KUNDI DIXIT

Now that polls are certain, let’s go for it

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal are Nepal’s two most-powerful men. But they were also the most nervous about elections. Both knew they’d fare badly so they maneuvered to add dissidents to the interim parliament and convert it into a constituent assembly without elections.

It was an ill-conceived and ill-concealed plan, one that would have cost the government the little legitimacy it had. Still, they’d probably have pulled it off had they not been warned off by the internationals. Now that they can’t avoid facing voters, the only way the Maoists can make up for lost ground and lift sagging cadre morale is by reuniting with the NC-D. It will also want to set itself apart from republicans to bag the estimated 40 percent of voters who want to retain a symbolic kingship. Since the election will effectively be a referendum on the monarchy, this will be a critical campaign issue.

The Maoists have come out of their central committee intact, and their radical rhetoric of rebellion seems to have been for internal consumption only. The plenum resolution on republic and proportional representation therefore shouldn’t be seen as an ultimatum but as the party’s campaign platform. Dahal’s biggest challenge now is to make the YCL and other hotheads behave so that their militancy will not wreck his party’s chance in elections. The Maoists have come out of their meetings this week by actually looking like a more democratic party than the NC. They have also re-committed themselves to the peace process and the 12-point agreement. Now, to fare well in elections all the ex-guerrillas need to do is show they have abandoned violence once and for all and that they stand for pluralism.

GARLAND OF FLOWERS: A teacher at the Panchakanya Secondary School in Chundebi on Wednesday gets his students to practice singing the new national anthem which extols Nepal’s unity in diversity and doesn’t mention the monarchy.
H
istorically when we’ve had peace, we’ve not had elections. We’ve been supposed to believe in the rule of law, but they are now competing with the YCL to establish youth leagues. The Rayamajhi Commission was also threatened by excluded groups with demands that escalate from secession to outright violence. The present band-aid approach of negotiations just won’t do, there has to be a genuine effort to address root causes and grievances.

We have a chance to restructure the state to the equality and democracy that was promised by an elected assembly. Constitutionalism implies a balance of the power of the people, the government, and the judiciary. But that expectation for an elected assembly to draft a new constitution via an elected assembly. Constitutionalism implies a balance of the power between the people, the government, and the judiciary.

Do the parties genuinely reflect the voices of the people? Is the political process important, or who owns the process: the parties or the people? What have the parties done? They have been given to the people so far? Can we vote the way we please? Do the parties or the people? Do the parties genuinely reflect the voices of the people?

The Rayamajhi Commission’s findings have been published but the home minister says action has already been taken against the guilty and there is no need to make them public. The insincerity in setting up a truth commission, the inability to appoint a head to the Human Rights Commission, the commission on Women is languishing.

From Mallik to Rayamajhi

When Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai on 23 May 1990 to investigate the excesses of the Panchayat regime that had suppressed democracy. At that time, it was unimaginable that a commission’s findings could be ignored by a democratic government. Mallik was reported to be highly for his uprightness and sense of fair play. Justices Uday Raj Upadhyay and Indra Pandey were colleagues in the commission, both equally renowned for contributions to furthering the Panchayat dictatorship.

But the reputation of three of the commission’s most respected judges proved to be powerless in the face of king Birendra’s pressure. Birendra reportedly told Bhadra that he was not answerable for everything done by his minions. Since no action could be contemplated against the king at that time, the report of Mallik Commission was consigned to the darkest recesses of Singha Durbar.

When King Gyanendra staged his royal-military coup in 2005, he brought all the Opposition to power. This erosion of public faith has to keep tolerating endless repetitions of the same story for the Peace Negotiation process: the parties or the people?)

The transition to democracy was set for 1990. The military regime that had controlled the country since 1960 was brought down by an elected assembly that had been elected in 1989. The party leaders had to face what mọi one ever learns anything from history”.

STATE OF THE STATE

or that it repeats itself as a farce. Sitaula virtually trashed the Rayamajhi Commission report by stating that the government had already taken appropriate action against those found guilty of atrocities to suppress the people’s uprising of April 2006. Of 302 persons identified by the commission, however, most were let off the hook or left untouched. Apparently, the commission of inquiry headed by former Supreme Court judge Krishna Jung Rayamajhi was constituted on 5 May 2006. Rayamajhi had championed the values of human rights, democracy, and rule of law at the height of Gyanendra’s absolute rule.

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So we have seen the parties pursue legislative agitations like the Gender Equality Amendment Act, the law on citizenship rights and the traffic of parties’ candidates, to the same issue: lack of due diligence in enforcing those laws. For the first time in the history of Nepal, the people will have a chance to craft their own constitution. It is not a flawless process. It will be the people’s representatives from the political parties who will be making the decisions after being elected to the People’s Constitutional Assembly. A certain number of excluded groups will be included in the closed lists of the parties, but there is no guarantee given the way who will choose those members, not the people directly.

And it all boils down to a classical game of zero-sum. No matter who wins in November, everyone wins. No matter who loses, it is a zero-sum game. No matter who wins in November, everyone wins. No matter who loses, it is a zero-sum game.

They must ensure that the parties to stay the course. The people who must put pressure on the parties to stay the course.

If the parties that represent the people are once more having their doubts about elections, it seems to be all systems go. The Maoists hounded the NC out of the hills, and the shortcut and converting the interim parliament into a constitutional assembly seems to be intact despite thinking aloud about taking a cold feet about elections being held in November. It looks like

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ADOPTION
As a regular reader of the Nepali Times, I had been dismayed by your front page article ‘On sale’ (#339) which was incredibly unbalanced. The recent followup ‘Kids in limbo’ (#359) is a bit more balanced, but the biases of the journalist appear in many of the same allegations. Where are the facts? Here are some data: one in 20 children under 18 is an orphan, according to the 2006 Demographic Health Survey for Nepal. This is a huge number given that Nepal’s population of 27 million is very young. 41 percent are under 15. In Nepal, children are often sent, lent, or ‘given’ to relatives or wealthier families to try to make sure they will have sufficient food and, perhaps, an education. At best, these children become ‘second-class family members’. Mostly, however, they are treated as little more than domestic servants, fed and maybe provided the opportunity of a little education. In a very small minority of cases, abandoned children and orphans are adopted internationally. International adoptions have increased to about 400 cases per year over the past two years, but this is a fraction of an orphan population of at least 500,000 children. These children are taken into loving families, provided full inheritance rights, and treated exactly as if they were biological children. Yes, there are some irregularities in the adoption process, but they are not as extensive or widespread as your articles imply. Instead of exaggerating the lack of international adoptions, and claiming that all of these children are being stolen, the Nepali Times should investigate the kinds of child-labour abuses that continue to be perpetuated on children through ‘domestic adoption’. The lack of opportunity, unequal treatment, and reservation of care and love are the norm in these situations – and this is in marked contrast with the love, devotion, and opportunities provided orphaned children in international adoptive families.

