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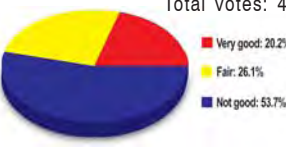


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Q. What are the chances of the UML-led coalition doing its job?

Total votes: 4,325



Very good: 28.2%  
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Not good: 53.7%

Weekly Internet Poll # 455. To vote go to: [www.nepaltimes.com](http://www.nepaltimes.com)  
Q. How do you assess Nepal's one year as republic?

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CHARLES HAVILAND

## Bhuwan and Juna

A brother and sister who served on opposite sides during the war have mended fences and got together again for a family reunion in Khotang. Bhuwan Rai (left) is in the Nepal Army and is stationed in Diktel. His sister Juna Rai (right) is in the Maoist army and now based in a cantonment in Udayapur. During the war, the two very nearly came to shooting at each other during the battles in eastern Nepal.

When Juna and her sister Guna joined the Maoists, Bhuwan was angry. Their father, Kumar, was harassed by both sides during the war. Now, he is

happy that his son and daughters are together again. "Our ideologies may be different, but we are a family," says Juna.

It is clear Juna is more indoctrinated than Bhuwan. She speaks in party jargon, and says her goal is to be a part of the national army and serve in the same barracks as her brother. Bhuwan's distrust of the Maoists still runs deep. But for now, the two have come together again.

On the national stage Prime Minister Nepal is desperately trying to get his 22-party coalition to agree on a

government. But even if that happens, the integration of the Maoist guerrillas into the Nepal Army will become the single biggest challenge to the peace process.

The level of distrust between the Maoists in the opposition and the UML-led government is at an all time high because of the row over the sacking of the army chief that led to the collapse of the Maoist government last month. The Maoists have launched nation-wide street protests that threaten disruptions and political instability. The fate of the nearly 19,000 Maoists in camps hangs in the balance as

**EDITORIAL**  
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Yesterday's men (and women) **p3**

UNMIN's mandate expires in July.

If Bhuwan and Juna can integrate back into their family, when will the two armies, to which they belong, do the same? ●

**Full story p10-11**

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# Under siege

## The Maoists are lashing out at everyone the president, speaker, army, judiciary, India

### THE ETHNIC CARD

It took only a week after the Maoists fell from power for them to unleash their affiliated ethnic groups and set them on the warpath against the new coalition government. They are playing with fire.

Nepal's Maoists copied the notion of ethnic autonomous state councils from Mao who copied it from Lenin. They turned descendent Maoism into an ascendant force in Nepal by grafting Maoist dogma to post-modern identity politics.

The combustible mixture of denial of national identity and assertion of ethnicity was originally prepared by donor-funded NGOs in the countryside.

The Maoists just lit the fuse. Not because they really wanted to emancipate those left out, but because it would get them to Year Zero with a bang. The fact that communism and communalism can never co-exist was papered over.

Within few years, Maoist-backed ethnic identity acquired legitimacy by default as revolving door governments of the late-nineties failed to address genuine concerns of marginalised communities. They used the grievances for recruitment during the war, and one of the factors leading to the Maoist victory in last year's elections was to use ethnic vote banks.

It's now payback time. The whole thing has started to unravel. Warlords in the Madhesi, Tharu, Limbuwan and Khambuwan movements are all ex-guerrillas. The Maoists can't meet the competing identity demands they helped establish, and can't put the genie back in the bottle. Driven out of government and running out of options, the Maoists are now unleashing the ethnic and ultra-nationalist (read: anti-Indian) card. They have found a new use for old accomplices, and the Valley shutdown on Monday was the first salvo of this new strategy.

As in the past, identity politics will ultimately weaken the Maoists as they try to reconcile the competing demands of the ethnic causes they champion. The Maoists need to realise that they are no longer a fringe force that can afford to stoke fires of hatred and leave it to others to fight the inferno. Once lit, the conflagration will consume us all, including those who started it.

In this space, we have consistently called for a consensus government, however unrealistic it may seem. The reason was precisely this: to ensure that the Maoists didn't go and do something as foolhardy as use the ethnic card. Now that they have, all we can wish is for better sense to prevail in the constituent assembly so that maximum flexibility is exercised to address the genuine grievances of Nepal's excluded ethnicities in writing the new constitution.

But there should be zero tolerance for incitement of ethnic intolerance and hatred for short-term political gain.



KIRAN PANDAY

The haggle over cabinet formation is a sideline. The real political dynamic right now is the new government's approach to the Maoists, the contours of which are becoming clearer, and the Maoist response, which remains difficult to assess at the moment.



PLAIN SPEAKING  
Prashant Jha

As suspected, the present coalition has come in with a brief to radically re-alter the terms of agreement with the Maoists, even if it means risking the achievements of the past few years.

The defence minister's statement saying she has not heard of the term "integration" and that "PLA would be managed and rehabilitated on humanitarian grounds" is striking. This is not a casual remark and makes it clear that the army will call the shots in this dispensation.

Not only is the minister shifting goalposts here (like some Maoists did when they demanded wholesale integration with control and command) the government seems to perceive

concessions on PLA as a favour it is doing for the Maoists.

Go back to the newspaper records of the days leading up to the peace accord in November 2006. It was preceded by a long stalemate over precisely these questions: what happens to PLA, how would

cantonment arrangements work out, what will the final settlement be? There were too many ambiguities in that accord, which has left us with the present problems.

But the deal that was finally struck at that point was based on the balance of power between parties.

What is happening now is that the other parties feel, two-and-half years later, that they gave in too much. They regret allowing the Nepal Army and the 'People's Liberation Army' to be regarded almost as equal forces in the Agreement on the Monitoring of the Management of Arms and Armies (AMMAA).

It is conveniently forgotten that the deal was necessitated by the fact that the Maoists were strong. The PLA had played a key role in ousting the king, and any political compact had to take into account their concerns.

Of course, the former rebels could take advantage because the others (especially India and the NC) were so careless and took things for granted. But now that they have a chance after seeing Maoists rule, the others want to re-write the rules.

This is based on the calculation that the Maoists have, in the post-Katawal situation, got weaker. Non-Maoists are not willing to concede a single inch any more. So the line goes: no to integration in the army, status quo on the president and army chief's position, rejection of Maoist constitutional proposals on state structure and federalism and a total crackdown on Maoists if they attempt any violence.

For their part, the Maoists institutionally, and Pushpa Kamal Dahal personally, are in a bit of a spot. Going back to the jungle is out of the question. So

is cooperating with what they have termed as a 'puppet' government. There is a sense of being under siege, which is why they are hitting out at everyone: the president, speaker, army, judiciary, parties, and of course, India.

The Maoists have little choice but to stay on in the process, even as their rivals seek to create disillusionment in their ranks, and go back on past commitments. But if anyone thinks the Maoists will quietly accept their fate, that would be naive.

The Maoists are focussing on a dual-strategy. The first is strengthening the organisation. The reshuffling of the PLA chain of command is a step in this direction, so is the focus on the district units. This organisational machine will then be geared towards escalating protests to cripple the government's functioning. They will engineer violence if necessary, but try to keep it low-key to avoid a backlash.

The second step seems to be reconnecting with the ethnic sentiment. There has been a growing distance between the Maoists and ethnic backers who felt Maoists were reneging on their commitments. With so many forces ganged up against them, the Maoists can't afford to lose the support of the ethnic groups they mobilised during the war.

They lost the initiative in the Madhes, Limbuwan and the Tharu belts. Going back to the ethnic agenda will help them score points on the ground, as well as make life hell for the UML, the most unsympathetic party on the question of marginalised communities.

Things will get a lot more unstable before they get more stable. ●

## LETTERS

### ACTION NOW

Thank you for promoting non violence on your editorial ('Action now,' #453). No religion advocates violence, this is an act of terrorism so let's not associate a religion with such a demeaning act. However, I think you are very naïve if you think all religions are peaceful. Take India for instance. The advent of Islam was violent and Christianity was full of propaganda. In the future, the readers of *Nepali Times* will hope to read equally strong editorials against the over-zealous multinational conversion business in Nepal.

Prabin Gautam, email

### PRAETORIAN REPUBLIC

It is unfortunate that CK has become the Maoists' spokesperson ('Towards a praetorian republic,' #453). Why does he think that the 22 parties who supported MKN are less informed about Nepal's current situation? I am shocked by the

fact that Lal takes the fact that Maoist PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal was the commander of two armies so nonchalantly. Whose interest did Dahal serve?

