Mr Dahal goes to Delhi

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal leaves for India on Sunday on his first “political visit” that is expected to be long on symbolism and short on substance.

Dahal will be staying at the plush Taj Mahal Hotel in central Delhi. On 15 September he will meet President Pratibha Patil, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Sonia Gandhi, Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee and other top officials. He will also meet the leader of the opposition, L K Advani of the BJP, a vocal critic of Nepal’s Maoists.

Then it will be off to India’s Silicon Plateau on Wednesday for the 40-member delegation where the prime minister will see first-hand what is driving India’s growth by visiting the headquarters of the global IT company, Infosys, in Bangalore.

It will be a goodwill visit and it is doubtful if Dahal will return on Thursday with anything tangible. There has been little political preparation for the visit and the Maoist advisory committee seems torn between radical nationalists and pragmatists. On Thursday, an all-party meeting was still trying to figure out what to say to the Indians.

Publicly, the Maoists have called for an overhaul of the 1950 treaty, but haven’t specified if they want to abrogate or revisit. Delhi has agreed to amend it, but wants specific suggestions or anew draft. So, expect a iteration by both sides to re-examine the treaty in principle.

Foreign Minister Upendra Yadav admitted last week that Nepal hadn’t yet figured out what it wanted from the Delhi visit. Sources said India wanted to delay the visit, but Dahal was insistent.

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Given India’s active role backing the peace process, there will be discussions on the future roadmap. Security reform, especially the integration of the PLA into the Nepal Army, may figure in private discussions.

Nepal will convey its concerns regarding the rising trade deficit with India, customs and transit issues and fuel supply. As they did during Girija Koirala’s visit in June 2006, India may announce a new economic package.

The Maoists will use the visit to reach out to sections of the Delhi establishment, especially the business community, that are still distrustful of their intentions.

Given the continuing threats by Maoist-supported unions to Indian multinationals in Nepal, Dahal may face some blunt questions.
**Fix Nepal First**

This is the honeymoon period, but the marriage of convenience in the coalition is already rocky. It took a record five months after the elections to set up this government, so the first thing in everyone's mind should be to make up for lost time and get down to business.

But all we hear are more speeches and a proclivity for foreign junkets. It's Nepal that needs to be fixed first before our jet-setting revolutionaries rush off to the Olympics, India and the UN. There should be a moratorium on inauguration launches and foundation-stones. TV channels shouldn't give anymore airtime to sermons from the pulpit.

What the people want is to see action. They want proof that the coalition is worth more than the sum of its parts. They need to see tangible signs of improvement in their lives.

However, on Wednesday there was the first sign of life with the ceremonial reading of the new government's policies and programs by President Ram Baran Yadav before the Constituent Assembly. We expected the Maoists-led government to be ambitious in its targets. It's Nepal because, more than any other party, they are the ones that need to show that they are different. The programs are indeed grand in scale: generating 10,000 megawatts of power in the next two years, investing in education, generating hundreds of thousands of new jobs, land reform and a 60 per cent literacy rate in two years and raising the annual handouts for VDCs.

At first glance, these are all doable. But where is the money going to come from? The pre-requisite is guaranteed political stability.

**Déjà vu all over again?**

To generate jobs, we need to attract domestic and foreign investment for which stability and rule of law are paramount. The other big ‘if’ is disagreement in the severely-delayed constitutional talks: the Maoists are demanding a population of about one billion plus. Feeling happy with my job, I go home in the United Nations, and turn my mind over to our old friend, Prime Minister Sushil Koirala, who had told me that he inherited on his sojourn in Australia and New Zealand a certain 'don't burn a tire and start chanting slogans around in their planes and SUVs all over the country'.

The Maoists were cheating and glorying in the anti-foreigner bandwagon and yet it was the Maoists that deserved all that space for Ian Martin's self-righteous sermons from the pulpit.

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Welcome to India, Mr Prime Minister

In a few days, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal will be in India on an official trip. This is perhaps the most significant visit by a Nepali Prime Minister to India in the past six decades.

There have been visits by eminent prime ministers in the past, but they represented an established order in Nepal and some had been well known to their Indian counterparts and others, at times even from before India’s independence.

Mr Dahal, on the other hand, led an insurgency for a decade, decided eventually to trust the judgement of the people and was rewarded with an unexpected plurality both in votes received and seats won in the Constituent Assembly.

What lends great significance to the visit is that it could provide firm and unequivocal clarity on how political Nepal views future relations with India. No less important would be signs that Indo-Nepal relations have risen from the trough of personalised politics to a reflection of the actual interests of the people.

The proposition of India as a threat to Nepal’s integrity and sovereignty, first elaborated by the palace in the early 1950s to justify its absolute rule, was later to be used by all mainstream political parties to a greater or lesser degree. The Maoists are no exception. But continuation of the same approach, justified at times as reflective of the views of the people, does not lead to constructive engagement. Besides, ademocratic framework in India and a vigilant press do tend to ask uncomfortable questions on such issues.

Prime Minister Dahal’s visit to Beijing for the Olympics raised quite unnecessary dust, perhaps more in Kathmandu than in Delhi, and is reflective of the sensitivities that sometimes accompany Indo-Nepal relations. It is, however, true that the description of Nepal’s relations with India and China as one of ‘equidistance’ or ‘equiproximity’ has been confusing even to the most committed of Nepal’s friends in India. Relations are what they are and adjectives do not add or subtract from them. India herself is also a celebration of Nepal’s wisdom in accommodation and a remarkable transition from despair to hope for millions of his long-deprived citizens.

