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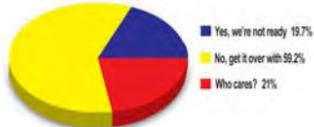
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Q. Should the elections be postponed to April?

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Weekly Internet Poll # 366. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. Who is most against elections happening?

Not in our name

Madhesis are sickened by the bombings claimed by a previously unknown tarai group

RAMESWOR BOHARA in NEPALGANJ,
CHANDRA KISHOR and **AJIT TIWARI**
in JANAKPUR

Terrorism, cowardice and inhuman are three words madhesis have been using a lot this week to describe last Sunday's murder of two schoolchildren and a woman in Kathmandu's bombings.

"Such an act of terror and the targeting of unarmed people is not politics at all and we condemn it very much," a furious and frustrated Surya Dev Ojha, Banke chairman of the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum said.

The bombings, claimed by an unknown group called Tarai Army, sparked a torrent of debate among madhesi political activists who wanted to make it clear that 'real' Nepali madhesis had no hand in the attacks.

Militant madhesi groups, including JTMM, were also critical, saying the bombs put a strain on the pro-madhese movement. Even leaders Jwala Singh and Goit, whose cadres have been responsible for much of the violence, killings and abduction in the terai, stepped forward to condemn the attacks.

"A madhesi group admitting to such a heinous crime is an attack on the sentiments of all our madhesi people and our country," says activist CP Singh from the Human Rights

Alliance. He believes such incidents serve only to jeopardise the madhesi movement and fuel communal violence against madhesis.

"We don't know who these people are, but they are definitely trying to disgrace our movement and people," said another frustrated madhesi leader, Barun Yadab, vice president of Jan Utthan in Janakpur.

After the attacks, Madhesi leaders called for an emergency meeting organised by Madhesi Loktantrik Samaj, which has a strong network in the eastern terai from Morang to Parsa.

In the past, madhesi leaders have sometimes been reluctant to criticise the violence, assassinations and abductions that have become commonplace in the terai, but this time they have spoken out, expressing their disgust and promising to hunt down the bombers. ●



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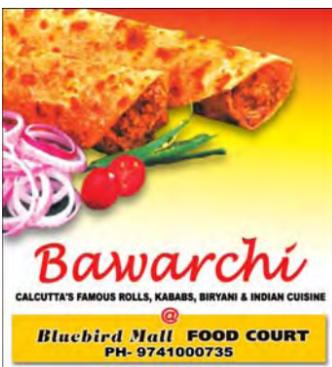


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POLLS APART

Civil society called it a premeditated crime, the government blamed anti-election forces, the parties believe the main goal of the bombers was to sabotage elections. The verdict is unanimous: acts of terror against innocents has no place in civilised society.

Even more important than 'beefed up' security is the public perception that they are safe. Rounding up the usual suspects (mostly people of a certain ethno-linguistic group) has the danger of polarising communal relations, which is exactly what the terrorists want. Post-terror mopups have to be handled with care.

Surprisingly, the Maoists have also denounced the terror attacks. For a party that had waged war against the state for over a decade employing identical methods, the Maoists have exhibited mature and measured judgement in the wake of the blasts. It seems the former insurgents are getting a crash course on how it feels to be on the other side.

Sadly, a similar demonstration of the maturity needed to create the conditions for constituent assembly elections is still lacking. Whichever way you look at it, the political demands of the Maoists yesterday have become the mainstream political agenda today. The inevitability of constituent assembly elections have been accepted by everybody. These days everyone is a republican, at least in public. Federalism and inclusive governance has been enshrined in the interim constitution. There is no turning back, politics can only go forward from here on.

What Maoists were unable to do after ten years of armed struggle was achieved peacefully in a little over a year. There is no reason for Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal to feel defensive or apologetic for the steps he has taken to transform a violent organisation into a party of peaceful politics. But his job is only half done, and carries the risk of a bloody relapse. The constituent assembly elections is his only exit strategy.

The polls are necessary to institutionalise the political victory of Maoist agenda. It doesn't necessarily mean that Maoists will come on top in the electoral politics too.

A political party needs to have an efficient election machinery right down to the booth level. It's the tireless volunteers at the grassroots that motivate an apathetic population, allay their fears, and assure them about the future to come out of their shells and sway election results.

It's an unglamorous, tiring, and thankless task that most Maoist militia are ill-equipped to handle, voting can't be done at gunpoint. There may be inaccuracies and inconsistencies in various opinion polls, but the Maoists know they will be just one of the three major parties to emerge out of constituent assembly elections.

The second-rung leaders of CPN-M seem to be scared of the prospect. After all, they will have to bear the brunt of public disenchantment, and Dahal needs all the persuasive skills at his disposal to convince them that is the best way to gain longterm influence.

Constituent assembly elections are necessary to end the present political uncertainty in which everyone does pretty much what they please. Without the verdict of the polls, the Maoist agenda will continue to be suspect. Peaceful politics is the only path to peace.

The parties still haven't understood that the winner can't take all Some past the post

The election has got off to an iffy start, and if the Sunday bombings in the capital are any indication, they underline two serious questions. First, is it going to be the blame game all over again? Will parties be running each other down rather than promoting their own agenda? Second, what do the polls mean to the parties: an opportunity to draft a constitution or to form a government?



GUEST COLUMN
Jainendra Jeevan

The constituent assembly will also work as a legislative assembly, which means it will elect a government. But this role is secondary. To the party leaders and their cadre, it is a zero-sum game to win indefinite power.

For instance, the UML wants to say we are the most organized party so we will win the elections. The NC is trying to unite so it can cash in on a fractious left. Any discussion about the constitution these parties are supposed to formulate

has figured nowhere. The Maoists intend to win through a combination of fear tactics and support from the masses. To achieve this end they can be expected to use crude musclepower.

The attraction of being in power is tremendous: the legitimate and illegitimate possession of public assets, state coffers, rent-seeking, distributing favours, and *bhagbanda*. During the last 17 years, the parties have used state power to perpetuate the status quo and oversee the emergence of a political neo-rich class at the expense of the poor.

Crafting a constitution is not a lucrative undertaking so the parties are looking beyond at how the constituent assembly will determine the power balance in government.

Voter education is a job best left to the Election Commission, the media, and the civil society groups. The polarised political parties can't be relied on to do that objectively. The mainstream political parties are surprisingly quiet on the most important issues the forthcoming constitution is supposed to

address. Most don't even have manifestos on how they propose to restructure the state. They are fuzzy on the issue of ethnic federalism and power sharing. These are issues on which the parties have to work together to resolve, not make it a subject of one-upmanship at election time.

They must agree on the universal tenets of democracy, on a balance between the sovereignty and integrity of the country and the aspirations of separate identity among various ethnic, regional, and linguistic groups. They must have a plan to include rights to education and health, and on the constitutional tools for social inclusion. This will enable them to single out and isolate the anti-national, anti-democratic, and the regressive forces. Regrettably, the parties aren't doing anything of this kind, and don't seem to be geared to doing so. The parties seem to have forgotten that even if they win the election with an absolute majority they can't have their sole say in the making of a new constitution.

The winner can't take all. The constituent assembly election is an opportunity for the ethnic, regional, or linguistic groups to ensure their fair share in state functioning. For some it may be an opportunity to secede, for the Maoists it may offer the pretext to return to the jungle. For the king it may be a way to exit gracefully and save the monarchy. For NC and the UML it may be one more opportunity not to repeat their mistakes in the 1990s. The choice is theirs. ●

Jainendra Jeevan is a bureaucrat and a freelance columnist.



KIRAN PANDAY

In a state of fear

Some powerful forces don't want elections

Terrorism is a terrible tactic for one simple reason: it targets non-combatants. No goal or grievance can justify acts that cause deaths of innocents by design. Terrorism may create more bang for the buck in visibility, but it doesn't take long for the propaganda of the deed to be counterproductive. The Madi bus blast delegitimised Maoists and they never recovered from it.



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

Soon after the serial bomb blasts shook Kathmandu last Sunday, two little-known groups from tarai claimed responsibility. Their justification was unconvincing. The nature of the violence in the tarai is too crude and raw to suggest any link with the relative sophistication of carefully orchestrated bomb blasts in the capital city.

The plotters knew exactly what they were doing and chose their targets for

maximum impact. Balaju, Sundhara and Tripureswar are crowded at any time of day, but during the peak afternoon hours they are teeming, nobody would have paid any attention to the lethal packets.

But why would anyone want to disturb Nepal's fragile peace process? Who gained? Powerful forces who don't want constituent assembly elections. The blasts also exposed the lapses of Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula and the shambles at the intelligence bureau in his ministry. The performance of YCL was also typical: when there was panic on the streets they were still protesting the arrest of comrades. The traffic gridlock they created delayed the transfer of blast victims to Bir Hospital. The Maoist leadership was also tainted. Their allegations of the involvement of royalists was knee jerk and lacked rationality. The Maoists should now accept that there never will be an environment fully conducive to completely peaceful and perfect polls for elections.

