Weekly Internet Poll  # 397. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Should the NC and the UML join the Maoists in the government?

Total votes: 14,063

Weekly Internet Poll  # 396

Q. Which party do you expect to get the highest number of votes in the direct ballot of the elections?

Voters' choice: 14,063

What a difference a week makes. With the future turned upside down, the victorious Maoists and the defeated parties are finding it difficult to cobble together a coalition.

Nepal is going to be new, but what is it going to be like, how is it going to be built, what elements of the old Nepal will prevail? Much of this will be decided by the constituent assembly over the next two-and-half years. The fact that this assembly reflects Nepal’s diversity and has more women than ever before will mean that people who never had a say will have their voices heard.

Most analysts explain the Maoists’ win as the people’s reward for making these elections their agenda, for having given up the armed struggle and for being the party most likely to steer this country towards a peaceful and prosperous future.

State-restructuring may be the easy part, because there is consensus on the broad parameters of republicanism and federalism. But already, the Maoists are finding it difficult to convince the parties they defeated to join in a coalition government. Stung and humiliated by their rout, the NC and UML have retreated into their shells and have refused to join the government. “It would not be democratic,” says one UML candidate. Some NC members who won are said to be keen to join the Maoist-led government. But the party is under strong pressure from cadre not to join.

Said one senior UML source: “By being a part of the government again, we risk being blamed for everything that goes wrong while the Maoists take credit for everything that goes right.”

What has not helped is that even after elections, Maoist cadre are still up to their old tricks. They beat up Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat in Nuwakot on Monday and have been blocking supporters of other parties from attending re-polling in some centres.

Proponents of a joint government argue that since this was not a general election, the alliance needs to stay intact. The constituent assembly and the country’s economic problems are too serious to be tackled alone, they say, even by a party that has won so decisively. The coalition will also have to accommodate a new party: the MJF.

Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal has been trying to lobby other parties to join in, and has said he doesn’t want to “go at it alone”. The other issue has been of the choice of head of state. Koirala has turned down Dahal’s suggestion that he take up the ceremonial position, and several other candidates have also said no. Dahal met Madhab Nepal of the UML on Thursday morning, but Nepal refused to be swayed. Sources say the NC is willing to be convinced to join.

Kunda Dixit

Editorial

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While some in the UML and NC are licking their wounds, others may be rubbing their hands with glee. Who wants to be in government at hard times like these with fuel and food prices rocketing, the trade deficit and massive capital flight? ‘Food insecurity’ and ‘Not just supply and demand’, #394.

This week, the lines at the gas stations have started again. Every morning, we add another tape to our huge debt to the Indian Oil. The state can’t afford subsidies, and previous governments have tried and failed to increase fuel prices.

Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal went back at the Maoists. That will be the old faces who robbed them for so many years of basic necessities like water, electricity and security. I honestly hope Prachanda will get the message that people want real change this time.

Shroma T, letter writer

It’s development, stupid

The Maoists’ organisational skills still on show

The last General Man Singh is in (falsely) attributed with the vain boast that even if the NC put up a walking stick as its candidate in Kathmandu, the Congress would still win. As the election results have shown, perhaps it is the Maoists who could have done that this time around.

Guest Column
Deeplak Thapa

Pundits are weighing in, and will do so for long time to come, to explain the Maoist victory. Change is what everyone agrees upon. The electorate saw the NC-UML mix as being old, and threw them out unceremoniously.

For too long our economy has been in a deep coma. We have seen the Maoists’ organisational skills come in full display. ‘Old parties’ are new and exceptions, the winners from the past of their ordinances.

‘Old parties’ are new and exceptions, the winners from the past.

Electoral promises that we hope our big parties have learnt from this election are: ‘Expectation is high for dramatic and immediate improvements’. The quick fixes to Nepal’s economic ills. It’s clear we need jobs, jobs, jobs. Employment generation needs investments which in turn requires political stability, the right economic climate and proper infrastructure. All this takes time.

Indian Oil. The state can’t afford subsidies, and previous governments have tried and failed to increase fuel prices.

Hardly surprising

Election coverage

Despite your political differences with the Maoists, I suggest you convey what you have tried to convey in your specific election coverage (www.nepalitimes.com). The pitfalls of the campaign represent the desire of the common people to do away with the old parties who have failed them for many years of basic necessities like water, electricity and security. I honestly hope Prachanda will get the message that people want real change this time.

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atan once. There were some among the controversial politicians who got through, but only by reinventing themselves, mainly as part of new forces on the rise.

Other supporting explanations have been floated as well: general fear that the Maoists would pick up the gun again, intimidation and booth capturing, voting along ethnic lines, especially in the Farah, thus, thugging of the NC voter base. According to the Maoist ideologue Baburam Bhattarai is making efforts to reconcile and justice’, #395). This is unprecedented in the history of Nepal’s political parties and is (in)famously attributed to the late Ganesh Man Singh

In ‘Sticking it out’ (#394), the JTMM-J, not the MJF-C, was Barsha Man Pun, and thus it is (in)famously attributed to the late Ganesh Man Singh

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We need to be very pragmatic if we really want to see good media contributions in this time of our history. Let’s not be biased and try to understand the people’s strong desire for change, which it seems could not be met by NC and UML. Why don’t we give new hope to the Maoists and MUF a chance this time? They really deserve it given the Maoists’ ten-year struggle for a constitutional assembly, and the MJF’s movement in the Tarai for the rights of Madhesi people. I think these two parties have done more great than any other in recent years, so let’s give them a chance now.

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION
I honestly believe that after the war both sides have the right to come out of it unimpeded after the king opened the Lauda Air scandal. The Maoist organisation was further unimpeded after the king opened the second front against the parties in 2002 and their sole focus of attention became the palace.

Thus, to declaim against the Maoists for what happened is not a fair way to look at the matter. The Maoists themselves had not been able to fully gauge the extent of goodwill they had created over time. And come election day, the party with the most extensive organisation won. Charges of rigging and intimidation scoured the hill and plain when it comes from past masters at the game, namely, the NC and the UML.