Name withheld, email

● ‘Kids in limbo’ (#359) quotes Joint Secretary Bhanu Adhikary as saying that the new terms and conditions for international adoptions are “...in the best interests of the child...” and for this we are all grateful and encourage the new terms and conditions to go into effect as soon as possible. However, for the more than 400 orphaned children waiting for adoption, the new terms and conditions proposed to, and accepted by international adoptive parents around the world under the current or ‘old’ adoption rules, it is hard to understand how waiting for the new terms and conditions to be passed, before their final paper work can be processed, is in their best interests, especially when some of them have been proposed and met their future parents as long ago as July 2006. While these proposed children with waiting parents, continue to live in orphanages it means that other orphaned children in Nepal are not able to get into these orphanage beds. Is this in their best interest? After signing their initial paperwork in Nepal, and meeting their proposed child, families around the world wait, their hearts filled with love, yet the child’s bed in their home remains empty. Is this in the best interest of the children? The minister now needs to act in the best interest of these children, and process the pending files under the laws and rules that were in place when the four hundred plus children were proposed and accepted.

Name withheld, email

● I commend Malika Aryal on her article about intercountry adoption, which brings up the issue that there have been indefinite delays since April in the processing of over 440 adoption files in progress. In fact, the delay has been in effect since February, when the adoption committee at the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare last met to review adoption files. In every single one of these cases, prospective adoptive parents have developed a strong bond over many months of waiting (usually years of waiting and preparing for a child) and in the majority of cases, one or both parties have requested to travel to Nepal to meet their child and submit their file to the CDO in person. Minister Biswokarma and others are to be commended for identifying the need for additional stringent procedures that will improve the system and bring it closer to new international standards for intercountry adoption. However, an important fact must be mentioned. The Ministry of Law and Justice has determined that the old files must be processed under the current adoption law, which has never been dissolved and therefore is still in effect. The statement by Minister Biswokarma that the new regulations must be passed in order to resume the processing of adoption files is inaccurate and misleading. What then is the use of making all these children and their waiting adoptive families hang in the balance? If the minister truly wishes to improve the plight of orphans and children, he needs to immediately finalise the current pending adoption files ahead of the approaching Nepali holidays.

A parent, email

FLAG CARRIER
Re: ‘Insult to the Flag’ that you translated from Samaya (#360). Nepal’s national airline is not the insult to our unique sun and moon flag. What brings the insult to the flag and the country is the degradation of our national economy and unstable politics. Our economy is remittance based, and we think negotiating better working conditions is enough. When will we start making investment friendly laws so jobs will be created in Nepal? We still only take the tourists who land in our laps, there is little effective promotion. Agriculture has never gone beyond subsistence because irrigation, extension, and microcredit has lagged behind. Domestic industrialists are so greedy, they’re out for the fast buck. We are proud to have a PMCO president who thinks it’s not necessary to resign on moral grounds even though he is a prominent bank detailer. But, being an optimist, I think this country can easily be put on the right track. All it needs is some vision, integrity and good managerial skills.

Praveen Sarva, Slovenia

TARAI
Frederike Gaigé (1975) was right in saying that the criteria for the nationality determination is not limited to the geographical difference between hill and tarai. He correctly pointed out for the first time that, while Nepal’s economic power and influence is the minister of information. Maoism has failed and has been abandoned in the very country where it originated, when will our Maoists learn from that?

Prabin Jung, email

MOAIST RIFT
The fissures that have emerged in the Maoist movement during their current convention (‘Prachanda vs Kiran’, #360) shows that Prashandas is now left with a hodgepodge ofth the maoist core. This wasn’t the case when the Miguel convention ('Prachanda vs Kiran', #360) shows that Prashandas is now left with a hodgepodge of th the maoist core. This wasn’t the case when the Miguel convention (#360) shows that Prachanda is now left with a hodgepodge of the maoist core. This wasn’t the case when the Miguel convention (#360) shows that Prachanda is now left with a hodgepodge of the maoist core.

The current discord within the Maoist party is but natural. They started with an impossible task at present: establish a communist regime based on armed rebellion and with the civil service, the parliamentary system was a forum of the oppressors. Now? It looks like the grapes are sour, come off. With the weakening of the party, it was a question of time that those who had less say in the party would try to gain more power. Even so, Prashandas is so powerful it is unlikely that the challenge will bear fruit. So, this week a drama will be staged to gain back the support of the dissidents and make the party look democratic.

Kumari Sarala, email

COMPUTERS IN SCHOOLS
I am not against initiatives like the ‘One Computer Per Child or the Linux Terminal Server Project (#360). My concern is sustainability. Where is the technical staff to maintain the systems, or the electricity to run them? What is the eco-economic environment? Every project makes it look like it has all the answers. In rural Nepal recently I saw the plight of schools and their very basic facilities. When will the politicians start to get out of bed and listen to what is happening in schools just after publicity, donor funding, and awards? Nepaliinux also started with a bang, and now it is glory days.

M Merdini, email
Out of the closets
Nepal’s lesbians are tired of hiding

MALLIKA ARYAL

A modest house in Baluwatar, just five
minute’s walk from the
prime minister’s residence, has
become the official home of
Nepal’s lesbians as they come out
in the open.

Most members of Mitini Nepal
were fired from their jobs or
ostracised by their families and
communities after they were
found out. Here, they get skills
training and learn to be
beauticians and office assistants
so they can be financially
independent.

With help from Austrian and
Norwegian groups, Mitini
members also conduct research
and outreach to find out more
about lesbians who still haven’t
come out in the open. So far,
Mitini has a data base of more
than 1,200 women, most are
middle class, some are from the
upper crust of Nepali society,
there are atheists, policemen,
and social activists.

Mitini was set up two years ago,
but Nepal’s low-profile
lesbian community hit the
headlines this week after two
soldiers at an army base in
Bhaktapur were detained and
discharged for alleged
homosexual behaviour. Media coverage of
the issue and international outraged
forced the army to backtrack and
restate the women this week.

The human rights of Nepal’s
gender and sexual minorities is
being raised with government
officials and MPs by lawyers and
activists. They have demanded a
‘third gender’ status to
transgendered people, and
guarantee representation in
policy making levels.

Sunil Pant, an activist with
the gay rights group, Blue
Diamond Society, says the army’s
dismissal is the first reported
incident of discrimination in the
military, but it isn’t uncommon.

“I am not here to tell politicians what to do. I can only
share the European experience where it has been
important to name sexual minorities to share a core
value of inclusion, a sense of identity, and feeling of
belonging. How this can be
formalised in Nepal needs to
be worked out locally by
organizations working with
sexual minorities, such as the Blue Diamond Society,
and the political parties. Because, if there is inclusion only in
the Constitution, and the reality on the streets is different, it
reduces inclusiveness to just a word on paper.”

An important step in society to recognise that it is
wrong to discriminate against sexual minorities. As long the
police can beat up metis and there is no public outcry,
simply including some words in the constitution will not
help. A just, wise, and sound constitution, is a constitution
that serves as a unifying factor in society. It should reflect
values that are non-negotiable. Especially in countries like
Nepal where there is a great diversity of cultures, religions,
race, people from different ethnic origins, castes, beliefs,
sexual orientation and gender identity, an overall inclusive
constitution plays a major role in bringing all these
differences together.

