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**Q. What is your opinion of the activities of the Maoist leadership?**

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**O**n 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."

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

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." ●

Naresh Newar in Bajura

# No election, no peace, no development



NARESH NEWAR

**TEACHING THEM TO VOTE:** Kausi Giri was among the 54 teachers recruited for voter education in Bajura. They had just completed their awareness campaign when news came on Saturday from Kathmandu that polls had been postponed. The teachers had personally met all of Bajura's 40,000 eligible voters.

Complete story [p10-11](#)

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# Anybody home?

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

### POLL VAULT

All is not lost. Despite the doom and gloom that followed the Maoist walkout of the government and the inability of the three main parties to prevent a poll postponement the door to resolution is still ajar.

The polls have been put off, not cancelled. It will probably be held within the year (2064, not 2007) which means April at the latest. The special session of parliament next week will have to agree on a compromise formula acceptable to hardliners in both the NC and Maoists: a pledge on republic and a commitment to hold elections by Chait. This time the parties will not want to make the embarrassing mistake of specifying an exact date.

That will save the day. But it won't save the seven parties from the opprobrium of the Nepali people who feel the leaders they catapulted to power with the April Uprising are frittering it all away in endless and needless bickering. Across the country in FM talk shows and phone-ins, the people are blaming kangresis and Maoists for letting them down once more. Even so, the public is patient and understanding enough to see that a proper election is better than a flawed one which the Maoists boycott or disrupt.

Only in Nepal can you have a political development in which no one wins, everyone loses. The poll postponement hurts the UML because it was the only party that was ready to face voters. The NC probably hoped a delay will allow them to regroup in the tarai but that is unlikely because instability will breed more radical groups that will eat into its traditional vote bank. The Maoists got what they wanted, but they don't fare any better in a postponed poll because they are unlikely 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 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. Already the tarai is at a standstill, there has been little movement along the East-West Highway between Dang and Jhapa for the past three weeks.

The poll postponement will encourage more groups using identity politics to gain recognition, and these fissiparous groups will only weaken an already feeble state.

But this is Nepal and we'll probably muddle through with that inexplicable resilience that makes us overcome odds.

The election to a constituent assembly may not have been an instant solution to the madhes, but it would have revived politics and forced local leaders to start campaigning.



TARAI EYE  
Prashant Jha

Last week's decision to push polls will only deepen the political vacuum in the tarai and leave the administrative machinery with even lesser motivation to act. Due to the silence of influential local politicians and the inertia of mainstream party units, the radicalisation and emergence of new groups continues. Can't they

see the ground slipping from beneath their feet? There may be several reasons why the parties are not acting.

There is no direction from party bosses, who are too busy fighting amongst themselves in Kathmandu. National leaders have neither passed on a coherent message on madhes down to the districts, nor energised local party units. They haven't even visited the tarai despite the seriousness of the crisis. Instead of sleeping in Baluwatar and air-dashing to Biratnagar, the prime minister needs to motivate and reassure his local activists.

The absence of party diktat actually works well for the local politicians. Pahadi or madhesi, they have enjoyed mixed support from both communities. They are at a loss now, and don't know what would be more beneficial politically: to act as a bridge between communities and stand up for moderate politics, or go populist and exploit identity-based exclusivist rhetoric.

Most leaders have decided to wait and watch instead of taking a public stand. In other cases, the line between mainstream leaders and rebels has blurred. A person may be an NC or MJF member formally, but is an active sympathiser of some armed group and even works for it secretly. We shouldn't overestimate the commitment of district politicians to resolve the crisis, or their influence and ability to do so. They are happy dispensing personal favours, engaging in politics of patronage and using their access to the government machinery to make money.