The question of the 1950 Treaty, or other treaties about Nepal’s interests. All revisions must necessarily take into account the interests and views of the other party—in this case, India, and the consequences of abrogation.

Unfortunately, it is likely that elements in Nepal politics as well as in India would look for signs of a cooling in Nepal-India relations during the prime minister’s visit. One would hope that his openness and ability to face with candour the responsibilities of office would silence critics.

Above all, the visit of Pushpa Kamal Dahal ‘Prachanda’ is also a celebration of Nepal’s wisdom in accommodation and a remarkable transition from despair to hope for millions of his long-deprived citizens.

Deb Mukharji was India’s ambassador to Nepal from 2000 to 2002.
Underestimating Upendra

For a long time last year, particularly after the Gaur massacre, Upendra Yadav lived more like a man on the run than a politician who had shot to fame because of a street movement. From the outskirts of Birganj to a housing estate in Patna, from the lanes of Teku to a sympathiser’s house in Gaushala, Yadav was constantly on the move. All he carried was a small bag with clothes, a pile of books and two mobile phones. Reluctant to meet outsiders, give interviews or appear at public events, he was scared for his life and his political future looked bleak.

As the MJF campaign to demand the Home Minister’s resignation was a failure, J P Oli had walked away, and when the MJF registered as a party with a broad platform, many activists quit; the organisation was in tatters. The Americans delayed granting him a visa until the night before his departure. In India, where the political establishment disliked the company he kept, he needed Pradeep Giri’s help to mend fences.

At home, the Maoists were gunning for him, and armed groups warned him off talking to the government. There were rumours in the Tarai that he had done a secret deal with the Koiralas and sold out. When he signed the 23-point agreement, the party split. From paan shops in the Tarai to the capital’s cocktail circuit, Upendra Yadav’s political obituary was already being written.

In retrospect, it just shows how often we get it wrong. Yadav has shown incredible survival skills and a sharp political sense, aided by a fair amount of luck. While maintaining multiple political ties, he is also his own man. Madheshi criticised him for depending on them more than necessary and blocking a Madhesi alliance before the elections. Yet he had clearly judged the MJF’s strength accurately and, from a party perspective, was right in going it alone. He used the royals when he needed to fight the parties and Maoists, but maintained a distance and stuck to his republican commitment in the CA.

His decision to appoint Parmanand Jha drew flak. Jha is a xenial politician who had shot to fame because of a street movement. He has pampered Bijay Gachhedar at the cost of being tainted because of Jha’s past. But an upper-caste candidate helped ally impressions back in the plains that the MJF was a Yadav party.

Upendra Yadav is coming into his own as a national leader because of his past. But an upper-caste candidate helped ally impressions back in the plains that the MJF was a Yadav party. Despite veering towards the NC during the presidential polls, he did the right thing by backing a Maoist-led government. He has warned Bijay Gachhedar at the cost of being tainted because of Jha’s past. But an upper-caste candidate helped ally impressions back in the plains that the MJF was a Yadav party.

The 90-point plan

Infrastructural development, economic reform, social security and law and order were the main focus of the ambitious 90-point plan laid out by the MJF-led government on Wednesday. Yet critics said there were few new ideas for an immediate relief to the people from shortages and high prices, and most of the programs were an assemblage of long-term goals of previous governments.

Even so, this was the largest and most ambitious plan ever presented by a government in Nepal. Among some of the projects envisaged: a fuel pipeline from Raxaul to Amlekhganj, free secondary education, a 10-year 100,000MW hydropower investment program, and the completion of aerial road networks in Lingkang and district headquarters. But there are also pie-in-the-sky type projects like the completion of all six Kathmandu-Pokhara-Lumbini rail link.

The UML’s KP Oli criticised the program as vague and ambitious. “There is nothing wrong with having good intentions, but plans must be realistic,” he said. “The government’s commitment to multiracial democracy, periodic elections and the rule of law are few positive aspects.”

The NC’s Prakash Saran Mahat said the program was a “cut and paste” of previous plans: “In trying to be ambitious, the program does not propose any substantial veplan for growth,” he said.

Home Minister Bamdev Gautam was understandably enthusiastic: “It is a program of national consensus, which has incorporated inputs of the coalition parties,” he said.

Little progress on any of the large infrastructure projects is likely within the lifetime of this Constituent Assembly, but the plan also revealed an attempt to wrap up the peace process, complete the writing of the new, democratic federal constitution on time, and seek rapid economic growth and generate major socio-economic transformation within the country as quickly as possible.

The government has adopted the public-private partnership approach for large infrastructure projects, and is to prioritise export industries. High-level boards will be set up under the prime minister’s chairmanship to promote PPPs and create an investment-friendly environment. New foreign investment will be welcomed in export-oriented industries.

However, continuous threats, harassment and extortion of businesses by Maoist-affiliated youth and migrants unions made business sceptical about the peace accord to increase investment.

The government has pledged to address labour grievances, and to deal with worker-management relations. It reiterated a commitment to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It will also set up a raft of other commissions, including one to look into the fate of the disappeared and others to assess the inclusiveness of women and minority groups. As part of its revolutionary land redistribution program, the government will set up yet another commission to look at land productivity.

The CA members are scheduled to debate the plans from 12-14 September. Political parties must register their amendment proposals by Thursday. However, the budget will be presented only after Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal returns from his visit to India on 18 September, since Finance Minister Baburam Bhattarat is also expected to accommodate him.
Colonising

Guna Colony’s Apartments are preparing 98 flats in two apartment buildings in LaxmiNagar. Each of the flats has three bedrooms, kitchen, dining, living and three bathrooms. The building is also earthquake resistant and has other services including a swimming pool, health club and 24-hour security. The apartments are priced from Rs 7,990 to 1,653 million. Various banks including Guna Bank will help to arrange payments by instalment.

