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Why is Kathmandu full of Che stickers and t-shirts?



Che chic

In full retreat

Kathmandu sees a slew of international meetings on climate change this week as scientists confirm that the effects of global warming on the Himalaya is actually much more serious than previously thought. The melting of the polar ice cap and permafrost in the Himalaya (Mt Tochoche in the Khumbu with a glacial lake at its base, *top*) are already affecting water availability and sea level rise is threatening to drown Male (*below*), the capital of the Maldives.



EDITORIAL
Climate climax p2

INTERVIEW Andreas Schild
"Nepal is a potential winner" p4-5

COMMENT Nirvana Chaudhary
A climate for change p4
Dawa Steven Sherpa p4-5

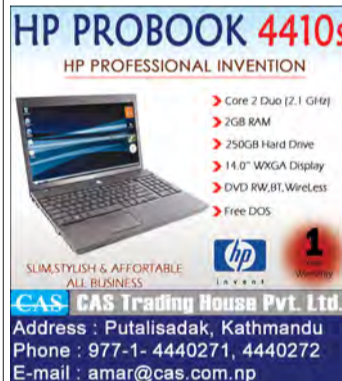
Times nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll # 466

Q. Will India give more support to Nepal's peace process following the PM's goodwill visit to India?

Total votes: 2,273



Weekly Internet Poll # 467. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com
Q. The vice president retaking his oath in Nepali is a:



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CLIMATE CLIMAX

In the run up to the Copenhagen Summit in December there is going to be a flash-flood of media attention on climate change. And, as is often the case, the reporting will focus on the skeptics, procedural matters and the operational strategies of blocs of countries. Business-as-usual companies will get on the bandwagon to showcase slick campaigns to greenwash themselves without really cleaning up their activities.

What will be lost in all the hype will be the need for a paradigm shift in energy use if we are to save the biosphere from the accelerated impact of global warming. There will be a lot of haggling over emissions, but no real plan of action.

Poor countries will hem and haw about compensation for adaptation, technical assistance for mitigation, and insist that their historical low per capita emissions absolve them from doing anything. Rich countries, still in the throes of economic crisis, will continue to try to push back the deadline for emission cutbacks or reduce their minimum threshold levels.

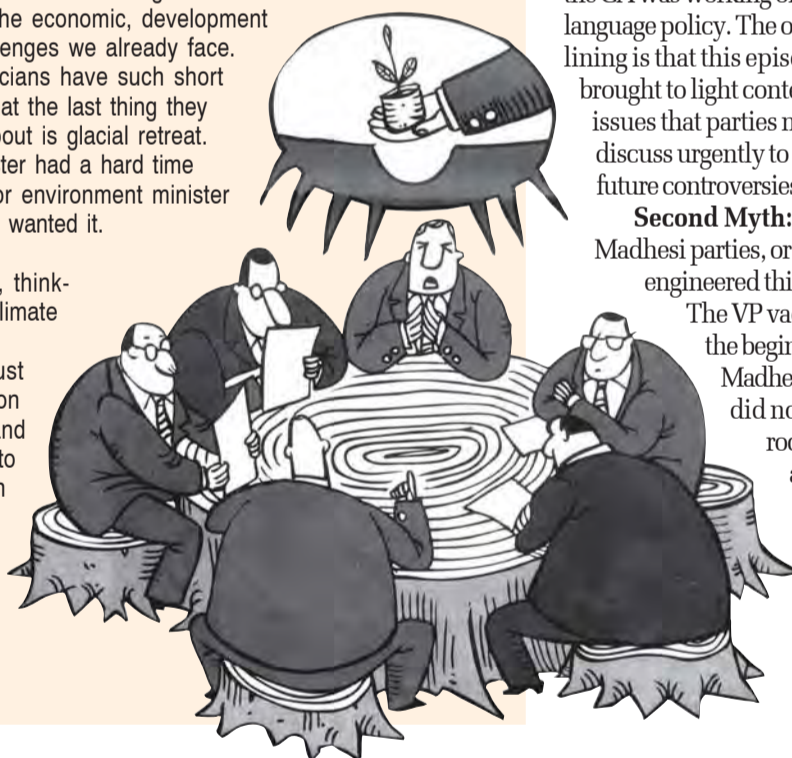
There are only 16 hours of negotiation time left in the preparatory meetings in Bangkok and Barcelona before leaders gather in Copenhagen to pontificate from the pulpit. By then, we need the United States to agree to agree to greenhouse gas emissions levels of at least 20 per cent below 1990, as the Europeans have. Even this is way below the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change's recommendations of up to 40 per cent cuts if we are to keep average global temperatures from rising more than 2 celsius in the coming decades.

Nothing we do (or don't do) in Nepal will affect global temperatures. But whether or not we switch to renewable energy as the mainstay of our economy will determine whether we survive economically as a nation. Nepal needs to reduce its carbon footprint not to save the planet, but to save itself.

As the world approaches Peak Oil (the maximum rate of petroleum extraction possible) and our petroleum import bill widens our huge trade deficit with India, continued dependence on fossil fuel and climate change will exacerbate all the economic, development and social challenges we already face.

Nepali politicians have such short time horizons that the last thing they are bothered about is glacial retreat. The prime minister had a hard time filling the slot for environment minister because no one wanted it.

Our elected representatives, think-tanks and the climate experts in the bureaucracy must exert pressure on the politicians and persuade them to begin the switch to a hydro-economy. It's not the ecology, stupid, it's the economy.



Swearing in Hindi

The veep oath saga exposes some myths

Vice President Paramananda Jha's Hindi saga has two dimensions. It is the story of deeply cynical politics, where each actor inflames passions to fetch political dividends. And it reveals the fragility of the political process, the assertion of the subaltern, and exposes some myths:



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

First Myth: That this judiciary is independent. It is susceptible to political pressure, tales of corrupt judges are legendary, it prefers to sit on cases (Katawal's age being a prime example) rather than ruffle feathers in the establishment. The fact that it has been proactive this time around, and imposed an arbitrary seven-day deadline, shows the deeply ingrained prejudice that exists in Nepali state institutions against Madhesism.

The decision is provocative and unnecessary, at a time when the CA was working on the future language policy. The only silver lining is that this episode has brought to light contentious issues that parties must discuss urgently to avoid future controversies.

Second Myth: That the Madhesi parties, or India, have engineered this crisis.

The VP vacillated at the beginning, the Madhesi leaders did not want to rock the boat, and India wanted to prevent a crisis

affecting government stability.

What has pushed the Madhesi side into taking a hard-line stance is pressure from below. The message from the Tarai (through calls to FM stations, street protests, media articles, and teashop conversations) was emphatic: Do not take the oath in Nepali. A Madhesi from Biratnagar, in a comment that reveals the depth of resentment, said: "Kathmandu has again told us that you are not Nepalis."

Third Myth: That the Madhes movement is over with adequate political representation in the CA, and the fragmentation on caste lines means they cannot mount a united offensive. Even now, it takes one careless, or deliberately prejudiced step, from the state to antagonise a large section of the population.

It also reveals the polarisation that engulfs this country. Can you find a Madhesi (except the one Kathmandu loves, Ram Baran Yadav) who wants the VP to take the oath in Nepali? How many pahadis (except some Maoists, who see a chance to destabilise the ruling arrangement) are willing to accept the legitimacy of the Hindi oath?

Fourth Myth: That this is a question of rule of law. In a country with rampant impunity, where rules are bent at will, where each party has gone against the SC at some point or the other, the law is remembered when it comes to the Madhes. Madhesism will accept the duties that come with citizenship only when they are allowed the corresponding benefits of citizenship, like preserving cultural rights. It cannot be a one-sided affair.

This is not a legal, but a political issue. Those arguing that the VP should take the oath in Nepali to respect the SC are ignoring the consequences. The Madhes has anyway been feeling it is under attack: the lack of movement on inclusion bill, the

sponsored splits in the parties that represent them, the anti-federal noises in the capital, the insistence on north-south vertical provinces being some examples. Insisting he should take his oath in Nepali will add to the alienation and volatility. Beneath these multi-layered arguments however is deeply cynical politics. The VP senses a chance to emerge as a martyr, and is making provocative statements. Upendra Yadav wants to recover his credibility in the Tarai by putting on a radical garb. The other Madhesi parties do not want Upendra to steal the thunder, and have jumped on to the bandwagon.

The government wants to paint the Maoists as the villains by claiming they have not allowed the house to function and an amendment to go through. The Maoists smell blood and realise that Madhesi parties will have to quit government if the VP resigns, allowing them to re-engineer the power alignment. The UML chief demands that the VP take his oath in Nepali, to appease his pahadi constituents and create trouble for his own PM. The fact that India wants the government to survive means it will use its leverage with all sides to push for a compromise. But the embassy is in a tough spot: it can neither ride roughshod on Madhesi demands nor can it allow the Madhesi forces to escalate their protests to unmanageable levels.

