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Weekly Internet Poll # 363

Q. Which political party do you most agree with?

Total votes: 7,480

Weekly Internet Poll # 364. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. What do you think of the Maoists' 22-point pre-election demand?

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SHUTDOWN: A sight that may be common in Thamel during the autumn tourist season if the Maoist threat to intensify street agitation from September materialises.

MIN BAJRACHARYA

Closed for business?

Election-related political action mustn't destroy tourism

NARESH NEWAR

Tourism bookings for the autumn season have never been healthier. Airlines and hotels are booked solid till November. Trekking agencies report record reservations. Yet, hotel and airline owners, trekking agents and those employed in the tourism industry are downcast. They see a dark cloud behind the silver lining because of threats from Maoist unions as well as the possibility of bandas smack at the start of the tourist season in September.

The Trekking Agents

Association of Nepal (TAAN) has been trying to sort out demands laid down by a Maoist trade union before the season starts. "We are ready to do everything for the welfare of employees, but we are running out of time," explains TAAN president Narendra BC.

After two months of talks, there has still been no agreement on two of the 13 demands of the Maoists: a Rs 600 increase in porter wages, better facilities, and permanent status to those working more than 240 days in a year.

TAAN says it has nothing

against these demands but can't fulfil them till the next season since the tariffs have been set. A local tourism entrepreneur says the Maoist demands are unrealistic, and will kill the industry, and the porters will lose even the jobs they have.

The government fixed the minimum wages of porters two years ago at Rs 350 per day for those going above 3,500m altitude and Rs 250 for those below that. But most of the porters who work for established companies make more than Rs 500 excluding tips. It is usually the porters associated with illegal unregistered companies who get exploited, and TAAN says it is trying to control these fly-by-nights.

But Maoist unions are threatening porters, and last

week even sent back some porters who were not members of their union from Lukla. Enforcing the union's demands on permanent staffing and benefits mean established trekking agencies can only hire half the number of porters they currently employ, says one trekking agent.

With the restoration of peace and positive foreign travel

INDIA-NEPAL
The view from Delhi p4

advisories, there was a lot of hope. But there is despondency again. Said one travel agent: "We have invested so much promoting this season, we will be ruined if there are strikes and cancellations."

Which means the Nepalis who need these jobs the most won't have any. ●



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Say no to another poll postponement Yes, yes, yes

LAWS OF THE JUNGLE

Breaking all records for viewership on YouTube last month was the dramatic video taken in a South African national park by a tourist of a herd of Cape buffaloes fending off an attack by a pride of lions.

The lions attack the herd and fall into the river with a buffalo calf. While struggling to get the young buffalo out, alligators attack the lions and try to snatch the calf. The lions manage to get the calf back on land and are about to feast on it when the buffaloes return with reinforcements and chase the lions off. The calf, which is still miraculously alive, limps off.

On the internet, people have seen the moral of this story as one that proves might is not right. Do the mighty have *might*? Is it only the brute carnivorous power of the lions, or is there strength in numbers of vegetarian ungulates? And what of the laws of the jungle: aren't the lions supposed to be hardwired to kill for food? Isn't that the *right* way?

The video is a perfect metaphor for April 2006. The lions were the royal army and the buffaloes the people on the streets. The alligators were the Maoists. The soldiers and the guerrillas took turns to prey on civilians. But people power finally won out, underlining the moral victory of non-violence.

Today, the lion king is still prowling. The alligators are submerged in the water with just their eyes and snouts showing. The buffaloes are leaderless again and have fallen out among themselves. Old habits die hard, and somehow things always return to the natural order and the laws of the jungle.

We were reminded of the video when we read Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal's 22-point demand this week accompanied by a threat to launch a mass action and street uprising if his conditions weren't met. He's trying to get the buffaloes stirred up again as part of an election campaign strategy. If Dahal actually believes he can stave off elections through staged street action he is sadly mistaken. But he could also be playing it both ways as he always has to hide the chronic internal rift between hardliners and pragmatists in his party.

And what of the buffaloes? The leaders are busy headbutting in Kathmandu fighting over political crumbs while the tarai crisis gets worse. It is hard to tell whether they are letting things drift out of sheer incompetence, or it is a deliberate attempt to let the crisis simmer as a distraction to mask greater failures.

Whatever it is, our honourable members of the interim parliament better prorogue the house and get out to start campaigning for votes like they mean it.

There was once a Chinese artist who was obsessed with dragons. He loved to draw dragons and he painted them everywhere. One day, a real dragon poked its nose through his door breathing fire, and the artist was so scared he ran away.



GUEST COLUMN
Raghu Pant

It is a similar story with the Maoists. For the past 12 years they have cried themselves hoarse demanding constituent assembly elections and they fought a ruinous war to make it happen. But now that polls are finally possible they're suddenly frightened of it.

It is clear that the Maoists are not psychologically, politically or physically ready for elections. That is why they've come up with their new set of 22 demands that include declaration of republic, complete proportional representation and the threat of escalating street protests that they hope will scuttle elections altogether.

These decisions smack of desperation and confusion in the Maoist ranks. The leadership is stuck, it can't go back and it can't move forward. Hence the post-plenum Prachandaspeak to remain in government while opposing it. To stick to the peace process while preparing for a "people's uprising". The leadership wants it both ways: distract its rank and file with radical talk while putting the pressure on partners in the governing alliance to postpone polls again.

But the long and short of it is that the Maoists are completely uninterested in elections on 22 November. The 22-point demand and the threat of a people's uprising is therefore a strategy to postpone elections again. Only two of the 22 demands are substantive: the declaration of a republic and a fully-proportional election. By insisting on the abolition of monarchy through parliament because "the king will conspire against elections" the Maoists are just being disingenuous.

And since they know they can't guarantee even a single seat in the first-past-the-post part of the election in the 240 constituencies, they are backing a full-proportional representation. But even that demand is

counterproductive because it was the Maoists themselves who approved the mixed election procedure in parliament. The demand just exposes their inconsistency.

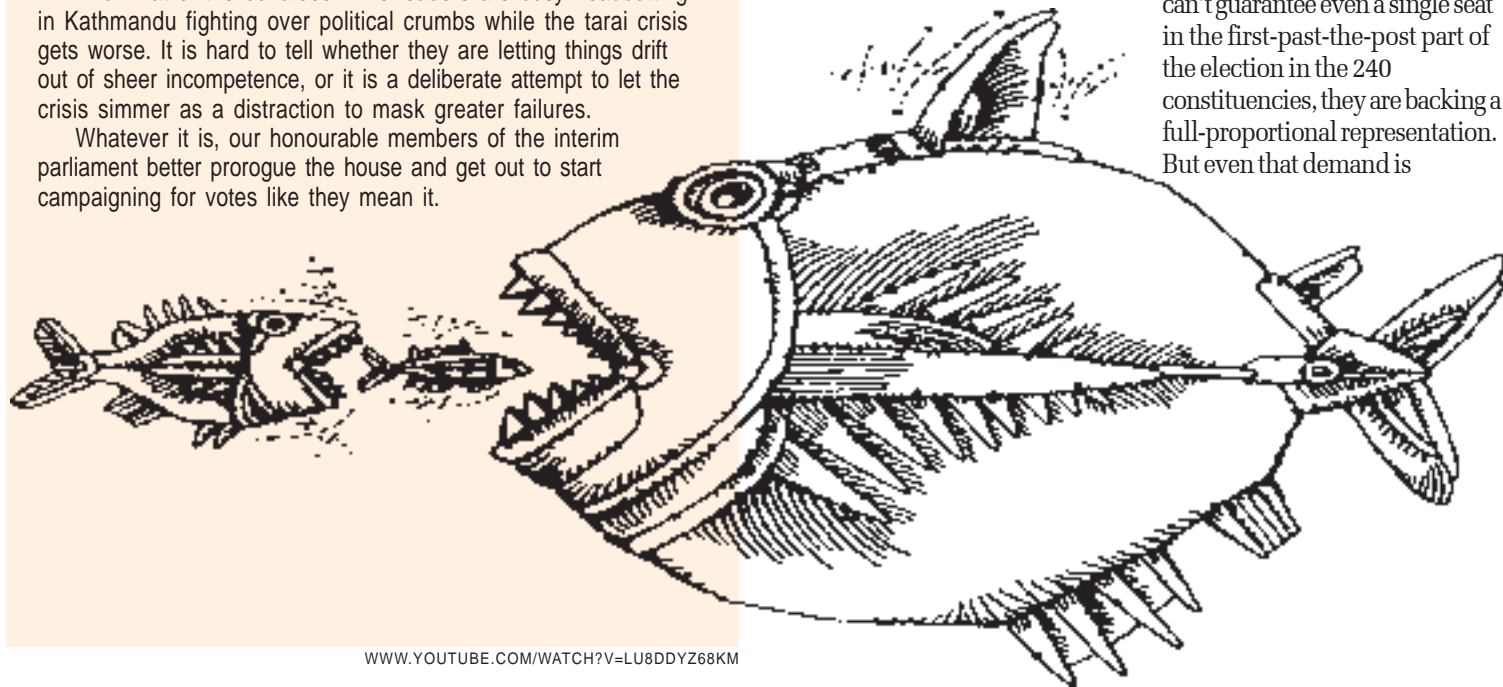
The Maoists now have 83 unelected members in the interim parliament. It is clear they will only have a fraction of those seats if proper elections are held in November. The Maoists just want a face-saving way to secure respectable representation in the constituent assembly. Informally, Maoist MPs have even tried to talk the NC and UML into a deal where they get to keep at least 30-40 percent of the seats, threatening that otherwise they won't go for elections. This is a party that is afraid of losing in November and is trying its level best to wangle a favourable outcome, failing which it will even try to sabotage the polls.