Attacks on innocent civilians in broad

daylight have also demonstrated the confidence of criminal gangs that stalk city streets. Such audacity wouldn't be possible had the law enforcement agencies been doing their job properly. Big crimes grow out of what has been called the 'broken window syndrome': preponderance of petty crimes signifying the failure of policing.

It's not unusual to hear in conflict-torn tarai towns that if the police stopped accepting their weekly tribute (*hafta*) from criminal gangs, the level of violence would immediately go down several notches. With tarai groups ostensibly claiming responsibility of the blasts, the design appeared to turn even sinister: it held alarming risks for communal conflagration similar to the Hritik Roshan riots on 1 September 2004. Fortunately, the people of Kathmandu exercised admirable restraint at this time as they did then. Other than bereaved families of the dead and the distraught relatives of the injured, everyone else went about

their task on Monday with an apparent nonchalance. The people refused to be afraid, and refused to retaliate.

The government must do whatever it can to create an atmosphere of public security. The Maoists need to accept the challenge of constituent assembly elections to defeat those who want to spread panic and set off a rightwing resurgence.

Facing fear is the only sensible way of tackling it. Blaming conspirators for obstructing constituent assembly election will not wash. To begin with the eight party alliance can resolve to conduct peaceful polls on the stipulated date. They can also conduct joint political campaigns to reassure the people.

But whatever they do, they must resist the urge to denigrate the Nepal Army at slightest pretext. Military takeovers occur only when the civilian-led political system breaks down or loses legitimacy. It's for the parties of the ruling coalition to prevent such a situation from coming to pass. ●



RSS

The MJF's deal with the government is not all its cracked up to be

A missed opportunity

The Kathmandu-Madhesi political disconnect is worrying. A day after the government-MJF deal (above), the two leading English dailies reported that the tarai tangle was resolved. But events over the past week have shown that the accord has in fact led to further polarisation.

So what triggered this sudden agreement? Upendra Yadav stood his ground as long as he was convinced polls would not take place in November. But with Indian pressure mounting for elections, Yadav felt he might miss the bus.

Given the shrinking MJF base, and the fact that people were in no mood for more agitation, Yadav decided to lap up the legitimacy the government gave him as the representative of the madhes movement. He felt the deal would portray him as a responsible leader and ensure that if polls were delayed, he would not be blamed.

The Indians assured Yadav of support for the polls while making it clear he would invite Indian wrath if he did not compromise. India was motivated by its desires to engineer a breakthrough in Madhes to hold the polls, and to form the basis for a 'democratic' alliance in the plains to defeat the leftist parties.

Sources in Baluwatar and MJF confirm that Yadav has been assured of financial and political support to help him win a minimum number of seats. Yadav, who is terrified of the Maoists, was also promised full security.



TARAI EYE
Prashant Jha

So how has this deal been received? It does create some positive momentum and address some demands at the heart of Madhesi discontent. Many issues in the deal had already been agreed elsewhere. What is now needed is implementation.

Nevertheless, it is positive that the promise of inclusion has been reiterated. Some in Madhesi civil society give Yadav credit for attempting to break the deadlock and create a suitable environment for polls.

But the agreement has also bred resentment. It does not reflect slogans that had become emotive issues on the ground—a fully PR electoral system, recognition of madhes as one unit, an immediate increase in madhesi presence in political positions and bureaucracy.

For madhesis, these have come to symbolise their aspiration for a rightful share in the power structure. The radicalisation engineered by the MJF and others has now led people to suspect Yadav has sold out.

He has a lot of explaining to do on why he conceded several core issues. And it is in this respect—communicating his strategy and decisions, and engaging with others—where he has been an abject failure. More than the substance, the problem is with the process and manner in which the deal was done.

Yadav has been in Kathmandu for more than two months. He signed the deal unilaterally without consulting his close advisers, and has done nothing since then to explain his reasons for the compromise.

With the government silent, district units of NC inert and angry with the party leadership for giving MJF more weight than it deserved, and Yadav still not out in madhes, there are few active proponents of the deal. Even those in civil society who are supportive do not want to be seen as apologists for a weak MJF and a leader addicted to Kathmandu power politics.

It is these factors that have given the MJF dissidents the confidence to walk away. At the same time, the Maoists sense a chance to regain lost ground in the terai. Their strategy is to dismiss the MJF deal, press for PR and round-table talks, and engage with select Madhesi groups for further agitation.

The vacuum also presents an opportunity for those who do not want a solution at all and wish to create instability.

The deal does not help address any of the fault-lines that exist in the tarai, between state and madhesis, among madhesi groups, between Maoists and madhesis, or between pahadis and madhesis.

The agreement's relevance lies not in finding a long-lasting solution, but in the fact that it has added actors and reconfigured alliances in madhes, besides generating illusions in the capital. ●

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Justice in the balance

Is Nepal ready for a truth and reconciliation commission?



NARESH NEWAR

ANALYSIS by **NAVIN SINGH KHADKA**

Perhaps this will be the trickiest part of Nepal's peace process. Leaders of the coalition government's major partners have warned that if the proposed Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is allowed to go the way international bodies would like, the entire peace process could be disrupted.

But if it is not, human rights groups fear the peace will not last. How can Nepal get out of this catch-22? It all came to the fore with comments from international agencies following the government's first draft of the TRC last month.

They complained the document was a tool to grant a blanket amnesty even to those who had committed the most serious crimes against humanity during the 10-year conflict. (See: 'No truth, some reconciliation', #363)

Their common concern is that it grants an amnesty too easily, even for the worst politically-motivated human rights violations, if the perpetrator will just indicate regret or if both parties agree to a reconciliation.

Ram Chandra Poudel, who heads the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction that released the TRC draft, says it is indeed a fiddly job.

"If we consider taking action against anyone for human rights violations, no one directly involved in the conflict will be spared," Poudel says. "In that case what would happen to the peace process?"

The CPN-M has taken the same line. Says Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai: "We need to be mindful of whether the commission's work would hamper the peace process. Those who are making comments about the TRC don't know the reality on the ground in Nepal and they have no right to speak on behalf of the Nepali people."

But others believe these are all short-term concerns. Sandra Beidas at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) says it is essential to break the cycle of impunity.

"It may take time because there are many obstacles to overcome," she says. "Moreover, those responsible for violations and abuses continue to abuse because they know they will not be punished."

TIME FOR TRUTH: Families like this one in Nawalparasi, whose members were victims of Maoist attacks and state atrocities, are still awaiting justice.

Her boss, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour, said that justice and peace are not contradictory forces.

"Justice should not be held hostage to the interest of those who threaten to resume conflict in order to avoid facing their own responsibilities," she said during her visit to Nepal in January.

Human rights activist Krishna Pahadi says those in the government have simply forgotten the pledge. "If only there is the political will, the TRC can be formed to bring the perpetrators to justice and to provide reparations to the victims."

Former home minister during the royal regime, Kamal Thapa, says he would be ready to face the TRC.

"The TRC is not just about the 10-year conflict and the people involved in it," he says. "It's about putting things on the record for generations to come."

For different reasons, the international

agencies are also in favour of not hurrying up.

"It is essential not to rush the process but rather to ensure those broad constituencies, including victims' groups and human rights NGOs at all levels, are thoroughly consulted and participate in shaping the design and focus of a future truth-telling process," Arbour said during her last visit.

Question of balance

Delaying justice means impunity goes unpunished and there will be danger to long-term peace. For almost all the 28 countries that have had truth commissions since 1974, striking the balance between justice and reconciliation has been very tricky.

Last month, a truth and reconciliation court case in South Africa threatened to reopen the divisions of the apartheid regime. Five former senior security officials, including the then security minister, Adriaan Vlok, were given suspended ten-year jail sentences earlier this month for plotting to kill an anti-apartheid activist.

All pleaded guilty 17 years after the incident, yet South Africans are divided over whether the case has helped the reconciliation process or reopened old wounds. Similarly, Human Rights Watch reported that Chileans in the early 1990s were almost evenly split over whether their National Truth and Reconciliation Commission had helped or hindered the healing process.

International human rights expert Mark Freeman, who authored Truth Commissions and Procedural Fairness, says given their limited lifespan and the vast scope of investigations, truth commissions cannot reveal the full and complicated truth about the past. "But they can be a critical tool in the fight against impunity."

But what if a TRC gets bogged down in controversy even before it is formed, as seems to be happening in Nepal? Some human rights experts suggest that while the debate may remain for some time, ratifying the Rome Statute could well help to check the sense of impunity.

International community members including the UN have insisted that Nepal sign up to the International Criminal Court.

The government has so far ignored the idea but the person recommended to head the National Human Rights Commission is positive about it.

Former chief justice Kedarnath Upadhyay, who is expected to be appointed NHRC chief soon, said: "If only we are able to sign the Rome Statute it would pretty much check impunity." ●

Learning from Northern Ireland

It's one thing to face up to the truth, but quite another to accept reconciliation after a time of great suffering. That, at least, has been the experience in Northern Ireland after decades of conflict, says Irish conflict mediator Joe Campbell, now working in Nepal.

