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Weekly Internet Poll # 403

Q. Are you proud to be a Nepali?

Total votes: 8,247

Yes 55.3%

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Weekly Internet Poll # 404. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com
Q. What should be the priority for politicians now?

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KIRAN PANDAY

The middle way

“The Maoists still have to reassure the other parties that they are a democratic, non-violent force”

It has been a week since the hung assembly declared Nepal a republic, and voters are getting restless. Political wrangling is being played out in public with threats as the parties try to improve their bargaining positions by sabre-rattling in the media.

This has poisoned the atmosphere and made it more difficult to forge a consensus on the seven pre-conditions that the NC put forward to join the

government. Of these, the main sticking points are whether the Maoists should get both president and prime minister, and whether the voting process should be with a simple or two-thirds majority.

“How can a person commanding his own separate army be a president?” asks constitutional expert Nilambar Acharya. Because Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal

had already proclaimed himself president he wants both posts, but Acharya insists a party that won only one-third of the seats in the assembly has no right to make that demand.

The Maoists decided on Thursday to accept a non-political personality for presidentship. But a Maoist faction wants to keep Baburam Bhattarai out at all cost, and some in the NC are rooting for Prime Minister Koirala being elevated to ceremonial president. And to complicate things even further the Maoists say they want Koirala to resign first before they form a government.

“We are even willing to consider the simple majority proposition if he steps down,” senior Maoist Ram Karki told *Nepali Times*. The army seems happy as long as it doesn’t have a Maoist president as commander-in-chief.

Acharya says all this is posturing, and the real issue is of power-sharing. “Once that is addressed, everything else will fall into place. The Maoists essentially have to reassure the other parties that they are a democratic, non-violent force.” ●
Dewan Rai and Subhas Devkota

EDITORIAL
No half way p2

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NO HALF WAY

Like pregnancy, one can't be half-democratic, especially in a country like ours that has lived through and fought against feudalism, autocracy and dictatorship.

The argument that somehow we Nepalis are not mature enough to have democracy or that only authoritarianism will enforce the discipline necessary for economic growth just does not hold water. We tried dictatorship throughout most of our modern history and it was disastrous. The 1990-2000 period, despite political instability, allowed grassroots democracy and accountability to be the proven pre-requisite to development.

We have disagreed with Maoist methods in the past, but the party has taken a considerable risk by steering the revolution towards a non-violent path. For this, the Nepali people rewarded them by making the Maoists the largest party in the assembly. But by not giving them the majority, the people were also saying: look, we don't completely trust you yet. And, of course, the people punished the two established parties for their failures of governance and in service delivery and rejected all monarchists.

The current political stalemate is unnecessary and can easily be resolved by agreeing on a two year moratorium on voting out the government, and by agreeing on a non-political figure as president.

The NC and UML need to snap out of their collective self-induced depression and stop acting like they want to exact revenge for their own failures. True, there was widespread cheating and intimidation but let he who has not sinned cast the first stone.

The Maoists, for their part, are behaving as if they have an absolute majority. With one-third of the seats in parliament, one can say the Maoists were successful, but they certainly weren't victorious. They should stop acting like they were.

Their leadership must also cease making reckless references to 'October Revolution', 'People's Republic' and publicly threaten the media. Explaining away these deadly serious threats by saying the chairman was 'joking' has itself become a joke. Everyone knows Dahal is sorely wanting in the humour department.

All the political parties should not lose sight of the goal here: writing up a new constitution in the next two years and in that period bringing some relief to the Nepali people who have uncomplainingly suffered a brutal war and government neglect for the past 12 years.

The Maoists have had more than enough time to make their political transition. We now want them to publicly renounce violence and show by words and deeds their commitment to democracy and pluralism. There can be no half-way!!!



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Who'll blink first?

Spare a thought for voters who thought they'd see change

This country needs a government. For months, we have had a lame-duck administration, waiting for direction from the top. The political class was initially busy signing agreements and trying to hold elections. After taking weeks to digest the poll outcome, they are back to the politics of brinksmanship for a slice of power.



TARAI EYE
Prashant Jha

This process of bargaining is natural given that the mandate is fractured and calls for a degree of power sharing. It is understandable for the rhetoric of all sides is directed at their respective constituencies. And it may even turn out to be positive by institutionalising a system of checks and balances.

But it has dragged on too long, got too acrimonious, lulled the popular enthusiasm generated by the polls, and come close to subverting the mandate. All this while the suffering on the ground is increasing.

It is not only the fuel crisis and rising food prices that have

caused misery across the country. There has been a surge in crime in the Tarai. What is striking is that this is happening at a time when the armed groups are at their weakest with almost no political support.

With Madhesi discontent finding a political channel through direct representatives, this could have been the best time for a newly elected, legitimate government to act against purely criminal groups and others masquerading as revolutionaries. A deft carrot and stick strategy, co-opting some of the armed activists, appointing more Madhesis as CDOs and SPs, and tightening the law and order machinery, would have worked.

Unfortunately, tackling impunity and ensuring security for citizens come very low on the priority of the major parties. The NC, with the UML tailing closely, has shamelessly clung on to power and constantly shifted goalposts. Don't these parties realise this was a vote against them? Instead of looking for reasons to explain the defeat, carve out a positive agenda, build an organisation, the NC leaders are competing among themselves to engage in meaningless anti-Maoist rhetoric.

The Maoists are benefiting from this stalemate. They are reaching out directly to people through rallies and corner meetings, using the same organisational structure which won them the polls. And the message is: the NC and the UML are cheating us of the right to lead. The NC and the UML stand is suicidal.

The Maoists have not helped. The other parties may have tried to cash in on the Ram Hari murder, but it is becoming increasingly clear that the order to kill him came from the very top.

Prachanda's speech at Tundikhel last Friday reinforced apprehensions about their commitment to basic freedoms. He may not like *Kantipur* because *Kantipur* does not like him and his party. If he wants to complain about coverage, he should send letters to the editor. But he has no right to threaten and warn anyone.

The 12-point agreement was actually a one point agreement: the Maoists agreed to accept norms of democracy and human rights, the political parties promised to turn republican. The parties may have dragged their feet but they have done their bit. The Maoists, to be fair, gave up the war and have also travelled a long distance in two years.

But they have to stick to the November 2005 pledge. The international community, particularly the northern Europeans who seem to think Maoists are like early 20th century social democrats, must stop romanticising the former rebels and instead use their influence to push this point.

The present deadlock is over the presidency. The NC and the UML see it as a post to counter the Maoists. And who better than a political trickster like Girija Koirala to use a ceremonial post for political purposes? The Maoists, if their rhetoric and private instructions to party cadre are any indicator, will not allow Girija to head the state. But their claim for both president and PM does not hold. If the position is to be truly ceremonial, then a compromise candidate (a Madhesi, a woman, or a Madhesi woman) may be an excellent symbolic step.

In this who blinks first game, spare a thought for all the voters of 10 April who are waiting to see the change they had been promised. ●

Chairman becomes premier

Pushpa Kamal Dahal now has nothing left to wreck

There are at least five kinds of communists in Nepal: romantic, naïve, bigoted, calculative and pragmatic. By his own admission, Pushpa Kamal Dahal has passed through all these phases.

He began as a romantic in the Chitwan of the seventies. He grew naïve in the eighties as he voted in the Referendum, believing in the power of the ballot to



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

change the system. He learned bigotry to wage war. Calculative politics forced him to make common cause with monarchists, and pragmatism made him make peace with the parties.

After years of aspiring, conspiring and waging war, the office of the chief executive of the country is within Dahal's grasp. Even though his party holds only over one-third of votes in the Constituent Assembly, almost everybody agrees that the Chairman should become Premier. Dahal is likely to

be the first ever popularly elected Maoist leader in world history.

But this appears to frighten him out of his wits. Dahal was foaming as he bad-mouthed everyone at Tundikhel last week. But one could see he trembled even as he thundered. What is he afraid of?

The Maoist high-command maintained a working relationship with the monarchy, an understanding with the military and close association with the Indian establishment during the most violent phase of insurgency. The credit for discrediting the 1990 constitution is shared equally by royalist conspirators, army generals, Indian interlocutors and Maoist strategists.

The Chairman shrewdly manipulated contradictions between the NC and the UML when his nominees practically dictated almost every decision of the seven party ruling alliance. Madhab Nepal thought he was using Krishna Bahadur Mahara to keep Ram Sharan Mahat in check. Sher Bahadur Deuba let Baburam Bhattarai manipulate the UML chief. In the end, Dahal pulled the rug from under the feet of Girija Prasad Koirala.

Dahal's single-minded pursuit of political power has been extraordinary, he is a demolition expert also in the political sense. Standing amidst the debris, Dahal is now worried that there is almost nothing left to break. He probably doubts his own capacity of clearing the mess and is even less sure of his ability of building anything new. So, he attempts to hide this behind majoritarian mumbo-jumbo and Maoist rhetoric.

