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**Times** nepalnews.com  
 Weekly Internet Poll # 421

Q. Do you expect next year's Dasain-Tihar to be better than this year's?

Total votes: 5,319

■ Yes: 52.5%  
 ■ No: 28.6%  
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Weekly Internet Poll # 422. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com  
 Q. Do you think it is a good idea for the NC to join the Maoist-led coalition?

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EDWIN KOO

**RIVER TO DESERT:** Just 1.5 km upstream from the Kosi Barrage in Saptari, a bull wades through stagnant water. This is where the Kosi used to flow before it suddenly breached its embankment and changed course. See also: 'Water world', p 8-9.

# Back to work

The government has a lot of catching up to do

The friendly mood of the festive season seems to have affected the top leaders of the NC and the Maoists, who have been using tea party diplomacy this week to patch up differences.

Although sharp differences remain, both within parties in the coalition and among each other, there seems to be a realisation that progress on governance and constitution-building can't happen in an atmosphere of acrimony and politics-as-usual.

NC leaders have said they have no intention of bringing down the government "for the next six months" but Koirala rejected overtures from the Maoists to join a consensus government.

Even the body language of the troika (UML's Jhlanath Khanal, the NC's Girija Koirala and Maoist Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal) at the UML tea party on Wednesday was of bonhomie and camaraderie.

The more immediate hurdle could be the integration of the Maoist PLA into the national army. The main political players and the army brass seem to have agreed secretly on a very limited induction with a rehabilitation package for the rest of the

combatants. But the real unknown is whether Dahal can sell that plan to his guerrilla commanders in UN-supervised cantonments.

Meanwhile, there are indications of further mellowing of the Maoist line. Finance Minister Baburam Bhattarai, attending the World Bank/IMF annual meeting in Washington this week, surprised people there and in Nepal by saying his party was discussing dropping 'Maoist' from its name.

Bhattarai needed to make a good impression among members of the Washington Consensus because his budget has doubled the foreign aid component to nearly \$950 million. However, Nepal's main donors say they are still skeptical about absorptive capacity, populist cash handouts to VDCs and cooperatives as well as unmonitored disbursement for Maoist cadres.

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# Talk the talk

The government and Madhesi militants are talking not because they want a solution, but to be seen as striving for one

## TERRAIN WARNING

Nepal is one of those places in the world where a traditionally fatalistic society that hasn't had time to adjust to the outside world collides head-on with modern technology, often with disastrous results.

The rate of road accidents in Nepal has soared in recent years. Fatalities calculated on the basis of passenger miles is now one of the highest in the world. Building codes, contingency planning or evacuation drills are nearly non-existent in the capital's new high-rise buildings. There is almost no state-level preparedness for earthquakes and their aftermath.

Our rash attitude towards pesticides, food additives, traffic rules, fuel adulteration, household electrical appliances, pharmaceuticals or even activities that directly affect our health (like tyre burning) show that we either don't care or don't know about the consequences of flouting norms that guide technology.

Nepal's civil aviation sector has been flying on a wing and a prayer. Inadequate training and equipment and a combination of carelessness and recklessness have made Nepal notorious for plane crashes.

Since 1990 there have been 18 fatal airliner accidents in which over 400 people have been killed. Analysing accident data shows that most of the crashes were caused by airworthy aircraft flown by disoriented or careless crew into mountains covered by clouds, called Controlled Flight Into Terrain (CFIT) in technical jargon.

Last week's crash of a Twin Otter in Lukla with the loss of 18 lives was just the latest in a long list of CFIT events that have occurred with tragic regularity in Nepal. In November 2006, a helicopter flew into a mountain in eastern Nepal killing 25 people, including most of Nepal's senior conservation experts.

The Canadian-built Twin Otter is a sturdy workhorse, but pilots need to be extra alert when flying to remote STOL airfields, especially during the monsoon. Ten Twin Otters have crashed since 1990, seven of them were CFIT—this is an unacceptably high attrition rate by any standard.

New cockpit avionics that give pilots a 3-D map of the terrain ahead of them are now available, but they are expensive. Ultimately, failsafe navigation aids are of no help if pilots ignore them. Nothing can replace rigorous crew training and strict guidelines on flying in poor visibility in the mountains.

We are culturally prone to leaving too much to chance. Modern technology doesn't forgive mistakes, and we tend to make too many. Alas, the Lukla crash probably won't be the last.



SURAJ KUNWAR

First the good news: the government and the armed groups in Tarai are reaching out to each other and may talk. The problem: it is unlikely they will either reach an agreement, or that the lawlessness in the Tarai will come to an end anytime soon.



**PLAIN SPEAKING**  
Prashant Jha

Circumstances have forced both sides to veer towards talks. The government wants to be seen as effective in restoring order and sincere in tackling political grievances.

Both the Maoists and MJFF have been associated with the armed activists in the past. This makes it easier to communicate.

Some are quibbling about the composition of the negotiation team, but that does not take away from the fact that the government has pushed this process forward.

The armed groups know they are discredited. The splits in their ranks, criminal activities, absence of political work and public

support, and the ability of the Nepali state to gradually co-opt key community representatives have put the militants on the defensive. They still need to be taken seriously, though, not only because of their potential to kill and destroy but also the idea of Madhesi separatism that

they represent.

There has been a degree of introspection among the more serious militants. They held a meeting in Jayanagar a month ago. The process of unification of some of them has picked pace. They are politically vulnerable, and this is forcing them to engage with the state.

But talk privately to government leaders or Madhesi militants and one comes away with the sense of an elaborate charade. Even if formal talks happen, it would be best not to expect too much. Both sides are talking not because they want a solution, but they want to be seen as striving for one. The government wants to be seen as sensitive, the armed groups want to be seen as political groups.

The government wants to make sure that when it unleashes the security apparatus, it is not blamed for not trying to find a negotiated settlement. The armed groups want to ensure that they get a breather which can be used to expand their network and build a political platform.

The government is in no position to agree to a single autonomous Madhes, and the armed groups can't be seen backing away from this demand just yet. At most, the government may release some arrested cadre and some militants will halt killings for a bit. Temporary respite is the best case scenario.

What adds to the complexity is that the armed groups are not homogeneous and their internal power dynamics are constantly shifting. If Jwala Singh was powerful till six months back, he

is on the margins now. Goit may be an ideologue but he has been thrown out of his own outfit and is relatively isolated. Ranbir Singh's JTMM and Manager's Madhes Tarai Mukti Morcha may merge soon. All this can alter if three top leaders of a group or 30 district activists shift loyalties.

Even if all the key groups come to the table, what do you do with a Tarai Army that blasted Chandranighapur this week killing innocents? Can this government, full of internal contradictions, politically sell and administratively implement a strategy of talking to some groups and cracking down on others simultaneously? Will this only give a pretext to the groups which are in dialogue to walk out? And can there be peace in Madhes when all the larger issues (representation, dignity, employment, economic stagnation) still remain?

The timing is not yet ripe for a way out. The incentives of major actors lie in promoting instability. The young militants have found a quick and easy way to earn, and the district administrators are happy with their share of the loot while journalists and NGOs act as middlemen. Sections of the Indian state and domestic anti-Maoist forces want the armed groups to be around to counter the left. Madhesi leaders are keen to use them during the next round of agitation.

Till the federal debate plays out and CA deliberations end, the armed groups are not going anywhere. We will just have to learn to live with them. ●

# The Gurkhas and Lahore

In the city where it all started, they don't even know who Lahures are

LAHORE—When Nepalis fought the East India Company in the war of 1814-16 the British were impressed by the gallantry of the defenders. So, after the Sugauli Treaty they started recruiting Nepali soldiers in the British Army.



**INTERESTING TIMES**  
Mallika Aryal

In the 20th century, Nepali soldiers went wherever the British Empire was fighting to expand or defend territory. After India's independence, Nepalis continued to be recruited not just in the British Army but also the Indian Army, the Singapore Contingent and the Brunei Reserve.

Nearly 45,000 Nepali soldiers were killed in the two world wars, falling in Flanders Field, Gallipoli, the attack on Monte Cassino and the jungles of Burma. But this didn't stop young Nepali boys from dreaming of serving in the army. Till

today, they apply by the tens of thousands at recruitment centres.

Ever since the British Afghan Campaign of 1848 when the new recruits were sent to the cantonment in Lahore for training, those who left to enlist in the British Army have been called 'Lahures' back home.

They left their families and friends behind, working in a foreign land and fighting and dying for foreign powers. The experience of travelling, living by themselves, fighting numerous battles changed the young men. For those left behind in the villages, Lahures were the symbol of modernity, the glamour of valour and the money they brought home gave them a special status. In many parts of Nepal, Gurkha veterans became the main agents of development.

The Lahure legend has gone down into Nepali folklore and songs. The lyrics are all about love and longing and the short time they spend at home. While Lahure has a mostly positive connotation in Nepali

language, the word has also transported to anything foreign, like imported buffalo breed of 'Lahure Bhaisi'. In fact, the Agriculture Development Bank gives loans only to farmers who want to buy a 'Lahure Bhaisi', and not local ones.

More recently, the word Lahure is losing its exclusive military connotation and includes all Nepalis who leave their homeland to work abroad.

