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Total votes: 3,943

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Weekly Internet Poll # 406. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q . What do you predict will happen if the parties keep squabbling like this?

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UNJUST: Students protesting the hike in bus fares vandalised Chief Justice Kedar Prasad Giri's car. Giri was unhurt, and protesters said they thought it was a minister's car.

NARENDRA SHRESTHA

# Same old Nepal

## Unrest nationwide highlights urgency of forming new government

Multiple protests shut down much of the capital on Thursday as students demonstrated about the steep increase in bus fares, civil servants went on the war path over Forestry Minister Matrika Yadav's imprisonment of a staff member in a toilet, and Tibetans protested outside the Chinese embassy.

The protesters blocked the streets and set government vehicles on fire, and suddenly the new Nepal looked no different from the old.

But over at Baluwatar, for a change, there were signs that the three parties were finally inching

closer to a deal. Three weeks after the country was declared a republic, the brinkmanship of the NC, UML and Maoists appeared to be entering its endgame after yet more negotiations.

Progress of sorts came after Prime Minister Koirala reportedly assured the Maoists he was ready to step down to make way for the formation of a Maoist-led government. But he quickly qualified that by saying he wanted it to coincide with a decision on the presidency.

"We are trying to make sure we get the process right," explained the NC's Minendra Rijal. "The PM will resign if the seven parties ask

him to, otherwise who should he submit his resignation to?"

A formula is to be worked out in the next three months for the partial integration of the PLA into the national army, opposition parties will have membership of the constitutional council, a task force will monitor the return of confiscated property and a 15-day timeframe has been given to demilitarize the YCL. There has already been an amendment to the constitution allowing a simple majority to form and sack governments.

"Getting Koirala to resign is not the solution," says lawyer Bishwakant Mainali. "The seven parties should reach a political consensus on the president and prime minister."

However, by press time on Thursday there was still no

agreement on who would be president. That decision has now been pushed back, to be discussed as part of a power-sharing package that will include the vice-presidency, the chair of the constituent assembly and ministerial posts.

By going for at least a partial agreement, the big three parties are trying to calm the restless smaller parties and also give the impatient Constituent Assembly members something to keep them occupied until the new government is formed.

And until this happens and someone takes charge, most analysts agree, the country's towns and highways will continue to be blocked by anyone with a grievance. ●

Dewan Rai

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# Veering off course

## Myopic politicians are missing the bigger picture

### PRIME MINISTER DAHAL

Enough is enough. If it takes two months after an election verdict to form a government and three weeks after the declaration of a republic to replace the head of state, we wonder how long it will take to agree on a cabinet. And after that, how much longer for 601 assembly members to draft a new constitution?

Every time we bring up the subject of this endless obsession with politics at the expense of development, our leaders keep telling us to be patient. Once the politics falls into place, they say, everything will be sorted out. Well, we've waited 15 years. Remove the feudal monarchy, we are told, and there will be a golden future.

We understand that bloodless, political evolution in a democracy takes longer than a quick, violent revolution. And it's a blessing that our two-year transition to a republic hasn't been messier and more brutal. But our leaders are so busy running in circles round trees, they can't see the forest.

It's a given that all politics is selfish. But mature politicians know there is a certain point beyond which self-centredness is counterproductive. Their narrow-minded and short-sighted pursuit of political power at the expense of the country's long-term national interest benefits no one, and will come back to haunt those very leaders when they take office in future.

The inability of Nepal's leaders to fathom the level of public disillusionment and the people's overwhelming desire for development and jobs shows a breathtaking lack of accountability. And there is no understanding that only if the pie gets bigger will their share also expand.

As we go to press on Thursday afternoon, talks are still stalled on the question of the presidency. Unless the leaders at Baluwater exhibit uncommon wisdom and flexibility there will be so much bad blood it will poison relations between the incumbent and the opposition even before the new government starts its work.

It is time for a reality check: the NC and UML lost, and the Maoists didn't win a landslide. That is the people's mandate and the parties have no option but to respect it. They will reach a midnight deal, as they always do, but precious time has been lost.

Time to turn our Magna Carta into a Marshall Plan. The Maoist-led government is rushing headlong into multiple crises: food, fuel, jobs. This country is looking at a hunger pandemic (see p 4). Soaring food prices will double the number of Nepalis living below the poverty line.

The fuel emergency is here to stay, so there must be a strategy to switch our transportation economy to renewables and immediately announce tax rebates and subsidies for electric buses and cars, recharging stations and cable-cars.

The upcoming budget can be a blueprint for this new paradigm. It must focus on jobs, jobs and more jobs. Not by turning ministries into recruitment centres for the party faithful, but by creating work through investment-friendly policies.

Good luck, Prime Minister Dahal, we hope you can pull it off.



The current stalemate is distressing. Are the present negotiations meant only to work out a power-sharing deal? Or are they the basis for the next phase in the peace process? Are they a bit of both?

The NC publicly comes up with seven preconditions, demanding the Maoists change their attitude and actions.



**TARAI EYE**  
Prashant Jha

Privately, Congress leaders admit that all points are bargaining chips to make Koirala president. The UML demands a new peace agreement, but drops that as soon as the names of Madhab Nepal or Subash Nembang are floated for the presidency. The party's flip-flop is just another symptom of its severe existential crisis.

While confusion reigns in the other parties, the Maoists remain focussed. This peace agreement has served them well and they would be happy to make similar commitments again, knowing there is no mechanism to hold them to account. They are also relaxed about a degree of top-level power sharing—if necessary—because it would have little

impact on their control on the ground.

Throughout the negotiations, critical aspects of the peace process have been used by one side or another for tactical purposes or else completely ignored.

For instance, the NC has insisted on an immediate agreement on the integration of the PLA soldiers into the Nepal Army. They have a point, for the Maoists cannot head two armies. (In fact, all parties should have paid attention to security sector reform before allowing the Maoists to go into the elections as a politico-military structure.)

The integration issue is not intractable. The Maoists know all their soldiers will never be taken into the NA—and they don't particularly want to get everyone in anyway. Likewise, the army knows it will have to take in a segment of the PLA.

Whether this happens en masse or on an individual basis; whether they will constitute a battalion or be fragmented; whether there will be places for top-level PLA generals; and what will be the fate of the remainder: these are the contentious issues needing preparatory work. This should have been done by the committee set up under Article 146 of the interim constitution, but it has not met since July.

Integration is ultimately a political decision, but one with far-reaching consequences. NC is playing a dangerous game if it thinks it can use the issue to ensure Girija's position as head of state. Linked to it is the new military-civilian relationship: the army has a right to express its opinion, but only in private when asked by the government. General Katuwal has no business making public statements, nor should he have a veto on the issue.

Notable by its absence from the present discussions is talk of Madhesi integration into the army, as promised by the eight-point agreement. Katuwal, openly opposed to the clause, has claimed the army is already inclusive. But with just 800 Madhesi—in low-level positions—out of almost 100,000 soldiers, that is an outright lie.

Madhesi parties know this could strike a chord with the unemployed youth in the Tarai and help broaden their political support while provoking a confrontation with Kathmandu and giving them grounds to work with the armed groups. Ideally, they want to arouse popular passions by the year's end. The fair inclusion of Madhesi into the state security apparatus is essential in preventing further conflict.

The third issue—and the one of greatest concern—is the statelessness and rampant impunity that exists across the Tarai, where even a fringe group can engineer killings at will. There is a real danger of anarchy or hegemony at the local level.

The Maoists had a vested interest in weakening the state until now. But now that they are the state, they will try to build a partisan institutional framework to do their bidding. In many Tarai districts they have already started putting pressure on the police to release activists from armed groups who promise to defect.

The negotiations should have been about how to share power at the local level, how to encourage effective peace-building initiatives in VDCs, and how to strengthen an inclusive, independent bureaucracy and judiciary.

Unfortunately, we have just missed out on carving a new peace deal. ●

## LETTERS

### SAME TO SAME

Seems like Kunda Dixit is pretty sure that things are certain to go wrong ('Same to same', #404). Why the pessimism? Let's stop worrying about who's to be blamed. Obviously those who let us down will be blamed and sidelined just like Gyanandra has been. Best wishes to the next leader of my nation.

**Anil, New Delhi**

● Communists are stuck in time. Never understood why they worship mass murderers like Stalin and Mao so shamelessly. Illiterate buffoons. Your page 1 photo morph (#404) is interesting in one thing though: it tell us what pains they go through for a personality cult. But I won't be surprised if ten years from now, a mob of the Maoists' own making will put a garland of shoes around the leader's neck. Hopefully, a new generation will rise that will put them in their right place: the circus.

**Keshab, Putalisadak**

● If political parties that lost continue to fight for posts and don't let the country move forward, they will be completely routed in the next general elections. What will they then fight for and how do they propose to check the Maoists then. Let the Maoists run the government and critique them if they let down the Nepali people. And if you tame the Maoists that way, may be the people will start to trust the NC and UML again.

### ENERGY BLUES

With the price-hike in India and international markets, the government of

Nepal hiked the price of petroleum products, which has largely affected Nepalis ('Those energy blues', #404). Petroleum products used in India and Nepal are the same but per capita incomes of the two countries are different. India has also hiked the prices in petroleum products but consumers over there can buy subsidised kerosene because the Indian government is responsible towards its citizens.

**Praveen Kumar Yadav, email**

### FIRST PRESIDENT

Mr Lal, please do not lower your stature with such a diatribe ('The priest and the warrior,' #404). Don't encourage disintegration of the nation. Please desist from all writings that are sectarian. Try to understand the gravity and the sensitivity of the issues that you

are presently addressing.