The prime minister's indifference and silence in all this is puzzling, but it shows that the NC is also not that keen on elections.

The difficulty in ensuring unity with the NC-D and Sher Bahadur Deuba using YCL as excuse to proclaim elections can't be held prove that the kangresis are also nervous about the outcome in November. But the NC is perfectly happy to let the Maoists take the blame for being anti-polls.

It's now up to the prime minister to behave like a statesman and not a party boss, get together with the Maoist leadership and show renewed commitment to elect an assembly in November to draft a new constitution. ●

Raghu Pant is a UML member of the interim parliament and a former journalist.



WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=LU8DDYZ68KM

LETTERS

PUKADA AND BARABHA

To add dissidents to the interim parliament and convert it into a Constituent Assembly without elections as Koirala and Prachanda were trying to do ('New song', #361) is the only way to get out of this mess. It will save money and blood.

Shree Shrestha, email

● 'Khrushchev's ghost' by your backside Ass (#362) was funny and I especially liked the part about Nepal's guerrilla leaders wanting to visit Japan or the US. Reminds me of the time I was visiting Moscow, and I asked my Russian friends if they would take a photo of me in front of Marx's statue outside Lenin's mausoleum. They thought I was mad. For them, the statues of Stalin and his comrades are painful memories of an absurd past. Our own Comrades PuKaDa and BaRaBha are making a mistake by applying for visas to

countries that are certain to reject them. They would in fact be better off visiting Moscow, the long-time headquarters of USSR and which now has the highest density of billionaires. Our comrades could come up with a whole new manifesto on the dictatorship of the proletariat while cruising in Lexus limousines.

B Raj Giri, email

● I found Prem J Thapa's Guest Column ('2007 to 2007', #356) very relevant. What will ordinary Nepalis gain from a republic? May be a banana. If they are lucky. There will be no big jump in HDI or GDP, in fact the country will surely turn into a Banana Republic. With the monarchy at least we get to preserve a part of our unique history and culture. An institution that sets us apart from the others.

B Luintel, London

● What's the YCL up to? Why are they undermining the chances

of the CPN-M in the elections? If they want to do politics, they have to do it right as you say in your editorial ('Split personality', #362). The idea should be that the Nepali people are able to cast their votes freely.

Unless Chairman Prachanda stops the YCL from doing what it is doing then there is no chance for a Maoist constituent assembly.

S Oli, Grade 10 Janajyoti Vidya Mandir, Gorahi, Dang

● Thanks for your editorial ('No turning back now', #360) I firmly believe in the rule of law and have a deep respect for it. We should always put our faith in the truth and in unbiased jurisprudence. But these can only be achieved through the application of the true spirit of democracy. So every party in our country should strive for a firm commitment to democratic principles. Adherence to those values will never fail us.

G Sharma, email

ONLY NEGATIVE

Daniel Lak has been associated with *Nepali Times* too long if all he has seen in Nepal is only negative things ('Could be worse', #360). Nepal has its problems, but who is responsible for them? Of course, the corrupt, power hungry politicians, including the Maoist leaders and their followers. Please do not compare these politicians to the rest of the Nepali population, 99 percent of the silent majority are sick and tired of Nepali politics, try to make the best of the existing problems, and try to live a normal life. They are the resilient, proud and capable people of Nepal, not the people who are forever in the limelight, thanks to newspapers like *Nepali Times*. I see hope in Nepal when I meet young engineers, both men and women, and young doctors and academics, who believe in a future for Nepal. They have my highest admiration. Despite

political turmoil, they are optimistic and are trying to help build a better Nepal.

D S Kansakar Hilker, Germany

KRISHNA BHIR

Re: 'No news from Krishna Bhir is good news', #362. Congratulations to Naresh Man Shakya for his pragmatic contribution in controlling landslides. The country needs people like him and to allow them to do what they do best. And congratulations to you for pointing out that Mr Shakya was transferred to a desk job! That is just scandalous and possibly corruption-linked. It will do good for all to find out who transferred Mr Shakya to a desk job and why. Is it because corrupt officials concerned, maybe in the Roads Department, wanted him out of the way so they could take on expensive projects and skim off commissions? Suggest *Nepali Times* take on this

Disrupt polls to have polls

War is peace, freedom is slavery, and ignorance is strength



KIRAN PANDAY

The doublespeak is getting so thick you now need a khukuri to cut through it. Pushpa Kamal Dahal says that the 22-point preconditions put forward by his party are intended to 'ensure' timely, free and fair constituent assembly elections. He promises to prepare the



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

ground for polls by street agitation, forced shutdowns, and mass action. And Comrade Awesome wants us to believe that his new-fangled instruments of electioneering are harmless.

Yes indeed. In the newspeak of Prachandpath war is peace, freedom is slavery and ignorance is strength. Clearly, the comrades are bent on once again postponing elections that were deferred earlier from June to November. Right on cue, the other parties are also hemming and hawing.

There are now hardly 90 days to polling date. Minus a month of Dasain-Tihar-Chhath slack in between it's only two months of serious campaigning. We assumed the legislators would be in a tearing hurry to get back to their

electorates. Not so. This week, instead of proroguing parliament it was prolonged.

Dahal's 22-point list is a compendium of Maoist slogans covering everything from declaration of republic to democratisation of the Nepal Army and control over 'regressive foreign forces' to the release of stipends for cadres in cantonments. Then there are contradictions that inevitably emerge when competing groups within the party are bent upon having their say. If the monarchy is to be abolished forthwith, Ram Bahadur Thapa shouldn't worry too much about the army at Narayanhiiti and the security detail of Gyanendra's family.

Though a vocal section of Kathmandu high society has been quick to pounce upon planned protests by Maoists, perhaps it's too early to fear a re-enactment of the October Revolution. Without a mutiny in the ranks of the security forces, perhaps Moscow wouldn't have collapsed the way it did in 1917 and there was no internet nor global monitoring of peace processes in the days of Lenin, Trotsky, and Bukharin. Besides, it's facile to assume that

Messrs Dahal and Bhattarai are unaware of the consequences of armed adventures at this stage.

It's not that Maoists fear the electorate more than any other party in the government. Compared to the discredited UML and the divided NC, the Maoists have retained their core support base among the dalits and the marginalised section of janjatis. Despite the anti-Maoist tone of the Madhes Uprising, economic disparity in tarai is conducive to the brand of leftwing radicalism espoused by

ideologue Baburam Bhattarai.

With its middle-class support base, the MJF will offer a political challenge to Rambaran Yadav and Mahantha Thakur rather than to Matrika Yadav and Prabhu Sah. It's just that the Maoists want to go to the electorate on their terms and keep their cadres engaged in the interim.

Postponement of polls is important for Maoists for exactly the same reasons the international community wants it to be held as soon as possible.

Once the polls weren't held in June as agreed the Maoists lost face. Only an election can give them the legitimacy they so crave.

Without popular mandate, the US terror tag is still there. The bureaucracy continues to be dismissive of Maoists out in the districts. To re-establish their political credentials, Maoists probably want to have a fresh accord, something that can't be achieved without peaceful agitation. Hence the antics aimed at their partner parties in legislature, government and district headquarters.

The international community wasn't terribly enthusiastic about polls in the steaming heat of June. November is different matter altogether. It's peak tourist season, and every probable international monitor is looking forward to election tourism in the Himalaya in autumn. The Maoists will have all hell to pay for disappointing some very high-profile monitors. The consequences of cancelled working vacations of UN bigwigs will be a lot harder to handle than complaints of contract employees holed up at the BICC. ●

investigation: start simply by finding out what kind of projects to manage landslides have been adopted by the Roads Department after Mr Shaky's transfer.

Name withheld, email

GYANENDRAPATH

An interesting anecdote by Chandrashekhar Karki ('Prachandapath, Gyanendrapath, #362) but he must realise that the YCL is not legalised and cannot, by the contents of law, perform such actions on civilians.

Nevertheless the army on the other hand have the law in their hands, yes but it was wrong to humiliate you back then. The difference lies in the matter of legality, and ethics. If you look into this then you will surely find Gyanendrapath a little better.

B K Shrestha, email

TRASH

Uncollected garbage, not the first time in Kathmandu, reflects the uncivilised mindset of the people

given the responsibility to carry out certain basic functions (Happenings, #362). The government banned strikes in essential services but lacks the political will to enforce them. It is amazing how Kathmandu's residents are tolerating such filth and chaos when garbage is piling up outside hospitals. Why is the medical profession, consumer rights advocates, and the tourism sector not exerting pressure on the government not to put the public at risk? Is this the New Nepal?

Ram Chaudhary, email

911

There is a mistake in Diwas Kc's Critical Cinema column reviewing Michael Moore's *Sicko* ('Sick of it', #361). Moore didn't get an Oscar for *Fahrenheit 9/11*. He won it for *Bowling for Columbine*. 9/11 was not even nominated.