The Maoist minister for general administration, Pampha Bhusal, said at a public function last month that all professionals including doctors and engineers who go in search of opportunities and 'greener pastures' are neo-Lahures. In a similar category are Nepali consultant Lahures, who are often invited to research and present papers at international conferences.

But here in Lahore from which the term Lahure is derived, the city still opens its arms to visitors, foreigners and refugees. Walking in a city burgeoning and bustling with people, and the impressive Mughal

architecture of Shalimar Gardens and Badshahi Mosque, one can't help but wonder what our young Lahures thought of this city on arriving after their long train journey across northern India.

Lahoris do not know who the Lahures are, and don't even remember that Gurkha soldiers used to be brought here in the last century to fight in Afghanistan. (The British Gurkhas are still there in Helmand.)

The old Lahures fought bravely in foreign armies and helped establish a name for Nepal. Our resilient boys who work hard as migrant labourers and send money home are doing the same thing, so are the intellectual Lahures who sell their skills internationally.

In Pakistan people from Lahore, who are mostly Punjabis, are thought to be people with big hearts, affectionate, fiercely protective of their culture, their tradition and loyal to their country and city. One Lahori says that to be a Lahori is to be resilient. Nepali Lahures are exactly that. ●

LETTERS

**MISSING MISS NEPAL**

Mallika Aryal's diatribe against ANWO-R's obstructions to hold Miss Nepal 2008 is short of arguments (Witch hunt hits wrong target, #420). This is not the first time that the organizers of Miss Nepal have faced stiff opposition. But when you have 140 CA members and 40+ organisations rallying against it, there is a need to understand the reason behind it. The opponents have already signalled that their opposition is with a private company holding a Miss Nepal title that can be equally confused between a talent hunt and a beauty pageant. I don't think they would object to organising a Miss Dabur or a Miss Hidden Treasure contest. The organisers could not even capitalise the situation by coming up with a new idea like Miss New Nepal.

**Narayan Manandhar, Lalitpur**

- I am no fan of Miss Nepal, or the beauty product companies that sponsor it. But where are the priorities of those who are opposed to Miss Nepal? Is the pageant the biggest threat to Nepali womanhood today? Is that keeping us backward? ANWO-R would be doing everyone a favour if it started agitating against the trafficking of Nepali young women to India for prostitution. We would take them seriously if they started a female literacy campaign. They would be serving a great cause if they spread awareness about the low status of women that is feeding into crises like maternal mortality, women with AIDS, child marriage and underweight female children. The anti-Miss Nepal bandwagon sounds to me like activism just for the sake of activism.

**R Thapa, email**

**SACRIFICES**

Mallika Aryal talks about violation of animal rights during festivities in her piece (What a riot,

#419) and that the money could instead be used for a better cause. I agree that we have to support noble causes and animal sacrifices may be viewed as a violation of animal rights. But let me point out that we are very rich in our culture and it is not right to violate our cultural rights either. These sacrifices are essential part of our traditions.

**Deepak Thapa, email**

- Animal Nepal is concerned about the reintroduction of state-sponsored animal sacrifice. A survey we carried out in 2007 confirmed that a majority of people feel the government no longer has to cough up millions for the public beheading of innocent animals. In fact, Nepal is the only country in the world that sponsors such rituals. It is also the only country that shows animal sacrifice live on TV, with millions of children watching. How can we build a peaceful society when the government supports extreme violence against fellow living beings? Last week high level Hindu and Buddhist leaders vowed to ban animal sacrifice. This is the right moment to stop wasting money on the killing of innocent beings.

**Animal Nepal, Patan**

- Really glad to see Finance Minister Baburam Bhattarai get his comeuppance with his decision to cut the budget for festivals. The Maoists have never been sensitive to cultural practices, and this has been their major weakness. While trying to take Nepal to Year Zero, they have tried to infringe on religion and culture, forcing Hindus to eat beef in some cases. That is what you'd do if you want to make enemies. And at the moment the Maoist-led government needs all the friends it can get.

**Jujubhai, Asan**



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# Local impact of global gloom

## Nepal's poverty partially cushions us from global recession



**TOURIST TRAP:** Tourists in Sauraha on Monday wait to view wildlife at the edge of the Chitwan National Park. There are fears global recession will Nepal's tourism industry.

KIRAN PANDAY

DEWAN RAI

Despite massive bank bailouts, fears of global recession are keeping stock markets down worldwide. But Nepal's relatively low level of globalisation, and its very underdevelopment have so far protected it.

Even so, economists warn that indirect effects of the worldwide economic stagnation will soon be felt through a possible downturn in tourism, a slump in Nepali exports to UK and America, shrinking foreign aid and the after-effect of slower growth in India.

"The effect on Nepal will be oblique," economist Biswambhar Pyakurel told *Nepali Times*, "the huge bailouts of banks in Europe and America will likely reduce their foreign aid budgets."

Charities and NGOs may also be hit because of the huge losses suffered by non-profit foundations in their stock market

portfolios. Nepal receives Rs 65 billion in foreign grants, and about Rs 30 billion is channelled through NGOs and charities.

The government's target of bringing in two million tourists by the Visit Nepal Year in 2011 is unlikely to be met. Economist Raghav D Pant says, "We can't expect tourists from countries that will suffer recession."

The global liquidity crisis may also affect big budget projects and foreign direct investment in Nepal. The government aims to generate 10,000 MW electricity in 10 years, much of which was supposed to be financed through foreign direct investment.

Nara Bahadur Thapa, director at the Research Department of Nepal Rastra Bank, says the global financial meltdown is already causing psychological anxiety in domestic financial institutions. "They will be cautious and even discouraged

by the global gloom," he says, "although the small size of our economy will reduce impact, we will be affected in indirect ways. Nepal is not an island."

In Washington for the annual meetings of the World Bank and the IMF, Finance Minister Baburam Bhattarai said the pain of world recession may be less for countries like Nepal.

"We are in the periphery, so Nepal is not as integrated with the world economy," he said, adding that there could be a fall in foreign aid to Nepal from international lenders and bilateral donors.

Economists say the only positive impact of the recession may be on remittances. The Gulf region so far appears to come out of the crisis relatively unscathed, and a projected appreciation of the US dollar may increase the Rs1.5 billion that Nepalis send home every year through official channels. Nearly as much comes to Nepal

through the hundi system.

However, Pant cautions that the money is probably going right back out. "There is no reason to be happy about remittances going up because the money will be spent in importing more expensive goods," he says. Increased dollar reserves would have helped Nepal shore up its annual Rs107 billion trade deficit with India.

More worrying is how the impact on India of global recession will affect Nepal. India is concerned about inflation and a sagging economic growth rate, which has been double digit for the past three consecutive years. With Indian elections around in May 2009, political parties will be tempted to check inflation rather than spur growth.

"Besides, they are trying to reform their financial sector to compete in the world financial market," says Thapa.

Nepal's financial sector has benefited from being a relatively isolated economy. Nepal's banks are not yet large or developed enough to be global players. "We are relatively less affected by the ongoing crisis for the simple reason that our exposure in the products and markets which are facing the crisis is very limited, if any," says Anil Shah of Nabil Bank.

Nepali banks are insulated from the global crisis and it is local or national challenges that pose a far greater risk. Nepali banks have also diversified investments by reducing concentration on any one sector or region.

Shah says the real challenge for Nepal is to see how the economy can be made less India-dependent. "I do not mean lessening our trade or economic ties with India, for we must in fact ensure even greater growth in this respect. But we also have to look to other export, import and investment partners so that the shock suffered by one market won't resonate so strongly through our economy," Shah told *Nepali Times*.

The global crisis may have another silver lining for Nepal: by arresting capital flight, especially to India. Some well-known Nepali investors are rumoured to have suffered big losses in the Indian stock market fall last week. ●

# "Capitalism has degenerated into

**Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus says in this interview that greed has destroyed the world's financial system. Hasnain Kazim spoke with him about the profit motive, social consciousness and what should be done to end the financial crisis.**

**Mr Yunus, for years you have been preaching a more socially conscious way of doing business and have denounced the narrow focus on maximizing profit as harmful. Now, the entire financial system is wobbling ...** The current turn of events makes me sad. The collapse has hurt so many people and has suddenly made the entire world unstable. We should now be concentrating on making sure that such a financial crisis does not happen again.

**What should be done?**

There are huge holes in the current financial system that need to be plugged. The market is clearly not able to solve these problems itself, and now people are having to run to the governments to ask for emergency assistance. That is not a good sign because it shows that trust in the markets has evaporated. At the moment, there is unfortunately no other option than for government takeovers and government support.

**Where exactly do you see the problem with such a strategy?**

The point is that we have to return as soon as possible to market mechanisms that can ameliorate the crisis and solve problems. Solutions should come out of the market and not from governments.

**But you just said yourself that the market is not capable of doing so.**

That is exactly what we need to work on. For a long time, the main priorities have been the maximisation of profits and rapid growth—but that focus has led to the current situation. Each day, we have to look to see if there is potentially harmful growth somewhere. If we find there is, then we need to react immediately. If something grows unnaturally quickly, then we have to stop it. Why don't companies all pay into a fund that buys up securities that have become too risky?