Dasain deals

Morang Auto Works has introduced Dasain promotions which include a Rs 10,000 discount on some motorbike models, scratch card offers and a bumper prize of a four-day, three-night trip to Japan to one lucky winner.

High interest

Kuwer Merchant Bank has introduced a ‘teachers savings account scheme’ and an ‘easy saving account scheme’. In the former, clients can open accounts with only Rs 1,000 and receive eight per cent interest; the latter account will accept payments of just Rs 100 at seven per cent interest. New customers will also receive discounts for other services at the bank.

NEW PRODUCTS

TUB: Home Furnishers has launched its Kaldewei bathtub, with an easy-clean finish resistant to all cosmetics and medicinal bathing preparations, perfumes and acid. It comes with a 30-year guarantee.

NEW PC: A product of ASUStek Computers, the Eee PC has been launched in Nepal by Nepal International Business, along with other ASUS products like the Eee box desktop replacement. The PC has an eight-hour battery life and weighs one kilogram. It is expected to appeal to students.

HERBAL: Alternative Herbal Products has recently launched organic coffee, spices and herbal soap under the Annapurna brand name. Spices on sale include ginger and turmeric powder. The products are available in all major departmental stores and mini-markets. The soap is priced at Rs 58.

Common Minimum Standard

O ne gets suspicious when Nepalese businessmen appear on television talk shows to pontificate about the micro-economy. Their urge to strut hard-earned knowledge about GDP growth and the finer points of fiscal and monetary policies is understandable. And it irks corporate leaders who want to talk about ‘big picture’ issues such as macroeconomic policies that are in the direct interest of the chambers of businesses, the federalists of industries and other business organisations. As such, these membership-driven business entities can easily take up some of these activities that appear below.

Brand Nepal: In Bangladesh private-sector companies in recent years have started coming together every year to put on a ‘Brand Bangladesh’ conference, in which, together with foreign experts, they craft plans to showcase Bangladesh’s strengths to the rest of the world. On a greater scale, China has long been doing something similar. And India has grown to the stage where its provinces have begun showing off their uniqueness to attract both tourists and investments. Why can’t the Nepali private-sector come together every year to do something similar to favorably position Nepal on the global tourism and investment map? Doing this does not require the government to take a lead.

Doing Business in Nepal: Every year, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) puts out a Doing Business report. The report measures the degree of difficulty in starting and closing a business in any country. Not surprisingly, there are fewer hurdles in developed than in developing countries, when it comes to starting and growing businesses. If we eradicate that the way to generate employment and development in Nepal is to make it easier for all to start and grow businesses, then, one activity that the Nepali business associations must do is to use the report to strongly lobby the government every year to keep on reducing the number of business-related obstacles.

After all, no competitor private sector thrive in a country where businessmen have to spend more time with government bureaucrats than with customers. Investment in Nepal: The two activities above—changing perceptions about Nepal and making it easier to do business in Nepal—help set the stage to undertake the third activity: Making Nepal attractively attractive by investing in small-scale investments from abroad. Small-scale investments because before we forget too ambitious, it’s worth remembering that we are in a country where capital markets are underdeveloped, that even remittance recipients hesitate to look around to find a place to invest their cash. Putting the right elements in place first to help attract and retain small-sized investments from abroad, trumps all other big talk of large-scale investments.

Next time you hear our captains of industry talk about macroeconomic variables, ask them: What’s stopping you from coming together, even with your competitors, to finalise common minimum standards about Nepal as a brand, as a country that’s open for business and as a country worth investing in? 

Business should take the lead in promoting the Nepal brand

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**Political youth**

Lakshman Khadka

Naya Patrika, 5 September

Following in the footsteps of the Maoist YCL and the UML's Youth Force, the NC too has initiated its own youth wing called Tarun Dasta ('Troop'). The force was established this month in Dolakha after the NC's central working committee decided. The group goes by the slogan: 'Party-based security is today's necessity'. The current 250 members of the district committee of the force include all the students from the Tarun Party and the NC's All Nepal Students' Union. While announcing the district-level leaders of the force, Kangresi politicians wore blue T-shirts and caps with 'Tarun Dasta' printed on them, and marched around Charikot to protest against YCL and Youth Force "anarchism". General Secretary of the Tarun Party, Umrat Neupane, is said to have directed his youth "to break bones without hurting yourself".

**"I won't topple the government"**

Interview with Girija Prasad Koirala in Ghatana Ra Bichar, 10-16 September

How are you spending your days? I am busy with political meetings all day. I have discussions with politicians from different parties and senior diplomats and I am trying to figure out the role the NC should play in the present government.

And your view is? The time to comment on the current government hasn't come yet. I have been following its behaviour for the past month since it was formed. I've been keeping count of the good and bad things that the government has been doing during that time.

The prime minister says you have been trying to topple the government. What Prachanda says is his own thoughts. Right now, it's not my goal to topple the government. If the government moves on without breaking democratic processes and laws, I have nothing to say. But if it does and if it brings about an unlawful law that takes away citizens' rights, or if there is any stoppage of the democratic processes, I will not stay quiet. I told Prachanda from the very beginning that we must bring forth a coalition government, but he didn't listen.

What sort of an opposition will the NC be? The Congress will fulfill the role of a responsible opposition party. Instead of burning tyres and blocking roads, we will be a model opposition. We will protest against those who are guilty.

But there isn't much difference between the activities of Youth Force and the YCL. We are very different. The YCL is still running a parallel state, but that is not on our agenda. We don't run courts or punish anyone illegally. We simply help the security apparatus to give justice.

