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Weekly Internet Poll # 396

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

Total votes: 14,063

Party	Percentage
UML	13.1%
NC	31.2%
Maoists	48.6%
Madhes parties	2.8%
Others	4.2%

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

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

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THOMAS L KELLY

Welcome to New Nepal

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.

EDITORIAL
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INTERVIEW
Baburam Bhattarai p6

Election result map p8-9

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

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IT'S DEVELOPMENT, STUPID

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 slump 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 month, we add another billion rupees to our huge debt to Indian Oil. The state can't afford subsidies, and previous governments have tried and failed to increase fuel prices.

GDP growth is behind population growth, per capita income is stagnant, exports have plummeted, the trade gap with India is so great that the thinktank IfDS is not joking when it says Nepal's number one export item to India now is the US dollar. And even that isn't buying as many INR as it used to.

Domestic investment is at an all-time low, and capital flight is catastrophic. Foreign investors are hanging by the skin of their teeth. The Maoists are coming to power at a time when incomes have plummeted and prices of essential commodities have risen, and they will now have to make good on utopian electoral promises.

Expectations are high for dramatic and immediate improvements. The trouble is there are no quick fixes to Nepal's economic woes. It's clear we need jobs, jobs, jobs. But employment generation needs investments which in turn requires political stability, the right economic climate and proper infrastructure. All this takes time.

With great power comes great responsibility. Maoist ideologue Baburam Bhattarai is making the right noises (see: interview p6). Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal went out of his way to reassure business at the FNCCI on Wednesday that he is actually a closet capitalist. He wants to launch a program for rapid economic growth. But how are they going to convince Nepali businessmen that they shouldn't be investing in real estate in India, but creating jobs at home?

Dahal also said he doesn't want to go at it alone and asked for the cooperation of other parties. He is right. The Maoist government is going to face difficulties from day one, but this is not the time to gloat about it or exploit political capital out of it. We're all in it together now.

The parties will be tempted to use the economy as a battering ram to get back at the Maoists. That will be the old way of doing things in Old Nepal. In New Nepal, let's build a political consensus on poverty.

For too long our economy has been held hostage by politics. The time to start changing that is now.

Hardly surprising
The Maoists' organisational skills paid off

The late Ganesh Man Singh is (in)famously 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
Deepak Thapa

Pundits are weighing in, and will do so for a long time, to explain the Maoist victory. CHANGE is what everyone agrees upon. The electorate saw the NC-UML strategy of presenting hoary old faces (the indisputable vote-getters) as agents to create a 'New Nepal' as a farce, and threw them out wholesale. Barring a few exceptions, the winners from the 'old parties' are new and

untainted. 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 Tarai, thus, robbing the NC of its voter base. According to the Maoists' former ideological guru and current bugbear, Mohan Bikram Singh, even 'Indian expansionism' was a factor.

All of these factors surely played a part in results that have taken everyone by surprise. But nothing would have been possible without the vast organisational strength the Maoists brought to bear on the campaigning. The organisation itself is the outcome of years of patient mobilisation at the grassroots that touched all sections of society, whether it be the dancer in a Kathmandu restaurant or a peasant from a hamlet in deep Rolpa.

Anyone who has ventured into rural Nepal in recent years knows very well that for many of these communities the first political party to reach out to them was the Maoists. Not just in remote Khotang or Humla, but even for those lying just on the periphery of urban Kathmandu. A friend who had gone to southern Lalitpur on election day was amazed to learn that the only parliamentary candidate ever to have sought their votes in person was Barsha Man Pun, and thus it was no surprise to her that a Magar from the far-west could win from a constituency dominated by Bahuns, Chhetris and Newars.

The Maoist ascent to power will change politics in ways that cannot be foreseen at present, but there is no doubt that they have

brought ordinary people into the reckoning. Gone, hopefully, are the old ways of doing politics that the NC and the UML had finessed, a system they had inherited from the Panchayat system and even further beyond from the Rana regime itself, of cherry-picking among the notables to serve their interests in the villages and deliver the votes. For years, the Maoists have gone door-to-door and mobilised everyone in the name of class, ethnicity, language with the central message that it is a party that cares and respects the people.

The only force that could have stood up to the Maoists organisationally was the UML. But the bourgeoisification of the erstwhile revolutionaries with their single-minded focus on power at the centre ensured that the Maoists were able to pull the rug from under their feet, and they did not even notice. One instance stands out clearly: in the early months of 2001, just as the Maoists were beginning to move eastward into UML strongholds, all the energy of the UML party machinery was devoted to the ultimately futile rallies against Girija Prasad Koirala and the Lauda Air scandal. The Maoist organisations were further unimpeded after the king opened a 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 pretty meaningless. 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 sound rather hollow when it comes from past masters at the game, namely, the NC and the UML. ●



EDWIN KOO

LETTERS

ELECTION COVERAGE

Despite your political differences with the Maoists, I appreciate what you have tried to convey in your special election coverage (www.nepalitimes.com). The poll results indeed represent the desire of the common people to do away with 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, email

● 'Lost time' by Kanak Mani Dixit (#395) was one of the most beautiful pieces of writing that I've read in *Nepali Times*, and it contains no political prejudice, but only forward vision and unbiased analysis. However, when considering whose time has been lost (which is basically everyone's) we remember that an important reason for this was the continued misinformation by the political elite, and petit bourgeois

media such as yourselves (sorry to say so). For the last 10 years our information systems were centered on the capital and did not gauge the real opinion of people around the rest of the country. The surprise at the Maoists' victory is emblematic of this. Can we hope our big journalists will be grounded in reality from now on?

Chanakya, email

● We need to be very pragmatic if we really want to make good media contributions in this time of our history. Let's not be biased and try to understand the Nepali people's strong desire for change, which it seems could not be met by NC and UML. Why don't we give new parties like the Maoists and MJF 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 good than any other in recent years, so let's give them a chance now.

Prasanna Adhikari,
email



TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

I honestly believe that after the war both sides have the right and the duty to give their respective

versions of what happened in a Truth and Reconciliation Commission ('Voting for reconciliation and justice', #395). This is crucial for the stability of a country. So, I hope in the near future the political authorities will show a real sense of responsibility in addressing this matter, so that nobody is unheard.

