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Kathmandu: Thursday, 14th September 2006 at 4:30 P.M., Hotel De L'Annapurna, Durbar Marg
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Pokhara: Saturday, 16th September 2006

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Times Weekly Internet Poll # 314

Q. Should the king appear before the Rayamajhi Commission?

Total votes: 5,575

Weekly Internet Poll # 315. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. Do you think the peace process will hold after Tihar?

RAMESHWOR BOHARA



MAROONED: A family in Holiya VDC in Banke sits out floods that swept the region on 25 August. Tens of thousands are still waiting for relief.

Power sharing

India and Nepal try to break the ice on joint hydropower

KUNDA DIXIT

- There is a 20 percent shortfall in power supply on the north Indian grid this summer
- Parts of New Delhi are suffering six-hour power cuts daily
- Nepal sits on anywhere between 45,000-80,000 MW

There is demand, and there is supply, yet Nepal and India can't agree on sharing power and water for mutual benefit.

Joint river projects are a political hot potato in Nepal because of the perception that India took advantage of past schemes. After 1990, there were efforts to start multipurpose projects like Mahakali and Tanakpur, but those are also stalled.

Now, the private sectors in India and Nepal are trying to see if they can succeed where their

governments failed. The Independent Power Producers' Association of Nepal (IPPAN) and the Power Trading Corporation (PTC) of India are holding a 'Power Summit' in Kathmandu this week to fast-track joint hydropower projects.

"We need to treat hydropower as a commodity, not just for export but also for our own growing domestic use," says IPPAN's Sandip Shah, "This conference is a good start. We have to delink power from geopolitics and governments must leave the business of business to business."

In order to stay away from politics, investors on both sides are showing pragmatism by talking just electricity and keeping multipurpose projects out of the equation for now.

"We want to discuss energy and leave it to market forces," says

the PTC's chairman Tantra Thakur, "there are complementarities we could use for mutual benefit."

Over 30 top Indian investors, bankers and technocrats are attending the two-day conference. Nepal's proximity to load centres in northern India is seen as ideal. Nepal also generates surplus hydropower during the monsoon when demand in India is highest, and India's thermal plants generate a surplus when Nepal has a winter shortage.

An immediate priority is to connect the two grids so more power can be traded. Nepal has asked India for 100MW to meet this year's winter shortfall in exchange for which Nepal will provide spill energy to India next monsoon. But this won't be possible until cross-border transmission lines are in place.

"We will consider positively

Nepal's request for supply of electricity on commercial terms during the coming winter," Indian ambassador Shiv Shanker Mukherjee told the conference, "although India has its own power

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Guns not allowed

Interview p4-5
Clean energy bank
Hydro solutions

shortage."

In the medium-term, the conference will look into political risk for investors in Nepal, which has been a stumbling block for the only other export project currently planned, the 750MW West Seti. Although one Indian investor felt "political risk in Nepal is not as serious as it is made out to be", it is a concern for offshore investors. ●

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Gross national grief

The Bhutani refugees should not be made to wait forever

GUNS NOT ALLOWED

It is in the interest of the Nepali people and the Maoists themselves that the CPN (Maoist) convert itself into a political party. Despite all the sabre-rattling, we believe that is the direction the party is taking. Its Kamidanda central committee meeting decided to continue the fight above ground and peacefully. Obviously, there is no mood, nor perhaps energy, among the comrades to go back to the jungle.

The current Maoist strategy seems to be to ratchet up the decibel level of radical sloganeering before the country closes down for Dasain. There is a lot of loose talk that goes against the November 12-point understanding: it was agreed that key issues of state restructuring, including the place of the monarchy, be left to the constituent assembly.

The comrades desperately want it, yet they will not consider (at least publicly) the matter of laying down arms before assembly elections. They need to explain to us how an election will happen when they, as only one of Nepali's many parties, continue to hold arms. The Nepali people have proved amply through their show of strength in April's people's movement that we value freedom and pluralism. Elections held under the threat of arms just can't happen.

Whichever way you look at it, the matter boils down to arms management: the original Nepali phraseology meant to make it feasible for a group that does not believe it has lost to consider demobilisation. Our understanding of arms management is simple: total civilian control of the Nepal Army and eventual demobilisation of the Maoists. Since the 'double lock' formula was thought to be premature for the Maoists to sell to their warriors, the agreement for now is to have the NA in the barracks and the PLA in cantonments. But unless the Maoist militia is also corralled, the formula makes little sense.

The importance of managing Maoist arms is self evident as we watch the Maoist cadre seek to create a parallel government across the land, carrying out ad hoc justice, forcing voluntary contributions, and riding roughshod over a dispirited bureaucracy and police force. All this is happening because of fear of the arms that the Maoists still hold.

The Maoists could evolve into one of the three main political parties if they renounced violence. But since they're used to forcing their way with the bullet, the comrades don't seem convinced they can win at the ballot.

If the opportunity provided to the Maoists by the April Uprising to come above ground is wasted in needless and short-term radical rhetoric, we are bound to see a slippage in Maoist control over their cadre, and marginalisation of the party.

Chairman Dahal hopefully is not carried away by the romantic welcome his party has received in Kathmandu, and realises that the people of the districts know better than the civil socialites who have lionised him these past weeks.

The US government goes through periodic spasms of interest in the Bhutan refugee issue, and comments by a US congressional delegation after a visit to Thimpu last month emanated from the latest.

US pressure in 2000 may have been one of the factors that prompted Bhutan to enter the joint verification process that began and ended in Khudunabari camp. Only a few hundred of the 12,000 residents were found to be



GUEST COLUMN
Michael Hutt

bona fide Bhutanis who have been evicted forcibly from their country. The most controversial aspect of the verification was that it categorised 70 percent of the camp as "voluntary emigrants". The process should have led to the repatriation of at least a handful of the bona fides from Khudunabari. It did not, because the Bhutanis hastily withdrew to Thimphu when those categorised as "voluntary emigrants" reacted with anger and stoned to an offer of temporary, conditional repatriation—an offer the Bhutan government knew very well they would never accept. By this time the Americans' attention span had long since been exhausted, and the Bhutan government knew that India, its closest friend, would not force its hand.

The US congressional team seems to suggest that Bhutan should take

back a number of its erstwhile citizens as a show of goodwill and that the US and other countries would accept many of the others. Most refugee leaders said long before the American intervention that they were implacably opposed to third country resettlement. They still say their demand for wholesale repatriation to Bhutan is non-negotiable. At least some of the 100,000 in the camps agree, going by recent demonstrations at Pathri and elsewhere.

The refugees have endured up to 16 years in the camps. They are among the most honourable, dignified people I have ever met. But Bhutan will never agree to anything even approaching wholesale repatriation. If it was going to, it would never have resorted to the disgraceful measures it took to expel around half of its Nepali-speaking population during the early 1990s. It will not take anyone back at all unless some other government or international organisation pressurises it to do so. But every Nepali government has been impotent in the face of skilled Bhutani diplomatic manoeuvring since the crisis first arose. India continues to insist that this is a matter for Nepal and Bhutan to resolve, even though the expulsions could not have taken place without the connivance of the Indian authorities. And no other government has any reason to prioritise this issue in its foreign policy, least of all the Americans.

Refugee leaders surely know this, but cannot acknowledge it in public. For them to begin to discuss third country resettlement would be to accept defeat, and the end of the long campaign that gives their lives

some purpose and meaning. After his mistreatment at the hands of the Bhutan authorities, it is psychologically and politically impossible for Tek Nath Rizal. But it is not clear whether this leadership is truly articulating the actual wishes of the mass of the refugee population.

Eighteen years have passed since the first citizenship cards were confiscated in the villages of southern Bhutan: refugee babies have grown into young refugee adults. A few, having watched recent events in Nepal, have concluded that insurgency will bring them justice. Nothing could be further from the truth. If Bhutan will not take back the gentle political innocents it first expelled, it is unlikely to accept their revolutionary children, and no one will ask it to do so.

The Royal Government of Bhutan is guilty of abusing the rights of a large proportion of its population. It should take back those who were once its citizens and who left their country against their will. However, I see no reason to believe that it will elect to, and I see no prospect of it being made to. The injustice of the situation in which the refugees find themselves is a testament to the hypocrisy of the international community. But it is not enough to reiterate the facts of this injustice again and again. Tens of thousands of young Lhotshampas deserve a better future than further years of hopelessness. If the Bhutan government will not admit them to its land of Gross National Happiness, let other nations make them an offer. ●

(Michael Hutt is professor of Nepali and Himalayan Studies and Dean of the Faculty of Languages and Cultures at the School of Oriental and African Studies. He is the author of *Unbecoming Citizens*, OUP Delhi 2004.)



Changeover convulsions

Claims, counter-claims, and brinkmanship must be balanced with unity of purpose

On a single day this week, at least four groups were blocking Kathmandu thoroughfares. Cabbies were protesting the murder of a colleague in Koteswor. Relatives of the disappeared were on the streets for the third consecutive day. Single women were demonstrating in front of Singha Darbar, but no one in the



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

melee seemed to know what about. Temporary teachers were demanding that they be made permanent without going through the due process of recruitment.

There was no alternative but to grin and bear the hotheads. Anyway, they aren't the only ones crippling the government in its negotiations with the Maoists. Every organised group wants to strangle the besieged state. †

The politics of claims and counter-claims that test the capability of all

transitional governments is everywhere. Donors insist that the Maoists must disarm before being allowed to join the government. The Maoists want a comprehensive political settlement as the precondition for arms management.

The Maoists' muddled agenda is heightening the atmosphere of ambiguity in the country. Chairman Dahal is itching to initiate another round of urban uprising. A rumour spread that the elite Special Task Force of Maoists had sneaked into the Valley, but Nanda Kishor Pun, the rebels' military mind, immediately went on Nepal FM to refute these allegations. But by then, government forces had already begun patrolling the streets of Kathmandu. Everyone is on a short fuse, a single mistake now could set off a chain reaction of hasty deeds and unintended consequences.

