KUNDA DIXIT

In a dramatic last-minute turnaround, the Maoists on Thursday dumped the NC and UML and placed veteran Madhesi republican, Ram Raja Prasad Singh, as their candidate for president.

Even though ideologically opposed to the Maoists, Madhesi parties immediately supported Singh’s candidature, making it almost certain that Nepal’s first president will be from the plains.

The fact that the NC presidential candidate (Ram Baran Yadav) and the UML (Ramprit Paswan) are Madhesis shows the importance of the Tarai vote bank for all three parties. Although the post is ceremonial, the president is the nominal commander-in-chief.

The arithmetic of the 594 voting members of the house will now mean that the Maoists with 229 seats and the Madhesi parties with 88 could easily muster the majority needed for Singh to win in the secret balloting on Saturday.

The candidates registered in a last-minute scramble before the 1PM deadline on Thursday at the CA secretariat. For vice-president, the Maoists have fielded Shanta Shrestha, a former K P Bhattarai aide who later became a Maoist MP in the interim parliament, while the NC put forward Man Bahadur Biswokarma and the UML Astha Laxmi Shakya.

Thursday’s drama was a result of the unraveling of the UML-Maoist alliance after the UML refused to give up the proposed joint-candidate, Madhab Kumar Nepal. The Maoists had asked the UML to come up with a name that would be “inclusive”.

The NC probably hopes to split the Madhesi vote with its candidate, but Ram Baran Yadav is not popular among Madhesi CA members for having refused to defect from the NC.

Analysts believe that Ram Raja Prasad Singh being elected will go a long way in addressing the grievances of Tarai Nepalis who feel discriminated by Kathmandu, and could narrow the widening gulf between the hills and the plains.

Stung by being let down by the Maoists, the UML once more declared that it will not join the government. Although the deadlock over presidentship is now over, the UML and NC feel humiliated and will try to make it difficult for the Maoists in government formation next week.

Friday will see hectic lobbying by all three parties.

EDITORIAL

Prime Minister Dahal and President Singh

Prime Minister Dahal and President Singh...
Napoleon to neo-Mao

Liberté, égalité, fraternité and pragmatism

PARIS—Baseil Day commemorates the storming of a Paris prison on 14 July 1789 that marked the beginning of the French Revolution. The memory of that event is about pomp with a military parade down the Champs Elysées today, the traditional Paris skyline. The guest of honour this year was UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, with the Blue Helmets leading the parade that included Nepali peacekeepers.

France today has a practical rather than idealistic approach to foreign policy. Sustained by subdity on baguette and other services, the bourgeoisie can concentrate on the arts, commerce and statecraft. It wasn’t always like this. French history has swing wildly between left and right until it found its equilibrium in the Fifth Republic.

‘The French peasant was a Bonapartiste,’ wrote Marx about mid-19th century upheavals. Present day France has given successors of that peasantry a very strong presence. But the French are also given to gloriously distracting work. President Nicolas Sarkozy sees his job as pushing the economy to 4% growth, creating 40,000 jobs and promises to convince the EU to reduce VAT. The Maoists in the 1960s wanted a Chinese style republic so that Pushpa Kamal Dahal can be its president. That would require the Nepali middle class to reach critical mass.

The Maoists are not alone in this. The May Day demonstrations, which are often a chance for French workers to express their dissatisfaction with their pay and working conditions, this year included a call for a more participatory democracy. The French Revolution, a century upheavals. Present day France has given successors of that peasantry a very strong presence. But the French are also given to gloriously distracting work. President Nicolas Sarkozy sees his job as pushing the economy to 4% growth, creating 40,000 jobs and promises to convince the EU to reduce VAT. The Maoists in the 1960s wanted a Chinese style republic so that Pushpa Kamal Dahal can be its president. That would require the Nepali middle class to reach critical mass.

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Nabil ANEW.
FOR A NEW NEPAL.

As we commence our 25th year of operation in Nepal, we reiterate our belief that our ability to constantly evolve, to meet and exceed the expectations of all our stakeholders, has been the main catalyst of our sustainable progress over the years. It is this philosophy that has driven us to continuously strive to improve ourselves by acting today, to reinvent tomorrow, through the wisdom learned yesterday. Today we are a leader in the financial industry because of the mutually beneficial partnerships we have forged with our customers, shareholders, regulators, our society and staff, as we journeyed together through two and a half decades, overcoming unprecedented challenges and witnessing historic surges forward. As we commence the celebration of our Silver Jubilee, each member of Team Nabil reiterates our commitment to remain your Bank of 1st Choice as we surge ahead together to build a New Nepal.
Sekhar Rizal always wanted to be a doctor. Till last year, the future looked bleak for this Grade 10 student who was born at the Goldhap Bhutani Refugee Camp in Jhapa.