**On the one hand, you say that the market has to solve the problem itself, on the other hand, though, you criticize overly quick growth.**

Capitalism, with all its market mechanisms, has to survive—there is no question. But today there is only one incentive for doing business, and that is the maximization of profits. The incentive of doing social good must be included. There need to be many more companies whose primary aim is not that of earning the highest profits possible, but that of providing the greatest benefit possible for human kind.

**And you think that those two incentives are mutually exclusive?**

I am not interested in turning all profit-oriented companies into socially conscious operations. They are two different categories of companies—there will always be businesses whose primary goal is that of earning as much money as possible. That is okay. But earning as much money as possible can only be a means to an end, not an end in itself. One has to invest money in something meaningful that improves the quality of life for all people.

**What, though, does an increase in the number of socially minded companies have to do with the financial crisis?**

Were there more socially minded companies, people would have more opportunities to shape their own lives. The markets would be more balanced than they are today.

**You are talking about saving the world with altruism ...**

There are many philanthropists in this world, people who help people by providing them with homes, education, etc. But that is a one-way street. The money is spent and never comes back. Were one to invest that money in a socially minded company, it would stay in the economy and would be much more effective because it would be used according to the criteria of the market and would

## West Seti attack

Three information centres set up by the West Seti hydroelectric project in Baitadi and Dadeldhura were attacked over Dasain by locals, furniture looted, property and documents set on fire. The much-delayed project is getting ready to build a dam which will export power to India. In a statement, Gopal Prasad Singh, of West Seti Hydro said: "Our newly elected government considers hydroelectricity generation as critical to the economy and also has a share in the 750MW West Seti project. This event cannot be ignored, we appeal to the government to take legal action against the perpetrators soon."

## High-flying Thai

Thai Airways International is adding three more flights between Kathmandu and Bangkok to meet increasing demand from passengers, bringing the total number of weekly flights to 10.



Starting 26 October, the new flights (TG335/336) arrive in Kathmandu at 1530hrs and depart at 1630hrs on Mondays, Saturdays and Wednesdays using Boeing 777-200s.

## New sat phones

Thuraya, a Dubai-based mobile satellite service, is exhibiting its latest products at Gulf Information Technology Exhibition 2008, Dubai. Of the exhibits, Thuraya IP is a broadband service with a speed of 444 Kpbs.



## Easy balance

Himalayan bank has launched a new savings account with a low minimum balance of Rs 100. The account comes with a free VISA debit card, monthly interest and an accidental death coverage of Rs 500,000. The account is available at all of the bank's branches.



## Responsible bikes

In an effort to be socially responsible, AVCO International, sole distributor of Hyundai in Nepal, donated Rs 1.5 million to the Prime Minister's Natural Disaster Relief Fund on 3 October.



# Maoist road show

"Is he really a Maoist?" one American communist muttered.

You'd think by now that New York had seen it all, but nothing like the Nepali Maoist road show in the Big Apple.

During the war, Comrade Prachanda never stinted on stinging anti-American rhetoric. But at the UN and on the lecture circuit in Manhattan, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal was centrist sweetness personified.



**HERE AND THERE**  
Daniel Lak

This week, Finance Minister Baburam Bhattarai also came across as a serious proponent of free market capitalism in Washington DC. Ironically, he and his boss were at the heart of the capitalist beast during its worst financial meltdown in modern times.

Whether PM Dahal spared the time to tour the Asia Society's excellent exhibit of Mao Zedong memorabilia (paintings, icons, posters and lapel pins) isn't known, but wonder what he'd have made of the Mao chic.

Where the Prime Minister really shone was before a mixed crowd at the New School in Greenwich Village. This was his first opportunity to be a man of the people on American soil. America's tiny left was seething with enthusiasm. Some youngsters with red stars in their eyes were handing out leaflets in praise of Comrade Dahal and wanted to give him a noisy welcome when his limo pulled up. UN Diplomatic Security thought not, and asked the local lefties to move to a safe distance.

Inside, there were skeptical young Nepali-Americans and a couple of pot-bellied, pony-tailed white old communist men who

said they'd come to see what success on the left actually looked like.

To wild cheers, the PM spoke first in English, then Nepali, visibly more comfortable in the latter. Mantras about change and ending feudalism were rolled out, and promises to be good to private investors in hydro, tourism and infrastructure. It was a pretty impressive speech. "Is he really a Maoist?" one American communist muttered. Then came the questions, and here Dahal was nimble, humorous and fairly open about his life, ideology and policy intentions for Nepal. Nepal's tended to ask about down-to-earth matters like the YCL. ("They'll be tamed, along with other parties' youth wings and merged into a development force.") Land reform? ("The priority is modern, effective agriculture and feeding the people.")

The future of Maoism? ("Time for Prachanda Path which emphasized multi-party competition, freedom of the press and inclusion.") And Marxism-Leninism-Maoism? ("We are not going to establish a dictatorship of the proletariat.") This provoked hisses of dismay among hitherto hopeful US lefties. Nepalis however perked up and looked pleased.

Chewing a wad of bubble gum and brushing greasy hair from his eyes, one questioner wanted to know as "one Maoist to another" if certain key principles weren't being abandoned here.

Not at all, said Nepal's Comrade-in-Chief, warning that no one gained from "rigid, doctrinaire and sectarian" thinking, and wowing the local left with his assertion that had Lenin lived another decade or so, he too would have allowed



bourgeois reform. More hisses, visible disappointment setting in.

It was the turn of the less-than-left next. A young American man with short hair and a suspicious resemblance to a Mormon missionary wondered if the Nepali Maoists weren't wrong to pay too much attention to history and to the ideas of "dead foreign leaders in the modern world"? Dahal smiled and asked if the US was ready to forget George Washington and Abraham Lincoln and their role in the American nation.

Summing up, the moderator Kul Chandra Gautam offered advice to the new Nepali leader that combined respect for his election victory with the sharp edge of years of experience on the world stage as a UN official. Reminding the PM that he had changed his name more than once in his life, Gautam made his point with a warm smile.

"It suited you being Prachanda, the fierce one, when you were fighting. But now please, as Prime Minister, be like Pushpa Kamal, lotus flower, to the people of Nepal."

A laughing PK seemed to agree, but who could tell what the fierce one was thinking? ●

# a casino"

thus develop a certain amount of market leverage.

**The current financial crisis began as a credit crisis — homeowners in the US could no longer pay down their mortgages. At your Grameen Bank the repayment rate is close to 100 per cent. Do you think your bank could be a model?**

The fundamental difference is that our business is very connected to the real economy. When we provide a loan of \$200, that money will go to buy a cow somewhere. If we lend \$100, someone will maybe buy some chickens. In other words, the money goes to something with concrete value. Finance and the real economy have to be connected. In the US, the financial system has completely split off from the real economy. Castles were built in the sky, and suddenly people realised that these castles don't exist at all. That was the point at which the financial system collapsed.

**Is it now time for governments to intervene in the market economy and strengthen regulation?**

Yunus: There has to be regulation, but governments should not be allowed to steer the market. On the other hand, it has become clear that Adam Smith's 'invisible hand' which supposedly solves all the market's problems doesn't exist.

(Interview conducted by Hasnain Kazim of Der Spiegel)



ASHUTOSH TIWARI

# Ashok died for a better future



ABHA ELI PHOBOO

## Intersecting lives

Fate had determined that the trajectory of the short life of Nepali student Ashok Bhattarai would fatally intersect with that of a high school junior, Raymond Whitcher (pictured) on 28 September at a shop in Houston.



Bhattarai, 21, was earning money on the side to finance his studies and pay back a loan his family had taken back home in Nepal to send him to the US. Seventeen-year-old Whitcher was a student at Elkins High School, and surveillance footage shows him putting on a red bandana, walking into the store with a rifle and shooting Bhattarai point blank. He ran away with \$5,000 in cash and aroused suspicions when he started showing off the money in school and buying a car. He was involved in an accident with his car, but confessed to the murder when he was questioned by Missouri police last week.

## Texas murder of Nepali highlights danger for students

ABHA ELI PHOBOO  
in HOUSTON

Twenty-one year old Ashok Bhattarai's death in Texas on 28 September wasn't the first time that a Nepali has been a victim of crime abroad. But it was among the first to receive an overwhelming response.

Within days, the Nepali community sprung into action via the internet to raise the \$15,000 required to send his body home. Nepalis here are well aware that Ashok may not be the last.

Within a week, a staggering \$104,000 poured in through cash, checks and Paypal donations. The money will not replace Ashok, but hopefully it will help ease the financial burden of his family in

Parasi who had taken a Rs 900,000 loan to send their son to America.

Ashok had been in the US for 15 months and was studying bioengineering. He was working as a part-time store clerk at the First Stop Food Store in Missouri City, Texas, where he was shot. The assailant was later identified in close circuit videos as 17-year-old Raymond Whitcher who has been arrested.

Ashok was well liked by residents of Missouri City who frequented the convenience store because of his friendly nature. A following of loyal customers organised a memorial service outside the store on 4 October. The next day, the Nepali Association of Houston had another memorial at a funeral home.

Detective Russell Terry, lead investigator of the case, remembered Ashok, and said: "Every time I walked into the store, he would call me Mister Detective, and made jokes. He knew his customers well and what they wanted."

Young Nepali students who work in similarly vulnerable situations in gas stations and convenience stores attended the memorial. "This isn't just about Ashok, it could have been any of us," said Manish Satyal, who works in a gas station not far from Ashok's shop.