So far since the April Uprising, the government and the rebels have conducted themselves with exemplary composure.

That has saved us from the horrors generally associated with major political changeovers. But a past record is no guarantee of future performance. Leaders of the seven-party alliance, civic activists, and Maoist apparatchiks need to remember that they are still standing trial in the court of history.

But should they succeed, they could set an example for the rest of the world: if adversaries are tolerant, political transformations need not be traumatic, as history shows they often have been.

Republicans believe the French Revolution changed the world forever. But it was a chaotic affair that began with the fall of the *ancien regime* in 1789 giving way to radicals, Lady Guillotine, the authoritarian Jacobins, and the rise of Napoleon. Russia's 1917 February Insurrection was even crueller in its progress to the October Revolution and the rise of totalitarianism. The American War of Independence (1775-1783) also pushed back desegregation by decades.

Indian independence began in 1947 with the creation of Pakistan, and the process continued till the formation of Bangladesh in 1971. In the intervening decades, millions were slaughtered and more made homeless in the name of religion, country, and community. Pakistan is still a pseudo-republic at best, as the recent murder of Nawab Akbar Bugti shows. Bangladesh is a quasi-democracy where the party in power relishes the privilege of abusing the constitution.

Despite their rhetoric, there are reasons to believe that Maoist commissars and SPA leaders know the limits of their brinkmanship. Now they need to show some magnanimity and unity of purpose. Individually, the SPA and the Maoists are grist for the mills of malcontents. Together they can withstand the unreasonable demands of domestic interest groups, as well as negotiate better deals from global gooders. Avoiding changeover convulsions will be a welcome bonus. ●

LETTERS

FINISHED

Last month on Father's Day, I re-read an old article by CK Lal, written on Father's Day years ago, describing his father and how he wanted CK to study well, despite all hardships. It was a column in *The Independent* and it touched my heart so much that I have followed his articles ever since. Sadly, he's becoming dogmatic. He looks more like a Maoist ally than a liberal journalist.

I don't know what more the Nepali people and government need to do to please the Maoists. Their militia are in the streets, they kidnap, kill, and threaten, and are above the police and the army. We pray it will be over soon, that they will join the mainstream and be humane. While I see that day getting farther away, journalists like CK Lal are trying to justify the Maoist cause and closing their eyes to all the suffering. It's not fair, especially not for someone as popular as CK.

For me the CK Lal who wrote about the hardships of his father, much like my own, is no more. I can't understand or connect with him anymore. I have lost one more loved one to the red revolution, this time a journalist lost in his rage towards the king and Koirala, and his love for red. He will be proved wrong, sooner rather than later.

Prabal Pandey, email

MAINA

Maina is another sad incident involving a poor family and gross abuse of state power (How Maina was killed, #313). How many more tragic cases like Maina is the government hiding? No doubt, all those involved are backed by the army and will go scot-free.

Ganesh Limbu, email

● Can't we do anything to support Maina's family? It won't bring her back, but we can show that we feel the pain she and her family felt. I wonder if the government has extended any support.

Akash Sherung, Dhumbarahi

GOOD DOCTORS

Thanks for the tribute to Dr Sanduk Ruit (The vision thing, #313), he is not only self-made but has also done a lot for Nepal and Nepalis. His work is acclaimed internationally, but in Nepal only people he has operated on know him. We hope people like Dr Ruit and Dr Lohani (Barefoot doctor, #312) in Sankhuwasabha will continue their selfless work and set an example.

Seema Lama, email

● I salute Dr Lohani's contribution to Nepal. He is a true hero and leader of the country. We need leaders like him to take our country to the 21st century.

Mohan Rana, California

● Sanduk Ruit is inspiring, and we are proud of him. But it's unfortunate that he was largely unknown in Nepal until he received the Magsaysay award. Had the media recognised him earlier, he might have been encouraged. Can't Dr Ruit write something on how he stayed motivated with no help from his surroundings?

Prakash P, email

VILLAGE PRACHANDAS

I was impressed by Shrishti RL Rana's on-the-ground piece (Rolpa's reality, #312). While Kathmandu is celebrating so-called loktantra and parliamentarians are making but not implementing historical declarations, the Maoists are using the chance to again extort and create chaos in remote districts and cities. People blame Prachanda for the atrocities and disappearances, but for the people in Rolpa, Rukum, Jajakot, and Dailekh, the village-level Prachandas are everything. They think if we hold a gun we are powerful because, they listen to us. They have no clue about people's power or sovereignty, and have no vision to follow. They genuinely believe that Jana Andolan II was successful because of the Maoists.

Rajan Khatri, Hamburg

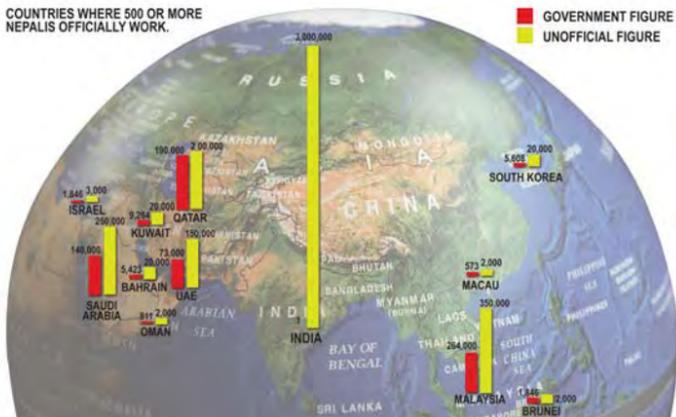
● How can Nepal hold fair and free elections if the Maoists roam the countryside armed and unfettered? Prachanda's time is running out in a more peaceful Nepal and he needs to remove the monarch. Then he can assume all the power traditionally associated with autocratic regimes. The government is wise to curb the monarch's powers, since this removes the need to abolish the monarchy altogether. GP Koirala shows he is a statesman when he puts realpolitik over ideology. That is why Prachanda's demagoguery is becoming increasingly shrill. He acts like a child whose mother takes away his sweets since he's already had too many. Do Nepalis really want such a man as their unquestioned leader?

G Lars, email

CORRECTION

Due to a design error, the tag on the bar charts for Unofficial and Official figures for the number of Nepalis working abroad was inadvertently inverted. The correct chart is reprinted below.

COUNTRIES WHERE 500 OR MORE NEPALIS OFFICIALLY WORK. ■ GOVERNMENT FIGURE ■ UNOFFICIAL FIGURE



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Impasse

India can do more by doing less

After King Gyanendra's disastrous coup in February 2005, India quietly began laying the groundwork to rollback the royal dictatorship. Its left parties and civil society were marshalled into bringing Nepal's mainstream political forces and rebel Maoists together to face down an intransigent king.

The strategy worked beyond Delhi's wildest dreams. By November that year, despite misgivings from the US, the seven-party alliance (SPA) and the Maoists had forged a formal partnership. By late April 2006, the royal dictatorship had completely collapsed in the face of people power stemming from that alliance.

Today, Nepal is four months into a peace process which was conceived in Delhi. While we may all have justifiable misgivings about foreigners playing an active role in Nepali politics, the hard fact is that it gave the SPA a new lease on life. But more importantly, the forces Delhi's diplomacy unleashed ultimately led to a sea-change in its foreign policy. For the first time in history, India had to quietly accede to a formal UN role in its neighbourhood, to Nepal's good fortune.

But today this peace process is at an impasse. It has become drawn out and dragged on the key issue of arms management. A prolonged face-off carries the risk of a slow unravelling of the whole process, warns a diplomat who has closely monitored the process.

The face-off stems from the Maoists upping the ante by stating that their arms and fighters will not be cantoned until overarching political issues are resolved first. The rebels have threatened an urban uprising lest the demand is ignored.

Most of the SPA, on the other hand, is digging in its heels and wants the rebels to first resolve the arms management issue. Their spines have been strengthened by recent, and repeated, public show, of support from India and the US. Other major powers too, from the EU to Japan, have taken similar positions.

Clearly, the international situation is against the Maoists. It's little wonder that they are relying on domestic constituents playing up the urban uprising threat in hopes of forcing the SPA to sue for peace. There is no question of returning to armed fighting, says Krishna Bahadur Mahara, the Maoists' chief negotiator. But we will bring hundreds of thousands of people into Kathmandu to press our demands. We suspect the SPA is again joining hands with the king and army to wipe us out, and they are being aided by the Americans.

These threats are a concern for the SPA government. Even so, major SPA constituents are determined not to back down, shored up as they are by India, the US and the belief that Maoists lack widespread public support for their agenda. We may have to call their bluff, says a senior SPA official. If they resort to violence during the protests, we will have no choice but to use force.

This is a high-wire act which can go either way. As such, the next two months are going to be extremely significant in the history of the Nepali conflict. A little miscalculation from either side can re-ignite armed fighting.

Like everybody else, this has the Indians worried. Having helped forge the SPA-Maoist partnership, it wants to see the two sides resolve the conflict through negotiations. Indian policy-makers understand that their interests lie in a peaceful, stable and prosperous Nepal on its strategic northern border. But the Indians are also mortified by the possibility of Maoists gaining state power through arms (by not disarming, for example) and the bad example that would set for the numerous insurgent groups in their own country.

This fear is driving Delhi's new policy of bolstering the SPA negotiating position. They are joined at the hip with the Americans on this. But it is making the Maoists suspicious and forcing them to up the ante.

If the impasse is to be broken and potential disaster averted in the coming months, India needs to play a new role. The best way it can do that is by doing less. India needs to step back a little and allow the UN to build trust between the warring sides. Or, it should let the SPA and Maoists appeal to the Indian constituents that helped forge that alliance in the first place. Having helped conceive the baby, Delhi must now work to save it. ●



MEANWHILE
Suman Pradhan

For the first time in history, India had to quietly accede to a formal UN role in its neighbourhood, to Nepal's good fortune.

