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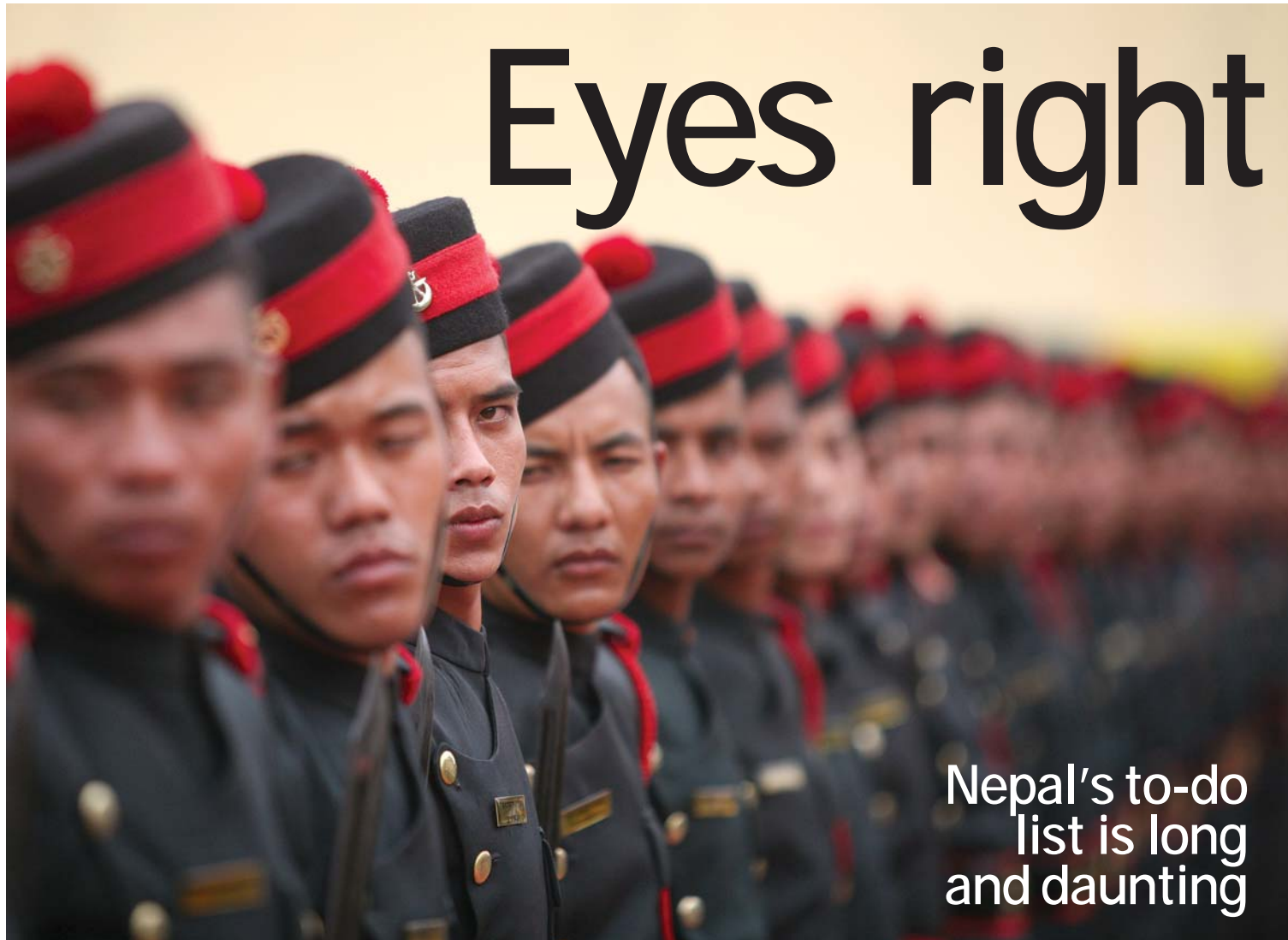
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# Eyes right

Nepal's to-do list is long and daunting

KIRAN PANDAY

## ANALYSIS by DEWAN RAI

Madhav Kumar Nepal may have been chosen prime minister in the house last week, but he is on morally shaky ground because he was not elected. This puts him at an immediate disadvantage to deal with the urgent tasks of constitution-writing, peace-building and development delivery.

What is going for him is that no one really sees Nepal as a threat, and this can be an advantage. Nepal also has rapport with all political forces and can be a bridge-builder. But is he an action man? He doesn't have much time to prove himself and

get to work on his long to-do list.

In his inaugural address to the nation, Nepal laid out his priorities: peace process, constitution and development. But his speech also exposed him as a status quoist because of his pronouncements on the army, exposing him to attacks by the Maoists who already see him as a spoiler.

And that is just the external threat. Internally, he will have to expend a lot of energy just to keep his flock of 22 parties flying in the same direction. They are already divided within and amongst themselves, not over lofty idealism but over the portfolios to be used to replenish their war chests.

There will certainly be discontents (and there already are) which will be easy pickings for the Maoists eager to bring down the Nepal coalition at a

time of their choosing. Blaming MKN over his open support for the army chief could provide the perfect ruse.

Although the Maoists have expressed commitment to the peace process, their history shows that they don't often mean by what they say. Nepal went through the motions of inviting them to join the government, but he knows they know it is not likely.

The most immediate hurdle in the peace process is to get the PLA integration wrapped up before UNMIN's departure in July. But integration has now become even more controversial over Pushpa Kamal Dahal's unguarded comments about inflated numbers in the Shaktikhor tape.

Aside from the development deadend, the nation is facing a crippling grain crisis because of drought and supply mismanagement. Hoarding and cartelling have sent inflation

soaring.

The only bright spot in all this is that the constitution drafting committees are hard at work, drafting clauses of the new constitution. The CA secretariat is confident the draft will be finished on schedule. However for that to happen, the ethnic and regional parties must suspend

**EDITORIAL**  
**Action now** p2

**PLAIN SPEAKING** Prashant Jha  
**MKN's checklist** p2

**STATE OF THE STATE** CK Lal  
**Towards a praetorian republic** p3

their grandstanding on federalism. But they have worked themselves into such a frenzy, that the agitation is bound to spill out into the streets in the coming months. Unless Nepal can take the bull by the horns. ●

Enjoy the moment  
a swing at a time

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# Towards a praetorian republic

Nepal maybe the only place where Huntington will be proven right

On the bestsellers list of a book fair in Kathmandu last week was a reissued edition of *Political Order in Changing Societies (POCS)*, a seventies classic that attempts to explain political complexities of transitional societies.



**STATE OF THE STATE**  
**C K Lal**

Late in his life, political scientist Samuel P Huntington gained notoriety for two of his most controversial works: *Clash of Civilizations* (1996) and *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (2004). In the post-9/11 world, the Clash of Civilizations was cited as being prophetic. Actually it was a prescriptive work for a new world order in the post-Cold War era with the United States as the only global power. In somewhat similar vein, the book on America's national identity is an apologia for America's increasingly illiberal immigration policies.

Huntington's lasting contributions to political discourse are contained in two of his earlier works-*The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (1957) and *POCS*, first published in 1968. Of the two, the later volume is particularly relevant to appreciate the contradictions of Nepali politics and understand its dark forebodings.

Wedge between an assertive

military and duplicitous militants, mainstream politicians have little room to manoeuvre to establish peace and democracy in the country.

