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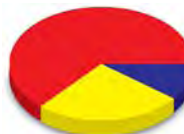
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Weekly Internet Poll # 411

Q. How do you characterise the Maoist decision not to form the new government?

Total votes: 5,398



They're bad losers 62.4%
Right decision 25.3%
Won't matter either way 12.3%

Weekly Internet Poll # 412. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. At this rate, can the new constitution be written in two years?

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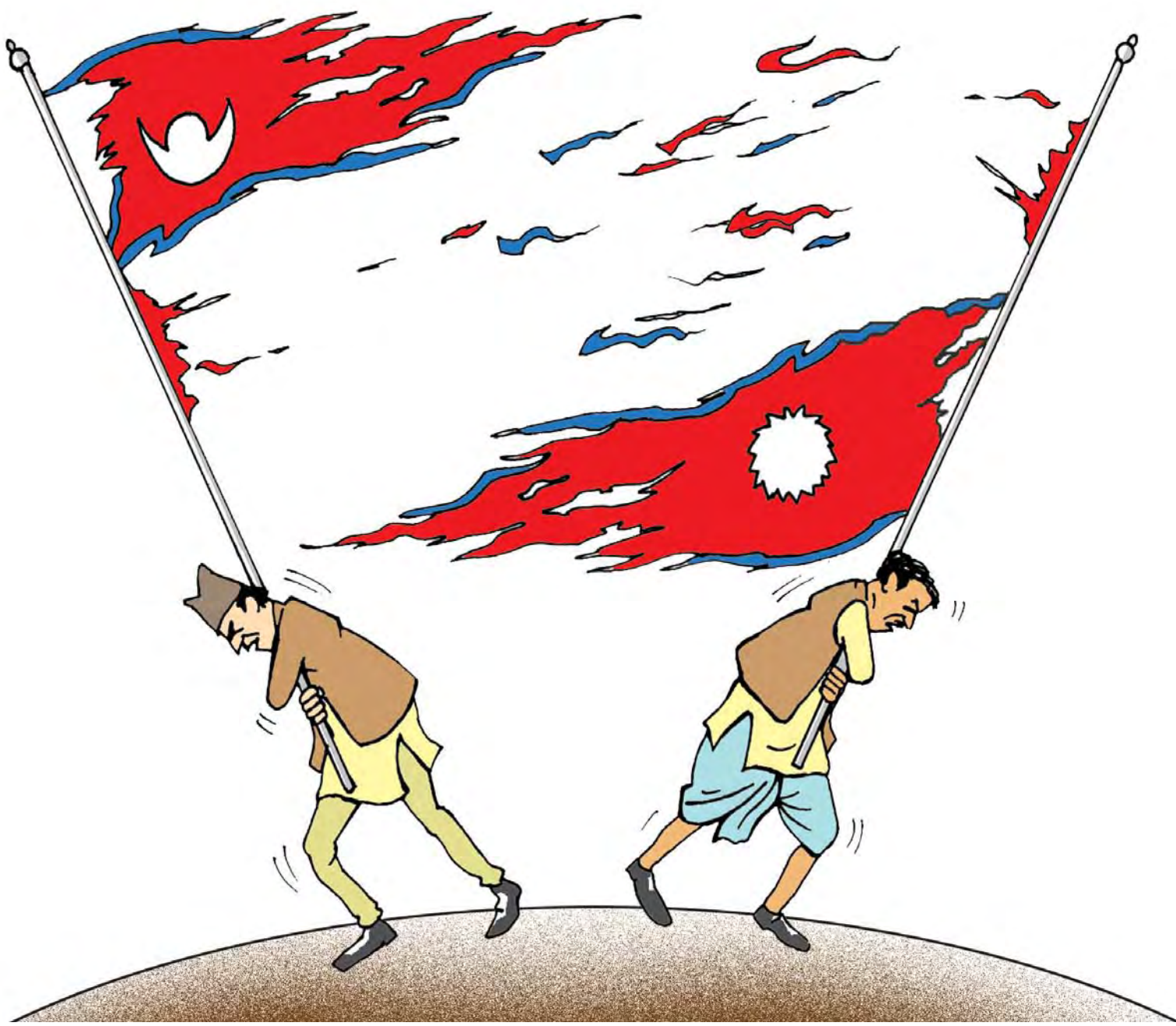
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ROBIN SAYAMI

Torn apart

Let's face it, it's not original anymore to fight just for the rights of one's community. The way to build a new Nepal is for Pahadis to also champion the cause of the Madhesis and understand their historical sense of injustice.

Editorial
p2

President Yadav's attempt to become a Nepali is admirable, but many more Madhesis would prefer to be known as Nepalis for what they are rather than what they have to become to be recognised as such.

CK Lal in State of the State
p2

Why not have Ram Bahadur Thapa as prime minister instead of Prachanda or Baburam? He is not tainted, we don't know of him visiting embassies, he is clean. He is even good-looking.

Interview with Madhab Nepal
p2

I do come from an area where Maithali is used, my wife speaks Bhojpuri. What language do you think we use to communicate with each other?

Interview with Paramananda Jha in Naya Patrika
p5

If taking an oath in Nepali was a problem, it should have been taken in the mother tongue. National identity is not protected with concrete border pillars but by

nurturing one's languages, culture and self-esteem.

Dhirendra Premarshi in Kantipur
p5

How is Hindi a Nepali language when Pahadis use it to communicate in the Tarai, but is an Indian language when Madhesis use it to speak to each other or in public?

Prashant Jha in Plain Speaking
p10

"I feel that I was stopped from heading the new government and participating in the Summit as it was feared that a new message would be disseminated to the world through my address."

Interview with Pushpa Kamal Dahal in Gorkhapatra
p12



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A MILLION MUTINIES

This past week of tyre-burning proved, if proof is still needed, just how volatile and unstable the political situation still is. The spark of the vice-president's ill-advised decision to take his oath in the official language of a neighbouring country lit the brush fire. The lingering political deadlock fanned it.

It wasn't supposed to be like this. The entire point about the political transition of the past two years was to install stability so that the constitution-making process could go ahead without pressure groups rampaging in the streets. Any grandstanding on sensitive topics such as ethnicity-based federalism was supposed to happen on the floor of the house, not on the asphalt outside.

The lesson we haven't learnt from past riots (Hrithik Roshan, September First) is that any political group that tries to orchestrate race-based street unrest will itself be consumed by it. Nepal's socio-economic and political undergrowth is too dry to play with fire.

Nepal's ethnicities, caste groups, the marginalised and downtrodden all have pent-up grievances that need urgent attention. Addressing the demand of one community invariably short-changes another. If it is not handled carefully, there can be a million mutinies. This is all the more reason for all sides to exhibit restraint and responsibility.

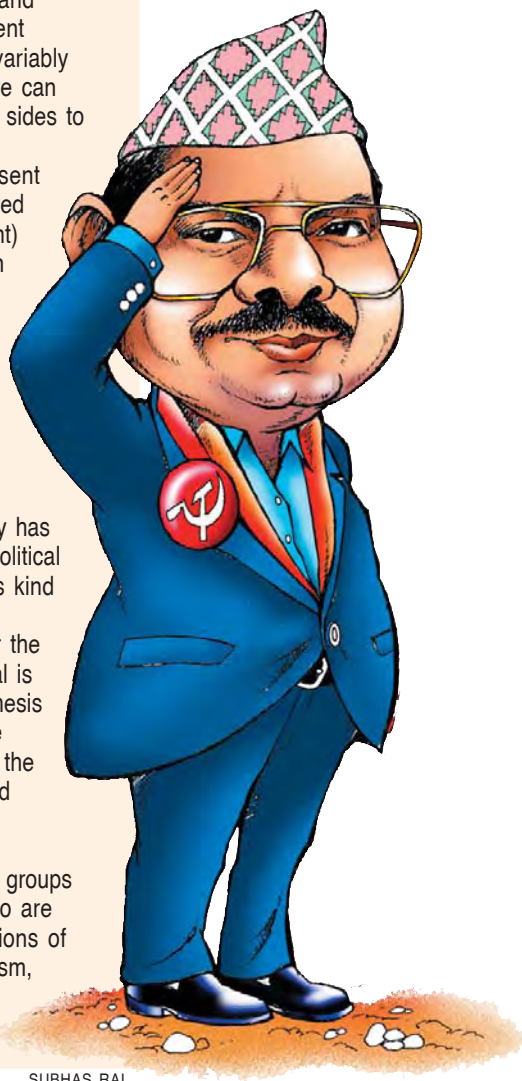
Restraint and responsibility were conspicuously absent on streets of the nation this week. Student unions directed by their parent parties (some of which are in government) were vandalising property. In their haste to capitalise on the Hindi issue they failed to foresee equal and opposite reaction in the Tarai.

Patriotism today means working for national unity, ethnic co-existence and racial harmony. The protests died down as suddenly as they started: proof that it was all deliberate brinkmanship by pseudo-nationalists and adventurists playing identity politics.

The damage has been done. Once more, the country has been taken to the edge of conflagration for short-term political gain. Nepal is surprisingly resilient, but it can't take this kind of abuse and uncertainty for much longer.

Let's face it, it's not original anymore to fight just for the rights of one's community. The way to build a new Nepal is for the Pahadis to also champion the cause of the Madhesis and to understand their historical sense of injustice. The people of the plains to understand the state's neglect of the marginalised communities of the hills. Both Pahadis and Madhesis to make up for their past role in suppressing the Tharus.

We will know we are on the right track when Janjati groups speak not just for themselves, but for fellow-Nepalis who are downtrodden. When Bahun-Chhetri-Newars share positions of official privilege with the excluded not just out of tokenism, but because that is the only way to build a new tomorrow.



SUBHAS RAI

"They betrayed us"

UML presidential candidate Madhab Kumar Nepal speaks his mind about the Maoists in an interview with *Nepali Times*.

Nepali Times: Why do you think the Maoists ditched you overnight?

Madhab Nepal: Pushpa Kamal Dahal accepted me as presidential candidate only a couple of days ahead of the voting in the CA. At 11PM we were told the agreement would be signed the following morning. But they betrayed us. I had told Prachanda the issue of president would be a test to improve relations between two

parties. But the Maoists have a use-and-throw policy. They used Gyanendra, and remember Prachanda used to say royalists are true nationalists?

What now?