ANALYSIS BY
RATNA SANSAR SHRESTHA

When it comes to Nepal's water resources, talk of emulating Bhutan tops the agenda for so-called hydro-experts, policymakers, activists and a growing number of ordinary Nepalis. Dissenters are branded ultra-nationalist, and many say that we should stop complaining about the country being 'sold' every time a treaty is signed.

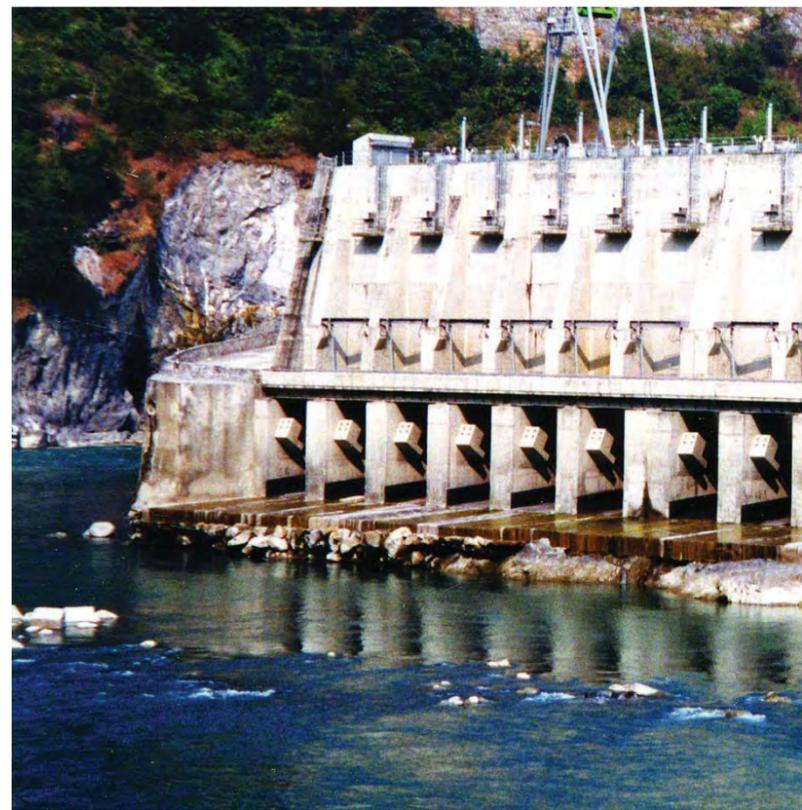
The claim is made that, thanks to the Druk model, Bhutan's per capita income is now at \$1,300 (Wikipedia, March). The standard response is that if a country expels a quarter of its population, as Bhutan has done with its citizens of Nepali origin, its per capita income could easily show a 33 percent rise.

The real story is somewhere in between. Bhutan did expel over 100,000 citizens. But it is also reaping benefit from the Chukha project (336MW) and is already developing Tala (1020MW). There is limited domestic demand for the power generated, given that Bhutan now has a population of just about half-a-million, as well as a limited transmission/distribution network. Exporting electricity to India is the only financially viable alternative.

Bhutan earns substantial profit from this export due to the financing model it uses. Sixty percent of the investment for any hydro project is provided as a grant, and the rest is a term loan. Technically, the project's total cost is slashed by 60 percent and therefore the cost of generation also goes down by roughly half.

Nepal is not

It's counter-productive to push



For example, Chilime electricity costs Rs 2.77/kWh to generate. Under Bhutan's financing mechanism, its cost per kWh would drop to approximately Rs 1.40. At that price, we could still make a substantial profit even if we export to India at Bhutan's price, Rs 3.20/kWh (recently increased from Rs 2.40). Sounds good, but there is a catch. In the 60 years that India has 'assisted' Nepal in developing a number of hydropower projects, we haven't been able offered a financing model similar to that used in Bhutan. On the contrary, every time a treaty is signed

between India and Nepal, Nepalis feel cheated.

The latest treaty between Nepal and India on the border Mahakali river illustrates this clearly. The slogan being bandied around at that time was 'half the water and electricity to each country'. Nepal's parliament ratified the treaty in the belief that we were securing 50 percent each of the water and electricity generated from Mahakali for Nepal. But close scrutiny reveals that Nepal actually gets only 3.5 percent of water, 96.5 percent going to India due to a proviso citing 'without prejudice to

Good banking from



Clean Energy Financial Institution opened Thursday as the country's first bank catering to the energy sector in partnership with Winrock International. CEFI will soon be renamed Clean Energy Development Bank. Marty Logan spoke to CEO Manoj Goyal (left) and Suman Basnet, director of Winrock's Renewable Energy Project Support Office.



Nepali Times: Why start this bank now, after six years of development?)

Manoj Goyal: The country needs energy badly. Someone has to take the initiative, someone who understands the risks. A bank, with technical know-how is best placed to do that.

Suman Basnet: There has been investment in hydropower and it's been quite significant... however, one problem that banks themselves again and again express is that they don't have the technical competence to do due diligence or evaluate projects. With that expertise we'll be able to analyse a project, decide 'OK, this is a good

project and then put the project itself up as collateral for financing.

How will the partnership work?

SB: Technical assistance from Winrock is centred on increasing CEFI's capacity to be able to do project financing. That means setting up a procedure to evaluate projects, having manuals ready that people can refer to, maybe developing a roster of experts that the bank can tap into, setting up systems software that will help them do due diligence, etc.

Is CEFI's Rs 320 million paid-up capital sufficient?

MG: I'm not satisfied with that

amount because this kind of development bank, with such a big agenda, will require more funds. We decided to go ahead with the minimum requirement first and then as we grow in the business we can always add on.

A green bank will understand the long-term investment needed in the energy sector. But are local investors prepared for things like venture financing?

MG: In today's Nepal people are not used to it. But if you look internationally it has worked, so why shouldn't it work for us? It may be risky but there are returns. There has to be a time when you start using these tools... we are preparing the

Bhutan

for the Bhutan model here



existing prior consumptive use' in Article 3. Thus it is heavily skewed towards India.

The Bhutan model works because Bhutan is India's protectorate and the latter determines Bhutan's defence and foreign affairs. Nepalis are unlikely to accept such an arrangement, and so chances are that we will not be treated on par with Bhutan. Despite knowing this, Nepali politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen, and bankers keep getting excited about the Bhutan model and clamouring for it. It is common sense that India is uncomfortable

about being dependent on an independent Nepal. There could be one way out. If the security of such a project were to be guaranteed by, say, the Indian Army, the comfort level would go up significantly. But there would surely be resistance to this in Nepal.

It looks as if the only solution in sight is for Nepal and India to act in good faith and be mutually magnanimous. And most importantly, stop focusing on any single model of cooperation. ●

Ratna Sansar Shrestha is a chartered accountant and attorney-at-law.

clean energy

investors' minds for it. We won't be taking too many risks at the beginning; first we want to create one or two success stories.

Do you expect project developers to bring their ideas to you?

SB: We are trying to be proactive, especially in hydropower. We're looking at the different projects in the pipeline (up to 5MW), why they are not progressing, what the barriers are. Quite a few of them, I'm sure, are blocked because of financing... for instance, there is a developer who wants to develop a project but doesn't know anyone who could invest; there are investors who want to put in money but don't know where the projects are. This bank can very well act as a matchmaker.

Will you be limited to hydropower projects?

SB: Hydropower is going to be very important because of its potential here, but we will also finance other renewable energy technologies, especially off-grid rural projects like solar home systems, biogas plants, microhydro plants.

How are other commercial banks reacting to you?

MG: Banks are willing to finance the sector because they see it's a potentially lucrative one. But they're not sure about their exposure; they feel it's a risky venture because they lack the technical expertise. We have Winrock and USAID support, along with investment from the Employees Provident Fund, so we can afford that expertise; at the same time, we speak the banks' language. That combination provides a much higher comfort level for the other banks. We want to send them this message: utilise our services, because no single bank can finance a hydro project.

With so much focus on energy, can you compete for traditional banking business?

MG: Energy will start paying us only after a few years. And we need to sustain ourselves, because investors' expectations are there. For that reason we'll go into traditional banking. But our wish will always be that energy takes over everything else.

Loan blows

Make it easy to lose all and start again

Fifty-three Nepali individuals and business houses owe a total of Rs 15.2 billion to Nepal Bank Limited (NBL) and Rastriya Banijya Bank (RBB). It is far from clear how we should go about recovering this.

One reason is that loans, when used effectively, fuel business. Any owner of a for-profit firm will tell you cash is her firm's



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

lifeblood. Things go well, they collect cash from customers, pay bills, and use the remainder to invest in further growth. In a competitive marketplace, her firm faces a variety of risks which it can't control. Most firms are unlikely to have paying customers right from the beginning, or even regularly for long. So, to get started, to develop and sell products and services, and keep on growing, they need cash, which they borrow from banks. In due course, earnings show up, and the loans are repaid with interest. If this isn't done, at some point the firm is forced to focus only on paying off the debts, not on going further.

This is where the Nepali case

becomes strange. Despite having creditors banging on the door, most bosses of defaulting firms continue to run their companies. Business magazines put some on the cover, hailing them as heroes, and publish spreads about the most ad-friendly slices of their conglomerates. In Kathmandu's cocktail circuits, ambivalence runs high. Defaulters are seen as likable victims who deserve sympathy, not as scheming crooks who should be thrown in jail.

The government periodically talks about applying social pressure, boycotting defaulters, or taking away their passports. But nobody believes drastic measures will really be taken. And when the money involved belongs to formerly state-managed banks, where political meddling, corruption, and mismanagement always meant 'business unusual', ordinary Nepalis find it hard to get agitated and demand their billions back. These cat and mouse games neither provide a way out nor develop confidence in Nepal's financial sector.

