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BILASH RAI

# Come together

There is no other way to write the new constitution, protect the peace process and reduce foreign interference than for the political leadership to work together. Yet they can't bring themselves to do it.

Individually, they all give speeches saying there is no alternative to consensus politics. But their actions say just the opposite. Even when antagonistic parties get together, like the NC and the Maoists, it is for selfish and partisan reasons. Threatening "to capture state power through

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a people's rebellion" and a bloodbath will not take the process forward. Openly moving around with guns, refusing to rehabilitate those rejected in the cantonments, continuing to obstruct parliament, will not help.

The election of respected jurist Nilambar Acharya to the constitutional committee shows how negotiations and compromise can lead to a favourable outcome. The parties have proven that they can act responsibly and do the right thing. Acharya's election will hopefully give momentum to the constitution-writing process, which has been pushed back five times. ●



## KARAOKE KRAZE

Who says you can't sing?

p8-9

**Times** nepalnews.com  
Weekly Internet Poll # 467

**Q. The vice president retaking his oath in Nepali is a:**

Total votes: 2,962

Good idea 80.7%
Lousy idea 16.2%
Don't know 3.1%

Weekly Internet Poll # 468. To vote go to: [www.nepaltimes.com](http://www.nepaltimes.com)

**Q. Will the PLA-Army row be settled within six months as the newly reconstituted Special Committee has promised?**

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## DEADLY DEADLOCK

The Maoists are not allowing the CA to function because they say they want to ensure 'civilian supremacy'. The UML-led coalition is determined to resist what it considers a Maoist gameplan to establish totalitarian rule. The NC seems to be driven by only one agenda: ensuring that the daughter of the party boss gets to head the next government.

Part of the reason for all this posturing is that all three parties are trying to manage their internal rifts and contradictions. They have no one to blame but themselves, as they have boxed themselves in by radicalising their own cadre.

The tragedy, of course, is that as a result governance has come to a complete halt, the budget hasn't been passed, the legislature is stalled, and the peace process and constitution-making are in limbo.

No matter how hard they try to hide their intentions, it's the politics of brinkmanship where the aim is to wipe out rivals. Moderation has no place in this game where those who shout the loudest are the only ones heard. Any compromise formula runs the risk of being labelled a surrender. This is a no-win situation.

But the triumvirate of the three big parties know this, which is why all is not lost. Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Madhav Kumar Nepal both detest Girija Prasad Koirala, but they distrust each other even more. However, all three know that their political legacies, their reputation and all they have worked for is at stake. They have the necessary two-thirds majority in the legislature to complete the constitution-drafting process, and there is no other option but to work together.

# The Maoist mind

## A three-pronged strategy from the comrades in the run-up to Dasain

What are the Maoists planning? This question has been at the heart of Nepali politics for the past decade. It remains so even today. This week, the former rebels gave us a glimpse of their strategy, or more accurately, strategies.



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

On Sunday, they set up a jumbo 'shadow government', with multiple departments, accommodating leaders from all factions, reminding many of the war-time parallel structures.

On Monday, they decided to boycott programs involving the prime minister, signalling that they would continue to challenge

involved in larger political negotiations, the Maoists have focused on internal party work for the last few months. All leaders are involved in training programs across the country. They have divided up responsibilities about where to address mass meetings in coming weeks.

The Maoists recognise that all their opponents would like to exacerbate the divide between the pragmatists and dogmatists, leadership and cadre, politicians and PLA, and the party and its ethnic fronts. But they also see other parties are in self-destruction mode because of factional feuds. The Maoist calculation is if they can stay together, even as others fragment, they will inevitably get back to power.

strong centre and leaving space for hegemonic rule, and going in for elections when victory is assured.

As this week's events show, the Maoists appear to have adopted a three-pronged strategy.

The first is to mount a calibrated movement that doesn't draw international condemnation and a backlash. This is uncannily similar to the strategy they had adopted after withdrawing from the interim government in September 2007, leading to the postponement of the November elections. The idea is to generate pressure, show they are relevant, encourage ethnic movements, but not cripple Kathmandu yet: to prevent the internationals, middle class and media from going on an offensive.

Simultaneously they will keep Madhav Nepal on tenterhooks. This involves stoking GPK's and Jhalanath Khanal's ambitions and ensuring that the government's credibility remains in the dumps. They were delighted at the government's discomfort on the VP issue. They are encouraging local actors and groups to oppose the security policy. And the Maoists' own achievements (essentially Baburam Bhattarai's) are highlighted to show up this government's non-performance.

The third element is to reach out to India and assuage concerns on China, multi-party democracy, and security. The other more gullible internationals are being told: look, we have been deprived of leadership of the executive, legislature, and now the key CA committee, but we continue to be responsible. If you want progress on the peace process, this government has to go.

Whether this strategy will succeed is difficult to tell. The Maoists have

**IN THE DARK:** Nepali Congress CA members Radheshyam Adhikari and Nilambar Acharya wait out a power cut in the House on Tuesday. Acharya was elected to head the CA's powerful constitution committee last week.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

The Maoists may be the largest party in the CA, but its majority has little meaning if Dahal can't win back the NC's trust. The trouble is he has double-crossed everyone so often he is finding it difficult to get people to take him seriously. Nepal is the head of government, but his party lacks the numbers to claim respect and leadership.

That leaves Koirala, who seems to have lost the will to take the initiative and pull the country out of its present morass. He is now so obsessed with perpetuating his dynasty he is compromising the long-term interest of his own party and the nation.

Just as the new constitution can't be written without the Maoists being a part of a new government, it also needs the NC back in government. Working out the mechanism and the numbers is the critical aspect.

Since the country has already started winding down for Dasain, our leaders must use the holidays to thrash out a formula for an all-party government with a clear strategy to rescue the country from this potentially deadly deadlock.

The formation of a UML-led government was necessary to fill the vacuum when Dahal decided to resign on point of principle. That point has now been made. It's time for his party to join the national government as its decisive stockholder.

the legitimacy of the government.

On Tuesday, they broke the logjam on the composition of the special committee, accepted the PM's leadership, sent two nominees and allowed it to meet. The move was geared to show their commitment to the larger peace process.

Through the week, the party leadership met with striking regularity to review current politics. They also found the time to reorganise their state committees.

Connect the dots and Maoist priorities start becoming clearer. The core aim is to keep the party intact, consolidate, and energise the cadre. Even as they have been

The leaders may not like each other, but for this larger objective, pride is being swallowed and difficult compromises hatched. And the cadre is being indoctrinated with slogans of change and 'civilian supremacy'. They are being told it is time for another struggle, and that success is near.

Success would mean leading the government again, or at the least, toppling this government, settling the PLA question at a convenient time in a way politically and financially advantageous to the party, writing a constitution which would appease their diverse ethnic base while creating a

to reconcile two conflicting strands: of going in for a movement to enhance their bargaining power, yet projecting a responsible image to show their democratic commitment. Skeptics will see it as a continuation of Maoist duplicity.

The intra-party divisions in the NC and UML complicate the larger politics. Hostile generals lurk in the background. The media will not be kind. India is not in a generous mood, and will judge the Maoists not on what they say, but specific actions.

Enjoy the Dasain and Tihar interlude, for the winter ahead will be politically turbulent. ●



# The fallacy of supremacy

The exact constitutional status of Parmanand Jha is unclear. The CA elected him as Nepal's first vice president. At an elaborate swearing-in ceremony in July 2008, President Ram Baran Yadav administered the oath of office in Nepali. Jha chose to



STATE OF THE STATE  
C K Lal

translate the text and repeat it in Hindi. A year later, the Supreme Court has decided that Jha has to swear in again in Nepali or face the consequences.

No pragmatic politician complies willingly with the directives of courts, committees or commissions unless they are in a tight spot and are looking for legal respite. In a democracy, an elected official is not answerable to anybody save his own constituency. Jha is on solid ground here. Almost all Madhes-based parties have applauded his refusal to re-take the oath of office in Nepali.

Pahadi-dominated parties are furious. Jha has publicly challenged their linguistic



CARTOON BY BATSIYAN IN KANTIPUR

## Where does the buck stop, at the Supreme Court or the Constituent Assembly?

superiority. But electoral calculations prevent them from publicly speaking out against the language rights of non-Nepali speakers. Hence, a purely political issue is being given a constitutional colour: the argument being that even if the judgment of the court was flawed, Jha should have resigned to uphold the 'rule of

law'. A pliant person could then have been elected in his place.

The rule of law is meant to be a deterrent against the abuse of power. The concept is turned on its head when the law becomes merely a tool to give continuity to the status quo. It then becomes legal arbitrariness, which creates

grounds for open defiance. The judges of the Supreme Court need to reflect whether their ruling about the legality of Jha's oath was based on rule of law or rule by law. Legal opinion is divided along ethno-political lines.

The political fallout of Jha's decision remains to be seen. If Sadbhavana, TMDP and MJF (Democratic) were to stick to their election manifestos, Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal would have to quit. But if Madhesi parties in the anti-Maoist coalition were to sign on the dotted line, Mahanth Thakur and Bijaya Gachhedar may as well begin preparing to set up a new 'nationalist' party.

One of the unintended consequences of the face-off between an elected vice president and a few nominated judges of the Supreme Court is that the Constituent Assembly can now discuss bases of popular sovereignty, of which the democratic form is parliamentary supremacy.

The principle of constitutional supremacy flows from the belief that all politicians are fallible while

most judges are angels. This often leads to judicial supremacy. Under communist or military rule, judges as well as parliamentarians are expected to be subservient to either the politburo or the junta. Sovereignty is then interpreted to mean the right of the rulers to do as they please.

The 1990 constitution ended up establishing judicial supremacy when one of its framers agreed to become the chief justice. The executive became impotent, the legislature was made dysfunctional. Whims of the court reigned supreme. Finally, the constitution collapsed under the weight of its own contradictions, the Maoists just accelerated the process.