We have shifted to majority politics from consensus politics. The Maoists started it by breaking off our agreement. There are no permanent friends and foes in politics, so things can change. But the Maoists squandered their opportunity, they lost the moral high ground. Today they are begging for the posts that they were earlier offering to other parties. Still, we have to give them a chance to form the government if they can. If they form the government, why not have Ram Bahadur Thapa as prime minister instead of Prachanda or Baburam? He is not tainted, we don't know of him visiting embassies, he is clean. He is even good-looking.

The Maoist want the NC-UML-MJF alliance dismantled.

Just face-saving rhetoric, it's a bluff. They can't wait to form the government. This alliance should continue and other parties should join in, the Maoists too. The alliance is not unnatural, it is the natural outcome of Maoist double-crossing. Drafting the constitution is now the goal of all parties, the Maoists should form the government and we should move ahead with the constitution-building process.

With you and Koirala out of the picture, what will be the

fate of mainstream politics?

It shouldn't affect the peace process. I will play a positive role whether I am in or out of politics. I have asked the Maoist leaders to read the history of Peru and Cambodia. Nepali communism is not extreme left, it can't move towards totalitarianism.

How difficult will it be to agree on a government?

It is complicated. There is this trend of bargaining for key posts even if parties do not have a claim. I don't know where the bargaining will take the country. There has to be political stability for two years. It is because the Maoists were bad losers that the process got complicated, they have to learn to get used to defeats.

Why did your party lose the CA election?

First we were too tolerant towards the Maoists and wanted to prevent them from walking out of the peace process. Second, we were too confident about our position. Third, we did not consider the Maoists as our opponents. Fourth, we didn't think the Maoists would resort to violence and threat to the extent that they did and we were cowed down by their terror.

Then why did you decide to flirt with the Maoists?

Our party was against the extreme left and the status quo of the NC. We concluded that the left parties should come together. Despite their totalitarian thinking we thought we could turn them around. But they betrayed us.

The disparate duo

Yadav's conformism and Jha's deviance, we need them both

Pending a hearing in the Supreme Court, Vice President Parmananda Jha has clarified that when he chose to take oath of office in Hindi, it was not his intention to hurt anybody's feelings. He pointed out that he signed the Nepali hardcopy of his pledge. The explanation seems to have doused the street fires for now.

But the question a Madhesi has to face at any social gathering these days is: "Which side are the President or the VP



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

on?" You are expected to reaffirm your faith in unity, integrity and sovereignty of Nepal by eulogising the chief and denouncing the veep. You are required to rejoice that both posts went to Madhesis and be apologetic about the MJF's choice of candidate.

If you happen to admire Jha's chutzpah, the onus of proving your loyalty

to the nation now lies on you. All over again, every Madhesi is a non-Nepali until he proves himself to be someone like Ram Baran Yadav.

Other questions follow. "Wasn't Jha a judge implicated in releasing a notorious drug-dealer? Hadn't he spoken Nepali all his life as a government employee? When did he discard daura-suruwal?" UML sympathisers ignore that their party wasn't unaware of Jha's antecedents. NC cadres make it sound as if they had propped up Jha without knowing his politics. Suddenly, everyone loves to hate the person that the majority of constituent assembly voted for.

President Yadav fits the mould of an ideal kangresi, never hiding his distaste for identity politics and claiming that he was a Nepali first and Madhesi second, as if the distinction was necessary. Ironically, he now owes his exalted position to a hyphenated identity. Were he not a Madhesi, it was unlikely that the anti-Maoist coalition would have fielded him against Ram Raja Prasad Singh

Upendra Yadav has apparently chosen to forget and forgive, but others remember that the then secretary general of NC Yadav was on the other side of the barricades throughout the Madhes Uprising. He often denounced those protesting in the streets, insinuating that the protestors were either "regressive forces" or "outsiders".

Yet, most Madhesis are genuinely happy that one of them had made it to the top. To expect them to be grateful as well would perhaps be rubbing it in. For Yadav, nationalism means fealty to the Koiralas and loyalty to the NC. Naturally, the rest of Nepal is prouder of President Yadav than most Madhesis.

With the possibility of a prolonged transition, President Yadav will probably have a greater role than granted to him by the interim constitution. By contrast, VP Jha will have a tough time keeping himself awake in Bahadur Bhaban. His most glorious moments were when his effigies were burnt in the streets of Kathmandu.

Gajendra Narayan Singh tried all his life to establish Hindi as an alternate language in Nepal. He failed because few considered his agenda important enough to resist. With the legitimacy of opposition, VP Jha has planted Hindi in the minds of those Madhesis who earlier championed their own languages.

Despite disruptive demonstrations over dhoti-suruwal or Nepali-Hindi, the street protests weren't as damaging as they were made out to be. But, they proved that the conceptualisation of Nepal as a nation-state is inherently faulty—it labels over one-third of country's population as the 'other'. President Yadav's attempt to become a Nepali is admirable, but many more Madhesis would prefer to be known as Nepalis for what they are rather than what they have to become to be recognised as such.

Jha's deviance probably contributes more to the making of Nepal as a state-nation than Yadav's conformism. They are so different and yet so much alike. We need them both, warts and all. ●

LETTERS

POWER OF WATER

The *Nepali Times* coverage on water by Prabhu Ghate and Dewan Rai ('The power of water' and 'Nepal's energy emergency', #410) was disappointing. The two pieces offered no new insights, and reiterated the failed paradigm that regards hydropower export to India as a silver bullet to bridge Nepal's trade gap.

Calculations of benefits to Nepal need to look beyond revenue alone to include assessment of forward and backward linkages, downstream benefits from regulated water, costs of altering the character of the resource base through inundation, economic and social rehabilitation of the displaced population, environmental externalities, and incorporating decommissioning costs to account for storage loss as Himalayan sediment fills up reservoirs.

According to one study, benefits from the proposed West Seti to Nepal scores 13.66 out of a composite index of 300. Revenue from the project will go to meet the country's debt service obligations and not to narrow the trade gap because the government has already borrowed to invest in the project's equity. Provisions like tax holidays for the developer, receiving money in lieu of 10 percent free energy, and the developer being allowed to defer payments until it has sufficient money (Clause 2.4 of the 1997 MoU) will further erode benefits to Nepal.

A recent MIT study of dams in India suggest that large dams in India have in aggregate increased poverty. Will Nepal fare any better with the same paradigm in a trans-boundary context?

Pushing large-scale storages in the Himalaya to subsidise 'notoriously under-priced' irrigation in India, as Ghate correctly states, makes little economic sense. India's policy of supplying free electricity to farmers to extract groundwater for irrigation not only depletes the state exchequer but also contributes to the lowering of the groundwater table thereby decreasing

food security.

Feeding hydro energy from storage projects in Nepal with their attendant economic, social, and political risks to a system with such holes will soak away electricity that is fundamental to job-creating industrialisation and the development of the service sector in Nepal.

Clearly, we need to confront structural constraints that perpetuate poverty as well as many second generation challenges of

crisis. People from all regions of Pakistan continue to fight over representation in the state. Also political parties have extremely regional biases. Another example: Belgium. You would think Belgium, being the capital of the EU would be pretty stable. No, debates still break out between the Flemish and French speaking regions that have time and again turned towards talks of secession. Although our neighbor India seems to have had some progress with linguistic states, it is the complex diversity within diversity in India that has become a lever for stability. However, there are still secessionist struggles within India. Ethnic Federalism is a weak way to structure the state because, like Tharu says, animosities will remain between the opposing groups long after a deal has been reached. These animosities can explode in the future at any given time creating newer troubles. They could be non-violent as in Belgium or extremely violent as in Baluchistan.

Nishant Acharya, email

● So this is what we have come down to, a nation of condescending, ego-centric, pompous bunch of baboons who cannot seem to forget their past and toil forward together for their future. Analysing the various kaleidoscope of Rams, CK Lal ('A nation of Rams', #410) pretty much presents the situation of our nation. Psychologically the key priorities are food, family and housing. Amongst all things to create a chaos, we fight about a VP swearing in Hindi which originates from Sanskrit and is written in Devnagari script. I thought the republican generation had a higher IQ since their acceptance of a government created in ancient Greece with its current avatar of Mao-Marxism. If what is bothering us is the symbolism of a nation-stronger than us, more developed than us, and less reliant than us- then we have become a nation of bickering babies, who tend to show a negative correlation with respect to a stimuli. We have indeed become a country of Rams, a Ram who is still a Rame.

Pradipta Rana, email

HELI-TREKKING

'Call of the wild' (#410) is advertising the negative side of mountain tourism and not its potential. Helicopters create huge noise, disturbing wildlife and humans on ground for pure pleasure and comfort. Now you can fly helicopter in the Annapurna Conservation Area or drive motorbikes in Jomosom, but if you use a bicycle you have to pay \$10 extra each day. There seems to be an apparent lack of understanding among official conservation authorities about the ecological/environmental impact of flying helicopters. Although the helicopters offer valuable support for emergencies and maybe regular supply flights in remote areas, it makes no sense to bring well-paying clients up to such remote areas. Why not create an alternative trekking itinerary so that the road doesn't interfere with the mountain tourism, crucial to the region?

Navya Eller, Chauni

CORRECTION:

Due to an editing error, the names of the Indian company and the power projects got mixed up in 'The power of water' (#410). It is Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam that has been allowed to develop the 400MW Arun III and GMR that got the 300MW Upper Karnali.

LETTERS

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

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water and energy development and management. Improving access to energy in South Asia needs to identify innovative and sustainable pathways including selection of energy platforms with low social, environmental and carbon footprints and their management.

Ajaya Dixit,

Nepal Water Conservation Foundation

MADHESISATION

I agree with Trib Tharu that ethnic federalism is not a suitable method to structure the state ('Madhesisation', #410). Example: Pakistan, it was divided into various regions based on ethnicity. After more than half a century of independence Pakistan is still deeply mired in identity

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MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

GREENHOUSE EFFECT: Women at the Dabur Nepal nursery in Banepa stoop to tend herbal plants last week.

heads Dabur's Medicinal Plant Project.

For example, one of the traditional ingredients in Chyawanprash is akarkara. It is a traditional Himalayan herb, but Dabur used to import it from Morocco. "Now we are 100 per cent self-sufficient in akarkara here in Nepal," says Badrinaryanan.