Sagun Shrestha, email

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The view from New Delhi

India is getting increasingly impatient with the drift in Kathmandu

PRASHANT JHA in NEW DELHI

The Indian establishment doesn't try to hide anymore its irritation with the Nepali political parties trying to dodge elections and endanger the peace process that it helped broker and micromanage for the past two years.

In a series of interviews in New Delhi this week, Indian politicians and policy-makers said they would like to see the peace process come to its logical conclusion with elections in November.

"Remember we were the only ones pushing for June elections and the last few months have been proven right," one diplomat here told us, "problems have only increased since then. Missing the November date can have extremely destabilising consequences."

Delhi believes that the polls can lock the Maoists irreversibly into the mainstream, pave the way for stability, provide a platform to address other grievances and demands, and limit the role of the internationals, especially the UN.

South Block has been taking public positions on polls and sent strong messages privately to leaders. In Kathmandu, Ambassador Shiv Shankar Mukherjee has told Prime Minister Koirala that the government would face a severe legitimacy crisis if elections do not take place.

Former Indian intelligence officers met Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal recently in Siliguri passing on a similar message from New Delhi. External Affairs Minister



SUBHAS RAI

Pranab Mukherjee is reported to have personally shot down the proposal by Koirala and Dahal idea of converting the present interim legislature into a constituent assembly and instead pushing for polls.

At the same time, New Delhi realises the limits of its leverage in Kathmandu. "We can push, we can threaten, we use different channels to communicate the message but it finally boils down to the political will of the major parties and whether they want polls," an MEA source said.

What is new in foreign policy-making circles here in the past few months is a sense of pessimism, and a belief that the peace process has become shakier.

Delhi diplomats and analysts are satisfied with UNMIN's performance so far,

but they want it to pack up and go as soon as possible. Even so, irrespective of the polls they admit UNMIN may have to stay on in some form for another six months to complete arms management. Although India may accept a limited extension of tenure, officials say an extension of UNMIN's mandate is out of the question. But what riles officials here is their belief that UNMIN is angling for a political role in the tarai, and even goading madhesi groups to ask for international mediation. "This goes beyond what was decided when India let the UN in and Ian Martin should tell his officials to be restrained," one influential Nepal analyst said.

New Delhi also blames Koirala for delaying taking a personal lead to appease madhesi groups while the crisis was still

manageable. They have tried to get the message across to the prime minister, but say when it comes to the tarai Koirala refuses to listen to them. Officials say they don't want a further proliferation of madhesi groups and reportedly discouraged mainstream madhesi politicians, including NC and NSP dissidents, from forming a separate party. There have been allegations that India is supporting madhesi armed groups because Goit and Jwala Singh live in Bihar.

When asked about this, a former ambassador to Nepal testily posed his own questions: "Look, at who is accusing India of this? The Maoists. Where did they stay all along? Does it mean we were supporting them? Get your house in order instead of blaming and expecting us to come and clean the mess."

Indian policymakers seem more sanguine about the Nepal Army's intentions. As long as the government does not tamper with the army's structure with security sector reforms, they feel the generals will play along. "There is no point messing with the army right now," said a retired Indian Army general, "it remains the bulwark against the Maoists and is the only back-up if everything falls apart."

There has been a change of guard at the Nepal desk of the MEA, and the new occupant has just returned from a fam tour of Kathmandu. Although India looms large in Kathmandu. Here, Nepal is overshadowed by some global crisis or other and this week it is the fallout from the India-US nuclear deal. ●

Hindu righteousness

Not this king, but India's religious right still wants the monarchy



India's Hindu right which has been traditionally sympathetic to the monarchy and opposed to Nepal going secular is split about Nepal policy.

There are differences in approach between the Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). about the political approach to Nepal. The RSS is reassessing its

past policy on the future of the monarchy and say putting all their eggs in the royal basket was not a wise move. Besides being a Hindu king, they believed only the king could fight the Maoists. Now, senior RSS leaders admit the erosion of the king's credibility in Nepal has damaged them as well.

"We depended on proximity with the king for our influence,

now with the king gone we have lost our strength on the ground," one senior RSS leader told us.

Despite this, the RSS would like the institution of monarchy to remain. While more radical groups in the Vishwa Hindu Parishad still hope for an active monarchy, most in the Hindu right in India know that the days of an assertive king are gone.

"We would be quite happy if the institution remains, it is a symbol of unity and is the only Hindu monarchy in the world. We know Gyanendra and Paras are unacceptable but then the grandson formula could work," says an RSS leader who has tracked Nepal for decades.

BJP leaders, including Atal Bihari Vajpayee, have said they will not actively push for retention of monarchy, and will decide on their stance based on the public mood in Nepal. The rightwing in India has kept the channels of communication open with king Gyanendra who has met three intermediaries in the past few months: a former minister from Tamil Nadu close to the RSS, a journalist with a Delhi-based pro-BJP paper, and a former intelligence official.

All have returned with the

impression that the king is relatively calm but at a loss about what steps to take. It appears he has been advised that a four month retreat, possibly a pilgrimage to India, would be in his interest as this would take the sting off criticism that he is obstructing elections.

More than saving the monarchy, the RSS wants to contain and curb Maoist influence and begin a political campaign in favour of reverting to a Hindu state. It is on these two issues they are willing to invest energy and capital, not on the monarchy.

Utterly convinced of Maoist insincerity, the Indian right is, contrary to popular perception, keen on constituent assembly elections. The RSS is convinced that the Maoists would fare miserably and see the polls as the right way to expose them. They believe that Maoists are keen on derailing polls and using the ensuing uncertainty to organise violent street agitations.

Like many others in India, the RSS was happy with the madhesi movement because it eroded Maoist support along the border. On the ground, especially in Raxaul and Gorakhpur, some RSS

activists provided support (political, logistical, and possibly, limited financial help) during the movement through the Seema Jagaran Manch, a front organisation. Upendra Yadav has met senior BJP leaders in Delhi through RSS interlocutors.

But this support is limited and they neither have the will nor capacity to drive the movement. "We realise there is limited benefit for us out of the madhesi agitation. There is a crisis of leadership.

Upendra Yadav is playing too many games with too many people and can't be trusted. No madhesi group is willing to boldly say they are for a Hindu state. "What's in it for us?" asks an RSS activist.

The RSS' opponents tend to over-estimate its strength, and even the RSS leaders know their capacity to influence domestic politics in Nepal is limited. But its leaders are aware there is strong sentiment in Nepal opposed to secularism. For now, the Hindu right in India is waiting for a strong anti-Maoist leader with a popular base who can publicly declare he is for a Hindu rastra. ●

(Prashant Jha in New Delhi)

Anti-banda travel agents

The Nepal Association of Tour Operators (NATO) has requested all parties to hold off all protests, demonstrations, and mass assemblies until the constituent assembly elections slated for November. Such programs will only send negative signals to the international market and media and can lead to cancellation or deferment of trips planned by tourists for the upcoming peak tourist season that begins from mid-September. The recent peace process has sent tourist arrivals soaring.

Powder plant

Under the banner of the Lakshmi Group, Sujal Foods is setting up a powder milk plant in Pokhara. The plant is expected to be operational by mid October and will cost about Rs 250 million, according to the company's acting executive director Anjan Shrestha. The plant is being built on Swedish and Danish technology and will be able to process 5,000 kilograms of powder milk per day and later it is expected go up to 7,500 kilograms.

Nokia advisory



Nokia has issued a product advisory for users of the Nokia-branded BL-5C battery manufactured by Matsushita Battery Industrial. In rare cases, a short circuit while charging can cause the battery to overheat and dislodge. This applies to the 46 million batteries manufactured by Matsushita between December 2005 and November 2006.

Concerned consumers can request a replacement for the BL-5C battery.

NEW PRODUCTS

SPARK: The Chevrolet Spark is now available in Nepal through Vijaya Motors. The 1,000cc hatchback comes with a three year or 100,000km warranty with a service interval of 5000km or six months, and claims a mileage of 17.85kpl with a top speed of 156km/hr. The Spark is manufactured by General Motors India.



HANG TEN: The international Hang Ten brand of clothing is now available in Nepal through Anirudh International. Initially, only the mens' casual range has been launched at an exclusive outlet at the Bluebird Mall in Kathmandu and at Neha Stores

in Pokhara. The products are imported into Nepal from Hang Ten factories in Pakistan, and are all made of 100 percent Pakistani cotton. There are plans to also introduce the ladies and kids range.

MOBILE: A new range of Philips mobile phones have been launched by Syakar Corporation, the sole authorised distributor for Philips in Nepal. The ten new models are available in prices ranging from Rs 2,990-15,690. Among them is the Philips Xenium range of phones that boasts the longest battery life of 1000 hours on standby and 10 hours of talk time. The new brands are available at all Philips retail showrooms and dealer outlets.

www.nepalbandh.com

Necessity is the mother of innovation

This week viewers couldn't watch Nepali channels on tv as agitating cable operators shut them off to pressure the government to meet their demands. And the demands? Reduction of taxes and royalty.



ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed

The standard operating procedures for taxis with grievances is to park on the Ring Road to obstruct all traffic in and out of the airport. Garbage is piling on the streets because someone in the rubbish chain is protesting about something.

The Maoists who last week announced they wouldn't close down newspapers anymore to press for their demands announced an indefinite nationwide school closure from Monday. Good for them they withdrew that drastic action otherwise there'd be all hell to pay.