Rajkumar Bista, Nepali Times' editor
The survival of the weakest
The war hasn’t ended, it has just begun

Pukhe Kamal Dahal and Co Ltd has run its political enterprise with ruthless efficiency. It identified the need for a radical force to champion the cause of the downtrodden and the marginalised. It designed the package of services to incorporate conflicting aspirations of ethnic autonomy and integrative nationalism, opposition to special relationship with India and the ambition of gaining its support for their political agenda, virulent anti-monarchism but courting of diehard royalists. To the other parties, the Maoists made an offer of settlement that none of them could rationally refuse: heads I lose and tails you win.

In run-up to elections, the Maoist propaganda machinery was way ahead of all others in seeding dissent in opposition camps and synchronising the strong-arm tactics of YCL hooligans. Those who say that Maoist victory at the polls was surprising are not being fair to the hard work the Maoists put in. The survival of the weakest may have worked to some extent, but the margin of votes garnered by the Maoists show the people were impressed. This is a feat worthy of a post-graduate case study thesis on campaign management. Planning an insurrection, executing a war, consolidating gains through the ballot box and going into government with an agenda of its own, however, are all parts of the political preparation. In Marxist-Maoist ideology, political power is merely the means, the end is to ensure complete redistribution of resources. That’s something the Rolpali Revolutionaries have now publicly disavowed. In their manifesto, Dahal and Co talk about reducing the ill-effects of liberalism, adopting public-private partnership, attracting foreign investment and limiting the role of government to that of facilitating growth. The vocabulary sounds familiar. These are the same medicines the World Bank and IMF have been prescribing for economic growth and its trickle-down effects. What hasn’t worked under the NC or UML in the past is unlikely to do the trick just because ex-rebels are driving Nepal’s crony capitalism.

The mandate is for change and the revolutionaries will be giving their supporters a raw deal, and ultimately harm themselves, if they begin to revel in the company of FNCCI big cats and Lalitpur moneybags on Wednesday was perhaps necessary, but there should be deep conversation with the rural destitute and the urban poor. Food, clothing, shelter, health and education, the ‘aatharbhoot abashyak’ that King Birendra’s white kids had identified in mid-seventies, remain the basic needs of most Nepalis. Go for economic growth by all means, but ensure the survival of the marginalised. Our experience with food-for-work to bail out vulnerable groups has been notable. Dahal can transform himself from a temporary Gandhi to a permanent one. He must help women earn, provide shelter for the urban poor and ensure affordable education and health care.

The Maoists can be market-savvy, but the need to reorient failed neo-liberal policies of the past is the only way they can make their mark and help Nepal break the vicious circle of poverty, instability, corruption, moral bankruptcy, helplessness and poverty. The fear of capital flight, tumbling share prices, escalating petroleum import bill or glut in lending is best left to professionals at the Nepal Rastra Bank. The incoming finance minister should concentrate on rising food prices and the necessities of the poor. With the survival of the weakest ensured, the fittest will be better equipped to look after their own interests. Mr Dahal, Chairman of the Board, now it’s your turn. The war hasn’t ended, it has just begun.
“The Maoists are a new party with new thinking, I think we should give them a chance to lead us into a new direction. Now that they have a mandate, it makes a climate for them to deliver results on the issues they have raised like social inclusion and distribution of wealth. I believe they can bring peace to the industrial sector, due to their strong links with the trade unions. If the Maoists work on the issues they have raised, we in the private sector will give them our support. The only thing I am afraid of is the attitude and behaviour of their cadres. They will have to do something about it or the loss of investments will continue.”

Rajendra K Khetan, Vice-Chairman of Khetan Group

“It is part of the Maoist agenda to develop the country. I think they will do what they can to ensure peace, a very important foundation for growth in the private sector. Apart from the unions, I don’t expect to see a major change in economic policy anytime soon. The unions are the pillars of their victory. They have promised them various things. While fulfilling their promises to them, I hope that the interest of industrialists will not be forgotten. Development cannot be compromised, but I am positive that they will be able to achieve it.”

Vishnu K Agarwal, Chief Executive of Morang Auto Works, Managing Director of United Finance

“Law and order has been our biggest problem. Now that the Maoists will become the law makers themselves, they will see to it that their own unions obey the rules. I hope the international community will not take the Maoists’ victory as a diplomatic failure. Nepal is very dependent on international assistance for development. We cannot afford to compromise our friendly relations with them, especially India, our biggest trading partner. I hope Prachanda, when he assumes power, will assure the Indian government that he will not support the communists in India.”

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“I welcome the result wholeheartedly. The business sector can’t wait to see the New Nepal that the Maoists have initiated. Businessmen in the country have been living under threats and extortion. I hope the new leadership will avoid the defects of previous government and draw new plans. But I fear that the Maoists will neglect the interests of business owners. To develop the economy, unions and industrialists have to work together. Strikes might work when they were the opposition, but now that they are the leaders of the country, they should change their approach.”

HB Rajbhandary, Executive Chairman of Nepal Dairy

Interviews conducted by Sheere Ng
**NTB in China**

The Nepal Tourism Board along with Sathins Travel and Tours, Nepal Dream, My Nepal, Asian Holidays, C-K Travel and China Southern Airlines participated in the three-day Guangzhou International Travel Fair held in Guangzhou from 4-6 April. Over 5,000 people visited the stand over the three-day period, a record for NTB and Nepal in China.

**Summer players**

John Players has launched its range of men’s wear for the summer-autumn season. The collection offers a range of formal and casual shirts, t-shirts, and formal and casual trousers. The new range is available at outlets at the Bluebird Mall, United World Trade Centre and retail outlets across the country.

**Gaming challenge**

Nokia has launched the worldwide Mobile Games Innovation Challenge. Sponsored by Nokia Publishing, the Challenge invites developers to submit mobile gaming concepts to help drive mobile gaming, relying on the features of N-Gage compatible devices, and Java- or Symbian-based Series 40 or S60 devices. The three most innovative game concepts will be offered pre-production contracts and $40,000 for first, the second $20,000, and the third $10,000 to enable the participant to further develop the concept. Deadline for submission is 20 August. Further information on http://developer.n-gage.com/innovation.

**Gorkha in Europe**

Gorkha Beer will now be available in Europe. Pradhan Brother SPRL is importing Gorkha Beer, the flagship brand of Gorkha Brewery, to Belgium and through its network to France, Germany and the Netherlands. Gorkha Beer is also available in Japan, Hong Kong and Macau.