Huntington was a 'conformist-reformer' policy analyst. Though a lifelong democrat, his prescriptions were invariably on the side of caution when not outright conservative. The Harvard academic preferred order to liberty because, 'Men may, of course, have order without liberty, but they cannot have liberty without order.'

This is the theme that his student Fareed Zakaria later updated in a tract called *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad*. As Francis Fukuyama notes in a very succinct foreword of the new edition of *POCS*, Huntington laid the groundwork for a development strategy that came to be called 'authoritarian transition' in which a modernising dictatorship provides, 'political order, rule of law, and conditions for successful economic and social development. Once these building blocks were in place, other aspects of modernity, like democracy and civic participation could be added.'

From Burma to Pakistan, the Huntington Hypothesis has failed to stand, but it seems to fascinate a section of the Kathmandu ruling class. Huntington thinks that a proclivity for authoritarian transition is the defining characteristic of praetorian societies. Praetorianism is a form



KIRAN PANDAY

of militarism in which the armed forces act as a corporate body to maintain control over government, actively intervening in politics to select or change the government. When social forces confront each other directly and institutional arrangements of conflict resolution are absent, security forces acquire legitimacy by default to step into the arena of civic governance. Nepal seems

to be headed in the direction of Huntingtonian praetorianism.

A non-elected member of the CA who entered the legislature by the backdoor has been installed as prime minister. His stature within his own party is not prominent: Comrade Nepal is neither party chairperson nor the parliamentary party leader of UML. The legality of the prime

minister's position is unassailable, but he lacks the moral authority to have his way in the 22-party coalition of almost all anti-Maoist forces.

For CoAS Rookmangud Katawal, President Ram Baran Yadav is the boss. When Comrade Nepal disagrees with that assessment, the premier would be free to follow in the footsteps of his illustrious predecessor and bow out with grace.

The collapse of governance seems to cry out for adventurous interventions. Fear-induced paralysis of the Pahadi community in central and eastern Tarai, the political and economic heartland of Nepal, has become so alarming that any weak government will be tempted to mobilise the security forces to fight armed bandits. The problem with such a solution lies with the composition of Nepal's army and police: they aren't inclusive enough to reassure Madhesi of their true intentions. The Maoists may tacitly support military activism to undermine the credibility of state forces, but they too would ultimately be its victims when the country becomes too chaotic and outsiders invite themselves to restore order.

The antidote to praetorian experiments is the revival of consensus politics, but the two communist parties seem to be poles apart. Communists are said to be avid readers. They should grab a copy of *POCS* and read it before going for any confrontational politics. ●

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editors@nepalitimes.com  
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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



# MKN's checklist

## Nepal's first priority must be the peace process

### ACTION NOW

The perpetrators of last week's fatal blast at the Assumption Church in Dhobighat were terrorist, pure and simple. No religion preaches violence. No interpretation of Hinduism can justify such brutal slaughter of innocent human beings.

Nepal's Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu and other religious leaders showed unprecedented solidarity by arriving together at the church in Jawalakhel within hours of the blast. Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal visited the church and the wounded at hospital even before taking his oath of office.

Nepal's 10 year class war is in danger of being transformed into ethno-religious violence. Not because the people want it, not because there are genuine grievances but because certain political power centres want to use religion as an excuse to foment anarchy and violence.

This virus needs to be eradicated at the incubation stage itself. The lack of governance and the absence of the state is often the root cause of communal, ethnic and religious violence. That is where the treatment should begin, not just adding two more baton-wielding cops at churches in Kathmandu.

Two years ago, our interim administrators bestowed upon themselves the right to declare Nepal secular and federal, even though such matters should have been left to the elected CA. In the name of fighting left extremism, rightist radicals find in religion a powerful tool. The Americans propped up the Taliban to fight the Soviets until it grew into a monster they couldn't control.

Nepal may be secular, but this is a country where even a communist prime minister consults his family priest before shifting to his official residence.

Such rituals are harmless, and will continue whether Nepal is secular or not. What is dangerous is to combine politics and religion into an explosive mix and light the fuse with terrorist attacks like the one last week.

All religious pogroms in history have been deliberately ignited by political groups. Inter-religious violence, even revenge massacres, are rarely spontaneous. Since it has to do more with politics rather than religion, that is where the hunt for the terrorists who detonated a bomb in a church last week should begin.

This isn't just a law and order issue. The bombing of a church is a heinous crime that requires the strong arm of the state to act: intelligence, infiltration with undercover agents, police investigation and public prosecution of the guilty.

This can't be treated as just another episode in the crime wave that is sweeping the country. This isn't just a murder of two innocent devotees, it is an act of terrorists wearing the cloak of religion.

The government needs to calm frayed nerves and the deep insecurity felt by Nepal's Christians. When the victim is from a minority community, it becomes the moral obligation of the majority community to show solidarity.

There is no other way of protecting social fabric from enemies within who want to tear this country apart.

Madhav Kumar Nepal's new government is going to operate under serious limits. He has many allies to please and many debts to repay, which will reduce his room for engineering a political consensus. There are serious doubts about the sustainability of this government, and whether it can deliver. Yet, here is a three-point checklist for the new government.



**PLAIN SPEAKING**  
**Prashant Jha**

Nepal's first priority must be the peace process. Those who want to derail it may attempt to do two things: block the payment of the monthly stipend to PLA in order to increase disillusionment within the Maoists, and prevent any discussion on integration. Integration has anyway become more difficult in recent weeks. The army is opposing it more vocally, the non Maoist parties have become more suspicious after the video, and Maoists (sensing attack from all sides) feel the need to keep the PLA as a back up force.

The new PM must resist any efforts to provoke the PLA. Making life difficult for the Maoist leadership may look like a tempting proposition, but it will

boomerang and create complications. Nepal also needs to have active channels of communication with the Maoist leadership. GP Koirala's proposal of a high-level political mechanism is a positive one in this respect, as it provides the top rung a common platform to talk things out when necessary.

Madhav Nepal is the only senior leader to have publicly admitted that they made a mistake in not pushing integration before the elections. He should reconstitute the special and technical committee if necessary, but give it the political backing to continue the preliminary homework on the future of combatants. It is unrealistic to expect a final settlement on the PLA in such a political climate, but keeping the ball rolling would be good enough.

The new government's second objective must be to address the political-security situation caused by multiple ethnic movements across the country. Between 2005 and 2008, there have been 1,600 killings in Tarai and more than 3,000 abductions. The disillusionment with existing Madhesi forces may once again create a political vacuum and leave the ground fertile for ethnic radicalism in eastern Tarai. The non-UML Tharu

faction led by Laxman Tharu is itching to get back to street agitation. And the eastern hills continue to be volatile. With the Maoists out with the aim of rendering the government ineffective, the security situation will become even more troubling.

If Nepal can just implement commitments made in agreements with

these groups, and stop playing the divide and rule games between them, it will be an enormous leap. This has to go along with a systematic rebuilding of the state apparatus. Some simple steps can help improve the security situation: increase in police posts outside district headquarters, a firm direction to the CDOs and SPs that anyone complicit with armed groups will face a punishment posting, strict vigilance from the centre, providing the administration the confidence that if they resist political pressure, they will not lose out, and a constant engagement between local authorities and civil society.

Nepal's third priority must be economy and governance. Every day that is wasted in this regard has implications for education, health and employment.

