Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal has said his primary mission during his Nordic tour next week will be to encourage foreign investment, especially in energy and IT. However, his hosts will also want to hear from him just how seriously he is committed to protecting democracy during Nepal’s transition to peace, and they will link his track record to future development assistance. Dahal will probably be able to convince the Norwegians and Finns that he is serious about democracy, but he will have a much tougher time with potential investors. “The investment climate doesn’t look good at all,” said one European investor, “and what is worrying is that instead of getting better it is getting worse.”

In Oslo, Dahal is set to meet executives from Statkraft, the Norwegian state-owned hydropower company that partly owns SN Power that is investing in the 600MW Tama Kosi III. He will be facing some tough questions about security, legal stability, political and bureaucratic delays. The Norwegians are said to be surprised that the minister of water resources is not included in Dahal’s entourage.

SN Power’s chief executive Nadia Sood was in Nepal last month, and told us: “We are committed to continuing to develop hydropower in Nepal, but a pre-condition to doing so is that we can rely on speedy, reliable and transparent decision-making. Our expansion plans hinge very much on these things being in place.” (See full interview: p4).

Indian companies like GMR and Sutlej, which had signed agreements for Arun III and Upper Karnali are said to be wavering because of security at the site. West Seti’s offices were vandalised recently in Doti and Sanima’s Likhu III was also attacked by locals.

“If labour and security is not addressed, no new foreign investment is coming into this country and even the joint ventures which are here will quit,” said one international representative in Nepal. Colgate Palmolive, which wound up in Nepal earlier this year has issued a damning annual report in which it cites “extortion and security” as the main reason.

Besides security, hydropower investors are also worried about corruption in NEA, uncertainties in the Electricity Act and arbitrary taxation. Local expectations have grown with districts with power plants and even households below transmission lines demanding 24-hour power. For the short-term India’s Power Trading Corporation has offered to sell up to 500MW of power to Nepal for Rs 3 per unit, but businesses say that unless investor woes are urgently addressed, Nepal’s economic future looks bleak.
**MEmegerS beWarE**

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has compared the relative dangers that journalists face around the world and has ranked Nepal seventh from the bottom for the killings of journalists and the lack of prosecution of their murderers.

*Rankings of this kind make snap judgments but the qualitative level of intimidation, violence and impunity in various countries, and indeed within countries. These lists, however, do name and shame governments that show a consistent contempt for the values of press freedom and the safety of journalists.*

*The only positive aspect of the CPJ list from Nepal’s point of view is that there are countries worse than us: Iraq, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Colombia and the Philippines. But the great shame about Nepal being in the ‘Bottom Ten’ is that it needn’t be.*

It all started out so promisingly three years ago with the ceasefire. And last year’s elections was a moral victory of the non-violent struggle for democracy and press freedom. Nepal was the fouled as an international role model for conflict transformation.

Yet, more journalists have been killed in the past three years than during the war. Not a single of the Nepal journalists so far been caught and tried. The side-effect of all this impunity is that self-censorship is now endemic. There is almost no probing investigative journalism, much less reporting of corruption, which is almost never covered. Journalists have learnt the hard way not to write about cross-border crime, or about the YCL and the other militants.

But most importantly, the creation of a qualified workforce. Dirt, sensational and lazy journalism spreads cynicism and perpetuates despair.

The CPJ report puts the spotlight on the Maoist-led government for allowing the media environment to deteriorate so drastically, and will put pressure on it to prove its commitment to press freedom with actions. It also forces us in the media to correct the damaging effect of the high threat level against the media with even more fearless, meaningful and responsible coverage.

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**FEAR GUEST COLUMN**

Shiva Gauri

But a lot will depend on how the Maoist leadership, and especially Defence Minister Rana Bahadur Thapa, react to the decision of the apex court. From Thursday’s protests outside the Supreme Court, it look like the court was not taking it well (pictures).

The Maoists were voted in even though they still have nearly 20,000 guerillas in UN-monitored camps. For a group that suddenly went from war to power it may be difficult to swallow the decision, but being a constitutionally elected government it can’t ignore the court.

Justice Kalyan Shrestha in his ruling said the 2006 decision by the apex court to similarly reject the non-renewal of the tenure of Gen Pushpa Pratap Barn Malla had created a precedent. He also said the government’s decision to overturn the army’s request to extend without giving a reason went against the principles of the ‘terms’ and ‘balance’ of military service.

The bone of contention is who should have the right to fire the command of retiring officers. The court decision will now make it difficult for the Maoists, who still regard the army as an ‘enemy’ force, to take unilateral decisions and will set a long-term precedent. The Maoist administration, which has been interfering in the army, police and civil service without any debate will now have to be much more careful about adhering to the rule of law.

The court will perhaps explain in more detail what it means by ‘terms’ and ‘balance’, but we can speculate that the justices are worried about unacceptable interference in the army’s internal rules and traditions that have a bearing on morale and discipline. It also showed that the Defence Ministry can’t do what it likes with the national army because in the present state of the country it would meet with unacceptable politicalisation of the military. A civilian chain of command is desirable when things are stable. This fragile transition is the wrong time to tamper with the one institution that has so far been saved from politicisation. It would be extremely dangerous for any government at the end of the Maoist HQ to have to go to the Maoist HQ in Kathmandu to lobby for a promotion.

The other positive aspect of the Supreme Court order is that it has rejected the irrational ‘terms’ and ‘balance’ policy. It was clear that the defence minister was itching to get back at the army for having stalled his attempt to stop recruitment into the national army, which itself was stopped by an earlier court order. It was clear the blocking of the tenure extension of the generals was not a decision of the defence minister but a strategic one of the coalition government but was taken by the Maoist party at a conclave of its own army.

If the Maoists are smart, they will not let this controversy drag on and use the opportunity of the Supreme Court decision to activate the Army Integration Special Committee on which it has been dragging its feet. UNMIN, which has a midterm report due at the UN Security Council, is losing patience with the lack of progress on integration, and the special committee which meets only to decide to meet again. It is also clear that the army’s tenure won’t be extended beyond June and it also sure that integration can’t commence now.