The Maoist rebellion wrecked the political economy. Fungibility allowed resources directed towards infrastructure to be used for counter-insurgency. The war economy scared away investment even as windfall trade profits flew out of the country. Agriculture collapsed as farmers fled villages. The trade imbalance widened as imports soared and there was nothing to export except unskilled labour. The litanies of woes is as much the Maoists' own creation as it was the handiwork of corrupt and incompetent royal regimes.

The urban middle class has its own worries: costly food, inadequate drinking water, undependable electricity, scarce

petrol, unpredictable mobile-phones, expensive education and unaffordable health services. Unfortunately, like everyone else, Dahal doesn't seem to have a clue about what to do about these immediate crises.

The anarchy and civil disorder in the Tarai is even more alarming. The economic crisis has exacerbated an already strained relationship between Pahadis and Madhesis as too many hands chase too few jobs. Armed groups terrorise people as the tottering instruments of state fight merely to maintain their presence amidst a hostile population.

A day in Birganj is enough to convince anyone that the squabbles over spoils of office in Kathmandu are almost pointless. No matter who holds the reigns of power in the capital city, it will take a while before the state can re-establish its authority.

Despite the doom and gloom, there is still hope. All Dahal has to do is reverse his steps and become a pragmatic leader of the coalition, a calculative constitutionalist and a romantic dreamer of rosy future. ●

LETTERS

PUBLIC'S REPUBLIC

This declaration of Nepal as a federal republic (Editorial, 'Public's Republic', #402) has not only stunned South Asians but also the world at large. This is the lesson from Nepal: that people can decide their fate not with bullets but with ballots. All Nepalis expect an all-inclusive Nepal free of corruption and chaos. It is the responsibility of the new leadership to translate these expectations into reality. Let us enjoy equal rights and freedom in our New Nepal.

Dhananjay Shah, Tribhuban University, Kirtipur

- In the last few days, yours is the only publication that has caught on to how irrelevant the

- Congratulations to all the representatives from the Madhes. I've also spent some years of my life in the Tarai and I could also feel the grievances of the Madhesi. But we will have to be careful to ensure that Madhesi politics are not just based on ethnicity and territory. Allowing all cultures to have a dignified existence is one of the cornerstones of free expression.

Nirmal Ghimire, Spain

- The CA election showed how our urban-based mainstream political parties became opportunists and abandoned their fundamental doctrines in order to hold on to power. The catchy sloganeering of 'New Nepal' has definitely made an impact upon the public. However, the common concern of all is what sort of new Nepal are we going to create? Will it really be inclusive with space for all or will it become ridden by ethnic and communal conflict? With regard to the monarchy: if a non-Hindu country, like Sri Lanka, can market Ram Setu to boost tourism, why shouldn't we Nepalis be positive about marketing a cultural king, who is believed to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, by restoring him to a non-political symbol? This would be interesting to the whole world, with New Nepal becoming a unique hybrid of republicanism in practice and monarchism in heritage. Can't the much-hyped New Nepal truly be inclusive in this way, by not excluding even the former king?

Pradeepta Sharma, Mumbai

republican agenda is to making a difference in the lives of most ordinary Nepalis (it doesn't make any difference to me if there is a raja in Kathmandu or not, #402). What difference does a republic make when the country is in the mess it is now, and we can't even get basic necessities like petrol and cooking gas? The parties celebrated by themselves, declaring another three days of holidays. My colleagues and I worked as normal in this time to show that what we care about is getting on with our lives, not the power and personality politics of all those at the BICC.

Prasanna KC, email

- We in the outside world think you guys in Nepal are crazy. Communism has come and gone in the rest of the world. And it's now that you decide you want a dictatorship of the proletariat. Go ahead and commit suicide. We will be watching with amazement.

Name withheld, email

LETTERS

Nepali Times welcomes feedback. Letters should be brief and may be edited for space. While pseudonyms can be accepted, writers who provide their real names and contact details will be given preference. Email letters should be in text format without attachments with letter to the editor in the subject line.


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Nestled amongst the green woods of Gokarna Forest is the Le Meridien Golf Resort and Spa. Although just ten minutes down the road from Chabahil, the peaceful surroundings feel many miles away from the dust, noise and chaos of the Ring Road.

Le Meridien has been conceived as a holistic centre, with a luxury hotel with 65 rooms, meeting and conference facilities for large groups, and recreation and leisure with an 18-hole golf course and spa.

The key to the resort's tranquility is the 470 acres of grounds surrounding the resort, which include both the golf course, and an even larger area of untouched forest, full of birds and animals including monkeys and deer.

The clean and secluded environment provides the perfect atmosphere for real relaxation at the spa. Recreation and spa manager Danijela Milanovic says, "Of course a spa is about pampering and rejuvenating, but it's not just treatment that's important, the environment matters too."

The Harmony Spa offers a



PICS: MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

range of relaxing and invigorating treatments, including massages, reflexology, aromatherapy, body wraps, scrubs and rubs, and mud packs, as well as beauty treatments for both ladies and gents, including hair and facial treatments, manicures and pedicures.

It has four massage rooms, a

swimming pool, jacuzzi, sauna, steam room, boutique, and gym, and is beautifully lit, and decorated with thick fabrics and fresh flowers.

Various different massages are available, including both Asian and Swedish styles, as well as the 'Golfer's Massage' which blends both. The 'Golfer's Massage'

involves first a dry massage, then application of heated herbal pillows, and finally a full-body oil massage. Through the three different stages I could feel the muscles and knots in my body gradually relax as they were pressed and pulled out.

But Danijela has more plans for the spa. An 'Art of Living'

teacher who has trained in Dubai and India, she intends to make it a fully holistic centre, saying "People come to the Himalayas for nature and fresh air, to relax and rejuvenate, and to get a glimpse of spirituality. We aim to fulfil all these wishes here."

There are already yoga and meditation classes every day (which many of the staff attend), and plans are afoot to increase the range of services to include more traditional ayurvedic treatments, and new alternative and new age treatments.

Danijela didn't wish to reveal the full range yet, but one of the newest treats on the menu is singing bowl therapy, in which singing bowls are placed at the various chakras of the body. One guest who had just taken this treatment said, "I feel like I've just come back from a faraway place."

It is easy to forget what's going on outside as the sun shines, the trees whisper in the wind, and birds sing in the woods. A day—even just a morning—at Le Meridien settles the mind and heart, preparing them for the return to the grinding hub of Kathmandu. ●

Tom Owen-Smith

Tranquility amidst the chaos



Tranquility Spa at Lazimpat is located in the bustling heart of the city, but as you step in inside, the brightly-painted walls, soothing music, dimmed lights and the sweet fragrance of incense create an air of peace. Then you can leave it up to the professionally trained masseur or masseuse to pummel out the tensions from your body.

Tranquility is the latest addition to the chain of spas that was begun as a family business by the Phaiju brothers in 2005. After working at and managing spas for renowned hotels such as the Le Meridien, Hyatt Regency and Hotel Radisson, Bhuwan Phaiju, Tranquility's chairman, wanted to do something on his own.

After facing a dearth of massage therapists during his tenure at Le Meridien, Phaiju started training interested individuals on his own, and eventually opened his own massage training centre in Boudha.

When asked why he chose to venture out on his own, Phaiju explains, "Then, spas in the big hotels only catered to rich and high-society clients. People in general did not really know about spas and massage centres, and were even suspicious of them as they had heard about what goes on in Thamel and Bangkok. I wanted to erase this negative conception and make massage services available to middle-class Nepalis and foreigners."

Getting the centre going wasn't easy. At first it failed to attract any students, and it was only after they promised a 100 percent job guarantee (an offer that is still applicable), that pupils started pouring in. Two months into the new business, Phaiju decided to branch out and began providing services to clients as well.

While foreigners make up a good part of Tranquility's regular customers, the primary focus has always been on Nepali clientele. The spa offers a variety of massage therapies, a sauna and steam bath, and also beauty treatments, using almost exclusively organic materials.

There is a wide range of massages to choose from. Shirodhara, the ayurvedic body massage and aromatherapy massage are the current favourites. Shirodhara involves pouring medicated oils into the third eye in a regular flow and requires exquisite care and concentration on the part of the therapist. Although shirodhara is one of the more expensive treatments available, at Rs 4,000, it is worth every penny. An hour and a half of shirodhara will leave you feeling like a different person.

As you sip herbal tea after your treatment session, you can feel the rush of energy and vigour in your mind and body. Says Phaiju: "People opt for the spa and massages to relieve anxiety, stress and pain. At the Tranquility Spa we rejuvenate the body by pleasing the senses." ●

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New store

John Players has opened up another flagship store at Putalisadak. The store has a collection of a range of formal and casual wear for men. John Players already operates two exclusive brand outlets at Bluebird Mall and UWTC.