**NEW PRODUCTS**

FLASHY DRIVE: LaCie launched the latest model of a hard disk, designed by Neil Poulton, which comes with USB 2.0, eSATA and Firewire 400, in capacities of 500GB, 750GB and 1TB. LaCie products are marketed by CAS Trading House.

CONSTRUCTION: Terex-vectra's latest offering the 4WD Backhoe Loader TX760. This new loader comes with Carraro axles and transmission, dual-flow hydraulic pump, 4WD option and upto 4500 hours of warranty. It is now available at a promotional price in Nepal.

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**ECONOMIC SENSE**

**Artha Beed**

Republic of Nepal. An important qualification needed to be part of the Kathamandu elite is to be able to take a negative view on almost any situation. This Beed would like to give the Maoists the benefit of the doubt. The important thing is now to help them in ensuring that peace is sustainable and economic development begins at last. There are many matters that were put aside until after the CA elections. Now that the elections have happened, there can be no more excuses for not addressing the economy seriously and with purpose.

The key challenge for the Maoist-led government will be to convert their policies into action. They will have to start giving a tangible meaning to phrases like “pursuing transitional economic policies.” With the Maoists, there has always been a big gap between their policies and their actual actions on the ground. While they have said their khamo-gangon courts were no longer operating, their party cadres out in the villages have not stopped issuing rough justice. Now that they will be leading the government, they need to shun their parallel government. Perhaps, the first gesture of their seriousness may be to vacate the government and private buildings that they are using.

The business community is especially worried about the attitude of workers who have either formed Maoist-affiliated unions or been forced to align with them. The Maoist leadership will have a hard time convincing the more hardcore factions amongst workers that the goals they have now changed and labour reforms are necessary. If the new government does not put into action commitments made by the leadership on bringing about reforms in the labour sector, Nepal will not see any increase in investment.

**Maonomies**

Some habits of the Kathmandu elite will certainly have had a sudden change of heart and are trying to find socialite Maoists who they can strike up a conversation with. But the Beed is still getting calls from people full of dread at the prospect of the new People’s Challenge.

The Manomics of a majority-led government would ensure there are fewer people to keep sweet and fewer palms to grease. The Beed just hopes that we will not repeat the story of West Bengal in the late seventies and a good part of eighties where a Left Front government with several coalition partners, embarked on protecting a section of the business in the name of protecting “national capitalism”. This attitude of the then West Bengal government threw the state out of the national development map and even after nearly thirty years, they are still busy fixing those mistakes. The CPN (Maoist) manifesto does lay down the strategies they would like to pursue for promoting domestic and foreign investment. The challenge will be how to put these into practice.

The other worry for the business community and citizens in general is the issues of right to property and ownership. The government has to seriously state its intention to keep these rights intact. On the other hand, laws such as inheritance and land laws could well be reformed. If inheritance was heavily taxed it might give people a stronger incentive to be proactive themselves rather than waiting for windfalls from their family. If land records were maintained electronically then the government would actually know how much land an individual owns.

The last important challenge for the new government will be fiscal balance. If the Maoists are really able to dole out all the goodies promised in their manifests like free education, subsidised food supplies, and millions of new jobs, this will cost money. With global increase in food prices and the market crisis suddenly hitting economies hard, it will be difficult to ensure that a large fiscal deficit from all the state spending does not lead to inflation. Large price hikes would lead to street protests and an opportunity for opposition to the government, and the Maoists know what that means better than anyone else.

Yes, the mandate has been given for building a New Nepal and everyone wants it to be better than the one we have been living in. Let’s hope our hopes are not dashed again.

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Further reading on

Elections eSpecial

www.nepalitimes.com

- A round-up of the international media’s coverage of the election (What the world is saying: http://www.nepalitimes.com.np/election/news.php?id=33)
“The investment climate will improve”

Baburam Bhattarai pointed to a bouquet in his study and said: “People who never looked at us before are coming here to give me flowers. Flanked by portraits of Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Mao, the chief ideologue of the Maoists spoke to Nepal Times on Tuesday about sleepless nights, his political and economic agenda and about whether he’d been offered the prime ministership. Nepal Times: How does it feel to arrive here after the long journey from a village in Gorkha?

Baburam Bhattarai: There is a deep sense of responsibility, and that comes from the fact that I was born in an ordinary village family, my mother can’t read or write, my father is a farmer. I used to get very emotional back when I saw the poverty, discrimination and disparities all around me in the village. And what was I going to do about it, those feelings did touch me at an early age.

Now we have to try to resolve issues of national importance, there are enormous anxieties, there is lots to do but we have very little time and resources. It makes me somewhat anxious, thinking about whether we can do it or not. There are sleepless nights.

But luckily we have a lot of experience, we engaged in open politics, then we went underground for ten years then we engaged in an armed struggle. I have always been very committed and that is why I think we can handle the challenges.

When the first results started coming in, weren’t you surprised?

Not so much. You are all in the media, you do political analysis. I have the feeling you may have been a bit out of touch with the reality in the countryside. The ground had shifted in the past 10 years of conflict. We were convinced the people wanted change, and we knew they would let us lead. We knew we’d be the largest party, but we knew the people wanted change, and we knew they would let us lead. We knew the people wanted change, and we knew they would let us lead.

The simple universal principle of land-reform is land to the tiller. In mountains, the owners are also tillers but in the tarai there is a lot of absentee landlordism and productivity is low. There has to be redistribution and modernisation of the methods of cultivation. When we say we want land reform and an end to feudalism we don’t mean we want to end private ownership. Collectivisation, socialisation and nationalisation is not our current agenda.

Your election manifesto also talks about land reform. What kind of land reform are you talking about?

There is of course the need to provide immediate relief. There are the victims of the war, those affected by inflation, corruption those things need to be addressed urgently. But the foundations also need to be laid for structural changes required for an economic transformation. Unless you pay attention to the structural reforms in the economy, superficial interventions won’t help. Our economic agenda is to improve agricultural productivity, create jobs through tourism and hydro-power, foster the service industries in IT and education, and infrastructure.

The Maoists have promised in their election manifesto to raise the per capita income by 2000 rupees by 2008. The Maoists have promised in their election manifesto to raise the per capita income by 2000 rupees by 2008. This seems somewhat ambitious, thinking about whether we can do it or not. There are sleepless nights.

