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Weekly Internet Poll # 445

Q. Where is this country headed?

Total votes: 3,671



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Weekly Internet Poll # 446. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. How would you describe the prime minister's visit to Europe?

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CHONG ZI LIANG

Time to kill

Ex-guerrillas who once waged war now fight boredom

Cooking may be just about the most demanding and time-consuming activity going on in the Maoist camp in Surkhet these days. The ex-guerrillas here spend six hours daily in the kitchen.

Morning drill is the only official activity. Guerrillas who once roamed the mountains, planning attacks on army bases, now play carom all day. And if

it's not too hot, they muster the energy for a game of volleyball.

The fighters say they are content with life in the cantonment. Says 32-year-old DBS Rana: "Peace has come to our land and we are enjoying every moment of it." There is also anticipation here that with UNMIN's mandate sunning out in June, cantonment life will come to an end one way or another.

The all-party Army

Integration Special Committee has finally started regular meetings and sent a technical committee to the seven cantonments and 21 sub-cantonments across the country.

"Our target is to conclude the process by June, but even if we can't meet that deadline we will have decided on how many to integrate and how many to rehabilitate," says committee member Mohamad Habibullah of the MJF.

There are nearly 20,000 verified guerrillas in the cantonments, but the situation is

LAZY DAYS: Maoist ex-guerrilla Nisana and her four-year-old son Nirak Khadka while their time away in the Surkhet cantonment.

complicated by the presence of some 4,000 adolescents and children rejected by UNMIN who continue to live in the camps.

UNMIN has to present a mid-term report to the Security Council in New York in mid-April, but there is skepticism that the committee can finish its work by the time its mandate expires in June. ●
Chong Zi Liang and Dewan Rai

NATION

Enlisting in the revolution

p10-11



Enjoy the moment
a swing at a time



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Objective situation

Nepal's revolution has international significance

WAKE UP

We have the unenviable task of trying to wake up rulers pretending to be asleep.

It is now only a question of time before dashed hopes turn into spontaneous outbursts of frustration. There were high expectations, even euphoria, when the Maoists came to power seven months ago that their revolutionary zeal would bring a new style and efficiency to the government.

Most Nepalis expected that the constitution-drafting process would be messy and fraught with delays, but they were certain their lives would improve. Even the critics of the Maoists predicted the party would really get moving and prove to the people that it meant business. The Maoists will be different, everyone thought.

It is still too early to call the coalition a complete failure, there are some ministries that have managed to crank up the machinery of government. The Finance Ministry under chief Maoist ideologue Baburam Bhattarai has impressed everyone with his revenue-generating skills. But all this cash is sitting unproductively in the treasury. Despite the need to show results, the rest of the government seems incapable of spending the money. Not everything can be blamed on this government, but this paralysis has mystified even the Maoists' well-wishers.

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal (wherever he is while we write this) needs to realise that he is heading a coalition government under a parliamentary system. Its successes, few as they may be, are his. But so are its failures. He can't blame the UML for a worsening law and order situation, or other members of the coalition for the renewed fuel crisis and continued power cuts. Ask motorcyclists waiting hours for five litres of petrol at Bhadrakali in the pouring rain who is to blame, and they all point to the party heading the government.

The buck stops at Baluwater. The Maoists are lucky the tolerance and pain threshold of Nepalis is so high. They have wasted precious time on resolving intra-party contradictions.

The people need at least a perception that their lives will improve, and this is even more urgent than the completion of the peace process and formation of an acceptable constitution.

Nobody expects miracles from Dahal and his fellow travellers. But they need to prove that they are doing more than just blaming everyone else, or at least once a week threaten to overthrow a government they themselves lead.

The proletariat is an international class. The communist movement of a certain country is therefore in essence an inseparable part of the international communist movement which gets enriched ideologically by acquiring and synthesising positive local aspects.



GUEST COLUMN
Indra Mohan Sigdel

The synthesis of the Paris Commune, the first proletarian revolution of the world, had been the ideological foundation for the Great October Revolution in Russia. Likewise, the synthesis of

the experiences of the Great October Revolution and those in the course of socialist construction in Russia had been the ideological base for the New Democratic Revolution and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China. In the course of these great revolutions, the international proletariat has developed Marxism to Marxism-Leninism and then to Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.

The Great Nepal People's War has now entered into its 14th year. It started at a time when world imperialism ideologically claimed that Marxism had failed and that the parliamentary bourgeois system had been inevitable, and when the oppressed classes the world over were on the defensive. Raising the banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and initiating the Great People's War in Nepal was in itself an ideological and political challenge against imperialism, Indian expansionism and their puppets, the domestic reactionaries.

Defence and development of the People's War that was initiated, in an adverse international situation, right after the fall of Soviet Social imperialism, counter-revolution in China and the serious setback suffered by the Peruvian people's war was a challenging job. Nevertheless, Nepal's oppressed class has now arrived at a very glorious but more challenging juncture

of seizing central power through a process of people's rebellion under the leadership of our party the Unified CPN (Maoist).

However, it is metaphysics, not dialectics, if it is understood that a certain communist party remains revolutionary forever. Now, we are applying a tactic of participating in the government as a front of struggle that was never and nowhere used in the world communist movement. Nowhere and never in the history of the communist movement has a party led revolution from the government.

It is not that it was a mistake on the part of our party to adopt this tactic. Only by defeating the right opportunism that understands this tactic as strategy, or attempts to make it strategy, can we apply this tactic in the service of revolution. But, it is equally necessary to be careful towards the danger of being entrapped in dogmatism while fighting right opportunism and being victimised by centrist opportunism while fighting both of them. Our party has developed the tactic of 'People's Federal Democratic National Republic' and this in the present concrete situation is the scientific and correct tactic to accomplish new democratic revolution by bringing to an end the feudalist, imperialist and Indian expansionist intervention in Nepal.

The economic crisis that had started from the US has now engulfed the whole world. This



LETTERS

PARAS OFFENSIVE

Your contributor in the web edition Eric Ellis has taken it upon himself to attack the journalistic integrity of Singapore's *The New Paper* (and the Singapore media in general) for publishing the recent interview with former crown prince Paras ('Paras' PR offensive', by Eric Ellis, www.nepalitimes.com).

"Paras," claims Ellis, "is not a nice man" or "a particularly bright man," and maintains that any true journalist (apparently counting himself in) would have made certain that these points received the most emphasis in any journalistic treatment of the former prince. What precise relevance, if any, that such an *ad hominem* attack on Paras would have to his recollections of the 2001 palace massacre, or on the his long-term plans for the future, is not mentioned in Ellis' little rant.

Nor does Ellis bother to explain to us why an interview with the ex-prince on the subject of the massacre should be considered a "snowjob," when the Maoists themselves have brought the 2001 incident back into the political limelight for their own purposes. A public statement from one of the first-hand witnesses to that tragedy is both topical and welcome.

It is shameful for Ellis to criticise the journalistic professionalism of others

when he clearly has so very little of his own. It is equally shameful for the *Nepali Times* to give prominence to such ill-mannered and bad-tempered petulance as this. Although I have not always found myself in total sympathy with the former prince, he has surely suffered enough abuse at the hands of journalistic hacks like Eric Ellis.

John M Kelleher, email

APRIL FOOLS! JOHN CHILD

Eric Ellis is right in his blog on the *Nepali Times* site: the naïve editor of *The New Paper* in Singapore obviously thinks it's the *Daily Mail* and is trying to boost its sales through titillating paparazzi-style royal gossip. The fact that a guy from a public relations firm wrote the serialised story doesn't seem to bother the editor. Luckily, most Nepalis will never read *The New Paper* and the article, and a publicity-seeking ex-prince, will soon be forgotten.

Gyan Subba, Kumaripati

CHANGE

I am among the many Nepalis who want to live in Nepal where I can utilise my personal capability. Apart from a handful that were in power or were in close proximity to the illegitimate power structure, this was an impossible dream for millions of Nepalis. We had hoped that after the bloody 'people's war', April Uprising, and successful completion of the CA election,

things would be different. That discrimination would end, that we would no longer have to rely on the mercy of whimsical and selfish leaders. But those hopes have been dashed. The situation has turned from bad to worse.

