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Weekly Internet Poll # 416

Q. The Prime Minister should have:

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Q. How long will this government last?

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RALF DUJMOVITS

A busy autumn ahead for mountaineering Peak season

The monsoon hasn't ended yet, but the autumn season for trekking and mountaineering is off to a busy start.

Traffic is already picking up on the trails around the Annapurnas, Manang has seen early arrivals and hikers are striking out to Dolpo, Rara and even the Saipal slopes in far western Nepal. Lukla was just starting to look busy, but flights have been cancelled for the 10th straight day because of poor visibility. Trekkers and mountaineers heading for the Khumbu have been stranded at the airport for the past week.

Meanwhile, hundreds of mountaineers have begun arriving in Kathmandu for the 2008 post-monsoon season. Chinese restrictions on Tibet

continue to affect expeditions using Kathmandu as a jumping-off point. Numerous groups trying to climb Cho Oyu, the world's sixth highest mountain, via its Chinese northwest route were disappointed this season.

"Tibet's loss is Nepal's gain," said British expedition leader, Phil Crampton, whose expedition is among many that have switched from Cho Oyu to Manaslu.

Cho Oyu's northern route is relatively easy, and the mountain is regarded as a training peak for Chomolungma climbers. Says Ang Tshering Sherpa of Asian Trekking: "If the success rate is high this year, expeditions will probably be back on Manaslu next season." There have been only about 300 ascents of Manaslu since it was first climbed by the

Japanese in 1956, compared to more than 2,600 on Cho Oyu.

Among the climbers on Manaslu will be Spanish female climber Edurne Pasaban and Italian Nives Meroi who have both scaled 10 of the world's 8,000m peaks. They will be racing to make Manaslu their 11th peak. If they do so, they will be on par with Austrian climber, Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner, who is currently leading the pack to become the first woman to summit all 8,000m peaks.

Autumn will also be the season for extreme skiers. Swede Frederik Ericsson and Norwegian Jorgen Aamot will be trying to reach the summit of Kangchenjunga and ski down. They will be following the tracks of Italian extreme

OUT OF THIS WORLD: Climbers on their way from Base Camp towards Camp I in 2007 to scale Manaslu, which is getting an unprecedented 20 expeditions this season because of the restriction on expeditions to Tibet.

mountaineer, Hans Kammerlander, who skied down the southwest face from 7,600m in 1998.

EDITORIAL
Business as usual p2

Another first could be a traverse of Lhotse Shar by Italian mountaineer Diego Fregona, who will attempt to solo climb Lhotse's southeast ridge and descent the west face. ●
Billi Bierling

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BUSINESS AS USUAL

At the very moment Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal was addressing the Economic Summit organised by the Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI) on Sunday, his cadres were enforcing a violent shutdown of the Dabur Nepal factory in Bara.

From the pulpit, the prime minister reiterated his conviction that double digit growth was possible, and his government would do all it could to encourage foreign investors. But as with everything else about the Maoists, their actions speak louder than words.

Even as the Maoist prime minister was finally swearing in the UML members of his cabinet this week, militant youth factions of the two parties were knifing each other in Dhankuta, which was under curfew for three days. The YCL and Youth Force are at daggers drawn over protection money from Kathmandu's casinos. This mafia-like gang warfare proves, if proof is still needed, that politics is criminalised at a time when their parent parties are members of the governing coalition.†

We would like to give the Maoists the benefit of the doubt when they say they want to stop corruption. We want to believe that they are better placed than other coalition partners to launch Nepal on a development and growth trajectory. We understand that militant Maoist unions and other party hotheads may not be under direct control of the party leadership, especially the clique led by Finance Minister Baburam Bhattarai.

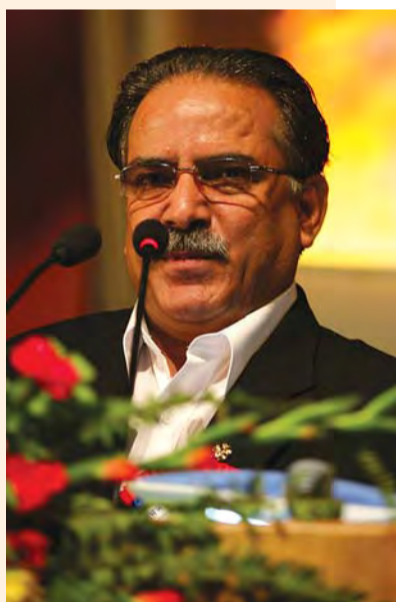
But the pattern of nationwide disruption of businesses, forced shutdowns, intimidation and extortion and threats against companies employing non-Nepalis is too systematic. Ultimately, this will undermine the Maoists' own plans for the economy.

Two weeks after the breach of the Kosi embankment, we now know the embankment did not breach because of heavy rains, but heavy politics. Two years of statelessness had bred militancy and criminality in the Tarai, directly affecting maintenance of the levees. The breach itself seems to have been a result of Indian contractors mining sand and boulders on the Kosi bed after paying off local militants. This is what made the river change course.

When the breach on the east embankment was noticed in early August, contractors dispatched to the scene for repairs were prevented from working because of threats and extortion by political activists from the Maoists and the MJF who are involved in a turf battle in Sunsari.

Finance Minister Bhattarai laid out his blueprint for the economy on Tuesday at the CNI meeting. He wants to leap frog development and launch massive job creation through investment in infrastructure.

But no one is going to invest here if his party can't clean up labour militancy and the criminalisation of politics.†And even the investors who are here will leave.†



KIRAN PANDAY

Remarkable peace

Nepalis mustn't be made to wait for a new constitution to see real improvement in their lives

Nepal's unique peace process has rarely gained outside attention since the guns fell silent two years ago. Yet, amid too many continuing conflicts and failing peace processes around the world, a success story deserves to be recognised and supported.

I came to Nepal in mid-2005, when human rights violations committed by both sides in the



GUEST COLUMN
Ian Martin

armed conflict, together with Gyanendra's crackdown on democratic rights as he seized absolute power, led the international community to support a monitoring presence from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

With no end in sight to a war with thousands of civilian victims, and democracy far off on the horizon, nobody could have foreseen how Nepal's people would express their demand for peace and change.

The turning point was the April 2006 people's movement, when hundreds of thousands took to the streets for 19 successive days. The king was compelled to hand power back to the political parties, while a peace agreement emerged that ended the conflict, bringing the Maoists into an interim parliament and government, and promising elections to a Constituent Assembly.

The people's movement also took the lid off social pressures often disregarded by Nepal's elites. Although established as a unitary Hindu kingdom, with politics directed from the

Himalayan foothills, today around half the population live in the fertile southern plains and more than one third are from over 50 indigenous, largely non-Hindu communities. Others are also historically marginalised from the social and political life of the nation, notably the Dalits.

For these groups, the restoration of democracy was a step toward social transformation, enabling them to participate more equally in the life of the country. Along with the success of socially diverse candidates fielded by the Maoists, the Constituent Assembly that was elected in April represents an unprecedented array of marginalised groups.

Women, too, had been almost invisible in political life—and, indeed, in the peace process. Now nearly one third of the Constituent Assembly's members are women—the highest proportion in South Asia and fourteenth place in the world for nationally elected bodies.

The challenges facing Prime Minister Dahal, the coalition government and the Constituent Assembly, are immense and trust is fragile. The NC, for example, has chosen to remain in opposition, dubious of the Maoists' commitment to democratic politics.

Nowhere in the world has the transformation of an armed insurgent group into a peaceful political movement been so quick or easy.

The Maoists enter the government still with their own army—confined to cantonments, with their weapons stored under UN monitoring—and a YCL that has persistently acted outside the law. Commitments to resolve the future of the Maoist combatants, along with what the peace agreements call the

'democratisation' of the state army, must now be implemented.

