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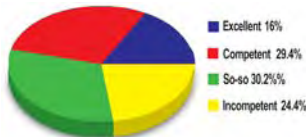
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SAM KANG LI

Cold blood

The unrest in neighbouring Tibet is having a direct impact on Nepal. Tourism and mountaineering have been affected, and riot police have been busy breaking up demonstrations by Tibetans in Kathmandu.

In scenes not witnessed since April 2006, police brutally put down rallies and candlelit vigils

by monks in Kathmandu. This young monk (above) was hit on his head with a bamboo stick wielded by riot police outside the United Nations office in Pulchok on Monday.

The UN's human rights office in Kathmandu condemned what it said was the "excessive use of force" by Nepal's police to disperse the demonstrations.

The protests have been part of an international campaign by Tibetans in exile and their supporters to highlight Chinese crackdowns in Lhasa and elsewhere. The rallies came in the run-up to the Olympics in Beijing in August. The unrest in Tibet has already hurt Nepal's tourism industry since Kathmandu is the jump off point for Lhasa. Hundreds of Sherpas are also employed by expeditions climbing the Himalaya from the north.

Nepal's tourism spokesman

denied on Tuesday that China had pressured Nepal to ban expeditions from the south side of Chomolungma, but industry sources said many expeditions had already cancelled. Tibet is now closed to tourists, and many who had already arrived in Kathmandu were rebooked to destinations within Nepal, or to Bhutan and India.

Tourists landing here on flights from Lhasa this week said they saw mobs attacking Chinese on the streets and setting fire to Chinese-owned shops. ●



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editors@nepaltimes.com
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Published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd. Editor: Kunda Dixit
CEO: Ashutosh Tiwari Design: Kiran Maharjan
Director Sales and Marketing: Sunaina Shah marketing@himalmedia.com
Marketing Manager: Sambhu Guragain,
Asst Managers: Deepak Sangraula, Subhash Kumar, Tanka Sitaula
Circulation Manager: Samir Maharjan sales@himalmedia.com

Hatiban, Godavari Road, Lalitpur
GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu 5250333/845, Fax: 5251013
Printed at Jagadamba Press, Hatiban: 5250017-19



Egalité vs liberté

The Big Three pay only lip service to individual freedom

The liquidity crisis in the financial markets may be over, but fears of infringement on personal liberty persist. No one really knows what this 'New Nepal' is going to look like, and the election manifestos of the three main parties don't allay the misgivings.



GUEST COLUMN
Bhola Chalise

Most Nepalis want basic safeguards of a prosperous and civilised state: they don't have to die of hunger, they want proper health care, they want to live without fear, they want to enjoy individual liberty.

Nathan Rosenberg and LE Birdzell in their book *How the West Grew Rich* have analysed the precursors to the west's prosperity:

"...political pluralism and remarkable flexibility...the breakup of centralised political and religious controls rather than any one factor that allowed an autonomous economic sphere to emerge."

Where do Nepal's Big Three stand on the issue of individual liberty?

First off, it is clear that all the parties seem to think that removal of one

man, a reviled king, is going to rid us of all our problems. It may be a step, but it's not the be-all and end-all. Secondly, they do seem to be reluctant to devolve the power that they have and this can only have negative fallout on individual liberty.

Personal freedoms include the freedom of expression, the right to buy and sell property, the freedom of movement inside the country, and the right to work in a profession of one's choice. The state's direct intervention in these freedoms can be through the military, police or civil service. Indirectly, the state also constricts personal freedom through infrastructure projects, education, health, poverty-alleviation and intervention in the functioning of the free market by using upliftment of poor regions as an excuse.

In their manifestos, the three parties have expressed their commitment to basic freedoms, and this must mark an achievement of the April Uprising and a recognition of the people's longing for freedom.

But how do they propose to do it? Unfortunately, the three manifestos get barely passing grades. They have used platitudes, clichés, jargon, even slogans, but not said outright how they will protect our fundamental rights.

Even the NC has fallen back on its discredited socialist antecedents by pushing 'just social security' and other buzzwords that have been used to curb individual freedom. Even on land ownership, the NC has

decided to be diplomatic and repeat leftist market-bashing.

As if it is the fault of rich Nepalis, for example, that the poor haven't been able to benefit as much as they could have from foreign employment. It is the politicians, ministers and the bureaucrats who have enriched themselves by controlling the labour market. If government permission needed to go abroad to work was scrapped, many more Nepalis would be able to benefit from foreign employment.

The UML for its part pushes a 'mixed economy' but follows this up with ifs and buts and opportunities for government rent-seeking. The Maoists have not been foolish enough to directly advocate taking land from the zamindars to distribute to the poor, but their manifesto does recommend 'revolutionary land reform' and 'modern agriculture'. It says it supports 'national industrialisation' but doesn't say anything about the private sector.

Whoever wins or loses, the three parties will be commanding our destinies after elections. All three say they will protect individual liberty, but look exceedingly weak on the implementation part. Civil society and Nepal's international donors could play a role, but even they seem to be infected by fashionable and discredited leftism of Nepal's past. ●

Bhola Chalise, PhD, served as secretary to HMG's Ministry of Industry for many years and is now a liberal economist.

MISHMASH MASS

There is now a near political consensus that Nepal should be some kind of a federated republic. The constituent assembly to be elected next month will have ample time to debate the pros and cons of different types of federal structures.

The Maoists want these units, or provinces, to be carved out based on ethnicity. We think it's a bad idea.

Nepal is a country of minorities. Nineteen of the 103 ethnic groups in this country number less than 5,000 individuals. Only 18 ethnic groups have more than one percent of the population. This mishmash penetrates right down to the VDC level. For example, the village of Badharmal in Siraha has a Chhetri majority, but they only make up 10 percent of the population.

In their elections manifesto, the Maoists have adjusted their provincial breakup to divide up the original Madhes into linguistic sub-provinces: Bhojpura, Mithila, Awadh and Kochila. They have also carved out Limbuwan from the Kirat autonomous region. All this gerrymandering before elections looks like too much of a coincidence.

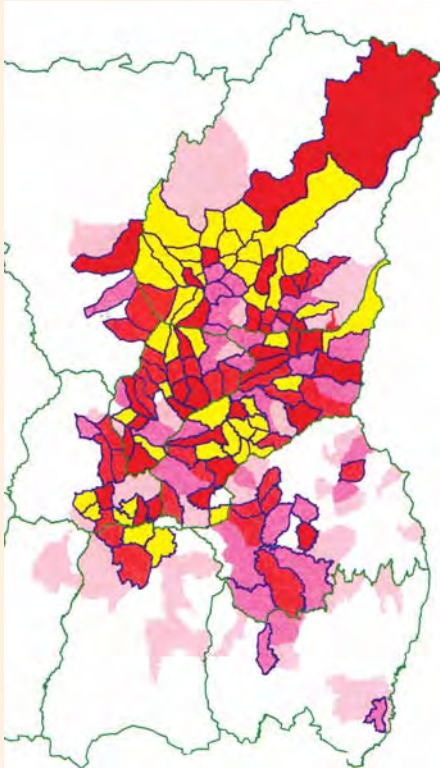
The Maoists, confronted with poor poll prospects, have obviously seen the ethnic card as the only way they can steal away votes from the mainstream parties. By now they should have realised how hard it is to put the ethnic genie back into the bottle. The Madhesi militants and the radicals of the eastern hills are all Maoist offshoots. The comrades now have to sound more radical than the ethnic parties they spawned in order to retrieve the agenda.

When they first mooted the idea of autonomous ethnic provinces, the Maoists were working out of the Soviet template. Lenin felt having a façade of devolution to ethnic and linguistic Soviet republics was a neat way to camouflage centralisation of power in Moscow.

The only rationale for ethnic federalism in Nepal is to compensate for historic wrongs. But we have to be careful about correcting one mistake with another. The Maoists have realised they have opened a can of worms, their former cadre will now settle for nothing less than separatism. Instituting these ethnic federal units is fraught with dangers and could fragment the country.

There is a real danger that the group after which each ethnic province is named will suppress or even evict other groups. Making an ethnic federation work presupposed political maturity and responsibility that our opportunistic leaders haven't yet exhibited.

Two books reviewed in this issue (p12-13) show in maps how Nepal and its provinces must, by definition be multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic. Let's not get into who settled down here first. Except for a handful of indigenous groups, we all came from somewhere else.



Conspiracies at the Buffalo Inn

There is now only one person who will benefit from stopping elections

As the D-Day of the Republican Assembly draws closer, political players of all persuasions, from monarchists to Maoists and mainstreamers to marginal players, all have their favourite conspiracy theory to explain their possible defeat at the polls.

Graffiti-President Pushpa Kamal Dahal believes in a UML-US nexus to defeat him. Madhab Nepal, UML Gen Sec for Life, has

sure to give them a big jolt. So they have a readymade excuse to explain their defeat: the Maoists and the UML are working on a leftist takeover of the country.

But the Mother of All Conspiracies must go to the Bhaisapati Plot to foil constituent assembly elections. Bajar hulla has it that KP Bhattarai will lead the way for the revival of the monarchy in Nepal.

In Birganj, the town that gave Kisunji the first electoral victory of his political life, there is a tradition of declaring a 'Mahamurkha' of the Year' at the time of Holi. This year, the jury has an easy job of bestowing the title to Bhattarai.

