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KUNDA DIXIT

## Bridge-building

The people don't want more squabbling, they want to see their country being re-built

### EDITORIAL

**O**n the first anniversary of the April Uprising, there is cynicism inside the Ring Road. In most other parts of the country there is hope for the future.

Many people from Jhapa to Kanchanpur that we spoke to in the past week count their blessings: the end to fighting, the

dramatic achievements of the past year from the ceasefire to the interim government, mainstreaming of the Maoists, being able to travel along the highways without checkpoints, the night buses running again, police posts being re-established, and a general feeling that things are returning to normal.

But the expected peace dividend is conspicuously

missing. The people expected the government to be efficient about service delivery, about fast-tracking showcase projects like the Sindhuli Highway or the Hetauda shortcut to the tarai, about quick decisions on hydropower. But all they got were fuel shortages, power cuts, and a business-as-usual attitude. Only the army seems to have its wits about itself and has rushed the completion of the Karnali Highway to Jumla.

The eight parties now need to focus on development, the economy. These things do not have to wait for elections, and

ignoring them creates conditions not just for anarchy and lawlessness, but for another, far messier revolution.

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# One more chance

## The risks and opportunities of delayed elections

### ALL THE PEOPLE ALL THE TIME

Nepalis in the districts seem to have a totally different set of priorities than the leaders of the eight parties. They don't understand why everyone is getting so worked up about postponement of the constituent assembly election. If the country is not ready for it, postpone till after Dasain, what's the fuss about dates, they say.

There is similar apathy about the king, most people are neither die-hard republicans nor die-hard monarchists. In fact, there is a what-do-you-expect attitude about Kathmandu's self-obsession with the trappings of power.

Making the same mistakes over and over again still has its consequences. The political choices are still there, it's about choosing the correct fork on the road. And that can be left to the people at election time.

How about listening to the people, instead of whipping them into a frenzy over every small thing? It's not enough anymore to say the right things, you have to do the right things. Nepalis across Nepal see through your self-righteous grandstanding. You can't fool all the people all the time.



The decision to postpone elections to the constituent assembly came as a damp squib, rather than a bombshell. Perhaps this is an indicator of the leisurely style of the transition to the new political and social order.

Cancellation of June elections has led to disappointment, confusion, anxiety, and even anger among the people. But even those who



**GUEST COLUMN**  
**Yash Ghai**

heaved a sigh of relief did so, not because they did not see the value of a June election, but because they were afraid of the consequences of flawed elections and contested results.

The postponement gives much-needed time for a number of processes. There is an opportunity to provide people with information about the constitution-making process and the role of the constituent assembly, and time to promote the participation of the people in constitution-making. Perhaps voters can now cast their votes knowing its consequences, something that would certainly not have been the case in June.

The longer interregnum allows time to prepare for the elections and for the work and facilities of the constituent assembly. The parties—and other groups who have been focusing solely on elections—have a chance to reflect on the nature of the constitution-making process. The grievances of marginalised communities may be dealt with more systematically. There is also time to explore substantive

options for the new constitution.

There are potential pitfalls, of course. An undemocratic system is getting a new lease of life. No significant progress has been made on any constitution and assembly-related matters since the reinstatement of the House of Representatives and the formation of multi-party government a year ago. The government itself has all the problems of a coalition, and these are likely to increase the longer the somewhat unstable coalition has to function. The recriminations and squabbling between the—parties provoked by postponement of elections could divert attention even more from the procedures critical to a meaningful constitution-making process. Already at least one party has said it feels freed from inter-party agreements on the path to a new constitution. For the peace process, the problems in the cantonments will intensify, posing an additional threat to the viability of the interim constitution.

The way in which the interim constitution was negotiated, and the rather cavalier approach of the political parties to it, had already devalued its role as a roadmap. It is possible that it will be further marginalised, as parties haggle over partisan political advantages. Key decisions on constitutional and political structures could continue to be ad hoc and exclusionary, perhaps not always made in a principled way by a small group of party leaders—constitution-making in a crisis. Some even think that perhaps, piece by piece in this way, a constitution will be stitched up by the coalition, making the constituent assembly

irrelevant, even unnecessary. It is possible that well before we reach that stage the whole thing will have spun out of control and the transitional arrangements negotiated over such a long period would collapse.

If this comes to pass, a great opportunity will have been squandered to move the country to a stable and just democratic future. The promise of a participatory process culminating in a truly representative constituent assembly, commanding the respect of all communities and regions, could have helped Nepal negotiate a new national vision and identity, and legitimacy for state structures. A democratic and participatory transitional process, at least after the initial ceasefire and peace issues are settled, is essential to consolidate democracy. In this regard the process so far has not served the country well. People feel let down because they are convinced a mid-June election was within the reach but has been allowed to slip away. But the postponement of the elections will give time to reflect on all this, and open the way to a more participatory and legitimate process. One way forward would be to appoint an independent commission to consult widely on constitutional options and prepare recommendations for the constituent assembly. This will reassure the people that the process is on track and that they are being listened to. ●

*Yash Ghai is professor emeritus at the University of Hong Kong, was chair of Kenya's constituent assembly, and has been senior adviser to the constitution-making processes in Afghanistan and Iraq.*

# An unfinished uprising

## A year later, the tarai is still struggling for inclusive loktantra

JALESWOR – Things look different a year after the April Uprising here in this Mahottari border town. But what changes you see depends on where you stand.

In Kathmandu, the concerns are about the delayed constituent assembly elections and the shenanigans of the Young Communist League.



**STATE OF THE STATE**  
**C K Lal**

Here it is about Madhesi representation and the unfinished revolution. There is an element of truth in all the allegations about the fires that raged here in January: royalist meddling, a 'foreign hand', forces of Hindu fundamentalism, disgruntled, disaffected members of society disturbing the democratisation process, the government's inability to maintain law and order. But none of these explanations gets to the heart of the problem.

Decades of discrimination, neglect, and oppression have alienated a large section of madhesi. Being moderate here these

days earns you a 'coward' tag. In Mahottari it's easy to see why, and to catch a revealing glimpse of the emotional distance between Kathmandu's rulers and the tarai.

At the edge of town, flying the national flag, is an early-20<sup>th</sup> century mansion built by Ram Sumsher, a C-Class Rana banished to the madhes by his purist clansmen. It has been home to powerful agents of the crown, *badhakims* and *anchaladhises* like Damodar Sumsher and Lila Raj Bista.

The present occupant of this crumbling edifice is CDO Ratan Raj Pandey, a descendent of royal priests, Kathmandu's top man here, the most powerful person in the district. The two officers in the District Administration Office are fine men, of pahadi bahun stock, and the Superintendent of Police is a Chand.

Individually, most pahadi officers and employees are well-liked and respected. But there is an incongruity in the fact that, in a district where over four-fifths of population is madhesi, almost every office is staffed exclusively by pahadis.

Then there's the matter of how little noble pahadi settlers have been vested in

the communities around them. In a district where the big landlords are Sharmas, Upadhyas, Ghimires and Pants, the first school here had to be built by a Marwari Murarka. The college had to wait for a Yadav donor.

In Janakpur, the town that Koiralas, Ranas, Sharmas, Singh Thakuris, and Ghimires claim as theirs there is no philanthropic effort bearing these names. The first few schools, the college, the hospital, and several temples were built by the Sah family, who were humble traders in comparison with the Ranas and Giris who made fortunes off the tarai's resources.

Individuals are not obliged to be altruistic, but the government is and its neglect is noticeable. Janakpur's highways, roads, airport and water supply have been set up with Indian assistance. The most visible reminder of the government are security personnel, which reinforces the sense of living in occupied territory.

Indian Ambassador Shiv Shankar Mukherjee is flooded with petitions for small embassy grants on his periodic

visits here to lay foundation stones, inaugurate school buildings. Girija Prasad Koirala is not likely to receive similar requests for help when he comes here on Saturday to address a mass meeting.