So the sooner the Maoist-led government and the army start working together on integration, the better. It will not be a tit-for-tat, the better it will be for the peace process.
Mass producing mediocrity

423,000 students will sit for their school exams this week

O nce again, Nepal’s young are knocking at the Iron Gate of their future careers. This year 423,000 students are appearing for SLC Examinations. Some of them will be declared ‘failed’, others will pass, a few with flying colours. Once more, the results will illustrate the gross inequality in Nepal’s education system. And what will these young people do once they are out of school? In these uncertain times, the general attitude (‘we’ll cross that bridge when we come to it’) has its advantages. But the decision becomes a little complicated when rivers are deep and the choice involves building a bridge, waiting at the edge while you wait for someone to throw the rope, or just jumping off the cliff and hoping for the best. No wonder students appear so stressed.

The last choice is the only one available to students stigmatised by society as failures, usually for no fault of their own. In a majority of public schools in rural areas, untrained and unmotivated teachers struggle with syllabuses that have no relationship with the ground reality. Other than the 3Rs of reading, writing and arithmetic, school education in rural Nepal teach no life skills. Students don’t learn about farming, how to make a plough, produce manure, keep goats, build huts, grow trees, look after the elderly, attend to the sick, clean streets, dig wells, play dhime baja or organise village communals. The best that they can wish is a chance to take up the gun for others, like the British or Indian Army, if they are lucky. Or to migrate for work.

The main problem with Nepal’s school system is that it churns out individuals who wish to consume but have little ability to produce. Even among the relatively privileged, some become cheerful robots of the NGO-industry. Many end up as no-collar automatons at projects and aid agencies. Nepali economy is in doldrums. The tragedy is that our youthful workforce lacks the will—and tools—to pull it out of this rut.

In the Birth Centenary year of social thinker Ram Manohar Lohia, it may be appropriate to learn from the model he envisioned for his own country. Like India of Lohia’s time, Nepal is a capital-scarce but labour-abundant country. Our problems are compounded by the fact that generations of Nepalis have availed of the easy option of withdrawing from the national economy by becoming Lahures. Had remittances been the best way to build a country, Nepal would already be Switzerland of Asia and the Philippines would be Japan. The hard reality is that there is no alternative to building a prosperous economy but pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps.

There are private schools in urban areas that teach to build bridges, but most churn out youths with exaggerated sense of self-importance. For them, this country is beyond redemption. Their talent needs a more conducive environment, so they troop off to educational consultancies for student visas to Australia, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark. Anywhere, as long as they can escape the country that they think has no future.

But even for an education system designed by default for the mass production of mediocrity, it’s possible to save seeds for the future of the country. Unfortunately, the post-school facilities of training the willing are in equally bad shape, if not worse. For those who are fortunate enough to be declared ‘passed’, technical schools are few, mostly of a standard that leaves a lot to be desired.

The intermediate level education of Tribhuvan University and majority of +2 teaching shops are merely places for the ambitious where they playact while they wait to be served with appropriate opportunity: an admission into professional colleges, a scholarship abroad, a job through connections or a career in politics. Very few have the confidence left to begin a trade or join an occupation by the time they finish secondary education.

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**RAW TEXT END**
Success and failure

For the Maoists it really about staying in power

A young banker says: “The Maoists cannot make things better. They are just too entrenched in corruption across sectors. All they have is rhetoric. The country is being run by a mafia.”

You can take that with a pinch of salt since bankers are obviously not the Maoist core constituency. But the same evening, a civil society activist, with sympathy for the Maoist agenda, commented, “I have just got back from villages in Kailhi and Sindupalchowk where young people are disillusioned. What was the point of the war if JP Gupta and Krishna Bahadur Mahara are doing the same thing in government?”

Talk to an urban resident and he will crib about the power and price crisis. A poor rural family will talk about the food shortage. In any of the ethnically charged regions (eastern hills, eastern Tarai, and western Tarai) there is insecurity, alienation and deteriorating inter-community ties. And the educated unemployed will ask that perennial question: where are the jobs? The Maoists will get the flak because they are in charge. But this doesn’t mean the Maoists are completely discredited. A young migrant worker visiting his home in Chitwan said: “Everyone is out to ensure they do not succeed. Give the Maoists a chance and freedom to work. There is peace in the districts.”

The Maoist leadership point at the finance ministry’s track record—revenues are up, minimum wages have increased, and irregular land labour is relieved. Old people are being given pensions. VDC grants have increased. Self employment schemes have drawn crowds of young people and Baburam Bhattarai’s integrity is hard to question.

Concern about uncertain investment climate

Nadia Sood is the chief executive of the Norwegian state-owned energy giant, SN Power. She was in Nepal recently to meet government officials and inspect the site of SN Power’s new project in the Tama Kosi basin. She spoke to Nepali Times about the investment climate for hydro developers in Nepal and gave suggestions to make the country more investor friendly.

Nepali Times: As the new head of SN Power what are the areas you’d like the company to concentrate on?

Nadia Sood: SN Power has a long-term vision about its participation in the Nepali hydropower sector. As the new head of SN Power’s South Asia business, I intend to keep SN Power focussed on participating in the development of Nepal’s hydropower potential in a responsible and sustainable manner. As such, this will involve seeking out projects that are economically viable, which can help alleviate Nepal’s load shedding problems, for example, for power import from India. The projects can be developed in line with international standards for social and environmental sustainability.

What were your impressions from your recent visit to Nepal?

I was struck by how much unrealised potential exists in the country. Nepal seems to be poised on the cusp of a great future, but significant work needs to be done to ensure that the foundations for a healthy economy, that is, political will, acceptable infrastructure, prudent legal and regulatory framework, good governance, and an efficient bureaucracy are firmly established.