But you too take the law into your own hands. The focus of our activities is justice. We obey the law of the land. True, some of the old laws are unfair. We need to reform them.

政 治 青 年

拉克斯曼·卡达卡

纳亚·帕里卡, 8月

跟随毛派YCL和UML青年力量的脚步，NC也成立了自己的青年翼称为塔伦达斯塔（“部队”）。该组织在本月在Dolakha成立后，中央工作委员会决定。该组织秉持“党基安全是当今的必要性”口号。当前的250名地方委员会成员包括所有来自塔伦党派和NC的所有学生。宣布地方领导人的会议期间，Kangresi政治家们身穿蓝色T恤和印有“塔伦达斯塔”字样帽子，他们聚集在Charikot抗议YCL和青年力量的“无政府主义”。塔伦党派的总经理Umrat Neupane被指示告诉他的青年“不伤害自己就打不倒别人”。

"我不会颠覆政府"

采访 Girija Prasad Koirala 在 Ghatana Ra Bichar, 10-16 9月

你在做什么？我整天忙于政治集会。我与不同政党及高级外交官进行讨论，试图确定NC在当前政府中的角色。

你的看法是什么？现在还没有发表评论的时间。我一直在密切关注政府在过去一个月的行动。我一直在统计政府所做的事情。

总理说你一直在颠覆政府。What Prachanda says is his own thoughts. Right now, it’s not my goal to topple the government. If the government moves on without breaking democratic processes and laws, I have nothing to say. But if it does and if it brings about an unlawful law that takes away citizens’ rights, or if there is any stoppage of the democratic processes, I will not stay quiet. I told Prachanda from the very beginning that we must bring forth a coalition government, but he didn’t listen.

你的政党将会是什么样的反对党？The Congress will fulfill the role of a responsible opposition party. Instead of burning tyres and blocking roads, we will be a model opposition. We will protest against those who are guilty.

但青年力量和YCL之间并没有太大差异。我们非常不同。YCL仍在运行一个平行国家，但这不是我们的议程。我们不运行法庭或对任何非法的人进行惩罚。我们只是帮助安全机构来给予正义。

但你也会自己动用法律。我们的活动的焦点是正义。我们遵守法律。当然，一些旧的法律是不公平的。我们需要改革它们。

**预算你的梦想**

Chose Wisely

厚或薄，取决于您的钱包大小，Wheels Automotive提供多种融资方案以帮助您做出决定。

**The Himalayan & SERVO Present Auto Show 2008**

日期：9月19日至20日, 2008

地点：Ashwin 3 & 4, 2005

场地：Bhrikuti Mandap Kathmandu

官方网站：www.kathmandu.com

联系人：AAPA Nepal, Basantapur, Kathmandu, Tel: 4770544
In the last couple of years the number of Nepali students studying abroad has increased rapidly. While studying in Canada is difficult for Nepali students, the number of students going to the US and Australia is increasing yearly. According to the Institute for International Education in New York, the number of Nepali students studying in the US increased by 27.9 per cent between 2006 and 2007, bringing the total number of enrolled Nepalis in the US to 7,754. Nepal now ranks 13th by number of students studying in the US, compared to 23rd in 2004.

The number of students going to the UK has decreased from 704 in 2000 to 292 in 2005. But according to Australia Education International, 2,884 Nepali students went to Australia in 2007 alone. Nepal now ranks 11th among countries sending students to Australia. An estimated 200 students apply for visas every day at the US embassy. With the visa fee of Rs 9,000, the embassy earns more than Rs 50 million just from visa fees every month. From 1997-2000, Nepal’s spent an estimated Rs 54 billion studying abroad. Between 1990 and 2005, the number of students going abroad doubled, which means Nepali students are spending more than Rs 30 billion annually to study in countries other than India.

“We can’t risk our lives, can we?”

Saptaipur—The new fiscal year has already started but VDC offices in the eastern region remain empty. Threats from armed groups in the Terai have kept VDC secretaries away. This has caused great hardship to those who need documents. The village council cannot be allowed to sit for a meeting, which means that development has ground to a halt. The budgets given to the VDCs are therefore kept in a freezed state.

Development plans are supposed to be formulated before the start of a new fiscal year, but even more than a month into the new fiscal year the districts don’t have a plan. A few village councils met before the new fiscal year but even then they had approved orders that hadn’t been implemented. The chairman of Dhapur VDC, Mahesh Chaudhary, had come to the district capital to collect his budget, but says it’s too dangerous to go back.

“These groups demand donations and threaten us. We can’t even transfer the money budgeted to us for development. They threaten to kill us if we don’t give them donations. We can’t risk our lives, can we?” Chaudhary asks.

Jagat Thakuri, chairman of Kamalpur VDC, says: “This group repeatedly demands donations from us. We live in fear every day.”

VDC chairmen say they have a village office and Rajan groups demand hefty donations by phone or by mail.

The chairman of Sakarpura VDC, Rajkumar Jha, was reluctant to call a meeting of the village council, but the meeting was conducted on the initiative of the villagers. But now he isn’t in a position to return to the village to implement the proposal passed at the meeting. Jha, who has been living in Rajbiraj for seven months, says the meeting had no meaning.

A majority of secretaries in the 116 VDCs in Saptari live in Rajbiraj, and this is true in nearly 900 VDCs across the eastern Terai. Even the adjoining hill districts are affected. During the Maoist insurgency, the VDC offices stayed empty because of Maoist threats, now because of threats from Terai militants.