Those who attended Bhattarai's Bhainsepati party to save the monarchy reads like who's who of Nepal's most opportunistic politicians. Many were armchair revolutionaries during the Panchayat years, but none lived up to their promise during Gyanendra's absolute rule—nearly all of them were on the wrong side of the barricades during the April

Uprising. Their call to save the monarchy will probably hasten its demise.

This is not to say that scheduled elections don't face challenges from various desperate elements. Nepal's judiciary isn't too well known for either its impartiality or competence. It can still be impressed upon by Hindutva forces to postpone polls indefinitely by taking recourse to procedural flaws such as that controversy over 'real' Sadhbhabana Party.

Kangresi conservatives in the cabinet can be persuaded by senior administrators of the country to use deteriorating law and order as a pretext to prevent a legitimate takeover by 'leftist forces'. MJF radicals and Maoist hotheads are always prepared to provide grounds to doubt the security situation.

However, none of the schemes will work this time. Nepalis haven't voted for nearly a decade and they desperately want to teach the monarchists and the Maoists a lesson. The international community (represented by UNMIN on the ground) has its reputation

at stake. It stands to lose not only face but also their relevance if planned elections aren't held. South Block babus will have a lot of explaining to do to the political establishment in New Delhi if polls in Nepal are once again postponed.

However, it's the interest of the Nepal Army that will ensure scheduled polls. Its image has been in tatters ever since the royal massacre. Then it fought a dirty war against the Maoists, and submitted timidly to the king's February First takeover.

The Nepal Army brass has now realised that allowing a third postponement of constituent assembly elections will be tantamount to giving a walkover to the Maoists. Its redemption lies in ensuring that voters will keep MJF and Maoist extremists in their places.

Loyal royals assembling regularly at the Buffalo Inn will do well not to try to sabotage elections. They can easily be found out because everyone knows there is only one entity that can possibly benefit from scrapping polls. ●



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

his own ghost to exorcise: regional parties that resist the cultural hegemony of UML's priestly politics. Monarchists as usual blame the southern neighbour and even invited KV Rajan from New Delhi to clear up the mess left by Digvijay Singh.

The kangresis may still fare reasonably well in the first-past-the-post part of the elections, but the PR portion of the result is

LETTERS

TIBET

I wondered about your choice of page 1 coverage on Mt Everest and its unconventional headline ('Mount Olympus', #391) but its rationale became clear over the following days as the Chinese government suppressed the Lhasa uprising and banned expeditions. What the Chinese do in their own country is their business. But to arm-twist Nepal to stop expeditions from the south side of the mountain shows that the Chinese can be bullies just like the Indians. So much for China counter-balancing India's heavy hand in Nepal.

Gyan Subba, Kumaripati

I am a Tibetan who was born and raised in Nepal. I am deeply saddened and angered that lathi-swinging Nepali police have recently been attacking women (including my own mother), monks, and even children, simply for protesting peacefully in support of people who are being massacred in Tibet. I understand that the Nepali government is under pressure from China to restrain the Tibetan protests. But I believe they can meet their objectives without gratuitous violence against Tibetans. We Tibetans are happy living in Nepal, and in turn contribute not insignificantly to the culture and economy of the nation. I call on the Nepali government to better balance the pressure from China with the welfare of the Tibetan community in Nepal. The violence against Tibetans by Nepali police, the shutting down of Everest to tourists, and the fact that Chinese police are operating with impunity on Nepali soil near the border, lead me to believe that Nepal could and maybe should exercise its rights and obligations as a sovereign nation more effectively than it is doing at present.

Tenzin T, Kathmandu

CK LAL'S COMEBACK

Great article ('Letter from Kolkata', #391). Nepal has been unstable because of fear of the left amongst the international community, bickering between the left parties themselves and the utter incompetence of the Nepali Congress. I hope the election brings a period of long-overdue left-wing government, so the country can be saved from being a playground for selfish regional and global powers.

Kamal Sharma, New York

I quote CK Lal: 'There is no reason for Nepal to fear the domination of Leninist UML or Stalinist

CPN-M in our own constituent assembly'. Of course there is, as much as the royalists! Whatever the sticker on the bottle, it's the same old drink.

Marceau Reda, Paris

Now Girija Prasad Koirala has finally announced his resignation from politics after the polls, but strangely he is also a candidate in the upcoming elections. He has of course done a great job for this country: bringing the Maoists into mainstream politics and laying the foundations for elections. But his appointment of his own daughter to a ministerial position shows that he is still not prepared to let go of power completely. I think the new constitution should set a retiring age for politicians at 65. Otherwise, even if Mr Koirala does decide to finally resign, we will still be ruled by another group of geriatrics. Great job, Mr Koirala, but now you need some rest.

Pravesh Saria, email



The Maoists have undoubtedly brought about a massive shift in the political climate of Nepal. In the 1990s all the mainstream parties were against a constituent assembly, but the Maoists brought it onto the agenda. This is a great achievement, but their threats about what they will do if they lose the election do them no favours. Most people are alienated by this kind of macho and belligerent language. I would appeal to the Maoist leadership to be proud of their achievements, but also humble and prepared to accept the will of the people, which will be expressed in the elections. Please do not disregard that.

Aruna Uprety, China

I think Comrade Prachanda must think the Nepali people are fools. He sells false promises ('In constituency 10', #391) while simultaneously getting the YCL to beat up his rivals. He must not forget that it was the people who allowed him to come out of the jungle. If he tries to take advantage of them, they could also bring about his downfall.

Abhishek Bhandari, New Zealand

EMIGRATION

Wong Shu Yun's 'No men's land' (#391) has rightly stressed the need to check the youth outflow of the country. Who is going to work for the much-hyped 'new Nepal'? It's high time the government addressed the unemployment problem through effective actions and policies.

Sanjeev Karmacharya, Kathmandu

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Murkier and murkier

Little to cheer about in the disarray among Madhesi groups

The main enemies of the Madhesi people are the present Madhesi leaders themselves.

It is now increasingly apparent that the second Madhesi movement of January-February happened only to generate a support base and ensure political survival for the three parties. Their demands (undefined autonomy, self determination) did little to help ordinary Madhesis. The promise of inclusion had already been made earlier, and was only reiterated.

All the three-week agitation did was channelise Madhesi discontent, and generate a wave. But in less than a week, the Madhesi parties blew it all away.



TARAI EYE
Prashant Jha

With elections three weeks away, the three Madhesi parties are not united and their votes will split. The best case scenario will be that for both the first past the post and

proportional representation seats combined, the TMLP, SP and MJF will be lucky to get 50 seats.

It is largely traditional NC voters who are shifting loyalties to the Madhesi parties, so if anyone benefits from this fragmentation it is the UML. And the UML with its non-inclusive leadership embodies the worst kind of pahadi conservatism.

So how did the Madhesi parties throw it all away? A large part of the problem is the MJF, which tried to block negotiations during the stalemate in Kathmandu. It has now done its utmost to prevent an alliance. It has a relatively better organisation, brand name, and thus deserves a larger share of the seats, but the Forum has been the most rigid. And this has raised suspicions about who pulls the strings in the MJF.

Upendra Yadav is playing too many games: he has links with the palace, the Hindu right in India, the right-wing in the NC and the Americans. On the night he was flown in from Birganj to Kathmandu during critical talks last month, he disappeared for a few hours to meet two senior royalists. Bijay Gachhedar's entry into the party may help the MJF carve out an alliance of Yadavs and Tharus in a few districts of eastern Tarai, but it does show that the party has become the refuge of crooks and royalists.

Sharad Singh Bhandari attends a meeting at K P Bhattarai's residence to figure out ways to save the monarchy, and the very next day he releases the MJF manifesto declaring commitment to a federal republic. Being a royalist is not a sin, but being so wildly inconsistent is.

Before Upendra Yadav knows it, the MJF will be hijacked by the J P Gupta-Gachhedar-Bhandari combine. What makes the Forum dangerous is that it might emerge as the biggest Madhesi party, and in the name of Madhes, push a conservative agenda.

Mahanta Thakur can't be absolved of responsibility either. He does provide a respectable face to the Madhesi movement, but the absence of dynamism has allowed all kinds of elements in his party with dubious palace and business connections (the Sarbendra Nath Shuklas and Hridayesh Tripathis) to push their agenda. Thakur has not made an effort to be inclusive of all castes. He has not travelled in the Madhes or even his own constituency. His district leaders are local elites who have barely started campaigning. And he has not stopped candidates who are flirting with Madhesi militants in their constituencies.

The Sadhabana is a marginal actor. The splits have really destroyed the party, and while the Mahato-Anil Jha combine is a hard-working lot, their ability to influence the debate or win seats is severely limited.

The weakness of the Madhesi parties, and their possible dismal showing in the polls, may make many in Kathmandu happy. But weakened moderate will only mean that the armed groups will be stronger. With a limited capacity to influence debate within the constituent assembly, the Madhesi parties will once again go back to the streets. And the next time that happens, the extremists will dictate the agenda. ●



AJIT TIWARI

Tarai election fallout

The movement has polarised the electorate, but Madhesi may not necessarily vote for Madhesi parties

JANAKPUR—With the wedding season in full swing in the Madhes, most vehicles were booked. Because there were no buses, the Jatahi custom post on the India-Nepal border was swarming with irate but talkative travellers.

Ram Yadav, the custom-in-charge, was happy to have company. "This is a useless posting with no authority to take decisions. No chance to make any money," he said bluntly, "hopefully Madhesi will get more profitable posts now after the movement."

