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Weekly Internet Poll # 414

Q. Can a Maoist-led government make a positive difference?

Total votes: 7,082



Weekly Internet Poll # 415. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com
Q. What should the prime minister have worn during his swearing in?

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BIRD'S EYE VIEW: The East-West Highway was the only dry ground for many fleeing the Kosi floods in Sunsari in this picture taken from a rescue helicopter on Wednesday.

Full story p4

SOM NATH BASTOLA

Likely faces

The Maoists, MJF and UML scrambled to finalise their ministerial lineup ahead of a cabinet meeting on Friday before Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal's departure for the Olympics.

The division of the portfolios were agreed in a three-party meeting, and the individual party candidates were finalised in separate meetings with the UML and MJF. The Maoists had earlier come up with their ministers.

At press time on Thursday evening, these were the names of the new ministers:



RAM BAHADUR THAPA
DEFENCE, CPN(M)



BAM DEB GAUTAM
HOME, UML



BABU RAM BHATTARAI
FINANCE, CPN(M)



DEB GURUNG
LAW, CPN(M)



BISHNU POUDEL
UML



RAM CHANDRA JHA
UML



UPENDRA YADAV
MJF



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CPN(M)



BHIM RAWAL
UML



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FOUR-CORNER EQUILIBRIUM

The swearing-in of the prime minister took place an absurd four months after his party was elected, but that wasn't a complete waste of time.

In the ceremony at the Rastrapati Bhaban on Monday the Big Four parties were represented (from left to right) by a Forum vice-president, a Kangresi president, a Maoist prime minister and a UML chairman of the Assembly. There was an elegant symmetry to this balance of power between the four main parties. It took time and a lot of unseemly wheeling dealing to achieve, but in the end it was the best outcome.

This four-cornered equilibrium lays the foundation for stable politics in the two years to come, but does not guarantee it. The lengthy bargaining over ministerial berths this week is already an indication that the path ahead is not easy. But at least for that we have a deadline: the line-up has to be agreed upon before the prime minister goes for the Olympics on Saturday.

The NC being in the opposition could be a positive thing if it serves a check-and-balance function. But if it plays the knee-jerk politics of tyre-burning and bandhs of the late 1990s, that will be a disservice to the people and the constitution-building process. The NC mustn't lose sight of the real issue here, which is to ensure stable government so that the drafting of a new constitution can take place with minimum disruption. As a loyal opposition, the NC can temper Maoist temptations towards adventurism, populism, opportunism and utopianism.

The challenge for Pushpa Kamal Dahal is to extend the effective role he played in the past two years in keeping his own party together when it was on the verge of mutiny to now keeping his alliance together.

This will not be easy. After all, the Forum was formed in January 2007 to serve as a political blowtorch to wipe the Maoists off the eastern Tarai. Every domestic, regional and international anti-Maoist player had a hand in propping up the Forum, and the plan worked.

Communist parties throughout history, in Nepal and elsewhere, have always loathed the lefties immediately to the right of them. The Maoists have no love lost for the UML and vice-versa. This makes the Maoists, MJF and UML alliance fragile.

We don't want to make a self-fulfilling prophecy here about the next two years. We don't want write in June 2010 "we told you so". Let's all help this government to last, ensure stability and kick-start the economy so that the Assembly can get on with its job of drafting the new constitution.



KIRAN PANDAY

Shared past, shared future

Where will we be if there is no Nepal?

Before we start demolishing the shared history of the Nepali nation-state, we must ask what kind of new history are we trying to create?

We do not do justice to Nepal's emergence as a country 240 years ago with retroactive political correctness. Nepal was amalgamated with military conquest at a time when regional powers were in ascendance. The



GUEST COLUMN
Narayan Khadka

Chinese emperor had come to the aid of an emerging power in Tibet, and by 1797 the British East India Company had already taken control of Burma, Bengal and Bihar, and was advancing on the Oudh.

What would Nepal have been like if there had been no expansion? Would Nepal even exist today? What would be the fate of the principalities that were unified? In 1768, how

would they have been able to stop the belligerent British to the south, the Chinese to the north and Russia beyond?

The nation state that did emerge in Nepal after the conquest established certain pillars of nationalism not just through political unification, but based on culture, language and religion. Even though Prithbi Narayan Shah was aware of Nepal's diversity, he tried to construct symbols of unity. In hindsight, there is no question that this artificial nationalism ignored diversity but it was needed at that time to cement the young nation.

We have tried since the 2006 uprising to demolish these edifices of our nationalism. There are legitimate reasons to question these symbols because they were unjust, they fostered discrimination, they centralised political and economic power and excluded a large section of the population from decision-making.

Just like the ex-soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and ex-Yugoslavia disintegrated after the removal of a central unifying power, Nepal has also seen a deterioration of inter-ethnic relations, geographical friction between geographical regions, and the beginnings of linguistic, religious and caste friction.

There are new boundaries being drawn up between the Pahad, Madhes, Tarai and Himal. The politics of identity is churning away and

undermining our survival as a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-cultural nation state. We have abandoned the old, but there are no new shared bonds to help us stay together. Nepalis live in Nepal, but have questions about their own Nepaliness.

Political parties, ethnic groups and so-called experts have been putting forth demands for self-determination and for ethnic federalism. Their worry is not about the existence of the nation state, but about their individual identities. This is like arguing over the windows even before the house is planned.

Air-brushing our shared history has brought out a cacophony of competing demands for identity which has drowned out the need for a shared identity for our new republic. How can we move ahead on the road to economic progress, equity, justice and self-esteem without a shared national consciousness, shared identity, shared symbols of Nepali nationalism?

These issues are now going to come to the fore in the discussions over federalism, of what kind and their boundaries. The builders of the New Nepal must now think about whether we will be here or not, where we will be if there is no Nepal. If we don't replace the old symbols with new ones, it is clear that neither the house nor the windows will ever be built. ●

Dr Narayan Khadka is a NC member of the Constituent Assembly from Udaypur.

Living with rivers

In the middle of World Water Week this week, Sunsari district bore the full fury of the Kosi. This wasn't a natural disaster, it was man-made.

The mountains are ravaged by landslides, and in the Tarai monsoon floods cause more and more economic damage because of the destruction of the watersheds and the blockage of natural

Solheim visited. Like most villages in the district, it is cut off by floods for a few weeks each year. Adults waded through knee-deep water to buy essentials from the nearest bazar. Children miss school as buses, rickshaws and horse-drawn carts cannot operate along the Jaleshwar-Matihani road. Even ambulances can't get there.

keep their valuables safe, educate their children and ensure that the sick and elderly can be kept safe during the monsoon. An unfortunate consequence is that the town sucks scarce resources away from the rural economy.

During my childhood, most farmers in Suga had boats. Today they have motorcycles instead. Large ponds at each

it's the flooding of villages at the local level or climate change at the global level, the story is the same: it's the poor who suffer most when the natural environment deteriorates.

Some action can be taken to improve matters. As in Bangladesh, villages in the Tarai-Madhes need easily accessible, earthquake-proof, flat-roofed flood shelters built on high ground and equipped for helicopter evacuation during times of calamity. These can be used for other purposes the rest of the time. And there is no reason why school holidays in flood-prone areas can't be rescheduled for the monsoon, as used to be the case.