How long will we have to wait till our grievances are properly addressed? What about the thousands who were killed in the war? Did they die so that a handful of selfish leaders would rule from Singha Darbar? Recently, at a hotel in Diu, a union territory of India bordering Gujarat, I found a hotel full of Nepali staff. In our conversation they all repeated the same thing—there's no work in Nepal and even though they get meager salaries in India, at least they have jobs and can save a little to send home so their children can get a good education. They hoped that their children will see better days than them. What hurts me the most is that their hopes will once again be shattered.

Akesh Jaiswal, Gujarat

CALL BYPASS

After reading your story on the scam

involving the channeling of incoming international calls through VOIP ('Fraud calls', #442) I have no doubt that NT employees are in cahoots with the international mafia. On a recent conference call with Dubai, my incoming calls all had local Mero

mobile caller IDs. It would be relatively easy for NTC and Mero to go after the crooks. Here are the numbers through which the incoming conference call was routed: 9804772630, 9803947156, 9804775045, 9804773420, 9804772618, 9804772524, 9808026010, 980477068, 9803946477. The reason there are so many numbers is

because my conference call kept getting interrupted because of the shoddy quality of the line.

Name withheld, email

CA

I have two words to sum up the moods of my fellow countrymen for all that goes on in our parliament—'who cares'?

Prasanna KC, Gyaneshwar



is sure to be gradually expressed in the form of a worldwide political crisis, so the objective situation is becoming favourable for a world proletarian revolution. But the subjective aspect of the revolutionaries is still very weak.

Only by raising to newer heights the ideological struggle against right revisionism, the main danger, and dogmatosectarianism, can this problem of the international communist movement, including the Nepal communist movement, be resolved.

Some revolutionaries have reached the conclusion that Nepal's revolution has been liquidated as a result of right deviation. Only by crushing the entire conspiracies of imperialism, Indian expansionism and domestic reaction and thereby accomplishing new democratic revolution in Nepal can this incorrect conclusion be proven wrong.

Now the whole world is looking at us. Reactionaries are centred on Nepal to root out revolution, just as the oppressed of the world are impatient to see the success of revolution in Nepal under the leadership of the Nepali proletariat.

In the present world situation, a possibility that can open up the door of world proletarian revolution exists only in Nepal. The responsibility of our party and the importance of Nepal's revolution remain in turning this possibility into reality. ●

Indra Mohan Sigdel is the chief of the Maoist Kirant State Committee. This comment is extracted from the Maoist English paper, The Red Star (www.krishnasenonline.org)

30 years of struggle

It has been one long, hard struggle since April 1979

Memory is selective. We remember what we want, recall events that endorse our outlook, and try to forget inconvenient truths. That could be the reason victors write history. We have to wait generations before a Shrawan Mukarung ('We're all Bise Nagarchis', #259) comes along to write about Bise Nagarchi.



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

Paras Shah's revelations in a Singapore tabloid will have to pass the test of time before his version of the Narayanhiti Massacre is accepted. But his assertion that King Dipendra wasn't happy with the restoration of multi-party democracy in 1990 has been known before. In the aftermath of the Referendum in 1980, then-prince Gyanendra and his nephew were unhappy with Birendra for having capitulated to street protests. They were even more furious when he backed down from a coup that the royal family had planned in 2000.

Incorrigible royalist Tulsi Giri chose self-exile and returned to Kathmandu only in 2005 when Gyanendra as king began resurrecting his father's autocracy. He soon became the principal ideologue and a loyal deputy of the Chief Executive of the royal-military regime.

During election rallies preceding the plebiscite in 1980, Giri had proudly proclaimed that he was ready to wear a sari and blouse if the king ordered him to do so. Such a public display of loyalty to royalty earned Giri the sobriquet of 'Mother of Panchayat'.

UML nominees in the coalition have their own reasons to forget the lessons of referendum: they were complicit in the conspiracy of defeating democracy by boycotting the historic plebiscite. MJF supremo Upendra Yadav also spent his formative years learning disruptive techniques of 'underground' politics from the likes of Jhalnath Khanal and Bamdev Gautam.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Pushpa Kamal Dahal has claimed that he voted blue in the referendum, but that's an indirect way of admitting that he didn't do much else. The majority of today's Maoists were not even born when the power of banners and not bullets shook the country 30 years ago.

The NC, which took the lead in the 6 April 1979 Student Uprising, should have proclaimed it the 'National Day of Youth'. But its geriatric leadership makes sure that nobody below 50 gets any role or responsibility in the party hierarchy. Issues that can energise Nepal's youth are intentionally ignored. It's almost by default that student fronts of left-wing parties dominate university campuses—the NC-affiliate NSU has lost the will to compete.

A collective amnesia envelopes events that led to the declaration of referendum. Few remember that had students all over the country not erupted in protests against the conspiratorial hanging of Pakistan's

prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a similar fate could easily have been engineered for BP Koirala. Like Pakistan, Nepal also was an arena where proxies of global powers engaged in gladiatorial contests.

King Birendra knew the rules of the game and provided BP with the face-saving device of the referendum. But apparently, even he didn't know enough to save his own family from the wrath of history.

The problem with monarchs, military dictators and revolutionaries is that they have too much faith in

their ability to calculate the consequences of their actions. Pakistan and Nepal, through our intertwined histories, are examples of what happens when political forces try to micromanage history.

Which is why the Maoist leadership should learn the lesson of history from 1979. The Maoists should see the long-term benefits of giving a democratic space to everyone, including political parties with feudal and regressive sympathies. You can shape destiny, but you can't control it. ●



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FIRST TIME IN NEPAL

Damage control

"Remember, Hitler came after the Great Depression"

LONDON- As leaders of 20 countries that account for 80 per cent of the world's economy sit together, they may face protests like that of last Saturday that rocked central London.

From asserting that 'capitalism isn't working' to declaring 'we won't pay for your crisis', from asking powerful nations to 'act against climate change' and urging all to 'put the people first', the 40,000 strong march had all the ingredients that would have thrilled our own left parties holding demos at Ratna Park.

This was more than a bunch of loony anarchists or doped out students on the streets. It represented the anger and the helplessness at losing livelihoods that people feel in this part of the world. Those on the sidelines on the streets cheered the protests on, revealing the depth of the feeling.



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

And for once, the state has not been able to ignore it. The entire police force was deployed for Thursday's G20 summit and leaves were cancelled. Those working in the financial sectors, the City as they call it here, have been asked to dress down or not come to office fearing attacks by an enraged mob. More than a terrorist attack, the world leaders and the financial elite seems to be in fear of their own people.

There are predictions that the UK economy will contract by 3-3.5 per cent for the first time since 1931. All sectors are affected: from the media that is losing advertisements to academic universities where funding will dip drastically. South Asian friends who were just celebrating a huge salary hike are now laid off and looking to come back home.

While some are hoping that the crisis would signal the possibility of the resurgence of some form of radical left politics, others are skeptical that it may in fact strengthen the anti-immigrant right wing. "Remember, Hitler came after the Great Depression. The world cannot afford to get this wrong," comments an Oxford history scholar.

What is certain though is that there can be no business as usual. Economic nationalism and protectionism, to varying degrees, is back. The basic logic of Keynesian economics, massive state intervention to create jobs, is fashionable again. And, as the AIG bonus episode in US showed, people will no longer accept an era of no regulation where a few indulge in reckless economics, yet make obscene amounts.

The G20 is significant because it signals that the world cannot be left to a few white western men. The presence of India, Brazil, South Africa and others from Latin America and Asia is reaffirmation of the need for a broader global leadership. Others see the G20 as a G2 where China will play as important a role as the US.



At the time of going to press, there is no policy consensus among the top leaders. Obama and Brown will push for a global stimulus package. Some reports suggest figures as high as \$2 trillion. A few EU governments have been resistant to more government spending and are worried about deficit, inflation and debt issues, with the Czechs even calling Obama's domestic \$800 billion stimulus as a "road to hell".

France and Germany are insistent that the immediate need is an overhaul and strengthening of the entire international regulatory regime. Europe and US will talk about the effects of the US domestic stimulus, but also what is needed to help eastern Europe. China and India will be heard in rapt attention to see how much they can bail the rest of the world out.