Nirmal Ghimire, Spain

INK SUPPLY

While I always enjoy reading the Ass's comments on the back of the *Nepali Times* and appreciate the satirical take on local developments, I do wish to point out one factual error in this week's piece 'Donkey voted for Duck' (Backside, #395). It was Australia, not Korea, which provided the indelible ink. When we signed up with the Election Commission to provide the ink, I had not realised what a complicated process it would be to arrange supply, but that is another story.

Graeme Lade,
Australian Ambassador

CORRECTION

In 'Sticking it out' (#394), the JTMM-J, not the Maoists, torched industrialist Rajeev Kumar Beriwal's plywood factory.

● Due to an editing error, the photo of Pushpa Kamal Dahal, captioned 'SOLDIER-STATESMAN' (#395) was wrongly credited. It was taken by Ekal Silwal.

The survival of the weakest

The war hasn't ended, it has just begun

Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Co Ltd has run its political enterprise with ruthless efficiency.

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STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

conflicting aspirations of ethnic autonomy and integrative nationalism, opposition to special relationship with India and the ambition of gaining its

Threats 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

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 bigwigs. The dialogue Dahal had with Kathmandu fat-cats and Lalitpur moneybags on Wednesday was perhaps necessary, but there should be deeper conversations with the rural destitute and the urban poor.

Food, clothing, shelter, health and education, the 'adharbhoot abasyakta' that King Birendra's whiz-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. ●



EDWIN KOO

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.

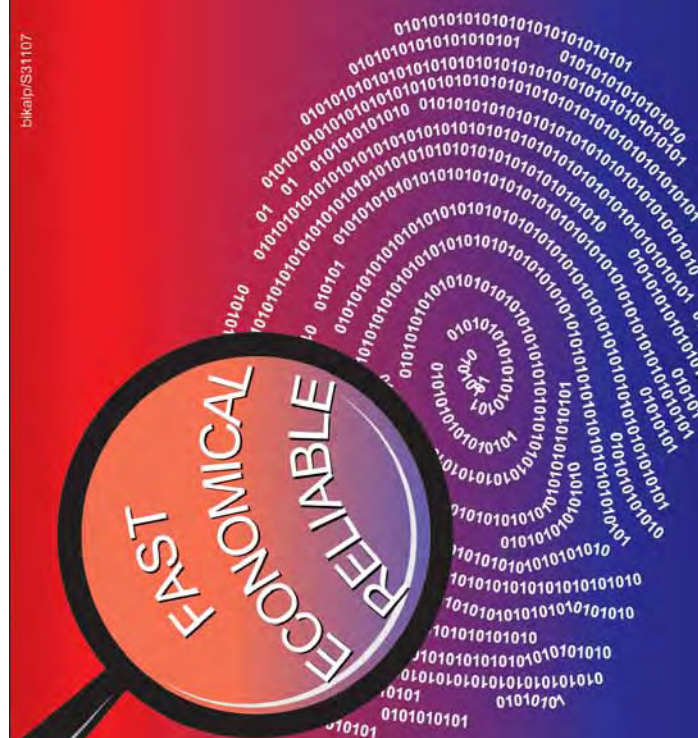
Revolutionaries have now publicly disavowed. In their manifesto, Dahal and Co talk about reducing the ill-effects of liberalism, adopting public-private partnership, attracting foreign investment and limiting the role of government to that of facilitating growth.

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

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“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 any time 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 Maoist’s 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 give no support to the communists in India.”

Shekhar Golchha, Director of Golchha Organisation



“It is a concern that a large percentage of our youth are working overseas. We need peace and security to encourage them to come back. Also, as young entrepreneurs, we are disappointed with the lack of youth participation within various sectors. When we talk about young leaders in the government, we are talking about 60-year-olds. I am quite relieved that the new leadership has quite a good number of young people, but I would like to see more to be done to assist this demographic.”

Saurabh Jyoti, Director of Jyoti Group and President of Nepalese Young Entrepreneurs’ Forum



“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

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The Nepal Tourism Board along with Saathi 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 their 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.

Maonomics

Some habitués of the Kathmandu cocktail circuit 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



ECONOMIC SENSE

Artha Beed

Republic of Nepal. An important qualification needed to be part of the Kathmandu 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 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 kangaroo 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 goalposts 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.

How will the Maoists turn their economic policies into action?

A section of the business community is also elated as 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 productive 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

manifesto 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

- An interview with Baburam Bhattarai (“Radical democrat”): <http://www.nepalitimes.com.np/election/news.php?id=32>
- A roundup of the international media’s coverage of the election (What the world is saying): <http://www.nepalitimes.com.np/election/news.php?id=21>
- An overview of the Nepali blogosphere (The cyberreaction): <http://www.nepalitimes.com.np/election/news.php?id=33>

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“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 *Nepali Times* on Tuesday about sleepless nights, his party’s economic agenda and about whether he’d been offered the prime ministership.

***Nepali 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 aspirations, 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 them. We knew we’d be the largest party, but we didn’t know exactly how many seats we would win.

Everyone got it wrong. We have been meeting members of the diplomatic community this past week, and they have told us that there was intelligence failure. The really oppressed groups like the Tamangs and Tharus voted for us in large numbers. In the Tamang belt we have won 24 of the 27 seats and in the Tharuwan, of the 22 seats we have won 20. Of the 24 women who have won, 20 are Maoists. But even the traditionally-vacillating urban middle class, the 20-30 percent, who make up their minds at the last moment came over to our side.

Was the price the Nepali people had to pay in terms of lives lost and destruction in the revolution worth all this?

We are still in a revolution. The elections were part of our

revolution. It’s not just an armed struggle that is a revolution. Revolution means a radical rapid change in the socio-economic structure, that can happen through violent or non-violent means. At some point in a revolution, violent means need to be adopted. If we hadn’t waged the People’s War to weaken the state and empower the masses, the conditions would not have been created for the elections alone to achieve the goal.

So, it’s not true that we abandoned the bullet to come to the ballot. We used both the bullet and the ballot in this revolution. Nepal’s revolution has been completed in this unique manner.

When are you going to turn your attention to the economy?

Our goal is economic development. For an economic revolution to succeed, we have to complete this political revolution by writing a new constitution.

There is of course the need to provide immediate relief. There are the victims of the war, those affected by inflation, corruption those things needs 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 hydropower, foster the service industries in IT and education, and infrastructure.