The company works closely with farmers cooperatives and government agencies to sell saplings of herbs to farmers at one-third the cost with a 100 per cent buy back MoU at the prevailing price minus two-thirds previous pending. Farmers in Humla, Mustang, Manang, Nuwakot, Kailali, Terathum have benefited, earning up to Rs 40,000 per hectare from this herbal cash crop. Land that was barren is now green with endangered herbs like kutki, jatamasi, chiraita and shatavari. Dabur hopes to set up greenhouse nurseries in Bara and Terathum as well and is experimenting with drip irrigation.

Dabur Nepal's unique effort to conserve nature and empower farmers at the grassroots is the reason the company was selected as the *Nepali Times* 'Company of the Month' for August. Ganguly said in an interview: "The contribution to conserving endangered plants and employment generation in remote areas is our Corporate Social Responsibility Project. Unlike charity, it has a strategic fit with our business."

Dabur has gone a step further in helping farmers with micro-financing options in partnership with Nabil Bank giving farmers collateral-free loans to buy the saplings. ●



PAAVAN MATHEMA
in BANEPA

Buy a mango juice at a department store in Delhi or a Hajmola in a pan shop in Dhaka and look at the fine print on the packaging. Chances are, they are both made in Nepal.

Except for the first five years since it established a joint venture here in 1991, Dabur Nepal has never had it easy. First, there was the disruption of the conflict years and in the past two years the instability has affected production, but Dabur has stuck

it out in Nepal through thick and thin. It has invested in a state-of-the-art juice production facility in Bara, plantations and a network of cooperatives throughout the country.

With an annual turnover of Rs 4 billion, Dabur is one of the success stories of the new economic policy of the early 1990s, and one that demonstrates that foreign investment in Nepal is still a viable proposition. Dabur exports 70 per cent of its production and the rest is sold within Nepal—proving that the Nepali market now has critical mass for manufacturing. Its range of products include Real juices, honey and a spectrum of health products that use herbal ayurvedic raw materials cultivated in greenhouses and by farmers across Nepal.

"Nepal is a very important

investment for us, it is an important production base. The bureaucracy is very cooperative, accessible and ready to hear us out and we are producing for the local market," explains Dabur Nepal CEO, Udayan Ganguly.

Dabur sticks by Nepal through thick and thin

Dabur's Greenhouse Project for Medicinal Plants is the other reason the company is in Nepal: most of its herbal raw material grows naturally in the Himalaya and even those that are found in the wild can be cultivated. Just stripping herbs from the forest would be unsustainable, so the greenhouse tries to cultivate them to create a sustainable source of medicinal and aromatic herbs.

Since 1998, this nursery in Banepa, with another one in

Marpha, have been involved in conservation and research into 25 species of endangered Himalayan ayurvedic plants. Banepa alone produces 6 million saplings of medicinal plants per year, and these are distributed to 46

farmers' cooperatives in 19 districts across Nepal, giving direct employment to 5,000 people and indirectly benefiting 25,000 others. The Banepa nursery employs 85 workers, all women from surrounding villages.

"Mostly ayurvedic medicine is derived from the roots of herbs, so uncontrolled harvesting in the wild can lead to their extinction. What we do here is try to find ways to cultivate them," explains Dr Sarvepalli Badrinarayan who

"We are optimistic about the future"

Udayan Ganguly is the CEO of Dabur Nepal. He spoke to *Nepali Times* about the challenges of the past 15 years and future plans

***Nepali Times:* Why Nepal?**

Udayan Ganguly: When we first came to Nepal in 1990, India hadn't opened up yet. Nepal was welcoming FDI and provided a very good manufacturing base for export to India with favourable customs and tax rules. There was proximity to the market and a cooperative bureaucracy. 70 per cent of our production is now for export.

How is the domestic market shaping up?

Today, one-fourth of our turnover is within Nepal, and this gives us all the more reason to be here. This is a big advantage because we are not traders. When you provide jobs and add to the

local economy, you have a say.

Is marketing a challenge?

The health revolution worldwide and among the middle class in the subcontinent in the past few years means that any product that is health-related does well. At Dabur, we have always worked with herbal plants which means we have a readymade market for our consumer health products.

Have you ever regretted your decision to invest in Nepal?

We never came here to be fly-by-night operators. We were very clear from the

beginning that we were here to stay, so we have intertwined with the fabric of Nepal through our network of farmer cooperatives. We have set up nurseries and greenhouses and we train farmers in cultivating wild herbs, we help them with microfinance. We have a 92 acre factory in Bara, which has been cited by Tetrapack as one of the world's top seven production facilities in terms of technology and quality for fruit juices.

How difficult have the past 15 years been for business?

The first five years were peaceful, but ironically, since the peace process began in April 2006, things have been more difficult than during the conflict. The last straw was when some activists broke through the main gate of our plant and vandalised the building. It is a pity that the country has to go through this, and we feel



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

a bit shortchanged after doing so much for economic growth. One thing that is keeping us here is our faith and optimism in Nepal's future. But the future is uncertain, and this makes us think twice about future investments.

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Cow king

Kingkow, an international retailer of children's wear based in Hong Kong, has opened an outlet in Durbar Marg and is soon to open another at City Center Mall, Kamal Pokhari. Kingkow's clothes, for newborns and up to age 16, are touted to be 'fun'damentally unique.



Kingkow

Awareness



Sony has launched an advertising campaign to create awareness among its customers to buy products with authorised warranty. Sony's authorised dealer Nepa Hima Trade recently opened a service centre at Kantipath.

Filipino degree

GEMS, in affiliation with Angeles University Foundation and the Commission on Higher Education of the Philippines, launched a two year, three semester course of Bachelors of Science. Students complete the first three semesters at GEMS and the last one in the Philippines.

Hospitality fair

The first International Hospitality and Tourism Edu-Career Fair 2008, organised by Ad Guru and Hospitality Media, will take place at Bhrikutimandap and will continue for three days from 8 August. International and national colleges and consultancies will be showcased.

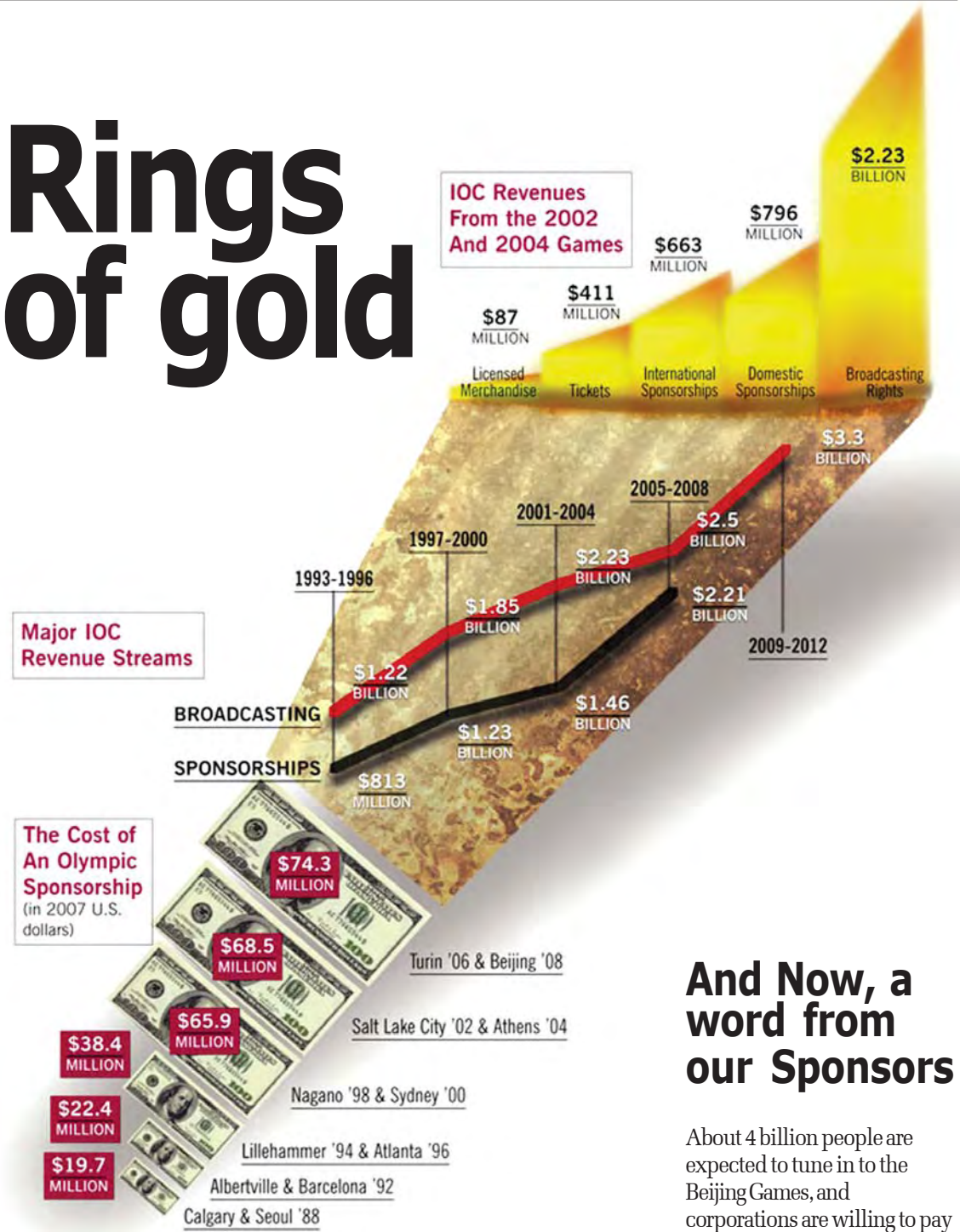
NEW PRODUCTS

LITTLE STAR: Micro Star International, a Taiwanese manufacturer, has brought in a new line of technology to Nepal including its Wind Net Book U100, mini-PC, P45 series mainboards and hybrid freezer graphics card. The prices range from Rs 39, 000 to 80, 000.



BIKE: Yamaha's latest introduction, the Yamaha YZF-R15, features liquid cooled, six-speed gear transmission, all-aluminium cylinders and diffuser look-alike under cowls. It is priced at Rs 1.5 million.