Power packed Alba



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Morang Auto Works has introduced the new and improved Alba ES with self starter. This 106cc 4-stroke motorcycle comes with a double cradle frame and ground clearance of 173mm. The Alba ES is available in two colours, black and red, offers a mileage of

Rocking the nation

Sprite Band Challenge—Freedom to Rock, a talent hunt organised by Bottlers Nepal has kicked off with the participation of 50 bands from around the nation. The pre-auditions are telecast every Sunday on Kantipur Television from the Russian Cultural Centre. Forty bands will be selected for the auditions which will also be held at the Russian Cultural Center.



Largest mobile showroom



Virgin Mobiles has opened a large mobile showroom in Tamrakar Complex, Pako, New Road. The new showroom will facilitate customers to various brands of cell phones in one place. The company will sell mobile sets with warranty and is expected to provide services even after the purchase.

NEW PRODUCTS

SAMSUNG: IMS Tele Trade has introduced two Samsung Windows mobile smartphones: the SGH-i780 and U 900. The SGH-i780 is Windows Mobile 6 Professional and features a two megapixel camera and a secondary VGA video call camera, touch screen, 400 MHz CPU, tri-band GSM, WiFi, Bluetooth, an A-GPS receiver, and 256/128 ROM and RAM. The U 900 is an ultra slim phone with minimal design and a real metal body. It has innovative DaCP technology and a five megapixel AF with Power LED camera, FM radio, mp3, 80 MB (User Memory) with microSD (up to 8GB).



RIO: Rio has introduced a new combination of apple and cherry in its fruit drink. Rio is currently available in a range of flavours such as mango, pineapple, lychee and mixed fruit.

Pressuring the press
It's not just about 'democracy'

Addressing a public rally in the heart of Kathmandu last week, Maoist Party Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal declared, 'We will no longer tolerate criticism as we have been elected by the people.' In a tirade against Kantipur Publications he added, 'They continuously criticised us before the CA elections, but now we have



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

become the largest party.' Applause greeted Dahal as he advised journalists from other newspapers to think twice before writing anything against the Maoists.

The following day, the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) responded: 'These remarks from the chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, the largest political party in the CA, have raised serious doubts over the Maoists' commitment to free press.' It asked Dahal to 'make public his party's policy towards the independent press', as if what he said earlier was vague.

What puzzled me about this exchange was not why Dahal said what he did. Perhaps he was playing to the gallery. Perhaps he remains drunk on his party's victory. Perhaps he was testing the limit of what he could say in

public. Whatever the case may be, since Dahal's party is on record for murdering and harassing journalists, I found his speech irresponsibly frightening. The FNJ's response was, as usual, tepid and mechanical.

What I found puzzling was why these young people, in their teens and early 20s — the very generation that has seen, experienced and benefited from the free Nepali press since 1990 — welcomed Dahal's remarks with such zeal. It's tempting to dismiss them as brainwashed Maoist cadres. But could it be that those who captain the FNJ and other donor-funded media entities are so used to reacting to the Maoists over the same issues, that they forget how poor a job they've been doing to remind the public why press freedom matters in the first place?

Instead of addressing the Maoist leadership, the FNJ should change its tactics, face the public and explain that press freedom is important on multiple levels.

First, freedom of press makes it easier to empower ordinary Nepalis, even those with no political voice. If the press makes it public how Dalits are ill-treated in certain villages, how migrant labourers are infecting their spouses with HIV, or how the cadres of a certain political party extort money from small businesses, it allows others to use social and political processes to stop the perpetrators from

undermining other citizens' rights to enjoy their freedoms. Second, it aids the flow of investment into the country. Nepal does not have a large capital base. To undertake large infrastructural projects, we need cash from abroad. But no investor wants to risk their money here if they cannot obtain independent third-party information, which is provided by a free press. A muzzled media means vague information for investors, which in turn means fewer investment dollars, which translates into fewer jobs for Nepalis in Nepal. And third, though it may seem obvious, freedom of press makes it easier for newspapers to be accountable to the truth. Putting the usual high-minded language about democracy aside, let us not forget that the Nepali mainstream media-scape is commercially competitive, and the currency that endures, for reputation and profits, is the verifiable truth that can be reported first. Just as open competition leads to higher quality and better outputs in other spheres of business, it also compels Nepali newspapers to keep their standards high.

Let's hope that next time Dahal makes threats against the press, the FNJ will have the wisdom to find out ways to influence the thinking of his rapturous audience. ●



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Crude words Witch-hunt

Ameet Dhakal in *Kantipur*, 2 June

कान्तिपुर

I am writing to you, Mr Pushpa Kamal Dahal, since you specifically threatened *Kantipur* at your public meeting in Tundikhel the other day. You were quoted as saying: 'I have told the editor of *Kantipur* that if he keeps on criticising us he will have to face the consequences because the people have now made us victorious.'

Do you mean to say, Mr Dahal, that the media should only criticise the losers in elections and you should be above censure? Or that whoever makes the government will have immunity from criticism. Such journalism exists only in people's republics. In democracies, the media is a watchdog especially vis-à-vis the state and the government.

In previous elections, the NC and UML have won with much larger numbers of popular votes than the Maoists have this time. The NC, in fact, won a majority twice. But they never said, we have won so stop criticising us. And neither did we stop exposing their wrongs. What kind political culture are you trying to construct, Mr Dahal?

Kantipur had a headline after the elections: 'Maoist wave'. It wrote that the Maoists should be allowed to form a government. That wasn't written to flatter you, yet you were happy with the paper that day. We were interpreting the political reality. During the king's rule we printed your interview. We didn't print it because you had forced us to print it, and we didn't desist from printing it out of fear of the king. We fought against the king and the army despite threats.

Am I allowed to express my opinions or not? Am I allowed to speak or not? Why should a journalist be publicly threatened for his coverage by the Maoists? At Tundikhel you asked us not to question your commitment to 'democratic competition' and then in complete contradiction



you threatened to impose a 'people's republic' if things didn't go the way you wanted.

Tulsi Giri used to say it was possible for Nepal to have an alternative to democracy, and he used to publicly berate the free media and *Kantipur* by name. What is the difference between Tulsi Giri Path and Prachanda Path.

Editorial in *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 2 June

समाचारपत्र

With Nepal now becoming a republic, we in the media thought there would be more press freedom in the country. However, Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal's recent statement against the free press has dashed all hopes. At the Republic Day celebrations in Khula Manch, Dahal threatened *Kantipur* Publications that if they keep criticising the Maoist party there will be consequences.

The Nepali press has taken this statement as a threat and a direct challenge. If there were differences between the party and the publication, they could have dealt with the situation amicably. There could have been dialogue.

People are also disappointed by the fact that a party they overwhelmingly supported would threaten the press so publicly. The Maoists should have used this time to build trust. Instead they have given the press community more reason to suspect their intentions.

This is not to say that the press is always right. Sometimes mistakes are made. But it is safe to say that no publication is on a witch-hunt against any political party. It is the right of the people to be informed, and that is not possible in a country where there is no press freedom. And to use the press against a particular party or individual, and for self-interest is unproductive and foolish.

Party leaders have to be careful about the tone and words they choose to use while speaking publicly. If the leader uses a threatening tone, party workers may take it as party policy and reflect that in their actions. The Federation of Nepali Journalists, Reporters Club and Press Chautari Nepal have condemned this recent statement and have requested that the Maoists respect press freedom, stop giving mixed signals and make clear their policy towards the Nepali media.

In a democratic republic it is the responsibility of political parties to ensure that the people's right to be informed is protected. Meanwhile in another public function, Maoist ideologue Baburam Bhattarai has said that Dahal wasn't threatening anyone. He insisted that unlike in the past, the press would enjoy maximum freedom under the Maoists. If only the Maoists could translate their proclamations into action, Bhattarai's assurances would gain more weight.

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SAM KANG LI

Competent

Jayapuri Gharti Magar in *Naya Patrika*, 4 June

आज पत्रिका

Women are often treated as second class citizens in Nepal, but they now hold 191 seats in the constituent assembly. In the old regime women MPs constituted barely five percent, but the women’s movement, active for over 50 years, gained lot of ground in the last few years, especially in the Maoist movement.

Feudal and patriarchal Nepali society did not take kindly to women fighting to change the nation. Over recent years women activists, campaigners and soldiers faced criticism from society, and were jailed, disappeared and tortured.

Still, they refused to give up because

they were fighting for equality of class, ethnicity, region and gender. The movement, initially limited to a few districts, spread to all 75. It brought all women together and made them aware of their situation. The fight was not for a few privileged women, but for rural women who had been oppressed for years.