The Maoists won the election with the slogan “new ideology and new leadership for a new Nepal”. They promised “new ideology and new leadership for a new Nepal”. They promised economy, superficial interventions won’t help.
It is clear now that the Maoists will emerge as the biggest party in the constituent assembly. If more people have voted for the party in PR than in the first past the post system, they might even inch close to a simple majority, though that magic 302 figure looks a bit distant right now.

The results are a wake-up call to us in the Kathmandu media. Only very few sensed the people’s desperate yearning for change, the Maoist base among the young and marginalised. To be fair, this has taken even the Maoists by surprise.

How did all of us get it so wrong? For one, there hadn’t been elections for nine years, traditional voting patterns had changed. An armed rebellion, a generational change, left politics, ethnic consciousness, and changing aspirations had complicated every prediction.

Kathmandu’s opinion-formers have been shown to be insular and disconnected from the rest of the country. This must force us to re-examine some of our basic assumptions about political changes over the past few years, and take what the Maoists say more seriously.

The Maoists managed to defy predictions partly because of pre-electoral intimidation and violence, and a degree of electoral malpractice on 10 April itself. But that doesn’t help explain the result.

The Maoists ran a parallel state for ten years, they had the best organisation, and the most committed cadre which has been hard at work.

Three days before the polls, Hisila Yami, told Nepali Times: “We have people everywhere. There is an invisible network that is active now.” The Maoists succeeded in selling themselves as the principal agents of change, raising issues of inclusion, federalism and land reform most effectively. Their support among the country’s marginalised and poor is no longer in doubt.

This was also an anti-incumbency vote against the establishmentarian NC and the UML. The Koirala dynasty has suffered a serious set-back. Two men who have helped get the peace process this far: Krishna Prasad Sitaula and Shekhar Koirala.

The UML, particularly its top leadership, has been routed. The party knows it has to engage in immediate introspection to prevent its demoralised low-level cadre from defecting to the Maoists, and to ensure that the Maoists do not succeed in monopolising the entire left space.

India was in panic mode when the results trickled in. From a policy high of seeing successful elections on the evening of 10 April, New Delhi was depressed the next day. Diplomats are in a tizzy, they have to answer difficult questions to their political leadership about getting it wrong, besides brain storming about what to do next. There was a danger that some in Delhi may have been tempted to subvert the result, try to stitch a NC-UML-Madhesi forces alliance to keep the Maoists out. But better sense seems to have prevailed. The MEA has been in damage control mode, and welcomed the results. Policy-makers know the dangers inherent in pummeling up against the former rebels. This school would like to stay the course, and believes there are enough balancing factors to prevent Maoists from rushing through their agenda.

The Maoists have been largely sober in victory. The cadre has not gone wild, and the leadership has made the right noises reaching out to everyone, including acknowledging Koirala’s role in the peace process. Balanman Bhattari, possibly in the running for prime ministerial, has said decisions will be made in consultation with all other forces.

In victory, the Maoists now need to be responsible, take the lead on a path to a New Nepal in a non-violent manner, respecting fundamental democratic freedoms, and recognising regional and global realities.

Prashant Jha

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"The Nepali election result is like the game of bag chaal. If you let the tiger go it will eat all the goats, but if the goats come together and put the tiger in a cage, there’s no danger from it anymore."

- Indra Bahadur Tamang, unemployed, 44, Itahari

"The Maoists have given so much blood just so that we can conduct constituent assembly elections, for our freedom. Why wouldn’t I vote for them?"

- Narayan Prasad Kafle, retired, 57, Dhading

"Peace must be sorted out, especially in the hilly regions. Security, that’s the number one factor."

- Manot Kumar Sharma, 24, Lumbini

"There must be pluralism as well as a multi-party system. Things in the country can’t be changed overnight, but the Maoists must alter their behavior, be a legitimate political force and not revive intimidation. They must respect the rule of law."

- Dinesh Tripathi, 40, lawyer, Rupendehi

"I did not vote for the Maoists and I will never vote for them. They have killed and looted so many people, including people in my village in Ghandruk. I will never support a party that has brought its way to power through fear and intimidation. I refuse to bow down to them. Everyone else might be afraid but I am not. They came to collect donations from my shop once but I did not even give them one paisa. They marked down my name and said there would be consequences but nothing happened. I am sure they will never renounce such behaviour even if they’re in government."

- Dhak Gurung, 43, shopkeeper, Ghandruk

"The first impression I had of the Maoists was good - they prevented alcohol from being sold and gambling was prohibited in their areas. Since they haven’t disappointed me - I felt it was good to vote for them."

- Shiva Regmi, driver, 43, Naubise

"I fear the police force where it’ll wipe out neutrality. So I hope neutral, well-reasoned law and order will be priorities."

- Bamsi Dahal, 33, policeman, Bhairawa

"I voted for the Maoists in my home town of Rautahat. Although the Maoists had beat me once for not giving them money, the JTMM-J came to my house and looked me, they lost my entire family and took everything I owned. I voted for the Maoists because only they can get rid of groups like the JTMM. They’re militants and you can’t trust weaklings like the NC and the UML to protect you. Only the Maoists are capable."

- Tuliram Rai, 40, farmer, Rautahat

"I want to see a democratic party system and a state system, so central power from Kathmandu gets spread."

- Bishnu Chaudhari, 27, caretaker, Bhairawa

"I was impressed with the Maoists’ aggressive style of campaigning. It showed that at least they’re serious about something. And like everyone else, I want a change. I don’t want to see the same old Girija and Madhab Nepal in power again. Maybe Prachanda will be different."

- Kushal Giri, 20, student, Lalitpur

"I’m not confident that the Maoists can rule as they have lesser knowledge on government and foreign policy. But first things first, the Nepali people want peace."

- B. P. Basyal, 51, civil contractor, Bhairawa

"The only party that came canvassing to my house was the Maoists. No other party bothered. The candidate was polite and he spoke to me well. He seemed like a good candidate and I saw the enthusiasm with which they were campaigning, I thought if they’re so excited then they should be given a chance."