Rings of gold



And Now, a word from our Sponsors

About 4 billion people are expected to tune in to the Beijing Games, and corporations are willing to pay top-dollar for access to the mammoth audience. For exclusive international marketing rights at the games in Turin in 2006 and Beijing this year, a dozen companies – Coca Cola, General Electric, Kodak and McDonald's among them – each paid the IOC an average of \$ 74 million, nearly four times the going rate for such sponsorships in the 1980s. Buying good coverage in China's market is a no-brainer. One recent study found that more than two thirds of Chinese said they'd choose Olympic sponsors over other companies.

BRAD R HUMPHREYS

The Olympics are about more than medals, pride, and national ambition. They're also about blatant commercialism and high-paying corporate sponsors. Today's games are designed to make big bucks- and it's not the hosts who are walking away with the gold.

A Perfect score

The international Olympic Committee (IOC) earned about \$ 4.2 billion from the 2002 and 2004 Olympic Games. The bulk came from lucrative broadcasting agreements and corporate sponsorships. Already, the IOC expects \$ 3.3 billion for the rights to broadcast the 2010 Vancouver Games and the 2012 London Olympics, nearly three times the haul in the mid-1990s. Most of the revenues are funneled to the IOC's national Olympic and organising committees, but the IOC keeps hundreds of millions for overhead-making it the richest international sporting organisation on the planet.

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"Nationalism is in the heart"

Interview with Vice President Parmananda Jha in *Naya Patrika*, July 30

भर्या पत्रिका

A lot of tension has been created after you took your oath in Hindi. Had you informed the President of your intention to do so?

It was not that big an issue that the President had to be notified. I didn't think it was necessary, neither was I asked.

Did you think that your actions would trigger demonstrations at national level?

I had never expected it.

Why do you think there has been such a huge reaction?

I cannot answer that question right now. It may have been politically motivated. But what I can deduce is that even now, languages spoken in the Madhes are not given due importance.

Couldn't you have used Maithali, your mother tongue?

I do come from an area where Maithali is used, my wife speaks Bhojpuri. What language do you think we use to communicate with each other?

You mean to say Hindi is a link language?

Indeed. You shouldn't forget that according to the 2001 census, 150,000 Nepalis use Hindi as their mother tongue. The numbers must have increased

now. All those who speak Maithali, Awadhi and Bhojpuri are united by Hindi.

But wouldn't you agree that the language you take the oath is a symbol of nationalism?

Nationalism is not limited to language and clothes. Nationalism is what is in your heart.

Were you afraid when the protestors demanded your resignation?

I wasn't scared at all. They misunderstood me. Also, I'm well aware of who is actually inciting these protests.

You changed into daura suruwal when you appeared at the Bhoto Jatra. Was it because you were under pressure due to the protests?

Such pressure has no effect on me.

Dhoti-kurta is the dress in Mithila, it is what I usually wear. When I took the oath as the Vice President, I wore the clothes of my region. But at the official occasion, I wore formal clothes.

Looking at the turn of events, do you regret taking the oath in Hindi?

Why would I regret it? If someone yells at you for speaking your language, would you stop speaking it altogether? If someone gives you a hard time for wearing your clothes, would you stop wearing them?



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA



KIRAN PANDAY

Language politics

Dhirendra Premarshi in *Kantipur*, 28 July

कान्तिपुर

Hindi is used in the Constituent Assembly by Madhesis to prove that they have different identity from the feudal Khas rulers of Kathmandu. But it has drowned them in Indian identity. The effort to sideline Nepali is being seen by many as a matricidal act.

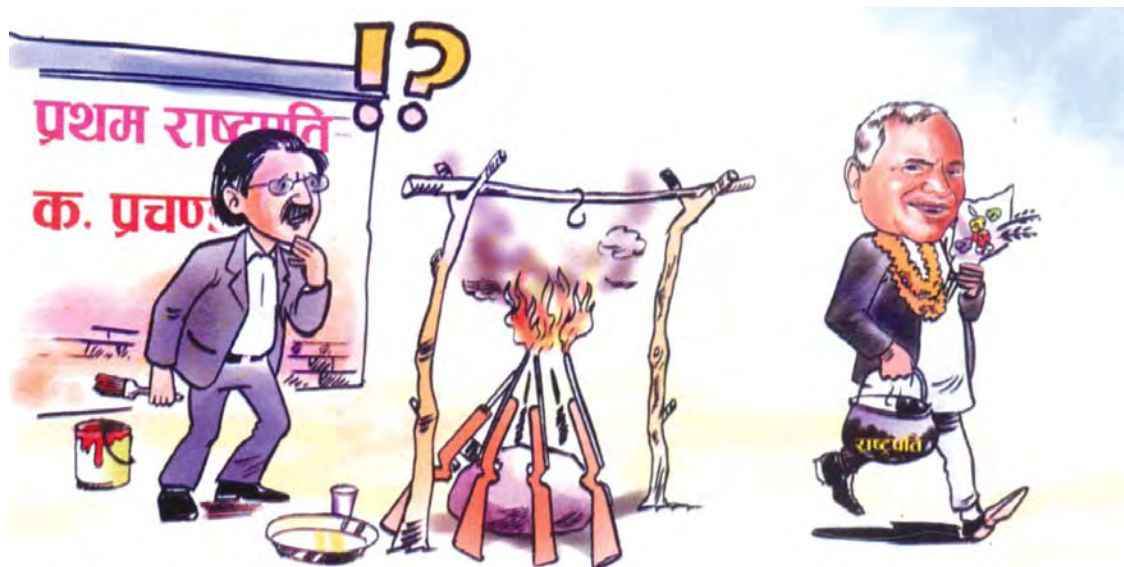
The MJF has explained to the world that there are problems in the Tarai and the state cannot get away by ignoring these issues any longer. It took the lead in focussing the Madhesi sense of grievances and Upendra Yadav deserves credit for giving it leadership. It was because of him that the Madhesi identity got a boost and the people of the Tarai finally had a say in national issues. From the Madhes Uprising to the CA election, the party cashed in on this support. Their leaders pushed for recognition of the Madhesi languages and for autonomy. But when the same Madhesi leaders start blabbering in Hindi, even people who sympathised with Madhesi demands are shocked.

When MJF leaders are interacting with other political leaders, they speak in Nepali 90 percent of the time and 10 percent in their mother tongues like Maithili or Bhojpuri. They speak fluent Nepali while giving interviews to tv and radio channels. While campaigning for votes they spoke in their mother tongues. But at official functions or in the CA they suddenly forget their mother tongue and the national language and break into Hindi. One wonders if they have all promised someone somewhere that they will henceforth only speak Hindi. What kind of Madhesi politics is this that does not allow its people to be proud of their own mother tongue, their own culture and identity?

When you ask them why they speak the language that's not even ours, they say that it is the link language of the Tarai. Really?

Taking an oath is to promise something to oneself, it is one's conscience speaking. An oath is not taken to appease foreign dignitaries, it is best done in one's mother tongue. Why use the language of a foreign country when taking an oath?

Hindi may be understood by many in Nepal, but it is still a foreign language. If taking an oath in Nepali was a problem, it should have been taken in their mother tongue. National identity is not protected with concrete border pillars but by nurturing one's languages, culture and self-esteem.



"First President: Comrade Prachanda"

नेपाल Nepal, 3 August

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“ The Americans do not want the Maoists to be in the government under any circumstances, while the Indians will only want us to form the government under the condition that our policies will not be implemented. ”

Maoist central committee member Barsha Man Pun (Ananta) quoted in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 31 July- 16 August.

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Politics of suspicion

Sambhu Shrestha in *Drishhti*, 29 July

Whenever politics is combined with ethnicity and language, it is a volatile mixture. The result is fragmentation and discord. Vice-president Parmanand Jha’s chosen language, for example, is not based on his ethnicity but is part of a conspiracy to bring about disintegration and segregation.

Politicians should be concerned about this rather than losing hair over the never-ending fight over political power. When a house is already burnt, what use are the ashes?

Nepal is suffering at the hands of politicians who are disloyal and unaware of what they are unleashing. The constituent assembly votes were cast almost four months ago and we still haven’t formed the new government. Spitting into the wind is counter-productive. The only remaining hope is that politicians, who’ve weakened themselves with this bruising fight, won’t go begging for Indian support.



Murdering teachers

Govinda Pariyar in *Samaya*, 31 July

समय

Ever since 1 July, when Father John Prakash of Don Bosco School in Sirsiya, Morang, was killed by members of the ‘Nepal Defence Army’, concern has grown about security in more than 36 other missionary schools in Nepal. Don Bosco has been closed down after the murder. Father Lawrence, the principal of St Xaviers School and the Jesuit Society warns: “All missionary schools will be closed down if the government doesn’t guarantee us protection.” If that happens, 17,992 students currently enrolled in missionary schools throughout Nepal will be affected.

In spite of the evidence that Ram Prasad Mainali from the self-styled ‘Nepal Defence Army’ is responsible for the murder, no action has been taken against him by the Home Ministry or police. Mainali was arrested but released for lack of evidence. Fr John was reportedly killed because he refused to give in to a Rs 1 million extortion demand. The Hindu-extremist ‘Nepal Defence Army’ also accuses missionary schools of proselytising. Fr Lawrence denies missionary schools have ever tried to convert students to Christianity. “In fact, 99 per cent of our students are Hindus,” he says. The perpetrators are using phone numbers stored in Fr John’s mobile to extort money from more schools. Many missionary schools are getting threatening calls and demands for money.

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Job title : Editor, Panos Radio South Asia
Duty Station : Kathmandu, Nepal

Job description

Overall responsibility

Panos Radio South Asia (PRSA) is an undertaking of Panos South Asia. In keeping with Panos South Asia’s mission to encourage and stimulate informed public debate on key developmental issues in South Asia and to ensure the effective flow of information from media in the south to the north and vice versa, and for communications and knowledge sharing for development, Panos Radio South Asia produces radio programmes that are distributed via the PRSA Internet radio (www.panosradiosouthasia.org) and Interworld Radio (IWR) (www.interworldradio.org). Since August 2006 PRSA has been producing a fifteen minute fortnightly radio magazine “Panoscope”, and another fortnightly since September 2007, half-an-hour long radio discussion “Development Dilemmas”. Both the programmes aim to capture the voices of poor and marginalized people in South Asia on general development issues, including Panos South Asia’s five thematic areas - media pluralism, public health, conflict, environment and globalization, and mainstream them in the development processes.