From the VDC to the DAO, NC, UML and now the Maoists have never had it so good. From

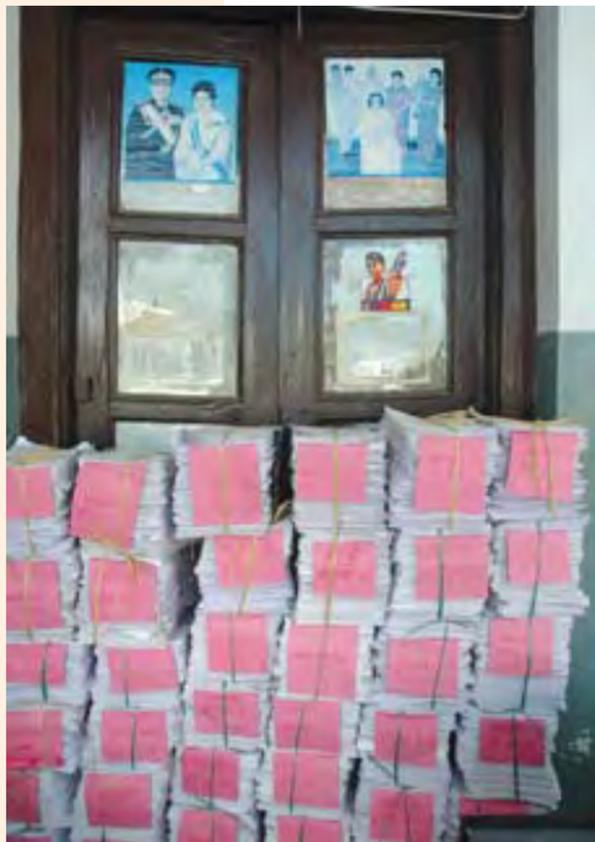
contracts and licenses to jobs, their word is the law for administrators. Why get involved in taking bold stands and engaging with madhesi groups when one can keep a low profile and rake it in?

There is also a real risk for politicians who want to get dialogue going and take a more moderate line than the one espoused by armed groups. Many have received death threats. The state is doing little to provide security. While the administrative apparatus and chain of command has not yet collapsed, officials are clueless about what to do.

A senior official in a tarai district said this week: "The Home Ministry just doesn't have a plan. Tell us whether these groups are terrorists or petty criminals or politicians and how to deal with them instead of blaming us."

The police are reluctant to take any action because they do not know the political connections of the accused. This has resulted in impunity, with no fear of the law. Officials have neither effective intelligence nor capacity to keep track of the two dozen armed groups that have sprung up. The open border and a nexus between Indian criminals and local informants makes their job more difficult.

A senior SP who has served in Maoist-affected districts and is now posted in the tarai remarked that the situation reminds him of the early days of the insurgency. "There are differences with multiple groups and more crime here, but the similarities are striking. There is insecurity in villages, the administration is becoming weaker." ●



KIRAN PANDAY

# Senility and the saviour syndrome

## What is KP Bhattarai afraid of?

Nobody is welcome at the Bhainsepati residence of Krishna Prasad Bhattarai. The two-time premier lives in self-imposed isolation in a modest house provided to him by Mahottari MP Sharad Singh Bhandari. Kisunji has to be referred to by his initials 'KP' rather than 'Bhattarai' as the familiarity of that surname is now claimed by Baburam. KP hits headlines these days only when he says something outrageous or does something absurd.



STATE OF THE STATE  
C K Lal

Two years ago he vehemently opposed the agreement between the seven party alliance and the Maoists in New Delhi. His silence spoke louder than words during the April Uprising. When Gyanendra was forced to restore parliament, Bhattarai baje as MP didn't even bother to attend. When the house

passed the interim constitution, he was absent.

A month ago, KP was the only politician of any consequence to visit a convalescing Paras. Soon after, he resigned from the party he helped found when the NC decided to go for a federal republic. There is no telling what surprise the old man will spring next. In normal circumstances, it wouldn't have been necessary to pay attention to the antics of a bachelor octogenarian who has to be carried by two assistants up and down the stairs.

But circumstances are not normal. The elections were deferred at the last minute. There is no new date. The Maoists have called for a special session of parliament to debate the fate of a suspended king. According to the amended interim constitution, the legislature can vote out the monarchy by two-thirds majority if it is found that the king had been hatching conspiracies against elections. But who is to judge who is against polls, if it's the

Maoists who keep shifting the goalposts? Meanwhile in the countryside, the mountains are restive and the plains are smouldering.

This is why KP's laconic statement may be significant. Whatever else he may be, this lifelong warrior for democracy can't be dismissed lightly as a royal lackey. There must be something that makes him fear for Nepal's "nationality, integrity and independence".