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

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. All we mean to say is that for a weak and backward economy like ours the state must play a facilitating and regulatory role. The state has to protect the domestic private sector and the free market.

Yet, the business community is not yet comfortable with the Maoist win mainly because of their experience over the past two years.

We would like to assure everyone that once the Maoists come (into government) the investment climate will be even more favourable. There shouldn’t be any unnecessary misunderstanding about that. The rumours in the press about our intention are wrong, there are reports of capital flight, but this shouldn’t happen. And the other aspect is

that once there is political stability, the investment climate will be even better.

We want to fully assure international investors already in Nepal that we welcome them here, and we will work to make the investment climate even better than it is now. Just watch, the labour-mangement climate will improve in our time in office. What happened in the past two years with the unions was during a transition phase, but the business sector also hasn’t identified the other factors that are causing them losses.

How about the hydropower deals that have already been agreed on?

The ones that have been signed needn’t have been done in a hush-hush manner, after all we were in an interim period and we could have agreed on it collectively. But we understand that big hydro projects are not possible without foreign investment. The deals could have been negotiated in a more open manner. If there have been major irregularities, we need to investigate them, correct the decision-making process but we don’t want to discourage investors by shutting down projects.

The time has come to deliver on the promises. There are very high expectations.

That is true, but the bigger challenge is to maintain national unity. Let’s have political competition, but for the next 10-15 years let’s cooperate, let’s agree on a common minimum program. That will bring political stability, allow us to make optimum use of our domestic resources and bring in investment and make progress in the elimination of absolute poverty. If we can achieve these things in a fairly short timeframe, it will give the people patience and lay the groundwork for further development.

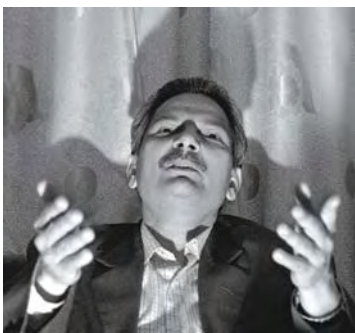
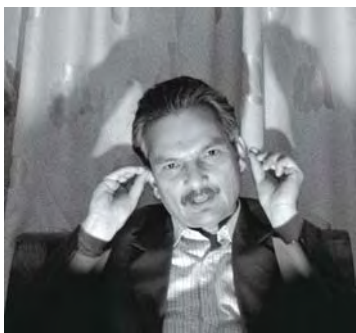
Your own subject is urban planning. How are you going to control this unplanned centralised growth in Kathmandu?

You see on this map the various federal units, we need to spread out the economic activity so jobs are available outside Kathmandu. The fast track highway (to Hetauda) will shift the population out, and we have to plan the growth of Kathmandu properly with zoning and the outer ring road. No where in the world is urban growth as unplanned as it is here.

Have you been offered the prime ministership?

(Laughs) Can’t say now. As we say, it is everyone according to their need and their capacity. Because of my interest in development planning, maybe my work will be in that field.

Full transcript on www.nepalitimes.com and podcasts excerpts of the audio in Nepali on www.himalkhabar.com



SAM KANG LI

From revolution to crisis management

In government, the Maoists will face serious economic challenges

DEWAN RAI

The Maoists won the election with the slogan “new ideology and new leadership for a new Nepal”. They will have their plate full delivering that.

Immediately after taking office, the Maoist government will have to deal with an urgent food and fuel crisis. As we go into the dry season, grain stockpiles are seriously depleted and there has been a dramatic rise in food prices (‘Not just supply and demand’, #394).

Gas lines have started again. There are shortages everywhere and latest one is of cement, as India bans the export of klinker and cement. Nepal imports 80 percent of its cement and all its petroleum from India.

While prices of basic daily necessities are rising, incomes remain low. The Nepal Rastra Bank record for January-February this year shows the price of grains and cereal products, which in total absorbs 18 percent of public expenditure, has increased by 13.5 percent in the last year. The price of food commodities almost doubled in the past three months.

“The first task for the new government will be to address poverty,” says economist Raghav Dhoj Pant of the Institute for Social Development (IfSD), “we need to create jobs in fast forward.” Nepal’s economy is propped up by remittances from workers abroad, amounting to 20 percent of GDP.

Nepal will need at least seven percent annual GDP growth to keep up with population growth and the need to create

jobs for the 500,000 young people who enter the labour force every year. The country is suffering from acute stagflation as the people’s purchasing power is wiped out by inflation. The US dollar exchange rate has decreased and Indian rupee reserves need for imports are depleted.

The Maoists have promised in their manifesto to raise the per capita income from \$270 to \$3,000 in the next 10 years. But many see that as utopian, as the Maoists will be too preoccupied with economic crisis management.

Even Maoist ideologue Baburam Bhattarai admits it will be tough. He told *Nepali Times* in an interview: “It makes me somewhat anxious, thinking about whether we can do it or not. There are sleepless nights.”

Bhattarai says his party has listed priority areas: agro-industries to keep people in farms, tourism, hydropower and infrastructure development for job-creation and development of the service sector.

Although two-thirds of the country’s population depends on near-subsistence agriculture, production grew at only 1.7 percent last year. Growth in the non-agricultural sector was 2.8 percent in 2005-06, up from 2.1 percent in 2004-05.

Despite misgivings from business (see interviews alongside) Bhattarai insists the investment climate, labour-management situation will improve once the Maoists are in government. “The country’s economy will take off once there is political stability,” he says. ●

Shock and awe

How did we get it so wrong, and what now?

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 easy predictions. 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



REFLECTED GLORY:
Prime Minister Koirala
after voting last
Thursday in Biratnagar.