But the biggest challenges go to the roots of the insurgency: poverty, injustice, and discrimination. One cost of the conflict has been the retreat of local governance and arrested development in a desperately poor country. Expectations are high among diverse groups for greater control of their lives and resources. But what federalism will mean in practice, taking account of the geographic and ethnic peculiarities of Nepal, remains elusive and potentially divisive. Reaching a national consensus will be a formidable task for the Constituent Assembly, and meanwhile the Nepali people cannot be expected to wait patiently until a new constitution is drafted to see real improvement in their daily lives.

But there is reason to be hopeful. Nepal's peace process has been truly indigenous: it has not been mediated or managed by any external party. The UN has encouraged and facilitated the process—through good offices during the last years of the conflict, human rights monitoring, assistance to the election, and monitoring arms and armies during the transition.

The Maoist and non-Maoist parties have asked the UN to maintain a political presence while the issue of the former combatants is resolved, and we stand ready to support peace-building, recovery and long-term development. But the world, too, must be generous and steady in assisting Nepal to sustain the still fragile success of a remarkable peace process. ●
Project Syndicate

Ian Martin is the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative in Nepal.

Budgeting for women

Gender equality will never happen without government intervention

Between 2002 and 2007, as the government and Maoists fought out the latter stages of a bloody war in the countryside and signed up for peace, exports plummeted, government and private sector investment fell and agriculture stagnated. Nepal's growth dropped from more than five per cent to 2.9 per cent in the period.



INTERESTING TIMES
Mallika Aryal

Since the signing of the peace agreement in November 2006, the government has tried to focus on social reconstruction to bring about more inclusive development. In the 2007-2010 interim plan the government included gender empowerment targets, and went further in the 2007-08 fiscal year with

gender responsive budgeting (GRB).

Typically, when the national budget is formulated, it tends to ignore the different, socially determined roles, responsibilities and capabilities of women and men. There is a blanket assumption which doesn't translate into reality that all sections of society will benefit from the national budget. GRB doesn't mean asking for more money, or for separate budgets for men and women.

Rather, it is a way to encourage those charged with planning programs and budgets to address the needs and interests of different social groups. Government ministries are required to report on the gender responsiveness of their programs and activities, which are accorded one of three ratings according to their gender sensitivity: directly supportive, indirectly supportive or gender neutral.

In the 2007-08 budget, about 24 per cent of social services spending (such as education, health, local development and

drinking water provision) were classified as 'directly supportive' of gender equality, and 55 per cent as 'indirectly supportive'.

In contrast, only 10 per cent of spending on economic services (agriculture, communications, forestry, land reform, transportation, industry, etc.) was classified as directly supportive of gender equality. In the worst performers' land reform, forestry and communications at least 90 per cent of expenditure was seen as gender neutral.

This evaluation of the 2007-08 budget shows very clearly the built-in imbalance in the system. We will have to wait and see if new gender-responsive programs can have a positive impact.

One school of thought believes that if Nepal truly wants to reduce the gender gap, policy makers must stop designing separate programs for men and women. But in an extreme patriarchal society like Nepal's, women do need to be given a

special focus because it is clear that gender-neutral programs generally only benefit men.

Nepali women do most of the agricultural work but have no rights over the land they till. They cannot even get loans. Thousands of Nepali women die in childbirth every year because there is no midwife in the village. We now have a Constituent Assembly comprising one third women. If we could have this gender ratio in local government, especially in decision-making positions, this would be hugely beneficial to women.

But by just telling various ministries to be gender sensitive without providing them with the necessary tools, progress will be limited. In adopting the concept of a gender sensitive budget, the government has shown a will to be responsive to women's needs. But unless this will translates into money actually being allocated to women and then spent properly, gender inequalities will remain. ●

LETTERS

INDIA-NEPAL-CHINA

I am appalled by Prashant Jha's rambling (Two Dajusi, Plain Speaking, #415). How much should we lean towards India to balance China? Playing China against India doesn't work but playing India against China does. Please clear my head.

Sandeep Dhungana, Preston, UK

Indians and Chinese are going to be the next super powers in Asia and the world. Nepal stands to gain a lot by being smart. But we need to fix our mess. The most important thing of all is to safeguard our dignity, sovereignty, territorial integrity and nationality. There should be no compromise on this. The responsibility of this lies with our own leaders.

India's reaction to PKD's China visit (Love thy neighbour, #415) is childish. We need to be pragmatic, but a great country like India should not be so insecure.†

Sirish, email

It is the political parties who have created this perception that the real reason Nepal hasn't advanced is due to Indian meddling. Such India-bashing is a lame excuse for their own inadequacies. Indian companies have invested in Nepal and more would do so if the attitude in Nepal was not so anti-Indian. China's desire has been to isolate India in its own backyard. By destabilising the region the Chinese want to make sure manufacturing and jobs do not move to these countries. If the Indian economy expands as projected and there is a favourable environment in other South Asian countries, the whole region will flourish.

Manoj Sharma, New Delhi

KOSI

As you point out in your editorial, it's time we all realise that we have to learn to live with nature and not against her (A flood of recrimination, #415). The strongest of human endeavours fail to stand in front of nature's fury. Corruption and careless attitude are two other reasons behind these devastating floods. The Indian government clearly failed to maintain the embankments properly.

Kapil Mishra, India

Your editorial warned of the Kosi changing its course and bypassing the barrage and sweeping across Bihar as a worst-case scenario that will make the flooding in Nepal a picnic. Well, it looks like the worst case scenario has happened, this is what we have dreaded all along. You suggest that we should not block the Kosi's path to the sea. How? By relocating tens of millions of people who now live in the flood plain? There is no alternative to the Kosi Dam, the sooner we get used to the idea the better.

Ritesh Thapa, email

Alternative to the Kosi Dam: tap the Sun Kosi at multiple points and bring the water down through the Tarai to Bihar first so that the water is uniformly distributed in the plains. The height of the Kosi High Dam can thus be reduced in this seismic prone area. Water can be better controlled, siltation won't be a problem and it will be much cheaper. Let there be a national debate on this issue.

Name withheld, email

VANISHED

Kishor Kayastha's photos (Vanished without a trace, #415) made me sad. It is cruel for these families to suffer this way. No amount of money will bring back their near and dear ones, but the new government of Nepal, which is built on the blood and sacrifices of these families, should properly compensate them for the tragedy they have suffered, and at least lighten their financial burden. This sort of negligence and injustice is unacceptable.

Daniel R., Valencia, USA

A non-profit group I lead here, Community Members Interested (COMMITTED), conducted a fund raiser to help the

families of the Jogimara 17. Within Nepal, some more money was raised. Money may help, but families need a more long-term redress and a belief that justice has been carried out.†

Jayjeev Hada, Virginia, USA

Looking at the wheeling and dealing in the formation of the new government, it looks like the sacrifices of the disappeared and killed like Ram Kumar Bhandari's father (Justice delayed, #415) have been in vain. Is it for this that all that blood was spilt? Even now you see a Maoist prime minister only pay lip service to the plight of the relatives of the disappeared. We have to put pressure on the army and the Maoists to disclose information on the people they disappeared.

Yamlal Aryal, Odense, Denmark

There has to be justice for the families of people like Ram Kumar Bhandari. Thank you Mr Bhandari for carrying on the struggle in such a humane and heart-warming way. A New Nepal can't be created until the suffering of those who lost dear ones is recognised.

