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Weekly Internet Poll # 450

Q. What is your opinion about the federalism?

Total votes: 4,667

Opinion	Percentage
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Yes, but not without federalism	11.7%
Yes, but not without federalism	11.7%
Yes, but not without federalism	11.7%
Yes, but not without federalism	11.7%
Yes, but not without federalism	11.7%
Yes, but not without federalism	11.7%
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Weekly Internet Poll # 451. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. The Maoists' true intention is:

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STREET OR SADAN: The aisles of parliament are beginning to resemble the alleys of the capital with sloganeering Maoist members bringing proceedings to a halt for the second straight day on Wednesday.

MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Second chance

Crisis is an opportunity to start afresh

ANALYSIS by KUNDA DIXIT

The fast-paced developments of the past week with the Maoists resigning over their sacking of the army chief presents us with another opportunity to get the peace process and constitution drafting back on track.

The row has now gone beyond just civilian supremacy over the army, with the Shaktikhor Tape confirming a Maoist gameplan for total state capture. The end game in that strategy seems to have been replacing the army chief with a friendlier general.

However much Dahal's party may try to explain away the tape the fact is that he has admitted

deceiving the UN and everyone else on guerilla numbers and about his commitment to the democratic process. The party's actions after the resignation, the show of force on the streets with threats against the NC and UML just confirm Dahal's words spoken to his forces and recorded on tape two years ago.

Dahal has cloaked himself in a martyr complex with his resignation, but the international community and other parties are now going to take what he says with an even bigger pinch of salt.

However, it may be better for this country to have the Maoists in government than outside it playing perpetual victim. Which is why this crisis provides us with another chance to start

afresh to cobble together a national government in which the Maoists, NC and UML try a tie-up that eluded them nine months ago.

That best-case scenario may be too optimistic, however, because the trust gap between the Maoists and the others is now so great. Also, the pound of flesh the comrades want in return for joining the government (presidential apology and Katawal removal) are no-no's for the other parties.

The other likely line-up is a MJF-Maoist combine, which would be like reshuffling the deck. And the UML staying in the opposition with the NC may be a better counterbalance to Maoist extremism in government.

The third option is a UML-NC led coalition. The trouble with this is that it is sure to have the same tired old faces who are even less likely than the Maoists to deliver.

All this is unlikely to be decided by the presidential deadline on Saturday. Whichever coalition is put together, the new government has to get to work immediately: accelerate the integration and rehabilitation of Maoist forces, crank up the constitution-drafting process and address the country's economic and development emergency. A consensus national government would be the only one that can address those daunting challenges. ●

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Published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd, Editor: Kunda Dixit
CEO: Ashutosh Tiwari Design: Kiran Maharjan
DGM Sales and Marketing: Sambhu Guragain marketing@himalmedia.com
Marketing Manager: Subhash Kumar Asst. Manager: Arjun Karki
Circulation: Prakash Raut
Hatiban, Godavari Road, Lalitpur
GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu 5250333/845 Fax: 5251013
Printed at Jagadamba Press 5250017-19



USEFUL IDIOTS

This week's political crisis is the perfect time for the parties to pay attention to the real issues that 28 million Nepalis are concerned about: law and order, prolonged highway closures, jobs, roads, health care and education. As far as the rest of the country is concerned the power struggle in Kathmandu is happening on another planet.

The NC and UML have been given their chance in the past and couldn't deliver. In last year's election the Maoist party was given a chance, but they showed they aren't much better in getting the job done. The Maoist trade union is unrepentantly militant. The student wing calls itself 'revolutionary' and roughs up anyone who dares stand in its way. The YCL is actually a corps of ex-guerrilla commanders. Even without combatants coming out of their temporary camps, the Maoists have enough muscle to intimidate the entire population into submission.

The machinery of the state, the administration, police force and the armed police are so demoralised that they lack the will to take action against common criminals, political hooligans and even a bunch of teenagers blocking a highway. The Nepal Army used to be above it all, but now the leadership row threatens to destroy even that institution.

In the absence of any coercive deterrent, Nepal seems to be ripe for the Maoist takeover. Pushpa Kamal Dahal told his guerrillas to be ready for that in his Shaktikhor Tapes. That won't happen without a fight, and Dahal knows he daren't go back to war. If the country disintegrates, his forces will be some of the first victims.

Other parties too need to realise that love them or hate them, ignore Maoists they can't. It is better for stability and the peace process to have the Maoists in government than outside it. Even though it may seem idealistic and unrealistic, this is the time for all other political parties to stop behaving like useful idiots and start looking beyond getting to Singha Durbar. This crisis is the chance they have to bury their differences and work towards a consensus national government at least until the constitution is written.

Let us simplify it all for you: this country is now divided between those who want to seize total control by violent means if necessary, and those who believe in democracy and pluralism. ●



CHONG ZI LIANG

No one won

But everyone thinks the others lost

The current crisis complicates politics for the simple reason that no side feels that it has lost. This isn't a win-win, all sides are smug, their ambitions are stoked, and they are even more unwilling to make any concessions.

This has actually been a problem right since the 12-point deal. The king got dumped. But besides that, no actor has had to relent on its fundamental interest and offer concessions.



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

The army, after a temporary cooling-off period, was rehabilitated and its privileges protected. For GPK, April 2006 was a moment to take over the state apparatus and keep the seat warm for his daughter while protecting the interests of the NC class base. The Maoists saw the entire process, and the polls, as a tactical victory on way to total state control.

In the last fortnight, the positions are even more retrenched. The army's political role and links and divisions may have been exposed, but the generals feel they have won a huge victory and will be even less

amenable to civilian control. The Maoists may not have succeeded in throwing out Katawal, but they feel they have won a moral victory by resigning and are complacent that the political stalemate cannot be resolved without them.

UML and MJF think this is their chance to lead the government. And NC is already thrilled at the windfall from ministries it will get to control.

It is a striking paradox that at a time when there is a sense of crisis, all political actors actually think they have won, the others have lost and can be weakened further.

Translate this mood into negotiations on government formation. The UML is hoping to get rewarded for foiling Maoist plans on army. The NC is happy to see the left take on the ultra-left. Other key players feel that the Maoists have got a bloody nose and should be kept out in the opposition, even as efforts to provoke, weaken, and divide them take root.

After three days of playing victim, the Maoists are back in the game to form the government. The resources and patronage dispensation opportunities are just too tempting. They have told Upendra Yadav, finally back from his holiday, that they may possibly back him as PM while retaining control from outside.

The 'we have not lost' sentiment impacts on integration, too. The Nepal Army has become more secure because it now knows for sure that India will not allow a Maoist takeover of the army. This confidence could either encourage them to become more open to integration, or it could make them adopt an even more hardline stand opposing it.

After the video tape revelations, the latter seems more likely. Lack of progress on integration will split the Maoist leadership and weaken them.

The Maoists have become even more acutely aware of the need for integration as a means to take control of the army. Even though it is difficult to see how others can ever accept unit-wise entry with space in the command structure, the Maoists will not give up on that plan easily.

They may prefer to continue the cantonment arrangement than, in their terminology, 'surrender' their cadre to the army as fodder. As the resignation showed, they are playing a long-term game.

This is not to say that if there was a clear winner or loser in the recent crisis, things would have been simpler. On the contrary, it would have invited a conflict: either an army reaction of some sort or Maoist dogmatists pushing their adventurism.

Nepal's political dynamics, and socio-economic structure, dictates that there has to be a multi-class compact. There is no short cut to reconciling myriad interests. That was the spirit of the peace process which has got waylaid with the latest crisis.

The Maoists would do well to realise this and curtail their excessive ambitions. PKD should use this moment of enormous popularity within the party to drive home the need for consensus. The other parties would do themselves a great favour by not letting fear and insecurity dictate all their actions. They will also need to be prepared to give up some key interests and privileges.

Unlikely as it is, this is the best-case scenario one can hope from last week's drama. ●

LETTERS

CRISIS

The president may be the supreme commander of the country as you argue in your online edition ('Constitutional crisis', www.nepalitimes.com) and it may be his duty to appoint the COAS, but he is a constitutional president and not an executive one. In another words he is a rubber stamp just like the Indian president. The president will stamp what the prime minister appoints and stamp on who the prime minister decides to sack. This is the plain truth. Obviously what is happening in Nepal is a conspiracy, and there is no rule of law.