The issue then becomes, should not a parent as a 'consumer' be able to get an adjustment on the fees or should not the school be able to adjust teacher's pay for the days the school's revenue is affected? Wednesday was supposed to be a banda, no one knew who was calling it or why, but that wasn't important. What was important was that the rumours had spread so everything remained closed.

Now, there is even a website www.nepalbandh.com where one can check out future bandas so that one can plan one's life around them. "Necessity is the mother of innovation," noted one wag.



A consumer who subscribes to cable television has entered into a contract with the cable operator for the number of channels 24 hours a day for the duration of the contract. The price one pays is for the service for that whole duration. Therefore, if the operator decides not to broadcast a channel then the price should be reduced.

Parents should stop paying for every day that a school is closed, or school buses are not plying. If a restaurant is closed on a particular day there should be a discount on the days when it is open.

Let's start looking at these closures from a consumer's perspective. If there are three hours of load-shedding a day, we should be compensated through a tariff rebate during periods when there is electricity. And how about variable salaries where the existing salary is broken down into fixed and variable components depending on the days businesses remain open.

Why should an employer pay

for the days that an employee stays at home outside stipulated holidays? Perhaps this is the only way to make sure people will struggle against bandas, teachers will ensure schools remain open, parents will demand schools not be closed, and employers will raise their voices against forced closures.

Nokia has just spent millions of dollars to recall their phone batteries. Ford withdrew a vehicle with faulty suspension. Fischer Price has taken out toys with excessive lead. They aren't stupid, they spend millions of dollars to avoid legal costs and damages that may ensue from faulty products.

The problem in Nepal is that contracting law is weak and there is no protection for the consumer. We can sue the cable operator, but nothing will happen. The time has come to really look at a firmer legal framework between service providers like schools, hospitals, cable operators to bolster their legal options against forced closures. ●

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'India's grand design'

Interview with Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Nepal, 19 August



Have you been talking to India on madhes?
Yes, we have been talking. I have been putting forward our views to the Indian ambassador and also officials in Delhi. If India had wanted, the mess in the tarai could have been avoided. The Indians blame the open

border, but we find it difficult to buy that argument. They have a strategy to undermine the revolution in Nepal. Indian officials are working on a grand design to expand their influence in the tarai. We have been resisting their attempts.

What's your current policy towards India?

At the centre of our people's war was the issue of nationalism. But when India began arresting our leaders and we saw Indian intervention everywhere, we decided to fight against it and even planned to fight a tunnel war against India. I had prepared a proposal on this after reading about Vietnam's tunnel warfare. We were talking to the palace before 1 February 2005 but the situation took a nasty turn after the royal takeover. We then accepted Delhi's help to forge an alliance with the parliamentary parties. We wanted to discuss the 12-point agreement in Rolpa, but Girijababu suggested Delhi. He used to come to us after evading the Indians. But we never believed that this was being done without India's knowledge. Girijababu was India's guest. India did play a role in the agreement. Through Congress, we also developed a relationship with India.

So what does India want from you? And what do you want from India?

A relation based on equality. We want to evaluate past treaties and agreements on that basis. During this transitional period we want them to extend positive support as a good neighbor. But maybe India wants us to work for their interest. After we joined the government, we haven't done that. In the tarai, India played a role to marginalise our influence. This is not right.

What's your take on Indian ambassador Mukherjee's recent comment on CA elections?

The language he used is objectionable. It seems as if India is trying to dictate Nepal and Nepalis. Somewhat it smacks of former American ambassador Moriarty's speech.

Doublespeak

Editorial in Kantipur, 22 August

After the Maoists announced their protest program effective from 17 September, fears have been raised about disruption to elections. A day after the Election Commission released election schedules, a responsible party in the ruling coalition is launching an agitation likely to affect the elections. This is against the eight-party agreement.

Meanwhile, the preparations for elections by other parties hasn't gained momentum. The Election Commission says even a single day's banda could affect the election timetable. The peace agreement between the prime minister and the Maoists clearly expressed a commitment not to call strikes. Even the student wings of the eight parties have expressed similar commitments. The Maoist agitation goes against this commitment and has added uncertainty to the elections.

The Maoists say their agitation is necessary to make the elections happen, but the only thing it will do is ensure it won't take place. Obviously there is a disconnect between the Maoists words and deeds. For ten long years they fought for elections, now finally when that's about to happen, they have been gearing up not to let it happen.

The recently held Maoists plenum had expressed fresh commitments for CA, even UN

Under-Secretary General Pascoe said last week elections could be held. Parties have to rise above their petty interests and fulfill their once in a lifetime opportunity writing a new history.

Should everyone begin to pursue their own partisan interest, this will undo the achievements of the People's Movement and push the country to another brink. Nepalis have spoken clearly, they do not wish to see authoritarianism of any shape or colour. Therefore, the Maoists should convert their protest program into an election campaign forthwith.

Fashion debate

Letter to the Editor in Kantipur, 20 August

The debate on fashion is about how much to cover while wearing clothes. While the debate in itself is positive, dresses do reflect our thinking.

Dresses change with time, but how much to wear is an individual decision. Covering less doesn't necessarily mean that it is an imitation of the foreigners, nevertheless in Nepal that's the case. Talking about foreigners, years ago some women took to the streets in Britain demanding the right to walk around naked. Police arrested them.

If boys don't get romantic on seeing scantily clad girls how will



KIRAN PANDAY

the world work? Even the older folks entertain themselves watching fashion tv. Everyone has sexual urges and it has to be channeled in the right way. In a romantic situation if a girl sees a guy naked, surely see must imagine a lot of things. But same cannot be said about someone half-dressed due to poverty. Before blaming Nepalis for

SELECTED MATERIAL TRANSLATED EVERY WEEK FROM THE NEPALI PRESS

Hearty Condolence



Dear Colleagues,

With great sadness we inform you that our dear friend **Matthias Moyersoens**, Director SNV Nepal and Honorary Consul for the Netherlands, has passed away on 22 August 2007, at his home in Belgium. Matthias was only 40 years old. He came to Nepal on 01 February 2004. With his vibrant, ambitious and intelligent attitude he became Director of SNV Nepal on 01 February 2005. He brought a new change and dynamism in the organisation. He was a caring family man, a great friend, energetic and enterprising professional. He loved Nepal and its people and it hurt him not to be able to return to say goodbye. He, until the very last moment, continued to mobilise additional resources for a SNV supported project in Nepal he strongly believed in. Through this project, young, disadvantaged women and men in a remote, post conflict setting will receive leadership training and other support for building peace and fighting poverty. He always wanted to bring new hope and a better future for the people of Nepal something he wishes us to continue.

Our thoughts are with his spouse Dominique, their children Sebastian, Carla and Arthur, his parents, other family members and friends.

Tom Derksen, Director
SNV Nepal Family
SNV Nepal
Bakhundole, Lalitpur
Phone # 5523444

NOTE: A book of condolences will be kept open at SNV/ Netherlands Consulate premises at Bakhundole, Lalitpur on August 27, 28, 29 from 09:00 – 17:00 hrs.

imitating the foreigners we should see what is culturally acceptable.
Amrit Bhandari, Kirtipur

Bidhata Singh’s, in her response, has rightly criticised Sushma Manadhar’s provocative dress. One would do well to pick up trash lying around and throw them in containers rather than ogling at panties. Is it right to undress oneself in the name of fashion and development? Do they know the problems of the countryside where women can’t even afford clothes to cover themselves? Young people have tremendous sexual desire.
He says provocative dresses will add fuel to the burning fire among the youngsters. It may even lead to rape cases. To walk around semi-naked in public in the name of fashion is to be insecure.

K S Lohrung

Tycoons

Janadesh, 21 August

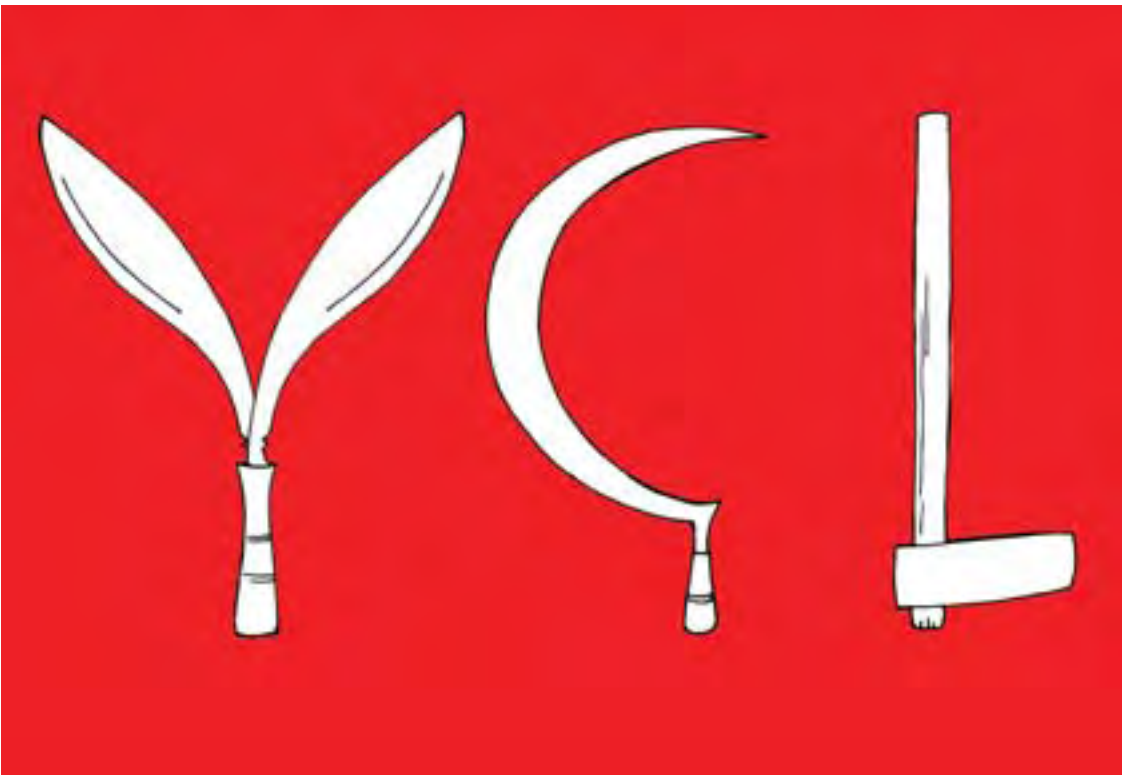
Media owners have started panicking after a Maoist Minister passed the Working Journalists’ Act, and have started badmouthing the Maoists. But they have been silent about HBC FM’s decision to lock up the studio and deny the journalists their the right to work. Even various other organisations that have been speaking for the owners have been silent on the HBC scandal. Last week, owners of the big media houses who formed