Full women’s rights have still not been achieved yet. It is time to evaluate the past and assess the present position of the movement in order to move ahead. Some leaders still have an old-fashioned attitude towards women. They appear to support them, but then doubt their capability in times of crisis.

Women proved their capability

during the interim government, and played a vital role in bringing about a republic. Some people try to belittle their role, but these claims are based on personal agendas and prejudices.

Women’s presence in the assembly is historic. We can not underestimate their capability, as they have already contributed much to the democratic movement. Women are not lacking in competence or unaware of the issues to be raised in the assembly. At present, their role is to write a new constitution, implement the republic and guarantee women’s rights. We must move ahead with the belief that men and women representatives have the same roles in nation-building.



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EURO 2008 GAME SCHEDULE

GROUP A

SATURDAY 7 JUNE 08

Switzerland

21:45

Czech Rep

SUNDAY 8 JUNE 08

Portugal

00:30

Turkey

WEDNESDAY 11 JUNE 08

Czech Rep

21:45

Portugal

THURSDAY 12 JUNE 08

Switzerland

00:30

Turkey

MONDAY 16 JUNE 08

Switzerland

00:30

Portugal

MONDAY 16 JUNE 08

Turkey

00:30

Czech Rep

GROUP B

SUNDAY 8 JUNE 08

Austria

21:45

Croatia

MONDAY 9 JUNE 08

Germany

00:30

Poland

THURSDAY 12 JUNE 08

Croatia

21:45

Germany

FRIDAY 13 JUNE 08

Austria

00:30

Poland

TUESDAY 17 JUNE 08

Poland

00:30

Croatia

TUESDAY 17 JUNE 08

Austria

00:30

Germany

GROUP C

MONDAY 9 JUNE 08

Romania

21:45

France

TUESDAY 10 JUNE 08

Netherlands

00:30

Italy

FRIDAY 13 JUNE 08

Italy

21:45

Romania

SATURDAY 14 JUNE 08

Netherlands

00:30

France

WEDNESDAY 18 JUNE 08

Netherlands

00:30

Romania

WEDNESDAY 18 JUNE 08

France

00:30

Italy

GROUP D

TUESDAY 10 JUNE 08

Spain

21:45

Russia

WEDNESDAY 11 JUNE 08

Greece

00:30

Sweden

SATURDAY 14 JUNE 08

Sweden

21:45

Spain

SUNDAY 15 JUNE 08

Greece

00:30

Russia

THURSDAY 19 JUNE 08

Greece

00:30

Spain

THURSDAY 19 JUNE 08

Russia

00:30

Sweden

QUARTER-FINAL 1: FRIDAY 20 JUNE 08

WINNER GROUP A

00:30

WINNER GROUP B

QUARTER-FINAL 2: SATURDAY 21 JUNE 08

WINNER GROUP B

00:30

WINNER GROUP C

QUARTER-FINAL 3: SUNDAY 22 JUNE 08

WINNER GROUP C

00:30

WINNER GROUP D

QUARTER-FINAL 4: MONDAY 23 JUNE 08

WINNER GROUP D

00:30

WINNER GROUP A

The Euro 2008 draw has been made and the top 16 teams are in Austria and Switzerland to kick off the tournament



Favourites

It is no secret as to who will be the favourites going into the tournament. France and Greece topped a tricky qualifying group containing France, a resurgent Romania, and the Netherlands. They will take some stopping.

Similarly France, beaten World Cup finalists will be out for revenge. They have assembled an impressive squad. However both teams have been drawn in a group with Holland and Romania, which means the tournament will lose some of its excitement.

Elsewhere, history suggests it is foolish to discount Germany. They have played so close to home. Another team to watch is the Czech Republic. They were in the group, actually finishing ahead of Germany, and with only one loss in their qualifying campaign.

Dark horses

It is fair to say that Greece's victory in 2004 was quite possibly the greatest upset in the history of the championships has ever seen. However, although they qualified for the tournament, it would be a surprise if they are to retain their title this year.

Sweden possesses a decent side and enough quality players to make them a dark horse. They suggest they may make it through to the quarter finals. Whether they can progress any further, however, remains to be seen.

Romania had an excellent qualifying campaign yet being drawn in a group with France means they will have done fantastically well just to reach the quarter finals. They are for an otherwise strong side.

Yet perhaps the real dark horses of the competition are Poland and the Czech Republic. They are in the finals of the competition, after qualifying top of their group and with only one loss they might just be worth a punt.

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RUNNER-UP GROUP B

21 JUNE 08

00:30

RUNNER-UP GROUP A

SEMI-FINALS: THURSDAY 26 JUNE 08

00:30

WINNER QF 1

00:30

WINNER QF 2

SEMI-FINALS: FRIDAY 27 JUNE 08

00:30

WINNER QF 3

00:30

WINNER QF 4

FINAL: MONDAY 30 JUNE 08

00:30

JUNE 08

00:30

RUNNER-UP GROUP D

JUNE 08

00:30

RUNNER-UP GROUP C

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, especially with the tournament being
epublic who topped their qualifying
oss along the way.

the biggest shock the European
with ease, it will be an even bigger

s in Ibrahimovic and Ljungberg to
r they have enough strength in depth

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arter finals; in essence, a rotten draw

nd. Although this is their first time in
nd surprisingly, ahead of Portugal,



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Still hand to mouth

Farmers see little benefit from food price rises



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

GITA DHUNGANA in BARA

Ten-year-old Sandeep Prasad dreams of becoming a pilot one day. Asked if he would be happy with life as a farmer like his father, the expression on his face shows he can hardly believe the question. Who would want to be a farmer these days?

Sathrughan Kumar Baitha of Banjaria, in Bara is doing an intermediate-level

course in commerce, but also helps out his family on their farm. Sathrughan too has no intention of staying back, and dreams instead of going abroad. He doesn't know where, but so long as it is outside Nepal, that's good enough for him.

Sandeep and Sathrughan are not only the ones who cannot see a future for themselves in agriculture. Every year thousands of Nepal's rural youth are migrating to countries like Qatar and

Malaysia, or even war-zones like Iraq or Afghanistan to work as labourers.

Why are so many prepared to face the debt, toil, and often humiliation and danger which going to work in these place entails? The reason, Baitha says, is simple: "There is no money in farming."

Considering the soaring food prices in both the international and the local markets, one might think that local farmers are making a tidy profit too, at least in the

last couple of months. But this is not the case.

"There is some profit, but the costs are even higher," says Ram Lakhan Prasad, a farmer at Barthoda VDC. The cost of fertilisers and equipment is rising, and farmers' productivity is further affected by a lack of irrigation and a generally low awareness of technological advancements.

And in most cases, it is not the farmers who reap the benefits of rising market prices for their crops, but the middlemen who get the goods to market.

"It's farm brokers and stockists who are really benefiting the most from these price rises," says Manish Kumar Goinka, who owns a flour mill. "Farmers are not getting nearly as much out of it."

Ram Lakhan Prasad explains: "We cannot decide the rate we sell at ourselves. We have to agree to the price set by farm traders."

With limited cash reserves, most farmers are in a weak position when bargaining with the traders. Many are living hand-to-mouth, with any spare income spent on children's school fees. They cannot afford to hold back their produce and wait for a better deal.

Fluctuating prices mean that farmers' incomes are uncertain despite their constant hard work and investment.

Many farmers in Bara say that if the government could help to provide irrigation systems, their productivity would rise and their costs would fall.

"If we had proper irrigation, we could harvest in three or even four seasons as opposed to the two seasons that we can now," says Lal Babu Raut from Banjaria.

Electricity is also scarce, so farmers depend on diesel pumps to water their fields, which cost roughly 10 times more than an electric pump. The nationwide diesel shortage has exacerbated this problem.

Ram Prasad Singh, a farmer in Barthoda, says: "I'm happy about New Nepal, but the most important thing for me to is to have enough electricity to make my machines work." ●

Peacetime in a war zone

War over, development hopes run high in the Maoist heartland

KISHOR RIMAL in ROLPA

The scenic little town of Thabang is where the Maoist insurgency began in 1996, and its inhabitants are proud of their role in spearheading the movement which eventually led to the declaration of a federal republic in Nepal last week.

The villages of Rolpa found themselves the target of the army's Operation Kilo Sierra 2 and Operation Romeo in 1997-99, intended to root out the budding Maoist movement. But the brutal crackdowns actually increased the Maoists' support here.

The war had a profound effect on the village. Many students dropped out of school, either to join the PLA or simply to flee. "We had to go to Libang for our SLC exams, and if we met the police they would capture and torture us," recalls Dhan Bahadur Roka who escaped the chaos by going to Saudi Arabia. Now he is home again and runs a telephone booth.

The people of Thabang are now working to rebuild the destruction, and there are a number of youth organisations working to set up services and infrastructure in the remote VDC.

