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Rapidly improving 2%


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Q. Should Hridayendra be named king soon?

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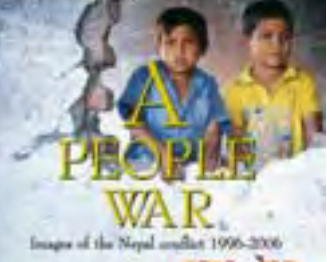
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KIRAN PANDAY

# Stop Press

**HIGHER CALLING:** Editor of *Nepal Samacharpatra*, Pushkar Lal Shrestha at his deserted office on Thursday. His Kamana Publication was forced to stop publishing after threats from Maoists.

## SHIVA GAUNLE

Rights activists and journalist groups have condemned a series of recent attacks on the private media by the Maoists, and have described the forced closure of *Nepal Samacharpatra* and *Mahanagar* dailies this week as a serious threat to press freedom in the country.

The pressure on the media has been carried out through the Maoist-affiliated trade unions, but editors say it is a political pressure tactic to tone down criticism of the Maoists under the guise of a labour movement.

“It is a grave threat against the public’s right to information when a legitimate struggle for labour rights is used as a tool to stop the publication of newspapers,” said the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) in a hard-

hitting statement on Wednesday.

A pattern has emerged of staff in private media disrupting journalistic output in recent weeks. *The Himalayan Times* and *Annapurna Post* were the first. Then *Kantipur* and *Kathmandu Post* suffered labour disturbances last week. Since Tuesday, *Nepal Samacharpatra* and the rest of Kamana Publications have been forced to close.

Although some staff grievances are genuine, editors and publishers say the Maoists are using their militant unions to interfere with editorial content. It also follows the pattern of how the Maoists have used militant unions to target the manufacturing sector, hotels, restaurants, and private schools in the past year.

“This is a direct challenge to the freedom of press, they have threatened me with physical

harm,” says Puskar Lal Shrestha, editor and publisher of *Nepal Samacharpatra* daily, which hasn’t come out since Tuesday. Staff at *Kantipur* also said they were physically threatened last week because they brought out the paper.

The Maoist leadership seems to have concluded that the private press is hostile to them. Although their own papers have a sizeable circulation, they aren’t very popular. Media analysts think this could be why they have used the labour leverage to force mainstream papers to suppress negative news and influence public opinion ahead of polls.

But Maoist union leader Sambhu Rimal who lead the movement against *Samacharpatra* this week says bluntly: “We don’t care what you think, we are

fighting for our rights.”

Labour expert Ramesh Badal cautions against over-reaction, since setting up a trade union is a legal right of workers. He suggests forming a tribunal made up of government, management, and workers to address existing labour demands and future ones as they come up.

Publishers and press freedom groups are convinced the current agitation isn’t about labour rights at all but to indirectly influence editorial content. They have called on the government, especially Maoist Information and Communications Minister Krishna Bahadur Mahara to be vigilant about protecting press freedom. ●

*Shiva Gaunle is editor of Himal Khabarpatrika and vice-president of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists.*



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# Future schools

## Let's put money and energy into education

### PRESSURE ON THE PRESS

Influential circles in Kathmandu can be divided into two schools of thought. One holds that the Maoists are genuine about entering non-violent mainstream politics, that it is a difficult transition for them, and that we must help them along in every way we can.

The other is convinced that the former guerrillas have not given up trying to capture state power and turn Nepal into a totalitarian people's republic and that, as soon as time is ripe, they'll go back to the jungle.

These two objectives seem to co-exist even within the Maoist fold. Which is probably why we hear Pushpa Kamal Dahal first taking the moderate conciliatory line when talking to ex-US presidents and European envoys, and then rattle sabres for cadres about the revolution.

It's been a year. Even those who wanted to give the Maoists time to get adjusted to peacetime politics are now losing their patience amidst continued reports of intimidation, extortion and militant unionism. Maoist leaders predictably dismiss these accusations as a smear campaign by "status-quo bourgeois lackeys" of a "238-year-old feudalism".

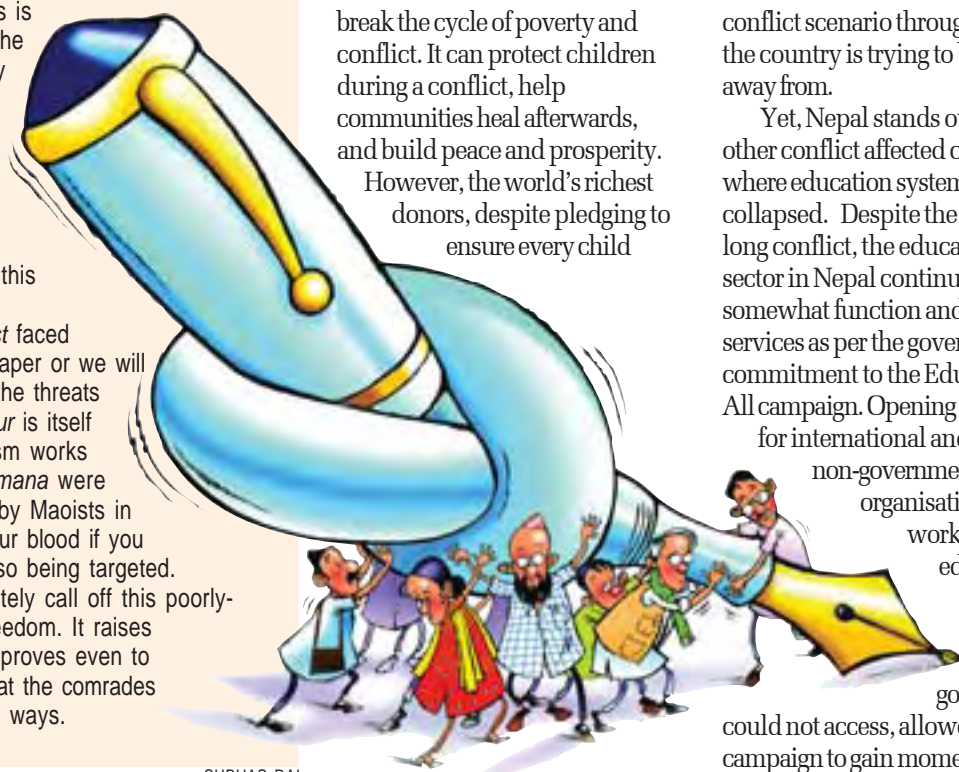
We looked the other way when the Maoists didn't put all their big guns in containers. We pretended we didn't know that the YCL is actually the PLA who theoretically should be in cantonments. We excused the league's high-handedness because, we said, the leadership couldn't possibly control each and every ex-guerrilla. The comrades have used this to play it both ways.

Anyone who has watched NTV news lately, listened to Radio Nepal's current affairs programs or read *Gorkhapatra* will have noticed that state media is used shamelessly for party propaganda. It must be said, however, that Information Minister Mahara is behaving no differently than his predecessors from the NC or UML.

Much more sinister, it looks like the threat of violence, if not actual violence, in the run-up to elections is part of the plan. Let's have no illusions: the systematic infiltration of private media by Maoist unions in the past weeks is about putting pressure on editors. It would be naïve to believe that this is only about legitimate labour rights. Editors who defied the royal junta's attempt after February 2005 to directly censor content say coercion by Maoists this time is much more insidious.

Staff at *Kantipur* and *Kathmandu Post* faced threats of violence ("don't bring out the paper or we will break your legs"). The fact that news of the threats didn't make it to the front page of *Kantipur* is itself proof censorship through militant unionism works brilliantly. *Nepal Samacharpatra* and *Kamana* were forced to suspend publication this week by Maoists in union garb who told staff "we will spill your blood if you publish". Independent FM stations are also being targeted.

The Maoist leadership must immediately call off this poorly-disguised attempt to undermine press freedom. It raises serious questions about their intent, and proves even to those who have a soft corner for them that the comrades haven't given up their violent, totalitarian ways.



SUBHAS RAI

For nearly 60 years, since the Universal Declaration on Human Rights in 1948, world leaders have promised all children that they have the right to go to school and receive education. In 2000, world leaders made new promises—the Millennium Development Goals—including education for all children by 2015.



**GUEST COLUMN**  
**Gunnar Andersen**

Yet, 77 million children are out of school globally. More than half—39 million—live in conflict-affected countries. Despite the vulnerability of these children, only 23 percent of the global basic education aid goes to these conflict and post-conflict areas. Without urgent action at least 30 million children will still be out of school in 2015, most in conflict-affected countries.