Nepal Media Society and the ‘big’ editors from the Editors Alliance said the situation of press freedom now has become even worse than during the king’s rule. To say that the state of press freedom was better during the royal regime based on few incidents of journalists demanding their rights is unfortunate, say analysts. The military was censoring every line at gunpoint, how was that better? This indicates that the bigshot editors are lackeys of feudal and foreign elements. Only recently, some editors of big media houses secretly met palace and army officials, according to sources.

Manpower

Abhiyan, 13-19 August

Last year alone manpower cheated Rs 400 million from young Nepalis going abroad, says the Labour and Employment Promotion Department.
Laxmi Narayan Sharma at the department says 377 individuals and 332 companies were involved. After complaints, some Rs 40 million was recovered from manpower companies and various individuals. Over 100 people have been sued and 117 companies had their licenses cancelled last year. Last year, the High Himalayan Manpower company was in the headlines for their high number of fraudulent activities. One of the executives, Om Gurung, is in police custody.



YCL

Robin Sayami in Himal Khabarpatrika in,18 August - 1 September

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



KIRAN PANDAY

“ We will expose everyone who slept with us. ”

Badi Group Struggle Committee chairperson Umadevi Badi in *Nayapatrika*, 23 August

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closeup

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MIN BAJRACHARYA



ALL PICS: KIRAN PANDAY



PRANAYA SJB RANA

The woman who took the seat next to me had something suspicious under her billowy red shawl. She had one hand tucked underneath as the Swayambhu Yatayat lurched and swayed along the Ring Road. Suddenly there was a clucking sound from under the shawl and I found myself face to face with a huge chicken. Its deep red comb pulsating, sharp beak inches from my nose and beady little eyes staring unblinkingly into mine, I let off a shriek.

That is the beauty of Kathmandu’s public transportation network: it’s a free for all and you never know what drama you’re going to encounter when you get on. Sometimes it is an instant chukka jam at Kalanki, at others a major fist fight between the conductor and a bunch of forty-year-olds who want a student discount, and just the other day

there was commotion when the bus driver drove away even before an alighting passenger could take down a goat he had stowed on the roof.

But despite the chaotic impression it gives, Kathmandu’s public transportation system is efficient and fast. There is an entire array of vehicles: the big blue ones that circle the Ring Road half of them clockwise and the other half counter clockwise, the microbuses that will pack you in like gundruk or sardines (take your pick), the 1970s vintage Munich Bakery Bus that ply to the suburbs and then the electric three wheelers which have by default become the favourite of women commuters. There are few bus numbers, the routes are flexible, no organised bus stops (you can stop and get on anywhere). A bus from Budanilkanta to Godavari, Sundarijal to Khokana oneway won’t cost you more than Rs 20, 33 percent less if you can produce a student ID. A great way to sightsee

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Get taken for a ride

Kathmandu's microbuses are Kathmandu in a microcosm

Kathmandu's urban squalor is to spend Rs 10 to circumnavigate the Ring Road on the blue bus in a little over one hour.

Then there are the microbuses that also circle the Ring Road. With white plates, these road demons will get you wherever in half the time but often charge double of what the blue buses do. Public transport in the inner city is chaotic. Microbus routes go from everywhere to everywhere and back but even after four years of commuting I haven't figured them out. There are little-known tempo routes that use the gullies, which is a great way to go during chukka jams on the main roads. Micros are the fastest, but it's a bit unnerving because the drivers think they're in the Formula One.

"We have to compete with other microbuses," says Raja Ram Thapa, a micro driver on the Ratna Park-Chabahil route," we cannot afford to waste time on the road." It's a race against time, and

it's a race to haul in as many passengers as possible to maximise daily earnings for the driver and conductor. Woe to any passenger unlucky enough to get stuck in one of these contests.

Some micros and buses have numbers. Ignore them. The numbers are irrelevant and routes change from day to day. For example, route 5 is supposed to take you from RNAC (yes, still called that) to Ratna Park, Lazimpat, Jamal, Bansbari upwards, but sometimes it goes to Basundhara without warning. It pays to be alert about any change of plans en route. "We've had the same number for years, even though we've changed routes at least five times," says Bishnu, a conductor on the Ratna Park-Kalanki route with pride.

For the best value ride in town use the trolley bus, almost no one rides on it and it causes no pollution. The only problem is that this near-defunct state-run electric transport runs only

between Baneswor and Tripureswor and once every half-hour.

An upside to using public transportation is that you meet all kinds of interesting people. I personally have met former teachers, made friends with an Australian woman, sat face-to-face with a rooster, talked to a sadhu on the benefits of marijuana, got a college girl's number, and even have had my thigh molested.

Yup, it's not just girls. If someone tries to get touchy feely make a hue and cry. People almost always come to the rescue of a damsel in distress.

"A man once tried to feel me up on a bus, but I yelled and other people immediately started to tell the person off," says Shilpa Shrestha, a 12th grade student who commutes to school and back every day.

If you want to see the real Kathmandu, take the bus. Travel with the masses. What you lose in time, you make up in money, and experience. ●



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Micro tips

Electric tempos have become the transport of choice for young girls and women in Kathmandu.

Exactly when women started opting for the zero-emission three-wheelers is not clear. But most women prefer the less-crowded, slower paced, and environment-friendly three-wheelers. And unlike the gas tempos, the electric ones don't smell. If a groper does get into a tempo, you can be sure the woman driver will stop the vehicle and personally throw the pervert out.

If you do have to take the micro because you are in a rush, here are a few tips:

- No low-slung shirts, no low-rise jeans, no saris.
- Carry a big bag, more difficult to snatch and can be used as a weapon if someone gets too close
- Choose a seat near the window (polluted outside air is better than indoor pollution)
- Sit towards the front to make it easier to get in and out
- Never sit on the small seat near the door unless you want your nose stuck inside the conductor's armpit
- Best seat is up ahead in business class next to the driver
- Have your fare ready (in small change) so you don't reveal the location of your wallet
- If the sleazebag next to you starts to get physical, scream. Jab the guy with your elbow or tell him you're YCL.



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No truth, some

Warring sides in government are trying to forgive themselves for atrocities

PURNA BASNET

Nine months after the comprehensive peace accord was signed and a year-and-half since the ceasefire, families of civilians killed or disappeared by both sides are losing hope that they will ever see justice done.

A government made up of the opposing sides in the war is now setting up a Truth and Reconciliation Commission that will actually allow amnesty to those accused of committing atrocities during the 10 years of conflict.

A draft bill drawn up by the Peace and Reconstruction Ministry says in paragraph 25: "The Truth and Reconciliation Commission can recommend to the government that amnesty be given to persons who are found to have committed serious violations of human rights based on their political beliefs in the line of duty."

Peace Minister Ram Chandra Poudel defends the provision,



WAR WIDOWS: Women whose husbands were killed by both the Maoists and state security sit together at a meeting of war victims in Nepalganj last month.

RAMESWOR BOHARA

saying the priority now is to move forward with reconciliation. "The former rebels and we are both in government...we cannot jeopardise the peace process in the name of ending impunity," Poudel told us.

Maoist ideologue Baburam Bhattarai is equally uncompromising. "At a time when the peace process is itself in

danger, there is no point getting sidetracked...the (Truth and Reconciliation) Commission is not going to be able to investigate anything even if it is set up."

But human rights activists say experience from other countries show that the peace process is undermined if victims don't get justice and

impunity goes unpunished. "This is called the justice of the victors, both sides want to bury their secrets," says Sushil Pyakurel, former member of National Human Rights Commission.

At a seminar on transitional justice and setting up a truth commission last week in Kathmandu, experts from Peru and South Africa shared their

experiences. "Politics must be kept out of the process," says Yasmin Sooka, who was Truth Commissioner in South Africa after apartheid, "there must be a series of nationwide consultations with the relatives of victims to ensure that their demands and rights are addressed." (*See interview*).