"A TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) can help with some answers, but in Ireland we want to wait until time is right," Campbell says. "Reconciliation is our biggest challenge and by far the hardest thing."

Could it be any different in Nepal?

Campbell, who arrived in the country last year to work with the United Mission to Nepal as conflict transformation advisor, is surprised at the speed of the peace process and the readiness of Nepalis to start talking about a TRC already.

He points out that in Northern Ireland it took more than a decade of political negotiation to reach a peace settlement, and the proposed truth commission is yet to get off the ground.

"There was so much violence that the pain is so real even now," he says.

He expects Nepalis to feel the same, given the violence, torture and death that so many have been exposed to in the past decade, whether at the hands of the Maoists or of government forces.

Each violent incident in Nepal today reminds him of his own country's anxious times during the 1994-1998 ceasefire period, when it was difficult to control the splinter groups who operated in defiance of the central leadership. Here there are similarities for Nepal.

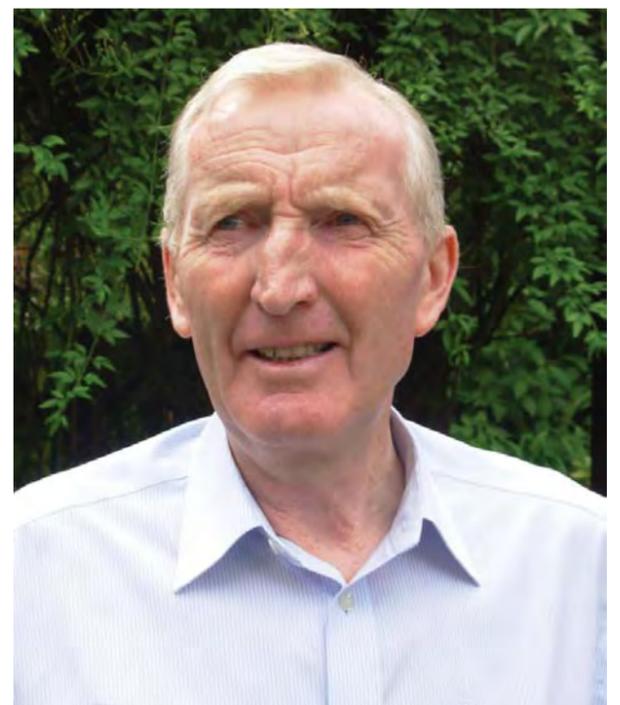
"There are so many parallels between Nepal and Ireland where civil wars have been easy to start but take a long journey to bring to a peaceful end," Campbell says.

He believes peace in Nepal will happen only when Nepali citizens want it and not at the behest of the bandwagon of so-called foreign conflict resolution experts.

But there is no doubt in his mind that those who have committed terrible crimes must be brought to justice. Many in Northern Ireland have already served long terms of imprisonment and he believes justice should not be delayed while everyone waits for a TRC to be established.

In Ireland it is more a case of remember and change, rather than forgive and forget, says Campbell, who was awarded an MBE for his mediation efforts, most prominently at a potentially explosive stand-off between Protestants and Catholics at Drumcree in 1995, where he and his colleague Brendan McAllister negotiated a peaceful settlement. ●

Naresh Newar



NARESH NEWAR

NIC in Damak

NIC Bank has opened a new branch at Damak, Jhapa. This is NIC's eleventh branch and second in Jhapa after Birtamod. NIC also plans to open three additional branches in the coming fiscal year.

Signature living

Lifestyle housing's new colony at Teku is open for booking. The new Signature Apartments offers subsidised rates for the first few customers. Surrounded by lush greenery, the apartments are built on earthquake-proof technology with a security detail, ample parking, two elevators, and 24-hour electricity and water.

eX2

China Southern Airlines has selected the Panasonic eX2 system for its in-flight digital entertainment. With over 50 unique in-flight applications and services, a variety of handsets, and high performance and high resolution displays, eX2 is the state of the art in-flight entertainment system. China Southern is the ninth largest airline in the world and the largest in China. It is the first airline in China to select the new Panasonic eX2 for the Boeing 787 Dreamliner.

Star clothing

Stars by Serendipity is a new women's and kids' clothing store in the Woodland Complex, Darbar Marg. With branded Indian wear, the store offers a mix of western and ethnic wear bags and accessories as well as tops and dresses.

S&K

The Samuel and Kevin brand has been launched in Nepal and is available at the Nike showroom at Darbar Marg. The S&K brand was established in 1997 and has over 610 stores over China, Thailand, Malaysia, and the Middle East. Avenue Marketing is the authorized dealer for S&K in Nepal.

Jai Nepal

Being compulsively optimistic about Nepal

I first visited in the monsoon of 1973. This monsoon I spent three months in Kathmandu, a city I have loved since. The Kathmandu Valley is no longer a serene, emerald valley. Even Nepal has been infected by terrorism and militarism, urbanisation, and environmental decay. A pall of despair hovered over the valley as I prepared to leave as news came in of serial bombs.



NEPALI PAN
Maura Moynihan

Despite all this, there is optimism and hope that Nepal will survive the present crisis of governance and forge a new identity for the 21st century. Why? Because Nepal is unique. The slim slice of earth that comprises the nation state of Nepal contains one of the world's oldest and most sophisticated civilisations in an ecosystem from Chomolungma to the Ganga plains, equal to the Amazon in water power and diversity of species.

Nepal is also unique as a political entity. The Himalayan Belt, once a chain of independent kingdoms reaching from Bhutan to Ladakh was crushed by the 20th century. Nepal is the only sovereign state left between India and China. Development economists rank Nepal as one of the world's poorest nations on earth, and it is painful to see millions of citizens trapped in a crippling poverty cycle. But culturally Nepal is one of the world's richest nations. The people are as gifted as they are diverse, world renowned scholars, authors, and artisans. Their religious and cultural tolerance is astounding. Farmers recite poetry, philosophy, and history.

It is both a superstition and a plausible fact that Nepal's stability is sustained by the artisans, shamans, and pujaris who perform the rituals that are the foundation of daily life. Nepal's civilisation has



RAMESWOR BOHARA

survived centuries of regicide, regime change, famine, and flood.

Given the chance and the tools, the people of Nepal will apply their talents to their development needs, and they will prosper. Nepalis are also supremely gracious hosts, and it's no wonder that the most successful economic force in modern Nepal is tourism. It has lifted millions of Nepalis out of poverty, creating jobs, sponsorships, and exchange programs. In 2002 the US State department put Nepal on its Terror Watch List and issued a travel advisory for Americans. This reactionary policy has closed hundreds of businesses and left thousands of porters and guides are without work, isolated and vulnerable. It is also inaccurate: no foreigners have ever been harmed in the 10 years of the Maoist insurgency. But the US travel advisory forced the withdrawal of the Peace Corps and dozens of established, popular American study programs and volunteer agencies.

Travellers serve as informal diplomats and monitors, and it is no coincidence that the forced withdrawal of so many

successful American organisations had weakened the central government and emboldened the Maoist rebels.

Nonetheless, the peace process is on track and business is up by 60 percent. Young Nepali entrepreneurs have reinvented Kathmandu nightlife, which for decades was choked by miserably tacky casinos. Thamel now teems with French and Italian bistros with imported Chianti, wi-fi coffee bars, and at last, proper discos, open till dawn. Compared to an American city, street crime is nearly non-existent. The most fearsome danger for the western traveller is, as ever, a crippling bout of dysentery.

I believe that as more Nepali citizens exercise their political rights and engage in democratic processes, Nepal will reinvent itself, as it has throughout its history. Nepal should not be caustically dismissed as a failed state, as happens so casually on the Kathmandu cocktail circuit.

Nepal's lands have sustained a great civilization for over 2,500 years. Lord Buddha was a Saky prince when most of humanity was mired in barbarism. And so I say, Jai Nepal. ●

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Black list

Madhab Basnet in *Drishiti*, 4 September

In an interview with the BBC, Maoist second-in-command Baburam Bhattarai promised persecution of corrupt people like Gobinda Raj Joshi and Khum Bahadur Khadka. Maoist supremo Prachanda also said in no uncertain terms that those named guilty by the Rayamajhi commission would not escape. The Maoists have published a 'black list' of people against whom they will take serious action. This revelation comes close on the heels of their decision to launch nationwide protests and a persecution campaign of those deemed to be corrupt or wicked. While they have not made this list public, we have managed to get hold of the list.

According to a highly placed Maoist source, there are four levels to those who will be punished. First, are those found guilty by the Rayamajhi commission, second are corrupt politicians, third are corrupt public service officers and police, fourth are those that have always opposed the Maoists.