While the political parties continue to squabble over who will control the Ministry of Water Resources (through which Rs 100 billion pass each year from the Nepal Electricity Authority alone), flood victims in Sunsari wait for assistance, and long-term measures to reduce floods remain a fantasy. Cursing India is perhaps the least harmful way to hide our collective incompetence. ●



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

drainage systems due to infrastructure.

A recent breach in the Kosi caused so much misery in Sunsari that less devastating floods elsewhere received scant national attention. Were it not for the high-profile visit of Norwegian Minister for Environment and International Development Erik Solheim to Mahottari, one of the most flood-prone districts of the country wouldn't even have got a passing mention in the media.

Suga is a village not far from the place

So when someone in Suga has saved enough money—usually from remittances—the first thing he does is build a house in Janakpur. Perhaps that's the reason land prices in Janakpur are higher than in Biratnagar or Birganj even though the town has little to offer in the way of urban services.

Janakpur's biggest draw is that it's the only town between the Kosi in the east and the Bagmati in the west that never floods. Prosperous villagers build houses here to

corner of the village used to have two functions: they absorbed some of the flood waters, and their elevated banks prevented houses from being washed away. Most villages also had mango orchards on their most vulnerable sides to dissipate the power of the floods, to provide firewood for the winter and to produce luscious fruits in the summer.

Such natural barriers have mostly disappeared. The rich have migrated to the towns, leaving the poor behind. Whether

LETTERS

CHECKLIST

I agree with your checklist ('Checklist', #412). The prime minister should have a clear vision, mission, goal and objectives to transform Nepal into a prosperous country.

Min Magar, email

● I do want to hope that bad days for democracy have not started with Pushpa Kamal Dahal becoming the PM. I hope he understands that Zimbabwe can be the worst scenario. The power sharing by UML and MJF without resolving the issue of PLA and YCL was a colossal blunder. The Maoists should have been disarmed before being given executive powers. There is now a big danger of a drift into totalitarianism. Let us be vigilant about the agenda of the Maoist-led government and any coercion.

Alok, email

● Pushpa Kamal is about to find out that it's more difficult to build than to destroy ('From Comrade Prachanda to Prime Minister Dahal', #413). This is where all Communist regimes have failed: they have successfully destroyed the status quo while failing to construct a functioning polity which promotes inclusive growth and development and ensures fundamental rights of all to practice their faith and protects their basic rights. Either the Maoists should abdicate their dubious label of 'Maoism' or we are back to business as usual: political demagoguery and ideology at complete odds with the realities of the 21st century.

Name withheld

● At last, after 14,000 people killed, Prachanda has become Pushpa Kamal Dahal the prime minister. Most of those who died were poor Nepalis from indigenous communities. He is now the most powerful man in Nepal and says he is the right person to develop Nepal. Will he make up for all the death and destruction, will he be a government only for Maoist supporters? Will he turn Nepal into Cuba or North Korea? Now we will know. He should stop being populist and bring genuine development programs to win the trust of the Nepali people.

N Sherpa, Finland

● Governments we've always had. What we didn't have was governance. We have always had the same bunch of people running the show for the last two decades, the so-called left and so-called right. Those at the centre were left with problems that the governments wouldn't give rats about. This time around there's a different team at the helm. Although the violent path they took cannot be justified, the Maoists do seem to have a strategy: they understand coordination and have planned accordingly. They need to challenge the status quo through a new model of governance, policy making and rapid economic growth. Policies that impact the poorest, projects that

deliver directly at the grassroots, economic activities that improve people's lives.

Name withheld, email

NEPAL AIRLINES

I agree with Capt Kul Bahadur Limbu and his plans ('Blue skies ahead', #413) but it is not always correct to blame politicians. Capt Limbu is an operational man and knows the airline business but he should also investigate his own sales, admin and finance where more than 50 per cent of the corruption takes place. That is where streamlining should start.

Kaji, email

● I wish Capt Limbu the best of luck. One of the main services of Nepal Airlines are its domestic routes which still regularly serves remote areas. If profitable international routes can subsidise an efficient, affordable domestic sector, there would

be many benefits for rural communities. It would also help promote tourism in remote areas, as Nepal Airlines is more reasonably priced than overpriced private operators even for non-Nepalis

M Smith, email

● Capt Limbu should start by stopping the tradition of sacrificing goats when one of his jet engines needs to be repaired. Concentrate on profitable routes with more flights to Delhi, Bangkok, and Hong Kong. Improve the image of the airline by

flying on time and pay due respect to Nepali passengers.

Nima Sherpa, USA

● Clean seat covers, carpets, no peanuts, tray tables that fold, slimmer and younger flight attendants.

K Gurung, Hong Kong

CORRECTIONS

● Dr Rajesh Gongal was inadvertently misquoted in 'More deliveries in Patan' (#412). The new Nick Simons Block maternity ward of Patan Hospital was supported with a personal grant from Jim and Marilyn Simons and not from the Nick Simons Institute.

● Pushpa Kamal Dahal's birthplace is Dhikurpokhari, which is now in Kaski and not Tanahu as stated in 'From Comrade Prachanda to Prime Minister Dahal' (#413).

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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After the deluge



SOM NATH BASTOLA



BHIM GHIMIRE



SOM NATH BASTOLA

DAMBAR K SHRESTHA
in SUNSARI

1 8 August, 7.30 AM: Four of us were crammed in a car that was stuck in a long queue at Jamuna Chok near the welcome gate of the Kosi Tapu Wildlife Reserve.

The Kosi was in full spate, its waters were threatening the eastern embankment. Locals had blocked the road to force the administration to repair the levee. They were also angry that the Indians, who control the barrage at the border downstream, hadn't opened the sluice gates.

Drivers were pleading with the locals to let them go. Suddenly, the people at the barricades scattered. Far off, we saw water surging out of a breach

in the embankment. Our driver put the jeep into high gear and we sped at 140km/h towards the barrage, racing the rushing waters. We crossed the barrage and noticed that the Indians had opened only

50,000 villagers displaced by the breach in the Kosi embankment. An entire 5km section of the East-West Highway had been washed away where we were stuck.

Water experts have been warning a possible breach of the Kosi embankments for decades. Less serious levee collapses have happened eight times. The root of the problem is that the Kosi Barrage, built to control floods in the 1960s, was a colossal engineering mistake. It may have regulated flood waters for the first few years, but sediment deposits over the years has caused the Kosi to now flow three metres above the surrounding land.