Sophia Macher, who headed

"Justice is a pre-requisite for peace"

Yasmin Sooka, commissioner in the post-apartheid South African Truth Commission, was in Kathmandu last week to attend a conference on transitional justice. She spoke to Dipendra Jha about the lessons Nepal could learn.

Nepali Times: Why have efforts at truth and reconciliation failed in many post-conflict situations?

Yasmin Sooka: It depends on what you mean by success, in many countries these efforts have uncovered the truth creating accountability of past atrocities and recommended effective reparation.

Nepal's challenge is to balance peace with justice. How does one do that?

Peace and justice are the same. There can be no sustainable peace in the absence of justice. Restorative justice is also important during the reconciliation process. The justice system must hold those who committed crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide accountable for their actions. Justice, accountability and reparation are the important factors that help a country move from conflict to democracy and peace.

Nepal's Truth and Reconciliation Commission draft bill has a provision for amnesty. Will this work?

Amnesty is superficial, it covers up and moves too quickly. Amnesty should only be granted for actions with a political goal and which were not of an excessive nature, it must not be granted by the government or political leaders, rather it should be based on the will of the victims. The state can't force victims to forget and forgive. But this doesn't mean that all tortures, rapes, disappearances, killings, and other unspeakable horrors should be pardoned.

How will the amnesty provision affect elections?

Actually a Truth and Reconciliation Commission must be formed only after wide consultation around the country. It takes time. It must not be formed in a hurry otherwise victims will not feel that they are included in the process.

Can the interim parliament give amnesty?

Neither parliament nor the government, not even the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, can be entitled to grant amnesty on behalf of the victims. That can only come after the perpetrators of serious human rights violations are brought to justice, and it should be based on the will of the victims.

And reconciliation? When does that come in?

Reconciliation is necessary on the path to peace. The question here is not just peace, but long-term sustainable peace. And it is impossible to establish this without full justice. Unjust peace is always ad hoc which can bring a different side-effect in society. Reconciliation without justice has been done, but it is only with the immediate objective of ending violence of what we call negative peace.

Nepali activists are proposing a 'hybrid model' of a truth commission including international members. Do you think that is suitable?

In South Africa, the people wanted commissioners from their own country. There is a need for international experience, technical support, and international lobbying but it is not necessary that they be members of the commission itself. Every country should try to do this by itself.



PURNA BASNET

reconciliation

Peru’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission after the Sendero Luminoso conflict, says the responsibility of the political parties is to ensure that the commission can work impartially. “The whole idea is for the two sides to put the truth before the people, listen to what the victims have to say and then promise that they’ll never carry out such acts again,” says Macher .

The peace ministry under Poudel had tried to rush the bill through parliament, but this has been called off and a consultative process is planned for the five regions. Some activists also say the time may not be right to discuss truth and reconciliation when the danger of political interference is high, the wounds are still fresh and the country is pre-occupied with the constituent assembly.

For many of the victims (*see box*) there was hope that with peace there would be justice. They may have to wait much longer for that. ●



PURNA BASNET

UNENDING GRIEF: Ram Maya Nakarmi (*above*) makes a living weaving carpets after her husband was detained , tortured and disappeared from the army’s infamous Bhairabnath barracks. Haikam Singh Rai and his wife Purna Maya (*below*) show a picture of their daughter Indra who was detained by police in Dharan three years ago. She was never seen again.

Undervalued grief



GYANENDRA KHADKA

- Narita Chand was at home in her village in Banke that night in May 2001. A group of armed guerrillas surrounded the house, dragged her husband Bhoj Bahadur out and killed him. Since then, it has been a struggle for Narita to raise her four young children. No one has an answer about why her husband was killed. “I asked the Maoist commander, what wrong did my husband do, but he still threatens me,” says Narita.
- Banchu Rokaya also has four children, and her husband was also killed by guerrillas in their home near Lake Rara four years ago. She has been living as a refugee in Banke since then. Like Narita, she has never got an answer why her husband was killed. Banchu has returned to Mugu with her children but her family property has still not been returned.
- Debi Pun of Kohalpur had two sons: Jang Bir and Jit Bahadur. “They say there is now peace in the country, but our sons still haven’t returned,” says Debi. Jang Bir was disappeared by police in 1999 while Jit Bahadur was taken away by soldiers and never seen again. Debi has been to Kathmandu to find out about her sons, but no one will even tell her whether her sons are dead or alive.
- Chakrapani Gautam’s brother was killed in the crossfire while cutting grass in a forest near his home in Tanahu three years ago this month. Since

then, Chakrapani has been helping his disabled sister-in-law take care for her eight children. Later, Chakrapani himself was accused by soldiers of feeding Maoists and was so severely tortured in detention that he is still unable to work. “We are poor, we don’t have a voice,” says Chakrapani, “please tell them about our suffering.”

- Haikam Singh Rai’s 20-year-old daughter, Indra, was on her way to take her exams in Dharan three years ago when she was detained by police at the Dharan Bus Park on suspicion of being a Maoist. She was never seen again. In complete despair, Haikam has been visiting the local shaman, who has told him his daughter is happily married and has two children. Sixty-two-year old Haikam and his wife Purna Maya (*pictured*) find solace even in that slim hope.
- In August 2003 the army raided the Bungmati suburb of Lalitpur and detained nine people. They were taken to the infamous Bhairabnath Battalion barracks in Lazimpat and eight of them were released 18 months later. Padam Narayan Nakarmi never came home, and probably died during torture. His wife Ram Maya (*pictured*) still remembers that night four years ago when soldiers stormed into her bedroom after scaling the balcony and took away her husband. “Don’t worry, we’ll send him back in the morning,” she remembers the soldiers telling her.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Adolescent antics

When will they ever grow up?

Reacting to Maoist antics has become the government’s latest full time job. Our hapless home minister, ever willing to bend over backwards on cue, is far too busy appeasing the unruly newcomers in parliament to keep track of their non-stop contraventions of the peace agreement. Alarming innovations like the YCL, kamikaze trade unionism, and violent attacks on the media continue the party’s text-book strategy of keeping everyone off-balance and in constant damage-control mode. (*Picture: Even rickshaws weren’t spared during Wednesday’s banda.*)



Maturity has never been a hallmark of national politics but the Maoists have brought unprecedented levels of irresponsibility into the arena. As the seven-party stalwarts express outrage at every YCL crime, reminiscent of elderly parents scolding rowdy teenagers, the police somehow never manage to actually arrest anybody, indicating these teenagers stopped listening years ago.

In the Hand’s mercifully limited experience, adolescents are typically self-obsessed, un-cooperative, and strongly averse to criticism, traits all too familiar to those following local politics of late. Tracing this trend back a decade or so, any ideology-free individual soon concludes the entire Pupil’s War was an ill-conceived exercise in nationwide juvenile delinquency. Despite noble goals professed by the ideologues, their bloody pursuit of a mythical workers paradise was always held hostage to a childishy intolerant, violent methodology. Our first clue to the Party’s rich fantasy life was its cute noms de guerre. As a kid, long before PK Dahal made everyone call him Supremo Commander Awesome-cum-Fierce-One, the Hand gained notoriety as the great Apache warrior Geronimo in after school skirmishes. Unlike the comrades, we have all since pulled up our socks and moved on.

Another early indication of the leadership’s aversion to real life was their dogged adherence to an ideology that had already failed spectacularly wherever attempted. Obviously ‘live and learn’ is not in the communist lexicon, but willful denial of reality, whether geopolitical, historical or Santa Clausical, could never be called mature. It would be nice if the Little Red Book (i.e. Daddy) had all the answers but most of us figured out long ago that life is never so simple.

Declaring war and wreaking havoc in a pique because of unmet demands is something we’d expect of adolescent street-gangs, not a political party with national aspirations. The responsible approach of putting their platform before the people must have seemed too tedious (i.e. adult) compared with going underground to live out imaginary roles in an epic adventure. Nepal’s remote districts provided the ideal venue for creating glorious dreams of utopia, while sabotaging infrastructure and demanding free food from the locals is way more fun than getting a job in town.

That was the past. The list now continues in the present tense. Coercion and intimidation may be universally frowned upon by democratic societies, including those presently propping up the peace process, but ask any of the countless extortion victims and they’ll tell you these features are Maoist policy cornerstones. Most people learn early on that ‘free money’ is an oxymoron and end up working for a living, whereas the cadre has been taught free lunch is their ideological birthright.

Packing a pistol and acting the tough guy is usually the stuff of Hindi action movies, not parliamentary democracy. Last time the Hand carried a gun was during those childhood wars (it was plastic), whereas nowadays fully grown MPs insist on bringing illegal weapons into Singha Darbar. We’ll leave the Freudian interpretations concerning men too insecure to leave home without a pistol for another diatribe but surely none of this indicates maturity, political, social or otherwise.

Intolerance of differing opinions is yet another juvenile trait the Maoists have made their own, displaying an edgy insecurity towards dissent more typical of pimply, disgruntled youth than a bunch of pudgy middle-aged netajis.