The list contains 205 names of those named by the Commission including those who were ministers during the royal regime and those who came to power then, including Dan Bahadur Shahi, Kamal Thapa, Badri Mandal, Tanka Dhakal, Durga Pokharel, Shirsh Shumsher, Senate Shrestha, Jagat Gauchan and many more. There are also numerous ministers believed to

be corrupt - Khum Bahadur Khadka, Gobinda Raj Joshi, Chinranjibi Wagle, Jayaprakash Gupta, and those corrupt from Lauda and China Southwest Airlines. Many police officials have been accused of collecting money illegally from casinos, restaurants, dance bars and discos. Also on the list are Nepal Salt Trading head Parameswar Mahaseth, the head responsible for the sinking of NAC Gautam Das Shrestha, various bank and financial institutions and those suspected to be smugglers.

Following the Maoist decision to take action against such individuals, the YCL and the All Nepal Women Association—Revolutionary, have decided to step up their own campaigns. A senior Maoist official told us that they hold the identities of all those who would scheme against the constituent assembly elections and action against them is already under way.

UML central committee member Shankar Pokhrel attributes the Maoist decision for persecution to increasing low morale inside the Maoist camp, thus the reason for propaganda. "During the civil war, the Maoists persecuted and punished whoever they pleased, and now, even in times of peace they wish to do the same, but that is not possible. To do so would weaken their own position," says Pokhrel. "Before, they made people follow them with the threat of guns, now they wish to do the same with the threat of persecution."



Expectations

Editorial in *Samaya*, 8 April

After nearly 15 months the appointment of 18 ambassadors was finally carried out on the principle of *bhagbanda* between the three main parties. The message to the Nepali people is: loktantra means the monopoly on power of the NC, UML and Maoists.

Why this sudden efficiency in envoy appointments? What did we lose by not having ambassadors? With elections looming and the possibility that the power equations may change, the three parties wanted to divide up the ambassadorships right away.

Similarly, NHRC is going to get a new commissioner. But are these political appointees going to push Nepal's image abroad? How are these candidates who have minimum knowledge about Nepal itself, let alone about the countries they have been appointed to, going to do an effective job? Since they are all political appointees, it is a sad reality that they will be representing the parties that selected them, not the country. The raw diplomats will be going to their new posts in a policy vacuum. The least we can expect of them is not to use their new positions for personal or partisan gain.

Other countries encourage career diplomats to specialise in the foreign country where there are strategic or economic interests.

Let's hope Their Excellencies will do a minimum amount of damage in their new jobs. Let's hope they rise above personal interests, that is the minimum hope we have for these new appointees.

New king

Budhabar, 5 September

As the interim constitution has stripped all cultural and political rights from the king, Prime Minister GP Koirala is all set to replace him as the new king, starting with the puja at the Krishna Mandir where he went as head of state.

The new constitution had clearly stated that the nation is now secular and this mean that the state has no obligation towards any religion, temple or our old Hindu traditions. But now there is a question as to why Koirala had to pose as the king by taking his place during Bhoto Jatra.

If the state's presence was necessary, then the premier should have sent his minister for culture or local administrator. Why was it important for him to go there as a protector of the Hindu religion?

This only proves that the state is taking the issue of secularism lightly. It is disappointing to see Koirala representing himself as the Hindu PM. The People's Movement happened not because it hated Gyanendra as a person or chose Girija for the same reason but because it wanted to end

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MIN BAJRACHARYA

feudal culture and establish an egalitarian society.

Already Koirala has started taking Gyanendra's place in the way he is behaving with a similar authoritarian fashion. There is nothing wrong with a head of state visiting a temple, mosque, chaitya or monastery, but it would be anti-democratic for someone to simulate all the king's doings.

No surrender

Editorial in *Kantipur*, 3 September

कान्तिपुर

The bombing on Sunday (2 September) in public places was targeted at innocent people. This was done deliberately with the aim of killing a lot of people given that the bombs were planted during busy hour in a public place usually crowded with young students, women and poor Nepalis. In this way they have intentionally targeted innocent people, the group's only intention must be to spread terror. This immoral act deserves

not only absolute condemnation but also harsh penalties for to the culprits.

Although criminal in action, this has the purely political motive to disrupt the constituent assembly elections. The incident took place just a day after home minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula announced security arrangement for the elections. The environment for elections had been gradually improving. The group's terrorist act only shows that they want to stop the elections through targeting the civilians.

Such a group, which carries out crimes against humanity for political gain, does not deserve to be listened to. There is no alternative but to take stern action against this group immediately. In a country passing through a transitional phase, there is a need for elections for a peaceful political process. Political parties are trying to patch up differences and are interested to participate in the elections.

Such an incident should not be allowed to jeopardise peace efforts. The aim of this incident has been to polarise the parties, and if they let that happen, the group that created this terror will have won. The parties must forge an alliance and work together to retaliate and boost the government's morale to arrange better security. This is also an opportunity for the political parties to reach an understanding. But if they let this incident demoralise the parties then the environment for elections will be disrupted for sure.



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Election

समय Abin Shrestha in *Samaya*, 6 September

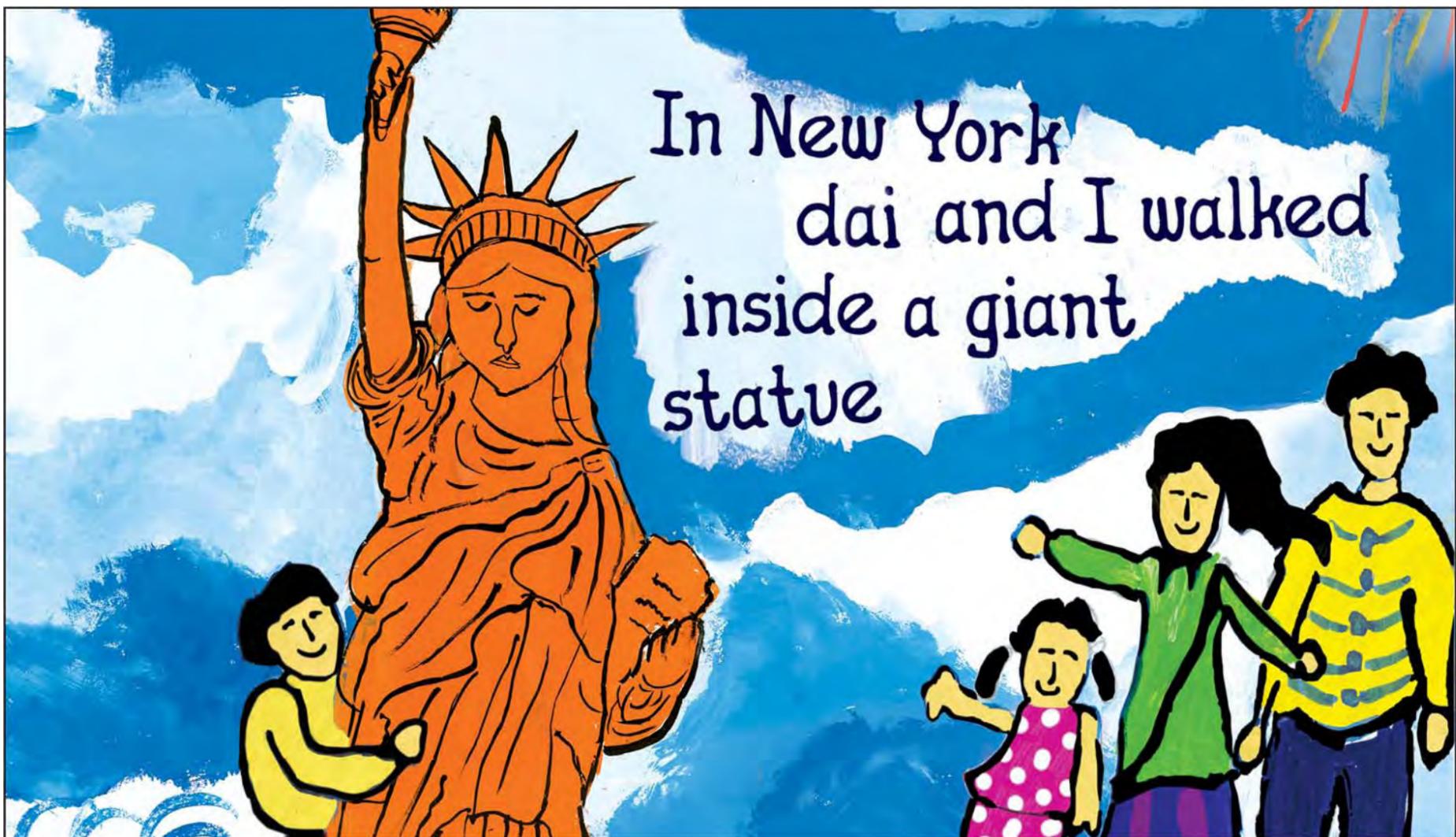
QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ The parties have not done real work, are too focussed on their party's interests and they always look for someone to blame (especially the king). ”

Former speaker Daman Nath Dhungana in *Desantar*, 2 September

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Cloudscapes of the mind



Don't forget to look up at the post-extravaganza in the sky above you

Every monsoon, people swoon over Kathmandu Valley's landscape: how the rains wash away the grime and pollution. The 360 degrees of hills are emerald green or blue-black, the terraced paddy fields on the outskirts are a quiltwork of every shade of green you can imagine.