Youth groups have built both a library and a computer centre in

CELEBRATION TIME: The Jaljala festival at Thabang.



KISHOR RIMAL

Thabang. The library is named after the first villagers to be killed in the war, Dil Man Roka and Lali Roka. "We are not on the power grid here, but we can run the computers with a diesel generator," says Mahesh Budha Magar.

A new learning centre has also recently opened, and 100 children

have already enrolled. Lakab Bahadur Magar says, "It was difficult to start this centre because we have so few resources. But our youth groups put in a lot of time and labour for free." Lakab Bahadur hopes to electrify the village next year by building a hydroplant.

The locals are also hoping to

market their village as a tourist destination. The first Jaljala Festival was celebrated this year on 20-22 May. Anera Roka hopes that the festival can become a crowd-puller for tourists and thus create more job opportunities for local youth, many of whom are still unemployed or underemployed. Maoist leader Santosh Budha

Magar credits village youth with thinking up the festival and helping organise it.

The youth of Thabang are as relieved as anyone that the war is over. Now they hope for political stability and an environment in which they can earn a living for themselves and build a future for their children. "We suffered so much in the war. I hope our children will never have to experience that," says Tilak BK.

Facilities and opportunities in the village are slowly increasing. There is now a higher secondary school in the village so children can study up to class 12.

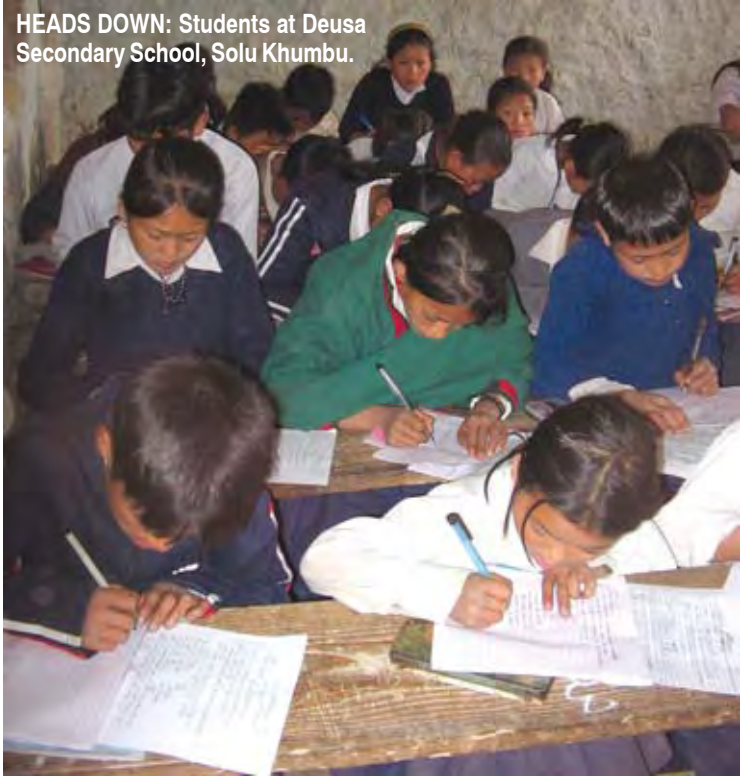
But after education people also need jobs. Many end up going to the Gulf to work. Those who remain are hoping for some investment from the government or the NGOs.

The Maoists state that they are amenable to working with donor agencies, but they are adamant that all programs should be community-based.

Thabang is typical of much of rural Nepal, the local population is eager to contribute to building infrastructure and services, but hindered by lack of resources. Villages like Thabang now look to the new government for help so they can get a new start in life. ●

The brain drain affects every aspect of Nepal’s development

Stopping the haemorrhage



HEADS DOWN: Students at Deusa Secondary School, Solu Khumbu.

ANGELA RYAN

Over half the students in every class in the Deusa Secondary School, Solu Khumbu, failed their exams this year. Over 300 children will be retaking the year again. Many of them will drop out to work in their parents’ fields or to work as porters in the trekking season. This school, a day’s walk from the district headquarters at Salleri, is not untypical of government schools over most of the country.



NEPALI PAN
Marianne Heredge

The healthpost at Deusa has paracetamol and some antibiotics for stomach complaints. The medical helper, Dil Kumari Rai, does the best she can given her resources, but she only has basic training and if anyone is seriously ill they have to walk or be carried to the hospital at Phaplu, a day’s walk away. A year ago, the secondary school advertised for a science teacher to teach classes up to class 10, with a salary of Rs 10,000 a month. Seven candidates applied, but all either got cold feet, or asked for extra incentives to lighten the hardship of living in the village. For most people who are qualified in fields such as health and education, working in a village seems like a hardship placement, and death knell to their career prospects. “The facilities are better in Kathmandu,” one nurse told me. Working in the capital not only means a higher standard of living and more opportunities for jobs on the side, but also the chance to study English, and eventually secure a job abroad, their ticket out of Nepal. These sentiments are understandable. Even for those who do have a genuine desire to help their community, the chance to build a career in the US or UK is a temptation hard to resist.

work in the villages. Few people are prepared to sacrifice their own comfort and future for humanitarian ideals, that often look unachievable in the context of widespread government neglect and institutions which no one respects, or expects to function properly. Many professional people believe that their chances will be better in Kathmandu or abroad. This is not always the case, though. Even Kathmandu only has a finite number of qualified jobs, as do the saturated work markets of North America and Europe. Many immigrants who are qualified as teachers, engineers or doctors in their own countries end up serving fast food or stacking supermarket shelves. And anyhow, nurses and teachers in the UK are barely able to make ends meet from their own salaries. If aspiring emigrants knew about all of this they might be less eager to seek employment abroad. But, as we all know, myths of streets paved with gold persist, and so rather than trying to

dissuade them from leaving with scare stories, Nepal will eventually have to offer more incentives for these people to stay. It is not easy to offer a solution to this problem which will actually work. There is no panacea which can bring decent services to rural areas in an instant. But maybe a change in the mentality of development-makers and state institutions would help. At present, progress seems to be measured in concrete terms—miles of roads laid, number of buildings constructed. Of course these things are important, but having competent people who are willing to work in them is too. Most government schools have overcrowded classes, crumbling structures and a lack

of teaching materials. Is it surprising that many teachers lose hope? Similar problems beset many healthposts. In order to encourage people to take and stay in these jobs, the government needs to address the neglect and hopelessness which are so often found in state services. If people don’t respect and feel respected in their jobs, they will never want to stay in them, and the villages of Nepal will remain without services as they are now. ● Marianne Heredge and her friends are helping to sponsor a number of teachers at remote government schools and are looking for a nurse to reopen the healthpost at Deusa. If anyone is interested to help, she can be contacted at m_heredge@yahoo.co.uk.



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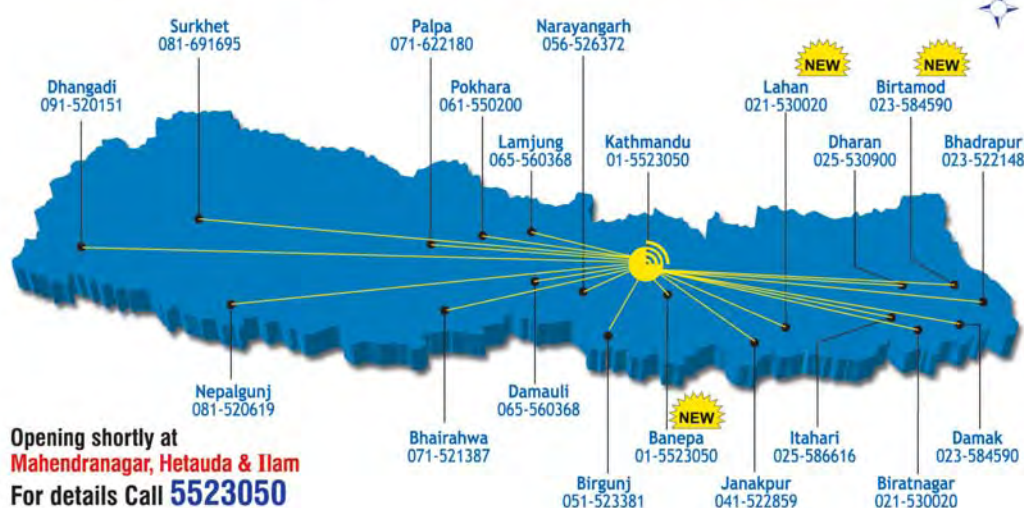
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Great Firewall coming down?

China warming to free speech

ANDREAS NI

Tight media control of the unrest in Tibet has been followed by what, to some, looks like far more open coverage of the devastating earthquake in Sichuan province. Is this a change in China's media strategy, or just a short term change in tactics?

