

Shikhar Travel Trip Insurance

Travelling Abroad ? Get relaxed.

Shikhar Travel Trip Insurance is here to insure your journey.

Shikhar Insurance

"Trust us, we will deliver"

Shikhar Travel Trip Insurance covers the following:

• Medical and Emergency Expenses

• Personal Liability

• Loss of Passport

• Delay/Loss of Checked Baggage

• Personal Liability

P.O. Box : 11123, Naya Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal Phone: 4784014, 4784515, Fax: 4784513

Times

Weekly Internet Poll # 368

Q. How do you rate the Maoist decision to leave the government?

Total votes: 4,017

More than 50%

Between 50% and 60%

Less than 50%

Weekly Internet Poll # 369. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. What is your opinion on monarchy?

Dia Safe

Special Discount on the Occasion of Dasain & Tihar

Protect your Valuables at Home & Office

HOME FURNISHERS

Tripathi, 254 Tripathi (way to Thapathali), Nepal. Ph: 4254891, 4262340, e-mail: bath@wink.com.np

HP Laser Jet P2014

Printer Series

• Print Speed

UP to 21 ppm

• Processor

264 MHz

• Standard Memory

32 MB

• Print Quality

Up to 1200 x 1200 dpi

CAS

CAS Trading House Pvt. Ltd.

P.O. Box: 2932, ComputerLand Building, New Plaza, Purbicokad, Kathmandu. Phone: 977-1-4440271, 4430858, 4430859. E-mail: sales@casnep.com. Web: www.castradinghouse.com

NEPA MARBLE BATH HOUSE

Drumbarahi, Kath. Tel: 4431307, 2011841

Sale

Up to 50% Off

Exclusive Nike Sneakers

Darbarahat, Tel: 4221481, 1 Bluebird Mall



MADHU PANTHI

Deal or deadlock?

Far from the misery of thousands of Kapilbastu refugees, leaders in Kathmandu are trying to hammer out a compromise for elections

There is nothing like elections and Dasain holidays to focus people's minds, which is probably what forced the NC to finally unite on Tuesday. This in turn has prompted the other parties to try to clear roadblocks in the runup to elections.

It hasn't been easy. Seven party leaders met in marathon sessions all Thursday to thrash out a compromise that would assuage Maoist concerns. A broad agreement was reached in the morning to call for a special session of the interim parliament to pass a resolution on a 'Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal' that would formalise a

commitment of all parties to be ratified by the elected constituent assembly after November.

But by afternoon, it was clear Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal couldn't convince his hardline comrades Ram Bahadur Thapa and Mohan Baidya to accept this. The two are insisting on a "package deal" that would include a formal declaration by parliament on republic and a full proportional election.

The NC's unity and party declaration to go for a federated loktantrik republic helped untangle the issue somewhat. Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Prime Minister Koirala held a one-hour meeting on

Thursday afternoon but failed to agree on Koirala's compromise on both contentious issues: a parliamentary resolution to be ratified later and an electoral system that would guarantee the Maoists more seats.

The election issue is critical for the Maoists because they feel they'd fare poorly in direct elections, and want to ensure a minimum representation. Dahal is reported to have admitted to the prime minister he was under pressure from within his party. Although a pre-poll division of seats would be irregular and undemocratic, some party leaders say they see no problem as long as it will bring the Maoists into

the mainstream.

The seven parties also agreed on Thursday to launch joint election-related meetings over Dasain in the districts to ensure maximum participation of the public in polls. This agreement is significant considering continued violence between UML and Maoist cadre in various parts of the country in recent days, and an announcement by various Maoist-affiliated ethnic groups to intensify street protests.

The real enemies of the seven parties are militant groups who have called for a poll boycott, and elections are only possible if they stand together. ●

Purna Basnet

Ford

RANGER

BUILT Ford TOUGH

AUTHORIZED AGENT:

Euro Gears Pvt. Ltd.

Kat-75-2 Teku Road, P.O.Box 4790 Kathmandu, Nepal

Tel: 4261235, 4371104

Fax: 4420877, 4262069,

E-mail: eurogears@mos.com.np

SERVICE CENTER :

Delta Motor Works Pvt. Ltd.

Dhumbarahi, Kathmandu Tel: 4371104



editors@nepalitimes.com
www.nepalitimes.com

Published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd, Editor: Kunda Dixit
Design: Kiran Maharjan
Director Sales and Marketing: Sunaina Shah marketing@himalmedia.com
Circulation Manager: Samir Maharjan sales@himalmedia.com
Subscription: subscription@himalmedia.com, 5542525/535
Hatiban, Godavari Road, Lalitpur
GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu 5543333-6, Fax: 5521013
Printed at Jagadamba Press, Hatiban: 5547018



IDOL WORSHIP

Two events this week are reminders that the power of a globalised media now touches even the remotest corners of the world.

An Indian policeman from Kolkata makes it to the finals of a televised song contest marketed by a Japanese multinational media conglomerate in partnership with an Indian mobile phone company. Nepalis spent an equivalent of Rs 70 million through mass SMS voting to make this man win.

When Prashant Tamang became India's idol, why did half of Ilam drive across the border to celebrate with fellow-Nepalis? Prashant made us rethink the definition of what constitutes Nepali culture and nationalism. Why were our double triangle banners waving at midnight at the Mall in Darjeeling alongside Indian tricolours? At a time when people wearing Nepali caps are being hounded out of the tarai, Prashant proudly wore the headgear that is a symbol of Nepalihood in India. When Bhanubhakta statues are being demolished by inclusivists in Nepal, our own Martin Luther is almost worshipped by Nepali speakers in Sikkim and the Indian northeast.

Dasain boycotts have become the norm in parts of Nepal, but it is still the main holiday for Indian Nepalis. The very symbols of monolithic nationhood that are being questioned in post-April 2006 Nepal are indentifiers for India's Nepali-speaking minority. Five Nepali workers in the Gulf have jointly published a book of poignant poetry in which they observe that while people back home now see each other as madhesi or pahadi, Hindu or Muslim, Tamang, Gurung, Limbu or bahun, in the Middle East they are all Nepali.

At one level the Prashant Tamang phenomenon showed the current Nepali craving for a feel-good story, the need for a knight in shining armour who, even if he can't rescue us, will make us feel momentarily proud. At another, it proved the need for national symbols when the motherland itself is being torn apart by centrifugal identity politics.

Prashant epitomizes the shared geography, shared history, shared lingua franca of Nepalis no matter what their passport. But he also underlines a flaw in our perception of ourselves and the way Nepalihood has traditionally been defined by hill-centric nationalism.

We wonder if there would be the same interest or excitement in Nepal if, instead of Prashant, an Indian of Nepali madhesi origin was the finalist. Probably not. Then there is the Ramdev phenomenon, which showed that televangelism has arrived and no part of the subcontinent is beyond its powerful footprint anymore. That an Indian yoga guru has such a following in ostensibly secular Nepal also goes to prove our spiritual deficit and that lifestyle stress is now endemic in this country's urban middle class.

Crossborder television has redefined the public sphere and now sets our national agenda. It is beyond regulation, and the message goes directly to audiences. Nepal and India don't just have an open border, we are now in the same geostationary orbit. The impact of this on our society, culture, politics and nationalism can only get stronger in the years to come.

"A date has been set"

James T Walsh has been a US Congressman representing New York for the past 18 years. He served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Nepal in 1970-72, speaks fluent Nepali and maintains his links with this country. Walsh was instrumental in drawing Congressional attention to the pro-democracy movement in April 2006 and was also closely involved with the Northern Ireland peace process. He is member of the House Appropriations Committee. John Narayan Parajuli spoke to Walsh this week.



JOHN NARAYAN PARAJULI

Nepali Times: What's your take on the latest hiccups in Nepal's peace process?

James Walsh: The government of Nepal needs to adhere to its commitment to hold constituent assembly elections on 22 November. It is vital that the people of Nepal have a specific date to work toward. I worry that if the government pushes back the date even more, the elections will not happen. You can only delay something as significant as this for so long.

Success takes time, but it also helps if everyone involved is working toward the same goal. It isn't fair to the people of Nepal to continue to push back the elections. A date has been set and it needs to stay that way.

Is there a difference between your views and that of the Bush administration?

I support the views of this administration, I agree with the view of our government to support the elections on 22 November, and I also agree with our pledge of complete cooperation in making the elections happen.

Is there a shift in US policy towards Nepal with the departure of Ambassador James Moriarty?

At the moment, I don't see any such shift. However, I do know that Ambassador Nancy Powell is a very thoughtful person and is taking the necessary time to come to her own decisions about the role of the United States in Nepal. I know we both agree that these elections need to happen as scheduled and that the intimidation needs to stop.

Do you think there should be some moderation, particularly on the US stance on the Maoists?

I think the US needs to continue to encourage the full participation of all eight political parties, which include the Maoists. All of Nepal needs to put their weapons down and commit to having an election on 22 November. Given the recent withdrawal from the government by the Maoists it's apparent that they think of themselves differently than the other parties. They should be held accountable for wrecking the agreement and threatening strikes.

I understand that you are interested in coming to Nepal to observe elections.

If the opportunity arose to go back to Nepal and observe the elections, I would be very interested.

Will you be meeting Maoist leaders?

It's hard to say. If I had the chance to visit Nepal, I would cross that bridge when I got there. However, I would only consider a meeting with Maoist leaders if they stopped de-railing the upcoming elections. They need to play an active and positive role in making sure the elections are fair and without interference.

Do you see the elections happening in November?

The people of Nepal have overcome so much and they deserve to be represented in a government they trust. Nepalis have put up with a civil war, a dysfunctional monarchy and heinous forms of violence and intimidation. It's time for Nepal to have a constitution worthy of its people. For Nepal's future, these elections have to happen on 22 November.

Our identity crisis

Who are we, and why is Prashant Tamang our hero?

When the boys from the boondocks were the only contestants left, Indian journalists in Chennai, Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai lost interest in *Indian Idol*. The mainstream press quickly dubbed the competition a 'battle of the hills' and relegated the story to the inside pages.