Nobody said it would be easy to go from deluded revolutionary to democratic statesmen. True democracy is the most advanced and demanding of all political systems and takes courage, finesse and maturity to pull off. Whether these leaders can control their baser instincts long enough to allow a free election remains to be seen, but at least it’s clear the people are more than ready to exercise their franchise and throw the bums out. ●

DanidaHUGOU

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT**Advisers****Human Rights and Good Governance**

The Danida Human Rights and Good Governance Advisory Unit (DanidaHUGOU) invites applications from qualified Nepali citizens for the following positions:

Vacancy No.: 01
Position: Adviser, Human Rights Organisations Component

Duties and Responsibilities

The main tasks of the Adviser to the Human Rights Organisations Component are to assist with the identification and assessment of potential partners and projects; coordination with partners and other donors; and monitoring and review of project activities within the scope of DanidaHUGOU's support to initiatives within the Component.

Required Qualifications and Experiences

Advanced university degree (Master's Degree or equivalent) in social science, preferably in a related field, and at least six (6) years of relevant working experience, possibly from the academia, civil society, and/or donor agencies of which at least three (3) years should have involved aspects related to human rights and/or good governance partnerships. Experience with managing projects, preferably of a capacity development nature, including the application of Logical Framework Approach and/or other project tools, would be a significant asset.

The Adviser will be under the overall guidance of DanidaHUGOU's Programme Coordinator and will be directly supervised by the Component's Senior Adviser who reports to the Deputy Programme Coordinator.

Vacancy No.: 02
Position: Adviser, Media Component

Duties and Responsibilities

The main tasks of the Adviser to the Media Component are to assist with the identification and assessment of potential partners and projects; coordination with partners and other donors; and monitoring and review of project activities within the scope of DanidaHUGOU's support to initiatives within the Component.

Required Qualifications and Experiences

Advanced university degree (Master's Degree or equivalent) in social science, preferably in a related field, and at least six (6) years of relevant working experience, possibly from the academia, civil society, and/or donor agencies of which at least three (3) years should have involved aspects related to human rights and/or good governance partnerships, particularly in the field of media. Experience with managing projects, preferably of a capacity development nature, including the application of Logical Framework Approach and/or other project tools, would be a significant asset.

The Adviser will be under the overall guidance of DanidaHUGOU's Programme Coordinator and will be directly supervised by the Deputy Programme Coordinator.

Vacancy No.: 03
Position: Adviser, Social Inclusion Component

Duties and Responsibilities

The main tasks of the Adviser to the Social Inclusion Component are to assist with the identification and assessment of potential partners and projects; coordination with partners and other donors; and monitoring and review of project activities within the scope of DanidaHUGOU's support to initiatives within the Component.

Required Qualifications and Experiences

Advanced university degree (Master's Degree or equivalent) in social science, preferably in a related field, and at least six (6) years of relevant working experience, possibly from the academia, civil society, and/or donor agencies of which at least three (3) years should have involved aspects related to human rights and/or good governance partnerships, particularly in the field of social inclusion. Experience with managing projects, preferably of a capacity development nature, including the application of Logical Framework Approach and/or other project tools, would be a significant asset.

The Adviser will be under the overall guidance of DanidaHUGOU's Programme Coordinator and will be directly supervised by the Component's Senior Adviser who reports to the Deputy Programme Coordinator.

For all positions, the successful applicants must have advanced analytical skills, excellent communication skills (spoken, written and presentational), extensive report writing skills and experience, good interpersonal skills and good computer skills (word processing, spreadsheet, e-mail and internet).

Expected starting date: 1 November 2007. All positions will be based at DanidaHUGOU's office in Kathmandu. Closing date for applications: 4 September 2007.

If you are interested and qualified, you should submit an application, including the following: (i) a letter in which you describe your motivation for applying for the position; (ii) updated curriculum vitae; (iii) names and contact details of three references; and (iv) a recent passport size photograph. Your application should be sent to **DanidaHUGOU, Panipokhari, Lazimpat, P.O. Box 6332, c/o Embassy of Denmark, Kathmandu, Nepal** in an envelope that is clearly marked with the position and/or vacancy number you are applying for. Only written applications will be considered and telephone contacts will not be entertained. Short listed candidates will be contacted for a written test and interview. Detailed job descriptions for the positions can be obtained from DanidaHUGOU's office or by forwarding a message to the following e-mail address: hugou@hugou.org.np.

DanidaHUGOU is an equal opportunities employer and encourages as such in particular women, Dalits, Janajatis and members of other disadvantaged group to apply

DanidaHUGOU is supporting human rights, social inclusion, media, anti-corruption, justice, governance and democratisation initiatives in Nepal through the provision of technical assistance and grants

The box that changed the world

Cheap container transport has brought about the end of geography

It is 40ft long, 8.5 or 9.5ft high, and 8ft wide. It carries up to 29 tons in its 2,000 cubic feet of recommended available space, goods worth roughly \$500,000 when sold at retail.

It, and what it carries, can be transported in a month anywhere in the world where there are suitable harbors, railways, locomotives, flatcars, truck tractors, diesel fuel, and roads. It is the modern cargo container, and it is able to move non-fragile, non-perishable goods from any modern factory with a loading dock to any modern warehouse anywhere in the world for about 1 percent of retail value.



WORLD IN WORDS
J Bradford DeLong

Indeed, it can be transported for a marginal cost of perhaps \$5,000, less than the price of a first-class

airplane ticket, as Marc Levinson, author of *The Box: How the Shipping Container Made the World Smaller and the World Economy Bigger*, puts it.

All of this has happened since 1960. Back then, costs of international trans-ocean shipment for most commodities could easily amount to 20 percent of retail value. The cargo container has changed everything.

The container has made the world much smaller in an economic sense for non-perishable, non-fragile goods. Yet it is not the whole world that is so small, but only that part of it that is attached to the global container-handling network. Areas that lack the necessary infrastructure are still far away from the global trading system that carries high-end German washing machines from to California warehouses for just a penny a pound.

For example, if your electricity is unreliable, so that you can't count on being able to pump the diesel into the truck tractor, you are not attached to the network. If the volume of your production is too small to fill 2,000 cubic feet of space headed for a single country, you are not attached to the network.

For any poor segment of the world economy, getting attached to the global container network is an immense opportunity. But it is an opportunity that requires that everything—infrastructure, scale, public administration, governance, and foreign knowledge of your production capabilities—work just right. And if you have not first built up the social networks that enable your workers and their bosses to know what kinds of manufactured goods would generate high demand in the rich post-industrial core of the world economy, it doesn't matter even if you are attached to the global container network.

Many have written about how telecommunications technology is bringing about the 'death of distance'. Indeed, nowadays, you can talk to anybody, anywhere. But it is the cargo container that appears to have brought about a more effective and more significant 'end of geography'.

In a commercial sense, at least, the goods we ship across oceans still far outweigh the words we chatter around the world. ● *Project Syndicate*

J Bradford DeLong is Professor of Economics at the University of California at Berkeley.

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Honorary consuls based in Kathmandu form their own association

Flag carriers

MALLIKA ARYAL

In early 1980s when tourism was booming in Nepal, some European and Latin American embassies in New Delhi started receiving an overwhelming number of inquires from citizens stranded or having problems in Nepal.

Since they had no missions on the ground in Kathmandu, it became difficult to help them. They thought it was time to share their responsibility by setting up honorary consulates in Nepal. It was a win-win for everyone: the embassies got an inexpensive way to have a presence in Kathmandu and prominent Nepalis got to wave the flag of exotic countries like Mexico, Brazil, and even Iceland.



Today there are 27 honorary consul generals, most of them Nepalis representing various countries around the world in Kathmandu. Pradeep Kumar Shrestha was the president of FNCCI three years ago when he hosted a team of South African officials visiting Nepal. An increasing number of South African mountaineers and pilgrims were coming to Nepal, so they asked Shrestha to be honorary consul and he readily agreed thinking there was great potential for trade and investment as well.

“But today, it goes beyond trade, Nepal can learn so much about peace and reconciliation from South Africa’s success,” says Pradeep Kumar Shrestha, who is also managing director of the Panchakanya Group.

Nepal used to have an Italian embassy in Kathmandu until mid 1990s. When it moved, the Italian government decided to appoint an honorary consul in Kathmandu in 1997 and they chose another businessman, Ravi Bhakta Shrestha. About 8,000 Italians come to Nepal annually, and Shrestha has to help them when they get into trouble or fall sick while trekking. “The work as an honorary consul involves business, social and diplomatic work, all the areas I am passionate about,” says Ravi Bhakta Shrestha,

One would think that Brazil wouldn’t have much to do with Nepal, but over 25 Brazilians visited Nepal last year and the number is expected to grow. Brazilian companies are also interested in hydropower and that is how Binay Man Shrestha got appointed the consul general for Brazil since he was involved in the hydro power sector in 1985 when he was appointed.

It’s probably just a coincidence but many of the honorary consul generals here are Shresthas. The consuls have now set up their own association, the Honorary Consular Corps, and will soon be affiliated to the World Federation of Consuls.

“HCC is a goodwill organisation and a place for honorary consulates to come together, exchange ideas, and information,” says Dean of HCC-Nepal Gajendra Bahadur Shrestha who is the honorary consul general of Sweden.

The government has recently allowed honorary consulates to carry blue plated cars besides the flags of the countries that they already fly when they are on official duty. Aside from that, there is no real salary or benefits from being an honorary consuls, although all expenses incurred in helping nationals is reimbursed.