Education is essential to break the cycle of poverty and conflict. It can protect children during a conflict, help communities heal afterwards, and build peace and prosperity.

However, the world's richest donors, despite pledging to ensure every child

receives an education by 2015, are selecting more stable countries to receive aid for education over those affected by conflict, effectively leaving those countries with little hope of breaking the cycle of poverty and conflict.

The current trend of providing education for more than four million children a year is not enough to reach the 2015 education target the world set itself in 2000. Although the total number of out-of-school children is declining, those who are still out-of-school are proving ever harder to reach.

The Global Monitoring Report 2007 states that 698,000 children in Nepal are still out of school.

Media coverage on the status of Nepal achieving the Millennium Development Goals on Education for All has cited the lack of infrastructure, financing, and management affecting the quality of the programmes being implemented. Over and above this is the post conflict scenario through which the country is trying to break away from.

Yet, Nepal stands out from other conflict affected countries, where education systems collapsed. Despite the decade-long conflict, the education sector in Nepal continued to somewhat function and deliver services as per the government's commitment to the Education for All campaign. Opening avenues for international and national

non-governmental organisations to work in the education sector, in areas the government could not access, allowed the campaign to gain momentum

steadily. As schools were run by the parents and local authorities, initiatives taken to ensure protection of schools and children as zones of peace were successful to some extent in demanding respect from both warring sides. Barring a few closures due to political interference, most schools in Nepal continued to provide for children the minimum basic services.

In today's changed context, the pace of work to fulfil the requirements and achieve the targeted goals is picking up, with the ministry urging to formulate strategies to reflect the changes in political situation. However, there is an urgent need to meet the gaps in funding for Nepal, to allow qualitative as well as quantitative implementation of education programmes to reach those children still out of school from marginalised communities.

To do this, we need to increase financing and better coordinate between the government, donors and INGOs to mobilise funds for effective and holistic delivery of education services to children in Nepal. Save the Children is implementing its Rewrite the Future programmes in 27 districts to increase access to education for children out of school, improve the quality of education to help keep children in school, ensure protection of schools, and advocate for financing of education in conflict-affected areas. Nepal has a unique possibility to reach the MDGs on education.

Let's do it. ●

*Gunnar Andersen is Country Representative in Nepal of Save the Children Norway.*

# The republic of disorder

## Jimmy Carter's visit only highlighted Kathmandu's hamhanded approach to the tarai

Sri Panch Gyanendra continues to be the reigning monarch of Nepal. For having outmanoeuvred the seven parties in the peace process, Prachanda is *Sri Sat*. As leader of the eight-party coalition, head of state, and head of government, Girija Prasad Koirala is *Sri Aath*. In recognition of his influence, Indian ambassador Shiv Shankar Mukherji could be *Sri Nau Sarkar*.



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

But no matter how high you are in Nepal, western donors and their government-inspired NGOs are higher than you. It's hard to decide how many 'sris' suffice for a person at the pinnacle of the donor community. Exasperated by the attention showered on the founder of the Carter Centre, the ever-popular blog Mero Sansar prefixed Jimmy Carter's name with

*Sri Kati Ho Kati.*

Carter granted an audience to Dahal and his alter ego. He called upon Koirala twice, presumably first to ascertain the status of the aging ruler and then to confer legitimacy. Mukherjee was also graciously received. In the interest of full disclosure, I have to admit that I too presented myself to this chief. Carter dominated the news for the entire 96 hours he was here.

In a way, the commotion over his visit was an amusing diversion in these otherwise dull and dreary times. His closely watched schedule did highlight the agenda of marginalised groups. It also stressed the importance of mainstreaming the Maoists with cautious urgency. Thanks to the former US president, the plight of madhesi is the flavour of the month among donors, lenders, and various parachutists.

Had the Nobel laureate paid platitudinous praise to the glorious peace process of Nepal, his visit would have been

a roaring success. Unfortunately, everything but Carter's 'private' observations about the Maoists echoed Moriarty speak.

It's understandable that the various excellencies strutting around the country are concerned about their personal security and resident foreigners deserve full government protection from such exigencies. But when someone like Carter expresses his concern about the security situation in the country, we're missing some details. Whose safety are we talking about? Security to do what and for what purpose? Where exactly does the security situation merit immediate attention, and how are we to do that?

The lawlessness in the tarai is the main concern for obvious reasons. But a law and order approach to establishing peace in the tarai is unworkable for one simple reason: the government looks nothing like the demographics on the ground in the region.

Rather crudely put, the police in Gaur looks too much like the armed wing of the Chure Bhabar Ekta Samaj. For a Yadav in Siraha, the CDO looks like Kathmandu's agent, and the local military barracks, an outpost of an occupying force. There is only one way to address this: level the playing field for contestations for political power.

Carter emphasised the importance of improving the security situation and addressing inclusion ahead of the constituent assembly elections. But when inclusion is a stand-in for integration, and law and order boils down to giving continuity to the status quo, the perfunctory prescriptions of a parachutist deserve just a bemused hearing.

A government that lacks legitimacy and acceptability should avoid having explicit intentions, a strong will, or proactive initiatives. There are times when less is more. The tarai needs patience, not rashness. ●



## LETTERS

## HALF EMPTY

Democracy gives false hope to Nepalis. Your editorial 'Half full' (#353) suggests that a multiparty system would be the best bet for the country. And yet it is the source of many disorders, the madhes and other ethnic uprisings. I agree that despotism is not the best solution, but Nepal does not have the conditions that allow democracy to succeed, there are too many ethnicities and politics is unstable. An 'enlightened despot', and not a disorganised parliament, could through an evolutionary process create democratic institutions that will eventually succeed.

Saujanya Acharya, Tokyo

## POLL

I agree with CK Lal that donor-driven research is diverting money to the elite rather than to the genuinely needy ('Footnotes to history', State of the State, #353). But I strongly disagree that surveys are inconsequential. The advantage of surveys is that they take us closer to social reality than mere speculation or rumours. They are limited, of course, because people change their minds. Using this to conclude that Nepalis have a mature political consciousness is unscientific.

Perhaps Lal's discomfort stems from the fact that support for Hinduism and the monarchy is still strong in the tarai, 49.9 percent of the people in the tarai want to keep the monarchy, according to the latest survey report by Interdisciplinary Analysts. Instead of ignoring that, people like Lal should go there and try to break the hegemony of the Hindu monarchy that prevails rather than refute scientific findings.

Muhammad Rafiq Ahemad, email

I was flabbergasted by CK Lal's assertion that opinion polling is a frivolous donor pastime. Implicit in his contention is that Nepal's leaders, or for that matter newspaper columnists, know the views of their country's citizens without having to bother to ask. His suggestion that polls are unnecessary during turbulent times is even more confounding. Does a dynamic political environment somehow preclude the need to consult the broader populace? The current political transition in Nepal provides an unprecedented opportunity to reinvent the state, but only if the policymakers and pundits cloistered in Kathmandu listen to voices outside the valley. Methodologically sound, rigorously conducted surveys are an invaluable tool for this purpose.

Nick Langton,

Country Representative, The Asia Foundation

## AIDS MONEY

It is unfortunate that there are people who make a selfish buck using AIDS and then disappear with it

('AIDS money', #353). Even worse is that no one asks for the money back. I don't understand who gives out money but doesn't ask what is happening to it. Where are the checks and balances?

Srijana Tuladhar, email

## DANIEL LAK

George Bush's luck is running out and even his own citizens are hounding him. ('Global Jana Andolan', Here and There, #353). Would this have been the case had the war in Iraq not gone as badly as it has for the Americans? After all, the American public elected him to the White House, not only once but twice. The American public and the world at large would've been blissfully unaware of places like Abu Gharib prison and Guantanamo Bay had the war gone according to plan. The allegations of CIA apprehending people on foreign soil would never have surfaced. All this dirt has come to the surface because things have not gone well for America. When the going gets tough, the weak-kneed start squealing and jumping ship.

S Pal, email

It is time for *Nepali Times* to release Daniel Lak and let him go hack away at some

Canadian pine with the anti-American axe he has been grinding. *NT* can be applauded for allowing the chip-on-the-shoulder-Canuck a forum, but he has made his point and it is time to move on. Daniel Laks ideas.