Saloja Dahal in Sancharka Feature Service, August: 10

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From beggars to givers

Shanti Sewa Griha proves that charity pays

The Nepali word 'Shanti' is not just about the absence of war, but also about inner, spiritual peace. And that is what one finds at the Shanti Sewa Griha, a leprosy clinic set up 15 years ago in Pashupatinath by Krishna Gurung and Rameshwar Singh, and Marianne Großpietsch of its German sister charity, Shanti Leprahilfe.

Leprosy patients from across Nepal come to the clinic at the temple in Kathmandu seeking solace from the stigma associated with the disease. The ashram is a hothouse of Nepali traditions. It runs a farm near Budhanilkantha where an elderly Newari patient, Jiri Bhai, produces organic vegetables. At the workshops in Gaushala, sisters Rekha and Sita draw Maithili-style patterns for carpets woven by women whose leprosy-damaged fingers can still remember skills learned long ago.

Shanti, like life, is a destroyer of rigid categorisations. It defies the grim, traditional ‘leper colony’. It is a place of colour, laughter and cleanliness, and a hub of activity. Instead of being just a leprosy centre, it is home to those suffering from any social disability and also runs an outpatient clinic.

While taking a short cut to the airport one day, Gurung noticed a plot of derelict government land in Tilganga, squatted by drug addicts and alcoholics. He convinced the government to let him plant the land with organically grown vegetables, and persuaded the addicts to become gardeners. Today, reformed alcoholic Hari Ram tends the garden with his fellow-workers.

The centre’s artisans create fabulous quilt covers from discarded scraps of silk, and a biogas-fuelled power plant produces light from human waste and cow dung. What spare money it has, the centre invests mostly in its own Steiner-Waldorf school in Budhanikantha.

“We are not looking to educate university students;” Großpietsch says. “We need good farmers and good craftspeople.”

While plenty of people in the Kathmandu Valley have never heard of Shanti Sewa Griha, it has nevertheless caught the attention of World Challenge 08, a global competition run by BBC World News, Newsweek and Shell, to find small businesses or projects that have shown innovation and enterprise at a grassroots level. Shanti is one of 12 finalists selected by the judges.

Voting for World Challenge 08 will be open to the public from 1 October to 21 November at www.theworldchallenge.co.uk
Caramel, a sensual and warm debut from Lebanese director Nadine Labaki, delights

It doesn’t require much detective work to realise the symbolic quality of something so sweet and delectable that also happens to hurt. Or the kinds of pain women subject themselves to in the pursuit of being beautiful and desired. However, the film returns to the support and solace that each character finds with the members of her gender. Indeed, the point is more about commiserating with the characters on the screen than anything overly didactic or revelatory.

Feminism, perhaps, sits in the back seat of this vehicle with little that is overtly political. Instead, the message is that sisterhood offers a solidarity between women in the face of society’s restrictions and rewards.

Putting together four strong central female characters to deal with womanhood and relationships is not only to mind the American television series Sex and the City. And much like that artifact, this one prominently features a city that impresses itself indelibly into the material.

Nadine Labaki’s dedication to ‘her’ Beirut, the film is as much a sentimental portrait of a place, diverse and multicultural and sustaining, as it is an aspiration and a promise. Very little overly surprises in this largely predictable film, but with winning characters and some gorgeous cinema the experience is still enjoyable. 

Caramel

Director: Nadine Labaki
Cast: Nadine Labaki, Yasmine Al Masri, Giuseppe Aouad, Joanna Moukarzel
2008. PG-13. 1 hr 36 min.
Abandoned

In March 2007 Nepal suspended adoptions by foreign families after criticism that children were being sold for thousands of dollars. Files of over 400 parents who had been matched by ‘orphanagers’, were sent back and embassies stopped issuing visas.

Earlier this year, bowing to pressure from the US and European governments, the files that were awaiting approval from the government were processed and the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare began work on a new set of terms and conditions for adoptions.

Last week UNICEF and the Swiss-based child relief agency Terres des Homes (TDH) released a two-year study on inter-country adoption and its influence on child protection in Nepal.

The report, Adopting the Rights of a Child, is deeply critical of Nepal’s inter-country adoption policies and says it doesn’t always take the best interests of the child into consideration. The report reveals instances of abduction of children and babies put up for adoption without their parents’ consent.

The majority of ‘orphans’, the researchers talked to should not have been in orphanages because their biological parents and relatives were still living. The report says most centres are not up to standard, monitoring of the centres is not properly done and biological parents are not given adequate information about the adoption process. Domestic adoption accounts for only four per cent of adoptions, families are still using orphans and siblings — including twins — are separated to increase the chance of them being matched. No psychosocial support is given to those who have been abandoned.

The government recently finished drafting new set of conditions and procedures on adoption. Some 37 Nepali institutional homes have been accredited by the ministry and officers are running background checks on more than 70 international adoption agencies which have registered with the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare.

A central commission, under the ministry, has been set up to facilitate the adoption process. Foreign parents wanting to adopt from Nepal must first approach the agencies in their home countries that have been accredited by the government. These in turn will contact the commission, which will match potential parents with children from the approved Nepali homes. Officers at the ministry say that these terms and conditions will make adoption transparent because a central authority, not private agents, will have a say in the process.

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As a result, the government has been forced to bring new rules into line with international standards. This week the government allowed 442 pending adoptions to go ahead, but foreign embassies stopped issuing visas and the ministry was sent back to the respective district offices unsatisfied.

The government stopped processing files, and those awaiting final authorisation from the ministry were sent back to the respective district offices unsatisfied. Foreign embassies stopped issuing visas and the ministry was sent back to the respective district offices unsatisfied.