Flamboyant front runner Amit Paul is from Shillong. Prashant Tamang, the dark horse, is from Darjeeling. The Indian glitterati, for whom these small towns may



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

as well have been in outer space, dismissed Prashant's victory as an SMS aberration rather than a well deserved success.

The mood was completely different in Darjeeling, where the boy wonder was hailed as the epitome of Gorkhali grit and determination in the face of adversity. Sikkim announced a two-day holiday to celebrate, while in Kalimpong it was three days. Any pretext is good enough for

Gorkhalis to stay away from work and indulge in revelry.

The celebrations in Kalimpong and Kurseong were understandable. For the ecstatic Gorkhalis of the Indian northeast, here was an event that transcended their Indian identity. When DD Bhutia, state land revenue minister of Sikkim gushed that "Prashant has sent the message of unity and brotherhood to the Darjeeling hills and Sikkim," his sincerity was unmistakable.

The Nepali diaspora's excitement was also explicable. The humble policeman from Kolkata was a kindred spirit. But the celebrations within Nepal defied all logic. Why were people rushing on to the streets in the middle of the night in Dharan, Tanahu and Kathmandu and setting off fire crackers to rejoice at victory of an Indian citizen?

This was a sign of just how deep Indian satellite television has gone in Nepal. Marketers have discovered that gullible customers are prepared to pay a premium for mobile phone texting to express their sentiments. And above all, Prashant's popularity has exposed the hollowness of our modern nationalism: behind the mask of

sophistication, we are all tribals. We place ethnicity above nationalism.

That also partly explains the communal divide over the outrages in Kapilbastu. And it shows that the idea of ethnic nationalism propounded by the courtiers of Chandra Shumshere persists despite more than 50 years of effort to replace it with territorial nationalism.

There are two types of ethnic nationalism. The French version hides its exclusivity behind the slogan of liberty, equality and fraternity. But Parisian cosmopolitanism has no place for distinct ethnic identities of minorities. The 'different' members of society form a subordinate population group. French nationalism subsumes other ethnicities before accepting them as near-equals in national culture.

The Germanic tradition of nationalism is more closed, believing in the existence of a *Volk* which predates the notions of nation-state and citizenship. Its membership may include people living in different parts of the globe. Consequently, it is free to exclude citizens working within the boundaries of

the state even though they pay their dues.

Like most democrats of his time, BP Koirala was inspired by the French version, which forms the third leg of the NC platform along with socialism and democracy. To counter its influence and create a separate constituency of loyal supporters, King Mahendra embraced the concept of Nepali Jati based upon the German idea of *Volk*.

The entire Nepali polity is divided along these lines. Paradoxically, the Maoists and royalist parties are closer to the NC's assimilation ideology, while UML and most other leftist parties embrace Mahendra's ethnic nationalism. Neither concept has been able to hold all Nepalis together.

Nepaliya nationalism must be more accommodating to the aspirations of dalits, janajatis, madhesis, Muslims and other marginalised groups. Republicanism aspires to popular rule. Federalism is meant to ensure people's participation in governance. Both become meaningless in the absence of consensus over the definition of 'people'. Establishing the ideology of 'We, the People of Nepal' is perhaps the most pressing issue of the moment. ●

LETTERS

WAKE UP

There is a simple reason why the Maoists quit the government ('Peace hiccup', #367). They don't have a clear vision as they did during their insurgency. Like your cover picture shows: they live in an illusionist world of Stalin and Mao. What surprises me is that Nepalis living illegally in Scandinavian countries and UK are sympathetic to these red comrades. If they like Maoism so much why don't they go back to their motherland?

Prakash Thapa, email

● It was heartbreaking to read about the violence in Kapilbastu ('Wake up, prime minister', #368) As Kanak Mani Dixit argues, where is the presence of the state? This government should take responsibility and resign.

Bimal Poudel, email

● Politicians in Kathmandu seem to believe that without a republic the country can't run properly. I think the declaration of republic without constituent assembly election will be the worst decision for the country. This is the worst time for Nepal to be a republic, getting rid of the monarchy will not solve our problems. Given the violence in the tarai and the inability of the government to restore peace, the republic slogan is just to distract attention from their failures. It seems that the eight parties are running the county as per instruction from south of the border.

Saurav Sharma, email

● Ever since the restoration of democracy last year, all we have heard are slogans from the selfish political parties. While the tarai burns, all they can think about is their own petty interests in Kathmandu. Unless they mend their ways, nothing will change.

D R Gurung, email

FLAWED ANALYSIS

Shristi Jha's analysis on election arithmetics is flawed ('Fix this first', #367). Jha doesn't seem to have read the Constituent Assembly Act properly otherwise she couldn't have said the various quotas add up to more than 100 percent. In Schedule 1, which gives the percentage of candidates, the table lays out what the proportion of electees should be but with a note saying the following: 'Explanation: As a number of candidates represent more than one group, the sum total of the percentage of the candidates of all groups appears to be more than one hundred.'

T Thapa, Kathmandu

CONSERVATION HEROES

The first anniversary piece ('Conservation can't wait', #367) on the Ghunsa helicopter crash rightly remembers the contributions of our conservation heroes. But the article should have also mentioned the conservation accomplishments of Mingma Norbu, Tirtha Man Maskey and Narayan Poudel. Tirtha Maskey spent over 30 years in the conservation field beginning with the establishment of Chitwan National Park in 1970, and worked tirelessly until he retired in 2004. As a former government employee at the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, I feel the legacy of these great conservationists should be continued through individual and collective efforts. May their souls rest in peace, and the bereaved families have the strength to cope with their loss.

Nima Sherpa, California, USA

JAI NEPAL

Thanks to Maura Moynihan for such a wonderful article ('Jai Nepal', #365). It is so hard nowadays to hear something good about this country. I am so glad to see that people still have faith and hope for Nepal and Nepalis. Moynihan's article gave me hope. I miss the Kathmandu that I left 15 years ago. I also feel sorry to read the news of violence, but I have confidence that Nepalis can resolve these issues through negotiations. For this, the politicians have to be less selfish.

Srijana Tuladhar, email

● I felt so proud and happy to read Maura Moynihan's upbeat Nepali Pan column. The horrific stories on Kapilbastu and the serial bombings in Kathmandu, but they were so depressing I culdn't even finish reading them. Nepali Times has shown how good news can also be news. That news need not all be negative. In Israel, the media has stopped putting news of bombings on page 1, they put inside so as not to make the people feel cynical and hopeless. Thanks to Moynihan for brightening up the day for a lot of your readers.

Swikrit Manandhar, University of Maryland, USA

● Thank you for bringing out the tragic human side of the evil bomb blasts in the capital ('Only memories remain', #367). It may be in our culture, as yet again our outrage over this terrorist attack is muted. It's as if we have been numbed by violence. The government is just paying lip service and insensitive to the anguish of the relatives.

Amit Pyakurel, Kathmandu

JOHN FINLAY

I was very sad to read of the demise of John Finlay ('Father of Nepal's gobar gas industry', #366). I met John five years ago at Bir Hospital and before he went off to the UK he had told my family that he was worried about the situation in Nepal. He was a true friend of Nepal and the people. His work to uplift Nepali livelihoods was selfless.

Krishna Pradhan, Banepa

its a wonderful feeling...

Sale upto **50%**
at woodland complex

Bluebird Shopping Mall
Tripureshwar, Kathmandu

Hotel Woodland, Durbar Marg
Kathmandu

club@plum.com.np
www.plum.com.np

Beautiful
at any Age

NPI **Nepal Pashmina Industry**

Main Showroom: Sooltee Mode (On the way of Hotel Sooltee) | Tel: 4273292, 4277023, 4263644
 Thamel Showroom: Opposite Sanchaykash Building | 4264775, 4410947
 Fax: 977 1 4270092 | Email: npi@npi.com.np | Web: www.npi-nepal.com

NEW

SUNSILK

ANTI-DANDRUFF

**FREE
HANDBAG**

WITH **EACH**

BOTTLE

Now get a free handbag with each bottle of 400ml Sunsilk anti-dandruff shampoo.

Kapilbastu Postmortem

Who killed Moid?

JB PUN in UTTAR PRADESH, INDIA

Naved Khan tries hard to calm himself but the assassination of his father, Abdul Moid, has shocked him so much he says he cannot rest till he finds the killers.

Khan is now in India, and says he isn't sure who killed his father. He is only half convinced the Maoists had a hand in it even though the killing has worked to their advantage. The Maoists have strongly denied a role in the murder.

Moid Khan had been their most hated enemy since 2003, when he switched from being an ally to become the leader of the anti-Maoist Loktantrik Madhesi Morcha in Kapilbastu, where he was so well protected the PLA couldn't touch him.

Khan's political U-turn in 2003 led to a spate of killings by both sides. The Maoists blamed him for the death of more than 36 cadres, and they in turn killed his brothers and nephew.

A month ago however, the two sides buried the hatchet with a pact mediated by local NC leader Deep Kumar Upadhyaya. Khan shook hands with the senior Maoist in Kapilbastu. The war was apparently over.

"For the first time he looked happy and travelled alone, and stopped slating

the Maoists as enemies," his son told us in the village of Budhuniya in Uttar Pradesh, 3km from Nepal's border, "but in the last few days, he said his life was at risk." The Maoists say they were planning to work together with Khan's group.

The suspicion for Khan's murder is on groups seeking to provoke war between madhesi and pahadis. Historically, Kapilbastu has seen friction between hill settlers and Muslim landlords. But the Hallanagar area, the epicentre of past tension, was untouched in the recent violence. ('We will flush them out', #240).

Did a madhesi group have a hand in Khan's assassination? Some, notably the JTMM-Goit faction, were angered by his refusal to help them disrupt the Constituent Assembly elections. JTMM-G cadres have also travelled to Budhuniya, where Khan's relatives and more than 2,000 displaced madhesi have taken refuge. While his family are in a mood to forgive and forget, the JTMM-G cadres seem to be working actively to incite them to take revenge against pahadis.

The Goit faction is also accused of misleading local Indian reporters with stories, now picked up by national and regional Hindi-language newspapers, that pahadis are to blame for Khan's death. Fearing more violence, the Kapilbastu

administration has banned Indian papers.