The CA needs to assert itself and tell the courts to leave politics to politicians. The best place to debate which language the vice president should take his oath in is the CA. It's good to have experts on tap, but a priesthood of judges at the top of the constitutional hierarchy is a fundamentally flawed idea in a democratic republic of multiple minorities. ●

## LETTERS

### HINDI

I fail to understand why Prashant Jha ('Swearing in Hindi' #466), among others, insists that Nepali is only a Pahadi language. Why can't we say that Nepali is the national language of Nepal which also happens to be spoken by many Pahadis? Divisive columnists will divide the country. Taking an oath in Nepali in no way impinges on one's cultural identity. In fact one who aims high in life, and even otherwise in this globalised world, needs to have several identities. Why can't one be a Madhesi and a Nepali at the same time?

Rajendra, email

● I am saddened to read this article ('Swearing in Hindi' #466) because it only serves to stoke ethnic hatred. I think the writer, along with our vice president, is yet to see the big picture. The crux of the issue is that the vice president, who is a jurist himself, defied the law from the very outset. Plus, he was taking the oath as the vice president of Nepal, as a representative of the entire Nepali populace, not just some section of it. So he is required to take the oath in the official language of Nepal, which still is Nepali according to the constitution.

Name withheld, email

● Throughout this whole Hindi oath episode, we've missed one thing: Parmanand Jha's mother tongue is Maithili, not Hindi, yet no one has spoken out about him taking the oath in Maithili. As a Nepali, I am proud to say Maithili is the second most widely spoken language after Nepali. When will your renowned columnists recognise this fact? Or are they in league with Upendra Yadav?

Name withheld, email

### TREK RESPONSIBLY

In response to 'Climbing to keep the Himalaya alive' (#466), it's too much to expect that there would be a moratorium on trekking or climbing to protect the Himalaya from human activity. Alternately, any responsible mountaineer/trekker should be adopting eco-friendly measures to protect the fragile Himalayan environment. For example, resources should be utilised sparingly and efforts made to leave as little of an eco-footprint as possible. Serious efforts are needed to harness renewable energy sources like solar and wind and be less dependent upon biomass fuels. The efforts of Dawa Steven Sherpa in preserving the Himalayan environment are laudable.

DBN Murthy, Lalitpur

### GHOOS

Complaints about the Maoists' unofficial fund raising are probably valid but I have found personally that for the two years that they ran the government, I was rarely asked for a bribe at some of the ministries. Now that the UML is back, so are the bribes.

Name withheld, email

### A CLIMATE FOR CHANGE

I appreciate Nirvana Chaudhary's comment ('A climate for change', #466) about the impact of global warming in Nepal. But, as grim as things may be, Nepal is in a unique position to serve as a great example of a nation that celebrates sustainability. In fact we've already come a long way. We've learned to use cow dung to make gas, to use hydroelectricity and solar power panels in place of coal-powered electric plants, and we have a fairly well developed public transportation system for a developing country.

If only we stopped burning tyres, government vehicles and adulterating fuel,

and restored forests and found better ways to operate brick factories, Nepal would literally be one of the greenest nations in the world.

Sushil Bogati, USA

### WOMEN IN RED

Enjoyed Mallika's Aryal's 'Reinventing Tij' (#465). The idea of women standing in front of Singha Darbar in red to force political and social change is a good one. We must take advantage of this opportunity to transform the patriarchy in Nepal that motivates festivals like Tij, where women have to fast for their husbands but not the other way around.

Mona, UK

whether an insect has wider vision than our leaders.

Anupam, email

### WHAT A PITY

In 'Rinchen reaches Ulan Bator' (#465) your reporter says that the word "skoda" in Czech means "sorry". Not exactly. It's more "what a pity". But that's just a technicality, congratulations to Rinchen.

Luba Svrčina, Prague

### CORRECTIONS

- Due to an editorial error, the front page picture (#463) was wrongly identified. It is actually an aerial shot of Bhakunde Besi.
- Photo credits for front page pictures (#466) were missing. The top photo of Mt Taboche was taken by Alton Byers of The Mountain Institute and the bottom image of Male was by Kunda Dixit.
- In 'A climate for change' (#466) the 'cash for trash' program is run by Eco Everest Expedition and the 'Beat the GLOF Action Event' was organised by the Sherpa student group Sherwi Yondhen Tshokpa and supported by IDEAS, a non-profit organisation run by Dawa Steven Sherpa. This event took place on 18-19 June 2009.

### LETTERS

Nepali Times welcomes feedback. Letters should be brief and may be edited for space. While pseudonyms are accepted, writers who provide their real names and contact details will be given preference. Email letters should be in text format without attachments with 'letter to the editor' in the subject line.

Email: letters(at)nepalitimes.com  
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GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu, Nepal.



### INSECTS

If I remember correctly Ratna Sansar Shrestha has been writing on the theme of rational hydropower planning for quite some time ('Sharing water resources', #464), yet our leaders don't seem to listen. Such disregard for important issues makes me wonder



# You are what you eat

## Beware of tomatoes too red or veggies too green

KATY WILLIAMS

When government scientist Ram Pameru goes to the market he steers clear of the stacks of perfect produce and hunts for vegetables that are “infested with insects”.

That, he says, is the only way to guarantee that the produce hasn’t been treated with as much as 25 times the recommended dose of pesticides. Children and mothers are particularly vulnerable to pesticides, which are known to impair intellectual development and damage the immune system.

Desperate to increase yields, commercial vegetable farmers in places such as the Kathmandu Valley, Chitwan and Kabhre are drenching their produce with chemicals. They believe the recommended doses simply don’t deal with pests effectively, and they can get a higher price for more aesthetically pleasing vegetables.

Farmers also use banned or out-of-date chemicals brought over the open border with India by unscrupulous traders. Often farmers dip green vegetables, especially broad leaf mustard, tomatoes and brinjal (aubergine) in malathion or mancozeb solution just before taking them to market to enhance their shiny appearance.



PICS: MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA



Researchers have discovered that potatoes have been sprayed with toxic organochlorine insecticide endosulfan at the point of purchase to give them a polished look while button mushrooms are sprayed, then packaged to keep them looking pristine. The vegetables most likely to be over-treated are tomatoes, brinjal, cucumbers and bitter gourd.

Official government figures show the legal import of pesticides had fallen from a high of 744,485kg in 2002 to 338,365kg in 2006. But imports rose steeply in 2007/2008 to spike at 762,000kg.

About 319 types of pesticides have been registered for use under the Pesticides Act (1991) and Pesticides Rules (1993). Lindane, phosphamidon, organomercury fungicides, BHC and the dirty dozen – the Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPS) which the 2004 Stockholm Convention listed for global elimination – are all banned. But some still seep over the porous border, particularly DDT, which continues to be available in India for a ‘grace period’ to tackle malaria.

The Nepal Agricultural Research Council’s numerous departments are housed in what was once an impressively elegant set of buildings near Satdobato. Now they are simply rotting away. The highly educated and concerned scientists working there wait for funding but are powerless.

“This needs to be a top government priority,” says chief entomologist Shree Baba Pradhan. “We have strong rules

and regulations. But implementation is the problem.”

And it’s not just the health of farm workers and consumers that is at stake. Pests are slowly building up resistance, and indiscriminately used pesticides accelerate this problem.

This is all good news for traders who can then sell more products. “They are thriving,” says Pameru. “They are highly influential in the farming communities and lure farmers into using more pesticides. The government should close them down.”

Nepal has traditional ways of growing vegetables, but farmers find it difficult to go back to the old ways. The Council has new technology to start residual analysis checks at vegetable collection centres, which won’t be costly. Those found using too much pesticide will be banned from taking their produce to market. The Council also wants to look

into the effects of Nepali-style cooking on chemicals.

Jagadish Bhakta Shrestha, pesticide registrar at the Pesticide Registration and Management Division, says a lack of training and technology means Nepal is “a little bit behind” in terms of introducing bio and botanical pesticides, integrated pest management (IPM) systems and organic farming, but is beginning to collaborate with Indian organisations.

He admits that little can be done to bring those farmers that are knowingly breaking the law to task. Pesticide inspectors work through the district development offices in 75 districts but all they can do is try to convince farmers to change their ways. Nevertheless he claims it is a high priority because it concerns public health.

Says Shrestha: “We lack the resources to do full inspections and monitoring, which is vital.” ●



## Where to go organic in the Kathmandu Valley

Organic Village outlets in Baluwatar (4414343) and Bakhundole (5528468). Email [info@theorganicvillage.com](mailto:info@theorganicvillage.com) or check [www.theorganicvillage.com](http://www.theorganicvillage.com)

The Organic Cafe and Salad Bar in Thamel (4215726, 9841286055) Email [love@loveorganic.com.np](mailto:love@loveorganic.com.np) or check [www.loveorganic.com.np](http://www.loveorganic.com.np)

Organic Food Market every Wednesday and Sunday, 10AM-12.30PM

The Summit Hotel in Sanepa (5521810)

Email [summit@wlink.com.np](mailto:summit@wlink.com.np) or check [www.summit-nepal.com](http://www.summit-nepal.com)

## Ten ways to limit the effects of pesticides

1. Wash your vegetables several times in water or soak them for several hours. This will reduce the levels of some pesticides but will not eliminate them.
2. Look for the imperfect fruit or vegetable. If it’s been nibbled at or still contains some insects it’s clearly not full of pesticides.
3. Buy organic fruit and vegetables where possible (*see box opposite*).
4. Try growing your own. It’s remarkable how much you can grow in a small kitchen garden or even pots.
5. Only eat produce that is in season: growers attempt to lengthen the season of vegetables by treating with chemicals.
6. Buy local. Ideally from small growers who are unlikely to be able to afford to treat vegetables with a lot of chemicals. Failing
7. that make sure it’s Nepali as Indian imports may be worse. As much as 70% of the cultivated area of the country employs organic farming methods because farming is on such a small scale.
8. Peeling also reduces exposure but valuable nutrients are often lost in the process.
9. Fruit and vegetables with tough skins, like carrots, should be scrubbed with a brush to remove any pesticide residue.
10. Produce like apples and cucumbers should be peeled because the wax-laden skins tend to hold more pesticides than other produce. Leafy vegetables like lettuce and spinach should be stripped of their outer leaves, which tend to collect most of the pesticide residue, and the rest should be washed carefully.