A truck came by and offered a ride till Janakpur. At the border police post, the conductor slipped in two Rs100 notes. For all the rhetoric about tight vigil on the border, that was all it took for the cops to allow the vehicle to move in unchecked.

On board, guruji and four friends from Saphi village began discussing politics. Referring to the eight point agreement between the government and Madhesi groups, the driver explained: "Ekhan ta sab udhaari che, nagadi nai bhel che. It is all credit right now, we have nothing in cash yet." An older co-passenger nodded.

Saphi falls under

constituency five, which will see a contest between Ram Baran Yadav, one of the few Madhesi who hasn't defected from the NC and Shri Krishna Yadav of TMLP. "Ram Baran will not even win a ward election in the district now. He is a Pahadi dalal," asserts the young conductor, Anil. The electoral prognosis is not shared by some in Janakpur, who think a divided opposition will see Ram Baran scrape through.

Up north on the highway, Ram Baran is a hero among Pahadis. Gopal Acharya, a young student in Bardibas, says, "If there is one person of Madhesi origin who can be the country's PM, it is Dr Yadav. He must win." Acharya is a member of the zonal taekwondo team, and has just returned from the Republican Sports Festival organised by the Maoists in Kathmandu.

Impressed with Maoist slogans, he adds: "The Maoists are the only ones who can fight Indian colonialism."

Waiting at the Janaki temple for a Kantipur TV public hearing with politicians to begin, Janardan Niroula says: "The NC had its chances. They are crooks and liars. I may go with

Maoists." It is clear that a section of Pahadi vote in the Tarai will go to the Maoists, at least in the proportional representation part.

A group of young Madhesi joins in the conversation. "I don't like the NC, but if the Madhesi parties don't get together, I will end up voting for tree. We can't ever trust Prachanda."

Studying commerce and science at a town campus, the students have made up their minds: "Mahanta is in the pockets of the Indians, Upendra is an American agent, the armed groups are a bunch of criminals but the government still needs to talk to them, elections will happen this time, but it will not be the solution, we want a Madhes sarkar but one Madhes is a foolish idea."

Candidates have not started going to villages yet, but people are talking about elections. There is calm on the surface, the results are unpredictable, but the discontent against Kathmandu remains deep.

The voices across the plains have a common thread: the state must implement promises, talk to armed groups, reach out to an alienated population and bridge the Pahadi-Madhesi divide. ●
Prashant Jha in Dhanusa

HANSA

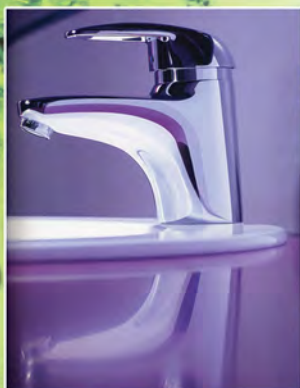
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The campaign was launched in cooperation with Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee and the Himalayan Club, Lukla. The bottles were handed over to breweries for recycling.

Kwik Cheese



Chaudhary Group has launched a new ad campaign for Kwik's Cheese Balls. The Cheese Man character features in all of the ads with the slogans Just Cheese, Gazab ko

Cheese, Kya Cheese Cha, Cheese Ball and Fit Cheese. Chaudhary Group manufactures fast foods, snacks and fruit juices.

Etihad F1

Etihad Airways is now sponsoring the Formula One Ferrari team. The Abu Dhabi-based airline will be featured on



the rear wing and side on the cars during the 18-race 2008 Formula One season.

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Nothing new, nothing about economics

Election fever forgets a thing or two

The cocktail circuit of Kathmandu which so beautifully belches negativity after every drink has started to shift its discussions from why the constituent assembly elections will not happen to the inevitable doom that will descend after the constituent assembly elections happen.

The discussions range from taking Nepal back to pre- or post-1990, to Maoist takeover of the nation, to Nepali



ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed

Congress aborting the process at the last moment. As Nepal has some of the most liberal alcohol sale and consumption laws in the world but no national gambling program, probably these self-appointed Cassandras will never shut up.

The parties seem to be serious about campaigning but, nine years on since the last election, campaign strategies have not advanced much. It's still all about trailing around door to door, wining, dining, coaxing funds and generally the same old procedures we first learnt two decades ago. Even our political gurus in down in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have changed their campaigning ways, but we are still happy to assume that our voters are illiterate, easily beguiled, and willing to sell their votes for a few glasses of raksi or some crisp rupee bills.

The demographics have changed. We have more young voters, who are wired to the world and have different expectations. However, it seems that none of the political parties have heeded this transformation.

The agenda for Nepal cannot be political only. What use of federalism if there is no plan for how taxes will be collected in the federated states and what powers they will have regarding expenditure? How will the state governments or the autonomous regions interact with business? Will there be enough autonomy to provide different tax sops? Who will collect VAT and



SAM KANG LI

SEEN IT BEFORE: Campaign strategies are following the same time-honoured lines.

Income Tax and how will the taxes collected be channeled to the various local governments? Who will be responsible for building infrastructure – the centre or the federated states and the autonomous regions? Will donors be able to work directly with the regions and states or will they still have to go through the centre? Can different regions have different labour laws or operate special economic zones? Will there be different telecom operators with circle-based licenses or will telecom and IT still be satellites of Kathmandu? Will the states be allowed to give hydropower licenses and have a say over transmission and distribution? Will education and health policies be decentralized? The questions are never-ending.

These issues are important and need proper research from experts in statecraft, history, economics and social sciences, as well as debate in the assembly, living rooms and teashops. But at the moment no one has much of an idea – much less a clear policy – on how economic growth will be achieved, how infrastructure will be built or how jobs will be created. While some members of the business

community will probably make it into the upcoming assembly, they will most likely only be those who joined the government during the royal regime.

The election debate needs to shift from vague promises and word-games to concrete discussions on how to build the future economy of Nepal. Some people seem to be expecting the elections to achieve little more than the coronation of a new dictator or guarantee of the political succession of ruling families.

Those who are happy to complain and doomsay with their import whiskey or rum in hand should think about something positive they could say for a change. Considering that these are often amongst the most educated and cosmopolitan in the country, why don't they put their wits into thinking about new paths for Nepal's future, rather than throwing mud at everyone?

Otherwise, for decades any elections we have will come together with the familiar backdrop of power-cuts and queues outside gas stations, and parties struggling even to get their manifestoes printed in time. ●

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SAM KANG LI

Editorial in *Kantipur*, 14 March

कान्तिपुर

The constituent assembly election is the real test that the CPN-Maoist will have to pass after abandoning armed struggle and joining mainstream politics. The Maoists have got due credit for their contribution in steering the country towards this election, but the Nepali people will scrutinise every move they make as they are new in competitive politics.

This election is not a general election. Because it is about writing our constitution, the very future, hopes and aspirations of the country are pinned on it. It is not about a single party winning or losing, and no party should think that if they win a majority they can run the country according to their party manifesto. The prime minister and the speaker have both stressed the need for cooperation while the constitution is being written. This cooperation is also a test to see if the

parties can work together in the future.

As election campaigning intensifies, it is clear that Maoists are slowly losing hope. The party was trying to actively promote a left alliance, but since that failed they are beginning to feel helpless. They have been beating, torturing and threatening all over Nepal. This is against both the terms set down by the election commission, and the entire election process.

Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal told reporters last week that his party workers only understand the language of bullets and requested that the media be sensitive while trying to report on them. Never have the Nepali people been so much against the language of the bullet, and when bullets are not limited to just language then it's an even bigger problem. No one will support a party whose central policies are at odds with what's actually happening in the districts around the country.

Irrelevant

Editorial in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 14-28 March

हिमाल

Some armed groups have said they will not allow elections to take place in the Tarai. But election campaigning has intensified in the last week, and their threats are now irrelevant. Our state is no more an oppressive one. Many disenchanted groups have been brought to the table and their demands fulfilled. For the last two years the government has always kept the door of dialogue open, and has proved that it is flexible. Those who still want to use weapons in search of justice in today's Nepal are out of touch with reality.

The leaders are going outside of Kathmandu, and party members campaigning round the country. Election fever is here and voters are no longer afraid. The Tarai, which has been gripped by violence for the last two years, is also hopeful about the elections. People in the Tarai understand that the constituent assembly elections will help address their demands that surfaced in the Madhes Uprising last year.

These armed groups are now obstacles to the redressing the issues of the Madhes. They have no clear political vision, depend on threats and violence, and are not trusted by the people. These groups, including Goit and Jwala, need to understand that we live

in a Nepal where problems are discussed freely. Soon nobody will view them as people trying to change society, but as criminals.

Solutions to democratic differences must be peaceful. Those engaged in armed struggle should take heed of the recent agreement between the government and United Madhesi Democratic Front. If they want to maintain any relevance, they will have to change themselves.

Prosperity

Editorial in *Gorkhapatra*, 15 March

गोरखापत्र

With the entire nation preparing for the constituent assembly elections, it is only natural for the development of some sectors to be temporarily neglected. But in the manifestos of the major parties, the economic agenda and development are prominent.

Without financial prosperity, and together with it proper education, decent health services and gender and ethnic equality, there will be no lasting peace. If these conditions do not exist then people will lose interest in politics.

