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Weekly Internet Poll # 426

Q. How would you assess the government's first 100 days?

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Weekly Internet Poll # 427. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. How do you characterise the rift in the Maoist party?



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Rising from the ashes

The crises are coming thick and fast for the Maoists in government. The peace process is stuck over modalities of army integration, internal ideological rifts have deadlocked its party conference and an alliance of other parties is on the attack over the YCL excesses.

The national conference of Maoist cadre to have been held on Thursday was postponed by a day because of a prolonged debate over whether the party should adopt a totalitarian 'people's republic' or a 'democratic republic'.

Party chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal's ability to compromise

has been tested to the limits and he has proposed a middle path: a 'transitional republic'. Until press time on Thursday it looked like the 'people's republic' wallahs had the numbers. A vote by the cadre could still be over-ruled in the central committee, but it would put moral pressure on the moderates. During a consultation with Maoist provincial councils, 12 of the 13 councils are said to have supported the hardliners' vision for a 'people's republic'.

"Don't worry, the party is not about to split," said a visibly tired Minister of Peace and Reconstruction, Janardan Sharma,

GOONDADOM: Nearly 2,000 subscriber copies of *Himal Khabarpatrika*'s latest issue, featuring this exposé of the excesses by militant youth wings of various political parties, were destroyed when masked attackers set fire to them at a distribution point in Maitighar on Sunday night.

on Wednesday evening.

However, the Maoists have been put on the defensive because of the discovery this week of the bodies of two young men, believed to have been executed by the YCL in Dhading last month. The capital was brought to a standstill in protest on Thursday by an alliance of UML and NC calling itself the Citizens' Struggle Committee. However, the protesters also used threats to enforce their strike. ● *Dewan Rai*

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REBELS WITHOUT A CAUSE

We tend to ignore alarmist forecasts because we think something will always come up to avert a future crisis.

Here in Nepal, we have a head-in-the sand attitude over the political gridlock because, as in the past two years, something always happens at the last moment to pull us back from the edge.

But statistics contained in the State of the World's Population Report 2008 released last week by UNFPA in Kathmandu should make politicians all sit up and take notice.

Nepal's current population of 28 million will reach 52 million by 2050. The population pyramid shows a growing youth bulge with half the people below 30. Rising female literacy and improved child survival rates widening the demographic gap and keeping population growth rate at above two percent, with the fertility rate at a still high 3.24.

It is when you combine these statistics with projections for food production, economic growth and job-creation that it gets even more frightening. Nepal's food productivity is the lowest in South Asia and is falling due to deficient inputs, fragmentation of land holdings and out-migration of males.

The war set development back by decades, investors fled and haven't come back. There hasn't been any new employment generation, and an estimated two million young Nepalis are jobless. In the next ten years, 500,000 new people will be entering the job market every year. Not all will make it to the Gulf.

All this can only mean one thing: social unrest and political instability. It is hard to find a more convincing case for working together politically to chart out emergency measures for decentralised job creation, boosting food production and ensuring investment and economic growth.

Instead, we just hear more speeches and lip service. It's not that the political parties don't see the writing on the wall, but their response has been to control the youth by setting up militant groups like the YCL and YF to keep young cadres under control and use them to arm-twist opponents.

This has unleashed anarchy across the country. In the past three months there have been 30 armed clashes between the YCL and YF and other ethnic-based militancies. Factories, bus companies, hotels, schools, hospitals, cable car operators, casinos have all fallen victim. On Sunday night, arsonists attacked our sister publication, *Himal Khabarpatrika*, and disrupted the distribution of an issue that carried an expose of young militant groups.

These rebels are without a cause. Nepal's rulers need the political will to understand the demographic transition we are going through, and together plan to avert it and be prepared for its socio-political consequences.

"Integration is the backbone of the peace process"

Minister for Peace and Reconstruction, Janardan Sharma, speaks to *Nepali Times* about his overtures to Madhesi militants, army integration and the peace process. Translated excerpts:

Nepali Times: What was the outcome of your meetings with Madhesi militant groups this week?

Janardan Sharma: We held informal face-to-face talks with all major groups except Goit. We have been trying to reach him, and hopefully will get through. We talked with Jwala Singh over the phone and met one of his emissaries. We reassured them that the government is serious about addressing Madhesi grievances, and the groups I met were positive, they are committed to the constitution-drafting process and Nepal's territorial integrity.

What were their main demands?

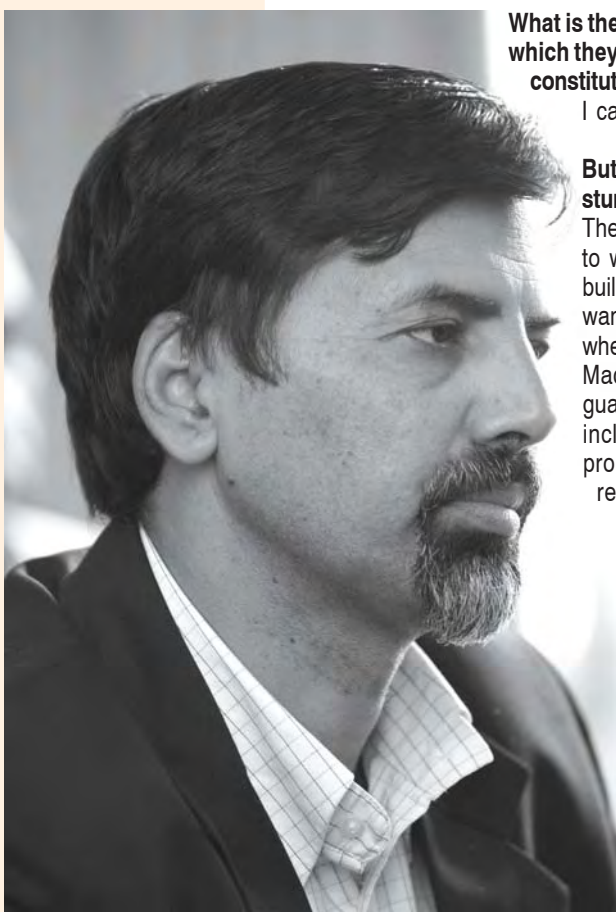
At present, they wanted amnesty for political prisoners and their security before negotiations. I believe these are reasonable demands. We have requested them to discuss it in their central committee and come up with a decision on how to go about it. If they can decide independently, they will come to the dialogue table. Various factions have started uniting and this is a positive sign and will expedite talks.

What is the mechanism under which they can participate in constitution writing?

I can't tell you that.

But couldn't that be a stumbling block?

The major task ahead is to write a constitution and build a new Nepal. They want a new constitution where the rights of Madhesi people is guaranteed. The issues of inclusiveness and proportional representation in all government level are the common issues of all political parties. We have promised the voice of Madhesi people will be heard. There is representation of the Madhesi people in the CA, and they told me that they played a positive role in the election of the CA.



KIRAN PANDAY

What now?

We hope to hold another meeting very soon. All we need is an atmosphere of trust between the government and these groups. We will begin releasing prisoners through due process. They assured me that violence and destruction would not solve anything, all they need is proof that the government is serious. They are not yet convinced because past agreements have not been implemented. They are right, but we have already started the process. Some of the past agreements aren't the purview of the government, only the CA can decide on them.

How important is PLA integration to the peace process?

It is the backbone of the peace process. It is as important as the writing of the constitution and both are directly linked with the peace process. There are some vested interests that don't want integration and want to derail the process. It is this that is hindering integration. This is a difficult issue, but not one that is intractable. One just needs to follow the clauses in the comprehensive peace accord.

Will the NC join the integration committee?

The NC is just trying to get some practice being in opposition. We gave up the post of coordinator, even though logically it should go to the peace minister. The committee will start its business, and there are some in the NC who want the party to join the committee. But integration is not just about merging the two armies, we have to see it as a part of wider security sector reforms. We have to redefine our security strategy and terms of reference of the security agencies and their chain of command. The PLA is a guerrilla army, and the national army needs guerrilla capability. The Nepal Army has a long history of professionalism, but was also feudal. So we are talking about an integrated army that has the best of both.

