On 5 October, as leaders in Kathmandu were busy quarreling, 1,000 villagers had gathered at a school at Kolti in the remote Bajura district. They were all eagerly waiting for police officials led by the DIG of the western region to brief them about security arrangements for elections. Around 40,000 eligible voters from Kolti were enthusiastic and prepared to go to the old district headquarters to vote. When news came of the cancellation of the 22 November polls, it hit Kolti like a lightning bolt. “All of this was just a waste of time and effort,” said a disgusted farmer, Kesar Nath Joshi. “These leaders in Kathmandu are useless.”

Local teachers recruited for election duty recounted how it was the leaders themselves who were giving fiery speeches about elections. “Everyone here was so excited especially after we educated them about what the constituent assembly was all about and why they should vote,” said voter educator Kausi Giri.

Compared to the fashionable cynicism in Kathmandu, the people of Bajura were still hopeful about a peaceful future in their remote district through elections.

The trans-Karnali district has struggled with chronic food shortages, alternative cycles of droughts and floods, extreme poverty and conflict for decades. But finally there was hope that through elections there would be peace and development. Farmer Nanda Prasad Joshi sums it up: “We were already poor and hungry, the war made it worse, there was some hope with elections, now even that hope is gone.”

The people of Bajura make the connection, and blame politicians.

For homemade hygienic delicacies such as sel roti and other Thakali items in reasonable price
Contact: Rita Serchan, 9801430303

No election, no peace, no development

Naresh Newar in Bajura
Anybody home?

If the Home Minister has a plan, no CDO in the tarai has heard of it

The election to be held in the province will not have an instant solution to the madhesi and the mainstream politicians and communities to win back that trust. The people will be very difficult for the parties to have the king...

Nepal is known for its political development in which no one wins, everyone loses. The polls postponed have been postponed because it is not in their interest to face voters. The NC probably hoped a delay will allow them to change their spots. Even the king doesn’t really gain much because it just prolongs the uncertainty about his future.

But the biggest losers are the Nepali people who feel cheated and let down. It will be very difficult for the parties to come together collectively win back that trust. The people also lose because they are the first to suffer from the instability and violence caused by extending the political transition.

The NC should act on its commitment to hold elections within a year (2064, not 2007) which means April at the latest. The special assembly will start campaigning.

Senility and the saviour syndrome

What is KP Bhattarai afraid of?

Nobody is welcome at the Bhaisepati residence of Krishna Prasad Bhattarai. This is a corner of the country where the premier lives in self-imposed isolation in a modest house provided to him by Multitop MP Shalim Singh Bhandari. Krishna Bhattarai may or may not be the only party leader who has absolutely no fear, but his politics is that of a bachelor octogenarian who has to be carried by two assistants up and down the stairs.

A senior political leader of any consequence to visit a politically: to act as a bridge between mainstream leaders and even works for it secretly. We haven’t even received death threats. The Maoists who keep shifting the goalposts?

The police are reluctant to deal with them instead of blaming us. ”

The police are reluctant to deal with them instead of blaming us.

There is no direction from the VDC to the DAO, no mechanism to make money. From the VDC to the DAO, No. 1 is always the same: the message on madhes down to the villages, the administration is silent. There is no telling what surprise the police are ready to deal with. In other cases, the line between mainstream leaders and the Maoists may be significant. Whatever else he may have done, this lifelong warrior for democracy can’t be dismissed lightly as a royal lackey. There is no telling what surprise the police are ready to deal with. In other cases, the line between mainstream leaders and the Maoists may be significant. Whatever else he may have done, this lifelong warrior for democracy can’t be dismissed lightly as a royal lackey. There is no telling what surprise the police are ready to deal with. In other cases, the line between mainstream leaders and the Maoists may be significant. Whatever else he may have done, this lifelong warrior for democracy can’t be dismissed lightly as a royal lackey. There is no telling what surprise the police are ready to deal with. In other cases, the line between mainstream leaders and the Maoists may be significant. Whatever else he may have done, this lifelong warrior for democracy can’t be dismissed lightly as a royal lackey.

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SEASON OF UNREASON

I am not a fan of king Gyanendra but give the guy a break. He can’t even go and receive tika from the Kumari without it being labelled a strange occurrence. ('Ending the season of unreasonable', State of the State, #369)!

Nalini Shah, Gairidhara

IDOL WORSHIP

Whether you are a Nepali or not depends on your roots. Everyone is proud to be a Nepali, wherever they are. It is only the political leaders who try to divide Nepalis into pahadi and madhesi. We don’t want to know that yours is a pahadi paper, but just that it is a Nepali paper. So that is why we don’t like it when your columnists (‘Our identity crisis’, #368) talk about pahadi and madhesi cultures. So, when Prashant won,

we celebrated not because he was an Indian national but his roots were in Nepal.  

Kishor Kamal, email

STARGAZING

I’d like to thank Nepali Times for its monthly Stargazing column.

I've always loved astronomy and have been fascinated by the night sky since grade 9. When I look up at the sky, I feel like I’m seeing old friends. The Kathmandu sky disappoints me with all the dust and pollution but I do try to look up. Thank you for bringing astronomy closer to my heart.