SAM KANG LI

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 ganging 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. Baburam Bhattarai, possibly in the running for prime ministership, 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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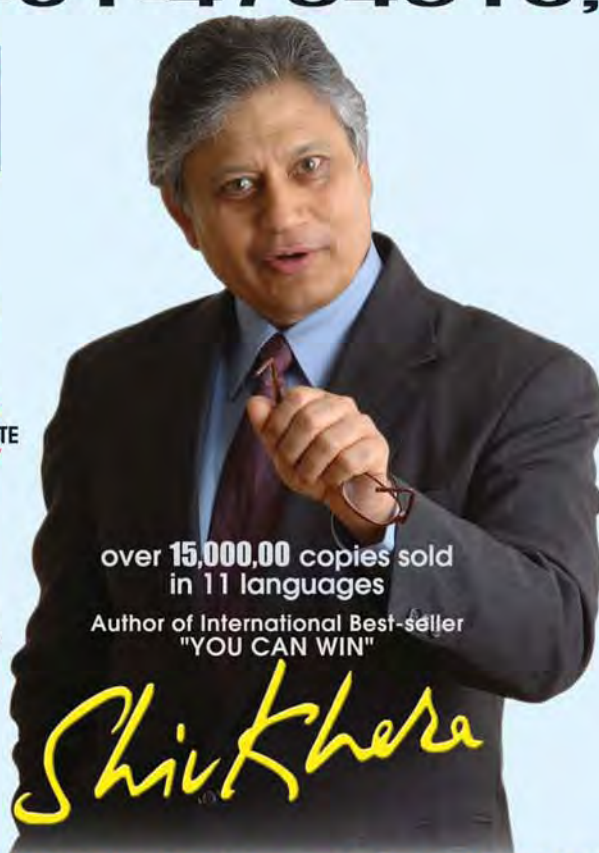
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“Voting for the Maoists was like an involuntary action. I had not planned to vote for them. I have always supported the UML, but when I got to the booth, I just couldn’t vote for them anymore. Without even thinking about what I was doing, at the last moment, I voted for the Maoists in both the ballots. Maybe it was because I want to give them a chance to prove themselves, like the UML and the NC had.”

- **Gautam Poudel, 37, teacher, Kathmandu**

“I’m frustrated with the results as I’ve seen the Maoists committing terror around the villages. I fear a monopoly in the government and an extreme left situation where they’ll give priority to their own ideology. Let’s hope these don’t happen.”

- **Duniya Shrestha, 29, activist, Bhairawa**

“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**

well-reasoned law and order will be priorities.”

- **Bamshi 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 looted me, they beat 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.”

- **Tulsiram Rai, 40, farmer, Rautahat**

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

- **Bishnu Chuadhari, 27, caretaker, 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**

“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**

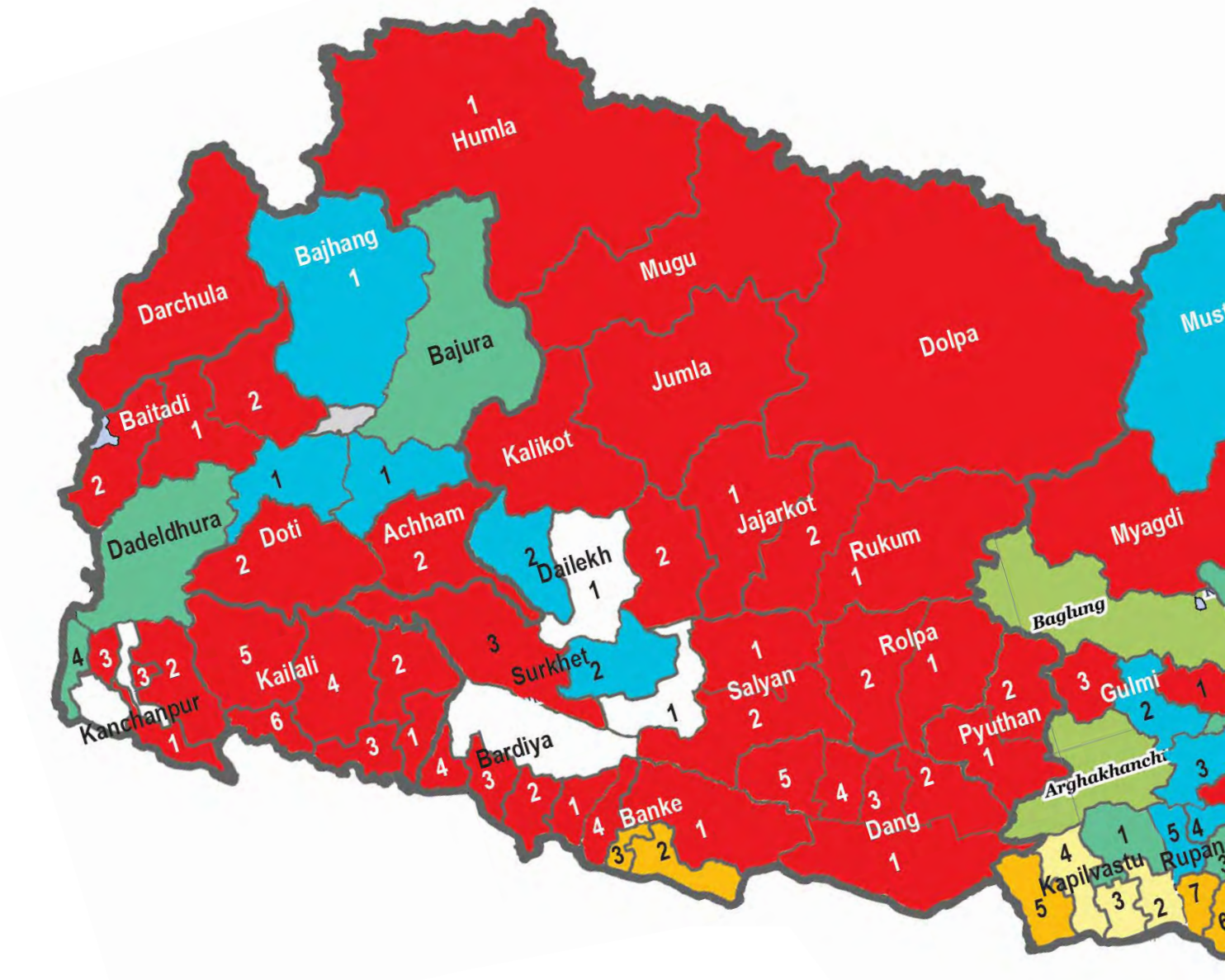


CA Scorecard

FIRST PAST THE POST		
CPN-M	-	48.3%
NC	-	13.75%
UML	-	12.9%
MJF	-	10%
Others	-	15.5%

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION		
CPN-M	-	32.27%
NC	-	21.84%
UML	-	21.19%
Others	-	18.39%
MJF	-	3.75%
RPP	-	2.57%

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 weapons 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

“I am a first time voter. I was not really interested in politics so I didn’t really know who I would vote for. I liked the election manifesto of the Maoists and also felt they would do something good. If the Maoists change the way things are done, I am hopeful there will be peace and employment in the country.”