Leeza Sharma, Virginia, USA

CORRECTION

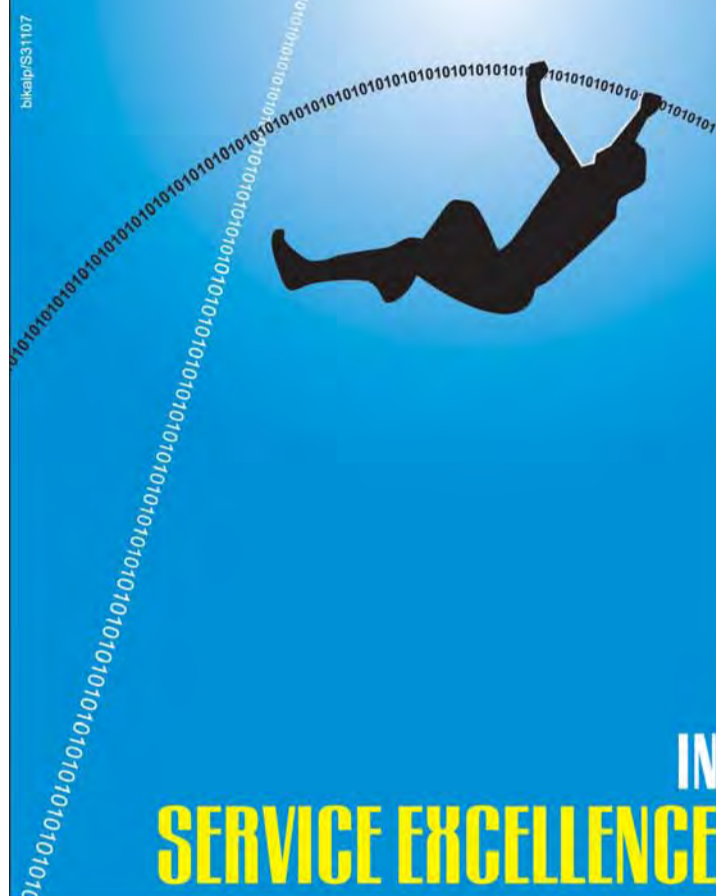
Ram Kumar Bhandari's father was disappeared (Justice delayed, #415) by the army in 2001 and not 2004 as inadvertently reported.



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Tea break

RABIN GIRI in DHANKUTA and ROSHAN SAWA in ILAM

April to August is peak picking time for tea, but this season most of Nepal's tea gardens in Dhankuta and Ilam have been closed because of strikes by workers. The tea bushes are slowly growing into trees.

Private tea gardens and processing centres, Ilam's privatised Nepal Tea Development Corporation, and Dhankuta's Guranse, Kuwapani and Jun tea

begun to make inroads in to those markets," he told *Nepali Times*.

The workers stopped work in Ilam and Dhankuta two months ago, with similar demands: a wage increase to Rs95 per day of tea picked, permanent contracts, insurance and other facilities. Protests in both districts are led by the Maoist-affiliated All Nepal Tea Estates Labour Union which

Chronic labour problems decimate Nepal's promising tea industry

estates have all been closed after workers either locked down or occupied the estates. Annually, Nepal produces over 176,000kg of orthodox tea and over 13 million kg of CTC tea, of which 70 and 30 per cent are exported respectively.

Andrew Gardner, the manager of Guranse, which is owned by the Vaidya group, says exports to Germany, Japan, France and the US have been hit. "It is frustrating because we had just

wants the implementation of earlier agreements as well as fulfilment of new demands. "If these demands are not met, we will intensify our protests," said the union's Dhankuta coordinator, Narayan Tamang.

The three tea estates in Dhankuta that together employed 700 people have still not been opened, although Guranse has reportedly reached an agreement on increasing the



PICS: ROSHAN SAWA

payment for pickers.

The union claims that the Triveni Group, which took over the management of the state-owned Nepal Tea Development Corporation in Ilam in 2000, has not made any moves to meet their demand, which include workers getting permanent contracts. Complicating matters is the fact that there are at least five unions affiliated to the various political parties involved. They had reached a deal with management mediated by the labour ministry last month, but Triveni says the unions have since come up with new demands.

In Dhankuta, tea estate owners say they had reached an agreement with a consortium of unions in 2006 that was supposed to be valid for three years when the new demands were put forward. Union leaders, however, say management of the estates are acting in bad faith and are refusing to listen. "We are not

demanding anything new, only wages and facilities that are within the law," says Shanta Kumar Rai, president of Nepal Free Labourers Union, Maoists affiliated union.

As the stalemate continues, thousands of people who depend on the earnings of tea estate workers in eastern Nepal have been affected, government revenue from the trade has taken a direct hit and the market for Nepali tea abroad is being damaged.

In Ilam, some workers are plucking leaves from the 534 hectare Triveni estate and selling it to local businessmen to make a living. FNCCI has criticised this move, saying it is illegal, but no one has been able to stop it—least of all the government which still owns 35 percent of the Triveni estate.

Says Triveni's Subash Shanghai: "We are already running at a loss. We can't raise wages anymore, we must work

together to save this company from liquidation, it is our national property." He says the company lost Rs70 million last year, mainly because the government hadn't kept its end of the bargain to help increase production. On paper, the estate, which is where the famous Saktim and Tokla brands are grown, could produce 1.3 million kg of tea a year. But it produces only 500,000kg. In Dhankuta, too, private estate owners say their wages were raised last year, and they are already higher than most other tea gardens in eastern Nepal.

But the issue has now become politicised, with the NC, Maoists and UML supporting the district administration in sending a memo to Kathmandu saying the demands of workers were justified. The only hope, district officials say, is for the political parties to work with their unions to mediate with the management of the tea estates. ●



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No Dasain



ILAMóFor the families of hundreds of tea pickers, it is going to be a sad Dasain. Without their daily wages, it is difficult to survive, let alone save up for Dasain shopping.

It has been a month that we haven't been paid, we can hardly manage to buy food," says Narmada Niraula, 35, who works on the Kanyam tea estate in Ilam.

She has been working here for 20 years, supporting her husband, two sons and one daughter. The family has been living in a temporary shed on the estate. Like her, about 75 per cent of the estate workers do not have their own land. Despite working here for many years, she has never been able to save any money.

The price of commodities has already gone through the roof and the Rs 80 per day wage can hardly buy two meals a day, so how can we save?" Narmada asks.

The tea estates have been closed since 28 July. If this continues, there won't be any Dasain for us," she says. Last year, too, the Dasain spirit was dampened by a strike.

The tea pickers living on the estates have no skills other than plucking tea leaves, nor do they have their own home or land.

She says it is the labourers who suffer most from such frequent strikes and wage disputes. The management may lose some money, but it is we pickers who suffer the most. The sooner the tea estate opens, the better.

Orbit wives



Orbit House Wife Club held an interaction programme on the occasion of Tij on 31 August on 'Women's Leadership and the Importance of English Language' initiated by Orbit International Education. The speakers at the programme talked about the importance of women's leadership to create a New Nepal and the role of English language to improve women's lives.

NEW PRODUCTS

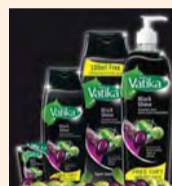
ELECTRIC WHEELS: Padma Shree Enterprises has recently introduced the Chinese-made Foton E-bike. The Foton Jingge Electric bike comes in 250W and 350W power output models, which are priced at Rs 37,600 and Rs 38,800 respectively. A single fully charged battery has a range of 50km and top speed of 30km/h.



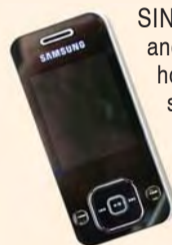
NOODLES LITE: Himalayan Snax & Noodles has introduced a new product to its Mayos noodles range—Mayos Lite, which is pre-cooked in Sunflower oil instead of Palm oil and so has 40 per cent less saturated fat and is cholesterol-free. It comes in chicken and vegetable flavours in the regular 75g pack size, and is priced at Rs 17.