The issues in the tarai are the same as they are for Nepalis around the country—the need for dignity and fundamental freedoms, the right to identity and proof that there is a government that cares.

The Tarai Uprising will continue as long as the peaceful revolution that the eight principal political parties promised remains just words. Most people here understand political complexities.

"Protests in the tarai will diminish the day the government realises the folly of playing dirty power games in Kathmandu," says a paan vendor near the vandalised statue of Bhanubhakta in Janakpur.

When Koirala comes visiting, he should talk less and listen more. People may not have readymade answers, but they have interesting stories, especially of the sacrifices that madhesi have made for his party. It's payback time. The consequence of defaulting on this will be a total rout of moderate forces. ●



## LETTERS

## OLD HABITS

Your editorial was an excellent analysis of UML and Maoist politicians ('New year, old habits', #344). But how about the Congress? All politicians of all parties should be able to take criticism. Hastily declaring a republic and blaming everything bad on the monarchy is not going to solve all our problems. It takes time to repair the damage that has been done over 10 years.

The country needs strong law and order. Businessmen and ordinary citizens still fear Maoist extortion. Everybody wants an election, but not everyone can participate without fear. One wonders whether the parties will be able to present the people with proper agendas, and what will be done to educate all Nepalis about what elections to the constituent assembly mean. We don't need a rushed election, we need one where there is maximum voter turnout.

**Bimal Raj Bastola, New York**

## REFERENDUM

There is a danger that regressive elements will infiltrate the constituent assembly, and engineer an undemocratic constitution. The only way to protect the achievements of Jana Andolan II is for the interim parliament to come to a political decision to declare a republic and amend the interim constitution in a way that satisfies mother tongue communities, dalits, castes, and women.

As Maitalal Gurung writes, a national referendum for the ratification of a republican constitution by the people would be the safest and quickest way to consolidate the achievements of the Jana Andolan II ('Horse before the cart', Guest Column, #344).

**Ravi Manandhar, Kuleswor**

## VOTE CONFUSION

Navin Singh Khadka's 'Vote Confusion' (#344) clearly shows that our leaders, Girija Prasad Koirala, Madhab Kumar Nepal and the rest of the eight-party crew should stop worrying about the election date and focus more on election preparedness, in particular voter education.

If that weren't enough trouble, there are burning national issues—in particular the demands of the

madhes community—that need to be hammered out through roundtable consultations. Also, UNMIN has to carry out the second phase of its mandate, verifying Maoist combatants.

Nepal has joined, dropped out, and rejoined the Global Democracy Club a few times by now. We don't want an exclusionary election do we, after vouching for democracy all along for the last 17 years?

**Surya B Prasaj, email**

## MISSING WOMEN

Re: 'Where are the women?' (Here and there, #342). Women bear the brunt of the different kinds of discrimination in Nepal on the basis of class, caste, and ethnicity.

I agree that the major problem is patriarchal thinking. But more than that, it comes down to the financial position of women. A woman who is economically independent can challenge patriarchal thinking, and social prejudices. A woman who is not, needs a lot more courage to do so.

Gender inequalities are rooted in the way in which relations between men and women are structured and determined. This is clearly reflected in everything we do. Creating opportunities for economic and social empowerment are essential to combat social discrimination and economic vulnerabilities. Women and men must both be targeted through awareness raising campaigns about human rights and social equity.

And this must happen in real life, in the beliefs, attitudes, and practices of men and women, not just at speeches, seminars, and workshops. Perhaps men should start small, making their own tea, noodles, and rotis—not only as chefs in fancy hotels, but right at home.

**Bhawana Upadhyay, Jawalakhel**

## UNDER MY ASS

Why has 'Under My Hat' been discontinued? Amidst all that is going on now, we really need a humorous poke at Nepali politics. I hope Kunda Dixit will resume writing the column.

**Name withheld, email**

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THOMAS L KELLY

**PAINTING THE TOWN RED:** The increasingly visible Young Communist League has been holding meetings and rallies around the country. Last week this one in Phaplu, Solu (*left*) was attended by 200 people, many of whom marched over from Salleri (*left second*). Shortly below a YCL gate welcoming foreign visitors in Phakding (*left*) is a counter where they process 'donations' (*left bottom*). The YCL office in Nepalganj is housed in this building (*below*) the Maoists took over from a royal relative.



KUNDA DIXIT

# The YCL is just another name for Maoist guerrillas not openly carrying guns

## An armless army



THOMAS L KELLY



MIN BAJRACHARYA



MIN BAJRACHARYA

### RAMESWOR BOHARA in NEPALGANJ

**K**nown by their English acronym YCL, the Young Communist League has emerged as the strong arm of the Maoists as the party joins the government and prepares to campaign for elections.

In the cities, the YCL has now come to be known for its summary justice and intimidation and is dreaded for the practice of roughing up anyone who stands in the way. In the tarai, the YCL has been blamed for its militant tactics that have alienated madhesis.

The YCL doesn't even try to hide the fact that it is composed of former battalion and company commanders of the 'People's Liberation Army'—personnel who should theoretically be inside UN-run cantonments under last year's peace agreement.

"The YCL is a fusion of the party's military and political character," admits the league's chairman Ganesh Man Pun, "it is composed of PLA members who have an interest in politics."

Political analysts say the league has been created to keep former guerrillas occupied and in control, but also play organisational and security roles for the political leadership. Indeed, in Kathmandu the YCL has been involved in high-profile street cleaning, demolition of illegal structures, crime control, and planting trees along Tundikhel.

But the YCL has also been active in continued intimidation and extortion despite the fact the parent party is in government. It was in response to complaints from the public that police made the unprecedented move of searching three YCL offices in Kathmandu on Sunday.

In Nepalganj, the YCL office is located in the five-storey house belonging to a royal relative that was confiscated by the Maoists last year. The head of the league in Nepalganj is also its central committee member, Jhak Bahadur Malla who used to be Comrade Sudip, the commander of the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Maoist Pratap Smriti Brigade. The deputy chief is Comrade Kabita, whose husband was killed in action during a battle in Syangja three

years ago in which both participated. The YCL's deputy chief, Uma Bhujel used to be a commissar and general secretary Dilip Prajapati used to be Comrade Bhisma in the PLA. Treasurer Bhagat Baduwal was a battalion commander. Other central committee members like Chandra Bahadur Thapa Magar used to be Comrade Sagar, a battalion commander of the Dinesh-Ramji Smriti Brigade. He is now YCL's Kathmandu in-charge. Sabitri Gurung used to deputy battalion commander and is now a senior league figure.

It is clear that a large proportion of the senior PLA leaders are not in camps at all but in the cities living as YCL cadre. They have been involved in organising security for Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal's nationwide tour in March during which young Maoists were involved in several violent incidents against madhesi activists. Most of those killed in the massacre in Gaur on 21 March were YCL cadre.

In a speech during the memorial in Kathmandu for Maoists killed in Gaur, YCL general secretary warned: "If attacks against us continue, we will mobilise the 21 divisions of YCL and seven divisions inside the camps."

It seems clear that the Maoists have sent their militia and trainees to the camps and kept hardcore fighters outside as deterrence against 'reactionaries'. In fact, Maoist leader Ram Bahadur Thapa (Badal) said at a YCL national convention in Kathmandu in February: "If there are conspiracies against us, the league will lead another revolt."

As in Nepalganj, the YCL in Kathmandu is housed in private homes and factories in Balaju, Gongabu, and Bhaktapur. Although the league says the premises were given to them, owners say they were taken over by force.