Nationality for the people of KP's generation implies the Nepali jati. That is indeed under threat because only a pluralistic Nepaliyata nationalism will be acceptable to those struggling for identity and representation. The meaning of national integrity in the Cold War lexicon used to be a strong centre commanding undivided loyalty of all. That too is sure to fall by the wayside as Nepal finds federalism. But there is no relativity to independence. It is freedom from political control by other countries.

If there is any such threat, KP should

know. He still has more friends in the Nehru-Gandhi family in New Delhi, where the Koirala surname is frowned upon, than anybody else in Kathmandu. And he has been a favourite figure of Americans for decades. What does he fear then: interference from our unusually quiet northern neighbour?

The paranoia over national sovereignty may partly be a result of guilt. Madhesis remember how KP as prime minister once implied that people of plains were somehow unfit to be soldiers. Even so, he won the first parliamentary election of his life from Birganj. Perhaps it's payback time and KP knows he is now at a political deadend with very few supporters and an obsolete ideology.

KP used to admit that his ancestors came into Kathmandu Valley tugging at the tail of Prithvi Narayan Shah's horse. But there isn't much he can do to rescue this cornered king. Hence his exonerations to nationalism, the first recourse of republicans and the last refuge of royalists. ●

**LETTERS**

**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 unreason', State of the State, #369)? This hullabaloo about the king's visit is nothing but the politicians and media making a mountain out of a molehill. Get your priorities straight people, we have more pressing matters that need your undivided attention.

*T Chanda, email*

- CK Lal's weekly column about the king receiving tika from the Kumari was strange. Kings have been doing it for decades, why the problem now? Isn't the king also a normal person? Who gave Girija or the Maoists the right to protest when someone goes to see the Kumari? Or maybe we need to start referring to Girija as His Majesty Girija Prasad Koirala, President of the Secular Kingdom of Nepal? The attention that people pay to every action of the king is just absurd.

*Nalini Shah, Gairidhara*

**SHOOTING THE MESSENGER**

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*



- The Maoists' actions show that they are not into democracy but into absolute communism. Constituent assembly elections were the one thing that all Nepalis wanted more than anything. Now, we can say that this government has failed its mission. This 'interim' government was supposed to be done six months ago. It seems that these dirty politicians will never let Nepalis write their own constitution.

*Saurav Sharma, email*

- Maoists atrocities have reached a peak. Nowhere else in the world can we find a parliamentarian leading the mob

like Shalik Ram Jammakatel has done. They are a clear and present danger to life, liberty and democracy. The Americans are right in not removing the Maoists from their terrorist list. They have abused the mandate of the Jana Andolan and dashed the dreams of thousands of Nepalis who died hoping for a better future.

*Ram Chaudhary, Birgunj*

**ARRESTED**

Re: 'Arrested in Kathmandu', #368. This is how the American government reigns in our country. They've got all the freedom they need: asking \$100 for a simple visa application form, the DV lottery system to steal our brains, commenting unbecomingly on Nepali politics and trying to marginalise a certain political party who are in government, the Maoists. All of this shows how little culture the rulers from the United States have.

*N Nirmal, Spain*

**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.

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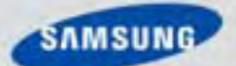
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# In the frontlines

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



RAJESH KC

**KUNDA DIXIT** in BIRGANJ

**B**irendra Sah had just started working for the new tv channel, Avenues. He also wrote for *Dristi* and *Himal Khabarpatrika* and reported for Nepal FM. He was riding out in his motorcycle to buy timber planks for his new house when he was abducted from the Pipara market near here on Saturday and hasn't been seen since.

A Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) mission on

Monday found that Sah was taken away by local Maoists. Another reporter, Ram Dev Das, who was also abducted and later released after being beaten, confirmed the abductors were Maoists. The Maoist district in-charge has denied that his party was responsible, but Satughan Nepal of FNJ Bara says eyewitness accounts left no doubt it was indeed the Maoists. The Bara kidnappings underline just how precarious the security situation has become in the tarai for

journalists.

"Things were never this bad during the war, we could go anywhere," says Bharat Jarga 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.

prominence.