The PRSA Editor will be based in Panos South Asia Media Centre, Kathmandu – the headquarters of Panos South Asia Regional Office – and work closely with the Panos South Asia Country Representative for Nepal and London-based IWR Editor (based in Panos London) to manage the radio productions for PRSA and IWR.

Specific Responsibilities

- Development and implementation of a strategy to support radio programme making in South Asia
- Develop quarterly work plans for producing the radio programmes
- Assign the PRSA Radio Correspondents (RCs) radio production works in countries where they are present and supervise them
- Commission production of Panoscope and Development Dilemmas to freelance journalists in the South Asian countries where the PRSA RCs are not present
- Collaborate with the Deputy Editor and the Technical Consultant for editing, encoding and uploading radio programmes to PRSA portal for broadcasting, pod-casting and distribution
- Ensure the timely production and online broadcasting of the fortnightly Panoscope and Development Dilemmas (12 each a year)
- Preparing and editing support materials, such as scripts, for PRSA portal
- Attending national and international radio related meetings, conferences, forums, exhibitions, knowledge sharing events, or any other events as PRSA/PSA representative as-and-when necessary
- Develop partnership with other national and international broadcasters to market and promote PRSA radio programmes
- Supervise the management of the studios and equipment based in Panos South Asia Media Centre radio and TV studios
- Prepare and produce PRSA and IWR projects progress reports
- Overall administration and management of the PRSA and IWR projects

Personal specification

Essential

- A masters degree from a recognized university in any relevant discipline
- 5-7 years experience working in mainstream media reporting and editing, of which at least 2-3 years should be in broadcast media (radio) and in management position
- Experience of commissioning and producing works from journalists in South Asia
- Experience in all aspects of producing radio programmes in English
- Experience of working on South Asian and international stories
- Familiarity with South Asian and international development topics and issues
- Strong digital radio production and editing skills
- Experience of working in a busy production office
- Strong research skills
- Good team working and communication skills

Desirable

- Fluency in English and preferably other South Asian languages, written, spoken and editing
- Familiar with audio editing digital software and system
- Managing digital production studios
- Supervising experience
- Project management and report writing experience

Term

Fulltime. Initially for 12 months, with three months probation. Extendable.

Remuneration

As per Panos Radio South Asia Project salary policy, depending on experience and qualifications.

Application

Application with a cover letter, a brief resume and three references can be submitted by e-mail to prsa@panosradiosouthasia.org. Applications should be submitted not later than 15 August 2008.

Telephone inquiries will not be entertained. Only short-listed candidates will be contacted for interviews. Panos South Asia reserves the rights to accept or reject any applications.

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‘Dolma’ used to run a souvenir shop on Pokhara’s lakeside. A Dutch tourist befriended her last year, and they fell in love. He took her to Goa, gave her \$3,000 and proposed to her. ‘Dolma’, now 30, refused. What she didn’t know was that she had been secretly filmed at their hotel room in Goa and that video is now being openly sold in Nepal and through the Internet. Says Dolma: “I was really angry, I am really stressed out and haven’t been able to go to my shop.”



‘Tek’ is from Dharan and lives in the UK where he was having an affair with the wife of a friend. They used to meet in hotels and he had filmed themselves making love. On a recent trip to Kathmandu he found out on arrival that the video was in circulation throughout Nepal. He flew right back to London. The woman’s father tried to commit suicide after seeing the film. The viedo file was copied and circulated by a repair shop where ‘Tek’ had given his laptop for repair.

Porn v

Technology is ripping open Nepa

J B PUN

As DVD cameras, mobile phones, computers and the Internet become affordable and accessible, more and more Nepalis are using the technology for filming and distributing pornography.

Combined with tourism, the trend has made Nepal one of the points of origin for pornographic films and even paedophilic material on the Web. Many young Nepali women have been unwittingly involved in the trade, some being exploited and blackmailed by their male partners.

With globalisation, increased travel, the Internet and the spread of cable, Nepal’s social mores have been transformed within one generation. Nepalis, who used to find Bollywood song sequences “racy”, or hide their faces when Nepali actress Rekha Thapa appeared in a swimsuit, are now routinely exposed to



sexually-explicit content.

A *Himal Khabarpatrika* investigation has revealed that “blue films” are more widely available than previously estimated in video parlours, mobile phone shops and even paan kiosks across the country. Pornographic videos that used to be available only to the urban upper class or traders returning from Bangkok now have audiences right through the social strata and even in rural areas.

What is new is that the people

seen in sexually explicit acts in these videos are no longer just Thai, Japanese or western women but Nepalis. The DVDs have names like *Nepali Lovers*, *Homemade Hardcore* or *Nepali Rani*. Some of the protagonists are young Nepali women who were filmed without their knowledge like ‘Dolma’. Personal material like that made its way into the public domain by accident (*See boxes*).

But some are sex workers who have willingly serviced foreign customers in their hotel rooms, knowing that the camera was rolling. ‘Maya’ is a fifth grade dropout from Syangja and works in Thamel with hundreds of other young Nepali women. She sees nothing wrong with being featured in pornographic videos that are circulated worldwide.

“My father is illiterate and lives in the village, he is not going to see me, and what do I care if others do?” asks ‘Maya’ who says she is paid Rs 70,000 per shoot.

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Wave

l's traditionally closed society

The growing frequency with which Nepali women are featured in Internet porn sites also seems to suggest a surge in sex tourism, especially in Kathmandu and Pokhara. Driven out of their home districts by the conflict and desperate for jobs, young women easily fall prey to cyber pimps.

Cybercafés in Kathmandu and district capitals are setting aside private cubicles specially designed for tandem porn viewing either on the net, or

through DVDs.

When an increased number of paedophilic material started appearing on the Internet five years ago and were traced back to Nepal, Interpol wrote to Nepal Police to investigate. Some arrests were made, but child sex material from Nepal is still finding its way to the net.

"It is inevitable that when traditional value systems are eroded by the content of new technology, and if new education and culture doesn't replace it, societal mores are altered," says sociologist Suresh Dhakal.

Because of the novelty of the medium and the ease with which mobile phones can be used for video, there are also increasing numbers of cases where women are victimised by ruthless partners. In a way, this seems to be a high-tech extension of the exploitation of young Nepali women trafficked for generations by their husbands, boyfriends or even relatives.



Psychologist Sharmila Manandhar believes that the spread of pornography in Nepal represents just one aspect of rapidly-changing interactions in what was till recently a closed, traditional society.

She adds: "But pornography also reinforces traditional relationships because the videos focus on male satisfaction and reflect the entrenched patriarchal nature of our society." ●

Some names have been changed.



Jibacha Yadav was a math teacher in Banke who was sexually abusing a grade eight student in his school. He blackmailed her with videos he had taken of them in bed taken with his mobile phone. Yadav is now in jail because the girl reported him to the police.



Tej Chand in Kanchanpur tempted an aspiring model with a movie career and filmed them in bed together. Chand's assistant copied the film out of his hard drive and sold it to a video parlour for Rs 5,000, which in turn passed the video on to a mobile store for Rs 10,000. The DVD is for sale for Rs 500, can be loaded into mobile phones for Rs 50, or rented in video parlours across western Nepal and even in India.

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ANNIVERSARY ISSUE



Manufacturing mistrust

This week saw identity politics at its most cynical

Cynicism, hypocrisy and insecurity were three key elements of last week's Hindi oath-taking controversy.

There was resentment in Kathmandu at Madhesi occupying the top two posts. And there was counter-resentment in the Madhes. The MJF was being asked why it had allied with two conservative forces, and felt the need to reassert its 'radical' image. Upendra Yadav's formula was to tell Parmanand Jha to take his oath in Hindi,



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

The backlash may have gone

beyond what the Forum expected, but the plan worked. Nepal's student politics is crawling with those who think Madhesis are Indians and Hindi is only an Indian language. Their latent prejudices only need a pretext to ignite.

The Maoists, for their part, saw this as an

opportunity to play the protector of nationalism and get back at the MJF. Pretty soon, Kathmandu streets were burning. Madhesi parties held back but their own activists wanted to retaliate in the Tarai. Once all sides met their political objectives, the confrontation fizzled out. This was politics at its most cynical, where the parties had no qualms risking lives and deliberately manufacturing mistrust.

It exposed the hypocrisy of those who criticised Jha's oath-taking and took to the streets. There were exceptions like language activist

Dhirendra Premarshi (see p 6) who have consistently opposed the use of Hindi and sought to promote Tarai's native languages. But the position of others was dubious.

From 'revolutionary' intellectuals to Kathmandu's street lumpens, everyone seems to have suddenly discovered the love of Maithili and Bhojpuri. Like the Kathmandu intelligentsia has discovered the alienation of Tharus, Madhesi, Dalits and Muslims in recent months, after never having bothered about them in the past. Most of the recent criticism is just an attempt to delegitimise the Madhesi movement.

Commentators who are saying Jha should have taken his oath in his mother-tongue are the same people who kicked up a fuss when Matrika Yadav insisted on taking his oath in Maithili. The politicians who encouraged protests are the same leaders who go back to their constituencies in Tarai and beg and plead for votes in Hindi.

Girija Koirala said: "Mujhe aaj aisa lag raha hai ki main laut ke ghar waapas aa gaya," after signing the eight point agreement, but his party activists feel Hindi is alien. How is Hindi a Nepali language when Pahadis use it to communicate in the Tarai, but is an Indian language when Madhesis use it to speak to each other or in public?

It all goes back to our insecurities. Our nationalism is still so fragile that we go back to enforcing unitary of dress and language. It will not work. And the sooner the leaders of the bigger parties explain that to their cadre and reinforce the message of inclusion, the better it will be for the country.

Nepal is engaged in an overwhelmingly ambitious project of modernity: transforming this old exclusivist ethnicity based nationalism into a constitutional, territorial, political sense of citizenship. Anyone who swears by Nepal's constitution, has their citizenship papers, pays taxes, participates in the politics and economy and is a Nepali. Whether they speak Hindi or Spanish or gibberish is irrelevant. The country has made enormous progress in that direction in the last two years, but events like these set the clock back.