## Economy calls

WorldLink Communications launched its 'India Call Card' last week. Customers can now call anywhere in India for just Rs 2 per minute. Calling cards worth Rs 250, Rs 500 and Rs 1000 are available in the market.



## Hornet

On 28 August, Syakar Company launched 'Honda Hornet' in Nepal. The Hornet CB600F was first introduced to the Honda range in 1998 and is still touted as the most stylish and advanced bike around.

## Money management

Standard Chartered Bank Nepal signed a memorandum of understanding with Beed Invest on 2 September to introduce portfolio management services to its customers.

## Sumptuous

Barek Bawarchi introduced the authentic taste of Dhaka Biryani in Hyatt Regency's 'Dhaka Biryani Promotion' last week. The buffet's sumptuous menu catered to the taste of both vegetarians and non-vegetarians alike.



## Win-Win

Hajmola is organising 'Hajmola khau, Harke lai hasau' once again. A panel of judges will choose the most humorous joke every 15 days.

## New branch

Kamana Bikash Bank opened a new branch in Srijana Chok, Pokhara last week. The bank will open another branch in Chitwan in the near future.



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Pathshala for Advancement

## Easy pay

Kumari Bank and Education Consultancy Association of Nepal (ECAN) signed a memorandum to help students register for standardised tests. Students can now pay online for these tests.

## Conservation

In an attempt to preserve the country's cultural heritage, Kumari Bank signed a four-year agreement with local organisation Sinha Swan Khala and handed over Rs 50,000 along with 300 t-shirts.

# Hiring hows

## Don't expect to get what you want if you're not really looking

Every company needs to hire good people. A manager gets better at hiring the right people through practice: by making mistakes and learning from them. Even then, it's safe to say that many hires do not work out for various reasons. Sometimes, the chemistry is not there to allow smooth collaboration. At other times, the job is too vague for the person. Still, as so often happens in



**STRICTLY BUSINESS**  
**Ashutosh Tiwari**

Nepal these days, even when there's a severe shortage of good people, the person you end up hiring turns out to have wanted the long-term job for a short-term duration while he privately waits for a student visa abroad.

How then does a manager go about hiring correctly? There's no exact answer, but there are ways to reduce hiring errors.

**Results matter.** Most managers first put together a generic vacancy ad, then wait for candidates to show up. This is the traditional way of finding people. What is likely to work better is to first visualise what the job demands in terms of specific actions and results, think about what personal traits and strengths are needed to produce those results, and then draw up the characteristics of the person who

can best fulfill that role. This way, the role gets filled explicitly for results, and the ad focuses on the results that are to be delivered. A generic ad is only helpful to the headhunters who can cursorily sort and list applicants without having to think about how non-traditional candidates could add value to their client's organisations.

**Broad interviews.** At most Nepali companies, it's the head of human resources or senior managers who conduct the interviews. They do so because they are the decision-makers. What they often miss is that once the person is hired, she will work primarily with colleagues at her level, who may or may not like her, and not necessarily with senior managers. If the chemistry is not there, most new hires end up not performing well, and may leave the company. Such an action costs the company time, money and morale.

One way to preempt this is to involve prospective colleagues in the first-round interviews so they can assess the candidate for an interpersonal fit. With this freedom, the manager needs to ensure the hiring process does not degenerate into like-minded staff hiring clones, thereby reducing staff diversity.

**Experiences and intangibles.** Except for high-level precision work such as brain surgery or

low-level clerical work that involves stuffing printed matter into envelopes, most jobs require a mix of experience and intangibles. Too many years of experience in one specific domain can be a hindrance to performance for most candidates. In these fast-changing times, stuck in their old ways of doing things, staff may fail to respond to new ways of conceptualising their roles, their company and their industry.

Print journalists with years of experience, for example, may forever reminisce about the good old days while failing to adapt to the challenges posed by digital media. Similarly, retail bankers may be stuck on chasing the same old high net-worth Nepalis while being clueless about how unassuming small business owners and rural landowners could be an untapped source of revenue. As for intangibles, social traits such as curiosity, drive, an eagerness to learn quickly what one doesn't know and an ability to share what one knows with others ultimately beat, at the workplace, symbols of respected but lonely achievements such as superior academic achievement.

Good employees take a company to greater heights. Finding them is a process of trial and error. The best that a manager can do is to minimise the usual hiring errors so the chances of finding the right people go up. ●



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- 'The pleasures and politics of pornography' by Shohini Ghosh
- 'Zia's long reach' by Quddus Mirza
- 'Creating an audience from the void' by Aunohita Mojumdar
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## रेडियो कार्यक्रमको आदान-प्रदान नेटवर्क हाइवे

हरेक दिन बिहान र बेलुका साढे ६ बजेदेखि ७ बजेसम्म



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पोखरा



उज्यालो 90 नेटवर्क  
सानेपा

रेडियो चितवन ९४.६  
रत्ननगर

## अब सधैका साथी





MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

# Playing truant

Khagendra Panta in *Naya Patrika*, 1 September

नयाँ पत्रिका

The interim constitution clearly states that if any CA member is absent from 10 consecutive meetings without giving notice to the assembly, he or she will be expelled. To date, a total of 57 CA meetings have taken place. Despite constant reminders from the CA Chairman Subash Nembang, most senior politicians are guilty of having neglected the parliamentary duties for which they were elected. Attendance is negligible on the part of most:

CA member	Number of days present
Girija Prasad Koirala (NC) (Though he attended three meetings, Koirala did not sign the attendance book)	0
Pushpa Kamal Dahal (CPN-Maoist)	4
Madhav Kumar Nepal (UML)	3
Jhala Nath Khanal (UML)	13
Sher Bahadur Deuba (NC)	2
Bijay Kumar Gachhadar (MJF-Democratic)	12
Mahant Thakur (TMLP)	15
Upendra Yadav (MJF)	12
Rajendra Mahato (Sadbhawana)	10
Baburam Bhattarai (CPN-Maoist)	9
Ram Bahadur Thapa (CPN-Maoist)	7

Apart from these leaders, a dozen more CA members risk being expelled from the assembly. Constitutionally speaking, they already have been.

# Mao, Inc.

Madhav Basnet in *Nepal*, 31 August-6 September

नेपाल

Multi-purpose cooperatives, poultry-farming, pig-rearing and media outlets are among the ventures Maoist cadres have invested in to successfully generate income and become self-reliant. The Maoist party is the first in Nepal to have invested in business through affiliated groups such as the YCL and student groups.

Maoist leaders themselves have invested in a range of ventures. But it is difficult to obtain particulars of such investments. The reason for this is the party's long-standing rejection of the notion of private property. Accordingly, the assets of all party members belong to the party itself, and no leader or cadre is allowed to invest for personal profit. However, it is rumoured that despite the sanction, many party members have invested secretly in business. The possibility has stirred up debate within the party.

The question of investment by party leaders was raised at the last

central committee meeting. A committee was formed under the leadership of Mohan Baidya for the express purpose of investigating the matter. The 15-point code of conduct that was made public thereafter states it thus: "If central committee members are found guilty of corruption or are using the party's name to secretly raise funds it will be treated as a serious crime and dealt with severely."

It is not difficult to conclude that such a blunt statement can only be the result of actual misdemeanours on the part of leaders or cadres. What is more, when the investigative committee allowed a grace period of 15 days for party members to declare their assets, more than 250 cases were lodged with the committee by party members at all levels, Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal included. This shows that secret investments are rife within the party.

According to sources, the Maoists have invested over Rs 10 million in Mirmire FM alone, almost Rs 50 million on a fleet of over 300 cars, and about

Rs 45 million in the party headquarters in Koteswor. The party has also invested Rs 40 million in its flagship Martyrs Memorial Cooperative Organisation in Sindhupalchok district. When Baburam Bhattarai was Finance Minister, over Rs 10 million was made available to this cooperative by the government. The deposit of Rs 32 million for Balaju's Janamaitri hospital was drawn from government payments intended for PLA temporary camps, according to a source. Total investment in this hospital now stands at Rs 330 million.

The debate on the involvement of leaders in such ventures continues. Maoist politburo member and YCL in charge Kul Bahadur KC says he too has heard the rumours of financial dealings by party leaders and admits this is why the investigative committee was set up. Echoing the 15-point code of conduct, he warns, "If anyone is found to have invested for personal profit then it will be taken as a serious crime and will be severely punished."

# Peace expenditure

Rameshwor Bohora in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 1-16 September

हिमाल

The government and the Maoists signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in November 2006, marking the formal beginning of the peace process. The process has not brought much hope to the people, although over Rs 58 billion has already been spent in the last three years. Peace is expensive.

A huge portion of the peace fund comes from donors. The peace ministry alone has spent about Rs 18.97 billion if we include this year's budget. Other expenditure is as follows:

- Reconstruction of demolished infrastructure: Rs 20.5 billion
- United Nations Mission in Nepal: Rs 13.19 billion

- CA election: Rs 3.05 billion
- Logistics for PLA soldiers: Rs 2.27 billion
- CA session (1 year): Rs 742 million

Considerable sums have also been spent on constitution writing and inclusion:

- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): Rs 1.8 billion
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID): Rs 2.14 billion
- Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC): Rs 2.73 billion
- European Union (EU): Rs 510 million
- Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA): Rs 470 million
- Germany: Rs 190 million



# Jha's justice

Letter to the Editor in *Nagarik*, 2 September

नागरिक

Vice President Parmanand Jha made a mockery of the rule of law by defying the SC order. He continues to object to the SC order and argues his position is legitimate. He claims to be Nepal's vice president, but takes his oath of office in Hindi, the Indian national language. What does this say about his moral character?