It has been five decades since the nation embarked on the path of development. During this time, the country has received uncountable amounts of foreign aid but none of it has been properly utilised. We are still in the grip of poverty and



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SHH Stock related help

DICTIONARY



DICT<space>the word you want to know the meaning of. i.e.
DICT<space>tut

CRICKET UPDATE

cri

NEWS



NEWS National news
SPO Sports news
ENT Entertainment news
INT International news
LIVE Breaking news

FOREX



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CLI<space>dharan

JOKES



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JOKE<space>DOC
JOKE<space>SILLY
JOKE<space>LAWYER
JOKE<space>SANTA
JOKE<space>BLONDE

THOUGHT



THOUGHT
THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE



WEEK<space>the initial three letters of your zodiac sign. i.e.
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TOP 5

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unemployment. Sixty percent of our yearly budget is dependent upon foreign aid, industrialisation has been minimal.

In the new political context, the most important point must be economic development. More employment opportunities, a safe environment to live independently, clean politics with a capable leadership, and proportionally inclusive participation are essential for this to happen. If we do not throw away this opportunity then the nation will leap forward not just politically but economically, socially, educationally, technically and culturally.

PhD brothers
Gopal Gadtaula in Himal Khabarpatrika, 28 February-13 March

When Narayan Phuyal, 35 and Madhab Phuyal, 32 had to flee from south Bhutan 17 years ago, all they had was a certificate to prove that they had passed Grade 10. They dreamt of studying further and becoming doctors one day. Today they live in Hut no.40 at the Jhapa refugee camp. They may not have become medical doctors but they are now both PhD holders. Just last year Narayan received his degree in Refugee and International Law from Bangalore and Madhab got his PhD in English from a university in Hyderabad.

When the brothers arrived in Nepal in 1991, Madhab began studying at a school in Birtamod and Narayan was sent to a school in Siliguri. He got his bachelors degree in law from West Bengal University before applying for his PhD in Bangalore. Before studying for his PhD, Madhab had received a bachelor's degree from Tribhuban University. The Phuyal brothers say that there are only 10 people in the whole of Bhutan who have a PhD degree and they are proud of the fact that they were able to get so far in their

studies while living in a refugee camp. Narayan says that the reason he studied refugee studies is because he wanted to understand the life he led, "If you are strong at heart, even the suffering of being a refugee will not stop you."

Padlocked
Khagendra Panta in Naya Patrika, 19 March

The minister for forestry and soil conservation, Matrika Prasad Yadav has padlocked the house of his Nepal Army security guards which is attached to his ministerial quarters. However, the lock was broken by the army soon after under the orders of their headquarters.

Eleven army men have been deployed for the protection of the minister. Four days ago the minister asked five of them to accompany him to Janakpur, but they denied they had not received any official orders. The minister then ordered them out of his quarters and left for Janakpur without any security. When he returned to find the army still there, he locked the house.

Talking to Naya Patrika, Yadav said, "if the army is supposed to be for my protection, shouldn't they follow my orders? They refuse to go along with me where there is no security. Why should I keep them in my quarters if they don't protect me?"

The minister said that the Nepal Army was conspiring against him, and he would no longer accept security from the army. "I have been informed that the army has broken the lock. I will lock the house again. If they don't leave the quarters, I will leave."

He also said that he would keep PLA soldiers for his security. "I have talked to Ian Martin and the party chairman about this. If they don't agree I will stay under the security of the people, but I will not have the army protecting me," he said.




Placard: Election Campaign

"Comrade! This bridge was destroyed during our great people's war!"

हिमाल Robin Sayami in Himal Khabarpatrika, 14-28 March

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

 "The Maoists are participating in the elections but they are threatening to capture booths in order to win. They are abducting people, breaking people's heads. How can you compare the UML with the Maoists?"

Senior CPN-UML leader KP Sharma Oli quoted in Drishti, 18 March

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Winter is supposed to have gone, but with temperature at 8 degrees on Monday morning, it didn't feel like it. We were walking down to the bus stop on our way to work. Holi was still five days away, so

we weren't on red alert yet. Then, "Splat." Cowardly sniggering boys let up a cheer at the direct hit. No explanation necessary: it's Holi. The rites of spring are here. Although Holi is celebrated only for a day in the Valley (on

Friday) the warmup begins long beforehand, and this year it has begun a full week before. The water scarcity in Kathmandu seems to make no difference. If there is no clean water, water from the drain will do just fine. The streets of Asan are already

spattered with plastic bags which have missed their targets. The choks are packed with huddles of boys waiting to ambush unsuspecting female passersby. Foreigners are not spared.

The country is preparing for elections that will have a proportional representation for women, Nepali women's groups may be battling for legislation to punish domestic violence, but the message hasn't got through to the street's brat packs.

Holi isn't fun anymore because it's not voluntary. Women are attacked, tourists are forced to join in, it has become a dreaded and hostile ritual. Why do you think this paper is coming out one day early this week?

And the teenagers on terraces aren't just dropping balloons anymore, they are throwing rotten tomatoes, big plastic bags with stinky water, and even eggs.

Holi is about ushering in

spring. The colours used to symbolise rebirth and rejuvenation. But the powders used are poisonous, using chromium and other heavy metals that can be lethal if ingested. The paints contain lethal doses of lead. In any other country holi would come with a health warning, or be banned.

Holi is supposed to be a reenactment of the antics of a precocious young Lord Krishna as he splashed water to tease gopinis. That may have been ok in Mathura, but today's gopinis are not going to take much more of this.

Starting this year, the women will be fighting back. The boys better beware because they're going to be at the receiving end and the girls are going to be getting back for centuries of bullying.

So what is it going to be, guys: a lola right between your eyes or a potato where it'll hurt the most? ● *Srishti Adhikari*



KIRAN PANDAY

Holi This year, the women are fighting back guacamoli



SAM KANG LI

Up close and personal at rare 1974AD reunion



It has been 14 years since 1974AD first performed, and the Nepali rock fusion group is performing at the courtyard of the Patan Museum on Saturday to mark the anniversary.

The concert is also made possible because all band members are currently in Kathmandu. Sanjay Shrestha has returned after a year in Australia, where he studied drums and toured with his band, Stupa. Manose Singh has been touring the world for the past two years, with back-to-back concerts with Deva Premal. He is back in Nepal only for March.

“The energy within the band when we are all together is magical,” says Sanjay Shrestha, “we wanted to do a concert as much for ourselves as for our fans.” The

concert on Saturday will re-interpret some of 1974AD’s old favourites and will focus on hit ballads.

The venue will also mean that the concert will be more intimate and the acoustic numbers will be unplugged. “This will be different than playing in the stadium,” says Nirakar Yakthumba, who is on bass guitar, “Patan Muesum will allow us to share more of ourselves with our audience. We want to get up close and personal.” ●

6:30 PM Saturday, 22 March
Patan Museum
Tickets Rs 500 available at Moksh, Himalayan Java, Bakery
Cafe, Jai Nepal and Kumari Cinema
9841320007

Silent beauty

A new career path for Bhairawa’s deaf and dumb

PRANAYA SJB RANA
in BHAIRAWA

Amid broken pieces of glittering bathroom tiles and small piles of brown dust, Sabitri Gurung is hard at work. She selects a tile from the pile beside her, cuts it into shape using pliers and smoothens out the rough edges with sandpaper. She looks down at the half-finished mosaic of a gecko, unable to decide where to place her piece. Nineteen-year old Reena notices her and walks over, and with hand motions, explains to Sabitri what she should do. Sabitri is speech- and hearing-impaired. She nods in agreement, and then turns back to her gecko.

“I want to earn my own money,” signs Sabitri, who left school in grade one because she had difficulty understanding the teacher. She went to Kathmandu for a one-year vocational course in sewing and learned to stitch, sew and darn. She even got herself a sewing machine. But after the course, she couldn’t find even one person who would hire her.

“The hearing-impaired are taught tailoring and sewing but that doesn’t help them because no one wants to go to a deaf tailor,”



says Philip Holmes, whose charity, the Esther Benjamins Trust, has been supporting the local deaf school here since 1999.

“Mosaics and art work are a better alternative.” In Kathmandu, many speech- and hearing-impaired apply to the Bakery Café chain as waiters, but there is no such option in Bhairawa.

“There used to be a garment factory where our graduates worked,” says Bal Kumari Gurung, principal of the school. “But now, even that has closed down.”

It is only few weeks since Holmes started the course and there are already 26 participants,

mostly female. The teachers, Reena, 19 and Manju, 20 are from Holmes’ Kathmandu-based Himalayan Mosaics, a non-profit organisation which employs girls rescued from Indian circuses (see ‘Artistic healing’, #341).

Reena and Manju are both former circus children. Just a year ago, they were the ones learning to coordinate colours and cut shapes but now, they’re doing the teaching. “I’ve become independent making mosaics and now I want others to learn what I know,” says Manju.

What started out as above all a philanthropic scheme for vulnerable girls has now mushroomed into a full-fledged

business. Himalayan Mosaics employs 17 young women and 20 more are in training at Holmes’ former residence in Godavari. In addition to making mosaics, the girls are now learning pottery and sculpting. Once the hearing-impaired in Bhairawa complete their training, they too will become part of Himalayan Mosaics, earning a commission for every mosaic they make.

The Bhairawa workshop is bright and specks of dust hang suspended in the sunlight filtering through the windows. Talk is muted between the two teachers and the only other

sounds are the snapping of pliers and the clink of bathroom tiles. Reena and Manju hover over those working, like mothers fussing over their children.