The polarisation in the tarai between communities got worse after January. At that time there were only two underground armed groups, there are now 22. Many are local warlords, criminal gangs and smugglers waving the madhes banner. Reporters have received death threats for refusing to exaggerate the numbers attending rallies, or to file rumours of racially-motivated attacks, for not printing photographs. Reporting on smuggling, investigating timber poaching or the extortion racket along the border towns is so dangerous that few do it.

Many reporters in the tarai have stopped openly carrying note books or cameras, they don't display their IDs and keep a low profile. "It's now come to the point where I am targeted because of my complexion, slanted eyes, my name or my newspaper," said one tarai-based journalist who says he rarely ventures to the border towns these days.

Journalists have to do much more than just cover events, they are often called upon to mediate with militant groups to seek the release of abducted people or work to maintain communal harmony.

Rajesh Mishra, a journalist based in Malangwa in Siraha had to act quickly last month when rumours spread that local women visiting a shrine north of the highway for a festival had been raped. It wasn't true, and local militants had to be dissuaded from carrying out reprisal arson attacks in the town.

"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 convinced race relations aren't irreversibly bad. It is probably because there are still journalists like Mishra, Magar and Chauhan that communal tensions in the tarai aren't worse than they are. 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 Saptari, editors have decided not to print statements from any groups announcing bandas and protests, and all claims about protests are cross-checked. ●



**MEDIA IN CROSSHAIRS:** Ram Sharaf of Terai TV and Jagadish Sharma of the newspaper, *Prateek*, share their concerns at a media meet in Birganj on Monday. Birendra Sah (above) who has been missing for a week after being abducted by suspected Maoists in Bara district.

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 defacto frontier for many reporters of hill origin. Dilli Khatiwada used to be the *Kantipur* correspondent in Rajbiraj, he fled in February after getting threats and has now been transferred to Gaighat. When it became too dangerous in Inaruwa, Bed Raj Pokhrel had to relocate to Biratnagar.

"As soon as we finish broadcasting our new bulletin, we start getting calls from people not satisfied with coverage," says Dipendra Chauhan of Radio Birganj, "there is a lot of intimidation and threats." Chauhan's station was vandalised by protestors in January who were angry that their agitation was not covered with



## 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.

On 17 September Radio Nepal broadcast the news that five people were killed in a Maoist attack on prisoners at a police post in Jagdishpur. In fact, only two were killed and the prisoners named were still alive.

The total Kapilbastu death toll itself has had to be scaled back from 31 reported at the time to 15 with four still missing. Rather than being a spontaneous race riot, it now appears to have been a deliberate attempt to incite an ethnic pogrom. But most locals refused to be provoked and didn't retaliate.

Indian newspapers have also been responsible in spreading incendiary news items like this headline from Sahara: 'Maoists chasing out madhes of Indian origin from Nepal'. The district administration has now banned Hindi papers. ●

JB Pun in Kapilbastu

## Dasain offer

Harati Computer Services and Shamam IT have come up with an offer for Dasain and Tihar. 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 and Microsoft have 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 Anamnagar 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 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 accessories – Graviton. The Graviton follows a special form follows function model. Inspired by diamond plating and combined with special side ridges, the Graviton offers strength with comparative lightness. The Graviton series is available at Samsonite's Darbar Marg outlet.



**YARIS:** The Toyota Yaris is the latest compact car in the market. This hatchback is a 1300cc car equipped with a 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.

# Deadend nation

That's what we'll be if we are not proactive on the economy

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

Here in Kolkata, the Beed has been chatting with analysts of the Nepali-Gorkali politics. The