HAPPY TO BE GAY: Members of Mitini Nepal at their office in Baluwatar on Wednesday pose for the media for
the first time after deciding to go public. More Nepali lesbians have come out after Mitini was set up two years
ago to provide support, counselling, and skills training.

Inclusion, not just on paper

Member of the Dutch parliament, Boris Dittrich is now
based in New York as the advocacy director of the
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Program at
Human Rights Watch. In Kalthmandu recently, he spoke
with Lasmi Murthy.

How did you go from politics to be an advocate of the
rights of sexual minorities?

I served as a Member of Parliament for more than 12
years with Democrats 66, a socialist party and was the
leader of the party for three years from 2003. Wanting a
break from active politics, I did not stand again, and
decided instead to focus more on human rights work. My
involvement with the European Parliament continues,
and in September we are trying to lobby for a resolution
to endorse the Yogjakarta principles (which codify the
rights of people with different sexual orientation or
gender identity).

How did you come to visit Nepal?

In 2006, during the HIV/AIDS conference at the UN, I led
a team from Netherlands and, thanks to alphabetical
listing of countries, sitting next to me was the team from
Nepal. During the long sessions, I got talking to Sunil
Pant, Director of the Blue Diamond Society (BDS).
During the last few months, with all the churning that is
going on in politics, identity and inclusion in Nepal, groups
such as BDS working on the rights of marginalised
sexualities, have also been taking the discussion forward.
I was approached by the embassy of the Netherlands to
come to Nepal, since I was also vice-chairman of
parliament and of the Standing Committee on Justice,
head the constitutional affairs branch. Since Nepal is
going through a process of constitutional revision, I was
invited to share my experience of the Dutch Constitution
and the European Constitution with Nepali
parliamentarians.

Do you think such issues will get a hearing?

I individually met several ministers across parties.
Everyone I met was supportive, and agreed that
discrimination against sexual minorities (for instance the
metis) is very wrong. They expressed their concern about
recent incidents of metis being beaten up by the police.
However, some senior leaders I met said that they were not
aware of the issues of sexual minorities, whereupon, I tried
to discuss ‘non-discrimination’, which is a very universal
concept.

But why do sexual minorities need to be specifically
mentioned in the new constitution?

Well, I am not here to tell politicians what to do. I can only
reduce inclusiveness to just a word on paper.

For a long time we have suspected and heard of
discrimination and harassment, but the victims don’t know where
to go and ask for help,” Pant told
us. He also wonders why only
women are being targeted. “There
must be so many gay men in the
army, have their cases ever come
out?” he asks.

Advocate Sharmila Dhakal is
gladdened by the Nepali Army’s
dismissal of the women. “But it
proves that there are many in the
army who are conservative,” she
says.

Says one Mitini member:
“Society will take time to change
its attitude, but if the law is
protected as we would feel safer.

In a festival of the 21st century, 5th June - 20th August
nrct@link.com
www.bagmatiriverfestival.org.np
Clean-ups - Awareness - Water sports
School Challenge, Corporate & Dunga Diplomacy
Eco Challenge & Jal Jatra
A festival of the 21st century, 5th June - 20th August
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**Abuse of authority?**

The CIAA’s hurried attempt to pounce on top Central Bank officials smacks of a gotcha attitude.

_Last November, the Commission for Investigation of the Abuse of Authority (CIAA) lost its cases against two politicians: Khum Bahadur Khadka and Govinda Raj Joshi. Citing an old law, the then Special Court said that a public officer could only be slapped with a corruption-related lawsuit within one year of his leaving office. Since that length of time had elapsed in the case of both Joshi and Khadka, the court let them go free. The court’s message to the CIAA was, “You guys were late in filing these lawsuits.”_  

Chastened, by that experience, the CIAA seems to have lost no time last June in basing up the governor and executive director (ED) of the Central Bank before a court on charges of corruption. The government, which was once a slowbellied creature, has now taken an interest in the ED’s case, which has been suspended. Released on bail, he is awaiting trials. Meanwhile, it is worth commenting on two signals one can peel off the CIAA’s letter of accusation, which it submitted on 29 June.

**The workload problem.** The CIAA’s case can be reframed not as an issue of corruption per se but as a workflow problem. That is, the failure on the bank’s part to file, index and follow up on a piece of work that it had contracted out. This failure could well be attributed to the bank’s negligent attitude toward the task of crossing the t’s and dotting the i’s.

In its letter, the CIAA lays out what the accused did not do to claim appropriate damages from ‘dubious’ foreign consultants, who had been paid large sums of donor money despite having done unsatisfactory work. Assuming this were true, it would be game to question the effectiveness of the bank’s internal monitoring system. But to use this broad governance issue as a narrow platform from which to pounce on the top brass smacks of an attempt to fish at the expense of its own credibility.

**The oversight issue.** The Central Bank has its own oversight committees and its own board of directors. Their collective job is to ensure that the work that the Bank does or contracts out conforms to appropriate procurement and delivery requirements. That the CIAA gave a clean pass to all others, who had been paid large sums of donor money despite having done unsatisfactory work, and then criticized the bank for not doing so is a double standard. The CIAA is zeroing in on two individuals make it more vulnerable to the counter-charges that it is settling unidentified personal scores under the lofty guise of battling corruption. Even after assuming that the accused were indeed corrupt, it’s hard to see how they could have done what they did without others at the bank being complicit in some way.

These score settling activities are all too believable given that almost all of CIAA’s staff members are on deputation from government ministries. This means that the members’ long-term incentive is to stay loyal to their possible future bosses (i.e. politicians and bureaucrats), who, it’s no secret, can use the CIAA to get to rivals and make jealousies.

To be sure,smarting over the loss of major corruption cases in the last three years, the CIAA wants a big win this time. It has never had any problem garnering press coverage for its initial arrests. But the many of its wins have come from a mundane strand of work: verifying government officers’ ‘educational credentials’. Though the CIAA may hope that this particular case will be its crowning achievement, chances are high that a bunch of judges will ultimately say, “You came to court too early with inadequate homework.”

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**Half the sky**

When Nepal’s newly restored parliament passed a resolution in May 2006 directing the government to reserve at least 33 percent seats for women in state bodies, initially there was jubilation. This was a landmark legislation for a country with one of the lowest levels of participation in Asia of women in government and among elected representatives. But for some women not only did the bill not go far enough, there was also that danger that like past laws it would never be implemented.

So they registered their own political party, Sa-shakti Nepal. “An entire year has gone by, many meetings have been organized, there has been a lot of discussion about gender equality, but they are just words,” says party’s chair, social worker Padmami Pradhananga (pictured). “We say reservation is not enough, we are equal so give us 50 percent not 33 percent.”

Sa-shakti Nepal is now registered with the Election Commission for the November polls and has the scales of justice as its symbol. It has nine working committee members and recently opened its membership to those interested in joining, including men.

Vice chair Samala Lama says many of Nepal’s ill’s can be traced to under-representation of women in politics. “Think violence, hatred, communalism have come up in Nepal because women are not in decision-making positions,” says Lama, quickly adding, “we are not extremist feminists, we are only asking for equality and what is rightfully ours.”