From shy children, these two have matured into confident teachers. Says Reena: “While making mosaics, everything falls into place, you don’t think about anything else. It will help them in the same way it has helped us.” ●

Himalayan Mosaics is conducting a sale of the mosaics at the Summit Hotel, 22-23 March, 10AM-5PM. www.ebtrust.org.uk

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For further information contact Philip Holmes on 9851105996 or by e mail at philip.holmes@ebtrust.org.uk

Smile, and the country smiles with you

Photojournalist Pushpa KC has always been fascinated by the various faces of Nepali politicians. He says although the public may have seen them in the heat of the moment, giving elaborate speeches, protesting on the streets, sitting outside Singha Darbar, very few have seen that these politicians also have a lighter side to them. Gallery 32 @ Dent Inn has collected these rare moments from KC’s lens where the leaders are smiling and put them together for their Smiling State exhibition. The organisers hope that more politicians show their lighter moments after the elections.

Smiling State | 23 March-10 April | Gallery 32 @ Dent Inn
Heritage Plaza, Kamaldi | 01-4241942





TELE DOCTOR: Saroj Dhital, a physician at the Model Hospital in Kathmandu interviews a patient in Gaurishankhar Hospital in Dolakha, through the Nepal Wireless Network Project.

Virtual medicine

Prem Bahadur Pun is a senior surgeon at the Om Hospital in Pokhara. But he is originally from Nangi, and is often on the internet with the health post in his home village advising the health workers there about how to treat patients.

Working through a webcam, Pun can examine a patient who is in a room two day's walk away. For roadless areas of Nepal where people have poor health services, telemedicine may be the most effective way to save lives.

"Look at me, sitting here in Pokhara, I am able to ensure good treatment to people who live in my native village," Pun told *Nepali Times* this week.

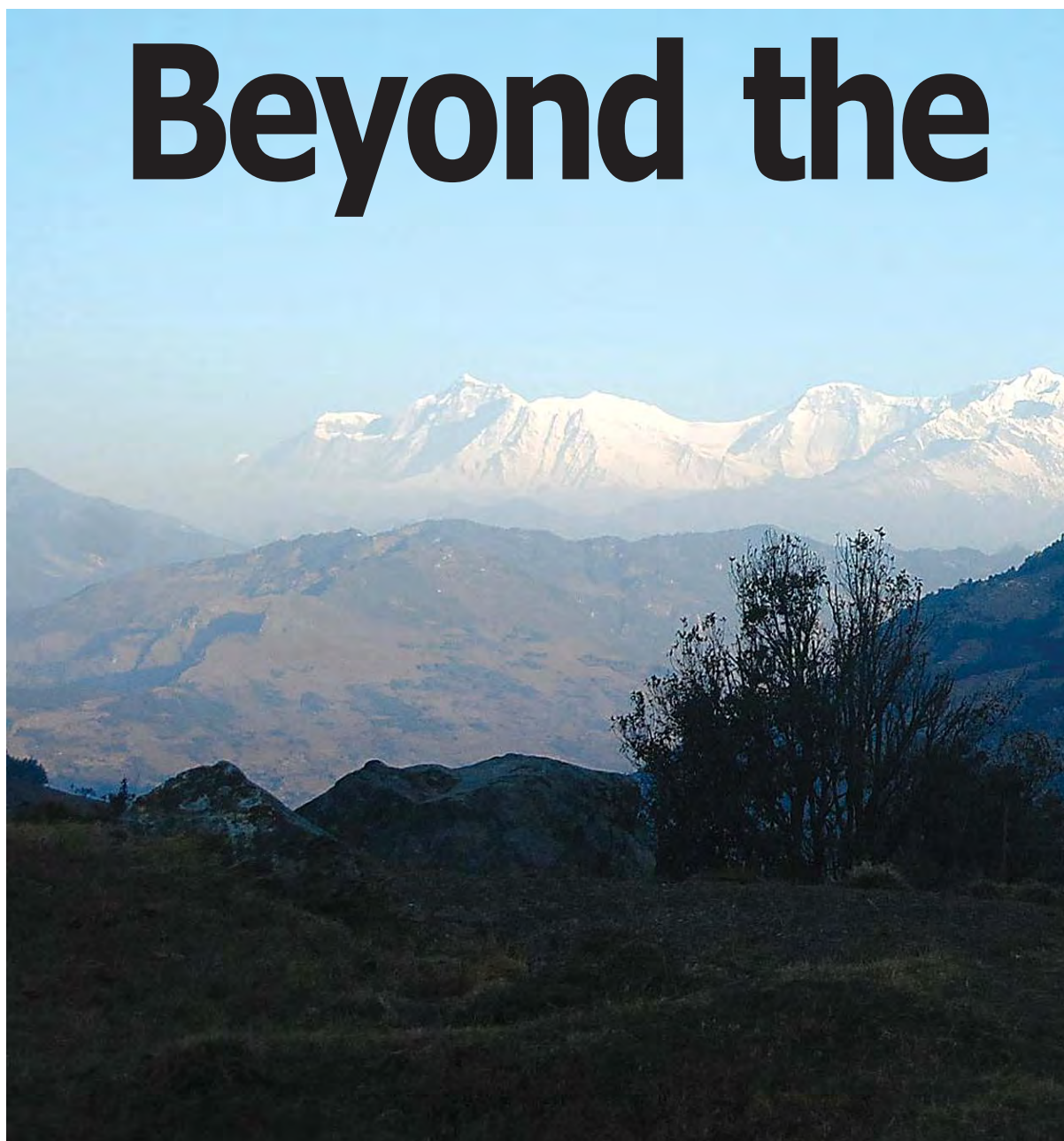
He is part of a wireless network established in 20 villages in Myagdi, Kaski and Parbat districts by Nepal Wireless Network Project, a brainchild of Mahabir Pun who has tried to use better internet connectivity to improve service delivery in health and education. Prem Bahadur Pun says telemedicine saves lives because many patients can't be moved and local health workers at times lack medical knowledge to deal with complicated illnesses.

The project is now expanding to Makwanpur, Palpa and Dolakha. Doctors at the Model Hospital in Kathmandu regularly consult patients and health workers at the Gaurishankhar Hospital in Dolakha via webcam.

As a surgeon, Pun speaks with community health workers about their patients over the internet, and sometimes directly to the patients themselves. He is on-call most of the day in Pokhara via in both his office and on mobile phone. The most common ailments are fractures, fall injuries, dental problems and diarrhoea dehydration in children. If patients need x-rays or operations, Pun advises them to come down to Pokhara.

The wireless internet is also helping schools in the three districts. Assistant principal of the Himalaya Secondary School in Tolka, Ananta Subedi says: "From the internet I am able to provide my students free supplementary study materials." although new technologies can help deliver education and health, it will have to be the government that will need to replicate this nationwide with public-private partnerships. ●

Thomas Grotkjaer Nielsen in Kaski



WONG SHU YUN in MYAGDI

Many others who have won major international awards rest on their laurels, bask in celebrityhood, or go into early retirement. Not Mahabir Pun.

After he won the Magsaysay Award for his pioneering work to bridge the digital divide in Nepal's remote mountains last year, Pun has thrown himself with renewed vigour to enlarge the scope and spread of his effort to raise the livelihood of his native region.

"We have been trying to scale up income-generation," says the soft-spoken 53-year-old, "we want to expand IT services so it helps agriculture, education, health and tourism in even more remote villages."

Pun's village of Nangi is located on a forested mountainside at 2,250m and

requires a seven-hour vertical climb on foot from Beni. A computer engineer in the United States, he did something unusual for a Nepali: he came back to Nepal after graduation. And even more unusual, he returned to his home village. ('Web pioneer', #360)

Pun set up the Nepal Wireless Networking Project in Nangi in 1997, where there was no electricity, no telephone lines, no roads, no health posts and few schools. Pun believed that by leapfrogging technology with computers, solar power and wireless connectivity, he could help lift his village out of poverty.

It worked. The literacy rate shot up as children used computers and the internet to broaden their horizons. The health post used telemedicine to treat patients. Families in the surrounding villages who have



SHEERE NG

NEIGHBOURHOOD INCINERATORS: A mothers' group in Arughat of Gorkha burn sidewalk garbage they collect daily.

Where grownup

Every morning after she finishes her housework, Ashmaya Ghak carries her daughter to school. But she doesn't leave when the class starts. Instead, she rocks her child to sleep as the teacher commences the lesson.

Ashmaya is a student at the 'women's school' in Arughat, set up two years ago by Sushila Khanal. The students are women who were deprived of proper education as a child. Like students of usual school age, they study according to the

government curriculum, and take the same exams.

In Gorkha, there are many examples, big and small, of enterprises that have been set up by women to improve their social and economic standing, and fill gaps where provision for them is missing. Their activities include education, finance and community work.