The crime rate in Houston is the 15<sup>th</sup> highest in American cities with a murder rate of 5.9 per 100,000. Nepali students here are well aware of the statistics but

shrug and say that they have no choice. Their families have sold land, homes and taken loans to send them to America for better education and good careers.

Students enter the United States on an F1 visa, which does not allow them to work off campus but because of expectations and financial obligations back home, they often work in high-risk and vulnerable settings. Karki says he has been robbed at gunpoint several times. In 2002, Divesh Malla was stabbed during a robbery in Houston, but survived.

Students don't tell their families back home about the dangers because they don't want them to worry. Most students like Ashok work nearly 100 hours a week for \$6 an hour. The money goes to pay rent, food and school tuition. If there is anything left

over, they send it home.

"If we don't get scholarships, we end up working in gas stations and stores, it's not legal but its work," Satyal said, "you learn to live with the fear." Nepalis in Houston president, Rajendra Shrestha, shrugs his shoulders and says that there isn't much that can be done except encourage students to work on campus where there is better security.

Many of Ashok's friends across the United States did not celebrate Dasain this year out of respect for him. On 10 October, the day after Tika, Ashok's body reached home in Nepal and was cremated at Pashupati.

Ashok's mother, Lila Bhattarai, was inconsolable. She remembered her son's last phone call on the morning before he was killed. He had told her: "I'll come home soon." ●



## ELD News

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in Kathmandu

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## VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Pragya Management Group (PMG) invites qualified Nepali citizens to apply for a **Human Resource Development Officer (HRDO)** to join in the **Livelihoods and Forestry Programme (LFP)** team. LFP is a bilateral aid programme of Government of Nepal (GoN) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID). Its purpose is to enhance the assets of rural communities through equitable, efficient and sustainable use of forests and other natural resources.

### Functions

The **Human Resource Development Officer (HRDO)** will coordinate the development, updating and implementation of LFP's Human Resource Management strategy, policy and procedures to enable the programme and its partners to deliver more effectively by:

- Ensuring effective HRD strategies, policies and procedures are in place to support the overall organizational strategy and direction and that capacitate the LFP team to implement these;
- Supporting preparation of staff performance development plans in line with the programme needs and required core competencies and overseeing implementation of those plans;
- Assessing staff capacity building needs and ensuring their effective delivery through a coordinated programme;
- Developing and delivering plans and processes for staff and consultant recruitment, including TORs, staff induction and orientation.

### Qualifications/experience

- A master's degree in Human Resource Management, Organizational Development, Social Science, MBA (with HRM specialization) or related fields;
- A minimum of 5 years of progressive experiences in Human Resource Management/ Organizational development;
- Familiar with the HRD practices of development organisations and GoN in Nepal;
- A good understanding of the policy, institutional and structural barriers to pro-poor livelihoods and social inclusion and approaches to deal with these in relation to HR development;
- Experience of working with multiple partners and multi-disciplinary teams;
- Excellent command of spoken and written Nepali and English.

### Competencies

- Team worker with good communication and influencing skills; ability to innovate and be pro-active; empathy with the poor and socially excluded; and commitment to social justice

The post is Kathmandu-based and requires extensive visits to LFP-supported districts. A competitive salary and benefits package is available.

Interested candidates should apply to Pragya Management Group (PMG) for an application pack and submit their completed application in writing or by email to the following address:



**Pragya Management Group**  
Pulchowk (near St. Mary's School), Lalitpur  
Tel: 5551458/5549398  
PO Box 10157, Kathmandu, Nepal.  
Email: pragyamg@wlink.com.np

Deadline for submission of applications is **5 pm, Friday, 31<sup>st</sup> October 2008**. Short-listed applicants will be invited to an assessment workshop in at which the experiences and competencies mentioned above will be tested.

Among the applicants meeting the job requirements, priority will be given to i) women from disadvantaged castes and ethnic groups ii) other women iii) other minority groups and men from disadvantaged groups.

**Only completed applications will be considered. PMG reserves the right to reject any or all applications. No telephone calls will be entertained. Undue influence will result in automatic rejection.**



RSS

## Dependency

Editorial in *Kantipur*, 13 October

कान्तिपुर

Is the government having trouble providing transportation for Constituent Assembly members? Obviously not, because it is using five buses donated by the Indian Embassy for their daily commute. The buses have a big sign that says 'Gift from the government of India' and are emblazoned with the flag of India and Nepal.

It isn't appropriate for Nepali legislators to be using buses gifted by a foreign government. Along with such financial support, the pressures of external influences are increasing on Nepal. In a country that is already economically dependent on other countries, the government is also becoming politically reliant.

The constitutional assembly members, who should be guided by the responsibility to develop a free constitution without any outside influence, are giving out the message of double standard as they ride in donated buses with Indian flags on them.

Nepalis in Japan have risen to the occasion and decided to donate bicycles to our representatives.



आउनुस्, गिरिजाबाबू !  
भुन्डिने ठाउँ राख्दको छु !

"Come on Girijababu, there's space for you to hang on".

समाचारकर्ता Suman Manadhar in  
*Nepal Samacharpatra*, 15 October

# Gang politics

Letter to the Editor in  
*Naya Patrika*, 14 October

नयाँ पत्रिका

The association of youth gangs with politics is nothing new. In fact, such groups have survived only because of their connections to their patrons in the political parties. The parties use the groups for strong-arm tactics, especially during elections. Under the protective shield of the political parties, the groups in turn exert clout. Their activities are reflected in increasing crime rates and deteriorating security situation.

The Maoists have shed their underground identity and have entered mainstream politics, but their guerrillas are still out there in their YCL avatar. Some

believe that the formation of YCL was a well-planned move of the Maoists aimed at the elections. YCL intimidation played a big role in tilting the election results in favor of the Maoists.

Now, the NC and UML have started believing in this 'gang culture' and are forming similar groups. UML's Youth Force has unleashed anarchy, especially in clashes between YCL. The police are helpless in controlling the situation because these groups have links to political bosses in government. Recently in Dhankuta, the situation between YCL and YF got so out of hand that the local administration had to impose a curfew.

Although the NC claims to be a true democratic force, it has also set up a Tarun Force to join the



KIRAN PANDEY

rat race. If the competition had been to further constructive activities, then the society could benefit. But sadly, they are competing to extort, use violence and to call strikes.

The Kosi flood destroyed lives

of thousands but none of these groups were seen aiding those in need. Are strikes, shut downs and violence the only purpose for these groups?

Ramdeb Madhesi  
*Shantinagar, Kathmandu*

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Villages in Nepal and India are cut off from access due to broken bridges and damaged roads. Getting food and medicine is difficult and often requires long travels on many different means of transportation.

# Water world

LINE WOLF NIELSEN in BIHAR  
PHOTOS by SUMIT DAYAL

## Three months after the Kosi changed course, Bihar and Nepal are joined by tragedy

**G**auri Devi's bamboo hut is barely standing. A row of wooden poles hold up the thatch roof, a wall looks ready to slide into the waist deep waters. Gauri Devi is among 2.5 million people in Bihar and 50,000 in Nepal made homeless by the Kosi changing its course. She has now returned to her village in Bihar's Madhepura district with her five children aged four to 10.

The water started rising on the night of 18 August when everyone was asleep, within an hour it was more than a metre high. "The children were scared and all our grain got wet. I was afraid too," she says.

No one died in the village, but it took weeks for them to be rescued by the Indian military. They were taken to high ground in Galmar where a camp was set up in a school building.

"We slept with more than 100 people per room but it was safe and all families got rice and lentils twice a day," recalls Gauri Devi. The men went back once a week to

check on houses and belongings, but after six weeks the camp was closed.

Most of the 500 people living in Gauri Devi's village are now back. The Kosi flows through the surrounding farmland, and the villagers wade knee-deep in brown water to get from one house to another.

Boys laugh and dive off the backs of water buffalos, but the grownups are worried about the future. "How can we stay here if we have no land to farm?" Gauri Devi asks.

A local NGO distributes supplies in a village, a 40-minute walk across flooded roads. Salt and other essentials need a day's roundtrip to nearby villages. The village lacks medicine and food the most. Safe drinking water is a problem because the tube wells are flooded.

How quickly life will get back to normal here will depend on how quickly engineers can channel the Kosi back to its old course upstream in Nepal. ●

*All panoramics are digital composites.*



◀ Plugging the breach in Kosi embankment that unleashed havoc in Bihar is proving to be a massive challenge for Indian and Nepali engineers. They are trying to divert the river upstream to its original channel so they can repair the breach.

▶ Subha Kanta Jha, 55, was living in a relief camp in Supaul district in Bihar. After a night of heavy rain, he went out to check on his banana plantation but drowned on the way.







Three months after the waters rose, this is still the only dry patch connecting the village of Galmar to the rest of flooded Mahdepura district.

Bihar is amongst the poorest states in India, eight out of ten people are dependent on agriculture. The Kosi catastrophe is expected to make Bihar even poorer, and force farmers to migrate for work.



Gauri Devi returned to her village in Madhepura after a relief camp was closed down. She has returned to her flooded home with four children.