There have been delays in setting up the commissions on disappearance and truth and reconciliation.

The cabinet endorsed the draft law on setting up the disappearance commission on Wednesday, now we will start work on truth and reconciliation. Without finding out the truth there can be no reconciliation, and we are committed to this process. The commissions on civil service reform and land reform are also on the way.

Looks like there is serious disagreement within your party.

It's not as serious as reported in the media, there are issues that will be decided by the national cadre meeting. Anyone expecting the party to split can dream on. It's not going to happen.

LETTERS

CONSTITUTION 2010

Thank you for presenting Krishna Khanal's A-to-Z of federalism in your Constitution Supplement (Rationale for federalism, #425). A friendly reminder that Belgium is a federal kingdom, not a federal republic. There are other incongruous arguments, let me refute them point by point:

- Decentralisation could not bring development, federalism is necessary to expedite development activities and ensure the participation of the people. There are many reasons why Nepal has not been able to develop, let's not blame decentralisation.

- Switzerland is a small country but there is ethnic and linguistic diversity, which is addressed through a federal system. Switzerland is a confederation although functioning as a de facto federation, consisting of more than 23 republics all of whom have different constitutions and jurisdictions.

- Federalism is required in our country due to the structure of society. If Prof Khanal is talking about the ethnic makeup of our country he should be reminded that despite there being more than 101 ethnic groups in Nepal these ethnic groups do not live in enclaves, the population in many regions are not suggestive of any ethnic majority.

Rishav Shrestha, email

IMAGINE

I am baffled by the Maoist policies in Nepal, but I am more surprised at the lack of any opposition to them (Imagine, #425). Where have all the Nepalis who rose up against oppression in April 2006 gone? How can the Maoists talk about handing out educational degrees to those who aren't literate? How can the criteria for receiving an educational degree be killing people? Does Bhattarai, a PhD himself, not value education? Does he

not understand the implication of such policies?

Abhishek Bhandari, email

- Thank you for a brave and optimistic editorial (Daylight robbery, #425). I agree with most of it, but it's not that the government can't control the lawlessness, it is the Maoists in government who are perpetrating it. The YCL needs to be made accountable for its actions, and we the people will do it. YCL be warned.

Name withheld, email

- The Maoists have time and again shown their dual character of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. Finance Minister Dr Baburam Bhattarai claims his group hasn't seized any property, whereas Minister for Culture and State Reconstruction Gopal Kiranti says land seized during the conflict will not be returned. Thousands of people have become internally displaced because of the Maoists, and the whole world is aware of it. There was a time when the palace was

blamed for everything. The king is gone. Who is to blame for the mess we are in today?

Heimdall Hallinskioi, email

DOWNSIZING DEVELOPMENT

The article 'Downsizing development' (#425) made a number of interesting points regarding how the global financial crisis may affect the development and humanitarian community. We would like to clarify that World Vision International Nepal (WVIN) and World Vision US, although part of the international World Vision Partnership, are separate entities. WVIN sources its funding from a number of countries, and at present does not receive any of its funding from World Vision US. There are currently no plans to downsize our development work in Nepal, which will continue with child focussed programs in 10 districts.

Callum Newman
Acting National Director
World Vision International Nepal



KIRAN PANDAY

Who's in charge?

Thugs and threats rule in the new Nepal

Early this week, a group of masked men forcibly entered the distribution centre of *Himal Khabarpatrika* at Maitighar, terrorised the staff, stole their cellphones, vandalised the office, set fire to copies of the magazine and then nonchalantly departed. The attack was an affirmation of an investigative report in the magazine that criminal gangs are virtually ruling the country.



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

Lawlessness in Madhes has long been a matter of concern but the

stranglehold of illegal bands of militants over the capital is no less debilitating. Instances of abduction for ransom or random killings may be less frequent in Kathmandu but there is no mistaking the helplessness of the law enforcement agencies when almost all gangs operate as radical wings of the political parties.

Home Minister Bamdev Gautam, meanwhile, is too busy enforcing decency laws on massage parlours and dance bars to worry about the collapse of law and order, and Janardan Sharma, the Maoist Minister for Peace and Reconstruction, is basking in the glory of having informally engaged 15 armed groups creating mayhem in Madhes. He has neither the time nor the inclination to hold talks with the militant wing of his own party which is busy running a parallel government by intimidation.

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal lacks the moral authority to rein in groups that challenge the authority of the state. After all, he owes his political ascendancy to those who defied prevailing laws by force of arms under his direction. Welcome to the world of the post-insurgency, moral-legal vacuum, where brute force is the only law.

After months of delay, the Constituent Assembly has finally established the rules and procedures for writing the new constitution. The deadline of May 2010 will be meaningless without a political consensus, but with all the main parties

GRIEVING: Sumitra Dongol and her daughter Suntali at their home in Siuchatar on Thursday. Sumitra's son, Puskar, and his friend Nirmal Pant were abducted and killed by suspected Maoists last month in Dhading. The capital was closed down on Thursday in protest

creating or revitalising their own militant groups to fill the law enforcement vacuum, confrontation rather than cooperation appears more likely.

There may not be a stated plan to prolong the tenure of the assembly but every political party seems to be working towards that end. Since the citizenry is unlikely to acquiesce meekly to a deadline extension, uncertainty looms on the horizon even as insecurity spreads on the ground.

It's easy to see that the cause of this lawlessness is the lack of governance. In the short term, the Maoists may feel that such a state is conducive to their rapid expansion. But it doesn't take long for a situation to change. With the formation of the UML's militant Youth Force, not to mention the armed groups in Madhes, the YCL's hoodlums are finding the boot is now often on the other foot.

There is an urgent need to strengthen local administrations. With most VDC secretaries operating either from district headquarters or the nearest urban centre, space is left for extortionists masquerading as politicians or rights activists. The government has wavered for far too long over proposals to form ad hoc local government units.

The Maoists, UML and MJF should resist the temptation to overhaul the entire civil service. Fragile coalitions have no moral right to bind future governments to hastily introduced reforms. That said, there is nothing to stop the government from bringing in effective policing to deal with bandana-clad radicals in a way that local authorities deem fit.

The Maoist-led government's inability to prevent the attack at *Himal Khabarpatrika* sends out a message that media is not able to exercise their freedom. Unless the Maoists plan to go back to war, they need to understand that maintaining a peaceful society is their primary responsibility. ●

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It's time to start implementing those development plans

The hotels of Kathmandu are buzzing with consultations, their rooms filled with 'parachute consultants', and it's difficult to get in and out of Kathmandu as flights are booked solid by report-



ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed

hugging experts. Let's face it, why would anyone turn down the chance to visit Nepal during a month when the mountains are visible from the city? But we must hope all their efforts produce fruitful results and help Nepal achieve inclusive economic growth.

Recently, there have been new and innovative approaches taken to planning. For the first time we are seeing the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and Britain's DFID working on a common strategy for their next three-year program. It would be good if there were more organisations pursuing such joint strategies rather than duplicating their efforts. Nepal has received billions of dollars in donor assistance in the past five decades, but when one looks around, apart from introducing workshop-seminar habits, paid junkets, cocktail receptions, report-generating and SUV driving habits, the impact vis-à-vis the costs has been

minimal. One may sound cynical, but it is difficult to pinpoint 10 successful interventions that have really altered Nepal's future. One change that has occurred is that now Nepal produces a good number of development workers who find jobs both here and abroad. But should these highly talented and educated Nepalis have been sucked into a sector where they are led to believe they can earn \$800-\$1,000 per day? The embracing of development work as a career has probably let many great people avoid the real world, where performance is measured by the accomplishment of set targets



rather than by the number of pages written in a report. While much debate is conducted and many column inches filled questioning the accountability of the state, little is known about the funds that come in or the work that is done. If public companies are required to disclose their accounts to the public, why shouldn't money that is given in the name of the Nepali public be accounted for too? Perhaps Nepal is competing with some African nations to have the highest number of reports per capita. Surely the time has come to move on from writing to implementation. Probably in every sector—barring nanotechnology or space programs—there are heaps of

reports that have been written in the past 15 years. The challenge now is not to write more of them but to start putting their recommendations into practice. Whether one is looking at managing state enterprises or financial sector reform, education sector reform, health sector reform or labour issues, a lot of man hours have already been spent on writing about such topics. Nepal has a great pool of young people that can be trained to make those plans happen. Of course they have to be inspired by people other than those who are not bothered about implementation or who have already retired. There is a window of opportunity once again to make an impact and perhaps make amends for past bungling. ●



Date of First Publication 20 November 2008

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

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The Support to Participatory Constitution Building in Nepal/UNDP is looking for an experienced and qualified Nepalese citizen for the following position with substantive experience.