According to the Women Development Office of Gorkha, in 2007 there were 47 women-only cooperatives in the district. Almost 10 per cent of the women

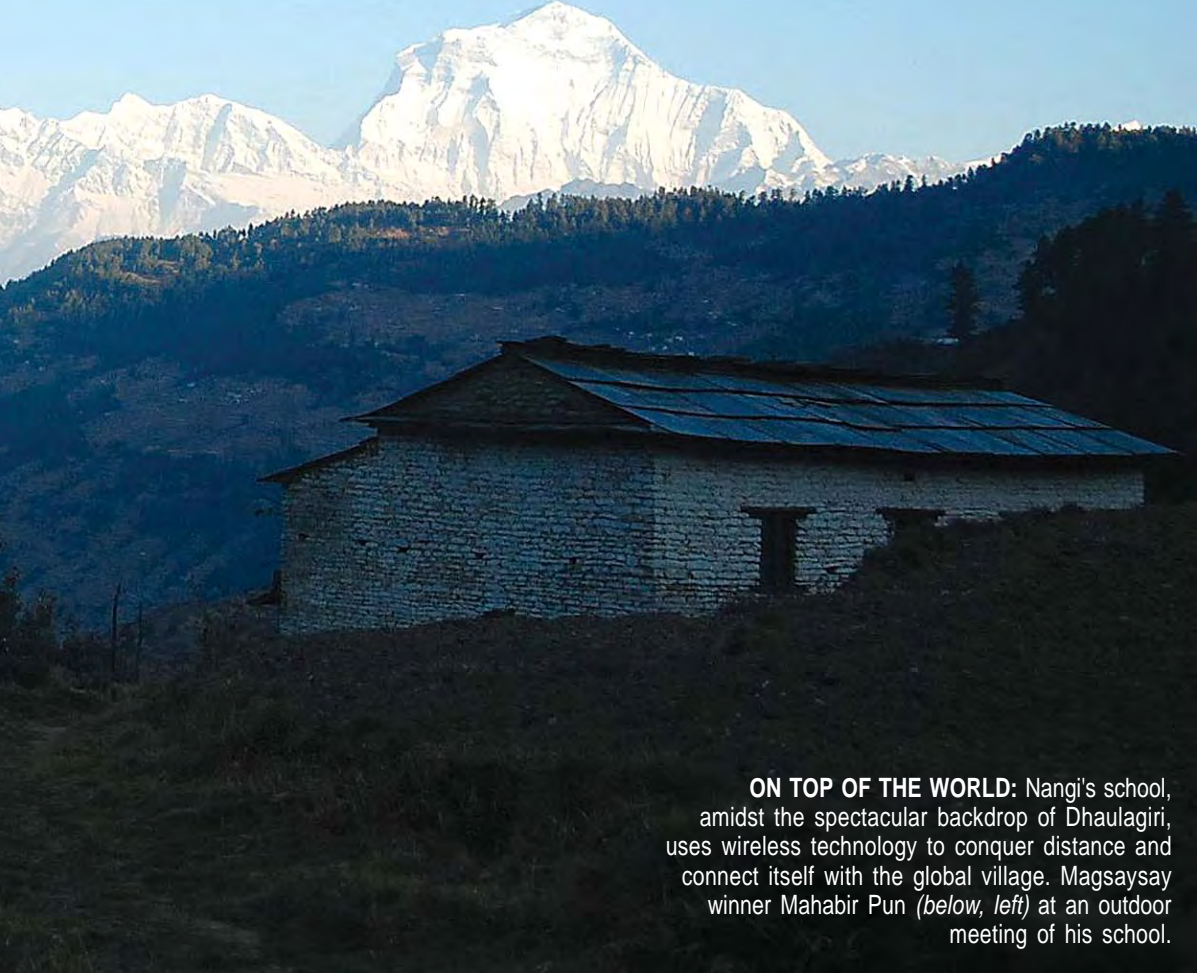
above 22 years old (the youngest recorded member) have savings in one of these cooperatives.

Rachana Basnet, mother of three, borrowed Rs 20,000 from her cooperative (Protsahit Women's Saving and Credit) four years ago to set up a grocery shop. She paid off the loan within six months and has shifted her business to a larger premise she recently built. Rachana now heads her household, earning 50 per cent of the total income, while her husband is working in Macau.

But the women's exploration

digital divide

Mahabir Pun proves that there is life after a Magsaysay



ON TOP OF THE WORLD: Nangi's school, amidst the spectacular backdrop of Dhaulagiri, uses wireless technology to conquer distance and connect itself with the global village. Magsaysay winner Mahabir Pun (*below, left*) at an outdoor meeting of his school.

WONG SHU YUN

relatives working abroad used email and chat, saving money on international phone calls. Now managed by Nangi's Himanchal Higher Secondary School, the venture pulled Nangi out of its seclusion. Nangi's network is connected to Pokhara through a line-of-sight microwave antenna fixed on an oak tree four hours up the mountain. Pun is now working on wireless telephony, e-libraries and online markets to help connect even more remote villages and help people find jobs. Healthcare services, eco-farming and small handicraft industries have all started to contribute to income generation. All are collaborative ventures involving the whole community. The Nangi Clinic and Women's Centre now has three rooms for patients and a dental

treatment area. "The government doesn't have a health clinic here, so we decided to start one ourselves," says nurse Lila Pun. The clinic receives online medical advice from doctors at Om Hospital in Pokhara. The villagers have also started to harvest local medicinal herbs. Caretaker Moti Purja looks after 21,000 seedlings of medicinal herbs in greenhouses and fruits on steep terraces. The 70-year-old ex-British Army officer is also busy with an organic farm that raises fish, ducks, chicken and rabbits. All this is expected to tap into the resurgent tourism industry. With new highways being built, trekkers will be venturing out to more remote parts of the district and Nangi wants to promote itself as an eco-friendly destination close to the trekking hub of Ghorepani. Nangi and the neighbouring

village of Paudwar are working together to promote tourism online. Camping grounds are being built and new trails cleared. Pun is a modest man, but he has ambitious long-term goals. One of them is to set up a university here by 2015. "The activities we're engaged in now will help create jobs and raise income, but at the end of the day, it is education that will help sustain it," he told *Nepali Times*. At a school board meeting last month, the village committee was busy planning scholarships for students and brainstorming on how to fundraise for the university. Adds Pun: "We want to encourage local talent to explore sustainable eco-programs, creative people who can think out of the box." ●

www.nepalwireless.net/index.php

women go to school

of new roles comes at a price, as they struggle to keep up with their traditional duties. Ashmaya is forced to bring her young daughter to school because there is no one to babysit for her. Her classmate, Budhimaya Gurung has to work as a porter to pay her school fees (Rs 25 per month), leaving her less time at home to do the chores. "My husband is against it, so he doesn't pay for me," she says. But the students are prepared to face these difficulties for, as Mina Shrestha, at 52 the oldest student puts it: "Having no

education is as good as being blind." There are also a number of groups working for the wider community. Also in Arughat, a "mothers' group" has been formed to carry out community services. They clean up rubbish, repair damage to village property such as taps and fences, and promote the traditional culture they think is losing influence over the younger generation. It seems that the reason that spurred local women to form these groups was frustration with

the lack of provisions from the government, NGOs and private sector. The tedious bureaucracy of local banks, the absence of any authority to keep their community clean, the social barriers for women to get an education. The list goes on. And the reason that the cooperatives are exclusively female? Indra Aryal, vice chairman of Ganesh Patan Saving and Credit Cooperative, explains: "Only women understand women's problems." ● *Sheere NG in Gorkha*

Clean and green

Suka Maya Chepang and her daughter Chameli are busy cooking their morning rice in Danda Gaon. But theirs isn't a murky smoke-filled kitchen like the others one sees around Nepal. It is clean and bright, and the reason is that the Chepang family has a new biogas stove. "See, no smoke going into my house," says Suka Maya, "I haven't had a cough in the last nine months." The stove burns methane generated from an underground digester filled with manure from here two buffalos and six cows. The family doesn't need firewood, and the children don't get chest infections. Apart from the biogas for cooking, Suka Maya also has a solar lantern for light. Earlier, she used to spend Rs 400 a month to buy kerosene for lighting, and although the solar light and battery cost Rs 2,200 it has already paid for itself. Off the grid and far away from any roads, Danda Gaon with its 17 households is becoming a model eco-village. Money for the alternative energy sources came as soft loan from the government with support from Practical Action Nepal and villagers chipped in with labour.



DUNG POWER: One of the biogas generators in Danda Gaon.

JONATHAN KALAN

Gorkha's eco village lights the way

Kul Bahadur, a teacher at Toman Danda Primary School, prepares class work by a solar-powered light which runs for seven hours using daylight charging. In nearby Luprang, 43-year-old Lal Bahadur Chepang is working on the tomato field which he fertilises with the rich slurry oozing out of his biogas plant. The digester not just supplies methane for cooking but yields rich fertiliser that has boosted vegetable harvests, increasing income. "Since using this manure we don't use chemicals anymore," says Lal Bahadur who now earns up to Rs 30,000 a year from selling tomatoes. The villages around Bhumlichok are now getting ready to declare themselves a successful renewable energy VDC. They have wind and solar hybrid systems, biogas, solar lamps, smoke hood chimneys and are now getting ready to install a micro-hydro plant. ● *Dhruba Simkhada in Gorkha*



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Mapping a mosaic

Nepal is too heterogeneous for ethnic federalism to work

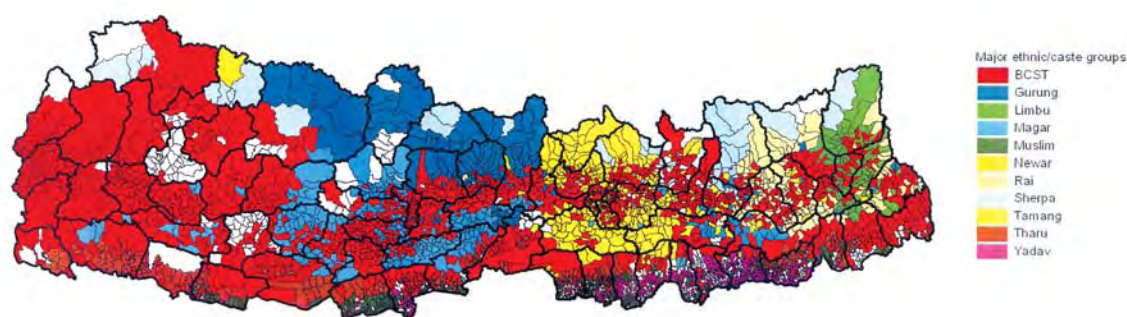
Pitamber Sharma and Gauri Nath Rimal couldn't have chosen a better time to launch their two ethnic atlases published within months of each other.