Baburam Bhattarai has left the government with a vast sum of money and a finance ministry in good shape. Nepal, not known for his economic acumen, needs to appoint the right people for the right jobs and allow them to build up on that. The other imperative is to constitute local bodies and have effective line ministries which can push projects. He needs to continue with the welfare programs like the employment scheme besides managing the inflation.

As head of the constitutional council, it is Nepal's double responsibility to expedite constitution-writing process. From ensuring access to water to dealing with the food crisis in the hills, engaging with ultra sensitive neighbours to an international community which has a prescription for every problem, his plate will be full.

Madhav Nepal's government is not in a position to radically change things for the better. Not letting it slide for the worse would be a major achievement. ●



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

## LETTERS

### ACT OF TERRORISM

I was shocked to read on your site (www.nepalitimes.com) that a church in Kathmandu had been bombed killing two people and injuring a dozen devotees. Contrary to the news article, though, this was not 'an unfortunate incident', it was a dangerous act of terrorism designed to provoke religious violence. Which religion sanctions attacking a sacred refuge and killing innocent people? Besides, doesn't Nepal have enough troubles already, without stirring up a new one? Somehow it would be hard to persuade anybody that the few Christians in Nepal are a source of any serious concern. It is like shooting sparrows where wolves are hunting. Nepal doesn't need more victims, you have plenty from the Maoists.

**L Svrčina, email**

### SOVEREIGNTY

Mina Pun is a brave politician to go

against the political correctness of the times ('Division of sovereignty', #452) to question the premise of federalism itself and also the lack of due process with which it was hurriedly announced. If we were going to have an elected CA, what was the rationale for unilaterally declaring Nepal a federal republic without even discussing it? Federalism is bad enough, if it is demarcated along ethnic lines, then lord help us. Thank you Ms Pun for that breath of fresh air and your bold, independent thinking. We need more people like you.

**Janbu Sherpa, Kathmandu**

### KOSI

Thank you for your exposé of the callousness of the past

government in ignoring the plight of the Kosi refugees (Special Report, #452). Not only did the government fail to address the needs of the displaced, it is failing to protect the babies in the camps and the children being kidnapped by Indian traffickers. I personally don't expect the new coalition to do much since it is made up of the same MJF party, which had three ministers from the flood

affected region in the previous Maoist-led coalition.

**Sunil Das, Biratnagar**



### A TIME TO HEAL

I never agreed with CK Lal, but have to admit that in the past weeks he has started making sense with his State of the State columns. Whatever caused the change, I don't know, but it was about time. His ('A time to heal', #452) is balanced and is a fervent plea to the parties to shelve their differences until after they restore political stability. This is where Prime Minister Nepal's negotiation skills come handy.

**LK, Kathmandu**

### USE ME

Where did you get that picture of Madhav Kumar Nepal on a mat saying 'Use Me' (#451). Congratulations to Min Bajracharya. That's worth a crore of words, brilliant, ab fab and amazing.

**David Langden, email**



# heat



PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

sales of aerated beverages and ice creams. Coke, which holds half the market share introduced a scheme of prize money worth Rs 100,000 in spring. Its competition, Pepsi recently sponsored a rafting trip for 200 winners in a scheme for Mountain Dew. The group also markets Mirinda, 7Up and Everest soda. The newly introduced Slice in a pet bottle has also attracted customers.

The demand graph for dairy products, especially ice cream has also seen a rise along with the rise in temperature. The trend of having ice cream as a dessert item at parties has caught on, sending

the demand for milk soaring 20 per cent annually. Although power cuts have affected ice cream sales in the districts, Shiyaram Prasad Singh of DDC says: "Because a majority of our products go to big department stores, the load shedding has not really affected the sales."

Arniko Rajbhandari of ND's says ice cream has really caught on, and predicts an exponential growth if power was regular. The distributor of Baskin Robbins, Rabi Rajkarnikar, says international brands have started making their mark as the purchasing power of the urban middle class rises. ●

Samsung refrigerators now comes with the world's best insulation technology, this enables the refrigerators to preserve the temperature even during long power cuts. Samsung Fresh-tech Ultima refrigerator's entire new line up equipped with state of the art technology, elegantly designed, is surely the coolest addition.

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DAMBAR K SHRESTHA

As the temperature hits the higher degrees, the demand for cold drinks, ice cream as well as home appliances like fridge and air

conditioners have shot up. And everyone is cashing it. If only the deep fridges would work during the load shedding.

As soon as a Nepali household hooks up electricity, they install lights, a television and a

refrigerator: in that order. In fact ref sales have zoomed and have outstripped other electrical appliances despite power cuts.

"The demand for fridges has zoomed even in places like Lukla, Namche and Jomsom as rural

# Beat the

## How to keep cool despite the power cuts



electrification spreads,' says Prabhakar Thapa of Him Electronics. "Changing lifestyle and growing affluence has influenced the need for fridges at home."

Four years the total annual

sales of refs in Nepal was only 25,000. That figures has now doubled, and would probably have been more if there were no power cuts. Kathmandu constitutes 30 per cent of the market, the rest 70 per cent are sold outside the Valley and sales nationwide have been growing at 20 per cent a year to total Rs 800 million last year.

There are 24 ref brands in the market from LG, Samsung, Whirlpool, Hitachi, Haier to Yasuda, Sanyo, Toshiba with capacities in the 80 to 1,500 litres range.

LG offers refrigerators that don't need stabilisers and have energy-saving technology. Ashok Khanna, senior general manager of Goldstar Nepal says LG has one-third share of the sales. The distributors of LG, Chaudhary Group has also introduced CG refrigerators.

Neck-to-neck in terms of sales is Samsung with 40 per cent of market share, according to Binaya Tripathi, marketing manager of Samsung's distributor Him Electronics. "Affordable price, high quality, easy maintenance and good service has made Samsung popular," he says.

Anan Agrawal, director of Ishita Trading which distributes Haier and Godrej refrigerators, says that the competition between the brands is now fierce. Haier and Godrej refs are priced in the Rs 9,000 to Rs 40,000 range.

Anil Goyanka, general manager of Tribeni Nepal says that customers should not look only at the price but also at the quality. Tribeni Nepal distributes Sanyo and Yasuda. The classic Whirlpool brand is sold by Nabin Distributors and prices range from Rs 14,000 to Rs 65,000.

Despite the electricity shortage, the market of air conditioners has also seen a surge as middle class homes upgrade from fans and use aircons also for heating. Samsung, AX, Panasonic, Yasuda, Gree, Macquae, Hilltake, York are among 12 brands that are available in the market with prices ranging from Rs 25,000 to anywhere up to Rs 200,000. Goyanka of Tribeni says that the market has grown for AC in the last five years.

Summer also means rising

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No to added colour  
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# “Armed struggle is not a hobby”

Excerpts of interview with Comrade Sushil from the Communist Party of Bhutan (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist) in Lal Salam Blog

**Lal Salam Blog: What is the history of the Party?**  
**Comrade Sushil:** The CPB(MLM) was established on the 7 November 2001, and the party has been working with the exploited people in Bhutan, mostly we work with the people in the villages.

**So what are the problems in Bhutan?**  
The biggest problem is the feudal monarchy. People's standard of living has been kept backwards because of the monarchy. This is why our glorious party is working to overthrow the feudal regime, and establish a peaceful society that can achieve socialism and communism.

**Last year your party started a People's War in Bhutan...**  
No, we have not initiated a protracted people's war in Bhutan. Last year we did initiate some armed struggles, which is only a factor of the rural class struggle. Much of the media proclaimed this as the beginning of the Peoples War, but we are not at that phase. We are preparing for it.