- Laxmi Adhikari, 29, housewife, Lalitpur

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CA Scorecard

**FIRST PAST THE POST**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>% of Votes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPN-M</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>13.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UML</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MJF</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
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**PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>% of Seats</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPN-M</td>
<td>32.27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>21.84%</td>
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<tr>
<td>UML</td>
<td>21.19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>MJF</td>
<td>18.39%</td>
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<tr>
<td>RPP</td>
<td>3.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2.57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As of 4PM, 17 April
I was a Congress supporter before. But they failed me. They didn’t do anything good. All they were concerned about was collecting money for themselves and taking bribes. Our roads remain broken and we still don’t have proper electricity or water. I don’t want to vote for a party that can’t even supply water to my house. The Maoists say they’re anti-corruption. They say they will get things done. Now that we have voted for them, let’s see if we get water and electricity. If they manage that, I’ll vote for them again.”

- Krishna Subedi, 44, cybercafé owner, Lalitpur

“I voted for the Maoists because none of the previous parties have implemented the rule of law. I am hoping the Maoists will be different. The Maoist leaders at the top level are educated and I believe if the driver is capable the bus will go in the right direction.”

- Raj Gopal Shrestha, farmer, 53, Dhulikhel

“Abandon weaponry and promote peace. These will be huge challenges for the Maoists.”

- Goma Kunwar, 24, teacher, Kapilbastu

“Already there are threats going around that India might ban some goods to Nepal. The new government must be able to convince that Nepal is genuine about carrying out businesses with them.”

- Satyendra Tripathi, 24, student, Bhairawa

“Do away with conflicts that cause shops to close and the blocking of roads. We don’t need these petty obstructions to occur. Also, employment and poverty alleviation.”

- Laxmi Khanal, 22, teacher, Bhairawa

“I believe everyone should get their own chance. Now it’s the Maoists’ turn. I have seen what the other parties have done. Even the king didn’t do anything. Now it is time the youth led the country in a new direction. Let’s see what they will do. The important thing is that they save the nation and the nation can’t be saved if the Maoists go back to the jungle.”

- Mohan Bahadur Thapa, retired, 84, Dhulikhel

“My family has always voted for the UML but this time we voted for the Maoists. The Maoists came and said, “Give us a chance we will make a new Nepal.” Let’s see what they’ll do. We voted because we did not want the Maoists to go back to the jungle. We are hoping there will be peace and we will get to earn our living peacefully.”

- Saraswati Malla, 32, housewife, Nepalganj

“I have always been a NC supporter. But this time I wanted to choose a new party. I voted for the Maoists in the FPTP and for MJF in PR. The new party has won, I am hopeful that now there will be peace.”

- Binod Kashyap, 35, businessman, Nepalganj

“International politics will compel the Maoists to change. Address the issue of the YCL, otherwise they will be more aggressive. I fear they will be used as a parallel commando group in the form of civilian to terrorise people.”

- Dilip Bhattarai, 65, Bhairawa

“They have sold dreams to the poor. Now they must fulfill them.”

- Nurddim Ahamat, 38 Hotel owner, Bhairawa

Based on interviews by Pranaya SJB Rana, Mallika Aryal, Srishti Adhikri, Wong Shu Yun
BEIJING—Here in the land of Mao, the Great Helmsman who changed the fate and face of China has been dead for more than 30 years and his body lies in a mausoleum at Tiananmen Square as proof.

Yet, very few Chinese know that Mao’s disciples are still waging revolutions in his name in Nepal and some parts of India. The few here who have heard that there was an election in Nepal are the ones who watch CCTV 9 International which has covered the polls. But even they don’t know that the winning party is known as Maoists. It’s an indication of how far China has distanced itself from Mao that not many people think about their great leader, and know even less about Maoism elsewhere in the world.

Even Chinese intellectuals are slightly puzzled about why a Nepali party had to name itself after Mao Zedong. “Don’t you have any leaders of your own that you could have named the party after?” asked one over dinner the other day.

My joke with friends here is: “We exported Bhrikuti and Arniko to you, and imported Mao.” But some Chinese have never heard of Bhrikuti, the Nepali princess married to a Tibetan king or Arniko, the master builder from Kathmandu Valley who is supposed to have brought the architecture of the pagoda (called dagoba here) to China.

China has been transformed in the last 30 years with Dengonomics and from an underdeveloped country it has become the fastest growing economy in the world and still growing. It does not mean that China doesn’t have problems like the growing gap in incomes, social issues. But the government seems to be well aware of them and has the resources and the commitment to address them.

Not many Chinese are aware of the Maoist victory in Nepal

China is turning to health issues like HIV and smoking which is a major health hazard because 350 million Chinese smoke. Keeping in mind the Beijing Olympics the government is banning smoking in public places.

China is also opening up and there are debates about the cultural revolution. An artist who was labeled counter-revolutionary and not allowed to paint during the 1960s is now a celebrity. Even in the past ten years, there has been a sea change in Chinese self-confidence. In 1995, very few would speak to us and it wasn’t just a language problem. Today, the Chinese are open and confident and many speak English. Literacy rates are up, there is more exposure.

What is still the same is the lack of knowledge about the rest of Asia, especially Nepal. Not only do people here not know about the Nepal Maoists, they don’t even know that Nepal is a neighbouring country. Only those who have been to India have heard about Nepal and some think Qomolungma is on China’s border with India.

If Nepal is to tap China’s huge market for investment and tourism, our economic diplomacy here has to pick up. No more China is also opening up and there are debates about the cultural revolution. An artist who was labeled counter-revolutionary and not allowed to paint during the 1960s is now a celebrity. Even in the past ten years, there has been a sea change in Chinese self-confidence. In 1995, very few would speak to us and it wasn’t just a language problem. Today, the Chinese are open and confident and many speak English. Literacy rates are up, there is more exposure.

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If Nepal is to tap China’s huge market for investment and tourism, our economic diplomacy here has to pick up. No more

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If Nepal is to tap China’s huge market for investment and tourism, our economic diplomacy here has to pick up. No more
not to forget

Relatives of the war dead come to terms with the Maoist victory

“Our entire village voted for the Maoists because they liked my father,” says Ruku’s 19-year-old son, Rajiv. Rajendra Parley, UML representative from Dhading-3, who lost to Jamarkattel (25,075 votes to 14,580 votes) believes the YCL’s terror tactics during the campaign brought about his defeat. From the day the UML filed nominations at the EC, UML cadre in Dhading started being threatened and assaulted, he says. “They would tell them and say that if they canvassed for the UML they would break their bones and make their wives widows,” recalls Parley. Many party workers were beaten up in March. The UML campaigned where it could because the YCL always attacked the meetings and rallies in Dhading had to be cancelled. Parley’s encounter was attacked. “How can there result of the election conducted in this manner be legitimate?” asks Parley.