One solution could be to believe individuals who say that what they owe exceeds what they own. The process then is not to write off their IOUs, but to work with them, one by one, and see

whether they can be legally declared bankrupt. There is a provision for filing personal bankruptcy in Nepal's Muluki Ain. Lawyer Jagannath Adhikari says it allows creditors to snatch a proportionate share of what's left. No Nepali has taken advantage of the law, but given the billions involved, shouldn't we try to bring the defaulters within the penumbra of an existing law, instead of just shouting at them from the sidelines?

For legislation dealing with failed firms' debts to have teeth, there need to be skilled personnel manning relevant new institutions, such as a Debt Recovery Tribunal, Insolvency Office, Commercial Court and the like. Here, media vigilance can play an effective role too.

Ultimately though, the government and the business community have to come together to portray personal bankruptcies and corporate liquidations as part of healthy processes that clean out the cobwebs of our financial systems. Putting a speedy legal closure on defaulted loans will allow entrepreneurs to settle with what they have, and then pick up the pieces and make a fresh start in business. ●

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NEPAL PASHMINA INDUSTRY

Emulate the UML

Pradeep Nepal in *Drishti*, 22 August

There were massive protests everywhere last week against Maoist atrocities. The Maoist leaders revealed their party's character when one of them made a statement saying, 'The relation between the Maoists and the seven-party alliance is not official. It is a matter between two equal powers.' This means that the Maoists are trying to give legitimacy to all their illegal activities.

We even heard them say that the seven-party alliance had suggested carrying out the Thankot attack. It was the CPN-UML which concluded that the attack had negative impacts in the 'People's Movement'. How can the Maoists claim that?

The Maoist party considers the UML its prime enemy at the moment. I am not saying this because they hold more secret talks with Girija Prasad Koirala than with Madhab Nepal. Actions are personal. But they have this set ideologically in their minds.

Their leaders have given priority to making friends with bourgeois democrats (Nepali Congress) than with the progressive (CPN-UML). If the Maoists continue this, they will reach the same stance that the NC has taken now, to accept a ceremonial king.

They have come up with a new conclusion that the relationship between their party and ours is not a party relationship. This is an analysis without any basis. Eight friendly parties reached the conclusion that the issue of weapons

दृष्टि

management must be tackled first, after which an alternative system to dissolve the parliament should be formed. If it was just about the rebels and the state, the only signatures there should have been are that of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala for the state and the commander of the 'People's Liberation Army' Pushpa Kamal Dahal. But the signatories there are Maoist Chairman Prachanda, Congress President Girija Prasad Koirala, and leaders of the seven other political parties.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Giving the Maoists suggestions is like pouring water on sand. Still, as a responsible citizen, I would like to request they give up their reliance on the power of the gun. Your intentions cannot be any more radical than those of the CPN UML. Be capable of thinking independently. No matter how much you sweet-talk at the moment, your active relationship with the NC will defeat your own purpose later. The Nepali Congress will not let you journey towards the democratic republic that you want. Whether we win or

lose it is only the CPN-UML that will ultimately help you achieve that goal.

Until the Maoists leave their weapons they will not fit in 21st century politics. All guns have ultimately been defeated in Nepal. It was because of guns that the mother party of the Maoists, CPN-Masal was divided in five. UML is a party created from unity, the Maoists from division.

My only good wishes (to the Maoists) is that they study the manifesto of the CPN-UML and try to make themselves the heirs to UML. This will benefit them.



Pending peace

Sushil Pyakurel in *Kantipur*, 3 September

कान्तिपुर

The peace process has been on for four months now. The 12-point agreement between the seven-party alliance and the Maoists reassured the people that the movement would successfully bring down the authoritarian rule of the king and reinstate full democracy. It was the people's struggle that eventually brought King Gyanendra to his knees on 24 April.

The government formed through the 'People's Movement' and the restored parliament now faces the challenge and responsibility of bringing lasting peace. The parliament's declaration on 18 May extensively cut down the king's power, and transferred it instead

to the prime minister and the parliamentary speaker. Then the political parties and the Maoists declared ceasefires, formed committees, signed a code of conduct, the 8-point agreement, and formed the interim constitution draft committee.

Now for any peace process to work, there has to be trust between the people and the leadership. And this trust can only be built if there is coordination between the most rural areas, various government departments, and if problems of the conflict victims are addressed. Ignoring the wounds of the conflict and trying to establish peace through the upper levels of power alone will be like building castles in the sand.

A proper base so that the peace process can move forward has not been built. The state's presence is only felt in the cities,

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there is none in rural areas. This has deprived the rural population of security and other services that the state should provide. They cannot trust the peace process because there are 'two governments' within the state.

Murder, rape, and looting are rampant in rural areas but the state has remained unresponsive. There are already more than 50 points that the seven-party alliance and the Maoists have agreed to, but nothing has been implemented. The committee formed to monitor the ceasefire is insignificant as both the government and the Maoists have been repeatedly violating the code of conduct. If the parties do not address the people's immediate problems, the peace process may stall. Leaders may debate on democracy and peace inside Singha Darbar, but unless the people see a solution to their problems, public frustration is likely to explode. If that happens, no one can say for sure what turn the country will take.

Hindu communist

Samaya, 31 August

समय

He was wearing a saffron robe and sitting with other religious leaders. He looked oddly familiar. He would suddenly stand up and try to talk, sometimes to interrupt the speaker or to explain the importance of Hinduism to the Maoists trying to disrupt the meeting.

He was former communist leader Mohan Chandra Adhikari, who became a Hindu leader when the government declared Nepal a secular state in April. He was in Bhairahawa attending a Hindu meeting organised by Shivsena, Nepal. He is the same Mohan Chandra who revolted against late

communist leader Man Mohan Adhikari and instead got involved in the Jhapa movement. He used to be known as Nepal's Nelson Mandela and was imprisoned for many years during the Panchyat era.

It is not uncommon for Nepali communist leaders to become royalists. Perfect examples are Keshar Jung Rayamajhi and Radha Krishna Mainali. But for a communist leader to actually be involved in a religious movement is still a new trend. At one point Adhikari used to equate religion with an opium addiction. So, why the change in attitude?

"When I was in prison, I realised there is so much to learn from Hinduism," says Adhikari. When the Maoists disrupted the Bhairahawa meeting, he was compelled to return. He said that Hindu leaders from India were invited to Nepal. "They came to Nepal to save Hinduism, it cannot be called foreign interference," he added.

Martin on arms

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's representative to Nepal, Ian Martin in an interview with Navin Singh Khadka of the *BBC Nepali Service*, 26 August

बिबिसि नेपाली

There's a deal to canton the Maoists and the Nepal Army. Why can't the UN start monitoring arms and personnel right away?

There has been an agreement in very general terms. That general agreement has to be turned into much more specific commitments and an understanding as to how we can verify these commitments.

What kind of specific commitments?

There are many more aspects of

arms and armies' management that have to be defined before the UN can plan its actual monitoring mission. We have to be clear on how many locations will be involved with how many troops in each. Only then can we, with the parties, plan the kind of monitoring that is needed.

So when do you think you can start the monitoring?

I can't answer that yet because that doesn't just depend upon the UN, but upon the parties as well. I will be continuing discussions from the moment of my return to Kathmandu next week. But when actual monitoring will begin is a question I can't answer immediately.

How would UN civil staff be able to monitor thousands of armed military personnel?

The letters from the prime minister and the Maoist leadership specifically asks for the deployment of qualified civilian personnel. There are other cases where civilian personnel, in some cases former military themselves, have been involved in monitoring arms and armies in the context of peace processes. We have to see how that can be tailored to fit Nepal.

Why did UN assessment team leader Staffan de Mistura meet Indian officials in New Delhi before and after his visit to Nepal?

Obviously India is a major stakeholder and the UN regularly consults other governments that have a major interest in a particular situation. So, indeed the UN has remained in close communication with India and I shall do the same.



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Incomplete team

Basanta Thapa in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 1-16 September

हिमाल

We might have stepped into the 21st century unknowingly and unwillingly, but the Nepali people are not all that foolish. It will not be easy to fool Nepalis who are ready to take to the streets for another full movement after going through one incomplete revolution and two half movements. It looks unlikely that the draft interim constitution prepared by a 16-member committee will be accepted by well-informed Nepali people.

Prithvi Narayan Shah, who laid the foundations for modern Nepal, himself said, Nepal is a garden of four castes and 36 sub-castes. It would be another matter altogether if we ignored what he said simply because his statue in front of Singha Darbar is covered in a red shroud today. But, if we are to take his words to heart, it is clear that the draft interim constitution committee does not include all the castes of Nepal.

Granted that perhaps the Shah king's words should remain unheeded. But the government of Nepal itself says that there are at least 61 indigenous castes, though the committee does not include all of them. The visually impaired, physically challenged, small and medium business entrepreneurs, students, artists, teachers, sports personalities, journalists, youth, gays, lesbians, transvestites, cabin girls, or the roadside vendors have not been represented in the committee. Nor have the farmers or labourers.

It might be interim, but it is still the constitution. The constitution cannot be made unless the interests of all of the 26 million people from every caste, profession, and business are represented.



Flood victims: Didn't you say the parliament was powerful? Please, you have to get a statement from Lord Indra.

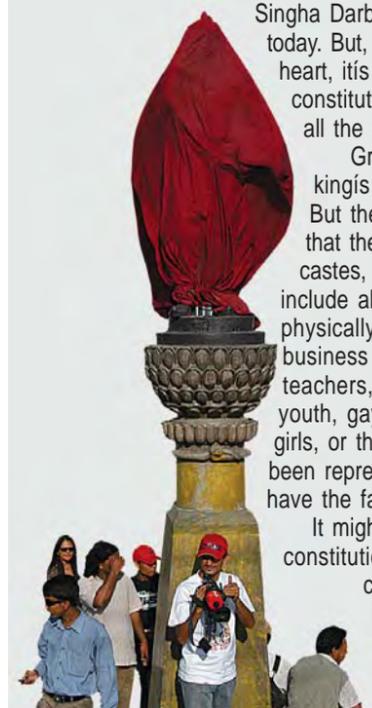
समाचारपत्र *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 3 September

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



"We are not being unreasonable when we say that whoever has fought to make Nepal a democratic republic should lead the army."