Democracy is a framework in a process balanced by many factors but it rests on a certain philosophy and foundation. If you violate the basic foundation by attacking the fundamental rights of the people, then you become a dictator. How can you support any dictator, whether it is Prachanda or Gyanendra? If they seem democratic, it is only a façade.

Kishor Kamal, email

### GURKHAS

The strength of the Gurkha soldiers currently serving in the British army is about 3500 not 35000 ('The

resistants' #453). Furthermore, only those Gurkhas (including other British soldiers) who fought during World War II and were made Prisoners Of War by the Japanese were awarded 10,000 pounds as a compensation by the Japanese government.

Captain Hikmatbahadur Gurung, Pokhara



### UNMIN

After Ian Martin, his successor continues to play foul in Nepal's peace-game—taking the sides of one and damning the others. This is tarnishing the image of the United Nations and its agencies. UNMIN must now think of damage control and stop hiding the mistakes it has made, which include a flawed verification process and a misguided briefing to the Secretary General on 5 May. It is important at this

time that the other UN Agencies not bail UNMIN out. While it was public knowledge that the exodus of fresh recruits into the cantonments was a deliberate attempt by the Maoists to inflate the number, the nation had banked its hopes on UNMIN and its verification process to reveal the truth. With the benefit of hindsight and with the preponderance of evidence, the concerned citizens of Nepal now believe that UNMIN has been part of the problem and not a part of the solution. Good intentions of the UN and its SG have gone to waste.

Om Nepali, email

### CORRECTION

Due to an editing error the designation of former vice-chairman Shankar Sharma ('Federalism doesn't suddenly bring development', #453) was printed as former secretary.





KIRAN PANDAY

# Yesterday's men (and women)

Out: Dark suit, red tie and black topi. In: Daura suruwal and grey coat.

With the ouster of Maoists from Singha Darbar, western suits have gone out of fashion and the red tie is passé. Sartorial elegance now comes all wrapped up in daura suruwal and grey coat. Hair cropped short to fit the Nepali cap is the current rage. Welcome to the bold old world of haute couture of the same old New Nepal.

Not just those hoping for a cabinet berth, even top bureaucrats were attired in the daura suruwal for the Republic Day reception at the presidential palace last week. The absence of GPK and PKD was more than made up by the be-medalled presence of men in uniform from the security forces.

Looking somewhat lost in the crowd of political pragmatists and social climbers in the gardens of Shital Nibas, NC leader Taranath



**STATE OF THE STATE**  
C K Lal

Ranabhat appeared to be rueing the day he decided to support the promonarchy lobby of the NC. But anti-Maoist realignment of political forces in the country

seems to have vindicated the position of those who believed that dominance of the military was preferable to the rule of militants.

Messrs Khadka, Joshi and Gachhedar, the notorious kangresi KGB trio were known for their vehement anti-UML stand in the mid-1990s. They have been the main actors this time in propping up Prime Minister Nepal. Naturally, they are grinning from ear to ear these days because those who make often reserve the right to unmake. Perhaps that should give some hope to Ranabhat, too. If Nepal can appear out of nowhere to head a 22-party coalition, who knows what is in store for the Speaker who investigated Narayanhiti Massacre? Interestingly, Nepal had first agreed to be in the investigation committee in June 2001 and then chickened out.

The UML's past will come back to haunt Comrade Nepal and his fellow travellers in the government. After the formation of first post-Panchayat government on 29 May 1991, the main opposition party refused to give customary 100-day honeymoon period to the Koirala cabinet. The UML unleashed its civil servants' unions within two months of a majority government being formed. The strike began unreasonably and ended abruptly.

Unity Centre, the Maoist parent organisation, had supported the agitation of civil servants affiliated with UML. The radicals began to doubt the intentions of the comrades when the strike was called off without any explanation.

Throughout the 1990s, the UML set new records in enforcing bandas and disrupting parliament. After the death of Madan Bhandari and Jib Raj Ashrit in a highway accident, UML cadres went on the rampage alleging that Prime Minister Koirala was somehow responsible for the car skidding off the slippery road and into the Narayani.

In 2001, the UML disrupted the entire 19<sup>th</sup> session of parliament, which had to then end without discussing any bills. A visibly upset Speaker Ranabhat had then said: "Though history will analyse it, this session, in my reading, is the most fruitless one after the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990." History has already passed its judgement: the UML was instrumental in the demise of the constitution that it helped draft in 1990 to institutionalise people's sovereignty and constitutional monarchy.

The problem with Nepal's 'moderate' Marxist-Leninist apparatchiks is that they don't know whether they want to be a revolutionary or parliamentary force. Worse, they don't know that they don't know. Hence, the constant flip-flopping and political promiscuity.

The Maoists are wasting their time and energy in boycotting the constituent assembly meetings-it's useless, if not counter-productive. The UML couldn't care less if it sits or not. If anyone were looking for excuses to suspend the interim constitution, the Maoist lawmakers appear to be giving them a very powerful reason to discard it in the dustbin of history. ●

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# From birth to death

Ambitions to improve reproductive health and beat maternal mortality in post-war Rolpa face an array of obstacles

KONG YEN LIN in ROLPA

Two years ago, midwife Kamala Khadka was called in to attend to a woman in Jurga village who had been in labour for three days. She needed an immediate caesarean section but the nearest hospital was half a day away.

It took Kamala five hours to deliver the baby, but it was still-born and the mother died.

“If a C-section could have been performed in time, both mother and child could have been saved,” says District Health Officer Uraj Pokharel, “But the shortage of permanent reproductive health care services like operating theatres and bloodbanks severely limit timely medical attention.”

Three years after the end of the ‘people’s war’, infant and maternal mortality rates in Rolpa remain critically high. There are no official figures but the maternal mortality rate in Rolpa is estimated to be more than the 280 out every 100,000 live births national figure according to the 2007 Nepal Demographic health survey because of poor ante-natal and post-natal care, multiple pregnancies, hypertension and reproductive infections.

Although female community health volunteers (FCHV) educate and provide midwifery and healthcare services to expectant mothers, distribution of professional expertise is sporadic and often, unappreciated. “Some families are resistant to the interference of an outsider even if help is offered for free,” says FCHV Pampha BK.

Such attitudes are prevalent in hospitals as well. “Often planned medical investigations and advice to seek treatment are perceived as a means to extract money,” says Sanjeev Rana, the Medical Director of Helping Hands Community Hospital in Dang. “Awareness about ante and post natal



PICS: KONG YEN LIN

**MESSENGERS:** Roving health camps raising awareness about safe motherhood, child vaccination and family planning held for the first time in northern Rolpa this year.

care is almost non-existent.”

Almost 90 per cent of gynaecologists work in Kathmandu, where wages are higher and equipment better. “Most of the time health facilities here make do with female general practitioners for gynaecological services but there’s a limit to what they can do because they’re not specialists,” says Rana.

“Most female patients are embarrassed to seek consultation with male doctors regarding reproductive health,” adds Rana, “Whenever I ask questions I have to try guessing the answers from their facial expressions and body language.”

In an attempt to raise safety standards, more than five roving female reproductive health camps organised by INGOs and local bodies have been held across Rolpa this year. Besides raising awareness about family planning, use of contraceptives and child vaccination, women are screened for uterine prolapses and sexually transmitted diseases. Male and female surgical sterilisations are available.

But poverty remains a major hurdle. Women generally return to tough physical labour 10 to 15 days after childbirth, rather than four months. Most have to work throughout their pregnancies to cover the

cost of ultrasound scannings and blood tests and to feed their families.

And men rarely share the burden of seeking medical attention. “When some couples are infected with sexually transmitted diseases, there’s no impetus for men to seek treatment even when their wives are suffering because the symptoms are less obvious for them,” says Jessica Spedding, a medical assistant at Helping Hands Community Hospital in Dang. “There should be discussion between both sides to come for treatment together, and the same goes for AN and PN checkups.” ●

## Rebirth and revival

On June 15, Bayalpata Hospital, which has been shut for 30 years due to political turmoil and violence, reopens with the aim of fighting maternal mortality in a district where one in every 250 women die from pregnancy complications and illegal abortions.