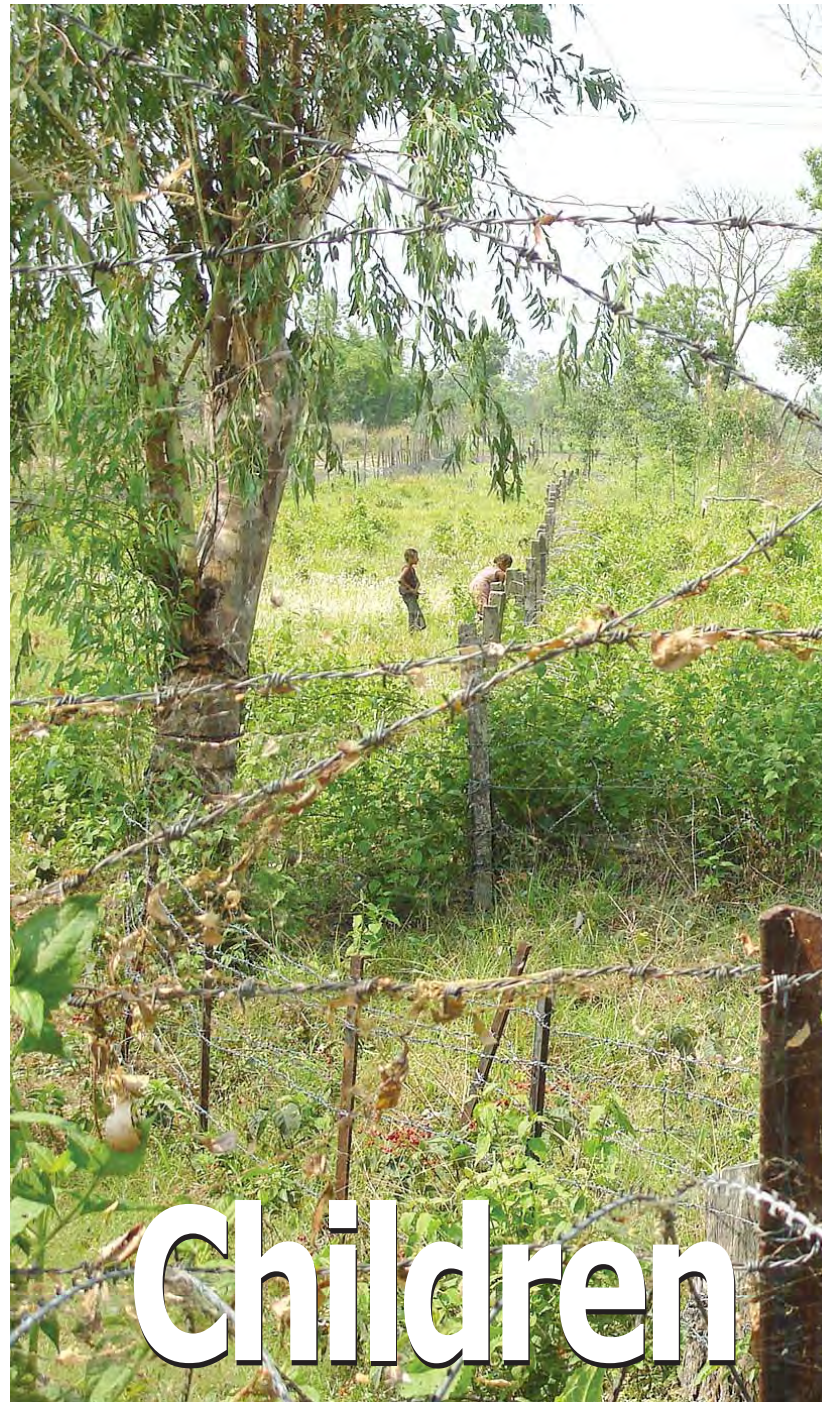
This week we played with fire. Madhesi residents in Kathmandu were reminded of the Hrithik Roshan riots of January 2001, which was the key trigger of Madhesi radicalisation. Levels of anxiety shot up after the MJF office was attacked. Pahadis in the Tarai felt the same this week when the daura-suruwal was burnt and the UML office was attacked.

It all died down, but the discourse has got bitter with long-term consequences. It is clear that key politicians are happy with this bitterness and anger. The task of bridging the Kathmandu-Madhes gap has just become more difficult. ●



ROBIN SAYAMI

...would you
have Hindi films in Nepali?



Children

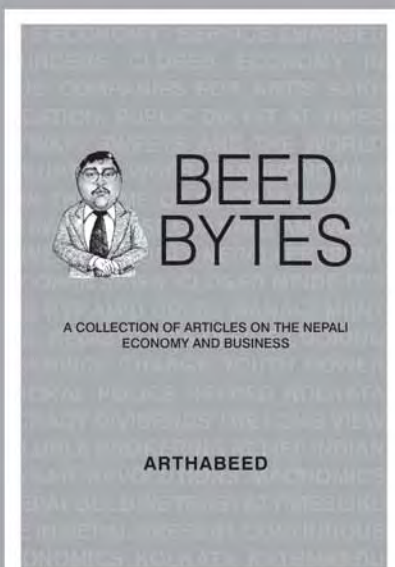
Across Nepal, the barbed wire perimeters of army bases are where the grass grows tallest. Children often sneak in to cut grass for the family livestock, oblivious of the fact that the area is a minefield.

Besides the continued suffering of the relatives of the dead and disappeared and the daily struggle of tens of thousands who were wounded, the other enduring legacy of the war are the explosives left behind. Explosive remnants of war continue to maim and kill long after the wars are over.

Two years after the end of hostilities, the army's landmines and the improvised explosive devices (IED) of the Maoists still lie scattered across the land. Despite the mine-clearing operations and an awareness campaign, people are still dying and being maimed by explosives. Many of them are children.



According to Luhar Danee, Mine Action Consultant at UNICEF, 321 people have fallen prey to victim-activated explosives since the ceasefire in April 2006. 54 of them died.



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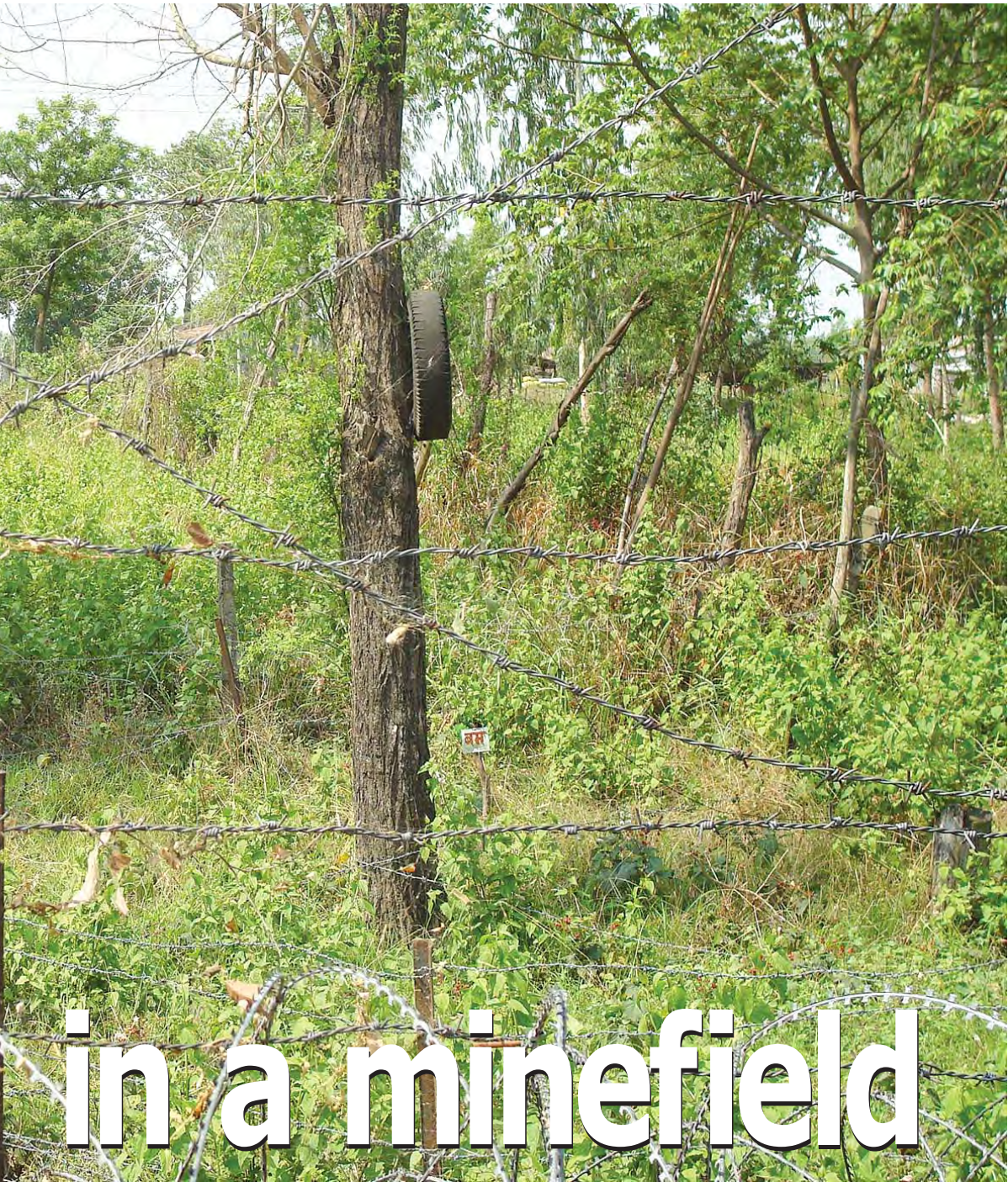
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SHRINKHALA SHARMA



THE GRASS IS GREENER IN THE MINEFIELD: These children were photographed recently (*left*) collecting grass inside a mine or IED field surrounding the Nepal Army’s Eastern Divisional Headquarters. The explosives have been laid in the area to the right, marked with signs saying ‘Bomb’ in Nepali.

The three children were about to lift the concertina wire and go into the minefield to cut grass (*above*) when they spotted the photographer. They seemed to know it was a restricted area.

The soldiers on sentry duty in the bunkers above the minefield either didn’t see the children, or didn’t try to stop them.