- Prabeshraj Joshi, 26, student, 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.”

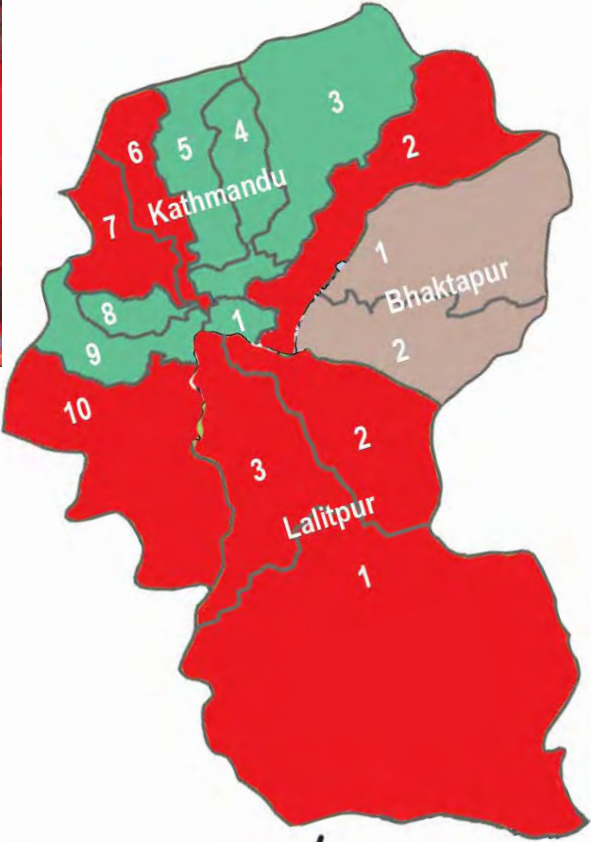
- Dilip Bhattarai, 65, Bhairawa

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

- Nurddim Ahamat, 38 Hotel owner, Bhairawa



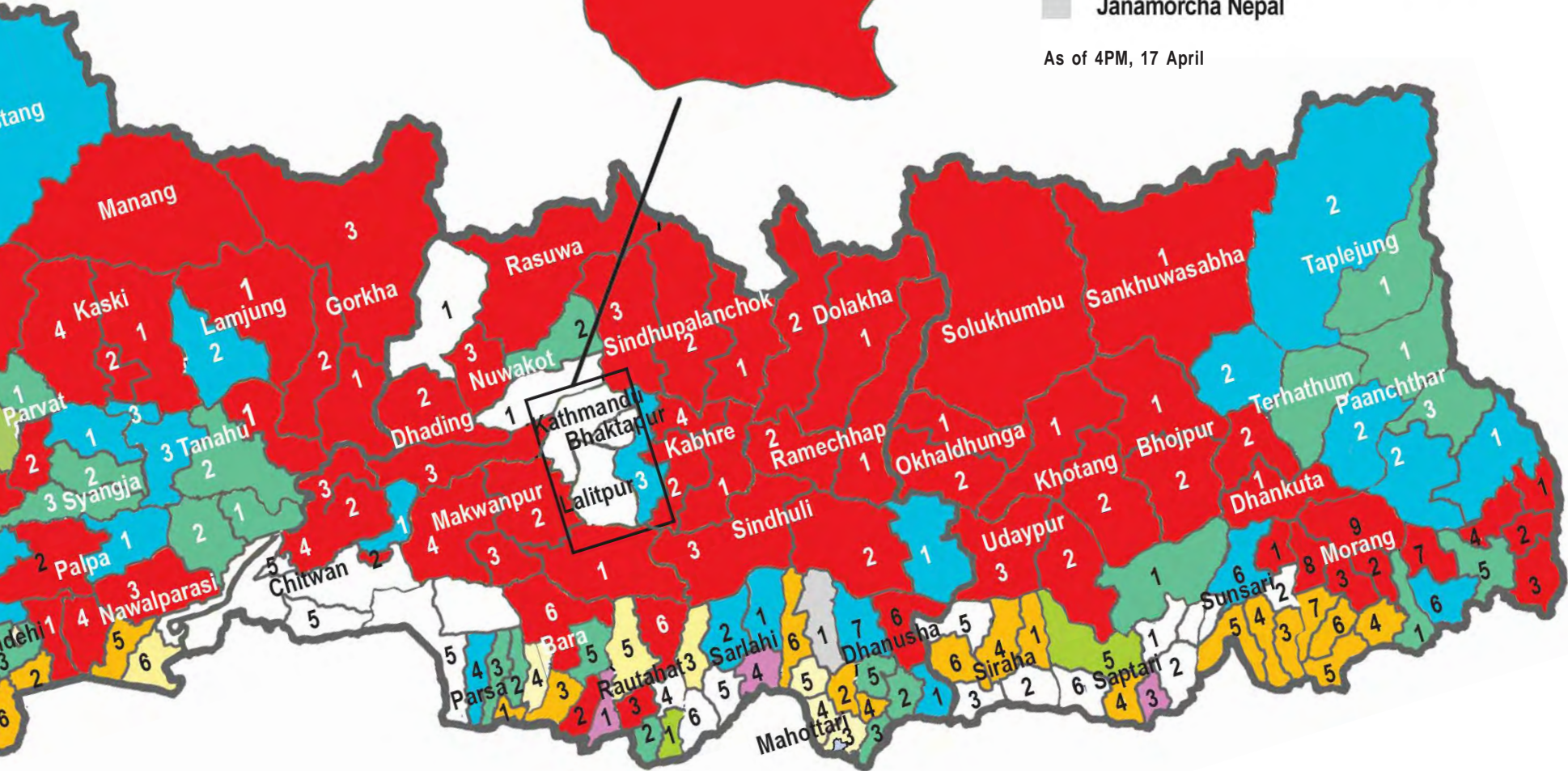
Based on interviews by Pranaya SJB Rana, Mallika Aryal, Srishti Adhikri, Wong Shu Yun



Nationwide results of the First Past the Post ballot by constituency

- Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists)
- Nepali Congress
- Communist Party of Nepal (UML)
- Madhesi Janadhikar Forum
- Independent
- Tarai Madhes Loktantrik Party
- Sadbhabana Party
- Nepal Workers and Peasants Party
- Janamorcha Nepal

As of 4PM, 17 April



Another Maoland

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



NEPALIPAN
Aruna Upreti

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 Nepali Maoists, they don't even know that Nepal is a neighbouring country. Some 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 should China just been seen as a geopolitical counterbalance to India, but the other locomotive that can pull the Nepali economy. The Nepal Embassy in Beijing has a website that is still called the 'Royal Nepalese Embassy'.