**So there will be more attacks, more bombs and more armed actions in the future?**  
Certainly. We are preparing for this. Without the armed struggle, we can't change the situation in our country. We cannot change state power.

**So have you learnt much from the experiences of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)? Are there close or special links between your parties?**  
We do not have special or direct links with this party. Like communists all around the world, in Peru, India or the Philippines we have ideological links. We have a relationship with the CP Nepal (Maoist), but also with the CP India (Maoist), who are also waging an armed struggle. We don't receive any physical support, but we are all communists, and we are all internationalists.



We receive and give moral support.

**The Maoists in Nepal have given up their People's War and taken a new tactic in pursuing the Constituent Assembly elections. Is this a correct tactic in your party's opinion?**  
We do not think that they have given up their goals. We think they are pursuing another way, another tactic to establish a people's state. We don't think they have established the proletarian dictatorship. So we, our party, does not think that they have achieved state power. We too will go for a Constituent Assembly at first, and only after that can we step or jump or leap forward to a New Democratic revolution. We think that the Maoists of Nepal face similar situations to us, and have similar actions, so we will continue to watch closely.

**Last year the government of Bhutan held elections, in a very restricted and controlled way, but the western media still presented this as 'democracy'.**

The international community has its formula and they see votes and call it democracy, but there is no such thing in Bhutan and it is not possible to impose a real democracy from the outside into Bhutan. Any 'democracy' that the regime brings into practice itself will be done in such a way so that real power continues to be restricted and kept in the hands of the old order, and not in the hands of the mass of exploited people. When I say this it does not mean that we are militarists. The people want peace, and don't want to live in terror but this regime suppresses and exploits the people. It is not a hobby to carry out armed struggle, it is our only option for the liberation of our people.

**If you care to reach people's war, do you think India would interfere to defend its interests?**  
On this the whole party is very much conscious. But in the present situation, India is not so dangerous to Bhutan. China is quite dangerous: 11,500 sq km of Bhutan's lands have been occupied and taken by China. So we are surrounded by two very large and powerful countries who are always looking to interfere into Bhutan. There are Indian Army camps established in Bhutan. Maybe at some point in the future there will be political intervention, and we can try to counter this with our allies by rousing grassroots support for our cause in India. If they try to intervene militarily it will be a heavy cost for them, a bloody and long civil war. We also want to establish the sovereignty of Bhutan, so we will always fight foreign influence, from India as well as China.

**Is it true your party favors repatriation of refugees to Bhutan rather than resettlement in third countries?**  
We are not for resettlement, and we are not for repatriation. Moving people around like they are animals is not a solution. Some people have said our party was created to agitate for the repatriation of refugees, this is not the case. Our party was not established for refugees, but for all Bhutanese.

[www.maobadiwatch.blogspot.com](http://www.maobadiwatch.blogspot.com)

# “We will not stay in this new mechanism”

Interview with Maoist leader Narayan Kaji Shrestha (Prakash) In *Janadisha*, 25 May

जिनादिसा

**A new government was formed without your party's demands being discussed. How will you get your demands met now?**

We resigned from the government for civilian supremacy so that the president's unconstitutional action would be corrected. We didn't resign just because of the struggle within the parliament. We didn't form the government by just getting 301 or 350 votes. We formed the government by getting 385 votes. We thought pressuring the government both in the parliament and the streets was necessary. And, until this unconstitutional move has been corrected we will continue our protests on the streets. The current government was formed because of our flexibility in resigning. For the sake of the peace process and constitution writing we have continued to compromise and be flexible.

**How will your relationship be with the prime minister who won unopposed and with his government?**



KIRAN PANDEY

Though it has been stated that he won unopposed, the fact that the largest party within the government boycotted the election is known to everyone. We will not support this government. Imperialists, defeatists and status quoists formed this government and is against the values of national independence.

**Do you think Madhav Nepal will continue to be intolerant towards PLA?**

This was a government that was formed under the direction of foreign forces. These imperialist expansionists do not want army integration and will try to tarnish the PLA's reputation.

**What effort will the Maoists make in writing the new constitution?**  
Since the 1950s military supremacy has been established in the name of civilian supremacy. The Nepali people are still not able to make decisions for themselves. We will continue to struggle for civilian supremacy and now we have the opportunity to make concrete proposals that benefit the Nepali people.

# Act of cowardice

Editorial in *Nagarik*, 25 May

नागरिक

In the bomb blast that shook the Assumption Catholic Church at Bhanimandal, Lalitpur on Saturday, two people died, including a ninth grader from St Mary's School. Among the 14 injured in the blast, six are in a critical state. Underground radical Hindu group Nepal Defence Army, claimed responsibility for this condemnable act.  
Given that the blast took place during the Saturday service when a large number of worshippers had gathered in the church, the aim was clearly to terrorise people. Nepal Defence Army is the same group that was responsible for the bomb blast at Choti Jamai Mosque in Biratnagar two years ago which killed three people. These criminal acts should be condemned by all and every attempt should be made to punish them by law.  
The pamphlets found on the premises demanded that Nepal—now secular—be restored to a Hindu state. The act may have been committed in the name of religion but in fact, it is nothing but an inhuman cowardly crime. We have to maintain the religious tolerance that has always been a part of Nepali unity. The police and the church should be very sensitive to this issue.

The politics of today is so rooted in violence that even the criminals have started using the mask of politics or religion as an excuse for the monstrous acts they commit. Whatever the motive, the victims are innocent civilians and such an act cannot be forgiven. Nepalis are free to practice the religion they choose. Religion should not be a reason for conflict.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA



# One year to go

DEWAN RAI

On Wednesday, the CA convened for the 18<sup>th</sup> time in a year and began the constitution drafting process, just five days behind schedule

because of the political impasse and election of the prime minister. But only one committee, the National Interest Preservation Committee (NIPC) submitted its draft concept in time for the 22 May deadline.

Although the committee said the draft was passed unanimously, differences have surfaced in the NIPC's report regarding state structure, the system of government, national defence policy, national interest and border issues. "Our first job should be to delineate fundamental issues raised in the committee," says Pari Thapa, a member of the Constitutional Committee. "And if we agree on these issues, the constitution writing process will be completed within the stipulated time."

The NIPC concept paper has proposed a provision of conscription for all adults and compulsory identity cards or passports for Indian and Chinese citizens entering Nepal. NC has disagreed about this concept stating it mentions preparing Maoist PLA soldiers who are over 18 for army integration.

## Political impasse shouldn't interfere with the constitution drafting process



KIRAN PANDAY

In spite of the individual committees' delays the day of 28 May 2010 is still scheduled for promulgation of the new constitution.

Spokesperson at the CA secretariat Mukunda Sharma is still hopeful it can be written within the stipulated timeframe. He says the committees' delay in submitting their reports will not affect the CA schedule. "We have

allotted five days for discussing each draft concept submitted by the committees," Sharma says adding, "Even if all committees had submitted their reports on time, they would have had to wait their turn."

The Committee for Protection of Fundamental Rights of the Minority and Marginalised Groups has also finalised its concept, which will be submitted

to the CA chair on Thursday. However, other committees are still embroiled in discussion.

Sharma thinks the growing differences among political parties took its toll on the work of the CA committees. The CA sessions were disrupted by political protests, rostrum gheraos and festival breaks. The CA committees also failed to meet because of political deadlock.