Today, Sekhar is among the first batch of Bhutani Lhotsampa refugees who have been resettled here as part of a plan under which the Netherlands, the United States, Denmark, Norway, Australia and Canada will give permanent residence to up to 90,000 of the 110,000 refugees.

Sekhar has never been to the country that he regards as his motherland. The Bhutan regime evicted his parents along with tens of thousands of others and trucked them back across Asia to Nepal in 1990. For Sekhar and dozens of others here who arrived three months ago, the novelty of non-refugee life hasn’t worn off.

“My bamboo classroom seems a long way away,” he told Nepal Times, “the teachers here are amazing, they never spank us. The Dutch are so friendly and so respectful to us.”

Sekhar is among Bhutanis who are being housed at the Amsfoort Transit Centre. The most dramatic change for them has been the restoration of their human dignity.

HAPPY ENDING: Refugees from Goldhap and Sanischare at a refugee.”

treat you as an equal. They don’t look down on you because you are respected. “I am now treated like a human being again, people respect. “I am now treated like a human being again, people

didn’t have status. No one gave us any respect,” he told Nepal Times.

Also for Acharya, the most remarkable thing is that he has moved from living in the camp to a bedroom in his apartment, and says it is difficult to get used to this state of culture shock. He proudly shows a visitor the kitchen and bathroom.

Rohit Acharya arrived here only a week ago, and he is still in a bedroom in his apartment, and says it is difficult to get used to this state of culture shock. He proudly shows a visitor the kitchen and bathroom.

As a refugee, we had no status. No one gave us any respect,” he told Nepal Times.

The Bhutanis are all learning Dutch and while at the Transit Centre they get free lodging, food and $5 pocket money every month.

Rohit Acharya arrived here only a week ago, and he is still in a bedroom in his apartment, and says it is difficult to get used to this state of culture shock. He proudly shows a visitor the kitchen and bathroom.

Despite the state of culture shock, he is happy to spend his days in Amsfoort, and says: “Why should I close the door to a chance for a better life?”

Indeed, Beldangi Camp secretary Tek Bahadur Gurung says his foremost concern is safety of the refugees.

He added: “We are not here to tell anyone to go or not go, everyone should be free to make up their own minds. We want to stop violence by those opposing resettlement.”

See also: ‘ (No place like home’, #306) (Home away from home’, #340) (Long way from home’, #353)
Buddha spreads wings
Buddha Air is adding two ATR-42-320s next month to meet rising passenger volume in Nepal's domestic routes, a surge in tourism and to make-up for the rising cost of aviation fuel.

The fuel-efficient 50-seater twin-turbo-props will be deployed in the high-volume Pokhara, Bharatpur, Bhadrapur, Biraha and Dhangadi sectors. The airline will continue to use its five Beechcraft 1900Ds for mountain flights and routes with smaller airports like Simara and Bharatpur and for Mt Everest sightseeing flights. The airline hopes to sell off two of its Beechcraft 1900s.

The airline has already sent pilots for simulator training with the French manufacturers, Avions de Transport Regional. The deal is financed by the International Finance Corporation, the private sector arm of the World Bank.

Buddha Air’s Managing Director, Birendra Basnet told Nepal Times the airline plans to upgrade to higher capacity ATR 72s in a few years.

NABIL BANK

Nabil Bank, the first joint venture bank in Nepal, which started with a technical service agreement with the Dubai Bank, entered its 25th year of service in Nepal on 12 July. The bank, which provides one-stop services, has 28 branches and counters all over Nepal.

IT learning

Prime life insurance, opened under the Khetan group, has started a life-insurance scheme for Nepalis working abroad. The life-insurance scheme will be available at a discounted rate of Rs 500 thousand for a period of one to five years.

IT learning

British Council has opened a new IT-based Learning Centre, which has the provision of online access to latest professional and learning resources. The centre, which is aimed at teachers, young professionals, and students, is equipped with 35 computers and plans to conduct workshops and training programmes.

NEW PRODUCTS

PHONE SPICE: New models of Spice mobile phones were recently launched in Nepal with the aim of providing more creative designs at all prices. The phones feature models that have in-built ‘singtones,’ and dual SIM card system.

Nepali newspapers are selling out, many. In the last one year alone, they’ve lost money to stay in business. Given Nepal’s vibrant fourth estate, media houses are about being members of the professional was, it’s nonetheless did raise this question. Just what is the nature of the relationship between ad agencies and media houses in Nepal? The answer depends on who you’re talking about.

First, let’s talk about the media houses. Behind all the heart-warming self-reflections about being members of the fourth estate, media houses are private companies that have to make money to stay in business. But the challenges they face are many. In the last one year alone, the cost of printing paper in the international market has risen by 50 per cent, if not more. When these companies plan to launch new media products or tweak the existing ones, they face a severe shortage of qualified staff—creative professionals who can think, write, edit, design, publish, sell and distribute with little supervision.