According to the party’s manifesto Sa-shakti Nepal will ‘struggle against all kinds of extortion, inequality, injustice, and feudalism, reactionary regression and all kinds of anti-nationalism’. Some of the party’s goals like ‘supporting world peace, disarmament, national, and social freedom movement and fighting imperialism, communalism, violence, and discrimination based on caste and gender’ may sound a bit self-evident. But what may appeal to Nepal’s voters are more specific goals like decentralisation, social security, transparency in public administration, and the setting up of village cooperatives to help create jobs for women.

“Men and women should vote for Sa-shakti because we aren’t politically affiliated and our main agenda is equality,” says Pradhananga who says her group’s social service and wide network across Nepal will allow the party to hit the ground running.

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**Flood of flood relief**

Companies, media houses, and banks have all chipped in to help people who have been affected by floods. Among them, the Association of Nabil Staff (ANS) of the Nabil Bank collected cash donations from the bank staff. These donations were further matched by the Staff Welfare Fund, Rs 101,101, along with several sacks of clothes and utensils were presented to the Hiriga group, a relief NGO.

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**More networking**

United Telecom has started operations in Bhairahawa from this month. The company will provide mobiles with limited mobility for Rs 2,000 and CDMA wireless phones for Rs 6,000, including all taxes. UTL boasts the cheapest phone call rates and plans to start services in Pokhara as well.

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**City Express**

City Express is the latest money transfer venture that aims to make remittances a lot easier. City Express is in partnership with Nabil Bank, and has its offices at Ghanaghar, Kathmandu.

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**VLCC in Nepal**

VLCC Health Care, India’s largest health and beauty brand, has opened its first centre in Kathmandu. VLCC is the first slimming, fitness, and beauty corporate to be awarded the ISO 9001:2000 certification, and has also received the ISO 14001 for meeting global environment standards.

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**Trip to Liverpool**

Contestant number 01822 is the official winner of Carlsberg’s ‘win a football trip to Liverpool’ campaign’s second promotion. The winner will travel to Liverpool to watch a Liverpool FC match and give away the Carlsberg Man of the Match award. Carlsberg sponsors Liverpool FC, and is also the official sponsor of Euro 2008.

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**NEW PRODUCTS**

NEW PULSAR: Hansraj Hulaschand has launched the new 200cc oil-cooled Bajaj Pulsar DTG6. The new Pulsar comes with a new advanced console that includes an odometer, speedometer, fuel gauge, trip meters, engine temperature, battery voltage, and oil level – all digital. The Pulsar 200cc is available on easy installments from Everest Bank, Teku.

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**Strictly Business**

Ashutosh Tiwari

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**Times**

10 - 16 AUGUST 2007 #361

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So they registered their own political party, Sa-shakti Nepal. “An entire year has gone by, many meetings have been organized, there has been a lot of discussion about gender equality, but they are just words,” says party’s chair, social worker Padmami Pradhananga (pictured). “We say reservation is not enough, we are equal so give us 50 percent not 33 percent.”

Sa-shakti Nepal is now registered with the Election Commission for the November polls and has the scales of justice as its symbol. It has nine working committee members and recently opened its membership to those interested in joining, including men.

Vice chair Samala Lama says many of Nepal’s ill’s can be traced to under-representation of women in politics. “Think violence, hatred, communalism have come up in Nepal because women are not in decision-making positions,” says Lama, quickly adding, “we are not extremist feminists, we are only asking for equality and what is rightfully ours.”

According to the party’s manifesto Sa-shakti Nepal will ‘struggle against all kinds of extortion, inequality, injustice, and feudalism, reactionary regression and all kinds of anti-nationalism’. Some of the party’s goals like ‘supporting world peace, disarmament, national, and social freedom movement and fighting imperialism, communalism, violence, and discrimination based on caste and gender’ may sound a bit self-evident. But what may appeal to Nepal’s voters are more specific goals like decentralisation, social security, transparency in public administration, and the setting up of village cooperatives to help create jobs for women.

“Men and women should vote for Sa-shakti because we aren’t politically affiliated and our main agenda is equality,” says Pradhananga who says her group’s social service and wide network across Nepal will allow the party to hit the ground running.

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**Malika Aryal**
Cold feet

Yubaraj Ghimire in Samaya, 10 August

Two events coincided with the Maoist central committee meeting this week. The admission by a Maoist guerrilla that some 1,000 inmates of the Nawalparasi cantonment have recently fled the camp accusing their seniors of not giving them the Rs 3,000 a month allowance they were due. Then, there was the YCL action in Dolakha where the CDO became the target of terroristic outrage. The Home Minister are not deliberate. The political parties and their leaders have been publicly making the constituent assembly election a life-or-death issue, but there is also a conspiracy to use the excuse of security to scuttle it.

It is getting difficult to say for sure that the behaviour of the attackers and the inaction of the Home Minister are not deliberate. The political parties and their leaders have been publicly making the constituent assembly election a life-or-death issue, but there is also a conspiracy to use the excuse of security to scuttle it.

Koirala has hatched a plan to induct dissident leaders will take decisions behind closed doors to let the situation deteriorate so much that elections can’t appreciate viewpoints that differ from theirs, the achievements of fellow Nepalis, they are pampered about competition and take pleasure in their own limited accomplishments. The Maoists now control the Ministry of Information, but they too have failed to appreciate the importance of the media. In this top-down world, the Nepali people who are consumers of media products have no choice but to accept what the journalists and publishers dish out.

This is what our press freedom means: the people are free to listen not to speak out. We media people thrive on our claim of news outside the perimeter of power. Most of the human cost of the war, those of the movement. It didn’t look at the possibility of news outside the perimeter of power, the media failed to form a clear view of the movement. It didn’t look at the human cost of the war, those caught in the crossfire. The Nepali media have never really looked at the possibility of news outside the perimeter of power. Most of its time is spent chasing loose talking politicians and leaky bureaucrats, on a policy-less government. Any politicians buying expensive goods from abroad becomes spicy news. It was never bothered by ethics. The media is also psychogenic, journalists have an illusion of unimputed qualification. They can’t appreciate viewpoints that differ from theirs, the achievements of fellow Nepalis, they are pampered about competition and take pleasure in their own limited accomplishments.

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the army has tarnished its image more than the king rather than pursuing its own institutional ambitions. I don’t think, it will repeat the same mistake.

There are officers who believe in demonstrating the army and adapting with the changing times. The Americans have cooperated moderate leftists by funding their NGOs. It still wants to neutralise the Maoists, but wouldn’t want to use the army for the job.

India has unprecedented influence over the parties. Nepali academics like to imagine meeting the Indian Prime Minister as soon as we land in Delhi, but Indian academics like SD Muni have access to Nepal’s prime minister despite his ill-health. Furthermore Muni goes to the researchers’ club and declares India’s full support for Nepal. Who’s Muni? This gives us a sense of how much influence India has in Nepal. And perhaps it indicates India doesn’t need the army to extend its influence.

Rayamajhi Commission Report Out

Report: Prosecute the guilty or the Rayamajhi Commission?

Sitaula: Now we’ll make the laws and prosecute them.