Name withheld, email

## APPEARANCES

The Beed uses largely colonial or feudal clichés about "nice Nepalis" who are mute in the face of exploitation and the mafias who make millions sending them overseas without any guarantees ('Appearances count', Economic Sense, #353).

Politicians and businessmen are equally responsible for the and the Beed should re-read himself to see how clear his meaning is—be gentle slaves, or stay home and starve (and be gentle anyway). It's Rana economics.

There's nothing new about any of this. Unions are just another type of mafia here, but Artha Beed seems to be saying that they are shameless because they eat into the profits of bank defaulters, tax evaders, and other established mafias.

Today's "dismal business conditions" are also the result of a job done poorly over the long term by businessmen. The 'business community' the Beed regularly supports is one of the world's less presentable.

MR, email



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Even in peacetime, thousands of explosive devices are threatening the lives of Nepalis

# Bombs in the countryside



GOVINDA LUITEL in PALPA

This wreck above was until two weeks ago Tara Bahadur Thada's home in Gothadi, 35km from Tansen. Then two bombs exploded simultaneously, killing nine people, and orphaning 18 young children. Details on the explosion are still sketchy, but it is understood to have been



GOVINDA LUITEL

caused by a bucket bomb that was to be used to demolish a road. Local resident Dhana Kumari Thada says the bomb was made available by CPN-M Gothadi in-charge Chet Bahadur Gamcha and brought in from his house. The locals believe there are more explosives in Gothadi. The explosion killed two children—seven-year-old Jiban Kumar Thada and 45-day-old Buddhi Bahadur Thada. Four-year-

old Human Bahadur Thada and his 15-month-old sister Dhanusa have no idea what happened to their parents (above right). They are being looked after by their aunt Debi Thada. The orphaned children keep asking surviving relatives where their mothers and fathers are. The widows do not know how they will take care of their children. The incident underscores the lack of

attention being given to collecting and defusing the hundreds, possibly thousands, of improvised explosive devices, war leftovers, that are scattered around the country. Gothadi police in-charge Parshuram Joshi says the bombs belonged to the Maoists and that how the explosives reached Gothadi and the circumstances of the explosion are under investigation, but local residents do not want to talk. Meanwhile CPN-M district committee member and Gothadi local Tika Kafle says that the person responsible for the explosives might have died or been "transferred and not told locals that the bombs were there." He says such incidents occur because the public "somehow gets hold of the explosives". Kafle says the CPN-M is not involved and is being scapegoated. District Children Welfare Committee, Palpa program coordinator Bishnu Prasad Pokhrel says, "Even during the conflict we rarely had so many children orphaned all at once. Such incidents bring back the war, they make healing more difficult." ●

# Messy gamble

## Maoists have infiltrated the casinos too

DAMBAR K SHRESTHA

It might seem as if casinos and Maoists don't mix, but the Valley's gaming houses now employ hundreds of party workers or their relatives. Kathmandu's casinos get frequent 'requests' from Maoist union bosses to employ party workers, wives, relatives, and friends from the districts. These friends and family work as croupiers, cashiers, security personnel, and in the accounts section at the casinos in Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Annapurna, Yak&Yeti, Everest, the Hyatt Regency, Radisson, Shangri-La, and the Fulbari in Pokhara.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

The Maoists are cashing in on the ongoing battle between casino partners RD Tuttle and Rakesh Wadhwa over majority ownership of the casinos at Shangri-La, Yak&Yeti, and Everest. Both sides have at different points sought Maoist help to resolve the issue. Bishnu Lamsal, president of

the Nepal Independent Hotel Workers' Union says the Maoists have sent 600 of their people to infiltrate these hotels. Ramesh Babu Panta, president of Maoist-affiliated All Nepal Hotel and Restaurant Workers' Organisation says these are just rumours being spread to discredit his organisation. "We only suggest that the casinos employ people from discriminated against and poor groups," says Panta. Panta's wife Durga and Laxmi Shrestha, wife of Shalikram Jamarkattel, president of the All Nepal Trade Union Federation are both high-level employees at the Everest Casino. According to our sources, the Maoists have 181 people at Casino Nepal, 78 at Anna, 88 at Royal, 65 at Everest, 40 at Casino Tara, 11 at Casino Rad, and 40 at Nepal Recreation Centre. Casino security is being provided by former Maoist fighters. Casino Everest's general manager TR Bhatta was vague while explaining the connection between his casino and Maoists.

"They requested us to give jobs to those who lost family members during the war and to the displaced, so we employed 30-35 people," says Bhatta. "People come and go, it is common for casinos to employ a bunch of new people every now and then." Other casino employees tell us that most of the people who were given employment due to Maoist pressure have got, quite literally, nothing to do at work. There's no money either, so other employees haven't been paid for months. Last month, under pressure from Maoists, Casino Royal sacked 14 employees from its NC- and UML-affiliated groups. Their unions agitated in turn, and the employees were reinstated. Rajesh Karki, central vice president of Nepal Tourism and Hotel Workers Association (NTHWA) tells us he has been threatened a number of times by union leaders. "If we do not support their union, they threaten and beat us, that's their specialty," says Netra Bikram Thapa, president of NTHWA. ●

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### Laxmi Visa

Laxmi Bank can now issue Visa credit cards, making it only the fifth Nepali bank to be authorised to do so. The bank was established in April 2002 and has nine branches around the country.

### Office supplies

A range of Gestetner and Ricoh office automaton products is now available through Shrestha Amrit Traders. Gestetner offers advanced multifunctional printers that combine the functions of a copier with those of network printers, scanners, and fax machines. Ricoh offers Japanese office equipment including copiers, fax machines, data processing systems, and photographic equipment. SAT has been importing office products for eight years.

### Swift insurance

Arun Intercontinental, authorised dealers of Maruti, is offering two years of free insurance on every Maruti Swift. The car already comes with a four-speaker



stereo system, seat covers, floor mats, and a car perfume. Customers can also exchange motorcycles for a new Maruti 800 for a down payment of just Rs 150,000 and monthly instalments of Rs 8,111. AIT is a subsidiary of the Chaudhary Group.

# Step up to the job

CEOs in Nepal need some basic strategic know-how

Ram Charan is a Texas-based Indian-American freelance business consultant. Fortune magazine puts his daily fee as high as \$20,000. Charan has long-term contracts with GE and Home Depot offering practical advice on how they can make their already-strong global businesses even better.

Charan has written and co-written 11 books, the latest of which is *Know-How: The 8 Skills That Separate People Who Perform From Those Who Don't*.

After reading *Know-How* last week, I looked for ways that four of the eight skills Charan talks about provide food for thought for CEOs and heads of organisations in Nepal.

#### Position and re-position your business:

Take Nepal's leading newspapers as an example. Their core product is news, which now has competitors in the form of blogs, FM radio stations, Google News and so on. Given this, what can media executives do to re-position newspapers? Should their web presence be completely revamped? Should newspapers do more tie-ups with TV, radio, mobile phones, and other websites? In addition to serving up news, should they also position themselves as providers of knowledge, interactions, and research?

**Pinpoint external change:** Most Nepali banks are sitting on piles of money, and stuck doing, what an ex-banker matter-of-factly calls 'plain vanilla' commercial banking work.

But the demands of the country for long-range growth are urgently clear. Nepal desperately needs more highways, better airports, power plants, tourism destinations, and other infrastructure projects. How can business leaders be credible spokespeople to convince the government to open regulatory doors so Nepalis' own money also gets reliably invested in development work that give multiple returns to both rural and urban Nepal?

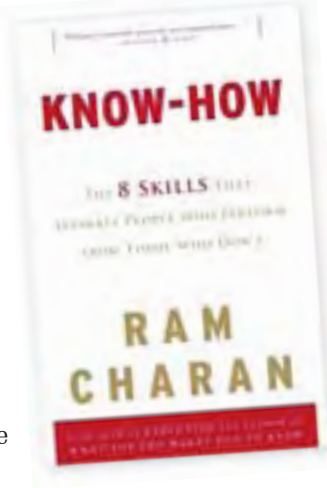
**Lead your business's social system:** Many non-family business partnerships flounder sooner or later in Nepal because the level of trust is often low.

True, arbitrary application of laws by government officers does little to reward basic transparency. But on the personnel side, doing well in tiny Nepal goes to most people's heads quickly, making them act like prima donnas who then start creating headaches for business partners and associates. These long-simmering internal quarrels make even businesses that start off doing well reach low points within a few years. Charan says that one business know-how skill to look for in a CEO is to see how she moulds teams "by getting the right people together with the right behaviours to achieve better business results."