The meetings on the sidelines will be as significant. The Afghanistan-Pakistan issue is sure to figure in the Obama-Manmohan Singh talks. Obama will meet his Russian counterpart and discuss arms control, Iran and Afghanistan. But the highlight will be the US-China meeting where leaders will size each other up and discuss a host of global issues.

In the ingrown world of Kathmandu politics and its petty intrigues, it is often easy to forget that there is a world out there: a world that is changing because of the enormity of the global recession. We may get affected primarily through a dip in remittances and tourism. But policymakers in the foreign and finance ministry must keep an eye on London summit, and the larger rapid evolution of global political and economic dynamics. ●



TOP GEAR: Sherpa Adventures' brand athlete Lakpa Rita on the summit of Chomolungma last year.

CHEWANG NIMA

"I did the calculations, and took a calculated risk"



KUNDA DIXIT

Tashi Tsering Sherpa should look harassed. There is only eight hours of power a day, his new generator hasn't yet arrived, and thousands of samples of a new quarter zip jacket for the Spring 2010 season need to be shipped out to stores in the US by Thursday.

Yet, Tashi is cool. He has worked around the problem and feels confident he can meet the deadline. His workers don't look over-worked and concentrate on precision laser cutting machines that slice through high-tech fabric.

"Every country has its own risks," Tashi explains, "but Nepal is actually quite competitive, importing raw materials is smoother than Vietnam or Bangladesh, it's my backyard so there are no barriers to doing business and there is a pool of skilled garment workers."

This goes against conventional wisdom. At a time when many investors have shied away from Nepal because of security concerns, power shortage and labour militancy, Tashi has not just returned to Nepal, but has decided to set up the world headquarters of his Sherpa Adventure Gear company in Kathmandu.

"I'm not a fool, I didn't come here because I felt I needed to score karma points," says Tashi, "I

came here because there is a high return on investment. I did the calculations and took a calculated risk."

Tashi is building a new five-storey flagship store that is nearing completion in Naxal. It will house his research and development unit, have two floors of a one-stop shop for down jackets, sleeping bags, tents and trekking gear and the top floor will have a bed and breakfast. The complex is set to open in June.

Tashi, 53, ran his garment-export business in Nepal till 1989. When he saw the writing on the wall with WTO coming he sold everything to move to the

"I know, it was a huge leap of faith to return to Nepal," Tashi admitted this week after being selected by *Nepali Times* as Company of the Month for April. "But it's not about me, I'm just the custodian of the brand."

Tashi has no illusions about the problems Nepal faces, but takes it as a given. "There are some things about this country that drives you up the wall, there are some days when I ask myself what am I doing here. But my past is my future."

He has handpicked some of Nepal's best garment workers. Sherpa runs a tight shift and keeps everyone motivated by spending a lot of time on the factory floor, discussing and solving problems. It helps that Sherpa has control of the whole production chain from design to sourcing the raw material to manufacturing, packaging, marketing and export. His daughter and son help out from the US.

To market the Sherpa range of products, Tashi has enlisted 'brand athletes' like celebrity climber Lhakpa Rita Sherpa who has climbed Chomolungma 11 times, extreme alpinist Joe Puryear, Pasang Lhamu Sherpa who has the climbed world's highest mountains from the north and is attempting the south route this spring, and Everest marathoner, Nima Yangjee.

Sherpa Adventure Gear insulation jackets, fleece hoodies, technical jackets and base layers, and even woolen hats with their proud Made in Nepal tags are now available in stores across the US, Taiwan, Japan and Europe.

Asked how come he remains so upbeat about Nepal, Tashi replies with a hearty laugh: "Optimism is human nature. You do your arithmetic, and you weigh that with the emotional attachment to your homeland."

www.sherpaadventuregear.com ●



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Tashi Sherpa returns to set up an international adventure gear manufacturing unit in Nepal

US. He found himself a niche in the adventure gear market and decided to take on the big boys, offering the same quality at a slightly more affordable price tag.

He was working out of a garage, outsourcing his manufacturing to Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan before deciding to scale up. Noted American adventure clothing designers helped him, and he launched the Sherpa brand and its distinctive 'endless knot' logo.

Empty seats

Figures released by the Tribhuvan International Airport indicate that tourist arrivals by air this month, compared to March last year, have decreased by 17.6 per cent to 33,005 tourists, due to the worldwide global recession and decreasing spending power. While arrivals from Bangladesh (29.6 per cent) has seen growth in incoming number of tourists, there was a marked decrease in arrivals from India by 24.7 per cent. Thailand and Singapore maintained their trend upwards, while arrivals from Japan, South Korea and Malaysia have decreased. However, the difference in arrivals from China was negligible. European and Oceania regions registered negative growth of 19.8 per cent and 11.6 per cent respectively and arrivals from Canada and the US also show negative growths of 9 per cent and 10.5 per cent respectively.

Linking places

The government has started a feasibility study for an electric railway linking Mechi and Mahakali. According to the Ministry of Physical Planning and Works, 19 international companies have already submitted proposals. Six companies from 12 countries including China, Japan and Australia who applied will be short-listed to six within the next week. According to the ministry, the required investment for the project will amount to more than a total of five years national budget of Nepal and it will take 2-3 years for planning only.

Darkness no more

Kyocera, a Japanese corporation, is donating 600-watt solar power generating systems, with storage batteries, to 15 middle schools in Nepal. Kyocera will install these systems in the schools, each of which will also audio-visual equipment and lights. Kyocera plans to install the systems in three schools a year, which will total to 15 schools.



Summer schedule



Etihad Airways has announced a new flight schedule for the monsoon, which will come into effect after 29 March. Etihad flies up to four times from Kathmandu to Abu Dhabi.

Water talk

Bottlers Nepal, celebrated World Water Day in Bharatpur to help raise awareness about safe drinking water, health and sanitation in communities and schools. An art competition, cultural shows and interaction programs with the stakeholders were also held. According to a recent UNICEF estimation, over 13,000 children die every year in Nepal due to unsafe drinking water and poor sanitation.



Bias in business

Non-logical factors that can lead the decision-making process astray

When dealing with business executives, the one and only one important trait I have learnt to look for is this: how do they make decisions.

Business executives can outsource functional works related to finance, marketing and administration to capable staff. But they can't outsource the process of making important



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

decisions. It's not necessary that they make decisions that turn out right all the time. But it is important to see what thought process and what mental balancing between what's known and what's unknown leads them to make decisions that affect people, resources and results in the long run.

I picked up this hobby several years ago, after failing more often than I dare to admit in my own various decision-making processes, and after having kept a log of my mistakes and that of others' from which I continue to learn. One lesson that comes up time and again is the elementary psychological biases that executives fail to be conscious of when they make decisions.

Confirmation bias: This bias leads executives to use new information to further believe what they already believe, usually by ignoring evidence that stand contrary to the existing beliefs.

Let's say that you believe that Shyam is unpopular with his colleagues. One afternoon, you see him eating lunch alone. You interpret this observation to further believe that Shyam is really the most hated person in the office. After all, you ask, why else would he be eating lunch alone?

But unless you talk to Shyam directly and find out more about



his work and lunch-eating habits, you are merely reinforcing beliefs about his unpopularity based on one set of observations. This is not going to capture what's really true about Shyam. Who knows, Shyam may be a hard worker who's disliked by his colleagues simply because he makes them feel like slackers.

One antidote is to ask: "Could it be that what I believe and what the verifiable truth is are actually two different things?"

Framing bias: Executives often frame issues in such narrow terms that they miss making decisions that get to the heart of their business problems.

Once startled colleagues by arguing that my company is not really in the media business, but in the attention business. That is, we have to constantly do innovative things that legitimately attract subscribers' and advertisers' attention. In a world full of choices, we are in the business of competing for our customers' attention.

One way to guard against using narrow frames when making decisions is to first define issues in broadest possible terms, and then zero in on the core business problem.

Fundamental attribution error:

You see a good-looking person. He speaks flawless English, talks easily about the state of the world, and you find out that he had attended all the right schools. Impressed by what you see, you assume that he must be excellent at his business.

But being an excellent businessman has nothing to do with being good-looking, speaking foreign languages or being a graduate of elite schools. What you, as an observer, have done is attribute what you see in one context to success in another, even when these contexts are completely different. In this case, the only way to judge the businessman's worth is through his measurable work-related performance, and not so much by how he charming he is in public.