What strategic direction would you like the Nepali Times

As for things they have not been able to do, the Maoists point out the difficulties of who make no distinction between the party and the Maoists began focussing on using the state in a bid to consolidate. For Maoists who make no distinction between the party and the theoretical underpinning. Classical Marxism in principle talks about power’s sake, not to bring about change. But there is a deeper paradox is that the Maoists have become immensely stronger in eight months of being in power even as their public credibility has dented, even partially. So they have succeeded in keeping the party intact, creating opportunities for their cadre, inflating the state, co-opting even erstwhile adversaries, delivering benefits to their core working class base, and making money. But they have not changed the patronage culture of politics or focussed on providing public goods to a wider constituency. They have not politically engaged with the patronage culture of politics or focussed on providing public goods to a wider constituency. They have not politically engaged with the

What strategic direction would you like the Nepali government to take for the development of its water resources?

Nepal needs to harness the potential of its water resources to help build the foundations for healthy and robust economic growth in the future. In practice, the easiest way for it to do so will be for it to stimulate the development of hydropower and over time establish an open-access electricity trading market both within Nepal and on a regional basis, similarly to what has been done in the Scandinavian countries. The first steps required to make this happen are strong focus on the establishment of a strong political and bureaucratic will, good legal and regulatory framework, reduction of red-tape and speedy decision-making. This will help attract foreign investors and open constructive interactions with India.

How would you characterise the present investment climate in Nepal, and what would you like changed?

Although Nepal is striving towards political stability, the current investment climate in Nepal is still quite uncertain. Nepal is on its way to formalising a number of regulations and policies that will be critical to ensure that it can continue to attract foreign investors. We look forward to following this development and will certainly be keeping a close eye on it as we continue to consider our investment strategy.
NRNs as tourists
A group of young people have started a tourism campaign, targeting Nepalis living abroad for tourism year 2011. Titled ‘Jau hai Nepal’ the campaign will include cultural shows with performances by Sabin Rai, Komal Oli and Mantra Band in Australia, Hong Kong, Korea, Japan and Korea. In Sydney alone, there are over 15,000 Nepalis.

Targeting the citizen
Citizens Bank International has launched a savings account that offers customers an eight to ten per cent interest for savings that are more than a year old. Senior citizens can get a yearly interest of 7.5 per cent on their current account.

New prez
Shasni Joshi, CEO of NIC Bank has succeeded Bank of Kathmandu managing director Radhesh Pant as president of Nepal Bankers’ Association. Anil Shah, CEO of Nabil Bank, was voted vice-president at the annual general meeting of the association last week.

Twenty twenty
KIST Merchant Banking and Finance and Himalayan Bank have both opened their 20th branches in Koteswor, Kathmandu and Chuchepati and Chabahil respectively.

Revisiting student politics
Young people need to engage in politics but not on campus
MUMBAI: I was asking a young college student about college elections in Mumbai and he responded as if I was talking about something alien to him, saying they only happen in some government colleges or in Bengal. Perception is more important than reality.

The recent fanfare about student elections reminded me of my years in Kolkata in the mid-eighties where many students seemed to go to college to change the world rather than concentrate on studies. While students stuck to politics in Kolkata, students in Karnataka decided to further their studies in IT and leave politics alone.

Twenty years on Karnataka produces the finest IT graduates that have converted Bangalore into a Silicon Valley while Bengal still produces student leaders who never make it to national leadership.

The growth of India is fuelled by the youth like those in Mumbai and elsewhere that are observing how change can take place and keeping up with its pace. Suddenly new airports are built in couple of years, flyovers commissioned in less than a year, mass rapid transit systems like metro rail built in a few years. Youngsters in Mumbai talk of how India and China will dominate the world economic scene in the coming decades and how they will lead the new world economic order. They are taking the general election seriously, demanding more representations from the youth and supporting initiatives like the new party formed by professionals to fight the forthcoming federal elections.

For Nepal, there is a lot to learn. Sloganeering for three or five years in campuses lead nowhere till the youth finds its voice in the larger political debate. Rather than fighting tooth and nail with different politically affiliated student unions, they should fight for their rights within their own parties so that youth leaders take responsible positions within their parties and further the political reform process in the country.

What does student union politics mean? How many of these student leaders will actually find greater roles in the national politics in a democratic republic? What is the point of such student union elections and how are they still relevant in the larger political landscape? What do the political leaders think of the role of the student unions? Are the students just a tool to fulfill their political ambitions or do they still take note of the students shaping the future of their own political parties? The questions are endless.

The Nepali youth and student politics need real reform to prevent Nepal from being relegated to another West Bengal. We need to learn from the youth leadership in places where it is making its mark and changing the economic and political landscape. Mumbai minus the sporadic extremism of some political parties could be a benchmark to explore.

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India to some extent but it is considerably more than this. Nepal can be compared with eastern English and French speaking groups like in Switzerland where ethnic and lingual groups dominate the linguistic landscape. There are no distinct units of a dominant linguistic group. The most recent example. Except in the far west and the far east, groups within the country are perceived as different communities. Federalism based on single ethnic identity and the concept of sub-nation could result in a disintegration. Alternatives should be thought about how to address the identity of different groups within a particular region. While ethnic autonomy seemed to work under communism in the former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, it ceased to work when communism collapsed and the countries disintegrated. The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia have now split into different independent states. While the breakup of the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia was relatively peaceful, the slaughter and ethnic cleansing in the Balkans is a matter for centuries. There is still time for federalism experts to make a comparative analysis of differing federal structures and to carve out a suitable one for us. The political parties should not delay appealing for a stable federal structure taking cultural diversity into consideration. The delay might unleash a series of demands like Tharuhat in Madhes and Greater Kirat in Limbuwan. The current climate of identity politics will open the floodgates to more and more demands from different communities.