**Samarjit Thapa, email**

● The first president of Nepal is going to be the commander-in-chief of one of the strongest forces in nation—100,000 plus men and women. We need someone who has a vision and can put the nation's interest above his/her own interests. If you elect an incompetent fellow just because s/he is a madhesi, pahadi, janajati, widow, apolitical—the list could go on and on with such stupid eligibility criteria—then you pave the way for New Pakistan or Bangladesh.

**Raj, Toronto**

### EX-KING

Pretty strange, if it's true what the Ass says, for the ex-king to be still relying on the advice of his priests and astrologers ('Friday the 13th', #404), especially as things have not gone well for him despite following their advice?

**Champa, email**



**Sandeep Dhungana, UK**



# Begin at the beginning

The disappearances, impunity and terror started 23 years ago

On 20 June, 1985 a series of bombs in Kathmandu killed at least seven and injured many others. Alarmed by the sudden eruption of violence, the NC withdrew a civic disobedience movement it had launched. The resulting political vacuum was filled by leftwing extremism.

Energised by the legitimacy of the 1980 plebiscite on the monarchy, the Panchayat system appeared unassailable. Through the third amendment to the constitution granted by his father, King Birendra



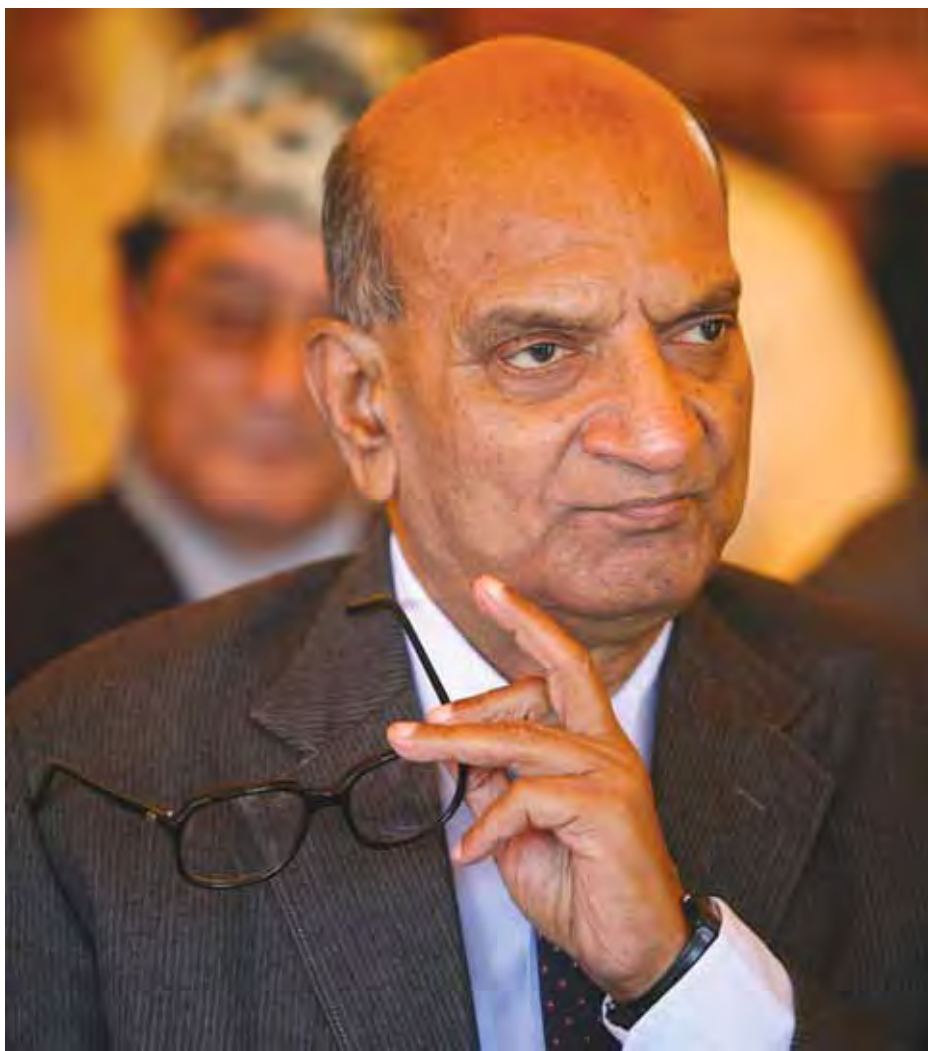
**STATE OF THE STATE**  
**C K Lal**

marginally loosened control over political activity. The dreaded Back to the Village National Committee was replaced with a technocratic Panchayat Policy and Evaluation Committee.

The 1982 Rastriya Panchayat elections proved that it was possible to be a communist and a Pancha at the same time, but a kangresi had to renounce his faith to be admitted into the political mainstream run by the royal-military elite. BP Koirala was such an important figure that when he died in 1983 there was nobody in the party to replace him. The troika of Ganeshman Singh, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Girija Prasad Koirala tried, but this was a prescription for factionalism

Political confusion had created conditions for the criminalisation of the administration, royal princes dealt openly in contraband, ministers sheltered criminals and police officers looked the other way as organised crime began to use Kathmandu as a safe haven.

This was the roaring eighties, and it was possible to breakfast with Afghan fighters in Jhonchhe, lunch with a



KIRAN PANDAY

Khalistan activist at Durbar Marg and dine with Tamil dissidents in Putali Sadak. Fugitives from all over South Asia used Kathmandu for R&R.

The military was the mainstay of the monarchy, but as king Tribhuban had correctly intuited, the NC was its political insurance policy. Unlike the presidential form of government favoured by the communists, kangresis were wedded to the

Westminster model with monarchy. Yet, every king since Mahendra did more to weaken the NC than devise ways of countering leftwing extremism.

In 1985, the NC had initiated the Satyagraha movement to check the influence of Jhapali Naxalites. Marxists like Tulsi Lal Amatya and Man Mohan Adhikari were backing the NC's civic disobedience movement. Alarmed by this,

the government used the bombs as an excuse to crack down.

Even though Ram Raja Prasad Singh of the Nepal Janabadi Morcha (and current Maoist presidential candidate) owned up to the terrorist attacks, thousands of NC activists were rounded up all over the country. The few that had remained free during the movement were arrested immediately after the blasts.

The Maoist insurgency since 1996 has injured Nepalis to news of violence, terrorism and disappearances. After the suffering of survivors in Jogimara, and the tragedy of the Madi bus bomb, reports of civilian casualties have ceased to shock the nation's conscience. But the 1985 bombs established the efficacy of terrorism and exposed the weaknesses of an autocratic regime demoralised by self-doubt, internal dissent and lack of electoral legitimacy.

Disappearances first appeared in the police lexicon. Laxmi Narayan Jha, Iswar Lama, Padam Lama, Maheswar Chaulagain and Saket Mishra were disappeared while in police custody. Years later, when we approached Prime Minister K P Bhattarai to trace them, his laconic answer was: "They may have been killed". Jha was a renowned physician and the Nepal Medical Association unsuccessfully pursued his case until the mid-nineties.

Thousands have been missing since the Maoist insurgency began. We have a comprehensive peace process, but the question of people who disappeared in captivity remains unresolved—from this war and from previous regimes.

We must start from the beginning. Today, 23 years after they were picked up at random, the families of the disappeared of 1985 deserve an answer from the first republican government of the country. ●



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# Food crisis epicentre

Jajarkot, Achham and Dailekh are the worst hit by the nationwide food crisis

RAMESWOR BOHARA

When the road to the Jajarkot district capital Khalanga was finally completed last year, the first jeep to arrive was garlanded and sprinkled with vermillion.

The road, it was thought, would mean cheaper rice an end to chronic food shortages. A year on, that euphoria has turned to misery and hunger. The highway is in such poor shape that no pick-ups can use it.

Jajarkot and neighbouring Achham and Dailekh are the districts worst affected by Nepal's nationwide food crisis. These midwestern districts had suffered five seasons of drought only to be hammered by hailstorms and blizzards this spring.

Within Jajarkot, it is the six VDCs in the north of the district that are worst hit. Ram Chandra Jyoti of Rami Danda points to the empty Nepal Food Corporation (NFC) godown and says: "The rice was finished in a week and the depot has been closed ever since." Jyoti and other villagers simply cannot afford the Rs 50 per kg the rice in the market costs.

The people of western Nepal have only one way to cope when they run out of food: they go to seek work in India. And that is what they are doing now, out-migration has turned into an exodus.

"No one has come up with a way to solve this crisis," says farmer Chandra Bahadur Khadka, who is walking down to the nearest road-head to take a bus down to the border at Nepalganj. "There is no way to fill our stomachs by staying here so we need to go to other places."

Jyoti explains: "We had some wheat but it was destroyed by hail. Now we can't even buy food because it's too expensive."

The only hope for farmers here is the maize crop that should be ripe in a month's time. Some well-off traders have been using horses and mules to bring in wheat, but the transport costs have also risen and the flour is too expensive for most people here.

Even at the best of times, Jajarkot's peasants could only grow enough food to last them three months in a year. Rugged and infertile land, a lack of irrigation and virtually no agricultural extension have kept this district dependent on the outside.

Jajarkot relies on the government's NFC to bring in rice, but the quota for the district has dwindled. After the civil servants get their share there is almost nothing left for ordinary people. Harihar Shrestha, head of the NFC office in Nepalganj, says the food quota for the district has been met and is surprised to be told that there is a food crisis in Jajarkot.