Nandakishore Pun, deputy commander of CPN-Maoist People's Liberation Army in *Jana Aastha*, 6 September, 2006



MIN BAJRACHARYA



PICS: KUNAL LAMA



PRABAL THAPA

Adobe should be part of a larger change in Nepal's architectural identity

Muddy waters

PRABAL THAPA

I'm not an expert in adobe, nor a hard-line supporter of alternative construction methods, or eco-building. I have, however, always set high priority on minimising environmental impact during the selection of construction materials by paying attention to their origin and using locally-produced materials whenever possible.

The extensive use of materials like scarce sal wood, or marble transported all the way from Rajasthan is not very PC. Further, a glimpse at our towns and cities makes it clear that we are stuck and running out of ideas stylistically.

That is where I have a lot of sympathy for someone trying to bring in new ideas. However, it would not serve much purpose if ideas like adobe and other alternative building methods get stuck at an experimental or *namuna ghar* phase.

What should our target group be for adobe? Should the rural Nepali builder be encouraged to continue building using indigenous material and construction

methods, or should builders of urban (residential) constructions be made aware of alternative construction methods and styles? If the latter, this should be propagated as a sort of coming home to a complete architectural archetype, not simply sticking on *dacchi appa* as a nod to tradition, but also allowing the alternative material dictate more than only looks.

We have essentially discarded our knowledge of conventional adobe methods which, combined with new technologies, could have been used as a springboard to innovatively meet emerging challenges.

Architects have to deal with shyness, and even aversion towards different construction methods and design. We see substantial older adobe buildings getting knocked down, when they could as easily be adapted to meet changed requirements. There are classy examples around the city, like Café Mitra (top left and centre).

The ever-so-popular conventional 'pillar system' house still has seriously deep foundations. After all, it has positives that any builder can swear by: it

is considered structurally sound, socially acceptable, and a non-risk investment.

The success of alternative building methods will lie in their economic advantages. Durability, ability to adapt to specific designs, the flexibility to meet modern requirements in wet areas such as kitchens and bathrooms, and lower cost of maintenance will determine success.

A significant challenge also lies in the willingness or capability of a contractor to build with non-conventional materials in urban areas. There are problems of rates, financial margins, and even lost skills.

There are magnificent recent examples of adobe and other alternative construction materials combined with contemporary materials to achieve very modern designs. There are a few corporate clients in tourism, such as Tiger Mountain (top right), who have ventured into eco-construction and received international acknowledgement and awards for ecologically-sustainable building. Most of these examples have resulted from the necessity to deal with economic factors and local situations, like difficult access

to the construction market.

Our building culture is monotonous, resulting in a cityscape we wish were different, to say the least. What we see now is the result of indifference and lack of innovation from the planners' side, and inflexibility and often conceit from the clients. The biggest challenge in using alternative building method will be convincing the client.

There are practical and engineering constraints to using adobe too. For one, it would probably only work for buildings under a certain size and designed for limited use. How would it function with large floor spans, or multi-storeyed buildings? Are there are examples of commercial urban structures built using it? (It would be exciting to shop in a 'muddy good' supermarket.) Can it be combined with other materials like concrete and steel structure? And don't forget the bureaucracy, whether and how adobe would comply with the 'stringent' building codes of our municipalities is probably a chapter of its own. We will also need daring clients, willing to break with the norm and not listen to family, friends etc.

It would be great to see Nepali building culture create a new identity, and adobe and other alternative building methods must surely part of it. But to do that, and not just build a few stand-alone model houses, we need awareness and real, informed debate on all our choices. ●

Prabal Thapa is an architect practicing in Kathmandu.

'Hollywood dips into Bollywood'

Hollywood paparazzi should try getting used to curries and Masala Chai. For they could be following such A-list stars like Brad Pitt, Adrien Brody and Owen Wilson to India in the next 12 months.

The unprecedented number of films to be shot in India by well-known directors like Francis Ford Coppola and Wes Anderson led the influential trade publication Variety declare last this week in a headline: Hollywood Dips into Bollywood.

MTV Awards Kicking Off With Timberlake

Justin Timberlake is on a mission to bring sexy back to MTV's Video Music Awards, which return to the Big Apple on Thursday night after a two-year excursion to Miami. Timberlake, who has the No. 1 song in the country with "SexyBack," was expected to kick off the show. Other performers include Beyonce, The Killers, Panic! at the Disco,

and, for the old-timers who still watch MTV, Lou Reed. Though the MTV Awards have never lacked star power last year, Diddy acted as host and stars ranging from Eva Longoria to Jessica Simpson and then-hubby Nick Lachey squeezed themselves into the spotlight that water-cooler MTV moment hasn't materialized recently.

Britney Spears stunned

WASHINGTON: Britney Spears revealed that her second pregnancy, soon after the first one left her stunned, and said that her excitement and enthusiasm for the next child can be credited to hubby Kevin Federline.

Spears insisted that it was because of her hubby's love and support that she could come to terms with her subsequent pregnancy, less than a year after son Sean Preston was born. "I was shocked because it was so soon and I was a little scared at first. Yes, I was very surprised", *Contactmusic* quoted her, as saying.

"Federline was a little shocked too. But his shock turned to excitement and he said, 'Let's just go for it', she added.

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Adobe architecture is the best alternative to concrete houses

Mud, glorious mud



COURTESY NRIPAL ADHIKARY

Adopting adobe

Pros

- If properly designed, adobe is warm in winter and cool in summer.
- It is structurally versatile: adobe houses don't have to be linear and rectangular like those made with cement.
- Adobe stands forever if it has a good foundation, a good roof, and gets periodic maintenance.
- It is fire-resistant.
- The techniques and skills required for adobe construction are easily learned.
- Unlike cement, adobe absorbs toxic gases, making such houses safer and more hygienic.
- Life inside an adobe house is quieter, since it insulates sound.
- Wood is conserved, as vault or dome systems can be used for the roofs
- Adobe houses are cheaper and environmentally benign
- Properly designed adobe buildings are earthquake-resistant
- Due to the rich variety of Nepali soil, we can have extraordinarily beautiful exterior and interior plasters

Cons

- The floor needs damp-proofing with a moisture barrier like a sheet of thick plastic to wick moisture up through capillary action or creating a *ehangiri* floor (called *hawas* in Nepali) or leaving an air gap between the soil and floor
- Adobe plaster needs to be regularly nurtured and in Kathmandu would need to be re-plastered every two years
- In Nepal, adobe houses symbolise poverty. This is a cultural bias because in places like Yemen, England, and New Mexico, having an adobe house is a status symbol.

NRIPAL ADHIKARY

For many of us, the mud houses dotting the skyline of rural Nepal are symbolic of poverty. But mud is on the comeback track internationally, as the material and bias against it are re-evaluated. There is interest in reviving it in Nepal, too.

Today, Kathmandu is almost overpowered by a concrete jungle. Existing concrete houses are not only ugly to look at, but also brutally expensive. They aren't earthquake-safe and are either too hot or too cold.

All this calls for an alternative model. And fortunately, we have the interest and the resources. First, we need to go adobe.

Adobe (pronounced a-doe-bee) is a mixture of sand and clay, and sometimes straw, poured into a rectangular form and left to bake in the sun. Sun-baked adobe bricks are thermally superior to kiln-baked bricks, cement, stones, wood, and straw, because they retain heat and cold better.

Until 30 years ago, adobe was the dominant building material in Nepal, and we have a rich tradition of such construction here. Most neo-classical Rana palaces were built out of adobe with only a thin façade of fired bricks. Dharara is believed to be one of the tallest earthen structures in the world.

Adobe was abandoned in Nepal mainly because the ground floors, or *chhindi*, of adobe houses were so cold and damp that they could only be used to house domestic animals. Today we have a better understanding of organic and inorganic materials that can effectively block the cold from seeping in from the floor, making the ground floors of such houses thermally comfortable.

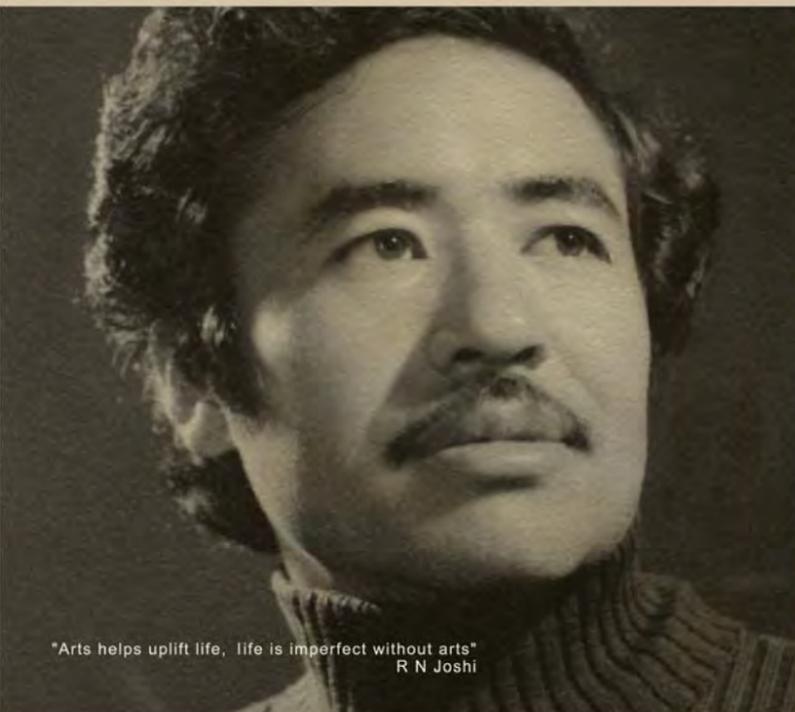
The old adobe houses also lacked indoor toilets. Outdoor toilets are more productive, since the waste is composted to make fertiliser, but unless updated, they are unlikely to cater to the modern sensibility. Italians have made a modern mud-plastered bathroom waterproof using linseed oil and beeswax.