The Maoists demand for proportional representation and republic can only mean one thing: they don’t want to take part in elections in November.
Rebirth in Chibakhel

But his big idea is to build a small Buddhist Vihar on an abandoned plot, not only for ceremonial purposes but as a community centre and library, where young people could learn traditional Newar arts like image casting and paubha painting activities from which ‘lower castes’ have traditionally been barred. Having fought caste prejudice to become a sculptor of Buddhist images, Shahi has personal experience.

Shahi also feels that sometimes Newar Buddhism leans too far towards ceremony and superstition, while forgetting the original message. Now, in preparation for the vihar, Shanta Ratna Shakya, chairman of the Nepal Rashtriya Gyanmala Samiti comes and teaches Pali chanting, while a Newar Theravada monk gives brief sermons on the original message of Buddhism.

The rebirth of Chibakhel has happened because of local initiative. There are no aid agencies or foreign charities involved. It is taking time, but it has a sustainable momentum. Once the Vihar and community centre get built, the locals plan to clean up the river bank. There is not much the inhabitants of the square can do about the sludge coming from upstream, but they can take care of their own part of the Bishnumati.

If such local initiatives take off everywhere along the river, who knows, maybe someday the sand will again turn to gold.

Golden sands and human sacrifice

Raja Ananda Malla of Bhaktapur learned from an astrologer that sand taken from a certain spot on the Bishnumati at an auspicious moment would turn to gold. That spot is probably Kankeshwari, one of the eight mother goddesses whose temple stands on the banks. The sand did turn to gold, by the way, but the coolies sent to fetch it had already sold it to a Kantipur merchant who subsequently became so rich that he paid off everyone’s debts and established Nepal Sambat (880 BCE).

In medieval times there was a wild stone-throwing festival held here in which the young men of two neighbouring toles competed. It was a rough sport: anyone knocked unconscious or captured by the opposing side was taken to the Kankeshwari temple and sacrificed. The festival was only ended by Jang Bahadur when the British Resident, a Mr Colvin, who had come for a look, was struck by a stone. There is no record of Colvin being sacrificed.

Scott Berry is associated with CNAS and co-author, with Rashmila Shakya, of From Goddess to Mortal, the True Life Story of a Former Royal Kumari.
Pig Alley and the flower children

In the sixties when curious and curiously dressed young people started arriving in Kathmandu from Europe, the US and Japan, most Nepalis didn't know what to do with them. How ritually polluting were these people anyway? This was no problem for the Shahi since by a strange coincidence, the Muluki Ain of 1854 put butchers and Europeans on the same level of the caste ladder. Whether they were actually aware of this or not, the local people opened their homes as lodges and feeding houses. Long before Thamel there was Freak Street. And before Freak Street there was Pie Alley (Maru Tole), and before Pie Alley there was the unfortunately named Pig Alley. And at the very end of Pig Alley stood Chibakhel with its little lodges and teashops clustered around the stupa. When the people up the hill noticed how well the butchers were doing feeding hippies, they seem to have decided that perhaps foreigners were not very polluting after all and the scene began to move up the hill. But not everyone left. Earlier this year an Italian veteran of the 1960s passed away in a room overlooking the stupa and was cremated just up the river at Bijeshwari. This was an occasion for many old-timers, Nepali, Tibetan and Western, to get together and reminisce.
The weakness of madhesi groups shouldn’t make us complacent about the tarai crisis

Sandbagging the plains

The state could have used the moment to reach out to the alienated madhesi population. A sincere relief program with displaced and almost a hundred people have died. But like the Kashmir earthquake and the tsunami in Sri Lanka, the human tragedy offered an opportunity for conflicting sides to build bridges.

The weaknesses of the madhesi movement: crisis of leadership, lack of a coherent political agenda, limited organisational strength and their inability to engage in true mass politics. The armed groups neither declared a ceasefire nor directed activists to work for relief. The armed factions neither declared a ceasefire nor directed activists to work for relief. Instead, they exploited the weakness of an over-stretched state machinery to continue with killings, abductions, and looting adding to the misery of the people they claim to represent.

When political entrepreneurs rely solely on identity chauvinism, they lose sight of the other factors that affect people’s lives. The response illustrates all that is wrong with the madhesi movement: crisis of leadership, lack of a coherent political agenda, limited organisational strength and their inability to engage in true mass politics. These weaknesses prevent madhesi outfits from filling the political vacuum in the tarai, besides posing a roadblock to serious negotiations.

The MJF came out with one statement days after the flooding began, and its district units have done little to organise assistance. The MJF’s organisation is in shambles. It has not been able to capitalise on the brand recognition it won after the movement’s pre-dominance had bred resentment among other castes.

The MJF talks: the lack of progress has as much to do with MJF’s internal problems as the government’s unwillingness to compromise. It is relying more on raw anger in the tarai for the next round of confrontation than thinking of building the party machine for polls.

The armed factions have calculated that the government will not give in on any major issue, and they can instead capitalise on the radicalisation on the ground. But this attitude can change and they may come for at least one round of talks if the government creates a pan-tarai appeal or a large popular base though there is increasing acceptance of armed action.

Both Goit and Jwala have expressed willingness for talks in the past realizing it would give them legitimacy. They had even declared a ceasefire but the government snubbed the initiative. They feel insulted and now appear more reluctant to negotiate, at least in the absence of certain preconditions.

The madhesi movement is fractured, disorganised and directionless. But there is anger firing it still. Faultlines are increasing acceptance of armed action. The armed factions have calculated that the government will not give in on any major issue, and they can instead capitalise on the radicalisation on the ground. But this attitude can change and they may come for at least one round of talks if the government creates a pan-tarai appeal or a large popular base though there is increasing acceptance of armed action.

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The statesman is more active and has expanded his organisation rapidly, but at the cost of including more criminals. Neither leader has a pan-tarai appeal or a large popular base though there is increasing acceptance of armed action.

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Small is beautiful

Small parties are much more enthusiastic about elections than the big, established ones.

JOHN NARAYAN PARAJULI

The Election Commission is getting ready for the 22 November elections. More than 20 political parties are ready. UNMIN is standing by. But the main political parties are not.

Most of the 64 parties in the fray are small and new, and they’re mostly ready for the November polls. But the main political parties are not. Except perhaps for the UML, the big parties have suddenly developed cold feet. While most of the established parties don’t have clearly-defined election manifests, the smaller ones have specific and coherent agendas.

Some are concerned with the restructuring of state, others with bringing back the Hindu kingdom, still others are only trying to uplift the status of women or improving the people’s living standards. While the larger parties are vague and idealistic, smaller parties like the Nepal National Development Party has a concrete vision to make Nepal amidile-income developed country in 20 years.

Chief Election Commissioner Bholraj Pokharel doesn’t find it unusual that the big political parties haven’t yet submitted their political platforms. “The election itself is a political agenda, and that is the agenda of the political parties,” he explains, “I don’t think they will allow themselves to be left behind in promoting their own agenda.”

We asked the chief whip of the main opposition, Ananda Prasad Dhungana, about his party’s election manifesto, he told us there isn’t any. When pressed, Dhungana mumbled vaguely about the NC standing for “democracy, nationalisation and socialism.” The UML already senses victory and is the most keen to have the elections over and done with.