"We have increased the food quota this year because of increased demand, it should be enough," he told *Nepali Times*. Of the 3,400 quintals of rice allocated for Jajarkot, he says 1,300 are stocked in the district capital and the rest is on its way.

He suggested that the crisis could be a result of the difficulty in taking the food to remote VDCs. The NFC uses tractor trailers to bring food to the district headquarters, then mule trains distribute it to the villages. But even if the road was repaired and food could be trucked in, the 35 per cent increase in freight costs announced this week would make the rice more costly and beyond the reach of most people. ●

Reporting also by Rajendra Karki in Khalanga

# Nepal's silent food emergency

KUNDA DIXIT

The biggest challenge for the new Maoist-led government will not be who gets to be president or who gets which ministry. It won't even be the drafting of a new constitution. The greatest and most immediate test for Prime Minister Dahal will

food prices may undermine the peace process if not taken seriously by all involved."

Nepal already had a nutrition emergency: 41 per cent of the population didn't get enough to eat and half of Nepali children were underweight because of the chronic lack of food. But the global increase in food and fuel

Some farmers who grow surplus grain will benefit, but the biggest winners will be the middlemen. Most Nepalis have to buy cooking oil, coarse rice and kerosene from the market and these are precisely the three items that have seen the sharpest price increases in the past six months.

In Nepal, food prices have a direct correlation with transportation costs. The 25-35 per cent increase in freight costs announced this week means that the WFP will have to revise its estimates of the food security crisis. A third of Nepalis currently live below the poverty line, and this could now rise to half the population as family incomes are undercut. Rural Nepalis spend up to 73 per cent of their income on buying food.

"The food price crisis has so far received very little attention," the WFP's Nepal representative, Richard Ragan told *Nepali Times*. "For example, during a fuel crisis people can make the choice not to drive, but when they can't afford the cost of food they don't have the choice of not eating."

The crisis will have political ramifications, too. Public frustration could boil over on to the streets, and groups with a vested interest could try to exploit the unrest, leading to further instability.

"We can no longer afford to be blasé about the effects of food insecurity," adds Ragan. "How effectively it is dealt with will have a tremendous impact on the viability of Nepal's newly elected government."

Although the food crisis is nationwide, the shortages are most serious in midwestern districts like Jajarkot, Bajura and Dailekh, hard hit by more than two years of drought, blizzards and floods. WFP says 50,000 people in these districts have no food and no money to buy food. The midwestern hills have always been a food-deficit area, and people have coped by migrating to India to find work. The next three months before the next harvest will be critical, and there is an urgent need to deliver emergency rice.

WFP's own operational costs have increased by 26 per cent because of the rising cost of food and fuel. Nepal also competes with more high-profile hunger hot spots and recent natural calamities like in Burma. The UN says the first priority for food assistance should be the 13 per cent of the population who are very poor and landless and therefore at risk from the increased food prices. Another 35 per cent of the population grow some of their own food, but are poor and will need help to cope with rising prices. ●

## The soaring cost of food has turned an already precarious situation into a full blown crisis



**HUNGER PANGS:** A child satisfies herself by gnawing on a piece of wild yam while awaiting rice distribution by the Nepal Food Corporation at a depot in Jajarkot.

RAMESWOR BOHARA

be the country's food emergency.

Unlike high-profile sub-Saharan famines, this is an existing food shortage made much worse by rising prices, and it will be the first national emergency that the new republican government will have to deal with.

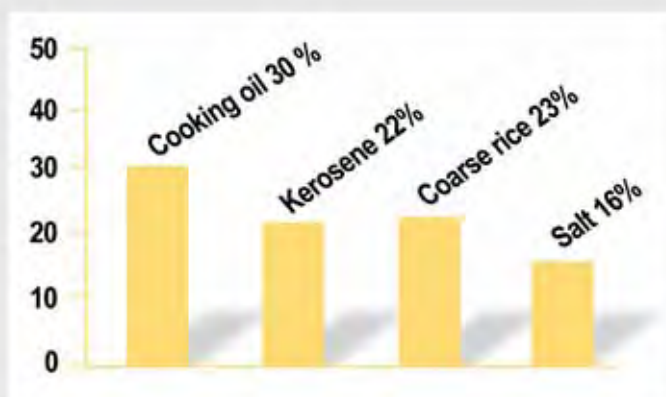
A joint study by the UN's World Food Program and the National Development Research Institute (NDRI) warns bluntly: "There is a clear risk that rising

prices, Nepal's population growth and falling farm productivity have made an already precarious situation worse.

The figures are staggering:

- 2.5 million people in rural Nepal need emergency food aid
- 3.9 million people will also need help if food prices increase further
- 19.2 million people will be affected by shortages and price increases

## Price rise in the last six months





Mercantile express

Mercantile has introduced a four-hour Express Service for Acer notebook users. Now Mercantile can have Acer notebooks serviced within four hours at Mercantile's Service Center, Darbar Marg.



Help from Dragonair

Dragonair has raised HK\$2 million from staff donations to support the China earthquake relief efforts. The airline also provided support to the Hong Kong government and various relief organisations by helping to send relief teams and supplies to the affected areas. It has provided more than 150 air tickets free of charge and flown 51 tonnes of relief supplies to the stricken areas. The airline's inflight charity programme, Change for Conservation, has also collected over HK\$530,000 for the Hong Kong Red Cross.

New Sunrise

Sunrise Bank Limited has opened its fifth Kathmandu branch in Tinkune. The new branch will provide services including Sunrise Bal Bachat Kosh, Normal Savings Account, Ghar Karja, SME Loan and Educational Institute Loan. The Tinkune branch will provide banking services till 8PM.



Yamaha racer

Morang Auto Works has launched the Yamaha YZF-R1. The bike has a 1000cc, liquid cooled, in-line four cylinder engine and a slipper-type back torque-limiting clutch. With a wheel base of 1415mm and dry weight of 177 kg, the bike comes with an 18-litre fuel tank. It will be selling at Rs 1.55 million.



Peter England showroom

Peter England has opened a new showroom at Khichapokhari. The brand has a wide range of shirts, trousers, T-shirts, denims, jackets, suits, blazers and accessories.

Spirits united

United Spirits Nepal, formerly known as McDowells Nepal, has acquired 100 per cent equity in Whyte and Mackay for £595m. It is the sole authorised bottler and seller for United Spirits products in Nepal.

Branch shift

Himalayan Bank's Bhaktapur Branch located at Suryabinayak has been shifted to Sukuldhoka. The spacious outlay of the new branch is expected to ensure the delivery of full fledged modern banking services.



NEW PRODUCTS

Rio: Rio has introduced Rio Alfonso drink which captures the taste of Alfonso mangoes in a hygienic pack. The drink is available in all retail outlets across Nepal.



NEW ARRIVALS

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**Bluebird Mall: 4228833**

Work in progress

Two days ago, relatives and neighbours of Giri Prasad Timilsina, a civil servant, set up roadblocks and stopped traffic for hours in front of the Lalitpur Forest Office in Hattiban. Timilsina was accused of smuggling wood by Forest Minister Matrika Yadav. The Maoist Minister took the law into his own hands, detained Timilsina and got his ministry to



STRICTLY BUSINESS  
Ashutosh Tiwari

throw him into a cell at Nakkhu jail. Earlier, Minister Yadav locked up LDO Danduraj Ghimire in his office toilet for alleged insubordination. Last month, relatives and friends of Ram Hari Shrestha, a restaurant owner and community leader in Koteswor, called for a Kathmandu-wide strike to protest against Shrestha's abduction and murder by Maoist cadres. With few vehicles plying the roads and few firms open for business, the strike turned what would have been an ordinary working day into New Nepal's first day of complete shutdown in this valley of about four million people.

Similarly, last year, journalists were riled up when one of their own, Birendra Sah, was killed in Bara by Maoist cadres, apparently on charges of reporting stories on illegal logging. The ensuing protests went on for days, only to taper off after the government promised to provide one million rupees to Sah's widow.

Drawn from the headlines, these three events give out two signals. First, they continue to remind us of the shocking atrocities that Nepal's Maoist party is capable of committing time and again, despite numerous silver-tongued assurances to the contrary. Second, they make clear that when trouble occurs in some sections of our society, the courts, lawyers, and any notion of due process and the rule of law all take a distant backseat as the victims' friends see no alternative path to justice but to vent their rage on the street for days on end, thereby affecting the day-to-day lives of many others.

To be sure, both are worrying signs for the world's youngest democratic republic. But the second in particular tells us that unless we work hard to create and sustain institutions that run the hardware of democracy through the software of rule of law, no

matter who we elect to represent us, ours will remain a regime marked by arbitrary abuses of power. And when that's the case, those in power are likely to continue to kill, kidnap and harass without ever being challenged to first adhere to the legal norms that are there to protect ordinary citizens against the excesses of others.

There are several reasons why Nepalis prefer the street to the courts when their individual freedoms are under attack.

Newspapers routinely report how corrupt the courts are. The Nepali judicial system is arguably the least ethnically inclusive wing of the state. Until recently, any negative report about the judicial system was treated as a matter of contempt, with reporters hauled up in front of a judge to be fined and even imprisoned. Almost 90 per cent of the thousands of cases pending in the courts involve multi-year

launch street protests by burning tyres, throwing stones at moving vehicles, forcing highways and shops to close down, and then calling their shutdowns a success?