This question stands out in view of Chinese public opinion in the latter phase of the Tibet crisis. Much to the consternation of the Western media, Chinese people worldwide lashed out against its allegedly biased coverage of the Tibetan riots.

Western reporting, once commended for its veracity, now seems discredited across China, although sympathetic coverage of the loss of life in Sichuan may have redeemed the Western media somewhat. Even Chinese liberals admit that Western journalists blundered badly in Tibet, using cropped images and false captions as evidence of China's heavy-handed rule.

But much of the Chinese wrath is directed at biased reports, not at Western media in general. And when one looks more closely at how the Chinese responded, both to the unrest in Tibet and the Sichuan earthquake, one sees tangible signs that the Chinese are embracing a greater degree of free speech.

Despite a news blackout during the riots in Lhasa, for example, Chinese internet users managed to dodge the country's censorship. Much as they loathed domestic publications for blindly following the guidelines of Xinhua, China's state news agency, they were similarly contemptuous of Western media that mishandled the story. As a result, those Chinese who use the internet as a source for news awakened to the fact that no account—Chinese or Western—is flawless. Such scepticism, which is a fundamental attribute of the democratic mind, may have played a role in pushing the government toward more openness in Sichuan.

Unlike in the past, when Chinese internet users passively received information, years of exposure to concepts such as human rights and democracy have emboldened them to challenge entrenched yet dubious views, even if it means iconoclasm. Chinese audiences are as fed up with the glowing encomiums broadcast by CCTV as they are with the simplistic, context-free reporting of Western media.

After China's government became aware that independent grassroots movements could convince ordinary Chinese where government propaganda had failed, it lifted its initial ban on reporting on Tibet. "Net nannies" – as China's Internet censors are often dubbed – blocked sensitive articles less frequently. China's government has apparently begun to appreciate the limitations of cover-ups and stonewalling, and perhaps also the merits of allowing some room for free speech.

This thirst for unbiased information highlights the dramatic change that the internet has brought to China's political landscape. Nowadays, the government no longer monopolises information and the right to process it. Insightful bloggers attract considerably more clicks than do official mouthpieces. A "virtual civil society" is in the making.

The more open media in Sichuan may be mere posturing to appease critics after the Tibet upheaval and the scuffle over the Olympic torch. The government's willingness to address squarely questions about shoddy infrastructure will be a key test of the genuineness of its supposed new found tolerance of freeish speech.

Although free speech is no panacea for China's woes, only when it is established will the country's progress be sustainable. Despite the watchful eyes of Beijing, the internet is sowing the seeds of free speech in China. That may be the most important lesson of the crises in Tibet and Sichuan. ● (Project Syndicate)

Andreas Ni is a writer living in Shanghai.

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Sobering thought

Kodo ko jad, tongba, raksi, etc

As an Englishman who is rarely averse to a dram whatever the weather, Khaire Bhai has been pleased and fascinated by the quality and variety of traditional alcohols in Nepal. Nepali alcoholic beverages are an acquired taste, but once I had acquired it and especially once others knew I had acquired it, in the village it could be hard to get through the afternoon sober.

 **KHAIRE BHAI**
Tom Owen-Smith

A few weeks ago I promised to devote a future column to Nepali alcohol ('Speaking in tongues', #397). Here it is.

Tongba and raksi are mainstays of the winter. Many a cold night my body has gone to sleep wrapped in a warm glow thanks to these natural heaters, and I am with that section of the Nepali population which believes that raksi *is* good for an upset stomach, though I don't know if the belief has any basis in medical fact.

But the best taste and widest variety are found in jad, a beer which can be brewed from seemingly almost any grain. The most popular varieties include:

1. Kodo ko jad, this is the king of jads. Most popular in eastern Nepal, the millet brew is sharp and refreshing, especially if it has been fermented long enough to be sour rather than sweet, and is of a thin consistency.

2. Chamal ko jad, the favourite in Kathmandu and the Valley rice jad is usually sweeter and often thicker than millet. I like this variety but find it is less tasty than millet and can be deceptively and dangerous strong, and should be treated with care on social occasion.

3. Makai ko jad—I have only been served maize brew a couple of times in the central hills. To be honest it was not my favourite. The texture was gritty and taste inferior to other varieties. Maybe I just got a bad batch.

4. Gahun ko jad—served in higher-up villages, wheat jad is no-nonsense and thick, filling the stomach almost like eating a meal. This is the most giggly of jads, as the power is slowly released from the full stomach.

5. Kodo ra chamal ko mix—apparently the best proportions are 80-90 percent millet and 10-20 percent rice. If the mix and fermentation time are right, this can be even better than pure millet.

Jad can also be made from various other grains and roots, though this connoisseur hasn't had the pleasure of trying them out. But whereas Khaire Bhai has enjoyed all the drinks and is grateful for the hospitality and brewing skill of so many hosts, he is aware that the spectre of alcoholism, which increasingly haunts the UK public consciousness, also hangs over Nepal.

Although here it tends to be older rather than younger people who consume more alcohol and 'binge drink', as the



KIRAN PANDAY

British media would have it, this still represents a danger and a problem. The realisation only dawned on me slowly that people who start drinking tongba first thing in the morning every day are alcoholics. Having drunk parents or grandparents strikes me as even more dangerous to society as a whole than having drunk children, especially in a country where age is accorded sometimes unquestioning obedience and deference.

Of course by no means everyone is an alcoholic. Indeed alcohol is despised by another section of the population, an attitude which seems almost as unhealthy. Nepali society has a kind of schizophrenia about alcohol. Some young people in Nepal are either put under pressure to drink by older relatives, and some forbidden it on

pain of disinheritance by teetotal parents. Many drink secretly whereas others, seeing the effect of alcoholism on some of their elders, have forsworn it themselves.

In a country where alcohol is very widely available and traditionally consumed, puritanical vilification of drinking is not a solution to alcoholism, as it just hardens resistance to what some people see as an attempt to suppress their culture.

Maybe it would be more healthy for everyone to accept that using alcohol in moderation is enjoyable, and try to consider the reasons, individual and social, why certain people become addicted to it. Helping alcoholics with their addiction will most likely do more good than condemning them. ●

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Full citizens

Sexual minorities are moving towards recognition

WONG SHU YUN

Alex Chamling used to dread going to confession at his church. As a gay Roman Catholic, he felt ashamed of his sexuality, which his church told him was a sin. But after meeting other gay people this year, he says he now feels more confident about himself—and has given up going to confession.

“As long as it doesn’t affect others in a negative way, I don’t believe that loving someone of the same sex can be a sin,” he says. “My priest has told me that although not religiously correct, I have every right to love whoever I want.” The 27-year-old remains a Catholic believer and still

attends weekly Mass.

Most LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) people in Nepal do not face the same inner religious conflict as Alex. Hinduism contains no explicit religious teachings against homosexuality, and families in the Tarai sometimes invite cross-dressers to bless their newborn children.

But few people want a gay person in their own family. Most battles that LGBTI people have to fight in Nepal are against exclusion from society and their own families.

“If we tell the truth about our sexuality in a job interview, we lose the job,” says transgender Kusum Lama, who will take hormone pills for the rest of her



BECAUSE I’M WORTH IT: Kusum Lama works at the Blue Diamond Society, and dreams of becoming a fashion designer.

SAM KANG LI

life to achieve a feminine figure. The sprightly 21-year-old became a sex worker in discos and bars after leaving her family, but later found support from the Blue Diamond Society (BDS), an NGO that helps the LGBTI community through education, healthcare and advocacy.

Lama, now the national

secretary for the Federation of Sexuality and Gender Minorities Nepal (FSGMN), says: “People think that transgender people only know how to put on lipstick, dance around, clap their hands and be prostitutes. They don’t know how career-driven and clever we can be.”

Leaders of the LGBTI

community say there may be 900,000 lesbian and gay people in Nepal, most of whom continue to hide their sexuality from society. Life for these people, particularly transgenders, is especially hard in rural areas, where village society expects them to marry someone of the opposite sex. Many are attracted by the anonymity and relative freedom they can find in larger towns and cities.

Lesbian couple Suman Tamang, 26, and Anusha Tamang, 21, had to leave their village in Jhapa after revealing to their families that they were in a relationship. Now they are struggling to make a living in Kathmandu, and Suman is learning to drive to become a taxi-driver. “We can’t go back to our village,” says Suman. “Only in Kathmandu can we live our married life in peace.”

When LGBTI people in Nepal speak of marriage, it has no legal status. There is no paperwork involved, as the state still doesn’t recognise same-sex marriages. But the situation is slowly changing. On 21 December 2007, the Supreme Court of Nepal declared that all discriminatory laws against LGBTI people must be repealed by the government, and provision must be made for recognition of the ‘third gender’ on government documents.

Nepal has become the only South Asian country to provide such rights. And as California’s Supreme Court lifts a ban on gay marriage this month, Nepal is making progress on the sidelines, with the BDS and Supreme Court talking of forming a committee to explore the legalisation of same-sex marriages.