Meantime, the manpower they have is getting cooler to hold on to as the costs of everything else continue to go up. The longer they wait to address staff’s legitimate and, in some cases, exaggerated grievances, it is likely that they’ll end up spending time dealing with trade unions, some of which have overt party-political agendas, which includes even shutting down the intermediary role, they collect fees from clients, slice off their share, and pass the rest on to the media houses. This flow of tunk has worked well with a handful of Nepal’s ad agencies that are professionally managed and exhibit a globally-savvy outlook. Careful about their reputation, they clear up their financial obligations promptly.

But there’s a long tail of smaller ad agencies that continue to hurt the credibility of advertising professionals in Nepal. Often run by characters who seem to have been lifted straight out of the movie Get Shorty, these agencies offer shoddy services to clients. And by not paying the media houses for months and years on end, they take advantage of the fact that there is no small-claims court, and that a lawsuit can drag on for years. Unable to offer convincing answers to auditors and promoters about a long list of non-paying agencies, most media houses pay the media houses their obligations promptly.

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**Deadlocked**

Khilbahadur Bhandari in Gorkhapatra, 11 July

The world has seen the character of the political parties in Nepal. They know that after 20 years of NC and UML misrule, the people want change. Yet, the ghosts of the past have come back to haunt us: the two parties are behaving as if they are still in power. Girija Koirala very reluctantly resigned, but he is now weaving another web of political intrigue with the Madhesi parties. The scenes at the CA in the past weeks with the slogan of One Madhes One Pradesh, which goes against many of the inhabitants of the Tarai, has raised questions of the integrity of the parties. The roots of this are spread all over. This has spread disillusionment among the people who had expected real change after the elections. How can the party that got less votes than the NC, UML and the Maoists hold the country hostage? The Madhesi parties need to understand this.

Even if the CA is to elect a presidential candidate, Article 63 of the interim constitution mentions the term Madhes. The reality is that there is no geographical area of Nepal that can be identified with the word. Further, the Election Commission has included us ethnic Tharus under the Madhes category. When we asked the EC about this, they pointed to the interim constitution. So we decided to burn that section of the constitution.

But do you have the strength in the Assembly to push through your demands?

Nothing is impossible when the people feel strongly about an issue. The agitation has come about because we felt the pressure for it from the districts. That is why we have launched the agitation in the Tarai.

What has been the response from Madhes supporters?

They are trying to trick us. They have been attempting to set a meeting and tried to get us to call off our program.

What have the major parties said?

We will soon put forth our demands before the major parties, intellectuals and the press.

**“No such place as Madhes”**

HimaKhabar.com , 7 July

The Tharu Welfare Council has been struggling to remove the terms Madhes and Madhesis from the Interim Constitution. On 7 July the council torched Article 63 of the interim constitution in 24 districts of the Tarai as well as in the capital. Interview with the Council’s Raj Kumar Leхи:

**Why did you set fire to the Interim Constitution?**

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Nepal, July 19

Even as the UML has been demanding the scrapping of the Maoist-affiliated Young Communist League (YCL), it has come up with its own clone: the Youth Force. It acts as the strong arm of the party and is a subsidiary of the UML-controlled Democratic National Youth Organisation.

The organisation’s president, Ajambar Kangmang, is quick to deny any similarity with the YCL. “We don’t live in the barracks, we don’t carry arms, we don’t take law in our own hands or administer justice through kangaroo courts,” Kangmang says. But some of these things is exactly what the Youth Force has been involved with in the past weeks.

The Youth Force was formed in early June, but senior UML figures like Pradeep Nepal are still denying its existence. Nepal even says the UML doesn’t need a group of such character. On the other hand, Gokarna Bista, who is in charge of the party’s youth wing, claims that the force was formed under the suggestion of the party but as the central committee of the party has not had a chance to meet, it is yet to have a discussion on the issue. But Bista maintains that although Youth Force will not endorse activities similar to YCL, the force will not keep quiet if anyone attempts to assault or harass its workers.

The YF recently made headlines after manhandling a clerk in the Department of Labour who it said was allegedly caught red-handed while taking a bribe. The official says he was framed, and he’s been the victim of a YF-instigated media witch hunt.

The YF’s Mahesh Basnet says it was not their intention to manhandle the clerk. “The force has been established with an aim to help the state to combat the existing disorder and lawlessness in the country,” he says.
A new life

Young women escape abuse and find a chance to start again

DHRUBA SIMKHADA

Uma Khadka was 21 years old when she fled the conflict in her home village in Dolakha and came to Kathmandu. Unable to find any work, she landed up in one of Kathmandu’s seedy ‘dance bars’. She met a man there whom she married, but he soon started abusing her. One night, he poured kerosene on her and set her ablaze.