**ECONOMIC SENSE**  
Artha Beed

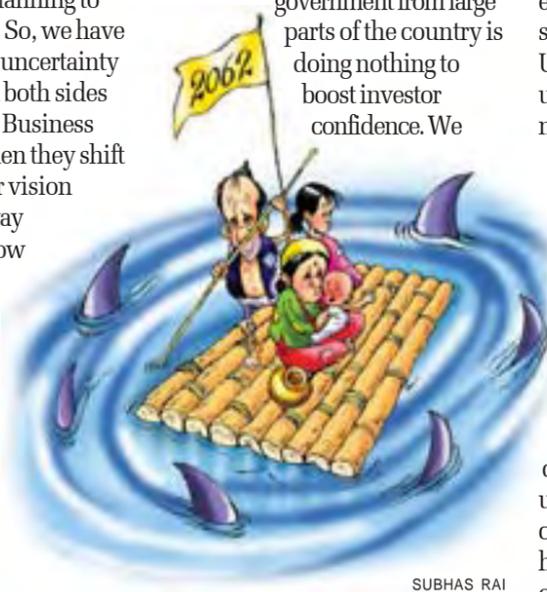
feeling is that Gorkhaland separatists have allowed the Prashant phenomenon to get into their heads and are planning to start up the agitation. So, we have nothing but political uncertainty to look forward to on both sides of the Mechi border. Business organizations fail when they shift the goal posts of their vision and objectives. The way PKD, BB & 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 tame 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 lull 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. We



SUBHAS RAI

move from one Power Summit to another Power Summit with more hours of power cuts. People in government blatantly lie and don't keep commitments, they should expect even the investors who are here to leave in disgust.

We cannot talk about doing infrastructure projects when one cannot buy insurance policies in

the global market that can cover the risk in Nepal. Nepal had lost on a lot of opportunities due to the political wrangling that began even before the war. The political myopia then was staggering, today it's just more of the same. It's as if the war never happened. A country with very good prospects and great potential is slipping further and further back in all global rankings. Pretty soon we won't even make it to the charts.

What the people of Nepal (and not Kathmandu) need are opportunities of engagement in enterprises, self-employment and jobs in infrastructure projects, not endless political wrangling. We should be working to make the UN redundant so they can pack up their bags and leave ASAP. We need multinationals to invest so they can harness Nepali resources and talents, so they don't have to go abroad to work for meager salaries.

What Nepal needs are opportunities for the growing population of Nepali youth who have a more global perspective and are more competitive than before. In these uncertain times, the people who can deliver certainty emerge as heroes. The king had an opportunity five years ago which he squandered. Everyone needs to learn from that lesson.

Dasain is celebration time after all, but it is better to drink to certainty than the pains of uncertainty!

Wishing readers a sacrifice-free Dasain; more slaughtering will not deliver a better Nepal! ●

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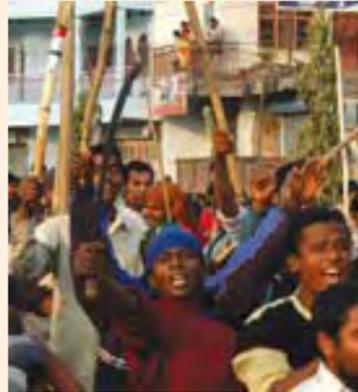
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# Before it's too late

Chandra Kishore Jha in *Naya Patrika*, 7 October

मन्दी पत्रिका

Madhes politics is no longer influenced by any single entity. There are many forces at play here and they are all competing to spread their influence in the tarai. There is growing international interest. But our political leaders are again playing with the sentiments of ordinary people to further their vested interest. Despite the pro-madhes demonstrations, the people in the tarai haven't gained much. Even the MJF has been unable to do much despite its 22-point understanding with the government. Of course, there have been changes in the madhes: communal feelings have come to the fore. Society has been polarized as those with populist, radical slogans catch the people's attention. Foreigners have also started taking interest, especially after the suspension of elections. India, which has long played a role in the development of the madhes, is not happy with other foreigners showing interest.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

The Maoists, stung by their loss of support after the January uprising, have also been manoeuvring to restore their presence on the ground here. It is all right for Nepal's politics if the Maoists are trying to win over the local population with its political ideals, but it looks like the Maoists are bent on retaliation and are using their tested violent methods.

If the mainstream parties do not engage in the madhes while the door for dialogue is still open, the situation could go out of everyone's control. The parties have to work towards protecting Nepal's identity and integrity. The government's presence is negligible, mistrust of the state is growing. Inter-ethnic tensions are intensifying in this vacuum.

People aren't that worried about the suspension of elections, the feeling is that the parties should use this time to carry out proper elections and urgently work to win back the trust of the madhesi people.

# Easy come, easy go

Madhab Basnet in *Dristi*, 9 October

दृष्टि

Instances of embezzlement have soared since the Maoists separated from government. Former rebel in-charge of Sindhuli Niru 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 Ramechaap 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

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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 lie 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 then there is Kapilbastu.