There is a possibility of an amendment or ordinance. Even if it is not with retrospective effect, it could allow the VP to retake his oath in Hindi or create future guarantees. Otherwise, what we are staring at is a full-blown crisis that will destabilise this government, trigger an agitation in Tarai, strengthen extremists on both sides, and complicate the fragile nation-building process underway. ●

LETTERS

REINVENTING TIJ

Mallika Aryal's 'Reinventing Tij' (#465) is misleading. Tij is part of our religious and cultural heritage and can never be used for revolution. The red sari is a component of our culture, not a catalyst to misguide women and hoodwink the country. To some extent, I agree with her in the sense that the tycoons have dared to tag Tij with commercial culture. Let's help save our culture from the one-eyed monster of consumerism.

Bed Nath Sharma, Kaski

ROOTS OF WAR

Rabi Thapa's article ('How far we lag behind', #465) was right about the under-representation of various ethnic groups amongst Nepal's elected officials, but it was prefaced by a fallacious statement that inequality and discrimination were at the roots of Nepal's conflict. I would suggest that, in fact, the roots of Nepal's conflict were greed for power and the lure of

corruption. What have any of the political parties done besides lie during election campaigns and then amass wealth for themselves during whatever brief time they gain power? Then it's the next party's turn. Sometimes it's the NC sometimes the UML and sometimes the Maoists, they are all the same. All of these organisations use ethnic tension and division to their advantage. Where are the modern leaders who see Nepal's diversity as a flower garden of ethnic groups, and not as an opportunity to pit castes and ethnic groups against one another in order to perpetuate their own power over a fractured society? This sort of

political culture doesn't augur well for the future.

Daniel Birch, USA

MAKE LOVE, NOT WAR

In response to Subodh Rana's 'Jung Bahadur's "tip"' (#464) let me say that there is nothing contradictory in the title 'Brave with the Sword at War', but how about the name 'Pyar Jung'? 'Love War', as it would translate from Urdu, is definitely the mother of all oxymorons. By the way, Rana made no mention of the contribution made by the army towards adapting English words into the lexicon. There are

plenty, but some of the more common ones are: Platoon – *Paltan*, General – *Jernail*, Captain – *Kaptaan*, Lieutenant – *Laptan*

S S Pal, email

OFFENSIVE TITLE

You guys need some common sense when you give titles to your pieces ('Nepal goes to India', #463). Do you have any common sense, and any common responsibility to the Nepali people and to Nepal? Your press should be shut down immediately when you write this nonsense. I hear the YCL vandalised your office and beat you up. You deserved it. How much is the Indian government paying you?

Pashupati Neupane, MBA, CMA

GREAT ASS

The Ass today ('The other Manmohan' #465) was really, truly hilariously enjoyable. I was split asunder with laughter, and more laughter till tears streamed down my eyes. Perhaps the best Ass I have read from you so far.

Keep going. Your wit, sarcasm (and bravery) astound me.

Madhukar, email





KIRAN PANDAY

Few will have noticed Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal's honeymoon period has come to an end. He earned the sobriquet of 'Premier of Rautahat' by visiting his constituency more often than ministries under his charge. He decided to outgrow the image of being too tied to the ground by flying off to the Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Sharm El-



STATE OF THE STATE C K Lal

Sheikh first. He may be in New York next month to address the UN Summit. In between, he managed to pay the customary respects to the Delhi Darbar.

Nepal's pilgrimage to New Delhi hogged the limelight at home but was completely ignored by the media of the host country. At the end of the trip, a long and tedious joint communiqué had to be issued. Diplomats know that

the anti-Maoist coalition on 25 May 2009 below the ramparts of Sital Niwas presidential palace, nobody expected anything from him. That he was being sworn in as the successor of Maoist chief Pushpa Kamal Dahal was an achievement in itself for the forces of status quo in the country. He took immediate steps to show that the old order was back in the saddle at Singha Darbar.

Dismissed army chief Rookmangad Katawal, continuing to function on the basis of the midnight missive from President Ram Baran Yadav, was promptly restored to his post. Retired army generals, stayed by court orders, were given extensions even as their cases remained sub judice. Maoists may be overdoing their 'civil supremacy' act, but it's clearly an issue Premier Nepal has neither the motivation nor the determination to face. Whether he has the political strength or the moral authority to

Since no one expected much from his government, Nepal hasn't disappointed anyone

successful agreements speak for themselves while failed negotiations need to be hidden behind a veil of verbiage.

If Premier Nepal were to vacate the jinxed Baluwatar premises tomorrow (as he must sooner rather than later like all his predecessors, none of whom ever got to complete a full term) what will the country remember his term of office for? Even Raghu Pant, a former journalist and current adviser to Prime Minister Nepal, will have a tough time compiling even a list of work-in-progress, let alone an inventory of accomplishments.

When Madhav Kumar Nepal took oath of office at the head of

introduce security sector reforms is also an open question.

Nepal revived the royal dress code and labeda-suruwal became the authorised dress of the anti-Maoist coalition. The Supreme Court has since declared that only Nepali has legal status as the official language of the country. Premier Nepal let the word 'god' lapse in his oath, but the hoary tradition of welcoming high dignitaries at the airport by Five Virgins is back. Welcome to the good old days of One Language, One Dress, One Religion, and One What-have-you of unitary Nepal because Prime Minister Nepal is proud of the past.

100 days of solitude

The only saving grace is that since nobody expected anything from his government, Nepal hasn't disappointed anyone. In fact, those who have been victims of Maoist excesses in the past are quite happy that the present council of ministers is making no attempt to govern. The police have resumed collecting tributes from businesses in Biratnagar.

The overhead charges at Birganj Customs are back. The main job of labour union leaders in Butwal and Hetauda is once again to loiter in the lobbies of factory managers.

This government can do nothing to resolve the issue of Maoist combatants, reform the bureaucracy, provide relief to the poor, revive the economy or even

control prices. No government that lacks the support of Maoists can help the Constituent Assembly do its work and complete a new statute. Premier Nepal is lucky no one expects much of him.

Pushpa Kamal Dahal failed because he tried to do everything at once. Nepal has succeeded by doing almost nothing. ●

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A climate for change

Someone once said that whatever made you successful in the past may not in the future. Sustainability is not just being alive today, it is also being alive tomorrow.

Climate change represents one of the greatest environmental, social and economic threats facing the planet, and we in Nepal are among the most vulnerable although we are probably the least responsible.

But as a young Nepali businessman I am worried we may not be doing enough ourselves to avert the impact of climate change. To address climate change we first have to change the way we do things.



COMMENT
Nirvana Chaudhary

In recent years there have been economic fluctuations, dramatic environmental changes and shifts in population dynamics. Our traditional

methods of adaptation are quickly losing their efficacy. The impact of global warming, pollution and the loss of biodiversity exacerbates existing problems of poverty, underdevelopment and the degradation of nature.

With changing rain patterns and an expected increase in temperature, the unique plants that grow in fragile environments may die out as well as the fauna that depend on them. This has serious implications for the livelihoods of the people who use them.

Human activity, the burning of fossil fuels and the destruction of forests have contributed to the situation we find ourselves in today. It can't be business as usual in business. Which is why even industries in Nepal have to change and build a long-term sustainability strategy.

Climate change may result in adverse business outcomes, including business interruption, increased investment or insurance costs, or declining financial measures such as value, return, and growth, or other measures of business success. How businesses adapt to these changes and how flexible they are will determine how well they cope with climate variability in the future.

It can't be business as usual in business

It is not just a matter of individual responsibility: we are all collectively responsible for climate change. Apportioning blame or singling out rich or poor countries will not help us surmount the challenges we face.

The Chaudhary Group (CG) has always been a big supporter of giving back to society and making changes happen at the grassroots level. We know that although climate change is a global problem, it will have local impacts. It will affect every one of us regardless of geography, caste, creed or profession. At CG, we are determined to lead by example and demonstrate that we can make a difference by working with conservation organisations such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

Success doesn't always mean being first today, it also means being better than what you were yesterday. Please remember that you may sow a seed today, and tomorrow it will give you shelter.

We have to find ways to convert the challenge of climate change into an opportunity to be more efficient in energy use so that saving the environment is good for business as well. As young entrepreneurs, we lead the way towards a truly economically and environmentally sustainable Nepal. We need to be climate smart and the time to act is now. ●

Nirvana Chaudhary is Executive Director of the Chaudhary Group and also Campaign Ambassador for the WWF's Climate for Life Campaign.