The Maoists and madhesi are stepping into the political vacuum left by the absence of government. Large squads of uniformed YCL cadres patrol madhesi villages, assuring pahadis the Maoists will protect them. Things are quieter, but the fear is still so great that neither pahadis nor madhesi want to return to their villages.

"Whoever killed him and whatever happened after that is very regrettable but we should be able to go back, and pahadis should too," says Moid Khan's younger brother Parvej. But he adds that until the YCL stops mobilising its cadres and removes them from the villages, no madhesi will feel safe to return.

There is no sign of the new three-member commission headed by Rajbiraj Appellate Court judge Lokendra Mallik, set up to investigate the incidents and recommend compensation. Many madhesis believe relief aid is mainly going to pahadi victims. Some feel the government, rather than trying to restore calm, is keeping tensions high by imposing curfews and making their return difficult.

So far, only madhesi rioters, four of them Indians, have been jailed in Kapilbastu. No action has been taken against pahadis who set fire to a mosque and attacked madhesi villagers. ●

The aftermath

A group of women had gathered in Shovaram Sunar's house in Bisanpur to celebrate Tij. At 9AM, a mob suddenly forced its way in and started beating them up. Everyone fled.

Sunar helped female guests hide in the nearby sugarcane field. But he and his younger brother, Dil Bahadur, could not escape the rampaging crowd, who murdered them with spears and homemade weapons. Bahadur had been married a month ago.

"We didn't know Mohid Khan had been killed until the madhesi attacked us, shouting 'You are celebrating while he is dead,'" Sunar's neighbour, Aruna BK, said.

Dhan Bahadur Basnet was killed mercilessly. Hemraj Basnet and his family were hiding behind their house. His wife Sumitra begged the attackers to spare her husband but they ignored her pleas.

Another victim was Mohit Bahadur Sunar who had travelled with his neighbour, Bimal Kunwar, from his village, Shivagari, to Bisanpur to buy a cow. If he had not had to delay his departure from Bisanpur, he would probably have lived. But he had to find change for his Rs 1,000 note to pay Bhiku Musalman. When he returned with the change, a mob armed with spears and knives attacked him.

"Mohit fell down and I was severely wounded, but I managed to run while my friend was dying," Kunwar said.

The attackers selectively killed those who were leaders or were educated. Sunar was a local leader, popular among both madhesi and pahadi residents.

"What had my husband done?" cried Sunar's wife, Dilsari. "He had not harmed any madhesi."

There are at least 1,500 displaced families in Kapilbastu alone, many have fled to the hills of Argakhanchi. Hundreds of people, both madhesi and pahadis are still missing. In Bisanpur alone, more than 61 families out of 126 are missing, according to local Muslim leader Ahmed Abdul. Almost every house has been burnt.

Many who survived are spending their third week in schools in Chandrauta and Sundari Dara. Madhesi have fled across the border to Gonda and Barni in Uttar Pradesh. Most families have decided to never return to Kapilbastu, preferring to move back to their ancestral villages in the hills.

Mukesh Pokhrel in Kapilbastu



FAR FROM HOME: Over 2,000 Nepali madhesi have fled to Duduniya village of Uttar Pradesh, 3 km from Krishnanagar, uncertain whether they can ever return home

MUKESH POKHREL

Kapilbastu diary

Senseless violence in the land of Buddha's birth

ARUNA UPRETY
in KAPILBASTU

It is difficult to believe that this is the district where Lord Buddha was born. The people of Shivapur village look dazed as they walk in the ashes of their burnt-out buildings. Two weeks after the arson and pogroms, they are still too shocked to speak. They are Muslim and Hindu families, they are madhesi and pahadi women all walking around like they're in a dream.

"They came in buses with knives," recalled one woman, "they just went house to house selecting what to burn. Our sons sent us money from Saudi Arabia, and we'd bought trucks, they burnt all of them. Nearly 50 houses were burnt in this village alone."

"Since this happened, not a

single person from the VDC or the CDO has come to see," said one elderly man who is living in a shelter and being taken care of by neighbours.

When a group of human rights activists drove into the village, they were the first outsiders there in ten days. The villagers surrounded the visitors hoping they'd brought food and other help. Because it is Ramadan, most villagers here were fasting, but there is not much to eat in the evenings when they break their fasts.

"As soon as we heard that Moid Khan had been killed, we expected looting and we sent word to the CDO, but no one came to help," said a villager from another community. "Just look around, you see the result."

Hundreds of refugees were

spending their second week in a local shelter. Many were sick with infections. A pregnant woman was going into labour. As a doctor, I was asked to help, but after examining her I could tell that the baby was dead. It was now important to save the mother and she needed immediate medical evacuation. With help from the ICRC and UNFPA we got her out to Butwal. But there are hundreds more who also need medical attention and food.

Because the people in Kathmandu and the district capital have been so slow to react, local civil society and activists from all communities have united to provide food and take care of the displaced with the little they have.

At Chandrauta, the epicentre of the organised arson and looting, there was no one on the road

because of the curfew. Some policemen were walking around aimlessly. Although the media for the most part had restrained coverage, there were some reports of irresponsible reporting by local FM stations of mosques being burnt which was not actually the case.

From everyone we heard the same lament: "this wouldn't have happened if the government had acted on time." "We were the first to be hit," said one trader. "They just looted everything from our shops and set them on fire. The police were nearby but they did nothing." They recognized some local hooligans among the crowds, but most were new faces.

A local health worker had a small pharmacy, it was looted and the house set on fire. "I don't know why they did it," said the 26-year-old owner, who like many we spoke to did not want to be identified. Many of the 18,000 refugees are now living on the Indian side of the border waiting for the situation to stabilize. The people there were mostly Muslim and their pain was the same as

the displaced people on the Nepal side.

"We had to leave Nepal in a hurry, our trucks were burnt, our shops were looted and we know the people who did it," said one refugee, who has taken shelter with his family in a local college. He added: "This is done deliberately to destroy harmony in Nepali society. The government should find the culprits and punish them."

Local Indian politicians have visited the refugees, who are seething with anger that the administration in Nepal stood by as the riots spread. "We will go back only after we get assurances of security from the government," said one Nepali.

Sad and shocking as the violence was, what gives us hope is that Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists, pahadis and madhesi are working together to help each other. They all blame motivated forces who tried to use the violence for political ends. Identifying these forces clearly and punishing them will be very important not to allow a repetition of the riots. ●

Dhobi's story

Purna Rai in Kantipur, 21 September

Rangalal Dhobi is 66 years old and hails from Raniyapur village in Banke district. His only wealth is his bicycle and a tiny makeshift hut built on an empty plot of land. He is constantly worried that his hut could be removed by the government and is uncertain where his family would live, as they are landless.

His previous generation had spent all their lives working as slaves and had to make do with whatever their masters provided. He himself spent half his life the same way, as a bonded labourer or kamaiya.

Following the liberation of kamaiyas, including his family, he managed to build tiny hut. But he still continues to serve his former master for his livelihood and in return makes about Rs 1,500 a year. This income is less than a seventh of what the average Nepali earns.

Statistics from the National Planning Commission, Ministry of Finance and World Bank show that Nepalis on average earn about Rs 10,000 a year. Dhobi has to feed six members of his family and this means he would need to work in more than 50 houses to properly provide for his family. But he has energy to work for only eight households.

Although 95 percent of kamaiyas, like Dhobi, are from the Tharu caste, there are a few from the hills and some are dalits from the tarai. The kamaiya families were thrilled when the government announced that they would get support, skills training, and free land. But Dhobi hasn't received anything in the last seven years. All he has is a kamaiya identity card which was supposed to help him get all the benefits from the

state, but this has not happened. Dhobi's situation is typical of backward Nepali communities who lack an educational certificate, land ownership papers and money. The dalits, freed kamaiyas and landless squatters are three key groups in that category who have no reach to the government.

Dhobi is not merely a madhesi but also a dalit, both of whom have never been considered part of the state by the government. It has just neglected them. They are even deprived of basic human rights. Hence they are the ones who have experienced all sorts of injustice: landlessness, exploitation for labour, illiteracy, humiliation, lack of political rights and social exclusion.

For many years, millions of dollars have been spent in their name and included in the national budget. Despite all this, their situation has hardly changed. It seems clear that the constituent assembly is key to creating a new Nepali nation. A new constitution will be formed following the elections and will especially address the issues of the most socially and economically backward Nepalis. There is also hope that this will help to restructure the nation into a more caring and responsible state.

As for Dhobi, he does not have time to think about anything momentous like that, but can only think of getting food to feed his family. He cannot read and does not understand Nepali radio broadcasts. Although he tries to grasp the words, he cannot comprehend the context. All he wants is a piece of paper from the government that gives him ownership of even a tiny plot of land. That is what freedom means to him. That for him is the new Nepal.



NARESH NEWAR

For the nation

Editorial in *The Dhankuta Herald*, 20 September

The Maoist decision to separate from government has caused a furore both inside and outside Nepal. If the CPN-M left government for the integrity of the country, to preserve the freedom of the Nepali people, then it will certainly pay off in the future. But if their action was undertaken only to quell fears and please a certain faction of the party, then this can have no positive effects whatsoever.

Just when the government is on the verge of constituent assembly elections, when eight-party unity is needed more than ever for leadership, the reversal of the Maoists will not benefit peace-loving Nepalis, only violent reactionary elements.

Political stability is most important. Without a proper political environment, no progress can be made and no processes will ever move forward. Or if they do, it will be with an excruciatingly slow gait.

If there is politics for the benefit of only one party then that will only invite despotism. This doesn't mean that we stay away from politics but rather scrutinise those in power so that we can criticise their every wrong step.

Rather than the benefit of one party, the political factions must focus on creating a suitable political environment. And for

this, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala must be up to the mark and must cultivate an environment of peace, which is not at all possible without the participation of the Maoists. For the progress of the country, the presence of the Maoists in government is compulsory.