In Kathmandu, a group of adobe enthusiasts from diverse professional backgrounds are researching and promoting mud, and what they call its 'soul mate', bamboo. The group, Abari (Adobe and Bamboo Research Initiative), says these materials could return to daily life.

Says Shishir Gairhe, one of the founders of Abari: "Our main idea is to have a portal, where anybody who wants to work with adobe or bamboo would get encouragement and resources. It doesn't matter where they want to make a sculpture or restore a house, if they have the interest we will help them." ●

Nripal Adhikary, an architecture consultant and documentary filmmaker, is also a founder of Abari. He can be contacted at nripal@yahoo.com.

NEPAL'S HISTORIC ART EXHIBITION



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R N Joshi

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Salt of the earth

A unique public-private partnership keeps down the price of salt and ensures quality

When goitre was endemic in Nepal, until as recently as the 1980s, the bulge in the throat caused by iodine deficiency was regarded as a sign of beauty. Young men and women in the high Himalays couldn't get married if they didn't have a goitre.

Almost everyone across the mountains was affected by iodine deficiency, making cretinism common. But a successful 30-year effort that combined government, private sector and aid agencies has all but wiped out visible goitre in Nepal.

The percentage of Nepali households with access to iodised salt is now 90 percent—much higher than India (50 percent) or Pakistan (17 percent). In fact, Nepal is the only country in the south and southeast Asia regions that has such high iodised salt use.

"This is a model for a public distribution system for essential commodities," says Parmeswar Mahaseth of Salt Trading Corporation (STC), which is involved in the iodised salt program, "it can be replicated elsewhere, and in Nepal we can use the same method to fortify foods with iron and other micronutrients."

Part of the reason for the success is that STC is the sole distributor for subsidised and iodised salt, ensuring quality and low prices. The subsidy is back-stopped by the Ministry of Health, the Indian government and UNICEF.

Salt imported from India has to be re-

iodised, since iodine is volatile and lost after prolonged storage. STC runs iodisation and packaging plants in Birtamod, Biratnagar, Janakpur, Bhairawa, Narayanghat, and Nepalgunj.

The problem now is that non-edible salt for industrial use is being smuggled into Nepal from India. These have below-threshold levels of sodium chloride and are unfit for human consumption, raising the danger of goitre resurfacing.

Salt from lakes in Tibet has been traditionally consumed in northern Nepal, but it lacks iodine. STC has set up an iodisation plant for Tibetan salt at the Chinese border in Hilsa of Humla and plans a similar one in Dolpo.

"Iodine deficiency needs constant vigilance to ensure distribution and quality control, otherwise the disorder could be endemic again," Mahaseth says.

But it is also a question of economics. The government spends more than Rs 150 million a year subsidising Nepali salt, making it among the cheapest in South Asia. Salt in Nepal costs Rs 10 per kg, it is Rs 16 in India, Rs 17 in Pakistan, Rs 20 in Bangladesh, and Rs 23 in Sri Lanka.

"If the subsidy is lifted, or if private distributors are allowed in, the price of salt will double overnight," says Mahaseth. Donor sources agree, saying the iodisation, subsidy, and distribution model works. "Why fix something that ain't broke?" says one Kathmandu donor official. Yet



MIN BAJRACHARYA

MAGICAL MINERAL: Sushil the Magician demonstrates the wonders of iodised salt during a June event celebrating Indian assistance for iodisation.

business interests in Nepal are putting pressure on the seven-party government to deregulate the import, wholesale, and distribution of salt.

Ninety percent of Nepali women are also anaemic because they don't get enough iron in their diet. With donor support, the government is now looking at double-fortification of salt to address the needs of Nepali mothers. Alternatively, wheat and flour could be fortified with iron.

Nepalis consume 150,000 tons of salt every year. About 65 percent of the population has access to adequately iodised salt, 18 percent gets inadequately iodised salt, and 17 percent of Nepalis still consume non-iodised salt. ●

Biodiesel in Nepal

Salt Trading has launched a feasibility study on the production and sale of biodiesel in Nepal. At a time when the price of fuel is rising worldwide and with sharp growth in domestic fuel demand, the prospects are said to be good.

Biodiesel is produced from the seed of a plant called *jatropha* (below), and can be mixed with kerosene and diesel to produce biofuels. Our calculation is that it will save Nepal billions annually in the fuel import bill, STC's P Mahaseth told us. A team of experts is in Nepal to advise the firm on the technical details of cultivating and refining the oil.

Diesel and petrol substitutes from vegetable oils have been tried in Brazil and other European countries, but are yet to take off in Asia. The most successful model is the gasohol made from sugarcane and sold in petrol stations in Mexico and Brazil.

Farmers in Nawalparasi and Rupendehi grow *jatropha* for medicinal purposes, but it could be promoted much more aggressively as a diesel substitute. *Jatropha*-based diesel has less sulphur and particulate emissions and comes from a renewable source.

The Indian state of Chhatisgarh is aggressively promoting *jatropha* and even the chief minister uses biodiesel. Nepal has great potential, it can reduce its import bill and provide small farmers with income, says Satyandra Yadav of the Horticulture Produce Management Institute in India, who is advising STC.

STC aims to launch a pilot project for a *jatropha* plantation working with a farmers' cooperative.



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3 Years 2520	2100
2 Years 1680	1450
1 Year 840	750

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1 Years 1530	1350

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दुई वर्ष (नेपाली म्यूजिक दुईबटा सिडी)

एक वर्ष (नेपाली म्यूजिक एउटा सिडी)

Actual Rate	Discount rate
3 Years 1260	1100
2 Years 840	750
1 Years 420	380

Development laboratory

Shortcuts as usual in two slick new studies



DEEPENDRA BAJRACHARYA

Developing countries offer a perfect laboratory for experimenting with newfangled ideas. Nepal has experienced much more than its fair share of trial and error-induced miseries.

In the late-fifties, some US academics impressed upon King Mahendra that Nepal had the potential to be the Israel of South Asia if it only did away with the strictures of democracy. The king complied and received generous grants to fund transmigration of hill settlers to the tarai and *bhitri madhesh*. That test of trickle-down prosperity with the help of foreign aid failed.

Educated at Eton, Harvard, and Tokyo, King Birendra first tried to replace subsistence farming with commercial agriculture. The Japanese did their best to help, but the experiment came unstuck: the poor got poorer, and nobody but the already-rich got richer.

Undaunted, Birendra lowered his sights and set an undefined and unspecified 'Asian Standard' as his next target. When that too came a cropper, 'Minimum Basic Needs' became the mantra for loyal panchas. It didn't save the king and his minions from humiliation in 1990.

Like all other regimes pushed to the forefront by the Third Wave of Democracy, the post-1990 government was served the 'Liberalisation, Privatisation, and Globalisation' agenda of donors as the only way to economic development. The prescription bred corruption and donors immediately suggested 'Good Governance' as the new solution.

Unfortunately, the Maoist insurgency had already begun to spread. So a new expression came into vogue: 'Poverty Alleviation'. Alas, it was too late for buzzwords. Guns had begun to make all the difference in the countryside.

So the new catch phrase became 'Conflict Transformation'. This concept prompted King Gyanendra to stage his phased coup, starting with the 4 October 2002 takeover. Within a year, important donors realised that they needed an exit strategy should the military solution to

Maoist insurgency fail. That's when 'Inclusiveness' became the war cry.

Ironically, 'inclusive democracy' is an expression that gained wide currency only when the entire democratic structure of the country was in a shambles.

This was the period when Lynn Bennett was hired by DFID and the World Bank to run an ambitious social science project in Nepal. Her project got a nod from the NPC under the ambitiously

named Nepal Gender and Social Exclusion Assessment (GSEA). *Unequal Citizens* is a summary of that four-year long effort.

Almost all rights activists at the vanguard of championing their causes during the democratic era, but who remained more or less silent after King Gyanendra's 2004 royal-military coup, have contributed to this report. It is elegantly written, competently edited, exquisitely produced, and beautifully printed. But does it say anything new?

Sadly, that's an open question. Perhaps saying something new or substantial was never part of the agenda. The project was probably conceived to keep possible activists occupied while the king handled the Maoists with the help of the military. That strategy would have worked had the chairmanship been able to deliver. He failed, and *Unequal Citizens* now must make way for much more fundamental changes in the structure of the Nepali polity.

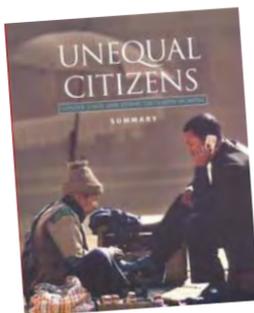
UNDP's *Nepal: Readings in Human Development* is somewhat more ambitious. It is

in the format of a reader for Masters-level students and seeks to intellectualise the idea of inclusiveness and incorporate diversity into development. A high-voltage team of academic luminaries grace the contents pages. But do any of them say anything that they haven't repeated ad infinitum from public platforms?

Once again, an honest answer will probably offend the touchy technocrats. The problem isn't the academicians, it's the idea of philosophising about a fad that is flawed. Be it democracy or development, there are simply no quick-fix solutions. Every country has to pass through the learning curve to reach its own level of liberty, order, and prosperity. All suggested short cuts are illusory.