Recently, two Nepal-loving American lawyers successfully fought a case in an American court against their government. As a result of their legal victory, the US government was compelled to provide compensation to the poor families of murdered Nepalis who worked for the Americans at the wrong time in the wrong place—in Iraq in 2004. Likewise, two years ago, a Nepali lawyer filed charges against the British government in London and won overdue compensation for ex-Gurkha soldiers. In both cases, the lawyers used the existing laws of the respective countries to argue for the rights of those hurt or neglected by the actions of those in power.

It was not seminars and talk fests that helped restore the rights

Let the rule of law be the king in the new republic

and multi-generational disputes over family and property ownership. Nepal's donor-savvy human rights communities are good at raising general platitudinous awareness about rights through workshops and seminars, but remain inhospitable to iconoclastic lawyers who can pursue justice on behalf of the wronged with bulldog-like persistence.

The best and brightest college graduates rarely think about attending law school in Nepal. And donor agencies offer short-term scholarships abroad on academically wishy-washy subjects such as peace studies and conflict studies without first helping to upgrade Nepali lawyers' skills on the nuts and bolts of contract, criminal, public and constitutional law. After all, who can really work to promote peace or reduce conflicts when one is hard-pressed to use what's available within the Nepali legal system to fight and win for individual rights under attack?

The result of all this is that we have a legal system, inherited and pretty much unchanged from the Panchayat days, to which hardly anyone turns for solutions when liberties are taken away. Is it any wonder that when problems arise, people either take matters into their own hands or

and the dignity of the victims. It was the mundane but necessarily patient process of studying the relevant laws, filing lawsuits, and then doggedly following them through the processes of the legal system that helped.

How long do we have to wait in Nepal to see the day when we value the rule of law to such an extent that those whose rights are trampled rush not to the streets to burn tyres but to the courts to fight to get what they are owed to as per the law?

Democracy is always an unfinished business. Thumping our chests about how democratic we are, or taking part in one street protest after another, hardly builds up the software for democracy.

Taking a hard look at Nepal's legal regime, improving it by filing cases that argue for the protection of individual rights, and then patiently if doggedly pursuing the cases to the finish would go a long way in restoring people's confidence in the hardware of democracy.

In future, the families of Timilsina, Shrestha and Sah should not have to take matters into their own hands, but be able to act in the belief that no one is above the law in Nepal. In our republic, let the rule of law be the new king. ●

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# Next president?

Interview with Ram Raja Prasad Singh, Janadisha, 17 June

जनदिशा

Your dream to see Nepal as a Republican state has now been realized. However, the debates over the presidency and formation of the government have posed major hurdles to its implementation. Do you think these obstructions can be successfully dealt with? How much will the Maoists' proposal for you to be president help solve the conflict? I don't think this conflict will last long. Everyone is aware of who stands in what position. However, I do feel that the Maoists' proposal will help guide the discussion in a positive direction.

How far do you think you as president reflect the sentiments of the common people of Nepal?

It is not an easy question to answer. Even if the people had specifically nominated me, I could not be the judge of that. I am a candidate for the presidency and it is up to the people to choose.

To what extent do you think the proposal of your name for the presidency will gain unanimous support?

That will depend on national aspirations. If the people collectively wish for it, then it is possible.

As a person who was born and brought up in the Tarai, what do you think of the idea of 'One Madhes, One State'?

Right now, many such voices can be heard. Decisions regarding such issues will be in the hands of the Constituent Assembly.

There are some who allege that you are not a Madhesi. Why do you think such claims have been made?

I was born and raised in the Tarai. But I have spent most of my life in Kathmandu and India. I lived in several other countries during the period I was exiled from India. Maybe that is why such claims have been made.



On the day you are appointed president, how will you address the nation?

My address as president will be in the name of the common people. The priority of the constituent assembly is to formulate the new constitution. The president's role will be to advise the government in this regard. Among other things, the president will also

be required to address the Constituent Assembly. My central focus will be on the need to devise a strong and effective constitution through special dialogues between the political parties and the Maoists.

I am well aware of the delicate nature of the relationship between the government and the president. My knowledge has been enhanced by my experience with regard to Indian politics. I understand that a president needs to have a lot of patience in order to prevent conflict. A constitutional president will need to work within the boundaries drawn by the constitution. The objective is not to contradict the government but to maintain a careful balance of co-operation.

What do you have to say about the view that federalism in Nepal will lead to disintegration?

The country will not disintegrate under any circumstances. It is the duty of the government, the president, the army and everybody else to ensure that the national unity remains intact.

So, will the new Nepal emerge as a powerful nation?

Nepal will emerge as a great nation. Not a greatness measured by population but on the basis of honour and pride. Nepal is a nation with inherent greatness, and thus it will rise.

Do you have something to say to the Nepali people and the political parties?

It would not be appropriate for me to say anything right now. This is not like the American presidential election. I cannot ask for votes. Other parties have the liberty to propose their own candidates and will do so. The future will ultimately depend on what the Nepali people want.

# Narayanhiti to Nagarjun

Ghatana Ra Bichar, 16-24 June

सप्तम दिवस

Since moving to Nagarjun, the former king Gyanendra has been spending most of his days reading. A source close to the former royal family says the king is very quiet and spends much of his day roaming around the Nagarjun Palace garden. He also takes time out to listen to music and write poems. The former queen Komal spends most of her days playing cards with relatives.

Those royal employees who used to go to Narayanhiti until last week, must now go all the way to the Nagarjun palace.

The former royal family wants to organize their new residence better. The palace kitchen is especially small, and preparations are being made to expand the kitchen area.

Despite many invitations from neighbouring India, the former king decided to live in Nepal. Those in the world closely watching the developments in Nepal were stunned by this news. Some say he is trying to win the hearts of the international community by becoming the king who decided not to go into exile because of his love for his country. However, others say he is waiting for the parties to make mistakes so that the people realise what they let go of and he will be eventually reinstated.

People in the palace discuss Cambodia's former king Norodom Sihanouk and say the only way for the former king to make a comeback is by following Sihanouk's example and using his strategy of entering mainstream politics.



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AST<space>the initial three letters of your zodiac sign. i.e.

AST<space>ARI

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

### JOKES

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

### THOUGHT

THOUGHT<space>THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

### STOCK

SHG Top 5 gainers of the day  
SHL Top 5 losers of the day  
SHH Stock related help

### FOREX

FOREX<space>BUY  
FOREX<space>BUY  
FOREX<space>CURRENCY ID

### WEEKLY HOROSCOPE

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

WEEK<space>ARI

### DICTIONARY

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

DICT<space>tut

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Calnep ddmmyyyy Nepali to English  
Caleng ddmmyyyy English to Nepali

### TOP 5

TOP5<space>Nepsong  
TOP5<space>Engsong  
TOP5<space>Bolsong

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CLI<space>dharan

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# Who controls the army?

Kiran Nepal in  
Himal Khabarpatrika, 15-29 June

The debates on the integration and rehabilitation of the Maoist combatants and their arms, the disbandment of the paramilitary YCL and the return of property confiscated by the Maoists have prolonged the finding of a consensus among the parties and delayed the formation of a new government.

As the election results call for a consensus among parties, it is impossible for the Maoists to hold both the post of prime minister with executive powers and of president, who will be the supreme commander of the army.

The NC is steadfast in its stance on making Koirala the president of the country. The party highly regards Koirala's contribution in bringing the peace process into this situation and would rather like to stay in opposition if he is not given the post of president.

A senior military officer says the army also has not accepted the proposal of Koirala as the supreme commander-in-chief. It seems they want a non-political person as president, believing that a politically neutral person will not interfere in their affairs.

People had never expected that the chief of army staff Rukmangud Katuwal, who had close relations with the deposed king, would accept the declaration of a republic. The reason was the Indian message to the king suggesting he make a graceful exit. It is believed that Gyanendra was well aware of this fact, as a result of which the republic was implemented without bloodshed.

A national security council has been formed which has not

met even once. The military apparatus has been run entirely by the prime minister and the army chief for the last two years. "Earlier it was the palace that would control the army, but now there is nothing to control it," said an officer on condition of anonymity.

Senior army officers claim the size of the Nepali army was reduced drastically in the name of restructuring, soon after democracy was introduced in 1951 under the leadership of Nepali Congress. It was done because India wanted it. Officers argue that India planed it as a military strategy to weaken the Nepali army.

Maoist leader Barshaman Pun (Ananta) says: "It is natural that foreign activities tend to thrive during the transition period but we must be able to utilise them for the national interest." He says Nepali politicians blame foreign hands if the situation is not favourable or consider it an impact of globalisation if the situation is favourable to them.

Military analysts argue that besides Indian influence, there has been American influence on the Nepali army quite recently, especially on counter-terrorism and staff training.

If the vacuum created by the ending of royal patronage is not filled, it could lead to disaster. It is important to keep the military structure intact, otherwise the long wait for a political decision on military patronage could upset the army.