Toksang Tamang, email

● The Maoist-leaning civil society stalwarts should remember that the president has saved this country from totalitarianism by making the right move at the right time. These self-appointed 'civil society' protestors whom no one elected are paid lackeys of the Maoists.

Tirtha Thapa, email

STATELESS STATE

I have not missed a single issue of *Nepali Times* since I left Nepal eight

years go. Despite the country's slide, your paper always offered solutions and profiled Nepalis who were making a difference despite all odds. But after following Kunda Dixit's East-West

travelblog, I have never been so depressed about my country. The writing is so vivid and personalised that I almost cried reading the one about Janakpur ('State of statelessness', www.nepalitimes.com) I can visualise what it was like 10 years ago. I phoned my 80-year-old old mother this morning in Dhanusha and she says things have never been so bad. My mother, Nepali Ama, sounded so down and hopeless that my heart went out to her. Thanks for portraying our country's gritty reality.

Nir Sharma, email

● After reading Kunda Dixit 'State of statelessness' about his travels across Nepal, I couldn't help thinking, isn't there an end to all this insanity? I was hoping to return to Nepal later this year, now I am

having second thoughts. Nothing seems to change and it feels like we are in some theatre of the absurd and macabre. As the Janakpur writer says, "Something really has snapped in our society. I never thought I would ever say this, but remember how much better the bad old days used to be?"

Pemba Lama, USA

BRAND NEPAL

Unlike what the Beed says, the debate is not over whether we should vote for a right-wing pro-Hindu party ('Brand Nepali,' #448). Rather people are asking if they should vote for Gorkhaland or against it.

A Nepali speaking candidate is yet to reach a high enough profile in Indian

politics (which is incidentally also one of the reasons for Gorkhaland) to make her/his voice heard in the parliament. Therefore, we are supporting Jaswant Singh, who is a former foreign/defence/finance minister of India, so when he speaks it matters and if he wins, his voice, and through him our voice, will be heard in parliament.

Nepali politics does not affect us in any manner, neither does it matter to us. We have been demanding a separate administrative set up of our own since 1907. So your argument that maybe your ex-king has something to do with our demand is baseless.

'Gorkhali' is the term used by Indian citizens whose mother tongue is Nepali (in India). We are different from Nepalis in Nepal, so what applies to you does not apply across the border. We have hydro-electricity, tea, resources to attract tourism, horticulture, agriculture, medicinal herbs and forests. This is precisely the reason why the government of West Bengal isn't willing to let us go.

Upendra Mani Pradhan, email





CHONG ZI LIANG

Yadav vs Dahal

Uncertainty is the only certainty in Nepali politics

A week is a long time in politics, but this week seems to be extending into eternity. Anomalies abound: the Nepal Army has two chiefs, the president is behaving like a chief executive and the resignation of the prime minister has made uncertainty once more the only certainty of Nepali politics.

The formation of a new government isn't going to be easy. The arithmetic of the CA is such that even if a government were to be formed without the Maoists, it would last only as long as Pushpa Kamal Dahal wishes. The future of the peace process



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

becomes even more precarious as Maoist combatants in temporary

camp begin to lose hope, and more crucially, patience. The framing of a new constitution and the very fate of this nascent republic hang in balance as political parties bicker over office.

It may not have been by design, but Pushpa Kamal Dahal demonstrated that were it not for the decade-long armed insurgency, parliamentary democracy in Nepal would still be a free market for horse-trading. The risk of totalitarianism can be frightening, but nothing scares people in the streets as much as the incompetence and dishonesty of their leaders.

Meanwhile, President Ram Baran Yadav has opened a different can of worms by an inventive interpretation of his role and responsibilities. Nepal has been a military state since its inception. From Bhimsen Thapa to Padma Shamsheer, every ruler that lost his control over the army had to make way for more ambitious soldiers. In the post-1950 decades of political volatility, monarchs used the threat, and sometimes direct application (as in December 1960 and February 2005) of military force to make prime ministers fall in line or dismiss them arbitrarily.

No one knows about the primacy of the army in Nepal better than the former guerilla leader Dahal. But for all his faults and follies (and they are legion in a man responsible for the death, disappearance, and displacement of thousands of innocent Nepalis) Dahal is correct in his assessment

that dual centre of power in a country can lead to even worse disasters. The office of the president needs to accept that the parliamentary system of governance is the essence of the interim constitution.

The 'authority' Yadav used to restore the CoAS against the decision of the government violates one of the fundamental principles of parliamentary democracy that holds the executive responsible to the legislature. The prime minister is the leader of parliament and is subjected to its supremacy. Barring impeachment, the president is exempt from parliamentary oversight and enjoys a fixed term under the assumption that every act of the government will be done in his name and on his behalf. However, should a difference of opinion arise between the president and the prime minister, the latter must prevail to prevent the democratic structure from collapsing. It's not about Yadav versus Dahal, the issue is whether democracy can function if the head of state refuses to respect the boundary of his autonomy.

Yadav's action has been compared with the authoritarian decisions of Gyanendra on 4 October, 2002. The comparison is unfair to the ousted king: the monarchy had tradition behind it, Nepal's presidency doesn't. There are three extraordinary situations when a head of state may risk his position and reputation to take executive action—war, rebellion or economic collapse. Gyanendra faced all three. Yadav had none that challenged the very existence of state creating the condition for the application of the doctrine of necessity.

Long-term ramifications apart, the army row can hinder the formation and functioning of the government. An exit strategy needs to be devised by the whiz kids of Shital Niwas to end the deadlock that their counsel has created.

It's not about separation of powers or checks and balances. The constitution has enough institutions for these functions. The duty of the president is to activate another institution when one becomes dysfunctional. The dismissed CoAS should be asked to go to the court to uphold the doctrine of civilian supremacy. The president doesn't need to apologise to the nation, but he must take corrective action. ●

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LOS ANGELES: The phone has not stopped ringing since I reached here with bewildered Nepalis trying to understand the new political situation in Nepal. International newspapers are running stories of what could go wrong with Nepal—bad news always sells.



ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed

Everyone wallows in talk of doomsday and a failed state. Many fellow Nepalis in LA—mainly parents attending their children's graduation—are grateful to be in a place of optimism rather than in their own despairing country. Collective loss of hope actually kills recovery. On the

other hand, collective hope of economic recovery in the US may just get the financial sector back on some semblance of a track later this calendar year.

The political history of Nepal since its formation 240 years ago has been turbulent. Economics were never a priority for the Shah kings, Rana rulers or the political parties under the constitutional monarchy or under complete republicanism. The myopia of egocentric politics and of crying foul when not in power has killed economic development. In the US the importance of the economy prevails. Just look at the circulation figures for the *Wall Street Journal* compared with the *New York Times*. People care about the economy.

The US is a meritocracy.

Regardless of their background people earn success, be it in education, business or even politics. They are not just born successful or wretched.

Narayanmurthy, one of the founder members of Infosys in India recently launched a book of his speeches (*A better India, A better world*). It's a must-read for Nepalis because it is as applicable to Nepal as it was once to India. He talks about India being a country that was a far cry from being a meritocracy—where people fought with each other to prove who was more underprivileged.

In Nepal too people want reservations for jobs, education

and social benefits not on the basis of merit but on the basis of language or belonging to a disadvantaged group. In a world where all societies are competing to be more advanced and developed, we don't want to shed our under-developed tag or move on from protectionism.

Good politics is not a pre-requisite for economic development if societies start migrating from protectionism to meritocracy—as we are seeing in India. Despite the political players not having changed much and the mud slinging at the elections being ever constant, the Indian economy moves on as

people believe that merit in a competitive society leads to prosperity.