Established by Nyaya Health NGO, the eight-building complex will have an OPD for maternal child health and a women’s ward for abortions and deliveries. The team of 40 will include two doctors, rotating surgeons and gynaecologists. There will be a 24-hour free delivery service and

caesarean section operating unit.

“Our goal is to ensure that no mother should die from delivery related difficulties,” says Medical Director Jhapat Thapa, “And locals won’t have to pay for more costly health care in India or Dhangadi.”

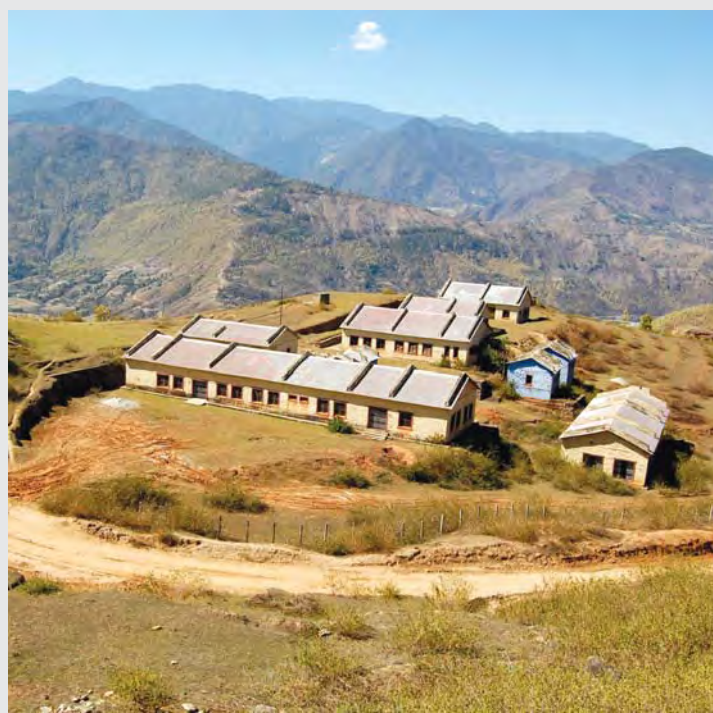
While government hospitals charge about Rs 1,000 to 3,000 for safe abortions, Bayalpata hospital is planning to offer the service for free, in a bid to reduce illegal, often lethal, procedures.

While the STD infection rate is estimated to be 0.5 per cent nationally, that of Accham is 20 times more because of the high percentage of migrant workers.

According to ASHA, an NGO offering HIV support, 70 per cent of the infected are women. Bayalpata will provide anti-retroviral therapy and drug treatments preventing mother to child transmission.

With chronic shortages of water, food and power and frequent highway bandas delaying supplies in Accham, Bayalpata’s goals seem ambitious. But health workers are optimistic by contrast with the conflict years when frequent raids and extortions kept hospitals shut. ●

Kong Yen Lin in Sanfebagar



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### FDI down

Foreign direct investment (FDI) commitments in Nepal have fallen to Rs 5.53 billion in the first nine months of the current fiscal year compared with Rs 7.96 billion for the same period last year. Load shedding and unrest in the Tarai are considered to be the chief reasons for the decline.

### Senior savings

Nabil Bank has launched a savings scheme, 'Nabil Jestha Bachat', aimed at the over 50s. The scheme offers a five per cent yearly interest rate.



### Fresh chews

Sujal Foods has launched two new flavours of gum - orange and strawberry which are being marketed under the campaign "Jhuma Orange Ra Strawberry ko Shwadma".

### Lighting up

CG has launched its own brand of inverters. Fitted with sensor charge, they are available from 325 VA to 3000 VA with a 24-month warranty.



### Finger in another pie



Joshi Group has opened a seafood restaurant called Lobsters in Sherpa Mall, Durbar Marg, which will offer lobster, crab, squid, oysters and prawns imported from

Thailand. The company's business interests include wire manufacturing, entertainment, banking, finance, insurance, hospitality, education consultancy, hydropower, and property development.

### Smooth transfer

Global Bank has started 'Global Remit' in co-operation with Qatar based Trust Exchange Company to provide remittance transfer servies from all its branches and agencies. Global bank has established association with 12 other exchange companies in six countries.



# Square one

## An economically empowered mass is all that can stem the rot in Nepali politics

Some believe the unprecedented closure of the Valley during the banda on Monday was the result of frustration vented against the political powers who have not mended their ways. Dynastic



ECONOMIC SENSE  
Artha Beed

politics continue and those who run rings of corruption are looking ahead for plump cabinet positions. The loss of 14,000 lives in the insurgency and a couple of years of autocratic rule haven't seemed to have shifted the power game.

The fall of the Maoist led government has brought a smile to the faces of many of the Kathmandu elite who had lost their connection with the regime. They are happy to see known faces back in government giving them access to known agents, power brokers and system 'oilers'. The sad state of Nepali politics continues not only because of the politicians themselves who cannot play a fair power game but the people who continuously want to have a set of incompetent rulers just to ensure that they can get what they want. It's not fair to blame only the Maoists for cronyism.

But the Maoist- led government's failure to bring



about any real fundamental changes in the way government functions has dashed the hopes of many who voted for them in the name of change. The Maoists also became more interested in focusing on keeping their party workers in business and doling out favours to the people they liked. If only they had succeeded in introducing the Gregorian calendar and making our holidays align with international ones, at least that would have been one contribution to integrating Nepal into the globalized world.

Moving ahead, hopefully the new coalition will find time to break from political bickering to focus on the economy and seriously look at creating a climate of investment and jobs along with tackling the larger issues of rule of law, providing security, dealing with labour unrest and finding a way out of the power crisis.

Investment is required to create jobs and the unions need to be dealt with for investment to flow. Everyone understands this but no one wants to work to ensure that it happens. Even in the US, while the government is bailing out failing General Motors, a company that pays high wages and has big worker unions. Meanwhile, Kia the Korean car manufacturer has established a new factory near Atlanta paying competitive wages and free from the stranglehold of unions.

For Nepal, the challenge is to ensure that we provide opportunities for businesses to start and existing businesses to operate free from hassle. This should be part of our DNA. A strong economically empowered mass can then stem the rot in Nepali politics as it has in India. ●  
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# Charity is child's play

## Japanese UN goodwill ambassador in Nepal

Tetsuko Kuroyanagi's father was a violinist in a symphony orchestra before the Second World War. Even so, he was conscripted, captured and sent to a POW camp in Siberia.

At age six, Kuronayagi learnt what it meant to go hungry. Suffering terrible bombings every day, her family struggled to survive. Today, a sprightly 72-year-old Kuronayagi travels to Africa, war zones and under-developed countries as UNICEF's Goodwill Ambassador.

"Because of what I went through as a child, when I see hungry children I know how they feel, and I know that I must help," said Kuronayagi during a visit to Nepal this week during which she visited mothers with AIDS in Syangja and schools in Kaski.

Sitting by the lake in Pokhara earlier this week Kuronayagi said it was the United Nations that helped children like her survive the aftermath of war by providing food and clothing.

Stage actress-turned-tv personality, Kuronayagi, is called Japan's Oprah Winfrey, with her talk show program Tetsuko's Room drawing more than 13 million viewers every day. She has served

as UNICEF's ambassador since 1984 and has raised \$30 million in Japan for the organisation's projects for children and women worldwide.

In her first visit to Nepal, Kuronayagi was accompanied by a tv crew from Asahi which is producing a documentary to be aired on her show to help raise money for Nepali children. While here, she also appeared on Bhusan Dahal's *Fireside* show.

Twenty years ago, 14 million children were dying worldwide every year of preventable causes. Today, according to UNICEF, that figure is down to 9.4 million even though the number of children has doubled.