But this is also the season when we should turn our eyes upwards to admire the post-monsoon cloudscape. As any photographer will tell you, it is the light that makes a picture come alive. A monsoon afternoon following a day of rain, when the sun comes slanting from the gap in the west between the Thankot pass and low clouds bathe the valley in exquisite halogen yellow.

And when this glow spotlights low-hanging clouds from below, bathing the city from its reflection, the effect is sublime. Take time, allow

yourself the luxury of gazing up at the sky.

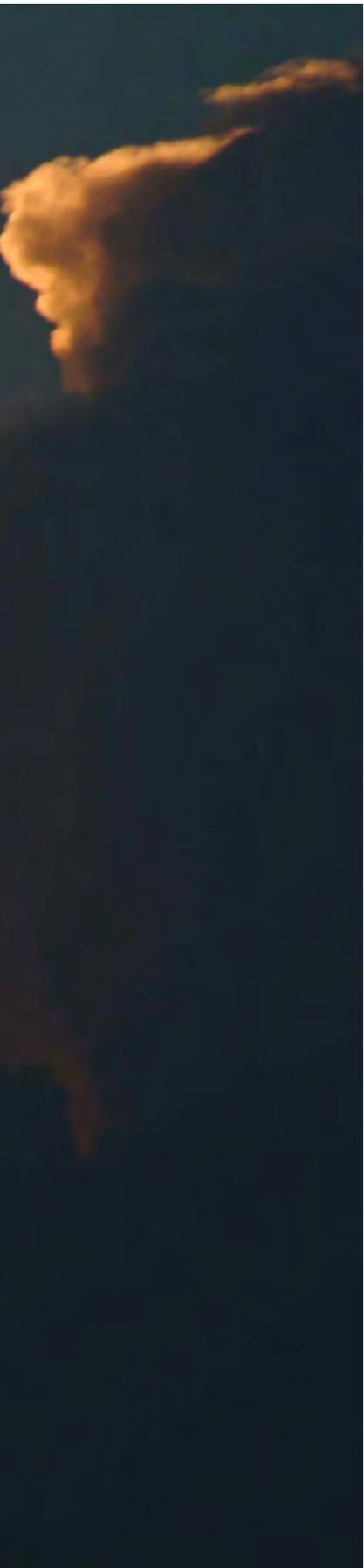
Despite this week's heavy rains, the sun will come shining through and by the middle of September, these cloud displays will be more frequent. Towering cumulus that soar into the stratosphere, billowing vertically so fast that they stretch and bend into alto-stratus clouds.

They don't have silver linings, but rainbow-hued edges as ice particles refract the sun. The clouds glow in pastels of gold, pink, blue, and grey. They cast shadows on each other, bringing out many shades of these hues. Then, as the sun finally dips behind the hills, the spotlight climbs higher up the cloud ramparts leaving the foundations in inky darkness. A yellow moon rises from behind a range of mountainous clouds to the east. The cloudtops glow in the moonlight, and the inside of the

clouds are incandescent with silent lightning. By nightfall, there is a sudden sharp coolness as the moisture turns into mist, and the mist in turn into a fine gauze of rain again.

It has been a good, healthy monsoon. For three months in a year, the Himalaya from Kashmir to Assam act as a gigantic atmospheric dam to store water





ANUP PRAKASH

monsoon

vapour. The mountains are such an effective barrier that the Tibetan plateau to the north is left high and dry in the rain shadow.

The rain will soon ebb as the monsoon starts to lose its momentum and the sun comes out again. The sky is navy blue and dotted with kites, and in the terraces the golden rice is ripening in the sun. ●



PICS: KUNDA DIXIT

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“Nepal should be a Hindu rastra again”

Sitting in a palatial house that also serves as his office next to the Gorakhnath mandir, Yogi Adityanath is signing a sheaf of papers. As supplicants crawled under the table to touch his feet, the Bharatiya Janata Party MP and the future head of the temple talked to Prashant Jha about politics in Nepal.

Nepali Times: What is your relationship with Nepal and the monarchy?

Yogi Adityanath: When Prithvi Narayan Shah began the process of unifying Nepal, Gorakhnath Maharaj blessed him. The bond was strengthened because Nepal has been a Hindu rastra with a Hindu monarchy.

What is your view of current Nepali politics?

Like any nationalist Indian, I am worried. There is anarchy in Nepal. The Maoists haven't given up arms and want to grab power through *goonda raj*. They want to extend their influence from Pashupati to Tirupati. For the first time, there is a possibility that Nepal might disintegrate. The unifying force in Nepal, like the soul that unites the body, is the Hindu king and Hindu culture. The imposition of secularism and sidelining the king will lead to devastating consequences.



But don't you think that the king had his chance and, in the present context, is more of a divisive than unifying force?

No, the king was never aggressive enough. I have not met him since 2004 but my assessment is that he gave up too easily. The king should not be silent but take matters into his hands. India's unification, out of 550 plus princely states, was possible because there was one umbrella party and the states were too small to rebel. In Nepal today, you have too many parties with

limited base and growing regionalism. This never happened during monarchy- there was no discrimination, the king does not loot and divide people like politicians are doing. What is going to keep your country as one? Who is the king is not important. What is essential is that he should be a Hindu.

What is your relationship with Madhesi groups?

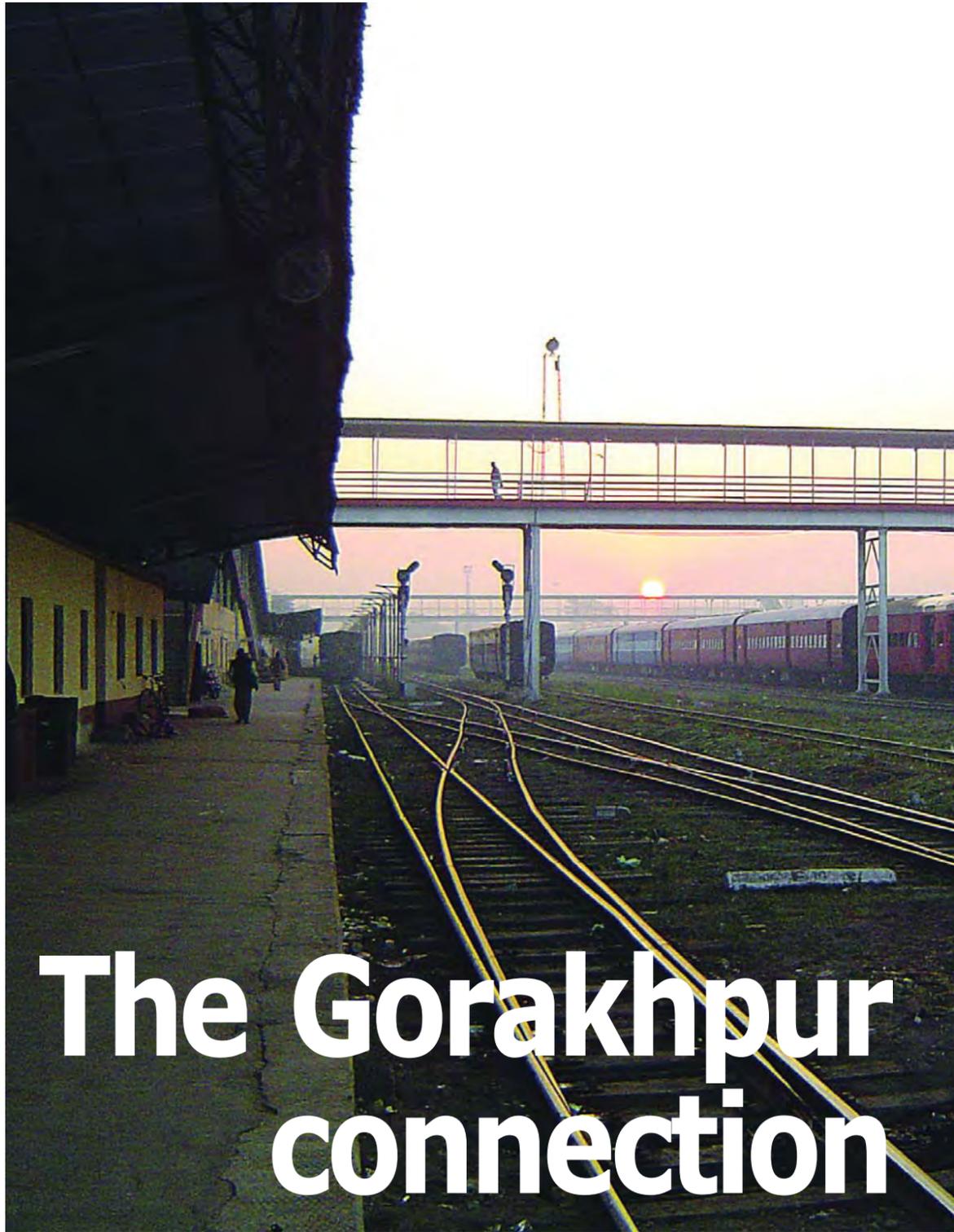
Madhesi leaders had a meeting in Gorakhpur in December 2006. Some of the major leaders came to see me and ask for support. I have given my moral support to those who want to fight for equality and rights within Nepal, but am not actively involved in their agitation yet. I am opposed to secession. My aim is that the whole of Nepal should become a Hindu rastra again, not a separate Madhes. But the Madhesi leaders should introspect. The movement will not go too far if it continues like this—it neither has the leadership nor the resources.