BILLI BIERLING

“Nepal is a

Andreas Schild, Director General of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), spoke to *Nepali Times* this week about climate change and how it will affect Himalayan livelihoods.

Nepali Times: Just how seriously is the Himalaya affected by climate change?

Andreas Schild: The problem with the Himalaya is that environmental science, meteorology and hydrology has never been of great concern. One of the consequences is that the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change hardly talks about this region. The basic data needed to make clear statements is missing. There are fundamental changes taking place: land use, land cover, biodiversity and people-resource dynamics are changing rapidly. But we have difficulties in explaining them in relation to a single factor like climate change.

But climate change has immediate consequences for cropping patterns: honestly, we are not sure how much climate change, the price of commodities, market situations and changing family structures are influencing this and which factors are more important. Talking to farmers, they perceive an increased tendency towards water stress and a higher frequency of extreme events.

We definitely see that the glaciers are receding, that there are changing rainfall patterns. Climate change skeptics are very quick to point to the fact that the Karakoram glaciers are growing, though even this is probably due to climate change...



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Climbing to keep the

RABI THAPA

Dawa Steven Sherpa, Managing Director of Asian Trekking, has a lot of stories to tell. At an interaction program to raise awareness about climate change in the Himalaya this week, he stepped up on behalf of the tourist industry to share the evidence he has seen of global warming melting the mountains and what can be done to deal with it.

He's certainly qualified to do so, and not just because he's climbed Chomolungma twice: in recognition of his wide-ranging efforts to promote responsible trekking in the Khumbu region and elsewhere, the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) has named him one of their Climate Ambassadors.

Not that being a Climate Ambassador comes with a predefined set of responsibilities. "Just continue to do what you're doing," Dawa was told. And he's doing plenty.

He has a bakery at Everest Base Camp that runs an innovative 'cash for trash' program for locals, organised the Beat the GLOF Imja Action Run in Khumbu in July, and through Asian Trekking has pioneered the use of Restop portable toilet bags and oxygen-efficient masks for mountaineering. He hopes the

trekking industry in Nepal will follow his lead, if not for environmental then for economic reasons.

Dawa feels that as Nepalis, we are in danger of "losing our identity" as a result of climate change. An important part of our identity on the global stage, after all, is that of being the 'roof of the world'. We may even have to rename our mountains, he says, citing the example of Ama Dablam ('Mother with Necklace'). Ama Dablam lost its distinctive necklace of ice in a huge avalanche in 2006.

Dawa tells of how his father drove yaks across Gokyo's Ngozumpa glacier with ease half a century ago. Today, the Cho La trek across the glacier is considered one of the toughest around. "Some time back at Base Camp," Dawa continues, "I was sitting around with some guys who'd been trekking for thirty, forty years. Suddenly this big black fly started buzzing around us. We just looked at each other in silence. A fly at 5,360 metres?"

It's clear Dawa takes climate change personally. But there's one story he doesn't want to have to tell. His father is Nepali, but his mother is from one of the Low Countries, Belgium, which lies below 300 metres above sea level. The last thing he wants, he says, is for "the country of my mother to be drowned by the country of my father". ●



potential winner”

The simplest objective indicator is the rising temperature in the mountains. The snowline is moving up. The first to observe these symptoms are the high mountain communities. A lack of snow means there is no drinking water in spring. Also scary is the reduction of permafrost: this phenomenon is well researched in the Alps but little assessed in the Himalaya.

But we have to see that the Himalayan countries, and particularly Nepal, are not only losers. They can potentially be winners, provided we have the right set of policies, programs and the determination to implement them.

How can countries like Nepal be winners?

The mountain regions and the Himalaya in particular are not major contributors to climate change. They can certainly reduce their contribution by switching to renewables, but the country can benefit from international carbon sink facilities. However, the importance of this is generally overestimated: so far international mechanisms do not favour small countries like Nepal. Nepal has a limited land area and a very mixed landscape. The contribution of a country like Nepal in mitigating climate change is globally of little relevance. Nationally and locally, like in the Kathmandu valley, it is of high relevance.

And how can we adapt better?

Assuming that mitigation will have positive impacts only in the second half of the century, we need to learn how to adapt to these changes from a mountain perspective. In general we have to say that poverty, lack of infrastructure and basic services to the rural population are so important that any adaptation agenda is very close to the traditional development agenda: a sustainable one. That said, there are specific measures possible and necessary. In the short term we have to be aware that changing rainfall patterns, melting glaciers and droughts create new vulnerabilities. Early warning systems, hazard

mapping, creating awareness and capacity development are required immediately. Glacial lakes considered a hazard can become a potential source for storage and energy. Hydropower, ecotourism and conservation are unique assets which contribute to strengthening resilience and adaptation. But we should move a step further: climate change and global warming on one hand and economic development with the growing middle class on the other. But let us not forget the low-hanging fruits: remittances are four times as important as development cooperation funds in Nepal. Clever policies to tap these resources to target rural areas will give us a good start in adapting to climate change.

Do you see any bright spots, best practices?

I think the bright spots are the most precious goods of the mountains: water, landscape, biodiversity and above all the adaptive people. Nepal will be a water tower also when the glaciers are melting. Water: it will be probably the single most important natural resource for the mountains and for Nepal. Biodiversity: urbanisation means a growing market for specific products with a place and culture branding. Why not sell Marpha apples at double the price of apples from China? Landscapes: the landscape is a unique way to attract tourists. The art is to make sure that the development of this resource is benefitting the people and is adding to sustainability and adaptation.

Are we focusing too much on melting glaciers and is this diverting attention from more important issues?

It is important to emphasise the importance of glaciers: they are the most visible and easy to understand indicators of climate change. Glacial lakes with danger of outbursts have received the immediate attention of the donor community. The impression is that raising warning flags is more important than sound analysis. Up to now the danger and loss of life due to floods and landslides has been 100 times higher than that from glacial lake outbursts. So we have to understand the difference between potentially dangerous lakes and immediate danger.

SHOWING BY DOING: ICIMOD Director General, Andreas Schild explains the workings of the solar charging station for his institute's fleet of six electric vehicles in Khumaltar on Tuesday.



Himalaya alive



DAWA STEVEN SHERPA



TOP CLIMATE AMBASSADOR: As a reminder to the world of its responsibility towards preserving its global heritage, Apa Sherpa carried the message ‘Stop Climate Change, Let the Himalayas Live’ up to the summit on his 19th world-record ascent of Chomolungma in May. The WWF campaign Climate for Life seeks to draw global attention to climate change impacts in the Himalaya. WWF hopes to plug the awareness gap between Nepalis and their leaders on climate change.

Climate week

It's the week of climate change here. Everyone from school children to the prime minister is getting in on the act:

Kathmandu to Copenhagen 2009: Regional Climate Change Conference
August 31-September 1, Hotel Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu
<http://www.kathmandutocopenhagen.org/>

UK Nepal Climate Change Film Competition Awards
August 31, Hotel Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu
(films to be screened at the end of the day's sessions, as well as at the Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival 2009, 10-14 December)
www.himalassociation.org/climatechange

Nepal Day, Kathmandu to Copenhagen 2009
September 2, Hotel Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu
Open to Nepali institutions interested in learning about climate change.

South Asian Youth Summit on Climate Change 2009, Road to Copenhagen
September 3-6, Mirabel Resort Hotel, Dhulikhel
<http://nyca.net.np/saysocc09/>

"Third revolution"

Janadisha, 23 August

जानदिशा

Maoist leader and head of the Revolutionary International Movement - Nepal, Netrabikram Chand 'Biplab' spoke to Janadisha. Translated excerpts:

Janadisha: The Maoists couldn't fulfill their own 40 demands when they were in power, how come you're demanding even more, 45, of this government?

Netrabikram Chand 'Biplab':

People are under the illusion that we ignored those 40 demands when we were in power. That's totally false. It's true that we couldn't do everything, but we made progress on the important demands. This government, on the other hand, has ignored them totally. Unlike us, they haven't taken the initiative to correct the country's problems.

What are this front's short-term and long-term goals?

First, the current governmental system isn't working, so it needs to be reformed. We want that to happen immediately. Secondly, we have

to address people's livelihoods, insecurity, political instability, the epidemic raging in the west and rising prices. Thirdly, this government lacks legal and moral legitimacy so it needs to be replaced with a government that people actually want. We are totally focused on this.



People are worried that these protests will endanger the peace. What do you think?

This is only a rumour. This movement will end violence and instability. It will empower parties and organisations that work for the people. Our protests aren't going to endanger the peace, they will strengthen it.

The other parties have been saying that the Maoist protests are illegitimate.