Kuronayagi remembers a child in Tamil Nadu who was dying of tetanus who looked at her and said: "I wish you happiness." It was a shock to her how patient children are, how innocent and how they don't blame others. Says Kuronayagi: "That is when I thought I never understood children, we always blame others. I told myself I will work for children. I know I can't save them all, but even if I can save one, I will be very happy." ●



SAGAR SHRESTHA/UNICEF NEPAL



# The Dependents



Tufan Neupane in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 30 May-14 June

हिमाल

JUMLA—The subsidies provided by the government and NGOS on both rice and vegetables in the Karnali is increasing dependency and prompting a fall in food production in all five districts of the zone. Many NGOs have been giving five to eight kilos of rice in exchange for non-agricultural work like road construction and building schools, thereby reducing the input into agriculture by the

Karnali inhabitants. The increasing quotas from donor food organisations are having a negative impact on the agricultural sector. The NGOs supply of ‘cheap rice’ means production of wheat, rye and buckwheat has dropped. In 2005/2006 over 2,800 hectares were cultivated for crops but by 2007/08 it had fallen by 200 hectares. These organisations have been distributing beans also in Humla—just 30 years ago lentil and bean production in the region used to be so high that it was being exported to Tibet. Agricultural Development Program official Dila Ram Bhandari says, “The trend of distributing supplies from outside as soon as there is a crisis, has led to the extinction of local agriculture.” Jumla academic Kusendra Mahat says, “Compensation should only be provided during natural disasters for a certain amount of time. But this ongoing food distribution is now likely to displace agriculture.” Although there was a scarcity of rice, wheat, buckwheat and rye production was still high. The rice shortage was caused because only 15 per cent of arable land was cultivated. Many agricultural experts accuse the government and donors of exaggerating the food crisis. Right now the government is paying double the cost of producing the rice just for transportation. In the last fiscal year, it paid Rs 260 million for transporting the 54,000 quintals of rice to the Karnali when producing it would have cost just Rs 130 million. ●



DURGA LAL KC/KANTIPUR

# Fight back

Editorial in *Janadisha*, 4 June

जनिदिशा

Thousands of people from villages bordering India—Rajpur, Bela, Koilabas and Gobardiha in Dang district—have this week been displaced by encroachment from the South Block. Over 2,000 Nepalis have fled their homes in the last week. The displaced are living in ramshackle shelters in Satbariya VDC—one of the most distressing aspects of border encroachment. Every so often Indian border security forces shift border pillars and chase away Nepalis, who have fled their homes fearing persecution and sexual harassment. Those abducted by Indian border security forces haven’t returned home. Many believe Madhav Kumar Nepal’s appointment as PM was planned by India. Indeed he has failed to mention the encroachment or the incidents of rapes and mass evacuation. Nor has the government provided any relief packages for the displaced. Nepali Congress and UML have even been consulting with the Indian ambassador to Nepal Rakesh Sood about choosing ministers to make up the new cabinet. If this government wants to disprove the allegations of it being pro India it has to ask the neighbour to pull the security forces out from the border areas. But what can we expect from a government formed against the people’s will? The encroachment in Kalapani, Susta, Maheshpur, Pashupatinagar, Bara and now in Dang amounts to an invasion.

# New revelations

Chudamuni Bhattarai in *Nepal*, 7 June

नेपाल

On 1 June 2001, the Royal murders in the billiard room changed the whole course of Nepal’s history. The investigation left many questions unanswered. When prince Dipendra started shooting, the ADCs of the royal family are said to have entered the room. Biswo Karma Shah, former queen Aishwarya’s maternal uncle says, “An ADC who ran in after most of the family members had collapsed raised his gun to shoot Dipendra, but another ADC pushed him away.” The report presented by the investigation committee made no mention of this event. During the investigation the ADCs had stated that they were not allowed to go into the room but this latest revelation casts suspicion on their testimony. This means that despite the presence of ADCs Dipendra made it out of the billiard room and shot

his mother and brother. Another revelation is that after king Birendra was shot, his younger son Nirajan pushed his gun towards his father. But by the time Birendra got hold of the gun, it was too late. A former high official at the palace says it is possible that someone ordered that Dipendra be shot. Major assassinations are investigated by the United Nations but this massacre was investigated internally. It still isn’t too late to find out the truth. The building may have been torn down but the eyewitnesses, including queen mother Ratna, are still alive.



# Purposeless proposal

Editorial in *Nagarik*, 2 June

नागरिक

The proposal for making military training compulsory for citizens has prompted an intense debate. The NC and UML have strongly opposed this draft put forward by the Maoists. The Maoist CA members have backed the draft saying that the idea came forward while collecting opinions for the new constitution. However, no one has been able to give a satisfactory explanation about the objective of this plan. The argument that providing military is important for national security is irrelevant. Nepal’s neighbours are the rising powers in the world. We cannot undertake an armed retaliation against them. Giving military training to all will only increase internal conflict. The Maoists’ intention may be to control the youth by granting them military training. But it will not be easy to direct the mindset of the youth. Thus, to try and repeat what Mao and Lenin undertook will not only be unwise, but impossible. Another aspect that we cannot forget is the financial burden that we will have to bear to give training. To divert the spending on sectors like health, education, infrastructure and socio economic development into an unproductive sector will have a negative impact on the general standard of living of the people who are already living in poverty. And, then if there are no jobs in the army—or elsewhere—for this trained youth, there is a real danger that they will misuse their skills. It’s inappropriate to waste time with purposeless proposals like compulsory military training, thereby delaying the constitution writing process. Rather than this the government could provide investment in training in skills to make the young people of this country internationally competitive.



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As soon as the results of the NC’s edict, MJF’s wrestling and UML’s lucky draw come out, the cabinet will take full shape.

अन्नपूर्णपोष्ट Basu Kshitij in *Annapurna Post*, 31 May



# Devolving natural resources

The new constitution should guarantee rights over natural resources

Last week conservationists and activists took part in a round table discussion on constitution writing with an emphasis on rights over natural resources in the process of state restructuring. The following is an excerpts:

**Ngamindra Dahal** (National Trust for Nature Conservation): Conflict over natural resources is possible in a country like ours. Due to the dry winter this year, people from two villages in Mustang who get water from the same stream, got into fight. The locals of Belghari, Sindhuli district were forced to leave the village after the water source dried up in winter.

**Santosh Mani Nepal** (World Wide Fund for Nature): Resources like forests, water, mines, land and energy should be managed sustainably. The ongoing debate on state restructuring should not just take into account ethnicity and language but also natural resources.

**Naya Sharma Poudel** (Forest Action Nepal): Ninety per cent of Nepal's population depends directly on natural resources for subsistence. It is the base of the economy, therefore how these resources are shared should be an important part of the new constitution. The productivity and sustainable management of resources depends on its distribution, and we should learn from past experience.

**Jagat Deuja** (Community Self-

Reliance Centre): Unequal distribution of natural resources, can be the cause of conflict. Dalit, Janajati, women and marginalised communities should be given fair access to resources.

**Yamuna Ghale** (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation): The formation of the 'delineation committee on natural resources, economic rights and structure of constitutional body' in the CA has highlighted the importance of natural resources. Socio-economic change is possible through proper management of land, water and forest. If we don't heed this there is bound to be conflict.

**Kamala Sharma** (HIMAWANTI-Nepal): A handful people in society exercise control over natural resources. Land to the tiller has never been implemented, even though we have debated it enough. Social transformation is possible only if the resources are distributed evenly and everyone has a share.

**Dilaraj Khanal** (Federation of Community Forest Users): There has not been enough discussion on what kind of rights we want over natural resources. At a time when the discussion has begun on constitution content, the issue of resources has been overshadowed.

**Naya Sharma:** There has to be restructuring of the rights of citizens and the state over resources. Federal units could overlook environment issues.



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For instance, the money DDCs earn from quarry royalty is much less than the environment cost. It will invite conflict in the long run. **Jagat Deuja:** The rights of water, forest, land at the centre, province, local and community level should be clear in the constitution.

**Santosh Nepal:** If the upper Karnali builds a dam, the lower Karnali will be affected. We must be sensitive to such issues. The products of resources should be taken into consideration while creating provinces.

**Yamuna Ghale:** Most lawmakers are concerned about territory, not about rivers and forests. This indicates a lack of common understanding.

**Dilraj Khanal:** There could be conflict between the centre, province and local authority over natural resources. The constitution should mention that the local community will be given the management of local resources.

**Naya Sharma:** Everyone speaks of rights over resources. But what about the responsibilities we have? There has to be devolution of rights from the centre to the provincial government, which will further pass the rights to local communities.

**Santosh Nepal:** Duty comes with rights. If the Botes get the right to fish in Rapti river, their duty is to ensure the rights of crocodiles to

live there. In a federal system, rights and responsibilities go together.