Shailaja's antics

Budhabar, 26 September

There is no one more condemnable in Nepali politics than Nepali Congress leader Shailaja Acharya. Her stale, outdated and unsuitable views have proved that she herself is unsuitable as a political leader. During the royal regime, when most politicians had their backs to the wall, Acharya was getting chummy with the king. Due to this suicidal action, there is now no space in Nepali politics for her. She had to use religious and medical reasons to obtain a position as ambassador to India.

Now, at this crucial moment, she has reappeared at the Nepali Congress mass meeting. Two years ago, during the 11th general assembly of the Congress, when she got fewer votes than both Sujata and Shashank Koirala, she handed in her resignation. There as been no news yet of her withdrawing her resignation. She hasn't participated in any of the NC assemblies but once again she has appeared suddenly, making her uncertain political nature self-evident.

SELECTED MATERIAL TRANSLATED EVERY WEEK FROM THE NEPALI PRESS



27221

Thumb to Thumb

रिङ्गटोन्स

म नेपाली

NEPALI RINGTONES		
Ringtone	Album	RT ID
Chiso Pani Ma	Saroj Dutt	N2110
Maryo Ni Maryo	Cobweb	N2133
Haata Bandi	Mohan Bhusal	N2115
Suneko Kura	Seasons	N2089
Ekanta Bato Ma	Kalind	N2055
Chankiyo Haat Ma	Rama Eli	N2108
Timro Adhar	Nalina Chitrakar	N2149
Jai Hos Pashupatinath	Daya ka Sagar	N2123
Jay Jay Bholenath	Sai Bhajan Vidhi	N2124
Jay Jay Shiva	Diya Bhajan Sagar	N2125

For example to download "Jay Jay Shiva"
Type RT <space> N2125 & send to 27221

For NTC & Mero Mobile

To get list of more Nepali Tones
type RT<space> NEP & send to 2722

HINDI RINGTONES		
Ringtone	Album	RT ID
Meni Zindagi Me	Armaan	1025
Yeh Hawain	Bas Itna Sa Khwaab Hai	1041
Chahat Na Hoti	Chahat	1071
Tum Dil Ki Dhadkan	Dhadkan	1115
Tujihe Dekha	Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge	1156
Ek Dil Hai	Ek Rishta	1175
Pari Pari	Hungama	1266
Chot Dil Pe	Ishq Vishk	1289
Jab Koi Baat	Jurm	1336
Bhigi Bhigi	Kabhi To Nazar Milao	1349

For example to download "Bhigi Bhigi"
Type RT <space> 1349 & send to 27221

For Mero Mobile only

To get list of more Hindi Tones
type RT<space> BOL & send to 2722

THT Live

अब उत्कृष्ट नेपाली र हिन्दी गीतहरूको रिङ्गटोन्सका साथ

नेपाल टेलिकम

मेरो मोबाईलमा

THT Live Customer Care: 9805002722

Web: www.thtlive.com, mail to : thtlive@thefmatayantimes.com, *Each download will attract Rs. 10/- plus all applicable Govt. Taxes per SMS.

Only compatible with sets that support RTTTL Format.

In association with





MIN BAJRACHARYA

During the April Uprising, rather than step on to the streets and protest, she supported the royal regime. She said that everything was in the interest of nation and was against the Jana Andolan. This alone should be enough to hurt her still, and the democratic government should take some kind of action against her.

But she remains a member of the Koirala family, and when you're a family member, even treason can be forgiven. At a time when help from our neighbours is crucial for democracy, we have Shailaja Acharya as ambassador.

Changing tack

Deshantar, 23 September

There has never been any love lost between NC-D chairman Sher Bahadur Deuba and the Maoists. The former prime minister labelled the Maoists as terrorists and put a price tag on the heads of their leaders. Once, the Maoists even tried to blow up Deuba's entourage in Kailali.

Deuba used to praise Prachanda as a courageous politician but when he was betrayed he started calling Prachanda a back-stabber. That is why it comes as a huge surprise when Deuba sticks up for the Maoists. Last Friday in Pokhara,

Deuba even went as far as saying that an election without the Maoists would not count.

At a time when everyone is condemning the decision to pull out of government and oppose the constituent assembly election, Deuba's support of the Maoist agenda has surprised everyone. Not only that but Deuba plans to change the government's agenda.

Certain leftist factions among the government have suggested making Deuba the prime minister. When elections don't happen, Girija Koirala will be too frail to continue as prime minister anymore. These factions have spread the information that the only person both the international and national community trust is Sher Bahadur Deuba.

Engaged in this conspiracy, Deuba has also managed to delay Congress unity. Is there not a fear that Deuba, caught up in this grand plan, might sink the country by letting it fall into the hands of the extreme left and destroy everything that democracy has sought to build?

Odd promotions

Dristi, 25 September

It seems corruption is going unchecked in the Nepal Army. Transfers and promotions all seem to be based on a sackful of cash. Two colonels, accused of corruption and crime and not yet cleared of any charges, have been promoted to general.

Four years ago, recently promoted General Hem Khatri's battalion was responsible for the looting of a public house on 3 September 2003. Two taxis were also seized and fake numbers painted on. One was used as a taxi and the other was used privately.

On 26 May, after complaints from the victims, YCL and a mob

manhandled Khatri at Jawalakhel and presented him to the police. The army prosecuted Khatri but according to the Nepal Army Crime Division's General BA Sharma, Khatri was cleared of all charges after investigation.

These corrupt soldiers who steal and loot from the public, use fake licence plates and take confiscated goods for their own use, are promoted instead of prosecuted. This shows just how corrupt the Nepal Army really is.

Khatri, engaged in illegal activities ever since he was a major, has always been shielded by those above him. It is understood that Khatri, who is a close friend of General Kul Bahadur Khadka, was promoted after pleasing first daughter Sujata Koirala. Khatri has also been engaged in various illegal smuggling activities.

Another general who was promoted is Ajit Singh Thakuri. It is public knowledge that four years ago Thakuri kidnapped a Maoist girl from Dhangadi and held her like a prisoner in his home. Kept like a domestic servant, this girl was set free just this year. The army lied to the United Nations, the Human Rights Commission, the Red Cross and various other human rights organisations for four years and refused to arrest Thakuri. The girl wasn't even on the list of disappeared people.

Ever since COAS Ruk Mangat Katuwal came to power, he has been finding new ways and establishing new rules to promote corrupt people. Even the defence minister, Prime Minister Girija Koirala and his daughter Sujata Koirala seem to be involved in this promotion process. It is common knowledge in the army that large sums of money change hands in order to make some people very happy and get other people the promotions they desire.



Referee: National Election Commission: Ready, one, two...
Pushpa Kamal Dahal: ... it's all drama!

नेपाल Nepal, 30 September

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ The Maoist base has collapsed in the tarai. We also don't have any but we are not afraid to go to elections. ”

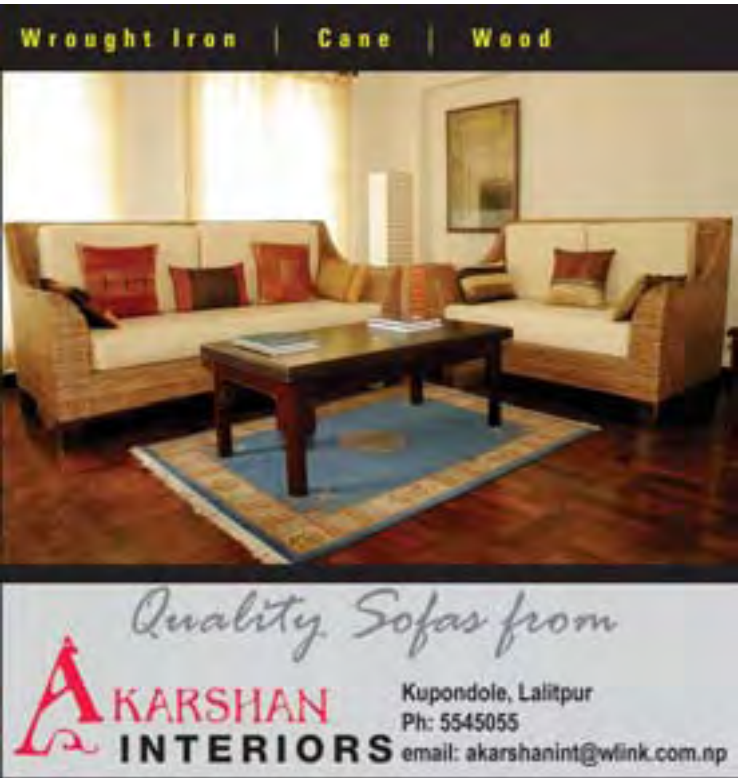
Prime Minister GP Koirala in *Naya Patrika*, 27 September



Weaves & Blends
cashmere accessories • home • knitwear

showroom: tel: 2121200, kumaripati, jawalakhel, lalitpur factory: tel: +977 1 4495569 fax: 5533337
email: weavesb@gmail.com.np OPEN SUN - FRI 10AM - 7 PM
Also available at: GALERIE BOUDHA
showroom tel: 2140702, boudha, kathmandu, fax: 5533337 email: galerieboudha@mbclubs.com.np
OPEN: ALL DAYS 10am - 7pm

Wrought Iron | Cane | Wood



Quality Sofas from

KARSHAN INTERIORS

Kupondole, Lalitpur
Ph: 5545055
email: akarshanint@wlink.com.np

iBLUES

DWA COMPLEX, GROUND FLOOR
CHIPLEDHUNGA, POKHARA



Rato Bangala School
Excellence in Learning

Vacancy

Rato Bangala School seeks
Teachers for Middle School and High School in English Literature, Language and Social Studies

Applicants must have fluency in English, an ability to relate to children and a willingness to learn.

Interested candidates are requested to collect application forms from the school office and submit the application as soon as possible.

Rato Bangala School
Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur
Phone: 5534318, 5522614, 5542045
E-mail: rbs@mos.com.np

There may be a petrol shortage, but car sales are still booming.