**Address societal pressures:** The median age of 27 million Nepalis is 18. Youths make this country tick. From sending money home from abroad to calling for shutdowns and disrupting factories, what young people do significantly affects all businesses. Yet most business leaders carry on as if they are only interested in a few young graduates for entry-level jobs. Charan says non-market forces are increasingly influencing business results everywhere, and that an effective CEO is the one who finds creative ways to respond to societal pressures that cannot be controlled but do have an impact on the bottom line.

Charan's gentle downplaying of a CEO's personal attributes such as intelligence, self-confidence, and communication skills makes him a rare guru who does not mistake a CEO's articulateness for accomplishment. Charan surely knows too many executives with all the right personal attributes who ultimately failed because their business priorities were a mess. In a previous book, Charan celebrated the art of execution and the practice of getting things done. In this new one, he has given every CEO a tool-kit for stepping outside of their day-to-day frame of reference to really examine the ingredients of high performance.

**STRICTLY BUSINESS**  
Ashutosh Tiwari



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Free the press

Annapurna Post, 21 June

अन्नपूर्ण पोस्ट

Nepal Samacharpatra has had to stop publication after 12 years. This is a gross violation of the press freedom stipulated in the constitution. Freedom of expression is a part of democracy and so are the differences of opinion among newspapers. It would be very wrong if the reason for closing down Nepal Samacharpatra was for vengeance, or for a role that a newspaper might have played in the past.

Newspapers are carriers of news and views, and just stopping their publication cannot hide the truth. Obstructing independent journalism is a betrayal of democratic norms and values and cannot be justified in any way.

To complicate matters, this has happened while the Maoists hold the information and communications portfolio. That a Maoist-affiliated labour group is involved in the current crisis sends out negative signs of a party that harbours dictatorial intentions. Minister Krishna Bahadur Mahara needs to urgently make a positive intervention. Such incidents negate the Maoists' commitment to peace, democracy, and development. The Nepali media is concerned that such incidents will become a pattern.



United we stand

Kantipur, 21 June

कान्तिपुर

For past one-and-a-half months, the activities of the Maoist-affiliated All Nepal Communication, Press and Publication Labour Union have been creating problems for newspapers. In a democratic set-up, preventing the publication of newspapers for even a day is unbecoming and objectionable. It might be normal for the sister organisations of political parties to make inroads into commercial ventures, but it is not normal to do so in media houses.

The Maoists are involved in the Samacharpatra fiasco—banners extolling Prachandapath have been put up at Kamana Publications, which

owns Samacharpatra. The unwillingness or the inability of the Maoists to sincerely address the disturbances casts a shadow on their behaviour.

It is the duty of the Maoist minister who holds the information and communication portfolio to resolve the issue and help create a media-friendly environment. All concerned should help in the exercise

of the constitutional right to publish and distribute newspapers freely. The media community and civil society must offer vital support to Kamana Publications' efforts to resume printing its two dailies. Only such a display of solidarity can ensure a free, unrestricted environment for publishing and broadcasting.

Jungle justice

Interview with Chandra Bahadur Thapa ('Sagar'), YCL in-charge of Kathmandu Valley, in Tarun, 18 June

तरुण

The Young Communist League arrested so-called criminal Sitaram Prasai and handed him over to the police. Shortly after, Girija Prasad Koirala publicly called you a "criminal" league. What's your reaction? Girija Prasad Koirala showed everyone that he is the king of the criminals, of the corrupt, and his "why did you arrest a bank defaulter without my permission" tirade only proves it. We thank him for that.

Will you follow up on your public proclamation that you will take action against criminals, traitors, and those who shield them?

If we come into power, we will hang them.

But hanging has been banned by law. America sent Saddam Hussain to the gallows. Our country has traitors a lot worse than Saddam Hussain, can we not hang them?

Do you have proof against them?

Yes. We have dossiers on hundreds of such people. If possible we will take action against them now. If not, then when we come into power. We will hang all those who are sinking the country.

Too much?

Abhiyan, 18-24 June

अभियान

Although the government claims that over Rs 1.1 billion has already been released for the running of the cantonments. The



NARESH NEWAR

2722

Thumbs up Thumbs down

JOKES		NEWS		HOROSCOPE		THOUGHT	
Keyword	Result	Keyword	Result	Keyword	Result	Keyword	Result
JOKE	JOKES	NEWS	NATIONAL NEWS	AST ARI	ARIES	THOUGHT	THOUGHT FOR THE DAY
JOKE SANTA	JOKES	LIVE	BREAKING NEWS	AST TAU	TAURUS		
		INT	INTERNATIONAL NEWS	AST GEM	GEMINI		
				AST CAN	CANCER		
		SPO	SPORTS NEWS	AST LEO	LEO		
		BIZ	BUSINESS NEWS	AST VIR	VIRGO		
		ENT	ENTERTAINMENT NEWS	AST LIB	LIBRA		
		OFF	OFF BEAT NEWS	AST SCO	SCORPIO		
		NEWS HELP	HELP	AST SAG	SAGITTARIUS		
				AST CAP	CAPRICORN		
				AST AQU	AQUARIUS		
				AST PIS	PISCES		

STOCKS		FOREX	
Keyword	Result	Keyword	Result
NEPSE	INDEX	FOREX SELL	SELLING RATES
SHG	TOP 5 GAINERS	FOREX BUY	BUYING RATES
SHL	TOP 5 LOSERS	FOREX	DESIRED CURRENCY
SHH	HELP	FOREX HELP	HELP
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Maoists say they have only received Rs 460.1 million. Maoist Minister of Information and Communications Krishna Prasad Mahara has over the months taken advances totalling Rs 43.1 million.

The relevant ministries have released monies for cantonment infrastructure development too—Rs 680 million for electrification, Rs 93.4 million for buildings, Rs 11.1 million for drinking water, Rs 5.8 million for communications, and Rs 100 million for roads.

In addition, the government of India provided 2,000 tents. Rs 90.6 million has been released for 100,000 temporary accommodations. At Rs 60 per day per fighter, close to 1.15 billion has been paid out for general upkeep over the last two months.

Local cantonment organisation offices and internal working groups for cantonment organisations have received Rs 48.7 million, and for June/ July over Rs 92.5 million has been released to pay stipends (at Rs 3,000 per month per fighter).

Little king

Naya Patrika, 19 June

King Gyanendra’s grandson Hridayendra will turn six this July. Paras and Himani’s second child is close to his grandmother Komal and great-grandmother



Ratna. He is mischievous and moody, but not mean. He loves toy guns and those inside the palace joke that his love for guns is genetic. He is said to be very close to his father. Until very recently Paras used to take him everywhere, even to formal programs. While being driven around, Hridayendra loves to look out of the window and onto the streets. He attends grade one in Rupy’s International School

in Tahachal and is an average student. His parents usually drop him off and pick him up from school. He is a fan of the NTV series Tito Satya. Left to his own devices, Hridayendra is said to be a dreamer. He is said to be very close to his aunt Prerana and loves to spend time at her place in Chauni. As discussion over King Gyanendra’s future heats up and many are suggesting Hridayendra be made the next king, this young boy spends his days like any normal six-year old.

Nepalipan

Rituraj, Himal Khabarpatrika, 15-29 June

To be Nepali, you need nepalipan. But what constitutes nepalipan? What is this thing? Talking over this with friends one evening we agreed that, in this age of globalisation, cuisine, lifestyle, and even dress codes are becoming uniform, and so cannot hold the essence of nepalipan.

We concluded the following: nepalipan is a set of unique characteristics that cannot be found in others. These are typical ways of being that do not change. These are some of the behaviours that we see as constituting nepalipan:

- Hawking: Nepalis will noisily clear their throats at all times—while brushing, washing up, after a meal, any old time. No one can work their phlegm like a Nepali.
- Spitting: Everyone spits. But unlike all the rest, Nepalis do it in all places and at all times.
- Smoking and riding: Lighting a cigarette and then zooming off on your motorcycle is definitely an indicator of nepalipan. But pedalling a bicycle and synchronously puffing away is an even more fundamental part of nepalipan.
- Honking: Every vehicle has a horn that has to be used at times. But a Nepali hand works a horn near-incessantly.
- Queue-jumping: The English taught the world how to wait in line. But Nepal has never been colonised and we refuse to follow what the English teach. To cut in line is not rudeness here, it’s a cunning move.
- Overtaking: The free Nepali spirit does not care whether this is done from left or right.
- Hurrying: Who isn’t rushing about these days? But while others dash around with purpose, Nepalis, uniquely, do it with none. We shove other people while walking, for example, and don’t even talk about motorbikes—ever seen one that can idle for a minute?