Apildev Neupane, Kaski

CORRECTION:
The column on Burma ‘Revolts of the righteous’ (#369) was written by Ian Buruma instead of what inadvertently appeared due to an editing error. Pictures accompanying ‘Hidden treasure’ (#369) were by Rupa Joshi.

T Chanda, email

THE AESTHETICS OF THE MESS

When goons have arms, they don’t listen to any reasoning. Obviously you don’t watch Hindi movies, otherwise you would never have written that editorial (‘Messing with the messenger’, #369). Their leader himself said that he often gets inspiration from Hindi movies. They just intimidate anyone who dares to speak out against them. If you people are still dreaming, God knows where Nepal is heading to.

Alok Dixit, email
In the frontlines

It is much more dangerous for tarai reporters today than it was during ten years of conflict

Biren德拉 Sah had just started working for the new tv channel, Avenues. He also wrote for Dristi and Hinal Khukurpatna and reported for Nepal FM. He was riding out in his motorcycle to buy timber planks for his new house when his motorcycle was stolen. He was riding out from Ambari to buy timber planks for his new house. He also reported for the new tv channel, Avenues.

Although he is back in Lahan, Magar's paper has appointed another reporter in Siraha to cover events south of the highway. Indeed, the East-West Highway has become the de facto frontier for many reporters of hill origin. Dilli Khatiwada used to report for Kantipur in Lahan, but now he has moved to Gaighat. When it became too dangerous in Lahan, another reporter in Siraha to report for Kantipur in Lahan, he fled in February after getting threats and has now been transferred to Gaighat.

“After that incident, we set up a committee made up of media, civil society and the administration to prevent communal riots,” says Mishra who is worried that communal tensions in the town aren’t worse than they are expected to be. There are numerous cases of radio stations that have refused to broadcast rumours and tried to keep things calm through mature reporting and public debate. In Naptali, editors have decided not to print statements from any groups announcing bandas and protests, and all claims about protests are cross-checked.

Media got it wrong

The Kapilbastu riots last month showed how easily communal conflagration can take place if media gets things wrong, names the communities involved or sensationalises events. It was after an FM station broadcast a live report about Moid Khan’s supporters attacking hill villagers near Chandrauta last month that two mosques in the town were looted and vandalised. Before the police declared a curfew, two trucks and two motorcycles had already been set on fire and the mosques looted. It was after an FM station broadcast a live report about Moid Khan’s supporters attacking hill villagers near Chandrauta last month that two mosques in the town were looted and vandalised. Before the police declared a curfew, two trucks and two motorcycles had already been set on fire and the mosques looted.

“Things were never this bad during the war, we could go anywhere,” says Birendra Janga Magar, who reports for Kantipur from Lahan. “These days you have to be careful about identifying yourself as a journalist.” Across the tarai, reporters have themselves become internally displaced. Magar had to flee to Udaypur for safety after receiving death threats from activists not satisfied with the coverage of the January uprising in Lahan.

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Dasain offer

Harial Computer Services and Shamam IT have come up with an offer for Dasain and Thar. A free gift of up to Rs 3,500 will be available on the purchase of each laptop, along with extended service warranty of three years and discounts. Installments and finance schemes at zero percent interest from Nabil and Standard Chartered Bank are also available.

Nokia Live

Nokia Mobile has announced that they will soon provide customers in Asia with Windows Live services. Users with selected S60 devices and the Nseries can download the suite enabling access to Windows Live Messenger, Hotmail and Spaces. By the end of the year, users in India, Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam will be able to access the service.

New scheme

Under Clean Energy Development Bank’s prepaid fixed deposit scheme, depositors will be paid full interest right at the time of deposit. This scheme is available for one to three years term. The bank has also appointed Nepal Merchant Banking and Finance and Anamgar Money Express as its authorised agents where customers can open accounts and collect interest.

Nabil’s meet

Nabil Bank held its 23rd Annual General Meeting on 8 October. The meeting approved a 100 percent cash dividend of Rs 100 per share and the issuance of 40 percent bonus shares. The meeting also showed that the bank’s capital has reached Rs 1.99 billion, with a profit of over Rs 1.10 billion.

NEW PRODUCTS

PIPES: Panchakanya’s group’s Polypropylene Random Pipes and Fittings are now available in the market. These pipes and fittings are specially made for conducting hot and cold water. Panchakanya guarantees that the special welding makes them leak-proof for their entire lifetimes.

GRAVITY: Samsonite introduces a new line of travel luggage and backpacks. The Graviton series is available at Samsonite’s Darbar Marg outlet. It guarantees that the special welding makes them leak-proof for their entire lifetimes.

YARIS: The Toyota Yaris is the latest compact car in the market. This hatchback is a 1300cc car equipped with an 86bhp engine and has a mileage of 16km per litre. The Yaris is being distributed by United Traders Syndicate, an automotive distribution unit of Vaidya’s Organisation of Industries and Trading Houses.

KOLKATA—The brief escapist interlude that Prashant Tamang provided is over. Dasain is eagerly awaited, but the situation in the tantr, the petrol shortage and the postponement of elections has dampened everyone’s spirits.