Political analyst Hari Sharma says: "Today's main challenge is the lack of a constitutional civil mechanism to direct the military command." He argues that a clear national security policy is the need of the hour.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

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Days	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
7:30-	Intro to salsa	Freestyle (Bollywood)	Intro to Salsa	Freestyle (Bollywood)	Intro to Salsa	
8:30 AM	Kathak	Tino slide MERENGUE	Kathak	SWING	Kathak	
10-11 AM	Fitness Salsa for women		Fitness Salsa for women		Fitness Salsa for women	
2-3 PM	Salsa for 50+	Salsa for 50+	Salsa for 50+	Salsa for 50+	Salsa for 50+	
3 - 4 PM					JIVE	
4-5 PM	Kathak	Freestyle (Bollywood)	Kathak		Kathak	
5-6 PM	Intro to Salsa	Intro to Salsa	Intro to Salsa	Freestyle (Bollywood)		
6-7 PM	BACHATA	CHA CHA	MERENGUE	CHA CHA		
	Intro to Salsa	Freestyle (Bollywood)	Intro to Salsa	Intro to Salsa		
	Ruede Salsa	Ruede Salsa	Ruede Salsa	JIVE		
7-8 PM	SALSA AFTER OFFICE	SALSA AFTER OFFICE	SALSA AFTER OFFICE	LINE DANCING		
	Salsa Intermediate Combinations	Salsa Intermediate Combinations	Salsa Intermediate Combinations	Freestyle (Bollywood)		
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# Juggling with young lives

**Nepali child slaves face a brighter future after rescue from Indian circus abuse**



PRANAYA SJB RANA  
in MAHARASTRA, INDIA

It's an ordinary morning in the sleepy Maharashtra town of Akola. The big top of the Raj Mahal circus stands on the town's cricket ground, its flags flapping in the breeze, a notice on the gate advertising the show's trapeze acts and elephant rides. Everything looks in order.

But at 7AM on 13 June, at a police station down the road, 30 police officers are preparing to raid the circus. They have been alerted by the district magistrate and Nandita Rao, a lawyer for Childline India, a child protection organisation. Colleagues at a Nepali NGO, the Esther Benjamins Memorial Foundation, have reliable information that the circus is illegally using young

Nepali children to perform dangerous acts.

The police convoy races up to the circus gate as a lone guard watches in bewilderment. The officers fan out across the cricket ground and within minutes have cordoned off the entire site. Inside, eight bamboo poles support the enormous tent, which has clearly seen better days. Sunlight filters through gaps in the canvas roof, where rickety iron trapeze bars hang from worn ropes. Three battered motorbikes lie in a steel "cage of death" beside the main ring, where a dozen teenagers are milling around, confused by the commotion.

Activists from EBMF, Childline and Swamini Vidhawa Vikas Mandal, a local rights group, search with the police through the half-dozen smaller

tents nearby, used by the circus as living quarters. Within an hour nearly 20 children have been found.

"We've come to get you out of here," says EBMF's Dilu Tamang. "We don't want to leave," the children chorus in return. "That's the standard response," her colleague Shailaja C M says, unfazed. She's seen all this before. "As long as they're inside the circus compound, they are so afraid of the owner they will say anything."

Shailaja says that girls rescued in the past have told how some circus owners stage mock police raids and pretend to free the girls. If the children appear keen to leave, they are then beaten.

"Did anyone come to help us in our villages when we didn't have enough money for food?"

asks Sapana Rai, a 15-year-old girl from Siliguri. "Now that we are earning money, you want to take us away?" Sapana is adamant she doesn't want to leave.

A plump man arrives, clad in checked shirt, cotton trousers and chappals, demanding to know why the children are being removed. His voice falters as he takes in the sight of the police. Rao, the Childline lawyer, promptly cites India's laws on juvenile justice, bonded labour and the minimum wage.

The man, Siraj Khan, produces contracts signed by the children's often illiterate parents, who couldn't resist the promise of instant cash. The documents state that the children, some as young as five, will work at the Raj Mahal circus for periods up to 12 years in

return for a cash advance paid to the parents. A clause states that the parents must pay an unspecified amount if they wish to take back their children.

Rao declares the contracts void, citing a 1933 law which says contracts signed by parents on behalf of their children for bonded labour are not legal. The police load the wailing children onto the truck and drive to the town's juvenile court. There, an amazing transformation takes place as the children meet girls rescued in earlier operations. Their miserable faces break into smiles.

"Of course I want to leave," says the now grinning Sapana. "I want to go to school and I want to go to Kathmandu to work." Some children start to talk of their unpleasant experiences with the circus.







PICS: MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Kumari Rumba Lama, 17, says she was beaten unconscious with a rope. One girl has a metal plate in her thigh, the result of a trapeze fall. Another holds up her scarred hands: "When my hands bled from working a long time on the trapeze, *malik* poured molten candle wax onto the wounds to stop the bleeding," she says. All the girls refer to Khan as *malik* or "owner." They were in effect his slaves.

Rao files a First Information Report with the police, the first step in bringing charges against Siraj Khan and his brother, the notorious circus owner Fateh Khan. "Fateh Khan is the Mr Nasty of these circuses," says Philip Holmes, founder of the Esther Benjamins Trust, the international NGO to which EBMF is affiliated. "The unspoken goal of these raids is to

put him behind bars."

Thirteen children and seven adult bonded workers have been released, almost all of them girls or women. Most are ethnic Nepalis from Darjeeling, Assam and Siliguri, but seven come from Nepal itself.

"The circuses prefer Nepali girls because they're fairer and have Mongolian features that appeal to the audience," says Holmes. He estimates there are about 30 large circuses and 300 smaller ones across India.

But Fateh Khan is a wily, well-connected UP politician who probably has enough political influence to keep himself out of jail. Says Holmes: "The only thing we can do is keep doing these raids and hope that we put these bastards behind bars." ●

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# Reading, writing,

The Maoists' model people's schools in Rukum and Rolpa seem an anachronism in post-conflict Nepal

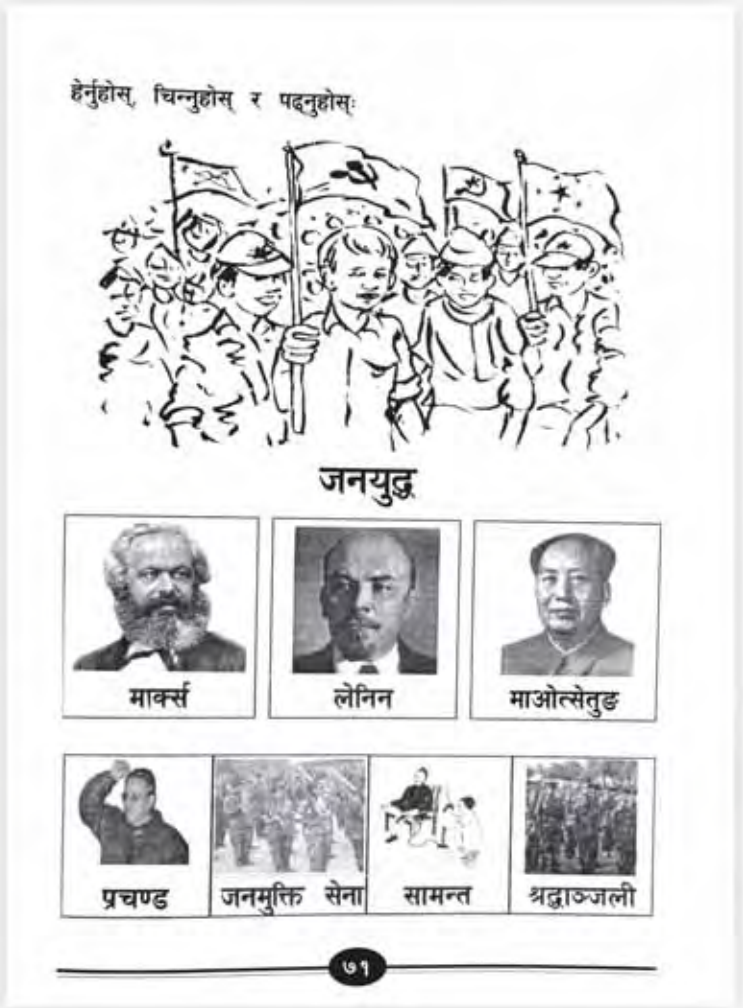
PRAKASH MAHATARA  
in RUKUM

During the war, the Maoists ran more than 80 model people's schools in their strongholds across the country. Now, as the party prepares to lead a new government, the future of these schools and their 5,500 pupils who follow the 'revolutionary curriculum' has been thrown into doubt.

From Achham to Bhojpur, the Maoists first opened the schools to educate children of their guerrillas and cadre killed by the state. The orphanages grew into so-called model people's schools as the children grew older, and the teachers were also party cadre.

"It was difficult during the war," recalls Bihani Pun, who runs one such school in Rukum's Kyangshi. "When we heard the army was approaching we had to scatter and hide the children in people's homes."

The children had all been taught a code language. If they



GANESH CHAUDHARY

## Children of the revolution

A cult of martyrdom persists in a Rolpa primary school

The pre-monsoon rains had created puddles on the muddy playground of the Martyrs' Memorial Model People's School in Bibang.

Established four years ago during the height of the conflict, the school is on a ridge overlooking Thawang, the cradle of the Maoist revolution here in Rolpa. Most of the pupils lost one or both parents in the war, and they still run to hide when they hear a helicopter overhead.

"The old regime runs education like a factory for unemployment," explained teacher Mohan Budathoki. "We emphasize practical education that upholds the interests of the proletariat." However, flipping through the text books that the children were learning from, it was clear what the Maoists mean by their "people's education."



NEPALI PAN  
Rubeena Mahato

The chapter headings included: 'Our Party', 'The Great Martyrs' and 'The Biography of

Comrade Chairman'. One page contained a graphic description of the Maoist attack on the army base at Ghorahi in 2001.

The English alphabet was taught with 'A for army...G for gun...R for rifle...' and the text was full of words like 'enemy', 'bomb' and 'weapon'. A section of the text book drew a distinction between murder ('the act of killing') and execution ('the act of carrying out capital punishment'). All this in a book for primary school children.