Uma was rescued by Rakshya Nepal, a charity dedicated to rehabilitating abused young women. Her body, hands and face are badly scarred but she is enrolled in driving lessons with eight other women rescued from violent husbands or abusive employers. Shushmita Basnet lost her right arm when she was hit during crossfire in a battle at Mulkharka, Okhaldhunga five years ago. She was helicoptered out by the army and it took her one year to recuperate at Chhuni Hospital. Today, at 20, she has started rebuilding her life, and, undeterred by her handicap, is taking tailoring lessons at Rakshya Nepal.

Rakshya Nepal was founded by Menuka Thapa, who herself sang at one of Kathmandu’s dohori restaurants. After personally witnessing the mistreatment and abuse of women in the restaurant, Menuka was motivated to work against it.

As a university student, Menuka also decided to research the plight of young women working in massage parlours, dance bars and restaurants for her master’s thesis. Menuka found most girls to be between the ages of 11-25, but some were as old as 45. There are now 300 massage centres in Thamel alone, and each of them employs an average of 10 girls. Most are fronts for prostitution and the police don’t try to stop them.

Menuka interviewed 200 women, who also filled out questionnaires. Her study shows that 80 percent of the women working in these parlours were directly affected by the conflict. They came to Kathmandu in search of work and fell into the capital’s netherworld of commercial sex. The dancers, the masseurs and the waitresses mostly come from Dhading, Makwanpur, Sindhupalchowk, Nuwakot, Ramchhap, Simikot and Dolakha. A majority were married but are separated.

Rakshya Nepal tries to help the women earn an alternative living by providing skills training. Besides driving and tailoring, the group also trains the women to become beauticians. Thirty former dance restaurant women have quit their jobs and are working in beauty parlours in the city. There are currently 50 women undergoing various types of free training at Rakshya Nepal’s training centres.

After her mother died, Suntali Rai was regularly abused by her stepmother. When the Maoists tried to recruit her into their militia, Suntali fled to Kathmandu. She worked in a businessman’s house, but when he tried to molest her she fled and started to work in a massage parlour in Thamel. She ran away from there and came to Rakshya Nepal, where she is now a beautician trainee. She says: “Finally, I have the possibility of

APARTMENT FOR RENT IN BALUWATAR

A newly renovated, earthquake proofed 2-bedroom semi-furnished apartment (with state-of-the-art 5-burner cooking hob and Euroguard filter in the kitchen) is available for immediate lease in Baluwatar. A long-lease arrangement is preferred.

In addition to 2 bedrooms there are 2 bathrooms, a living room with a fireplace, a dining room and a spacious foyer. The rooms have wood floors, and the kitchen and bathrooms have tile floors. The apartment has its own lawn and garden area. Separate parking, storage room and guard room are available if needed.

Rent: Rs. 45,000/- month + utilities unfurnished.
Contact: 4411260 / 98510 16060

No brokers or agents please.
IN THE DRIVING SEAT: Uma Khadka’s husband poured kerosene on her and set her on fire. (Left) Despite the bandages in her hand, Uma is determined to learn driving and find a new life for herself.

Suntali Rai fled Maoist recruitment in Ramechhap, was rescued from a massage centre in Thamel and is now a beautician trainee (right) at Raskhya Nepal set up by Menuka Thapa (above) who herself was a singer in a dohori restaurant in Kathmandu.

Women escape and find a way to start afresh

starting a new life. “Twenty-two year old Sunita Chaudhary’s father died when her mother was pregnant. Sunita came to Kathmandu from Bhanu when her mother married another man. She was forced to work at a dohori restaurant after the man she married started beating her up. She is now working as a beautician trainee. “I have no relatives left, the didis at Rakshya Nepal are my family now,” she says. Menuka Thapa knows that her work is a drop in the ocean. The plight of the women also shows just how conflict leaves long-term effects. “The government has to formulate clear policies so this blatant exploitation of women stops,” she told Nepali Times, “there is only so much people like us can do.”

HELPLINES

Rakshya Nepal 01-6912734 protection_nepal@gmail.com
Saathi 01-4411078 contact@saathi.org.np http://www.saathi.org.np/

The Women’s Foundation Nepal 01-4423257 tara@tara.wlink.com.np http://www.womenepal.org

Maiti Nepal 01-4492904 maitinepal@wlink.com.np http://www.maitinepal.org

Legal Aid and Consultancy Centre (LACC) 01-5643111 lacc@wlink.com.np http://www.laccnepal.com

Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD) 01-4242683 fwld@andolan.wlink.com.np http://www.fwld.org.np

KIRAN PANDEY
Fear and want

In June, the UN’s Intergovernmental Human Rights Council took an important step toward eliminating the artificial divide between freedom from fear and freedom from want that has characterised the human rights system since its inception.