Maoist ideology dominating political deliberations and ethnic-lingual issues coming to the fore will divide the country’s federal structure. Some believe that basing provinces on ethnicity could lead to the country’s disintegration. Alternatives should be discussed. Often by ensuring the rights of one group, another will be deprived of its own rights. The recent Tharu uprising against Madhesi identity crisis has been the latest example. Except in the far west and Mahabharat, there are no instances of a single dominant linguistic group. Nepali diversity does not mirror that of Canada. Nepal’s political system and its prevailing politics of ethnicity, regionalism and language are inspired by Maoist ideology. It is the Maoists who have been raising these issues in a violent fashion. It comes as no surprise to have Maoist ideology dominating political deliberations and ethnic-lingual issues coming to the fore when deciding the country’s federal structure.

Do you recognise the person in the picture? It is Prakash Dahal, son of Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal ‘Prachanda’. The location is Dhalghat Lodge Resort. During their revolution, the Maoists banned alcohol, a move that was appreciated by the people. A year hasn’t yet passed since the Maoist chairman Dahal took over as the country’s prime minister. But his son, who also holds an important position in the party, was caught last Sunday, drunk.

Heir apparent

Nepal Samacharpatra, 24 March

The current power structure of Nepal is heading for disaster. Whether the PM will fulfil his promises, judging by his track record. If he doesn’t, the consequences will be disastrous. In Nepal’s present context, it is a question of merely who leads the government. But it is vital that the main parties within the government work and cooperate with each other to complete the constitution. It has been clear from the beginning that the UML and Nepali Congress do not see eye to eye with the present government. Even though the UML is a part of the government, they have always been critical of the Maoists. Many of the commissions still haven’t been formed, and the ones that have are incomplete. So far, they haven’t even been able to utilise the development budget. Without any capital investment there is no hope of generating employment and boosting economic development. For this, all the parties of the government have to work together.

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6 FROM THE NEPALI PRESS

Mistrust

Editorial in Naya Patrika, 23 March

PM Prachandha has claimed that the restructuring of the government will take place within the next month and that the NC will also be joining the government. If the PM’s promise turns out to be true, then Nepal’s political future looks brighter. But it remains to be seen whether the PM will fulfill his promises, judging by his track record. If he doesn’t, the consequences will be disastrous. In Nepal’s present context, it is merely a question of who leads the government. But it is vital that the main parties within the government work and cooperate with each other to complete the constitution. It has been clear from the beginning that the UML and Nepali Congress do not see eye to eye with the present government. Even though the UML is a part of the government, they have always been critical of the Maoists. Many of the commissions still haven’t been formed, and the ones that have are incomplete. So far, they haven’t even been able to utilise the development budget. Without any capital investment there is no hope of generating employment and boosting economic development. For this, all the parties of the government have to work together.

Commissions

Kantipur, 23 March

1. Land reform commission
2. Administrative restructuring commission
3. Commission for the landless
4. Inclusiveness commission
5. Commission of the freed Kamaiyas

To be formed:
1. State restructuring commission
2. Commission to investigate forced disappearances
3. Truth and reconciliation commission
4. Labour commission
5. National Muslim commission

Nepal Samacharpatra, 24 March

Do you recognise the person in the picture? It is Prakash Dahal, son of Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal ‘Prachanda’. The location is Dhalghat Lodge Resort. During their revolution, the Maoists banned alcohol, a move that was appreciated by the people. A year hasn’t yet passed since the Maoist chairman Dahal took over as the country’s prime minister. But his son, who also holds an important position in the party, was caught last Sunday, drunk.

PM Dahal and Finance Minister Baburam Bhattarai were in Dhalghat on Sunday to discuss Kathmandu University and Dhalghat Hospital. While Dahal and Bhattarai were busy in discussions, Prakash made merry. He coerced party members, accompanying traffic police and journalists to join him. Prakash was even serving the drinks. At the end of it, Prakash was so knocked out that he did not even attend the dinner party. The journalists there could not ignore this juicy piece of news and let their cameras roll. But Prakash’s supporters pressed them to delete the pictures and snatched away their cameras. A journalist from a Maoist paper even commented that such sights should not be recorded and the press should not focus on “negative issues”.

This program is an empowering three-day workshop adapted from Stephen R. Covey’s best selling book The 7 Habits outlined in this workshop will teach you to develop stronger relationships, communicate more effectively, become an influential leader, and handle everyday challenges and difficulties in a proactive and constructive manner.

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

Signature Program

For registration please call: Ajay 9851036719; Pashang 9841165437; Phuphen 9803450299

For more information visit: www.frankincovey.com/theshell/8444

The Times of Nepal

27 MARCH - 2 APRIL 2009 #444

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Reservation- not a magic solution
An interview with Yogendra Yadav, an Indian social and political analyst

Reservation policies? Or did they take an unexpected turn because of this system? This does not mean reservation is a magic tool to satisfy certain communities. Rather it is an instrument to free the society from the slavery of caste but other social dimensions as well.

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**SHITU RAJBHANDARI**

Jazz, more than any musical genre, defies definition. Most musicians define it as an improvisation of the ideas that is formed in the head and later expressed through music.

Ozma, the French quintet jazz band define jazz simply as freedom.

“For us it is the artistic freedom to incorporate our personal influences which could be funk, rock or even hip-hop through the five different musical instruments we play to create our sound,” says Stéphane Scharel, the drummer of the band.

“Today’s jazz doesn’t sound like the jazz you’d hear 40 years back,” says sax player David Florsch, “it’s constantly evolving and as a jazz band Ozma’s goal is to create our sound,” says Stéphane.

“We felt a little lonely,” says Stéphane jokingly but on a serious note adds, “We wanted to add a melodic dimension to our music. When it was just the three of us, one took the lead and it was difficult for the other two to step away. With five, it’s easier.”

A year later they released their first album and in just two years were named the Best French Group at the National Jazz Competition.

They put their sync and strength down to their great friendship. “We’ve known each other for around nine years and this sort of friendship is very rare in jazz,” says sax player David Florsch.

“Most musicians come together for a very brief period of time and then go their separate ways,” explains Stéphane who compares the band’s friendship to that of rock bands. “It is this compatibility as friends that is reflected on stage,” adds David.