But local journalist Ramesh Acharya says the key to the Maoists’ success was their ability to penetrate even the most remote parts of the district, ask people what their worries were and gain their trust. “You could make the argument about intimidation if the Maoists had only won in remote areas, but they also won in Kathmandu and Lalitpur, the people voted for change,” he says. In Thakre, Shrisha and Radha wonder what the government run by the Maoists is going to look like. “I don’t understand the Maoist ideology, because I have only seen them as agents of violence, but since they are in government I hope they understand that they have been given a great responsibility and Nepalis will throw them out too if they disappoint the people again.”

For them, Ruku has already returned. He didn’t ask Radha. It is still not clear why Navaraj Subedi was killed. Like hundreds of others killed by the Maoists all over Nepal, it could be personal grudge, they could have thought he was an informer, or it could have been mistaken identity.

Ruku Acharya who used to be a staunch UML supporter, this time she voted for the Maoists. The army came in the middle of the night and took Ruku’s husband away five years ago. The family hasn’t heard from him since, and doesn’t know if he is dead or alive. “I am so disappointed with the NC and UML and the governments they made. I went to the prime minister, to various home ministers and nothing happened, the Maoists have said they will find out,” Ruku says.

Nearby, the Humagain family pictured is busy tilling their terrace to sov main after overnight rain. All the women voted for the Maoists while their husbands voted for other parties. Sakundol Humagain says, “The Maoist candidates are locals. They are sons of farmers like us and know the difficulties we face. Although I didn’t vote for them I am happy the Maoists won, we are hopeful that they will address our problems.”

Even traditional NC and UML voters cast their ballots for the Maoists. A once-devout NC supporter who did not wish to be named cites the incompetence of the government and the threat of violence as the reason he voted Maoist this time. “I don’t want to live in fear. I don’t care what they do once they are in the government, if they don’t bother me I can live peacefully,” he adds. In the more remote parts of Kathmandu, Tai Bahadur Pradhan witnessed YCL cadre urging the elderly to vote for the Maoists right inside the polling booth.

A week after elections, expectations are very high. And many people state that although the Maoists deserved to win, they must deliver on their promises.
Preconditions
Narayan Wagle in Kathmandu
13 April
Prime Minister Koirala said before the elections that the government’s composition should be intact for ten more years. He didn’t campaign in the polls because of his head of state status. He is on the FR list of the NC, but said he would bow out of active politics.

All that was before the results started coming in. The Maoist sweep. The question is not anymore about who has a majority but who can cobble a two-thirds majority. When the constituent assembly sits, there will be a need to appoint a “ceremonial” president. It would be difficult to make the executive Maoist prime minister also serve as president, and the other parties may want a say.

There is a strong possibility that the Maoists will ask Koirala to serve as president. This will reward him for his leadership role in the peace process as well as allow the Maoists to reassure the domestic and international community. The only question is whether a person whose party as well as his family has lost in elections will be in the frame of mind to accept. He will be under pressure from within the party to ensure that the elections are clean and fair. He may have to present an electoral reform package, his stand will be in the frame of mind to accept. He will be under pressure from within the party to ensure that the elections are clean and fair.

The UML, NC, Nepal Army, and especially India and the US may not be comfortable with a Maoist government led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal, but they can’t reject him outright either. India helped the Maoists abandon the ballot for the ballot, and will have to live with the consequences of the Maoist electoral win, and so will the American administration which faces a Democratic challenge this year.

So the day may not be far away when the army chief has to salute Dahal and make his regular briefing. For an army that has rejected integration with the PLA, this will not be easy. The Maoists make integration a prestige issue, the army will have to go along with it or look for acceptable alternatives. In his victory speech, Dahal appeared responsible and ready for a leadership role. He accepted multiparty democratic competition and also stressed seven-party unity. On the economic front, he will be forced to be pragmatic. On constitution drafting he has no option but to cooperate with the other parties. And he can’t allow his YCL free rein as they have now. The more responsible Dahal makes himself, the more public credibility he will gain.

Donations
Akhilesh, 14-20 April
During this election, political parties around the country raised millions of rupees from businesses and businessmen to finance their campaigns. Big businesses donated according to party size, large parties got upwards of Rs 10-20,000 while smaller ones got Rs 10-20,000. Businessmen say that the Maoists collected the most amount of money, after which came the Congress and UML.

To collect donations, top leaders from the parties would call up the senior businessmen and even arrange meetings if required. Many businesses donated voluntarily as they felt the donations would increase their bargaining power with the parties. Making donations today will make it easier for the business sector to lobby tomorrow, says one businessman.

Interim prez
Blog post on www.zynyansau.com, 16 April
It is now certain that king Gyanendra will soon have to pack his bags and leave the palace. But it’s not as if he’s the head of country even now. Right now, the roles of both head of state and prime minister are being played by Girija Prasad Koirala. The UML have decided not to take part in the government and all UML ministers will hand in a joint resignation. Even the NC might follow suit. But the question arises: who will occupy the spot vacated by Gyanendra?

A few days ago, Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Baburam Bhattarai went to Baluwatar to visit PM Koirala and requested that he remain prime minister for the interim period. But Koirala refused, apparently saying he is old and tired. After his refusal, the Maoists went to Raja Ram Prasad Singh, leader of the Nepal Janamati Morcha and regarded as Nepal’s first republican leader. He too, refused.

How the Maoists proceed with the current political consensus remains to be seen. In fact, the true test of the Maoists begins now.

National unity
Editorial in Himal Khaharapatra, 13-27 April
The enthusiastic participation of the Nepali people in the CA polls shows that people have made the political and financial reconstruction of the country their national aim. The success of the election marks an end to old violent politics. Voters have proven that fears about ethnic and regional violence were unfounded.

Himal, Pahal, and Tani voted for a new Nepal and have demanded the fulfillment of the people’s mandate and political stability. There will be talks about which party won and which lost in comparison to its publicity efforts but the main achievement is the success of this election.