When the sluice gates are not opened at the border by the Indians, the impounded water in Nepal endangers the levees. This



NT August 2003, #157

half the 56 sluice gates. It was only when we got to the western side of the river that we felt safe. Six hours later, we were in Hetauda, where we heard the news on the local FM station:

- The army's Puma helicopter picks up villagers marooned in flooded homes on Wednesday, two days after the floods struck.
- A five km section of the East-West Highway has been washed away by the flood in western Sunsari.
- Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal and MJF leader Upendra Yadav had a difficult time assuring people displaced by the floods in Sunsari of government relief.




week, the river broke through a weak point in the 12km eastern embankment. Water expert Ajaya Dixit says the focus should be on drainage, not river control. "By blocking a river's path to the sea, you make the situation worse, we must try to manage the river, not control it," he explained. The Kosi has migrated 150 km westwards since 1730, and could easily go back to its original course in a year with heavy

monsoon. That would make the river bypass the barrage altogether, take it past Biratnagar, and make this week's flood seem like a picnic. The other problem is the lack of coordination between Nepal and India in managing the border barrage. "The embankments are weak and there is no maintenance," says Deb Narayan Yadav of the Kosi Pidit Samaj, "The decision to open the sluice gates has to come from Patna." ●


Capital flight

The International Finance Corporation, a member of the World Bank Group, is providing Buddha Air with a \$10 million long-term loan to help the airline expand its capacity and reduce operating costs by improving fuel efficiency. "With IFC's support, Buddha Air can focus on optimizing growth opportunities to strengthen our operations in the face of rising oil prices and a rapidly evolving competitive landscape," said Birendra Basnet, Managing Director of Buddha Air. The airline also plans to expand its mountain flights. IFC has invested \$62.7 million in the past in other Nepali projects such as hydropower generation and tourism.



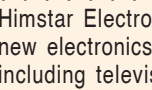
Deposit more

NMB Bank is offering customers a tiered savings account, giving them greater returns according to the size of their deposit. Benefits from the account include free ATM access and a discount on Travellers Cheque issuing fees.




Lighting up

Himstar Electronics, part of the Golchha Organisation, has added new electronics and kitchen appliances to its product range including televisions, DVD players, CFL bulbs and gas stoves.




Intensely caring

The Marwadi Yuwa Manch led by Rajendra Khetan has donated Rs 2.351 million to Patan Hospital to expand its intensive care unit by 10 beds. The donation was made at the inauguration ceremony of the new Nick Simons maternity wing.




Military scholars

Everest Bank is providing scholarships to 10 children who lost their parents during the insurgency. Half of the scholarships were offered to orphans in the Nepal Army and half to those in the People's Liberation Army.




Hilarious Hajmola

Contestants in the 'Hajmola Khane Bahana Two' competition can win, among other prizes, a Sony home theatre and free Buddha Air mountain flight tickets by sending in humorous reasons to enjoy Hajmola.



New branch

Nepal Investment Bank recently opened its 19th branch in Nepal at Battisputali. The branch is linked to all other 18 branches, and its services include 365-day banking, ATM and safety deposit lockers.



Depending on the diaspora

Nepalis abroad can help us rebuild

NEW YORK—A group of Nepalis in Queens, New York, was gathering at the street corner to discuss the victory of Pushpa Kamal Dahal. It could have been anywhere in Nepal, with the same Nepali logic and the same old guffaws. What was interesting was that none in the crowd were Nepalis who had been born in the US or had gone there at a young age.

 **ECONOMIC SENSE**
Artha Beed

The Beed has always found the diaspora an interesting breed to research, be it on the streets of New York or around Chungking Mansions in Hong Kong. A couple of stark issues are always instantly noticeable. First is the question of Nepali identity. What is this Nepali identity and why can't it be part of a South Asian identity?

The diaspora is disappointed to have Tarai leaders as President and Vice President, since it increases the effort required to distance oneself from the Indian community. In the US, Nepalis prefer to be identified as Mexicans rather than as Indians. In Hong Kong, they prefer to be called Japanese or even Thai, rather than anything close to being an Indian. The identity issue has revived the Gorkhaland movement in the Indian state of West Bengal, and it's possible the

quest for an elusive Nepali identity will never cease. Second, one sees among the diaspora that people from places outside the Kathmandu valley have been more enterprising and done far better than those from within the valley. It would be interesting for a social scientist to do some research on this. There could also be a similar correlation between Nepalis and other South Asians and a desire to be an employee rather than an employer. Lastly, it would be interesting to see how second-generation Nepalis in the diaspora turn out. We are already seeing children of those who emigrated in the 1970s and 1980s starting to do well, with some of them getting into Ivy League schools and landing good jobs or launching successful careers.

There are thousands of Nepali children in different schools and colleges who will be starting their careers in the next 10 years. Will they find—like the Indians have—the region hotting up economically, and decide to make a life for themselves back in the land of their parents? Or will they be like the Irish, who preferred never to go back? Nepal's future, in terms of economic investment and human capabilities, may depend to a great extent on what the children of the diaspora decide to do.



However, one thing the new government really must do is to sell Nepal to those outside. Our country needs to sell itself as a unique nation that has been able to deal with its monarchy and Maoism and is now ready to rebuild itself as the 40th most populous country in the world. We need to make a lot more noise in the corridors of Washington and other global capitals and revive our embassies abroad, which for so long have been moribund institutions.

The government needs to work with the diaspora to ensure that the Nepali dream emerges, and the time has come for the world to help Nepal do better than it ever did before. We need to create an air of optimism, an air of hope that will also entice the next generation of fortunate Nepalis to contribute to the rebuilding of the state. ● www.arthabeed.com

No jokes allowed

Your first thought is it can't be a Skoda. It's too comfortable, too smart, too darned good. But long gone are the days when a Skoda was an under-powered, Czech-built tin can where the noisy engine at the back blew up every few miles. 'Skoda' in Czech actually means 'sorry'. And there are all those tired old jokes (How do you overtake a Skoda? Run! What do you call a Skoda at the top of a hill? A miracle! What happened when the Skoda hit the cat? The Skoda died!) no longer apply. These days Skodas are too busy winning reliability awards and topping customer satisfaction surveys. And now Morang Auto Works is selling slick Skodas in Nepal.

"European cars have a reputation for their power and performance," says MAW's Vishnu Agrawal: "Skoda is the perfect choice for a luxury ride even on Nepal's roads." Skoda started life in Czechoslovakia in 1895, and nearly 100 years later was taken over by the Volkswagen Group which updated the models, improved design, performance and safety, and dealt with the car's notorious reliability problems so effectively that Skoda drivers today are some of the happiest around.

Agrawal is confident his diesel-engined Laura and Octavia models will be highly sought after in Nepal, and will stand up well to the rigours of Nepal's roads. The cars come with a 'rough road' package of upgraded shock absorbers, a protective underbody coating and 160mm ground clearance. Laura can do 14km/l and the Octavia 16km/l. Both models can be seen at Morang's Thapathali showroom, and its Dhobighat workshop is equipped for full servicing.

After only 25 days in his showroom, Agrawal already has 10 bookings for Skodas. ● *Paavan Mathema*



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Two armies

Kul Chandra Gautam in
Himal Khabarpatrika, 17-31 August

● The Maoists need to clearly separate the political and the military responsibilities among their politicians. In a democratic framework, the line between these two responsibilities cannot be blurred. The Maoist comrades need to give up their military positions if they have been elected in the CA or nominated for civil posts. Military officials, whether in or outside the cantonments, should not hold a government position.

● Two armies cannot exist in a single state. According to an amendment to Section 146 of the Interim Constitution, a ministerial-level committee should immediately be given the responsibility of managing the cantonments, as directed by the multiparty special committee. The ministerial-level committee will work with technical help from UNMIN military advisers and specialists. The

government can also be assisted by experienced and capable army officers, who have served in UN Peacekeeping missions, for this purpose.

● The under-age rebels should be temporarily shifted from the cantonments to a non-political shelter. UNICEF and other local and international organisations working with children can help in this regard.