Other than that their music is also characterized by the huge dose of humour that’s incorporated into their sound. “We are happy guys,” says Stéphane, “who make dark music, as paradoxical as that might sound.”

So what is Ozma’s sound like? In their own words–it is jazz metric-rhythmic-swinging-warmly-festive-dynamic-rough-explosive-music. “Or we could weave out fairytales, which start with ‘once upon a time’ and end with ‘happily ever after’,” reveals David.

They have spent two years working on some of them. “During rehearsals we sit together and just start playing without talking to each other at all,” adds David. “During rehearsals we sit together and just start playing without talking to each other at all,” adds David.

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French quintet jazz band Ozma, find freedom in Nepal.

The band was initially formed by three Strasbourg Conservatory students namely Adrien Demondel who plays the guitar, Édouard Séro-Guillaume who plays the bass and Stéphane in 2001. Guillaume Nuss, the trombone player and David joined them in their jam sessions a few times before they were invited to join the group in 2004.
Rock weds with tabla and sarangi

MARIANO ERNESTO ABELLO

Last year, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory (KJC) launched a new music festival, the Nepal Jazz Jatra, with the aim of providing a space for predominantly Nepali musicians to come together and fuse various forms of music and create a different sound. The festival was a success. This year KJC has changed the name of the festival to Miles Music Festival, dropping jazz from the title to encourage interaction between various genres of music. And why Miles? Because Miles Davis was an innovator and a pioneer of fusion.

Miles Music Festival (MMF) is about the human interplay between musicians. The idea is to have a Nepali rock group play with a tabla or sarangi player. The festival is about music in general rather than a certain genre. It should be accessible to everyone—the festival will offer a bit of everything—performances, workshops, movies, lectures and concerts.

KJC was launched in October 2007 to support music and give professional music education in Nepal. It currently has more than 180 students learning instruments, music theory, ear training, ensembles, audio engineering, electronic music and video editing. Apart from teaching music, KJC also stages concerts in which many national and international artists such as trombonist Jeremy Borthwick, vocalist Sachal Vasandani and saxophonist Jorge Pardo have performed.

Miles Music Festival brings together three events: Women in Concert, OZMA (collaborating with Alliance Française in Kathmandu) and Miles Festival itself. It’s not about being better than other festivals in Nepal, but about planting the seed of culture and uniting people with music.

In the past decade or so jazz music has put down a very strong and solid root in Nepal. Many youngsters are getting hooked on knowing how it works and how much fun it can really be. The other reason for jazz’s popularity among the youth is the realization that it is flexible and easy to fuse with other genres.

KJC believes that Kathmandu can be the capital of the arts in South Asia and this requires a higher level of musicianship to achieve that we must share our knowledge.

28 March - Chevrolet Concert at 1905 Restaurant

- KJC Combo
- Baja Gaja with international guests (Nepal and France)
- Anu Tarmar with international guests (Nepal and Canada)
- Kathmandu Empress with Nick Jost on bass and Eric Slaughter on guitar (Nepal, Norway, Spain and US)
- Pousie and the Fags (Nepal and Netherlands)
The wild east

in JANAKPUR

Yubaraj has decided to move the eastern Tarai, Khati’s brother hundreds of other families in the daughters and a son. Like Factory and had a wife, two state-owned Janakpur Cigarette Singh). belonging to the JTMM (Jwala he was shot dead by assailants out of his house for a walk when "I am from Mahottari, even more insecure. also made people of hill-origin Tharu movement this month, but 'Madhesi' not just fuelled the decision to classify 92 groups as of the country. Indeed, at this rate, Bardibas he says. "The Jwala Singh group had warned they’d kill a person of hill origin to mark their anniversary, and they made my innocent husband the target," says Khati’s wife, Kamala. The war has never ended here, but even I am thinking for protection, but I’ll moved to Bardibas, but I don’t want to leave, this is my home," he says. Indeed, at this rate, Bardibas on the East-West Highway could soon have a larger population than Janakpur. The highway has now become the de facto border between the Madhes and the rest of the country. The government’s recent new figures are hard to come No one is keeping exact count, of families. Local and national groups has increased the exodus of non-Madhesi families in Janakpur. Kamala and Kritta Khati, wife and son of Narendra Khati, who was killed by the Jwala Singh group last month.

"I am from Mahottari, but even I am thinking of moving out."
"I will hire 10 hit men for protection, but I’ll stay in Janakpur."

Janakpur Zonal police chief, Gopal Bhandari.
Former mayor, Krishna Giri

The police seem incapable of dealing with the criminalised politics. “Even if we nab someone, we have to let him go because of political pressure,” says police inspector Yadav Raj Khanal. Police sub-inspector Bigan Ram Yadav concurs: “There are more guns confiscated in Janakpur than in Hanaman Dhoka.” Former Janakpur mayor Krishna Giri, whose family has lived here for two generations, says for every one Pahadi that has been killed by a Madhesi group, two Madhesi have been killed by Madhesi. Yet he says the level of fear is greater among people of hill-origin. Brij Kumar Yadav, Editor of Janakpur Today says that the crime rate has gone up since the murder of his colleague, Uma Singh, in January. He says: “The criminalisation of politics has fostered impunity.”

Is the violence in Janakpur a sign of things to come for the rest of the country?

"We can’t live here anymore."

Kamala and Kritta Khati, wife and son of Narendra Khati, who was killed by the Jwala Singh group last month.