**Kamala Sharma:** There is no consensus on how to distribute land, water and forest even after many rounds of talks with lawmakers and committee members and experts. The committees concerned should focus on the rights of women, Janajatis and consumers of natural resources.

**Yamuna Ghale:** Ensuring the rights of women, Janajatis, Dalit and other marginalised communities can ensure the rights over natural resources as well. For example, if a single woman gets a land ownership certificate, there will be a reduction in discrimination against women.

## Confused ideology

It is vital that the constitution addresses the needs of the people at a grass roots level

BHARAT KUMAR POKHAREL

In all the discussions about constitution writing there seems to be alarmingly little said about how to tackle the crucial issue facing this country—poverty.

This signals confusion in ideology regarding who will rule for whom in the future. Constitutional rights have to be ensured for the poor. Initially, we can use tools like positive discrimination, reservation and quotas because that is probably the only way to realise any semblance of equality.

This constitution is being formulated in the tradition of balancing the power between the legislative, executive and judiciary. But it is more important to ensure the balance of power between the communities and people rather than government bodies and state, which has always been powerful.

While to some extent we can say that the rights of ethnic groups have been brought to light, the concerns of geographical communities who depend on specific natural resources have been ignored.

Even at a local level certain ethnic



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groups, women and lower classes are the victims of discrimination. This issue can be addressed through positive discrimination. The groups that operate community forests could sell forest products to poor and deprived families at a discounted price. Their children could be given school bursaries and employment priorities.

An issue that is receiving too little attention is how the distribution of natural

resources should influence the formation of federal states. Even if there have been some talks, the grass-roots communities that depend on the resources have not been considered. There has to be constitutional provision to ensure these communities have access to the resources—otherwise they won't have any body to turn to in the case of dispute.

The people's movement did not take

place to safeguard rights that already existed. The new constitution has to offer more. If there isn't a balance between the rights and the duties of the citizens, state and local communities, the result will be anarchy. Some points that have to be considered while drafting the new constitution are:

- The proposal should mention the rights and duties of the state, community and the people regarding natural resources
- The right to a healthy environment, clean drinking water, food and shelter must be ensured.
- Agreements regarding distribution of natural resources should be made only after attaining a two-thirds majority in parliament. Otherwise, a referendum should be held.
- The process of state reconstruction should be based on issues of distribution of responsibilities among the country, state, municipality and village. Among other things, distribution of natural resources should also influence the federal structure.
- A natural resources commission should be established to resolve conflicts, formulate plans for land utilisation and undertake scientific study and analysis.



# Let the sun shine in

Going solar doesn’t just make ecological sense, it also makes economic sense

SHRADHA BASNYAT



**POWER PANELS:** The eight solar panels installed at ECCA Nepal building which keep the office running even during load shedding.

PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

If winter load-shedding is going to be with us for another 12 years in makes sense to sell off your inverter and go solar.

Surendra Mathema is already doing it with his 200 watt system that lights up his house and even powers the tv. He has installed six panels on his roof at a cost of approximately Rs 300,000. In Sitapaila Mukunda Bhattarai has built himself a completely renewable house , powered by a windmill and solar panels. He recycles as much as possible in his compost unit, uses biogas for the kitchen and harvests water from his roof.

“Shortage of electricity is going to be a problem every winter in Nepal for at least 10 years, the demand exceeds supply by a long shot. Solar is the best option,” says Jay Raj Bhandari, director of ECCA Nepal which has an office powered by a solar unit on the roof.

Kamal Rupakheti, of German Nepalese Help Association, has a small office and has installed two solar panels to power two computers, a fax machine and a laser printer. The two panels and a battery system cost Rs 120,000 but pay for themselves in a few years, Rupakheti says.

Solar suppliers says their panels are in such hot demand that they are flying off the shelves. Sri Raj Joshi of Lotus Energy says sales are up 20 per cent. “It is still expensive for an average urban household,

## Rain check

ROMA ARYAL

With the scarcity of water becoming a persistent problem in the Valley, the Alliance Française, a language institute and event organiser, has introduced a rainwater harvesting system at its office in Tripureswor, which is visited by at least 450 people a week.

“Within the first three weeks alone,” says Philippe Martin, director of the Alliance Française, “we saved 2,000 litres of water. For the first time, we had more water than we needed.” And, in only two days of heavy rainfall this week, another 6,000 litres was collected. Rainwater is used in the office for the toilets and

even for cooking and drinking once it has been through a double filtration process.

The system is simple—a single roof with a surface area of 65 sq m roof has been prepared for collecting water, which is linked to two 3,000 litre tanks and a 2,000 litre tank.

Bhusan Tuladhar, executive director of the Environment and Public Health Organisation (ENPHO) Nepal that helped install the rainwater harvesting system says, “The advantage is that it’s relatively cheap and you don’t have to depend on the erratic water supply from the mains.”

The total cost for the system at the Alliance Française, amounted to around Rs 40,000, but costs will soon be covered with the amount they’re already

saving per month now that they are relying solely on rainwater and water drawn from the well rather than tanker deliveries. On an average, a system to store rainwater for four months after the monsoon costs Rs 30,000 for a 7,500 litre tank.

“The only catch is storage, especially during the dry months,” says Tuladhar. The Alliance Française has that figured out, but another option is to direct rainwater to the well and recharge groundwater instead.

Martin is already planning to make the rest of the roofs in the compound suitable for harvesting rainfall. “We already had an awareness campaign planned for environment day,” says Martin “but we installed the rainwater harvesting system to do what we

were talking about and show people how easy it really is.”

He is optimistic about others too: “As people realise how easy it is, maybe in a couple of years rainwater harvesting systems will be as prevalent as solar panels have become.” ●

*The Alliance Francaise is hosting a round table and lecture by ENPHO and screening the film Home on 5 June at the Alliance Française, Tripureswor. Free entry. For schedule: [www.alliancefrancaise.org.np](http://www.alliancefrancaise.org.np)*

SEE ALSO  
“Here comes the rain,” #301

**SOAKING IN:** The rainwater harvesting system installed at the Alliance Française supplies water for the entire office.







**NO WORRIES:** Although the lights are out in the area, Kamal Rupakheti of German-Nepalese Help Association continues working on his PC under the light of CFL bulbs, both powered by solar technology.

but many are using it for essential lighting and one computer or tv,” says Joshi. Basanta Kumar of Himsuli says solar is catching on. His company has sold nearly 120 solar systems. “Most of the new houses have designs that incorporate a separate solar wiring for solar,” he says. Despite the initial cost of Rs 30,000 for one 75 watt panel, the photo-voltaic cells come with a 25 year guarantee. The batteries last at least five years if maintained properly. And, international prices for solar cells may decrease from \$3.25 per watt to \$2 per watt. A government tax rebate for solar systems in urban areas has helped boost sales just as a