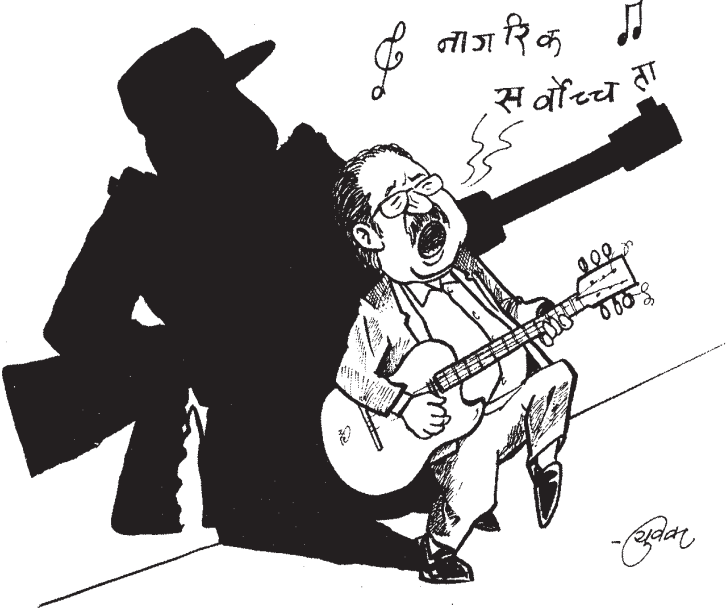
Jha himself is a law student. The court has clarified with sufficient reasons and precedents why

his oath taking in Hindi breached the constitutional provision. But he does not seem to admit that he is mistaken. If he truly believes in the rule of law, he should have obeyed the court order and retaken the oath in Nepali. This would have secured his position as well as supported the justice of the state.

The court decision is not biased at all. The interim constitution has declared Nepali to be the national language and the language of communication. By defying the court order, Jha has challenged the judiciary and questioned



the delivery of justice. His act is tantamount to contempt of court. He should resign. Kamal Koirala, New Baneswor



"Civilian supremacy"





KIRAN PANDAY

# Jumping the gun

## Federalism is fraught with potential failure

The elected Constituent Assembly is supposed to write the constitution. But we jumped the gun. The commission tasked to write the interim constitution declared the country a federal republic before CA members had a chance to debate its merits.

We need to step back and take a fresh look at the problems involved, not least because the commission doesn't have the right to preempt the popularly elected CA.



**COMMENT**  
**Ratna Sansar Shrestha**

For one, the proposed ethnic federalist model impinges on a citizen's right to equal access to national resources since it grants communities special rights to provincial forests, mines, rivers. This pits communities directly against one another since it encourages them to undercut one another's rights.

The recent cold-blooded murder of seven yarsagumba harvesters from Gorkha by a local community in Manang prefigures the devastating consequences a federal arrangement could have. It could also set off a wave of internal migration and displacement, as we've already seen in the Tarai.

Second, the proposal to entitle particular ethnic groups to the exclusive leadership of particular provinces could take

the country down the Yugoslavia path. Take the proposed Newa province in Kathmandu Valley. Since only 45 per cent of the valley is Newari, the majority will perpetually be led by a minority. If the valley's 11 adjoining districts were included in the province, then 25 per cent would rule the rest. This will also require the government to split up territory that many groups claim, which could set off race riots.

Third, federalism will be very costly since it will create many more high offices of state to be filled with pompous personalities. We already have a president who likes stopping traffic when he's on the road, and a trouble-making vice president who puts even the ex-crown prince to shame. Federalism will elevate more people like this to the posts of governors and ministers at the provincial level. The question is: do taxpayers really want to shoulder this extra administrative burden?

Finally, federalism in itself won't accomplish what it sets out to do: empower ethnic and marginalised communities. The unitary structure at the provincial level will continue to leave some groups out of power. It will add one more layer of politicians to the bureaucracy who will leach off money that's supposed to help people. Already, less than half of the

money slated for development work actually reaches the people. Provincial federalism could exacerbate this tendency. Instead, we should devolve power to the grassroots level and skirt the provinces. This way, there will be less corruption and greater representation.

Federalism has its merits, of course, but it's dangerous at the doses we're recommending. The right medicine, at the right time, at the right level will work. No more, no less.

We need to discuss federalism in more detail and rejecting it doesn't mean less representation. Take the demand for a Newa province as an example. If one is to look around, many of the major cultural celebrations of Nepal are based on Newa culture. Similarly, what is famed as Nepali architecture is actually Newa architecture. Therefore it is in the Newa interest to ensure that our motherland, Nepal, doesn't disintegrate due to problems with its proposed federal structure.

Newa identity is like a fish that will not survive outside water, in this case, our motherland. The same could be said of all of Nepal's ethnicities, scattered as they are across the country. It is just not worthwhile to split this country along ethnic lines. ●

*Ratna Sansar Shrestha is a water resource analyst.*

## “Humanitarian, not Maoist”

Shramaner Anand, Maoist CA member, Kathmandu

### How did you spend the last year in the CA?

In the 13 months that the CA has been running, good and bad things have happened. We declared the country a republic during the first CA session, and then got ordinary people's suggestions for the constitution and on this basis began work on preliminary drafts within our thematic committees. Five committees have finished their drafts already. But there's growing mistrust between the parties, which has put the constitution work on hold. I'm beginning to think that the constitution won't be written on time.



PICS: MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

### You're a monk and a Maoist. Isn't that a contradiction?

Religion is about equality, happiness, humanity and is revolutionary in its own way, so what Buddha preached 2500 years ago isn't too different from what the Maoists are saying now.

### But Buddha wasn't violent like the Maoists, right?

I don't believe in violence, it's inhuman.

### If you don't believe in violence, how did you ever fall in with the Maoists?

After training to be a monk in Sri Lanka for 20 years, I returned to Nepal in 2001. After witnessing the violence here, like other monks, I wanted to convince people to turn against violence, which required that I stay close to Maoist fighters, which is why I'm officially a Maoist CA member. But I'm a humanitarian, not a Maoist.

### Are you for a unicameral or bicameral system?

Let's see if a unicameral system works first, since we're in an experimental phase right now.

### Will the constitution be written on time?

The parties must first cooperate, focus on the people's demands, and there shouldn't be any more protests. If all this happens, the constitution will be written on time.

## “Almost done”

Shakuntala Lepcha, UML CA member, Ilam

### How have you spent the last 13 months in the CA?

We're currently writing preliminary drafts on the basis of the suggestions we received from ordinary people. Five committees have finished their drafts already. Although the schedule's already been revised a couple of times, there's no need to panic. CA members should work deliberately, not hastily.



### Has your committee finished its draft?

I am in the Protection of Minority Rights and Marginalised Communities committee. We've already submitted the draft and have begun discussions on it.

### The house is frequently disrupted. At this rate, will the constitution be written on time?

If the parties stop bickering, the government is more sensitive and CA members work really hard then the constitution can be written on time.

### Do you support a unicameral or bicameral system?

A bicameral system, with a lower and upper house, would be best for Nepal.

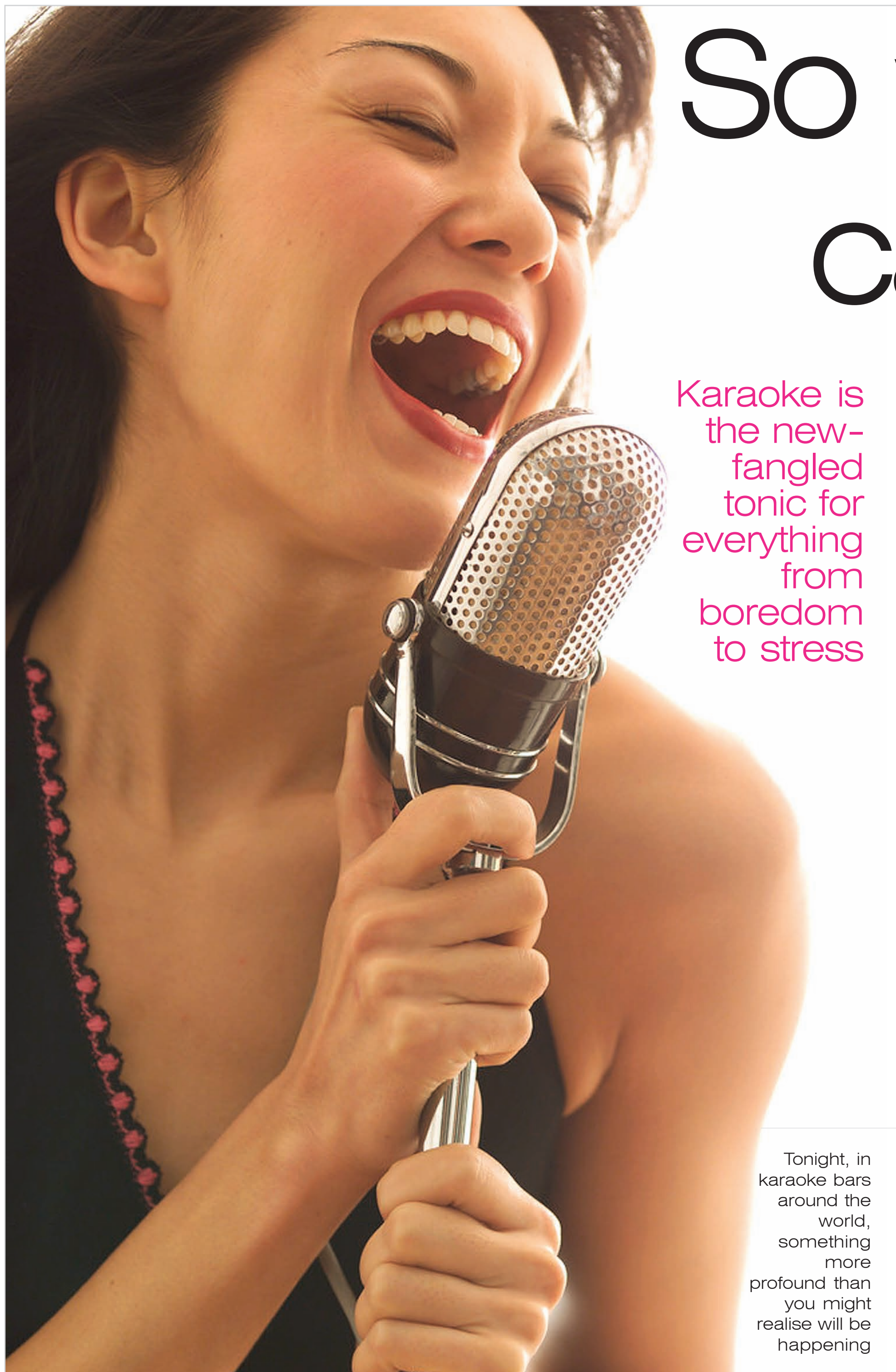
### What should be the official state language?