The brutal slaying of journalist Uma Singh on 11 January cast a pall of fear over Janakpur that has still not lifted. The message from the killer was in the method of her murder, and it has had a dampening effect on press freedom nationwide, but especially in Janakpur among Uma’s colleagues. Since January numerous journalists in Janakpur have been assaulted and threatened. But it speaks of the courage of the journalists here that the radio stations and newspapers continue to report under very difficult circumstances. Women journalists have been under pressure from families to give up the profession, and some have decided to stay home. Five people are currently under detention awaiting charges: Lalita Devi Singh, Nenial Paswan, Shraban Yadav, Bimlesh Jha and Abhishek Singh. Lalita Devi is Uma’s sister-in-law and wife of her brother who was disappeared by the Maoists in 2007. Her arrest has been made on the evidence of the number of telephone calls she made, prior to the murder to Umesh Yadav, a former Maoist who is still absconding. He is now known to be with the Jwala Singh group. Shraban Yadav is a Maoist who police suspect was involved in the disappearance and suspected murder of Uma Singh’s father and brother three years ago. Lalita Devi is known to have been close to Shraban, who is a Maoist. Nenial Paswan and Abhishek Singh are known local criminals with several indictments against them. However, in a report last week, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) concluded that Uma Singh was killed for her investigative journalism which was embarrassing to Maoists and former Maoists in the eastern Tarai. See also: ‘Flame of truth’, #434 ‘Press post mortem’, #443

Life after Uma

RADIO ACTIVE: Seema Sharma and Gayatri Mishra, in the studio of Radio Today radio hosting the show Ajab Gajab, the hard-hitting program Uma Singh used to broadcast.

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The by-election next month will be Nepal’s first all-digital voting

Voting in the by-election in six constituencies on 10 April is going to be different from the last April election of Constituent Assembly. The ballots will all be cast in Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) and voters are required to produce a citizenship card for voting.

After a successful experiment with the EVMs in Kathmandu constituency 1 during the CA elections in April last year, the Election Commission had decided to go digital this time. “Electronic voting is more cost-effective, efficient and prevents rigging,” says election commissioner Neel Kantha Uprety.

The by-elections will be conducted in Dhamnusa-5, Morang-5 and 7, Kaski-1, Kanchanpur-4 and Rolpa-2. There are 139 candidates representing various political parties including 54 independents.

Uperty says political and technical preparations are complete and campaigning, voters’ education, supervision of the code of conduct in the constituencies began this week. Officials and volunteers have started visiting door to door with dummy voting machine for training voters on the use of the machines.

The EC received 197 ballot units and 676 control units required for this election were gifted by India. A single ballot unit can accommodate the serial number, names of 16 candidates and their election symbols. When there are more than 16 candidates, two EVMs are connected.

Single ballot unit will be used in Rolpa-2 and Kanchanpur-4, double ballot units for Morang-5, 7 and Kaski-1 and triple ballot units for Dhamnusa-5, where there are 46 candidates. There are altogether 490 polling centres.

The EC has barred public office bearers including ministers and chairman and deputy chair of the CA from being involved in publicity campaigns. It has raised concerns of political parties but the EC is committed to enforce the code of conduct to make the election free, fair and credible by avoiding possible misuse of government resources. However, they can visit the election constituencies as common citizens.

To make the election fair, the EC has made citizenship certificates mandatory for voters. The political parties had asked the EC to introduce voters’ identity cards or check their citizenship certificates to avoid possible rigging in the polls. However, the political parties had mixed opinion on the EC’s decision. Chure Bhawar Rastriya Ekta Party and Sadbhavna Party, among others, present at a meeting with the EC on Monday had said making citizenship certificate mandatory for voting could deprive some genuine voters from their right to vote.

The EC has asked the political parties to educate the voters to bring along their citizenship certificates for exercising their franchise. The EC has asked school teachers in the villages to participate in educating voters about the use of EVMs.

“This is a learning process,” says Uprety, “we will take feedback from this election, and then we can go nationwide in future elections.”

DEWAN RAI
Although two years have passed since Bikash Sherpa and his friends returned to Nepal from Singapore, they still speak Singaporean slang and the Singlish lilt.

The teenagers were born in Singapore and grew up there while their fathers served in the Gurkha Contingent of the Singapore Police Force. But when they reached the mandatory retirement age of 45, the family had to return. Children, like 18-year-old Bikash, often find it hard to adjust to life in a homeland where they have hardly spent any time.

“I thought I was ready to leave Singapore, but I wasn’t prepared for life in Kathmandu,” says Bikash.

For starters, they have to get used to the pollution in Kathmandu and the overall drop in hygiene standards. Then, there is the language problem: they look Nepali but can’t speak it very well. Which means they get cheated in shops because they are treated like foreigners.

Being suddenly cut off from friends and familiar surroundings makes their new life in Kathmandu harder, especially for Dino Gurung, 19, who now keeps in touch with his Singaporean girlfriend by chatting online and writing emails.

Last January, he was able to take a two-week holiday to Singapore and visit his girlfriend and go to his old favourite haunts like East Coast Park, a seaside beach popular with Singaporeans.

Sujita Gurung says the extreme boredom of the first few months was the hardest to bear. Her parents, afraid she would get mixed up with bad company in her new environment, forbade her to go out with friends during the first months of returning.

“In our Gurkha camp, there were all sorts of sports facilities and friends to hang out with, but suddenly I had to stay home all day,” says the 19-year-old. Thankfully, this group of friends are now in different colleges in Kathmandu studying for their A levels. But even in school, they say they had to overcome perceptions that they were spoilt children who were used to a cushy life overseas and not interested in studying. Most of them were able to complete their O levels in Singapore and had plans to continue their studies there, but had to come back after their fathers retired.

“The Singapore government should have at least allowed us to complete our education before making us leave,” says Sujita. The Nepalis were doing well in studies and were involved in extra curricular activities. Umesh Rana was a staff sergeant in the youth military corp, Milan Thapa Magar held the same rank in the equivalent police organisation. Milan still keeps the badges he earned during his time in Singapore.

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Though disappointed that they are unable to stay in Singapore for a longer period of time despite their fathers’ service to the city state, it is clear they still harbour good feelings about Singapore. And food is what gets them really excited. Ramesh Pan says: “Before I returned to Nepal, I went all around Singapore having my favourite dishes one last time.”