There is little we can do about our politicians, 10 years of people's war, the loss of 14,000 lives and the trauma of the thousands that survived the war but lost their loved ones. But if as a society we start building our own little spheres of influence around merit, then maybe we will one day be able to establish a political system based on merit. Let's give it a try before politicians squander all Nepali aspirations. ●

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Feeling the pinch

As foreign workers return, Myagdi is buffeted by the global financial crisis

KONG YEN LIN in BENI

When export orders at his Malaysian hydraulic hose company fell this year, production operator Jiblal Shrestha knew his job was on the line. Sure enough, his three-year contract was terminated prematurely. The 26-year-old is now back at his former job, working as a waiter at Hotel Yeti in Beni.

Myagdi is the district with the highest per capita outmigration in Nepal, and there are hundreds like Shrestha who have been laid off and have come home in the recent months.

"I was lucky I had skills and experience so I found a job in Nepal easily within a month, but some of my friends have been jobless for months," Shrestha said.

Retrenchment is most severe in Malaysia, where foreign labour policies have been tightened. Approval for work permits have been slashed by almost 70 per cent and worker levies doubled.

"It's like slow poison, remittances will gradually go down," says economics lecturer Bhola Nath Ghimire, "the crisis could hit us full force if developed economies do not make a fast recovery."

Dhaulagiri Corporation, a Beni remittance company, used to handle Rs 5 million worth of remittances daily till two years ago, but it has gone down to Rs 3.2 million a day. Buddha Money Transfer handled Rs 50 million in remittances last year, but expects a 20 per cent drop this year.



KONG YEN LIN

HARD TIMES: Farmer Kadevi Chhantyal, 32, (centre), of Kuine Mangile VDC collects remittance at a finance corporation in Beni. In the past, her husband, who works as a welder at a steel company in Dubai, used to send back as much as Rs 100,000 but the amount has decreased recently.

The drop in cash inflow has affected land transactions and other businesses. Jiban Biswokarma of the Chamber of Commerce says investment has slumped 40 per cent. Land prices on Beni's New Road has dropped by 20 per cent in the past three months alone.

"All this will increase unemployment because the local labour market can't absorb all the retrenched Nepalis," says Biswokarma.

However, some remain optimistic and most believe that job security remains high in the Gulf. Supermarket staffer Shanker Subedi is on a two-month leave from his job in Qatar and says he will return to his Rs 25,000 a month job.

Despite harsh working conditions abroad most are unable to resist the attraction of higher paychecks. "Many of those retrenched are still lining up to apply for foreign employment despite the risks," says Bhola Nath Ghimire.

Laxman Khatri, 26, used to earn Rs 35,000 a month in his job as a supervisor at a Dubai steel company, six times more than his current wage as a computer technician. Laid off three months ago due to financial problems within the company, he says: "To repay the loan I've taken and to afford my children's education the only option is for me to go abroad again."

The government has promised financial aid for the retrenched, but people here in Myagdi are demanding more should be done in the long-term to generate local employment through investments in tourism, cottage industries and agriculture.

"Our government lacks bargaining power when it comes to formulating foreign labour policies and regulating employment," says Ramji Prasad Subedi of the Dhaulagiri Finance Corporation, "Nepalis are the first to be laid off when foreign companies face a downturn. The welfare and rights of Nepali workers must be better protected in foreign lands."

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Maoists tricked UNMI N

A video of Pushpa Kamal Dahal addressing the combatants in Shaktikhor cantonment in January 2008 was broadcast by *Image Channel* on 6 May. In it, Dahal says he hoodwinked the UN into taking 20,000 guerrillas into the cantonments when there were only 7,000. He also urges them to prepare for ultimate revolution. In a statement on Tuesday, Dahal said the "dated file tape" which was made during the election campaign "lacked relevance". Below are excerpts from the speech:

Elections

First, let me assure you that the elections will not happen. But we cannot share this understanding. We must insist that the country needs elections as that it is the only way out. If we show enthusiasm, then they will stop the process. You may remember that in June, before the peace process, I said that if it looks like we

their 100,000. That is true. It will be under our total influence.

If there are no elections, we will win through a movement. We will first capture power, and then work on integration. We will not throw all of them out, as it will be necessary to keep some of them. We will reduce them systematically and bring the army under our leadership.

Integration will happen in this way. It will not happen one-by-one, on an individual basis. We will do it unit-wise. Our battalions and theirs will be separate, under one command. Our people will also be in command. The plan is to 'democratise' the army, which means to politicise it. It'll take five to seven years to do that. If we are really going to have integration, the way to do it is unit-wise, so that our units remain with us. This is important: if we do it unit-wise, we can react if we are betrayed.

Martyrs

compensation

Now, about the 600 million for the cantonments, we will use this for the revolt. We need money to prepare for the revolt. Remember my point about the need for 100 million, to bring it all in a truck. We need money for what the truck carries, nobody gives it for free. We don't have enough money for that. Of the 60 crore, you will take a little bit, and about 200 million will come to us. Just imagine

the preparations we can do with 200 million. Look deeper, and you will understand how the brave party is preparing for revolt.

Verification

Because we have thousands in the People's Liberation Army, everybody is petrified, even now. The Congress and UML don't want to admit it, but they feel the fear.

Our army has grown significantly. Speaking honestly, we were few before the compromise. We were at 7,000 to 8,000. If we had reported that, we would have had 4,000 left after verification. Instead, we claimed 35,000, and now we have 20,000. This is the truth. We cannot tell others, but all of you and I know the truth. And on the outside, we have created the YCL infrastructure and we have thousands in the YCL.

Longer version of excerpted transcript on www.nepalitimes.com



ROBIN SAYAMI/NAGARIK

will win they will not let it happen. And if it looks like they will win, we will not let it happen. Either way, I have said there will be no elections. I was never confused about that. If it looks like the Maoists are going to win, the reactionaries, America and India, together will prevent the elections.

When we win, we will just create a new law that includes our people and cuts those from the other side. Once we become the rooster, please pardon the expression, why would we need to obey the verification?

Integration

From the start, I have said that we do not need such a large national army. Let's keep it between 30,000 and 50,000. Ours may drop from 20,000 to 10,000, let's just say. You heard what Katawal said the other day—even if the army absorbs only 3,000 Maoist combatants, the whole army will be finished. He said a mere 3,000 could destroy



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Positive move

Editorial in *Annapurna Post*, 5 May

अन्नपूर्ण पोस्ट

PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal's resignation over the army issue signals a new direction for Nepali politics. By resigning he has demonstrated his political ethics and understanding—though it would have been more effective if he had resigned when the other parties were protesting against dismissing Army Chief Rookmangud Katawal.

Prachanda has also made it easier for other parties in the government to continue implementing the peace process.

Now that the PM has resigned, it is up to NC, UML and the other parties to act with political discipline, far-sightedness and wisdom. Learning from the conflicts that the Maoist government has had to face over the last nine months is the biggest challenge for these parties. In fact, if the parties had worked together from the beginning and formed a political consensus today's situation would never have happened.

Admit it

Editorial in *Kantipur*, 5 May

कान्तिपुर

Recent political events reveal that the government is still largely running under the shadow of the armed forces and a single head of state. The president's move to overturn the Maoist decision has raised a number of constitutional and political concerns. Dahal's resignation was an easy conclusion. In his speech, he expressed commitment to a democratic state. But the Maoists' behaviour on the streets seems to say otherwise.

By overturning the Maoists' decision, the president has created the impression that he controls the army. By taking matters into his own hands as though he were vested with executive power, the president over-reached his legitimate rights which are limited

to bringing official attention to deviations and taking advice from the Supreme Court. This move makes his intentions seem political and unconstitutional.

In a statement on Monday, the president attempted an unconvincing explanation for his move on Sunday. However, if he wants to regain the people's respect, he needs to admit to his mistake and assure them that executive powers will be under the control of the new government.

Impeach Yadav

Editorial, *Janadesh*, 7 May

जनादेश

History has repeated itself. The cowardice on the part of the political parties has permitted President Ram Baran Yadav to depend on foreign powers and attempt to take the role that the king took earlier.

Constitutionally, the president cannot do anything without the cabinet's recommendation. But Yadav went so far as to overturn the cabinet's decision. The political parties went one step further this time, encouraging Yadav to undertake a 'coup'. This clearly proves that these parties believe in army totalitarianism over people's supremacy. The NC has always had questionable roots. But in this episode it is the UML's reputation that has fallen miserably.