First of all, we're all Nepalis, almost everyone understands Nepali, so the government should conduct its work in Nepali. But the government must help to develop the other languages that Nepalis speak.

### How does it feel to represent the less than 4000-strong Lepcha community?

This is the first time in 240 years that a Lepcha got this far up in government. There are two of us in the CA right now, the other being Tikaram Lepcha. We were both elected from the same place. We are both extremely proud of the fact. The 2001 census recorded 3,600 Lepchas in Nepal.





# So C

Karaoke is  
the new-  
fangled  
tonic for  
everything  
from  
boredom  
to stress

Tonight, in  
karaoke bars  
around the  
world,  
something  
more  
profound than  
you might  
realise will be  
happening



# What if you can't Sing?

SABHYATA TIMSINA

If you're such a bad singer that you croak like a toad, don't worry. You're more than welcome at any of the new karaoke bars in Kathmandu, where after a few drinks you will have the distinct impression you can sing like Frank Sinatra. Karaoke is a new fixture in the Valley's popular culture, and karaoke bars have caught on as a favoured hangout for people weary after slogging all day at work. We've taken a cue from the Philippines, where half the population has a karaoke box at home. Filipinos even host their own singing and dancing competitions! Karaoke is a form of daily recreation and an absolute must at all get-togethers and festivals in the Philippines. Little wonder then that it was Roselle Prisno from the Philippines who set up Kathmandu's first karaoke bar in her restaurant Baryo Fiesta in Naxal. It was an instant hit. Nepalis showed up from day one howling like wounded dogs into the microphone. "People come here and have the most enjoyable time and it's nice for us to be sharing this love for singing with Nepalis," Prisno says.

Thirty-year-old Shweta Pradhan visits Baryo Fiesta regularly to unwind after work. "It's the most effective stress buster for me. When I sing everything that's bothering me comes out, and though it's late when I get home I end up feeling really refreshed after an evening of karaoke," she says.

Karaoke is apparently also a great way to work out since it increases oxygen levels in the blood without leaving you hot and sweaty. It also produces 'feel-good' endorphins (eating chocolate does too, but singing is less fattening). Doctors in Japan and Taiwan are now prescribing karaoke instead of Prozac to cure stress.

If you don't like going out but are eager to try karaoke, you can do so from your couch at home. All you need is a computer microphone and software that's available online. Croon to the moon! ●

Top Ten Karaoke Hits

- My Heart will go on—Celine Dion
- Everything I do—Bryan Adams
- Always—Bon Jovi
- Every breath you take—The Police
- Summer of '69—Bryan Adams
- All summer long—Kid Rock
- Born to be wild—Steppenwolf
- Hotel California—The Eagles
- I love rock n' roll—Joan Jett and the Blackhearts
- I will survive—Gloria Gaynor

Karaoke Bars in Kathmandu

- Baryo Fiesta, Naxal
- Everest Korean Restaurant, Sorakhutte Station, Lazimpat
- Café de Patan, Patan Darbar Square
- Korea-Pyongyang Okryu-Gwan Restaurant, Darbar Marg



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

## Korea-ke bar

What do you get when you mix music, diplomatic intrigue and a supreme leader who fancies American girls? A North Korean karaoke bar, and there's one right here in Kathmandu. The word on the street is the Korea-Pyongyang Okryu-Gwan Restaurant funds Kim Jong Il's international diplomatic forays.

The restaurant near Yak and Yeti in Darbar Marg is a modern looking affair with bright neon tube lights. It's hosted by smiling Korean girls in baby pink and blue suits who look like stewardesses with Air Koryo, the hermit kingdom's flag carrier. We were escorted into one of seven cosy private karaoke rooms, where we found an impressive list of songs in English, Korean, Hindi and Nepali. We jumped right in and a raucous evening of off-key screeching followed.

A couple of hours later the bill

put paid to our mood. A thousand rupees just for the room, in addition to exorbitant prices for everything from water to ice cream. I returned a few days later, still miffed, but determined to investigate the bar's Pyongyang connections. The management was tight-lipped, never mind that its business is to get people to open up. A dour looking lady behind the counter was clearly in charge but she totally ignored me. Instead, one of the attendants came over and handed me a brochure that purportedly contained all the information I needed. I tried to extract more 'information' out of her, but it seemed she spoke neither Nepali nor English. Perhaps she had been warned not to divulge any more than was absolutely necessary? But I did pick up some snippets. The restaurant has been

around for two years and is attended to by 11 waitresses, all unmarried, who sing and dance at specific times listed in the brochure. All the other branches of the restaurant are in China. The restaurant is frequented by our own comrades when they have to meet their diplomatic connections. They seem to find the privacy they want in the cubicles, but I doubt they ever turn on the karaoke machine for a session of Sino-Nepali duets. Finally, I broached the big question. "Who owns the restaurant?" The waitress pointed to the lady behind the desk. "Can I get her name?" The answer was an unsurprising "no". North and South Korea are different, she seemed to imply, and, unlike the former, the latter do not like to feature in bar reviews. ● Surabhi Pudasaini

## 'This one goes out...'

About the karaoke machine, that most prophetic of postmodern leisure devices, almost any number of intelligent-sounding things can be said: like the cellphone and the iPod, it seems to have invented us more than we invented it. You can say, for example, that ours is a Karaoke Age, in which the arts of mimicry and simulation are more esteemed than originality or sincerity. You can say that in the trash democracy of global pop culture, where the anonymous soul has been replaced by the undiscovered star and the celebrity-in-waiting, it is karaoke that has ritualised the emergence of this inner performer. None of this, however, will get you near the true nature of karaoke. Deeply awful at times, even sordid, it is never less than interesting – and it can be revelatory. I once saw a friend of mine do

Thin Lizzy's 'Jailbreak', and I've never been able to look at him the same way again. At the instant he sang "See the boys and me mean business...", he became legendary to me. Karaoke, a book by Zhou Xun and Francesca Tarocco, tracks the westward spread of the phenomenon, from its birth in Japan in 1971 with the low-rent keyboardist and vibraphone player Daisuke Inoue to the installation of a karaoke machine in an English church, 30 years later. ("I'm afraid singing unaccompanied just wasn't the same," explained the vicar.) Something of the mystery of karaoke is contained in its etymology. The word is a compound abbreviation of two Japanese words meaning 'empty' and 'orchestra'. Karaoke is above all a space, an absence haunted by the missing vocal line. The instrumental accompaniment is

ghost-music, tinkling with its own deadness, and that unsung melody is spectrally beckoning, beckoning. The heart of the karaoke performer swells: into this vacancy he must project his beautiful essence, his soul. He or she may be emboldened or confused by alcohol, wild with a private grief, or, worst of all, suffering from a genuine desire to excel before his peers. Regardless, in the performance that ensues, something will be brought to light. Tonight the bars will fill and the microphones will be gripped. So I dedicate this column to the karaoke-lovers, who will make tonight their own. ● James Parker The Boston Globe



# One hundred days with Nepal

The government of Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal turned 100 days on Wednesday. These have not been the easiest 100 days for Nepal, neither the PM nor the country.

Nepal was elected unopposed by the CA a year after embarrassing defeats in elections in two constituencies, Kathmandu and Rautahat. Critics said this would discredit the CA elections. "We selected the person who was rejected by the people as the leader of the country, what do you expect?" a disenchanted young activist asked.

Nepal has become the butt of many jokes. So desperate is he to fulfill his life-long dream to be Nepal's PM that he will sign anything, they say. The Maoists obstructed house proceedings, hurled insults and finally stepped down to start street agitations and boycott the PM's functions.

Most urban moderates, who secretly believed that Nepal was not at all qualified for the position, decided to keep mum, so

relieved were they that the Maoists had been ousted. Others just didn't care as they knew that no matter who is in power things won't really change.



**INTERESTING TIMES**  
Mallika Aryal

When MKN became PM there was no euphoria or celebration, just a lot of cynicism. Those who voted against veteran leaders like Nepal were angry and unhappy that the achievements made since the end of the 'people's war' were all going to go to waste. With such low expectations, the Nepal government didn't have much to prove.

Yet the UML-led government has been surprisingly resilient. It appears more confident after the PM's Delhi visit, and the Maoists are scratching their heads about how to wiggle back into government. But the government got by with doing absolutely nothing on the development front for the first 100 days. It can't afford to now. If there is one thing that will give Nepal legitimacy and moral authority, it is a perception that he means business.

The challenges are daunting: the peace process must be kept on track, the constitution must be written, the security situation must be improved, inflation controlled, food supply ensured and the two armies have to be integrated.

## Time to make difficult decisions and prove to the people that this government really exists

It would not be fair to say that the government has done nothing right. The appointment of the chair to the constitutional committee, the formation of a special committee on army integration, the appointment of secretaries in various ministries and the start of a special security plan to deal with the deteriorating security condition were all done by the book.

All this, despite having to firefight over crises like the VP's oath row, the flak over the cholera epidemic, the decisions over priests in Pashupatinath. Nilambar Acharya, the new chair of the constitutional committee, said this week that it is still possible to write the constitution in the next nine months if everyone works hard and stays focused on the goals. All the parties had better listen to him.

The leaders of this government must also remember that while the overall goals of the country are broad, there are certain areas in Nepal that need special attention. The families in the far west whose sole bread-winners died of cholera don't really care about the new constitution. The people in the mid-west want food, clean drinking water, medications and relief that proves to them that they are not alone and the state actually does care about its people.