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- Client satisfaction: Ensure that the Resource centre programmes meet the expectation of the clients and implement appropriate measures for improvements based on regular monitoring of the client satisfaction and needs., programme management: Ensure that the activities of the Resource Centre encourage and support constitutional dialogue.
- Preparation of annual and quarterly work plans and progress reports including donor reports for the Resource Centre., organization of periodic meetings of the Resource Centre Steering Committee, and some other coordination forum if required.
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Gangs of anarchy



KIRAN PANDAY

JP Pun Magar in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 16-30 November

हिमाल

Regardless of how hard the parties try to give a political cover to the competition between the Maoists' YCL and UML's Youth Force, the conflict between these two political youth groups is basically to do with money.

According to records at the Police headquarters, in a span of just three months there have been 30 clashes

between Youth Force and YCL, with two Youth Force party workers and one YCL killed. In these incidents, eight have been left disabled and more than 78 have been injured.

These young party workers are known to collect hefty commissions for aiding with the fixing of contracts and for recovering sums from manpower agencies who dupe people in the name of foreign employment. The social work that these youth wings do is in fact not very different

from what the Mandales did during the Panchayat era. A background check on the members of these groups shows that a substantial number of them have criminal records and a history of drug abuse.

Youth Force was first established to challenge the YCL. It also helped the UML to re-establish political influence in the districts. But the YF also started getting drawn to anything that involved money. And now the rest of the 16 youth wings in the country are following their footsteps.

Leaders of the youth wings have strong support from the top brass of their parent parties so it is impossible for the police to take action against them, even when there is evidence. There have been extensive protests against the YCL, but the Maoists are reluctant to dismantle it because it is also an income source.

During the people's war, the conflict was between two sides, the state and the Maoists. But since they joined the peace process, the conflict has become multifaceted. The fear now is that this fire could cash in on the regional and ethnic identity struggle that is brewing.

Already, unorganised armed groups in the Tarai are campaigning to displace workers from the hills. The situation could get out of hand if groups like the Madhesi Youth Force, Rakshya Dal and Madhesi Commando also join in. And we can't guarantee that a similar situation will not occur in Limbuwan, or that the ethnic

struggle of the Tharus will not take on a bigger form. If the state and the political parties do not take timely measures to control and monitor these youth wings, they will become uncontrollable. These young groups have the power to invite war. If the situation gets out of hand, the parties are sure to suffer. The bigger worry is what will then happen to our country.

Press attack

Editorial, *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 19 November

The attacks on Himalmedia in the past weeks has shocked the media and civil society. The arson attack on *Himal*'s latest issue represents a direct threat to press freedom and the citizen's right to information. The attackers have also challenged the state's security apparatus. For the past two and half years, *Nepal Samacharpatra* and other newspapers have been the target of attacks. The Editor's Alliance, set up to defend press freedom, has been condemning these attacks in the strongest terms. The state must assure its citizens and the press that it is capable of ensuring security, and investigate the attack on Himalmedia.

We're family

Dristi, 18 November

दृष्टि

Prachanda's family

1. Samir Dahal (Under-secretary of PM's office), son of Prachanda's younger brother Narayan Dahal
2. Ganga Dahal (Officer of PM's office), Prachanda's younger daughter (Indian citizen)
3. Gangaram Dahal (un-appointed foreign relations officer), Prachanda's own brother
4. Renu Pathak (CA member), Prachanda's daughter
5. Arjun Pathak (Officer of CA), Prachanda's son-in-law
6. Prakash Dahal (Prime Minister's PA/accountant), Prachanda's son, salary equal to the under-secretary
7. Narayan Dahal (CA member), Prachanda's nephew
8. Thakur Bhatta (Prachanda's brother-in-law)
9. Another son-in-law (contractor of Chitwan Cantonment)

Baburam's relatives

1. Hisila Yami (Tourist Minister), Baburam's wife
2. Taranaj Pandey (PM's adviser), Baburam's nephew
3. Praya Yami (National Planning Commission), Hisila's older sister
4. Timila Yami (Chairperson of Drinking Water Project), Hisila's older sister
5. Chirik Shova (member of Kathmandu Drinking Water), Baburam's older sister
6. Baburam's younger brother (Tariff-fixing Committee), Head of Kathmandu Drinking water.

Underground with Baburam Sir



THREESOME: Ram Bahadur Thapa, Biswadeep Pandey and Baburam Bhattarai somewhere in India during the war.

Biswadeep Pandey, Baburam Bhattarai's personal assistant, in *Naya Patrika*, 17 November

नयाँ पत्रिका

It was March 2004. A long cold winter had just ended and there was a certain calm in the country because of a ceasefire. My father, Bhakta Pandey, who was living underground in Gorakhpur, arrived in Butwal. I had just finished my SLC exams, but my father wanted me to come to India with him. I couldn't ask him where he was taking me.

At Lucknow railway station I found out I was going to be Baburam Bhattarai's personal assistant. After a 15-minute auto-rickshaw ride, we reached a three-storeyed house. There were two women and two men waiting for us. I recognised Baburam and Lekhnath and later learnt that the other two were their wives. Baburam Sir was leaving that day for Nepal for peace talks. "Comrade," he told me, "go to Delhi with Hisila. I'll see you there when I get back from Nepal."

Hisila Madam and I left for Delhi the next day. She told me that Baburam Sir was looking for a young, hard-working, disciplined and responsible assistant who could keep party secrets and understood the importance of simple living. We lived in a pink house in Rohini Sector 15 in Delhi. Hisila Madam showed me how to get around the city

in public buses.

My main responsibility was to get Nepali newspapers for Baburam sir. I also had to type up articles and run errands. The nearest cybercafé was 10km away. I had learnt how to use a computer in school but didn't know how to use the internet. Hisila Madam taught me and I was ready when Baburam Sir returned.

The talks failed and Baburam was restless, disturbed and unhappy. One day there was a knock on the door of our apartment. There was a man standing there. He had a salt and pepper moustache and looked familiar, but I couldn't quite figure out where I had seen him before. He asked me if I was Bhakta's son and headed straight to Baburam Sir's room. Hisila Madam asked me if I recognised him. When I told her I didn't, she said: "That's Prachanda." I was stunned. I hadn't recognised the leader of the people's war.

That evening, Baburam Sir asked me to type up a paper. It was a statement on the failure of the talks. I went to the cybercafé and sent it out to all the leading international newspapers. Back then we used to create new email IDs to send emails out. The story was published in *The Times of India* the next day.

Baburam Sir used to drink black tea in the morning. At around 8AM he used to have a breakfast of roti and curry, and lunch at 1PM. If he had to make a call he used public phones. He carried a mobile phone but only a few Maoist leaders had his number. He never used an auto-rickshaw or taxi. He used to go around Delhi on public buses to save money.

Baburam Sir never used to have his picture taken because of security reasons. I didn't have any pictures with him, so it was my dream to have one taken. I requested him a number of times. He was so tired of my request that he called my father and asked him to talk to me about it. After that, I never asked him again.

I learnt about communism from Baburam Sir. He gave me Lenin's *The State and Revolution* to read. The first time I read it, I didn't understand a word. By the third read I could vaguely understand some of the concepts.