SHINING BLACK: Vatika has introduced Vatika Black Shine Shampoo, available in 500ml dispenser packs, 400ml flip-top packs, 200ml packs and sachets. The ingredients include black olives and amla. The dispenser packs are priced at Rs 215 and come with a free hair brush.



SINGING PHONES: Samsung has launched its F250 and i450 music series of mobile phones. The F250 has hotkeys for listening to music and built-in real stereo speakers, as well as video and still cameras. You can listen to music even when the phone is switched off. The i450 has a pop-up speaker, 3.5G technology that allows for fast downloading, and the ability to multitask with applications.



Investment worries

The news that Tata Motors is packing its bags and leaving Singur district in Communist-ruled West Bengal has sent a chill down the spine of India's corporate world. The Nano project succumbed in the fight for



ECONOMIC SENSE Artha Beed

political egos. The corporate world that always takes the word of the political leadership with caution will be shaken by the events that are unfolding in Singur. If Singur lost the opportunity to become a Detroit, the West Bengal government lost a lot of credibility for being unable to defend its land acquisition process.

There are lessons Nepal can learn from the Singur episode. While private sector growth can be facilitated by governments and political parties, without the right involvement of the local communities, processes may be delayed. Government may be relied upon as a facilitator, but only to the extent of the legal structure. It is up to companies or institutions to go beyond and actually see what the communities think.

Countries in the region such as Thailand are experiencing a big rural-urban divide between what urban dwellers and rural folk

consider to be acceptable development parameters. Particularly in rural areas that are dependent on agriculture, it is important to find labourers alternative livelihoods when land is no longer available.

The recent CNI economic summit did not introduce any groundbreaking thinking on the role of the private sector, but it was at least possible to hear the new government's take on economic growth. Finance Minister Baburam Bhattarai has

guarantees and there are not sufficient resources to pump into the public sector?

● How does a country encourage the private sector when rights to own property and to run businesses are not fully guaranteed?

Globally, it has been observed that private sector development accelerates the pace of economic growth more than anything else. For the private sector, the key is also to embark on action along with the

Economic growth needs a confident private sector

rightly pointed out the four key areas, but we must wait and see if anything actually happens.

● How does a country with fragmented land holdings achieve economies of scale through land reform that causes further fragmentation?

● How does a country with high community expectations implement land acquisition for infrastructure projects?

● How does a country suffering from a decade of deteriorating tourism service quality develop a sustainable tourism industry?

● How does a country attain its health and education targets when private providers have no

government and other stake holders using the right models of partnership. Public Private Partnerships should not be modelled around party workers forced into work by private enterprises creating unproductive institutions.

The private sector also needs to engage beyond the usual speeches and hobnobbing with the centres of power. The time has come to collectively support an economic policy centre that will both help the private sector to think and also help the government to take action. ●

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People's republic

Deshantar Saptahik, 31 August

देशान्तर साप्ताहिक

Senior Maoist minister Mohan Baidya, guru to Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, has always stuck to, and fought for, his vision of establishing Nepal as a people's republic. Excerpts from an interview with Rishi Dhamala:

Are you more fond of Bamdeb or Baburam?

This is difficult to answer, but because it raises questions of whether I'll stay in the government or not, I am compelled to make a decision. Since we've decided to give the responsibility of setting things right to the Chairman Comrade, I accept his decisions.

Inside the party, they say that you're next after Prachanda.

It's only in Parliament that there's such specificity as to who leads and who will follow. It is not that way inside parties. When we brought about the revolution, we had no protocols. Since entering parliamentary politics, we've learned a lot about things we didn't know existed.

Didn't Baburam say that he wouldn't work under anyone?

All of us are under the party, no one is above it. Even the Chairman isn't bigger than the party.

How long do you think this government will last?

If the government gains support, it will last for its term of office. But if it doesn't gain the support it

requires, the government will not last for even a short while.

Is it true that the government is facing a threat from the Maoists themselves?

There is no threat from the Maoists. We will always work towards making our government successful.



KIRAN PANDAY

When will you become the party's acting chairman?

Our central committee has to agree. Whether I am granted the responsibility of being the acting chairman is something decided by the party, not something for an individual person to decide. If and when the party decides to give me that responsibility, I am ready. But till then, I won't demand anything.

Why did you resign from the assembly?

Things happen internally. I don't want to comment on them. There is always discussion and debate inside the party.

Hasn't Baburam said that it's not necessary to give anyone the post of acting chairperson?

There's no problem if they don't make me the acting chairperson. In fact, it's better if they don't.

When will Nepal become a People's Republic?

Making Nepal a people's republic is our goal. That day will definitely come.

Royal ways

Samaya, 29 August – 4 September

समय

The Maoists had asserted that their relations with diplomats would be less formal but more fulfilling, but in practice the new government does not seem too different from the old. Public and private vehicles are still forced to take a detour when our PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal decides to take a drive.

For Dahal's 'informal' visit to China, all the ambassadors were invited to the Tribhuvan International Airport to see him off. The absence of Indian ambassador Rakesh Sood was viewed by most as an expression of India's dissatisfaction over China being chosen for the first official visit of the PM. But Sood was not alone in boycotting the event. The British and American ambassadors also chose not to see Dahal off.

"Normally only the ambassador of the concerned country is present at such occasions. It would have been appropriate if others were not invited," a South Asian ambassador told *Samaya*. Another ambassador asked: "Why is Prachanda behaving like the king?"

The ambassadors and diplomats are also annoyed that much of their time is wasted in waiting. Whether it is formal and informal visits of officials,

or the sessions of the interim Parliament and the Constituent Assembly, none start on time. It must be noted that because there was no mechanism for translation in the interim Parliament and still isn't in the CA, it has been impossible for the foreign diplomats to understand the proceedings.

US of Nepal

Sangjuhang Palugwa, chairman of the Federal Limbuwan State Council in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 1-16 September

हिमाल
खबरपत्रिका

- According to the five-point agreement with the government, ethnic autonomy needs to be ensured now.
- If our demands are not met by 30 August, we will officially declare the Limbuwan State, leaving only the foreign, currency and military centres to the government. This action will be the last stage of our peaceful protest.



ROSHAN SAWAR

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●Prithbi Narayan Shah united sovereign states, not sentiments. The end of the monarchy has marked freedom for those constituencies. Nepal now needs to be referred to as the United States of Nepal in the constitution. Only then can these states be held together.

●We are preparing for a possible armed struggle in the future. Our LVs (Limbuwan Volunteers) are

undergoing training to use guns.

●In the distribution of power between the parties, talk of dismissing local government can be heard. This is against federalism. It can only invite civil war.

●We have been preparing the army in case the state tries to oppress us. In our fight for self-governance, we can die or win our motherland.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



We will get 90 per cent in the next elections, and we can easily rule for another 20 years. After that, the Nepali people won't feel the need for any other party except the Maoists.

Pushpa Kamal Dahal in interview with BBC Nepali Service 2 September



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Barhopping in 'Mandu

Filled with the promise of showing you a good time, a cocktail should be as appealing to your eyes as it is to your taste buds—an art form of sorts. At great risk to their sanity, *Nepali Times* reporters sought out the capital's best watering holes. Let's face it, somebody had to.

SHITU RAJBHANDARI,
PRAVAT J GURUNG, MALIN GURUNG



Moksh Bar, Pulchok
Moksh Bar's friendly staff and homely dÉcor give it the feel of a local pub. Owned by famous musician Nirakar Yakthumba, Moksh opened in 2002 and is best known for its music and pizzas. But the drinks at Moksh can't be over looked, for the menu lists an array of international cocktails made with good quality spirits. Try: Sex on the Beach and the Moksh Special.