Even tiny Luxembourg has an honorary consulate. Tourism entrepreneur Shree Ram Lamichhane was appointed in 1998. The tourism entrepreneur says there are limited exchanges between Luxembourg and Nepal, but the number of tourists is increasing. “Exports of Nepali paper and handicrafts are increasing and have great potential,” says Lamichhane, who is now head of Nepal Scouts which has a Luxembourg-funded centre in Kakani. ●

“but I am really hoping we can encourage more Italian businesses to invest here.”

Ambica Shrestha of Dwarika’s Hotel has been the honorary consul here of Spain since 1992. Like others, she is kept busy in the tourist season helping Spanish trekkers and mountaineers when they get into trouble. Her work has been made more difficult by the political instability.

“When there are riots and bandas we have to advise Spanish nationals and it is hard when the situation is unpredictable,” explains Ambica Shrestha.

Conjugal consulate

Zdenka Karkyova has been living in Nepal with her Nepali husband, Chatur Dhoj Karky, for the past 30 years ever since they were married in their student days in Czechoslovakia.

But after the country split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1990, Chatur Dhoj Karky became the Slovak honorary consul. A few years later, Zdenka became the Czech consul. So what’s it like for a husband and wife to work for a country that has split in two?

“We got married in Czechoslovakia when it was one country, so for us it is very nostalgic that we represent both countries here in Kathmandu,” says Chatur Dhoj Karky who gets really busy during the mountaineering season when Slovak climbers are all over Nepal doing difficult routes.



“People think that because Czech Republic and Slovakia are separate countries there would be problems,” adds Karky, “but the relationship between the two is quite amicable, which makes it easy to work together.”

Karky says that the most challenging part of the work is when there are accidents with climbers and we have to

get helicopter search and rescue. The Slovak consul is also interested in fostering cultural exchanges and he brought a group of Slovak folk song singers to Kathmandu for a concert in 2004.

In the next room is Chatur’s wife, Zdenka has much more of a full-time job because she also has to screen visas for the Czech Republic. Zdenka runs a pre-school in Jawalakhel and is also called on to help Czechs who get into trouble.



My wife is a gangster, too

This Korean sequel tramples the egos of male gangsters across East Asia

Oh, the travails of watching films in Kathmandu! I had planned to review *Hairspray*, only to discover that the content of the DVD was an action-comedy from another nation. But what a welcome surprise! So what if I don’t get to report how good John Travolta was in drag. Korean flick *My Wife Is a Gangster 3* supplies gender role reversals in abundance, and perhaps in a kinkier vein than Hollywood’s *Hairspray*.

Yes, kinky, once again. I had thought that the sadomasochist humour of *My Sassy Girl* was an anomaly. Instead, it seems, ass-kicking dominatrixes are the norm for Korean cinema. God knows what kind of hell was raised by the heroines in the previous two instalments, but in *Gangster 3* Aryong (Shu) gets to trample the egos of male gangsters all over Hong Kong and Korea. An icily self-possessed and menacingly stubborn gangster princess, she is above the niceties of her father’s criminal court and above the foolishness of her custodians. She batters men with the flick of a finger and routs mobs in a jiffy.

The story begins when Aryong is accused of decapitating a lieutenant of her father’s rival gang and has to be evicted from Hong Kong. Choosing Korea for exile, she falls into the care of a petty henchman Ki-Cul (Lee) and his boys, whose hopeless attempts to impress her only get them into more trouble.

In a way *Gangster 3* is a flippant nod to the Yakuza films of neighboring Japan. The brooding soundtrack that accompanies Aeyoung during the action scenes may even weirdly remind you of *Kill Bill* (Tarantino’s tribute to Yakuza). *Gangster 3*, however, never gets as gory or as grave. There is enough action to warn you never to mess with hot, mopey chicks. But, really, the fight scenes are barely satisfactory.

What you will find to your heart’s content is humour. Just the shenanigans of translation provides so much farce, it is incredible that director Jin-gyu Cho keeps the running gag for so long without cloying. Yeon-hee (Hyeon) has too much fun as the translator between Chinese Aryong and the Korean goons, filtering the content depending on her disposition, awfully sweet when the characters threaten each other and foreboding during friendlier bouts.

You wouldn’t expect it, but *Gangster 3* is a highly entertaining film. As the plot gets knottier, it is amazing how smoothly this noir turns into slapstick. And let me tell you, I haven’t laughed as loudly at a movie in a very long time. ●

My Wife is a Gangster 3
Dir:Jin-gyu Cho
Cast: Qi Shu, Beom-su Lee, Yeong Hyeon.
2006.
115 min
In Korean, with English subtitles.



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नेपाली आवाज

हालचाल

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हालचाल
डिजिटल: ८ अघि ११ अघि
अपरान्तः ९ अघि ४ अघि
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हुनेक बिचाम १.०० देखि राती ११.०० बजे सम्म सुचना सिलाउ र स्वयं संशोधनका लागि भरपर्दो साठी रेडियो सगरमाथा १०२ कोहीले व सेवाहुनेछ



CHANDRA SHEKHAR KARKI

WOMAN TO WOMAN: UNICEF's Nepal representative Gillian Mellsop on Wednesday in Nepalganj comforts Tarjun Darji and her six-week-old baby girl who was born during the devastating Banke floods last month. UNICEF provided families with flood relief kits.



RAM HUMAGAIN/NEPALNEWS.COM

CIVIL MILITARY: Chief of Army Staff General Rukmangat Katuwal with Minister for Peace and Reconstruction Ram Chandra Poudel at the inaugural ceremony of a workshop on Democratic Transition and Nepalese Army Reform on Thursday. This is the first seminar of its kind, and part of the army's effort to make a break with its royal past.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

PARROT GREEN: The visiting UN Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs, Lynn Pascoe, arrives at Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal's residence. Dahal is reportedly moving out to a more modest accomodation.



KIRAN PANDAY

HELL'S ANGELS: Photojournalists covering Wednesday's banda find strength in numbers as they cruise the deserted avenue in front of Singha Darbar.

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KATHMANDU

THE PLACE TO MEET.

STATUTORY DIRECTIVE: SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

Final blow

After warning of "physical action" on reactionaries in their fiery post-plenum speeches, the Maoists are furiously back-peddalling, especially while talking to internationals.

The comrades are not just under pressure from hardline dissidents within the party but also international revolutionaries who have accused them of abandoning the cause when victory was within reach. That is why the party's delegation to a **CCOMPOSA** conference somewhere in the Eastern Sector recently had to grovel and whine. "We are using this transitional phase to spread our mass base and consolidate it...to bring disintegration to in the enemy's camp so that we can give a *final blow* and usher into the country a new democracy," our comrades told their comrades. Ass' italics.

Now, wonder what the Swiss and Nordics who have been the firmest believers in reformed Maoism think of that. The problem with the international solidarity movement is that some people want revolutions everywhere else but in their own country.



The criticism of YCL high-handedness has put the leadership on the defensive. Awesome One is now on a charm offensive to try to convince donors, activists, media bosses and others that he means well. On Friday, Kathmandu's self-described intelligentsia was invited to the Hyatt for a roundtable. The partyline now is: "physical action" doesn't mean what it used to during the conflict. **Metaphysical?**



Even Maoist party bosses have their movements curtailed when fraternal and maternal outfits call for chukker jams. Wednesday's bund was wildly "successful" because even bicycles were not allowed and in Thamel rickshaws that were normally exempt were demolished. Why don't these guys show the same thoroughness in community social work?

Anyway, even Comrade Awesome couldn't travel to an prior engagement he had with the newly-formed Editors' Alliance because of the bund called by his own cadre. It is apparently due to criticism he faced about living it up that Chairman Dahal is moving house again from his pistachio-coloured villa in **Sora Khutte** to something more modest.



No Ass column is complete without an update on UNMIN. We hear local recruits at the BICC are unionising and will soon launch a phasewise agitation for the extension of UNMIN's mandate. If their demands of extension till April '08 is not met, they have threatened to burn tyres at Baneshwor. And why do UNMIN SUVs (nicknamed "**White Rhinos**" in the tarai) have English number plates? Devnagari not good enough for you guys?

Given UNMIN's strained relations with the Indians, the last thing it needed was for flight UN310 to stray into Indian air space last week on a flight from Simra to Nepalganj. Ass NOTAM to pilot of Charlie Foxtrot Whiskey Yankee Uniform: Kathmandu FIR is only 34 DME from KTM VOR on radial 300 so can't fly on a straight line between SMR and NPJ unless you want the Indian Air Force scrambling interceptors with heat-seeking missiles from Gorakhpur AFB.



It looks like UNDP is getting more pie in its face for gifting \$2 million from a fund earmarked for peace building in Nepal to the BBC Trust. For an organisation that makes "capacity building" its motto, it is hilarious that UNDP has been excelling in taking away capacity from Nepal's radio producers and poaching scriptwriters, producers and radio journalists. Meanwhile, some **kuire** experts have spent the last six months "learning about Nepal" so they can hit the ground running. The FM radio network has gone radioactive, not to mention ballistic, and have taken delegations to UNHQ in Pulchok to register their protest. This ill-conceived project is also being asked some tough questions by Kathmandu-based donors.

P.S.: Please send **John** back when you're finished with him.

ass@nepaltimes.com



Stained teeth?"

WHITER TEETH IN 2 WEEKS

*Consumption of coffee, tea, wine etc can cause staining of teeth.

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