The flood waters are knee deep in what used to be Satender Yadav's rice field in Parwah Navtol in Madhepura district of Bihar. The flooding has submerged 1,100 sq km of farms here.



Here in Patarghat, the main road has disappeared. As in Nepal, dangerously overloaded boats help people cross to the other side.

PRAVAT J GURUNG

**T**he Kathmandu Jazz Festival, now known as just 'Jazzmandu', is taking place after a year's gap from 22-27 October. Charging up to put Kathmandu in the International Jazz Circuit, this year's jazz yatra is expected to get Kathmandu swinging to the rhythm of jazz like never before.

International bands playing this year are Catia Werneck Quartet, Greg Lyon Trio, Mark Brown Quartet, Global Unity Trio, The Wannu Angerer Latin-Jazz Trio and Terrence Bowry along with Prustaar. Nepali ensembles Gandarbha, Kutumba, JCS Trio and Cadenza & Friends of Nepal are also up.



# Jazzing up



Catia Werneck Quartet, France

Catia and Carlos come from a musical family. Catia has performed on Broadway in the US before landing in Paris and Carlos is a bass player, guitarist, percussionist, composer and an arranger. Vincent Bidal, on the other hand, started playing keyboard when he was 3 years old and started showing interest in Jazz music. Interested in Latin music especially in Brazilian music besides jazz, drummer Christophe Bras has been one of the most popular drummers of the Brazilian scene in France.

*Nepali Times* caught up with the Catia Werneck Quartet and other international bands via cyberspace and got them to answer a few questions.

**Nepali Times:** What do you think of jazzing it up in Kathmandu?

**Adrian:** I have heard wonderful things about it from friends who have played here before, so I am looking forward to having a blast.

**Catia:** I don't know about Jazzmandu yet but I've prayed to be a part of the event. Nepal is one place I've always wanted to go and I'm sure it will be a wonderful experience.

**Greg:** I think it's a great idea.

**Terrence:** I'll find out soon as this will be my first visit.

**How did the band come together?**

**Adrian:** I was still in college back in the 90's and Karl and I played together then. Then I met Sanjay in 2002 in Bombay when he came down from L.A. We played and the good vibe connected us. So in 2004 when we both resettled in Bombay we formed Global Unity and have been playing together ever since.

**Catia:** Carlos and I come from a musical family. We grew up listening to all kinds of music. When I came back from my tour to the US, we began playing together. Vincent was the last one to join the band, Christophe and I have been working together for the past 10 years.

**Greg:** I was looking for musicians to play my compositions and we came together because of similar interest in music. These are some of the best guys I've played with.

**Terrence:** In Jazzmandu, I will be performing as a solo artist supported by Festival musicians. I haven't actually met them but this is rather exciting for me.

**How did the band get its name?**

**Adrian:** At the time when we talked about getting together I was in New York, Sanjay was in LA and Karl in Bombay. We were individually gigging around the world with our own respective set ups. Hence, our band is called 'Global Unity.'

**Terrence:** We are still in search for a good name. Any suggestions?

**What is the main motive of the band?**

**Adrian:** We love performing and song writing. So this trio gives us a creative sphere to let us be who we are and that's that.

**Catia:** I'm a free artist, and love that my musicians feel like me. I write songs and each musician brings something, which is why freedom of expression is important to us.

**Terrence:** For me, music brings cultures together and bridges the generation gap. This is also what is happening in my band and our music: we are five musicians from different countries, musical backgrounds and experience levels.



Terrence Bowry, Berlin

Born in London, a Canadian citizen, currently living in Germany, Terrence Bowry is pure groove! With well-known songs of jazz, blues, soul songs and his own ambient and funky compositions in his bag, Bowry's musical variety is impressive. He was educated in music on stage while working with bands and world class musicians for many years, which gives him a versatile background of music, dance and acting.

The Wannu Angerer Latin-Jazz Trio, Honduras

With her style of music, a mixture of bossa nova, romantic ballads, jazz and Latin American sounds, Wannu Angerer with her dynamic voice sings of love, life, loss & celebration. The band includes Suchet Malhotra on Drums & percussion and Svetlana Radashkevich on Keyboards. Swing, bossa-nova, samba, bolero - the Wannu Angerer Trio performs jazz with a Latin twist.

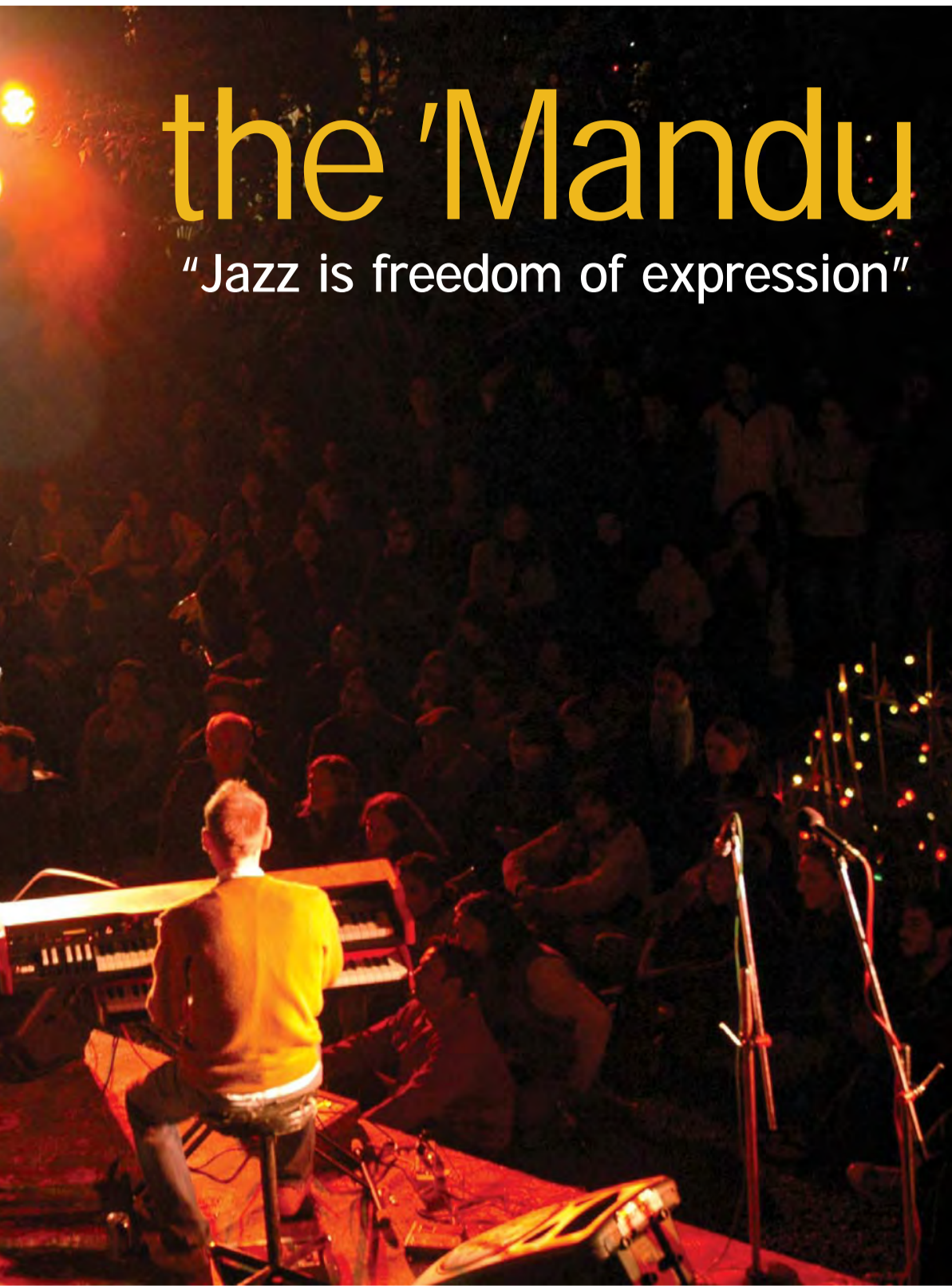


Greg Lyon Trio, London

The trio formed by Greg Lyons on sax, Darren Moore on drums and Marcus Dengate on bass has a special place in the jazz world. If you're lucky enough to witness this awesome little group, which you will in Jazzmandu, you'll hear them encouraging each other to push the limits of melodic inventiveness and rhythmic daring.

# the 'Mandu

"Jazz is freedom of expression"



KIRAN PANDAY

## Do you think jazz is underestimated in the music scene?

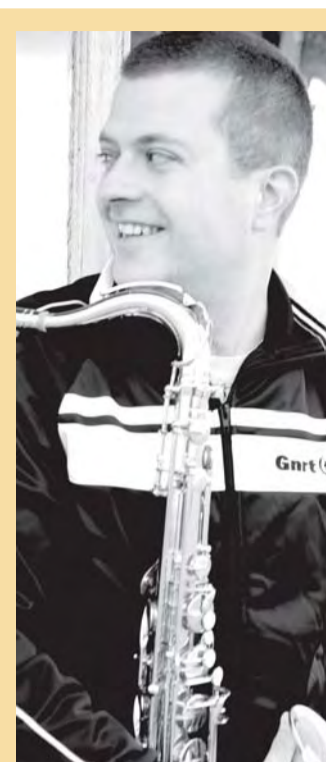
**Adrian:** Jazz is not underestimated anywhere. It has been mystified for some reason but when people experience it at a concert there is always an immediate connection whether they understand it or not. Its lack of sponsorship that stops it from being easily accessed. It can be the popular music of the day as it once was in the 30's and 40's. The music scene here in Mumbai is ok. However, because of lack of exposure and awareness there are just a handful of quality jazz musicians.