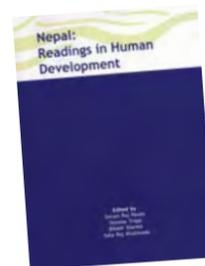
These two publications show that we have a long way to go in producing knowledge. Other than offering some interesting case studies and potentially useful data, these volumes contribute very little to the advancement of social science studies. ●

CK Lal



Unequal Citizens: Gender, Caste, and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal (Summary)

A co-publication of The World Bank and DFID, Kathmandu
ISBN 99946-890-0-2,
Pages: 112+xxvi



Nepal: Readings in Human Development (Edited volume)
UNDP, Pulchowk, Kathmandu
ISBN 99933-763-9-6,
Pages: 295

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Dance for Kathmandu

Diya Sen is now ready for her first international solo Odissi dance performance. It took fourteen years of dancing, many hours of hard work, practice, and travels. The Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT) and Portage Programme Nepal (early intervention for children with disabilities and development delays) have flown in the 23-year-old dancer from New Delhi for a fundraising event at Baber Mahal Revisited on 10 September.

As a classical dancer, Sen understands the importance of preserving heritage and culture, and says she is impressed by the commitment of organisations and individuals in Nepal to doing so. She is on a bit of a mission too, concerned about the old art forms disappearing because Bollywood dances and songs are more popular with the younger generation.

Still, she is confident she will perform to a full house. Whether you understand classical Indian dance is not an important factor here, people will come to see the performance because KVPT and Portage Program Nepal

are trying to raise funds for good cause, says the vivacious Sen.

"I hope my performance will be an opening towards what India can offer in terms of art. I hope that my performance will introduce Nepalis on one of the six Indian classical dance forms. Odissi's origins dates back to the 2nd century BCE," says Sen.

Sen will dance in Baber Mahal's main courtyard, which looks magical when illuminated at night. The two-hour performance will open with a lecture-demonstration to introduce the technical side of Odissi dance. Although this is her first solo performance outside India, Sen is not new to performing internationally. With her troupe, she has travelled to the US, Belgium, Germany, France, and the UK. ●

Date: Sunday, 10 September.

Time: 6.30 PM

Tickets: Rs 2,000 per person (includes dinner) at Chez Caroline, 4263070, and Baithak, 4267346



MIN BAJRACHARYA

RN Joshi retrospective

Park Gallery dedicates a new art complex to its founder

Back when Kathmandu had a cosmopolitan café culture, Ratna Park was where it was at.

It's all gone now, torn down by Kathmandu's demolition man mayor Keshab Sthapit. But in 1968, near Rani Pokhari was a complex that housed the famous Park Restaurant and next to it was the Park Gallery.

People hung out at the café and strolled over to admire art.

Conceived of by artist RN Joshi, Park Gallery was not just Nepal's first gallery of modern art but also a school for budding artists. Joshi took his students out into the outskirts to paint nature in the raw. Years later, Joshi shifted to his native Patan and set up his Park Gallery in Jawalakhel.

Joshi died in 1988 at 50. Now, his daughter Nira (pictured) and son Navin have renovated the premises and turned it into a museum of their dad's work as well as a modern gallery to exhibit works by other artists. The complex is being inaugurated on Sunday by Indian ambassador Shiv Shanker Mukherjee and a retrospective of RN Joshi's work will be on display from 11-25 September.

RN Joshi was trained at Bombay's JJ School of Art under an Indian government scholarship. He returned to Nepal

and at first shunned modern impressionistic styles, arguing that it would be difficult for Nepalis to understand it.

Unlike other Nepali artists of the time, he became a travelling landscape artist. He took his brushes, colours, and canvas and toured his magnificent country, sitting down to paint wherever the scenery fascinated him.

"My dad was a pioneer in travelling landscape art, he was very spontaneous," says Nira, who is curator of Park Gallery. Even though he only showed his landscapes and water colours in public, few people know that in private RN Joshi also painted impressionistic oil on canvas. Joshi also went through a deeply spiritual phase and used tantric motifs a lot.

'Earth Eclipse' and 'Voice of Silence' are from his spiritual phase. Indeed, it was when he returned from Japan that he started working on his exquisite work, 'Universe' depicting the divine Hindu trinity in a serene and cosmic blue-green backdrop.

Ninety percent of his works were snapped up by expats in the 1980s and are abroad, but the Joshi clan has collected what it can for this retrospective. RN Joshi's wife and five children are all artists. ●

RN Joshi Retrospective
Park Gallery
Jawalakhel
11-25 September

Eastern cars for eastern roads



into markets traditionally captured by Japanese, European and American automakers. In India, for example, it has outpaced the better-known premium segment cars. It's also a lesson in how to turn a company and country around.

Skoda, which was founded in 1895, doesn't just make sleek, tough, high-functioning cars. It has also leveraged its experience as one of the world's oldest automakers to reinvent its product and become a major driver of the Czech economy. It is also a major driver of the strong Czech economy and its success has enticed German, Japanese, Korean, and Chinese companies to set up large manufacturing operations in the country. In 2004, the Czech Republic joined the EU and Skoda launched its Octavia

model, which was voted Car of the Year across Europe. At that time, the Czech economy, together with those of Estonia and Slovenia was in the top three of the 15 new countries that entered the EU recently. Two years later, the Czech Republic is itself considered an engine of the European economy, in large part because of its hundreds of automobile and autoparts industries.

The already-classic Octavia, which gets raves and four-star ratings on whatcar.com, is already available in India, and will soon be on the streets of Kathmandu too. The Octavia is often seen as a sturdier version of the VW Golf and comes with a huge range of options and variants designed to maximise safety, comfort, and functionality. ●



Time was that the mention of cars like Skoda, Lada, and Yugo used to make people giggle or snort derisively. The Yugo is a distant memory, and Lada is just chugging along. But the Skoda company, which is now wholly owned by Volkswagen, has become a major player in the international automobile scene. Today the brand is eating

Classic Encounters

Second edition of the series in full swing

As part of its continued commitment to promote good music, Surya Classic, the premium brand from Surya Nepal, is back with the second edition of Surya Classic Encounters from 3 - 20 September at various exclusive venues in Kathmandu. This series will focus on building up to the Surya Classic Jazzmandu to be held from 12 October.

The second edition of Surya Classic Encounters kicked off on 3 September, Sunday with 1974 AD playing unplugged at J Bar in Thamel. Nepal's best loved rock band showed they had more than rock in their veins when they performed instrumental, jazz, blues, funk tracks like Irish Coffee, P Funk, Crossing, and their Nepali jazz composition "Timro Maya" along with ever green melody numbers such as "Samjhi Baschhu" and their new song "Madhu Masta". Kathmandu's premium crowd swooned to the beats from 8-11PM.

The Surya Classic Encounters continues on 8 September. Guitar virtuoso Anil Shahi and friends, percussionist Pritam Rai and flautist Binod Katuwal will be performing a combination of fusion with folk, funk, and Arabic tunes and a bit of Spanish flamenco in Absolute Bar, Pulchowk. Shahi has learnt Hindustani classical flute under acclaimed masters in Benaras but is known more for his classical fusion guitar style. His first album Maya Mantra established him as one of Nepal's finest guitarist.

On 9 September, Kathmandu's new jazz outfit Stupa will be performing at Jatra. The band consists of bassist Nirakar Yakthumba, percussionist Sanjay Shrestha, guitarist and vocalist Yuvraj Chhetri, guitarist Bimal Gurung and saxophonist Mariano. Stupa will be performing numbers by Miles Davis and RB Hane and other blues, jazz, acid jazz, funk, rock, and reggae tracks including their original compositions Right Path and Clear Blue Sky.

Surya Classic Encounters is brought to you by Surya Classic and is an exclusive invitation only event. The event is managed by Party Nepal.



Upcoming events

Anil Shahi and friends @ Absolute Bar, Pulchowk, 8 September, 8PM

Stupa @ Jatra, Thamel, 9 September, 8PM

Cadenza @ Olive Bar, Radisson Hotel, 15 September, 8PM

Stupa @ Rodi Bar, Soaltee Hotel, 15 September, 8PM

Cadenza @ Fusion Bar, Dwarikas Hotel, 16 September, 7PM

1974 AD @ Liquid Lounge, Lazimpat, 20 September, 8PM††



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Classic

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in the valley

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WITH ANIL SHAHI, 8PM ONWARDS

9th SEP SATURDAY @ JATRA, THAMEL
WITH STUPA, 8PM ONWARDS



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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **British Council Reading Mission** exhibition of 106 new fiction books for children, 8 September 10AM-4PM at British Council
- ❖ **A Retrospective** exhibition of RN Joshi's works at Park Gallery, Pulchok, 11-25 September. 5522307
- ❖ **Reflections** paintings by Chanda Shah at The Art Shop till 18 September. 4267063
- ❖ **3000 Trail Bridges** photo exhibition of trail bridges at Patan Museum Café till 19 September, 10AM-5PM.
- ❖ **Impressions of Manang** 10-28 September, Nepal Tourism Board.