"Despite all things, the committees carried out their duty of drawing up their concept draft. It takes time," he says, "But it will not affect the scheduled date for finalising and endorsing the new constitution."

The first five months passed by with preparing and approving the CA procedure, which delayed its first sitting. A disagreement over whether members should vote according to their conscience or follow the party whip had delayed approval of the procedure, which was eventually approved after dropping the controversial clause altogether.

The thematic committees were supposed to each come up with a draft of clauses by mid-April, but the submission date was delayed by a month. The received drafts should be debated and presented to the CA by 15 August. Thereafter, public hearings will be held on the draft up to 15 December. "Considering the present work pace of the committee, we are hopeful we will be able to prepare the preliminary draft of the constitution and take it to the public on time," Thapa told *Nepali Times*.

The public's suggestions will be incorporated and debated at a Constitutional Committee meeting before the draft is finalised and debated in the full CA session—before the new constitution is promulgated on 28 May. ●

# "Federalism doesn't suddenly bring development"

## Interview with Shankar Sharma, former Secretary of National Planning Commission

**From an economic point of view, how feasible is it to turn Nepal into a federal state?**

The economic activities and resources in Nepal are limited to certain districts only. Eighty-five per cent of tax revenue is collected from customs offices in Parsa, Jhapa, Morang, Sindhupalchok, Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Rupendehi. Although maximum revenue is collected in the Tarai, most goods are consumed in the Kathmandu. Thus, the maximum contribution to the taxes is made by residents of the Valley. Federalism will be challenging as tax collection and economic activities are clustered in certain parts of the country.

**How far will federalism live up to the expectations of the people with regards to economic growth, employment and development?**

In a federal country, the state government is responsible for the daily administration, education, health and development of the state, while the central government takes care of issues that the state government cannot address. Federalism encourages people to be more involved in the development of their states and they reap the benefits directly. But when we talk about the development of the whole country, we also have to think about the distribution of foreign grants and taxes. This depends on

the central government.

The constitution gives the states the right to formulate their economic development plans and policies. But there might be difficulties regarding resources and capabilities—skilled manpower, infrastructure, institutions are severely lacking in some regions. Development will take time, federalism will not suddenly bring about these changes.

**What are the economic challenges as we enter a federal system?**

The first challenge is distribution revenues raised from VAT, income tax, excise duty and other types of taxes among the states. The second challenge concerns the handover of resources. One concern is regarding how efficient the states will be in collecting taxes on land, assets, entertainment etc, which until now has been incompetently handled by lower administrative bodies.

This work is difficult politically as well as administratively. The economic and financial discipline poses the third challenge. In order to be able to utilise their natural resources efficiently, then the states need to be able to manage the corresponding budget and not allow it to line politicians' pockets.

We do not have legal provisions regarding distribution of natural resources, and it is also going to be a challenge as it includes the issue of ownership, conservation and allotment of their benefits.

**How should the states be established in consideration of the economical factors?**

The basis for establishing the states should be complimentary. Our major economic sectors are agriculture, hydropower, tourism and industry to some extent. The Tarai is based on agriculture and industry, the hills have lucrative opportunities in hydropower and the mountain regions are important for tourism.

While establishing states, these four economic sectors have to be taken into consideration. We need to understand two issues here, one is the transportation of goods and the other is the ease with which one can travel. Right now, Biratnagar, Kathmandu and Bhairahawa are the economically thriving districts, which cater for their adjoining regions. Therefore, in terms of economic activities, the country should have three major states.

**As we establish the states, some might be affluent while others might be backward. In such a case how will we be able to achieve economic equality among them?**

To ensure economic equality, two provisions can be made in the constitution. One is to fulfill the basic needs of all the states. The second is to distribute resources according to the recommendations of the fiscal commission, which considers issues like poverty, infrastructure and regional balance. This will pave way for granting a higher budget to weak states.



KAMSINGH CHEPANG





“Before I came to Kathmandu, I was very fat. When I lived in the village, I had to do a lot of work, so I ate a lot. Because I ate a lot, my body became bigger. I was probably 60 or 65kg then.”



“In Kathmandu more than trying to lose weight, I didn’t eat on time. When I was studying I was alone, I didn’t feel like eating. I only ate Rara noodles.”



“Before, when I was very fat, I did want to become thin, but I never wanted to become too thin. There was a lot of fat on my stomach, and I would have liked to have lost that weight.”

# “Malai chitta



# I’m no

PICTURES AND TEXT BY LIZ LANCE

Mishal Moktan is originally from eastern Nepal and moved to Kathmandu about five years ago. In that time, she has been unable to find a steady job. Many young women compromise their dignity or sell their bodies in some way to earn money in Kathmandu, Mishal says, which is something she is unwilling to do.

“I got ulcers in my stomach. I would only eat rice once in two or three days. I had to study a lot, too, and even though I didn’t eat, I wouldn’t be hungry. And after not eating well, I became unbalanced.”



“Now, I think a healthy, fuller body is better. Before, when I was fat, I never got fevers or got sick. The cold wouldn’t get to me. Now I am trying to gain weight! Really!”





# a bujhdaina.



## ot satisfied.”

Mishal completed a diploma course in fashion design and now studies at a college in Baneshwor. She is supported in part by an American family friend. She recently travelled abroad for the first time to work as a costume designer and coordinator for a series of music programs in Singapore and Malaysia. She is hoping she will be able to continue doing this kind of work.

She has lived alone for many years in a rented room, though her father has recently joined her for an extended stay. ●



“Right now I am 40 or 41kg. I’ve put on about 1kg recently, within the past month.



“There is a big difference between the old me and the new me. I never used to talk and I was always afraid. But now when I run into someone on the street, I speak with them, and I have a lot more confidence.”



“In my experience, no matter how many people I meet, they all want to become slim, because it’s fashionable. They want to copy other people. All of the heroines are thin and slender. In Kathmandu, 50 or 60 per cent of girls, and women, too, want to become slim.”



“I’m not satisfied with my body or my face. When I look in the mirror, I don’t like the external shape or the structure of my face. I think I look skinny, like a tall, thin bamboo shoot. I think that it was better when I was a little fat. Actually, I don’t look in the mirror much. If I look in the mirror too much, I get mad.”



“After I moved to Kathmandu, I began to realise how people perceive you. If you sit silently, people have certain ideas about you. I learned how to speak with different kinds of people. I became more comfortable with myself than before. I have a lot more confidence than I had before.”



# Taking a path less



PICS: KUNDA DIXIT

KUNDA DIXIT in THIMPHU

**T**hey have kept their pristine country out of bounds for mass tourism, ensured good governance, done huge hydro deals with India to raise living standards, nurtured cultural and national symbols.

Bhutan expects to double its GDP in five years. And it doesn't even believe in GDP, but in Gross National Happiness (GNH), the national policy that combines cultural and environmental preservation with a welfare state and guided democracy.

"We don't want to make Nepal's mistakes" is a phrase you hear often in Bhutan. It's not helpful to compare because Nepal is 40 times bigger than Bhutan's 700,000 population. Yet, officials here keep reminding you, this country doesn't want to lose its monarchy and have a feckless democracy.

When former king Jigme Singye Wangchuk proposed GNH as a national doctrine in the 1990s, many made fun of the idea. Then, in 2006, he announced dramatic democratic reforms and stepped down to make his 26-year-old son Jigme Khesar the king.