Here in Nepalganj, the YCL has been seen sporadically in urban cleanup and was involved in intimidation against UML cadre attending a rally by Madhab Nepal in Kailali. Recently, the group claimed—but did not follow through—that it was going to the border region of Laxmanpur that is inundated as a result of embankment building on the Indian side to draw attention to the problem. ●



New shoes

The Bajra Group has opened a showroom of the Malaysian multinational footwear brand Blay at the United World Trade Centre in Tripureswor. Bajra Group, which was established in 1985, is Blay's 15<sup>th</sup> franchise and holds a five year contract to market their products. The product line includes outdoor classic, occupational, and fashion footwear.



Lucky 13



Bank of Kathmandu recently celebrated its 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary. BoK already has 13 branches and five counters and plans to open three new branches in the coming year. The bank assists marginalised or underprivileged groups, including female public transport drivers, by providing low interest loans. BoK's other social welfare programs including help for HIV/AIDS patients and the handicapped. The bank has more than 80,000 customers.

Doing good

On the 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pasang Lhamu Sherpa's ascent of Chomolungma, Yeti Airlines is offering a 30 percent discount to all female passengers from 3 May. Yeti Airlines, which has the largest domestic air network, also has an active corporate social responsibility program. Over the past six months, Yeti has collected Rs 222,000 by contributing Rs 4 for every passenger for Maiti Nepal, Nepal Leprosy Relief Fund, the Organisation for Community, Child and Environment Development, and TEWA.



Carwash



Customers at Bluebird Mall can have their cars washed and detailed while they shop. Hansraj Hulaschand's Easy Car Wash is open from 10AM-8PM, seven days a week. The carwash also offers membership for quick cleaning at subsidised rates. Hansraj Hulaschand has been in the automobile business for 30 years and imports vehicles from Daihatsu, Ssangyong, and Proton Motors.

New account

Machhapuchchhre Bank has launched its new Pewa Savings Account. Special features include a minimum balance of just Rs 500, 4 percent interest, free ATM/ debit card, 50 percent discount on locker rental, and free mobile banking services. Account holders with a balance higher than Rs 15,000 will be entered into a monthly lottery with a refrigerator, a microwave oven, and a vacuum cleaner as prizes. Machhapuchchhre Bank has 12 branches around the country.

Summer scheme

Gorkha Brewery's new summer scheme, Jolly Summer Bonanza, offers a free pack of Shakalaka Boom noodles with every Jolly Shandy or Jolly Lemonade. Jolly Shandy is a beer and lemonade combination with one percent alcohol.



New showroom

Morang Auto Works, official distributors of Yamaha bikes, is opening a new showroom at Chuchepati, Chabahil. The showroom will display Yamaha bikes and offer genuine spare parts and servicing. Inaugural offers until 14 May include gift hampers, 50 percent off on servicing and lube, and five percent off on spare parts.

Second showroom



Koutons Retail India, a leading menswear brand, has opened a second showroom, in Putalisadak. The brand has over 650 outlets across India and is offering inaugural discounts of up to 30 percent for the Nepali market. Koutons is distributed by Nishant Enterprises.

Watch offer



Philips is offering a Tag Heuer watch worth over Rs 100,000 with every purchase of a Philips Plasma or LCD television, or home theatre system. All plasma and LCD sets come with a five-year warranty. Syakar Company is the authorised distributor of Philips products.

Book celebration

British Council will be exhibiting 200 new fiction titles for children and adults from 23-25 April to mark World Book Day on 23 April. There will also be a bookmark painting competition for children from grades 4-10 in three different categories. The three winners in each category will receive free membership to the library for a year and book gift vouchers of Rs 3,000, Rs 2,000, and Rs 1,000. The winners will be announced on 1 May, and the exhibited books will be available for checkout from that day.

NEW PRODUCTS

AVEO U-VA: Vijaya Motors is introducing the new Chevrolet Aveo U-VA. The U-VA has a modern Italian design and roomy interiors, and improves upon the older Chevrolet Aveo with ground clearance increased to 188mm, reinforced suspension, improved air-conditioning, and full chrome headlamps. The hatchback is produced by General Motors India and comes with a warranty of 6,000km or six months, whichever comes first.



Speak your mind

As citizens we all need to engage with informed, moderate debate

This week the Beed has been reflecting on the different kinds of gaps and schisms in our society, and the need to find a middle path.



ECONOMIC SENSE  
Artha Beed

At the graduation ceremony of Silver Mountain Hotel Management School, young Nepalis training to make a career in the global hospitality industry put on a world-class show, exuding confidence and competence. At the same function, watching from the front row were dignitaries who perhaps found it difficult to relate to these young, ambitious compatriots of theirs.

You see such divides more and more in Nepal. On the one hand, young, educated people eager to make their mark in the global workplace. On the other, physically and mentally older policymakers, conservative supporters of the status quo. What could be a productive meeting ground for these two sets of Nepalis?

One curious aspect of the currently fashionable backlash against the perceived homogenisation of Nepal starting with its unification is the revival of centuries-old customs and traditions, and reverential videos and films about them. The Beed wonders why we can't keep the good old things while still moving with the times. For example, why can't we make movies in mother tongues, but about progressive, successful students and professionals?

Our clash and lockdown of ideologies has led to a vacuum at the centre, and no space for debate. Say we abolish the monarchy. Who is talking about what will follow, whether the next head of state will be a president or chancellor. We talk about federalism but haven't a clue how power will be devolved to the village level. To start talking about the details in which the devil resides—essential things like how villages will collect revenue, how allocations from the centre will be channelled to the villages—we need to first clear a space for proper conversation.

But our eight-party leaders

can't seem to get their heads around important things such as a reconstruction budget, energy security, foreign exchange rates, labour laws, investment flows, and fiscal discipline, they're so busy consolidating their positions, feathering their nests and doling out favours. This lack of informed, open-minded debate is one reason people are sliding back into 1996-style apathy.

If we're not careful, we'll see a return of the myopic power politics of that time, and the last ten years will seem like a picnic. As citizens we all need to engage with the big questions. If the politicians don't start the essential discussions and debates, we need to. It's time for a real citizens' movement. And this one doesn't need to go to the streets or play on old differences. Instead, it needs to view the diversity of identities and ideas in Nepal as the starting point for innovation, to strengthen those things that we do share. Extremist politics of difference or homogeneity only harm the common person. We need to move towards the middle if we want to see a prosperous New Nepal in our lifetimes. ●

“We are confident in Nepal”



**Nepali Times:** What's behind your renewed push in Nepal?

**Ramesh Tainwala:** We entered the Nepali market four years ago and have had to bear a lot of loss. But with the peace process underway, our assessment is that the market environment will be much better. We are confident about launching our products once again.

**What do you see is the future of the Nepali market?**

Boston Consulting in the United States advises the Samsonite Corporation about how to deal with international markets. We know from the tour operators Carlson Wagonlit that they alone will increase the numbers of tourists they bring into Nepal in 2008-09 by over 400 percent. In addition to tourism, business travel will also grow, and we need to be ready before they arrive.

**So the tourist market is large enough?**

We are trying to be more visible in Nepal not just because we want to sell more, but also to offer service. Existing customers will have access to repair services for their products.

**You are offering a large range here; what's new in it?**

The corporation offers five brands: Samsonite, the luxury Black Label, American Tourister for family travels, Timberland for outdoor activities, and Lacoste for women. Samsonite and Black Label are here, we will also introduce Lacoste and Timberland.

**Does this mean a big investment?**

We have four showrooms in Nepal. By the end of the year we plan to have 11. We will also open showrooms in Pokhara, because it is a big tourist destination. We expect additional investment of \$700,000, at \$100,000 per showroom. In addition, we are also organising a global sales meet in Nepal in November.