By giving the green light to the Optional Protocol to the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the Council has established an important mechanism to expose abuses that are typically linked to poverty, discrimination, and neglect, and that victims frequently endure in silence and helplessness.

It will now be up to the UN General Assembly to provide final approval of the Protocol. If adopted, this instrument can make a real difference in the lives of those who are often left to languish at the margins of society, and are denied their economic, social, and cultural rights, such as access to adequate nutrition, health services, housing, and education.

Sixty years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognised that both freedom from want and freedom from fear are indispensable preconditions for a dignified life. Its framers understood that social and cultural stigmatisation precludes full participation in public life and the ability to influence policies and obtain justice.

Yet this unified approach was undermined by the Cold War bipolarity. Countries with planned economies argued that the need for survival superseded the aspiration to freedom, so that access to basic necessities included in the basket of economic, social, and cultural rights should take priority in policy and practice.

Human dignity requires mutually dependent freedoms from fear and want

Western governments were wary of this perspective and they chose to prioritise those civil and political rights that they viewed as the hallmarks of democracy.

Against this background, it was impossible to agree on a single, comprehensive human rights instrument giving holistic effect to the Declaration’s principles. Unsurprisingly, it took almost two decades before UN member states simultaneously adopted two separate treaties: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights encompassing the two distinct baskets of rights. However, only the former treaty was endowed with a follow-up mechanism to monitor its implementation.

In practice, this discrepancy created a category of “alpha” rights (civil and political) that took priority in the influential and wealthy countries’ domestic and foreign policy agendas. By contrast, economic, social, and cultural rights were often left to linger at the bottom of the national and international to-do lists.

The new Protocol establishes for the Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights a vehicle to expose abuse, known as a ‘complaint mechanism’ similar to those created for other core human rights treaties. By lodging a complaint victims will now be able to bring to the surface abuses that their governments inflict, fail to stop, ignore, or do not redress. The Protocol provides a way for individuals, who may otherwise be isolated and powerless, to make the international community aware of their plight.

After its adoption by the General Assembly, the Protocol will enter into force when a critical mass of UN member states has ratified it. Not all countries will embrace the Protocol. Some will prefer to avoid any strengthening of economic, social, and cultural rights and will seek to maintain the status quo.

The better and fairer position, however, is to embrace the vision of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and promote unambiguously the idea that human dignity requires respect for the equally vital and mutually dependent freedoms from fear and want.

Louise Arbour is United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Pardoning

In June 2007 Nepal’s Supreme Court ordered the government to form a commission to investigate cases of forced disappearances during the 1990-2006 conflict and the Home Ministry started drafting a disappearance bill. A year later it is still stuck.

The law is in limbo because of poor coordination between the Home and Peace Ministries, ambiguity about their responsibilities, preparations for elections and political deadlock.

“Mostly, it is the sheer lack of political will,” says Jitendra Bohara of the rights group, Advocacy Forum.

Another bill for the formation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), drafted by the Peace Ministry, has just undergone a fourth revision because of a controversy over a clause on amnesty for perpetrators of war crimes.

“You can’t establish a truth commission in a hurry,” warn experts at the Nepal office of the International Centre for Transitional Justice who say the environment is still not safe for a TRC to start work. But other activists say time is running out on the TRC and disappearance bills, and valuable evidence is being lost. With the Maoists soon forming the new government, the long wait for justice is likely to continue.

MALLIKA ARYAL

ONLY MEMORIES: Lakmi Bhandari looks at the photograph of her husband, Tej Bahadur Bhandari, who was disappeared by the army in 2002 (above) and Maiya Basnet (at right, overleaf) with other women whose relatives were disappeared in Lamjung during the war.

KIRAN KRISHNA SHRESTHA (LEFT), MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA (ABOVE)

Pardoning

MALLIKA ARYAL

ONLY MEMORIES: Lakmi Bhandari looks at the photograph of her husband, Tej Bahadur Bhandari, who was disappeared by the army in 2002 (above) and Maiya Basnet (at right, overleaf) with other women whose relatives were disappeared in Lamjung during the war.

KIRAN KRISHNA SHRESTHA (LEFT), MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA (ABOVE)
PROLONGED AGONY: War victims like mother of a disappeared, Laxmi Maya Acharya, (far left) and former Maoist Ramkumari Dhungel who lost his arm to a grenade (left) say no to amnesty for human rights perpetrators and their families are also afraid the commissions may never be formed.