Jigme Singye wanted to give

# The resistants

SITA MANDEBA in DHARAN

**G**ajendra Ispo of Dharan was employed as a soldier in the United Kingdom for 17 years. When he came back after receiving his pension in 1993, Dharan was still relatively empty. But within the last couple of years the town had become a thriving middle class residential area for ex-Gurkhas who set up their homes in the city. Visitors to Dharan were stunned by the smart houses and beautiful gardens.

Recently the houses have gradually been emptying, the gardens neglected as more than half the 10,000 ex-Gurkha families in Dharan migrate and settle in the UK.

But Ispo says he is not for settling in the UK, "I want to live a life of dignity in my own country. In the UK, I will be degraded to a second grade citizen. Why go to a foreign country to slave for others? My principles don't allow that."

Since the Gurkha Army Ex-

Servicemen's Organisation (GAESO) was set up, Ipso has been actively involved in the fight for equal treatment of the Gurkha soldiers. He has been trying to help the families of the remaining ex-Gurkhas in Dharan. But as most Gurkhas have left to settle in the UK, he says he has not been able to help as much as he would have liked to.

Supporting Ipso is Ram Narayan Kandagwa, who has also decided to stay back. After his pension arrived, he completed his PhD on Nepali British relations with special focus on Gurkhas. Kandagwa explains, "I am against going to the UK because I believe that we have to make a contribution to Nepali society. British society, culture, religion and lifestyle are different. Language is a problem as well. In addition, our life will be of a lower standard. My life here is good, why should I leave? There is no point." Along with Ipso and Kandagwa other Dharan residents who have opted to stay include Ramesh Rai, Nara Bahadur Thapa and Bhaktesar Rai.



PICS: SITA MANDEBA



# trodden

## "We don't want to make Nepal's mistakes" is a phrase you hear often in Bhutan



**ROYAL TRIBUTE:** Prime Minister Jigmi Thinley greet visitors in Thimphu last week. A billboard with portraits of past and present kings at Paro airport (left).

his people democracy before they demanded it, and help preserve the 100-year-old dynasty by turning kings into constitutional monarchs with mandatory retirement at age 65. Officials say it was all done to ensure a calibrated democratic transition that would not destabilise

the society. The king's move appears to be driven by a deep-seated sense of national vulnerability, and a fierce determination to preserve the Drukpa culture and counter an over-dependence on India. While Nepali politicians make public denouncements of

"Indian expansionism" and try to play China off against India, Bhutan uses deft diplomacy to keep New Delhi happy and at arm's length. Before he handed over the throne to his son, King Jigme Singye renegotiated the 1949 treaty of friendship with India and quietly removed clauses about Bhutan's defence and foreign policy being guided by India. He had been working on this for years, cultivating a personal friendship first with Rajiv Gandhi and then his widow Sonia. The king himself led his army to flush out Assamese ULFA militants from camps in eastern Bhutan, thus ingratiating himself further to New Delhi. While Nepal just talks about it, Bhutan is set to export an additional 11,000 megawatts of hydropower to India by 2020. The idea seems to be to make energy-hungry India economically dependent on Bhutan, and not the other way around. Bhutanis were ecstatic with the Congress win in this month's Indian elections. Gushed the Thimpu daily, *Kuensei*: 'For Bhutan, the election results couldn't have been better. Though no government official will say so, it is an open secret that the Bhutan government has always been more at ease with a Congress government, whose leaders right

from Jawaharlal Nehru to Sonia Gandhi today, are close friends of Bhutan.' Not all Bhutanis are comfortable with the democracy their monarch has bequeathed to them. People see democratic decay in the neighbourhood and are afraid Bhutan may also follow. Among politicians and the bureaucracy there are misgivings about an over-zealous parliamentary opposition and a newly-aggressive media. Prime Minister Jigmi Y Thinley served as prime minister under the absolute monarchy and is now the elected head of government under the constitutional monarchy. Thinley admits to being "nervous" about making the democracy perform. He says there are no plans to establish diplomatic relations with China, hinting that this will only happen when there is a green light from New Delhi. "Bhutan's choice of neighbours is determined by geography, we happen to be on the southern slopes of the Himalaya and we have relations with India of which we are happy," he said. In a refreshing departure from Nepali politicians, Thinley makes delivery a priority. During the campaign his party promised to build roads to all 205 local administrative units, provide

electricity and safe drinking water to every home, ensure every primary school is only one hour walk away and staff every district hospital with three doctors and two ambulances. "We made huge promises to the people at election time, and it will be a big challenge to meet them," Thinley admits. Bhutan's eviction of 100,000 Lhotsampas in 1991 was a deliberate policy to prevent what the Drukpa felt was Nepali speakers over-running the country. By pushing democracy now, Bhutan could also be legitimising the eviction of its people. Now that the refugees are being resettled in third countries, officials here appear confident that the problem will now "go away", despite the activities of Bhutani Maoists. Although refugee leaders say many Lhotsampas are still denied citizenship papers and were not allowed to vote in the last election, Nepali-speakers make up one-fifth of the MPs and cabinet posts in the new government. The fertile southern valleys where the Lhotsampa lived are about to be submerged in reservoirs to generate power for India. Bhutan may be a happy country, but it has come at a cost: the mass misery of one-sixth of its population that it evicted 20 years ago. ●

## The fight for equality opened doors for the Gurkhas to settle in the UK, but the towns back home are now deserted



**STAYING HOME:** (r-l) Gajendra Ispo, Nar Bahadur Thapa, Bhaktesar Rai, Ram Naryan Kandangwa are a handful of former Gurkha soldiers who have decided not to emigrate to the UK. Former Gurkha soldiers gather at a mass meeting earlier this year (left)

But there are very few who choose not to join the race. According to GAESO there are about 40,000 ex-Gurkhas, the majority of whom have chosen to migrate with their families, which totals 60,000 Nepali people. Towns like Dharan, Damak, Pokhara, Butwal, Itahari and Palpa, which used to have heavy settlements of

ex-Gurkhas, are now almost deserted. Many families sold their houses and property before leaving. Dharan became a thriving town, thanks to the money invested by former soldiers. The former Gurkhas established Depot Secondary School under the one-day salary program. Gurkha Savings Cooperative has

operations worth Rs 110 million. The Gurkha Community Building was well attended and land worth Rs 10 million was bought to construct Gurkha Department Store. British Gurkha Memorial Park, a Rs 150 million project, is being constructed to encourage tourism in Dharan. The present financial crunch aside, there is now a shortage of manpower to run these organisations. They seem destined to fold. The Ex-Gurkha Organisation, women's committee used to have 300 general members and was very active in social service activities in Dharan. Now they rarely have enough women to justify holding a meeting. Local businessmen say the mass emigration has had a detrimental impact on local businesses. Remittances have also gone down. But the situation has not discouraged the ex-Gurkha community. Despite the low manpower, they are determined to carve out an identity for themselves and perpetuate the

ongoing works. Those who have left also contributed to the projects. The Gurkhas united in 1995 to fight against the injustice of inequality. They had put forward a four-point demand of which three have been granted. The soldiers who fought in World War II received compensation of 10,000 pounds each in 2002. Gurkhas recruited after 1997, were granted a permanent residence visa in 2003. Then, another ruling in favour of the Gurkhas earlier this month granted permanent residency to soldiers who had been in service for more than four years. Permanent residency was not a part of the four-point demand. Their main demand, which is for Gurkha soldiers to receive a pension equal to that of their British counterparts, is yet to be fulfilled. The UK started recruiting Nepali soldiers after the 1816 Sugauli Treaty. There are now 35,000 Nepalis in the British army. Every year more than 200 Nepali youths are recruited. ●



# From the Middle Kingdom

Figuring out China is what contemporary statecraft in Asia should be about

The power-brokers in Beijing play a long, highly intelligent hand, driven by private consensus among a powerful few about the country's national interests. Discerning what those takes creative thinking, an ability to do serious homework and a modicum of luck—none of which Nepal has demonstrated in recent years.