EVENTS

- ❖ **International Literacy Day** 8 September
- ❖ **Carnival** to celebrate world literacy day at Hyatt Regency, 10AM on 9 September.
- ❖ **Being a Student in Germany** a seminar at German Info and Culture Centre, Thamel, 10 September. 4700835
- ❖ **Dinner Spectacle** with Odissi Dance performance by Diya Sen at Baber Mahal Revisited, 10 September. 6.30 PM. 4263070
- ❖ **Foreign Aid and Nepali Politics** with Jeevan Subedi, 10 September, 3PM at Martin Chautari. 4238050
- ❖ **Films Out of Mind** at Lajimpat Gallery Café, *Being John Malkovitch* on 12 September, *A Beautiful Mind* on 14 September.
- ❖ **Courses** on participatory peace-conflict assessment and human rights/rights based approach, 13-15 September. 4432602
- ❖ **Sports Journalism in Nepal** with Raju Silwal and Himesh Bajracharya, 14 September, 3PM at Martin Chautari
- ❖ **Garment Industry in Nepal Under WTO Framework** with Chiranjibi Tiwari, 16 September, 3PM at Martin Chautari
- ❖ **Ghatasthapana** 23 September
- ❖ **Naya Nepal Conference** organised by Action Aid Nepal and the Social Science Baha, 26-27 September. 9841419943

MUSIC

- ❖ **The Best of Rock, Funk, Jazz and Reggae** with Stupa and Riki at Moksh Live on 8 September, 8PM. 5526212
- ❖ **Putaliko Ghar** Nepali adaptation of *A Doll's House* at Gurukul till 9 September. 4466956
- ❖ **Take 5 Jazz Night** with Cadenza, Dwarika's Hotel on 16 September, Rs. 1200, 7PM. 479488
- ❖ **Ramailo Saanjh** with Anil Shahi's Maya Mantra at Dwarika's, 26 September, Rs 1000
- ❖ **Oktober Fest** a fusion of food music and at Dwarika's, 29 September, Rs 850
- ❖ **Open Mic Night** at ViaVia Café, Thamel every Friday, 8PM.
- ❖ **Heartbreakers** live every Friday at Rum Doodle Bar & Restaurant. 4422613

DINING

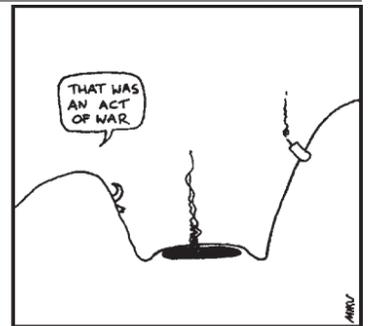
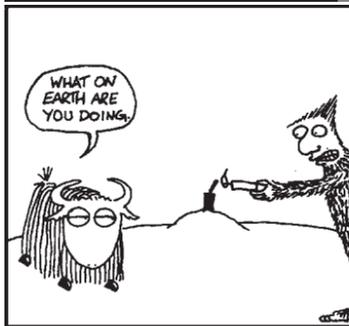
- ❖ **Grand Dosa Fest** at Hyatt Regency till 10 September. 4491234
- ❖ **Mezza and Margarita** at Dwarika's Fusion, every Wednesday at 5.30 PM, Rs 555. 4479448
- ❖ **Saffron** new Indian restaurant at Hotel Shangri-la, 25 percent discount as a promotional offer. 4412999
- ❖ **Seven Sensations** at Hotel Yak & Yeti, cocktails and snacks. 4248999
- ❖ **Thakali Lunch** special price, everyday at Moksh. 5526212
- ❖ **Nhuchee's Kitchen** at the Organic Village, Baluwatar for lunch, dinner, and breakfast on weekends. 4414383
- ❖ **Sizzler Promotion** at Hotel Himalaya. 5523900
- ❖ **Authentic Thai Food** at Krua Thai, Thamel. 4701291
- ❖ **Monsoon Madness Wine Festival** enjoy wines from four continents at Kilroy's of Kathmandu. 4250440
- ❖ **Traditional Cuisine** at Patan Museum Café. 5526271
- ❖ **Wet & Wild Summer Splash** swimming and lunch, or overnight stay with breakfast and swimming, Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **Weekend Brunch** at Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4491234
- ❖ **Breakfast** Singma Restaurant, 8.30-11AM daily. 5009092

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge** open for new season from 1 September. 4361500
- ❖ **Nature Retreat** at Park Village Resorts & Spa. 4375280
- ❖ **Escape Kathmandu** at Shivapuri Heights Cottage. 9841371927
- ❖ **Escape to Godavari Village Resort**, an overnight stay package with breakfast & swimming. 5560675

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

YAK YETI YAK

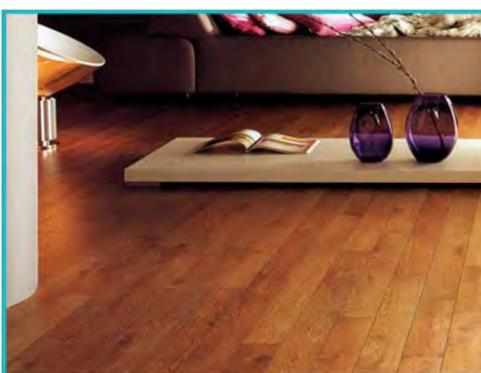


by MIKU

Quest Entertainment

Lage Raho Munnabhai is the sequel to 2003's hit comedy *Munnabhai M.B.B.S.* Once again good-hearted local thug Munnabhai (Sanjay Dutt) and his loyal sidekick Circuit (Arshad Warsi) find themselves in a host of unlikely situations when Munnabhai masquerades as a history professor to impress radio jockey Jhanvi (Vidya Balan). As usual, there's more than a few unexpected surprises, and hilarity ensues.

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NEPALI WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL



Officially, the monsoon beats its retreat in two weeks, but already last week's satellite picture showed signs of its early departure. The cyclone seen in central India, for example, sent no clouds north. The recent pressure chart shows that a low pressure zone over Tibet is gradually shifting to the southern Himalaya, but losing strength as it does. The cloud patch over east Nepal in Thursday afternoon's satellite picture will bring only light rains in hilly areas there. As we mentioned two weeks ago, unless there is a dramatic change, this monsoon will be the driest in three decades, floods notwithstanding. Valley residents will have a pleasant weekend, with sunny intervals and light afternoon rains.

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KIRAN PANDAY

CEREMONIAL ROLE: King Gyanendra and Queen Komal watch as the Kumari's chariot is pulled past in Basantapur during Indra Jatra on Wednesday.



KIRAN PANDAY

WHO HE?: President of FNCCI, Chandi Raj Dhakal (extreme left) shares the podium with Maoists Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Nanda Kishore Pun and Saligram Jammakatel (l-r) at a mass meeting of the Maoist-affiliated trade union at Khula Manch on Wednesday. Industrialist Dhakal has been blacklisted for being a wilful defaulter.



NEPALNEWS.COM/RAM HUMAGAIN

OPEN ARMS: Chief of Army Staff Rukmangrat Katuwal hugs double athletic gold winner and member of Nepal Army's Tribhuvan Club, Rajendra Bhandari, at a ceremony to honour sportsmen returning from the SAG games on Sunday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

GRIDLOCKED: An ambulance is stuck at Ratna Park on Tuesday as taxi and microbus drivers protesting the murder of a cab driver blocked roads all over the city.



KIRAN PANDAY

BRIGHT SPARKS: Suhrid Jyoti, Suruchi Jyoti, and Abheek Jyoti of the Jyoti Group raise the trophy they won at the Surya Lights Brainstorm corporate quiz organised by boss magazine at Soaltee Crowne Plaza on Tuesday. To the side is Harsh Madhav Dar, CEO of Surya Nepal.

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Showing a red flag to a bull

Now that the birth of a grandson to Emperor Akihito has defused a succession crisis in Japan, we couldn't help thinking how far ahead Nepal is, because our parliament has already decreed in favour of female succession. It's just that we may not have a monarchy by the time a female comes around. Our female royals don't have it easy these days given the kind of commoners they are married to. The **First Daughter** has scars in her scalp and clumps of hair missing and no prizes for guessing whodunit. Given the CP's reputation for roughing up people in discos you'd think he'd take it upon himself to defend his sister from the misogynist she seems to be married to. But with much more serious stuff at stake, no one at the palace seems to have time to think of petty matters like wife-battering.



And at the rate **Daddy** is attending ceremonies these days, it does seem like he is growing into his ceremonial role. Despite uncertainties and rumours, King G and Queen K managed to make it to the balcony of Hanuman Dhoka on Indra Jatra and toss coins at the Kumari in a ceremony that dates back to his ancestor's conquest of the Valley on this very day 237 years ago. Come to think of it, in terms of political power, there is now really very little difference between the living goddess and the king. So why not keep them both as tourist attractions? NTB must seriously consider recruiting the king as a roving ambassador or even a mascot for tourism promotion. At least he'd have something to do.



Even before the autumn tourist season gets underway Kathmandu hotels are already chock-a-block full. Many lodgings in the Thamel area are reporting **100 percent** occupancy because of Maoists who are in town this week for a series of conventions. And thank heavens for that, because without the comrades our domestic convention tourism would be in bad shape. The Maoists are low-budget tourists, though, and have an ingenious way to get dramatic discounts by playing around with ominous-looking sockets while bargaining with the manager on room tariffs. With hotel rooms all booked, thousands of comrades are also staying as house guests in homes on the outskirts of Kathmandu and Patan.



Someone must do something before Nepal's ex-majestic seven-party government becomes known as a **rubber stamp** body. Even as reports pour in of Nepalis being detained in airports around the world for carrying suspected forged passports because of the spelling mistakes on the rubber stamps, we now hear that the deputy-prime minister's office doesn't just need a spell checker—it needs its head examined. A rubber stamp bearing the coat of arms of the Government of Nepal (with cow, danfe, soles of a pair of feet, two flags and still topped off by a bird-of-paradise feather crown) says: 'Personal Secretariate of Deputy Prime Minister & Primeminister of Health & Population Ramshahapath'. Being an ex-headmaster, we are glad to note that **Amikdai** can still spell 'secretariate' and that his address doesn't say Prachandapath. But the rubber stamp does prove what we knew all along, that the good comrade has ambitions.



Speaking of comrades, we've just been perusing **Vol 1 No 1** of the new political tabloid 'Rato Jhanda' weekly in which every article is a vitriolic tirade against Prachanda. Sample headlines: 'Prachanda meets secretly with Indian intelligence', 'Prachanda silent on Indian expansionism', 'Prachanda soft on king', and a hard-hitting editorial titled 'Onward with the Proletarian Revolution, Our Pledge'. The debut issue also contains a major chunk of the 9,000 word interview by **Comrade Azad** of the Communist Party of India (Maoist), in which he tears apart our own Prachanda for selling out to the reactionaries. It all becomes clear who is behind Rato Jhanda if you flip to page 3 which contains a lengthy op-ed by Rabintra Shrestha titled 'Lessons of Neo-Prachandapath, Khrushchevism, Trotskyism and Brezhnevism'. **Gulp.** If you want to delve into the inner workings of the Maoist mind, this weekly paper is highly recommended. The Awful One told a visiting International Media Mission this week his party would do nothing to curb the freedom of press. Maybe he will make an exception for Rato Jhanda?



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