The platform that underlines a democratic republic and equity. UML leaders have been on the campaign trail, but even they don’t seem to be completely geared up. The Maoists, still hungover after a bruising party plenum, have realised that whatever support they had has evaporated because of the threats and high-handedness of their own cadre during the past year. The Maoists didn’t split during their plenum, but it put Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal on the dock for trying to weaken the party by taking the poll route.

The lack of enthusiasm among the main parties towards elections has dismayed the new players. “These old men have much of an agenda, what are they going to take to the people?” asks Jepaudhaya Yadeav of the Madhesi Janadhistik Party (MJP) which has registered as a party in the 22 November elections.

“The big parties aren’t ready because they know that election won’t happen,” Yadav adds, “they have been scared to death by the ethnic and regional awakening of the masses.”

Political analyst Krishna Khanal believes that fear of an uncertain outcome in the elections has petrified some party leaders and held them back from getting into serious campaigning. “Such is the lack of preparedness that the major political parties haven’t even submitted their manifestos to the Election Commission.”

“When they have to submit the manifesto for registration,” says Election Commission’s Naren Mal Shrestha, “but none of the bigger parties have formally done so, and some haven’t even updated their addresses. Out of 64 applicable parties, 58 have already been registered. Most of these are small, new parties which all have to procure at least 10,000 verifiable signatories. There are several that are one-agenda parties to restore Nepal as a Hindu kingdom and the Peace Party to Shiv Sena Nepal or turn Nepal into a Hindu republic, like the Hindu Democratic Party.”

Some, like the Nepal Cooperative Party, is totally devoted to development. “Our party is the monopoly of the eight parties,” says Toyanath Dahal, whose party wants to create jobs by establishing local cooperatives.

But Dahal is first to admit his party hasn’t done much of a chance and he will be satisfied if it can just be a pressure group.

But there are others who are much more ambitious. The Nepal National Development Party headed by naturalised Japanese Miyahara’s plans include an east-west railway and link highways, moving the capital to Naryangarh to ease the population pressure, three river tanning, and markets for local products, among others. “We are here to do something great,” Miyahara firmly.

Nepal Congress
Symbol: Tree
Agenda: Democracy, nationalism, socialism, equitable development, federal setup, not decided on monarchy or republic.

CPN-UML
Symbol: Sun
Agenda: Democratic republic, end of feudalism, non-feudalistic economy, socialist state, epartition state, preservation of sovereignty of the people.

Nepal Congress-Democratic
Symbol: Jar (kalash)
Agenda: Federal setup, inclusive society, restructuring of the state organs, territorial integrity, total military democracy, promotion of national and local languages.

CPN-Maoists
Symbol: Hammer and sickle within circle
Agenda: Proportional representation, People’s Republic

Small Parties
Madhesi Janadhistik Forum
Symbol: Hand held torch
Agenda: Inclusive federal democratic republic, proportional representation, mixed economy, social justice, regional autonomy, separation of powers and end to all forms of ethnic, racial, and regional discrimination.

Hindu Democratic Party
Symbol: Woman
Agenda: Hindu republic, end to all kinds of dictatorship.

Democratic Janamukti Party
Symbol: Corn
Agenda: Proportional representation on the basis of ethnicity, ethnic literature

Sa-Sakti Party
Agenda: 50 percent representation for women, cooperatives in every village and employment for women.

Nepal Green Party
Symbol: Mushroom
Agenda: Poverty alleviation, inclusive society, federal setup, protection of personal freedom and property.

Nepal Cooperative Party
Symbol: Notebook and pen
Agenda: Cooperative in every village, employment for youths, vocational training, and markets for local products, ceremonial monarchy

Nepal National Development Party
Symbol: Elephant
Agenda: Elimination of unemployment through development projects, protection of tourism and preservation of the nature, social security, development of education

Peace Party Nepal
Symbol: Two triangles
Agenda: Declaring Nepal a Hindu state

Naba Janabadi Morcha
Symbol: Baby
Agenda: Autonomy for madhes, federalism

Nepal Janathwana Party
Symbol: Parax
Agenda: Pension for farmers, equal opportunity for all, democratic republic

Pragatikant Shakti Party
Symbol: Clock
Agenda: Constitutional monarchy

United, they stand

After weeks of wrangling and dispute over who should be more senior leaders of the NC and NCD say they are on the verge of unity. They hope to announce the settlement by next week,” Ram Krishna Tamrakar of the NC told us. NC-D leader Sher Bahadur Deuba’s threatened to walk out of talks if party unity doesn’t happen by 15 August. The five-time prime minister’s tantrum seems to have worked.

The NC-D says it is the NC that was holding things up. “We are clear on the unity, if anyone is Kisu” says Bimalendra Nish. NC-D’s general secretary. Deuba wants the simultaneous merger of both the local and central committees, while the NC wants to just do the central committee for now and seven districts for later. The NC-D is also proposing a leadership panel at the central level comprising of Deuba and Koirala to sort out any outstanding issues until the unified convention of the party takes place.

“The unity process is going through labour pains,” says NC leader Anand Prasad Dhungana, “but the baby will be born soon.”
With 192 members and a mandate that covers everything from security to refugees to public health, the United Nations is the world’s only global organisation. But many think the UN is failing. As a poorly paid, and believe it was tarnished by corruption during the Iraq oil-for-food program under Saddam Hussein. Many also blame the UN for failing to solve the Middle East’s myriad problems.

Ban Ki-moon is more secretary than general.

But such views reflect a misunderstanding of the UN’s nature. The UN is more an instrument of state power than an independent actor in world politics. True, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon can make speeches, convene meetings, and propose actions, but his role is more secretary than general.

Consider the oil-for-food program, which was designed by member states to provide relief to Iraqis hurt by sanctions against Saddam’s regime. The secretariat did an inadequate job of monitoring the program and some corruption was involved. But the much larger sums that Saddam diverted for his own purposes reflected how the member governments designed the program, and they chose to turn a blind eye to the abuses. Yet the program’s problems are portrayed in the press as ‘the UN’s fault’.

The cost of the entire UN system is about $30 billion, or less than the annual bonuses paid out in a good year on Wall Street. Of that sum, the secretariat in New York accounts for a mere 10 percent. Some universities have larger budgets. Another $7 billion supports UN peacekeeping forces in places like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Lebanon, Haiti, and the Balkans. The rest, more than half, is spent by the UN’s specialised agencies, which are located around the world and often play an important role in managing global trade, development, health, and humanitarian assistance.

For a brief moment after a broad coalition of countries acted together to force Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait in 1991, it looked like the original concept of collective security would become ‘a new world order’. Such hopes were short-lived. Consensus was also created to coordinate actions that could help prevent a recurrence of genocidal acts. The current test case is the situation in Sudan’s Darfur region, where diplomats are trying to establish a joint UN-African Union peacekeeping force under the UN’s ‘responsibility to protect’.