**HERE AND THERE**  
Daniel Lak

Nor for that matter, have the US, Europe or other major powers cracked China's code and their policy towards Beijing often seems to be set on the fly. Those countries that have done well on China include those who sell it goods: Australia, South Africa, Brazil, even Angola and Sudan.

China's hunger for minerals from those places is well known, even as it buys up US government debt and sells cheap widgets to Western consumers to pay for it all. China has leapt into Africa with bags of money and dynamism, criss-crossing a continent that the West long treated like a collective basket case. In the process many

countries once considered to be moribund with war and corruption have witnessed great leaps forward in GDP and government revenues.

Now comes news that Beijing is taking steps to shore up flagging food production at home by purchasing huge farm tracts in dozens of poorer places and introducing production intensive agriculture.

Copper, coal, steel and other commodities are being stockpiled in anticipation of wild price fluctuations in the global meltdown that's engulfing most of us at the moment. China's flaunting its naval and other military prowess, quietly encouraging North Korea to needle the Americans with claims of nuclear and missile tests and frightening its old adversary India by building sea bases in Sri Lanka, Burma and elsewhere.

A blue water fleet that includes at least one aircraft carrier is a mailed fist with reach and the message isn't lost in New Delhi, which has never signed a peace treaty with Beijing after a humiliating military defeat in a 1962 war that resonates still in Indian strategic planning sessions even today.



In short, China is on the move. It is coping well with the global economic slowdown and decline in US and European demand. One obvious reason is that China has a robust domestic economy that buys about half of its output and is carefully developing a wide variety of trading partners around the world, including India.

The trial balloon late last year by a Chinese Central Banker that speculated about ending the role of the US dollar as de-factor world currency was no accident. China might as well be the

world's banker now, given its acquisitions on every continent and carefully stewarded external and internal finances.

Not that we should fear China's imperial ambitions. The Middle Kingdom is driven by national pride but has no obvious inkling to conquer territory or fight military conflicts.

In Nepal, Beijing is still focussed on Tibet-related policies in the short term and access to blue water ports and markets in India in the future. That could include a Lhasa to Calcutta train, better highways and pipelines

from Central Asia.

Stability here is also important to Beijing and its seeing little of that lately. Nepal needs to do many things but first among them on the foreign policy front is coming up with a sensible national consensus about China, balancing local interests as always with what Delhi expects from this country.

Given the perpetually squabbling mediocrities who dominate Kathmandu politics it's hard to have confidence that this will happen. It's much easier to combine currying favour in the most sycophantic way, with underhanded unilateralism. These behaviours are more typical of the men who've ruled Nepal for decades, through authoritarianism, democracy, civil war, royal rule and faltering peace process.

At the end of the day, China could easily decide it has bigger fish to fry than the minnows who swim the political currents in this capital. It will be to this country's great cost but that doesn't seem to bother anyone who aspires to power here. ●

Daniel Lak's latest book is the India Express.

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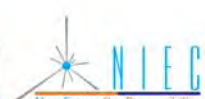
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# A night of Stevie Wonder

He is the king of the 'last slow dance' and no romantic compilation album would be complete without 'I just called to say I love you' while many a wedding couple have smooched their first to 'Isn't she lovely'.

This weekend the soulful hits of Stevie Wonder are being played live at a tribute concert at the Summit hotel by Dutch vocal trio Posey and the Fags and 1974AD.

This is the final concert here for trio who have been in Nepal for the past eight months, performing in various places throughout the city and teaching at Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory. Also performing on the piano is Yan from Norway.

A big fan of Stevie Wonder, 1974AD and Posey and the Fags have been deeply influenced and inspired by his music, though they are making their own musical arrangements of his songs. The Friday concert is to give Kathmandu a taste of some of his greatest songs and a chance for different bands to work together, the bands claim.

"This is also a great opportunity for Nepali musicians to learn, teach and form relationships with bands from other countries. We can learn more about different countries and their cultures" says Sanjay Shrestha of 1974AD. ●

Tickets are available at the Summit Hotel for Rs 1499 and the concert starts from 6.30 PM. Summit Hotel's spit roast barbecue will also be served.



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# Summer skies

June boasts morning views of planets, the Great Summer Triangle and the Milky Way

During the June evenings, zodiacal constellations like Leo, Virgo, Libra and Scorpio can be easily spotted from west to east. In the northern skies along the meridian, you can make out the Big Dipper and the bright star Arcturus in the constellation of Bootes.

In the evening, the sky turns to its summer phase by revealing some prominent stars and asterisms that will dominate the summer sky. Looking towards the eastern horizon after 9PM, you can locate three of the brightest stars - Vega, Deneb and Altair - that form the shape of a right-angled triangle, known as the "Great Summer Triangle". Vega is the brightest of all these stars in the constellation of Lyra, the Harp. Deneb is the alpha star in the constellation of Cygnus, the Swan - which holds its own asterism as the 'Northern Cross' - and it looks like one. The southern tip of the triangle is Altair, which belongs to the constellation of Aquila the Eagle, the mythological bird of Zeus.

On a clear, dark night, you might notice something special about the Summer Triangle. The fuzzy band of stars running through it is part of our galaxy, the Milky Way, a collection of billions of stars, including our own Sun. For a real treat, look at this area with binoculars. You'll see thousands of stars. You can't fail to be amazed by the beauty of the summer sky.

The Summer Triangle will be in the sky for several months. Watch it move across the sky as summer changes into autumn. To the west of the Summer Triangle, you can identify another interesting constellation - **Hercules**. From a dark location use your binoculars to view two brilliant star clusters in Hercules (M13 and M92).

And finally, we have the **summer solstice** (the longest day) on 21 June, when the sun reaches its most northerly point in the sky signalling the arrival of summer in the northern hemisphere.

It's time to start preparing for the big eclipse next month, (22 July 2009), when we will have a chance to view the total eclipse of the Sun. Those folks who would like to know more about the eclipse and get prepared for the big event, visit: <http://www.eclipse-glasses.com/>



### June Highlights:

**Mercury** is at its greatest elongation westwards from the Sun on 13 June. But it's rising less than an hour before the Sun and we are unlikely to see this planet at all, this month. **Venus** is rising an hour or two before the Sun, and we should be able to see the brilliant 'Morning Star' low in the east at dawn. On the morning of 19 June, the waning Moon will appear close to Venus.

**Mars** appears very close to Venus in the sky this month, so both planets will fit into the same field of view in a pair of binoculars. But the Red Planet is far further away at present, so it looks much fainter, just like a dim yellowish dot.

**Jupiter** is rising in the south-east around midnight, and it's well up in the southern sky at dawn. If you can find the 'Summer Triangle', you will find Jupiter far below Deneb, the upper left-hand star in the Triangle. Early on the morning of June 13 & 14, waning Moon will be seen close to Jupiter.

**Saturn**, in Leo, is well to the left of the bright star Regulus in the western sky at dusk, and doesn't set until well after midnight. Saturn appears brighter than Regulus, and it shines with a steady, untwinkling light. On the evening of 27 June, crescent Moon will appear just below Saturn.