Orphanages were closed and babies put up for adoption without their parents’ consent. Orphanages were in some cases more than an excuse to put a child up for adoption.

A former orphan returns to Nepal to find his roots

INTERESTING TIMES

Malika Aryal

Abandoned

Adopting new French

A former orphan returns to Nepal to find his roots

INTERESTING TIMES

Malika Aryal

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Adopting new French

A former orphan returns to Nepal to find his roots
ADOPTION

safeguards

The government tries to clamp down on fake orphanages

both international agencies and local children’s homes had been doing. "Now a formal authority, under the ministry, will facilitate the inter-country adoption process including matching of children with parents, not just individual homes," Adhikari told Nepali Times this week. However, UNICEF and TDH said the definition of what made a child eligible for foreign adoption remained too vague, and local children’s homes had been told not to let private agencies.

“A lot of Nepali children put up for foreign adoption are not even orphans, and their parents are misled into parting with their children,” a guerrant said.

“Poverty alone is not enough reason for inter-country adoption,” PD Sharma, coordinator at 19. He is interested in French foreign policy and likes surfing.

"A lot of children put up for foreign adoption are not even orphans, and their parents are misled into parting with their children," Adhikari said the definition of what made a child eligible for foreign adoption remained too vague, and local children’s homes had been told not to let private agencies.

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Raphael’s parents also believe that adoption has turned into a money-making business in Nepal. "But adoption is a matter of action on the heart, not of the purse," they say. Despite having no memory of his first months of life, Raphael is pleased he made the journey back. He is well aware of how fate changed his life, and can’t imagine leaving without doing his part to help others do the same. "Now a formal authority, under the ministry, will facilitate the inter-country adoption process including matching of children with parents, not just individual homes," Adhikari told Nepali Times this week. However, UNICEF and TDH said the definition of what made a child eligible for foreign adoption remained too vague, and local children’s homes had been told not to let private agencies.

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West vs the Rest

It’s back to the Cold War at the United Nations

**THALIF DEEN in NEW YORK**

UNITED NATIONS—When the United States and the former Soviet Union were on the verge of a military confrontation over Cuba during the Cold War, the legendary US Ambassador Adlai Stevenson went eyeball-to-eyeball with Soviet envoy Vitaly Churkin in the Security Council chamber.

As cold UN hands recalled, Stevenson aggressively sought answers from Churkin over allegations of Soviet nuclear missiles stationed in Cuba.

“Yes or no?” Stevenson demanded, and added the punch line: “And don’t wait for the translation,” as he prepared for an immediate answer from the Russian-speaking envoy.

Churkin returned to Stevenson and said, through a translator: “I am not an American court of law, and I do not wish to answer the question in the manner of an prosecuting counsel.”

Stevenson famously responded that he would wait for an answer “until hell freezes over.”

Judging by the recent deadlock in the Security Council over Kosovo, Iran, Burma, Zimbabwe, Sudan and most recently Georgia, the politics of the Cold War are back, at least its political rhetoric.

In January last year, a Western-backed U.S.-led move to castigate the Burmese government for human rights violations suffered a double veto from China and Russia. Last month, history repeated itself when the two vetoed an resolution aimed at imposing sanctions against Zimbabwe.

The US-Russian political confrontation in the Security Council has intensified in recent weeks with the Russian invasion of Georgia, and Moscow’s subsequent decision to recognize the breakaway territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

When US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad sought a response from Russian Ambassador Vitaly Churkin on whether or not the Russians were bent on violating the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia, Churkin said he had already provided an answer to the question. Maybe, he added sarcastically, the US representative had not been listening when Churkin had given his response. “Perhaps he had not heard my earpiece,” he added.

And when US Ambassador Alejandro Wolff recently blasted Russia for its perceived violations of international law and the UN charter during the invasion of Georgia, Churkin hit back with another dose of sarcasm.

“If you find any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and are you still looking for them?” he asked.

Speeches laced with sarcasm and personal insults are rare in the Council chamber. But the Cold War rhetoric is back.

“The United Nations is not headed for a new Cold War,” predicts Phyllis Bennis, director of the New Internationalist Project at the Washington-based Institute for Policy Studies. As US economic, political and diplomatic power diminishes around the world, military power has become ever more dominant as a wielded tool of hegemony.

Partly as a result of that rising militarism and partly out of longstanding habit, she pointed out, governments around the world continue to view the United States as if it were still an unchallengable dominion.

“And in the United Nations, that means allowing Washington to continue to call the shots,” added Bennis.

Just after the Cold War, Washington was in less of an ideological mode. Maybe it felt it could afford to be belligerent to the point of behaving in an overbearing and unilateral manner. But in the last eight years, diplomatic and military methods have become increasingly ideological and unilateral.

One Asian envoy said the ideological zeal of the United States had not onlyIr

Russia and China are becoming more assertive, primarily on issues that bear directly on their own national interests, like preventing the Security Council from producing new sanctions against Georgia.

Diplomacy therefore is about to take on the look and feel of the Cold War.
Abusing young hearts and minds

EMMA SCIANTARELLI

Among the organisations working to protect children’s rights in Nepal, two of the best known are Voice of Children and Child Protection and Services. They joined forces recently to research the abuse endured by children on the streets of Kathmandu, and discovered that a horrifying 95 percent of children who slept on the streets suffered at least one form of abuse.

The abuse of Street Children in Kathmandu provides much needed insight into the reality of everyday life for these children. Physical violence and sexual predation are rampant that lacerations, beatings, rape and exposure to pornography have become the norm for many children.