JOIN THE JOY



ALL PICS: MIN BAJRACHARYA

PERODUA
DASHAIN
GhumGhum
Free BANGKOK - PATTAYA
TRIP FOR TWO

PERODUA
EXCELLENCE ASSURED

Visit Stall B3 at
NADA Auto
Show 2007
BICC, New Baneshwor
27th Sep - 1st Oct 2007

This Dashain, get on a new Perodua and find yourself enjoying with your companion on the exotic locales of Bangkok-Pattaya for 5 rejuvenating and entertaining days. And come back home with mesmerizing memories for a lifetime...

HAPPY DASHAIN. HAPPY JOURNEY.
Offer valid for cars booked till 31st October, 2007.

Call 4443262 for a test drive today wherever you feel comfortable or visit our showroom.

Nemlink International Traders (P) Ltd., Panipokhari (Opp. Japanese Embassy), 4443262, 9841359262 (Rabindra), 9851084910 (Shrey)
Authorized Service Center : Shyam Motorworks, Kuponol, 9851051117, Wheels and Steering, Gwarko, 5520594 • Subdealers:
Bhairahawa: Samridhi Enterprises, 071-522929, 9857020963, 9847031170, Pokhara: Dev Auto P. Ltd., 9856022300, Narayanghat:
Auto-Drive P. Ltd., 9855057399, 056-527256

We are also open on Saturdays

PANKAJ RAYAMAJHI and TRISHNA GURUNG

So what if there is no gas? Car prices are coming down, and sales have never been better.

It's a buyer's market out there and there is stiff competition between the 25 or so brands out there. And it's not just Kathmandu, car dealerships are opening up in Pokhara, Biratnagar, Birganj and Butwal. Profit margins may have gone down but car taxes contribute nearly 20 percent to the government's revenue. Car dealers weathered a long conflict, petrol shortages and a recently concluded discount scheme for scrapping old cars.

"It is a challenge to sell in a limited market," admits Aakash Golchha, director of Hansraj Hulaschand, "ultimately, customer satisfaction counts and that happens when services are better."

The biggest change has been in people's attitudes towards cars. Upwardly mobile urbanites are graduating from motorcycles to cars in greater numbers. With better paying jobs and higher disposable incomes, they are not prepared to wait for the good life. Thanks to generous finance schemes, they don't have to.

Anup Baral of Sipradi Trading, the agent for Tata in Nepal, says: "Nepalis are working harder and are willing to invest in cars. The fuel situation is worrisome and the market is unpredictable, but we are seeing higher sales than in 2006."

The business of selling cars is not divorced from politics and continued unrest in the tarai has put a slight dip on sales. Dipak Dutta, director of Nakasu Motors, a Mitsubishi dealer says: "The current political scenario is not the best, but things have improved compared to last year."

The good news is that competition is prompting dealers to ensure good after-sales service and many are upgrading their maintenance facilities.

GAP
OLD NAVY
BANANA REPUBLIC
click!
NEW ARRIVAL

Shop No.: 6, First Floor
Woodland Complex, Durbar Marg, Ph: 4233047

CHARLES STURT
UNIVERSITY
Group 00005F

A national university for excellence in education for the professions, strategic and applied research and flexible delivery of learning and teaching

Applications are now open for "Feb-2008"

PAC ASIA
EDUCATION AGENCY

For details:
Kansadi Ganesthan
Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel.: 4222844/ 4251404
www.pacasia.org

NEW CAR PICKS

The **Kia Cerato** is back with a bang, and some welcome additions. A “facelift” is how the helpful sales manager described it as he pointed out chrome details and the new reflective lights. We liked the more muscular body contours, dynamic handling and fresh new interiors, which include moulded seats, improved boot space, and a cute cubby-hole for your designer sunnies.

With the 1.6-litre Cerato, Kia has produced a classy competitor in the much coveted C-segment. It may be a few inches shorter than other C-class saloons, but that's all the better for cornering, reversing and parking in the urban jungle. Created especially for city use, the Cerato's MacPherson strut suspension system and the 160mm ground clearance will let you sail over the worst roads.



If anything can put the joy back into city driving it's a car that packs a powerful punch without losing the fun. Check out the all new **Chevrolet Spark**, so new in fact that the paint has barely dried on this one-litre, four-cylinder, S-Tec powered marvel, which was launched in Nepal in August 2007.



This baby is great to manoeuvre through the city and will always stand out in its five fresh colours. The five-speed gearbox is light to use and the car cruises almost silently at all speeds.

What also sets the Spark apart is the groundbreaking interior design, especially of the dashboard, which is a

semi-circular display of control and the warning lights. The digital and analogue speedometer and instruments are strikingly positioned in the centre, visible to all. We liked the other add-ons like hooks for hanging shopping bags and the hidden trays, which could save you a lot of grief if you are smart enough to stash your goodies there.

A light blue Tata Nano car is shown from a front-three-quarter view. It is a small, compact hatchback with a blue roof rack. The car is parked on a paved surface next to a brick wall. The image is part of a presentation slide titled 'Tata Nano' with a list of features.

In a world full of choices, most of them expensive, the **Hyundai Atos** is the perfect first car that offers economy without compromising on style or substance. Billed as the “small car, big delight”, the Atos borrows from the design of its more popular cousin, the Hyundai Santro.

It has a contemporary look with sleek lines and handles confidently, serviced by a one-litre, four-cylinder, 12-valve fuel-injected engine. It has a smooth pick-up as it slides into top gear and the tall-boy design is a plus for Nepalīs of all sizes.

The Atos doesn't have a fancy dashboard or quirky extras but who needs that when you can still pick from eight exciting colours, including the cheerful Tweety Yellow?

Festive Offer*

FREE Philips LCD TV

Get 32" Philips LCD TV Model no. 32TA2800, worth Rs. 1,15,000 with every booking of CIVIC and CR-V.

HURRY
Offer valid for limited time only.


NEW CIVIC

NEW CR-V

Offer Valid from 27th Sep. upto 30th Nov.

SYAKAR COMPANY LTD.
Honda Car Showroom, Dhobighat, Ringroad
Tel: 5549741, Fax: 5549742
E-mail: www.syakarhonda.infoclub.com.sg

*Conditions Apply



HYUNDAI
Drive your way™

HYUGE DISCOUNT*

CELEBRATING THE 21st *Anniversary* OF AVCO INTERNATIONAL (P) LTD.
ENJOY A ONCE IN A LIFETIME MEGA DISCOUNT ON THE **FIRST 21 HYUNDAI CARS**

TO BE SOLD AT THE NADA AUTO SHOW !

SPECIAL OFFER ON GETZ, ACCENT & TUCSON AS WELL.

Visit us at Stall no. **B4,B5.**

ATOS PRIME

SANTRO Xing

MODEL	MRP (LAKHS)	DISCOUNTED PRICE (LAKHS)
Atos GL Non A/C	11.35	10.50
Atos GL with A/C	12.25	11.25

MODEL	MRP (LAKHS)	DISCOUNTED PRICE (LAKHS)
Santro Xing XL (Semi option)	14.60	13.25
Santro Xing XO (Full option)	15.50	13.95

* Offer valid for NADA Auto show only.

 **AVCO** INTERNATIONAL (P) Ltd.
Sole distributor of Hyundai vehicles for Nepal

DIRECT SALES LINE: 4414281, 4425538, 98510 47600 (SUNIL), 98510 47100 (YOGAIN) NAGPOKHARI, NAXAL, KATHMANDU.
WWW.AVCO.COM.NP

Does the new US embassy need a hijab?

Arrested in Kathmandu

I would like to relate the story of my friend and her brush with the US embassy here in Kathmandu. Prema is an architect and city-planner, trained in the US and currently living in Nepal. She is writing articles about Kathmandu's architecture and is looking at several prominent buildings in the city, including the new US embassy in Maharajganj.

Last week, Prema was headed to Bansbari with her family. As she was passing the US embassy, she thought she would take some pictures from the road for her article. She asked the taxi to wait as she stepped out to take a few shots, across the road from the embassy.

Men whistled, feet shuffled, armour dazzled. She was whisked into the embassy grounds by two armadillo-like security men and they confiscated her outdated Nikon camera. She asked them what the issue was and how it would be resolved. They said she had to go through The Procedure. She

NEPALIPAN
Azaadi Desh

tried to understand what The Procedure was, and how long it would take (as her family was waiting outside in the taxi), but no one seemed to know.

Prema was taken through four layers of security personnel within 10 minutes. The guards kept telling her they were simply doing their job. She offered to delete the pictures, but that wouldn't suffice. She offered to leave the memory card with them...nope. She finally told them they could keep her camera, but even that wouldn't do.

The Procedure, it turned out, was to have her detained without explanation, interrogated by a high-level American security officer, profiled with personal background and mugshots, and strongly reprimanded for breaking a US law in Nepal.

The well-heeled American security officer informed Prema it was against the law to take pictures of US government buildings. She didn't think it was a good time to tell him about the millions of tourists taking pictures of the White House. Finally, she was let go 'this one time', he would not call the police to put her in jail. Prema left the embassy with her camera, no pictures, and chewing on the lessons she was force-fed.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

This is what she told me:

"Personally, the embassy's security procedure seemed disproportionate and intimidating. It seems to be a misuse of their own resources. I realised how unnerving and helpless it feels to be at the mercy of armed and powerful authorities who represent the law, and who have no respect for your perspective. My respect for the press and for human rights groups has multiplied.

From an architect's perspective—full points to the US embassy. It has achieved what most architects can only aspire for—that the building's physical form and lack of harmony with the site embodies and reflects the culture and ethos of its inhabitants.

As a planner, I find the no-picture rule quite disturbing. It blurs the conceptual difference between the public and the private. If the embassy does not want their building to be scrutinised or photographed, wouldn't it be simpler to cover or hide the façade (like they have done with Phora) than to mandate the behaviour of people on the street? Doesn't the public façade of a building have the right to be accessed by the public?"

The US Embassy spent a lot of their security resources on my petite friend. In return, I have spent some resources in writing this article on her behalf, to spread public awareness of the law. The lesson to the Nepali public is: when you next trespass on that stretch of Maharajganj, please avert your gaze lest you break some US law in Nepal. ●

The prime

This year's 250th kumari chariot jatra was different from all previous ones



SCOTT BERRY

Last year, anticipation was in the air as we wondered whether the king would show up or not. Of course in the end he did, and as he stood on the balcony of the Gaddi Baithak, he looked confident, arrogant, even happy, in spite of the boycott by most foreign diplomats.