That's the opinion of a reactionary, status-quoist and puppet government. In the public's eyes, this movement is perfectly legitimate. People started demanding a 'third revolution' when the government ascended to power unconstitutionally.

Is a third revolution necessary?

Certainly, because people's hopes and aspirations haven't been met yet. Unless these hopes are met, there will be another revolution.

Maoist gameplan

Ganga BC in Kantipur, 23 August

कान्तिपुर

The NC and UML are the main opponents of the Maoists. The latter concluded during their recent central committee meeting that the growing polarisation in Parliament was good for them. Their opponents aren't as cooperative now as they were back when they thrashed out the 12-point agreement.

Although the Maoists are maintaining decorum for the sake of the ongoing peace process and the formation of the constitution, they are insisting on a new agreement that will allow them to write the new constitution. They are deliberately clashing with other political parties because they feel it will allow them to set the national agenda of the government and give them a basis for the 'people's movement'.



'Civil supremacy' is now the key issue on the Maoist agenda. They hope to be successful with a new agenda that includes the setting up of a people's democratic republic and a pro-people constitution.

The Maoists are more likely to get their way by protesting about 'civilian supremacy' than by raising the issue in Parliament. If Parliament addresses their demands in any way, then their agitation will be limited to just slogans. They have observed that increasing conflict with the government will automatically create the conditions for a people's uprising. After the central committee meeting, Pushpa Kamal Dahal highlighted 'the right to revolt'. He said revolution is inevitable if there is no civilian supremacy, which means civil unrest is essential.

The internal conflict of the Maoists following their withdrawal from government has been resolved for good. Mohan Baidhya is happy with Dahal's roadmap, which envisages establishing a people's republic through a people's uprising. Now the Maoists are calling for a national government under their leadership. This is a temporary strategic plan. If they succeed, they will shift to demanding a republican constitution, a move which is likely to be controversial. This really means a people's constitution.

The former rebels aim to establish a people's republic through a people's revolt. They don't think there is any other way to establish a people's republic. They will not implement their strategy as yet because any other agenda besides peace, constitution-writing and a democratic republic could be counterproductive nationally and internationally for them. They have studied the possibility of an alliance between the NC and UML and their own subsequent isolation. This is why they are keen to encourage conflict between the NC and UML.

Tharu citizenship

Gajendra Bohora in *Nagarik*, 24 August

नागरिक

The Tharuhat council in Dang is preparing to grant citizenship to people living within the self-styled 'Tharuhat province'. Addressing a 'Tharuhat army' of 700 in Deukhuri on Sunday, council president Laxman Tharu announced that a Tharuhat province will be formed in the next 8 months.

The council has already declared 22 districts of the Tarai part of the Tharuhat province. "We want our rights, we don't snatch others' rights," Laxman Tharu

said. "We will provide Tharu citizenship to non-Tharus too."

The council claims to have formed a Tharuhat army as the government's recent security policy is designed to suppress indigenous communities. But Laxman Tharu adds, 'We will not use weapons unless we're oppressed.'

The Tharus are currently organising their first national convention in Dang, where representatives from 22 districts have already arrived. The convention plans to discuss military strategy and a division of governmental duties within Tharuhat.



PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

The District Administration Office in Dang has requested the media not to disseminate news about the Tharuhat convention. Police were deployed at the convention site.

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KIRAN PANDAY

Federal model

Himalkhabar Patrika organised a discussion on the model of federalism in Charikot two weeks ago. People from diverse backgrounds participated in the discussion. Translated excerpts:

What should the structure of federalism be?
Kiran Lama (NC): The demand put forth by ethnic communities is that there be ethnic and regional autonomy with right to self-determination. But provinces should be created not only on the basis of ethnicity but also on the political rights of other non-ethnic groups.

Nara Bahadur Pakhrin (RPP): Without education and wealth, ethnic minorities won't succeed and will probably have to surrender leadership of their provinces to well-educated higher castes. The Maoists have encouraged ethnic pride, but in the absence of education this will probably only promote ethnic discrimination. An ethnic federal system won't bring development overnight.

Shankar Lama(Maoists): The rights of all communities living in any particular ethnic province should be guaranteed. This does not mean non-ethnic groups can never come into power. It is not enough that the federal units are inclusive. They should be given autonomy. Federal units should be created considering ethnicity, gender, religion and class.

Krishna Basnet (Gaurishankar Multiple Campus Chief): The purpose

of federalism should be to unite people and discourage secession. We should also study experiences with federalism throughout the world. These experiences teach us that provinces should be owned by all their inhabitants and not just ethnic groups.

Gopal Neupane (UML): What is important is to lift up backward communities, which requires an equal distribution of opportunities and human and natural resources, not ethnic federalism. One group should not suffer in the name of uplifting another. All communities should get equal respect and be represented in all sectors.

What if the federal units are based on and named after particular ethnicities?
Tanka Jirel (social worker): The people do not care about the names of the provinces, they are more concerned with what work is done. The government should help ethnic minority groups, for instance when an SLC graduate cannot pursue higher education due to financial instability at home. How does the name of a state help a minority?

All they want are a few facilities, to stop travelling miles to reach a clinic or the district headquarters to receive

their citizenship. The marginalised ask for nothing more than these minor privileges.

Kumar Bishwakarma (Dalit rights activist): Fourteen per cent of the population of Dolakha is Tamang. If it becomes a Tamsaling province, this minority will be ruling the rest, which is unfair. Provinces should be based on economic as well as social factors.

Norsang Sherpa (Federal Democratic Sherpa Association): The Maoist-proposed ethnic federal system won't be inclusive of every ethnic group and class. They're considering making an autonomous Sherpa province, which will help me individually, but still won't be inclusive of every group. So, instead of breaking up the country into ethnic provinces, I propose a regional division, with an autonomous Himalayan region.

Parbathi Khadka (Maiti Forum): We need to help women, and think about how to lift them out of poverty and denigration. Also, federalism should be based on geography and not ethnicity. That way we can name our provinces after geographical landmarks, like Gauri Shankar, instead of ethnicities, like Tamsaling.

Whipping it up

Abhishek Pratap Sah, MJF CA member, Kapilbastu

How did you spend the last year in the CA?
It didn't go as well as I'd expected. Political instability interrupted the constitution-writing process. We've fallen behind the schedule we fixed ourselves, which means we probably won't complete the constitution on time, not unless we put aside our differences.

What needs to be done to finish on time?
First, we have to run the committees in a more orderly fashion. The constitutional committee has stopped functioning. It is leaderless, which has stalled the sub-committees too. The big leaders have to devote themselves totally to the constitution instead of fighting their petty wars. If the constitution isn't written on time, it could invite more trouble.

Has your party used its whip in the committee meetings?
Not so far.

But the party whip must hold some influence in these meetings?
Some pressure is inevitable. Those committee members who were nominated via the proportional representation system, particularly, won't agree to anything without the party's green signal. But those who have been directly elected listen to their own conscience and aren't scared of their party bosses.

What's the country's main problem right now?
Corruption, and all young leaders should be aware of it. It takes Rs 500,000-600,000 to build a culvert in the village. If a politician were involved, the cost would skyrocket to Rs 2,500,000-3,000,000. Youth leaders need to do something about this.



“Maoists slowing things down”

Usha Gurung, NCCA member, Jhapa

How has the past year been?
During the first couple of months, I felt like I was lost at sea. It's taken me a while to find out what my responsibilities are. I didn't know most of the other 600 CA members, and I still don't. The big parties have been fighting each other, which means we probably won't meet the constitution deadline.

What needs to be done?
The parties must find common ground. If they cooperate, it won't be difficult. If some are stubborn, we can still rely on a two-third CA majority to render them irrelevant. The party whips must stop operating at all levels of government. If all this happens, we can finish the constitution in the remaining eight months.

Have you faced pressure from your party whip?
No.

But surely others have?
The Maoist members all parrot their party whip. This is a major reason why so many of the committees are behind schedule. The Maoists are slowing things down.

Will the CA schedule be revised a fifth time?
If the big parties don't reconcile, the schedule will be pushed back again. They need to stop seeking out new issues to disagree about and mend their differences.



Che chic

MAURICE ISSERMAN

On 9 October, 1967 a Bolivian army communiqué from La Paz announced that Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara, the Argentine-born Cuban revolutionary comandante turned itinerant guerrilla, had been hunted down by soldiers and killed in battle. *The New York Times* responded editorially, and with evident satisfaction, that if the report proved true, “as now seems probable, then a myth as well as a man has been laid to rest.” It was not the *Times*’s most accurate prediction.

Photographs of Che’s lifeless body soon appeared in newspapers around the globe, putting to rest doubts about his death. He had been executed. His amputated hands were smuggled to Cuba in 1970, and his bones were discovered by a Cuban forensic team in Bolivia in 1997 and returned to Cuba for state burial.