Nepalis grew tired of the political bickering a long time ago. We may write the constitution on time, but if we can't even deliver basic services and show the presence of the state in the countryside, the people are going to get even more disillusioned. And this will benefit only the extremists.

There has always been the fear that the constitution may not be written on time and this government has done nothing to allay those fears. In fact with its inability to act or make difficult decisions, it has proven its critics right—that it is unreasonable to expect anything from this government.

But it is still not too late. Nepal's team faces rough days ahead, and those days may be numbered if the Maoists decide to pull the rug from under it after Dasain. But the government must stay true to the commitments of an inclusive new Nepal, show with their work that they are serious about the people. Nepalis want action, not more speeches. It's not enough for Nepal to stay on in government by the skin of his teeth. ●

# Security beyond

SUVAYU DEV PANT

Nepal is the very picture of insecurity: its army resists civilian authority, the police and the APF are perceived by some as private political militias, political thugs terrorise the public, and ordinary people starve and endure epidemics of wholly preventable diseases as development grinds to a halt.

*Changing Security Dynamics in Nepal*, co-edited by Rosy Cave and foreign policy adviser to the Prime Minister Rajan Bhattarai, is a collection of essays written by security experts such as Dhruva Kumar (see book review below) and Kul Chandra Gautam, and the editors themselves. It investigates Nepal's security establishment with emphasis on its history and ongoing problems. The book's overarching argument is that the establishment has historically obsessed over the threat of a foreign invasion and as a result has ignored more pressing, local concerns of 'human security' such as lawlessness and malnutrition. The government's loose hold over the military has distorted security policies to reflect these outdated fears and has contributed to our security woes.

Contributor Geja Sharma Wagle notes that in 2001 the government established the National Security Council with the prime minister, defense minister and army chief as members. But nothing changed, largely because it became a sounding chamber for the army. Little else was done to bring the army more firmly under civilian

control until the reestablishment of democracy in 2006.

Security expert Sridhar Khatri of the South Asia Centre for Policy Studies agrees. "The defense ministry was a post-box for the army so it didn't have any real powers at all." As a result, he says, security policy became increasingly unresponsive to ordinary people's needs.

## A wide-ranging collection still misses the point

The NSC floundered partly because it wasn't held accountable to parliament, which the government relentlessly undermined. Contributor Dhruva Kumar explains that parliamentary committees were warned against grilling security personnel about their misdeeds.

But the book exaggerates the threat the army poses since the Nepali military is less troublesome than its regional counterparts, most notably those in Bangladesh and Pakistan. Since 1990 the army has accepted a more democratic role although there have been hiccups along the way. The army panicked when the Maoists came to power as it felt threatened by the PLA. Still, the Nepal Army



KIRAN PANDAY

tends to look for outside leadership, says Khatri.

The bigger security problem is the lawlessness that has swept across the country these past three years, which reflects a growing legitimacy crisis. The state appears illegitimate partly

# The army must



KIRAN PANDAY



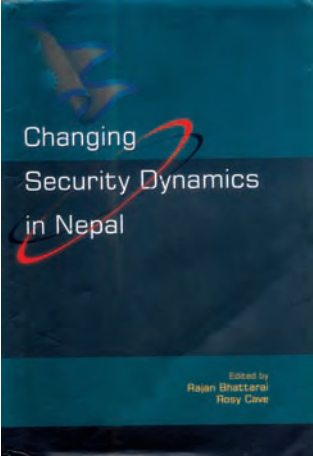
# the security sector



that sparked the current lawlessness and ignores the fact that our gravest threats are corrupt parties and rampant politicisation, not a stubborn army.

Unless we reform our parties so that they better represent people's interests, civilian oversight of the army isn't going to reorient the security establishment's objectives, and the politically disenchanted will continue to turn to violence. Yet the book fails to ask the million dollar question: how do you reform parties when you need the consent of their leaders, who stand to lose the most from reform? A practical answer to this question could pull us out of the mess we're in. ●

The book is available for free online at: <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Current-Affairs/Policy-Briefs/Detail/?Ing=en&id=103628>



because it's timid, factionalised and often out of sight. The government fears that tough action against political thugs will spark reprisals that will unseat it and parties factionalise state institutions like the police and judiciary to score political points.

The state is also absent in large parts of the country, leaving goons and militants in charge. Urban planner Pitambar Sharma warns that "the absence of the state at the local level is a big blow to its legitimacy and could ruin us if we don't fix it soon."

The legitimacy crisis has been aggravated by growing unrest caused by a widening income inequality.

Bhattarai and Cave suggest shoring up the National Security Council so that it makes rather than receives policy, developing a

coherent security strategy, professionalising the police and army, and educating policymakers about Nepal's new internal security threats.

But the book's biggest failing is that it makes only a fleeting mention of the legitimacy crisis

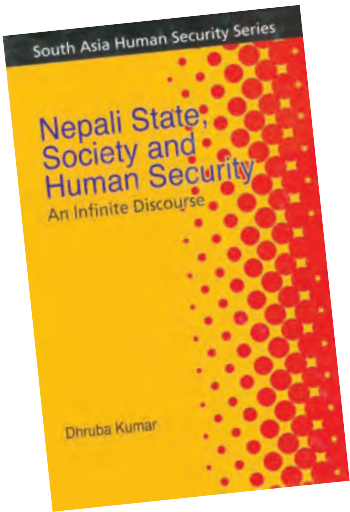
**Changing Security Dynamics in Nepal: A Collection of Essays**  
**Edited by Rajan Bhattarai and Rosy Cave**  
**Nepal Institute of Policy Studies (Kathmandu) and Saferworld (London), 2009**  
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**Pages 226**

# be handled with care

DHRUBA SIMKHADA

Despite the restoration of democratic rule and the end of the civil war, Nepal's security situation can hardly be said to have improved. Insecurity at the hands of state and non-state forces continues to thwart the aspirations of Nepalis, and is examined more closely in Dhruba Kumar's *Nepali State, Society and Human Security: An Infinite Discourse*.

Kumar's broad-based definition of human security sets the stage. Drawing from the Human Development Report 1994, he declares that human security is "a child who did not die, a disease that did not spread, a job that was not cut, an ethnic tension that did not explode in violence, a dissident who was not silenced." Correspondingly, human insecurity "arises from worries about daily life", thereby encompassing everything



**Nepali State, Society and Human Security: An Infinite Discourse**  
**Dhruba Kumar**  
**Mohiuddin Ahmed, The University Press Ltd., Dhaka (2009)**  
**ISBN 978-9840-5-1794-7**  
**Pages 365**

from financial and economic insecurity to fear of violence at the hands of the state, common criminals or other groups due to sexual, religious or ethnic differences.

Kumar, who lectures at Tribhuvan University, pays special attention to the question of army-PLA integration. He considers it a particularly knotty problem because nobody is obviously in the right. The row over Rookmangad Katawal's sacking and subsequent reinstatement has only worsened matters. Nonetheless, there are deep-rooted problems with the Nepal Army that need to be addressed, according to Kumar. Basically, the institution is unaccustomed to civilian rule. But the bungled Maoist move to subjugate them should make one thing clear: the army should be eased into civilian rule, not manhandled.

"Maintaining civilian supremacy and stable civil-military relations does not

mean that the armed forces should obey civilian orders imprudently", writes Kumar. It means the development of a code of conduct for the security forces, particularly with regard to their relationship with Nepali society. Such a code of conduct could be bolstered by parliamentary oversight committees.

Problems of human security reach far beyond security sector reform, as the scope of this book indicates. Political hooliganism and the ongoing army-PLA row are only the most obvious symptoms of a more general malaise that is manifest not only in rising crime and the burgeoning numbers of armed groups in the Tarai and the east but also in the human insecurity underlined by the epidemic in the west. These are all interrelated, Kumar seems to say, so the need of the hour is a security policy that can deal with them simultaneously and comprehensively. ●



# Malaysia's ten-point agenda

It wasn't a 'miracle' that brought prosperity to Malaysia, it was hard work



This week we celebrate the 52<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of Malaysia's independence. What in 1957 was an underdeveloped country with a poverty rate of 78 per cent and an annual per capita income of \$270 has now emerged as a progressive and prosperous country of 27 million people with a per capita income of \$7,000. By Malaysia's National Vision year of 2020, the country aspires to join the ranks of the developed nations.

I have often been asked what made Malaysia tick. There are ten points that made our progress possible:

1. Political stability. The National Front, consisting of 13 political parties representing all the ethnic groups in Malaysia, has been governing the nation since independence. The alliance, painstakingly forged by the forefathers in



**GUEST COLUMN**  
**Ilankovan**  
**Kolandavelu**

1954, was built on an overwhelming spirit of accommodation and moderation. It serves as a unique example of long-term power sharing among multi-ethnic and majority-minority communities and between West Malaysia and the regions of Sabah and Sarawak.

2. Peace, security and social harmony. The country is blessed with visionary leaders. The people haven't felt the need to change a winning combination. Our leaders think out of the box, like the time we rejected the IMF policy prescriptions and successfully

adopted home-grown remedies to lift the country out of the 1997 Asian financial crisis. Our approach is being adopted by even developed nations to tackle the current global recession.

3. Enduring inter-ethnic harmony. Instead of creating a melting pot, Malaysia painstakingly weaved a rich cultural mosaic. The plurality of lifestyles this engenders has given rise to an extraordinarily multi-faceted society that stands as an example of how a fragmented multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural polity can be welded together in a common nation.

4. Eradication of poverty. Malaysia invested in free primary and secondary education and free health care, and has used its expanding economy to preserve social peace. We adopted pragmatic, globalised economic policies long before globalisation. A strong economy has acted as a glue to bind our people, first, by forging inter-ethnic economic partnerships and second, by giving to every community a share in an expanding economic cake.

6. Peaceful and cooperative social engineering. Malaysia embarked on a pragmatic expansion of opportunities for all. This reduced tensions that flared in 1969 due to the economic gap between the majority-minority communities.