Executives do not make decisions in a vacuum. As flesh-and-blood human beings, they make decisions by using their head, heart and guts, all of which are influenced by non-logical factors that can lead the decision-making process astray.

But being aware of these three biases is a good step toward sharpening one's decision-making skills in business in these uncertain times. ●

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Shadows Looming: Af-Pak, together and separate



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Kantipur, 18 March

कान्तिपुर

Four days after the Tarai districts were lumped into the Madhes by the first amendment of the interim constitution in 2008, Laxman Tharu defected from the party. If he had stuck with the Maoists, Laxman would be a minister or CA member by now.

But Laxman isn't the only one seeking a future in the politics of ethnicity. More recently, Matrika Yadav split from the Maoists, arguing that the party was weak on the Madhes issue. The general secretary of the Tharu Kalyankarini Sabha was a representative of the UML national conference in Butwal, while Rastriya Prajatantra Party's regional politician Thakur Singh Tharu and two-time NC parliamentarian Padma Narayan Chaudary are also members.

Ex-state minister and UML regional member, Nagendra Chaudary, is chairman of Nepal Tharu Loktantrik Sangh, which is concerned with both ethnicity and class based agitation. Kishor Kumar Biswas, who was secretary of Sadhabana and vice-chairman of MJF and its break-away party Madhesi Forum (Madhes group), is now second

chairman of the Rastriya Adibasi Janajati Ganatantrik Morcha.

Notable ministers and parliamentarians from the NC like Jayprakash Gupta, Bijaya Kumar Gachhadar, Sharat Singh Bhandari and Ram Janam Chaudary are in the MFJ now.

Chairman of the TMLP Mahantha Thakur was treasurer and minister in the NC. UML parliamentarian and minister Mahendra Yadav is now TMLP's general secretary. Ministers during the royal time, Sarbendra Shukla is in the TMLP while Renu Yadav is in the MJF. Both were politicians from the Rastriya Jana Shakti Party.

"It's natural to be concerned most about ethnic identity when one's ethnic group is disadvantaged," says Gachhadar. He says that he raised the Tharu issue when he was in the NC, but didn't see the party changing its views.

A number of politicians have admitted to defecting from their original parties for political survival. Political analyst Krishna Khanal says that the parties have been opportunistic about ethnicity. "There needs to be a consistent concept of ethnicity and ethnic politics," he says.

Fire Alarms

Nepal, 5 April

नेपाल

In the past three months, there have been fires in community forests, national parks and nature reserves in Nepal. In 634 places, fires raged on for 45 days.

- 105,350 hectares of forests destroyed
- 11 people killed, 1 missing, 11 injured
- 110,000,000+ number of trees destroyed



primary health services and employment. The state has to provide jobs, ensure reservation for women, the marginalised and downtrodden. They are fed up with corruption and inefficiency. A constitution that does not address these issues will fail to close the gap between the rich and the poor, they felt.

People smarter

Industrialist Binod Chaudhary in Kantipur, 31 March

कान्तिपुर

I've just returned from the public consultation in Nawalparasi. We toured Parasi and villages in outlying areas. There were many elderly people who had walked hours to collect their old age state benefit of Rs 500.

Previous constitutions have not compelled the state to respect the people. For this reason, we, the CA members, mustn't forget those left out. People are curious as well as anxious about how the new constitution will be written. Although past constitutions were written in the name of the people, they could not change the face of Nepal and inequality and discrimination persisted.

The people told us what their priorities are: free education,

They also want the state to help in making use of agricultural and forest resources, support for the landless and respect for the old, women and children. It was evident the government hasn't been able to win over the people's trust. There is deep frustration about the collapse of law and order and extended periods of strikes and blockades. The people want the disruptive culture of blocking highways stopped.

An over-politicised administration will never be able to address these grievances. The people are very clear about what the problems are and what needs to be done. Are our politicians ready to address them?

Religious revival

Himal Khabarpatrika, 1-15 April

हिमाल

Khemraj Keshabsharan, Santa Shiromani

In the fourth and sixth centuries, two Chinese theologians wrote about Nepal as the sort of place where no one wanted bad for another and where people kept their doors open even when they left the house. No one ever imagined that there would be violence in Nepal, or that Nepal's would engage in so much hatred and bloodshed.

Because of the politics of hatred in Nepal, most people have become faithless. But people are again turning

towards religion due to social instability. It's characteristic for people to have renewed faith in god during times when they, their families and societies, do not have any security. While other religions focus on expansion, trying to convert more people into their religion, Hindu leaders are promoting religious activities and ways of thinking through sermons.

Kebi Rokaya, Nepali Rastriya Mandali Parisad

Increasing insecurity and inflation have eroded people's sense of hope. This is one of the reasons why they are trying to find answers in spirituality.

Since Nepal was declared a secular state, Hindu devotees have become even more religious. Groups that thought twice before engaging in religious activities are now much more active. The increasing religious fervour is a good sign. But parties are politicising religion. In the new constitution, Nepal shouldn't be made a secular state, but a religiously neutral one. It would be hypocritical to let representatives be chosen simply based on religion. If we are going to ask for places for Muslims and Christians, why were we against the opportunities Hindus enjoyed in the past?



"Whose victory is this?"
"It's ours."

राजधानी
Rabindra in Nepal, 5 April

Non-indigenous

Parsuram Kafle in Naya Patrika, 1 April

नयाँ पत्रिका

Maoists have always supported ethnic equality. They have identified 19 ethnic groups and appointed co-ordinators for them who are different from the ethnic groups they represent.

Maoist spokesperson Dina Nath Sharma said, "We don't believe that absolute inclusiveness is possible. But we are against ethnic inequality and racism."

Ethnicity	In-charge	Deb Gurung
Magar		Hemanta Prakash Oli 'Sudarshan'
Tharu		Hari Bhakta Kandel
Tamang		Agni Sapkota
Newar		Hitman Sakya
Kirat		Indra Mohan Sigdel
Limbu		Narayan Prasad Sharma "Kamal Prasad"
Tamu		Hit Raj Pandey
Sherpa		Agni Sapkota
Lama		Khadga Bahadur Bik
Majhi		Ganga Shrestha
Thami		Jitbir Lama
Chepeng		Surya Subedi
Kumal		Hari Adhikari
Danuwar		Kumar Dahal
Kochila		Prahlad Budathoki
Madhesi		Haribol Gajurel
Women		Lila Mani Pokharel
Baram		Hari Adhikari
Thakali		Sriram Dhakal
Chhantel		Hemanta Prakash Oli
Muslim		Debendra Poudel

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"We are all Nepalis first"

Residents of the Tamang-dominated Palchok of Kabhre gather to discuss the issues that the new constitution should address.

How is the government doing?



Norsang Lama, social worker: The Maoist-led government has not been able to work effectively and efficiently. Instead of decreasing the problems, it is increasing them. The government has sidelined the task of writing the constitution and is stuck over small issues.



Surya Tamang, Mongolian Youth Society: Everyone, including those in the government, talk of the New Nepal,

but the work they do remains unchanged. They had made many promises, but it does not look like they will fulfil them. Those who had pledged to work for the people should not lie and cheat now that they are in the government.



Netra Bahadur Bhujel, teacher: The Maoists are in government but there is no peace. Law and order has broken down, things are worse in the

Tarai now than during the war. People are displaced. The government seems to have closed its eyes to the terrifying situation in the Tarai.

What kind of federal setup should the new Nepal have?

Surya Tamang: Regardless of which

party is in the government, they should adopt policies that facilitate development. It is not necessary to designate states to the different ethnic groups.



Munsing Pakhrin Tamang, Satdhara Youth Jagaran Club: Right now we hear demands for ethnicity-based states like Tamsling, Magarat and

Tharuhat. Such a division will lead to disintegration and there is danger that in future we will again have Baise and Chaubise states like in the past. Development efforts will stop. Federalism should not be based on ethnicity, it should facilitate development.



Jimi Tamang: Turning the existing five development regions into federal states is a good option. Kathmandu should remain the centre. The names of

the state should not be based on any caste, language or religion. Instead, the name should be formed through discussions with intellectuals of that region and should be based on geography. We should renounce the idea of Madhesi, Tamsaling, Khumbuwan, Magarat or Tharuhat and create states that reflect unity. Although I am a Tamang I don't agree with the ethnic division of the states, they should be demarcated along geographic lines.