Here in Kolakata, the Beed has been chatting with analysts of the Nepali-Gorkali politics. The feeling is that Gorkhaland separatists have allowed the Prashant phenomenon to get into their heads and are planning to start up the agitation. So, we have nothing but political uncertainty to look forward to on both sides of the Mochi border. Business organisations fall when they start the goal posts of their vision and objectives. The way PKD, BBA & Co have now shunned their business objective of holding the constituent assembly election, they have become like a manufacturer who is marketing a product that it doesn’t want to sell anymore. Like in business, the cost of changing objectives can be very high.

Businesses also use unscrupulous ways to tarnish the competition, just as ruthless politicians do. The Maoists have tried to do the same in intimidating the media, but it is difficult to do that and also keep one’s own organisation and credibility intact. The fight for justice, inclusion and the voices of the marginalised has suddenly lost its most committed crusader. The Beed gives up trying to predict what will happen next. The situation is so fluid anything could happen. The bear run in the stock market and the sudden fall in land transactions should serve as a warning. The new-found zeal amongst the tourism entrepreneurs has also been shaken and everyone has their fingers crossed about political uncertainty during the autumn season.

The absence of governance and the more worrying absence of government from large parts of the country is doing nothing to boost investor confidence. The new-found zeal amongst the tourism entrepreneurs has also been shaken and everyone has their fingers crossed about political uncertainty during the autumn season.

WHO ARE WE?

We are leading specialists in creating a range of products and services that have helped millions of people in Nepal. We have been committed to helping people lead safer, healthier and more fulfilling lives. We believe that everyone deserves access to high-quality healthcare and we work tirelessly to make this a reality.

Our mission is to improve the health and well-being of people across Nepal, helping them to live longer, happier lives. We are committed to providing innovative and effective solutions that meet the needs of our patients, families and communities.

We strive to deliver the highest standards of care in a compassionate and caring environment. Our team of dedicated professionals is committed to delivering the best possible outcomes for our patients.

We value collaboration and partnership with our clients and partners to ensure that we are meeting their needs and providing the best possible service. We are committed to continuous improvement and innovation in our products and services.

We are proud of our achievements and look forward to continuing to make a positive impact in the lives of people across Nepal.

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NEW PRODUCTS

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The absence of governance and the more worrying absence of government from large parts of the country is doing nothing to boost investor confidence. The new-found zeal amongst the tourism entrepreneurs has also been shaken and everyone has their fingers crossed about political uncertainty during the autumn season.
Instances of embezzlement have soared since the Maoists separated from government. Former rebel in-charge of Sindhuli Nirmal Darlami ('Sheela') embezzled Rs 2 million. The Maoists promised financial equality and societal justice for everyone but the hard-earned money that the people of Sindhuli donated to their campaign has been used for their own selfish motives. This just goes to show that all politicians, be they in government or revolutionaries, are the same.

Darlami had raised Rs 1.6 million from Ashok Shrestha of the Shrestha Construction Company that was working on the Sindhuli-Banepa Highway. She had also raised Rs 200,000 each from Ramechap and Okhaldhunga each, but has failed to account for the money.

At a committee meeting called to account for the money, Darlami said she had used Rs 700,000 for her mother-in-law's and her own medical expenses. She was supposed to account for the rest of the money by 9 October. Now she claims that she gave the money to someone to keep and that she would get it back, but that doesn’t seem very likely. There is dissatisfaction...
within the Maoist camp that some comrades have to account for even Rs 100, but when a senior comrade embezzles Rs 2 million there is not even a reprimand. YCL comrades Prashant and Ashok are out to save Darlami. There is suspicion that parts of the 2 million wound up in Prashant and Ashok’s pockets.

Palace power
Nepal, 14 October

The place in Nepal with the heaviest security is still Narayanhiti palace which is guarded by 3,000 soldiers. Before loktantra, they used to be called the Royal Guards. There are even anti-aircraft batteries to deter air attacks. There are more soldiers deployed for security at Nagarjun, Gokarna and Nirmal Niwas.

Palace guards have the army’s most modern weapons. The name may have been changed from ‘Royal Guard Battalion’ to the ‘Palace Battalion’ but King Gyanendra still remains in charge. The northern gate still has a sign reading ‘Royal Guard,’ and the soldiers still celebrate the birthdays of the royal family. Queen mother Ratna’s birthday was celebrated with a football match between two soldier units.

The government’s control over the palace guards is only on paper. The palace still handles all promotions and transfers. The loyalty of the guards lies with the king as was evident at the recent Kumari visit. And it seems no one is ready to comply with the prime minister’s orders to cut palace staff by half. Removal of the army from the palace is one of the 22 demands of the Maoists, but some generals maintain that this can happen only after the elections decide on the fate of the monarchy.

Perhaps no one has understood the psychological aspect of this more than the king. With an army at his doorstep, the palace would still be reckoned a powerful force. And it is also a way of knowing where loyalties lie.