● A high-level national security council must be established to gain the people's trust and respect by addressing the long-term issues regarding improvement of security and policies of army integration.

● The process to re-establish the defence ministry as a competent and influential body should be started. A respected politician should be the nominated as defence minister. The officials and the employees at the ministry should be specialists or should have at least a minimum of knowledge about military and politics.

Suitable clothes

Editorial in *Kantipur*,
20 August

कान्तिपुर

The Nepali people were shocked to see the head of the government not in the national dress but in an attire which many labelled as feudalistic. Similar to the commotion created by the Vice President reciting his oath in Hindi, the Prime Minister's clothes have left many people dissatisfied. The question that has now risen is: What dress represents Nepal's national identity?

The idea of 'one language, one dress', which was propagated by King Mahendra for the success of the Panchayat, surely does not hold true any more. Even so, it is important to ensure homogeneity among high-

level officers and dignitaries when they come together in public. When representing Nepal in an international forum, this dress should reflect what is called 'Nepalipani'. A practical outfit that is acceptable to all ethnic groups can be used as long

as it gives an essence of unity. The national dress is like the national anthem and language and should symbolise unity in diversity.

When, two years ago, Dahal appeared in public as the chairman of the Maoists at Baluwatar, he was dressed in a grey coat. Now he is entering Baluwatar in a suit. According to statements from other Maoist politicians, the PM's attire was decided by the party itself.

In order to achieve homogeneity in dress, it is important to have an agreement between the supporters of the government and other parties. This is not a simple issue of clothes but is connected with the future identity of New Nepal.



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"The peace process comes first"

Himal Khabarpatrika, 17-31 August

In his first interview since being elected prime minister, Pushpa Kamal Dahal spoke to *Himal Khabarpatrika*. Translated excerpts:

Himal Khabarpatrika: How did you reach a consensus to form the government?
Pushpa Kamal Dahal: This was an effort to forge consensus amidst disagreement. We share an agenda of social and economic transformation with the UML, and are with the Forum on the matter of the formation of a federal republic.

How can those who call for 'one Madhes, one state' and those who oppose it, work together?
We have an understanding on autonomous regions and federalism with the pro-Madhes parties. However, we made it clear early on that 'one Madhes, one state' is not a possibility. We can have lots of autonomous provinces in the Madhes or Tarai on the basis of language, culture and geography.

How can the new constitution be written with the Nepali Congress out of government?
The NC is trying to imply that it has been deliberately left out of the government, but this is untrue. We were fully engaged over a long period to go into the government with the NC. Finally, on the afternoon of 14 August, at a meeting with the UML and the Forum, the NC made it clear that it was not keen to be part of a Maoist-led government.

How can there be agreement in constitution-writing, now that we have a government and an opposition?
We will try to maintain consensus. We have been telling the Congress that we need to conduct ourselves carefully, since the constitution has to be written on time. We will try this exercise and perhaps, a couple of months or more after staying in opposition, the Congress will be persuaded to join the government.

What are the new government's priorities?
The peace process indeed comes first. We have agreed on the integration of the military forces within three to six months. Then, second, we need to draft the constitution. Third, we have to provide relief to the people. The absence of a government for the past four months has led to a rise in impunity, and has threatened peace and security. The need of the hour is to address and manage these issues.




How will you fulfil the pledges made during the elections?
We presented an election manifesto with long-term plans for 10, 20, 40 years. Since our focus in the next two years will be on writing the constitution, it is true that we will not be able to do much.

The Nepal Army seems anxious over the formation of a Maoist-led government. How will you address its concerns about the matter of integration?
We are committed to the goal of long-term peace, and the Nepal Army too does not want bloodshed among Nepalis. I see no reason why the army should be distressed by the turn of events that has us leading the government.



How will you go about the issue of integration?
The main basis of integration is the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Then there is the interim constitution, which has firmed the ground. As per the constitution, the third basis will be the formation of a committee to look into the matter, comprising the political parties in the cabinet.

Will you continue to use Maoist combatants for your security?
At the moment, we are using a team comprising the police and members of the PLA who have been verified by UNMIN. In future, too, as per requirements, we may continue with a similar arrangement. After army integration and rehabilitation, one can think of an adjustment so that they are under a single command and control.

Will the Maoists now formally announce a rejection of violence?
This is a very difficult question. Those who demand this of us are the very people who engage in violence under the cover of so-called democracy. We cannot talk about violence in neutral terms, and only a fool would say he is forever against the use of violence. Likewise, it is foolish and unscientific to claim to be forever in favour of the use of violence. One is for or against violence depending on the situation. If a foreign army attacks Nepal, we would all be speaking in favour of violence. To try to make us say we will never use violence is an attempt to trap us. Violence was never our choice in the past, and neither is it today.



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SHRADHA BASNYAT and ROMA ARYAL

Kathmandu's burgeoning middle class is becoming more health conscious. This is reflected in the growing numbers of people joining gyms and health clubs, which in turn are steadily improving their facilities to attract new customers. Demand is also rising for places where people can just relax after a busy day at work with some pampering in saunas and jacuzzis, massage and beauty treatments. Membership is not exactly cheap, but there are some gyms catering to the less well-off and younger people.



PICS: MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Jasmine Club, United World Trade Center, Tripureswor

Whether it's the soothing current of steamy water from the Jacuzzi or the well-equipped gym that grabs you, the Jasmine Club is a great place for either a relaxing spa treatment or a vigorous workout. There is a beauty parlour for those who want a more thorough grooming, as well as aqua aerobics in its roof-top heated pool and power yoga with experienced trainers.

Annual membership: Rs 40,000.



Hotel Shaligram, Jawalakhel

Bamboo Grove at Hotel Shaligram offers a children's pool and a larger pool for adults surrounded by shrubbery. The club's exercise equipment is housed in a homely environment.

Annual membership: Rs 27,000.



Flex, Nakhu

Spacious and well-equipped with elliptic crosstrainers, chest press exercise machines and large treadmills, Flex specialises in serious exercise regimen. There is a swimming pool, an indoor badminton court and sauna.

Annual membership: Rs 22,000.



Clark Hatch, Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat

The Radisson's Clark Hatch gym is the only international fitness chain in Nepal. You can exercise your reciprocal rights and use other Clark Hatch gyms in Asia when you're on the go. Its facilities include a gym with top-quality Life Fitness equipment, a spa and roof-top swimming pool.

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KIRAN PANDAY

Rage Fitness, Thasikhel

Trainers at the Rage Fitness make that extra effort to motivate their clients, by making home calls if they don't show up and handing out certificates to those who've achieved their goals. The club may be small but the friendly atmosphere and affordability make it all the more accessible.

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Club Oasis, Hyatt Regency, Boudhanath

Club Oasis offers the most luxurious facilities and top-class service for which members are more than willing to pay the price. "People come here for our presentation and ambience," says manager Naresh Maharjan. There are Astroturf tennis courts, a well-equipped gym, and a 1km jogging track around the hotel. The spa has an outdoor whirlpool and offers singing bowl therapy and Shirodhara massage.

Annual membership: Rs 50,000.