Manny's Bar, Dhokaima CafÉ, Patan Dhoka
The orange and yellow walls cast a warm mellow glow in this small cosy bar. The man beside the bottles, Manoj Basnet, refined his skills with a 10-year stint in Manhattan. Says Manny: 'I want to develop the culture of an after-work watering hole.' Try: Mojito or Manny's very own invention, the 'Liquid Viagra', to get the evening underway.



Roadhouse CafÉ, Thamel
Although most famous for its excellent wood-fired pizzas, Roadhouse CafÉ also offers one of the best range of cocktails in town. Feeding the epicureans of Kathmandu since 1992, the Kayastha brothers seem to have got it right, as getting a table at any of their outlets in the evening can be hard. A Caipirinha coupled with cheese-covered potato skins provides a refreshing break on a hot day. Also try the Margarita.

CafÉ Mitra, Thamel
After climbing the stairs to the lounge area of CafÉ Mitra, we found welcoming glasses of Strawberry Sunset and Cosmic Chas awaiting us. With its contemporary and minimalist dÉcor, it is clear that CafÉ Mitra treats everything that comes out of the



kitchen as a piece of art. The Green Chilly Prawns and Cold Steamed Tofu is a top-class accompaniment to a cocktail or two.

Casablanca, Baber Mahal Revisited
Just five months old, Casablanca is very white and very chic. With dÉcor inspired by the eponymous film, this bar serves a total of eight cocktails and four shooters. But if



you are hungry you'll have to satisfy yourself with Korean cup noodles. It's a typical bar minus the noise—a relaxed place to hang out with friends young and old. Try: Lychee Martini and Sangria.



Splash Bar, Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat
A bar that's good for any occasion, and open from 11AM till late. You can enjoy more than a dozen cocktails on the breezy

fifth floor and the view there is terrific. The Blue Margarita and Mocktail Sunrise go down well with BBQ Chicken or, for vegetarians, the Mushroom Pineapple Shashlik. Go after the barbecue hots up at 6.30PM.



Fusion Bar, Dwarika's Hotel, Battisputali
A peaceful place reflecting true Nepali culture right beside the hustle and bustle of Battisputali, Fusion Bar offers a blend of cultures, drinks and food with live bands on Wednesdays and Fridays. Manager Arjun Raj Giri assures us the Mojito and Bloody Mary are different here. Enjoy a drink by the poolside or just relax at the bar.



Absolute Bar, Pulchok
Opened with an eye to creating the perfect lounge bar in Kathmandu, Absolute Bar has a relaxing seating area with live fusion and classical music with Anil Shahi on Wednesdays, Rock music with Rashmi on Fridays and Sufi music with Hemant Rana on Saturdays. Try the Mojito with cold meat platter.

Bhumi Restro Lounge, Lazimpat
Bhumi Restro Lounge only sprang into action two months ago, but it's already considered to be a hip and happening

Manny's Rukhmuni Lounge
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Tamas Spa Lounge, Thamel

Located in the heart of Thamel, Tamas Spa Lounge is an oasis amid the hustle and bustle. Proprietor Alok Yonjon has been a bartender for 10 years, which is reflected in the bar's professional approach. Tamas boasts a wide range of original cocktails, live music every night and a DJ on Fridays.

place. A decent location, attractive décor and comfortable seating all complement the equally good food. Bhumi's cocktail special is its Electric Margarita, which swaps the normal tequila for aila. Teetotallers should try the Virgin Flamingo. Groove to funk blues with the band Looza every Friday. Open from 11AM to 11PM.



New Orleans Café, Pulchowk

New Orleans boasts a great selection of music, often performed live by various bands. It has a quiet candlelit ambience accompanied by great food and drinks. Proprietor Sudesh Shrestha is a frequent traveller, and that is reflected in the menu as well, which has dishes from around the world, including a good range of vegetarian food. Apart from the regular cocktails, New Orleans also has a wide selection of non-alcoholic drinks.

Bourbon Room, Lal Durbar Marg

Nabin Tuladhar and his partner Suresh Manadhar opened Bourbon Room just a few months ago after successfully running the Liquid Lounge. Bourbon Room is quiet with a relaxed ambience. Great food and drinks are accompanied by soothing live music every evening. An ongoing promotion titled 'Mojito Mania' offers 20 varieties of Mojito.



Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency, Boudha

Head for Rox if you want peace, privacy, good service, chic décor and top quality food and drinks. This month Rox is promoting Mojito and Herbal cocktails, which taste amazing. Try spicy potato wedges and fish croquette snacks. There is also live jazz on Sunday at lunch.

Drinking responsibly

- Alternate alcoholic drinks with soft drinks or low-alcohol drinks.
- Know your limit. If you don't know when enough is enough at least have a friend or family member present who can tell you.
- If you start drinking don't even think about driving.
- Don't drink on an empty stomach because the effects of alcohol will hit you harder and faster.
- Stop drinking if you start vomiting. This definitely means your body has had enough.
- Always limit yourself to one type of alcohol.
- Do not take sleeping pills or any prescription or non-prescription drugs when you are drinking alcohol.
- If by any chance you see someone who has passed out and has not vomited after extreme amounts of alcohol, take the person to the hospital. Complete unconsciousness may mean the person is subjected to alcohol poisoning.

PICS BY: PRAVAT J GURUNG AND KIRAN PANDAY

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LINE/SEP/08

Children of

PRIYA JOSHI in SAPTARI

Driving across the Kosi Barrage it finally hits you: the mighty river has been reduced to a trickle. Most of the Kosi now flows through densely populated villages in Nepal and India along a course that the river abandoned in 1867.

left and guard their houses. Most have put up anything they can find: tarp, plastic sheets, bamboo, reeds for shelter. The stench of human waste is pervasive, disease is rife and children are especially vulnerable. Drinking water is scarce. For most, there is just the muddy water of what is left of the Kosi. Everywhere, there is the destitution, confusion and



ALL PICS: PRIYA JOSHI

The Kosi's western embankment here in Saptari has become one long refugee camp stretching up to 14km. Those fleeing the floods in neighbouring Bihar have also settled along old banks of the Kosi.

They have come with their livestock and belongings and have set up tents along the highways where relief supplies are most plentiful. One Indian family say they walked six days to get here because everything was flooded, relief camps were crowded and they wanted their three daughters to be safe.



Every day, more people come from Sunsari and Bihar: in tractors, rickshaws and bullock carts piled high with women and children. Once the family is safe, the menfolk wade back to their villages to try to salvage what is

misery of people who have lost everything.

From one camp to the next,



what is most apparent is the vast number of children everywhere. Children ferrying water, children foraging for dry straw and twigs



to cook, children tending livestock. There are newborns sleeping in the laps of their of emaciated mothers. Little Neha, barely a week old, is all oiled up



and groomed by her mother, for whom the neighbours brought food. Even the goats have given birth and the kids scamper around their mother with human children.



AUGUST 8, 2008



BEFORE AND AFTER: Time lapse NASA images from 8 August before the embankment breach (left) and on 24 August, one week after the levee collapsed in Nepal (right).

The Kosi's heavy sediment load makes the river very mobile along its 200km alluvial fan after it breaks through the mountains in Chhatar.

But new embankments built in



PRIYA JOSHI

Fatalism and hope

Everybody loves a good flood

LAUKHI, SUNSARI The story from the Kosi is of incredible human resilience and a strong social fabric. Despite the tragedy, traditional networks of kinship and solidarity, fatalism and hope are helping people cope.