Sunil Babu Pant, Nepal’s first openly gay MP and founder of the BDS, is hopeful about the future for LGBTI people in Nepal. “Things are improving,” he says. “There is less violence compared to three years ago due to increased sensitisation.” But there are still more than 50 cases of violence or discrimination against LGBTI people pending in the courts.

Awareness of homosexuality is growing in Nepal. At least LGBTI people do not have to face the religious condemnation they do in Catholic countries, but there is still a long way to go before they are accepted as ‘normal’.



First date of publication: 31 May 2008 WESTERN TERAI LANDSCAPE COMPLEX PROJECT VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT



The Western Terai Landscape Complex Project (WTLCP) was launched in January 2006 to establish a landscape level management model to conserve biological wealth and vital ecological functions in the Western Terai area of Nepal.

In total, the project covers 3,466 sq km in the Bardia, Kailali and Kanchanpur districts in the western Nepal. Half of the project area falls in Bardia National Park, Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve and their buffer zones and the other half in the adjoining productive landscapes. Of the total land area, forests and agriculture land comprises 60% and grasslands 32%. The combined population of all three sub-complexes reaches over half a million. Altogether project works with 52 Village Development Committees (VDCs) in three districts and few other VDCs which were supported during the preloading project period. The project is looking for qualified Nepalese citizen for the following post.

Post title : Biodiversity Conservation Officer (BCO) SB 4
Duty Station : Kathmandu with frequent travel to the project districts

Responsibilities

- The BCO will work under the supervision of the National Project Coordinator (NPC).
- S/he will act as a deputy for NPC and provide principle guidance for the NPC and project staff.
- S/he will develop project reports in collaboration with NPC and support in representing the project in meetings/workshops
- S/he will be responsible for developing and overall implementation of the project’s activities related to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity (including agrobiodiversity) components, in the protected areas and productive landscape.
- S/he will facilitate the execution of all biodiversity conservation and sustainable land/resource management components by forming the vital link between people, local institutions and the objectives of the project.
- S/he will work in close collaboration with other project staff, subcontractors/consultants, project partners as well as governmental counterparts. S/he will have the responsibility on the side of the NPC to coordinate between different counterparts and other environmentally related projects for smooth project implementation
- S/he will support in developing and implementation of local strategies for alternative energy
- S/he will assess training needs of protected area staff and service providers in scientific and participatory management of protected areas; s/he will oversee development and implementation of targeted training modules and act as facilitator or trainer as required.
- Together with communications officer s/he will provide technical inputs for conservation education materials and support in dissemination the project information and findings to the stake holders
- S/he will assist in developing biological indicators to measure project efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and relevance; and designing and implementing strategy for involving local communities in participatory monitoring and evaluation.
- Oversee analysis and interpretation of geographical, biological, socio-economic data, applying them to management and policy recommendations in close cooperation with M & E Officer.
- S/he is responsible for following the global and national development in the relevant fields and applying essential findings to the design and implementation of the project activities.
- Support local authorities in mainstreaming biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into local development planning and programming, and facilitate the formulation and implementation of planning tools for landscape-level biodiversity management for Churia range.
- Work with DFO and protected area staff to develop and implement plans for prevention of future re-encroachments and habitat restoration and ensure comprehensive surveying and demarcation of government-managed forests and internal biodiversity hotspots/critical habitat linkages in project area.

Qualifications:

- Master’s degree in Natural Resource Management or other relevant area with over **seven years** of experience in program development with at least six years of relevant field experience in project monitoring.
- Strong background in conservation planning, biodiversity monitoring and experience in sustainable land/resource use practices, including agrobiodiversity.
- Proven knowledge of developing participatory planning frameworks and experience in providing guidance to field level.
- Must have experience and knowledge on project cycle management and planning, monitoring, evaluation and transferring lessons learned into action. Good understanding and experience in knowledge management and information sharing.
- Must possess excellent English report writing, and computer skills. Experience of working for multi-donor and multi stakeholder projects.

Social Competencies:

- Sensitivity and experience in areas of gender and social inclusion. Ability to work independently and under pressure in fast changing circumstances.
- Good social, interpersonal and conflict management skills, willingness to work in team. Good capacity to work under stress and rapidly changing situations.

Applications should be submitted **no later than 19 June 2008 by email, to: hrrmu2.np@undp.org** by stating the position applied for in the “Subject” line or in a sealed envelope to **UNDP Operations Division, (Ref: BCO/UNDP/RC), P.O. Box 107, Kathmandu, Nepal**
(Only Applicants who are short-listed will be contacted)

Applicants must submit the updated standard **P11 Form for Project Personnel** available at UNDP Office, Pulchowk, Nepalgunj (PON) & Biratnagar or the UNDP webpage <http://www.undp.org.np/vacancy.htm>

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“Nepal shows it is possible to de-link from US imperialism”

Prakash Karat is among the most powerful people in India today. With the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government dependent on the support of the left, the general secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) holds a veto on critical issues and has blocked the Indo-US nuclear deal. With Sitaram Yechury, Karat used the clout of CPM to influence India’s Nepal policy and the tilt towards republic. Sitting in his New Delhi party office, Karat spoke to *Nepali Times*’ Prashant Jha last week. Excerpts:

How do you see the recent election results in Nepal?

The political process and elections have significance not only for Nepal, but also South Asia. This is the first break in the chain of imperialism that has engulfed our entire region. American influence expresses itself through neo-liberal economic policies and military partnerships. Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, all are getting locked into US strategic designs. The last two years in Nepal and now the election results have provided a break with what the US has been up to. The process in Nepal and our opposition to the nuclear deal, all show it is possible to fight and try to de-link from US imperialism.



You claim that India is getting locked into US designs, and is not pursuing an independent policy. How do you explain the fact there is a visible divergence in the Indian and American approach on Nepal?

India’s strategic autonomy has got curbed, especially with the nuclear deal. Our collaboration with Israel and stand against Iran are examples. The Indian establishment, left to itself, would have taken the well beaten path on Nepal as well. Do you remember the meeting between Manmohan Singh and the

king in Jakarta and India promising to resume military aid to Nepal? That was the line being pushed by our army and defence sectors. It was we on the left who put our foot down and objected. There was constant pressure from us on the government to work with the parties and Maoists. The left’s pivotal role on Nepal and its support for the peace process must be taken into account.

Sitaram Yechury constantly makes the point about how the Indian Naxalites must learn from the Nepali Maoists. How do you view Naxalism in India?

Right now in West Bengal we face constant Maoist attacks. From 2006, 32 of our important cadre have been killed by these self-styled Maoists. Whose cause do they serve by adopting these tactics and killing our people? They do no work with the masses. This type of anarcho-sectarian politics cannot be called left politics. In Nepal, the Maoists made a significant transition. They launched an armed struggle, developed a mass base, and realised that this mass base must be utilised to move to the next stage.

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EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **MaterialScapes 6th** solo collage painting exhibition by Gaurav Shrestha, until 30 June 10AM-6PM at Gallery 32 at Dent Inn, Heritage Plaza Kamaladi. 4241942
- ❖ **Splashes** paintings by Milan Rai, until 7 June, 11AM-5PM at Park Gallery, Lazimpat. 4419353
- ❖ **Tattva** multimedia and collage exhibition by Chirag Bangdel on until 18 July, 5.30 PM at Bakery Cafe, Pulchowk.

EVENTS

- ❖ **Cadena Collective Live** 6-7 June, 7PM at Hotel Shangri-la. Rs. 450. 4412999
- ❖ **Nepal International Indigenous Film festival** 6-9 June at City Hall and Nepal Tourism Board. 4102577
- ❖ **Lecture** about how to ski on the rocks, Massage and Yoga, 7 June, 10.30 AM at Alliance Francaise. 4241163
- ❖ **AWON's Rock n Roll Nite** a fundraiser 7 June, 6.30 PM onwards at Imago Dei Café, Naxal, Rs. 950. Tickets available at Hotel Ambassador 4410432 and AWON library 2112151.
- ❖ **The Bow** film by Kim Ki-Duk presented by Cine-Sankipa on 9 June, 5.30 PM at Rimal Theater, Gurukul. 4466956
- ❖ **6th Annual Wine Festival** until September at Kilroy's, Jyatha. 4250440 Tantric Dance of Nepal presented by Kalamandapa, every Tuesday 7PM at Hotel Vajra and every Saturday 11AM at Patan Museum.