In 2004, the Maoist party decided to take disciplinary action against Baburam Sir and three other leaders. I was in Kharibot, Rolpa and wept all night when I heard the news. The next day, 1 February 2005, Baburam, Dinanath, Hisila, Debendra Paudel and Mani Thapa arrived at Kharibot. That was also the day former king Gyanendra decided to take over. This changed everything, and the Chairman rescinded his decision to order disciplinary action against the leaders.



Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal at the BIMSTEC Convention: "We destroyed countless bridges, telecommunication towers, buildings during the ten year people's war. That is why Nepal has lots of opportunities for investment."

Learning from South Africa

Nepali legislators must look to the experiences of other ‘new’ nations

“What do you expect from this visit to South Africa?” the organiser asked us. Everyone had a different answer, but one thing we all wanted was to meet Nelson Mandela, known throughout the world as a symbol for political freedom and equality. Sadly his ill health meant this was not possible, but we did visit the Apartheid Museum in Soweto, which told the story of his struggle against the racist regime.

 **COMMENT**
Gagan Thapa

We were 19 youth leaders from different political parties, including some Constituent Assembly members. During the nine-day program in Pretoria and Johannesburg, we learned about the South African constitution writing process, the role of the political parties in establishing democracy, the part played by the constitution commission and political institutions in safeguarding the constitution, and the nature of the federal government structure.

We interacted with people who were directly involved in the movement against apartheid, as well as researchers from academic institutions and experts who worked on the peace process and writing the constitution.



PATH TO PEACE: Gagan Thapa present a Buddha figure rently in Johannesburg to South African army general Roland de Vries, who played a key peace-building role in post-apartheid South Africa.

The first day began with a talk by Ibrahim Ibrahim, an ANC veteran of the fight against apartheid, and Roelf Meyer, a former defence minister in the apartheid regime and secretary-general of the National Party.

“In 1986, when I was deputy police minister, Ibrahim was kidnapped from Switzerland,” Meyer told us. “The journey that had begun in animosity is now moving ahead in companionship.”

Once political foes from extreme opposite ends of the political spectrum, Meyer and Ibrahim are now close friends, actively working together in the ANC. They spoke to us about peace and their experience of the constitution writing process in South Africa.

One might wonder how it was possible for these two men to work together. Several times they came close to falling out but they said two things kept them focussed.

First, there was the trust between them. They believed each side in the negotiations had honest intentions to take the peace process forward to a logical conclusion, even though they had different priorities and ideologies.

Second, each was prepared, at difficult moments, to try and see any dispute from the other’s perspective in an attempt to unravel the problem.

In contrast to Nepal, the South African journey from the

formation of a constituent assembly to the promulgation of a new constitution was fairly straightforward because most contentious issues had already been resolved in a 36-point agreement before the CA was created. A constitutional court, independent of the political parties, was established to oversee the writing process, which meant parties’ partisan positions on constitutional issues became less important.

This in turn meant there was more time for public discussion about the constitution. For this, the local media, constitutional experts and international comparisons were important.

There is a lot that Nepali assembly members can learn from the South African experience. Boundaries of provinces should not be decided too hurriedly and randomly. We need to have extensive deliberations with experts and reach consensus among the parties. We should not look only to past experiences, but also to future aspirations, otherwise we may pay a heavy price.

In the movement against apartheid, everyone understood that colour could not be the basis on which to build a new South Africa. They told us proudly: “The constitution of South Africa does not recognise black or white; it knows only African citizens.”

We also learnt from the ANC experience that although the success of political parties depends on leadership, their organisational management and ideology are equally important. The ANC’s 52nd convention passed a statute giving women 50 per cent of the positions within the party as well as in all levels of government. There was no provision for this in the constitution, but this statute ultimately ensured that women received equal representation.

As for the integration of opposing combatants, the first important step was to build confidence between the two armies. In South Africa, they found it worked best if they looked at problems from the perspective of the other side or, as they put it, ‘analyse the situation, walk slowly but don’t change direction’.

Ultimately, the peace process in South Africa was not easy. For Nepal, it is important that we look at their peace building and constitution-writing experiences to learn what worked and what didn’t. But we should not make the mistake of imitating them, as each society has its own specific characteristics and each peace process must follow its own particular path. ●

Gagan Thapa is a NC member of the Constituent Assembly

Constitution calendar

- 30 November-15 December, 2008**

 - Formation of 14 subject committees and nomination of vice chairman of the CA
- 16 December-11 February, 2009**

 - Drawing up of action plans for each committee
 - Civic education, training and orientation begins
 - Opinion gathering from the public
- 12 February-13 April, 2009**

 - Subject committees complete concept papers
- 14 April-14 June, 2009**

 - Preliminary drafts from committees to be tabled in the CA
- 15 June-16 September, 2009**

 - Draft constitution prepared, incorporating suggestions from the CA and subject committees, then tabled in the assembly
- 17 September-30 September, 2009**

 - Final draft of the constitution to be published in the gazette for public comment
 - Drawing up of action plans for responding to public feedback
- 1 October-15 October, 2009**

 - Extensive discussion on draft constitution
 - Public feedback to be gathered by CA members
- 16 December-14 January, 2010**

 - Report on collected suggestions to be tabled at the assembly
- 15 January-13 March, 2010**

 - The full CA to discuss the report
 - Constitution bill to be tabled in the CA, incorporating feedback
 - The bill to be discussed in the CA
 - CA members to table amendments
- 14 March-14 May, 2010**

 - After article by article discussion, all articles and sub-articles of the constitution to be finalised
- 15 May-28 May, 2010**

 - Endorsement of a complete constitution with its preamble
 - Signing off by the CA members
 - The CA chair to authenticate the constitution
 - The new constitution to be handed over to the president in a formal ceremony, where he will announce its promulgation

Gift horses

A fleet of buses that India donated to transport CA members between Singha Darbar and the BICC are still not being used. Assembly members refuse to ride the 32-seater buses because they are unhappy about the conspicuously painted eGifted from the Government of India on their sides. They believe that such a visible proof of foreign involvement will demean the constitution-drafting process. However, employees at the secretariat claim that the inability of the government to provide facilities led them to ask India for help. Indian embassy officials say that the secretariat requested 50 buses, cars and jeeps. The buses were the first to be provided. One compromise: erase the Indian flag and the prominent sign.



RSS

“We can rock the CA session easily”

Basanti Jha, (TMLP)

When did you join politics?
I was born in India. In 1971, women had no right to vote. Then, I thought of entering politics. I am also president of the Women Awareness Project. I became more actively involved in politics after the Madhes movement.

When do you think the process of constitution writing will start?

There is no sign of the process starting soon. In over six months, we have not even thought of it. It has sent out a wrong message to the villages. We have not been able to elect a vice chair of the CA, let alone begin writing the constitution. This position is allocated for a woman and no party is showing any interest in it.

What are the issues of women to be met immediately?
A single woman will get an allowance when she is 60. But I think she should be eligible to get the allowance when she becomes single. Madhesi women are plagued by the dowry system. They are also illiterate. The state should pay attention to these problems first.

Which side are you on regarding party whips?
Our own party whip is unacceptable to us regarding women’s rights. If the new constitution is written against the interests of women, women CA members will stand united. The 197 women members are enough to rock the CA session easily.



SANTA GAHA MAGAR



Off the beaten trek

As Nepal's main trekking areas get overcrowded, it's time to open up new areas



2 Lumbha Samba Pass looking east

The goddess of the east

If you have a wish, go to Pathibhara

SAGUN S LAWOTI in TAPLEJUNG

Call it chance or a twist of fate, but a pilgrimage to the fabled Pathibhara Devi temple was the last thing on the mind of 31-year-old Dinesh Karki when he left his home in Kathmandu.

It was on my way to Siliguri to board a train, I said Karki, sipping a cup of warm Tibetan tea at Suketar,

Taplejung's airfield. Friends casually mentioned Pathibhara Devi during the stopover in Birtamod. I don't know what made me do it, but I rescheduled my reservation and was off to Taplejung first thing in the morning.