Rajendra Yadav is a small contractor in Kathmandu whose family is from Sripur. Yadav is not worried about the destroyed crops or his recently constructed concrete house being swept away. He is worried about his mother who is nowhere to be found. As his old neighbours fix a boat to go back to the village to look for her, a

stoic Yadav says: 'She may have gone over to Saptari or maybe she is in a camp. We will find her.'

At a health camp in Inaruwa, run by the Maoist

Kochila State Committee, women and children crowd around waiting for their chance. Sarita Devi, from Supaul in Bihar, waded through water with her child for a day to reach her relatives on the Nepal side. Her husband stayed back to take care of others. She found her sister but discovered there was no trace of her brother-in-law, who had gone to his native Haripur VDC for the rakhi festival right before the breach destroyed the village. 'We don't know where our men are. Our children are unwell. But we at least have each other,' she says.

The border has become meaningless because of family ties, logistical convenience and better relief operations in Nepal. At Jogbani station across the Biratnagar border, we met a man who works in Gujarat. After hearing about the floods, he rushed to Sunsari and took a boat from Laukhi to Bihar's Birpur because that was the only way to get there. He rescued his wife and two children, brought them back via Nepal and was waiting for a train to return to Surat.

As P Sainath said of droughts in India, everyone here seems to love a good flood. District administrators are thrilled with the relief money and hatch plans to skim it off. Boatmen are charging as much as Rs 12,000 at key points to take people back to their villages to find relatives or recover goods. Party activists have turned relief operations into patronage dispensation exercises. A new politician-contractor nexus is already taking shape for the repair work. Engineers at the road and irrigation departments are salivating over the money that will come in for reconstruction. The Bihari transport cartel knows if their highway does not give way, they can make a neat profit off Nepali passengers and goods.

The present disaster happened because of what water expert Dipak Gyawali calls the confluence of wrong technological choice, wrong institutional arrangements and Bihari-style politics. Indian policy makers preferred to live on in Nehruvian fantasies rather than heed warnings from their own activists. Bihari politicians and contractors looted state coffers annually. There was no co-ordination between the Kosi engineer in Birpur, the government in Patna, the MEA in Delhi and the embassy in Kathmandu when the crisis was brewing. And what can you expect from the illiterate Indian media which was busy accusing Nepal of 'releasing water'?

On our side, a weak district administration did little to rein in local contractors blocking work. Some were MJF and Maoist supporters and their parties protected them. The authorities were criminally negligent by not acting on repeated warnings about an imminent breach.

The truth is little can be done immediately. N Sanyal, an octogenarian who headed the Ganga Flood Control Commission in the past, has been called back by the Bihar government to suggest measures. He told us: 'Our action plan for now includes surveys, feasibility studies and procurement of material. We need to see how the river behaves. The actual closure will be an adventure.' Other sources tell us work can begin only after March.

When asked about the weakness of the Kosi project, Sanyal remarked: 'Our biggest weakness was overconfidence in the strength of the project. We were too complacent nothing would happen.'

PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha



the flood

Families fleeing floods have settled where the Kosi used to flow



Grandparents look after the children while able-bodied family members go to fetch relief supplies, fuel, shelter and food. Families sleep on the floor, lucky if they have a plastic sheet to lie down on at night.



The children are resilient, they find things to do: playing in carts, painting their nails with ballpoint pens, or making mud cakes. But there are also sick children, many suffering from diarrhoeal dehydration. Older children, especially the girls, babysit younger siblings, fetch water and do the household chores, and where men are not present, help their mothers set up shelters.

This boy from India, Jainul

Masuli, was separated from his family when the Kosi changed course. He was found alone in the



buffalo shed, crying. A family has taken him in even though he is an extra mouth to feed.

One family was looking after children whose mother had been pushed off the boat after she was not able to pay to be rescued. Some marooned women in Bihar said they paid boatmen with their nose rings to be taken to dry land.

Many from India stay with their Nepali relatives at night and some flock to the relief camps in the day time to get aid. And as with everything else, aid is also getting politicised. Young political activists threaten violence if relief materials are not distributed through their organisation, locals try to loot



supplies. There is communal tension brewing.

Two weeks after the flood, there are still hundreds streaming in. Unlike neighbouring Sunsari, relief is not as organised here, but the need is even greater. These are the flood refugees who have found themselves in the back waters of the relief operations.

Thankfully, relief work in Saptari is gathering pace day by day, with better shelters and toilets. Handpumps have been installed, and the registration of the homeless is in full swing. But there is a long way to go. ●



- What the Kosi refugees need:**
- Food and clean water
 - Tents, shelter, latrines, bathing areas
 - Dry blankets, clothes, mattresses, treated mosquito nets
 - Medical attention
 - Supplementary food for nursing mothers and babies
 - Recreational and educational material for children
 - Kitchen utensils and fuel wood

Who to send contributions to:
District Disaster Relief Committee (Saptari)
Phone: 031-520-073/520-366

The other side

PARVINDER SINGH in BIHAR

This is heartbreaking. The world has not been told the magnitude of what has happened here or the unique nature of this tragedy.

We are now close to the place where the crisis began, the epicentre, where the Kosi crosses from Nepal into India. The disaster has struck in a place which hasn't seen flooding for 150 years. We are facing a total social collapse.

Huge areas are under water. In most places the flooding is six metres deep and ordinary homes and huts have been completely submerged. Only the roofs of schools and other official buildings are still visible. People have tried to escape the waters by climbing on to the raised parts of roads which have been built on stilts. In Supaul district, I saw around 1,000 people sitting on a single section of highway.

The waters have been rising for nearly two weeks and we are still in the rescue phase. There had been no sign of help from the government until yesterday. In the absence of the state, what you have here is anarchy.

Private boat operators are charging survivors to rescue them. One woman told me that she had been forced to pay Rs 3,000 to get on a boat. That was all her family could afford and the others were left behind. Many women say that they have been molested, others have had their valuables taken from them while they were helpless and trying to escape the flood.

Things are much, much worse in Bihar

People are angry that they have been abandoned for so long. Boats are being operated by local opportunists and caste is playing a part in who survives. You have to go back three generations to find anyone who has experience of how to deal with floods. Elsewhere, there is some ability to cope. Here it has broken the people.

I visited a school in Sahrfa, 65km from here, where as many as 1,000 people were crammed into a building meant to house a few hundred pupils. There is no toilet, no cooking facilities, no beds, no sheets. Young, old, disabled and vulnerable people are camped there with nothing.

A young man, 18 years old, had lost all 15 of his relatives. The Madhepura area he was rescued from has been under water for days. Two women in the school are pregnant. Another gave birth during the weekend. She is alone waiting for her husband, who is trying to find the rest of the family.



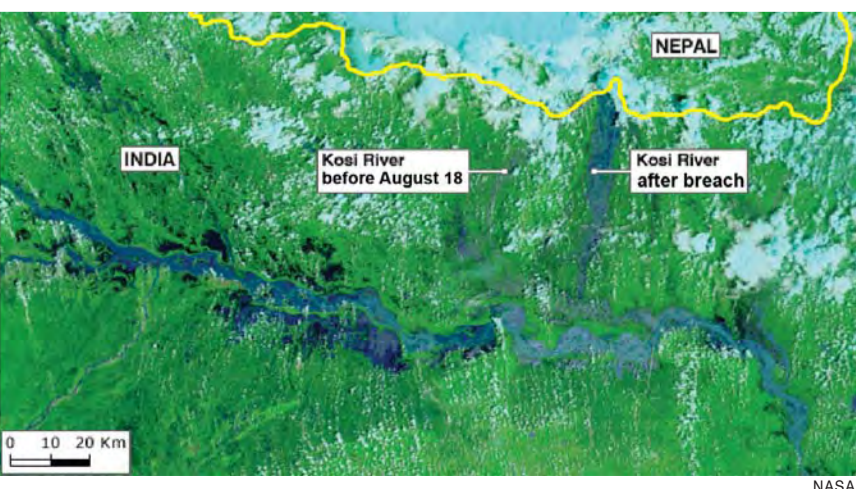
Everywhere there are women left alone. This is one of the poorest parts of the country with high unemployment, low life expectancy and poor health care. The men in this region are sucked into the cities as migrant labourers. There are already serious problems with women being trafficked across the border into Nepal. Now the numbers of vulnerable people will balloon. The waters are still rising and this will continue in its full fury until November. A lot of effort will be needed to set up a long-term relief operation.