Hotel Shahanshah, Dhapasi

Membership at the Shahanshah's health club includes indoor and outdoor swimming pool and multi-gyms (with a separate one for women), along with spa essentials. Besides the health club, there is an indoor tennis court. The swimming pools are small but the most popular pick, especially for school children.

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SAM KANG LI

Land and peace

NEPALGANJ – Land management is a central question of our political economy. The absence of land reform helped the Maoists gain popularity and consolidate. The formal agenda of the new government includes the need to carve out policies 'related to land'.

The issue is linked not only to the dip in farm productivity and the agrarian crisis, but also with social justice and livelihoods. As the Maoists project it, the core contradiction is that those who own the land are not the actual tillers and those who till the land are not the owners.

The recognition that land and peace is related is most acutely felt here in the western Tarai. This is where an exploitative zamindari system, landlessness, Maoist land-grab, and their electoral success

converge. "Solve land issues and 75 per cent of the conflict will be resolved," says Bhola Mahat of the rights group, INSEC.



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

But apart from occasional civil society seminars and sporadic op-ed pieces, the land question isn't on the agenda. It is a complex policy challenge, affects a majority of the country's population, and has antagonistic classes pitted against each other.

Do we need land reform? The consensus across the board is yes. Past attempts have only been partial and conflict-exacerbating. Mahendra's land reform of 1964 is seen by many Madhesi and Tharus as an assault on their livelihood, as hill migrants were gifted the land by the state.

Deuba's attempt in 2003 to fix the ceiling at 10 bighas was a step forward, but did not translate into support for the poor landless. It also ignored the cardinal principle that land reform and agrarian reform must go together. The UML's Badal commission recommended a ceiling of 4.5 bighas and other policy measures, but was never implemented.

Land reform cannot just be about redistribution, it has to be a package deal

But what kind of land reform? Given inequitable land distribution, does the answer lie in reducing the ceiling further to extract land from those who have it and redistribute it? But after fragmentation within families and across generations, most farmers in the Tarai have less than 10 bighas. Half a ropani of land in Kathmandu is more valuable than 15-20 bighas in most districts. If there has to be valuation and ceiling, farmers say, it should be on property and not just land.

Will giving small plots away only lead to a further dip in production as it will not be profitable for marginal farmers to invest in modern technology? Even those with five bighas of land just manage modern living standards, so how will a family with half a bigha of land manage? Will he just end up selling it and becoming landless again?

Can all this be a sophisticated rationalisation for not doing anything for the landless? Is it important to target the few remaining big zamindars who have accrued the property illegally over the years? Is it possible to use scattered public land, called 'elani jagga', and take property of the guthis which are monopolised by a few?

But even if you find land without drastically infringing on the right to property, will merely giving it away to select poor help change lives? Isn't the core issue the need for an agrarian revival: irrigation, moderate use of subsidised fertilisers, crop diversification, technical know-how, availability of seeds, better market management and co-operative farming?

And do we not need to start exploring non-farm economy options for employment generation? If the migration is any indicator, people want to escape from the land for better options. Or is that our failure where the poor, who are least equipped for the modern economy, are pushed out of agriculture while others who are professionally skilled continue to profit from land?

Land reform cannot just be about rash redistribution. It has to be a package deal which addresses some of these questions. What this government can do is set up a commission which prepares a white paper on previous land-reform attempts, and conducts a nation-wide survey to come up with baseline data on land ownership and productivity. Balancing individual rights with social justice, and evolving a land and agrarian policy should be key priorities. ●

Power to the

MALLIKA ARYAL in KABHRE

As the new Maoist-led government takes power in Kathmandu, past experience has shown the fastest way to ensure development at the grassroots is to devolve that power to local units.

For this, the Maoists must rebuild the elected village and district committees that they dismantled during the war. Three thousand of the 4,000 VDC buildings were bombed, members were chased out, DDCs were not allowed to function properly.

Here in Khusadebi village, the

VDC building was firebombed by the Maoists in 2003 (*right*) and there are ruins of the village councils all over the district overgrown with vegetation.

"Ten years ago, we had found the path to rapid rural development," recalls Khusadebi's elected UML VDC chairman, Bhim Neupane, "local elected officials were forced to be accountable and we had to deliver schools, health services, roads to markets. There was a direct link between grassroots democracy and development."

All that was destroyed in the war. There hasn't been local



KUNDA DIXIT

elections for 10 years. VDCs function with just a secretary, if at all. When Parliament passed the Local Self Governance Act in



Sowing doubts

Farmers fret as Maoists remain vague over land reform plans

Comments by senior Maoists at a recent meeting with small farmers have left them nervous that the reality of the Maoists' land reform program may be different from their stated intent.



COMMENT
Bihari K Shrestha

Senior Maoist CP Gajurel said he had been impressed by the cooperatives he had seen in Japan, and would use them as his model for boosting farm output. But many in his audience were

aware that in 'cooperative' model farms in Rolpa production teams and work in Cultural Revolution-style brigades even though China has long since abandoned them.

Instead of professing: "From each according to his ability to each according to his needs", the Chinese had adopted the Soviet Union's variation: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his work". Furthermore, Chinese farmers had also been given small plots of land for private cultivation, which were considerably more productive than their collectively-farmed counterparts.

But is this the case in Rolpa?

And what have the Maoists planned for the rest of the country? During the 'people's war', Nepal's relatively few but economically self-sufficient small-farmer cooperatives were often targeted by Maoist guerrillas. A Maoist at the recent meeting expressed a degree of remorse, claiming that they had only turned to their guns after their attempts to be heard by the state failed. But his audience remained unimpressed.

In the same breath he also disclosed that the Maoists had seized 50,000 bighas of land and would not release it until the party had implemented the so-called scientific land reform—a concept

people

Only devolution of decision-making can help speed up development

1998, it broke conventional and cultural barriers and transferred not just decision-making authority but also the right to frame local laws to elected village and district committees. Where these committees began to exercise new powers, decentralisation delivered development.

“The strength of the Act was that it recognised that devolution was necessary for development,” says Dwarika Dhungel, a researcher at the Institute for Integrated Development Studies. But in July 2002, local elections could not be held and the Local

Self Governance Act has remained in limbo ever since.

As the process of writing a new constitution begins, experts say that the CA members need to learn from past mistakes and build on the successes of rural democracy of the 1990s. “As a concept, decentralisation is quite simple: empower those who are most affected by any development practice,” says development expert Bihari Krishna Shrestha.

Nepal is committed to fulfilling various international commitments, including achieving Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Experts say the central government should focus on national projects and leave the districts alone to plan out their own futures. “If the government actually wants devolution to work this time, it needs to start rebuilding the destroyed VDCs and DDCs,” says Khem Raj Nepal at the Institute of Local Governance Studies. But simply giving power to local people is not enough, he says, VDCs need resources to implement plans.

The 1998 Local Self Government Act gave power to local authorities, but in the past five years the VDCs are run by government bureaucrats. Says Krishna Prasad Sapkota, CA member from Kabhre-3: “It is absurd that a VDC secretary in Manang has to be sent from Singha Darbar. There’s no accountability. If that officer makes a mistake in one VDC, he is immediately transferred to another. They have to be locally elected.”

Despite being the first country in South Asia to attempt devolution, Nepal’s progress with decentralisation was first stalled by the war and now by the lack of preparation for local elections.