7. A culture that avoids open confrontation. Behind-the-scenes negotiations and compromises on a whole range of issues are preferred to open confrontation. Malaysia imposes severe controls on mass protests, thereby keeping social conflict off the

streets. This may have some human rights implications by western standards but has circumvented the continuous cycle of political and religious violence that bedevils many democratic societies. Trade unions do not resort to bandhas and demonstrations to press their demands in Malaysia.

8. Professionalism and competency of the Malaysian civil service in planning and implementing development programs. The government has invested massively in developing human resource capital and upgrading its public delivery capacity.

9. Malaysia as a Muslim country is an exemplar of a moderate, multi-cultural and tolerant society. Secularism and Islam co-exist peacefully despite the rise of political Islam due to the government's balancing of Islamic measures with the broad secular, capitalistic, democratic and globalised features of Malaysia's multi-ethnic and multi-religious society.

10. Women's rights. In the work place, in schools and in universities, women easily outnumber men. About 65 per cent of students in colleges and universities are women.

The World Bank used to categorise the achievement of Malaysia as an 'Asian Miracle'. It's a compliment, but Malaysia's prosperity was not the result of some divine intervention, it was brought about by our own hard work and sacrifice.

*Ilankovan Kolandavelu is ambassador of Malaysia to Nepal. This is an excerpt of a speech he made on his country's national day on 31 August in Kathmandu.*

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# Back to the future

Michael Jackson was not the only moonwalker commemorated this year, 2009 marked the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Apollo 9 mission that placed American astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin on the moon.

Even as China and India are cautiously attempting space missions of their own now, that first moon landing marked in the world the height of a certain optimism in the notion of progress, a certain faith in the endeavours of science and human ingenuity, and our inherent ability to overcome challenges and transcend our limitations, a mindset that seems to have long receded from our common perspective.

 **CRITICAL CINEMA**  
**A Angelo D'Silva**

It does not seem unfair to question that optimism when 40 years later diarrhea and malaria are still among the leading causes of death, a fact brought home to Nepalis by the epidemic in Jajarkot.

Next month Hollywood technicians will release restored footage from that landing, a cinematic landmark in its own right. So now might be the perfect time to revisit Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which began earlier in that decade as a collaboration with sci-fi author Arthur C. Clarke and was released a year before the manned moon landing. Kubrick's masterpiece encapsulates the promises of human progress and highlights man's conflicted relationship with technology through a vision peppered with the anxieties of the Cold War and enlivened by curious notions of what the world might be like at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The lynchpin of the sprawling, segmented *2001* is the image of a black monolith, a towering slab of black rock. It is alien, inscrutable and totemic, and stares back blankly at the humanity it encounters, first in the recesses of the past



where it inspires an ape-like ancestor to kill using a tool, then thousands of years later at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when a group of Americans uncover it on the moon, and finally on Jupiter's moon where the 'Odysseus' of the film, Dave Bowman (Keir Dullea), comes face to face with it while on a lonesome manned mission. It is a common complaint of canonical works, and cinematic ones such as *2001* are no exception, that they are inaccessible and obscure. Stanley Kubrick's *2001* may be guilty of the charge, but mostly because of its uncompromising vision. Audiences today might find the central segment set on the pioneering spaceship, which details the contest between the human passengers and the onboard computer HAL, to be the most narratively coherent and satisfying. It is in this section, still rich in the kinds of serious questions that mark this film, where the innovative storytelling—its experimental use of sound and silence, for instance—is most effective. Indeed, even in its ambiguity (moral and narrative), there has rarely been a piece of cinema as gripping as the final confrontation between the surviving

human and his homicidal computer.

Reconsidering *2001*, one can't help but wonder at its curious contraction from the science fiction genre. Despite its audacious arc spanning thousands of years, the direction that it begins in is in the past, and it extends scant decades into the future. Nor does it, for the most part, venture outside the solar system. Even as its image of the future exceeds the accomplishment of today (we have no manned missions heading to other planets and no Soviet-American space stations outfitted like the lobbies of 5-star hotels), it remains oddly modest and prosaic. Kubrick and Clarke do not imagine a resolution to the Cold War, let alone even cosmetic changes to the race and gender politics of their time: American women serve as flight hostesses and receptionists and nary a person of color besmirches the screen. That aside, in the premium placed on 'realism', one finds a still entertaining attention to mechanics and the everyday tedium of life in zero gravity space, from magnetic shoes to meals drunk out of a straw. The state-of-the-art special effects of the time are still curiously effective.

What is most admirable and audacious about *2001* is its insistence on remaining agnostic towards its meanings, conferring on them a meditative aspect, even in moments of real terror or surrealism. What is the next stage in the evolution of man? Are we fundamentally a violent species and is transcendence beyond us? Does technology allow us to overcome our limitations or will it simply lead to our destruction? *2001* evokes these questions for the attentive viewer but does not allow for comfortable answers. The movie is iconic beyond doubt, and has attracted parody and homage in equal measure. But it also provides a template for a more sophisticated, contemplative and adult science fiction that has rarely been repeated in American cinema. ●

*2001: A Space Odyssey*  
**Director:** Stanley Kubrick  
**Cast:** Keir Dullea, William Sylvester, Gary Lockwood, Daniel Richter  
**Runtime:** 2 hrs 39 mins  
**Release date:** 1968

# Under the pipal tree



MIN RATNA BAURACHARYA

The intimate and tranquil Pipalbot that has just opened at Baber Mahal Revisited should not really be written about because if it becomes too popular, crowds may spoil the entire effect.

Pipalbot is a unique blend of many things: a bright and airy café with a communal table, an event space, and a store for contemporary furniture, comfort clothing, rugs and art objects. The open room exudes optimism, and has an uplifting, quiet ambience.

"Kathmandu is a small place with very diverse people who move in their own circles, we wanted to mix them up," says Diki Ongmo, who opened a store in Sydney 15 years ago called Tibet Sydney. She moved back to launch Pipalbot with her partner,

Australian architect Tim Linkins, who works as a design consultant in Kathmandu.

Ongmo explains: "We wanted to provide a venue where people with different interests could overlap, talk, eat, be entertained. It's really open-ended how the space can be utilised and this keeps the space fresh and ever-evolving."

Indeed, at different times this week at Pipalbot, we spotted Eric Valli, Gotz Hagemuller, Sapana Malla and Dubby Bhagat. People who have been in Kathmandu many years mingled with those who have just arrived, and the common table brought everyone together in like-minded intimacy.

Within this oasis-like sanctuary, it is hard to imagine that the south gate of Singha Darbar is just 200m away and

there is a noisy political sit-in going on there.

Pipalbot is also a venue for art exhibitions, weekly film nights and practical meditation classes, and



**DESIGNER INTERIOR:** Dining table with ceramics, wall carpets and lampshades combine Kathmandu's traditional craft with contemporary design at Pipalbot, set up by Diki Ongmo and Tim Linkins (above).

on Friday 4 September there is a raga evening with Gurudev Kamath.

"We really feel that the built environment has a subtle but profound impact on a person's way of thinking, so we wanted to provide an exemplar of contemporary design in the Nepali context," says Linkins, who has

designed furniture merging Kathmandu Valley's traditional craft with contemporary lines for dining tables, sofas, lamp shades, partitions and ceramics.

The overall effect is of good taste, minimalist functionality and traditional elegance in a restored space within a former Rana residence. Linkins has a definite vision: "Whether you are designing a building, piece of clothing, cutlery or a business card, design is integrative and holistic: it is all about approaching design challenges and, by extension, life in general, with an attitude of clarity and simplicity."

But why the name Pipalbot, we ask Ongmo. She is happy to explain. "The pipal tree gives shade, it's where travelers take a rest and stop to chat, and it has a spiritual dimension." ●

Kunda Dixit

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## ABOUT TOWN

## EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **'Concealed splendour'**, photography exhibition by Shubhecha Tewari, Shangri-La hotel, Lazimpat, till 6 Sep, 11AM



## EVENTS

- ❖ **Monsoon Wedding**, movie screening at Lazimpat Gallery Café, 5 Sep, 5.30PM, 4428549
- ❖ **'Patan Press club'**, meets every Thursday at Dhokaima Café, 6PM, 5522113
- ❖ **Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre**, Meditation Mon-Fri 5-6PM, Yoga Mon-Fri 8.30-9.30AM, Tai Chi Sat 10-11.30AM at Himalayan

Vegetarian Garden Café at HBMC, Keshar Mahal Marg, Thamel, 4410402

## MUSIC

- ❖ **Raga Evening**, performance by classical vocalist Guru Dev Kamat at Pipalbot, Baber Mahal Revisited, 4 Sep, 6.30PM, 9721331390
- ❖ **Baja gaja**, every Tuesday at Moksh, Pulchok, 7.30 PMonwards, 5526212
- ❖ **Live band** every Friday and rooftop bbq everyday at Kausi Kitchen, Darbar Marg, 4227288
- ❖ **Sunday Jazz brunch** barbecue and live jazz music at the Terrace, Hyatt Regency, 12-3.30PM, 4491234
- ❖ **Jazz evening** at Delices de France Restaurant every Wednesday, 11AM-2PM, 4260326
- ❖ **Some like it hot** every Friday BBQ and live music by Dinesh Rai and the Sound Minds, Rs 899 at Fusion, Dwarika's Hotel, 7PM onwards, 4479488
- ❖ **Happy cocktail hour**, ladies night on Wednesday with live unplugged music at Jatra Café & Bar, Thamel, 5-7PM
- ❖ **Live Sensation**, performance by Yankey every Saturday 9PM, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu, 4491234
- ❖ **Nepali Ghajals** and songs at D'Lounge Beijing Duck Restaurant, every Thursday 6.30 PM onwards, 4468589