[kedarbadu\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:kedarbadu(at)gmail.com)



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## ABOUT TOWN

## EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Festivals of the Kathmandu Valley** - an exhibition by Scott Faiia at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited till 29 May, 11AM- 6PM. 4218048
- ❖ **Fair & Lovely Beauty Lies in Nepal** by Liz Lance, a photo exhibition on 29 May at 5.30PM at Indigo Gallery, Naxal. 4413580

## EVENTS

- ❖ **Call for entries for Film South Asia** till 31 May, documentaries made in and after January 2007 qualified. 5552141

## MUSIC

- ❖ **A tribute to Stevie Wonder** performed by 1974AD and Posey and the Fags, 6.30PM, 29 May, NRs1499, Summit Hotel. 5521810
- ❖ **KJC Concert series IX**, 30 May, Yala Maya Kendra, 4PM and 6PM, Rs 100.
- ❖ **TGIF** at Jazzabella Café every Wednesday and Friday. 2110475
- ❖ **Baja gaja**, every tuesday at Moksh, 7.30 pm onwards, Pulchok. 5526212
- ❖ **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

- ❖ **Smoke on the water BBQ**, 29 May at Fusion, Dwarika Hotel, Rs 1499
- ❖ **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, Hyatt Regency. 4489362
- ❖ **Pasta pesto passion** at La Dolce Vita, Thamel. 4700612
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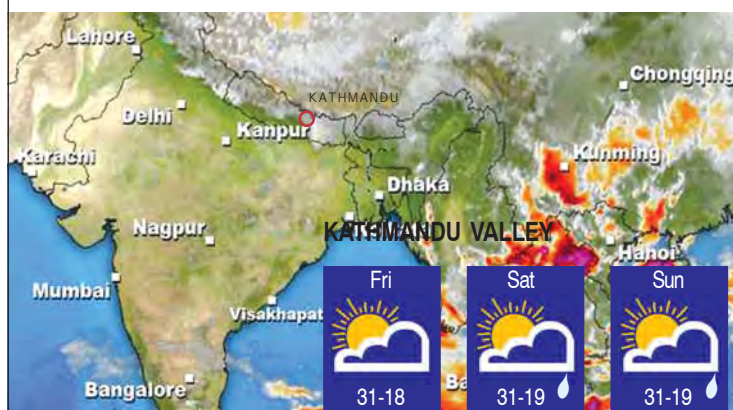
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## WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

This week's pre-monsoon showers over eastern Nepal were almost like the rain in peak monsoon days. This was because of the unusually strong cyclones over the Bay of Bengal. However, it has already been weakened, and is paving the way for monsoon pulses over the Bay heading northwards to the Himalaya. Thursday afternoon's satellite pictures also show the westerly fronts over Tibet rolling back after bolstering monsoon fronts' direct kick-off. As a result, Nepal's eastern and central hills will continue to get rains between sunny intervals. Expect hot and humid afternoons but cooler nights due to open summer skies.

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**SHATTERED FAITH:** A blast at the Assumption Church in Dhobighat on Saturday killed two and injured 15. Nepal Defence Army, a Hindu extremist group, has claimed responsibility.



**HOUSEWARMING:** Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal being welcomed at the official residence in Baluwatar on Wednesday, five days after he was elected to the post.



**FORCES OF NATURE:** A Kosi local points at the area flooded last year where three newly constructed cofferdams were again destroyed this week. Reconstruction has resumed after the rainfall ceased on Wednesday.



**FOREIGN HAND:** An activist lobbying against international intervention in Nepali politics and demanding timely drafting of the new constitution at a rally in Babar Mahal last week.



**DAREDEVIL:** Mountaineer Appa Shrepa arrives at Tribhuvan International airport on Tuesday after summiting the Mount Everest for the 19<sup>th</sup> time and setting a new world record.

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# Right Honourable Makunay

Somehow it doesn't feel right calling the right honourable prime minister by his Nepali initials 'Makunay' anymore. Despite being a communist, Comrade Nepal apparently did a tour of the temples to thank the lord for having propelled him to PMship. When the swearing-in was delayed, seems Lainchaur was getting a bit antsy and inquired about what was holding things up. Apparently he was waiting for clearance from his astrologers. The delay was therefore caused by a **Soothsayer and not Soodsayer**.

Trust PKD to get back to his Pistachio Palace and sulk. And he couldn't help crying sour grapes and lament that he should never have arm-twisted the JNK to get MKN nominated as a CA member and how he never imagined Nepali would grow to be a **"poisonous tree"**. MKN couldn't let that pass, and in his inaugural address retorted: "I am neither a poisonous tree nor a magic tree. I will try to be a tree that bears fruit and gives shade to travelers." Hear-hear.



The Ass' prediction is that it will take at least two more weeks for the UML to form a new govt, and even then it is doubtful that it will be complete cabinet. Wanna bet? If it was so difficult to agree on even Surendra P and Bidya B, imagine trying to negotiate with 22 members of the coalition. Looks like there was a **formidable tug-o-war** between Oli (backing Bidya because of his soft spot for Madan Bhandari's widow) and Jhallu (backing Suren 'cos he is his bro-in-law). The compromise was to give them defence and finance, respectively. And it's not just the eh-malays who are **hopelessly split**. The NC has got a vertical rift between the proxies of Brave Lion and Ram Chandra. And the MJF of course want all six of the biggie ministries, that is if it can stop Upadro vs BijayG from tearing each other apart. The remarkable thing is that none of the big names who won elections wants to be on a cabinet led by a PM who lost, probably sensing its short lifespan. They're all losers scrambling for a place at the head table.



The higher they fly, the lower they fall. Upadro Yadav was a Maobaddie who was caught in Delhi, managed to get released when the two comrades he was with were incarcerated by the Indians and later deported to Nepal. A year later, he emerges in Gorakhpur to give a fiery speech to reinstate the royalty a few weeks before communal riots break out in Nepalganj. The Madhes movement gathers strength and there is Upadro again taking its lead. He forms the MJF, contests elections and sweeps the Tarai. He rejoins the Maoists as a coalition partner and becomes foreign minister, and backs the baddies to the hilt against NJF joining the UML coalition. But there he was last week, virtually voted out of his party parliamentary board by a non-Madhesi leader, BijayG. The reason was that he was hardly in Nepal, and humility was not his strong point. He told his party's MPs to leave the politics to him. Now, he should've know that no politician likes to be told not to do politics. Meanwhile BijaG spent the best part of the past nine months throwing lavish parties for MJF MPs to get them on his side. The investment on all the **booze and sekuwa** paid off. Still, last week as the bargaining gathered steam the going rate for a mid-level Forum MP was said to be 30 lakhs.



As the Forum teeters on the verge of a split, the TMLP is in the horns of dilemma to go or not to go into government. If it joins it would lose the moral high ground it attained by **staying virgin** for the past nine months. But if it doesn't it would cause heartburn among junior MPs who are **licking their chops** at the prospect of ministerial berths, and they'd have to just watch the MJF and Sad Bhavana rake in all the moolah. The TMLP is seriously short of cash and needs to replenish its war chest.



While on his way for his swearing in at Shit All Nibas, the new prime minister passed **mountains of garbage** at Jamal. He said he felt so helpless and embarrassed, his first edict when he got to his desk at Singha Darbar was to order the rubbish cleared up "no matter what it takes". The next day the garbage started being collected.



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