But it is a model that can easily be revived. The 2007 interim constitution endorsed a federal system of governance, but some fear that even within a federal structure there could be the concentration of key powers in the centre. Warns researcher Dwarika Dhungel: “Power could still be centred in the provincial capitals and with little devolution to the grassroots.” ●



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

that, despite its repetitive use, has remained mysteriously undefined.

Nepal’s small-farmer cooperatives operate in 228 VDCs with 133,000 members, more than half of whom are women. They evolved from a successful FAO initiative in the mid-1970s, backed by the Agricultural Development Bank, to provide support to small farmers. The Small Farmers Development Project was expanded with foreign funding and at one time involved 16 per cent of Nepal’s villages.

The size of the program eventually grew beyond the means of the Agricultural Development Bank, which handed it over to the farmers themselves, in the form of small-farmer cooperatives. As with Nepal’s forest user groups, the small-farmer cooperatives remain a fine domestic innovation which, according to a GTZ review in 2003, have “dramatically changed the fortunes for many small farmer members for the better”.

They are eligible for loans of hundreds of millions of rupees

each year from the Agricultural Development Bank, available to members for income-generating activities. The impact has been significant, increasing available credit by about Rs11,600 per member in 2007. This also points to the possibility of using the liquidity of the commercial banking sector for rural poverty alleviation without having to bend over backwards to donors all the time.

Despite such successes, historically the program has been in retreat, plagued by government and donor indifference. The National Planning Commission, despite its untiring refrain about poverty alleviation, remains ignorant of small-farmer cooperatives even though they are now being replicated in Afghanistan with Nepali expertise. The Finance Ministry, responsible for guiding and coordinating foreign aid, functions more as a rubber stamp to legitimise donor proposals.

The 2003 GTZ review recommended an expansion of the program to create 400 cooperatives catering to 400,000 households within four years, but this was ignored. Meanwhile, there is the Poverty Alleviation Fund with \$100 million in World Bank funding. Unfortunately, the PAF is myopic and is engaged in promoting what it calls “community organisation”, which by all accounts is a poorer version of the small farmers development project of the 1970s.

If the Maoists are serious about their stated commitment to poor farmers and their cooperatives, this is where the government they lead should be concentrating their efforts. ●



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Emotional bond

“I leave a bit of my heart here in Nepal”

For departing Sri Lankan ambassador Sumith Nakandala, his two-year posting in Nepal was shorter than normal but unusually exciting, as he watched the country stumble through the peace process to emerge intact with a new government.

“I became close to Mr Prachanda in the past two years, and I found in him a real determination to see the peace process to its conclusion and to develop the country,” Nakandala told *Nepali Times* before leaving for his new job as Sri Lanka’s deputy high commissioner in London.

He admitted to feeling highly emotional as he made his farewell call on newly elected Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal on Sunday

morning, realising what an historic period he had witnessed in Nepal’s modern history.

Coming from a country where violence is again increasing following the collapse of the 2002 ceasefire, Nakandala welcomed what he saw as a genuine commitment among Nepal’s political forces for peace and reconciliation. “Nepal has evolved its own model based on diversity and pluralism and it can be a showcase for the world,” he said.

Nakandala said the second main reason for his emotional attachment to Nepal was that it was the birthplace of the Buddha. During his stay here, he visited Lumbini 15 times, often accompanying Sri Lankan ministers and dignitaries.

But he said the 34,000 Sri

Lankan pilgrims who visit Lumbini each year—more than from any other country—are often disappointed by the lack of decent accommodation and other visitor facilities at the site, so most of them end up making brief day trips.

Nakandala said his greatest regret was not being able to start a regular Sri Lankan Airlines flight between Kathmandu and Colombo. Despite two bilateral meetings, talks broke down over the number the passengers the airline could carry between Kathmandu and Delhi. The Sri Lankans wanted 700 seats a week to make the route viable, while the Nepalis wouldn’t budge on 500.

However, it was Nakandala’s deft diplomacy



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

that helped save last month’s SAARC summit in Colombo which he said came close to being cancelled because of the delay in Nepal naming a prime minister. His own hectic, last-minute lobbying ensured a Nepali head of government attended—even if only a caretaker prime minister.

“It was touch and go till the last moment,” Nakandala recalled. “But the bottom line

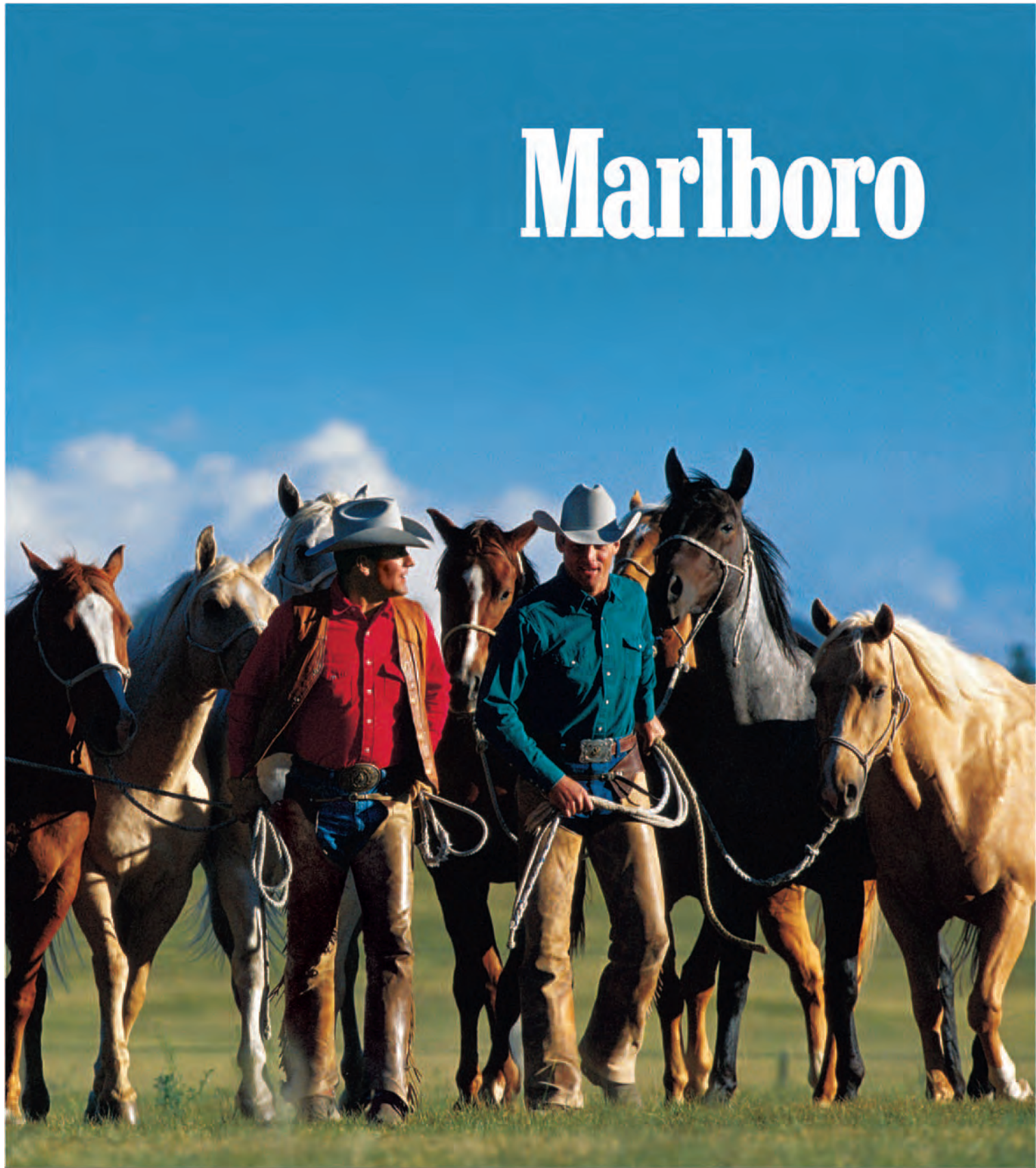
was that the summit had to be held.” At the time, the Maoists demanded that the summit be postponed, but Nakandala said Dahal bore him no hard feelings today.