The report states that: “Younger interviewees in the CPCS/VOC survey reported sexual abuse occurring to a large extent the hardest to assist. Child victims of abuse suffer from long-term psychological damage. A lack of self-worth and stunted emotional development are common, and many street children learn to deal with problems through violent confrontation or by numbing the mind through alcohol or drugs.”

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From Curação with love

In his exhibition of paintings, ‘Bridges of Love’, Netherlands Antillean Tony Monsanto explores a wide range of contemporary issues—from the death of Benazir Bhutto to the ethnic conflict of his home, the beautiful island of Curação in the Caribbean.

There are 20 different paintings on display at the Siddharta Art Gallery at Baber Mahal, most of which date from the past year. Monsanto mainly uses mixed media, collage and paint, and a selection of metaphorical images.

One of the most striking and controversial pieces on display is ‘Pregnant Woman’, in which a woman in an advanced state of pregnancy stands before a cross while a pig stares out at the viewer. It is clear their behaviour is to a large extent the result of how other people have treated them.

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The exhibition is his tribute to the people of Nepal.

The exhibition will run at the Siddharta Art Gallery till 27th September.
EVENTS

- **Bridges of Love**, an exhibition of paintings by Toney Montana, 12-26 September, Siddhartha Art Gallery.
- **Steak escape**, **Reality Bites**, and **Continental and cafe item**
- **Plat Du Jour**
- **Cocktails, mocktails and liqueurs**
- **Masala Fusion**
- **Sunday Jazz Brunch**
- **Thai Food festival**
- **Fusion and Classical Music**
- **Rudra night**
- **Fusion and Looza**
- **HyJazz Club**
- **Happy cocktail hour**
- **Some like it hot**
- **2nd Copyright evening session**
- **The Illusionist**, a film by Neil Burger at Lazimpat Gallery Café at 12 September, 6.30 PM. 4428549.
- **2nd Copyright evening session at Alliance Francaise**, 12 September, 6.30 PM. Rs 200, Tripeunthewa.
- **Thai traditional Puppetry Show** by Joe Louis Puppets Troupe, 14 September, Nepal Academy Hall.
- **Lecture Series XXVII** by John Cameron on Development in the Republic of Nepal, 14 PM, 16 September, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka.
- **Monsoon madness package at Shangri-la Village Resort**, Pokhara. 4435741

MUSIC

- **2PM Yala Maya Classic**, a classical musical series, 18 September, 5PM, Yala Maya Kendra (Bagbhagni), Patan Dhoka. Rs 100. 5555767
- **Poesie and Fags** a jazz vocal trio from Holland, Saturday at Patan. 5522708, Sunday at Thamel. 4700736. New Orleans Café at 7 PM.
- **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.
- **Happy cocktail hour** 5-7PM. Ladies night on Wednesday with live unplugged music at Jatra Café & Bar.
- **HyJazz Club** every Friday from 8.30 PM, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4489800.
- **Dance and Cocktails at Cube Bar, Kamaladi. 4438017**
- **Fusion and Lozaa Band every Friday night**, Bhumi Keza Lounge, 4412193
- **Rudra night** fusion and classical Nepali music by Shyam Nepal 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 Shafi every Wednesday, rock with Rashmi Singh every Friday, Sufi & Raga with Hemanta Rana every Saturday, 8 PM onwards. Absolute Bar. 5522408

DINING

- **Thai Food festival** at Shambala Garden café, Hotel Shangri-la, 21 September, Rs 600. 4432998
- **Sunday Jazz Brunch** at Hyatt Regency with performances by Mariano and his band from 12-3.30PM. 4492134
- **Pizza & Pasta** every Monday and Tuesday at Rox Restaurant. Hyatt Regency. 448936
- **Fusion of Marcella Regan’s new menu and Mannie’s new bar** at Dohkama Café. 5522113
- **Masala**, an Indian restaurant on Jawalakhel, St.Mary’s school road. 4421634
- **Plat Du jour** at Hotel Shangri-la, Kathmandu, Rs 600. 4412199
- **Pasta pero passion** at La Dolce Vita, Thamel. 4470012
- **Steak special with free Irish coffee at k-boo Beer & Steakhouse**, Thamel. 4670012
- **Continental and cafe item** with Live band every Friday at Vintage Café and Pub, Woodland Complex, Durbarmarg.
- **Home made pasta at A’resco, Soabse Crowne Plaza. 4273998**
- **Reality Bites**, The Kaiser Café, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika’s Group of Hotels. 9AM-10PM. 4452341
- **Steak escape** with Kathmandu’s premier steaks at the Olde Bar and Bistro, Hotel Radisson. 4411818
- ** Cocktails, mocktails and liqueurs at the Kashii Lounge**, opening hours 1-10PM, above Himalayan Java, Thamel.
- **Iy Expresson Coffee** at Hotel Shangri-la, Lazimapat and Mardola Hotel, Thamel.
- **Retro Brunch Barbeque** with live acoustic music by Sound Chemistry, every Saturday, 12-3PM at LeMerridien-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. 4421999
- **Kebabs and curries** at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619
- **Socially Responsible coffee** at Himalayan Java, Thamel.

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For inclusion in the listing send information to editors@nepalitimes.com

A hip new Nepali movie, Sano Sansar is about the youth. In this movie we are introduced to Kasi, an average guy who has just graduated from college and faces the dilemma of not knowing what to do. Like Ravi, a etu, a not so average girl, also doesn’t know what the wants out of life. Unlike them, Sunj is a confident guy who knows exactly what he wants to do with his life. Maro Susakhi (aka Suki) wants what every guy wants. All these characters soon find out the same sani that they live in and how they are interconnected.