Nepali people have made their wish for the construction of a new Nepal known through the ballots, and now those chosen need to fulfill that responsibility.
The banality of brutality

The work that gives its title to the exhibition, ‘Splatter Analysis’, is a good starting point to unpacking the messages of the show: a large, mirror-smooth white board is drilled through to create a delicate pattern, but it is in fact the mark of random firing of an air defence system.

The beauty of the painting is in stark contrast to the reality of the weapon whose operation gives it its form. ‘Splatter Analysis’ sets the tone for the rest of the exhibition, highlighting the brutality of war by subverting its reality and transforming it into something aesthetically pleasing. The effect is unsettling.

The overall impression, despite the beauty of the individual pieces, is of unease. It stems from the contradiction of aesthetic pleasure with the death theme on many levels. Materials are used that are not so much unrelated as antithetical, glitter and stealth being the obvious example. Further disorientation comes from the inclusion of cultural and visual references from Africa and Europe in an exhibition that begins and ends with Nepal but refuses to let you settle into the comfort of a one country theme. Indeed, the stealth bomber and the other ultra-modern weapons depicted are an ironic reminder of the relief that the Nepali war remained relatively low-tech apart from a few notable examples.

The overwhelming effect of this collection of beautifully crafted references to brutality, is to remind the visitor of the banality of violence, how it happens in apparently ‘normal’, everyday contexts. It is resonant of the mid-19th century British poet, WH Auden, who writes of the myth of the fall of Icarus as he flies too close to the sun, pointing out that ‘dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer’s horse scratches his innocent behind on a tree’.

John Bevan

Splatter Analysis is an exhibition of 22 pieces by UK artist Loren Bevan and is showing at the Siddhartha Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited until 23 April.

Sun Dance

A rtsists from five different continents are set to descend on the Last Resort near the Chinese border next weekend to get together and celebrate the renowned Sun Dance Festival.

This year the festival’s organisers Sam Voolstra from The Last Resort and Nirakar Yaktumba from Moksh have hooked up with internationally acclaimed bands, such as Pachooka from Australia, Pink Noise from India and Liz Foster from the United States.

However, Nepal-based bands like Baja Gaja and Inner Groove will turn the adventure resort into a multi-cultural platform, adding to its international flair.

“Musicians in Nepal are really open to all sorts of music, any form and any style. Inner Groove, for me, is a mixture of genres, like a tasty and smooth cocktail,” says Caribbean pianist and singer Patrick Scannel, who joined the fusion band only a few months ago.

This is the third Sun Dance Festival Voolstra and Yaktumba are organising and they enjoy the challenge of bringing musicians together from around the world.

“Most people who come to Sun Dance are absolute music lovers and they like different styles of music. All musicians will have their own sets but they will also jam together; folk and jazz to relax; rock, reggae and hip hop to dance—it is perfect,” Voolstra says.

Bill Bierling

Last Resort, Thamel, 4700525
Tickets: Rs 2,000 includes food, accommodation and transport
EVENTS
- Spicy salsa evening with the Salsa dance academy at the Yak and Yeti pub, from 6-10PM on 18 April. Free entrance. 4248499
- Weekly human rights film screenings with Dr Babasubash Ambadekar a film by Jabbar Patel at the Same Theatre, Gunukul, 5PM on 20 April. 4469056
- School Bulling a talk program by Rakhya Nepal, 30 April at The New Era, Battisputali. 9561295985
- Don’t worry, be happy spring concert by the Kathmandu Chorale, 3.30 PM and 6PM on 3 May at the British School, admission free.
- Tantric Dance of Nepal presented at Kalamananda, every Monday 7PM at Hotel Vaja and every Saturday 11AM at Patan Museum.
- Toastmasters a communication and leadership program, organised by Kathmandu Toastmasters Club every Wednesday 6PM at Industrial Enterprise Development Institute (IEDI) building, Tripureswor. 4288487

MUSIC
- Paleti with MP Gurung from Shilton, 25 April, 6PM at Nepa-laya ‘r’ sala, Kalikasthan.
- Rudra night fusion and classical Nepali music by Shyam Nepal and friends, every Friday, 7PM at La Meridien, Gokarna. 4452122
- Bull music by Hemanta Rao every Friday at 7.30 PM at Dhaebest Restaurant and Bar, Thapathali.
- 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. 5524008

DINING
- The Kaiser Cafe open now at the Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika’s Group of Hotels, open from 8AM-10PM. 4425341
- Sunday jazz brunch design your meal with pastas, salads and barbeque, with jazz by Mariano and band, at the Rox Garden, Hotel Hyatt Regency. 4493611
- Steak escape with Kathmandu’s premier steaks available for lunch and dinner at the Olive Bar and Bistro, Hotel Radisson. 4418168
- Bourbon Room Restro-bar now open for lunch and dinner with wines from over 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 Ashi Lounge, opening hours 1-10PM, above Himalayan Java, Thamel.
- Continental and Chinese cuisine and complimentary fresh brewed coffee, every meal at a Restarant and Bar, Pulchok.
- Illy espresso coffee at the Galleria cafe, every Friday espresso coffee at the Bar.
- International buffet at the Sunrise Cafe, and Russian specialities at Chimney, Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248499
- Roasts and reds fine roasts and red wine at the Rox Restaurant, Hotel Hyatt Regency. 15 April-6 May. 4493611
- Jazz in Patan with coffee, food, drinks and dessert at the New Orleans Cafe, Jawakheti. 11:30 AM-10PM. 5522708
- Saturday special barbeque, sekuwa, momos, dal-bhat at The Tea House Inn, Wind Hills, Nagarkot every Saturday. 9841208468.
- Dice-licious brunch at Kakori, Seetal Crowne Plaza, roll the dice to the number of the day and get 50% discount on an individual meal, Saturdays and Sundays, 12.30-3.30 PM. 4225999
- Scrumptious wood fired pizzas, cocktails and more at Roadhouse, Bhaktapur. 4420567. Pulchok 522755 and Thamel 4280567.
- Starr night barbecue at Hotel Shangri-la with Live performance by Giney Gurung, Rs. 666.00 nett per person, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7PM onwards. 4429399
- Kebabs and curries at the Dhaeb, Thapathali. 9841209061
- Lavazza coffee Italy’s favourite coffee at La Dolce Vita, Thamel, Roadhouse Cafe Pulchok and Thamel. 4706612
- Pizza from the woodfired oven at Java, Thamel. 4422519