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 lie to cover its faults. 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.



Sack: Constituent Assembly  
Gun: Proportional

निर्वाहक Robin Sayami in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 3-17 October

### QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“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

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PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

There are many reasons to get out of Kathmandu during Dasain: 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, Dasain 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 Panauti and great mountain biking trails including the return to Kathmandu via Lakuri Bhanjyang. Dhulikhel is only 30km 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



MIN BAJRACHARYA

# Head for

much better angle on Chomolungma) with Kathmandu's urban cauldron spread out below you. There are plenty of ridge walks up to Champadebi and Chandragiri 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, Tribhuban 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 when 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 Thamskeru but also the spiritual energy that the place exudes. Three days up

May your Spirits soar high this Festive Season!

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# the hills!

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

**FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD:** (l-r) Tengboche monastery in the shadow of the mountains; a crimson sunset as seen from Nagarkot; and a lake of the deepest blue, Phewa in Pokhara.

to Charikot and it's 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, Sikles, 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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# "Give us food, we'll give



**A New Nepal should be one where Nepalis don't go to bed hungry every night**

**NARESH NEWAR** in BAJURA

**W**hen 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 go 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

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Smoking is Injurious to Health

# you votes"

health camps were related to poor nutrition. It's a catch-22: people can only work on road construction if they have enough to eat, but they can only eat if they can earn food from work.

Even Kolti, considered better than other Bajura villages, doesn't even have a hospital or a proper clinic. A three-bed hospital is under construction. There is no electricity, telephone line or road. Only 45 percent of villagers can read or write.

Many farmers like Nanda Prasad Joshi smoke local *tomaku* to ward off hunger pangs, and even allow their children to smoke if they cry. Doctors at the camp tell him he will die of cancer if he continues like this.

Says Joshi to no one in particular, "Ok, give me food and a road and I'll vote." ●



PICS: NARESH NEWAR

**LET DOWN:** Children (left) joined their parents from far off villages to attend the briefing by security officials about the voting process in Kolti on Saturday.

**STILL AT WAR:** A severely sick farmer (above) had walked nearly 20 hours to reach the Bajura airport where he was escorted after days of waiting only to be as rejected due to the overbooked flight

## Smoking to kill the pain

"I'll quit now," says Nanda Prasad Joshi, a chain smoker. It was only after he met a doctor at the health camp organised by UNFPA alongwith WFP's food distribution programme in Bajura's Kolti this week that he found out how sick he was. The doctors told him bluntly that he would die if he didn't quit.

Villagers walked for up to three days to get free treatment and medicine. "Before this health camp, a lot of them had never seen a doctor before in their lives," says WFP's Heather Sutliff.

Over 1,500 people had already showed up in the first three days of the camp, most of them women. There is only one small hospital for Bajura's 100,700 population, and it has only medicines for colds and headaches. Most people don't even know about the ill effects of smoking, and many women smoke. Explains 22-year old Sheela Nepali: "Everyone is sick in our village and we often smoke to kill the pain."

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# Nepali ek haun

Forget about a new Nepal, just build us a better Nepal

**T**here 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 Nepali society 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.



**NEPALI PAN**  
Vijay Lama

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

apartchiks. Once more, the leaders we rewarded with power are squandering the opportunity they had.

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. If 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 survival in this so-called new Nepal has become a struggle.

The eight parties (now seven after NC unification) are not listening to us. Flying to remote corners of Nepal, I hear everyone saying about the politicians: we don't care about your quarrels just get this country back to normal. The eight all blame each other, or the king, or foreigners, but never themselves. The arrogance and loose tongue of our politicians make things worse. Forget about a new Nepal, we just want a better Nepal.



NARESH NEWAR

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 sycophantic 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 Maobadi, or kangresi, royalist, UML, madhesi or janajati or whatever else. As Prashant Tamang showed us, let us be proud just to be called a Nepali. Let's bring back our Nepalipaan, after all we are all children of Mother Nepal. ●

Captain Vijay Lama flies for Nepal Airlines.