“More than half the casualties are children who have lost their limbs or lives playing with or tampering with explosive devices that lie scattered in former clash sites,” says Danee. “Recently, there has also been an increase in the number of incidents involving women who have entered mined perimeters to cut grass or forage for mushrooms and other forest products.”
Despite continued

awareness-raising campaigns and mine risk education activities carried out throughout the country, the threat of explosives still loom large mainly for children and women.
“Nepal still ranks quite high amongst countries where children are falling prey to victim-activated explosions,” says Danee, who says more needs to be done to spread awareness about explosives and clear them. ●
Shrinkhala Sharma in Sunsari

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"We don't take instructions from foreign powers"



KIRAN PANDAY

Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal's interview with *Gorkhapatra* editor Vijay Chalise on 28 July. Translated excerpts:

Gorkhapatra: Some national and international status quoist forces seem to be maneuvering to appoint Girija Prasad Koirala as the prime minister once again. When will the next government be formed?

Pushpa Kamal Dahal: Some forces from within and outside the country having reactionary and status quoist tendencies are still not happy with the outcome of the Constituent Assembly elections. Hence, different kinds of conspiracies are being hatched to not allow the CPN-Maoist to form the government. Had some other party emerged as the largest in the CA then the government would have been formed within a week. Nepalis know this reality. Nepali people will ultimately emerge victorious. The next government will be of the Maoists as mandated by the people.

One breed of politicians has been terming the Maoist preparations to lead the next government as "totalitarianism".

When Nepalis fought for their rights they were dubbed terrorists. But we joined the peace process, contested the elections and became the largest party by getting overwhelming support from the people. If attempts are made to dub us totalitarians at this juncture then those who make such charges give out the odour of despotic and reactionary rulers of yesterday. The CPN-Maoist waged a struggle for the last three months not to become a totalitarian force but to uphold the

people's mandate. It is a party that believes in politics based on norms and values. Those who have been dubbing the Maoists as totalitarians are out to push the nation into a grave crisis.

How can we expect to have consensus politics in this situation?

We called the meeting of the 25 parties. Of them 20-21 parties said the Maoists should lead the next government. It was only after this that the Maoists put forward the three preconditions in order to move ahead in a different way amidst the changed political situation after the presidential elections. Thus, we asked the three parties to clarify whether their coalition was only for the elections or would also go ahead.

We did not mean to instruct the three parties to dissolve the alliance, all we told them was that they should clarify the nature of the alliance. If they want us to form the government then our programs and policies for the next two years should be reflected in the commitment paper to be signed by the other parties that wish to join the Maoist-led coalition.

It is said that the new coalition in India does not want the Maoists to rise to power?

I do not feel that just because the communists withdrew their support to the Indian government, there will be a shift in India's foreign policy. Nepal's politics has always been guided by Indian interests. Some political parties

chart out their policies according to India's wishes. This is not a new phenomenon. The Indian establishment helped the parties in Nepal to put the 12-point agreement in place and accordingly backed the efforts of the parties to hold the elections to the CA and move ahead in the peace process. The four-month-long lingering on whether the Maoists should form the government is not because of the NC, UML or India only. There is a subtle difference between the class opinion and political opinion between the Maoists and foreigners. They have been weighing what they need to do if the Maoists are to be allowed to form the government. But I would like to make it clear that the CPN-Maoist does not move ahead at the instruction of any foreign power. Our strength is the people of Nepal and we will always uphold their aspirations.

Was the election of the president influenced by foreign pressure?

It has widely been felt that there has been foreign interference in Nepal's internal politics. In the later phase, the interference has increased. There was foreign interference behind the delay in the formation of the new government and the way the election of the president was held. The proposal for reaching

a consensus to elect Girija Prasad Koirala from the NC and Madhab Kumar Nepal from the UML was not a Nepali plan. It wasn't the plan of the NC or UML either. When we proposed Ram Raja Prasad Singh as the presidential candidate, Dr Ram Baran Yadav and Ramprit Paswan were declared candidates overnight. We had been holding a dialogue with the UML. We asked them to give the candidacy to a Dalit, somebody from the ethnic or indigenous community, Madhesi or a woman instead of Nepal, to make the post inclusive. Had the UML proposed Paswan at the outset, we would have easily agreed. Now I wonder whether Nepal's name was proposed at the behest of foreign powers. What stopped the UML from proposing Sahana Pradhan's name to which we had given a nod earlier?

What is your comment on a caretaker prime minister representing Nepal at the SAARC Summit?

A conspiracy (new) hatched to prevent the new Maoist-led government to take part in the SAARC Summit. The address of a Maoist prime minister would certainly deviate from tradition and would be entirely different. I had regular meetings with the Sri Lankan Ambassador to Nepal and the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister. They extended their invitation to me to participate in the Summit. I had prepared my address, which would have been quite different. I feel that I was stopped from heading the new government and participating in the Summit as it was feared that a new message would be disseminated to the world through my address.

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Dark as night

The new Batman film is as close as a pop-film will ever get to art

Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight* might possibly be the darkest and most enigmatic superhero movie to ever come out of Hollywood. With the Batman/Bruce Wayne premise firmly lodged by *Batman Begins*, director Nolan is now free to explore the characters to the very depth of their being. One would not expect

 **PHILM FARE**
Pranaya SJB Rana

that a superhero movie (one of the Batman franchise's many avatars) could be more than cheap pop-entertainment, but *The Dark Knight* is a thoughtful social commentary and gripping crime saga with the big bangs, car chases and action sequences intact. Christian Bale reprises his role as the stoic Batman and billionaire playboy Bruce Wayne. Bale is an amazing actor and delivers a solid performance beneath the titanium armour and as Bruce Wayne inside the Armani suit. Batman is tired of

being a vigilante, a man behind a mask, and so welcomes the latest addition to the ranks of Gotham's crime fighters: the dashing new District Attorney Harvey Dent, played by an equally talented Aaron Eckhart. Golden boy Dent is exactly what Batman has been looking for, a seemingly incorruptible crime fighter who doesn't need a mask and cowl to put the bad guys behind bars. Helping Dent in the fight against crime is the infallible police officer Jim Gordon (a superb Gary Oldman). With two such shining examples, Batman decides it's time to hang the cape and pursue other leisurely activities, namely old flame and DA assistant Rachel Dawes (Maggie Gyllenhaal, filling in for mediocre Katie Holmes). But things take an unexpected turn when a psychotic new criminal appears on the scene, a garishly made-up psychopath, who goes by the name Joker (Heath Ledger). Batman takes second stage whenever the Joker appears and he's a pleasure, and a terror, to watch. The Joker is not like other petty criminals. He

doesn't lust after money, power or any of the things that interest other hoods. He wants to have fun, and his idea of fun is torturing Batman. "You complete me," he tells Batman at one point, an eager earnest smile on his painted face. Ledger puts Jack Nicholson's Joker in Tim Burton's *Batman* to shame. This Joker is a maniac. Director Nolan has gone back to Batman's very roots, staying true to Bob Kane's original vision and Frank Miller's cult comic reincarnation in *The Dark Knight Returns*. There are echoes of trying American times, with The Joker branded a terrorist. Nolan questions morality and in one masterful segment, creates a situation where the morality of the everyman hangs in the balance, making you question: what would I have done? This film is the director's mediation on good and evil, right and wrong, order and chaos. Nolan, who wrote the script with brother Jonathan, gives a new depth to Batman, portraying him not just as a superhero battling supervillians but one also battling his own demons, his own conscience.

Nolan brings a pop-film as close as it ever will get to art. It's smart, deceptively complex and as dark as night. The real star of the show is neither Nolan nor Batman. The Joker steals each and every scene he's in. And while you marvel at the amazing intensity of Ledger, you can't help but feel a tinge of regret that an actor of such brilliance died so tragically early. The film belongs to Ledger's Joker, with the cracked and bleeding makeup, hair stringy and dirty, that stretched crimson leer and his lizard tongue darting in and out of his mouth. Don't take your kids. ● *The Dark Knight* 2008. PG-13. 152 mins Cast: Christian Bale, Heath Ledger, Aaron Eckhart, Morgan Freeman, Maggie Gyllenhaal Director: Christopher Nolan Showing at Kumari Cinema, 4442220 for show timings.



KUNDA DIXIT

ANOTHER ECLIPSE: A partial solar eclipse, similar to this one over Nepal in March 2006, will happen on Friday afternoon. There will also be a lunar eclipse and a metriotie shower in August.

If the clouds part, Nepalis will see a partial eclipse of the Sun this afternoon between 16:06 and 17:57. The maxima will be at 17:04 when 70 per cent of the sun's disc will be covered by a new moon. It should be quite a sight, but our customary health warning: looking at the sun without proper protection will blind you. Today's eclipse is one of two eclipses this month: the other one is a partial lunar eclipse on 17 August. This one will be early in the morning between 01:05 and 04:14, with 80 per cent of the moon covered at 02:39. Time to start organising eclipse parties and hope for clear skies. The 1 August **total solar eclipse** will start in northern Canada at 09:23 UT then sweep eastwards crossing Greenland and make landfall in Europe in northern Russia. The greatest eclipse occurs at 10:21 UT and the maximum duration around that time will be 2 minutes and 27 seconds. Over the course of the next hour, the Moon's shadow crosses Mongolia and leaves the Earth's surface in northern China. Here in Nepal, the eclipse will be partial. The other excitement in August are the **Perseid Showers**, which is why August is called "Meteorite Month" as the Earth passes through the debris of the comet, Swift-Tuttle. At its peak on 11-12 August we may see up to one shooting star a minute. The Perseids are a rich and consistent shower and it should be a spectacular firework display. Notice that all the meteorites seem to radiate from the same point in the sky from the constellation of Perseus (hence called Perseids) which lies to the north of Taurus the Bull. If you can't identify this constellation, just look to the northeast direction after midnight and you'll see meteors shooting out of Perseus. For planet watchers, the predawn sky is kind of dull this month since all the action is at sunset. All the five visible planets are in the evening sky after sunset in August: **Mercury, Venus, Saturn and Mars**, all in a straight line. Mercury sets about half an hour after the Sun. Venus sets almost an hour after the Sun. Saturn sits in Leo and shares this constellation with Venus and Mercury at the beginning of the month. Venus, Mercury and Saturn seem to be having a get-together as the three of them meet close to the sunset twilight on 15 August. Jupiter is high in the southeast and is brilliant in Sagittarius, so you can't mistake it for anything else. ●

[kedarbadu\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:kedarbadu(at)gmail.com)