What do you think of Indian policy towards Nepal in the last few years?

Complete failure. If Nepal slides towards anarchy, there will be a direct impact on India, especially in the border areas. Nehru understood Nepal and that monarchy was essential for peace and stability—so he re-established the king after the Rana rule. That stability has now gone. Nepal will either disintegrate or go the Tibet way with China stepping in. India has just gone on accepting the Maoist agenda and this leniency has also led to increased Naxalite activity domestically. The Maoists are Chinese agents. The Indian diplomats are fools.

Is it true you have property interests in Nepal?

I don't have personal property but yes the Gorakhnath has temples in Mrigasthali in Kathmandu, Dang, and some other places.



The Gorakhpur connection

PRASHANT JHA
in GORAKHPUR

A railway junction, a line of hotels opposite the station, blaring horns amid a swarm of cycle rickshaws, hoardings of politicians at every street corner, a ramshackle movie hall showing an old Govinda number, and new malls signify that globalisation has arrived in Gorakhpur too.

But the presence of the Gorakhnath temple and the

town's proximity to Nepal make Gorakhpur more significant than its size and appearance suggests.

Gorakhpur's politics revolve around the temple and its leadership, who claim a centuries-old link to Nepal's monarchy and are active supporters of Nepal as a Hindu rastra. From the days of Mahant Digvijaynath in the 1940s, who was accused of conspiring in the Mahatma Gandhi assassination but was later acquitted, the temple has backed the Hindu

Right in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Nepal.

Mahant Adityanath was a BJP MP, and his anointed successor, Yogi Adityanath, has taken over the political and religious responsibilities. Besides being an MP, he is the national president of the India chapter of the Kathmandu-based Viswa Hindu Mahasangh. He has organised two conferences which were attended by the king's ADC and Hindutva hard-liner, General Bharat Kesari Simha. The Yogi has popular



KIRAN PANDAY

“They're

MJF leader Upendra Yadav defends the deal in a conversation with Prashant Jha.

Prashant Jha: How do you see this agreement?

Upendra Yadav: This is a historic agreement. It takes the country from a unitary to a federal state with autonomy, and ensures proportional representation of Madhesis in all state organs. This addresses the issue of identity. This is the best deal, the maximum achievement possible under the present situation.

Why have you given up on core demands like a fully PR electoral system?

The election is the national priority. If the electoral system is changed now, it would not be possible to hold timely polls. As responsible political actors, we compromised to enable polls to take place. We



The Indian town where Nepal is a domestic political agenda

HIMALI DIXIT

support and was a vocal supporter of royal rule.

In recent months, especially during the UP assembly elections, Adityanath made Nepal a a domestic political issue in Gorakhpur and neighbouring areas. Claiming that the Nepali Maoists were expanding influence in bordering areas and had deep links with Naxalites, Adityanath asked voters to support his candidates to defeat the Maoist agenda.

He is also alleged to have

played a role in fomenting the madhesi movement with the same objective - that of weakening the Maoists. The Yogi himself admits to having met madhesi leaders but claims he has not played an active role in Madhes yet (*see interview*).

But aversion to Maoists is neither restricted to rabid Hindu extremists, nor does it stem only from ideological rivalry. It's all about land and property interests that the eastern UP elite have in Nepal.

"Many have dual citizenship

and large landholdings in Nepal and they fear that Maoist land reform will harm their interests," says Manoj Singh, a journalist with the Hindustan daily.

"Adityanath himself has property in Nawalparasi where the Maoists had once come to ask for tax."

Pankaj Chaudhary, legislator from Maharajganj district, Amarmani Tripathi, a Gorakhpur leader, Shivendra Singh of the former Sisma princely state and many others are said to directly or indirectly own land in Nepal. "This is not about religion but money," says Yashwant Singh, leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist).

Criminals from both UP and Bihar were also said to be hired during the royal regime to be a part of the anti-Maoist vigilante groups active in some tarai districts. Many have stayed behind in Nepal and to continue with crime and weaken the Maoists. Ashok Chaudhary, a Dainik Jagran

journalist says: "Nepal is heaven for them right now, given the weakness of the state machinery and proliferation of criminal groups under a political cover." The prejudice is fuelled by local Hindi media here which portrays the Maoists as an anti-Indian force that aims to extend its influence beyond the border. Almost all local dailies publish stories of Maoist atrocities, both substantiated and unverified, and present them as a looming threat.

The anti-Maoist stance at the top is coupled with a genuine sympathy for the madhesi movement on the ground. "Madhesis are our people. I know what they go through. Their struggle is valid," says Jainath, a dalit rickshaw puller in the border town of Sunauli.

Gorakhpur is possibly the only place in India where aspects of Nepali politics (monarchy, Maoists, madhes) have a deep resonance. But while there are players here who may have engaged in local Nepali politics at a local level, they have neither the ability nor a coherent agenda to influence national politics in India. ●

"He's a traitor"

Kishore Biswas, public face of the MJF in Kathmandu, now leads the dissident faction of the party. He spoke to Prashant Jha about his decision to rebel.

Prashant Jha: What went wrong?

Kishore Biswas: Upendra Yadav turned out to be dishonest. He is a traitor. His decision was undemocratic, regressive and went against the spirit of collective leadership. Where was the process of consultation? I am very unhappy.

What is your basic disagreement with the deal?

We had three core demands – declaration of a republic; a full proportional representation based system; and an amendment in the constitution to incorporate the principle of regional autonomy with the right of self-determination. Upendra Yadav has betrayed madhes on all three issues.

Your agenda is similar to that of the Maoists. Is there any possibility you will strike an alliance with them?

In principle, we may have common issues. But for them, this is a political stunt. They have no moral credibility left. Didn't they sign the interim constitution without these provisions? If the Maoists are really serious, they should quit the government and parliament and come on the streets. Then we can think of cooperating.

Don't you think that the division in MJF will only weaken the Madhesi movement? What is your future strategy?

We are keeping alive the non-violent thread of the Madhes struggle. Madhes has got too radicalised and the problem will not be solved by dealing with one person, or deploying strategies of divide and rule. If we had not split, then the sympathy of Madhesis would have been fully for armed action. We will now talk to the armed groups and try to bring them into the peaceful movement. Only a round table conference can lead to a solution.

Will the elections happen on 22 November?

Madhesis want elections more than anyone else. But there is no political environment right now. The government needs to give in on key demands; we need to engage with Goit and Jwala Singh. If elections are held without these steps, then it will be meaningless and will sow seeds for a longer conflict.



SHALIGRAM TIWARI / NEPAL

immature"

have not given up on the demand and expressed a note of dissent.

What is your reaction to the rebellion within the party?

This is not a split. Those opposing the deal are against the constituent assembly and will have little impact. They are immature and do not have a practical vision. We tried to convince them but now the central committee has decided to expel them for anti-party activities. This group is being driven from elsewhere, by those who do not want elections.

Who are you pointing towards – the king or the Maoists?

It could be either. They have no direction and are confused. Some statements indicate they are willing to work with the Maoists. This is completely against MJF policy.

Do you think this deal will solve the madhes problem given that there are so many other groups?

The entire country is in a fluid situation. There will be clarity only after the elections, both nationally and in Madhes. Yes, to solve the madhes problem, the government will need to bring other groups on board. This process of indirect contact has begun, including with armed groups.

Some critics allege that the problem is that you spend too much time in Kathmandu and have not engaged with people on the ground.

We are a small party. The situation is constantly evolving and a few people have to manage everything—all the problems that come up. I met lots of people here, several issues came up. Now we have finally arrived at an accord.





NALAKA GUNAWARDENE
in COLOMBO

There is a new kind of 'tout' accosting development and humanitarian agency officials at international meetings.

They are smart, well-heeled and are not looking for a supply contract. In the age of spin, they are offering agencies 'product placement' in the globalised news media.

"I can get your agency on BBC World," is a common claim. This is not an over-enthusiastic journalist looking for a scoop. These intermediaries are peddling access to highly visible news and current affairs tv

channels. Some are freelancers or stringers, while others are film production company executives. Their media access is hard earned: they all have track records of producing tv news features or documentaries to international broadcast standards.

Worryingly, the development community does not find anything ethically or morally wrong with this practice. One possible reason is that competition among development and humanitarian organisations for public recognition has intensified in the past decade. Their communication officers are under tremendous pressure to raise the profile of their organisations and in some cases, of egotistic bosses.