Ramesh Shrestha, a former Maoist, lost his right arm in a grenade attack in Kathmandu in 2000 and was in and out of military custody for 17 months during the war. He is not hopeful for the families of the disappeared. “In the Nepal Army as well as the PLA, those responsible for war crimes during the war are all high-level officers,” says Shrestha, “if a disappearance commission is formed they will all be exposed, the Maoists will never let that happen.”

Laxmi Maya Acharya’s son, Lil Prasad, was arrested by army intelligence in Kathmandu in 2003 and detained at the notorious Bhumibol Battalion. Lil Prasad was a Maoist and had called his mother in Gaighat a few days before his arrest and told her not to worry. She hasn’t heard from him since.

Lila Prasad’s picture appears on a Maoist poster of martyrs from Udayapur, but is listed as ‘Bepatta’. Laxmi Maya carries the poster wherever she goes. “I want to meet Prachandra and tell him because of you my son is gone, tell me if he is dead or alive and if he is dead you should take care of us,” Laxmi Maya said.

Meanwhile, rights groups are disturbed by a memo from the US-based Holland & Knight law firm that they say proposes a blanket amnesty for perpetrators of human rights violations. The memo states that Nepal had ‘not a clear, binding, general duty’ under international customary law or Nepali law to prosecute rights violations. It says there is no ‘firm support’ for claims that Nepal must prosecute violations of human rights and humanitarian law. The memo adds that amnesty is common in times of political transition, especially when truth commissions are set up.

Advocate Manilata Shama says the memo has many flaws. “Impunity has been the biggest challenge in Nepal, reports like the one Holland & Knight prepared only strengthens this culture,” she says.

But Hannes Siebert, a South African consultant with the USAID-funded Nepal’s Transition to Peace Initiative, says the memo doesn’t state, recommend or imply that international law permits blanket amnesties for serious crimes. (See box.)

“That is a terrible misunderstanding, or non-reading, of the report,” adds Siebert, who is also chairman of the Appeal Foundation of the Nobel Peace Laureates for whom the memo was written pro bono by H & K. Joint Secretary at the Peace Ministry, Madhur Regmi says the H & K recommendations are not binding. “We did not ask for legal advice in our favour, we are not obligated to implement their suggestions since the TRC bill is a living document that is open for experts to comment on,” Regmi says.

Devi Sunuwar, mother of 15-year-old old Sama Sunuwar, who was tortured killed in 2004 while in Nepal Army custody, is outraged about all this talk of amnesty. “She told Nepali Times: “They killed my little daughter, I can’t forgive them. If they killed once they will kill again.”

See also: “Voting for reconciliation and justice”, #395 “Disappeared, dead or alive”, #351

LONG WAIT
Families of the disappeared
want truth and justice

But there is hope. Eight members of the Constituent Assembly are family members of the disappeared. Other parties are also hopeful that the new Maoist-led government will do more to keep its campaign promises. But for now this has only been passed by lip service. There is a fear among the families that the Maoist will not also fulfill their promises.

There are no records or reports on the disappeared. No evidence to present before the courts. Amnesty and reparations proposed by various draft bills in the past will not help the quest for justice, and may undermine the peace process. The families of the disappeared have no other option but to be organised so they can lobby the new government to fulfill its promises. •

Ram Kumar Bhandari’s father was disappeared by the Army in 2000. He is the coordinator of the Committee for Social Justice. See also: ‘How can we forget’, #389
What leaders need to lead

Are leaders born to lead, or do they learn to lead? Are they Alpha Males or Little Big Men?

History is often written in terms of military heroes, but leads to overemphasis of command, control and hard military power. In America today, the presidential debate is between John McCain, a war hero, and Barack Obama, a former community organizer.

The image of the warrior leader lingers in modern times. Smart warriors, however, know how to lead with more than just the use of force. They need the soft power of attraction as well as the hard power of coercion.

Many autocratic rulers in Zimbabwe, Burma, North Korea and elsewhere still lead the old-fashioned way. They combine fear with corruption to maintain kleptocracies dominated by the Big Man and his coterie. A good portion of the world is ruled this way.

Some theorists try to explain this with an ‘alpha male theory of leadership’. Just as male monkeys, chimps or apes automatically begin to assume more responsibility once they attain the dominant status of alpha male, human rulers do so as well.

One effect of the traditional heroic warrior approach to leadership has been to support the belief that leaders are born rather than made, and that nature is more important than nurture. The search for the essential traits of a leader dominated the field of leadership studies until the late 1940’s, and remains common in popular discourse today.

A tall handsome person enters a room, draws attention, and “looks like a leader”. Various studies show that tall men are often favoured, and that corporate CEOs are taller than average. But some of the most powerful leaders in history, such as Napoleon, Stalin and Deng Xiaoping were little over five feet tall.

A persuasive experiment recently demonstrated the interaction between nature and nurture. A group of employers was asked to hire workers who had been ranked by their looks. If the employers saw only the resumes, beauty had no impact on hiring.