But mostly, one suspects they simply miss being in their comfort zone, in the place where they grew up. One of them jokingly asks a Singaporean journalist: “When you leave Nepal, can you pack me in your luggage and take me with you?”

Children of Gurkhas who grew up in Singapore find it hard to adjust back in Nepal

© Times Nepal
**Post Traumatic Stress**

Browsing through a bookshop in Mumbai recently, I asked the convivial proprietor whether he could recommend a title on the history of Indian Muslims. He wasn’t sure, but he did recommend a book on the history of Indian Muslims, then a book on international terrorism, followed by a book on Muslims, then a book on something else. I could recommend a title on the strange and troubling constellation of related images the Indian public may not readily acknowledge—that of the ‘victim’. An upper-class Hindu-Muslim witness, an insistence of constitutive violence that claimed 3,000 Muslim lives with the acquiescence of the state apparatus—Nanadita Das, in her directorial debut, highlights the intersecting storylines cutting across class and community.

Firaaq follows multiple and intersecting storylines cutting across class and community. One Hindu household has its One Hindu household has its past reawakened with the news of the death of a relative. Another reaches an abrupt conclusion. The public around the world will be public stargazing events and a meteor shower later in the month. This month amateur astronomy groups in Nepal will be organizing star parties for the public as part of the International Year of Astronomy’s (IYA 2009) four-day event from April 2-5 called ‘100 Hours of Astronomy’. Designed to bring astronomy to the public around the world there will be public stargazing events throughout the world. Those of you who wish to participate in this global event, please visit: www.100hoursofastronomy.org

**Mercury’s return**

This month during the evening, the ringed-planet Saturn appears in the east, the elusive planet Mercury in the west and a meteor shower later in the month.

The April night sky also displays a variety of stars and constellations. During the evening, the Winter Hexagon will be dominating the western skies, where you can still enjoy the constellations Orion the Hunter, the V-shaped Taurus the Bull and the Pleiades (Seven Sisters) star cluster. Starting next month, many of the brilliant stars and star clusters of the Winter Hexagon will become lost in the glow of the setting Sun. Some time this month to view these interesting sights. In the eastern sky you can see the constellations Leo the Lion and Virgo the Virgin. Saturn is just to the south of Leo and its incredible moons can be seen through the telescope. In the northern skies, you can easily identify the Big Dipper, Ursa Minor. The Lyrid meteor-shower is active during the third week of April, peaking probably on 22 April. The meteors seem to radiate outwards from a point in the constellation of Lyra, close to the bright star Vega, which is high in the south-east at midnight. The best time to look is in the early hours, before the sky grows bright towards dawn. We might expect to see one Lyrid every 10 minutes or so, and there will be little interference from the moon.

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**Stargazing**

**Kedar S Badu**

Don’t miss observing Saturn on 6 April, when it will appear close to the Moon. The Moon will be near the eastern horizon at dawn and not so bright. However, as the month goes by, Saturn will be rising earlier every day. By the end of April, Jupiter will be easier to see through than ever, and its bright star will be visible in the east about an hour before sunrise. The ‘morning Star’ will be very bright indeed, it will be hard to see it, very low on the eastern horizon at dawn.

Mars is still rising only a few minutes before sunrise. We won’t be getting good views of the ‘red planet’ until after the summer. Jupiter is rising about an hour before the sun, so it’s very low down in the east at dawn and not so bright. However, as the month goes by, Jupiter rises earlier every day. By the end of April, Jupiter will be easier to see through than ever, and its bright star will be visible in the east about an hour before sunrise. The ‘morning Star’ will be very bright indeed, it will be hard to see it, very low on the eastern horizon at dawn.

**Bon Appetit**

Spicing up the food variety in their menu has always been a Hyatt specialty whether it is through: their monthly food promotions or introducing new chefs. They believe that with so many people travelling abroad and getting more attuned to cuisine over the world, bringing in exciting new flavours is a big priority.

This month Hyatt Mumbai chef Jean Christophe Fieschi, who has worked in Hyatt branches all over the world, ran a training program for the chefs at the Kathmandu hotel.

“Attention to the small intricate details makes all the difference when enjoying an evening out,” says Fieschi. While training the staff at the Hyatt, he considers each aspect including presentation and ambiance. With any food, the basic thing that he teaches is “to make it simple”. His training is also about the nonchalance or even simpering suffering, rage, guilt and empathetic remorse that frays at her very sanity. Firaaq is capably photographed by the aid of the cinematographer Ravi Chandran, but it is the performances of its large constellation of related images the public may not readily acknowledge—that of the ‘victim’. An upper-class Hindu-Muslim witness, an insistence of constitutive violence that claimed 3,000 Muslim lives with the acquiescence of the state apparatus—Nanadita Das, in her directorial debut, highlights the intersecting storylines cutting across class and community.

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**Other Highlights for Mercury**

Mercury is at its greatest elongation east of the Sun on 26 April, so this month we have an unusually good chance to spot this elusive little planet, in the western sky after sunset. Binoculars will help locate it, but it should be visible to the unaided eye once you know where to look.

Venus was at inferior conjunction (almost directly in front of the Sun) on 27 March. Throughout April it is rising in the east about an hour before sunrise. Although the ‘morning star’ is very bright indeed, it will be hard to see it, very low on the eastern horizon at dawn.