This affair is a warning sign of the delicacy of Nepali nationalism and sovereignty. Indian ambassador Rakesh Sood had been meeting the prime minister every day to tell him not to sack Katawal.

The Nepali people will now take to the streets to support the courageous decision of the government they had elected. Voices for Nepali nationalism and against foreign intervention should echo in the parliament. A proposal of impeachment against Ram Baran Yadav should be presented to the legislative parliament.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

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Interviews will take place during the week of 25 May 2009

A federal eco-system

SUSHIL BHATTARAI

There is a need for a holistic approach to federalism. Care to be taken in ensuring an equitable distribution of natural resources (forest, water, places of tourism potential) and inclusion of ethnic and linguistic groups in the proposed structure.

So far, proposals have centred on ethnically-demarcated and named federal units. But there is a need for an approach that also addresses the country's national integrity, sovereignty and the economic sustainability of the regional units.

As has been pointed out by many demographers, geographers and social scientists, ethnic-based demarcation would be disastrous, and we have already seen precursors to communal violence even during the transitional period. Tensions are flaring not just between Pahad and Madhes but within ethnicities in the mountains and in the plains. State restructuring should aim to address existing injustices and inequalities as well as future potentials. Smaller ethnic groups should not be dominated by the major ethnic or linguistic groups within a federal unit.

There is a close ecological interdependence between the Tarai and hills. The grain-basket of the plains need the regulation of water in the mountains to prevent floods and provide irrigation. Forests in the mountains ensure ground-water recharge and prevent rising of river beds. Increased productivity in the Tarai, on the other hand, ensures food security in the mountains. The plains control access to

the mountains, while the mountains control water that flows down to the plains. There is no way but for the two to co-exist in a highland-lowland interactive system.

The challenge therefore is for us to come up with a workable solution that reduces communal tension, preserves ethnic pride, promotes economic development and protects the environment for the long-term benefit of all Nepalis.

At present, the government is facing challenges to support sustainable development in the five current regions and 75 districts using resources from the centre. Local resources are either unmanaged or not enough to initiate development activities.

Current regions and zones address the symbiotic relationship between the hills and plains with river boundaries to the east and west. These five development regions are just the right size to serve as federal states. The sub-units could then address the need to include various ethnic and linguistic groups, fair representation of Dalits and other disadvantaged. The boundaries of existing districts, municipalities, VDCs and wards can then be re-delineated to accommodate the above issues. The major ethnic groups would then automatically have a say in future federal units.

While delineating state boundaries, the topography, geographical setting and rich biodiversity of Nepal must be taken into



HELEN ARTHY

consideration so that a harmonious interdependence can be maintained between the people in the hills, mountains and Tarai through an integrated eco-system approach. One way to do this would be to use Nepal's main rivers as a criteria for delineating state boundaries by naming them Kosi, Gandaki or Karnali.

To do this, representatives of political parties must sit with groups agitating for ethnic autonomy and experts to sort out their rival claims and ensure that no future province is short-changed. A fair deal for future economic development must ensure

an equitable distribution of hydropower potential, topography, demographics, agriculture, infrastructure possibilities and places of economic importance. Care must be taken to address the special needs of those marginalised, even within the excluded ethnicities and regions. ●

Sushil Bhattarai is a consultant on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Natural Resource Management and has served 36 years in government, including as Regional Administrator in the Far-West Development Region.

Amiable bureaucracy

The civil service in the new federal Nepal should be efficient, result-orientated and approachable

The debate about how the civil service will be run has not started yet because the federal authority still has to decide on the local, provincial and federal administration. However, it is one of the important issues to be addressed.



COMMENT
Shyam Prasad Mainali

Nepal has great geographic diversity with high mountains, hills and lowland Tarai. There has to be coordination between the provinces and we've got to retain the age-long relationship between these territories.

Kathmandu alone has 42 per cent share of the total national revenue collection. If we add the revenue of Parsa, Morang, Rupandehi and Banke to it, that makes 85 per cent of the national revenue.

There are places which have insignificant revenue collection and the regions without resources can make little progress. It would be counter-productive to create provinces based only on language and ethnicity: it will only increase the gap between the rich and poor, resulting in conflict.

Administrative management should be three-tiered: central,



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

provincial and local. The mandatory central administration looks after overall administration but it should not impose or interfere in local units. The most important thing is that the administrative structure is efficient and approachable, responsible and transparent. It should also embody regional and ethnic inclusiveness and professionalism.

The structure should be pro-public and guarantee good governance. The central administration can control national planning, implementation

and evaluation, national security, states of emergency, foreign affairs, national resources and their equal distribution and economic and financial policies.

The judiciary, universities, public service commission, election commission, security authorities and national army should be run by the centre with the local units carrying policies and programs. The appointment of diplomats, central bank, highway, development infrastructure, treaties and understanding with foreign countries will be federal issues.

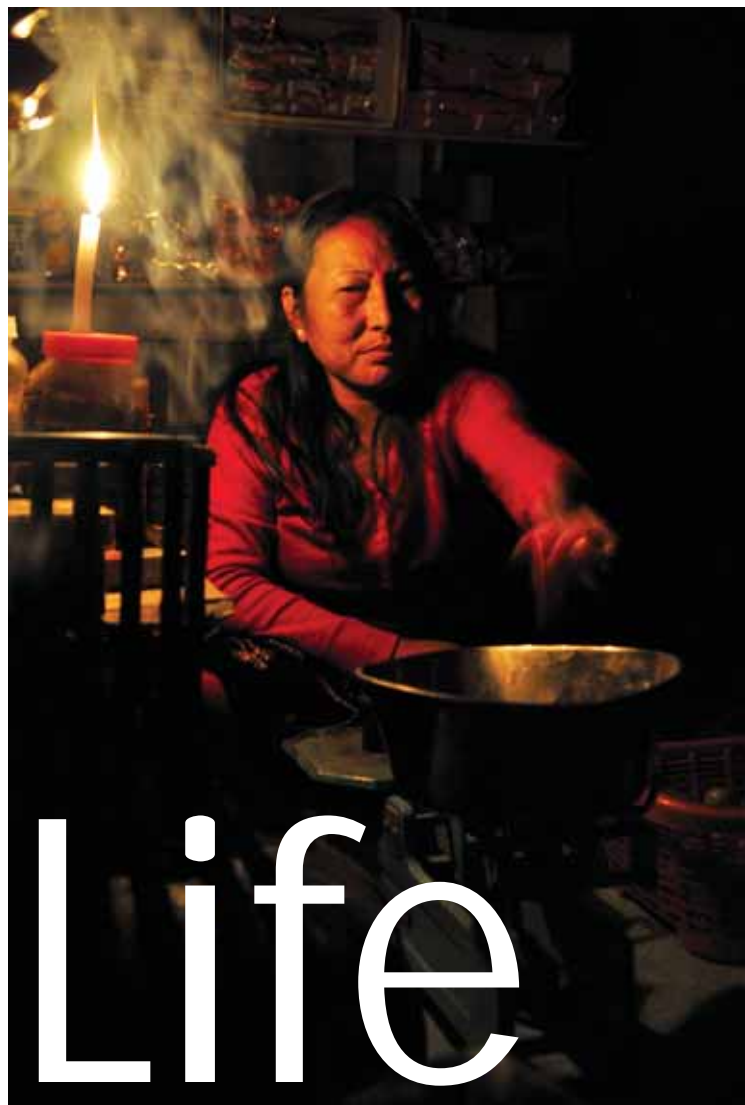
Police administration, industrial security forces, issuance of passports and citizenship certificates, maintaining and updating records of people's property, management of transport, real estate, implementation of development projects, labour, road and forest management will be taken care of at a provincial level with a separate bureaucratic mechanism. The provincial government will develop an independent system regarding recruitment and set terms and conditions for their service.

Local resources will eventually be managed at a local level though permission will need to be sought from the centre if there is an issue relating to more than one province. The centre should play a role of facilitator until the provincial and local administrations are self-reliant.

We also need to have a uniform policy about the private sector and non-governmental organisations. The aim of a federal system is to strengthen provincial and local government. The more rights the provincial and local people are given, the more ownership they feel over government policies and programs.