**Catia:** No, not at all. It's only those who don't play jazz that think it doesn't have any future. Infact, the biggest festivals in the world are jazz festivals. Listening to jazz is giving wings to your imagination, which is why a jazz concert can be terrific therapy. I've been living in France for 24 years. I'm a part of several jazz festivals, but I still haven't managed to sing in all of them. So you can imagine how many there are, know how the jazz scene is like there and how respected it is.

**Greg:** Yes. It is not big business. The media is, understandably, only interested in promoting that which is already popular out of self-interest. The popular stuff is dictated by the music industry which is only interested in the safest options for making money. The public would only be aware of real musical expression if they went looking for it. And about the scene here, well, it's struggling – like everywhere else – but it's a mission to fill the world with truth.

**Terrence:** The problem I see is that jazz musicians sometimes underestimate other musical genres in order to keep jazz 'pure'. I believe jazz can survive only on inclusiveness. In Berlin, where I currently live, there are many great jazz musicians, you can go see live jazz every night! The competition is fierce and growing with more international artists arriving weekly. Especially jam sessions are especially inspiring, when young music students and seasoned professionals come together and play.

Tickets are available at Upstairs Jazz bar, Lazimpat, Moksh Jawlakhel, all Nepa Music Outlets & respective concert venues or call 9841614230. For online booking log onto: [www.jazzmandu.com](http://www.jazzmandu.com)



## Mark Brown Quartet, London

Having studied classical and jazz music, Mark has established himself as one of the leading jazz and pop session players. He has performed and recorded with Basement Jaxx, Amy Winehouse, Mark Ronson, Groove Armada, Jamie Cullum and many more. Jazz UK Magazine quoted Mark Brown Quartet's drummer Graham Fox as "most listening" young drummer ever heard. Bass player Jerry Haglund most recently became the guitarist for the acid-jazz legends that is the James Taylor quartet while guitarist Daniel Drury's music aims at a tapping foot and a smirk on peoples faces.



## Global Unity Trio, Mumbai

Global Unity hails from Mumbai and was formed back in 2004. Adrian has performed at the VH1 Jazz Masters held at the Gate Way of India. Sanjay has crossed many borders, physical & cultural, in pursuit of his vision – a vision of world community, expressed through music. He graduated from Guitar Institute of Technology, LA in 1989 and quickly became an active member of the Los Angeles music scene as a guitar player and composer. Karl Peters grew up in a railway employees' colony in Madras where most people played music to relieve the tedium of dreary day jobs. His father sang and played the guitar at gymkhanas and night clubs while his uncle was a drummer. His musical upbringing revolved around the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and Cliff Richards and he eventually got into music himself.

Nick Aggs of Afro Dizzi Act was one of the first international bands who played for the 1<sup>st</sup> Kathmandu Jazz Festival and he shares his thoughts.

Jazzmandu is a wonderful festival in an amazing part of the world. I have performed at Jazzmandu in 2002 and 2003 with my band Afro Dizzi Act and in 2006 as a solo performer with the backing of the finest rhythm section in East Asia, Cadenza. I think my favorite gig over the years was at Basantapur, Durbar Square; the day I landed in Kathmandu in 2006. Straight from the airport and onto the stage in front of thousands of enthusiastic Nepali music fans, the atmosphere was electric. What I love about the festival is that it attracts such a diverse range of musicians and experiences. One moment you'll be playing be-bop and funk at Gokarna, the next a traditional Nepali folk song surrounded by the majesty of Patan.

Music as the key to peace and unity is truly realized at Jazzmandu. There are so many talented musicians sharing ideas and playing together in a country full of grandeur, humility and spirituality.



## SCHEDULE

### JAZZMANDU PEACE FLAG PAINTING

Wednesday, 22 October, 12.30PM-2.30PM  
Venue: Hyatt Regency

### FREE JAZZ

Wednesday, 22 October, 4PM-5PM  
Venue: Bhaktapur, Dattatraya Square  
Free entry

### UPSTAIRS JAM

Wednesday, 22 October, 7PM-10PM  
Venue: Upstairs Jazz Bar  
Price: Rs. 350/-

### JAZZ FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS

Thursday, 23 October, 1.30 PM-3.30 PM  
Free entry, by invitation only

### VALLEY JAMS

Thursday, 23 October 7.30 PM-9.30 PM  
Price: Rs. 350/-  
Featuring  
Global Unity at: Hy Jazz, Hyatt Regency, Boudha  
Greg Lyons Trio at: 1905, Kantipath  
Mark Brown Band at: La'soon, Jawlakhel

### GOKARNA JAZZ BAZAAR

Friday, 24 October, 5PM - 10:30 PM (Gates open at 4PM and close at 7PM)  
Venue: Gokarna Forest Golf Resort and Spa  
Price: Rs. 599/-

### PEACE PARADE

Saturday, 25 October, 12PM - 1PM  
Venue: Lazimpat Street  
Free entry

### RED HOT LATIN JAZZ

Saturday, 25 October, 7.30 PM - 10.30 PM.  
(To be seated by 7.20 PM)  
Venue: Regency Ballroom, Hyatt Regency  
Price: Rs. 499/-

### JAZZMANDU MASTER CLASS

(Workshop)  
Sunday, October 26<sup>th</sup>, 11:00am - 12:00noon  
Venue: Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory  
Free entry (first come first seat)

### JAZZ AT PATAN

Sunday, 26 October, 6PM - 8.30 PM. (To be seated by 5.45PM)  
Venue: Patan Museum Square  
Price: Rs. 999/-

### ALL-STAR FEVER & JAZZMANDU ART EXHIBITION

Monday, 27 October, 6.30 PM - 10PM  
Venue: Hotel Shangri-La, Shambala Garden  
Price: Rs. 699/-

# Thailand's elite revolutionaries

ANNE CERA in BANGKOK

Since August, Thailand's government is not in the Government House. The administration has been forced to conduct its business out of Bangkok's old airport. Government House itself is a sea of yellow: the colour that symbolises Thailand's revered King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

Thailand's would-be revolution is being led by the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), but this is not what most Nepalis understand by revolution, or democracy.

This 'people power' is made up of Bangkok's middle class and their leaders are from the old aristocratic elite. They want to bring down a government that was elected by a landslide less than a year ago, and want an elected parliament dissolved. To make it all happen, they say the army should stage its 19th coup in Thai history.

Over 400 people were injured in street battles around parliament on 7 October. Three protesters were killed. But PAD has rarely attracted crowds

## People power in Thailand is different from people power in Nepal



LAP DOG: Protesters at the seize of government homes in Bangkok last week.

ANNA CERA

exceeding a few thousand and opinion polls show that most Bangkok residents oppose their protests. Even the government's fiercest critics say that if an election was held again the

government would win it. So why is the government so powerless to contain the crisis?

The answer lies in the premiership of Thaksin Shinawatra, the controversial

telecoms billionaire who led Thailand 2001-2006. It also lies in the great undiscussed issue of Thai politics, the monarchy.

At the beginning of the decade Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai party developed a devoted following among the rural poor with policies that delivered cheap health care and economic development. They rewarded him with an unprecedented second term and a giant parliamentary majority.

Not everyone was so happy. Liberals criticised Thaksin for authoritarianism, the Bangkok middle class were appalled by what they saw as Thaksin's use of government power to promote his business interests, and the old, aristocratic political establishment were also alarmed.

"The bureaucrats, the military and the monarchy, the troika that has called the shots in Thailand for decades opposed Thaksin," explains Thitinan Pongsudhirak, a political scientist at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University.

In 2006 Thaksin was overthrown by a military coup. Many of his supporters believe the plot was masterminded by General Prem Tinsulanonda, chairman of the privy council and King Bhumibol's chief adviser. Prem has always denied the allegation.

Thaksin was disqualified from politics. But when elections were held at the end of 2007, to the coup-makers' dismay, the rural poor voted Thaksin's supporters back into office. A few weeks later the PAD were back on the streets. This is a contest between populist democrats who the poor keep electing, and conservatives in the bureaucracy, military and the palace who are

anxious to preserve the traditional status-quo, analysts say.

King Bhumibol is revered by Thais as a semi-divine figure who, during 62 years on the throne, has overseen the development of his country from a rural backwater to prosperous land of skyscrapers, skytrains and shopping malls. The countryside has developed less rapidly.

The king's portrait appears all over the country, often covering the side of buildings many stories high. He is officially above politics but, in his own words, has been "in the middle, and working in every field". In 1973 and in 1992 he intervened when military regimes opened fire on unarmed protesters to stop the slaughter and restore democracy. In 2006, he quickly endorsed the coup that toppled Thaksin.

But Thais never discuss the king's role in politics because anything seen as an 'insult' to the king is punishable with 20 years in jail. Prosecutions are common. One subject in particular is off limits: the royal succession. King Bhumibol is 80 years old and has suffered poor health.