Just as Nepal is now getting more and more tourists and pilgrims from India, visitor arrivals from China could boom if there was just more knowledge here about Nepal. Who knows, the familiar name of Mao may be a good way to get Chinese tourists to visit Nepal.

Remembering



MALLIKA ARYAL in DHADING

Since early morning Maoist party representatives and locals have been painting hammer and sickles and putting up welcome signs along the Dhading stretch of the Prithbi Highway. The women are readying vermillion and weaving garlands.

Salik Ram Jamarkattel who

won for the Maoists in Dhading-3 arrives at Dharke around midday. He is followed by a truckload of supporters chanting victory slogans. His entourage moves fast as he stops to receive garlands and talk to the locals.

In nearby Thakre, Radha Subedi and her daughter Shrisha (*pictured*) have just come back from the fields. Radha's husband Navaraj Subedi was the UML VDC

chairman when the Maoists took him away from his house in Dasain 2002. They shot him dead nearby. Radha and Shrisha are stunned by Jamarkattel's win and the Maoists' sweeping victory all over Nepal.

"We don't know what to think, have people forgiven the Maoists already for the years of violence? Are families who have lost someone ready to forget what

After the landslide

SRISHTI ADHIKARI in KABHRE


Having elected three Maoist candidates out of four constituencies, people in Kabhre have high hopes from the Maoists. The general perception is that now that they have won, they cannot shy away from the responsibility of a stable government.

As Sumitra Pariyar, 20, has her checklist: "Now they should help the poor, bring jobs and control the price rise."

Women and the elderly who wouldn't say which way they would vote before the elections, are now opening up. Junadebi, 50, echoed the views of many women when she said, "I voted for the Maoists this time, I don't know how to read and write but I know if the Maoists win there won't be violence."

Bikash Karki, 27, was injured in the crossfire during a clash between the army and Maoists in Kabhre Bhanjyang two years ago. He has given up his local dairy due to his weak leg and now runs a small shop. "I voted Maoists because I hope they will understand my suffering," he told *Nepali Times*, "I don't have any hard feelings against them, maybe they will arrange a job for me."





ELD News

Training Courses in Kathmandu

Developing Project Proposals
(5 - 9 May)

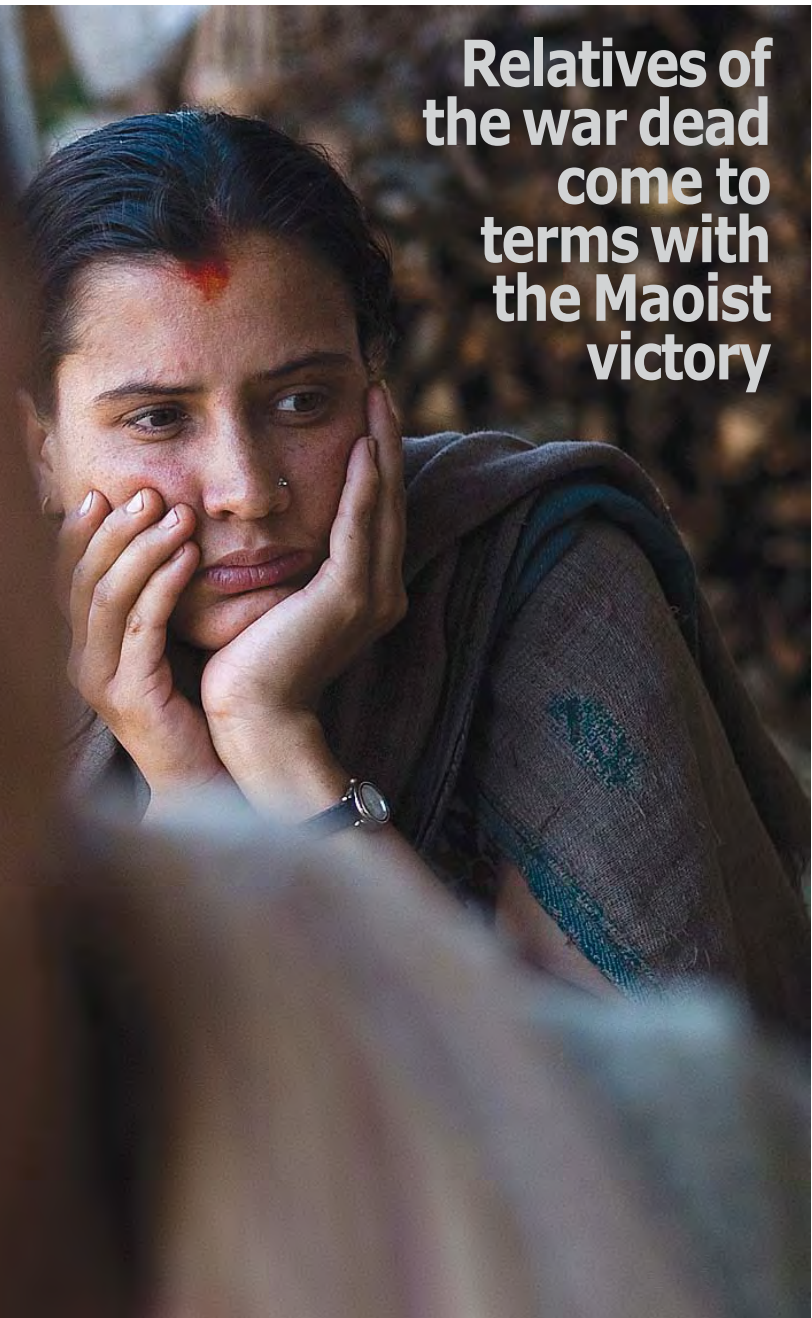
Reporting Skills & Professional Writing
(12 - 16 May)

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not to forget



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

they did?” asks 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.