We need to find the experts and human resources that the provinces require. We must calculate the number of people required at a local level and the number of people that that province can recruit. Provincial governments may hire experts on contracts instead of recruiting an unnecessary number of people. It provides the government with efficient and skilled manpower to suit their requirements and saves it from unnecessary financial burdens. ●

Shyam Prasad Mainali is secretary at the Ministry of Youth and Sports.



Life after Dark

With or without lights,
life goes on in
Kathmandu's gallis

TEXT AND PICTURES BY CHONG ZI LIANG

For a capital city, Kathmandu certainly goes to sleep pretty early. By eight, traffic-logged streets are empty, a motorcycle heads home catching street dogs and stray cattle in its headlights.

Kathmandu always closed down early, but now with the power cuts it goes to bed even earlier. Even when electricity is available, street lamps are often dim and spread too widely to illuminate the gallis. Yet, in the back alleys of Kathmandu city-zens have found a way around in the dark.

As darkness falls, street vendors turn on battery-powered lamps in an effort to hawk the remainder of their wares. Corner convenience stores use candles. Mina Tamang deftly measures out a kilo of tomatoes for a customer under the orange glow of the flame.

Bonfires are also a common sight. As the working day draws to a close, Sanu Basnyat burns the rubbish in front of his store. The Basnyat family gathers around the warmth of the flames. "We don't do this every day, just sometimes when it's cold," says his son, Narvin. Finally, the fire dies out and Basnyat packs up his store. Elsewhere, the metal clanks of shutters rolling down can be heard. Like the rest of Kathmandu, even the gallis are turning in for the night. ●




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DFID is a major bilateral development agency in Nepal. We work with Government and others to reduce poverty. DFID is committed to promoting governance reform, social development and economic growth in order to address the root causes of poverty. We give priority to support for economic opportunities and essential public services to poor and disadvantaged communities, and to social justice and governance reform. We are committed to delivering assistance transparently and full accountability to local communities.

With a budget of £27.5 million, the Enabling State Programme (ESP) is DFID's biggest governance initiative in Nepal. The goal of ESP is governance which is more responsive to the interests of the poor and excluded. ESP contributes to this by strengthening the relationship between state institutions and citizens to promote inclusive policies and programmes. This involves helping to increase understanding of governance, learning about how change in governance occurs in Nepal, supporting change by funding projects developed by local reformers. ESP was launched in January 2001 and will run until December 2012. ESP priorities for the next four years include social/political inclusion, public financial management, anti-corruption, local governance, delivery of public services, and Constituent Assembly processes. ESP is run by a small team of professionals and support staff headed by a Programme Manager.

Applicants should have a keen interest in governance, with the ability to network widely and to work with and earn the respect of key individuals and organisations in the political and administrative spheres of governance, as well as in civil society and private sector.

Qualification requirements

- Master's Degree in a governance related subject
- At least 10 years of work experience in governance with a minimum of 5 years experience in senior management position with comparable development agencies
- Knowledge of, and experience in, public policy-making in Nepal is desirable
- Excellent English language skills, both written and spoken.

Core competencies

- Working with others
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- Communicating with others
- Decision Making

There will be an attractive and highly competitive local salary and benefits package.

The successful applicant will be contracted for a fixed term appointment until December 2012. DFID is an equal opportunities employer and appoints on merit based on open competition. Applicants are welcomed from all parts of the community. Please send email to recruitment-nepal@dfid.gov.uk for application form, diversity questionnaire and job description and send the completed forms to recruitment-nepal@dfid.gov.uk. Only completed applications made on the prescribed application form and diversity questionnaire will be considered. Telephone enquiries after the deadline of the application will not be entertained.

Closing date for applications is Friday, 15th May 2009.

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Chemonics International seeks qualified candidates for a regional program manager. This is a one year, full time position on a USAID/OTI funded program which seeks to support Nepal's political transition. This fast, flexible program is designed to bolster the current peace process; strengthen governance mechanisms; and support positive, non-violent community engagement in the country's political, social and economic future.

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Requirements:

- Strong written and spoken English language ability is required, Nepali or other local language a plus
- Knowledge of USAID rules and regulations, especially financial
- Experience conceptualizing, implementing, and monitoring small grant projects
- Experience overseeing projects and project budgets
- Minimum of two years experience working in a complex and challenging field operation in unstable developing countries with preferably at least one year in a supervisory capacity
- Desire and willingness to live in Janakpur

Please submit CV to operations@chemonics-nepal.com and write the position you are applying for in the subject. Applicants will be reviewed on a rolling basis until all positions are filled. Only short listed applicants will be contacted.

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For the families of the disappeared, knowing where their loved ones are is more important than reparation

MALLIKA ARYAL

Those who were disappeared during the 'people's war' were the direct victims but the families they leave behind are also victims. Their relatives are still unaccounted for, and now they have to endure the agonising uncertainty of whether or not they are dead or alive.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Nepal this week released the report *Families of Missing Persons in Nepal: A Study of Their Needs*. It emphasises the needs, rather than rights, of the families. The study is based on interviews and discussions in 10 districts, accounting for 43 per cent of the missing persons in Nepal. For most families the right to truth, justice and reparation are not as important as survival and knowing what happened to their loved ones.

They talk about their daily struggle for livelihood, lack of jobs and money. They still don't want to believe their loved ones

are dead. Although last rites can be performed in the absence of a body in our culture, many families refuse to do so. Wives of the disappeared face discrimination and ostracisation by their family members and live in terrible conditions.

Although justice is not a priority, families want those responsible for the disappearance of their relatives to be prosecuted and they reject amnesty outright. They believe that the trials should be accessible to victims and should be held in their local area. Most families think reparation and compensation must await truth. However, they do demand interim relief and to have the missing acknowledged as martyrs and memorials built if and when the truth of their fate is known.



Yasodha Sharma of Baglung is the wife of Surya Prasad Shrama, 35, who was taken by Nepal Army

in January 2002. "I have been dying every day since my husband was taken away seven years ago. First tell me who gave the orders to take my husband away. Tell my three children why their father is not coming home so they don't wait for him anymore. If he is dead tell us how he was killed and give me the names of those who ordered his prosecution. Give me his dead body and then only come and talk about reparations."



Ram Kumar Bhandari of Lamjung is the son of Tej Bahadur Bhandari who was 55 when he

went missing in December 2001. "The government is trying to pass the disappearance bill through ordinance. Why weren't we consulted? As families of the victims, don't we have a big stake in the process? They are just not ready to face us and discuss why innocent people

were taken, which is why they are trying to rush the process."



Jai Kishore Labh of Dhanusha is the father of Sanjiv Karna, 23, who went missing in

October 2003. "I dream at night that my son is back and when I wake up he is not there. Loss of a son means loss of pension. If a person kills another they are severely punished. Our laws even have provisions to punish those who are involved in petty crime. So why are the laws silent when a person is involved in the disappearance of another?"



Prem Neupane of Gorkha is the brother of Dipak Neupane, 30, who was disappeared in February

2004 in Kaski. "Only the families of those who went missing know what it is like to live in the uncertainty of whether or not their loved ones are dead or alive. Give me his corpse if he is dead or tell me where he is if he is alive."



Ram Ujagir Chaudhari of Kapilbastu is the brother of Hari Ram Chaudhari, 27, who was disappeared in October 2003.

"Any news of my brother makes the family alive but we are met with disappointment again and again. My family dies every day. We haven't performed his last rites and we are stigmatised by society. Who is going to restore our social prestige? Who is going to educate my brother's kids? Who is going to look after us?" ●

See also:
'The long, long wait', # 409
'How can we forget?' # 389

Lighting a lamp

KUNDA DIXIT in UDAYAPUR

The oppressive afternoon heat and a curfew had kept people off the streets of Gaighat all day. Even the dogs have gone indoors. The silence is suddenly broken by the sound of an approaching motorcycle, it is a macho-looking 123 cc Enticer and riding it is a woman in T-shirt and jeans.