To knowing nods, local man Suresh Limbu suggested that perhaps the goddess was calling Karki from his urban home.

Now, if you have any wish, you can lay it before Pathibhara, Limbu added,

explaining the strong faith shared by local people that the goddess fulfills people's wishes.

For Karki, the trip had come out of the blue. But there are large numbers of the devout who take a vow to come back again and again when their wishes are realised.

Dilli Acharya, one of the two temple priests, has little doubt that the shrine, nestled on a 3,780m mountain top is bestowed with celestial powers. He claims

the Pathibhara temple lies on a site where Parvati prayed for Lord Shiva. The sunset views of Kangchenjunga and Jannu Himal (see picture) from the temple is one of ethereal beauty.

Since Parvati's prayers were answered, the same is reflected in the case of the devotees, Acharya says.

Indeed there are many who return frequently to pay their respects to the goddess. Some come to show off their



1 Honku Basin from West Col with Ama Dablam at centre.

TEXT by **BILLI BIERLING**
PICTURES by **ROBIN BOUSTEAD**

This year’s autumn trekking season has been a bumper one, with tourist arrivals soaring to over 50,000 in October. Teahouses in the Khumbu and Annapurna regions are bursting at the seams. Even Langtang has seen thousands of tourists hitting the trails to Kyanjin Gumpa and Gosainkunda.

More than 9,200 trekkers descended on Khumbu in October—the largest number in that month since the Sagarmatha National Park was established 20 years ago and counting began. The steep trail to Namche Bajar was congested with hikers, yaks and porters.

“I have never, ever seen the Everest region so busy,” said British trek leader Mike Truman.

Some are calling for a ceiling on the number of people on the Everest trail every season.

The huge surge in the number of trekkers, and the extension of roads into the heart of the popular Annapurna trekking area, have led to growing calls for new hiking regions to be opened up to relieve the pressure on the most popular routes.

One proposal, backed by the Dutch group SNV and ICIMOD in Kathmandu is to create a Great Himalayan Trail along the entire length of Nepal, from near Kangchenjunga in the east to Api-Saipal in the far west, which could benefit 1.8 million people living in the mountains.

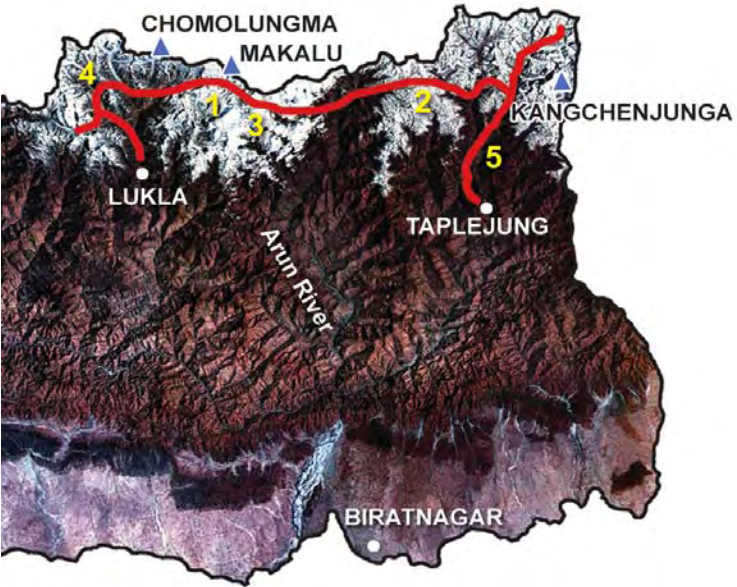
Australian tourism professional Robin Boustead has just tried out the first stretch, starting out from Suketar airfield in Taplejung and crossing nine high passes to get to Thame in

Khumbu. During the entire trek that lasted more than a month, they saw just five other trekkers.

Boustead and trekking partner Bob Rosenbaum set out at the beginning of September. The first few weeks were marred by relentless rain and continual battles with leeches.

“Bob and I would spend the evenings picking leeches from each other,” Boustead said. “The villagers were unconditionally welcoming and so open-hearted, it was humbling.”

With their eight Nepali support crew, they fought their way through dense bamboo forests, raging rivers and across snowy passes with only a rather inaccurate map. “If someone gathered enough information on that area, it would be a great trek for everyone,” Boustead said. “It may not be as comfortable as the Everest region but it is certainly



an adventure.”

While the tourist influx has brought welcome economic benefits to some, these remain very localised.

“The people in the areas outside the major trekking regions are still very poor, and the tourist

business—if done in a sustainable manner—would certainly improve their lives,” said Sam Voolstra, a tourism adviser for SNV.

Boustead, who lost 14kg on the walk, intends to return in the spring to continue along the next section of the 1,500km trail. ●



3 Makalu from Sherpani Col



4 Chomolungma as seen from Renjo La

newborn baby, others to express gratitude for their recruitment into the Gurkha regiment or to give thanks for overcoming a physical ailment.

The reasons could be anything under the sun, says Surya Bhattacharya, a devotee and member of the Pathibhara Devi Temple Conservation and Promotion Committee. But pilgrims do come for prayers answered.

Bhattacharya, a government employee, backed up his assertion citing several experiences of his own: If not for the divine powers, why would the devotees continue coming?

However, the name Pathibhara has nothing to do with the sanctity of the holy abode. The name came about simply because the temple sits atop a mountain resembling a *pathi* or measuring vessel.

Local Limbus know the site as Bung: Muktu meaning ěpowersí and ětreeí.

Little is known of the real origins of this long-venerated shrine, but according to local folklore, shepherds camping nearby were astonished when a flock of lambs disappeared into thin air. Their subsequent search proved fruitless. They later dreamt that they should make an animal sacrifice and after they had done so, the lambs reappeared.

Since the people had literally lost all knowledge of the sacred site, this was the goddess’s way of reacquainting the people with it, said Acharya, who lives at the site even throughout the harsh winter cold. That act was her calling.

Taplejung is accessible by road via Ilam, or by direct flights to Suketar from Kathmandu or Biratnagar. From there Pathibhara is a three day roundtrip with easy walking. ●



5 Jannu Himal from Pathibhara



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Towards a

PAAVAN MATHEMA

The battle of the operating systems is intensifying in Nepal, it looks like free open source softwares like Linux are emerging as a viable alternative to commercial software.

People usually are only too happy to grab anything labelled 'free', but free and open source software (FOSS) was finding it difficult to make much headway against the commercial giants. Ironically, it was the fact that pirated Windows operating systems are cheap and sometimes come free with the hardware that made it difficult for FOSS to have a following.

It's free, it's in Nepali, and it could save you a packet

"The concept of FOSS lies in freedom of usage, modification and sharing," says Bal Krishna Bal of Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya (MPP), which is trying to promote the programs and its Nepali language operating system.

FOSS is computer software a user can download for free, use in any way and even modify. Among the most popular examples of FOSS are the Mozilla Firefox web browser, and the OpenOffice.org office suite which offers a free alternative to Microsoft's

Windows software. Original, proprietary software, like that of Windows or Adobe, can cost several hundred dollars. But they can be legally used once only by one customer and cannot be modified.

"Unlike FOSS, the rights of the software are restricted to the company and the user is bounded to comply with their policies," says Subir Pradhananga, President of FOSS Nepal.

Regardless of its cost and technical limitations, proprietary



STEVE MALLOCH

I KNOW THE ANSWER: Children, each with their own XO computers, at the Biswamitra Ganesh School in Lalitpur respond to a question from the teacher at an interactive classroom last week.

One laptop per Nepali child

LINE WOLF NIELSEN in LALITPUR

As the morning bell rings, uniformed students of the Biswamitra Ganesh Secondary School line up in the playground and sing Nepal's stirring new national anthem.

Students of grade two and six walk to their classrooms and turn on their little green laptops. The school has been selected to test how computers specially designed for children in developing countries can be integrated into daily teachings.

Six months ago each student here was given these robust XO computers by Open Learning Nepal with support from a Danish group. Teachers are being trained to provide computer-based exercises.