**The timing was bad when Samsonite entered the Nepali luggage market four years ago. But the company stayed on and, is now ready to take advantage of peacetime. Samsonite is launching a major campaign to improve its visibility and increase points of sale. The company has opened a new showroom at the Bluebird Mall and is preparing to open more showrooms around the country and expand the range of products on sale. Samsonite South Asia president Ramesh Tainwala talked to Nepali Times about the company's plans for the future in Nepal.**



# Madhes mess

Tarun, 16 April

It looks as if Upendra Yadav, who has been accused of forming alliances with the palace and betraying the madhesi movement, may be saved by Minister of Peace and Reconstruction Ram Chandra Poudel. The palace is said to be instrumental in this.

Human rights activists have filed charges of murder against Yadav for the Gaur massacre. Since then, the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum has kept a low profile, in contrast to their strident demands in the past, including the resignation of Home Minister Krishna Prasad Situala. A toned-down MJF is now saying that it is ready to talk to the government. This is being seen as an attempt by Yadav to dodge responsibility for the deaths in Gaur.

Our sources say Yadav had to flee to the border town of Bairganiya because even people within his own organisation have stopped trusting him. When news of Yadav's alliances with the royal palace and Indian criminals became public, the MJF broke into three different groups, one of which is working hard to remove Yadav as the chairman of the forum.

Bijaya Singh, chair of the Madhesi Student's Union and Madhesi Intellectual's Forum, and Rajendra Raya of the Madhesi Dalit Forum have publicly announced that their organisations have split from the MJF. Similarly Madhesi Youth Forum chair Jitendra Sen has said repeatedly that the MJF failed because of Upendra Yadav's leadership.

तस्वर्ण

At a recent MJF central committee meeting there was a heated discussion about the issue of Yadav's allegiances. The central committee decided to keep Yadav on as chairman only because the 27 April deadline for the registration of parties [to contest the constituent assembly elections] made it complicated to appoint a new leadership in time.



KIRAN PANDAY

But even this point is contested, with general secretary Ram Kumar Sharma arguing that the organisation should not be registered as a political party, in order to avoid conflict with madhesi leaders in other parties. He believes the MJF should remain a pressure group.

The Maoists have warned Ram Chandra Poudel to not encourage the Forum. When they learnt about Poudel's recent talks with Yadav, they asked Prime Minister Koirala not to make Poudel the coordinator of the talks committee.

The Maoists won sympathy after Gaur, but the incident has caused a rift within the party. The Madhesi Janamukti Morcha's Satya Narayan Bhagat and Prabhu Sah have accused Matrika Yadav of providing Upendra Yadav with information about how their organisation was planning to launch an attack in Gaur using Young Communist League members and fighters from the Chitwan cantonment. Yadav thus hired professional sharpshooters from Bihar. These criminals were the ones who hunted down YCL activists and fighters from the Chitwan cantonment in Gaur and killed them. The Forum says 11 fighters from Chitwan were killed, but neither the Maoists nor UNMIN have confirmed that.

## Logging in

Himal Khabarpatrika, 14-30 April

हिमाल  
खबरपत्रिका

DHANGADI – It took less than a week after the Maoists were given the Ministry of Forests for the group's Seventh Division at Gorange in Kailali to chop down 60 fully-grown sal trees ostensibly to build beds for their cantonment. The Maoists hired local timber contractors to illegally fell the trees in plots protected by three community forest user groups in the neighbouring villages. Instead of being used for camp furniture as stated most of the logs were taken to saw mills by the contractors. But two trucks carrying the logs were stopped by villagers who unloaded the timber and have kept them near the camps.

After complaints from the

community forestry groups and orders from the CDO, the police apprehended another truck at the saw mill in Dhangadi and sent the timber to be deposited at the District Forest office. This is not the first time that the Maoists have taken part in illegal logging sprees in Kailali using the argument that they need timber for camp construction. DFO Mohan Koirala said the Maoists had told him they needed 3,000 cubic feet of timber to make beds, and said his office was investigating the matter. Maoist Kailali deputy in-charge Shrawan said the trees were felled with full knowledge of the DFO.

Villagers say the Maoists had asked for permission to fell trees in their forest, but even before the users' committee could make a decision the Maoists had already started felling.



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2. Choose your option and send your message as **WC A** or **WC B** or **WC C** to **2722**.
3. You begin the game with 0 runs. There are unlimited questions to be answered.
4. For each correct answer you score 6 runs. No runs lost for incorrect answers.
5. Type **WC SCORE** and **SMS** to **2722** to know your score.
6. For further details call 9805002722.
7. You can play as many times as you wish. Win prizes daily.
8. Runs scored after 7 pm are included in the next day's score. Contest is open 24 hours.
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Kailali's forests have always been a source of resource for the Maoists even during the conflict when they taxed the timber trade. Now, they have stopped taxing timber but seem to have directly chopped down trees to raise money.

Citizen papers

Editorial in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 14-30 April

हिमाल

The current citizenship distribution exercise has taught us all a lesson: never take any accepted theory or statistic as a given. We take motivated or amateur information as a given and through constant repetition turn them into accepted truth. Such mistakes and myths distract

the country's resources and we end up wasting decades in pointless debate. For the past decade we have been talking about the millions in the tarai who don't have citizenship. It turns out we were barking up the wrong tree: the number of people deprived of citizenship is much higher in the hills. Political parties like the UML and the NC set up their own commissions to study the question of citizenship in the tarai. Both concluded that there were up to three million Nepalis who didn't have citizenship living in the madhes, not even the entire tarai. And that became a fact. Neither the commissions nor civil society ever imagined that the hills and himal would have the same

problem. That is why for more than 25 years, Nepal's citizenship problem became synonymous with the madhes problem. The citizenship team has nearly completed its work, and they have so far distributed a total of 2.2 million citizenship certificates in three months: 1.1 million in the tarai and 1.2 million in the rest of the country. This shows how political slogans based on regional, or partisan interest are wrongly turned into a matter of national debate. Even while we are happy that Nepalis, wherever they live, have belatedly got citizenship papers, this example teaches us to be more careful about jumping to convenient conclusions in the future.



Eight parties

Ballot box: Constituent assembly elections

समय Abin Shrestha in *Samaya*, 15 April

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“I am aware that the Maoists do not like me because I have always criticised their policies. I believe that the ten years of the so-called ‘people’s war’ did nothing but senselessly spread terror, and that they need to give up violence and rethink their ideologies if they want to be trusted.”

CPN-UML leader KP Sharma Oli in an interview with *Nepal*, 15 April.

SELECTED MATERIAL TRANSLATED EVERY WEEK FROM THE NEPALI PRESS



KIRAN KRISHNA SHRESTHA

Hemanta after four years

Dhangadi Post, Dhangadi, 18 April

धनगढी पोष्ट

Hemanta Bista was born in Kailali in 1996, the year that the Maoists started their ‘people’s war’. When he was six the police station next to his home in Motipur near Lamki was attacked and seven policemen were killed. The police station lay in ruins and students from a nearby school didn’t venture in because they thought it was haunted. But in 2003, when two photographers were in the building curiosity got the better of them and Hemanta and his friend Aman went inside and were peering through a mortar hole when Amrit Gurung clicked the now-famous photograph which was chosen for the cover of the book, *A People War*. Published by nepalaya, the book is a pictorial story of Nepal’s ten-year conflict. Four years later, when a travelling exhibition of pictures from the book arrived in Dhangadi on Tuesday Hemanta was asked to inaugurate it by unveiling his own photograph (see picture). “I never thought I’d be asked to inaugurate this exhibition,” Hemanta said, “but the pictures also made me sad. I hope we don’t see a war like this again.” Hemanta misses his classmate Aman, who is also in the picture. Aman’s mother died after the picture was taken and his father took him away to India where he doesn’t go to school anymore and works in a restaurant. In Motipur itself, the hole in the wall has been patched up and the police post is being rebuilt—a sign that the country is finally coming out of the ravages of war.