Surprisingly, however, when telephone interviews were included in the process, beautiful people did better, even though they were unseen by the employers. A lifetime of social reinforcement based on their genetically given looks may have encoded into their voice patterns a tone of confidence that could be projected over the phone.

Genetics and biology matter in human leadership, but they do not determine it in the way the traditional heroic warrior approach to leadership suggests. The Big Man type of leader works in societies based on networks of tribal cultures that rely on personal and family honour and loyalty. But such social structures are not well adapted for coping with today’s complex information-based world. Societies that rely on heroic leaders are slow to develop the civil society and broad social capital that are necessary for leading in a modern networked world. Modern leadership turns out to be less about who you are or how you were born than about what you have learned and what you do as part of a group.

Modern information societies require us to go beyond the Big Man approach to leadership.

Joseph S Nye is a professor at Harvard and author of The Powers to Lead.
American Nepali dohori

S

he can match the quick wit and sarcasm required to master the traditional art of dohori singing with confidence and poise. And if you chose your eyes, you could swear this was a dohori singer from somewhere north of Pokhara.

But Anna Stirr is from the United States and with her perfect Nepali, clever improvisations and mastery of the art of dohori she could fool a lot of people. The first time Anna heard dohori, she fell in love with it. The more she listened to the more she realized how, with a lyrical play on words, it can be used to entertain as well as convey love with it. The more she listened to the more she realised how, with a lyrical play on words, it can be used to entertain as well as convey love with it. The more she listened to the more she realised how, with a lyrical play on words, it can be used to entertain as well as convey love with it.

Anna is researching dohoris for her PhD on ethnomusicology at Columbia University in New York. She says that instead of being eclipsed by modern pop, dohori has got a new lease on life because it has been popularised in restaurants and tv shows. Anna herself has appeared in Image Channel’s ‘Khelum Dohori’ and amazed her audience. Village-based dohori requires witty, impromptu improvisations, and that is what caught Anna’s attention.

For the past three years Anna has been travelling to different villages learning and participating in dohori sessions. “Learning this impromptu improvisations, and that is what caught Anna’s attention.”

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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS
- Taiara a multimedia and collage exhibition by Chirag Bangdel until 18 July, 5.30 PM at Bakery Café, Pulchowk.
- 4th solo exhibition and sale, 11 AM- 6.30 PM, 17 Char Narayan Marg, Maligapan, 18-22 July
- Connection, solo Charity Art exhibition by Jiju Kaji Mahajan, until 6 August, 2 PM onwards at 1605 Restaurant, Kantipath, 9801005029

EVENTS
- Aguirre, Wrath of God, a film by Werner Herzog, 21 July 2008, 5.30 PM, Rimal Theater Gurukul, 4466856
- Lecture Series XXIV by Susan Hangen on Rational thinking in Nepal, 5 PM, 22 July, Bagghikhana, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Bhokha
- French classes, next session starts from 23 July-1 October, admissions from 30 June-22 July, Alliance Française, Kathmandu
- Ratatouille, a cartoon film, at Lazimpat Gallery Café, 22 July, 6.30 PM, 4428549
- Summer Cult Film Festival at the Lazimpat Gallery Café throughout July and August
- Monsoon madness package at Shangri-la Village Resort,Pokhara, pay Rs 5999 and get back Rs 5000 to spend on any hotel facility. Also available is the Yeti Airlines special offer. 4435741
- Tantric Dance of Nepal presented by Kalamandapa, every Tuesday 7 PM at Hotel Vaja and every Saturday 11 AM at Patan Museum

MUSIC
- Budri & Durga Kharel a composer/singer duo from Darjeeling performing at nepa-laya’s Paleti series, ‘r’-sala theatre, 25 July, 4431489
- 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, 7 PM at Le Meriden, Gokarna. 4461121
- 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