The map books illustrate simply and elegantly just how complicated Nepal's diversity is. While Kalikot is home to only 34 caste or ethnic groups, for example, Sunsari, Morang and Jhapa have as many as 96 of the country's 103 ethnic groups. This country is truly a 'mosaic'—the word that appears in the title of both books.

For example, while 'only' nine languages are spoken in Kalikot, Morang is home to 70 out of the 93 languages in the country. Even Kathmandu has 61 spoken tongues. The picture that emerges is of profound ethno-linguistic variation in the eastern Tarai with greater homogeneity in the hill and mountain districts of the mid and far west of the country.

If one can make it past the title of Rimal's book, which sounds like a cross between janajati tea and international donor fantasy, underneath lies an interesting set of maps, appended with an earnest narrative and some unusual data

Distribution of Bahun, Chhetri, Sanyasi, Thakuri (BCST) and major ethnic/caste population of VDCs, 2001



sets. Sharma's book also highlights the mobility of Nepal's ethnic groups. Fifty years ago, for example, 99.6 percent of all Limbus lived in the eastern hills. Today that figure is down to 72 percent.

The main concept behind both books is that a visual representation of Nepal's diversity will assist policy makers and the stewards of tomorrow's Naya Nepal. In his foreword, Rimal hopes the maps will help "in the process of restructuring the state and in taking judicious decisions". It's a point well made and well taken, but one which presupposes that the obstacle to implementation is an absence of facts rather than a lack of political will and commitment.

Rimal starts off with maps depicting the 12 different

proposals for a federated Nepal. Six pages of colour plates allow the reader to compare and contrast a range of competing visions for what such a Nepal may look like.

Aside from Takahashi Miyahara's suggestion, which accepts the north-south divisions of the present, the federal proposals illustrate different clusterings based on shared social, ecological, linguistic and religious attributes. In light of the recent agreement signed between some Madhesi groups and the government, those advocating federalism in Nepal should not forget the uniqueness of Nepal's particular strand of diversity.

With notable exceptions, Nepal's mosaic is a variegated one—or as Rimal would have it—'interlaced'. What makes so many of Nepal's districts and villages distinctive is their blend of

peoples, ethnicities and castes, not the numerical dominance or the exclusivity of one community over others. In short, as we see in Sharma's VDC-level breakdown of the census data, Nepal's VDCs are largely heterogenous administrative units, even though people continue to marry within their own communities.

Rimal and Sharma both rely heavily on the 2001 census and other figures from the Central Bureau of Statistics. How reliable is this raw data? For one thing, Nepal's population has grown by three million since 2001. The census also had gaps because it was conducted during the height of the insurgency and the Maoists didn't allow enumerators into parts of 12 districts.

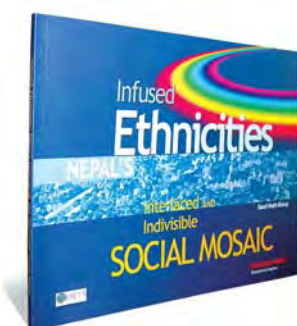
The main difference between the two books is that while Sharma divides up Bahuns and Chhetris into separate categories, Rimal lumps Bahuns, Chhetris, Sanyasis and Thakuris into one. The rationale is that they are racially and historically the same group. This may sound like common sense, but it has implications on the proposed ethnic provinces. When counted together, Bahuns and Chhetris outnumber ethnic groups even in the provinces the Maoists have demarcated for Limbu, Kirat, Tamang, Gurung and Magar autonomous regions.

In Tamuwan, for example, Gurungs make up 19.2 percent of the population, while Bahun-Chhetris are 44.8 percent. It's the same story in the Tamsaling, Kirat and Magarat. It is only in the Limbuwan that Limbus and Bahun-Chhetris make up more or

less the same proportion of the population.

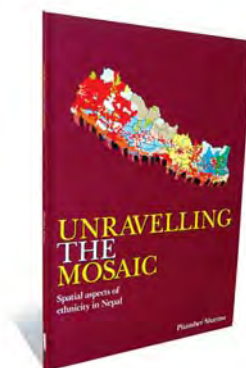
Rimal's final five plates are a helpful bookend to the collection, displaying the current arrangement of parliamentary seats by population and district, the late Harka Gurung's proposal of 28 consolidated administrative districts and the parliamentary representation that each would be given, and a visual breakdown of seats if they were to be accorded on the basis of one seat per 100,000 people.

Can ethnic federalism work in a country like Nepal? Sharma's answer is that it is possible to demarcate ethnic provinces, but no ethnic group will have a majority in any one of them. Nepal's future federal units must, by definition, be multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic and not regions exclusive to one community who promote a vision of ethnic purity that likely never existed. ●



Infused Ethnicities: Nepal's Interlaced and Indivisible Social Mosaic

Gauri Nath Rimal
Institute for Social and Economic Transition-Nepal and ActionAid Nepal, 2007
Price: Rs 600, pages: 72
ISBN: 978 99946 2 577 2



Unravelling the Mosaic: Spatial Aspects of Ethnicity in Nepal
Pitamber Sharma
Himal Books, 2008
Price: Rs 375, pages: 109
ISBN: 978 99933 43 91 2



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A roadmap to war

Much has been said about the role of the media in turning public opinion against the American engagement in Vietnam, as images of the war's atrocities were streamed daily on the evening news. Of course, the television coverage didn't cause the war to end immediately, but in America's



CRITICAL CINEMA
A Angelo D'Silva

present engagements in the Afghanistan and Iraq, no doubt with the power of images of war in mind, there has been an effort to manage the video coverage that gets on television screens. Perhaps in reaction to this, we have now seen a spate of critical documentary pieces on George Bush's 'war on terror', including two Oscar nominees – *Taxi to the Dark Side* and *No End in Sight*.

Alex Gibney's *Taxi to the Dark Side* gets its title from the episode of an Afghan taxi driver, Dilawar, who died in custody after interrogation, torture and beating by the American army. His story is Gibney's departure point (the documentary continues through Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo) for investigating the uses and excuses for torture by the American government.

Highlighting the efforts of two New York Times reporters investigating Dilawar's case, the film is a testimony to the importance (and perhaps the limits) of the free press. Much like in Gibney's previous work *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room* on the Enron scandal, *Taxi* is more impressive for the appalling, damning material it uncovers than for its filmmaking. Gibney chooses to use post-mortem photographs of Dilawar, naked and bruised. The images are shocking and, against expectation, humanising.

Interestingly, the sympathies of the film also extend to the soldiers who were ultimately charged in the case of Dilawar.

They give vivid descriptions of the protocol followed and techniques used, casting an amateurish picture both of themselves and of the army. Gibney assembles a slew of evidence – through the soldiers' accounts, internal memos, legal arguments and statements by former Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld among others – which convincingly connects the culture of abuse with the architects of the 'war on terror'.

Charles Ferguson's *No End in Sight* (on which Gibney is producer) is a taut, polished and engaging documentary that gives a walk-through of the immediate aftermath of the invasion of Iraq, a period of time which saw massive looting in Baghdad, and Paul Bremer's brief and disastrous tenure as the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority.

As the somewhat clunky tagline 'The

Inside Story from the Ultimate Insiders' indicates, *No End in Sight* relies heavily on talking heads, a trait which is often the

bane of documentary films. But the lineup of former military and administrative officials makes for a very engaging commentary on the downward spiral of events in Iraq. It is a gallery of articulate, cool and wronged individuals, who tersely relate the dismissal of their knowledge and experience by their ideologically rigid bosses, who began and persisted with giddy idealism in the face of mounting failures.

There's a growing sense of horror as the events unfold, even as you know the outcome. They don't make spy thrillers this thrilling. Or this maddening. ●

Taxi to the Dark Side
Director: Alex Gibney.

2007. R. 106 min.

No End in Sight
Director: Charles Ferguson
2007. R. 102 min.