Active English verbs are on the menu for today's English lesson in grade two. *Walking, dancing, singing* - it says on the black board. The children are busy constructing sentences on the computer. The right answers are rewarded with a happy beep.

"Before I only had my textbook, but now I have many more opportunities in my teaching," says teacher Pawan KC, "the computer helps the children improve pronunciation."

The break bell rings again. But not all the students rush out. Marita Shrestha in class six turns on her computer. She tells us: "The computer has sound and pictures and if I make a mistake I can correct it immediately."

For Rabi Karmacharya of Open Learning Nepal, internet and computer-based education is less about gadgets and more about quality education.

"Learning can be more fun and interactive," he explains, "there is also an aspect of self-learning and

self evaluation and the children can take the computer home.

Nepal's education spending today is an average of Rs 3,000 per child, and many argue that schools need text books, furniture and roofs, not computers. Karmacharya argues that it is not a question of either/ or.

"If we believe that education leads to positive development, then we have to invest in better education. If the benefits match the expenses, then I am confident that we can find the means to continue," he says.

The American Internet guru and founder of One-laptop-per-child Nicolas Negroponte launched the idea that children from developing countries should have access to ICT-based education. His group developed the XO, marketed as the \$100 computer, although it now costs \$195.

Cheap computers for children in the developing world have been tried elsewhere, but this is the first time a project includes specially developed teaching materials too. So far, materials for English and Math have been developed. Soon, some for Nepali will follow.

It's still too early to say how the laptops will affect learning capabilities and the teaching of the 135 students at the Biswamitra Ganesh School who got their computers in April. Next month, the Ministry of Education will decide if it wants to continue a larger pilot project. The findings from Nepal will feed into projects in other countries. ●

www.amazon.co.uk/xo/
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Himal Khabarpatrika
1-15 Mangsir

Cover

World Economic Meltdown hits Nepal
Nepal is now linked to the world economy through remittances, trade, foreign aid, investment, NRNs and ties to India.

Editorial

- Should tax payers' money be used to compensate victims of Maoist property seizures?
- The Obama victory showed US society becoming inclusive

Goon Rule

Special report on the militant youth wings of the various parties

Sambidhan Yatra

Regular 12-page Supplement on the constitution-writing exercise

Land Reform

Special package various options for land reform

Last Page

Debi Sunar writes about her struggle for justice against the murderers of her daughter, Maina

Windowsless world

software is used virtually everywhere in the world. Even in Nepal, the pirated versions of proprietary software make up 90 per cent of all software used. Pradhananga says there is a FOSS alternative to almost all commercial software. “What is lacking is awareness,” he says. Now, FossNepal with MPP, Help Nepal Network and other

cyberactivists are trying to change all that with public programs and recruitment of young software engineers into the movement. Nepal is at the forefront among South Asian countries in promoting FOSS, especially in developing localised software. In 2005, NepalLinux—an operating system in the Nepali language—was launched and is now

available in four versions. The arrival of NepalLinux meant that using a computer was no longer limited to English speakers. Several rural schools are now using FOSS, and enthusiasts have been lobbying for the government to include it in the country’s IT policies and in the national education curriculum. The switch to FOSS is not difficult as many free applications are Windows compatible, and it is also possible to install a dual-booting system on a computer.

What makes FOSS unique is the easy availability of its source code, which allows IT-savvy operators around the world to modify and improve the software. FOSS users and developers share ideas, problems and solutions in the quest to make the free software more useful and easier to operate. And the other great advantage is the low risk from computer viruses. ●

See also:
‘Ayo Nepali!’, #129
‘Fontastic Nepali’, #165
‘NepaLinux’, #231
‘Not doing too badly in IT outsourcing’, #291
‘Dailekh bridges the digital divide’, #360
‘Instead of one laptop per child...’, #361



Networked cabinet

It is Thursday and another cabinet meeting is about to commence at Singha Durbar. The ministers are comfortably seated waiting for Prime Minister Dahal to show up. But unlike in the past, there aren’t sheafs of papers and files on the table. Instead, each minister has a slick notebook computer, and some are busy typing in notes and others are reviewing the agenda for the Thursday meeting. All 23 ministers now sport sleek laptops, though it is not clear how many know how to type or use the computers. The ministers can view their daily program schedules and the meeting agenda with their laptops, says IT engineer Arjun Adhikari, who networked the system. The ministers can even post their opinions or amendments on the discussions. They can access legislation, and are networked to each other. The ministers have been enthusiastically using them even though none of them were trained in using the computers, says Jagdish Regmi at the cabinet secretariat. There is a support team of three computer experts who can help the ministers out if they get stuck. And it’s strictly business in the cabinet meeting: there is no room for a quick game of solitaire or a chat with a daughter in Australia. To help the ministers concentrate on running the country, no games or internet have been installed.

IT’s happening in Bhaktapur

Laxman Shrestha, leans down to press the start button of the newly installed computer at Bhaktapur DDC. It is an old and slow machine that takes five minutes to boot up. But it’s better than nothing in Nepal’s most IT-savvy DDC office. Shrestha works for the Bhaktapur district development office and with considerable pride opens up the Government of Nepal website and shows us how his districts posts all its information online. Since June 2008, Bhaktapur has been one of several DDCs to start computerising its office. Believing that technology could help make work more efficient and respond faster to demand, Bhaktapur raised the necessary funds to install the technology. We can now network with 16 of our VDCs and the main ministry, Shrestha says. The volume of work at the DDC was such that often services were slow and not up to the standard required. The hope is that the new technology will eventually help DDC staff serve the people of Bhaktapur more effectively and competently. However, as most employees don’t yet know how to use the computers proficiently, the technology is not being used to its full capacity. Staff are receiving training, but this is a slow business. Nevertheless, Shrestha remains confident that with a little more practice, the computer technology will make a big difference not just to Bhaktapur but to other districts in Nepal. *Shradha Basnyat in Bhaktapur*



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Maina's story

A powerful new feature film relates the true story of Maina Sunar

REVIEW by DEWAN RAI

Maina is not the usual formulaic, made in Nepal, replica Bollywood nonsense. It is a spirited portrayal of a time when this country was at war.

Director K P Pathak reminds us of the terror that ordinary families caught in between the soldiers and the guerrillas experienced every day during the war. He sheds light on an issue that deserves far more prominence in contemporary Nepali debate—that of abuse by the state of its own citizens.

Maina Sunar's case got attention because of the struggle that one woman, Maina's mother Debi, launched to find out what had happened to her daughter. Her single-handed fight for justice when she found out Maina had been tortured and murdered got full media attention.

Ironically, Maina was murdered in Panchkhal—the base where the Nepal Army's UN peacekeepers are trained. Those who were responsible for Maina's torture and murder are known by name, yet have never stood trial.

There are more than 1,200 documented cases of disappearances by the state and the insurgents. There are many more which were never reported. At a time when the peace process is moving forward, one may argue that this is a time for reconciliation, to let bygones be bygones.

But *Maina* shows us in painful detail that the war is never over for the relatives of the victims—especially the disappeared and the wounded. For closure they need the truth about what happened to their relatives, they need compensation and they need justice.



Pathak's film is gritty in its cinematography, portraying the stark reality of rural Nepal in a time of war. There is no attempt to glamourise the violence or sensationalise the action, and one smells the fear of the protagonists as the camera moves cinema verité style to expose state brutality and reveal the hard-heartedness of insurgents.

It goes further in urging the government to set up the mechanisms to ensure that the poor get justice and individuals' rights are protected. The director has presented the story as a straight re-telling of what happened, from the perspective of the victim's family and without resorting to over-the-top dramatics—as usually happens with feature films. Pathak doesn't fall into the trap of being propagandistic or preachy, which is why his message against impunity and for accountability has credibility and power.

Minister for Information Krishna

Bahadur Mahara was chief guest at a special screening of *Maina* at Kumari Cinema recently (the prime minister was invited but didn't show up). Many in the audience, which included Debi, could be seen wiping away tears. Perhaps the movie will help Mahara and others in government to think: we overthrew the monarchy but has the condition of ordinary Nepalis changed for the better? Are the relatives of the victims ever going to see justice?