Norsing Lama: Creating ethnic-based provinces will invite conflict. We are Nepalis first. Demands for Tharuhat, or

One Madhesh are not right. Here in Sindhupalchok, there is a call for a Tamang state. This is not right either. Because it's not just us Tamangs who live here. Future provinces should include everyone.



Mahanta Yadab, English school principal: We have to establish One Madhes One Pradhes, but there should be no caste-based

discrimination. Whether you are a Chettri or Bahun, a Yadab or a Tamang, those who live in Madhes are Madhesi.



Purnima Giri, teacher: We have to unite for development regardless of our ethnicity or religion. Nepal won't be able to develop if we divide the states

according to ethnicity. We have to create an environment where everyone can peacefully live together and work.

What are your views on affirmative action?

Surya Tamang: We need inclusive policies to maintain political stability. It will only if possible if the new constitution includes the rights of discriminated sections of society like women, ethnic groups and dalits. One does not always get the chance to write the constitution with the direct participation of the people. We have to utilise this opportunity to include all sectors and areas.

Jimi Tamang: We have become inclusive to some extent after the CA elections. There is still the need to adopt inclusive policies in all government bodies and the private sector. Tamangs constitute the second largest indigenous group, but no Tamang has become a CDO yet. There are Tamang doctors, engineers, pilots and policemen. The army has to be inclusive too, not just on the lower level but higher level as well. Why haven't the women received 50 per cent reservation?



Narayan Giri: The provision for reservation should be made for underprivileged communities and ethnic groups so they can catch up. But

only for some time, otherwise there will be no competition and the quality will go down. We shouldn't lay too much emphasis on reservation.



Daya Laxmi Shrestha: Women, dalits and indigenous groups have to be provided reservation. Otherwise they will not be able to

compete with the privileged groups. I became a teacher in this school through competition among women. I don't think I would have reached here if I had to compete with men.

Netra Bahadur Bhujel: The idea of affirmative action sounds very good. But it makes people less competitive. The culture of relying on reservation will not motivate people to work hard and improve themselves.

The judiciary in a federalism

Prof Siegfried Bross is a judge at the Federal Constitutional Court of Germany and chairman of the Executive Committee of the German Section of the International Commission of Jurists. He was in Nepal last week for a GTZ program to support the constitution-building process. Bross spoke to *Nepali Times* about how the judiciary should function in a federal structure.

Nepali Times: How practicable is a federal system in a multi ethnic country like Nepal?

Prof Siegfried Bross: Actually, a federal system is desirable in a multi ethnic set-up like Nepal. It can accommodate different cultures and ethnicities. This does not mean drawing up states based on ethnic grounds only and marginalising other communities, but giving them the freedom to run their own government. This structure does not mean ceding to separatist aspirations but allowing certain groups to live within their own jurisdiction.

But there is no majority of a particular ethnic community in a particular place.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

You should look at it from a local level and see which different groups live together. It is not possible to draw boundaries based on ethnicity alone. We should take into account the geography, infrastructure, economy and cultural identities of different communities. For instance, there are certain minorities in Germany. They have been able to preserve their own culture and language at a local level. The provinces will have their own statute. This can refer to setting holidays depending on the local culture and traditions, creating a sense of tolerance and giving other

people a say. Strengthening provinces strengthens central government at the same time. There can be a three-tier government—central, provincial and local for better governance.

What kind of a judicial system could be applicable to Nepal?

In a federal system, there should be a court at the provincial level. There should be Supreme Court at the centre and also a separate Constitutional Court which is independent from the Supreme Court. One of the reasons for setting up the Constitutional Court is to take into account the diversity of the people within the country through the appointment of the judges.

Why do we need a Constitutional Court?

We have to look at its composition first. It is made up of professional judges, lawyers and legal scientists, which is impossible at the Supreme Court. The judges' independence is ensured because they are not allowed to serve more than 12 years and cannot be re-elected. Although there aren't different ethnicities in Germany, following this principle, different judges from different provinces come to the court so it ensures a much greater ethnic representation.



Basantapur by

Among throngs of people and bustle of market, the old town





Any night

n square is still a place of peace

ROMA ARYAL

As night falls in Basantapur, the frantic rush of people is replaced by the shuffle of feet on the cobble stones. The crowd becomes more Nepali as the small tourist nik-nak shops beside the Kumari's house pack up.

On the walls and benches around the market, youngsters start gathering in groups, sipping tea from small plastic cups and chatting noisily. Street children cart-wheel around the benches, carefully avoiding the old men seated on fallen wooden pillars around the temples. Some of them are porters, resting after a hard day's work. Others sit quietly huddled together, watching the rush of people coming and going.

As the tourist market packs up, the night market takes its place. By dusk, the market is a glowing caterpillar of fake diamond earrings glittering under the feeble light of bulbs. Hundreds of young people throng the market, bargaining and passing from stall to stall of cheap glasses, scarves, t-shirts, bags and slippers. Sometimes, Kollywood actors come to stock up on fake jewellery for their movies.

A bigger crowd gathers around the stalls at the entrance to the square. Wheeled in

stalls crowd the streets, displaying copious piles of food, the fat spitting as vendors dip meats and rich tofu into vessels brimming with oil. There's everything from sausages, salami and burgers to fish, goat's tongue and chicken lollies.

Even in the inner reaches of Basantapur, the local markets are still in full swing. Behind the Ganesh Temple, a man sells baskets of dried fish and vegetables in a pati. Kasthamandap is empty, except for women selling marigold garlands, who still have heaps left from their daily stock. As they try to convince you to buy some, they keep watchful eyes on their children, their shadows prancing about as they play hide and seek in dark corners. A woman at a madal shop spreads black coal on dried skin to make the black circles on the drum. "It would be so much easier," she jokes, "if the Chinese made our madals."

From a small café around the square, the white stucco palace at the centre is bathed in reflected glory. Youngsters chatting on the highest steps of the temples start making their way to their bikes, and lovers stand up to leave. Even in the dark, noisy square, most people seem to come here for peace, and many leave for home having found it. ●



No change

You don't have to go far from Kathmandu to gauge the disillusionment

MALLIKA ARYAL in KABHRE

A year after the elections and almost three years since the ceasefire in 2006, Panauti is still stuck in time. The bombed out hulk of the municipality building destroyed during a night of fighting in March 2006 still stands as a monument to the war. But the people of Panauti don't want to talk about that war, they want to talk about their war against inflation, poverty, illiteracy.

A week after the CA elections when the results were trickling in and it was certain that the Maoists were going to lead the government, there was much jubilation here. The locals had hopes that the Maoists would be different. They had promised employment to the young, education, health and development. Most may not have understood that the candidates they were voting for would help write the constitution, but they expected them to improve schools and health posts.

That hope has all but evaporated. There is a mood of gloom and doom in this generally relaxed town. "The only thing I find comfort in is that when there was a king Nepalis were dying, now at least that has stopped," says Gita Shrestha. But she says there are new problems: power cuts, inflation and water scarcity. Her eight-year-old son is doing poorly in school because he can't finish his homework in the dark.

Gita has to walk to fetch water and she has to watch every paisa she spends because everything is so expensive. The family hasn't watched tv together in months. "They say the Tarai is burning, that there are bandas by various ethnic groups, I haven't listened to the news in a long time," she says, "I feel so disconnected."

Panauti residents says they are tired of hearing about yet more committees and task forces that politicians set up in Kathmandu. They are sick of the parties attacking each other, of empty promises of 10,000MW of electricity, the assurances on law and order when businesses, media and schools are all being extorted and attacked. They were willing to give the politicians a chance. Now, the feeling is that the government just doesn't seem capable of dealing with the political and development challenges. "The Maoists used the ethnic card to fight the war, now they have no clue how to deal with it, things are going to get bloody and messy," predicts an elderly resident.

Democracy is about freedom but it is also about respect of other political identities. Laxman Dahal was around during King Mahendra's rule and has seen Nepal and leadership change over the years. He knows that democracy is good for Nepal, what he fails to understand is why the Maoists, who say they want to protect democracy, go about killing and beating cadres from other parties.