Two films examining the 'war on terror'

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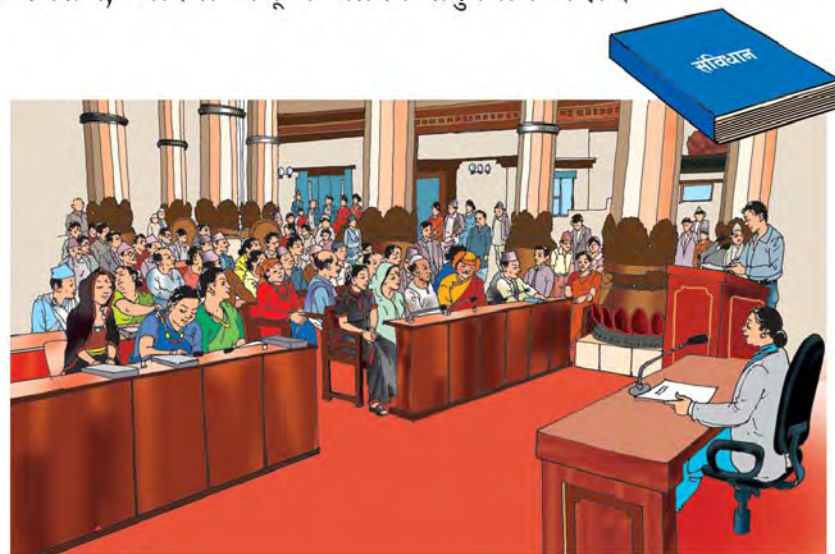


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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Himalayan Mosaics** a sale of handmade mosaics, 21 March, 5-8PM and 22-23 March at 10AM-5PM at the Summit Hotel, Sanepa.
- ❖ **Smiling state** a smiling portfolio of Nepali leaders by Pushpa KC, at Gallery 32, from 23 March-10 April, 10AM-6PM. 4241942
- ❖ **Petals** paintings by Neera Joshi Pradhan, 11AM-5.30 PM, until 23 March at Park Gallery, Lazimpat. 4419353
- ❖ **Nepal Alfresco** etchings by Beverly Thompson, until 26 March at the Park Gallery, Lazimpat. 4419353
- ❖ **The Unspoken** paintings by Madan Chitrakar, until 3 April, 11AM-6PM at the Siddhartha Art Gallery. 4218048



EVENTS

- ❖ **Weekly human rights film** screenings, *Hotel Rwanda* a film by Terry George at the Sama Theatre, Gurukul, 5PM on 23 March. 4466956
- ❖ **Once** a film by John Carney, 6PM, 25 March at the Lazimpat Gallery Café.
- ❖ **Journey through Nepali Art** CSGN monthly lecture by Rabindra Puri, 28 March, 9.30 AM at the Shankar Hotel, Lazimpat.
- ❖ **Toastmasters** a communication and leadership program, organised by Kathmandu Toastmasters Club every Wednesday 6PM at Industrial Enterprise Development Institute (IEDI) building, Tripureswor. 4288847

MUSIC

- ❖ **Baja Gaja** playing funk, jazz and rock at Moksh, Pulchok, 21 March, 8.30 PM onwards. 5526212
- ❖ **1974AD Unplugged** tunes from 1994 to 2008, 22 March, 6.30 PM at the Patan Museum. 9841320007
- ❖ **Unexpressed melody** a performance by Santosh Bhakta Shrestha on ishraj and Nabaraj Gurung on tabla, 22 March, 6PM at the Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka, Rs 500.
- ❖ **Yankey and friends** live acoustic music every Friday at the Bourbon room Restro-bar, Lal Darbar.
- ❖ **Anil Shahi** every Wednesday and Rashmi Singh every Friday, live at the Absolute Bar, Hotel Narayani Complex, 8PM. 5521408

DINING

- ❖ **Easter at Kilroy's and K-too!** With chocolates and the Easter Bunny, 23 March. 4250440.
- ❖ **The Kaiser Café open now** at the Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, open from 9AM-10PM. 4425341
- ❖ **Steak escape** with Kathmandu's premier steaks available for lunch and dinner at the Olive Bar and Bistro, Hotel Radisson. 4411818
- ❖ **Jalan Jalan Restaurant** with a new Italian menu, Kupondole. 5544872
- ❖ **Bourbon Room Restro-bar** now open for lunch and dinner with over a 100 cocktails, Lal Darbar.
- ❖ **Cocktails and grooves** with jazz by Inner Groove at Fusion-the bar at Dwarika's, every Wednesday, at Dwarika's Hotel.
- ❖ **Cocktails, mocktails and liqueurs** at the Asahi Lounge, opening hours 1-10PM, above Himalayan Java, Thamel.
- ❖ **Continental and Chinese** cuisine and complimentary fresh brewed coffee after every meal a Zest Restaurant and Bar, Pulchok.
- ❖ **Illy espresso coffee** at the Galleria cafe, every Friday espresso cocktails.
- ❖ **International four course buffet** at the Sunrise Café with a range of Boris' signature dishes at The Chimney, Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
- ❖ **Pan Asian evenings** every Wednesday at The Café, Hyatt Regency with food from Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. 4491234
- ❖ **Jazz in Patan** with coffee, food, drinks and dessert at the New Orleans Cafe, Jawalakhel. 11.30 AM-10PM. 5522708
- ❖ **Saturday special** barbeque, sekuwa, momos, dal-bhat at The Tea House Inn, Windy Hills, Nagarkot every Saturday. 9841250848.
- ❖ **Dice-licious brunch** at Kakori, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, roll the dice to the number of the day and get 50 percent discount on an individual meal, Saturdays and Sundays, 12.30-3.30 PM. 4273999
- ❖ **Scrumptious wood fired pizzas**, cocktails and specialty coffees at Roadhouse, Bhatbateni 4426587, Pulchok 5521755 and Thamel 4260187.
- ❖ **Starry night barbecue** at Hotel Shangri-la with Live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs. 666.00 nett. per person, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 6.30 PM onwards. 4412999
- ❖ **Kebabs and curries** at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619
- ❖ **Calcutta's rolls, biryani, kebabs** Indian cuisine at Bawarchi, Bluebird Mall Food Court. 9741000735
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WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The current alternating pattern of warm and cold days is the result of a tug-of-war between the weakening northwesterly front and creeping warm breezes from the south. This interaction will also launch localised updrafts along the Himalayan foothills triggering storms like the one that lashed Kathmandu this week. Expect more thunder showers like these in the coming weeks. A low pressure trough over southern India is disturbing the weather patterns, but its effect won't be felt this far up. Expect warmer mornings, with hot afternoons giving way to cloud buildup towards evening with occasional localised passing showers along the midhills.



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KIRAN PANDAY

EUROPE IS WATCHING: The European Union Election Observation Mission was launched on Tuesday. The government invited the European Union to monitor the CA election on 10 April.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

FLAG WEAVING: Tailors in Bhairawa were busy last Friday sewing Nepali Congress banners for the election.



KIRAN PANDAY

BOND OF TRUST: Santa Bahadur Lama (*right*) writes on behalf of blind student Ram Gopal Karki for the latter's SLC examination in Patan on Monday.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

KOREA PATH: Thousands joined the queue in Tripureswor this week to get a registration form for the Korean language exam. Proficiency in Korean language is a prerequisite to get a job there.

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Uncle Dahal and Uncle Sam

The nearer we get to elections, the more it looks like the **Prachanda Jugend** are doing their damndest to damage their chairman's chances of winning in elections. Baddies are beginning to panic that their leaders may actually lose, hence Uncle Dahal's tirade against Uncle Sam last week.

He alluded to a mysterious foreign conspiracy led by American imperialists and Indian expansionists to prevent him from winning in Rolpa. (If that is so then why is His Fierceness going to India before elections?) Actually, Comrades Lotus Flower, Cloud and Jit Bahadur don't need any foreign conspiracy to lose. The YCL will do very nicely.

Extracting campaign finances with telephone threats has become so common that it is getting impossible to locate anyone on the phone these days. Businessmen, traders, doctors, senior civil servants have all switched off their mobiles and disconnected landlines.



On Shivaratri a bunch of street urchins had pulled a rope across the road to extract money from passersby near Pashupati. Among

the people forced to cough up a Rs 1 donation each were a bunch of YCL in grey racksuits. This is what happens when the **Nepali Jungvolk** are more powerful than the Prachanda Jugend that inspired them.

The YCL was at the receiving end of a technique it regularised, but it has long been perfectly acceptable to forcibly demand money in the name of deity in Nepal. This is also what made the Maoist use of the tactic not only acceptable but somehow sacred and acceptable in the Nepali public sphere.



The former subterranean comrades are showing themselves to be no different from their mainstream counterparts with the revolutionary nepotism in the Ministry of Metaphysical Planning and mass recruitment of cadre in the Ministry of Jungles. Now comes word that the Maoist election manifesto **whitewashes** even willful defaulters by adding a small clause about NPAs that reads: 'borrowers can be pardoned if they have good intentions'. Right. The guy stole a billion bucks from a public bank, but it's all right because he is well-

intentioned. Irony of the month: the biggest supporters of the crookedest capitalists in this country are the communists.



A week after tourism minister Prithvi Subba Gurung told NYT there was pressure from China to close off Everest till 10 May, his ministry spokesman has denied it outright. The statement reads exactly like the China Tibet Mountaineering Association press release, saying expeditions will be doing their climbs only after 10 May because of "overcrowding" on the mountain. How is there going to be overcrowding if no expeditions are allowed? It will be **crawling with PLA**, stupid.

There is nothing unusual about our guys buckling under Beijing's pressure, but did the Chinese also tell our riot police to beat nuns holding candles like they were rag dolls? And not a peep from our heroic human rights activists yet.



So the Election Commission has got the Press Council to finally haul up *Gorkhakopatra* and warn it to follow the Code of Conduct. The Maoist **mouth-organ** is so loyal to its masters

that it printed Comrade Dahal's entire election manifesto as a special supplement. But the warning seems to have worked because the paper then started printing the manifestos of all the other parties as well. It wouldn't have helped boost the paper's declining circulation, that's for sure.



Kingji's name is not on the voter's list, so he can't even vote himself out of power. There isn't much for him to do these days, so he sits in the palace **googling** himself and probably contemplating another interview with sympathetic media like perhaps the North Korean News Agency, Yonhap, this time.

Just exactly why is KingG looking so unperturbed even as his kingdom is nearing its last throes? Does he know something we don't?

Is he planning to publicly expose the secret deal between him, the eh-maleys and kangresis in the palace on 23 April, 2006 that would have ensured his safety and the continuity of the monarchy in return for not holding out against street protests?



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