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**TRAUMA WARD:** The corridor of the Chautara hospital is still in ruins a year after the night-long battle that raged here. Nepalaya organised its 'A people war' exhibition of photographs of the conflict amidst the devastation recently.

# The last big battle

One year later, Chautara's hospital rises from the ashes of war

**KUNDA DIXIT** in SINDHUPALCHOK

No one at Chautara hospital who lived through that night of terror exactly a year ago can still speak about it without a trembling voice.

A Maoist force estimated at 1,000 used the hospital to attack an army base guarding an adjacent telecom tower. The first shots were fired just after 9PM on the night of 23 April 2006, a day before King Gyanendra restored parliament after three weeks of nationwide protests.

The Maoists tried to break into the army base using the hospital's corridor. But this was directly in the line of fire of a sandbagged bunker with an army machine gun post. The noise was deafening, bombs were going off and bullets were ricocheting off hospital equipment.

The Maoists evacuated patients from the wards, but a father who was looking after his sick son was killed when a bomb demolished their room and both were buried in the debris.

"There were bodies everywhere, the Maoists were using the maternity clinic as their armoury and had set up a triage down the hall," recalls Nanda Lal Sikarni, who was in charge of the hospital. Like everyone else in Chautara that night, the doctor hid under his bed wide-awake and terrified till dawn.

The fighting subsided a bit at about 1.30 AM when a helicopter circled overhead, but resumed soon after. At the army base, Lieutenant Bhan Bahadur Airi had trained his men to conserve ammunition and they took turns firing as others reloaded ammo clips.

"After the helicopter flew back and they started running low on ammunition, the boys were really scared," Airi recalls, "they wanted to use rocket propelled grenades to fire at the hospital but I couldn't allow it because of the fear of civilian casualties."

Given the intensity and duration of the firefight, it is surprising that only three patients in the hospital and one soldier were killed. Six Maoist bodies were found the next morning but eye-witnesses saw dozens of dead guerrillas being taken away down the mountain.

The next morning the hospital looked like the

war zone that it was. More than 500 improvised explosives littered the wards. The operation theatre, maternity ward, and main corridors were destroyed. There was blood all over the floor where the Maoists treated their wounded comrades.

"I just wish we never have to see such violence again," Sikarni told us last week showing us his bullet-ridden blood pressure gauge. The doctor is determined to push through with an ambitious reconstruction and expansion of the hospital. The Rs 80 million project will turn this into a full-fledged district hospital with an OPD block, a TB section, paediatric department, and a fully-equipped maternity ward.

Even without the conflict and despite its proximity to the capital, Sindhupalchok has maternal and child mortality rates higher than the national average. Nearly 90 percent of all deliveries are still carried out at home, and this week the OPD was full of children with stomach and chest infections.

The army says it had been trying to get the telecom tower moved because of the proximity to the hospital and its vulnerability to attack. Doctors at the hospital had been unsuccessfully trying to get the army to move its observation post from its roof and human rights groups had been critical of the military using the hospital as a sentry point.

The Maoist motive may have been to stage a strategic victory over a district headquarter at a time when a people power uprising was reaching a climax in Kathmandu. For local Maoists it was revenge for the army's helicopter raid in Thokarpa the previous month in which Maoist commander Agni Sapkota narrowly escaped being killed. Thokarpa itself was supposed to be a Maoist victory commemoration for the killing of 13 soldiers in an ambush in Kabhre a few weeks previously.

Chautara got a lot of publicity with the arrival of international media the next morning from Kathmandu but the battle was soon overshadowed by the dramatic events in Kathmandu the next day and the king's restoration of parliament.

As Sikarni showed us the ruins of his hospital, he said: "This is a symbol of the waste of war, but we were lucky this was the last battle before peace was restored. Now we can rebuild." ●





MIN BAJRACHARYA

# April 2006

## Scenes from an uprising

RIDICULE, RAGE, RECRIMINATION: These scenes from Ason, Kirtipur, Tahachal, Gongabu, and Dilli Bajar chronicle some of the many ways in which demonstrators kept the protests going, kept their spirits up, and forced a king to take back his words.



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PICS: KIRAN PANDAY





# The real story

Nepalis don't want to hear glorious myths, they want to work for a glorious future

It's easy enough, in the tiny cloistered compounds of the discourse of Nepal's elite, to believe in that most damaging national myth—that of uniqueness, of exclusivity. Of all the nonsense perpetuated by authoritarians, feudals, and the royal culture here, none has done more harm than negative and narrow exclusivity. The notion that somehow this slice of real estate is utterly unique, beyond geographic and cultural context, and possessed of innate virtue by its very existence. As a patriotic mythology, this is nothing new. America, France, Egypt, and other modern states bask in delusions of uniqueness that serve largely to emphasise exaggerated notions of national decline. The United States has manifest destiny, the thought that American society is a 'castle on a hill' that all others strive for. Or these days, despise. The truth is less dramatic and more malleable. French politicians are uniquely boring in their constant parsing of the nature of France and her 'civilisation'. Never mind that France is an influential, but no means overly-powerful, European state that has contributed much to global society—not least the notion of malaise, a national sickness of heart that moves the locals but bores the rest of us. Egypt's idea that it is the centre of the universe would be laughable if it weren't so relentlessly and humourlessly promoted by national media and political types. But Cairo is the seat of a tottering dictatorship which must associate itself with the glories of Pharaohs and pyramids to stay relevant, not to mention sucking up to Washington while at the same time spouting anti-American rhetoric.



HERE AND THERE  
Daniel Lak



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Nepal's panchayati rulers and kings modelled their myths on such examples, as well as Stalinist and fascist ideas of blood and soil. Thus the land of the Gurkha was born, the land of Mt Everest, the world's only Hindu kingdom, and a list of other exclusionary sub-titles for an otherwise rather pleasant place where citizens didn't actually need their egos and patriotism stoked by falsehoods. My optimism these days rests on these people, who are troubled at the moment, and possibly rather pessimistic, who long for political surety as a means to guarantee their children a future. People who want to be proud of their country not because it has mountains or kings in funny crowns, but because it is a fair, democratic, dynamic place where merit matters and education produces results. Where corruption and crime are punished by due process, and wealth guarantees nothing but a good meal and a fair tax bill. Any politician—of left, right or centre—who wants to get the levers of power in this land needs to know something basic but not always within the grasp of the aspiring leader here. Nepalis want good government, not glorifications of national greatness. They want an elite which knows its place and surrenders it gracefully when bidden by voter demand. They want stability, prosperity, peace. National pride comes from these things, not from the mouth of a blowhard aspiring to get his hands in the till. You can't fool the Nepali people. Surely the political, royal, and revolutionary types are learning this. And if so, that's something to be proud of. ●

# "You need political

Steven Broad, executive director of TRAFFIC International, the wildlife trade monitoring network was in Kathmandu this week for the Global Tiger Forum to discuss big cat conservation and counter Chinese efforts to have the ban on tiger parts trade lifted. Broad talked to Nepali Times about trafficking of endangered species from Nepal and different approaches to controlling it.

**Nepali Times: Where does Nepal stand in the international species trade?**  
**Steven Broad:** Wildlife trade is diverse, from timber to flagship species like rhinos and elephants. Nepal's laws are quite restrictive on what can and cannot be traded. In terms of legal trade you find a lot of medicinal plants going north and south, to China for traditional medicine and India for ayurvedic medicine. India is one of the biggest exporters of medicinal plants, and most of what is exported actually comes from Nepal. When we talk of the trade of endangered species, we are concerned with rhinos, elephants, tigers, leopards. There are many other species of concern too, like musk deer being trafficked from Nepal for their musk in traditional medicines. Behind the scenes there is bird trafficking, and a thriving illegal bird trade in India. Globally there is high demand for reptiles, lizards, and snakes. The hair of the Tibetan antelope, used to make shahtoosh shawls, is smuggled to Jammu and Kashmir, with Kathmandu as the point of sale in the past.