Residents here are closely watching the constitution writing process and remind the CA members who will come back with suggestions from their constituencies to not forget three basic things: remember the promise they made to the people, prioritise development, education, health, and not to separate the country along ethnic lines because that would be the end of Nepal as they know it.

And they have a message for the Maoist leadership in Kathmandu: everyone makes mistakes, you can redeem yourselves by improving our lives.



Julum Pariyar, 52, makes a living sowing mattresses for her neighbours. "We had so much hope that the new party would do new things, but almost a year has passed—what have these Maoists done?" Pariyar has worked all her life to raise her two sons, but they couldn't find jobs so they've gone to Malaysia.



Akrit Sapota, 18, is a student and is lounging in the sun with his friends. He voted Maoist this past election and is an active student member of the party in Panauti. But he says the government isn't doing its job properly. "Jobs, education, health, roads, development, controlling inflation, those should be the top priorities," he says.



Badri Sapkota in Sarada Batas VDC runs the little tea shop. "Those in government are deliberately trying to create a situation of chaos so that the people will be distracted and won't question their moves," he says. "Why do the CA members have to go to the villages to collect suggestions for a new constitution? They were elected by the people and it's not like our problems have changed in the past year."



Laxman Dahal, 73, worked as a contractor in India for 42 years and has retired in Panauti. He is disillusioned with the new rulers: "The Tarai is burning and the Maoist leadership in Kathmandu either doesn't want to or has no idea how to deal with the situation there. Federalism may be a good thing but if it is not done properly, it will only

separate the people along ethnic lines." ●

Peace is



ALL PICS: KONG YEN LIN

Enlisting in the

CHONG ZI LIANG in SURKHET

It took Anganu Chaudhary and Ram Kumar Chaudhary four hours by bus to get to the Surkhet cantonment to apply to join the Maoist army, but they will return home disappointed. Together with 14 friends from the same village in Bardia, the two had been hoping to join the People's Liberation Army.

They had heard on FM that the Maoists were accepting

went on for about a week in early March and he received 1,800 applications. "We stopped recruitment out of respect for the Supreme Court's decision," he says, "but even after that at least a thousand more turned up at the camps."

The Maoists announced recruitment to retaliate against the Nepal Army going through with the induction of 3,000 recruits,

Despite the Supreme Court's decision to block recruitment, many line up to join the Maoist army

applications, but news of the Supreme Court stay order failed to reach them. And such is the desperation for jobs, that many like Chaudhary rushed to the cantonments.

"I only studied till the 5th grade so I can't join the national army," explained Chaudary, "and none of my friends have passed SLC."

At the main cantonment in Surkhet, 6th Division Commander Pratik confirms that recruitment

and called for applications through radio. But the Supreme Court ruled that the Maoists had violated the 2006 peace accord.

Meanwhile, Chaudary says he will try again if the PLA re-opens the application process. As he packs his bags to return home, he tells *Nepali Times* that jobs are non-existent in his village. Staring blankly, he says: "My parents will be disappointed. They were the ones who told me to go for the PLA." ●

WHAT TO DO: Anganu Chaudary and Ram Kumar Chaudary, part of a group of 16 from a village in Bardiya, prepare to return home after being told at a cantonment in Surkhet that the Maoists are not recruiting.



yet to be

The end of war hasn't yet brought justice and equality in Dang

KONG YEN LIN in DANG

Each month Nirmal Debkota earns Rs 10,000 from renting out apartments opposite his residence. That is more than double what the 55-year-old earns as a teacher.

“It’s the only way I can afford education for my children,” says the economics professor at Mahendra Multiple Campus. The property he inherited from his father is now worth ten times more than its value five years ago.

Indeed, the only peace dividend that Dang has got with the end of the war is the surge in property prices. There is no investment, hardly any presence of the state, and seven months after the Maoists came to power no tangible improvement in delivery of services.

Highways here were closed for two weeks during the Tharu protests last month and there are blockades every other day. Inequality is on the rise as speculators and businessmen monopolise benefits from the post-war economy.

With land at a premium, property that the Maoists seized are not just not being returned, new land is being seized in the name of



HAVES AND NOT HAVES: With land prices soaring after the end of the war, Dang residents are investing heavily in property along the highway. But the poor still live in their mud huts.



the internally displaced or freed Kamaiyas. Along the highway from Ghorahi to Tulsipur, there is almost no portion that don’t have huts of ‘sukumbasi’ squatters.

There is no visible effort to develop housing and sanitation facilities for the new settlements. “We were issued red cards three years ago to sit in our boxes, nothing more than that,” says Khitini Chaudhari who lives in the squatter settlement. Alienation is also deepening among the indigenous Tharu community of Dang. “The war might have been over and there is no fighting, but we’re still not being treated as Nepali citizens,”

says a local Chandrakala Chaudhari (pictured).

There are signs of a widening rich-poor divide. Villagers from the mid-western districts of Rolpa, Piuthan and Rukum funnel down to Dang, fuelling the real estate bubble in the towns.

The new settlements and buildings are haphazard and do not follow any zoning rules. Local officials all say what should be, but seem powerless to control what is happening.

“All construction activities should have official approval to make sure that land use is strictly classified and regulated,” says local development officer Madhu

Sudan Poudyal.

Ethnic friction is mounting, and climaxed in the Tharu protests in which two were killed in Dang. “The war ended but there is no peace,” says population studies teacher Sudharshan Rijal, “the people are still waiting for peace and justice.”

But for those who’ve lost loved ones during the conflict, it has been one endless struggle to survive. Six years ago Bahuni Chaudhari’s husband was killed in a crossfire while harvesting rice in fields. The 35-year-old has brought up two young children on her own, toiling in the farm and doing odd jobs.

“I’m living only for my children and working hard to give them a better education and future,” says Bahuni, “I have no more fear because I have suffered so much.”

There are some signs of progress. The rural road network is expanding and the Ghorahi-Lamahi-Koilabas road will join Dang directly to India. School enrollment is up and the dropout rate has fallen.

Says Ghorahi English teacher Ram Hari Rijal: “People are starting to recognise the importance of education, the presence of girls in the classroom is also increasing.” ●

revolution



CHONG ZI LIANG

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Don't eat fish, let them eat you

Meet Nepal's new dermatologists in a fish tank



PICS: KONG YEN LIN

When spa entrepreneur Megha Chaudhary returned from Singapore after a two week holiday, she came up with an elaborate business plan: to set up a fish spa in Kathmandu.

It required clients getting used to confronting their spa therapists in a tank, as live Garra Rufa fish get busy as skin exfoliators. As soon as Midas Spa was set up in Durbar Marg, the business took off.

"I'm constantly on the lookout for new technologies and innovations, and I thought the gently ticklish sensation of the treatment, together with its beautifying properties will catch on among young women," says



the 27-year-old.

These fish are a member of the carp family which nibbles dead skin, producing enzymes at the same time that leave skin smooth and healthy. Customers have the option of dipping either hands or feet into the tank for a 30-minute session.

Commonly found in the rivers of Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Iran, they have been used traditionally to treat psoriasis, a chronic skin disease. While it may seem novel here, such doctor fish spas have been taking Europe and Southeast Asia by storm.

Megha's uncle physically carried 50 fish in bags to Nepal by plane. Keeping them alive has been a challenge, as they require water of 32 celsius maintained strictly at an acidity level of

pH7.5.

The entire investment cost Megha Rs 25,000 and the next hurdle was to establish a niche market. While other services like ayurvedic massages, manicures and facials are offered, she aims to make the doctor fish spa Midas' signature product.

"I'm not sure if the dead skin will go, but the dip is very soothing and therapeutic," says Ruchi Goel, a Midas regular.

Reeta Shrestha, a lecturer of dermatology at the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital agrees that the unique selling point of the treatment lies in its 'feel-good' factor rather than medical benefits. The hospital sees an average of 50-60 psoriasis patients during the dry seasons, and administers moisturizing and keratolytic treatment such as steroid creams. Recovery takes about one to two months.

Her spa may still be a start-up, but Megha is already making big plans to set up a branch in Delhi and a spa resort in Kakani. ●

Kong Yen Lin

Doctor Fish Spa is priced at Rs 1,500 for a 30-min dip and Rs 2,000 for a dip with reflexology.