How aid agencies buy favourable coverage in media

Chequebook development

So when a cash-for-media coverage opportunity comes along, it is too good to be missed. The obvious question is hardly raised: How come access to a trusted news outlet is being marketed? Instead, many development professionals simply ask: How much?

The answer depends on how many precious seconds of airtime, on which broadcast outlet and for what kind of story. But we are not talking about small change: some of these deals involve up to \$100,000. And those funds are drawn from the already tight communication budgets of development and humanitarian agencies.

At Asia Media Summit 2006 in Kuala Lumpur, the regional communication chief of a leading UN agency told me how she'd worked with such an 'access peddler' to get a post-tsunami story on BBC World. The few minutes of coverage almost drained her budget, but the agency management was highly pleased with their few minutes of fame.

It was not a BBC staffer but a freelancer who was involved. As development organisations compete more intensely for

external funding, they are increasingly adopting desperate strategies to gain higher media visibility for their names, logos and bosses.

Communication officers in some leading development and humanitarian organisations have been reduced to publicists. When certain UN agency chiefs tour disaster or conflict zones, their spin doctors precede or follow them. Some top honchos now travel with their own embedded journalists, all at agency expense.

In this publicity frenzy, these agencies' communication products are less and less on the issues they stand for or reforms they passionately advocate. Instead, the printed material, online offerings and video films have become logo delivery mechanisms.

It's not just the development sector's vanity that fuels this process. Many 24/7 news channels are struggling to fill their air time inexpensively. Some media outlets are harder to penetrate than others and prevent access peddling by its staff or intermediaries. Sadly, not every broadcaster is as careful. ●

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A love affair turns into a psychotic journey through fear when the imagination takes over

BUG

Bugged by paranoia

The horror genre is in something of a rut. The East Asian nations churn out a macabre parade of gore-fests, only to be aped in the States a few years later. Each Hollywood incarnation is a poor facsimile of the last, whether it's copying the East, its own classic from the heyday of horror, or the seemingly inevitable sequel. It's enough to



CRITICAL CINEMA
A. Angelo D'Silva

make you want to gouge your eyes out. But with William Friedkin as its director, *Bug* promises to be a horror flick of a higher breed.

Not that the marketers would want you to know that. *Bug* is packaged as if it's a typical horror flick, its posters indistinct from its gory cousins, pronouncing quite prominently that it's made by the director of *The Exorcist*. However, whereas in *Exorcist* Friedkin quite effectively strums the nerves of its time, here with an equally instinctual fear he only manages to elicit pity, even disgust, at the (possibly self-inflicted) suffering of his subjects.

Our protagonist Agnes (Judd)—a hard-drinking, dope-smoking Joan Jett-type waitress—spirals into spectacular depths of delusion when she follows her companion Peter (Shannon), a misfit drifter, down the rabbit-hole of psychoses. Peter, whom Agnes takes on as her lover seemingly out of pity, appears to be a harmless loner. His paranoia is at first quirky—charming even. But as he reveals his belief that he is infected by bugs as a subject of a military experiment to control the general populace, the character grows increasingly disturbing. And his paranoia proves extremely infectious. Now, however, five years into America's misadventure in Iraq, our suspicion of the US government can no longer take the form of Big Brother: It's unimaginable that its military could carry out any degree of planning to manage

a population, let alone a colony of bugs.

The film's sparse setting and tight cast belies the source of the material, an off-Broadway play that attained considerable accolades. Indeed, many scenes are conceivably more enthralling on stage. *Bug* is no shoddy project when it comes to performances. Here, scantily clad nymphets screaming won't suffice. Instead, we are treated to acting of an impressive caliber. Likewise, Friedkin manages the cinematography adeptly, using the cramped set to his advantage.

With a concession to the horror genre, we are provided with a few worthy scenes of skin-crawling dread, even stomach-turning violence quite popular with the genre's adherents. But *Bug* would be far more successful

if it trod more effectively the line between the psychoses of its characters and the credibility of their crazed imaginings. Instead, from fairly early on, the viewer is left with the notion that the characters are clearly psychotic. What's worse, not only does Friedkin do a terrible job of convincing us of the cockamamie scenario presented by Peter, he does a terrible job of making credible the pair's descent from the maladjusted, odd couple to outright nutcases.

It's a shame because, for a couple of chills, we would generally be happy to go along. ●

Director: William Friedkin.
Cast: Ashley Judd, Michael Shannon, Harry Connick, Jr, 2007.
R. 102 min.

Moving to an international beat

A young Nepali folk ensemble travelled to India. They were nervous. How would the Indian audience react to Nepali music and, what's more, on the eve of India's 60th Independence Day? Their worst nightmare was to be called *Gorkhas* and *Kanchas* and receive a pat on the back.

Instead, they were met with friendship, respect, and a pulsating enthusiasm for Nepali instrumental folk music.

Kutumba performed at the Freedom Concert at the Nehru Memorial Hall in Pune on 14 August and the following day at the Orchid School, a local school with a special emphasis on arts and culture. The concerts, organised by the Centre for Youth Development and Activities, were an opportunity to connect with young Indians and compare notes on cultures and fashions.

"We go looking for cultural exchange programs to far-away lands, but we don't look next door," Lakshmi Kumar, director of the Orchid School, told her students and their parents after the performance. "We have so much to share and learn from each other."

She plans to invite Kutumba back.

"The one thing I have come back home with, that I will probably not forget for a long time to come, is the way they drop everything they are doing, and stand bolt upright and sing their national anthem almost as if it were a song of worship," said Rashil Palanchoke, Kutumba's sarangi player. "I don't know if I will ever feel that way about our new national anthem. Hopefully in 60 years."

Kutumba's music harmonises the sounds of instruments from many different ethnic groups. No single instrument leads the orchestra, yet each one is unique and essential to the beauty and strength of the overall sound.



NAYANTARA GURUNG KAKSHAPATI

"Listen to how their instruments communicate," Shilpa Solanki, principal of the Orchid School, told her students. "When some of them get loud, the others are soft, and when the soft ones get loud, the others give them space. There is space for everyone."

Starting in December, Kutumba plans to travel around Nepal visiting places that have inspired them. They hope to share their experiences with local musicians and link up with music and educational institutions to provide more formal learning opportunities.

Their two-fold aim is to gain some appreciation of local music and culture while also providing encouragement to enthusiastic local youth ensembles. ●

NayanTara Gurung Kakshapati



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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Out of Nepal** an exhibition of exclusive handicrafts produced by artisans families of Kathmandu, at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, 9-17 September, 11AM-6PM. 4218048
- ❖ **Exhibition of contemporary paintings, art and crafts** at the Kathmandu Gallery, Thamel Chok, until 8 September. 4248094
- ❖ **Confronting transitional period** a solo painting exhibition by Sabin Prakash Sainju at the Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal, 10AM-6PM, till 11 September. 4220735
- ❖ **Heritage Panoramas** acrylic paintings by Pradeep Bajracharya, until 12 September, at Park Gallery, Pulchok. 5522307

EVENTS

- ❖ **Apocalypse** a film by Mel Gibson, 6.45 PM at the Lazimpat Gallery Cafe, on 7 September.
- ❖ **Reading program** with Madan K Limbu from his book *Fragile Mountains*, at the British Council, 7 September at 6PM.
- ❖ **Nyayapremee** a play by Albert Camus, directed by Sunil Pokharel, until 8 September, at 5.30 PM except Mondays and Wednesdays, at the Rimal Theatre, Gurukul. 4466956
- ❖ **Fiddler on the Roof** a play by Malpi International School, at the Nepal Academy Hall on 12 September at 2PM and 13 September at 5.30 PM. 4240159
- ❖ **Regular pottery classes** at Artworks, Pulchok, opposite New Orleans Cafe, starting 12 noon. 9851101837
- ❖ **Film South Asia 2007** Festival of South Asian documentaries, 11-14 October. www.filmsouthasia.org
- ❖ **Toastmasters** a communication and leadership program, organised by Kathmandu Toastmasters Club every Wednesday 6PM at Industrial Enterprise Development Institute (IEDI) building, Tripureswor. 4288847

MUSIC

- ❖ **Himalayan Blues Festival 2007** featuring international and local blues artists, until 9 September at 1905, and the Organic Bistro.
- ❖ **Western classical music** with Symphonic Impressions, 8 September, 7PM at the New Orleans Café, Patan. 5522708
- ❖ **Jazz at Jatra** every Saturday 7PM onwards, at Jatra Café and Bar, Thamel.
- ❖ **Ciney Gurung** every Wednesday and Rashmi Singh every Friday, live at the Absolute Bar, Hotel Narayani Complex, 7PM. 5521408