The sight would make one sit up and take notice even in Kathmandu. But here, in the middle of nowhere, in the capital of one of the most deprived districts of eastern Nepal, it is stunningly incongruous. Locals have got used to seeing Najbul Khan Nilam roar around town in one of her mercy missions to rescue battered women, take mothers to hospital or take trafficked children back to their families.

"The motorcycle is the message," explains Nilam, "it shows women what it means to be independent and empowered. But it is also practical to have a bigger bike because I have to sometimes carry two women on the back."

It is rare enough to find a woman activist like Nilam in rural Nepal and it is even more surprising that she is Muslim. She understood very early in her childhood what it meant to bear the triple burden of discrimination within her family, her community and society at large. When her father discouraged her from going to school, she enrolled in adult literacy classes and graduated.

Her brothers set fire to her books and kurta suruwat. "That is when I decided to

Activist's work shows there is no point just cursing the darkness



MOTORCYCLE RESCUERS: Najbul Khan Nilam and colleague Mamitra Ale Magar of the women's group Muldhar in Udayapur, which works with women from disadvantaged groups in the district.

only wear jeans," she says. Then she taught herself to drive a Vikram Tempo and worked on the Gaighat-Jaljale route, just to show other women that it was possible to earn a living that way.

Seeing victims of domestic violence in her community, women abandoned by their husbands, and seeing the trauma suffered by young girls rescued from

traffickers Nilam decided to devote her life to help them. She set up Muldhar (Mainstream Women Service Centre) to address problems specific to women, Dalits, indigenous groups, Madhesis and Muslims in Udaypur district. In the corner of Muldhar's office, there are mattresses stacked high, for rescued women who have nowhere to go.

Muldhar gets about 20 cases per month, and many of them are women whose husbands have divorced them simply by saying "Talak" three times. Nilam, whose inspiration is maverick Bangladeshi author Taslima Nasrin, is determined to fight it. "We are in Nepal, and it is Nepali law that should prevail," she says, "and if men can divorce their wives by saying Talak then women should also be allowed to do so." It is such talk that earns Nilam death threats, but she says she has got used to them.

Nilam's phone rings. A ten-year-old girl has been raped by a 67-year-old man in an adjoining village. She rushes downstairs, guns her bike and is off in a cloud of dust. We find later she has brought the man to the police and started legal proceedings with help from a woman lawyer.

Last week, Nilam travelled to Kathmandu in an ambulance carrying a woman who had been severely burnt in the neck and body in an acid attack by her husband. She raised the money for the ambulance by persistently badgering officials. "She is one headstrong woman," said a district administration officer, "anyone else would have just given up."

Nilam is appalled at her district's high maternal mortality rate. Frequent highway blockades have cost many more lives. So her next project is to raise money to acquire a maternity ambulance that can rush women to the nearest good hospital in Dharan and have the equipment on board for delivery.

Says Nilam: "I'd like to drive the ambulance myself." ●



MALIKA ARYAL

A play in which nothing happens—twice

Departing from its usual larger-than-life theatrical productions, this year Studio 7 is daring to perform Samuel Beckett's most famous absurdist work *Waiting for Godot*, directed by Sabine Lehmann. The play opens with two characters, Vladimir and Estragon who, as the title suggests, are waiting for a person called Godot. The men clown around, joking and arguing, as they wait through one day and then another, for the mysterious Godot. They are later joined by Pozzo and his servant Lucky who

introduce the tension of social inequality to the play. Surprising, delighting and confounding its audiences since the 1950s *Waiting for Godot*, like all works in the theatre of the absurd genre, lacks a conventional plot yet provocatively explores the complexity of the human condition. In fact you could argue that nothing at all happens in the first half of the play—and the second is a repetition of the first. But that very absence of a plot—and of the mysterious Godot—will prompt discussion and personal interpretations

from the audience. Unlike the other productions put forward by Studio 7, *Waiting for Godot* has an all Nepali cast, bringing actors together from various backgrounds. The established cast at Studio 7 have decided to opt out this time, giving younger players a chance to enchant and provoke the audience. ● *Waiting for Godot plays at the Naga Theatre in Hotel Vajra every Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 8 May-24 May. All performances start at 7.15 PM. 4271545*

Planets abound

Steady untwinkling Saturn is overhead from dusk til dawn

In the May sky, we have the ringed planet Saturn in the evening, mighty Jupiter before dawn and some shooting stars early in the month. As far as stars are concerned, at 8PM you can easily identify the bright constellation Leo the lion just overhead—it looks like an inverted question mark. At the base of the question mark, locate the bright star Regulus, which falls directly in the Ecliptic, the imaginary path of the planets. The bright star-like object to the east of Regulus is Saturn. To the west from Leo, the faint constellation Cancer the crab, can be seen only from a dark location. If you can identify it, don't miss the Beehive star cluster, best seen through a pair of binoculars. Further to the west, you may find the constellation Gemini the twins above the western horizon.

To the east of Leo, there is another faint constellation Virgo the virgin, with the bright star Spica. To the north of Virgo, is the small constellation Coma Berenices and the fuzzy Coma Cluster of stars. To the east of Coma, there is the bright star Arcturus in the constellation of Bootes the herdsman. Don't miss the brilliant Big Dipper (*Saptarshi*) display in the northern skies. At the 'handle' of the Big Dipper, identify the double star Mizar-Alcor that is visible to the naked eye. Please note that the two end stars of the Big-Dipper's bowl point to the North Star (Polaris).



The Eta-Aquarid meteor shower peaked on 5 May, when the Earth passed through the centre of a dust trail left by Halley's Comet when it visited us in 1986. As bits of Halley strike the Earth's upper atmosphere, we experience a meteor shower producing up to 30 shooting-stars an hour. Look towards the south east to the constellation Aquarius (where Jupiter is now located) in the early morning hours.

Other Highlights for May: Mercury is at *inferior conjunction* (almost directly in front of the Sun) on 18 May. We may just be able to glimpse it after sunset, at the very start of May, but it will soon disappear and we won't see it again this month.

Venus is rising an hour or so before the Sun and we may be able to see the brilliant 'Morning Star' very low in the east at dawn. Don't confuse it with Jupiter, which is further right and somewhat higher up.

Mars is also in the morning sky, coming up in the east a few minutes after Venus. But the Red Planet is very much fainter than Venus, and will be virtually impossible to observe this month.

Jupiter is rising in the south-east in the early hours of the morning and it is well up in the south-eastern sky at dawn. If you're familiar with the three bright stars of the 'Summer Triangle', you will find Jupiter far below them.

Saturn, in Leo, is overhead at dusk, and doesn't set until dawn. Located well to the left of the bright star Regulus, Saturn appears brighter than Regulus, and shines with a steady, untwinkling light.

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There goes the neighbourhood

What a time to hold elections in India

Gripping issues may be in short supply for the country's 700-million plus voters who seem underwhelmed by the parade of political ambition on display in recent weeks. But just take a look around the region.



HERE AND THERE
Daniel Lak

Sri Lanka's relentless and brutal campaign against the Tamil Tigers is on the brink of success. No one knows yet at what cost to civilian lives. Pakistan's army seems serious as it ramps up military pressure on the Taliban, engaging them in Dir, Buner and soon Swat.

And then there's Nepal. The deepening stand-off over General Katawal's attempted dismissal has plunged the country into murky and frightening new territory. The mother of all power vacuums looks set to ensue.

Meanwhile, India's netas keep on making promises and flinging mud but largely ignoring the region's turmoil. National power, they know, doesn't lie in leading the way to peace in

neighbouring states.

Yes, the UPA government remains in place and is free—even under India's strict model code of conduct—to take decisions on crucial issues of foreign policy. But External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee is facing a tough election fight in his West Bengal constituency and even his legendary work ethic is being tested by the bulging files that keep dropping on his often empty desk at South Block.

Not just in New Delhi but in national capitals around the world, India's claim on political leadership across South Asia is widely accepted. True, China might have a thing or two to say but even Beijing believes that country's should be free to lead the way in their own neighbourhoods.

Washington, London, Berlin and Brussels know that India is a key player in regional affairs that has to be onboard before foreigners take new initiatives.

UNMIN in Nepal needed India's grudging approval. Norway failed in Sri Lanka, in part because New Delhi wasn't kept in the loop by a Scandinavian style peace effort



that was viewed as increasingly partisan.