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Other highlights for Mercury:
ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS
❖ Ceramic works - an exhibition by Patrice Rouby & Barbara Welbel and Kathmandu University Students at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, 10-29 March, 11AM-6PM. 4438979.
❖ Shastra, an exhibition by Ramesh KC, Lazimpat Gallery Café, 29 March. 4438494

EVENTS
❖ Paleti with Yogesh Baidya, 27 March, 6PM, Nepa-la-a sala, Rs 565. 4412469
❖ The Wrestler, starring Mickey Rouke, 28 March, 6PM, Lazimpat Gallery Café. 4426499
❖ The First Annual Garden party, Lazimpat Gallery Café, 29 March. 5:30 PM.
❖ Community Animal Treatment (CAT) Volunteer training – 28 March-3 April (afternoon). 9841745913
❖ Call for entries for Film South Asia till 31 May, documentaries made in and after January 2007 qualified. 5552141

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Dining
❖ Dhaba, Indian food festival, 27 March-11 April, Garden terrace, Scolee Crowne Plaza, 7-11.45 PM, Rs 1200.
❖ Australian Food Promotion, 3-12 April, from 6PM onwards at Hyatt Regency. 4480082
❖ Gourmet trout at Olive Garden, 6PM onwards at Rs 850+, Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat. 4411818
❖ Chef Caroline for French and Mediterranean cuisine, Babar Mahal Revisited. 4260370
❖ High tea with scones and sandwiches everyday at the Lounge from 4.30-6.30 PM, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4491234
❖ Fusion and Looza Band every Friday night, Bhumi Resto Lounge, Lazimpat. 4412193
❖ Fusion and Classical Music by Anil Shahi every Wednesday, rock with Rashmi Singh every Friday, au li & raja with Hemant Rana every Saturday, 5PM onwards, Absolute Bar. 5521-408
❖ Dhaba, Indian food festival, 27 March-11 April, Garden terrace, Scolee Crowne Plaza, 7-11.45 PM, Rs 1200.
❖ Australian Food Promotion, 3-12 April, from 6PM onwards at Hyatt Regency. 4480082
❖ Gourmet trout at Olive Garden, 6PM onwards at Rs 850+, Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat. 4411818
❖ Chef Caroline for French and Mediterranean cuisine, Babar Mahal Revisited. 4260370
❖ High tea with scones and sandwiches everyday at the Lounge from 4.30-6.30 PM, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4491234
❖ Mediterranean cuisine every Friday from Greece, Italy and the Middle-East at The Café, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
❖ Nhucho goi Thai at Nhucho’s Thai Kitchen, Bakuwatar. 4426903
❖ Fusion of Marcela Ragan’s new menu of Dwarika’s Group of Hotels, 9AM-10PM. 4425341
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ESSENTIAL DEMANDS: UML activists protest against loadshedding, inflation, and lack of drinking water and security at a rally in Ratna Park on Tuesday.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE: A visually impaired student, Imran Ahamad, sits for the SLC exams assisted by ninth grade student, Biju Maharjan, at Lalitpur on Wednesday, the first day of the SLC exams.

HARD FACTS: Activists and locals lobby for improvement of water quality to mark World Water Day at Swayambhu Nath on Wednesday. At least 10,500 children die annually due to unclean drinking water in Nepal.

THE BEEB TRIUMPHS: The drama team of BBC World Service Trust, Nepal celebrates in Kathmandu after winning best non-English production and best team at the BBC Global Reith Awards in London earlier this month for their radio play Katha Mitho Sarangiko.

BANNER MAN: Laxman Singh Khadka, self-proclaimed cleaner of Nepal, decorates the statue of Jung Bahadur Rana at Sahid Gate on Tuesday.
The good news this week is that the rain raised the level of Kulekhani reservoir by 1cm. The bad news is that the level went down by 50cm the very next day because the water was drained to generate power. What all this means is that when Kulekhani goes completely dry, NEA is going to scrap its loadshedding schedule. After that, instead of the power going off at 4PM and coming back at midnight like clockwork, the Nepal Eletrocuted Authoritarians will surprise us by turning off the power anytime they like.

The most sensational bit of news this week was the antic of First Son Prakash in Dhulikhel where he got himself plastered and was photographed in an advanced stage of inebriation while Daddy and Uncle Babu were meeting KU honchos. (Editor’s note: The PMO has clarified that the Tremendous, Jr had “dozed off.”) Even so, the Heir Apparent was overheard exhorting the PM’s bodyguards and security to join in the merry-making. The second generation comrades are really making up for lost time for having tried to turn the whole country dry during their revolution.

What’s with clown princes in this country anyway that they all end up turning into spoilt brats, at best, or mass murderers at worst? Immediate parallels were of course drawn between Prakash and Paras. And speaking of whom, these CPs were seen recently at a Burgis St watering hole swinging back one too many Singapore Slings and essentially making a donkey of himself. If he gets another speeding ticket on the PIE they may actually cancel the registration of his Lamborghini, and there’s no way he can bribe his way out of that one. At the rate the ex-prince is going, it appears he is personally working towards making the Baby King propose a reality by disqualifying himself from the contest.

Is Comrade Shock & Awe thinking of setting up a parallel YCL? Probably not, but it was disconcerting to see him giving the three finger salute wearing a neckerchief and merit badges at a jamboree of Nepal Scouts the other day.Lt Gen Robert Baden-Powell must be turning in his grave, or maybe he is pretty chuffed that someone actually wants his former guerrillas to become Boy Scouts? But the YCLs just doesn’t sit when the chairman tells them to sit. The leapgers aren’t going after wilful defaulters with toxic assets, they are still on the rampage terrorising multinationals and schools, still confiscating property and conducting wallaby courts in rural areas. Now that the media spotlight has swung away from Pasupathi, YCL-backed goons are now extorting money from people wishing to perform pujas by the banks of the unholy Bagmati. There is a standard rate of Rs 5,000 for Indian pilgrims and Rs 2,000 for locals. If you don’t cough up, well, you can’t say “Om Nama Shivaya” because the YCL control the gates of heaven.

We now have it on fairly good authority that Nepal is like Rwanda. Although Comrade Navi was quoted out of context, she was obviously trying to make a pitch for a three-year extension for OHCHR mandate in Nepal by implying that things ain’t all hunky-dory in the boondocks yet, the gaffe may have actually made it easier now for NHRC to attain its goal to drive out the high commission.

US embassy officials, always very obsessed with security around the Maharajganj Fortress, apparently haven’t been able to do anything about a huge billboard that has sprouted on the south side of the embassy parking lot put up by an education consultancy advertising consular services that offer to smuggle people to the US via Mexico.

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