Hopeless
Editorial in Arpan, 5 October

It seems as if Nepalis have lost hope. There is no region in Nepal where it is possible to live a quiet, peaceful life. It is death, murder, arson, kidnapping, traffic jams and chaos everywhere. Inflation is soaring and the petrol crisis has crippled life. There is no rest in the tarai, bombs go off in the capital, and there is Kapihastu. When the government sets up an investigative committee, their reports just vanish. The government has ignored the public’s desire for peace, security and the freedom to live their lives in peace. All the government does is to cover its laps. Then there is the election postponement fiasco. The Maoist demand for a republic before polls is unreasonable at this time. The interim government has no power to declare the nation a republic. When all the other parties have agreed to go for elections, it is unreasonable for the Maoists to dilly-dally. Their demands go against the loktantric code. Their actions will only cause the international community to thumb their noses at us, and at a time when Nepal is in dire need of support. In order to keep Nepal together and not let it degenerate into an Afghanistan, all the political parties, including the Maoists, must put aside their own petty demands and work for the establishment of a new Nepal.

I’m in favour of monarchy as this country needs a democratic monarchy for its sovereignty.

Founding NC leader and former president Krishna Prasad Bhattarai in Naya Patrika, 9 October

QUOTES OF THE WEEK
There are many reasons to get out of Kathmandu during Dashain: to avoid seeing buffalos being decapitated en masse, to avoid meeting obnoxious relatives, to breathe oxygen, or if you are UNMIN, to take a break because elections have been postponed.

So, head for the hills. Get away from this filthy, polluted, demo-infested city of endless petrol lines. In fact, if you don’t feel like coming back stay there and find a new occupation. Whatever your reason for wanting to leave, Dashain is ideally timed to coincide with the post-monsoon season which is the best time to see Nepal in all its glory. The combination of lush green

with white mountains and turquoise skies are what make October and November unique. Now that you’ve decided to go, the question is where to? Here are some unsolicited suggestions from Nepali Times staffers.

Nagarkot: The easiest, most accessible and most touristy of the hill stations outside Kathmandu. Despite noisy city picnickers and swarms of Korean tourists trying to catch a glimpse of the sun rising from behind Chomolungma, the mountain vistas still make Nagarkot stunning and you understand why this place is enduringly popular. Some hotels like Club Himalaya are world class but there are also Thamel-style lodges or tranquil meditation places like The Farm House.

Dhulikhel: the same mountain vistas as Nagarkot but with a diversity of sightseeing including forest hikes, Namo Boudhha monastery, historic Panauli and great mountain biking trails including the return to Kathmandu via Lakauri Bhanijya. Dhulikhel is only 50km from Kathmandu and is the best managed town in Nepal and has emerged as a tourism, education and medical centre.

Hatiban: This is Nagarkot without the crowds and the views are even more superb (including a much better angle on Chomolungma) with Kathmandu’s urban cauldron spread out below you. There are plenty of ridge walks up to Champadebi and Chaurangiri from where the views are stupendous, covering nearly 500km of horizon from Dhaulagiri to Makalu. Hatiban Resort is the only hotel here and has individual bungalows and decent rooms.

Daman: At 3,200m above sea level at Sim Bhanjyang on the old Kathmandu-Hetauda highway, Daman is an ideal getaway. Because of the altitude, Daman offers an unparalleled view of the entire Himalaya. Anywhere else in the world, Tribhuvan Highway would be called a Scenic Parkway and would be a tourist attraction all by itself. The comfortable and quiet Everest Panoramic Resort is the best place to stay.

Tengboche: You have only one week, and you don’t know where you’ll be in Nepal again but want to get up close and personal with the highest mountain in the world. Then it’s Tengboche for you. Fly to Lukla and walk via Namche to the monastery township that is one of the most spectacular places on earth not just for its views of Ama Dablam, Chomolungma and Thamserku but also the spiritual energy that the place exudes. Three days up
two days stay there to explore side valleys and two days down to Lukla for the flight back.

**Manang:** One of the most scenic trans-Himalayan Valleys in Nepal. Charter flights from Pokhara and Kathmandu need to be booked early, but worth the trouble because you are rubbing your nose against the north wall of the Annapurnas. Most people just make Manang a transit point on the way to Thorung La, but Manang is a destination in its own right with comfortable clean lodges, good food and exhilarating walks up the Gangapurna glacier or Tilicho Lake.

**Langtang:** The closest wild place from Kathmandu. Ride and walk to Kyangjin in three days and spend a whole week exploring this awesome valley for which only the term ‘out of this world’ would suffice. There is plenty to see: the fluted and delicate face of Gang Chenpo, Langtang’s massive face towering over the valley and at night the mountains all glow in the moonlight. If you don’t want to waste time walking up to Langtang, getting four people together and hiring a helicopter for the 25 minute flight to Kyangjin can be surprisingly affordable.

**Kalinchok:** One of the best and least-known walks near Kathmandu that takes you to a 3,900m mountain shrine. No tourists, no lodges, and strictly camping all the way. Take the bus to Chaitari and it is a two-day walk to the summit from the top of which is a staggering view of Gauri Shankar. One gets a distinct feeling that this is not a trek but a pilgrimage.

**Pokhara:** The town is a destination by itself, but also a springboard for fabulous walks in the surrounding mountains. This is the most vertical place in Nepal: from this tropical valley 800m above sea level the Annapurnas rise to above 8,000m within a mere distance of less than 30km. The effect is awe-inspiring. Try the ultra-light sightseeing flights for a better perspective, or head up to Poon Hill, Tikli, or even the ridge above the Peace Stupa for great views unparalleled on earth.