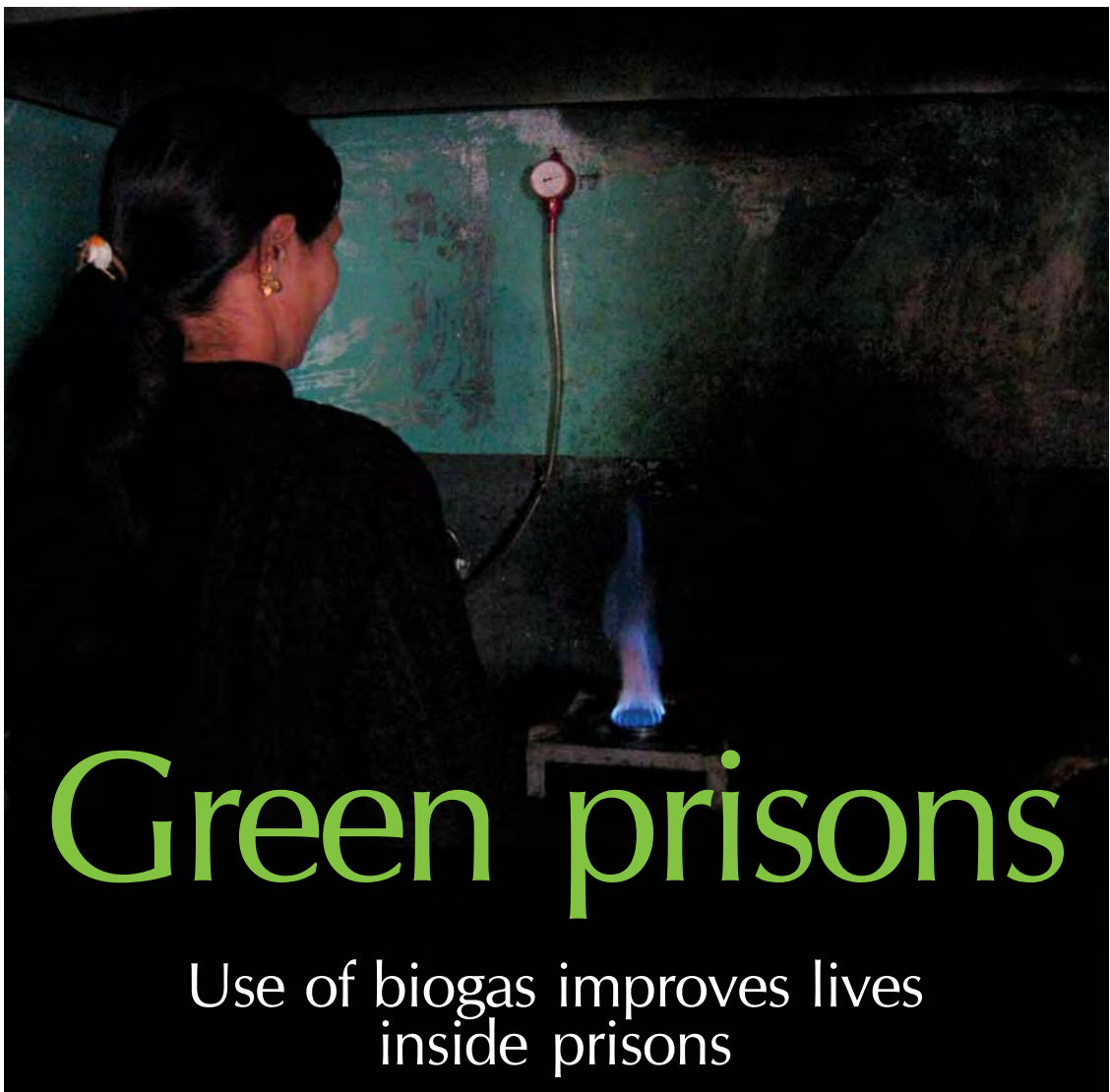
subsidy for rural solar tukis spread its use in the districts. Rhesa Piya of the Energy Sector Assistance Program (ESAP) sees great potential for solar power in Nepal. She says: “It is a great alternative until hydropower is regular. It is god-gifted, and the sun shines at least 300 days in a year.”

**Costs for Solar:**  
Rs 1000-1500 per watt  
1 panel approx Rs 30,000 for 75 watts (at least 12 lights can run on 1 panel)

Lotus Energy- 4418203  
ESAP-5539390  
ECCA Nepal-553870  
Himsuli energy and planning- 9851013688



PHILIPPE MARTIN



# Green prisons

## Use of biogas improves lives inside prisons

MALLIKA ARYAL IN KASKI

It is early morning in Kaski prison and prisoners have just finished preparing their meals on eco-friendly stoves. Until last year, 209 detainees in this prison used to spend a big part of the Rs 45 daily government allowance per inmate on kerosene and half their day in smoky kitchens. But thanks to the introduction of biogas stoves, that’s all changed. “Cooking was an ordeal, and it was unbearable to stay in the kitchen area for long because of the smoke from the kerosene stoves,” says Raju Bogati, who cooks for his group in the Kaski mess. Kaski, Kanchanpur and Chitwan prisons were all renovated last year by Nepal’s International Committee of the Red Cross and the Prison Management Department. They have all been equipped with biogas plants and gas-stoves. “While domestic use of biogas is well known, this is a perfect example of how biogas can also be successfully used in large scale institutional settings,” says Gisella McGuinness, co-coordinator of the Water and Habitat section of the ICRC, which has taken on the initiative in the three prisons. “The project seeks to ensure cleanliness, good health, self-sufficiency

environmental preservation and relieves economic pressure on the inmates and their families in terms of fuel, as a result they can access nutritional food,” adds ICRC’s Rafiullah Qureshi. Since the prison started managing the project in September last year, the detainees in Kaski have been maintaining the plants and stoves themselves. Two separate digesters are hooked to the toilets in the prison and organic kitchen waste can also be fed directly through outlets in the kitchen. “This is perfect for us—there’s no wastage in the kitchen, no extra money spent on fuel and we feel empowered that we can run the plant and the stoves ourselves,” says Maya Pun in the women’s wing. Kaski prison’s jailer Uma Kanta Poudel says that equipping the prison was only the first step and it’s now up to the government to ensure sustainability by providing the expertise and budget for maintenance and repairs. “It is the responsibility of the government to ensure acceptable living conditions of detainees in prison. They should replicate and take a lead role in projects like these in the future,” he says. ●



PICS: MALLIKA ARYAL



# Brother and sister

In Kumar's face you can see the delight that his children are together again.



CHARLES HAVILAND

CHARLES HAVILAND  
in KHOTANG

It was late afternoon at the Maoist sub-cantonment in Udayapur. In a yellow t-shirt, Juna was playing a vigorous volleyball game. Later, she was unmistakably the Comrade Chumauti of Sagar Shrestha's famous picture taken in Bhojpur (pictured right) and printed in nepa-laya's book, *A People War*.

She is married now, but her husband and young son live far away in Sankhuwasabha. Juna's sister, Guna (known by her war name, Comrade Sujata) lives with her in the camp in Udayapur. Guna has seen a lot of action, and was wounded many times. Juna herself was nearly killed by an exploding grenade during the battle for Bhojpur in 2004 in which her commander and 20 others were killed.

Guna and Juna have a brother, Bhuwan and during the war he was in the then-royal Nepal Army. Juna says she never really saw the Army as her enemy. But what if she had encountered Bhuwan on the

# Kollywood calling

Nepali film makers are now trying to reach out to a larger audience

PAAVAN MATHEMA

With no Hindi films released for three months, thanks to the film producers' strike, Nepali films are doing good business.

Of the seven Nepali films released in the last two months *Hamro Milan Kahile Huncha*, *Takdir*, *Jungle Queen*, *Iku*, *Takdir* and *Mission Paisa* are reaping good returns while *Silsila* has crossed 100 days.

The industry has seen a lot of ups and downs since the release of the first Nepali film *Aama* in 1964. In recent years the market has contracted severely with many cinemas closing down during the conflict while the distribution channels for Nepali films in Darjeeling, Sikkim and Assam have disappeared.

But most film makers are positive that 'Kollywood' is now on the path to recovery.

"We can be hopeful about the industry growing," says Ashok Sharma, president of Nepal Film Producers Association, "While only 28 films were released last year, we can expect the figures to reach 45 this year."

But it is questionable whether a higher volume of releases will

equate to higher quality productions. Needless to say, most Nepali films have had repetitive storylines and are highly influenced by Bollywood. Even when a director takes a risk with a new plot, the screenplay and acting is not always up to the mark.

"There is a mass audience that religiously watch Nepali films," says Nakim Uddin, chairman of Quest Entertainment, "and most film makers are satisfied with the returns they get from there." But there is an urban upper class audience that err away from home produced films, opting for Hindi or English movies.

Films that are made to bridge these two audiences end up appealing to only one—or neither—of them. "My film has fared very well outside the valley, although I had expected a better response in Kathmandu where a sector of the audience doesn't really watch Nepali films," says Simosh Sunuwar, maker of *Mission Paisa*.

But processes are underway to improve the quality of Nepali productions. Digital Cinema Nepal has been actively working on a project to digitalise Nepali films. "Shooting films with



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digital technology not only gives better quality but also allow us to release the film in many places at the same time," says Sharma.

"There are more young people now who are interested in joining the Nepali film industry. New directors are coming up who are

ready to take a risk with different storylines," says Naresh Poudel who is working on his new film *Deepshikha* after his 2005 hit, *Dadkan*.

At present, about 150 cinemas operate in the country and efforts are being made to give them a

facelift and improve picture and sound quality. Digital Cinema Nepal has digitized 35 movie halls and processes are underway in 10 more.

Although the industry seems to be making headway, film makers are still hesitant about making big investment commitments. The average budget for a Nepali film is Rs 5 million. It rarely crosses Rs 10 million. "The market is limited and so is the return," says Chhabhi Ojha, producer of the recent hit *Himnat*, "if there was a possibility of higher returns, then we would definitely invest more."