The true magnitude of what's happening still hasn't been accepted, even by the government. We've just seen the first naval boats being pushed into the water. No one here knows what has become of their relatives or homes and there is a lot of anger when the government is seen to come in and take credit.

We have calculated the death toll at 2,000 and that is a very modest estimate. We believe the true figure may be much higher. ●

Parvidner Singh is an Indian humanitarian relief worker with the charity, Action Aid.

AUGUST 24, 2008



Bihar in the past 60 years has raised the river bed above the surrounding land. In Nepal, the Kosi barrage dams up not just water, but also silt. the breach of the east embankment on 18 August was exacerbated by sand and boulder mining of the nearby Kosi bed that made it easier for the river to change course and scour the levee. Once it was breached, the Kosi started flowing down a channel it had abandoned in 1867.

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MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

"A lesson for the rest of the world"

Head of the EU delegation in Nepal, Eduardo Lechuga-Jimenez spoke to *Nepali Times* this week at the end of his eventful four-year tenure here. Excerpts:†

Nepali Times: In the four years that you have been here, Nepal has gone through a dizzying political transformation. What are your impressions?

Eduardo Lechuga Jimenez: When I came here, I never realised we were going to witness such a historical evolution. In 2004, Mr Deuba was prime minister but I could see the government had no future because his capacity to maneuver was impossible. Then on 1 February 2005, when the king took over, we came to an autocratic situation. A year later we witnessed a social revolution and now we not only have a democratic government but a prime minister who is a former fighter. I have never been through such a fantastic and intense situation in my professional life.

Would you say that the visit of the EU Troika at that time and your embargo on aid to the royal government had an impact on the eventual sidelining of the king?

I think so. The Troika is a political instrument that analyses the situation in a country. We were already very worried when the first Troika came in December 2004, and we made that public. But I don't think the king's government was listening to our advice. We had to stop our cooperation because the regime was not a democratic one. I think it had a big impact because it was the biggest political message we gave to the government. Nevertheless, we continued our aid to the poor, to civil society and NGOs. What was remarkable was the fantastic response of the Nepali people and the political parties in dealing with the new situation.

Now that the political issues have been addressed, how is the EU placed to help Nepal with the economy and development?

Before development, there is still the challenge of political stability. One thing is to have a government, now they have to prove that it works. I think it is still too early to say, but what the government has to do is to deliver, and to prove to the people that it can govern and to the rest of the world that it is capable of facing the new task ahead. Apart from that, Nepal needs development, not just aid of which we are the biggest contributor, but also the preferential treatment for Nepali goods in the European market. Basically, we have to modernise the country's capacity to create wealth.

Have you had to change your Country Strategy Program 2007-2013 because of the political changes here?

No doubt. And that is why we came out a bit late, but it gave us time to adapt the program so well that we will have a better quality of aid. What we are looking out for till 2013 is social development: education, health, and inclusiveness in our programs. We are also going to be looking at the peace process and stability. And the economic part of the country strategy is that we will develop Nepal's trade with the rest of the world. We will also look at climate change, which is a priority for the EU.

How is third country repatriation of Bhutan refugees going, and is your aid now going to be phased out?

The American scheme is a very positive one, we are working with them and we will be embedded in it. We have put a limit to our presence in the camps and we will be phasing out by 2010. We have been supporting the cause and a solution to the problem for more than 20 years.†Also, we have extended a one million euro aid for flood victims last week, on top of the 40 million euros of humanitarian aid to Nepal last year.†

What would you say are your more striking memories of Nepal?

For me it is the capacity of the Nepali people to be so democratic to always give a very peaceful response to the difficult challenges that Nepal has had in these four years. I am really amazed by the peaceful evolution. Nothing is perfect, and I would be very naïve if I didn't say that many things were not right. I have to congratulate the people of Nepal for the lesson they have given to the rest of the world about how you can evolve from a difficult political situation towards a stabilised one.

On a more personal basis, I was impressed 20 years ago when I came here, and now I am even more impressed. I am almost about to cry as I leave here in a few days. The beauty of the country comes from the mountains and fields of Nepal, but also from the people. My wish is that I will be accepted as a friend of Nepal forever.

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Weaving magic

Tapestry artist ties up threads to make ends meet

Raju Tuladhar sits at his loom and starts to weave the wool through the fine warp threads that have been carefully fixed on the frame. His hands move with a swiftness that can only come after years of practice. As he works, the shape of hills slowly emerges from the intertwined green threads of wool.

“I have a special attachment to threads,” Raju says with a smile. “They have been a part of my life for 18 years now.”



PAAVAN MATHEMA

While Nepali carpets are well known to the outside world, few people know about Tuladhar’s tapestries. He was 12 years old when he began to learn the weaving techniques at the Nepal Srijanatmak Kala Guthi, a privately run arts and crafts institute in Dhobighat.

Urmila Upadhyaya Garg, who established the institute, has been his mentor from the beginning and today is

himself an instructor.

“You never know how long it will take to make a tapestry or how the design will emerge,” he says. “As I play with the ideas and blend the colours, my tapestries often turn out different from how I first imagined them.”

He has tried his hands at Mithila-style folk art, Australian aboriginal painting and western-style modern art. But he always comes back to his preferred landscapes, which give him the freedom to merge shades and textures of wool, cotton and silk threads. A Picasso lover, he has tried to emulate the artist’s brush strokes in his weaving. From a distance, his work can appear almost impressionistic.

“Producing the right texture is a challenge because it requires precision in the adding and merging of colours,” says Raju. “But the satisfaction you get after completing your work is worth every effort.”

More than 50 of Raju’s tapestries decorate homes and galleries around the world. Although his work has a strong following abroad, Tuladhar says few Nepalis respect tapestry as an art form, but he plans to hold a solo exhibition of his tapestries in Nepal.

He is selling his latest work, a tapestry depicting a Nepali landscape of hills and mountains, measuring 60 by 39 inches to Canadian collectors Sherry and Dennis Holyk for \$2,000. “It is difficult to sell something you’ve worked so hard on,” Tuladhar concedes. “It almost becomes like your child.”

Say the Holyks: “This is a treasure for us, and will be passed down through our family for generations to come.” ● Paavan Mathema

Football fever

In an attempt to give sport in Nepal a kick up the backside, Nepa-laya and Kathmandu Khel Mandal have joined forces to organise a nationwide promotional football tour for ÆAi Division side New Road Team, which will play against local teams in eight cities.

The main objective behind organising this tour is to push-start sporting activities, which have been affected by both internal and external politics, said Kiran Krishna Shrestha of Nepa-laya.

During the tour, the team will run football clinics for local children conducted by NRT coaches Yogamber Suwal and Maheswor Mulmi, while FIFA-recognised referee Sriram Ranjitkar will hold workshops for local referees when he is not refereeing the matches.