**Chitwan:** One shouldn’t take ‘heading for the hills’ too literally because there is always Nepal’s most famous national park: Chitwan. Sauraha is a bit scruffy, but there are the upmarket hotels inside the park that offer elephant-back safaris and nature walks at one of the world’s most-successful conservation stories. Chitwan’s tourism is recovering from the conflict years and every visitor dollar counts in this park and other eco-tourism reserves in Nepal.

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**Dasain Getaways:**

**Dhulikel Mountain Resort**
Single room $45, double $55, with accommodation, breakfast, dinner and nature walk. Transportation available on request. 4423774

**Dhulikel Lodge Resort, Dhulikel**
Dasain Package Rs 2,100 per couple with complimentary snacks, dinner, accommodation and breakfast. 4223389

**Hotel Trek-O-Tel, Pokhara**
Rs 1, 200 nett for accommodation and breakfast. Reservation available c/o Ambassador Hotel. 061-528996, 4410432

**Fulbari Resort and Spa, Pokhara**
Rs 10,999 for Nepali double, $219 for expat double, two days and three nights package, including transportation, drinks, tennis and swimming.

**Club Himalaya, Nagarkot**
Chey Chen: Nepal Flyer package Rs 3,600 plus vat for double, Rs 2,800 plus vat for single, includes one night accommodation, dinner, breakfast and shuttle service. 508000, 4410452.

**Tiger Tops Karnali, Bardia National Park**
$299 nett per person for two nights and three days, includes accommodation, all meals, wildlife activities and transportation to and from Nepalgunj. 4361500
When news came this week that the politicians in faraway Kathmandu had failed to agree on preconditions to polls, there was deep disappointment and anger here in the Bajura airport of Kolti.

“These politicians are just destroying our country by playing their little games,” fumes Nanda Prasad Joshi, a farmer in Jagannath VDC, “we could have used the money they set aside for elections to build roads here.”

Most Bajura villages don’t have roads, electricity, telephones, hospitals and food, but the elections were seen as important. Local teachers employed for election work had even overcome Maoist opposition to complete preparations. Now, the enthusiasm has been replaced by despair and fear of a return to war.

“We really felt that the elections would help take this country back to peace,” says 18-year-old student, Puspa Raj Debkota, who would have voted for the first time.

There is plenty here that reminds people of the dark days of war. Twenty-three villagers were lined up and shot by the army near Kolti airfield five years ago, 13 of them were innocent civilians. None of the families ever got any compensation.

“This election would have made a lot of difference to us,” says Ganey Motara from Chhapu village. Farmers here may not know the technical aspect of the elections and the ballot paper, but even the most illiterate ones knew that it was about drafting a new constitution that would bring peace and roads.

“I knew why I had to vote, it was so my children would have a better life,” says Motara. Local farmers willingly gave up their precious land for the construction of the 65km road to link Bajura to the outside world. They reasoned that once the road is built, there won’t be food shortages, they may be able to sell produce in the market and get the sick to hospital.

Bajura was the worst-hit by drought among the ten districts of the far west in the past two years. The food situation was so bad that the World Food Programme (WFP) launched its first ever emergency operation to feed 225,000 people here in 2006. If there was a road, the shortage wouldn’t have been as severe.

The WFP has helped with the Martadi road through its Food for Work program that is supported by the German, Danish and Dutch governments. But only 41km of the 65km road is complete, and even the existing stretches are blocked by landslides. The people here blame the government, the government blames the conflict and the fact that food meant for construction was looted by Maoists.

“We need an MP who will do something for us by finishing the road, we don’t care which party he belongs to,” says Debu Rawal, who brought his one-year-old daughter to a health camp from four hours away. His daughter looks barely three months old due to malnutrition.

Most children under five here don’t get enough to eat, they are stunted and many die because chronic hunger makes them more vulnerable to infections. This is not famine on an African scale, but it is slow hunger that kills just as surely.

“For us a new Nepal means a Nepal where children don’t got to bed hungry every night, one where there are medicines available,” says Sheela Nepali who walked for a whole day from Ghotri village to get a medical checkup.

Most of the cases treated at the...
Forget about a new Nepal, just build us a better Nepal

There is a deep sense of doom and gloom these days among Nepali professionals like myself. Civil engineers, heart surgeons, investment bankers, urban planners, conservationists, sociologists—Nepalis from all walks of life who have the training, experience and vision to take this country forward feel let down by the politicians. As world-class professionals they can get a job anywhere in the world, but they have decided to contribute to the development of Nepal by working in Nepal.

But once more, they see those at the controls, the leaders who are supposed to steer this country to peace and development hopelessly stuck with their petty politics.

As an airline captain, I am often asked why our country has never got the leadership it deserved. And the answer is we have left our country to be governed by a fully-depreciated bunch of mediocrities.

The consequences can be seen in all aspects of daily life: the fuel lines, the power outage, blocked highways, rising crime and lawlessness, extortion and a general sense of drift. It goes on like this, the very people who poured out into the streets are going to start saying dictatorship was better. Today, we are only free to complain how wretched we are, and just survive in this so-called new Nepal has become a struggle.