DINING

- ❖ **Riffs and ribs** BBQ dinner with JL Stiles and the Pax Armada at Fusion - The Bar at Dwarika's on 7 September 2007, part of the Himalayan Blues Festival, Rs 1,000. 4479488
- ❖ **Pear and berry etagere** taste pear and blackberry crepes, at The Lounge, Hyatt Regency, 4.30-6.30 PM. 4491234
- ❖ **Italian barbeque lunch** at Alfresco, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Saturdays, 12.30-3.30PM, Rs 300 plus taxes. 4273999
- ❖ **Jazz in Patan** with coffee, food, drinks, and dessert at the New Orleans Cafe, Jawalakhel, 11.30 AM-10PM. 5522708
- ❖ **BBQ Unlimited at Splash Bar & Grill** Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat, every Friday 6.30 PM, Rs. 899 nett.
- ❖ **5th Annual Monsoon Wine Festival** 16 wines at Rs 150 a glass and Rs 600 a bottle, at Kilroy's of Kathmandu, Thamel. 4250440
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Lajawaab** curry, kebab and biryani festival, every Friday, 7PM onwards at Café Horizon, Hotel Himalaya. 5523900
- ❖ **Shangri-La's pasta, pizza, pie, and pool** a special swimming package with a complimentary beer, Rs 650 nett per person, every Saturday and Sunday at Shangri-La Hotel. 4412999
- ❖ **Kebabs and curries** at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619
- ❖ **Krishnarpan** Nepali specialty restaurant at Dwarika's Hotel, six to 22 course ceremonial lunch and dinner. 4479488
- ❖ **Weekend special** with sekuwa, bara, barbeque, Fridays at Ambassador Garden House, Lazimpat, 5.30 PM onwards. 4411706
- ❖ **Light nouvelle snacks** and elaborate cordon bleu meals at La'Soon, Pulchok, behind the Egyptian embassy. 5537166
- ❖ **Calcutta's rolls, biryani, kebabs** Indian cuisine at Bawarchi, Bluebird Mall Food Court. 9741000735
- ❖ **Rediscover fine Italian cuisine** at La Dolce Vita, Thamel, all new exciting menu. 4700612
- ❖ **Pizza** from the woodfired oven at Java, Thamel. 4422519



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



Roy (Ritesh Deshmukh), Manav (Javed Jaffrey) and his elder brother, Aditya aka Adi (Arsad Warsi) are happy making their living doing small time con jobs. Their lucky break comes while trying to save Bose (Prem Chopra) who is on the verge of dying. Unfortunately for them, Police Inspector Kabir Nayak (Sanjay Dutt) has been chasing Bose for the last ten years. He finally finds him. Only dead! Inadvertently they blurt out the secret before managing to escape. As one misadventure follows after another, they are thrown into hilarious situations. Catch Sanjay Dutt on his first release after his bail from prison.

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WEEKEND WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

Mother Nature is doing her best to make up for the lack of rain at the start of the monsoon. Heavy showers on Wednesday broke 24-hour maximum rainfall records, with 312mm dumped on Simara, and Kathmandu (83mm) getting a thorough drenching. This week's heavy cloud pattern will make life difficult for fly-by-sight aircraft. Thursday's satellite photo shows a huge cloud mass rushing towards north India and Nepal, where deep low-pressure systems are firmly embedded. Another extensive low sits over the Tibetan Plateau in a blocking position. So expect widespread rain over north India and the central and eastern Himalaya throughout Friday, with the sun fighting back from Saturday as the low pressure system weakens.

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हरेक आइतबार दिउँसो (१:४०-२:००)
"रेडियो सगरमाथामा नियमित सुनी, अंग्रेजी सुधारी"
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KIRAN PANDAY

CITY OF LIGHTS: Patan's Darbar Square is bathed in light to celebrate Krishna Asthami on Tuesday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

OVERFLOW: Bagmati River in full spate at Kupondole on Wednesday after heavy rain soaked the Kathmandu valley for more than 12 hours.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

BEFORE THE DELUGE: A YCL rally heads for Singha Darbar on Sunday to submit a memorandum to Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula demanding immediate release of their cadre. Moments later, the bombs exploded.



KIRAN PANDAY

CAUGHT BY THE BLAST: Sandhya Khadka, a student of Viswa Niketan High School killed in Sunday's bomb blast in Tripureswor, being cremated at Pashupati on Wednesday.

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CVICT invites application from interested candidates for the following post:

Executive Director

- based in Kathmandu with occasional need of field trips to the programme areas
- For the period of 2 years
- First 6 months as probationary period

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- Lead the process for development of next 5 years (2008-2013) strategic plan for CVICT with involvement of key stakeholders
- Develop programme/projects proposals in line with the overall strategic plan and negotiate with appropriate donors for funding
- Develop new initiatives for fund raising to secure financial resources to ensure organizational development and sustainability
- Provide a dynamic leadership in management of the organization with strategy focus, team building, programme effectiveness and efficient management of the resources
- Strengthen linkages and coordination with other human right organizations, relevant government organizations and the donor community
- Strengthen CVICT's role in influencing policy changes for promotion of human rights, prevention of torture and treatment and rehabilitation of victims of torture and trauma
- Ensure timely reporting of the projects and programmes as agreed with the donors, government and Executive Committee

Person Specification:

- Proven ability for strategic planning, team building and managing a large multi-disciplinary team including capacity building and motivation for strategic focus
- Proven ability to work effectively with a range of government, international donors and national and international human right organization's representatives at senior levels
- Excellent networking, relationship building, communication and advocacy skills. Demonstrated ability for fund raising and financial management
- Excellent reporting skills in English and Nepali language with good computer skills
- University Degree in Health, Social Sciences, Management, Law or Human Rights
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- Good knowledge of key political and development issues within Nepal and the region

Note:

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Interested individuals meeting these specifications are encouraged to submit application with updated CV by 15th September 2007 to the following address:

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GPO box: 5839, Kathmandu, Nepal
email: cvict@cvict.org.np

Di Ass Pora

We've all wondered when Girija would pull out his republican trump card, and it looks like the time has arrived. He had held on to it not to open two armed fronts, but he thinks it is now safe to go for it. Partly it is pressure from within the party ranks from young cadre who think the monarchy is a no-go for elections. Girija banked on making the monarchy the issue on which he could differentiate his party from all the others, but now it looks like even he has decided that it is **electoral suicide**.



So what does kingji think about all this? Was always hard to tell what **ex-Lord Vishnu** was plotting, but he has apparently been mulling a quiet getaway to India (provided he can get confirmed seats on the Delhi flight) on the semi-pretext of a health checkup. And the visit could always be extended later so it doesn't look like he's been hounded out. A good plan, and one in which no one loses face. The only trouble is sonnyboy taking it badly enough to have a coronary condition. Egged on by buddies, the young man is reluctant to give up this chance to be a **sri paunch**. Daddy and mummy are so terrified of what he may do, the Ass learns they are unwilling to confront him.



If we Nepalis want to behave just like we would in Nepal when we go abroad, why bother going abroad at all? Here we haven't started getting excited about elections, but there election fever has already taken hold. In fact, the diaspora is being polarised along party lines with infighting, backbiting, and ideological confusion even more intense than among their parent parties back home.

For example, in Europe the Jana Samparka Karyalaya serves as the NC front which has the Sujata Faction, the Sushil Faction, and even the Ramchandra Faction. The UML is represented by the Development Forum which recently hosted Comrade Makunay and even that has the Oli faction and Jhallu faction. And the Maoists have their Jana Mukti Morcha, or words to that effect, which acts like the foreign arm of the YCL. And then, there are the Tamu Samaj, Tamang Samaj, Madhes Samaj, a Sherpa Samaj and just about every samaj except a Nepali Samaj. Their agenda: to evict from the samaj anyone found to be taking part in Tij **dohoris**, or observing dasain. Some truth in the observations from Sri Lankan Tamils in Toronto and Sikhs in Vancouver that diaspora chauvinism is always more radical than among the same groups at home.

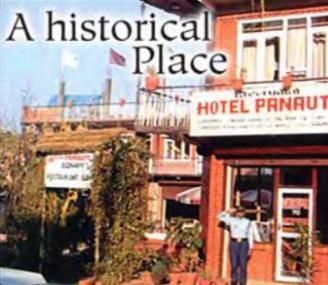


Now that Europe is being carved up into **spheres of influence** by Maoist ambassadors in France and Denmark, a kangresi in London, and the UML in Brussels turf battles among overseas party wings are going to get vicious. For sure, the last thing on the minds of these political plenipotentiaries is going to be their country's national interest. As the Ass hinted last week, the tearing hurry about sending an ambassador to London was to seal the deal on the sale of the embassy property at Kensington Square Garden which has been Nepal's property since the 1930s. Apparently the building hasn't been repaired since it was acquired and the borough council has decided to condemn it. We'll have to pay a 4 million pound fine if repairs aren't started right away. So in its infinite wisdom, Shitall Nibas has decided to sell off this prime property. The bids are in the 30 million pound range and the **Mittals** who own blocks opposite are apparently eyeing 12A as well. The UML-controlled ministry has been handling the deal so far, and that is why the NC decided to send its trusted man to London so it would have a stake in whatever is being negotiated. The Ass can give it in writing right here and now that the money is sure to go into various pockets, and none of it will be spent on buying a new embassy in London.

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