Ironically, peacekeeping was one of the original concepts of collective security. For a brief moment after a broad coalition of countries acted together to force Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait in 1991, it looked like the original concept of collective security would become ‘a new world order’. Such hopes were short-lived. Consensus was also created to coordinate actions that could help prevent a recurrence of genocidal acts. The current test case is the situation in Sudan’s Darfur region, where diplomats are trying to establish a joint UN-African Union peacekeeping force under the UN’s ‘responsibility to protect’.

There are now roughly 100,000 troops from various countries wearing UN blue helmets around the world. Peacekeeping has had its ups and downs. Bosnia and Rwanda were failures in the 1990’s, and then Secretary General Kofi Annan proposed reforms to deal with genocide and mass killings.

In September 2005, the states in the UN General Assembly accepted the existence of a ‘responsibility to protect’ vulnerable peoples. In other words, governments could no longer treat their citizens however they wanted. A new Peace-building Commission was created to coordinate actions that could help prevent a recurrence of genocidal acts. The current test case is the situation in Sudan’s Darfur region, where diplomats are trying to establish a joint UN-African Union peacekeeping force under the UN’s ‘responsibility to protect’.

In the poisonous political atmosphere that has bedeviled the UN after the Iraq War, widespread disillusionment is not surprising. Ban Ki-moon has a tough job. But, rather than calling into question, states are likely to find that they need such legitimising powers.

While the UN system is far from perfect, the world would be a poorer and more disorderly place without it.
Michael Moore's new documentary

Sick of it

What's up with Michael Moore bashing? Just read the reviews for his recent release Sicko and you may not believe that a person could be described with a more contradictory set of words. He is, apparently, a genuine activist, but also a distinguished dragon slayer. He is manipulative, it is said, yet his analysis too simplistic. He is a regular guy (a blue-collar philatelist event), but—oh it’s beginning to be pointed out—not from the same tax bracket.

If you have followed Michael Moore’s career, you know what he is about, and moreover, what he is against. With Roger and Me (1990), Bowling for Columbine (2002), Fahrenheit 9/11 (2004), and now Sicko on his résumé, Moore is perhaps the most outspoken filmmaker contemporary America has seen. For over a decade and a half, Moore has stalked the health-care system of America, as if they were fantasy films. Regardless, Moore is a popular patriotic populism too annoying. Whereas the left finds his jaunty, him too passionate for its taste, the right hates him for his foibles, no one better represents the American conscience at the moment.

Moore’s intention, then, is to expose the shadiness of this system and demonstrate, in a basic way, that there is an alternative. Analysts will be disappointed that this alternative comes only in the form of romanticised trips to Canada, UK, France, and Cuba. More debate on the interiority of Moore’s polemics will inevitably follow, even though everyone will agree that he is onto something here. But consider this: his methods have made the custodians of this system go berserk. In other words, it works! Capitalists are terrified of being subjected to his ethical gaze, and now even the US Treasury Department hopes to curb him with legal impediments.

Moore has found something that affects Americans in a more general, direct way, and perhaps for that reason, critics will make less controversy out of this film. It’s a good thing that Moore has decided this time around to stay out of the picture a bit more. Although a master confrontationalist, he isn’t confronting anyone in Sicko. Instead we get testimonies from ordinary people who have lost health insurance policies. "It’s a good thing that Moore has bought into the victim trap, that affects Americans in a more general, direct way, and perhaps for that reason, critics will make less controversy out of this film."

But he is there, zany and in-your-face as ever, a modern jester, calling kings fools. For all this, Pasang Lhamu was nine years old, her nameake became the first Nepali woman to climb Chomolungma. This year, at age 23 Pasang herself reached the summit of the highest mountain in the world. "It’s great that Pasang has managed to do so well, we’re really glad to have her in our team," says Dagombu Sherpa of the NMA. Pasang is also preparing to go back to Chomolungma next year as a high altitude guide on the First Inclusive Women’s Sagarmatha Expedition 2008 Spring, of which Sprayway, mountain gear model, Sushmita Maskay, is also a member. The expedition has vacancies for a few more Nepali members.

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EXHIBITIONS

- Amalgam - a group exhibition of paintings by national and international artists at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Barabat Mahal, Revioted, until 30 August, 11AM-6PM. 4218048
- A tribute to pioneering work - a group exhibition of paintings by Chandra Man Singh Magar, Tej Bahadur Chitrakar, Bal Krishna Sama, and Rama Nanda Joshi, until 11 August at Park Gallery, Pulchowk, Rs 50 entrance.

EVENTS

- 300 - a film based on the graphic novel by Frank Miller, 10 August, 6.45 PM at Lazma Cafe. 4285849
- Lajawaab - Walk and lunch at Artworks, Pulchowk, opposite Banana Cat every Saturday at the Shivapuri Heights Cottage.
- Regular pottery classes at Kathmandu. Pulchowk, opposite Banana Cat, starting 12 noon till. 98510183
- Film South Asia 2007 - Festival of South Asian documentaries, 9-14 October, www.filmsouthasia.org

MUSIC

- Acoustic music by Yarni and friends at Mokoko Bar, 8.30 PM. 5526212
- Rudra Nile - at Lehrenford, fusion and classical Nepali music by Shyam Nepal, every Friday, Rs 800 nett. 4415212
- Jazz at Jatra - every Saturday 7PM onwards, at Jatra Cafe and Bar, Thamel.
- Soul of Raga - live classical and fusion music, every Friday night at Nachhatar's Kitchen, The Organic Bistro. 4429903.
- Open mic night at Via Via Cafe, every Friday, 8PM onwards.
- Live music at the Red Onion Bar, every Fridays from 9PM with Yarni and Zigme Lepcha. 4416071
- Ciney Gurung - music every Wednesday and Rashmi Singh every Friday, live at the Absolute Bar, Hotel Narayan Complex, 7PM. 5521408

DINING

- Mango Etage - taste mango crepes suzette, bread scrones with mango cream at The Lounge, Hiyat Regency. 4419234
- Starry night BBQ - with live music by Ciney Gurung at The Shamballa Garden Cafe, Hotel Shangri-La, every Friday 7PM, Rs 666 inclusive of a beer. 4412999
- Traditional Nepali BBQ - at Splash Bar & Grill, every Friday 6.30 PM, Rs. 799 nett with 1 large Pusan Vodka.
- 5th Annual Monsoon Wine Festival - wines at Rs 150 a glass and Rs 600 a bottle, at Kilroy's at Kathmandu. Rs 565404.
- Monsoon Magic - live jazz by Inner Groove and a variety of cocktails from the summer special menu, every Wednesday, Rs 599 at Fusion – the Bar at Dwarika's. 4479488.
- Laajwadi curry, kebab and bhatiyali festival, every Thursday 7PM onwards at Cafe Horison, Hotel Himalaya. 5529300
- Walk and lunch every Saturday at the Shivapuri Heights Cottage. 941371907
- Shangri La's Pizza - pizza pie and pozi, a special swimming package with a complimentary beverage. Saturday and Sunday. 4412999
- Kohabs and curries at the Kathmandu Shamballa, 841206819
- KrishnaNepan specially restaurant at Dwaraka's Hotel, six to six, Rs 666.
- Weekend special with sokuwa, bara, barbeque, Fridays at Ambassador Garden House, Lazmafit, 5.30 PM onwards. 4417106
- Flavours of the Middle East - every Friday and the taste of Thailand every Wednesday at The Cafe, Hiyat Regency, Boudha. 4491254
- Light nouvelle snacks and elaborate cordon bleu meals at La'Soon, Pulchowk, behind the Egyptian embassy. 6537136
- Continental cuisine and wine by the fire place at Kilroy’s. Thamel. 4250441.
- Smorgasbord lunch at Park Village Resort, every Saturday 4375280
- Calcutta's roles, biniyas, kebabs Indian cuisine at Bawarchi, BluedbirdVad-Food Court. 974100739
- Redisson fine Italian cuisine at La Dolce Vita, Thamel, all new exciting menu. 4700612
- Pizza from the woodfired oven at Java, Thamel. 4422519