The eight parties (now seven after NC unification) are not reforming themselves. Give them time, we say, but we don’t have that much time left. The politicians will reform themselves. Give them time, we say, but we don’t have that much time left.

Too much damage has been done to this motherland already, it is true when they say that the media is always at the coat-tails of those in power. During the panchayat years, it was Long Live the King, after 1990 it became Long Live Ganeshman, Kishunji and those in power. During the panchayat years, it was Long Live the King, after 1990 it became Long Live the king, or foreigners, but never themselves. The arrogance and boastfulness of our politicians make things worse. Forget about a new Nepal, we just want a better Nepal.

The media is equally to blame for magnifying the cynicism of the politicians and infecting the rest of the country with it. Why does the media wallow in the hollow promises of our hollow politicians? It is true when they say that the media is always at the coat-tails of those in power. During the panchayat years, it was Long Live the King, after 1990 it became Long Live Ganeshman, Kishunji and Girija, warts and all, after 2002 it was Gyanendra ki Jai, and now it is Jai Prachanda and Baburam. The media obviously can’t resolve our country’s problems by itself, but by being so apathetic it certainly becomes a part of the problem.

Also to blame is our fatalistic culture that makes us accept the status quo. We were never outraged by injustice and wrongdoing all around us, hoping that things will be better in our next life. We think politicians will reform themselves. Give them time, we say, but we don’t have that much time left.

Too much damage has been done to this motherland already, it is time to get ourselves out of the tangle of politics and pay attention to our ravaged economy and development that has been set back 20 years. That is how people will judge politicians, not by whether they usher in a federal democratic republic or not.

For that, the biggest need of the hour is unity. Stop saying I am loose tongue of our politicians make things worse. Forget about a new Nepal, we just want a better Nepal.

As an airline captain, I am often asked why our country has never got the leadership it deserved. And the answer is we have left our country to be governed by a fully-depreciated bunch of mediocrities.
Aung San Suu Kyi. There she stood, at the back gate of her lakeside home in Rangoon, where she is under house arrest. She looked very thin. For years, people would brave the roadblocks just to pass by her house and be reassured by the sound of her playing the piano. She told me she would lie awake listening for voices outside and to the sound of her playing the piano. I asked, "What do I call you?" I asked. "Well, if you can’t manage the whole thing, friends call me Suu." "The regime is always saying you are finished, but here you are, hardly finished. How is that?" "It’s because democracy is not finished in Burma ... Look at the courage of the people [on the streets], of those who go on working for democracy, those who have already been to prison. They knew that any day they are likely to be put back there and yet they do not give up." "But how do you reclaim the power you won at the ballot box with brute power confronting you?" I asked. "In Buddhism we are taught there are four basic ingredients for success. The first is the will to want it, then you must have the right kind of attitude, then perseverance, then wisdom ... But the other side has all the gunpowder." "Yes, but it’s becoming more and more difficult to resolve problems by military means. It’s no longer acceptable." We talked about the willingness of foreign business to do business with Burma. "What is the way?” She said, "In the West you don’t have to give up." "But how do you reclaim the power you won at the ballot box with brute power confronting you?" I asked. "In Buddhism we are taught there are four basic ingredients for success. The first is the will to want it, then you must have the right kind of attitude, then perseverance, then wisdom ... But the other side has all the gunpowder." "Yes, but it’s becoming more and more difficult to resolve problems by military means. It’s no longer acceptable." We talked about the willingness of foreign business to do business with Burma. "What is the way?” She said, "In the West you don’t have to give up.”

"But how do you reclaim the power you won at the ballot box with brute power confronting you?" I asked. "In Buddhism we are taught there are four basic ingredients for success. The first is the will to want it, then you must have the right kind of attitude, then perseverance, then wisdom ... But the other side has all the gunpowder.”

What I am saying is that, no matter the regime’s physical presence, they are trapped in a terrible stalemate. I replied rather sternly, “People have been on the streets for years.” The real question is, “What are they doing?”

"What would you call it?" I asked. "Oh, I have my meditation, and I don’t do a miracle... and loneliness comes from inside, you know. People who are free and who live in big cities suffer from it, because it comes from inside.” I told him about going back to the U.S. and the telephone number she gave me. The phone would ring, then go dead. One day I got through. “Thank you so much for the book,” she said. "It has been a joy to read widely again.” I had sent her a collection of T S Eliot, her favourite, and Jonathan Coe’s political roman, "What a Carve Up!” She asked me what was happening now. I told her she was living in the house Rangoon, where she is under house arrest. She looked very thin. For years, people would brave the roadblocks just to pass by her house and be reassured by the sound of her playing the piano. She told me she would lie awake listening for voices outside and to the sound of her playing the piano. I asked, "What do I call you?" I asked. "Well, if you can’t manage the whole thing, friends call me Suu.”
ART

Illustrating a mother tongue
An artist from Darjeeling helps save his language through art

SARA SHNEIDERMAN

With Prashant Tamang’s victory in Indian Idol Darjeeling is undergoing an overdue renaissance. For centuries an important site of cultural production for Nepali language and literature, not to mention identity, for Nepalis of all castes and ethnicities, this overpopulated hill station is also home to a vibrant artistic community.