NO ACCESS: Blockades, such as this one organised by the landless demanding land, are becoming increasingly common along the East-West Highway.

RAMESWOR BOHARA

A banda a day

Dirgha Raj Upadhya in Dhangadi, Himal Khabarpatrika, 15-29 June

You can close down the far-west for any reason at all these days. Kailali saw a three-day banda when armed police confiscated 107 sacks of smuggled fertiliser. Other obscure reasons for bandas and chakkajams include problems with electricity, a sugarcane farmer not getting paid by the sugar mill, and a man being arrested for illegal felling.

Residents of Baitadi’s Patan called a two-week banda because they wanted government offices displaced during the insurgency reinstated. The Maoists call strikes for every little reason, and it has become common practice for highway accident victims to close down the Rajmarg to claim compensation.

Free Masuriya kamaiyas called a chakkajam demanding land and forcibly held assistant director of the National Human Rights Commission in Dhangadi, Koshraj Neupane and a group of journalists for close to an hour. One organiser said: “We must hold these people, only then will the government feel pressure to listen to

our demands.” In another case half-a-dozen VDCs in Kailali closed down the Lamki-Chisapani region of the East-West highway because there was no water in their canals. Farmers in Tikapur also stopped receiving water and shut down the highway. The government gave them tools to dig canals and Rs 250,000 in exchange for lifting the banda. The government remains a spectator. Government influence on the highways is zero, and the police seem totally unconcerned by these frequent closures. Lawlessness is rife. The newspapers and radio here have even stopped carrying news of shutdowns. Only banda cancellations and highway openings make news.

These frequent shutdowns make travel an uncertain, tedious, and sometimes dangerous undertaking. Banda organisers don’t even let through media people, human rights workers, or ambulances. These repeated closures are taking a huge toll on the travel and transport industry. Over 50 businessmen have been forced into bankruptcy and this number is likely to double. Businessman Balram Poudel says, “I couldn’t pay the instalments on my bus and so had to sell it for extremely cheap.” Larger companies are also affected—the Far-Western Bus and Mini-bus Industry Committee owned 325 vehicles two years ago, this number is down to 221.



Interim Constitution, Second Amendment:

Remove the king from the House of Representatives – remove him through the constitutional assembly elections – remove the king after a public meeting – remove him after a town meeting – conduct polls by June – conduct polls by July – conduct polls by October – conduct polls by November....

Nepal, 24 June

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“Those who protect criminals are traitors and we will hang them when we come to power.”

Chandra Bahadur Thapa (‘Sagar’), YCL in-charge of Kathmandu Valley, in an interview with Tarun, 18 June

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ALL PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

The celestial fruit is a perennial hit in the Valley of the Gods

# Mango fever

PRANAYA SJB RANA

**T**he star monsoon life form is the mango-crazed Kathmandu resident. This drooling, slaving, often spotty creature in soiled shirts eats, quite literally, tons of mangoes — estimates vary from 9 to 90. A day.

Mango fever is a trait we share with our South Asian brethren, politics be damned. Mangoes actually originated here some 25 to 30 million years ago according to genetic family tree tracing and carbon dating of fossils (hey, we said this was serious business).

In myth and in literature we and our neighbours have always celebrated the mango. There is a mango story attached to every major (and even minor) character in folktales and myths. There is

not one set of lovers that does not rendezvous in a mango grove. Consider this gem of more recent vintage: “Ma mahuri hu radha, timi aanp ke manjari hau (“I am a bee, Radha, you are a flowering mango tree”—perhaps this loses something in translation.)

The ‘fruit of the gods’ timeline is murky, but makes for a great story—Parvati loved mangoes and missed them so terribly when she came with Shiva down to the Himalayas that her attentive and caring consort brought the celestial fruit to our lowly world to please her. Please do not bother us with the logic of ‘how can mangoes grow in icy Himalayan caves’.

The result of this obsession is that in Kuleswor’s wholesale fruit market today you see everything from perfect Nepali-grown maldahas and dasheris to elusive

Indian hapoos and banaganallis. The kalami, or ‘developed’ commercial varieties are the commonest, including the maldaha, bambaiya, calcuttia, and dasheri, but keep an eye out for the few genuine super-local indigenous varieties that survive, such as the supariya, sinduriya, and keraba. Increasingly, Kathmandu’s mangoes are not Indian, but from the eastern tarai districts, Kapilbastu, and Banke.

Mangoes are cheapest at this time of the year, with maldahas at Rs 40-50 a kilo, which suits most of us fine. There is this hankering after the super-expensive alphonso, or hapoos (a crate of twelve will set you back Rs 700), but those in the know are dismissive of it. “Hapoos are popular among the moneyed, but they’re not terribly tasty,” says

Kuleswor wholesaler Saroj Shrestha. “Maldahas are better.”

Ah yes, the maldaha, so perfect for relaxed eating. With an average-sized pit and lots of juicy flesh, it can be cut hedgehog style or sliced into long thin pieces. Just remember those wine snobs who fail in blind tastings, though, and don’t kid yourself that you always know what you’re eating. “People will buy any kind of mango if you tell them it is a maldaha,” smirks Jungi Lal, a bicycle vendor. “Few can tell a real one from a fake.”

One way not to look a fool is to explore other varieties. The skinny dasheri is perfect if you lop off one end suck out the flesh from there. The banganapalli is a seductive plump orange-red. Bombaiyas and calcuttias are good for drinks and shakes. Smaller







That texture, that sweet, sweet taste—what better way to spend the monsoon than at home, with a big pile of the golden fruit, munching, slurping, drooling, and gulping away. Invest in a bib. ●



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# The next big bad thing

Agendas and spin determine page one news, but offer no early warning system

**W**hy do I have this funny feeling that we're all missing the point, that we're heading for big trouble irrespective, or perhaps because of, our 24/7 media culture, internet-driven ideas and panic tendencies fully stoked by cynical and dishonest world leaders?

Why do I think that the battle with radical Islam is a farce, that the west's real enemies are poverty, disease, alienation, illiteracy, inequality and the tendency of global elites to plunder and pander?

Perhaps it's because I am in the media, and I do surf the internet and I occasionally feel that fear that my leaders like to induce in me. I know my limitations as a journalist and information gatherer; I know the power of panic and the easy loathing of the 'other' that comes from paranoia.

In the battle for viewers, rating and advertising dollars, global television and even the best newspapers are at best instruments of the moment. They have little choice but to follow existing or stage managed agendas. Even when those are clearly false or misleading, if they come from powerful stages or top leaders then they are repeated as if true.

By the time iconoclastic reporters examine the pronouncements of presidents and prime ministers thoroughly, exposing flaws and fallacies, the damage has been done—a country invaded, a village obliterated, economies left in ruins, a death toll accelerated, a process out of control.

From time to time, the media looks for the next 'big bad thing' and gives it headline coverage. But it's almost always too little, too late or just plain wrong. Climate change only battled its way into popular consciousness because of Al Gore's film, *An Inconvenient Truth* and the efforts of committed scientists, writers and activists to force the issue past corporate and US presidential malignant denial. Public health threats like SARS and bird flu pandemics become matters of concern when people die but not before, when it might have been possible to save lives and establish a truly effective and humane health care system for the planet.



**HERE AND THERE**  
Daniel Lak



Concerns about genetic engineering arise in mainstream media consciousness years after products made in laboratories reach the market and make activists angry. A leading US scientist is applying for a patent on the first wholly created form of life. Bad news is, it's a bacterium. Made from chemicals in the lab. Now that's scary.

What it isn't, is front page news. Instead, we have the latest line on Iraq, Afghanistan, terror, and Paris Hilton. Endless momentarism, diversion, spin. There's no sense of the real flow of history, or the truth of a situation. It's all reduced to what one side says, and the other side's response, to numbers of dead and injured, to scripted rhetoric that adds nothing to comprehension or leadership.

You can find attempts to broaden this paltry agenda throughout the media, but in obscure places, back pages, late broadcasts, obscure corners of the internet. But without the wallop of the big headline or the expensive news anchor's sonorous tones, consciousness is not raised to anything like a critical mass.