The film is also a tribute to Debi Sunar and many mothers like her as well as human rights activists who displayed extraordinary courage to take on the state and the rebels to expose the abuse.

Although it might not play well at the box office, this film will help to earn Pathak kudos among Nepalis and within the Nepali film industry.

LAST SEEN: The moment in the film in which soldiers drag away Maina from her home. Director K P Pathak (below) on location in Dhading, where he recreated Maina's home in Sindhupalchok.



Opening doors for Nepali art in London

When Sangeeta Thapa organized the exhibition 'Khulla Dhoka' in March 2006, Nepal's future looked bleak.

The war was at its peak, 50 Nepalis were being killed every week. Pro-democracy protests were gathering strength on the streets. Yet, the exhibition in a symbolic fashion tried to show that there was hope, that doors (and minds) needed to be opened.

As it turned out, by April that year the street protests forced king Gyanendra to restore parliament and a ceasefire went into effect. Nepal's future suddenly looked bright again.

Thapa has now taken the exhibition to London as part of an effort to raise money for a proposed Kathmandu Arts Centre, a vibrant world-class centre to support the creativity of future Nepali artists. Khulla Dhoka 2 was opened in London on 28 October and ended on 14 November.

"The absence of quality museums, experimental spaces and studios has



WAY OUT JUNE 2008 / PATRICK HUGHES

hindered the development of contemporary expression and it is to make up for this loss that we are trying to set up the Kathmandu Arts Centre," Thapa told *Nepali Times*.

The exhibition in London had works by 11 prominent Nepali artists (Durga Baral, Sujana Chitrakar, Kiran Manandhar, Manuj Babu Mishra, Ashmina Ranjit, Seema Shah, Shahi Shah, Uma Shankar Shah, Romio Shrestha, Sunil Sigdel and Ragini Updhyaya-Grela) and international artists, including Catherine Goodman,

Maggi Hambling, Patrick Hughes, Tim Hyman and Richard Long. All 108 artists donated work which were for sale at £150 to £50,000.

The Duchess of Cornwall, Camilla Parker Bowles, also lead a fundraising dog walk at London's Green Park on 8 November to raise money for the Kathmandu Arts Centre as well as the Kathmandu Animal Treatment (KAT) that rescues street dogs. The dogs were all garlanded as if on Kukur Tihar. ● www.kathmanduarts.org



HOW DO YOU DO: Sangeeta Thapa of the Kathmandu Arts Centre welcomes Camilla Parker-Bowles at the Khulla Dhoka 2 exhibition in London last week.

Still yearning for justice

The war hasn't ended for Maina's mother

One day in February 2003 I left my daughter Maina at home to visit my mother. My sister Rina Rasaili had earlier been abducted by soldiers, raped and killed.

I could never imagine that a similar fate awaited my daughter. I didn't see her being handcuffed and dragged out of the house. My husband and sister don't want to talk about it because they say their hearts still tremble when they remember the horror.

Director K P Pathak has made a feature film about my daughter's murder, called *Maina*, which premiered on 10 November. During the scenes when Maina's character is tortured by electrocution and her head pushed under a water drum, I covered my head and wept.

The tears I shed were also tears of happiness. That a movie about Maina was finally made represented a result of my long struggle. If I had just grieved no one would have known me, nor Maina. It was because of my struggle that the army which was saying "We didn't do it" was finally forced to say "Yes, we did it." Human rights activists and journalists played an important part in this struggle. However, the journey hasn't ended yet, it won't end until the murderers are punished.

In 2003 I attended a reception by the OHCHR's Louise Arbour at the Himalaya Hotel. She had arranged for me to meet the army chief, Pyarjung Thapa. Someone pointed him out to me, and I walked to his side: "Namaste, sir. I am lucky to be able to meet someone like you," I said. "Why?" he asked.

"It's rare for a victim of violence like me to have the opportunity to meet someone like you."

"Victimised by whom?" he asked.

I replied: "I am Maina Sunar's mother. My daughter has disappeared since February 2003. I want to know where my daughter is, if she was detained. If so, why."



COMMENT
Debi Sunar



REEL DEBI: Maina's parents Debi and Purna Sunar (played by Radha Shrestha and Govinda Prabhat) in the film, *Maina*.

He thought for a while, then said: "I will contact you in a week." I didn't have a phone so human rights activist Mandira Sharma gave him her number.

It was after this that the army admitted through the media that Maina was killed in the barracks. It named Col Babi Khatri, Lt Col Amit Pun and Sunil Adhkari and Capt Niranjana as having taken part in Maina's torture and murder. The army said it had frozen their promotion and detained them for a few months.

The army also promised compensation, but I didn't go to the Kabhre district office because my struggle was not for money. I wanted to take the guilty to court to have them tried and then awarded damages.

I had thought that I would get justice when the Maoists came to power. But now I see that they are too busy with their own vested interests. No Maoist leader or cadre has ever spoken to me after they got into government. I don't understand how they could just forget about the victims of the conflict so soon.

Not just the Maoists, many human rights activists and journalists have also taken advantage of my tragedy. They take hours and hours of footage of me and then they sell my suffering. I hear the Maoists are even planning to release an album named after Maina. K P Pathak's film exposes these things.

I am poor, but I want to immortalise Maina by setting up the Maina Child Development Committee and an orphanage in my daughter's name. And I am glad to note that K P Pathak has pledged a part of the earnings from charity shows of his film in Kabhre to Maina's cause. ●

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RENDEZVOUS

• Venue: Regency Ball Room, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu • Date: 26 Nov, 08 • Time: 6:30 pm

Welcome to the world of Miss Players @ Fashion Rendezvous, the show where the premium women's wear collections from Surya Nepal will be unveiled. Be there to update yourself with the latest international trends and rub shoulders with the who's who of Kathmandu. Showcasing at the rendezvous are Miss Players - Corporate, Casual & Party wear collections. John Players Jeans and John Players Signature Line, designed by Hrithik himself, will also be on show.

Be seen at the Miss Players - Fashion Rendezvous...

ENTRY BY INVITATION ONLY

ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Nepali Paintings: A story of transition**, 22 November, Hyatt regency, 3PM
- ❖ **Himal Southasian magazine** presents a cartoon exhibition 'The Pea under the Mattress: An Abu Retrospective and cartoons in Trying Times: The Best of Nepali Satire', till 22 November, 9AM - 5PM, Yala Maya Kendra (Free Entry). 5552141
- ❖ **Divinity of the common life**, an exhibition of paintings and photos by Karl Knapp, Nayantara Kakshapati and Tenzin Norbu Gurung at Nepal Art Council till 30 November. 4218048

EVENTS

- ❖ **Kathmandu International Theater Festival 2008**, Gurukul, 11-27 November. 4466956
- ❖ **Funeral**, a movie by Subarna Thapa, 21 November, 7PM, Alliance Française.
- ❖ **Paleti** with Pratap Subba, 28 November, 5.30 PM, nepa-laya erti sala, Rs 565. 4412469
- ❖ **AWON Christmas Bazaar**, 6 December at the Hyatt Regency, 10AM-4.30 PM

MUSIC

- ❖ **Sunday Live Music** on 23 November, Lazimpat Gallery Café, 7-11PM.
- ❖ **Tuesday Melody** at Jazzabell Café, Happy hour 6-8PM. 2114075
- ❖ **74 Twister** playing live every Tuesday at Moksh, Pulchowk. 5526212
- ❖ **Robin and the New Revolution** playing live every Tuesday, 7.10 PM onwards at Bamboo Club restaurant, Thamel. 470157
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Live Sensation**, live performance by Yankey, every Saturday, 9PM, Hyatt Regency. 4491234.
- ❖ **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