The mythic appeal of the slain revolutionary, known to many today in Latin America as San Ernesto, has only grown in subsequent years. In *Che’s Afterlife: The Legacy of an Image*, Michael

Casey writes, “Unwittingly, the Bolivian military delivered the world a lasting and sympathetic picture of the man they’d hunted down, they gave it a crucified Che.” Indeed, John Berger and other art critics have argued that Freddy Alborta’s photo of Che’s corpse bears a startling resemblance to Renaissance depictions of Jesus Christ at the moment he was brought down from the cross by the Romans.

Che hardly ever sat for a bad photo, even in death. But of all surviving photographs of him, one in particular stands out: the head-and-shoulders portrait of a bearded, long-haired, 31-year-old Che, wearing a bomber jacket and his trademark beret emblazoned with the comandante star, taken by Alberto

‘Korda’ Díaz Gutiérrez for *Revolución*, the official newspaper of Fidel Castro’s 26th of July Movement.

In the aftermath of Che’s death, the Korda photo, or various graphic derivations, became a staple of radical newspapers and left-wing poster art in North and South America and Western Europe. And in an ironic post-1960s development, the image took on yet another life: this time as a marketing device, used to sell everything from air fresheners to condoms to an ice-cream bar called Cherry Guevara.

Che has since become a commodity. The issue is not that Che’s image is without continuing political appeal but that it has too many diverse meanings to be the symbol of any coherent ideology. As one would expect, the Korda photo remains the symbol of choice for contemporary Latin American rebels.

It has also shown up in recent years as movement iconography in Palestine, Nepal, East Timor and many other locales caught up in radical insurgencies. But its appeal is not limited to conventional left-wing movements. It has been embraced, for instance, by US-backed Christian rebels in Sudan who are fighting a Muslim regime.

The contemporary meaning of Che’s image ultimately isn’t about communism or anti-imperialism: it’s about attitude, and it’s about sacrifice. Writes Casey: “A man, a teacher, lays down a code of personal conduct from which to build a just society, a utopia, and then proceeds to live and die according to it.”

Castro combined the Cuban revolution, Che’s stellar qualities, and the *Guerrillero Herico* image into a single attractive product. Just as urban sneaker-wearing teenagers seem susceptible these days to advertisers who encourage them to identify with brands such as Nike or Tommy Hilffiger, in late 1967 radicalised students across the Western world were ripe for the Che brand.

And he continues to appeal to activists today. It is not only Guevara’s high cheekbones, long eyelashes and cool bomber jacket that make this photo desirable. Its appeal also lies in its spirituality, in its ability to feed people’s longings for a better world and to encourage them to dream of defeating death. Korda’s Che keeps hope alive. ●

Maurice Isserman is James L. Ferguson Professor of History at Hamilton College and the author, with Michael Kazin, of *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s*.



“Che who?”

Ask a Nepali who Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara was and you might get the following answers: “A pure man of the proletariat, no capitalist-roader like our commies” “Some cool dude with a funky hairdo” “Che who?”

Yet stickers advertising the iconic silhouette of Che, he of the wispy beard, long hair and starred beret, can be seen on every other Kathmandu taxi, microbus and t-shirt. Che





LISA SCHWIERER

is a favourite among Nepali communists from Youth Communist League thugs to cabdrivers.

“The YCL is here from time to time,” says Reetu Sahani of The Sticker Shop. One cabdriver pointed to a Che sticker on his rearview mirror to say this is the kind of leader Nepal needs.

Releases of the movie adaptation of Che’s *Motorcycle Diaries* in 2004 and the more recent two-part Che biopic by Steven Soderbergh have boosted his popularity and sealed his communist credentials in the eyes of many Nepalis, but he’s been popular for a longer time.

Many people buy Che stickers simply for his good looks and because they’re fashionable. One store vendor in Kathmandu who sells Che memorabilia explains: “He doesn’t have a special meaning for most people, they are just following a market trend.”

In fact he’s become such a commercial figure many owners of Che memorabilia don’t know who he is. Others think they do but are usually way off the mark. A sample street survey in Thamel evoked a few more intriguing answers from young Nepalis: “This is Hitler”; “He was a European president”; and “He was a very smart man.” ●

Lisa Schwierer

“The most complete human being of our age”

figure into Che the icon.

Steven Soderbergh’s mammoth two-part cinematic treatment, *Che*, is the latest evocation

of the revolutionary figure and a complex engagement of both the person and the persona of Che. In the sense that it explodes the static,

decontextualised image of Che, Soderbergh’s *Che* cannot be said to simply resuscitate Che, it also reanimates and rejuvenates him. And yet, like the image itself, Soderbergh’s representation retains both the frustrating obscurism of Che’s visage and his legacy.

Soderbergh focuses on two historical passages: the first film, *The Argentine*, follows Che with Fidel’s small

band of fighters as they start the armed

insurrection that culminates in the Cuban Revolution of 1959. The second,

Guerilla, follows Che through the Bolivian countryside in his disastrous and ultimately fatal attempt to spark a similar revolution across Latin America. The two films have a fatalistic symmetry: the trajectory of the first, buoyed with optimism, inexorably heads to victory, while the second, weighed down by divisions, just as inexorably leads to defeat and doom.

The director abandons the typical narrative arc of

most biopics (like Salles’ *Motorcycle Diaries*, for instance, with its effective, calculated emotional notes), opting instead for a grittier aesthetic resembling a *verité* cinematic style. Of the two, *The Argentine* is the more narratively palatable and, despite the reputation the pair of films has earned as being difficult, is surprisingly gripping. Che’s visit to New York to address the United Nations in 1964 is one of the interjections, along with interviews, vignettes and fiery speeches, that provides momentum to the first movie and relieves the potential tedium of tropical guerilla warfare tableaux (which has an appeal in smaller doses). This momentum is wholly absent in the second film.

Soderbergh highlights the outsider status of Che, even among his band of revolutionaries. He is the Argentine among Cubans in the first part, and ironically the Cuban among Bolivians in the second. The biopic underscores the guarded persona Che cultivated, projecting the character of a pure and loyal revolutionary, and Benicio Del Toro’s exacting performance brings him to life impressively. By the second movie, all that is left of the ragged revolutionary is steely determination in his cause and the pragmatism of a guerilla. In the desolate but transcendent death that

inevitably befalls Che when his band is overwhelmed by the Bolivian army, the comparison to the Passion plays enacting Jesus Christ’s death is well nigh impossible to avoid.

To his credit, Soderbergh does not avoid the fundamental kernel of Che’s method—revolutionary violence. There is a quality in this historical drama that edges towards documentary in the density of its details and the reportage of events. But it establishes its truly historical dimension almost immediately when the movie opens with a question posed to Che about the power of the message of the Cuban Revolution: “if the ruling class agrees to land reform and tax reform”, “the standard of living could be raised.” It is that comment and invitation to consider the past in relation to the present, those ‘ifs’ that still remain unfulfilled in many places today, that flaunts the movie’s intention. In our context, with Nepal’s much fresher history of revolutionary violence, *Che* forces us to delve deeper into the underlying causes of conflict, and to consider what measures the state has taken to mitigate exploitation. ●



CRITICAL CINEMA
A Angelo D'Silva

ideal. The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre attached the burdensome epithet “the most complete human being of our age” to Che, further consigning him to the realm of the ideal and idolatry. The two-tone transformation Korda’s image underwent at the hands of Irish artist Jim Fitzpatrick, the image that is now so ubiquitous in global popular culture, completed the transformation of Che the historical

When in 1967 Alberto Korda’s cropped photograph of Che Guevara was exhibited worldwide, it was titled *Guerrillero Heroico*. The label has a strange taxonomical resemblance: as if it indicated a certain subset of *Homo sapiens*, a kind of

dissemblance of the actual person into a rationalised and modern

Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara, the Argentine Marxist revolutionary and international statesman, has morphed into a catch-all left and counterculture icon in the half century since the Cuban Revolution.

When in 1967 Alberto Korda’s cropped photograph of Che Guevara was exhibited worldwide, it was titled *Guerrillero Heroico*. The label has a strange taxonomical resemblance: as if it indicated a certain subset of *Homo sapiens*, a kind of

GROUNDNDED!

DEWAN RAI

Nepal signed a global agreement in 2005 to use Machine Readable Passports (MRPs), which have the passport holder's information encoded digitally on a page so they can be quickly scanned. The agreement requires the replacement of all conventional passports by 2010, but our government has done

that are still valid can be used for travel until October 2015," says Hemlal Sharma Bhattarai of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), adding, "it is not compulsory for everyone to switch to the new passport just yet."