For inclusion in the listing send information to editors(at)nepaltimes.com

WEEKEND WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL
The satellite pictures show a very interesting weather situation. The symptoms are sunny afternoons followed by windy thunderstorms and showers, which are the result of ongoing tussles between a northwesterly cold front and emerging warm front from the southwest. This confrontation is likely to continue through the weekend as both sides are gathering strength from their sources. As a consequence, temperatures will continue rising in the daytime but remain stable in the mornings. Another large rainfall is not likely this weekend. The mornings will be foggy and the afternoons will be cloudy. The satellite pictures show a very interesting weather situation. The symptoms are sunny afternoons followed by windy thunderstorms and showers, which are the result of ongoing tussles between a northwesterly cold front and emerging warm front from the southwest. This confrontation is likely to continue through the weekend as both sides are gathering strength from their sources. As a consequence, temperatures will continue rising in the daytime but remain stable in the mornings. Another large rainfall is not likely this weekend. The mornings will be foggy and the afternoons will be cloudy. The satellite pictures show a very interesting weather situation. The symptoms are sunny afternoons followed by windy thunderstorms and showers, which are the result of ongoing tussles between a northwesterly cold front and emerging warm front from the southwest. This confrontation is likely to continue through the weekend as both sides are gathering strength from their sources. As a consequence, temperatures will continue rising in the daytime but remain stable in the mornings. Another large rainfall is not likely this weekend. The mornings will be foggy and the afternoons will be cloudy. The satellite pictures show a very interesting weather situation. The symptoms are sunny afternoons followed by windy thunderstorms and showers, which are the result of ongoing tussles between a northwesterly cold front and emerging warm front from the southwest. This confrontation is likely to continue through the weekend as both sides are gathering strength from their sources. As a consequence, temperatures will continue rising in the daytime but remain stable in the mornings. Another large rainfall is not likely this weekend. The mornings will be foggy and the afternoons will be cloudy.

In U. Me Aur Hun, Ajay (Ajay Devgan) is on a cruise with four of his friends. He meets Pia (Kajol) and falls in love with her. After a disastrous first meeting, Ajay tries everything to woo her but Pia doesn’t fall for it. Eventually, by sheer perseverance, he dances his way into her heart and the two get married. Everything is expected to be happy until Pia is diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. The film is produced and directed by Ajay Devgan.

Call 4422529 for show timings at Jai Nepal www.jainepal.com

Call 4422529 for show timings at Jai Nepal www.jainepal.com
TRUST US: To allay worries in the business community about their victory, the Maoist leadership invited FNCCI members to an interactive session at the Everest Hotel on Wednesday. (l-r) Baburam Bhattarai, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Khus Kumar Joshi (FNCCI president) and Krishna Acharya.

BACK ON STRIKE: Tibetans in Kathmandu have resumed their protests since the elections. These nuns, photographed in front of the museum at Swoyambhu, have gone on hunger strike in protest against human rights violations in Tibet.
Mau Mau land

Quite a sight to see those who were kicking bad baddie asses till two weeks ago now licking them at various gostis around town. There was a near stampede at the Pistachio Palace the other day as farang dignitaries and crony capitalists raced each other to the Oval Orifice. Good thing the Ass got there before the crowd to present his bouquet of gladioli to El Presidente himself. The Mau Mau victory in Nepal didn’t just prove wrong pundits, prophets, astrologers, intelligence services, and other assorted asses but it got the neighbourhood superpowers both wondering what hit them.

The Indians put on a brave face. But the Chinese are still worked up because it hasn’t gone according to the script. Hey, Pasang, Mao said you are supposed to win power by the barrel of the gun, not through elections. What kind of message will this send to ex-Red Guards in the mainland? Not since the Mallus became the first commies to sweep elections in Kerala has the world seen something as amazing as this.

The Americans for their part are still trying to figure out if it is Tibet or Nepal that wants independence from China. National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley told George Stephanopoulos on ABC News on Sunday night that the human rights violations against monks in Nepal would not deter President Bush from attending the Olympics opening ceremony in Beijing in August. Nepalis, he added, had the right to self determination and Beijing should respect that. Five times Hadley said ‘Nepal’ instead of ‘Tibet’ and Georgie Boy didn’t bat either eyelid. Could it be he didn’t know the diff either, or was he letting Hadley hang himself? At least ‘Iraq’ and ‘Iran’ both rhyme begin with ‘I’. But Nepal and Tibet?

Speaking of autonomous regions, it looks like the Chinese Embassy takes a very dim view of French and German MPs using the ruse of election observation in Nepal to attend Free Tibet meetings at Boudha. They have taken umbrage at Yvon Colin, French upper house rep and cheerleader of the Community of Tibetans in France, underling the Free Tibet flag in Kathmandu. In fact, the Chinese ambassador went to Bakhovat to protest to the prime minister himself, but the old man was so distracted with elections he only gave him half a ear. Well, the Ass’ take on it is if there is any pro-Tibet activity the French want to carry out, they should do it from New Caledonia and not Nepal. Besides, were these Europeans when 100,000 Bhutanis were evicted from Bhutan? How come the MPs didn’t visit them in Jhapa?

Either way, the next few weeks look certain to be exciting as the Olympic Torture makes it up Mt Everest only to find Tibetan banners made it up ahead of them.

The Maoists are now such free market promoters of globalisation that they are soon going to allow what even our neo-liberal regimes in the early 1990s hadn’t permitted: let McDonalds and Pizz Hut open up franchises here. That would have been tolerable, but why let in Burger King? Doesn’t that go against our politically correct republicanism?

That reminds me, what does Kingji know that we don’t? Is he about to pull a rabbit from his crown? As a family gathering this week, the Ass learns, the man looked unhuggable as ever. Is he about to spill the beans on a secret deal made on 23 April, 2006? By the way, if NarayanShah is going to be turned into a museum with artifacts from Nepal’s history on display why not have a separate section with a living exhibit of the last king of the Shah dynasty in person in his office, reading the papers, surfing the net, meeting hangers-on and going about his daily business?

FG