आईतबार, साताको प्रारम्भ सँगै शुरु हुन्छ...

अन्नपूर्ण पोस्ट

गजब छ!

गजब छ है गजब छ!!

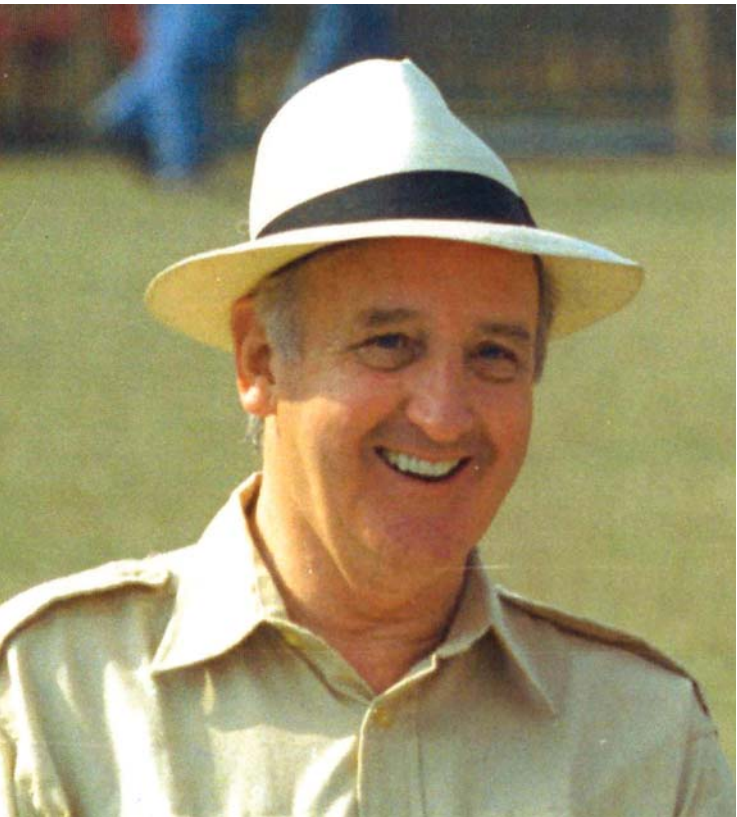
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Jim Edwards, 75

Put Chitwan on the world map



Jim Edwards, who died recently in Kathmandu, was one of the pioneers of tourism in Nepal, along with his friends Boris Lissanevitch and Col Jimmy Roberts. A far-sighted man, gifted with luck and charisma, Jim had the vision to see the future for conservation-based wildlife tourism in the Himlayan mountains and jungles that he loved, long before the concept of 'ecotourism' came into being. Dreaming of seeing more of the world, and always the adventurer, Jim drove overland on a Saab car promotion to Nepal in May 1962. Enraptured by the splendours of the country, he decided this was where he wanted to live. Travelling further afield was put on hold and he spent a year exploring Chitwan and the Tarai. In 1964, Jim teamed up with

American anthropologist turned wildlife ecologist, Charles (Chuck) McDougal and started the first wildlife tourism company, Nepal Wildlife Adventure, to operate jungle treks, fishing and hunting expeditions. It was the beginning of a long and distinguished career in the travel industry. On a tip-off from Boris Lissanevitch, Nepal's pioneer hotelier, Jim heard of Tiger Tops a small camp in the Chitwan rhino reserve that was in need of improved management. Jim and Chuck took over the Tiger Tops Jungle Lodge in 1971, turning it into a famous conservation tourism model. Jim teamed up with Jimmy Roberts, the pioneer of Himalayan trekking who had started Mountain Travel, the

first trekking company in the world. Thus, Tiger Mountain was formed, which is very much Jim's group of adventure travel companies throughout Nepal and India. Seeing the effective manner in which tourism, when carefully and sensitively managed, could be a positive force for conservation, Jim, and his colleagues formed the International Trust for Nature Conservation, a UK registered charity with a mandate to support conservation initiatives around the world. Jim is widely recognised for his immense contribution to Nepal's tourism industry, setting standards of adventure tourism that are admired all over Asia. It was a matter of great pride to Jim that Indira Gandhi once berated her bureaucracy with: "Why do we have to look to Nepal to learn how to manage wildlife tourism lodges?" Jim founded the World Elephant Polo Association in 1981 with James Manclark and ran the annual World Championships at Meghauri, a tribute to his sense of humour, marketing acumen, and enjoyment of a fine party. Elephant polo attracted many celebrities to Nepal and raised funds for many charities. A man of immense charm and love of life, Jim could bowl people over with his inspirational energy, hospitality, self-deprecating sense of humour and monumental generosity. A paradoxical man, Jim challenged and inspired all those with whom he came in contact. He enriched the lives of many from all over the world and provided support for many Nepalis at home and abroad as part of his lifelong love and commitment to Nepal and her people. Marcus Cotton and Lisa Choegyal

From artisan to artist

Most of Aymeric Hamon's paintings are visions of complete serenity: a Buddha from a temple carving, an old man with eyes shut in bliss. And his medium is unique: perfectly sculpted clay models, stencilled and airbrushed in layers onto canvas. Hamon came to Nepal from France two years ago, and started learning traditional Nepali stone, clay and wood sculptures. In France he was a mason, restoring old cathedrals and castles, more of an engineer than an artist. "When I began to understand the patterns of Nepali sculptures, I wanted to find and combine my own style into my work," Hamon explains. He was inspired by the images of calm from Hinduism and Buddhism, rather than those laden with emotion that he knew so well from French cathedrals. Hamon's figures all have an unrealistic feature, an exaggerated brow line or unreal eyes. These are elements present in Nepali sculpture as well. He uses warm colours he associates with Nepal: auburn, yellow and red and amalgamates these distinctly Nepali influences with the contemporary art forms of stencils, associated with street art. Hamon really likes street art because of its accessibility. But in Nepal, traditional art is more visible. Besides the usual political slogans and ugly posters, he's hardly seen any graffiti or paintings on walls, even though there's so much space to work on. Hamon has an exhibition this week and will also give a presentation on the unique process involved in creating the paintings from sculptures and to share his fascination for street art. He says, "I hope this will give new possibilities for street art in Nepal too." Roma Aryal

'Silent witnesses' by Aymeric Hamon at The Bakery Café in Pulchok, 3-24 April.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Thunder, hail and jazz

Based on their performance on 27 March at the Army Club auditorium, Ozma, the French quintet jazz band should add the word radical to the string of adjectives used to describe their music. As David Florsch (saxophone), Matthias Mahle (trombone), Adrien Dennefeld (guitar), Edouard Séro-Guillaume (bass) and Stéphane Scharlé (drums) performed, they unfolded beautiful stories through their instruments. The stories were as diverse as their music with subjects that ranged from a big rabbit to their memories in Lithuania. Though in the beginning it seemed as though each

of the five musicians were doing their own thing, the natural sync that banded them together had the audience spellbound. The theatrical presentation they put on for the show had the audience tapping their feet and swaying to the music, bringing to light the cosmic (or should we say the 'ozmic') understanding of their music. The five-member band Ozma was in Kathmandu to be a part of the week long Chevrolet Miles Music Festival which was jointly organised by Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, Alliance Française in Kathmandu and Infinity International. Apart from this concert, Ozma also mesmerised the audience on 28 March at 1905 along with many national and

international bands. On 29 March, the last day of the festival which aimed at uniting people through music, they also played with Nepali musicians at a unique repertoire concert at Dokhaima Café. Nature pitched in with the amazing acoustics of thunder in Kathmandu Valley's unique echo-chamber. The celestial fireworks display gave way to a spectacular hailstorm: all we needed was a bit of jazz to break the six-month drought. Shitu Rajbhandari



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Silent Witnesses**, stencil artwork by Aymeric Hamon, 3-24 April, 6 PM, The Bakery Café, Pulchowk.
- ❖ **Caravan art show 2009** by Narayan Shrestha at Hotel Summit till 30 April. 9851000519
- ❖ **Unexpressed Expressions** by Sangee Shrestha, 20 April, 11AM-6PM, Siddhatha Art gallery. 4218048