It is this "why me worry?" attitude of leaving everything till the last minute that is going to make international travel a lot more difficult for Nepalis in the coming years. MRPs will make

Nepal is behind schedule on a global agreement to phase in digital passports by 2010

nothing to implement it, meaning Nepalis may face even more hassles at airports around the world.

The agreement, mediated by the UN's International Civil Aviation Organization, allows for the validity of non-MRP passports until October 2015. But they can't be distributed after March 2010, which means the government has only seven months to start issuing MRP passports exclusively.

"Previously issued passports

travelling easier since airport officials can easily check their validity by swiping them through a machine. They will also help governments cut down on passport fraud (*see box*) since illegal or duplicate passports can be quickly and digitally invalidated.

At the rate Nepal is going, we will make the switch to MRPs long after the rest of the world since we almost certainly won't meet the 2010 deadline. This means Nepali travellers will be



KIRAN PANDAY

stuck in long airport queues as immigration officials manually check their documents and manually enter details on computers, while other nationalities zoom through. Nepali travelers, already singled out for special checks at airports around the world, will now face more harassment.

Things are moving at a snail's pace at MoFA. Officials have so far been busy pushing paper on the printing, supply and delivery of the new passports. It has made late arrangements for the installation of the necessary equipment and the organisation and management of staff, and only just approved the building

design prepared by the Construction Division this month.

The ministry conducted its first detailed study of MRP this year even though it had commissioned a team for this purpose in 2007, comprising members of the Foreign and Home ministries, the Civil

Sunday, 30 August, is International Disappearance Day and like all other commemorative days, there will be functions at which dignitaries and donors will gather to make speeches and sip tea before heading home. The families of the estimated 1,500 Nepalis who were disappeared during the war will be forgotten for another year.

Committees are formed and promises are made that are not kept. The warring sides are in government, or trying to get



COMMENT
Ram Kumar Bhandari

into it, and the last thing they want is their past atrocities investigated. But the families of the disappeared want the truth about what happened to their loved ones, and they want justice as per the points laid out in the UN Convention on Enforced Disappearances (2006).

There is an added complication. The relatives of the victims remain divided, depending on which side was responsible for the death or disappearance. Various political parties hold sway over these blocs. In fact, political parties recognise victims only if they were affiliated to them as cadres.

The country may have seen the end of the war, but the families of the disappeared are not at peace. The movement towards reconciliation has become fragmented and the grief of tens of thousands of victims' families is being held hostage to vested political interests.

Therefore, we must ask, is reconciliation possible at all? As long as the plight of the victims is politicised, we will not see true peace.

No matter how many bills are drafted in parliament on Truth and Reconciliation and Disappearances, they will be buzzwords understood only by donors and their middlemen. Families, relatives and victims in rural areas are never

Vanishing hope



consulted or asked for feedback.

Nepal's post-conflict period has seen the politicisation and commodification of victims. Says Sakuntala Poudel, whose husband was disappeared by the state: "Many NGO workers ask to take photographs of us and ask for photos of our loved ones, but they don't understand our needs and the value of our tears."

Krishna Khanal from Gorkha, who lost his brother during the war, says: "We can't sacrifice justice in the name of peace and reconciliation. We want to know the whereabouts of our loved ones and punish the criminals."

The recently formed peace committees across Nepal have, ironically, stirred up more conflict and made victims' families even more disillusioned. Only 60 of 75 committees have been formed, many are still without a chairperson, and their

The families of Nepal's disappeared are forgotten

offices are often closed. In reality, the committees have failed and are mere showpieces for stakeholders and donors. The whole peace process as well as the Peace Ministry has become a donor-driven project.

Families of the victims demand to know the truth through satisfactory answers and identification of the perpetrators. In addition, families have the right to reparations, as laid out by the UN, including: restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction,

and guarantees of non-repetition.

Unfortunately, in Nepal reparation has come to be viewed solely in terms of money. The government doles out money to families and considers the matter closed, adding insult to injury. Moreover, the distribution of compensation is politicised. It is unsustainable and ineffective and contributes nothing to the greater peace process.

Laxmi Bhandari, who lost her husband in 2001, argues: "Instead of justice, the government offers money. We demand the truth." Prem Neupane, whose brother was disappeared, says, "Until we know the whereabouts of our loved ones, our struggle continues. We are ready to die for justice."

What is needed is an independent commission with the power to investigate disappeared citizens. The policy regarding enforced disappearances should be framed according to international standards, as laid out by the UN. The various agreements and commitments made by the government and political parties such as the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, Interim Constitution and Supreme Court verdicts should be implemented without compromise.

The Rayamajhi Commission's report has never been published or implemented, and ultimately contributed to the culture of impunity in Nepal. Any document prepared in the capital without wider consultation with victims' communities is not acceptable as the families of the disappeared are legitimate protagonists in the process of change, peace and the reconstruction of a new Nepal.

Unless we address these concerns, Nepal's peace process will remain fragile. ●

Ram Kumar Bhandari, whose father was disappeared in 2001, is a human rights activist based in Lamjung.



Aviation Authority, Nepal Rastra Bank and the National Information and Technology Centre. It had earlier sent teams to India, Thailand and Brussels for study visits.

Bhattarai says the delay was exacerbated by the shifting of MoFA from Sital Niwas to the former royal palace in Narayanhiti, which took almost seven months. With time quickly running out, MoFA wants to begin screening contractors to supply printing materials and install the necessary equipment soon.

For this purpose, it will likely call for a prequalification bid this week and a global bid within a month and a half. The ministry hasn't begun work on the building which will house the MRP printers and equipment since it is waiting for the District Technical Office to announce this year's prices for construction materials, but hopes to identify a

builder soon. The builder will face a tall order since the planned five-storey building north of Narayanhiti must be completed within five months to meet the 2010 deadline, but ministry officials are confident it can be done. "We will have to mobilise workers for 24 hours in three shifts to complete the construction in five months," says Uma Devi Sangachhe, chief divisional engineer at the Construction Division.

The government will also have to install expensive Optical Character Recognition Machines that can read MRPs at nine entry points around the country, including Tribhuvan International Airport, Kakarbhitta, Birgunj, Tatopani, Bhairahawa, Nepalgunj, Dhangadhi and Gadda Chauki, Mahendranagar.

If MRPs don't take off pretty soon, neither will we. ●

Ever wondered about these ads?

The government has been liberally issuing replacement passports to people who have damaged or lost their passports – or are pretending to have lost them so they can qualify for a new one.

When people lose their passports, they are supposed to print an ad in a national daily and request a police enquiry before applying for a new one, but these investigations are rarely undertaken.

"We cannot investigate even when we're certain they aren't genuine," admits Deepak Adhikari, under-secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he heads the visa section. State authorities guess that a staggering 90 per cent of the petitions are fraudulent, but are under pressure to issue new passports immediately.

"Nepal is probably the only country where a replacement passport is issued so easily," Adhikari says.

There are four main reasons why people pretend to lose their passports in order to get a new one. Students who apply to study abroad and are rejected worry that the visa rejection stamp in their passports will disqualify them the next time they apply, so seek fresh documents. People interested in working for overseas companies must surrender their passports to them, which means they need

a separate passport for every company they are interested in. Those who have been deported are hassled at international airports because their passports have stamps that advertise the fact and can't be erased. Some simply need new passports to get away with a crime or run illegal passport rackets of their own.

Others deliberately invalidate their passports by ripping pages or smudging information, so they don't have to lie about having lost a passport in order to qualify for a new one.

The introduction of Machine Readable Passports (MRP) will significantly reduce cases of fraud since their digitally encoded information can't be corrupted. Although they can be lost, it will be less difficult to replace them. Authorities can digitally invalidate old ones so people can't illegally hold two passports.