Mahendra Thami is one of Darjeeling’s most prominent contemporary artists, perhaps best known for his murals inside Glenary’s Restaurant on the Mall. Born in Assam, the 37-year-old painter graduated from Mumbai’s British Institute with a degree in Art in 2002. He went on to exhibit his paintings in Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, Chennai, Guwahati and Gangtok before returning to Darjeeling to establish his own gallery.

Opened last year, M2’s gallery (named after Mahendra and his wife Manu—the two ‘M’s) sits just behind Chowrasta on the road to Tungsung. Displaying pieces of Mahendra’s collection that date from his teenage years to the present, as well as special exhibitions by other artists, the gallery is a family business staffed on a rotating basis by Mahendra and Manu themselves, along with their daughters and Mahendra’s parents.

Recently Mahendra took a break from the gallery to travel to Kathmandu for a different kind of project. Fashelung Samajik Sewa (FSS), a locally registered NGO run by the Thami ethnic community of Dolakha— to which the Darjeeling painter traces his origins—is presently producing the first-ever primary school book in the Thami language. FSS, who work in partnership with Educate the Children (ETC) and the Nepal Thami Samaj (NTS) in Kathmandu, invited Mahendra to illustrate the 65-page primer intended for Class One Thami students (called ‘Thangmi’ by the community themselves) in government schools. Having begun his career with a set of educational comic books commissioned by Darjeeling’s Hill Council government, Mahendra had visited Nepal once before in 1997 on a family trip, but this was the first time he had come to contribute his skills to preserving Thami language and culture.

As a long-term member of Darjeeling’s Bharatiya Thami Welfare Association, Mahendra was well aware of the issues facing minority groups, like the Thami, in both Nepal and India. “I did not grow up speaking my own language, but I would like my daughters to know something about it. This book will help younger generations keep in touch with their heritage,” the artist said at an ETC program.

Mother tongue Thami speakers in Nepal still number over 20,000, and the Darjeeling community has a long history of supporting mother tongue education as well: in 1943, the then Bhai Larke Thami Samaj (which later became the Thami Welfare Association) opened the Jyoti Thami Primary School, which taught the Thami language in addition to other subjects.

Although the school closed after a decade due to lack of funding, the initiative remains remarkable as one of Darjeeling’s first and perhaps only school established to teach an ethnic language in a largely Nepali-speaking environment. As a collaboration between members of the Nepali and Indian Thami communities, the present language book follows in this rich tradition of linguistic preservation and innovation. Mahendra’s ink and watercolour illustrations bring to life simple lessons about people, animals and the village community in a way that will engage young and old alike. The book developer, artist and community are working together to see the text through publication and introduction into local schools.

SARA SHNEIDERMAN

ETHNIC ARTIST: Mahendra Thami was in Kathmandu in September, working on the Thami language primer book. On the right are drafts of Mahendra’s illustrations for the book.
ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS
- Old Man’s Mirror: continuation, charity exhibition to raise awareness about the elderly, by students of the Fine Arts Campus, at Baryo Fiesta, Naxal, starting 10 October at 6PM.

EVENTS
- Film South Asia 2007: Festival of South Asian documentaries. 11-14 October, at the Kumari Cinema Hall, Rs 30, followed by the Music Video Festival, following the evolution of South Asian music videos. www.filmsouthasia.org

DINING
- Indian cuisine at Bawarchi, and elaborate cordon bleu meals at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619
- A special swimming curry, kebab and biryani festival, every Friday, 7PM onwards at Radisson Hotel.
- BBQ Unlimited at Splash Bar & Grill, Cocktails and jazz.
- Italian barbeque lunch at Alfresco, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Lazimpat, every Friday 6.30 PM, Rs 899 nett.
- Sundays, 12.30-3.30PM, Rs 300 plus taxes. 4273999
- Onwards at Café Horizon, Hotel Himalaya. 5523900
- Naked Indulgence: a play directed by Sunil Pokharel, presented by Aarohan Gurukul, at the Royal Theatre, Gurukul, New Baneshwor, until 13 October at 5.30 PM. 4466956
- Jazz in Patan: every Saturday and Rashmi Singh every Friday, live at the Absolute Bar, Hotel Narayani Complex. 7PM. 5521408
- At Bollywood night with DJ B Man at the J Bar, Thamel. 4418209

MUSIC
- Baile Balie at Bollywood night with DJ B Man at the J Bar, Thamel, 13 October. 4419029
- 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

WEEKEND WEATHER

A major late monsoon circulation which encroached into eastern Nepal this week was quickly chased off by a brisk westerly, but not before it dropped copious precipitation over the central and eastern Mahabharat. There is still some lingering moisture which is what is giving us such spectacular cloud formations in the afternoons. Expect misty cool mornings, breezy afternoons with winds from the south ideal for kite flying and clear starry nights for viewing meteorite showers.

KATHMANDU VALLEY
- Expect conditions to remain clear with a progressively warming trend.
- There may be some isolated showers in the eastern part of the valley.
- Morning temperatures will be between 10°C and 12°C, while daytime highs will range from 16°C to 22°C.
- Expect a slight drop in temperatures overnight, with lows ranging from 8°C to 10°C.