Raj Kumar Pokharel, president of Nepal Motion Pictures Association, says that there is an urgent need to revive the lost markets and start exporting Nepali productions abroad. Nepali films should be able to find an audience not only in India but also other countries like Qatar and Malaysia where there is a large Nepali audience. "People will watch the film if it's good," adds Pokharel, "Nepali film makers have to realise that and treat the industry as a commercial undertaking. If we target the right audience with quality films the gains are bound to be higher." ●



# together again



SAGAR SHRESTHA

**FAMILY PORTRAIT:** The picture of Bhuwan posing with his sisters in happier times hangs in the family home in Khotang (right). Three years after the war ended, Bhuwan and Juna embrace their father (left).

battlefield? “We’d have to answer bullets with bullets.”  
Juna had lots of questions in the drive up from Udayapur to

the Rai home in Khotang for a family reunion. The mountains were dry and eastern Nepal looked like a dust bowl. “I’m very happy to be meeting my brother after a long time,” says Juna as we begin the walk after crossing the Sun Kosi. Chunauti becomes Juna again when she meets an old friend, Nirmala Magar, on the trail. Nirmala is not political but says she feels good her former classmate joined the rebels “because all the villagers support the Maoists”.

At dusk we get to Juna’s tiny village of Suntale. Bhuwan has walked two days from Diktel, where he is based in an army barrack to sit for exams.  
Brother and sister greet each other matter-of-factly, like most Nepali siblings. Their widowed and remarried father, Kumar, is very kind to everyone but there is something sad in his smile.  
The next morning Bhuwan, a handsome, muscular man whose wife lives here in the village, is ploughing. He speaks more

from the heart than his sister. He joined the NA not only because of a military tradition in the family (his grandfather was in the British army and his uncle in the Indian) but also to resist Maoist attempts to recruit among villagers.  
When his sisters joined the rebels, he was shocked. “I told them to complete their studies and not to join the Maoists. I didn’t like the Maoists. I felt bad that we were born of the womb of the same mother.” It was impossible to meet his sisters during the war. And he was deeply troubled by his own colleagues in the army who threatened to arrest his sisters. They did try to detain them, but couldn’t find them. He was also afraid they may meet on the battlefield. “I heard that they took part in the same attacks as me, in Diktel, Udayapur and Bokse. They said they saw me, but I didn’t see them.”  
Yet, what if they had met in battle? “I feel that if we had met in battle then obviously I wouldn’t have spared her,” Bhuwan says. For Kumar, life was hell during the war. “The army used to come and search



the house,” he says, “they would ask me to bring my daughters back. No sooner would the army leave than the Maoists would come and ask me to get my son out of the army, otherwise it would not be good for me. Both sides harassed me for years. The constant tension almost drove me away from here.”  
Now, in Kumar’s face you can see the delight that his children are together again. The siblings’ emotions are harder to detect. “To some extent there was distance between us,” is all Bhuwan will say about their relationship during the war. Juna is much more forthcoming. “We can’t compare the war

period with the present because it is like comparing sky and earth,” she says. “Yes, our ideologies may be different but we’re from the same family. We have a blood relationship.”  
Juna is optimistic that one day the two of them will be part of the same army. Bhuwan says “I’ll have to see.” The two pose with their father for a family portrait. They could be any family. As I snap Kumar between his two children, Bhuwan flings his arms around his father. Juna hesitantly puts her arm on her father’s shoulders, with her hand resting delicately on her brother’s. ●

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# Nepal's 'shining path'

Both Kathmandu and Lima were and still are city states in dysfunctional lands

During the long dark years of the Maoist war in Nepal, many perplexed foreigners looked to Peru to try to understand what was happening here.

The similarities were striking. A mountainous land at the fringes of the modern world with huge inequities among



**HERE AND THERE**  
**Daniel Lak**

ethnicities, economic classes and locations played host to a shadowy guerrilla movement, intent on overthrowing a central state. The Peruvian rebels paid homage to an ideology that many thought outdated and discredited, even in the land of its conception: China.

The insurgents fought in distant hills, attacking isolated police posts at night and depended for sustenance upon a rural peasantry caught in the crossfire. The Nepali Maoists themselves encouraged the comparison with Peru's Sendero Luminoso, in statements, international tie-ups and graffiti on roadside rock faces.

Not that they wanted to



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emulate the fate of Abimael Guzman, Sendero's founder and bloody-minded leader. He was captured in 1992, and discredited himself by calling for a surrender by his cadres a year later. The Peruvian state's decision to dress Guzman in black and white stripes and display him to the public in a cage helped defuse the horrific fear of an entire nation.

Plans to put Pushpa Kumar Dahal in such a cage were no doubt drawn up in Nepali government circles in the late 1990s and early part of this century. They probably sit there still, stained with whiskey and tears, in some retired Army general's study.

Other aspects of the Peruvian state's victory over Sendero (death squads, torture dens and general brutality) were contemplated too, and probably not discouraged by the ranks of conflict resolution specialists from foreign parts who kept this city's hotels and bistros going in the darkest days of the war.

Mountains, Maoism, murderous violence, all these similarities occurred to any of us trying to comprehend Nepal's version of the 'People's War' in the years before the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. We shuddered at the thought of this fair land

emulating far off events in the Andes. The comparisons were both valid and spurious, as all these things are, as I was told in 2002 by a Peruvian academic on assignment here with an environmental organisation.

"Don't let them turn this into Peru," he warned. For my friend, this meant a horrific police state, a populace riddled with informants and an economy twisted by cocaine trafficking. "Nepal can't be like this," he told me.

Our conversation meandered and we decided that there was one crucial similarity with Peru that needed to be addressed here: the huge imbalance in resources and political power and resources between the capital city and the rest of the country.

Kathmandu is Nepal's Lima and still is: a vast black hole of corruption, cynicism and coercive power that both preys upon and ignores a troubled hinterland. Good intentions come to the city and become avarice and disinterest. Suitcases of thousand-rupee notes warp the processes of politics, compromise and peace building.

Contractors, dalals and influence peddlers abound,

especially those with access to the foreign funds that our aidocrats fling about with impunity, disregarding their destructive impact on the polity. Both Kathmandu and Lima were and still are city states in dysfunctional lands. Both countries cry out for devolution and new urban centres of power that will distribute political power beyond their respective Ring Roads.

What's happening now in Nepal's regions (strikes, bandas, sovereignty movements) is a defacto form of devolution that was once de jure before Maoist comrades and their monarchist cronies wrecked it in the 1990s. I burn with anger when I see a foreign voice raised against federalism or devolving power for I know that the willful ignorance behind such opinionating is a comfort to the soul of a mediocrity.

Nepal is not Peru. We need not follow the dreadful tarnished path of that tortured Andean land. But Kathmandu is definitely Lima. And the sooner it becomes just another city in a devolved, federal, modern state, the quicker we can drop the cross-continental. ●

"never say no to what you can do  
never let defeat come over you  
just keep going on and on... and on  
make sure you keep the pace  
don't let life command your space  
just never forget the one you know you are... a star !"