This year, the same anticipation. Would this be the first time in the 250 year history of the Kumari Rath Jatra, that the festival would not be presided over by a monarch? Even till 3.30 PM no one seemed sure. In the end Girija Koirala did show up, but disappeared at the crucial time.

Inside Kumari Ghar everyone was so taken up with preparations for the 250th anniversary of Kumari Jatra, that the question of who would preside did not seem very important. "That's just politics. It doesn't concern us," one of the Kumari guardians said.

During the early and mid-eighties, we never missed the first day. To make sure we got a good vantage point, we would be sitting on the steps of the Narayan Temple (which nowadays is reserved for the massive press corps, rather unfairly keeping Kumari's biggest fans at a distance) from about 2PM, though the king would not arrive until after four and the chariot pulling would not begin until after five.

King Birendra was still an absolute monarch. While he was not popular among urban, educated youth, anything like an anti-monarchy demonstration would have been unthinkable. The monarch was simply there,

and politics were forgotten at festival time.

An unforgettable feature of the festival in those days was the brutal crowd control that would begin about an hour before the king's arrival. With typical cheerful Nepali anarchy and amnesia (it happened every year) people would crowd into the square in front of the Gaddi Baithak, only to be beaten back, sometimes quite viciously, to make room for the military bands, the Newar dancers, and the king's motorcade. Even more striking was that no one actually seemed to mind. No one ever fought back, and people even smiled and laughed as they held their aching heads as if it was all part of the fun.

Not last year. Just about the time the onlookers were eventually persuaded to leave the square, a noisy crowd of Maoist anti-royalists tried to force their way in from the direction of Kasthamandap and

were beaten back with the old enthusiasm. Meanwhile, in front of the king there was a small flag-waving, pro-royalist demonstration. This year it was the pro-royalist black-flag demonstration that was kept out, giving the riot police their one opportunity to wield their truncheons and make a few arrests.

Also kept out, for some reason, were the dancers. Did the prime minister not wish to appear to be stepping directly into the king's footsteps? Lakhe and Bhairav had spun around enthusiastically in return for royal coins last year. Lakhe now put in an appearance just long enough to slip and fall. Bhairav and his followers literally had to fight their way into the square, then danced listlessly off to the side. Indra's elephant, a great crowd pleaser, was nowhere to be seen, at least not yet. Just before Ganesh, Bhairav and Kumari emerged, when



minister and the kumari

festivities should have been reaching a fever pitch, the square went eerily quiet.

When the chariot procession started, things got very strange. The prime minister stood there smiling and waving, among far more ambassadors and far less military brass than had been present last year, as Ganesh and Bhairav stopped in front of him. Then, before Kumari's chariot approached, he went inside, followed by his ministers. At this point, an axle on Kumari's rath broke. I've seen her stuck in all sorts of potholes in the back streets, and I even remember seeing her carried home while her chariot was left to be retrieved the next day. But I have never seen her stuck before she even started.

Meanwhile the crowd was entertained by a combination of black-flag protestors fighting the police, Indra's elephant running about complaining about not being let into the square earlier, the band which kept bravely playing away, and a ten-figure tableau that got bored with standing there and started dancing.

When Kumari's rath finally got going, with nothing but a bunch of foreign ambassadors to greet her, it didn't bother to stop for the usual tribute. As soon as she had passed, Girija Babu miraculously reappeared, smiling and waving at the back of the chariot, the first time in 250 years that Kumari has not been greeted by a head of state. In fact, this must have been the strangest reception Kumari has had since Prithvi Narayan Shah appeared out of nowhere in place of Jayaprakesh Malla at the



PICS:MIN BAJRACHARYA

festival of 1767. Of course the upcoming tika ceremony on Sunday night is even more important, but we will have to wait and see what happens then.

Once Kumari got started, she had a good long procession, not returning till 2AM. This was caused not by further breakdowns, but by the unusual number of pujas and and bhajan groups along the way in celebration of the 250th anniversary of the festival.

This was my third Kumari. Anita Shakya, Kumari in the early

eighties, was always stone-faced as tradition required, in spite of the excitement around her.

Rashmila Shakya, who took over from her in 1984, has told me that as soon as she donned her naga necklace, she felt like she was in a different world, and the thought of smiling, or betraying any emotion at all, never even occurred to her, though she was 'smiling inside'. The present Kumari never bothers to keep her feelings secret. She smiles and talks constantly during festivals, and I've even seen her

break into tears.

Rashmila Shakya says this year's festival was different from any other she remembers. The former Kumari who is now a computer technician at Lumanti in Kopundol said that at first no one knew whether the king or the prime minister was coming. "There were no dancers in the square, so it was not as exciting as usual," Rashmila said, "and the prime minister did not throw coins, he only watched. And then when the chariot broke in front of Kumari

Ghar, it was very surprising and shocking."

On the other hand, Rashmila said, everyone was very excited over the 250th anniversary of the Kumari festival, adding: "There were lots of special pujas in front of the chariot, so this year there was a very special atmosphere."

Is it reading too much into this to connect Kumari's behaviour with the present state of the monarchy? There are precedents. In 1954 Kumari mistakenly gave the king's tika to Crown Prince Mahendra, who within a year would occupy the throne. And in 1990, Rashmila, who had always enjoyed perfect health, became ill and moody during the Democracy Movement, though she knew nothing about politics. But perhaps we should look for a more positive interpretation. Could the present Kumari's behaviour symbolise a more relaxed and open future for the nation?

Through the broken axle, the black flag demonstration and the disappearing prime minister, let's not forget that Kumari is still a symbol of the unity of the nation and of the lack of enmity between faiths: a Buddhist girl who becomes a Hindu goddess and is venerated by both communities. And if she breaks with tradition by smiling, Nepal needs all the smiles it can get these days. Let's hope hers can make a difference.

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

“An opportunity to accompany me to Sanya, China !”

To accompany Miss Nepal to the Miss World beauty pageant all you have to do is fill in the contest form and send it along with **4 Vatika Soap Wrappers (Vatika Honey & Saffron Soap or Vatika Saffron Glow Soap with Sandal)** to Dabur Nepal Pvt. Ltd. at P. O. Box: 14375, Kathmandu or place it in the Vatika Miss World Offer Drop Box at the nearest outlet. And you could win a trip for 2 to see Miss World at Sanya, China !

Miss Nagarnuhola !

Sitashma Chand - Nepal's representative for the Miss World 2007.

Contest forms available at www.missnepal.com.np, leading dailies and the outlets below.

Drop Box Locations

• **Kathmandu** - All Nangla Bakery Caffe outlets, Blue Bird Dept Store, Lazimpat & Tripureshwor, Bhatbhateni Dept Store, Bhatbhateni, Saleways Dept Store, Jewalakhel, Namaste Dept Store, Pulchowk, Gemini Dept Store, Boudha, Kasthamandap Bazar, Durbar Marg, Raimark Dept Store, Delfi, Naya Baneshwor Dept Store, New Baneshwor • **Pokhara** - Park n Shop, Binayak Fresh House, Yes & Yes Dept Store, Bindabasini Shopping, Looks Fashion - Chipledhunga • **Dharan** - S.K. & Company, Main Road, • **Biratnagar** - Quality Centre, Beta Road • **Rahuri** - Gorkha Dept Store, Dharan Rd • **Birtamode** - Sanjosh Variety, Birtamode Chowk • **Damak** - Gorkha Dept Store, Damak Chowk • **Birgunj** - DNPL Showroom, Ghantaghar, Rima Impex, Maishan • **Janakpur** - Sweta Shringar, Janaki Chowk • **Hetauda** - Blue Tit Shringar, Main Road • **Narayanganj** - S - Mart, Milan Road • **Nepalgunj** - Banwarlal Bood Kumar, Saddar Line • **Mahendranagar** - Gagan General Store, Traffic Chowk • **Dhangadi** - Kamana General Store • **Bhairahawa** - Durga Cosmetic, Matripath • **Butwal** - Butwal Dept Store, Traffic Chowk

Burmese days

Things might get much worse before they start to get better

Burma's military government is fairly good at two things: cracking down on peaceful demonstrators, and then coolly ignoring any international criticism that might follow. Both skills have been on full display in recent weeks, as anger over official policies drove



COMMENT
Thant Myint-U

tens of thousands of people onto the streets, only to be met with the expected heavy hand. If the junta has one bedrock policy, it's to prevent any repetition of the 1988 uprising that came so close to overthrowing decades of army rule.

Beneath the long-running political stalemate in Rangoon, Burma has actually been changing fast; not necessarily in the right direction, but changing all the same. The problem is not that the situation will stand still: the problem is that things might get worse—much worse.

First, there's the civil war. For nearly half a century, the Burmese army battled an array of communist and ethnic-minority rebellions, growing bigger and tougher in the process and seizing power along the way. About 15 years ago, the government and most of the rebel groups agreed to a historic set of ceasefires. But these are just ceasefires, and the

international community has done little or nothing to encourage efforts toward a just and sustainable peace. The civil war is at the centre of Burma's problems, it's what has brutalised and impoverished the country, and its proper conclusion is crucial to any progress.

Then there's the economy, one of the poorest in the world. After 30 years of self-imposed isolation and ruinous quasi-socialist policies, the junta reversed course in the early 1990s, privatising businesses, welcoming foreign trade and investment, and seeking international aid. But the West began to impose debilitating sanctions, and the threat of boycotts kept most international companies away. The World Bank and the IMF were prevented from helping. Around the same time the Burmese discovered a treasure trove of natural gas, worth hundreds of billions of dollars, sitting offshore. The net result? A Burmese regime that can easily withstand Western sanctions, an economy still closely tied to official power and patronage, and a growing underclass facing greater hardship than ever before. Millions of poor people from rural areas are on the move, in search of work and food, including across the border into Thailand. Many are now in desperate need of basic life-saving assistance, and yet per capita international aid to Burma (less

than \$3 a year per person) remains about a twentieth of what's provided to Cambodia, Laos or Vietnam.