Nor can India be de-linked from a role in international attempts to undermine Islamism in Pakistan and ease the country into a more secular and prosperous future. Washington's special envoy, Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, is at pains to

treat Delhi's powerful diplomats and ministers as near-equals in his attempts to sort things out in the Af-Pak region.

So what to do when New Delhi, political New Delhi, has its eye off the ball during an unprecedented series of regional firestorms erupt and intensify. Well, if you're the Maoists in Nepal you make your move, accuse the Indian bureaucrats of being partial to the Army, and hope that high risk carries high rewards. In poker, they call this going 'all-in', shoving all your money into the middle of the table and daring everyone else to join the game and see just what cards you're holding. Other players at this particular table will probably make India part of their bid for power too, betting on a total breach between the neighbouring country and the outgoing Maoists.

Sri Lanka's government takes a more subtle line. Begged two weeks ago by senior officials from Delhi to tone down an offensive that was whipping up turmoil in electorally crucial Tamil Nadu, they make visible concessions while keeping up the military pressure in less

obvious ways.

In other words, their soldiers are still blasting away with guns and mortars but they've stopped bombing and shelling with heavy artillery. Non-combatants are still dying, but less obviously.

Even Pakistani leaders (civilians only of course, the army needs a hostile India to justify its grip on power and resources) have been reaching out quietly and secretly to India. They want desperately for Delhi, still angry over the Mumbai attacks of 26/11, to renew dialogue and shore up efforts to rebrand the Taliban and Al Qaeda the main existential threats to their nation.

Even a distracted India plays its designated role in this benighted region. After the elections, look for fast action on foreign policy, involving Nepal, Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

Diplomats and bureaucrats, however much maligned by the likes of Baburam Bhattarai, can't be expected to take bold initiatives or think outside the box. It's beyond their pay scale. Pray for an Indian election result of your choice, but pray it comes soon. ●



2009 Europe Day Message of Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner For External Relations and Neighbourhood Policy



"We are not forming coalitions of states, we are uniting people"

These historical words of Jean Monnet, one of our founding fathers, express in one sentence what the European Union has achieved over the last decades. Only twenty years ago the iron curtain divided people and ran like a scar through Europe. Today we are celebrating the 5th anniversary of an enlarged and re-united European Union, a Union of citizens who have decided together, of their own will, to build a common future, based on the rule of law, an internal market, and the gradual abolition of internal borders.

What we have done for ourselves – supporting and consolidating democracy for millions of people – we also wish to help others to accomplish. The European Union's transformational power is a major force for democratic and economic change in neighbouring countries, not only in the candidate countries but also in Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean fostered by the European Neighbourhood Policy.

In the last year we established the Union for the Mediterranean with our Mediterranean partners and agreed with them on six flagship projects delivering concrete benefits for citizens of the region. Similarly, we proposed an ambitious new Eastern Partnership aiming at bringing a lasting message of solidarity, with additional, tangible support for democratic and market-oriented reforms and the consolidation of partners' statehood and territorial integrity.

These changes bring new opportunities, but also new responsibilities for our partners and for a united global Europe. In last summer's conflict in Georgia and in the gas-dispute between Russia and Ukraine, a united and swiftly acting Union showed that it can be a guarantor for stability, freedom and security in our globalised world.

We are rising to this challenge by seeking to build a global consensus to tackle the issues we all face. This is particularly true in finding a global answer to the current global financial and economic crises. The European Union has not only become one of the driving forces in the G20 which brings together all global and regional key players, but we also provided the blue print for a global response which resulted in the most ambitious global stimulus to boost the global economy and re-shape our globalised world.

This crisis is also an opportunity as it is opening minds to the need to come up with global solutions. Thus, we agreed to work with our G20 partners for a breakthrough on Doha, Climate Change and energy security, and are frontloading our aid to those developing countries worst hit by falling export revenues.

2009 is not merely a year of crises. It is also a unique moment in the world's history and a unique opportunity to work together to tackle global issues. A strong global Europe should seize this momentum and make its contribution not only to overcoming the challenges posed by the global financial and economic crisis but also to achieving an ambitious and binding agreement at the Climate Conference in Copenhagen at the end of this year.

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FIRST TIME IN NEPAL

Over the last five years the band Kutumba has revived forgotten folk tunes from villages and brought them to the mainstream music scene. Celebrating their fifth anniversary on 9 May, they aim to continue bringing life to tunes from old forgotten instruments such as tungna, arbajo, sarangi and dhimay and to continue to create music which the band members characterise as new age folk.

At the beginning, Kutumba was a group that was formed on a whim—a couple of friends playing together.

Their first album *Forever Nepali Folk Instrumental* was launched in 2004 and since then they have performed at fundraisers for the flood victims, collaborated with various artists to create a peace song and released another two albums- *Folk Roots* and *Naulo Bihani* and toured throughout the country. They also performed the back score for the feature film *God lives in the Himalayas*.

“Our music has always has been about giving back to society”, says Pavit



SAM KANG LI

New age folk

Maharjan, the band’s percussionist. Currently they are working on the Danish-funded project Kutumba Sanga Hatemelo, which involves researching and preserving the diversity of traditional music and inspiring other musicians in this field.

A memorable performance for all the band members and an inspiration for their fourth album would be their concert at Janakpur, a place that has never heard orchestral folk tunes like theirs. ‘Mithila’, their new album, which consists of seven

songs is dedicated to Maithili culture, festivals and traditions. This will be released on 9 May at Rastriya Nach Ghar. This concert which celebrates Newari, Gaardharva and Maithali culture is a continuation of their Hatemalo series. ●

Free passes for the concert are available at East and West Music Box, Thamel. Show is from 4-6PM. 4256411

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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **A Homage to Heritage**, an exhibition by Birendra Pratap Singh at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited from till 13 May, 11AM- 6PM. 4218048
- ❖ **Silent Witnesses**, an exhibition by Aymeric Hamon at the Allaince Francaise Garden, 16 May, 10 AM.

EVENTS

- ❖ **Yoga for Holistic Health** 9 -10AM and Meditation 5-6PM, till 8 May at Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre, Keshar Mahal Marg, Thamel. 4410402
- ❖ **The Horn of Shame**, artistic performance by Salil Subedi Kanika & Karl Knapop, 8 May, 6.30 PM, Alliance Francaise
- ❖ **Waiting for Godot**, a play by Samuel Beckett, Hotel Vajra, 8-24 May at 7.15 PM. 4271545
- ❖ **Workplace Bullying**, a talk program, 24 May at The New Era Institute,Battisputali. 9851023958.
- ❖ **IPL 2009**, watch IPL 2009 live matches at Rox Bar Hyatt Regency Kathmandu at 4491234
- ❖ **Call for entries for Film South Asia** till 31 May, documentaries made in and after January 2007 qualified. 5552141

MUSIC

- ❖ **1974 AD** concert featuring Deep Shrestha, 8 May, Patan Museum, 6PM
- ❖ **Louis Bertignac & Bijaya Vaidya** concert, with SAC MUSIC, Academy Hall, 23 May
- ❖ **The Kathmandu Chorale** presents -Enjoy Life, a spring concert at the British School, Jhamsikhel,16 May, 3.30PM- 6PM
- ❖ **TGIF** at Jazzabella Café every Wednesday and Friday. 2110475
- ❖ **Roots**, a musical performance by Bob Manes along Desmond O'Flattery and Anthony Correll, 5.30- 8 PM. Lazimpat Gallery Café. 4428549
- ❖ **Kathmandu express**, performance by International Acts, 7.30 PM onwards, free entry at Moksh.
- ❖ **Live band** every Friday and rooftop bbq everyday at Kausi Kitchen, Durbar Marg. 4227288
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Epic**, at the Brunchilli- the Acoustic Lounge every Friday, Thamel. 9851035437
- ❖ **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