To this Sri Lankan diplomat, South Asians share a common culture and similar moral values. “We are not different, we are the same,” he said. “We have the resources and wisdom to strive for a better common future for our peoples.”

He said his inspiration came from the Buddha’s teachings to replace selfishness and pettiness with compassion and generosity—qualities he found in abundance in Nepal.

Asked for his enduring memory of Nepal, Nakandala replied: “The people, the simplicity of the Nepali people, the complete lack of arrogance from the top leadership right down to ordinary people. I leave a bit of my heart here.” ●

Kumar Acharya



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New Norway chancery mimics Nepal's mountains

Down the hill in Kopundole, into a narrow lane that you almost miss, past two security gates where guards examine the bottom of the car with mirrors, the first sight of the new Norwegian Embassy building nearly takes your breath away.

Large zig-zag windows dominate the low-slung façade of the building that you don't see until you are right in front of it. The building is classic Nordic architectural functionality, low-key and modern, and full of common sense.

"We call them the Himalayan windows," says architect Kristin Jarmund, who designed the building and its dramatic glass façade, "the windows mimic the mountains, and when the weather is clear it will reflect Langtang."

The building was inaugurated on Monday by visiting Norwegian Development Minister Erik Solheim. "It is a fantastic coincidence that this chancery is being opened on the day of the prime minister's oath-taking," said Solheim at the inaugural function attended by Nepali foreign ministry officials and Kathmandu-based diplomats.

Solheim was the first foreign dignitary to visit Nepal after the success of the People Power



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

uprising in April 2006, and couldn't help drawing attention to Nepal's political transformation since then. "This is the first time in world history that a Maoist has been elected to head a government," he said,

"even Mao wouldn't have predicted it." The chancery building in Kopundole has used local materials as much as possible. "This is not Norwegian wood," says Jarmund (*see in pic, left*)

pointing out the sisau ceiling and wall panels. Stacked slate facades and flagstones in the parking lot and walls are all locally made.

This is the first foreign project for Jarmund's firm, which has designed school buildings, office blocks and even tube stations in Norway. Three years ago when she saw the site for the first time, it was north-facing terraced slope in Kopundole with a view of the mountains.

"What we tried to do was to greet and celebrate the Himalayan environment and integrate the building with the outside," she says.

In stark contrast with the elegant functionality of the building, however, are the unaesthetic brick-and-

concrete boxes that have come up outside the compound in the three years it took for the embassy to be completed.

Nepali architects could learn a tip or two from a building that is stylishly simple and built mostly from material available in Nepal. The building is also energy efficient and environment-friendly, with a rainwater harvesting system and solar heating panels.

Norwegian ambassador Tore Toreng said he was happy everything had come together a week before he is scheduled to conclude his four-year tenure in Nepal. He told guests at Monday's inauguration: "I managed to see the building finished before I go, and even got to see the new prime minister take office." ●

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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Missing Persons in Nepal**, black and white photo exhibition by Kishor Kayastha, Indigo gallery: 30 August- 6 September, Darbar Square: Bhaktapur 7 September, Kathmandu 8 September, Lalitpur 9 September, 8AM- 6.30 PM, Free entrance
- ❖ **The Group Painting Exhibition** by Bipin Raj Shrestha, Kishor Nakarmi and Madan Shrestha, till 23 August, 4.30 PM, Light and Shade Gallery, Thamel.
- ❖ **Health and Fitness Expo 2008** till 24 August at United World Trade Centre, Tripureswor. 4117104
- ❖ **Duet of Fantasies** by Promina Shrestha and Ranendra B. Mali till 7 September, 10AM-6PM, Gallery 32, Dent Inn at Heritage Plaza II, Kamaladi. 4241942
- ❖ **Amalgam-2008** an exhibition of paintings by national and international artists till 8 September at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, Sunday-Friday 11AM- 6PM and Saturday 12-4PM. 4438979

EVENTS

- ❖ **Half Nelson** a film by Ryan Fleck and Anna Boden on 26 August, Lazimpat Gallery CafE, 6.30 PM. 4428549
- ❖ **Paleti** concert with Madan Krishna Shrestha at Nepa-laya on 29 August. 4412469
- ❖ **Dancing/yoga-latey with Shabira Rao** 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

- ❖ **Some like it hot** every Friday BBQ and live music by Dinesh Rai and the Sound Minds, 7PM onwards, Rs 899 at Fusion, Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488
- ❖ **Ladies night** at Jatra Cafe & Bar on Wednesday with live unplugged music by D Shewan.
- ❖ **HyJazz Club** every Friday from 8.30 PM, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4489800
- ❖ **Dance and Cocktails** at Cube Bar, Kamaladi. 4438017
- ❖ **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.
- ❖ **Fusion and Classical Music** by Anil Shahi every Wednesday, rock with Rashmi Singh every Friday, Sufi & Raga with Hemant Rana every Saturday, 8 PM onwards, Absolute Bar. 5521408

DINING

- ❖ **Mediterranean Culinary Delights** every Friday at Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Shiraz Fever**, Australian Shiraz promotion throughout August at La Maison Wine and Cigar Lounge, Baluwatar. 4429903
- ❖ **TFC Buffet and Lunch** for Senior Citizen, 50 per cent discount offer throughout August, Radisson Hotel. 4411818†
- ❖ **Sixth Annual Wine Festival** until September at Kilroy's, Jyatha. 4250440
- ❖ **Fusion** of Marcela Regan's new menu and Mannie's new bar at Dhokaima Cafe. 5522113
- ❖ **Masala**, an Indian restaurant in Jawalakhel, St. Mary's school road. 4421634
- ❖ **Asparagus Promotion** at Hyatt Regency from 7 PM onwards till 31 August. 4489361
- ❖ **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri-la, Kathmandu, Rs 600. 4412999
- ❖ **Pasta pesto passion** at La Dolce Vita, Thamel. 4700612
- ❖ **Mexican Food Special** at Jalan Jalan restaurant, Kupondole height. 5544872†
- ❖ **Steak special** with free Irish coffee at K-too! Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel. 4700043
- ❖ **Continental and cafe item** with Live band every Friday at Vintage Cafe and Pub, Woodland Complex, Durbarmarg.
- ❖ **Home made pasta** at Alfresco, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **Reality Bites**, The Kaiser CafE, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, 9AM-10PM. 4425341
- ❖ **Steak escape** with Kathmandu's premier steaks available for lunch and dinner at the Olive Bar and Bistro, Hotel Radisson. 4411818
- ❖ **Bourbon Room Restro-bar** open for lunch and dinner, Lal Darbar.
- ❖ **Cocktails, mocktails and liqueurs** at the Asahi Lounge, opening hours 1-10PM, above Himalayan Java, Thamel.
- ❖ **Ily Expresson Coffee** at Hotel Shangrila, Lazimpat and Mandap Hotel, Thamel
- †❖ **International buffet** at the Sunrise CafE, 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 LeMeridien-Kathmandu, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Socially Responsible coffee** at Himalayan Java, Thamel