- ❖ **Thanksgiving Celebration**, 27-29 November, K-too! Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel. 4700043
- ❖ **Thanksgiving dinner**, 27-29 November, Kilroy's Restaurant. 4250440
- ❖ **Coffee & Chocolate** at the Lounge in Hyatt Regency. 4.30-6.30 PM. 4491234
- ❖ **Take away** at Te Restaurant from Bluebird Food Court and Welcome Food Plaza at Bakhundole, Sanepa. 5549331
- ❖ **Salmon Delicacies** at the Rox Restaurant from 7PM onwards. Hyatt Regency. 4489361
- ❖ **Organic Salad Bar and Steak** at Jalan Jalan restaurant every Friday from 6PM, Rs 650
- ❖ **Fusion** of Marcela Regan's new menu and Mannie's new bar at Dhokaima Cafe. 5522113
- ❖ **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri-la, Kathmandu, Rs 600. 4412999
- ❖ **Pizza & Pasta** every Monday and Tuesday at Rox Restaurant. Hyatt Regency. 448936
- ❖ **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, Durbar Marg.
- ❖ **Unlimited wine offer** for Rs 990 at La Maison wine and cigar lounge. 984133628
- ❖ **Home made pasta** at Alfresco, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **Reality Bites**, The Kaiser Café, 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.
- ❖ **Retro Brunch Barbecue** 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
- ❖ **Ily Expression Coffee** at Hotel Shangri-la, Lazimpat and Mandap Hotel, Thamel
- ❖ **Socially Responsible coffee** at Himalayan Java, Thamel



Quest Entertainment



Yuvvraaj is a musical story of a fragmented family of three brothers Deven Yuvvraaj (Salman Khan), Gyanesh (Anil Kapoor) and Danny (Zayed Khan) who battle among themselves to inherit their father's wealth. Deven Yuvvraaj is a struggling singer who signs an agreement with his girlfriend Anoushka's (Katrina Kaif) father Dr. Banton (Boman Irani) to be a billionaire in 40 days. In order to acquire this wealth, he has to face his two estranged brothers who he meets after 12 years. On meeting them, he realises that they are two individuals who are complete opposites of each other, which makes the task all the more difficult.

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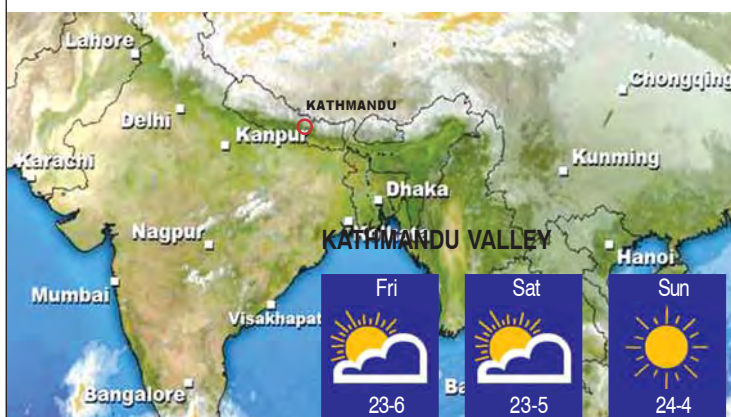
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WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

Moisture remnants of last week's cyclone in the Bay that had drifted across peninsular India washed over the Himalaya by a westerly. Its after effects will be with us into the weekend, making the mornings misty mixed with smog. Expect flight delays for morning arrivals and departures. The westerly is bringing in colder air from western Tibet, and this will bring the mercury down by another three degrees to an unseasonably low 4 degrees. The partial cloud cover will also bring down the maximum temperature to 23. The frontal system over Kashmir will bring light snow to farwest Nepal this weekend.



'MANDU MANDALA

by PRERANA PAKHRIN





KIRAN PANDAY

LARGER THAN LIFE: Former president of India, Abdul Kalam, gives a lecture at the Soaltee Crowne Plaza to a gathering of dignitaries and diplomats on Monday.



KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA

HI, BYE: Suresh Chalise speaks at a farewell reception at the Nepal Centre in New York on Wednesday after he was recalled by the Maoist-led government as Nepalis ambassador to the United States barely a year after he was appointed.



DEEPENDRA BAJRACHARYA

BOY KING: Urgyen Jigme Rabtsel Dawa recognised as a reincarnation of Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche, founder of the centre for religious learning, after his enthronement ceremony on Wednesday at the Shedrub Ling Monastery.

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A house for Comrade Biswas

In all this high drama one thing the Maobaddies seem to have forgotten about is the 40-point demand that they presented to PM Deuba way back in February 1996. They handed in the laundry list and without even waiting for a reply while Deuba was away in Delhi, launched their **janajudha** which ended up costing 15,000 Nepali lives over the next ten years.

The same comrades are now in government heading key ministries and don't seem to want to be reminded about the 40 demands. Among other things, they wanted to scrap the 1950 treaty, ban Hindi movies, stop Gurkha recruitment, impose work permits for foreign workers, end monopolistic capitalism in the banking sector, etc etc. The party that went to war to scrap the Tanakpur treaty is now ready to sign away Pancheswor. **So what was the war for?**

During the war years you could be killed for selling moonshine. Gamblers were executed. Now that they are in power, the Maoists have got their revolutionary trade union to put pressure on the home minister to lift the ban on Nepalis gambling in the nation's casinos. Not that

the ban ever stopped us from even sneaking in pretending to be Indians, but a revolutionary government that has bravely imposed a curfew in Thamel's night clubs, banned smoking in public places, evicted sidewalk vendors, plans to tear down all royal statues, and has licensed booze shops is now about to allow Nepalis to legally play **Russian Roulette**.

It is getting more and more difficult to say whether Comrade Dumb Dev is eh-Malé or Mau Mau. Even though the man lost the election, the UML put him on the PR list and then made him a minister. But our **Homily Minister** is so beholden to the baddies for having pulled strings to make him minister that his public pronouncements of late make him sound like he is a spokesman for Awesome. The other day he said: so what if Pasang becomes commander in chief? If a guerrilla chief can be prime minister, Comrade Nanda Kishore can be COAS. Fair enough. But then at Bharatpur airport the other day he said he saw nothing wrong with the government using tax payer's money to compensate people whose property had

been confiscated by the Maoists. Come again? You steal from me and then you reach into my wallet to pay me back?

Kudos to the Maoist-appointed head of the National Planning Commission for having put his foot down on inducting various relatives and cronies of Maoist ministers as new members of the NPC. PKD seems to have realised his boys had gone too far and rescinded the order. Alas, other nominees in **parastatals** and corporations like Water and Sewage, NIC, NAC and NOC don't seem to have the cojones to stand up to their baddie benefactors and are busy turning their new fiefdoms into employment agencies for cadre. The only thing we can say for the Maoists is that all this is nothign new: the UML and NC did exactly the same thing.

Would-be foreign minister Com Gaurab was recently in Caracas at a Hugo Chavez do, rubbing shoulders with lefties from all over the Americas. The question arose whether it was the Senderos who inspired the Maoists, or **Prachanda Path** that inspired the **Shining Path**. Whatever the real story,

Gajurel Sir reportedly went off on a doctrinaire tangent instigating the Senderistas to rise up again and overthrow the elected Peruvian government. This had quite a few of the Latin American delegates squirming in their seats. An Indian eye-witness said it sounded like Naxalite rhetoric from his college days in the 1960s.

Before he left for Caracas, Gajurel Sir let some cats out of the bag. '**Prachanda**' was originally supposed to be *his* nom de guerre and PKD's war name was actually Comrade Biswas. But Lotus Flower thought '**Biswas**' didn't have that certain zing and decided to call himself '**Prachanda**' and told Gajurel that henceforth

he would be called '**Gaurab**'. Gajurel has never forgiven Comrade Terrific for taking away his name.

So Chitwan has declared itself a band-free zone. Shame on the capital for not being able to do it also, and letting YF hoodlums compete with YCL goons to bring the capital to a halt even though their mother parties are both in government. Not even the embarrassment of ex-prez Abdul Kamal getting stuck for two hours on the Arniko Highway by accident victims blocking the road has woken up a government that is pretending to sleep.

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