GETWAYS

- Weekend package at Le Meridien Kathmandu Gokarna Forest Golf Resort and Spa, two nights three days at Rs 8,888 and one night two nights at Rs 4,444. 4451212
- Honeymoon package at Godawari Village Resort, every Saturday and Sunday, unlimited swimming, buffet lunch with a beer, Rs 690. 5560675
- Monsoon madness - two nights three days package at Rs5999 for a couple at Shangri-La Village, Pokhara. 4412999
- Experience Hiyat - one night stay on double occupancy, full buffet breakfast at The Cafe and access to Club Oasis, Rs 5000 plus taxes, valid only for Nepali and local residences. 4419234
- Overnight package at Dwaraka's Himalayan Shangri-La Village Resort, Dhumel, includes accommodation, snacks, dinner and breakfast. 4479488

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

Weekend Weather

KATHMANDU VALLEY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Temperature</th>
<th>Rainfall</th>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
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Chak De India is the story of Coach Kabir Kahn's (Shahrukh Khan) fight and struggles while training the female Indian hockey team. Kabir's Team India must overcome their diverse backgrounds and learn to use everything that life hurls on them to get to the top. A story about honesty, sincerity and integrity, the movie follows the rise of Kabir Kahn's team of diverse yet similar individuals rediscovers their love for the sport of hockey.

Call 442220 for show timings at Jai Nepal www.jainepal.com

About Town

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The southwest monsoon (a bit of a misnomer since it arrives actually from the southeast) is taking a breather. Thankfully so, considering the heat in the town this past week. But this may not last long since there are two cyclonic troughs, one over the Bay and the other over the Arabian Sea. Both clearly seen in this satellite picture taken on Thursday morning. They will take another week to reach us and may cancel each other out. But they may also strengthen each other depending on how the isobars arrange themselves next week. Till then, expect the moisture to wall up the mountains and fall as rain, mainly in the late evening and night with light, cool winds from the southeast. And when the sun does shine through, as it will in the mornings, it will be hot and sticky.

Weekend Weather

Kathmandu Valley

SUNDA, TOWER, SUNDAY, SUNDAY, SUNDAY...
SHE’S HERE: New US ambassador, Nancy Powell, being received by Charge d’affaires Robert Hugins at Kathmandu airport on Wednesday.

ALL TOGETHER NOW: Maoist top brass (from l-r: Baburam Bhattarai, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Ram Bahadur Thapa, and Mohan Baidya) patched up their differences at the party’s central committee meeting in Balaju Tuesday and decided to go for elections and stay in government.

BOOK WORMS: Two Maoist ex-guerrillas in full combat gear outside the meeting hall in Balaju on Monday set aside their assault rifles to flip through a book about the history of the student struggle in Nepal.

GREAT PICTURE: Sangeeta Thapa of Siddhartha Art Gallery and her family admire the paintings of Bal Krishna Sama at the Park Gallery in Pulchok on Thursday. The exhibition also includes paintings by other greats like Chandra Maskay and Tej Chitrakar and is on till 11 August.

ART IMITATES LIFE: Shova Chand, a performance artist based in Paris, performing Go West combining theatre, music, dance, and portraying shocking images of the west, at Jatra Cafe and Bar, Thamel on Sunday.
Nepal is garnering a well-deserved reputation worldwide for being a pretty incompetent country. Let’s face it, our blokes can’t do anything right. But, be that as it may, we are a proud and independent nation. We may not have assets, but we have a whole lot of asses. And that is what makes our country truly great.

Sorry to say, but even our crooks are third-rate. Our willful defaulters are so incompetent they get caught in flagrante delicto with their hands in the honeypot. Then, they’re so dense they can’t even believe their way out of being blacklisted. Highway robbers in Chaudhari Bazaar get involved in motorcycle accidents as they make too swift a getaway. In Birgunj, kidnappers botch their kidnapping and end up getting caught. Only in The Rising Nipple do you get to read headlines like: ‘Abductors Abducted’.

Ambitious as he was to wield absolute power, even our wily kingji couldn’t pull off a proper royal dictatorship. He is reported to have said soon after his half-hearted coup in February 2005: “Those loyal to me are incompetent and those who are incompetent are loyal.” And those who are royal were neither loyal nor competent, the Ass supposes.

Over at our Department of Uncivil Aviation, it looks like folks aren’t even smart enough to be really corrupt. If they were, they’d have ordered replacement for X-ray machines long ago and we’d not have to wait in lines stretching right down to the Ring Road just trying to get into the terminal because only one of the x-rated things still works.

And if they were smart enough to be corrupt they’d have ordered two Dreamliners long ago. Instead, what we have is petty graft that involves cabin crew squirrelling away undrunk booze after flights and commissions on ordering cabin consumables like plastic cutlery. Makes one ashamed to call oneself a Nepali.

Why doesn’t someone just muster the courage to earn some major kickbacks so that the RB211 engine that is rotting in a Hong Kong hangar for more than a year can be overhauled? If this fight is between HECO and AMECO, for heaven’s sake take your cut and get the damn thing repaired.

Really, our guys are just not greedy enough. Instead of embezelling billions on plane purchases, the very people who are ministers today went for messy leases right through the 1980s. Now, they aren’t even immoral enough to lease planes, they are happy with measly baksheesh on maintenance contracts. Pretty soon they’ll be satisfied with an underhand payoff on storage fees for the broken engine. Speaking of which, there is a plan to take the engine off the plane that is being checked out in Brunei and fly it back to be fitted on the grounded jet here. Genius, whoever thought of that. But, umm, how will the jet in Brunei fly back?

So Sri Tin Girija has installed a lift at Bahawalpur to get up to his first floor bedroom. Which begs the question: if he needs a dumbwaiter in his official residence how on earth is he going to make it to China on an official visit in Asoj? Isn’t it a health hazard for our head of state and government?

Besides, how is he going to fly to Beijing if the 757s are still grounded? In a Twin Otter?

Still on the subject of aviation, our unusually reliable source tells us negotiations with Sri Lankan Airlines on flying to Kathmandu have broken down because our guys wouldn’t allow the Lankans to carry 100 pax per flight between Delhi and Kathmandu, only 75. Call me an ass, but how can a country that has suspended all international flights by its flag carrier not allow someone else fly passengers? So mean, no?

Abductors Almost Abducted