When the students were asked, two years ago, what they would like to be in the future, they had replied that they wanted to join the PLA and kill their parents' killers. Today, when asked the same question, eight-year-olds Aruna and Sapana said without hesitation that they wanted to avenge the deaths of their parents.

With such a militaristic curriculum, a response like this is hardly surprising. The books glorify war and violence even though the conflict ended two years ago. The ideological orientation is blatant, encouraging children to grow up with hatred instead of weaning them off violence.

The teachers at the Bibang school said it was the war that had caused psychological trauma in the children, not the curriculum. But how can perpetuating a feeling for revenge and be justified when there should be peace and reconciliation? What effect will such an education have on the personalities of the children when they grow up?

Like all citizens, children have the right to adopt and practice any political ideology deemed right by their conscience. But brain-washing them at such an early age through text books that are full of party slogans and jargon will hamper the free intellectual development of the children.

When Pushpa Kamal Dahal rails against the media and threatens them for criticising his party, his attitude has resonance with the kind of education system the party is propagating through its revolutionary curriculum. Such indoctrination can be counter-productive for the party that propagates it. When opposing views, ideas and criticism are not respected, and when free expression is limited to the one-sided utterances of the party, the only outcome can be totalitarianism.

Teacher Budathoki said the curriculum could be modified, but added: "We will never surrender to bourgeois education." No doubt the existing education system needs to change, but is this the alternative?

To be sure, there are positive elements to the school: it is progressive, pragmatic and realistic compared to similar government schools. It acquaints students with social realities and inculcates a sense of duty. It includes agricultural science and other life skills. And the party was taking care of the orphans of its martyrs with free education.

But the war is over, there is a peace accord and the children deserve better. The new Maoist government must now try to channel the fear, anger and violence of this war-affected generation into something positive for society and not use them as the party's political weapon. ●

Rubeena Mahato is a student at Kathmandu University.



# arithmetic and revolution

heard the teachers say: “The fox is coming, hide the chickens,” everyone knew what to do. Bhabana Khadka, who runs a people’s school in Sirke in Jajarkot, remembers an army operation four years ago when she had to hide the children in the forests, surviving on berries and yams for a week.

The Maoist People’s Education Department together with the Bheri-Karnali regional administration has also brought out a separate ‘revolutionary curriculum’ for the model people’s schools. “The curriculum is strongly influenced by Marxism and has a proletarian orientation, it honours the dignity of labour and patriotism,” explains Lal Bahadur G C of the Maoist-affiliated teacher’s union. The primary school curriculum has subjects like Nepali and the local mother tongue, art, social studies, military theory, arithmetic, politics, economics, history, culture and English.

In their culture classes, children learn about Martyrs’ Week, People’s War Day, Mao’s birthday and other anniversaries. Military theory teaches primary school children about sentry duty, security precautions during battles, roll call, and the functioning of



guns, grenades and socket bombs. The politics class familiarizes young students with the lives of Marx, Lenin, Mao and Pushpa Kamal Dahal, and also makes them aware of victorious Maoist attacks on Beni, Ghorahi and Mangalsen.

The model schools here in Rukum have a strict barracks-style routine. Children wake up at 5AM and have an hour of exercises and drills. They line up to eat at 9AM

and then sing the Internationale while parading to their classrooms.

The book for Grade One, *Hamro Kitab*, has a preface by Pushpa Kamal Dahal and is not that different from the ‘Mahendra Mala’ of the Panchayat era, which 35 years ago had a similarly exhortative preface about Nepal entering a ‘new modern age’ written by king Mahendra.

The model people’s schools have never been registered with the District Education Offices, even after the Maoists joined the government. District administrators know very little about these schools nominally under their jurisdiction.

“We have no idea how many there are and where they are,” admits deputy secretary of the Ministry of Education in Kathmandu, Hari Shrestha.

In Rukum, District Education Officer Badri Basnet says preparations have begun to bring the Maoist revolutionary schools into line with the national curriculum, but adds that the Education Ministry and the Maoist leadership in Kathmandu must first make a policy decision.

Senior Maoist Agni Sapkota says the Maoists will announce their new education policy after a government is formed under their leadership and it will be



publicly debated before a strategy paper is issued. “Just like we have agreed with the other parties on political issues, we will discuss the new education policy with them before implementing it,” he says.

Parents and guardians in Rukum and Rolpa are worried about the future of their children and whether their certificates from the Maoist schools will be recognised. The Maoist leadership, which has been trying to overthrow Nepal’s ‘bourgeois education’ for the past 10 years, seems to have realised that the alternative can’t be their model people’s schools experiment.

The fact that private English-language schools are opening up in the midwestern hills proves what kind of education most people here prefer. But because most families can’t afford these schools, parents say, the quality of government schools must be improved. ●

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# CHINDIA

OXFORD—George W Bush may have messed up on the Middle East, but he leaves behind a better legacy in Asia. American relations with Japan and China remain strong, and he has greatly enhanced US ties with India.

In 2005, Bush announced a major agreement on US-Indian civilian nuclear co-operation, as well as a variety of measures for commercial and defence co-operation. The CPI-M, a small (but important) member of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's ruling coalition, has blocked the agreement. But, as one Indian friend explained to me, this is mainly symbolic politics for India's Left.

Even if the nuclear agreement fails, the improvement in US-India relations is likely to continue. Some attribute this to the fact that India and the US are the world's two largest democracies. But that was true for much of the Cold War, when they frequently talked past each other.



**SOFT POWER**  
Joseph S Nye

As Evan Feigenbaum, the top State Department official for South Asia recently said: "The world of 2008 is not the world of 1948. And so India really has the capacity, and, we think, the interest, to work with the United States and other partners on a variety of issues of global and regional scope." This change began under the Clinton administration and is likely to continue regardless of who is elected president in 2008.

Personal contacts have increased greatly. There are now more than 80,000 Indian students studying in the US, and many have stayed to establish successful companies. The Indian diaspora in the US constitutes roughly three million people, many of whom actively participate in politics. Trade between India and America is increasing, and reached \$26 billion (11% of India's total trade) in 2006.



SUBHAS RAI

## The simultaneous rise of China and India is good for everyone

The rise of China poses a strategic consideration. As Bill Emmott, the former editor of *The Economist* argues in his new book *The Rivals*, 'Where Nixon had used China to balance the Soviet Union, Bush was using India to balance China.' And the concern is reciprocated on the Indian side. As a senior foreign ministry official told Emmott in 2007, "The thing you have to understand is that both India and China think that the future belongs to us. We can't both be right."

Official pronouncements stress friendly relations between India and China, and some trade analysts argue that, given their rapid growth, the two giant markets will become an economic 'Chindia'. When Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visited India in 2005, he signed 11 agreements, including a comprehensive five-year strategic co-operation pact. Wen announced that China would support India's inclusion as a permanent member of an expanded United Nations Security Council, and oppose Japan's inclusion, which the US supports. As Singh put it during Wen's visit: "India and China can together reshape the world order."

The two countries' recent rapprochement marks a considerable change from the hostility that bedeviled their relations following their 1962 war over the Himalaya. Nevertheless, strategic anxiety lurks below the surface, particularly in India. China's GDP is three times that of India, its growth rate is higher, and its defense budget increased by nearly 18 percent last year. The border dispute remains unsettled, and both countries vie for influence in neighboring states such as Myanmar.

China's rise has also created anxiety in Japan, despite professions of good relations. Thus, Japan has increased its aid and trade with India. Last year, the US suggested quadrilateral defense exercises including US, Japanese, Indian, and Australian naval units, but the newly elected Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has pulled his country out.

Rudd wisely believes that the right response to China's rise is to incorporate it into international institutional arrangements. Or, as Robert Zoellick, currently the president of the World Bank, put it when he was a State Department official, the US should invite China to become a "responsible stakeholder" in the international system.

Improved relations between India and the US can structure the international situation in a manner that encourages such an evolution in Chinese policy, whereas trying to isolate China would be a mistake. Handled properly, the simultaneous rise of China and India could be good for all countries. ●

*Project Syndicate*

Joseph S Nye is a professor at Harvard and author, most recently, of *The Powers to Lead*.



# A class struggle

ADITYA ADHIKARI

**M**artin Chautari, the Kathmandu-based research and discussion group, has recently republished *Suitably Modern: Making Middle-Class Culture in Kathmandu* by Mark Liechty.

Originally published by an American academic publisher in 2003, this anthropological study was intended as a case study of the formation of a modern middle class in a peripheral region of the world. The new edition, with a more affordable price tag than the ones normally affixed to volumes produced by Western publishers, is targeted at the English-speaking Kathmandu middle class, the class that forms the subject of the book. It offers them self-recognition and an understanding of how they have been shaped by the demands of the new consumer economy of transnational goods and media.

A middle-class culture began to develop in Kathmandu only after the demise of the Rana regime in 1951. Over the next half-century all the old restrictions were demolished and Nepal was flung open to an array of international influences, ranging from foreign aid, tourism, print and electronic mass media and English language education. The beginnings of a modern economy created new avenues of professional and earning opportunity. These gave rise to a new social group defined more by their middle-class status than by



## The chasm between the real and imagined lives of the middle class

caste or ethnicity, with values increasingly defined more by a global capitalist consumer culture than by traditional norms.

Liechty shows how the advent of a modern material culture can be a profoundly disorienting experience for a large section of the middle class. Accustomed to a society where status is largely dependent on heredity, members of the middle class find themselves in a culture where status increasingly depends on access to consumer goods (ranging

from private education to tv sets).