“Our entire village voted for the Maoists because they liked my father,” says Ruku’s 19-year-old son, Rajiv. Rajendra Pandey, UML representative from Dhading-3 who lost to Jamarkattel (25,075 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 call them and say that if they canvassed for the UML they would break their bones and make their wives widows,” recalls Pandey. Many party workers were beaten up in March. The UML campaigned where it could but the YCL always attacked the meetings and rallies in Dhading had to be cancelled. Pandey’s entourage was attacked. “How can the result of the election conducted in this manner be legitimate?” asks Pandey. 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, Shrishna 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 Nepal will throw them out too if they disappoint the people again.” ●

“Help the poor, bring jobs and control the price rise”



Nearby, the Humagain family (*pictured*) is busy tilling their terrace to sow maize 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 added. In the more remote parts of Kabhre, Tara Bahadur Pradhan witnessed YCL cadre urging the elderly to vote for the Maoists right inside the polling booth. A week after elections, expectations here are very high. And most people says that although the Maoists deserved to win, they must deliver on their promises. ●

KIRAN PANDAY

Forum in Maostan

As the Maoists sweep the polls, do not forget the Madhes. The hills may have swung the balance in favour of the former rebels. But it was the plains which ensured that NC could not catch up. The Tarai results have revealed the potency of regional and ethnic politics, and given birth to a true multi-party system. The verdict has also shown the tactical brilliance of the MJF and Maoists, and taught the NC and UML a lesson for taking the Madhesi Street for granted. It has marginalised the armed groups for now, but opened fault-lines for future conflicts. The Madhes has voted for Madhesi. For the first time, Madhesi, across party lines, are finding proportional political representation and the consequent access to power and opportunities. This is true not only for the eastern tarai, but also Banke, Nawalparasi, Kapilbastu and Rupandehi. A historical injustice is being corrected in a democratic framework. The Koiralas, Aryals, Acharyas, Amatyas, Nepals Dhunganas and Mallas fought in Madhes constituencies and bit dust. At the same time, the demographic mix means that the results have been balanced. The 33 percent Pahadis in the Tarai also have their share of representation, largely from the Maoists and UML. As expected, the MJF did better than other Madhesi counterparts. People identified the ‘Forum’ as having led the Madhesi awakening during the past year. Better organisation, the presence of established faces and experienced election manipulators, a strong Yadav base, and pockets of Tharu support helped. Despite being discredited and isolated, facing physical insecurity, and playing dangerous games with multiple power centres over the past year, Upendra Yadav has bounced back.



TARAI EYE
Prashant Jha

A historical injustice is being corrected in a democratic framework

He will displace Mahant Thakur at the helm of the Madhesi movement. But the MJF’s politics has its dangers. It is the most militant and hard-line of the three Madhesi parties. Its politics over the past year has almost exclusively been anti-Maoist. The Forum’s huge funding and linkages are traced to conservatives in Nepal and India. And many who have won on its ticket come from a royalist, criminal, feudal or rampantly corrupt past. Nepal’s Right has made a comeback through the MJF. But the party also has enormous internal contradictions, and doubts persist if it will last as a unit. The Maoists have won a large share of seats in the Tarai as well. The Pahadi vote has shifted to them from the UML. The Tharus in the west and Rajbanshis in the east have voted Maoist. Smart selection of candidates based on precise caste calculations has ensured them a win in even hardcore Madhesi seats. The Maoists also maintained their base among Dalits and the landless. They succeeded in breaking the stranglehold of a few locals over chunks of votes in a village, and reached out directly to the ground. Matrika Yadav and Prabhu Sah will continue to fight amongst themselves, but return as active players in Madhesi politics. Politics makes for strange bedfellows. There is back-channel effort underway to get the Maoists and the MJF to forget Lahan and Gaur and work together. Upendra has made conciliatory statements. Sections in the MJF are thrilled at the idea of joining the government, and there may be a tactical alliance on certain issues in the constituent assembly. But the Maoist-MJF relationship will be confrontational, with rivalry at the top and competition for space on the ground. The Maoist government, prodded by a conservative bureaucracy, will not find it easy to include Madhesi in proportionate numbers in state structures, Madhesi forces will be happy to pick the non-implementation of the ambiguously phrased eight-point agreement to oppose the government. The Maoist support base among Tarai janjatis means it will stick to its proposed federal model, the MJF will insist on ‘samagra Madhes’. The Maoists will have to push for some land reform to deliver to its constituency, the MJF and other Madhesi forces will become the vehicle for resistance and backlash. There is still a danger of extremist politics making a comeback. Competitive populism will continue, with each force trying to be more radical than the other. The armed groups will keep quiet for a while, but may pounce as soon as they sense Madhesi parties are on the defensive. In their moment of victory, the Maoists would do well to counter possible identity chauvinism and militancy by reaching out to all Madhesi forces, and constantly engaging with them on common issues. ●



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Preconditions

Narayan Wagle in *Kantipur*, 13 April

कान्तिपुर

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 PR list of the NC, but said he would bow out of active politics.

All that was before the results started coming of the Maoist sweep. The question is not anymore about who has a majority but who can clobber 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 bear some of the responsibility for the defeat by having appeased the Maoists. The Maoists may therefore have to look for a respected democratic face to be head of state.

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 bullet 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. If 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

Abhiyan, 14-20 April

अभियान

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 50,000 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.mysansar.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 Janabadi 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 Khabarpatrika*, 13-27 April

हिमाल

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, Pahad, and Tarai 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 fulfil 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 first piece that catches the eye on entering the gallery is a screen print of Birendra. If you squint it could be a Warholesque representation of John F Kennedy, driving in his open car, with obvious connotations. It is overpainted on aluminium, giving it a mirror-like aspect, only with

no reflection, just a sense of unreality. Hanging opposite it in the room is a portrait of a young Pushpa Kamal Dahal in which the blend of aluminium background with black overlay gives an odd hint of the Shroud of Turin.

In between these two pieces, which both provoke a double take, is a hanging dress, the shape of which suggests a 1960s mini-skirt. Closer

examination shows that it is made of camouflage cloth and is, as the guide sheet reveals, a reproduction of a 17th century Tibetan suit of armour.

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 Beven and is showing at the Siddhartha Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited until 23 April.