WORLD WEATHER
- Gently warming trends are expected, with temperatures rising gradually throughout the week.

KATHMANDU
- Monday, 15 October: Expect mild conditions with daytime temperatures in the low 20s.
- Tuesday, 16 October: Slightly warmer, with temperatures reaching the mid-20s.
- Wednesday, 17 October: Further increase in warmth, with temperatures approaching the high 20s.
- Thursday, 18 October: Warmth continues, with temperatures in the high 20s.

NGAMINDRA DAHAL

A play directed by Sunil Pokharel, presented by Aarohan Gurukul, at the Royal Theatre, Gurukul, New Baneshwor, until 13 October at 5.30 PM. 4466956

Arrives the rich girl Kanchan (Tanushree Dutta), so all the four decide to take some desperate measures to end their misery once and for all. According to them, the only way to get rich without working hard is to get married to a rich girl. Arrives the rich girl Kanchan (Tanushree Dutta), so all the four set out with their individual plans to marry her but end up discovering an unexpected truth.

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

Times
12 - 18 OCTOBER 2007 #370
HAPPENINGS

AND JUSTICE FOR ALL: Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala swears in Kedar Prasad Gir as Chief Justice on Friday. Gir was acting Chief Justice since Dilip Kumar Poudal retired in early September.

DESTRUCTION AND CONSTRUCTION: Work has started in rebuilding the Tansen Darbar, seat of the Palpa district administration which was destroyed in a Maoist attack in February 2005. The palace was built by Pratap Shumshere Rana 97 years ago and the building will be restored to its original design.

BE PREPARED: Members of a disaster preparedness drill organised jointly by the Nepal Health Care Foundation and Patan Hospital fake injuries inside a truck at Patan Hospital, on Tuesday.

HOME COMING: Eleven Nepali student monks return from Burma on Monday after the ongoing monks’ struggle for democracy made it dangerous for them to stay on.

AND JUSTICE FOR ALL: Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala swears in Kedar Prasad Gir as Chief Justice on Friday. Gir was acting Chief Justice since Dilip Kumar Poudal retired in early September.
Mero or Tero?

Kind of symbolic that the much-talked about new Rs 500 note that has replaced kingji with Everest still has the watermark of the bird of paradise crown.

Just goes to show that however much they try to erase the monarchy, its vestiges still remain. So what are the republicans going to do now, burn the money on the streets instead of tyres?

Even if his party has decided on the republican agenda, it looks like GP is hedging his bets. The current political deadlock is not because of the Maoists but because the prime minister stubbornly refuses to declare Nepal a republic before elections. So why is kingji so viscerally opposed to the only guy who is still standing for monarchy?

The Ass has heard it whispered that Girjau also rejected an Indian package proposal last month to make him Interim Prez and a Maoist deputy prime minister to end the current deadlock. In fact, after kingji rejected the 'baby king' proposal centre-right kangresis think the 'citizen king' approach of Keshar Bahadur and others may fly.

Sujata's strategy is that backing the Scandinavian model will distinguish the NC from others in polls and earn it the block monarchy vote. It's a high-risk gamble.

Kingji appears unperturbed by all this, and keeps himself in the news by visiting Kumaris and stuff. That's probably because instead of getting Dr Pathak to provide him with a daily summary of the newspapers he uses his newfound freetime to read the papers himself. (Ass says hi.) He's also on the net a lot and seems to be an active blogger. His recent meetings with loyal royals have hit the news, but he has also been meeting up with Indian and American diplomats in Nirmal Nibas and Nagarjun. For exercise, he goes for long hikes on Nagarjun and uses his treadmill while in the city.

Just like kingji made the biggest contribution to the republican cause in this country, it is now clear that the biggest monarchists are the Maoists. The postponement of elections in which they had a big hand, has ensured that kingji will now be around for at least six more months. Neither the Maoists nor the monarchists want elections, and the Fierce One has done the ex-Majesty a great big fat favour.

Speaking of fat, the Maoists aren’t getting as much exercise as they used to during their underground years as can be gleaned from their ample girths. Awesome’s paunch is now becoming hazardous to his health, and the entire politburo looks like it needs a workout. Which is probably why they are doing aerobics every chance they get. The comrades celebrated their resignation from government by doing an impromptu boogie at the Khula Munch and even Awesome joined in to gyrate his hips at the launch of Comrade Leftist God’s new CD album. Why do we need Ramdev when we have Bamdev?

It took PKD and BRB to mediate between Kantipur management and the Maoist trade union last week. The reason is that Comrade Awful was getting calls from Jimmy Carter in Atlanta and Shahid Malik in London. And who was Jammar the Kattel speaking to on the phone after the Kantipur meeting? Does he take his orders from someone else besides the two senior-most leaders of his party who were present?

People in the tarai have stopped taking calls if the caller ID shows it is from a Mero mobile. The reason is that just about every shopkeeper, industrialist, doctor, and school principal is being extorted with threatening calls from Meros. The extortionists prefer Mero mobile because Tero mobile never works. The Ass wonders why these crooks can’t be tracked down if the police knows their numbers.