On the other hand, authorities have to inform diplomatic missions and immigration offices abroad of lost non-MRP passports before they issue new passports, which could be very troublesome. Although some people inform the ministry if they find their old passports, this is rare. Without updated technology, Adhikari laments, "There is nothing we can do to dissuade a dishonest and unethical individual." And there seem to be quite a few of them about. ●

Dewan Rai



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Highway blues

Why is travelling on Kathmandu roads so unbearable? Impromptu chakka jams and landslides seem likely culprits, as do a dysfunctional government and truant cops. But a closer look



ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed

reveals that the private sector deserves some part of the blame too. Don't get too self-righteous about it, we're part of the problem as well. Cars park on both lanes of major highways and breakdown mid-road because they carry more

than they can physically bear. And yet the people who could fix this, the cops, don't seem to care. Many of these cars also belch plumes of toxic, black smoke, even though countless campaigns have tried to pull polluting cars off the roads by making green stickers mandatory. Yet a number of traffic cops this Beed talked to

didn't even know what a green sticker was or signified. The private sector can fill in where the government has failed. Vehicle dealers could help out by educating their customers about what they can and can't do and run an emergency two truck service so they can quickly pull stalled cars off the roads. But if the private sector wants to do a better job than the government, then it must respect the rule of law and keep from launching street protests and hartals that hold up traffic to have their way. It's in their own interest to show some restraint. Not only do hartals discourage foreign investment but they irk the government, which could then vindictively withhold its protection from the business community. The Beed's advice: focus on innovation and cutting costs, not

politics. So criminal drivers and negligent cops have certainly done their part to bring about this sorry state of affairs. But the private sector is just as culpable. Next time you rail at the government, save some breath for our businesses. ● www.arthabeed.com

Nabil is 25

Nabil Bank is marking its 25th anniversary this week. It was the first foreign joint venture bank in Nepal when it started operations in 1984 and has been providing international standard banking services in Nepal since then. "This is a milestone in the history of banking in Nepal, and it shows what can be achieved with professionalism, reliability and dedication," says Nabil CEO Anil Shah.

As a part of its anniversary, Nabil Bank and the clothing brand, Miss Players, together launched a special saving scheme, 'Miss Players Nabil Nari Bachat'. Under the scheme, customers will be offered a Visa Electron Debit card as well as an interest rate of five per cent on a minimum balance of Rs 500.

Going flat



Samsung has introduced its popular flat panel LED High Definition TV in the market, and the product is flying off the shelves. Samsung says the sleek new design and incomparable picture quality has made all other models look obsolete in comparison. Creating a new category in the television market, the 6 and 7 series of LCD TV are available in 32" and 40" screen sizes.

5000 lumen

Boxlight announced the release of Pro5000SL projector. Designed to meet the needs of the system integrator, it features three lens options, LAN control, network management and other applications.

Oil bank

Cosmic Automobiles, a subsidiary of Avco Holding and Investment Group launched its automotive lubricant - Hyundai Oilbank (HOB). HOB provides an array of reasonably priced lubricants for all vehicles.

X-change

Bajaj Motorcycles organised a swapping offer 'Bajaj Maha X-change Mela-6' yet again. In exchange for their old bikes, more than 20 Bajaj companies provided new bikes to customers at 'best prices'.

Green Planet

Syakar, the distributor of Honda cars and automobiles in Nepal, organised a painting competition, 'Green Planet Painting Competition' for children under the age of 15 last week. With more than 100 participants, the winners were awarded gift hampers from Philips.

After-sale

LG electronics has introduced an after-sale service campaign, the '211 campaign', in Nepal. Fulfilling its promise of quality even after the sale of goods, LG is offering this service on all LG electronics as well as LG home appliances.

ICT

Catering to the need of Information and Technology Services (ICT) in Nepal, Chaudhary Group has formed an alliance with Singapore-based CrimsonLogic IT Solutions. Operating under the name 'CG Techno Dreams', the alliance aims to provide ICT products, solutions, operation outsourcings to Nepalis and implement e-governance in Nepal.

Ooodles

Keeping in mind the popularity of Chinese food in Nepal, Wai Wai Quick introduced two new flavours, Chicken Schetzwan and Vegetable Manchurian, in the market last week.



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September surprise

If you look out the window this month and notice that the sun is setting in a different place every day, don't worry, the earth is not spiralling out of orbit: it's tilting toward the sun to welcome the season of autumn, beginning 23 September.

This means a new set of stars and constellations will make their debut. A couple of hours after sunset, you will see the Milky Way stretching diagonally across the night sky (you may need to wait for a load-shedding night to see this). Make sure to pull out a



STARGAZING
Kedar S Badu

set of binoculars and observe this band of stars because it contains some fantastic constellations. You will see the W-shaped Cassiopeia, the Great Summer Triangle, Sagittarius and Scorpius. In the eastern horizon, just below Cassiopeia, don't miss the constellations of Andromeda and the square-shaped Pegasus. The Big Dipper will be only partly visible in the north-western skies, but the kite-shaped Bootes and the man-shaped Hercules should be clear.

There will be a full moon on 4 September, also called the 'Harvest Moon' because it helps farmers harvest past sunset.

Planets

Mars will rise in the north-east just before midnight but the view will be obscured late September when it is directly between the earth and the sun. The planet will drift eastwards through Gemini and head toward the bright twin stars of Castor and Pollux. You can catch a late glimpse of it again at the very end of September when it will be visible in the east just before dawn below a sparkling **Venus**, which should be clearly visible throughout the month.

Jupiter will be the only planet visible in the evening this month, and will descend toward the horizon as the evening passes. The planet can be best seen late in the evening when it's sitting a mere 20 degrees above the horizon. Telescope users will have a few chances to catch Jupiter's closest moons, Io and Europa, eclipsing and occulting one another on September 15, 22 and 29.

Saturn fans have less to cheer about since the planet will be invisible for some part of the month as it hides behind the sun. Since it's tilting away from the earth, its rings will lose their characteristic sheen as they reflect less of the sun's light. The last opportunity to view Saturn's rings is on 4 September at 6:45 pm. Catch the planet close to the western horizon.

kedarbadu(at)gmail.com

Shabana Azmi to play

Renowned Indian actors Shabana Azmi and Farooque Shaikh will be staging the acclaimed play *Tumhari Amrita* in Kathmandu on 16 September as part of a fund-raising drive for the Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre (SIRC) in Kabhre.

Tumhari Amrita was written by Javed Siddiqui and is directed by Feroz Abbas Khan, the well-known Indian theatre personality. The play is a love story in a unique format: the tale unfolds through a series of letters written over 35 years between Amrita (played by Azmi) and Zulfi (played by Shaikh).

Beginning in 1940 with an invitation to Amrita's eighth birthday party, the two friends come closer against the backdrop of India's tumultuous history: from Independence and Partition in 1947 to the



Emergency of 1975, and subsequent events. As the two correspondents discuss these and other happenings, their letters are marked by wit, jibes, arguments and inevitable patch-ups.

Soon the friends evolve into different and complex personalities. Zulfi is an honest politician in their native Lucknow, while Amrita becomes

a painter and a lost soul, travelling through Europe before returning, emotionally unstable, to India. Their bond, however, remains strong throughout, until the play reaches its tragic conclusion.

Says Shabana Azmi: "We look forward to playing before the Kathmandu audience, where I believe the theatre world has advanced greatly in recent years.

I am also happy to be putting up a play whose proceeds will go to further the rehabilitation of the victims of spinal injuries."

The proceeds of this play will go toward building halfway homes for the patients of SIRC so they can adjust to their home environment.

"We are happy that the two actors and the director have agreed to our request, and thank the BP Koirala Foundation and the Indian Embassy for their helping hand in making this unique event possible," says SIRC founder **Kanak Mani Dixit**. ●

Tumhari Amrita
Kamal Mani Theatre, Patan Dhoka
16 September, 6PM
Tickets will be available from
31 August at Dhokaima Café,
Patan Dhoka, 5522113 and
Madhu Shrestha, Jyoti Bhawan,
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EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **'Concealed splendour'**, photography exhibition by Shubhecha Tewari, Shangri-La hotel, Lazimpat, 30 Aug-6 Sep, 11AM

EVENTS

- ❖ **Everything is Illuminated**, movie screening at Lazimpat Gallery Café, 5.30 PM, 4428549

MUSIC

- ❖ **Baja gaja**, every Tuesday at Moksh, Pulchok, 7.30 PM onwards, 5526212
- ❖ **Live band** every Friday and rooftop bbq everyday at Kausi Kitchen, Darbar Marg, 4227288
- ❖ **Sunday Jazz brunch** barbecue and live jazz music at the Terrace, Hyatt Regency, 12-3.30 PM, 4491234
- ❖ **Jazz evening** at Delices de France Restaurant every Wednesday, 11AM-2PM, 4260326
- ❖ **Some like it hot** every Friday BBQ and live music by Dinesh Rai and the Sound Minds, Rs 899 at Fusion, Dwarika's Hotel, 7PM onwards, 4479488
- ❖ **Happy cocktail hour**, ladies night on Wednesday with live unplugged music at Jatra Café & Bar, Thamel, 5-7PM
- ❖ **Live Sensation**, performance by Yankey every Saturday 9PM, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu, 4491234
- ❖ **Live Band Sensation** performance by Aprilrush, every Saturday till late, Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, 4489362
- ❖ **Sunday Jazz Brunch** by Inner Groove with barbeque, Sunday, 12PM-3.30 PM, The Terrace at Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, 4489362
- ❖ **Nepali Ghajals** and songs at D'Lounge Beijing Duck Restaurant, every Thursday 6.30 PM onwards, 4468589