Writing in the latest edition of the American scholarly quarterly *Journal of Democracy* Thitinan says: 'Both sides are well aware, as all Thais fear but dare not say in public, that Thailand's future is up for grabs...the setting sun on the king's long reign is the background against which the battle of attrition for Thailand's soul is taking place. King Bhumibol's unsurpassed moral authority has been Thailand's sheet anchor, the mainstay of national stability and continuity. Once he is gone, the country will be in uncharted waters.'

It is unclear who will Thailand's next monarch. Thitinan says none of King Bhumibol's eligible heirs can reasonably be expected to command as much popularity, reverence and moral authority as he does.

King Bhumibol has made no public comment on the latest round of PAD protests since they began. But his wife, Queen Sirikit, announced a personal donation for the treatment of injured protesters and, a few days later, for injured policemen.

"We, ladies and gentlemen, are the musketeers of the king and queen," PAD leader Sonthi Limthongkul told supporters as he celebrated the donations. This week, Queen Sirikit and the army chief, Gen Anupong, attended the funeral of one of the protesters who had died. According to *The Nation*, the queen described the dead woman as "a good girl" who "helped to protect the country and the monarchy".

No one in Thailand is willing to publicly discuss who could be the powerful backers giving the PAD the high level support they need to carry on their campaign. ●

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# The theatre of war

*Chicago 10* and *Battle in Seattle* revisit protests

The recent collapses of some American banking institutions and their reverberations across the world have led to renewed questions over economic liberalisation championed by free traders.



**CRITICAL CINEMA**  
A Angelo D'Silva

No other event in recent history has led to more questions about the present trajectory of unregulated free-market globalisation. But in 1999, thousands of protesters descended on to Seattle to challenge the WTO, its policies and its effect on third-world economies and the environment. Stuart Townsend dramatises that event in his debut *Battle in Seattle*. That form of people power, arguably has its roots in another event: the riot during the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago, which gets the documentary treatment by Brett Morgen in *Chicago 10*.

Morgen unconventionally retells the protests surrounding the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago, the violent confrontation with the police and subsequent court case against some of the popular faces of the movement, the titular *Chicago 10* (the eight defendants and their two attorneys).

Among the defendants of anti-war members of Gandhian-influenced MOBE and the Students for a Democratic Society and Bobby Seale of the Black Panthers, are the countercultural Yippies, personified by Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin. The yippies, at turns abrasive and absurd, employed theatrics to ridicule the status quo.

Morgen's documentary abstains entirely from talking heads or narration. Instead, using an ensemble cast of Hollywood actors Morgen dramatises the court proceedings of the conspiracy trial using actual court transcripts. Using an animation technique associated with Richard Linklater (*A Scanner Darkly*), he renders the footage into a cartoon, which frankly looks like a poor man's *Waking Life* but lends itself to the spirit of absurdism

that Hoffman embodied and that the proceeding seem to have taken from the get-go.

As the trial continues that material, entertaining and engaging in itself, is deftly spliced with actual footage from the of the Yippie-organised Festival of Life, their 'counter-convention,' a free-wheeling camp-out in a park that drew thousands of participants and the eventual confrontation with the cops at the Democratic Convention.

The opening credits are still running and it is already clear on which end of the political spectrum *Battle in Seattle's*

cunning of the protesters of the first 'internet protest in history' is depicted by a map on a wall with Xs and arrows and orders over a walkie-talkie. However, the best parts of the film are in the streets: the clever maneuvering over the police barricades to keep the delegates from attending their meetings, the spirit of camaraderie, the heady adrenaline-fueled chases and taunts between protesters and cops, and ultimately the visceral gut-wrenching violence at the culmination of the escalation. Surprisingly, it is these ambitious scenes that the rookie director shines, capturing something that



allegiance lie, with zippy tutorial—blunt as police baton—that summarises the history of WTO and its problem. Yet director Townsend strives for a more nuanced treatment, an attempt by the director to mine the events of the protest at the WTO meeting of 1999 for a kind of dramatic connectedness and empathy *a la Crash* or *Babel*, which hadn't worked well with those films anyway.

The dramatisation leads to trouble with its content, each powerful moment sabotaged by the shroud of ambiguity. Had the protests really inspired delegates from smaller nations to challenge the status quo? Were the Starbucks-busting anarchists simply a fringe in an otherwise peaceful protest movement? The ultimate ambivalence that the film's treatment of events—characterised by turns meaningful, then futile—perhaps reflects society's own failure to come to terms with the protests.

The infamous planning and

seems genuine—in the varied and difficult to articulate emotions from scenes of victory and defeat, and in those hot-blooded scenes of confrontation.

Politics asides, I wonder how much more entertaining *Battle in Seattle* would have been purely as a heist film, a kind of *Ocean's 11* meets *Chicago 10* with savvy protestors rocking out their unwashed hippie threads while sticking it to the system and outsmarting the grunting cops in their riot gear. Now that's the kind of unabashedly leftie Hollywood movie I want to see. ●

*Chicago 10*  
Director: Brett Morgen  
Cast: Hank Azaria, Dylan Baker, Nick Nolte, Mark Ruffalo  
2008. R. 1 hr 43min

*Battle in Seattle*  
Director: Stuart Townsend  
Cast: Martin Henderson, Michelle Rodriguez, Woody Harrelson, Charlize Theron  
2008. R. 1 hr 38 min



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

## Doctor dogs

Mango and Tara are at the Bal Mandir for their monthly play time and seem to enjoy it as much as the children do. Mango (pictured) is a cuddly and lovable Tibetan terrier and Tara is a friendly and furry mixed-breed. Both belong to Kathmandu Animal Treatment Centre (KAT) and are part of pet therapy sessions with Bal Mandir's orphaned, physically and mentally handicapped children.

The children are guided by a group of adults to touch and play with the two dogs. At first some are hesitant, but soon they get comfortable with the dogs and hug and play with them. Research shows a direct link between pet interaction and improved mental well-being in institutionalised individuals.

"The stimulation and excitement really enlivened the kids, there was a new light in their eyes as they started to understand and pet the dogs," says Rebecca Ordish of the Mitrata Foundation, who brought KAT and Bal Mandir together for the pet therapy sessions.

While the new-comers are intimidated because it's their first time being so close to an animal, by the end of an hour, they enthusiastically pat and cuddle the dogs. The most marked effect has been on the disabled children: they are usually the ones most comfortable with the dogs and enjoy the sessions most, taking the initiative to play with them first, and even encouraging the others to do the same.

One small boy tirelessly followed the dogs throughout the session, calling them by their names, pointing out the different parts of their body, all the while with a wide smile across his face. Bal Krishna Dangol, deputy director of Bal Mandir, explains: "Pet therapy helps children relate to animals, bond with them and that stimulates their overall development."

The dogs seem to enjoy the sessions too. Mango was initially rescued from the streets and found severely disfigured. He is now a KAT mascot, while Tara is a paraplegic who lived most of her life in a tiny cage after an accident. Both dogs interact with the children with the utmost patience, letting them pull and touch them.

Looking on, KAT's Jan Salter says: "We can trust the dogs around children, they love each other." ●

Roma Aryal

Mitrata Foundation: [www.mitrataa.org](http://www.mitrataa.org)  
KAT: [www.katcentre.org.np](http://www.katcentre.org.np)  
Bal Mandir: [www.nconepal.org](http://www.nconepal.org)

## Bohemian Nepalis



As the Nepali diaspora expands, it is getting difficult not to see a Nepali restaurant in the world's big cities.

But Nepalis can now be found running restaurants even in the remoter parts of countries like Canada, Australia or the Czech Republic.

At the Mount Everest Kitchen in Calgary, it is easy to strike up a conversation with the chef and staff. The place is cosy and warm, evoking the sights, sounds and smells of the faraway Himalaya. A Nepali regular mentions that his cousin runs a restaurant in Ěeské

Budjovice in the Czech Republic.

So the next time I was in the the southern Bohemian town made famous as the city where the Budweiser beer gets its name from, I looked into the Indicka Restaurace. It is a fairly well known fact that most Indian restaurants across the world today are either owned by Nepalis or have Nepali chefs, and this one is no different.

Arjun Sapkota (pictured), originally from Gulmi, was rather surprised when he heard me speaking in broken Nepali on the phone. Later, over a generous and tasty helping of dal bhat, Arjun told me how he came to Europe to study, and with a bachelor degree in economics decided to get away from the crowded restaurant scene in Prague and cash in on the aura of

Indian cuisine.

I argued that Nepal is fairly well known in the Czech Republic now, and even Shrepas have grown to recognise the Czech flag on backpacks while trekking. So he could easily change the name of the restaurant to 'Nepalska Restaurace'. After all, Helsinki has eight Nepali restaurants, and five of them are a chain run by two brothers also from Gulmi, and the other three Nepali eateries are run by an Iranian and a Bangladeshi.