As sports is largely neglected in Nepal, Nepa-laya and KKM are hoping the publicity generated by the tour might encourage more Nepalis to participate in sport. As the recent Beijing Olympics showed, Nepali athletes attend international sport events woefully under-prepared, with minimal government or private sector support, and little hope of winning. Aspiring sportsmen and women often find themselves having to deal more with political wheeler-dealing over sponsorship and financial issues than being able to focus on their training and improvement.

The NRT tour, managed by Nepa-laya and with KKM lending its sporting expertise, will kick off in Janakpur on 6 September. The tour will then continue to Kakarvitta, Itahari, Kwasoti, Mahendranagar, Nepalganj and Baglung before finishing on 27 September in Gorkha.

Narendra Shrestha, chairman of KKM\NRT said: “We are glad to be working with Nepa-laya in making this tour happen. This kind of sporting initiative is a positive step and we do hope it will have a positive impact in the sporting sector of the nation, especially football.” ●



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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Missing Persons in Nepal:** The right to know, photo exhibition organised by ICRC and NRCS. Indigo Gallery: till 6 September, Darbar Square: Bhaktapur 7 September, Kathmandu 8 September, Lalitpur 9 September, 8AM-6.30 PM. Free entry
- ❖ **Buddha and Nature,** a painting exhibition by Nar Bahadur Biswa Karma till 10 September Sunday-Monday 1-6 PM, Tuesday-Friday 10.30-6PM at Park Gallery, Lazimpat. 4419353
- ❖ **Bridges of Love,** an exhibition of paintings by Toney Monsanto, 12-26 September, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Sunday- Friday 11AM-6PM, Saturday 12-4PM. 421808



EVENTS

- ❖ **Launching** of the book New Nepal, New voices, 5 September, Alliance Francaise, 6.30 PM
- ❖ **The Stevie Wonder Project,** a tribute concert by 1974 AD, 9 PM, 6 September at Moksh.†Free entry
- ❖ **Photo.Circle** with Kishor Kayastha, Rishi Amatya and Sushan Prajapati, 6 September, 9.45 AM-12PM, The Bakery, Sundhara
- ❖ **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

- ❖ **Sunday Jazz Brunch** at Hyatt Regency with performances by Mariano and his band from 12-3.30 PM. 4491234
- ❖ **Thai food festival** at Shambala Garden Cafe till 12 September, Hotel Shangri-la, Rs 600. 4412999
- ❖ **Pizza & Pasta** every Monday and Tuesday at Rox Restaurant. Hyatt Regency. 448936
- ❖ **BBQ** at Splash Bar & Grill, 1 September, 6.30 PM onwards, Radisson Hotel. 4411818
- ❖ **Mediterranean Culinary Delights** every Friday at Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Fusion** of Marcela Regan's new menu and Mannie's new bar at Dhokaima Cafe. 5522113
- ❖ **Masala,** an Indian restaurant on Jawalakhel, St. Mary's school road. 4421634
- ❖ **Pasta pesto passion** at La Dolce Vita, Thamel. 4700612
- ❖ **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 at the Olive Bar and Bistro, Hotel Radisson. 4411818
- ❖ **Cocktails, mocktails and liqueurs** at the Asahi Lounge, opening hours 1-10PM, above Himalayan Java, Thamel.
- ❖ **Ily Expresson Coffee** at Hotel Shangri-la, Lazimpat and Mandap Hotel, Thamel
- ❖ **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

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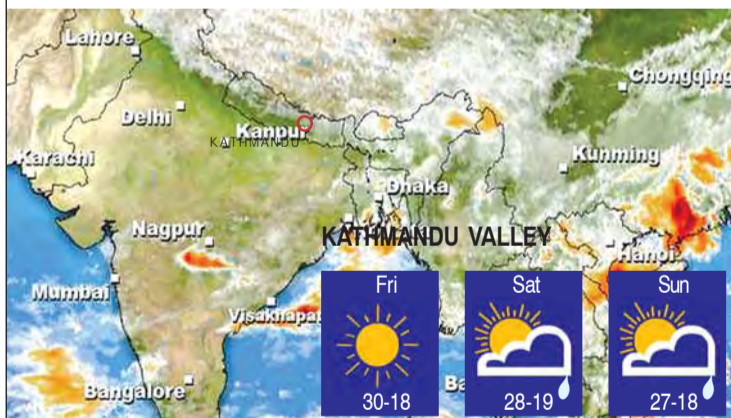
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WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

At the time when the official date of monsoon departure is less than three weeks away (23 September), records of majority of hill stations indicate below normal rainfall in this summer. The Valley weather station recorded only 70 per cent of normal rainfall in August making it the sixth consecutive month with deficit precipitation. An immediate impact of this deficit has been on Kulekhani where the water level is at record low of this month. The satellite picture from Thursday morning shows the reason for this temporary dry spell: a premature westerly has almost completely wiped out monsoon moisture from the Indo-Gangetic plains. However, once the low-pressure system over Orissa gathers strength the monsoon can reassert itself early next week. Expect the first mainly sunny weekend in quite a while. There may be some light night-time showers.



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KIRAN PANDAY

ENOUGH SAID: Deputy Prime Minister Bamdeb Gautam appears deep in thought during a speech by Prime Minister Dahal at the inauguration of the new tv channel ABC in the capital on Thursday.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

JUSTICE REQUIRED: Victims of Maoist atrocities, like this woman at a rally in Kathmandu on Wednesday above, have stepped up their campaign for justice and compensation after the Maoist-led government was installed.

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Cockfight

Is it just a coincidence, or are **pundits** genetically susceptible to infighting because of their supposedly superior brainpower? Just look at who can't stand whom within the parties. They are all high priests: Jhalnath vs Oli, Baburam vs Mohan Baidya (yes, despite his surname Comrade Kiran is a true blue brahmin), Bamdeb vs Makunay, Pradeep Nepal vs Jhalnath, Prachanda vs Kiran, and in the Janamocha Giriraj Mani Pokhrel vs Iswari Pokhrel. The NC may be in the opposition, but even there the pundits are at each other's throats: Ram Chandra Poudel vs Govinda Raj Joshi, and Shekhar Koirala and Krishna Prasad Sitaula vs Everyone Else.†



The most serious rift is within the Maobaddies, where pundits in the politburo can't get along. There is so much bad blood between Lal Dhoj and **The Doc** over the #2 position in the government that it seems to have reached breaking point ahead of the party's central committee meeting this weekend.†

Ever since he was in high school in Gorkha and at ISc at Amrit Science, the young BRB used to tell people 'I will never be third in anything.' Indeed, he came either first or second in all exams he sat for in his life. Which is why the other day he said he'd rather resign than be #3 in the government's pecking order. BRB refused to go to the deputy premier oath-taking even though PKD called him repeatedly from his motorcade en route to the Presidential Mansion.

Comrade Lal Dhoj was reportedly placated after his consort, Comrade Parbati, was inducted as Ministress of Tourism. To the many firsts that have transpired in the past two years of political transition, we get to add another: for the first time in Nepal's history there is a husband-and-wife team in the cabinet.



But BRB was still hopping mad that his left-hand-man Top Budder was dropped from the lineup so he staged a coup d'état at Gorkhapatra where he managed to bring his own henchman in as editor of **The Rinsing Nepal**, the only problem being that the gentleman in question hasn't written anything in English in his life.



This week, there is a tie for first place in the New Name Contest between Dilip Rajbhandari, whose name for the new home minister is **Bomb Deu Gautam**, and Caroline Martin of Naya Bajar who has a new name for Nepal's national dish: **Dahal Bhatt**.



Entries to the New Name Contest and any other asinine stuff should be sent to: [ass\(at\)nepalitimes.com](mailto:ass(at)nepalitimes.com)

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