DINING

- ❖ **Dhaka Biryani Festival**, by Berek Bawarchi from Bangladesh at The Café, 30 Aug-12 Sep, 4491234
- ❖ **'Indra Jatra' dinner**, at 1905 Amarawati Garden, 3 Sep, 6.30 PM onwards, 4225272.
- ❖ **Asparagus mania**,

enjoy all flavours at the Rox Restaurant, all through August, 4491234

- ❖ **Wine Festival**, until 15 September, Kilroy's Thamel, 4250440
- ❖ **Chocolate, Coffee and Caramel**, every evening at The Lounge, 4.30 PM-6.30 PM, 4491234
- ❖ **A cafe's café**, Dhokaima Café, Patan Dhoka, 5522113
- ❖ **Jazzabell Café**, relaunched at Jhamsikhel, 2114075
- ❖ **The Corner Bar**, 5-7PM, 3-11PM, Radisson Hotel Kathmandu, 4411818
- ❖ **Al Fresco**, for home made pasta, steak and fresh water trout, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 4273999
- ❖ **Kakori**, for biryanis, curries and kebabs, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 7-10.45 PM
- ❖ **Chez Caroline** for French and Mediterranean cuisine, Babar Mahal Revisited, 4263070
- ❖ **Mediterranean cuisine** every Friday from Greece, Italy and the Middle-East at The Café, Hyatt Regency, 4491234
- ❖ **Teppanyaki** meat items and garlic rice at Le Resturant, Gairidhara, 4436318
- ❖ **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri-La, Lazimpat, Rs 600, 4412999
- ❖ **Reality Bites**, The Kaiser Café, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, 9AM-10PM, 4425341
- ❖ **Starry night barbecue** at Hotel Shangri-La with live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs 999, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7PM onwards, 4412999
- ❖ **Himalayan Rainbow Trout** at Hotel Yak and Yeti, Darbar Marg, 4248999
- ❖ **Tiger for Breakfast**, breakfast everyday at 1905, Kantipath, 4215068

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Dhulikhel Lodge Resort** offers an overnight stay for Rs 1600 till 30 September, 4222389
- ❖ **Relax Package** at Hyatt Regency Kathmandu for Rs 5555 plus taxes, for a night of double occupancy with breakfast, complimentary use of spa. Offer valid for Nepalis and local residents only, 4489800
- ❖ **Spa package**, ayurvedic massage and access to the pool and spa with either breakfast or lunch at The Café or hi-tea at the Lounge at the Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, 4491234

For inclusion in the listing send information to editors(at)nepalitimes.com

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Life Partner is a story about two couples with wildly different views about marriage and the unique difficulties it causes. Karan (Fardeen Khan) and Sanjana (Genelia D'Souza), who have been madly in love for ages, rush into marriage. But traditional Bhavesh (Tusshar Kapoor) and his love Prachi (Prachi Desai) wait obediently for the green signal from their parents. Both couples come across Jeet (Govinda) a playboy and divorce lawyer who thinks marriage is senseless. How they cope with married life is for you to find out.

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WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

Quite an unusual weather pattern this week dumped copious rain on central Nepal and even brought down the mercury by two degrees. This was the result of a curling back of a low pressure system over southern Tibet that traversed the Himalaya and re-entered the monsoon circulation from the north! This is low pressure trough itself was a monsoon system that strayed too far over northwestern India and was washed back east by the jet stream. With antics like this, it is hard to predict what the monsoon is going to do next. But we can safely say that the large depression we see in this satellite picture over the Bay will continue to affect Nepal with a late monsoon pulse, with the showers mainly at night.



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RECIPES

by GRAHAM SYDNEY

Cheese & Marmite Muffin Tart

(Serves 4)

This very simple recipe makes a perfect vegetarian lunch or snack. I serve it with a green herb salad and tomato concase. One can add finely chopped onion, chives, spring onion, cooked bacon or cooked ham. Replace 1 cup of milk with a tin of creamed sweet corn and add ½ teaspoon of red chilli powder for another option.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 cup | flour |
| 1 cup | milk |
| 1 cup | strong cheese, grated |
| 1 teaspoon | baking powder |
| 2 | eggs |
| ½ teaspoon | oregano |
| a pinch each of salt and pepper | |
| 2 tablespoons | butter |
| 1 tablespoon | Marmite |



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MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

WHITE KNIGHT: Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal denounces the government's delayed response to the Jajarkot epidemic and announces an independent Maoist relief program during a speech at Ratna Park on Monday.



KIRAN PANDAY

GOTCHA: Foreign Minister Sujata Koirala outside NC Parliamentary Party Office at Singhadarbar on August 25 where she was summoned to explain her last-minute decision not to accompany the prime minister on his trip to India.



KIRAN PANDAY

TRUSTY HANDS: Caretaker Army Chief Chattraman Gurung mills about at Tribhuvan International Airport on Saturday as he waits for the prime minister to return from his five-day visit to India.



DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA

EARTH SHAKER: Flash floods from a swollen Aduwa river sweep away a store in Birtamod bazaar, Jhapa, on Friday. Eight people have already perished in Jhapa during floods brought on by this season's erratic monsoon.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

WISE WORDS: Two men greet one another on Monday at Kashmir Masjid near Ghanta Ghar. Muslims worldwide began fasting for the holy Islamic month of Ramadan on 22 August.

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Love triangles

The Irrigation Minister, of all people, has decided that he doesn't like the international security call signs used by his bodyguards and especially his code name: "Zulu 21". The cops recently were at the receiving end of the Minister of Irrigation, who fumed: "Why are they using these English-sounding names? Let's use Nepali codes." So it has come to pass that the Special Security Force is switching call signs. The PM is henceforth "Gurans One" and former PM GPK is "Himal Two" and not "Foxtrot Tango" as previously.

The reason Nepali politics isn't moving ahead is because of the love triangle between the kangresis, eh-malaise and the baddies. The sooner we get the three of them married off, the faster we will have political stability in this country. The best would be for the UML and the UCPN-M to merge, which would mean the NC could then get hitched to the united lefties, form a government to have consensual interactions, and everyone could live happily ever after.



But it seems Comrade Awe-inspiring has suddenly got the hots for **Geezer Babu**. PKD figured out he can use Makunay's falling out with Suzy Q to drive a wedge in the ruling coalition and made desperate attempts to court Koirala, who played hard-to-get for a few days. But then the Old Fox realised he could send lot of signals to various power centres and get tongues wagging by secretly meeting Shock and Awe, which he did. The two agreed to set up yet nudder 'High-level Mechanism' to untangle political knots.



Sure enough, the meeting immediately made it to the gossip columns (like this one), and rattled the Indians enough during the MKN visit to make them snort angrily. Having triggered the desired effect, however, **Dodder and Dotter** are suddenly less excited about hitching their wagon to the Mao engine. There is just too much accumulated bad blood between the kangresis and the krantikaris for them to form an alliance just so the pampered daughter gets the toy DPM-ship that her Dad had promised her. Even the kangresis are now exasperated by Suzy, who got her flunkies to chant slogans ("Sujata au kangres bachau") when she arrived to be grilled by her own party.

The whole problem has arisen because Geezer thinks that since he can pull the rug from under Makunay at any time, even though his party lost miserably in the elections, he can dictate to the prime minister (who also lost miserably) about who gets to be DPM and who doesn't. And that's as far as the political horizon of these fellows extends.



PKD, as the Ass has noted in earlier episodes of this series, has been trying to woo both GPK and JNK. Sometimes he has more luck with GPK and sometimes he scores with JNK. He seems to have had some success with Jhallu who is now circling like a vulture that knows a wounded wildebeest is going down any time. There has been a strange silence between JNK and KPO lately, and we all thought that might be because the two had called a truce. But the reason for the silence is that the two have stopped speaking to each other: even in public. Talk is PKD wants to make GPK prez and become PM himself after Dasain.



Whenever the Chinese get antsy you know there is trouble ahead. After a 16-member delegation from the Autonomous Region visited Nepal recently, the Chinese are hosting a jumbo delegation of APF and Nepal Police brass as well as CDOs from eight Nepali districts bordering **TAR-PRC**. A senior politburo delegation is also coming soon and the subject of all of these meetings is, yes you guessed it, Tibet.



The editors of a national broadsheet probably didn't realise that when they banned the headline 'PM brings home the bacon' last week it was the first day of **Ramadan**. It's like the Riyadh press carrying a story about "pork-barrel funds" about Saudi Arabian legislators doling out patronage to constituents, or our own government "beefing up" security when we were still a Hindu Kingdom.

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