DINING
- Hirato and goochi at the Roxy Restaurant, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu, till 26 July from 7-10.30 PM
- Walk and lunch, 26 July, Shivapuri Heights Cottage
- The Fun Cafe, discounts available at lunch 12.30-2.30 PM and dinner 6.30-10.30 PM at the Radisson Hotel, Kathmandu, Rs 800, till 31 July. 4411818
- New menu at the Dhorikama Cafe, Patan Bhokha, 5522113
- Sixth Annual Wine Festival till September at Kilroy’s, Jyatha. 4250440
- Steak special with free Irish coffee at K-too! Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel. 4700043
- Hot summer spicy food at the Jalan Jalan Restaurant, Kupondole heights. 5644872
- Reality Bites, The Kaiser Café, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika’s Group of Hotels, 9 AM-10 PM. 4425341
- Mango etagere mango delicacies 4.30-6.30 PM at the Lounge, Hyatt Regency. 4492124
- Steak escape with Kathmandu’s premier steaks, available for lunch and dinner at the Olive Bar and Bistro, Hotel Radisson. 4411818
- Cocktails and grooves with jazz by Inner Groove at Fusion-the-bar, every Wednesday at Dwarika’s Hotel
- International buffet at the Sunrise Cafe, and Russian specialties at Chimney, Hotel Yak and Yel, 4348899
- Jazz in Patan with coffee, food, drinks and dessert at the New Orleans Cafe, Jawaakhel, 8.30 AM-10 PM. 5522708
- Saturday special at the Tea House Inn, Windy Hills, Nagarkot every Saturday. 9841250848.
- Scrumptious wood fired pizzas, cocktails and more at Roadhouse, Bhaktapur 4436897, Pulchowk 5521755 and Thamel. 4261827
- Starry night barbecue at Hotel Shangri-la with live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs 666, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7 PM onwards. 4412999
- Kebabs and curries at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841206019
- Lavazza coffee Italy’s favourite coffee at La Dolce Vita, Thamel, Roadhouse Café, Pulchowk and Thamel. 4700612
- Pizza from the woodfired oven at Java, Thamel. 4425319

For inclusion in the listing send information to editor@nepaltimes.com
‘TINTA RAM’: The Maoist vice-president candidate Shanta Shrestha and NC general secretary Ek Raj Bhandari, NC presidential candidate Ram Baran Yadav with the TMLP’s Hridayesh Tripathi. NC’s vice-presidential candidate Man Bahadur Biswokarma. UML’s vice-presidential nominee, Astha Laxmi Shakya and Maoist leader Khim Lal Devkota. All pictures taken as candidates registered just before deadline at 1PM on Thursday at the CA Secretariat. The elections for the president and vice-president are slated for Saturday.
What’s going on with the photo-section of our Maoist-controlled media? RSS transmitted a bucolic picture of Grindenwald in Switzerland with fat cows munching juicy grass and captioned it ‘Scenic view of the Annapurnas from Poon Hill’. One can understand the Baddies are in a hurry to turn Nepal into Schweiz, but why would Kantipur splash that picture across the top of page 1 on Thursday?

Then there is the still unresolved Reporter’s Club Photo Mystery. Was Rishi Dhamala wiped out of the front page of Gorkhapatra, or was he inserted in the group picture with RCP, PKD and JNK in The Rising Nepal? (See p6) Given their Stalinist tradition of airbrushing history, one can be sure the Maoist hakims at Gorkhe can’t stand the ubiquitous Dhamala, but their colleagues across the balcony at TRN seem to totally adore him. In fact, they seem to love him so much they printed Dhamala’s full page profile of PKD titled ‘Prachanda: Towering Personality’ last Friday. PM Awesome has dialectic gems like: ‘Love and sex are purely personal matters and these are linked to social relationship...it can set in anarchy...

Pukada, the president-maker

Since he’s going to be executive prime minister any day now, we might as well get Awesome’s nomencalture sorted out. Prachanda, Chhabilal Baje, or Pushpa Kamal Dahal? The best thing may be to have it both ways and call him Prime Minister Prachanda Dahal, the President-Maker.

In the Tale of the Three Brahmins Makunay, Giprako and Pukada, Girjau was knocked out first. The Maoists couldn’t help blurting out to Makunay during a private meeting that his biggest liability was that he was a Bahun, a guy and a Pahadi and any one of those was enough grounds for disqualification. That the Maoists have nothing but contempt for UML comrades can be gleaned from the snide comments they pass in private about them. For a month, Awesome displayed awesome political acumen by dragging Makunay along by his nose by promising presidency. MKN never guessed that Venerable Comrade Mohan Baidya would never allow it and Raja Ram was the Maoist choice all along.

Then Lahijoh got to work on JN to think about how he could take over as General Secretary if MKN was kicked upstairs. JN started whole-heartedly backing the Makunay for Prez lobby completely ignoring his own UML colleagues who told him he was being had. Behind the scenes, President Raja was winning and dining Madhesi leaders to lobby for his candidacy all week.

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This week’s winning entry for the New Name Contest is from C Tuladhar and his prediction that Nepal will not be a Switzerland by 2020, but a Sewageland.

New Name Contest entries: ass(at)nepalitimes.com

culinary delights

Pan Asian every Wednesday
The traditional Nepali taste to try the exotic flavours of the orient ranging from Indonesian Satay to Malaysian Roti Canai and Thai G bruk. Mediterranean every Friday
Enjoy robust flavours including items from the tagine, antipasti, stuffed vine leaves, freshly made foccacia with spices and spicy sauce.

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Price: NPR 1500 + tax per person
Timings: 7:00 PM to 10:30 PM
For more details call Yoga at 9844128055.