Third, there's the changing nature of the state itself. Over the past couple of decades, the Burmese army has more than doubled in size, to over 400,000 men, and is today one of the largest armies anywhere. In many ways, the army is the state in Burma. Other institutions of government—the civil service, the health and education systems, local administration—are either extremely frail or virtually nonexistent. Insurgent armies still hold sway over parts of the borderlands. And in some other areas there simply isn't much government at all, perhaps an army battalion to keep down any potential dissent, but almost nothing to provide basic social and legal services. Any major political upheaval is as likely to lead to anarchy as anything else.

Finally there is the looming presence of China, the rising superpower on Burma's doorstep. While Western countries have been wondering how to promote democracy, China has been quietly changing the facts on the ground. More and more of Burma's economy is being linked north and east, with new roads, bridges and railways, and now plans for a multibillion-dollar oil pipeline extending from the Bay of Bengal across the Irrawaddy

Valley to China's Yunnan Province and beyond. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese have already settled in Burma in recent years and more will likely follow.

Taken together, all these changes suggest possibly treacherous times ahead. The ceasefires could come unstuck. The humanitarian crisis in parts of the country could get worse. State structures could further weaken, rendering even more difficult any transition to a future democratic government. And it's not impossible that China's growing presence, combined with rising economic frustrations, will lead to anti-Chinese violence. Sanctions and long-distance

condemnation do little to address the multifaceted challenges facing the country today. They were a response to the very different Burma of nearly 20 years ago, when it looked like democracy was just around the corner and a good push from friends overseas might make all the difference. Without a fresh international approach, it may soon be too late to avoid a catastrophe in Burma. ●

Thant Myint-U is the author of The River of Lost Footsteps: Histories of Burma (see review). He is delivering a talk on Burma on Friday 5, October at 6 PM at Yala Maya Kendra (5552141).

Military oblivion

During the darkest days of the king's rule, when it looked like Nepal was headed towards oblivion, there were many who said the international community would never tolerate a dictatorial monarch or totalitarian communist rule in Nepal.

Yet, there are in this day and age countries like North Korea and Burma that the international community hasn't been able to do much about.

For the past 50 years, the world has looked on as the military maintains its iron grip on Burma.

Its popular opposition leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, won the Nobel Peace Prize and became a symbol of democratic resistance. Yet, the Orwellian State Law and Development Council is as entrenched as ever, now bludgeoning monks to death. The lesson from Burma is that the international community is made up of countries that act in their national interest. Change has to come from within.

China has geo-strategic reasons to back the junta, ASEAN and the UN are limited about what they can do and even India which last week signed a \$120 million natural gas deal with the Rangoon regime doesn't want to upset the junta.

For Nepalis, Burma is a part of our historic and cultural lore. Nepalis started

migrating to Burma during the British days, prospering as dairy farmers, traders and security guards. Then the war came and the British retreated to India, abandoning Burma to a relentless Japanese advance. Up to 15,000 Nepalis in the British Army died in the battle for Burma. Indians and Nepalis were driven out in the 1960s, but there are still an estimated 100,000 Nepalis in Burma.

The River of Lost Footsteps: Histories of Burma is a bittersweet history of the country by Thant Myint-U, grandson of UN Secretary General U Thant. As the title suggests, these are multiple histories of Burma interwoven with the saga of Thant's own family. The story begins in the mid-19th century and British India's preoccupation with finding a land trade route to China. They'd tried to forge a link via Nepal, but the rulers of the belligerent kingdom of Gorkha fought fiercely to keep them out.

It was Randolph Churchill who took Britain to war with Burma for economic and domestic political reasons to bring about regime change. Sound familiar? Burma was never the same again. Thant's great grandparents were officials in the court before the kingdom fell, and King Thibaw was sent to exile in India where he died, the subject of Amitav Ghosh's

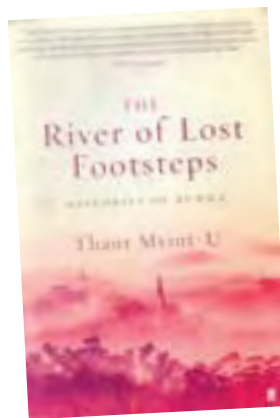
novel, *The Glass House*.

Thant explores with sensitivity the humiliation of colonialism and the brutality of the war years (it was the most-bombed country in Asia after Japan) and the role they may have had in the rise of a paranoid military dictatorship that made isolation the national credo. Burma's separatist conflicts are the longest running wars in the world today, and may provide proof to us here about how difficult it is to stop ethnic fighting once it starts. The 8-8-1988 uprising was so brutally crushed that it has taken nearly 20 years for the monks to march again on the streets of Rangoon.

Thant is a firm opponent of the west's knee-jerk sanctions to put pressure on the junta, despite proof it hasn't worked. Isolating an already isolated Burma perpetuates its dictatorship. Thant writes: "If Burma were

less isolated, if there were more trade, more engagement—more tourism in particular—and if this were coupled with a desire by the government for greater economic reform, a rebuilding of state institutions, and a slow opening up of space for civil society, then perhaps the conditions for political change would emerge over the next decade or two."

For Nepalis, there is a lesson in all this. Our own royal military junta was an international pariah till recently and, if the political parties bungle again, how easy it will be to revert back to isolation. And all the 'international community' can do is issue statements. ● *Kunda Dixit*



The River of Lost Footsteps: Histories of Burma
By Thant Myint-U
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006
384 pages, \$25
Limited stock at Mandala Book Point (4227711)

Ultimate thriller

Name’s Bourne, Jason Bourne



The Bourne Ultimatum, the third offering in the Bourne series, is distinguishable from its predecessor only in a matter of degrees. Jason Bourne once again attempts to piece together his past, while the nervous CIA attempts to eliminate him. Director Paul Greengrass has

CRITICAL CINEMA
A Angelo D’Silva

honed his craft from his previous projects, giving us more of what made the previous incarnation so successful. And Matt Damon has perfected the silent morose poses—leaving you to read all sorts of weighty and troubling thoughts on his furrowed brows and unsmiling face. Bourne is the Bond of our time: a glum, gritty, reluctant killer as opposed to the slick and glamorous spy of yesteryear.

Ultimatum engages both in a kind of escapism and fantasy: on the one hand the war on terror is banished to the faint margins of the frame; on the other hand, the CIA is fantastically equipped in

tracking a determinedly elusive character (a certain turbaned bearded Saudi notwithstanding). And yet, the present situation in Iraq creeps into the film, albeit obliquely, mostly presented by the ripostes lobbed back and forth in the CIA war room that mirror the right and the left in American editorials and talk shows. For instance, the villainous Deputy Director of the CIA (David Strathairn), embodying the hawks’ position, admits “mistakes were made” at the censure of subordinate Pamela Landy (Joan Allen), a tough blonde soft on Bourne (Hillary for president?), but chides her “armchair criticism”. The flashbacks Bourne suffers are also loaded with images like hooded figures resonating with Abu Ghraib and other sundry torture scenes, and reflect the amnesia that seems to inflict the American populace. This kind of veiled political criticism is almost a habit for films coming out of Hollywood, as if the filmmakers feel that their audience needs a spoonful of

sugar for their political analysis to go down. Greengrass keeps the film at a clipping pace with its jittering, bobbing hand-held camerawork and cuts that are mere seconds long for much of the film. It works for a while, but even for the MTV generation the effect cloyes rapidly. The breakneck pace means most of the film speeds past you, and even before you can make sense of one plot element, it has already become irrelevant.

The adrenaline-pumping action owes much to the agile camera work that follows the actors in the various cat-and-mouse scenes of good guys hunting bad guys hunting good guys. But it relies as much on the performances of the “assets,” a euphemism for assassins in the employ of the CIA. Something akin to James Cameron’s Terminators, they are dispassionate relentless killers who doggedly pursue their targets. Their silent menace and stifled morals have a strange gravity that grant weight to the movie. In one action scene that seems like the crux of the film, Bourne fights an asset, their dizzyingly choreographed duel ends with Bourne choking his opponent with a towel and Greengrass holds for seconds longer causing us to slip momentarily from being purely entertained into being sickly aware of the violence depicted. Here is one message the film articulates brilliantly: there is a high cost when we train people to kill. ●

Director: Paul Greengrass
Cast: Matt Damon, David Strathairn, Joan Allen, Julia Stiles, Edgar Ramirez
2007. R. 111 min.



Soshana in Nepal

Soshana first came to Nepal in 1957, and we can only imagine what her artist eyes saw here. An emerald valley with green terrace fields, the russet tile and brick towns of Patan and Bhaktapur perched on ridges under azure Himalayan skies.

Soshana is now 80, a celebrated Austrian artist and contemporary of Picasso, Albert Giacometti, Mark Rothko and Rufino Tomaya. Her paintings have been collected by private museums and institutions along with private collectors such as Baron Rothschild, Jean Paul Sartre, the Guggenheims and the Hirshorn family.

“We are celebrating our 20th anniversary and the 50 years since Soshana came to Kathmandu,” says Sangeeta Thapa of Siddhartha At Gallery, “it is a very prestigious venture for a private gallery like ours.”

Soshana herself will not be able to travel to Kathmandu, but said in a recent interview: “When I was in India in 1957 I decided it was time to go to Kathmandu. I have not encountered such hospitality anywhere else in the whole world. I also went to Pokhara which was very quiet, serene and beautiful. I felt like staying on in Nepal.”

Soshana also met Lain Bangdel in Paris, but it was her art dealer in Zurich who suggested that she visit Nepal. Soshana went on to China and says Chinese art influenced her to paint figuratively.

Soshana was born in Vienna in 1927, and was already famous in the 1950s with her works exhibited worldwide. It was in Paris that Picasso discovered her in the Salon de Mai. She travelled a lot and exposure to various cultures inspired Soshana’s visual worlds.

Soshana’s visual language expresses her inner feelings. She refers to current problems of our time and puts them passionately on an equal footing with Chinese lacquer work or sacral architecture.

The Soshana exhibition is also being shown in Vienna, Montreal, New York, Chicago and Zurich in the coming months.