EVENTS

- ❖ **Malaysian Educational fair**, 3-5 April, Malla Hotel, 10AM-5PM
- ❖ **The curious case of Benjamin Button**, 6PM, 4 April, Lazimpat Gallery Café. 4428549
- ❖ **Literature and Book discussion**, 5 April, 3PM, Marti Chautari
- ❖ **Call for entries for Film South Asia** till 31 May, documentaries made in and after January 2007 qualified. 5552141



MUSIC

- ❖ **Rock Classics** by return of Bob Manes along Desmond O'Flattery and Anthony Correll, 5.30- 8 PM. Lazimpat Gallery Cafe. 4428549
- ❖ **Sunday Jazz brunch** barbecue and live jazz music at the Terrace, Hyatt Regency from 12-3.30 PM. 4491234
- ❖ **Jazz evening** at Delices de France Restaurant every Wednesday, 11AM-2PM. 4260326
- ❖ **Strings Band** live every Tuesday at G's Terrace Restaurant and Bar, Thamel.
- ❖ **Wednesday Melody** at Jazzabell Café, Happy hour 6-8PM and TGIF party with live band Epic every Friday at 8PM. 2114075
- ❖ **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**, performance by Yankey every Saturday, 9PM, 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, sufi & raga with Hemant Rana every Saturday, 8PM onwards, Absolute Bar. 5521408

DINING

- ❖ **Dhaba**, Indian food festival, till 11 April, Garden terrace, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 7-11.45 PM, Rs 1200
- ❖ **Australian Food Promotion**, 3-12 April, from 6PM onwards. Hyatt Regency. 4489362
- ❖ **Gourmet trout** at Olive Garden, 6PM onwards at Rs 850+, Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat. 4411818
- ❖ **Chez Caroline** for French and Mediterranean cuisine, Babar Mahal Revisited. 4263070
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Nhuchhe goes Thai** at Nhuchhe's Thai Kitchen, Baluwatar. 4429903
- ❖ **Fusion** of Marcela Ragan's new menu and Mannie's new bar at Dhokaima Café. 5522113
- ❖ **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri La, Kathmandu, Rs 600. 4412999
- ❖ **Pasta pesto passion** at La Dolce Vita, Thamel. 4700612
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Cocktails, mocktails and liqueurs** at the Asahi Lounge, opening hours 1-10PM, above Himalayan Java, Thamel.
- ❖ **Starry night barbecue** at Hotel Shangri-la with live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs 999, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7PM onwards. 4412999

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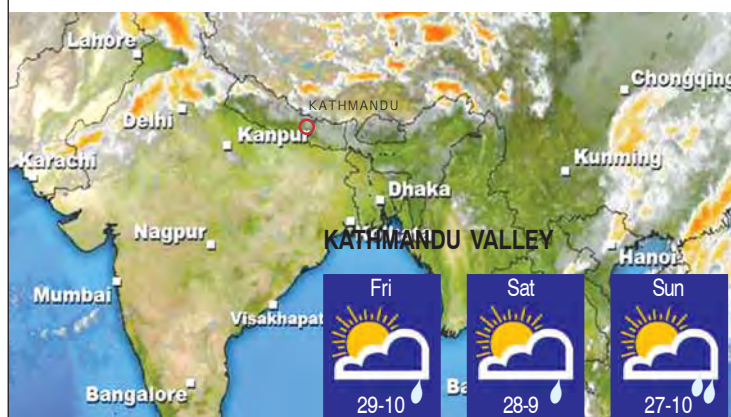
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WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The infusion of moisture from the west has brought us respite. The air rising along the Himalaya, condenses into thunderheads and falls as rain, hail and snow. This satellite-radar composite taken on Thursday noon shows an elongated frontal system that can be traced way back over the Arabian Sea to East Africa. The water vapour in this system will bring cloudy skies and isolated storm showers over the central hills towards evening and at night. The collision of this warm moist air with colder air from the Tibetan plateau will intensify the storms somewhat. Kathmandu residents should expect sticky days with sunny intervals and occasional showers over the weekend.



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BEING JUDGEMENTAL: Judges from all over the country gathered for their two-day national convention at the National Academy on Tuesday.



GORKHALI WOMEN: Maoist women leaders speak about the new constitution at a district conference in Gorkha on Monday. Maoist brigadier commander Kamala Naharki, who broke out of jail eight years ago, addresses the gathering.



NICE TIE: Chief of Army Staff Rookmangad Katawal (centre) with Dharmendra Jha of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) and former NC minister Purna Bahadur Khadka at the 54th anniversary function of FNJ on Monday.



LAKE CITY: Tuesday night's downpour inundated the Khula Manch, and submerged many streets in the city centre.



AIMING HIGH: Minister of Physical Planning Bijay Gachhedar at the inauguration of the Real Estate Expo at Bhrikuti Mandap on Thursday.

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- Masters degree in renewable energy or related discipline.
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Knational knife

Only in Nepal will activists belonging to a party that controls the Ministry of Water Resources go out into the streets to protest the shortage of water and electricity. Those UML fellows **brandishing buckets** should have staged a sit-in at Balkhu instead, and set fire to a few tyres if their demands were not met.

The Ass hadn't been able to figure out the reason for the latest fuel shortage, but by Jove I've got it now: existing fuel tankers are 30 years old and are time bombs on wheels. Their tanks can't be sealed properly, leading to pilferage. The supplies ministry decides to upgrade the tankers so the owners go on strike. The government invokes the essential services act, but can't open the supply lines. Surprising that people who block highways for weeks on end tolerate all this, and haven't set fire to some petrol tankers yet.



Millions of people worldwide joined in solidarity to combat climate change by turning their power off for one hour in celebration of the second annual Earth Hour last Saturday. Floodlights were turned off at monuments from the Pyramids to the Sydney Harbour Bridge, and all this got headline treatment in the media. But the international press missed the biggest story of all: that we in Nepal are far ahead and have been celebrating Earth Day for the past eight months by not using electricity for 16 hours a day.



Unfortunately, we squandered all the environmental **browniepoints** we earned for saving the planet by burning tons of diesel and petrol by being stuck in monstrous traffic jams caused by the prime ministerial motorcade headed to the airport. Even bicyclists weren't allowed to stray into the streets from Baluwatar to Gauchar. The total greenhouse gases we emitted that day must have exceeded all savings we had made since January. The more things change in this country, the more they remain the same. How is this any different to when the entire city ground to a halt when Kingji went off on state visits?



Good thing it was a Saturday, otherwise Awesome's departure would have given us a **carbon footprint** double the size of Saudi Arabia. Double because the roads are going to be blocked all over again when Comrade Terrificness returns over the weekend.

But something will be different when PKD comes back: he will ride home in the brand new black bomb-proof Toyota Prado GXL that Baluwatar has ordered at the cost of 15 million bucks. Why don't the rulers of New Nepal just take a helicopter to the airport and save us all the bother, and save the environment at the same time?



Which brings us to the question of why the Prime Minister of Nepal and his 19-member entourage broke the government's own regulation by not flying the national airline to connect to his final destination. He could have flown Nepal Airlines to Dubai and had a less roundabout link to Oslo. The Ass' **back-of-envelope calculation** shows that we spent \$150,000 just on tickets and TADA.



Those who went to bid the entourage farewell were surprised to see First Son Prakash in the cabin even though his name was not on the original manifest. Looks like Mom and Pop don't want to let the Dear Leader out of their sight, lest he **raid the bar** again and pass out on the sofa. Bad idea on the part of Sita Dahal to take mean-looking Bhojpuri khukuris to gift her pacifist Norwegian and Finnish hosts. Even if they were told it is our knational knife, it is unlikely they can use them as envelope slicers.



More and more it is looking like the Paras Files of Singapore's *The New Paper* was not an elaborate **April Fool hoax** after all, and that the Singapore press is even more incredible than we thought it was. Up to the point where ex-CP expressed his desire to run for elections and save Nepal we could see the handiwork of the Singaporean public relations firm named Bang. But then they brought Angela Cheng in and printed a picture of her being cuddled by none other than our own Girjababu. And Angela is threatening to visit Nepal to convince Prachandababu to convince him to save the monarchy.

Even *The New Paper's* editorial found this too outrageous and they pulled the story out of their website. Oh yes, and Angela also claims she was the person who convinced Gyanu to give up his throne in 2006 by getting Girjau to talk to the erstwhile majesty. Fat chance.

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cruise

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