DINING

- ❖ **Weekend Brunch** by the Poolside every Saturday and Sunday, Soaltee Crowne Plaza Kathmandu ,11AM-3PM. 4273999
- ❖ **Pizza & Pasta** at the Rox Restaurant every Monday & Tuesday, starts from 13 April, Hyatt Regency. 4489362
- ❖ **Pasta pesto passion** at La Dolce Vita, Thamel. 4700612
- ❖ **Home made pasta** at Alfresco, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Reality Bites**, The Kaiser Café, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, 9AM-10PM. 4425341
- ❖ **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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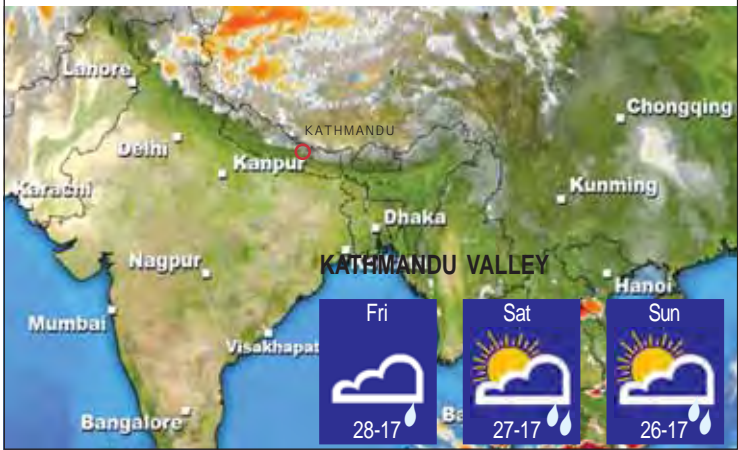
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WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The storm of last Sunday morning brought welcome relief to Valley dwellers not just in the form of much needed rain but also clearer air. The coming week will see the onset of heavy daily showers over the weekend as we steadily approach the monsoon with maximum temperatures remaining at around 28 degrees Celsius and humidity inching up to 51 per cent on Sunday when winds will be lighter than they have been of late.



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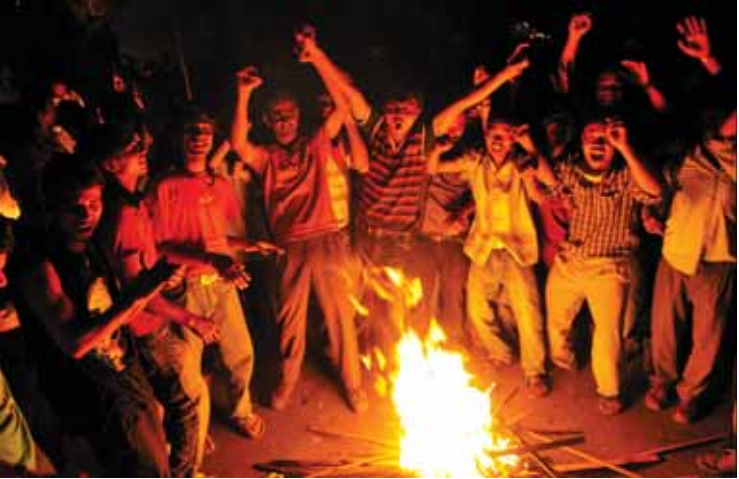
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MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

BRAIN FREEZE: Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal held a press conference on Wednesday to clarify the controversial video released the day before.



CHONG ZI LIANG

WE DIDN'T START THE FIRE: Maoists organised a torch rally in the Valley after a demonstration in Ratna Park on Tuesday. The demonstration was in support of Pushpa Kamal Dahal's resignation from prime ministership.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

RAIN ON PARADE: Communications minister Krishna Bahadur Mahara, FNJ president Dharmendra Jha and journalists brave the rain to mark the 18th International Press Freedom Day at City Hall on Sunday.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

ON THE MOVE: Astonished Maoist cadres capture the PM's resignation speech on mobile phones at Khula Manch on Monday.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

WRITE ON: Janakpur journalist Sital Shah receives an award from UML central committee member Raghuji Panta in the name of deceased writer Birendra Shah, organised by the Press Chautari Nepal on Sunday.

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Caught red handed

After three years during which he contradicted himself and said diametrically opposite things to different people, PKD finally got caught "red" handed. Everyone thinks Tremendousness hoodwinked UNMIN and lied to everyone in government, but come to think of it, what if he was actually lying to his own PLA to stop them from mutinying? Anyway, what's certain is that Terrifico ain't gonna go around shooting his mouth off anymore even within his family confines.

ॐॐॐ

No sooner had the Maobuddies turned into a non-government organisation with PKD's resignation this week, the country returned to normal. The Tharu bund that had paralysed the country for two weeks was called off, Limbuwans lifted the school closure in the east and **sundry militants** decided to lie low. With no one to fight with, the people were finally left alone. It looks like this country runs better without a government than with it.

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The news about BRB **barfing** into an air-sickness bag of his Ecuriel Somewhere Over the Western

Sector on Tuesday wasn't the real story. But what on earth was the Finance Minister doing sightseeing over Rara the day after his prime minister resigned? The really intriguing question was what was he doing over there when he should have been over here at the Maoist secretariat meeting to decide on the future course of action? Is Laldhoj being **ostracised** again, or is the man sulking and showing his boss displeasure for having inducted Kaji Narayan over his head. After being soft-spoken for six months, BRB has sent **tongues wagging** even within his own party by his increasingly belligerent tone. Some say he is trying to use the army row to correct the perception within his party of being a tad too south-leaning.

ॐॐॐ

The two who cut really sorry figures this week were Bum Dev and Cool Budder. Leftist God stuck it out till the end in the UML meeting, and when everyone decided to quit the govt he decided to write a note of dissent. But JN refused to even minute it, so he gave it to the press which, except for the Baddie media, everyone ignored. How does someone who lost the election get to be not just a

powerful home minister but also the senior most UML in the coalition? Meanwhile Cool Budder is **cooling his heels** at Bhadrakali, hardly venturing out of his office, and not daring to speak on his phone for fear of bugs.

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One casualty of the Maoists stepping down was that First Son Prakash had to wave goodbye to his budding cinematography career. Inducted into Dahaltar first as the head of PKD's security detail, then as computer assistant during the trip with Daddy to the US last year, Dahal Jr reportedly was thwarted in his attempts to record the family outing in Norway because his camera was too cheap. So the PMO had just bought him a Rs 250,000 video camera to film the China visit but, alas, not only was the China visit cancelled, Dad had to go and give his stupid resignation. **Drat and double drat.**

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So, nine months later, the whole numbers game is starting all over again for that magic 302. Rumour has it that **Upadro the Junketeering Farang Minister** now has ambitions of being prime minister. Those who thought even

the foreign ministry was way beyond his capacity are aghast. The man has been in Kathmandu for exactly one week in the past two months. The Maoists would even make him PM to ridicule the dignity of the position and get back at Ram Baran Guru whom Upadro can't stand.

ॐॐॐ

Wasn't there something politically incorrect about YCL protesters putting a Ram Baran impersonator on a wheelchair

and parading him around town? Was that an insult to the office of president or to all handicapped people in the country? Our **uncivil society** stalwarts don't realise just how silly they look with their defiance of prohibitory orders at Shital Nibas. Guess that comes from being a pro-government civil society.

ॐॐॐ

Only one entry for Absurdity of the Week from Kalu Pande in Baneswor: UML statement: 'We left the government because the government couldn't perform.'

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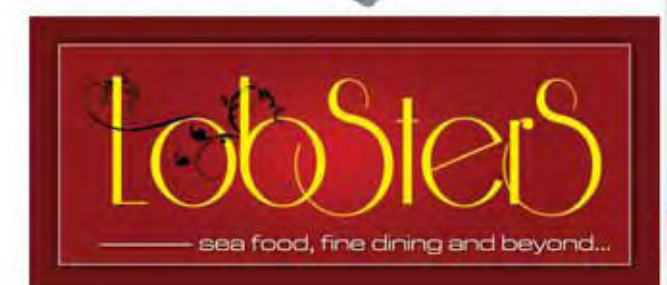


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we request you to drop in and sketch your valuable input for us.
After all, we are trying to change the definition of a landlocked country
and it won't be possible without YOU.



Sherpa Mall, Durbar Marg, Kathmandu, Phone - 01-4231323, 4231437