Soshana
30 September-20 October
Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babaer Mahal Revisited
www.siddharthaartgallery.com

Siddhartha turns 20

Siddhartha Art Gallery celebrates its 20th anniversary by staging an exhibition this week of the works of the Austrian artist and Picasso contemporary, Soshana.

“It is fitting that we have such an important exhibition to celebrate our two decades of existence,” says Sangeeta Thapa who set up Siddhartha Art Galley with Shashikala Tiwari in 1987. Indeed, Siddhartha has strived to be a contemporary art space and meeting point for artists from Nepal and abroad.

Located at the Baber Mahal Revisited, itself a renowned heritage conservation site, the gallery has attempted to introduce international perspectives in art to the Kathmandu community.

Artists from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Japan, China along with Tibet, Korea, Australia, France, Belgium, Austria, Holland, Germany, Britain, Finland, the US and many Nepalis have held a total of 253 exhibitions here.

Some landmark events have been exhibitions of Amar Chitrakar, Karna Narsingh Rana, Shashikala Tiwari, Ragini Upadhya-Grela, Uttam Nepali, Shashi Shah and Tej Bahadur Chitrakar. ‘Celebrating Line’ was the first ever exhibition of drawings in Nepal, there was a powerful anti-conflict exhibition by Durga Baral and an exhibition by the celebrated Bombay-based artist Laxman Shrestha. The gallery has also organised exhibitions of Nepali artists in India and in Pakistan.

The gallery is presently working with GTZ on its third community art project ‘Whose City Is This?’ with more than 100 poets examining urban issues.

“We believe that culture is an important component of development,” says Thapa. “We do this by investing in creativity.”



**Notebook
Aspire 4710**

- Intel Centrino T2450 (2GHz) Processor
- 14" WXGA CrystalBrite Display
- 512MB DDR II Memory
- 120GB Harddisk
- DVD Super Multi Drive
- Built in Camera
- 5 in 1 Card Reader



**Notebook
Aspire 4310**

- Intel Celeron M 520 (1.6GHz) Processor
- 14.1" CrystalBrite Display
- 512MB DDR II Memory
- 120GB Harddisk
- DVD Super Multi Drive
- Camera Built in
- 5 in 1 Card Reader

MERCANTILE OFFICE SYSTEMS

Mercantile Building, Durbar Marg, Kathmandu
Tel: 4220773, 4243566, Fax: 977-1-4225407
Email: market@mos.com.np

Warranty available only from Mercantile and it's authorized partners.

★ STAR OFFICE AUTOMATION: PUTALI SADIK, 4220480, 4246994, 4242358 ★ HIMALAYAN TRADING HOUSE: POKHARA, 061 521756
★ GAUTAM COMPUTERS & PERIPHERALS: NEW ROAD, POKHARA 061-539529 / 533529 ★ SAGAR INTERNATIONAL PVT. LTD.: PUTALI SADIK, 200240
★ THE WAVES GROUP TRADING PVT. LTD.: LAUNCHAUR, KATHMANDU, 4427264, 4422327
★ BIRAT INFOTECH ENT.: BIRATNAGAR, 021 525150 ★ COMPUTER & ELECTRONICS TRADE LINK: BUTWAL, 071-542699



KIRAN PANDAY

LAME DUCK: Senior leader of Nepali Congress Krishna Prasad Bhattarai is helped on his way to the NC reunification meeting in Lalitpur on Tuesday, where he resigned from the party.



DAMBER KRISHNA SHRESTHA

GURUNG GALA: Chure Damai, a childhood friend of Harka Gurung, garlands Gurung's picture during the launch of the Nepali translation of Gurung's *Vignettes of Nepal (Maile Dekheko Nepal)* at his home village of Ngadi in Lumjung last weekend.



KIRAN PANDAY

YOGA WHIZ: Swami Ramdev demonstrates a yoga position to schoolchildren on Monday. The organizers claimed more than 14,000 children attended the class from 250 schools in Kathmandu.



KIRAN PANDAY

HOT PROPERTY: Models pose with the latest Bajaj motorcycles at the 2007 NADA Auto Show at the BICC on Thursday. The show will close on 1 October.

LOUNGE

SUNDAY - TUESDAY - WEDNESDAY - THURSDAY

DANCE

FRIDAY - SATURDAY

j

BAR

JBAR, TRIDEVI MARG, THAMEL, PH: 4418208. FOR PRIVATE PARTIES CONTACT 9851086711

SAVE Rs. 6000/-
as low as 1,350/- per month*
(For Limited Period Only)

WIDEST COVERAGE
FROM BHAISEPATI TO BHUBANILKANTHA

wireless internet
IN YOUR HOME

vianet
communications
Tel: 5546410 Pokhara, Lalitpur, Nepal
http://www.vianet.com.np

*conditions apply

The Summit Hotel supported by the
Princes Christina Concours
of the Netherlands and
WAVE presents the

Raggazze String Quartet.

The concert's programmes vary. Amongst pieces featured will be works by;
Haydn, Glass, Ravel, Mozart, Shostakovich and Elgar.

October 2007:
Sunday 7th, "Western Classical for Students" 11 am and 2 pm at Rato Bangala School Auditorium. Tickets Rs 100.
Monday 8th, "Interaction with local musicians" 4 pm at Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka.
Tuesday 9th and Wednesday 10th, 6.30 pm at Russian Cultural Centre. Tickets Rs 400.
Friday 12th, 6.30 pm at Patan Museum Cafe, Concert and buffet dinner inclusive, Tickets Rs 950.
Saturday 13th, 7 pm at Summit Hotel, Concert and three course dinner inclusive, Tickets Rs 1800. (Limited seats, please reserve in advance).

Further details, tickets and advance bookings please contact The Summit Hotel 5521810.
(Tickets also available at Dhokaima Cafe and at the Russian Cultural Centre and Patan Museum Cafe at the door on the day of the event).

HIMAL SOUTHASIAN'S OCTOBER ISSUE NOW ON STANDS!

Cover section:
Future fundamentalisms
Ten looks at the new faces of Southasian religious fundamentalism

Also:
And the people be damned -Kanak Mani Dixit
Burmese powder-keg -Larry Jagan
A sad year for the BJP -James Mutti
Post-2002 rehabilitation in Gujarat -Deepa A
Restoring the Lahore Museum -Rinku Dutta
As the Indo-Bangladeshi border is fenced -Antu Saha
Archaeology and the rejection of mono-country -Sudharshan
Biharis becoming Bangladeshi -Saad Hammadi
Chandrika contemplates a return -Dilrukshi Handunnetti

HIMAL SOUTHASIAN
Thoughtful - Irreverent - Cohesive - Regional

www.himalmag.com, subscription@himalmag.com

Vatika
Natural Beauty
OFFER

Vatika Anti-Dandruff Shampoo now available in a 500ml bottle... What's more you get a Hair Care Set Free!

Hair Care Set FREE

FDR of Nepal

It is a toss up, who will gather bigger crowds in Kathmandu: Ramdev or Prashant.

The yoga guru's trip seems to have been jinxed from the very first day: first by Nepali incompetence and then by the gods of rain. Home Minister Sitaula was so **spooked** when he finally made it to Kapilbastu that he decided to cancel the show without telling the prime minister. The Maoists had told Sitaula Ramdev may say one can't attain nirvana if one is secular. The guru's disciples swung into action using source and force to get the Tundikhel mass breathing exercises reinstated.

Compromise was reached, so Sitaula, Shekhar and Poudel all trooped off to expel polluted air from their lungs with explosive pumps from their diaphragms. But the guy who needed it the most, The Fearsome One, didn't go. Pity. Hope he was watching it all on live tv.

But Mahara did make it. Flanked by

Arjun Narsingh KC of NC and NP Saud of NC-D, Mahara introduced Saud to Ramdev as being from the "democratic congress" and KC from the "undemocratic congress". So the comrades have a sense of humour after all, and this is what makes Mahara the Ass' favourite Maoist.

Our first ever secular Indra Jatra went off without a hitch, except that the chariot's axle broke, the diplomats were stuck at Gaddi Baithak for two hours, the PM (playing king) couldn't throw coins at the Kumari because he kept disappearing from the balcony to rest, and police had to baton charge royalists showing black flags and mistakenly took dancers from the Bhairab Nach group into custody. Ironically, when Kingji attended the function last year it was the Maoists with the black flags. Throughout all this, the little Kumari herself looked rather **bemused**. With such

bad omens will she bother to bless the country for another year?

Is it just the Ass that finds it a bit strange that if the Maoist ministers have resigned from government, shouldn't their four ambassadorial appointees also resign? On moral grounds, as it were? After all, their appointments were approved by the cabinet only a week before the comrades walked out of government. But with these plenipotentiaries all packed up and ready to go, who is going to tell them they can't? What's to prevent Comrade Pampha and the others staging a sit in and **burning tyres** outside the party HQ at Buddhanagar?

The Maoist ambassadorial candidates are not just compromise candidates for the seven parties, but also represent a compromise within the party's hardline dissidents who have now pushed Awesome and Laldhoj into a minority. While the leadership is passing the buck to the Finance Minister, saying it hasn't got money for the cantonments, the Cloudy One reportedly accused Awesome of giving each guerrilla in the camps only Rs 500 of

the Rs 3,000 a month it got from the government. Ouch.

Elder Statesman KP Bhattarai never ceases to amaze, he may have committed the last political hara-kiri of his life by standing by the crown, but don't dismiss the old man yet. Does he know something we don't, especially after meeting COAS Katuwal before submitting his resignation? He did play a significant behind-the-scenes role in getting Deuba and Girija to shake hands. Was the **alluringly slimmed-down** Arzu prodding hubby boy with her umbrella not to take up the Maoist offer to make him PM if he refused to unite with the NC? Anyway, Girija's declaration of the FDR of Nepal was too much for Bhattarai, so he quit in disgust.

The YCL asks the CDO for **police protection** when it travels to the eastern tarai these days.

ass@nepalitimes.com



LUX

Almond Delight
with Almond oil, Peach and Cream

Energising Honey
with Fruit Extracts, Milk Cream and Honey

Orchid Touch
with Exotic Petals and Jojoba Oil

Brings out the star in you