Individual journalists, editors, and producers struggle every day to get insightful and helpful material into their medium, but often fall afoul of the daily demands for sensation, sentiment, and voyeurism. Yet the troubled times we live in require so much more. The next big bad thing might just be lurking, and all we know for sure is that it will take us by surprise. ●

# Wheels of change

## Improving water mills has a domino effect

**MALLIKA ARYAL** in KABHRE

**M**iller Durga Simha Mahat of Chahal, Panauti knew there was more grain in the village than he could really grind. So, the 74-year-old (*above*) decided to get help improving the water mill he inherited from his father.

Today, Mahat gets to work as early as 5AM, and everyday he grinds about 450kg of grain for an average of eight families. "Sometimes," he smiles, "there's no time even to blink." Now, his son does not have to till other people's fields to ensure the family has enough grain. Instead, he can drive a taxi in Kathmandu, which helps bring in more cash.

The women of Chahal are ecstatic, because the new mill has given them back their time. They're happy to pay Mahat one-fifteenth of the grain he grinds for them. "You have no idea how much time we used to spend at the traditional ghatta," says 49-year-old Subhadra Karki putting her doko full of grain next to the mill, telling of waiting all day for her turn and then having to return the next day anyway. Now, villagers just drop off their grain in the morning and pick it up on their way back home from the fields in the evening.

Since 2003, the Centre for Renewable Technology Nepal has helped improve over 2,400 water mills all over Nepal, close to 10

percent of all the ghattas in the country. As a direct result, about 100,000 rural Nepali households save time and earn more money. For its efforts, the organisation has been named one of the ten nominees this year for the prestigious Ashden Awards for sustainable energy.

The improved water mills grind grain at 20-50kg per hour—up from 10-20kg per hour, hull paddy, extract oil, function as sawmills, and generate up to 3kW electricity. Of CRTN's improved water mills, 237 can do all of this (barring electricity generation), and 31 successfully generate electricity.

In some places, polluting diesel engines are being replaced with clean electricity. It takes two improved water mills to replace a

single diesel mill. CRTN estimates that one such switch reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 4.8 tons per year.

A project like this could run into a number of problems in part because while ghattas perform a valuable community function, and often generate resources such as electricity that will be used communally, they are privately-owned. Improvements are made by individuals but are in the interest of the entire village.

In response, an integrated private-ngo-public partnership is emerging to help improve and manage the output of water mills. While CRTN designs and implements the changes, the millers must provide the raw materials themselves. They use local service centres,



KIRAN PANDAY





MALLIKA ARYAL

manufacturers, and financing institutions, and take advantage of the government subsidy available.

The simplest improvement—getting a mill to grind more and faster—costs Rs 15-20,000, and receives a Rs 9,000 subsidy while kitting a water mill out to do all but serve the tea costs about Rs 250,000. The government’s Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEPCC) will subsidise this expense at the rate of Rs 40,000

per kW of electricity generation capacity—provided at least ten households are lit up.

“The government contributes cash, the mill owners and manufacturers are directly involved, CRTN supports and advises. The project remains sustainable because everyone has certain responsibilities.” says Subarna Rai of the Dutch aid agency SNV, which advises, monitors, and evaluates the program activities. Rai believes

these projects are perfect examples of public private partnerships.

Ensuring millers’ rights is a key factor in making sure the system will work well in future years. Shiva Saran Shrestha, secretary of the Kabhre Ghatta Owners’ Association, explains: “Mills are owned by poor families, they have no papers or certification, so technically it’s not their property. And that means no insurance, no right over the water they use.”

But supporting individual millers is cumbersome and costly and, CRTN believes, only half the battle. “What we have to do is build up local confidence, the owners’ associations have been doing just that,” says Ganesh Ram Shrestha, executive director of CRTN. The organisation supports eight Ghatta Owners Associations (GOA).

The other factor is keeping the money coming in—not all mill owners can even afford the subsidised cost of improvement. Govind Raj Pokharel, executive director of the AEPCC, which provides financial, technical, and policy support to the program, says micro finance institutions, DDCs, and village cooperatives need to work together to find solutions.

CRTN plans to improve 5,000 ghattas by 2008. If they win the Ashden Award, they say the money will go to a pilot project to test a lower-cost improvement that allows a water mill to generate electricity, which can be stored in batteries for household lighting purposes.

In Kulchok in Sindhupalchok, 68-year-old Narayan Bharati can’t contain his glee as he tells us about the “singing and dancing and laughing” that has followed the electrification of 40 households through water mill improvement. On the other edge of the ridge, there are houses still lit by sputtering lanterns. “We refused to live in darkness anymore, so we took the initiative and installed the system. If we can do it,” says Bharati, “so can they. Anyone can.” ●

# Where’s the loot?

## Some questions are harder to answer than others

The country’s ambiguous political situation is a boon for conspiracy theorists, alarmists, rumor mongers, soothsayers and foreign hands. In a post-truth society (‘Post-truth Nepal’ #339) everyone gets a shot at answering the national questions and anybody’s guess has a decent chance of being adopted as conventional wisdom and held up as fact.

A recent whirl of social events afforded the opportunity of conducting spontaneous opinion polls to discern which versions of the truth are most popular these days. Aware that foreigners are expected to be ignorant of nuance in local politics, (a status I aspire to), the Hand feigned innocence, thus assuring opinions aplenty.

### MOVING TARGET Foreign Hand

The wide range of locales and participants, from artisans in the village to business and government types in swanky hotels, belies the highly unscientific nature of the poll, which applied only one rule rigorously throughout: wait patiently until the second tumbler of whiskey is well underway before posing the first question.

“So, where do you think all the guns are?” is a great way to break the ice at parties, and the Hand has yet to meet anyone who believes the Maoists surrendered more than a fraction of their arms. Most say the UN containers are full of rejects while the quality weaponry is stashed in several locales across the country.

“If they joined the government in good faith, why didn’t they turn in the guns?” World-weary fatalism, second nature to Valley residents after so many years of bad politics, is evinced in the shrugs and admission it’s likely these weapons will soon be used against the police, army, and people.

“And where is the cadre?”

Once upon a time this was a real mystery, as the UN camps filled with Maobabies clutching pressure cookers and bits of pipe they called bombs instead of trained fighters with real guns. The sudden appearance of the YCL answers this question handily.

“So, who is in the camps, anyway?” Simple, comes the chorus: village kids who should be in school, some 34,000 of them, hoping to get the promised dollar a day for their part in the ruse.

Time to slake the thirst and affect a look of heartfelt frustration, “but why hasn’t the government enforced law and order all along?” This question could only be asked by a naïve outsider and the answer is both unanimous and patronising; because it is weak, wracked with rivalries, and terrified of being consumed by the highly motivated Maoists.

If my drinking buddies aren’t sympathetic to the curious *quire* by now they’ll never be, so the Hand launches his final attempt at understanding the mysterious East.

“Just imagine the enormous amount of cash extorted from businesses, schools, factories, hotels, departmental stores, radio stations, newspapers, coldstores, taxi drivers, and us; where does all the money go?”

The ensuing silence is eloquent, as even the most boisterous fall quiet. Some furtively sidle off to the bar for another double while others appear to contemplate the vast sums involved and mayhem this money could finance.

A few solemn sips later, the Hand wonders aloud, “Maybe they should change their name to CPN (Moneybadi).” Pandemonium ensues to the tune of clinking glasses and raucous laughter, endorsing the suggestion that it all comes down to the cash. No-one is surprised another political party has sold its soul for easy money.

Some say the Maoists are stockpiling arms for the next war, others say they buy gold, adding to the tons already collected from hapless villagers, and bury it in secret locations. Yet others suggest the extorted funds will buy votes and thugs come election time or retirement homes on the Indian Riviera for the top comrades when they finally flee the country.

Everyone agrees only the Maoists know how much loot they’ve accumulated and they aren’t telling. If there is no hidden agenda to accompany the hidden arms and hidden loot, none of this makes sense.

So far, not one of those polled thought the money would be used to help victims of the war, rebuild wrecked infrastructure, or for any other purpose remotely beneficial.

The poll continues, and the Hand welcomes your theories. By the time we figure this out, let’s hope it’s not too late. ●



KIRAN PANDAY

# उज्यालो २० एफ.एम.

## बिहान ५ बजेदेखि बेलुकी ११ बजेसम्म

### सीधा कुरा, प्रष्ट बिचार

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# Re-casteing politics

**C**aste is again casting its shadow over India's politics. Caste-based 'reservations' in education and government employment are supposed to benefit India's most deprived, but have hardened, rather than eroded, India's ancient system of discrimination.