- ❖ **Live music** by Rachele Van Zanten on acoustic guitar and vocal 7June, 7PM at New Orleans Cafe, Jawlakhel. 5522708
- ❖ **Live karaoke** with special thai cuisine, every Wednesday at Holiday Karaoke Restaurant and Bar, Lazimpat. 4445731
- ❖ **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.
- ❖ **Anil Shahi** every Wednesday and Rashmi Singh every Friday, live at the Absolute Bar, Hotel Narayani Complex, 8PM. 5521408

DINING

- ❖ **30/30 Enhanced Buffet** 30% discount on entire bill for a group of four or more for the month of June at The Fun Café, Radisson Hotel. 12.30-2.30 PM and 6.30-10.30 PM, Rs. 800. 4411818
- ❖ **Lajawab** tandoori and kabab festival, 7-10 PM every Friday at the Hotel Himalaya, Rs 550.
- ❖ **Hot summer spicy food** at the Jalan Jalan Restaurant, Kupondole Heights. 5544872
- ❖ **The Kaiser Café open now** at the Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, open from 9AM-10PM. 4425341
- ❖ **Handmade Pasta** experience handmade pasta at the Rox Restaurant, Hyatt Regency until 20 June, 7-10.30 PM. 4489361
- ❖ **Steak escape** with Kathmandu's premier steaks available for lunch and dinner at the Olive Bar and Bistro, Hotel Radisson. 4411818
- ❖ **Chinese and more** at Chopsticks Restaurant and Bar, Teku. 4104503
- ❖ **Thakali and local cuisine** at Marpha Thakali Restaurant and Bar, Teku. 4104504
- ❖ **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.
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Margaritas and Martinis**, enjoy refreshing margaritas and an assortment of martinis at the Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency, until 20 June 7-10.30 PM. 4489361
- ❖ **Jazz in Patan** with coffee, food, drinks and dessert at the New Orleans Cafe, Jawalakhel. 8.30 AM-10PM. 5522708
- ❖ **Scrumptious wood fired pizzas** cocktails and more at Roadhouse, Bhatbateni 4426587, Pulchok 5521755 and Thamel 4260187.
- ❖ **Retro Brunch Barbeque** with live acoustic music by Sound Chemistry, every Saturday, 12-3PM at LeMeridien-Kathmandu, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **Dhamaka** a Nepali style barbeque with a pan-Indian fusion at the Splash Bar and Grill, Hotel Radisson, Rs. 1399 7PM, every Friday. 4411818
- ❖ **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. 9803158592
- ❖ **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](mailto:editors(at)nepalitimes.com)

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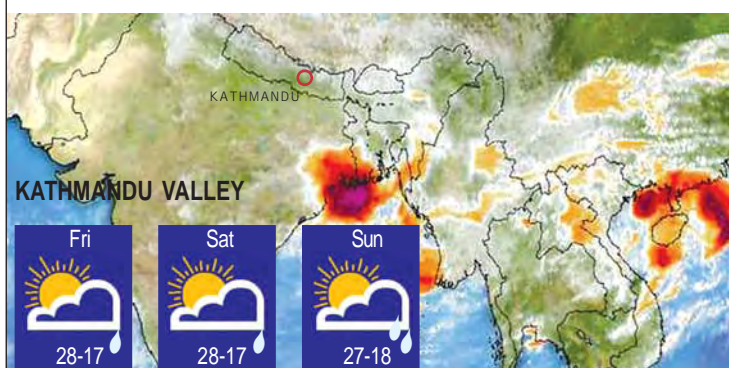
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WEEKEND WEATHER

by **NGAMINDRA DAHAL**

This year's monsoon has reached Nepal this week. Some rain gauges in southern parts of the country recorded as much as 70mm in 24 hours. A short but heavy shower (11mm) in Kathmandu on Wednesday morning is a sign of the onset of the monsoon in the Valley. Satellite pictures show a series of storms moving northwards from the Bay of Bengal, and some are already rumbling over the eastern Himalaya and Assam. These promise more rain for Nepal over the weekend and onwards. A strong low pressure trough has developed over the hills south of Kathmandu, which will drench them with rain, but limit rainfall in the mid-hills and the Valley for the time being. The monsoon is likely to lower daytime temperatures by about 2 degrees and raise nighttime temperatures by about 1 degree Celsius.




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प्रसार हुने समय : हरक शुक्रवार बेलुका (५:१५-५:३५)
हरक आइतवार दिउँसो (१:४०-२:००)
रेडियो सगरमाथामा निम्तिन सुनौ, अंग्रेजी सुन्नातौ
(रेडियो सगरमाथा र अमेरिकी राजदुतावास, अमेरिकी केन्द्रको सहकार्य)

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हर एक विधान ५:०० देखि राती ११:०० बजे सम्म सञ्चना शिक्षा र स्वस्थ मनोरञ्जनका लागि भरपर्दो साथी रेडियो सगरमाथा १०२ घोप्लो X मेगाहर्ज



KIRAN PANDAY

RAGE: At the CA's first session on 28 May, UML MP Kamala Sharma takes off her shoe to beat NC leader Purna Bahadur Khadka, who she holds responsible for the death of her husband Rishi Prasad Sharma during the election campaign. Khadka's bodyguards shot him.



PHURBA TENZING SHERPA

ON TOP OF THE WORLD: Himalmedia reporter Shailee Basnet on the summit of Mount Everest on 25 May. She climbed the mountain with the First Inclusive Women's Sagarmatha Expedition.



HIMEX

ROCKY ROAD: A competitor in the 6th Tenzing Hillary Everest Marathon scrambles over scree near the Everest Base Camp on 29 May.



KIRAN PANDAY

SPLASH: College students play water polo at the 7Up College Swimming Fungama, organised by Wave Magazine on 30 May.

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Jana-Gana-Mana-Tantra

After Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee's message of felicitation was read out to the first session of the Constituent Assembly, some wisecracks at the BICC were overheard muttering that Nepal now wasn't just a Ganatantra, but a Jana-Gana-Mana-Tantra. Which is probably what Comrade Ferocious also meant when he warned that he would turn Nepal into a "people's republic" if the NC didn't stop creating obstacles.

But the Ass thinks maybe we shouldn't give the Indians too much flak for reading out Speaker Somnath's message to the august CA last week. Turns out it was the CA Secretariat's fault for putting messages from friendly countries in the agenda for the session, but they never followed up and none of the foreign missions in Kathmandu (except Lainchour) bothered. The conscientious Indians felt it

would be embarrassing if they were missing so got Chattopadhyabhai to dash off a congratulatory missive. There being only one country which sent a message, that was the only one that was read out. Seems the secretariat didn't want to tick off the Indians.

A poll in the Indian Express this week shows that 70 percent of Indians think getting rid of the Nepal monarchy was a bad idea and wasn't in India's national interest. It seems there are now more monarchists in the Republic of India than in FDRN.

The last media interview that the ex-kingji gave was to the Japanese newspaper, Yomuiiri Shimbun in January. This week, the Yomuiiri has carried an interview with Chairman Chhabilal in which he tells the Japanese reporter that Gyanendra has a bright future ahead of him "as a

businessman, or even a politician". Now, it can't just be a coincidence that the very next day ex-kingji assures his family gathering at Narayanhiti that he may restart his business career, or launch a new political party. Seems the two have been exchanging notes. If Awesome thinks ex-kingji can be a politician, then why not just nominate Gyanendra the first president of republican Nepal and break the current political deadlock?

Even after the housing crisis for the ex-royals has been solved by shunting Gyan off to Nagarjun, Paras to Nirmal Nibas and allowing the ex-queen mother to stay on at Mahendra Manjil, the nation was immediately confronted with another crisis, viz: the issue of where the new presidential palace should be located.

A delegation of government secretaries has been doing the rounds visiting potential sites like

the Ita Tile Karkhana in Harisiddhi, the Himal Cement Factory in Chobar and even the Chhala Jutta Karkhana in Bansbari. But they have zeroed in on Shital Nibas as the official residence for the president, to be called The Yellow House. The Ass agrees, it is probably the most suitable because of its ample parking, location opposite Bhairabnath and it has a working fountain.

But the incumbent MoFa bureaucrats are reportedly loath to let go of their cosy dens and have said they will move only if they are relocated into Naryanhiti.

The Ass has an idea, why not house the new prez at the Trolley Bus Terminal which has already been turned into a dorm for YCLs and the young commies residing there can be converted into the new Young Presidential Palace Guards and kick off the integration of the two armies.

True, the Trolley Bus Building will need some sprucing up, but it is centrally located and if the president is senile and in poor health, the new Chinese-built Civil Service Hospital is right across the road. Even better, if Gyanendra can be named president then Nagarjun can also be the presidential palace. The residents of Balaju were astounded to look up and see the Nagarjun forest all lit up with neon on the day Nepal was declared a republic. Was that a sign?

Memo to Mahara Sir who just got back from a junket to China: Chinese trying to reduce the official height of Mt Everest by three metres to 8845m. You should not, repeat not, agree to this and threaten retaliation if they do. We will not give away even a centimeter of our territory.

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