**What are the challenges in controlling the trade of endangered species?**  
Policing is hard. You can smuggle rhino horns or tiger bones in a bag, suitcase or a sack. Second, illegal traders are businessmen, they adapt, and are often one step ahead of the law. It's not just a poor country thing—in Europe 27 wealthy countries are campaigning to enforce laws against the trade of endangered species. That said, in South Asia, there aren't adequate resources for law enforcement. Even if there are government officers carrying out regular checks and they catch someone, what happens next? Are they prosecuted? Do they stay in jail? If you can get away by paying a few hundred dollars and are in a business where you make profits of thousands of dollars, you will pay and get away. Poorly-paid government officers doing dangerous jobs are more likely to look the other way or be involved in illegal trade. We'd like to call that a failure of governance. For Nepal geography is a big challenge, being between the massive, growing economies of India and China, where illegal trade of wildlife is thriving.

**What is TRAFFIC International's reading of the rise in rhino poaching in Nepal?**  
Let me be very clear about one thing: the end market for rhino horn is not strong because the demand is not that high at the moment. We do surveys of traditional medicine in China and east Asian countries and the laws are respected. This isn't a demand-driven trade, but if you had some rhino horns, you'd probably find someone willing to speculate. Rhino protection depends on the security you can provide for the population in the protected areas, and the ability to predict where there are possible poaching problem. Chitwan has devised some model approaches; the communities around the park benefit from protecting the areas, and

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# will to save wildlife"

informers come forward if they hear of businessmen looking for rhino horns in the villages.

My own view, and I talked about this in detail with my colleagues in Chitwan, is that the rise in poaching is a symptom of the security situation. The unpredictability of what will happen creates opportunity. The army, a big part of wildlife protection, has been otherwise occupied. The good news is, I hear from government officials and my colleagues, that they are seriously thinking about getting a grip back on the situation.

## What does it take to address problems of trafficking and poaching?

Political will—an interest and desire right from the top to make sure the controls work. We need people who are trained, who understand the legal framework in which they work, what approaches are available, what skills we need. Forest guards need to be trained to save the scene of crime so evidence is not destroyed. Wildlife



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crime investigation should be intelligence-driven. Cooperation between forest protection, wildlife and national parks, customs, army and border control is vital, as is cross-border cooperation, which almost never happens.

South Africa and China have put together very successful need-based trainings. Intelligence gathering works, with basic tools to work with international organisations like the Interpol, World Customs Organisation, and specialist agencies. There are good examples of that, especially in the UK, where key government agencies, NGOs, and other groups come together to share and set priorities. India is thinking about replicating this model.

India has specialist bureaus for information on wildlife crime where people really specialise and are trained in intelligence gathering and investigation. Forensics is important and WWF in Nepal is thinking seriously about it. It doesn't have to be fancy science, just basic skills that identify whether the bone is from a tiger, whether it is rhino horn or fake skin. It could also be information from the scene of crime.

Again, India has a good wildlife forensics department at the Wildlife Institute of India. We're talking about a similar set-up in Nepal.



## Cat conservation

Conservation experts from 12 countries lobbied hard at this week's International Tiger Symposium here to ensure the ban on the trade in tiger parts stays. Tiger farmers in China are pressurising their government to push for lifting the 14-year-old ban, at least on products from farmed tigers. ('Asia's tiger economy,' #344)

Experts we spoke to said lifting the ban would be a death sentence for wild tigers, as it would provide legal avenues for the laundering of wild tiger products through.

"This is not the time to feed the interests of a few already-rich tiger farmers when people in this region have so worked hard for so many years to make the ban successful," said Susan Lieberman, director of WWF's Global Species Programme and chair of the International Tiger Symposium.

"A clear consensus emerged in the International Tiger Symposium that poaching of tigers in the wild must be combated urgently and that it requires immediate, coordinated efforts both by countries with tiger populations and countries driving the black market demand for tiger parts," Lieberman added.

The symposium, organised by WWF and TRAFFIC International, included tiger scientists, policy experts, and wildlife trade authorities. Seventeen representatives from China reportedly attended the conference, eight of them government officials. The Chinese government has not yet responded on the status of the farmers' petition. ●

Mallika Aryal

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## Making people feel good has a positive domino effect

# Smile for life

Smiling is a universal human practice, although readiness to smile at strangers varies according to culture. In Australia, where being open and friendly to strangers is not unusual, the city of Port Phillip in the bayside suburbs of Melbourne, has been using volunteers to find out how often people smile at others in the street. It puts up signs which tell pedestrians that they are in, for example, a "10 Smiles Per Hour Zone."

Frivolous nonsense? A waste of taxpayers' money? Mayor Janet Bolitho says the signs are to encourage people to smile or say "G'day" to neighbours and strangers on the street. Smiling, she adds, encourages people to feel more connected and safer, so reducing fear of crime, an important quality of life factor.



**COMMENT**  
**Peter Singer**

The city government also facilitates street parties, offering organisational advice, loans out barbecues and sun umbrellas, and

covers the public liability insurance. Many people who have lived in the same street for years meet for the first time at a street party.

All this is part of a larger program to measure whether changes in the city's quality of life are moving in a desirable direction. The city council wants Port Phillip to be sustainable, not only in an environmental sense, but also in terms of social equity, economic viability, and cultural vitality.

Port Phillip wants to be a good global citizen. Instead of seeing private car ownership as a sign of prosperity, the city hails a declining number of cars—and rising use of public transport—as progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions while encouraging a healthier lifestyle in which people walk or ride bicycles. The city is also seeking less energy-intensive designs for new buildings.



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Some local governments see their role as being to provide basic services like collecting the trash and maintaining the roads, and collecting taxes to pay for this. Others promote the area's economy, welcoming industry and so increasing jobs and the local tax base.

Port Phillip's city government takes a broader, longer-term view. It wants the next generation of residents to have the same opportunities for a good quality of life as today's. This is why it measures all the aspects that contribute to it, including friendliness.

Professor Richard Layard of the London School of Economics argues in his recent book *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science* that promoting friendship is easy, cheap, and can have big payoffs in making people happier. Why shouldn't that be a focus of public policy?

Small positive experiences can make people feel better about themselves, and also be more helpful to others. In the 1970's, American psychologists Alice Isen and Paula Levin conducted an experiment in which some randomly selected people making a phone call found a ten-cent coin left behind by a previous caller, and others did not. All were then given an opportunity to help a woman pick up a folder of papers she dropped in front of them.

Isen and Levin claimed that of the 16 who found a coin, 14 helped the woman, while of the 25 who did not find, only one did. A further study found a similar difference in willingness to mail an addressed letter that had been left behind in the phone booth: those who found the coin were more likely to mail it.

Although later research has questioned such dramatic differences, there is little doubt that being in a good mood makes people feel better about themselves and more likely to help others. Psychologists call it the 'glow of goodwill.' Why shouldn't taking small steps that may produce such a glow be part of the role of government?

One measure of success—over the past year-and-a-half, the proportion of people who smile at you in Port Phillip has risen from 8 to 10 percent. ● (Project Syndicate)

Peter Singer is professor of bioethics at Princeton University and author of *How Are We to Live?* and *Writings on an Ethical Life*.



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# Images of sounds



HERBERT GRAMMATIKOPOULOUS

Three men bound by a singular passion for the rich, complex tones of bells have put together a stimulating mixed media exhibition. The group show 'Bells—Silence and Sounds,' showcases the diverse talents of poet Manjul, visual artist Manish Lal Shrestha, and photographer Herbert Grammatikopoulos.

Manjul's poems translate the sound and energy of bells into words. He says he wants to capture the evocative energy of the bells, and their power to rouse dormant emotions and feelings in people. His poems are sometimes angry, sometimes reproachful, and sometimes just commemorations of the sounds of bells. Manjul has several volumes of poetry, a novel, travelogues, and translations to his credit.