Every now and then, particularly before elections, caste groups demand to be placed on the list of 'other backwards classes' (OBC's) to benefit from these reservations. Political parties promise reservations for ever more castes and say they will to extend the policy to admissions into elite educational institutions and the private sector.

Many intellectuals and politicians consider India's increasing mobilisation along caste lines a welcome assertion of identity and a move towards true equality. Some argue that the recent rise of the lower castes in northern Indian politics and the implementation of reservations by the central government are a silent revolution, and that caste politics is secular and a bulwark against religious sectarianism.

But whether caste is a good indicator of socioeconomic deprivation remains unexamined. The protagonists of caste politics and caste-based public policy offer only small-sample surveys that can be grossly misleading in the context of a huge country characterised by monumental diversity. Moreover, these studies typically pool castes into three large groups, which distorts the real picture.

Since India gained its independence, the government has systematically refused to collect sufficient data on the socioeconomic aspects of caste. The huge mass of evidence in the censuses and land revenue settlement reports of the period from 1901 to 1931 lies ignored. If caste is a good indicator of deprivation now, it should have been even clearer in the past. But

statistical analysis of this evidence—the only accessible macro-level quantitative data for the whole country—does not confirm caste as a clear indicator of deprivation.

For example, less than one-third of workers in this period followed their traditional caste occupations. Workers belonging to each caste pursued a wide variety of occupations, although agriculture provided the bulk of employment.

Access to land was uneven. Farmers, the single largest occupational group in most castes, were highly differentiated in terms of size and economic status. Holdings sizes were similar for most upper castes and some



**TOOLS OF THE TRADE:** Dalits, such as this leatherworker, are pawns in India's politics.

lower castes. Thus, the economic status of households varied a great deal within each caste. The majority of peasants belonging to any caste, upper or lower, were poor.

The most obvious fact in the data is the great disparity in the economic positions of castes sharing the same ritual rank. Such differences are particularly acute for middle-ranking castes, which are now called OBCs. Some dalit castes have higher economic status than others. The data shows an amazing degree of heterogeneity among backward castes. In some regions the lowest economic positions were occupied by some "backward" castes, not by untouchables.

Caste has not been an indicator of material deprivation, even during the early decades of the twentieth century. Boosters of caste politics claim that it is not economic deprivation but the social backwardness from which these castes have historically suffered that makes caste reservations necessary.

But not all lower castes suffered from an equal degree of ritual handicap. There was an elaborate gradation and hierarchy among the middle-ranking and even untouchable castes, which governed interaction between them and kept inter-caste socialisation to a minimum. Historically, the rich in each low caste emulated the customs and rituals of the upper castes, such as child marriage, dowry, and prevention of widows remarrying. Usually, well-off sections of low castes broke away to form new castes and achieved higher ritual status.

By using caste as a criterion in public policy, India's government is effectively treating the rich and the poor equally, thereby conveying benefits to the former. This helps co-opt the elite among the lower castes to the ruling coalition, and keeps the poor divided along caste lines. But it is hypocritical to argue that this does anything to eliminate poverty. ● (Project Syndicate)

*Pradipta Chaudhury, currently a visiting fellow in the department of economic history at the London School of Economics, is professor of economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University.*



# In film, we'll always have Paris—unfortunately Cheap sho(r)ts

A month after Sarkozy won the French elections, it's hard to imagine Paris still being the most romantic place on earth. Yet, mythbuilding projects like *Paris, Je T'Aime* would have you believe otherwise. Never mind the serious immigrant issues, rising VAT, or the glaring social and economic polarisation between different arrondissement. What is important is that in Paris, the city of pyrotechnic charms, you can find love anywhere.



REEL REVIEW  
Diwas KC

*Paris, Je T'Aime* is a francophile's wet dream. A dazzling international entourage of 21 directors offer eighteen shorts about love and loss in Paris. The directors get to pick a neighbourhood each, where they concoct their auteurist tributes to the city. The movie boasts big names like Gus Van Sant (*My Own Private Idaho*, *Good Will Hunting*), the Coen brothers (*Fargo* and *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*), Gurinder Chadha (*Bend It Like Beckham*), Alexander

Payne (*Sideways*), Alfonso Cuarón (*Y Tu Mamá También*), Walter Salles (*The Motorcycle Diaries*), Sylvian Chomet (*The Triplets of Belleville*), and Tom Tykwer (*Run Lola Run*).



Paris Je T'Aime, 2006, R, 120 min.

How wrong can you go with this line-up and a decent concept, you ask? Awfully wrong. Sure, the shorts offer a brilliant array of characters, ranging from mimes to vampires. But your acquaintance with them is a little like speed-dating—the multiplicity is intriguing, but not really satisfying at the end. The problem with *Paris Je*

*T'Aime* isn't just the patchiness of the shorts. It is that most of the vignettes are, simply put, unsuccessful as shorts. But while some are insubstantial and completely forgettable, there are a few that may well redeem the film. Joel and Ethan Coen's 'Tuileries' shows remarkable handling of humour, with Steve Buscemi consummately portraying a humiliated American tourist. Walter Salles and Daniela Thomas's 'Loin du 16ème' starring Catalina Sandino Moreno (*Maria Full of Grace*) poignantly contemplates the irony of motherly love for a nanny. Olivier Assayas brings his short-film mastery to 'Quartier des Enfants Rogues'. And Gérard Depardieu's "Quartier Latin" is an excellent depiction of the caustic decorum of a divorcing couple. These delights are, however, lost in the hotchpotch of other duds. Ultimately, the idea of a mythical city through the lenses of some of the most talented filmmakers of our time does not do enough. Sense, if not sensibility, is in short supply here. It's hard to tell if *Paris, Je T'Aime* is an elegy to love, an offbeat effort, or just an unofficial plug for L'office de Tourisme. ●



# East-meets-west is back east

After breaking away from his seminal band Sur Sudha and embarking on a solo career, Bijaya Baidya has gained international recognition as a sitarist. Completing a successful tour of Europe, Baidya is back in Kathmandu and performing for the fans who gave him his start. Baidya will perform new compositions in his signature style—a seamless fusing of eastern classical, rock and roll, and the occasional surprise. Nepali classical celtic rock anyone? As with most of Baidya's concerts, including his annual performances in France, the proceeds will go to charity.

The 29 June concert starts at 6.30 at the Megha Malhar Hall in Soaltee Crowne Plaza and will run for an hour-and-a-half.

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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Saransha** an exhibition of paintings by BFA final year students from Kathmandu University, until 28 June at Baryo Fiesta, Naxal. 4414395
- ❖ **Art-as-Object** a functional art exhibition by Nutan Singh, 28 June-7 July, 11AM-6PM, at GTZ/DED Neer Bhawan, Sanepa. 4700835

EVENTS

- ❖ **Nowhere in Africa** a film by Caroline Link, 22 June, 6.45PM at the Lazimpat Gallery Cafe.
- ❖ **Greater Nepal** a documentary by Manoj Pandit followed by discussion, 22 June, 3-5PM at Martin Chautari. 4107599
- ❖ **CSGN monthly lecture** Unequal Citizens: gender, caste, and ethnic exclusion by Lynn Bennett, 22 June, 9.30 AM at Shangri-La Hotel. 9851046543
- ❖ **Shastrartha** on environmentalism with Vibek Raj Maurya and Anil Raut, 23 June, 4-6PM at Martin Chautari. 4238050
- ❖ **School Bullying** a talk program by Niti Rana, 26 June at The New Era, Battisputali. 9851023958
- ❖ **Art of Living** basic course by Rishi Nitya Pragya from Bangalore, 26 June-1 July, 6-9AM and 6-11AM on Saturdays at Agrawal Bhawan, Kamalpokhari, Rs 3000. 5520868
- ❖ **Film South Asia 2007** Festival of South Asian documentaries, 11-14 October, call for entries deadline 30 June. www.filmsouthasia.org

MUSIC

- ❖ **Jazz at Jatra** every Saturday 7PM onwards.
- ❖ **Rashmi and Kitcha** live at Latin Quarter Corner, Darbar Marg, every Saturday. 7.30PM. 4243225
- ❖ **Soul of Raga** live classical and fusion music, every Friday night at Nhuchhe's Kitchen, The Organic Bistro. 4429903.
- ❖ **Open mic night** at Via Via Café, every Friday, 8PM onwards.
- ❖ **Live music** at the Red Onion Bar, Wednesdays from 8PM with Yanki and Zigme Lepcha. 4416071
- ❖ **Ciney Gurung** every Wednesday and Rashmi Singh every Friday, live at the Absolute Bar, Hotel Narayani Complex, 7PM. 5521408
- ❖ **DJ Raju and the Cloudwalkers** live at the Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency, every Friday and Saturday. 4491234