# My Last Conversation With Aung San Suu Kyi

JOHN PILGER

As the people of Burma rise up again, we have had a rare sighting of 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 thumping of her heart. "I found it difficult to breathe lying on my back after I became ill, she said."

That was a decade ago. Stealing into her house, as I did then, required all the ingenuity of the Burmese underground. My film-making partner David Munro and I were greeted by her assistant, Win Htein, who had spent six years in prison, five of them in solitary confinement. Yet his face was open and his handshake warm. He led us into the house, a stately pile fallen on hard times. The garden with its ragged palms falls down to Inya Lake and to a trip wire, a reminder that this was the prison of a woman elected by a landslide in 1990, a democratic act extinguished by generals in ludicrous uniforms.

Aung San Suu Kyi wore silk and had orchids in her hair. She is a striking, glamorous figure whose face in repose shows the resolve that has seen her along her heroic journey.

We sat in a room dominated by a wall-length portrait of Aung San, independent Burma's assassinated liberation fighter, the father she never knew.



"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 know 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 guns?"

"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 come to Burma, especially tour

companies, and of the hypocrisy of 'friends' in the West. I read her a British Foreign Office press release: "Through commercial contacts with democratic nations such as Britain, the Burmese people will gain experience of democratic principles."

"Not in the least bit," she responded, "because new investments only help a small elite to get richer and richer. Forced labour goes on all over the country, and a lot of the projects are aimed at the tourist trade and are worked by children."

"People I've spoken to regard you as something of a saint, a miracle worker."

"I'm not a saint and you'd better tell the world that!"

"Where are your sinful qualities, then?"

"Er, I've got a short temper."

"What happened to your piano?"

"You mean when the string broke? In this climate pianos do deteriorate and some of the keys were getting stuck, so I broke a string because I was pumping the pedal too hard."

"You lost it ... you exploded?"

"I did."

"It's a very moving scene.

Here you are, all alone, and you get so angry you break the piano."

"I told you, I have a hot temper."

"Weren't there times when, surrounded by a hostile force, cut off from your family and friends you were actually terrified?"

"No, because I didn't feel hostile towards the guards surrounding me. Fear comes out of hostility and I felt none towards them."

"But didn't that produce a

terrible aloneness...?"

"Oh, I have my meditation, and I did have a radio... 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."

"What were the small pleasures you'd look forward to?"

"I'd look forward to a good book being read on 'Off the Shelf' on the BBC and of course to my meditation .... I didn't enjoy my exercises so much; I'd never been a very athletic type."

"Was there a point when you had to conquer fear?"

"Yes. When I was small in this house. I wandered around in the darkness until I knew where all the demons might be . . . and they weren't there."

For several years after that encounter with Aung San Suu Kyi I tried to phone the number she gave me. The phone would ring, then go dead. One day I got through.

"Thank you so much for the books," 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 romp *What a Carve Up!*) I asked her what was happening outside her house. "Oh, the road is blocked and they [the military] are all over the street . . ."

"Do you worry that you might be trapped in a terrible stalemate?"

"I am really not fond of that expression," she replied rather sternly. "People have been on the streets. That's not a stalemate. Ethnic people, like the Karen, are fighting back. That's not a stalemate. The defiance is there in people's lives, day after day. You know, even when things seem still on the surface, there's always movement underneath. It's like a frozen lake; and beneath our lake, we are progressing, bit by bit."

"What do you mean exactly?"

"What I am saying is that, no matter the regime's physical power, in the end they can't stop the people; they can't stop freedom. We shall have our time." ●

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# 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 was no stranger to book illustration, and readily accepted the invitation.

"The project gave me an opportunity to visit my ancestral homeland and to help my community, as well as the Nepali community as a whole", said the painter. Along with Bir Bahadur



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.