Shrestha's seven shows so far have all presented bells in some way, shape or form. His vivid canvases are evocative of the feelings inspired by the ephemeral sound of bells, and often mimic the explosion of sound bells can produce. Shrestha believes bells have great positive energy, and so uses bold, vibrant colours, rather than dark and gloomy ones.

Grammatikopoulos, Austrian by birth, has lived in Nepal for some years and photographs everything from street scenes and jattras to the architecture of Tansen and ornate metal locks. Like Shrestha, he says that his intention is not just to capture their cultural and religious significance, but also their sound. The bells take centre stage in his pictures, against backdrops of temples, destroyed buildings, and mountains, reminding the viewer how central they are to Nepali life.

The idea for the show came about when Manjul was composing poems to go along with Herbert's photographs for a book. As it turned out, many were about bells. Shrestha had separately been working with bells for a long time, and putting together all of their creative output for a show was a no-brainer. On display are seven paintings, eight poems, and sixteen photographs. ●

Pranaya SJB Rana

Bells—Silence and Sounds,' is at the Gallery 32 at Dent Inn, the Dental Clinic, until 27 April.



MARIANO E ABELLO

## Music on the border

Live music and mild summer evenings are a superb combination. But The Last Resort has found a way to make it even better. On the weekend of 28-29 April, the resort is hosting the second Sundance Music Festival, "the only overnight open-air music event in Nepal," says marketing director Sam Voolstra.

It began two years ago when Voolstra and Nirakar Yakthumba of 1974AD thought a European-style open-air music event would go down a treat. "We wanted to do something like Glastonbury," explains Voolstra. The Moksh@TheLas Resort event will feature fewer bands than Glastonbury, but hopefully also less rain and mud than the infamously messy UK festival.



This year, in addition to Nepali and Indian artists like Stupa, Cadenza, Inner Groove, Lew Hilt, and Arpana, all of whom play varieties of contemporary music, the festival will also feature more traditional groups like Kutumba and the young drumming Thimi Boys.

The festival encourages improvisation. "Last year, the bands just got together and created a weekend-long jam session," says Voolstra. "This time the experiment will be even more interesting, because we have a lot of different music styles."

The success of the 2006 event has turned the festival into a credible platform for all kinds of musical talent, even the bathroom kind—the Sundance Festival allows would-be singers and musicians to join in the sessions.

Tickets cost Rs 2,000 per head, and include a bus ride from The Last Resort Office in Thamel at 9AM on 28 April, all meals, camping accommodation, and weekend-long music. Those with a need for adventure—and large lung capacity—can bicycle the 100km to the resort. The biking group leaves from the Shangri-La Hotel at 7AM on 28 April. Enfielders leave from their Lazimpat workshop at 8AM. For more information, ring 4700525.

Billi Bierling

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## ABOUT TOWN

## EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Flowers in the Garden of Dreams** an exhibition of photos by Leonhard Stramitz at Kaiser Mahal, 10AM-6PM, except Mondays, until 20 April.
- ❖ **Retrospective** an exhibition of paintings by Shashi Shah, until 20 April, 11AM- 6PM at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited. 4218048
- ❖ **Bells – Silence and Sounds** poems by Manjul, paintings by Manish Lal Shrestha and photographs by Herbert Grammatikopoulous, at Gallery 32, Dent Inn, Heritage Plaza, until 27 April.
- ❖ **Landmarks of New York** photography exhibition at Tribhuban University Central Library until 3 May.
- ❖ **Focus** paintings by Rajesh Manahdar, Bipin Raj Shrestha at Baryo Fiesta, Naxal until 5 May.
- ❖ **Colours of the sepals and petals** an exhibition of paintings based on botanical art by Neera Joshi Pradhan, 10.30 AM-6PM, except Saturdays at Park Gallery, Pulchok, until 15 May. 5522307

## EVENTS

- ❖ **City of God** a film by Fernando Meirelles presented by the FSA Film Club, 20 April at Yala Maya Kendra, Rs 50 entrance. 5542544
- ❖ **Dreamgirls** Friday movie at the Lazimpat Gallery Café, 20 April, 6.30PM.
- ❖ **Spring Open Air Market** at Nhuchhe's Kitchen, The Organic Bistro, 21 April, 11AM onwards. 4429903
- ❖ **The Spirit of Golf** methods to control the mind and practice techniques on the golf course, until 23 April, Le Meridien, Kathmandu Gokarna Forest Golf Resort and Spa. 4451212
- ❖ **Yuva Chalfal Shrinkhala** on 'youth from theatre', 3-5PM at Martin Chautari, 27 April. 4107599
- ❖ **Understanding the art of Tibetan furniture** CSGN monthly lecture by Luca Corona, 27 April at the Shanker Hotel, 9.30AM.
- ❖ **The Spirit(s) of Cricket** at Hotel Yak & Yeti live cricket in a widescreen projection and a World Cup special cocktail selection at The Pub, until 28 April. 4248999
- ❖ **Koninginnedag** flea market, buy and sell whatever you can, 28 April, 12-4PM at the Summit Hotel. 5521810
- ❖ **Sun Dance Festival** at The Last Resort featuring Nepali and international musicians 28-29 April. 4700525
- ❖ **Aarohan National Theatre Festival 2007** featuring theatre groups from all over Nepal, two shows a day at 12 noon and 5.30 PM, at Gurukul, until 11 May. 4466956
- ❖ **Pottery course** by Santosh Kumar from the Delhi Blue Pottery Trust, at Newa Art Ceramics in Mdhypur, Thimi, 25 May-24 June. 9841257968



## MUSIC

- ❖ **Stupa and friends** at the Moksh Bar, 8.30 PM onwards, 20 April, no cover charge. 5526212
- ❖ **Live Music** at the Red Onion Bar, Wednesdays from 8PM with Yanki and Zigme Lepcha. 4416071
- ❖ **DJ Raju and the Cloudwalkers** live at the Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency, every Friday and Saturday. 4491234
- ❖ **Fusion and classical Nepali music** by Rudra live at the Courtyard, Le Meridien, Gokarna every Friday, 7PM onwards, Rs 800. 4451212

## DINING

- ❖ **Weekend special** with sekuwa, bara, barbeque, Fridays at Ambassador Garden House, Lazimpat, 5.30 PM onwards. 4411706
- ❖ **Mongolian BBQ** with Mongolian cuisine starting 6 April, every Wednesday and Friday, 6.30 PM onwards at the Splash Bar and Grill, Radisson Hotel. Rs 1,000 including unlimited barbeque with Carlsberg beer, shandy or Splash special cocktail. 4422828
- ❖ **Saturday Brunch** at the Waterfall Garden, Radisson Hotel. 11.30 AM-3PM. Rs 799 net inclusive of free flow of Carlsberg and soft drinks. 4411818
- ❖ **Light nouvelle snacks** and elaborate cordon bleu meals at La'Soon, Pulchok, behind the Egyptian embassy. 5537166
- ❖ **Continental cuisine** and wine by the fire place at Kilroy's, Thamel. 4250440.
- ❖ **Smorgasbord** lunch at Park Village Resort, every Saturday. 4375280
- ❖ **Trendy martinis** and appetizers at the Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Gyakok** lunch and dinner at the Shambala Garden Café, Hotel Shangri-La, minimum of four guests at Rs 450 per person, two hours order in advance.
- ❖ **Retro brunch barbeque** with the Crossfire Band at The Poolside, Le Meridien, Gokarna from 12-4PM, Rs 1,000 inclusive of swimming and complimentary drink. 4451212
- ❖ **Pizza** from the woodfired oven at Java, Thamel. 4422519
- ❖ **Senoritas & Margaritas** Inner Groove live at Fusion—the bar at Dwarika's, Rs 599 includes a Mezza platter and a Margarita pitcher. 4479488
- ❖ **Jazzabell Café** enjoy great food, exotic cocktails and music, Chakupat, Patan. 2114075

## GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Weekend package** at Le Meridien Kathmandu Gokarna Forest Golf Resort and Spa, two nights three days at Rs 8,888 and one night two days at Rs 4,444. 4451212

For inclusion in the listing send information to [editors@nepalitimes.com](mailto:editors@nepalitimes.com)

## Quest Entertainment



Kya Love Story Hai is about a carefree and rebellious youth, Arjun (Tusshar Kapoor), who experiences love at first sight with Kaajal (Ayesha Takia). Too afraid to convey his feelings, he follows her around for some time before breaking the ice. For Kaajal, Arjun is a mere acquaintance. A successful but snobbish entrepreneur (Karan Hukku) meets Kaajal and they get engaged. What follows is a romantic comedy with Arjun trying to win Kaajal's heart.