Call 4442220 for show timings at Jai Nepal www.jainepal.com

-times

12 - 18 SEPTEMBER 2008

EDITORIAL

Outsourcing of raw glass: hemp, linen, cotton, natural fabric clothes & olive accessories
MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

BROAD TENT: President Ram Baran Yadav and Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal with Indian Ambassador Rakesh Sood at the tea party organised by the president at Shital Nibas on Wednesday.

MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

GENERATION GAP: CA member Prajibha Rana (RPP), left, has a chat with her daughter, Arzu Deuba (NC), at the president’s tea party at Shital Nibas on Wednesday.

MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

AND THE ANSWER IS...: Nabil Bank’s CEO Anil Shah and DHL’s Country Manager Mukunda Malla cheer for their teams at the Surya 24 Carat Boss Brainstorm Quiz on Friday. DHL took the trophy home.

MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

HOLDING HANDS: Nepali athletes walk the ramp at the Nepal Sports Journalist Forum’s Player of the Year 2008 awards ceremony on Wednesday.
I
t was bound to happen sooner
or later. A section of
disgruntled Baddies have
gone off and set up a splinter
party called Revolutionary Armed
Wing (RAW) accusing
Comrade
Bhayanak
of going pink and
selling out on the revolution by
turning into lackeys of running
dog imperialists. The Madhesi
armed groups are ex-Baddies and
so are the assorted militants in
the eastern hills, but those are
ethnic-based splinters. This one
is in-house.

There is also growing
disillusionment among mid-level
guerrilla commanders
about the same comrades getting
on to be ministers again and
again, while the ones who sacrificed and
suffered during the revolutionary
war haven't been rewarded with
ministerships. Bhayanak is under
pressure to expand the
government by making some
dissidents state ministers and
balancing the cabinet composition
with excluded ethnicities and
women. But there are no houses
left in the ministers' quarters at
Harhar Bhaban, and the
government has given away its
last black Kia for the personal use
of First Lady Sita.

So, Mr & Mrs Dahal are both
going to the US visa
interview
conducted in Singha
Darbar on Tuesday that they're not
high-risk visitors and will return to
Nepal. Seems it was touch and go.

All this, is a country where
when a Nepali singer gets a five-
year multiple entry visitor’s visa,
the news makes it into the papers.
It does look like the prime
minister's Norwegian visa may be
home delivered, though.

One shouldn’t get too worked up
about Maoist squatters
encroaching on a community
forest in Dhading last week. All it
means is that the Baddies aren’t
going back to the jungles because
there are no jungles left to go
back to.

Also, as someone said last
week at Reporter’s Club, no way
the Maoists are going back to
the jungle because you can’t drive a
Pajero in the jungle. To which
another kangresi retorted: “A
leopard will never turn into a
vegetarian.” News just in: GPK has
become vegetarian while PM has
turned carnivore again.

There are so many foundation
stones to be laid that our
honourable prime minister just
hadn’t had the time to figure out
what on earth he’s going to do in
India. Neither have the Indians, for
that matter, who hadn’t been told by
press time who was in the
entourage, or why they were
coming. So, they're packing the
PM off to Bangalore for the
Weekend to get him out of their
hair. At the rate
Chabilal Baje
has been meeting Godmen and
blessing new school buildings with
akshyata while priests chant
mantras, it wouldn’t a massive
surprise if the Dahals snuck in a
little side visit to Puttaparthi.

Awesome’s waiting for his party’s
instructions about what not to talk
to the Indians about, and we’re told
it’s a fairly long list. But this being
the man who once said Nepal was
not a sweet potato but a
dynamite
stick
between two boulders, he is
sure to lago things to a tarkik
niskarsa. If the Chinese were
sending a message by presenting
the visiting PM with a double bed
(“Give it a rest, Comrade”) maybe
the Indians will outdo them by
giving Mr Dahal something
symbolic like a couple of jerry
cans of diesel.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, it
looks like BRB is still in a deep
slump. But the Ass can confirm that
rumours about him resigning after
delivering the budget speech next
week are exaggerated. As soon as
he became financial minister
Comrade Laldhoj liked to say that
he would announce a budget that
would transform Nepal’s economy
from slithering like a
snake
to
leapfrogging like a
toad.

And this week’s winning entry for
the New Name Contest is Major
Anupam, who wants the
DHABA
 Airlines, to be renamed
Laldhoj Airlines, since
Mrs Laldhoj is Truism
Minister.

Australia has become a possible choice for overseas
students
in the context of Nepalese students has risen
sharply over the two years. According to the statistics
published by Australian Education International, the
number of enrolments of Nepalese students has gone up
by 400% or more. In the year 2007, Nepal became
the 12th largest source country in terms of number of
enrolled students. In the year 2007, the students going to
Australia has increased compared to last year. The
maximum number has increased their studies in
National Education and Training Sector.

With the aim of attracting more European migrants by the
Australian Government, Nepalese student to migrate to
Australia from 1975. There is an official din before
1975 and only 4 Nepalese permanently migrated to
Australia in the year 1975. It is interesting to
annoy by the number of Nepalese migrants to Australia
from the year 2000. Nepalese students was 229 in 2000-01,
305 in 2001-02, 260 in 2002-03 and 219, 203 in 2003-04,

People who want to live permanently in Australia must
apply to migrate to, or in with Australia, apply to
change their status to permanent residence. There are
few years to the Australian migration program and they are:
1. Skilled worker
2. Skilled migrant
3. Student Stream
4. Working Holiday Program

For more information on Australian Education and
Migrants please email on info@migrationspecialists.com
or visit our website www.migrationspecialists.com.