An increasing number of available and desirable consumer goods, and constant inflation coupled with fixed incomes, releases deep anxieties about not being able to keep up. There is also the feeling of being swept away by the demands and desires of an alien way of life, of losing one's traditional social moorings.

In the struggle to maintain balance, the middle class creates stories about the suitability and respectability of its class

position. It perceives itself as superior both to the lower classes—identified by their ignorance and blind adherence to tradition—as well as to the upper classes—identified as having lost all traditional notions of decency by having succumbed totally to the vulgarities of a Western consumer culture.

Liechty's observations are based on more than 200 interviews he conducted with a wide variety of members of Kathmandu's middle class in the early and mid-1990s. His questions focus chiefly on their

self-perception and the meanings they assign to the clothing, films, music and other goods they consume. Extended quotes from these interviews are frequently interspersed throughout the text.

There is a certain nostalgic pleasure to be derived from specific references from that era—the culture of video parlors, the music show Sunday Pop on Nepal that was so popular before the advent of satellite tv, and slang that has now become outmoded. However, the relentless cataloguing of near-identical responses sometimes causes tedium. The extended academic discussions on the nature and meaning of class are also not likely to inspire much interest in a generalist audience.

But on the occasions that Liechty offers sustained life-histories of particular individuals, the writing transcends the merely academic. Particularly moving are his stories of two educated young men of limited financial and social resources who find themselves caught in a nowhere place between tradition and modernity. One of them is a drug addict, the other unemployed. Both of them feel that their education has uprooted them but has not provided them with any sustainable alternative. Through detailing the chasm between their real and imagined lives, Liechty viscerally evokes the anxiety and fear this discrepancy provokes. ●

*Suitably Modern: Making Middle-Class Culture in Kathmandu*  
Mark Liechty  
Martin Chautari 2008 (Originally published by Princeton University Press 2003)  
Rs 500



## Silk Route detour via Mt 8848



**W**hen Robin Sitoula of Party Nepal met Indian singer Mohit Chauhan in Delhi two years ago, they agreed that Chauhan would come to Nepal to perform. It has taken that long to arrange, but Sitoula has now confirmed that the former Silk Route vocalist will play a set in Kathmandu on 21 June, International Music Day.

"We had been thinking about bringing Mohit to Kathmandu for a concert for a long time, and three months ago everything fell into place," said Sitoula. "Yamaha agreed to sponsor the concert to launch its new bike and the Nepal Tourism Board also offered its support. When Mohit agreed, we knew we could do it."

Party Nepal, which is known for hosting parties and organising events, is nevertheless sticking to its tradition of

nurturing local talent, with local band Mt 8848 also on the program.

Chauhan, widely known also as the singer who sang the soulful "tumse se hi" in the film *Jab We Met*, is expected to keep the audience on their feet for a full 90 minutes as he works his way through his most popular numbers.

"Nepal has always topped our list of destinations for a gig because it brings me closer to the mountains that I love so much," said a cheerful and relaxed Chauhan, clearly excited about his upcoming concert. ●

*Mohit Chauhan and his band will perform at the Jawalakhel Football Ground on 21 June. Tickets are Rs 500 and the gates will open at 2PM.*



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## ABOUT TOWN

## EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **MaterialScapes** 6<sup>th</sup> solo collage painting exhibition by Gaurav Shrestha, until 30 June 10AM-6PM at Gallery 32, Dent Inn, Heritage Plaza, Kamaladi. 4241942
- ❖ **Tattva** multimedia and collage exhibition by Chirag Bangdel until 18 July, 5.30 PM at Bakery Café, Pulchok.

## EVENTS

- ❖ **Fete de la musique** music concerts presented by Alliance Francaise, 21 June. [www.alliancefrancaise.org.np](http://www.alliancefrancaise.org.np)
- ❖ **Shastrartha** on free interaction with CA members, 21 June 4-6PM at Martin Chautari.
- ❖ **Still Life**, a film by Zhang Ke Jia presented by Cine-Sankipa, 23 June 5.30 PM at Gurukul. 4466956
- ❖ **6<sup>th</sup> 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.



## MUSIC

- ❖ **KJC Concert Series IV** presented by Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory and US embassy in Nepal, 22 June 5PM at Gyanodaya Hall. 5013554
- ❖ **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.
- ❖ **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

- ❖ **30/30 Enhanced Buffet** percent 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.
- ❖ **Japanese lunch set**, Rs 445 at Shogun, Babar Mahal Revisited. 4263720
- ❖ **Home made pasta** at Alfresco, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Mango étagère** mango delicacies, 4.30-6.30 PM at the Lounge, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Steak escape** 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
- ❖ **Local Drinks Cocktail** selection of favorite cocktails with local flavors while watching EURO 2008 on the big screen at Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency. 4489361
- ❖ **Jazz in Patan** with coffee, food, drinks and dessert at the New Orleans Cafe, Jawalakhel. 8.30 AM-10PM. 5522708
- ❖ **Saturday special barbeque**, sekuwa, momos, dal-bhat at The Tea House Inn, Windy Hills, Nagarkot every Saturday. 9841250848.
- ❖ **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** 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

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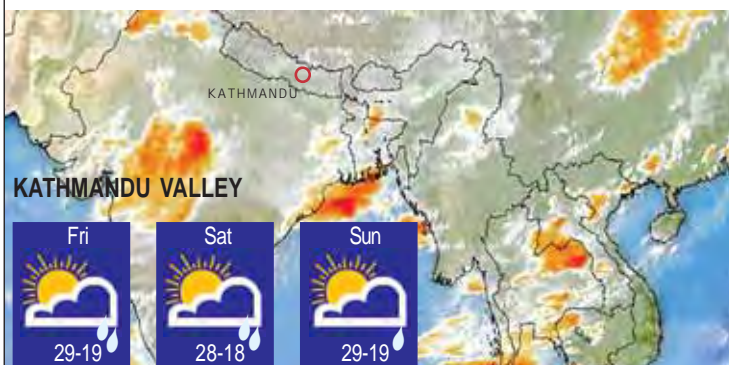
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## WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The monsoon is strengthening in its usual fashion, moving from an initially slow start to its moderate and ultimately intense stages. We are already in the second stage, with rain on average every other day. The Valley has received nearly half of this month's normal quota. Satellite photos on Wednesday afternoon indicated the likelihood of heavy rain over the weekend. An active cyclone from the Bay is pushing moisture-laden clouds towards the northwest, which includes Nepal. Monsoon rains typically occur during the night but extend into the day when a centre of low pressure comes close to us. After a four-day respite from the rains early this week, expect heavy showers over the next few days. Our advice: carry an umbrella!



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हरेक आइतबार बिर्सेमी (१:४०-२:००)  
"रेडियो सगरमाथा विचलित मुनी, अंग्रेजी सुधारी"  
(रेडियो सगरमाथा र अमेरिकी राजदुतावास, अमेरिकी केन्द्रको सहकार्य)

सम्पर्क: ४४१०००८, ४४२२२२२ मोबाइल: ९७८०२२८, ईमेल: [info@radio-sagarmatha.org](mailto:info@radio-sagarmatha.org)

हरेक विहान २:०० देखि राती ११:०० बजे सम्म सूचना, शिक्षा र स्वास्थ्य महोरन्जकता लागि चरचर्चा साथी रेडियो सगरमाथा १०२ थोप्लो ४ मेगाहर्ज





MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**DRAMA QUEEN:** Minister of Water Resources Hisila Yami improvises dialogue for the BBC World Service Trust's radio drama *Katha Mitho Sarangi Ko*, where she responds to a victim of war who has lost land, property and family on Thursday at the ministry.



KIRAN PANDY

**STRIKE RESPITE:** Security forces at Satdobato take a break on Thursday during a Lalitpur banda called by the Nepali Congress to protest Minister for Forests Matrika Prasad Yadav's locking up of a Local Development Officer on Tuesday night.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**MUDDY WATERS:** Farmers in Lalitpur take advantage of the arrival of the monsoon to start planting rice on Monday.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**WHAT A WASTE:** Garbage piled up in the Valley once again as Okharpauwa residents refused to let the municipality unload garbage at the Sisdol landfill site unless their demands were met. On Tuesday, locals reached a tentative agreement to allow 10 days of dumping while their demands were being considered.

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# A suitable president

Thanks to loyal readers in Derbyshire for alerting the donkey to the Maoist Summer Camp in the Peak District on 4-8 July. Book early because the slots are getting filled up fast. The summer camp is being organised by Turkish Maoist comrades who say in a **Yahoo group** posting that it will be open to 'Maoists and their families, friends and sympathisers'. The purpose will be both political and social, and emerging trends within the international Maoist movement will be discussed and analysed.

However, it looks like the Revolutionary International Movement, COMPOSA and Comrade Azad of the Indian Naxalites aren't all that enthused about the Maoist electoral victory in Nepal and have accused our very own respected Comrade Chairman of departing from the script. 'You're supposed to grab power by the barrel of the gun, not through elections,' Azad is quoted as saying. The Naxals are also shaking their heads in disbelief that the Maoists are going to lead the government in Kathmandu.

The whole point about Mao's doctrine of perpetual revolution is that it's never over and, according to Azad, The Fierce One has broken that **cardinal rule**.