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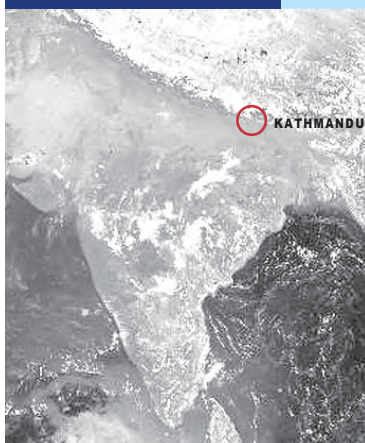
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संविधान मुलुकको मूल कानून भएकाले आफ्नो देशका संविधान आफै बनाउन संविधानसभा सदस्यको निर्वाचन हुँदैछ । त्यसैले, संविधानसभा सदस्यको निर्वाचनमा भाग लिई आफूले चाहे जस्तो संविधान बनाउने ऐतिहासिक मौकाको सदुपयोग गर्नुहोस् ।

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## NEPALI WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL



## KATHMANDU VALLEY



It's not hot and yet we're all sweating. This is largely due to the steep rise in humidity caused by the sporadic rains. Expect more of the same, as the sun continues to move to the northern hemisphere and we prepare to receive the remaining two-thirds of our monthly quota of rainfall. Thursday afternoon's satellite picture suggests a continuation of this week's features—sunny intervals, thunderstorms, light showers towards evening. It's the perfect way to usher in Patan's traditional chariot-pulling festival dedicated to Macchindranath, the rain god of the Valley.

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KUNDA DIXIT

**DANGEROUS AT ANY SPEED:** An LPG tanker that smashed into a mountainside at Daunne on the East-West Highway on 12 April still lay on the hairpin bend a week later. The Indian driver and his helper were killed when the truck caught fire and set the surrounding forest ablaze.



KIRAN PANDAY

**FIRE IN THE NIGHT:** Members of the Young Communist League on a torch rally at Ratna Park on Tuesday protesting police raids on their offices in Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur two days earlier.



BIMAL GAUTAM

**RICHARD, MEET RINPOCHE:** Richard Gere pays his respects to Chogyi Nyima Rinpoche in Boudha on Wednesday at the end of a three-day visit to Kathmandu.



KIRAN PANDAY

**BARBED TONGUE:** With his pierced tongue, Buddho Krishoo Bag Shrestha is at the centre of this throng of devotees celebrating Bisket Jatra in Bode, Thimi, on Sunday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

**PRAYER, NOT POLITICS:** Public prayers for peace on Thursday at Khulla Manch, traditionally the reserve of political speakers. The prayers are organised by the National Organising Committee of Prayer for Peace from 7AM-6PM until Friday.

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# Kissing Ass

Just as the Ass feared all along, Richard Gere is in town. Having witnessed this man's **osculatory prowess**, it is surprising the immigration office allowed him into the country. Now that he's here, the government should issue a restraining order banning him from coming within 35 metres of our very own Shitasma Chand. But the real casualty from Gere molesting Shilpa Shetty in broad daylight in New Delhi this week wasn't the slur on Indian womanhood, but the Free Tibet Movement which may now need another mascot.

ॐ

Ironies abound as the Maoists enter government. Kingji is still in Narayanhiti and the ex-guerrillas are in government this makes Nepal the **world's only Maoist monarchy**. Minister Deb Gurung has a Nepal Army bodyguard in addition to his own Maoist security. Since we have a parallel government and Maoist ministers have two bodyguards, does this mean Home Minister Krishna Sitaula will also demand a Maoist bodyguard to complement his army security?

ॐ

Having Matrika Yadav as Forest Minister is like assigning an **ass to guard the haystack**. In the week when his cadre was invading community forests across the tarai, Minister Yadav was up on the podium in Kathmandu inaugurating a conference on tiger conservation with a speech that focussed on habitat destruction. It was perhaps to distract attention from all this that Yadavbabu went off on a tangent at a cabinet meeting Wednesday accusing the army of cutting down trees in Shivapuri.

ॐ

**Comrade Yummy** who was partly responsible for blowing up bridges, booby trapping highways and demolishing telecom towers in the past 11 years is now Minister of Physical Planning and Infrastructure. See how much harder it is to build than to destroy?

Everyone knew the Maoists were engaged in bikenapping and carnapping during their revolution, but what we didn't know was that it went right to the top. So, the Nissan Patrol that His Fierceness was driving around the country in the past year was actually stolen and they'd changed the number plates and replaced the Blue Book with a Red Book. And what was El Supremo Uno listening to during long drives? Not the Collected Works of Mao Zedong on **audio tapes**, but Bima Kumari Dura's Dohori Album and Nima Rumba's Greatest Hits.

ॐ

But you have to hand it to the comrades, they have taken the country by storm with the release of war movies on VCD, you have a pick of Beni Akraman, Mechi Ambush, or Gajuri Bhidanta—all actual footage taken during past battles. And the way 'historical novels' like *Raktakunda* and *Pardaphas* are selling like hot cakes and helping the republican campaign for elections, one shouldn't be surprised if their next novel will be **Bhandaphor**.

ॐ

Pity the YCL guys who have the misfortune to be posted on the banks of the Bagmati at Kopundole. Given the **increment in excrement** flowing into Kathmandu's holy sewer and the ensuing vapours, it's no wonder the police decided not to raid this particular YCL outpost last week, presuming, the Ass supposes, that the comrades had all fainted. So the young baddies have taken matters into their own hands and have decided to clean up the Bagmati. How exactly they are going to do that is a closely guarded military secret.

ass@nepalitimes.com



सर्वत्र उपलब्ध छ ।

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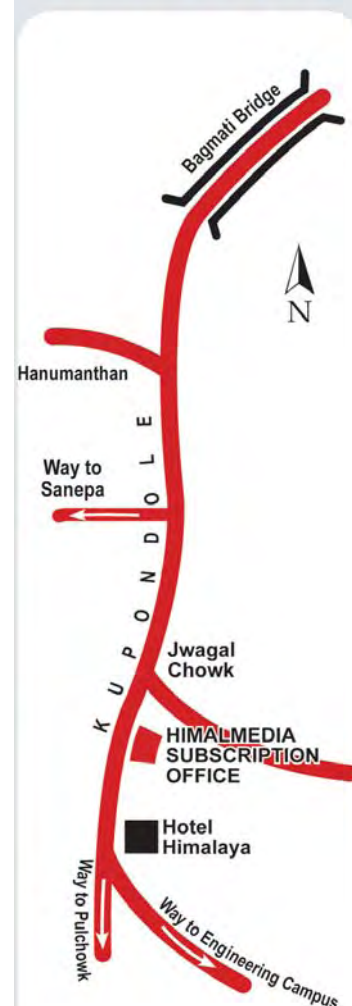
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