DINING

- ❖ **5th Annual Monsoon Wine Festival** 16 wines at Rs 150 a glass and Rs 600 a bottle, at Kilroy's of Kathmandu, Thamel. 4250440
- ❖ **Friday evening BBQ** with live music, at the Hotel Himalaya, 7PM, Rs 499 net. 5523900
- ❖ **Walk and lunch** every Saturday at the Shivapuri Heights Cottage. 9841371927
- ❖ **Kebabs and curries** at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619
- ❖ **Krishnarpan** Nepali specialty restaurant at Dwarika's Hotel, six to 22 course ceremonial lunch and dinner. 4479488
- ❖ **Weekend special** with sekuwa, bara, barbeque, Fridays at Ambassador Garden House, Lazimpat, 5.30 PM onwards. 4411706
- ❖ **Mongolian BBQ** Wednesdays and Fridays, 6.30 PM on at the Splash Bar and Grill, Radisson Hotel. Rs 1,000 for unlimited barbeque and beer. 4422828
- ❖ **Flavours of the Middle East** every Friday and the taste of Thailand every Wednesday at The Café, Hyatt Regency, Boudha. 4491234
- ❖ **Light nouvelle snacks** and elaborate cordon bleu meals at La'Soon, Pulchowk, 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
- ❖ **Gyakok** at the Shambala Garden Café, Hotel Shangri-La, minimum four diners at Rs 450 per person, two hours' notice.
- ❖ **Retro brunch barbecue** with Crossfire Band at Le Meridien, Gokarna from 12-4PM, Rs 1,000 including swimming. 4451212
- ❖ **Calcutta's rolls, biryani, kebabs** Indian cuisine at Bawarchi, Bluebird Mall Food Court. 9741000735
- ❖ **Woodfired pizzas** at the Roadhouse Café, Thamel 4262768, Bhatbhateni 4426587 and Pulchowk 5521755
- ❖ **Pizza** from the woodfired oven at Java, Thamel. 4422519
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Wet and wild package** at Godavari Village Resort, every Saturday and Sunday, unlimited swimming, buffet lunch with a bottle of beer or a softdrink, Rs 690 net. 5560675

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



Quest Entertainment

Rikki Thukral (Abhishek Bachchan) is a Punjabi living in London, and has a fiancé, Anaida (Lara Dutta). Alvira Khan (Preity Zinta) is Steve's (Bobby Deol) fiancé. Alvira and Rikki happen to meet by chance, and exchange stories, and fall for each other, creating a complex quadrangle. *Jhoom Barabar Jhoom* also stars Amitabh Bachchan in a marginal role.

Call 4442220 for show timings at Jai Nepal  
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**WEEKEND WEATHER** by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

KATHMANDU

The rainfall this week in west Nepal was welcomed with open arms—it made the scorching days 5 degrees cooler. The rest of the country received isolated thundershowers and some rainfall at night, but not as much as usual. The Valley, for example, is 100mm short of its 261mm June quota. Thursday afternoon's satellite picture shows the sky over the Bay gathering strength to send another lot of moisture-laden clouds to the north. This may reach us early next week if the tropical jet stream continues its northward march over the foothill as it did two weeks ago. The weekend will be hot and muggy, so leave those hiking boots at home.

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MIN BAJRACHARYA

**UNHAPPY FAMILIES:** Among the 200-strong crowd of protestors outside Baluwater on Wednesday demanding to know the whereabouts of their missing relatives were Ruby Shrestha, whose husband Rajendra Mali is missing, and her mother Indira who is petitioning to find out what happened to her son, Nanga Ram and friend Rajan Dongol.



KUMAR SHRESTHA

**AMBASSADORIAL ASSURANCE:** China's ambassador to Nepal Zheng Xianglin speaks to the press at Reporter's Club on Wednesday. Zheng said China would respect whatever decisions Nepal made about its internal affairs.



KIRAN PANDAY

**A LONG TRADITION:** The Rato Machhendranath chariot being taken for a spin around Lagankhel on Wednesday evening in preparation for the jatra's grand finale on Thursday. Machhendranath, who is also called Karunamaya and, in the Buddhist tradition, Lokeswara, must be kept happy if the Valley is to have a good monsoon.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

**TOP OF THE CLASS:** WAVE Mister University Nepal 2007 Hembung Rai gets keys to his new Yamaha Gladiator JA from Vishnu Agarwal, CEO of Morang Autoworks at the finals on Saturday. Swekshya Adhikari, the new WAVE Miss University Nepal 2007 won a scooter. The winners fly to South Korea this weekend to represent Nepal's universities in the international contest.





# Burgher King

The weekly Donkey just can't figure out why we are working ourselves into a frothing frenzy about Girija and his Baby King proposal. After all he sent up that trial balloon in February which your loyal Ass had duly pricked. Putting Princess Sruti's daughter on the throne may do the trick, but even that is iffy.

This may be an opportune moment for kingji to start making alternative plans. There are plenty of examples of monarchs who have gone back to being commoners. With his significant assets, our businessman king may actually have a headstart in investing and creating jobs for Nepalis. Even as a **tyrant**, KingG wasn't very successful, he may actually make not a bad **tycoon**.

ॐ

So why does our kingmaker prime minister keep prying open his monarchist can of worms, especially in front of Pakistani journalists of all people? Our prime minister may be President Carter's hero, but he is flogging a dead horse.

And what are the Paki journalists doing here, anyways, shouldn't they be back home struggling for their own freedom? Apparently they were here to lobby FNJ to make a strong statement about freedom of press (**or lack thereof**) in Pakistan. FNJ obliged and dashed off a self-righteous statement which brought a swift rebuke from Islamabad suggesting FNJ mind its own business.

Here, for once, the Ass's sympathies are

with the Pakistanis. At a time when Nepali journalists are being internally displaced, getting death threats from criminal gangs, and newspapers have been forced by Baddies to suspend publication, FNJ's should be protecting our own freedom first.

ॐ

The Ass does give credit where it is due once in a while, and this week it must go to Comrade Hasiya who is probably the only member of the cabinet showing some strategic thinking through her Ministry of Psychological Planning and Deconstruction. She has just released a **'Vision Document'** for the next two years to finish the Midhill East-West Highway, construct North-South road corridors, and push a Strategic Road Network.

Ms Yummy has gone to the heart of the issue and drawn up a realistic do-able plan. The only thing left for her now is to ask various Maoist-affiliated unions to stop blockading those very highways she aims to construct at the slightest pretext with bunds, chukka jams, blockades, and general strikes.

ॐ

So what's with us ethnocentric Nepalis when we go abroad? Hanging out at the waterfront in Doha or Kowloon, exactly as we do on the Bagnati bridge. Gulf employers aren't great about labour rights, so our diaspora comrades went on strike with a 15-point demand and promptly got deported.

Next time, they'll probably burn tyres, mistaking **Daharan** for **Dharan** and call for a Saudi-wide bund. Even on the US west coast a certain janajati group decided to set up its own association to differentiate it from other bahun-dominated groupings. However, the registration process had to be abandoned when the convernors found out that only three of the 400 prospective members were legally in America.

ॐ

So who cares if Unicef's South Asia Office in Kathmandu is thinking of moving to Bangkok? It is just following the grand UN tradition of shunting offices around the region as if it was a game of Chinese checkers. **ROSA** will be following in the illustrious footsteps of UNFPA, UNAIDS and various UNDP projects. However absurd, at least some of them moved from one part of the subcontinent to another. Now, they are moving a South Asia office to East Asia. What next: taking the SAARC Secretariat to Singapore?

ॐ

Anyone planning to fly out on Formerly-royal Nepal Airlines in the coming weeks, don't say the Ass didn't warn you about humungous delays. Between the ministry, the eight-party cabinet and kNACK management no one can agree on who going to get the cut on a new plane lease and the contract to overhaul the airline's spare Rolls Royce RB211 jet engine lying in a Hong Kong hangar. If all this sounds like the mid-1990s, you're right, our democracy is back to **Square One**. Time to put the flag-carrier out of its misery and start afresh.

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