Master of spices

If you're under the notion that Indian food is Nepali food a few tablespoons ahead on the spice-continuum, an evening at The Café, Hyatt with Anil Khurana's exquisite kebabs and curry, and you're in for a pleasant surprise. Chef Khurana of Bukhara fame was flown in from Delhi especially for the Indian food promotional event till 17 August. Start off with chat and panipuri, street style, that melts in your mouth like an éclair. But go easy on that, it's just the trailer. "Nepalis are ready to try new things these days," says the executive chef at Hyatt, while Khurana works on some of his magic kebabs before the main course. The generic 'Indian Cuisine' refers to mainly Mughlai food,

which is pretty heavy in the meat department. And with the aromatic spices in the sabjis, the Nepali palate gets a distinct sensation that this is wholly different than our normal dal bhat tarakri fare. Khurana has been dishing it out in all kinds of exotic places: the Sheraton Royal Orchid in Bangkok and others at Singapore, Hong Kong and Delhi—so he comes highly recommended. A lot of Nepalis are blasé about Indian cuisine, thinking "it's just like Nepali food so what's the big deal?" But one spoonful of Khurana's chick-pea curry that is only a dash of mango powder away from our own and you know there is a difference. What's yummy about Indian cuisine is that it reflects India in all its diversity. The preparation and flavour of each



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

dish is diverse—from the butter chicken, which is as rich as its name, to the exquisitely sublime mean molli. Khurana hasn't tasted Nepali food yet, but when you ask him what his personal favourites are he starts, "Chinese, Thai." and stops with a wink. Chef's recommended combo for desert is 'paan-flavoured' ice-cream with gulab jamun. Prepare to surprise your taste buds! ● Roma Aryal

ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Amalgam-2008** an exhibition of paintings by national and international artists from 3 August-8 September at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, Sunday-Friday 11 AM-6PM and Saturday 12-4PM. 4438979.
- ❖ **Connection**, solo Charity Art exhibition by Juju kaji Maharjan, until 6 August, 2PM onwards at 1905 Restaurant, Kantipath, 9851050299

EVENTS

- ❖ **The Namesake** a film by Mira Nair, 5 August, 6.30 PM, Lazimpat Gallery Café, 4428549
- ❖ **Jasmine Woman**, a film by Hou Yong, 4 August, 5.30 PM, Rimal Theater, Gurukul, 4466956
- ❖ **Dancing/yoga-latey** 1-14 September, Rs 300 per session, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan, 9803673551
- ❖ **Monsoon madness package** at Shangri-la Village Resort, Pokhara, Rs 5999. 4435741



MUSIC

- ❖ **The Joint Family**, a reggae band at Moksh Live, Pulchowk, 1 August, 8.30 PM onwards, 5526212.
- ❖ **TGIF** at Jazzabelle Café every Wednesday and Friday from 6.30 PM onwards, 2114075
- ❖ **Ladies night** at JATRA Cafe & Bar on Wednesday with live unplugged music by D Shewan
- ❖ **HyJazz Club** every Friday from 8.30PM, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu, 4489800
- ❖ **Fusion and Looza** Band every Friday night, Bhumi Resto Lounge, Lazimpat, 4412193
- ❖ **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.

DINING

- ❖ **Indian Food Promotion** at The Café, Hyatt Regency from 7PM onwards until 17 August, 4489362
- ❖ **Sixth Annual Wine Festival** until September at Kilroy's, Jyatha. 4250440
- ❖ **New menu** at Dhokaima, Patan Dhoka, 552213
- ❖ **Masala**, an Indian restaurant in Jawalakhel, St.Mary's School Road, 4100510
- ❖ **Steak Fare** every Monday and Tuesday, 7PM-10.30 PM, Rox Restaurant, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu, 4489361
- ❖ **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri-la, Kathmandu, Rs 600, 4412999
- ❖ **Asian Food Special**, Jalan Jalan restaurant, Kupondole, 5544872
- ❖ **Steak special** with free Irish coffee at K-too! Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel, 4700043
- ❖ **Continental and café item** with live band every Friday at Vintage Cafe and Pub, Woodland Complex, Durbar Marg.
- ❖ **Home-made pasta** at Alfresco, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **Hot summer spicy food** at the Jalan Jalan Restaurant, Kupondole Heights. 5544872
- ❖ **Reality Bites**, The Kaiser Café, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, 9AM-10PM. 4425341
- ❖ **Mango étagère** mango delicacies 4.30-6.30 PM at the Lounge, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **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 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.
- ❖ **International buffet** at the Sunrise Café, and Russian specialties at Chimney, Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
- ❖ **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 LeMeritien-Kathmandu, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **Dhamaka** a Nepali style barbeque with pan-Indian fusion at the Splash Bar and Grill, Hotel Radisson, 7PM, every Friday. 4411818
- ❖ **Starry night barbecue** at Hotel Shangri-la with live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs. 666, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7PM onwards. 4412999
- ❖ **Kebabs and curries** at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619
- ❖ **Lavazza coffee** Italy's favourite coffee at La Dolce Vita, Thamel, Roadhouse Café, Pulchok and Thamel. 4700612

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The sequel to Batman Begins, The Dark Knight reunites director Christopher Nolan and star Christian Bale, who reprises the role of Bruce Wayne/Batman. In this film, Batman continues his quest to fight organised crime with the help of Lieutenant Jim Gordon (Gary Oldman) and District Attorney Harvey Dent (Aaron Eckhart). However, a maniacal criminal mastermind the Joker (Heath Ledger) unleashes a fresh reign of chaos and anarchy across Gotham City. For Batman to stop his most personal and vicious enemy yet, he will have to use every high-tech weapon in his arsenal and confront everything he believes in.

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WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

July has passed with below normal precipitation, making it the fifth consecutive month with deficit rainfall this year. The Valley received 260 mm out of the 360 mm quota for July. This satellite radar image for the subcontinent on Thursday morning shows a dramatic jet stream blowing a major cloud front from western Tibet towards East China. So that's where all our moisture ended up. The monsoon pulses from the Bay have been weak and far between, and the showers we are getting in the Himalayan midhills are more convection-driven than brought by monsoon fronts. However, a vigorous low pressure system is building up over central Nepal and could bring short but heavy showers over the weekend. Expect it to be hot and sticky during the sunny intervals.



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MEN IN SUITS: Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat and members of the Nepali delegation at a pre-Summit meeting of SAARC ministers in Colombo on Thursday morning. Prime Minister Koirala left for the Summit on Thursday afternoon via Delhi.



MKN AND GPK: Prime Minister Koirala made a rare visit to the residence of UML leader Madhab Nepal early on Tuesday morning to get him to support his participation at the SAARC summit.



RECOGNITION: Assembly Speaker, Subhas Nembang, presents the 2064 Prakash Human Rights Award to Free Kamaiya Movement leader, Dukhuwa Tharu, at a function organised by INSEC on Thursday. The award is named after rights campaigner Prakash Kafle, who died in a plane crash on 31 July, 1992.



MODEL CONSTITUTION: Speaker Nembang at the launch of a model constitution drawn up by civil society members in Kathmandu on Thursday.

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A Summit push with oxygen

In the end, riots sparked by the Vice President of Hindistan worked great to delay the Maoist formation of a government, and Giprako got to lead a 35-member delegation to the SHARKS Summit in Colombo. It's probably the first time in the history of the regional body that a head of government who has already resigned is leading an expedition to a Summit with the help of bottled oxygen. Since the **caretaker** PM needs a **caregiver**, he took along his daughter.

Our Baluwatar mole tells us the Old Man was at first quite reluctant to go. "Send Ram Baran," he told a foreign ministry logistics meeting, adding cynically, "or better still send Parmananda and he can give his speech in Hindi!"

The Lankans were getting frantic, but they were playing it safe by sending formal invitations to both the ex-PM as well as the PM-in-waiting. Then they got Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Dada to agree to give both PKD and GPK a tinkle because the Summit would otherwise have to be postponed because the Nepalis couldn't get their act together. The Sri Lankans have left no stones unturned for the conference, even getting the Tigers

to agree not to blow themselves up in the capital during the Summit.

Now that the Left Front is out of the picture in Delhi, it was relatively easy for Mukherji to make his preference clear. He called Girjau on the hotline and managed to convince him to come. But what really did the trick was that the **Old Fox** wanted to prevent Comrade Pukada from taking all the credit for Nepal's transformation into a people's republic on the international stage.

ॐ

President Ram wasn't that worried about losing his chance to hobnob with South Asian netas cos he's off to the Olympics next week having won the presidential race. Lucky for the prez that the original Chinese invite to Girjababoo was not non-endorsable. Which means he may have to take a raincheck on Gyanuraja's invite to dine at Nagarjun. Nice gesture by the ex-Majesty to congratulate His Excellency even though he took possession of the **royal Jag**.

ॐ

Those who want a United Madhes should insist on a revision of not just the 1950

Treaty but also the 1816 Sugauli Treaty with British India after which large chunks of the Tarai were carved out wherever there was a Bhitri Madhes. Without the return of these lands, the Tarai will never be contiguous and there can't be One Madhes. After that Chitwan and Dang-Deukhuri can start their own andolan for **One Bhitri Madhes**.

ॐ

Going by the write-ups in the Baddie press, the rift within the Maoists between hardcore comrades and softliners seems to be widening. It is so bad that the real problem in forming a new government is not the disagreement between the Maoists and the MJF-UML-NC, but between Jit Bahadur and Ram Bahadur. Each side is accusing

the other of being backed by foreign forces, by which they mean the **Big Brothers** to the north and south as well as **Big Daddy** on the other side of the planet.

On Wednesday, while the Maoist secretariat was meeting to try to form a new government within a week, Gajurel Uncle was telling the CA the president was overstepping his constitutional prerogative by asking his party to form a government.

ॐ

Comrade Jhallu seems to have kissed and made up with Comrade Lotus Flower about being stabbed in the back, but Comrade Makunay is in no mood to forgive and forget. He met PKD in the foyer of his house, and BRB has been declared persona

non grata in Koteswor. "I don't even want to see their faces," he fumed to a visitor this week.

Comrade Awesome has finally broken his silence on what he thinks about people not calling him **Prachanda**. He told *Gorkhapatra* this week in a lengthy interview: "Some people these days have stopped using my nom de guerre, Prachanda. I feel that is very reactionary." Oops.

ॐ

The winning entry for New Name Contest for a New Nepal comes from Raju in Jamal: "**Rani Pokhari** should be named **Ani Pokhari**."

Entries to the New Name Contest: [ass\(at\)nepalitimes.com](mailto:ass(at)nepalitimes.com)



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