Now that UNMIN is about to **UNWIND** and leave the People's Revolutionary International Convention Kendra (PRICK), it will free up space for the Constituent Assembly secretariat. Meanwhile, NYHQ is reportedly looking at retraction and reinsertion of peacekeepers for firefighting duties in the Gorkha Hill Council which has been reeling under an indefinite bund. After all, UNMIN is already there in Jhapa, a hop-skip-and-a-jump away from Siliguri.

Maoist Minister of Deforestation and Landslides, Matrika Yadav has a knack for grabbing headlines for all the wrong reasons. He also seems to have a fetish for padlocking people inside lavatories. Barely two months after locking his Nepal Army bodyguards in the urinal, he did it again this week by locking up the Lalitpur LDO in the

**arsenal**. The positive side of Yadav's systematic decimation of Nepal's remaining forests is that the Maoists now have no jungles to go back to.

So far, this country has been ruled mainly by octogenarians, but we are about to take a great leap forward if Ram Raja Prasad Singh becomes constitutional president. We will be entering the age of **nonagenarians**. Singh may be the front runner for president, but it's not his ripe old age of 90 that is his major liability, it's his name. Unless he drops 'Raja', I'm afraid we can't take him as a serious candidate. We've just got rid of one raja, we can't have another one.

The Ass is pleased to announce the result of this week's New Name Contest. The winning entry for renaming Gyane-swor is **Prachande-swor**.

As the negotiations drag on at Baluwa-tar-tar, it seems the main obstacle to finding a suitable president is not the deadlock

between the Maoists and the NC, but the deadlock within the UML between proponents of Sahana-for-president and the Makunay-for-president lobby. And the most vociferous opponent of Girjau as president is not Awesomeji, as we may imagine, but Koirala-bashers Sher Bahadur, Gagan and Narahari.

No, sorry to disappoint some of you who thought two-time Fijian **coup-maker** Sitiveni Rabuka was here to be the compromise candidate for president. He's just visiting an orphanage run by friends.

So the Regmi Peace Prize for this year has gone jointly to Jimmy Carter and Comrade Dreadful. Excellent choice. Carter got the Nobel for the Camp David Accord and working for Middle East peace, and 20 years later they're still fighting. Carter pronounced our April elections free, fair and lovely even before the final results were out, and even while his own field personnel had amassed data on systematic intimidation. And there is no one more deserving of the peace prize than Comrade Chairman because he was responsible for the war that allowed 15,000 Nepalis to **rest in eternal peace**.

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- Bluetooth® v2.0 + EDR (Enhanced Data Rate)
- Approx. 2.85kg

**\*Monthly Price 6,250.00**

Value-priced Performer	All U Want	Convertible Tablet PC	Ultra-portable
<p><b>Rs. 1,21,000</b></p> <p><b>LifeBook A6030</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intel® Centrino® processor technology</li> <li>Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor T7300</li> <li>Intel® PRO/Wireless 4965AGN Network Connection</li> <li>Intel® GM965 Express Chipset</li> <li>Genuine Windows Vista® Home Premium</li> <li>Fingerprint Recognition Technology</li> <li>1GB DDR2 667MHz</li> <li>120GB SATA HDD</li> <li>15.4" SuperFine WXGA TFT</li> <li>Dual Layer DVD Super Multi Writer</li> <li>V.92 Modem &amp; 1000/100/10Mbps Gigabit LAN</li> <li>Bluetooth® v2.0 + EDR (Enhanced Data Rate)</li> <li>Active Digitizer</li> <li>Approx. 2.9kg</li> </ul> <p><b>*Monthly Price 10,084.00</b></p>	<p><b>Rs. 1,00,000</b></p> <p><b>LifeBook U1010</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intel® Ultra Mobile Platform 2007</li> <li>Intel® Processor A110</li> <li>Intel® 945GM Express Chipset</li> <li>Intel® ICH7U I/O Controller Hub</li> <li>Genuine Windows® XP Tablet PC Edition</li> <li>Fingerprint Recognition Technology</li> <li>1GB DDR2 400MHz</li> <li>40GB PATA HDD</li> <li>5.6" SuperFine WSVGA, Passive Touch Panel</li> <li>Realtek 8101L 100Base Ethernet</li> <li>Bluetooth® v2.0</li> <li>0.3 Mega Pixel Built-in Camera</li> <li>Approx. 0.61kg</li> </ul> <p><b>*Monthly Price 8,334.00</b></p>	<p><b>Rs. 1,75,000</b></p> <p><b>LifeBook T4220</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intel® Centrino® processor technology</li> <li>Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor T7300</li> <li>Intel® PRO/Wireless 4965AGN Network Connection</li> <li>Intel® GM965 Express Chipset</li> <li>Genuine Windows Vista® Business</li> <li>Fingerprint Recognition Technology</li> <li>1GB DDR2 667MHz</li> <li>80GB SATA HDD</li> <li>12.1" XGA Transmissive TFT</li> <li>Dual Layer DVD Super Multi Writer</li> <li>V.92 Modem &amp; 1000/100/10Mbps Gigabit LAN</li> <li>Bluetooth® v2.0 + EDR (Enhanced Data Rate)</li> <li>Approx. 1.88kg (w/ weight saver option)</li> </ul> <p><b>*Monthly Price 14,564.00</b></p>	<p><b>Rs. 1,30,000</b></p> <p><b>ESPRIMO™ MOBILE U5200</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intel® Centrino® processor technology</li> <li>Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor T7300</li> <li>Intel® PRO/Wireless 4965AGN Network Connection</li> <li>Intel® GM965 Express Chipset</li> <li>Genuine Windows Vista® Business</li> <li>Fingerprint Recognition Technology</li> <li>1GB DDR2 667MHz</li> <li>160GB SATA HDD</li> <li>12.1" WXGA TFT</li> <li>Dual Layer DVD Super Multi Writer</li> <li>V.92 Modem &amp; 1000/100/10Mbps Gigabit LAN</li> <li>Bluetooth® v2.0 + EDR (Enhanced Data Rate)</li> <li>1.3 Mega Pixel Built-in Camera</li> <li>Approx. 1.9kg</li> </ul> <p><b>*Monthly Price 10,834.00</b></p>
<p><b>Rs. 1,23,000</b></p> <p><b>LifeBook S6311</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intel® Centrino® processor technology</li> <li>Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor T5600</li> <li>Intel® PRO/Wireless 3945AGN Network Connection</li> <li>Intel® 945GM Express Chipset</li> <li>Genuine Windows Vista® Home Premium</li> <li>Fingerprint Recognition Technology</li> <li>1GB DDR2 667MHz</li> <li>80GB SATA HDD</li> <li>13.3" SuperFine XGA TFT</li> <li>Dual Layer DVD Super Multi Writer</li> <li>V.92 Modem &amp; 1000/100/10Mbps Gigabit LAN</li> <li>Bluetooth® v2.0 + EDR (Enhanced Data Rate)</li> <li>Approx. 1.7kg (w/ weight saver option)</li> </ul> <p><b>*Monthly Price 10,250.00</b></p>	<p><b>Rs. 1,34,000</b></p> <p><b>LifeBook S7110</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intel® Centrino® processor technology</li> <li>Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor T5600</li> <li>Intel® PRO/Wireless 3945AGN Network Connection</li> <li>Intel® 945GM Express Chipset</li> <li>Genuine Windows Vista® Home Premium</li> <li>Fingerprint Recognition Technology</li> <li>1GB DDR2 667MHz</li> <li>120GB SATA HDD</li> <li>14.1" SuperFine XGA TFT</li> <li>Dual Layer DVD Super Multi Writer</li> <li>V.92 Modem &amp; 1000/100/10Mbps Gigabit LAN</li> <li>Bluetooth® v2.0 + EDR (Enhanced Data Rate)</li> <li>Approx. 1.8kg (w/ weight saver option)</li> </ul> <p><b>*Monthly Price 11,167.00</b></p>	<p><b>Rs. 1,48,000</b></p> <p><b>LifeBook S6410</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intel® Centrino® processor technology</li> <li>Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor T7300</li> <li>Intel® PRO/Wireless 4965AGN Network Connection</li> <li>Intel® GM965 Express Chipset</li> <li>Genuine Windows Vista® Home Premium</li> <li>Fingerprint Recognition Technology</li> <li>1GB DDR2 667MHz</li> <li>120GB SATA HDD</li> <li>13.3" SuperFine WXGA TFT</li> <li>Dual Layer DVD Super Multi Writer</li> <li>V.92 Modem &amp; 1000/100/10Mbps Gigabit LAN</li> <li>Bluetooth® v2.0 + EDR (Enhanced Data Rate)</li> <li>1.3 Mega Pixel Built-in Camera</li> <li>Approx. 1.9kg (w/ weight saver option)</li> </ul> <p><b>*Monthly Price 12,334.00</b></p>	<p><b>Rs. 87,000</b></p> <p><b>LifeBook S2210</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mobile AMD Sempron™ Processor 3200+</li> <li>ATI RADEON® Xpress 1150 + SB460 Chipset</li> <li>Genuine Windows Vista® Home Basic</li> <li>Fingerprint Recognition Technology</li> <li>1GB DDR2 667MHz</li> <li>180GB SATA HDD</li> <li>13.3" SuperFine XGA TFT</li> <li>Dual Layer DVD Super Multi Writer</li> <li>V.92 Modem &amp; 1000/100/10Mbps Gigabit LAN</li> <li>Bluetooth® v2.0 + EDR (Enhanced Data Rate)</li> <li>Port Replicator</li> <li>Approx. 1.7kg (w/ weight saver option)</li> </ul> <p><b>*Monthly Price 7,250.00</b></p>

**FUJITSU**  
PARTNER

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