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Sun Dance

Artists 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 Yaktumka 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. ●

Billi Bierling

Last Resort, Thamel, 4700525

Tickets: Rs 2,000 includes food, accommodation and transport

ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **photo.circle.special edition** with photographs by Frederic Lecloux, 19 April, 9.45 AM-12PM at Sundhara Bakery Café, also a presentation of photographs from Himalmedia by Kunda Dixit.
- ❖ **Splatter Analysis** an exhibition by Loren Beven at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, until 23 April.
- ❖ **Double vision** photographs by Nepali and international students, until 27 April at New Orleans, Patan. 5522708
- ❖ **Masks – Expressions We Wear** an exhibition by Soo Jin Oh, from 20 April-5 May, 10AM-6PM at the Gallery 32, Dent Inn.
- ❖ **Collection One** paintings by Amir and Anup Chitrakar, until 10 May, at the Saturday Café, Boudha. 9851106626

EVENTS

- ❖ **Spicy salsa evening** with the Salsa dance academy at the Yak and Yeti pub, from 6-10PM on 18 April, free entrance. 4248999
- ❖ **Weekly human rights** film screenings with *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar* a film by Jabbar Patel at the Sama Theatre, Gurukul, 5PM on 20 April. 4466956
- ❖ **School Bullying** a talk program by Rakshya Nepal, 30 April at The New Era, Battisputali. 9851023958
- ❖ **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 by Kalamandapa, every Tuesday 7PM at Hotel Vajra 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. 4288847

MUSIC

- ❖ **Paleti** with MP Gurung from Shillong, 25 April, 6PM at nepa-laya 'r' sala, Kalikasthan, Rs 565. 4412469
- ❖ **Rudra night** fusion and classical Nepali music by Shyam Nepali and friends, every Friday, 7PM at Le Meridien, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **Sufi music** by Hemanta Rana, every Friday at 7.30 PM at Dhaba 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. 5521408

DINING

- ❖ **The Kaiser Café open now** at the Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, open from 9AM-10PM. 4425341
- ❖ **Sunday jazz brunch** design your meal with pastas, salads and barbeque, with jazz by Mariano and band, at the Rox Garden, Hyatt Regency. 4489361
- ❖ **Steak escape** with Kathmandu's premier steaks available for lunch and dinner at the Olive Bar and Bistro, Hotel Radisson. 4411818
- ❖ **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 buffet** at the Sunrise Café, and Russian specialties at Chimney, Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
- ❖ **Roasts and reds** fine roasts and red wine at the Rox Restaurant, Hyatt Regency, 15 April-6 May. 4489361
- ❖ **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% discount on an individual meal, Saturdays and Sundays, 12.30-3.30 PM. 4273999
- ❖ **Scrumptious wood fired pizzas**, cocktails and more 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 7PM onwards. 4412999
- ❖ **Kebabs and curries** at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619
- ❖ **Lavazza coffee** Italy's favourite coffee at La Dolce Vita, Thamel, Roadhouse Café Pulchok and Thamel. 4700612
- ❖ **Pizza** from the woodfired oven at Java, Thamel. 4422519

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

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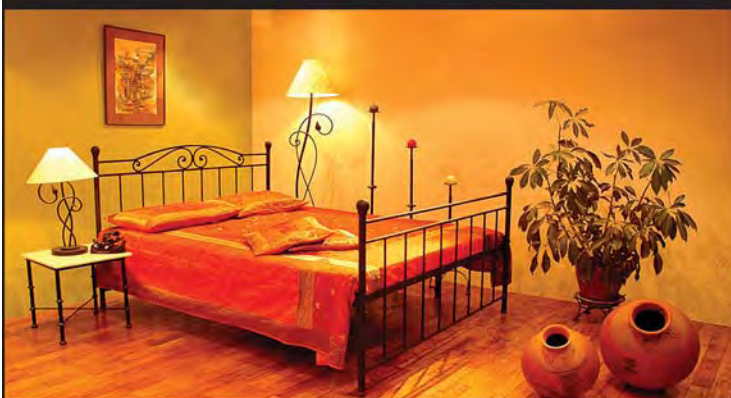
In *U, Me Aur Hum*, Ajay (Ajay Devgan) is on a cruise with four of his friends. He meets Pia (Kajol) and falls in love with her. After a disastrous first meeting, Ajay tries everything to woo her but Pia doesn't fall for it. Eventually, by sheer perseverance, he dances his way into her heart and the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

Call 4442220 for show timings at **Jai Nepal**
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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 rising mercury will go down briefly next week, when a low pressure system is due to cross from the northern side to the southern side of the Himalaya, bringing cold, moist air and thundery showers.



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हालचाल
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अपरान्ह: २.४५-४.४५
राति: ६.४५ र राती: ८.४५

अंग्रेजी सिक्न सघाउने कार्यक्रम
Tuning In To Language and Culture
प्रसार हुने समय : हरेक शुक्रबार बेलुका (८:१५-८:३५)
हरेक आइतबार दिउँसो (१:४०-२:००)
"रेडियो सगरमाथामा नियमित सुनी, अंग्रेजी सुधारी"
(रेडियो सगरमाथा र अमेरिकी राजदुतावास, अमेरिकी केन्द्रको सहकार्य)

सम्पर्क: ५५२००९१, ५५४२२४५ मोस्ट बक्स: १०२८, ईमेल: info@radiosagarmatha.org

हरेक विहान ५:०० देखि राती ११:०० बजे सम्म सूचना शिक्षा र स्वस्थ मनोरञ्जनका लागि भरपर्दो साथी रेडियो सगरमाथा १०२ थोप्लो ४ मेगाहर्ज



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.

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Mau Mau land

Quite a sight to see those who were kicking 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. Nepal's, 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 'Eye-ra' and 'Eye-ran' both rhyme begin with 'T'. 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, unfurling the Free Tibet flag in Kathmandu. In fact, the Chinese ambassador went to Baluwatar 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-Tibetan activity the French want to carry out, they should do it from New Caledonia and not Nepal. Besides, where were these Europeans when 100,000 Bhutanis were evicted from Bhutan? How come the MPs didn't visit them in Jhapa?

✽

The **Maoistas** 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? At a family gathering this week, the Ass learns, the man looked unflappable as ever. Is he about to spill the beans on a secret deal made on 23 April, 2006?

By the way, if Naryanhiti 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?

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