## DINING

- ❖ **Indra Jatra Festival**, at 1905 postponed to 10 Sept.
- ❖ **Dhaka Biryani Festival**, by Barek Bawarchi from Bangladesh at The Café, till 12 Sep, 4489362
- ❖ **Wine Festival**, till 15 September, Kilroy's Thamel, 4250440
- ❖ **Chocolate, Coffee and Caramel**, every evening at The Lounge, 4.30 PM-6.30 PM, 4491234
- ❖ **A cafe's café**, Dhokaima Café, Patan Dhoka, 5522113
- ❖ **Jazzabell Café**, relaunched at Jhamsikhel, 2114075
- ❖ **The Corner Bar**, 5-7PM, 3-11PM, Radisson Hotel Kathmandu, 4411818
- ❖ **Al Fresco**, for home-made pasta, steak and freshwater trout, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 4273999
- ❖ **Kakori**, for bryanis, curries and kebabs, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 7-10.45 PM
- ❖ **Chez Caroline** for French and Mediterranean cuisine, Baber Mahal Revisited, 4263070
- ❖ **Mediterranean cuisine** every Friday from Greece, Italy and the Middle East at The Café, Hyatt Regency, 4491234
- ❖ **Teppanyaki** meat items and garlic rice at Le Resturant, Gairidhara, 4436318
- ❖ **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri-La, Lazimpat, 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
- ❖ **Himalayan Rainbow Trout** at Hotel Yak and Yeti, Darbar Marg, 4248999
- ❖ **Tiger for Breakfast**, breakfast everyday at 1905, Kantipath, 4215068

## GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Dhulikhel Lodge Resort** offers an overnight stay for Rs 1600 till 30 September, 4222389
- ❖ **Relax Package** at Hyatt Regency Kathmandu for Rs 5555 plus taxes, for a night of double occupancy with breakfast, complimentary use of spa. Offer valid for Nepalis and local residents only, 4489800
- ❖ **Spa package**, ayurvedic massage and access to the pool and spa with either breakfast or lunch at The Café or hi-tea at the Lounge at the Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, 4491234

For inclusion in the listing send information to editors(at)nepalitimes.com

## Quest Entertainment



In GI Joe, the first film made about a fictional troupe of super-soldiers, the team must contend with COBRA which, after stealing a special broadcast satellite, now threatens the world with a teleportation device called MASS. The GI Joes find the original designer of the device, who says the only way to counter it is to build a MASS device of their own. However to do that, they need three rare and exotic elements to power it. This pits the team against COBRA in a race to find these elements while humanity's survival is at stake.

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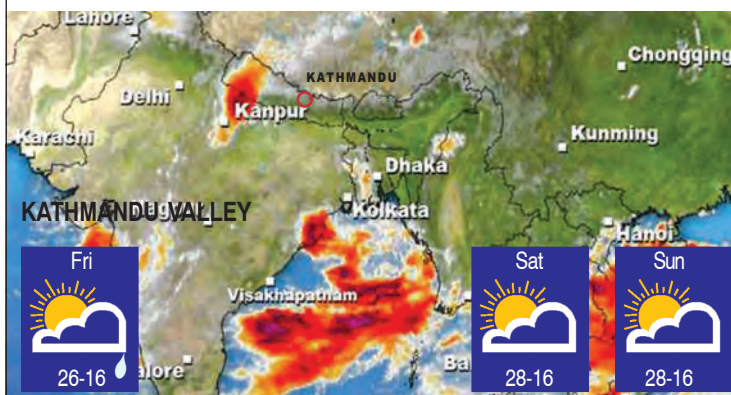
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## WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

This late monsoon has sure had a lot of late surprises. But it is finally settled into the familiar pattern of *Bhadaure Jhari* that is familiar for this time of year: bright, clear mornings, hot afternoons, buildups by evening and night squalls. Expect more of this during the coming week, since the Bay is pumping in a lot of moisture up our way. In addition, there is a lot of transpiration from midhill forests who rise up the mountains in the afternoon convection and fall in the evening as rain. It will be hot and humid during the sunny spells, but the nights will be substantially cooler over the weekend. We are still looking at a couple of deep troughs spinning out of the Bay, and these will keep the monsoon active to beyond the expected close of the rainy season in mid-September.



## RECIPES

by GRAHAM SYDNEY

## South African Milk Tart

(Serves 4)

This is an easy dessert or tea tart recipe. I usually serve it with a coffee syrup but one can also use a fruit coulis or a chocolate sauce.

1 cup flour  
75 grams butter  
¼ cup sugar  
1 teaspoon baking powder  
1 egg  
Cream the butter and sugar together. Beat in the egg. Mix in the flour and baking powder to form a dough and press into a thin layer in a pie dish or individual pie dishes. Bake at 180C until golden brown. Allow to cool.

½ cup sugar  
2 eggs  
1½ tablespoons cornflour  
1½ tablespoons flour  
2 cups milk  
1 tablespoon butter  
1 teaspoon vanilla essence  
cinnamon

Beat the sugar and eggs together before adding the cornflour and flour. Bring the milk to the boil and add the vanilla and the butter. Reduce the heat to a slow boil and beat in the egg mixture. Continue to cook the mixture over a low heat until it becomes a thick custard. Pour the mixture into the pie dish, sprinkle with cinnamon and allow to cool.



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KIRAN PANDAY

**THANKS A LOT:** Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal with Korean ambassador, Hong Sung Mog, after the inauguration of the Government Integrated Data Centre on Wednesday at Singha Darbar.



RAJESH GURUNG/THE HIMALAYAN TIMES

**DIVINE REVOLUTION:** Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal at a prayer vigil organised by preacher Dinabandhu Pokhrel at Kapan on Tuesday to raise money for a local school.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**STICK 'EM UP:** A health worker at Kathmandu airport testing a young passenger for signs of swine flu on Monday. The manual testing and filling of health forms results in huge queues at immigration.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**WHEN I AM 77:** Founder of Dwarika's Hotel, Ambika Shrestha, in a ceremonial chariot at her jankhu that marked her reaching 77 years, 7 months, 7 weeks and 7 days on Tuesday.

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Tickets priced at Rs 3000 and Rs 2000 Showtime: 6 pm  
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Dhokaima Café, Patan Dhoka, 5522113 Venue: The Kamalmani Theatre, Patan Dhoka  
Madhu Shrestha, Jyoti Bhawan, Kantipath, 4252665 (Rato Bangala School parking)  
Further info: Preeti Thapa, 5552141/5547279, Email: admin@himalmag.com

The proceeds of the play will go towards supporting the patients at the Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre, Kavre District.  
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**Candidates who have applied for this job announced in May 2009 need to re-confirm by email if they would like to be reassessed ([recruitment-nepal@dfid.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment-nepal@dfid.gov.uk)).**

**Closing date for applications is Monday, 07 September 2009.**



# Let's eat everything

The Nepali language has all kinds of uses for the verb “*khanu*” (to eat). Ministers greet each other with “*Khanu bho?*” when they meet in the corridors of power, but they actually mean “How are you?” We eat air (“*haba khanu*”), we eat water, we eat cigarettes (“*churot khanu*”), eat blame (“*gali khanu*”) and we even eat bribes (“*ghoos khanu*”). The whole debate about the vice president is about him eating his oath (“*sapath khanu*”) in Hindi. Given the food crisis that is looming in this country, it figures that we are a nation preoccupied with **filling our bellies** and one that prioritises eating above all else.



The Makunay Govt's honeymoon period is over, and the PM marked the occasion by supersizing his jumbo cabinet by another dozen or so ministers to reach a record 42 members who are now all eating their ministries (“*mantralaya khanu*”). This proves Parkinson's Second Law which states that the size of the cabinet will expand in indirect proportion to the government's effectiveness. The Madhesi members were inducted into the cabinet to shore up the fragile coalition and hopefully it will work otherwise we will have a huge hole in the state exchequer. Quite symbolic, though, that the last ministries to go were the Ministry of Environment, and the Ministry of Men, Women and Children and the Ministry of Scientific Technology. These are regarded as ‘not important’ ministries because of the **slim pickings** available there (“*khanai paidaina*”). Still, that didn't prevent one Sad Bhavana stalwart to strike while the iron was hot and grab whatever he could: a berth as Minister Without Portfolio. Wonder what potentiality to forage he saw there.



There is a lot of moaning and groaning among Kathmandu's chatterati that there is no government at present. What are they complaining about? What else is new? The best periods in this country have been when there has been no government. The logic is simple: since governments make mistakes, not having a government means no one has a chance to make any mistakes. Which is why a militant party staged a press conference at the Reporters' Club the other day brandishing pistols in front of the gathered journalists and dared the Home Minister to come and get them. And when there is no government, a five-year-old boy in Banepa was allowed to drive a car through traffic, cheered on by cops and be felicitated by none other than the vice-chair of the Constituent Assembly. Way to go!



Has Comrade Awesome taken the Baddies from being a **godless** party to one that is **god-fearing**? Chairman Dahal seems to have suddenly turned spiritual in his old age to atone for his sins. What else could explain his presence at a prayer vigil organised by Dinabandhu Pokhrel the other day bedecked in khatas and garlands? The preacher man looked stern-faced throughout the proceedings, and we can't really blame him since it was Awe-Inspiring's party that assassinated his father in Nawalparasi during the war. Guess even atheists have a guilty conscience.



Worried by growing illicit liaisons among his flock, Chairman Tremendous has got his party secretariat to dash off a directive to female comrades to get married forthwith. The letter from **Paris Danda** to 13 women CA members of marriageable age states that female comrades currently living in sin should tie the knot, settle down and raise families. This hasn't gone down too well with feminist comrades like Jayapuri Didi who have told the party to go mind its own business.



Without too much fuss in the paparazzi press, King-ji has moved back up to Nagarjun, and has granted audiences to a slew of visitors in the past week, including an NRN delegation and **like-minded hacks**. The ex-Majesty is supposed to be relaxed, happy and rather pleased with himself. His message to everyone is: “Look, I voluntarily stepped down from the throne so things would get better, but the country is going to pot.” With one visiting journalist, KingG even expressed his fear that the country was heading towards ethnic fragmentation and that if the people wanted him back to preserve the country's unity, he was always willing.



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