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

Quest Entertainment



Raj (Ranbir Kapoor) is the stuff of dreams, with the looks of a 'butter wouldn't melt in my mouth' good boy. He is also the guy that mothers warn their daughters about. Raj can't help falling in love each time he meets a different girl. It's not his fault that he's a heartbreaker, it's in his DNA. This movie tells his three love stories with Mahi (Minissha Lamba), Radhika (Bipasha Basu) and Gayatri (Deepika Padukone), his ladyloves at different times in his life. All three of them teach him a little bit about love and life in their own sweet, sexy or sassy way. Come fall in love... three times over!

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WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The disastrous flooding in Sunsari district after the Kosi River breached its east bank this week was not a direct result of excessive rainfall upstream. Most of the weather stations in the Kosi river basin have recorded normal or slightly higher than average rainfall this season, and no unusually large cloudbursts were recorded there in the last week. Satellite pictures on Thursday morning showed a persistent low pressure belt along the southern Himalaya alongside patches of moisture-bearing cloud. The stormy Bay is adding moisture to the air but most of this will be dumped before reaching Nepal. Conclusion: expect little change until early next week, when sunny intervals will make the days hot and humid but the nights will remain cool due to occasional showers.



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ताजा खबर थाहा पाउन
हालवाल
विहान: ८.४५, ११.४५
अपराह्न: २.४५, ४.४५
राति: ६.४५ र राती: ८.४५

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Tuning In To Language and Culture
प्रसार हुने समय : हरेक शुक्रबार बेजुका (८:१५-८:३५)
हरेक आइतबार विर्सो (१:४०-२:००)
"रेडियो सगरमाथा विचलित मुनी, अंग्रेजी सुधारी"
(रेडियो सगरमाथा र अमेरिकी राजदूतावास, अमेरिकी केन्द्रको सहकार्य)

सम्पर्क: २२१००९, २२२२२२, मोबाइल: ९७८२२२२, ईमेल: info@radiosagarmatha.org

हरेक विहान ५:०० देखि राती ११:०० बजे सम्म सूचना सिला र स्वास्थ्य बमोदरजनका लागि भरपर्दो साथी रेडियो सगरमाथा १०२ थोप्लो ४ मेगाहर्ज



KIRAN PANDAY

PROUD DADDY: Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal is congratulated by his father, Mukti Ram Dahal, at the Rastrapati Bhaban on Monday after his swearing in while CA speaker Subhas Nembang looks on.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

POLITICAL SPIN: Prime Minister Dahal meets with a delegation of former Miss Nepals (l-r) Sugarika KC and Usha Khadgi and 2008 contestants Akriti Shrestha and Padmini Jha. Gopal Kakshapati of Hidden Treasure took the delegation to get Dahal to call off the threats to the pageant from Maoist-affiliated groups.



KIRAN PANDAY

PHOTO MONTAGE: Photojournalists parade at Hanuman Dhoka on Tuesday on the occasion of 169th World Photography Day.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO GIVE: Maoist supporters collect money for flood victims in Sunsari at Indra Chok on Thursday.

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New national dress for New Nepal



For someone who dresses well, has a good taste in John Player shirts, Prime Minister Awesome sprung us all a surprise with his choice of a dirt-beige suit and a matching ugly tie. The Ass' tip: wear a dark suit, light blue shirt and red tie to Beijing, if you don't want to look like an ass.

The question of what to wear at the swearing-in engaged the Maoist politburo in a two-hour debate on Sunday. PKD himself at first wanted to wear daura suruwal, but the central committee had other ideas. After some heated exchange between the **Gang of Fourists** and **Dengists** the comrades settled on the fusion of suit and black cap. But when Awesome sneaked in a tie at the last moment, no one was more shocked than politburo members present at the oath-taking.



What the prime minister's suit fiasco did was take attention off the vice president's re-appearance in a dhoti. We urgently need an inclusive **unisex national dress for a New Nepal** that incorporates dress elements from the far corners of the republic from head to toe with a Sherpa fur hat, chuba with gamchha and bhoto, bakkhru, patuka, dhoti

wrapped around a suruwal and a pair of kharau.



Despite the prime minister's sympathetic assurance to the organisers of Miss Nepal on Sunday that he would unblock the pageant, and having posed with all the girls for a group picture, Maoist-affiliated cadre have over-ruled their leader. If this is the way it's going to be, how is one to believe all the Maoist assurances to foreign investors about being business friendly?



The real delay in government formation was not the feud between parties but within the Maoists, UML and MJF. The Comrade Biplop faction was sidelined in the race to replace PKD as PLA chieftain. Mohan Baidya rejected a ministership and wanted the much more powerful party post. UML couldn't agree on who should be **Homemaker Minister**. And infighting within the Forum between Upendra and Kangresi Madhesis got so bad the party nearly split in two.



What irritates President Yadav the most these days as he

commutes to and from work in his motorcade are large **billboards** with Awesome's mugshots that still proclaim 'Ganatantra Nepal ko Pahilo Rastrapati'. The Baddie Propaganda Division should repaint 'President' with 'Prime Minster' in these hoardings for the sake of inter-party harmony. This had become such a common election slogan that even BRB blurted out "our president" during his fiery tirade at the Constituent Assembly last week. He quickly corrected himself amidst laughter from honourable members. That slip of the tongue proves that in the Maoist gameplan PKD was supposed to be first prez and BRB PM.



The Maoists came out of the jungle and they sent the king into the jungle. But ex-kingji is preparing to vacate his temporary abode at Nagarjun and move back down to the city. Which is a pity, because Gyan was making good progress on his **memoir**, which they say will tell all and set the record straight on the royal massacre on the February First coup. Friends and relatives were surprised by how relaxed

and happy the former majesty looked at a birthday bash for the Queen Mother at Nirmal Nibas on Wednesday night.



The Maoist mouthpiece **Janadisha** is so chockablock full of congratulatory ads felicitating PKD on being PM it has brought out a Special Supplement. Some of them are the same guys who felicitated King Gyanendra when he sacked an elected prime minister in 2001. Prominent among *Janadisha* advertisers on Wednesday were Chitwan CoE, Nepal Telecom, Spice Nepal, various District Development Committees, and even the People's Liberation Army and Airport Sekuwa Ghar.



The winner of this week's New Name Contest is the Associated Press which filed a Kathmandu datelined story last week in which the editor in Hong Kong put the spell checker on Girija Prasad Koirala and put out the story with: **Gorilla Proboscis Corolla**. Moral of the story: always double check the spell check.

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