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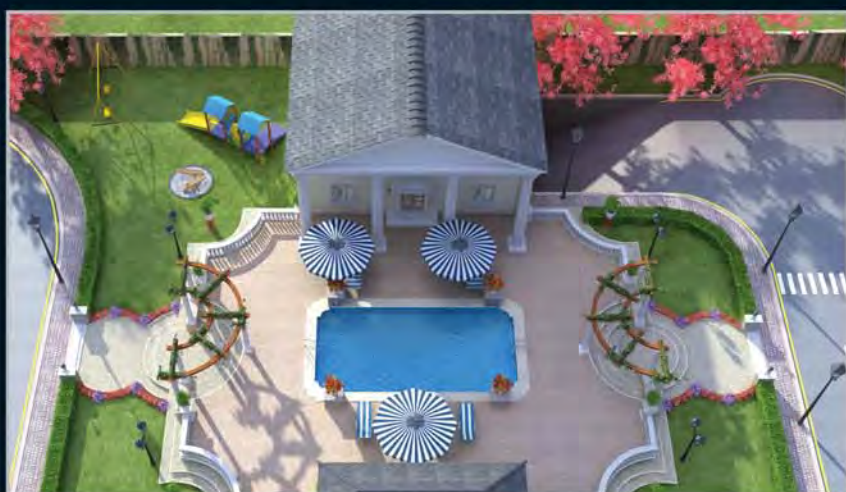
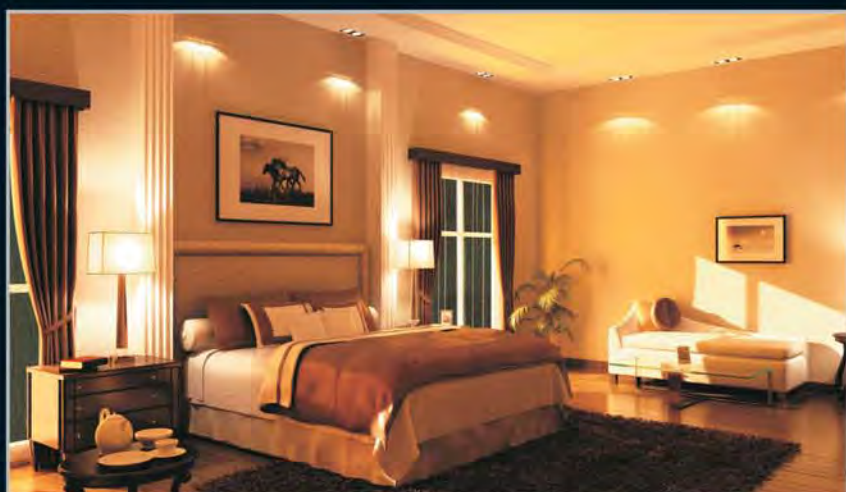


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## ABOUT TOWN

## EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Portraits from the Shadow - The plight of street children**, an exhibition by Sanjeev Maharjan, 3-14 June at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited.
- ❖ **Transcendental Vibrations**, an exhibition by Kabi Raj Lama, 5-17 June at Hotel de l'Annapurna, Durbar Marg.

## EVENTS

- ❖ **Blind chance**, a documentary by Kristof Keislowksi, 5 June. 5PM at the Documentary Open School Film Resource Centre. Gaurighat. 4471104
- ❖ **World Environment Day**, 5 June, Alliance Francaise, 4PM. 4241163
- ❖ **Tai chi & chi kung**, 6 June, 10AM, 11.30AM at Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre, Keshar Mahal Marg, Thamel. 4410402
- ❖ **La Vie en Rose**, a film about Edith Piaf, 10 June, 6.30 PM. Lazimpat Gallery Café. 4428549
- ❖ **Call for entries for Film South Asia** till 30 June, documentaries made in and after January 2007 qualified. 5552141



## MUSIC

- ❖ **TGIF** at Jazzabella Café every Wednesday and Friday. 2110475
- ❖ **Baja gaja**, every tuesday at Moksh, 7.30 pm onwards, Pulchowk. 5526212
- ❖ **Live band** every Friday and rooftop barbecue 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

- ❖ **Mango Etagerie** at The Lounge from 4.30- 6.30PM. Hyatt Regency. 4489362
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **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, Baber 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
- ❖ **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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## WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

This year's monsoon is all set to enter Nepal next week from its usual route via the eastern Himalayan foothills. Satellite pictures taken at noon on Thursday clearly show the cyclone over the Bay of Bengal heading to northeast India. The low pressure over Eastern Tibet has a strong pulling effect that would help lifting the moisture laden clouds high, thus creating a cooling effect to produce heavy rains along the foothills and plains. A series of fronts can be seen in the pictures, with the clouds moving in a discrete form. For the weekend, expect calm skies dominated by clouds in the day and showers towards afternoon.



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KIRAN PANDAY

**UNITED IN LOSS:** Family members mourn the death of Buddha Laxmi Shakya, the third fatality of the blast at the Assumption Church on 23 May. Shakya's daughter Celestina Joseph was also killed in the bombing.



KIRAN PANDAY

**PHYSICAL PRESENCE:** President Ram Baran Yadav and German Nobel Laureate Klaus Bohn Klitzing at the inaugural function of the International Conference on Frontiers of Physics in Kathmandu on Tuesday.



KIRAN PANDAY

**FLAG BEARERS:** Nepal Police perform traditional dances during a celebration to mark the first Republic day at Tundikhel last week.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**RUNNING MATES:** Ram Kumar Tamang, Furba Tamang and Sudeep Kulung celebrate winning the Tenzing Hillary Everest Marathon 2009 last week.



DAMBER KRISHNA SHRESTHA

**OVERCOMING THE ODDS:** Veteran actor Gopal Bhutani, who was facing economic hardships, being given financial assistance by Nepalis in Hong Kong at a ceremony in Kathmandu on Monday.

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# Republic of Euthanasia

While California debates the merits of legalising marijuana, Nepal is way ahead of the US. Has anyone noticed the **pot growing in pots** right in the middle of Museum Marg (formerly Darbar Marg)? Always wondered why we have to have those hard-to-maintain flower pots, when we allow taxis to triple park on this road. And, has anyone noticed Grandfather of the Nation, Prithvi Narayan Shah, turning into a paleface in his statue in front of Singha Darbar? Must be an ad gimmick by Fair and Handsome.



It's not just ash trays and picture frames that have started disappearing from the Republican Museum at Narayanhiti. Apparently Dipendra's desktop's hard drive went missing as it was being moved from the former royal secretariat to make room for the **Foreigner Ministry**.



Now that they are in the opposition, the Baddies are pulling out all the stops. Monday's shutdown of the capital showed that they will even deploy the **Young Tots Communist League** (YTCL) of street kids aged 10 and below to deflate tyres of bicycles in future strikes. They really went too far this time, and gauging from the reax on the streets from vendors to traders, taxi drivers and even rickshaw pullers it was a PR disaster for Com Yummy who led the charge. Yet, she has reason to be peeved. Just when she had installed a cousin at Nepal Airlines and smoothed the way for the purchase of two Airbuses, her government resigned. Despite the delay-tactics in parliament, the deal just couldn't be wrapped up in time and now that the Supremo Court has reinstated Capt Limbo. It looks like Boeing's chances have revived.

Which is why former First Dotter Sujata is finding it difficult to decide between Tourism and Foreign in the new cabinet in this **Government of Losers**. Daddy is pushing Foreign to Makunay, but Tourism suddenly has dollar signs written all over it because of the prospect of aircraft purchases. However, Dotter'd have to paraglide and bungee jump as part of the job description and this is a big minus point. Opposition to Sujata getting either ministry is stronger from within the Koirala clan and the NC than from the UML or MJF.



Two tycoons who paid up to Baddie ministers in return for

favours in deals from telecom to aviation are now left in a spot. They will either have to kiss the moola goodbye and cut their losses, or pay up again to the new masters. The **business buddies of the baddies**, esp PKD's son, are in a bit of a lurch.



Of all the hare-brained schemes concocted by the short-lived Baddie govt, the one that takes the prize for Absurdity of the Week is the bill being proposed to parliament for **mandatory conscription** of all Nepali males. What flummoxes the Ass is whether such things are proposed by the Comrades off the top of their heads because they are so bored sitting at these meetings that they need to liven it up a bit or whether it is part of a grand design to launch World War III. Either way, it doesn't make the idea any less asinine. Sixty per cent of Nepalis are less than 25 years old, let's say half of them are between the ages of 18-25. That would mean 7 million men and women under arms. At a time when we can't even sustain a 100,000-strong army how do the Kamreds propose to fund this and, more importantly: this monstrous army is needed to defend ourselves from whom?



As we try to make up for lost time in completing the new constitution, as Makunay is greeted with a 20 kg marigold

garland in his home district, as the mantri mandal bandfand gets really ugly, and as the country sinks deeper into the morass, a donkey fan suggests including a clause in the new constitution allowing Nepalis to opt for **collective euthanasia**.

The Ass collected the following acronyms from a short news item in a national daily about the threat of a nationwide stir by teachers: BSEC NERE DEO PABSONNISTU HISANGAN NTUNT RF ANFSU(R) NSU PAPAD. The Ass' Grand Prize

goes to PAPAD for giving INSECT and HERPES strong competition for having the most-imaginative NGO acronyms.

Send asinine ideas to: [ass\(at\)nepalitimes.com](mailto:ass(at)nepalitimes.com)



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