Arjun and his friend Chhatra Adhikary plan to open three more Nepali restaurants in Bohemia soon. Says Arjun: "That's probably when we can give our restaurants a Nepali name." ●

[www.indickarestaurace.com](http://www.indickarestaurace.com)

## ABOUT TOWN

## EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Solidarity**, a photo exhibition from the Women's Trek for Peace and Development at Nepal Tourism Board, till 19 October, 9AM-5PM. 4414430
- ❖ **Installation Exhibition – Mountain** from 18-20 October, 11AM-6PM at Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal.
- ❖ **Collaborative Exhibition** till 24 October at the Embassy of Japan, 11AM-6PM
- ❖ **A way of Life-** a photo show by Rajendra Manadhar, till 26 October, 5PM onwards at The Bakery café, Pulchowk.
- ❖ **Kumudinee-** The Lotus, an exhibition of drawings and black pottery sculptures by Kalapremi Shrestha till 28 October at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited. Sunday-Friday 11AM-6PM and Saturday 12PM-4PM. 4218048.

## EVENTS

- ❖ **Vote in 2008 Presidential Election** and pick up a Federal Write in Ballot 17 October, 11AM-2PM, Summit Hotel.
- ❖ **30th Yala Maya Classic**, a classical music series, 18 October, 5PM, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka
- ❖ **Inside Man**, a film by Spike Lee, 20 October, 6.30 PM, Lazimpat Gallery Café. 4428549

## MUSIC

- ❖ **Himalayan Blues Festival 2008** from 15-19 October. 2313997
- ❖ **Jazzmandu 2008** from 22-27 October. 9841614230.
- ❖ **Poesie and Fags** a jazz vocal trio from Holland, Saturday at Patan .5522708, Sunday at Thamel.4700736. New Orleans Café, 7PM
- ❖ **74 Twister** playing live every Tuesday at Moksh, Pulchowk. 5526212
- ❖ **Tuesday Melody** at the Jazzabell Café, everyday happy hour 6-8PM
- ❖ **Happy cocktail hour**, 5-7PM, Ladies night on Wednesday with live unplugged music at Jatra Café & Bar.
- ❖ **HyJazz Club** every Friday from 8.30 PM, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4489800
- ❖ **Dance and Cocktails** at Cube Bar, Kamaladi.4438017
- ❖ **Fusion and Looza** Band every Friday night, Bhumi Resto Lounge, Lazimpat. 4412193
- ❖ **Rudra night** fusion and classical Nepali music by Shyam Nepali and friends, every Friday, 7PM at Le Meridien, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **Sufi music** by Hemanta Rana, every Friday at 7.30 PM at Dhaba Restaurant and Bar, Thapathali.
- ❖ **Fusion and Classical Music** by Anil Shahi every Wednesday, rock with Rashmi Singh every Friday, Sufi & Raga with Hemant Rana every Saturday, 8 PM onwards, Absolute Bar. 5521408

## DINING

- ❖ **Wok & Curry** every Wednesday at Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Sunday Jazz Brunch** at Hyatt Regency with performances by Mariano and his band from 12- 3.30PM. 4491234
- ❖ **Organic Salad Bar and Steak** at Jalan Jalan restaurant every Friday from 6PM, Rs 650
- ❖ **Fusion** of Marcela Regan's new menu and Mannie's new bar at Dhokaima Cafe. 5522113
- ❖ **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri-la, Kathmandu, Rs 600. 4412999
- ❖ **Pizza & Pasta** every Monday and Tuesday at Rox Restaurant. Hyatt Regency. 448936
- ❖ **Pasta pesto passion** at La Dolce Vita, Thamel. 4700612
- ❖ **Steak special** with free Irish coffee at K-too! Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel. 4700043
- ❖ **Continental and cafe item** with Live band every Friday at Vintage Cafe and Pub, Woodland Complex, Durbarmarg.
- ❖ **Unlimited wine offer** for Rs 990 at La Maison wine and cigar lounge. 9841333628
- ❖ **Home made pasta** at Alfresco, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **Reality Bites**, The Kaiser Café, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, 9AM-10PM. 4425341
- ❖ **Steak escape** with Kathmandu's premier steaks at the Olive Bar and Bistro, Hotel Radisson. 4411818
- ❖ **Cocktails, mocktails and liqueurs** at the Asahi Lounge, opening hours 1-10PM, above Himalayan Java, Thamel.
- ❖ **Retro Brunch Barbeque** with live acoustic music by Sound Chemistry, every Saturday, 12-3PM at LeMeridien-Kathmandu, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **Starry night barbecue** at Hotel Shangri-la with Live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs. 666, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7PM onwards. 4412999
- ❖ **Kebabs and curries** at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619
- ❖ **Ily Expression Coffee** at Hotel Shangrila, Lazimpat and Mandap Hotel, Thamel
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## WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

A significant change in the past two week's weather is the change of season from wet to dry and drop of the mean temperature by 4 degrees. October is the second driest month when the monthly quota of rain for Kathmandu Valley is only 56 mm. And this rain usually falls in the first half of the month. This October, we've had only 10mm so far. Satellite pictures of Thursday morning show the monsoon rolling back from eastern and central India while the westerly fronts seem waiting to advance eastward. Also, there is a temporary low pressure trough over the eastern hills of Nepal that may accumulate passing clouds and produce brief isolated showers such as those experienced in Nagarkot (16mm) and Jiri (16 mm) on Wednesday. In general, autumny weather with sunny days and clear nights are in store for the weekend.



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KIRAN PANDAY

**ONE FOR ALL AND ALL FOR ONE:** The UML's Jhalnath Khanal, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal and the NC's Girija Koirala at the UML tea party on Wednesday.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**SOLIDARITY TREK:** A photo exhibition of pictures from the Women's Trek for Peace and Development, in which Nepali and Canadian women took part, opened on Wednesday at the Nepal Tourism Board.



KIRAN PANDAY

**NOT THE SAHARA:** But Sauraha. A tourist lodge in Chitwan tries out camel rides on the banks of the Rapti River at the edge of the national park on Monday.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**FLAMENCO MATADOR:** The Honorary Consul General of Spain to Nepal, Ambica Shrestha, hosted an evening of modern flamenco improvisations on Wednesday on the occasion of the national day of Spain.



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# Judge a party by its tea party

The Baddies-led government is leaving no stone unturned to restore a semblance of normalcy to this nation by **clearing** squatters from the Bagmati, **evicting** hawkers from the sidewalks, **closing** down the Duty Free shops at the airport and **clamping** down those trying to sneak in an extra bottle of booze through customs.

The Dept of Customs has proudly announced that it seized 15 bottles of Black Label, 52 bottles of Red Label and another 16 assorted brands, including Old Smuggler, over the Dasain holidays. We don't know what happened to the confiscated scotch, but having seen some senior comrades on a strict liquid diet over the festival period, it is sure getting difficult to distinguish between Farmer Jones and Comrade Napoleon.

Nepali workers coming home from the Gulf for Dasain were all surprised to see that the Customs was on Red Alert in the Red Channel to seize Red Labels. One distraught passenger drank down half a bottle of whiskey, preferring to consume it right there and then rather than give it to the customs guy to take home. Another was so angry he

shattered his bottle on the floor. BRB has an uphill battle raising revenue to balance his budget.



So, when whiskey confiscation didn't work, the Finance Ministry ordered the closure of the Airport Duty Free. And it has just printed new Customs Declaration Forms for arriving passengers (in appropriately **pink** paper this time) which lists the consumable and non-consumable items that can be brought into the country without having to pay duty:

- Liquor up to 1.15 litres or 12 cans of beer
  - Video Camera or Steel (sic) Camera 1 piece
  - Perambulator 1 piece
  - Tricycle 1 piece
  - Used Fountain Pen, Ball Pen 1 piece each
  - Fishing Rod 1 piece
- Now we know Comrade Baburam is really serious about raising revenue for his budget so he can afford the handouts for Baddie cadres. The way he's going to do it is to come down hard on hapless tourists who try to smuggle in more than one tricycle or a couple of perambulators to sell in Kathmandu's black market. And

it's a revelation to the Ass that fishing rods were such a hot item.

**Warning to tourists:** If you are trying to smuggle in more than one fountain pen or ball point pen, beware, Nepal's vigilant customs officials are ready to pounce on you.



As if we didn't have enough post-Dasain mad tea parties in this country, it looks like the Maobuddies are also threatening their own bourgeois tea party in the near future. Of all the gatherings this week, the kangresi tea party took the cake for sheer bad management and chaotic conditions.

It's really true, you can judge a party by its tea party. No wonder the NC can't govern this country, it can't even organise a tea party without its Party President being nearly trampled in a stampede.

Girjau was waving his index finger saying he'd defend democracy and press freedom even if he had to go down doing it, when he was very nearly knocked down because of sheer crush of people trying to catch a glimpse of him shake hands with the Fierce One. That was

when he was heard telling his aides: "Get those journalists out of here!"

Overheard at the eh-maley chiapan: "We had the chia, where is the pan?"



At the rate the Girija-Prachanda love fest is going, the two will be smooching in public one of these days. What is the world coming to?

America is going socialist, nationalising banks, while our Maoist Finance Minister is attending the IMF meeting to declare his party's capitalist free market orientation and intention to privatise public sector enterprises. Bhattarai

even let it slip that his party would be jettisoning the 'M' in CPN-M after its general convention next month. Question then arises: why did we need a war?



The Ass has stopped buying sukuti in KTM after receiving intelligence from relatives in Nepalganj that dried meat suppliers there are slaughtering donkeys and elderly tanga ponies to meet the capital's insatiable demand for meat. We're turning into a nation of **cannibals**.

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