Thami, the lead developer of the language book and chairman of FSS, Mahendra spent several days touring Dolakha before returning to Kathmandu to prepare the illustrations. 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. ●

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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.
- ❖ **Buddhahoods** an exhibition of photography by Daniel Collins, 13 October onwards, 2-6PM at the Saturday Café, Boudhanath Stupa. 2073157
- ❖ **Exhibition of Tibetan furniture and Thangka** paintings at the Kathmandu Gallery, Thamel, until 13 October. 4248094
- ❖ **Soshana** an exhibition of drawings and paintings by Soshana, on occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, until 20 October, 11AM-6PM. 4218048

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
- ❖ **Celebrating Womanhood** Navadevi Awards 2007, 12 October, 4PM at the Radisson Hotel. 9851029356
- ❖ **Kite flying festival** with food and music at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot, 13 October, Rs 100. 9841324880
- ❖ **Dr Kanak** a play directed by Sunil Pokharel, presented by Aarohan Gurukul, at the Rimal Theatre, Gurukul, New Baneshwor, until 13 October at 5.30 PM. 4466956
- ❖ **Grand Badhe Festival** part of Destination Manang, 25-28 October, at Manang Village. 4423643
- ❖ **Bingo nights** at the Welcome Food Plaza, Darbar Marg, starts 6PM every Monday. 2337201



MUSIC

- ❖ **Bale Bale** at Bollywood night with DJ B Man at the J Bar, Thamel, 13 October. 4418209
- ❖ **Jazz at Jatra** every Saturday 7PM onwards, at Jatra Café and Bar, Thamel.
- ❖ **Ciney Gurung** every Wednesday and Rashmi Singh every Friday, live at the Absolute Bar, Hotel Narayani Complex, 7PM. 5521408

DINING

- ❖ **Flaming Friday** flaming bartenders and famous cocktails at the J Bar, Thamel, 12 October. 4418209
- ❖ **Sunday Jazz Brunch** Hyatt's BBQ brunch with live jazz music at the Rox Garden, Hyatt Regency. 4491234.
- ❖ **Italian barbeque lunch** at Alfresco, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Saturdays, 12.30-3.30PM, Rs 300 plus taxes. 4273999
- ❖ **Jazz in Patan** with coffee, food, drinks, and dessert at the New Orleans Cafe, Jawalakhel, 11.30 AM-10PM. 5522708
- ❖ **BBQ, chilled beer, cocktails** and live music at the Kausi Restaurant and Bar, Darbar Marg, 6218490
- ❖ **BBQ Unlimited at Splash Bar & Grill** Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat, every Friday 6.30 PM, Rs 899 nett.
- ❖ **Cocktails and jazz** with the JCS Quartet and a choice of cocktails at Fusion – the Bar at Dwarika's. 4479448
- ❖ **Lajwaab** curry, kebab and biryani festival, every Friday, 7PM onwards at Café Horizon, Hotel Himalaya. 5523900
- ❖ **Shangri-La's pasta, pizza, pie, and pool** a special swimming package with a complimentary beer, Rs 650 nett per person, every Saturday and Sunday at Shangri-La Hotel. 4412999
- ❖ **Kebabs and curries** at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619
- ❖ **Krishnarpan** Nepali specialty restaurant at Dwarika's Hotel, six to 22 course ceremonial lunch and dinner. 4479488
- ❖ **Light nouvelle snacks** and elaborate cordon bleu meals at La'Soon, Pulchok, behind the Egyptian embassy. 5537166
- ❖ **Calcutta's rolls, biryani, kebabs** Indian cuisine at Bawarchi, Bluebird Mall Food Court. 9741000735
- ❖ **Rediscover fine Italian cuisine** at La Dolce Vita, Thamel, all new exciting menu. 4700612
- ❖ **Pizza** from the woodfired oven at Java, Thamel. 4422519

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

Quest Entertainment



'Dhol - Kiska Bajega' revolves around the lives of four friends - Sam (Tusshar Kapoor), Pakky (Sharmen Joshi), Maru (Rajpal Yadav) and Goti (Kunal Khemu), who're bound together by their child-like notoriety and aimlessness. Things get worse as 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 four set out with their individual plans to marry her but end up discovering an unexpected truth.

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WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

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.

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हरेक शनिवार बिस्वा (१०.१०-१०.३०)  
रेडियो सगरमाथा विभिन्न सुनी, अर्को सुनी-  
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सगरमाथा।

सम्पर्क: ९७७०११११११११ सम्पर्क: ९७७०१११११११ सम्पर्क: ९७७०११११११११

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KIRAN PANDAY

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



GOVINDA LUITEL

**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.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

**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.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

**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.

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# 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 Jamar 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.



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