

NEPALI Times

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16 pages

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KIRAN PANDAY

All for one

EDITORIAL p2
Any day now

GUEST COLUMN p2
"I feel the earth move"

Nepalis must come out of our habit of leaving things to fate and chance. Only by taking our destiny in our own hands, uniting with a common purpose can we sustain the peace process, and take the steps needed to finish writing the constitution on time. We have to end the current do-nothing deadlock to avoid a political disaster. And to prepare for future natural disasters, Nepal has to learn from the Haiti experience. Read more:



JHAMEL

Mix Jhamsikhel with Thamel and what do you get?

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ANY DAY NOW

We like to make fun of our national culture of taking things as they come. In fact, we use the Hindi phrase '*dekha jayega*' (we'll see) to poke fun at our own habit of never doing today what can be done tomorrow.

Among the many traits of our political leadership that keep Nepal backward (selfishness, greed, elastic morals, laziness, incompetence) one of the most harmful is the fatalistic belief that somehow things will sort themselves out. This is probably the reason for the utter lack of urgency among the political parties and their CA members in seeing the peace process through, making progress on integration of armies and writing of the constitution by 28 May.

This deterministic cultural explanation for inaction, however, should not be an excuse to

continue with this do-nothing deadlock. The aim should be to get out of the habit of letting fate determine our future, of leaving the nation's destiny to chance.

On the day of the annular solar eclipse last week, Nepali tv channels vied with each other to broadcast astrological prognoses in their regular new programs on what the celestial event meant to Capricorns and Leos. When the media mixes up myth and superstition with news and current affairs, it shows the malaise runs much deeper than we think.

Or, a national daily that on Wednesday printed the picture of the sunset illuminating contrails of an airliner flying the new Kathmandu-Delhi air route over western Nepal and said it was a "rocket" on a "spy mission" to Mustang. This is worse than superstition, it is disinformation.

Leaving things to fate is also seen in earthquake preparedness, or shall we say, unpreparedness. If there is one country in the world where earthquakes are a certainty, and where awareness and safeguards should be mandatory, it is Nepal. For us, it is not 'if' there will be a

major quake, but 'when'. It could be tonight, or it could be five years from now, but it is 100 per cent certain that it will happen.

Yet, looking at the haphazard urban sprawl and dangerous construction in Nepal's metros, it is clear hardly anyone is looking at prevention and readiness. This should be the government's job, but how do you expect a leadership with such a short time horizon that it can't even resolve the current political deadlock, to prepare for a disaster that may or may not happen from one year to the next?

But it must. And Haiti has focused our minds on what can happen. An 8 magnitude earthquake in Kathmandu would actually be ten times worse than Haiti, which was 7 on the Richter scale.

Historically, we know great earthquakes have hit central Nepal every 75 years. The last one was 1934. The Big One is due any day now.

KD

"I feel the earth move"

Apathy presents a greater risk to Nepal from earthquakes



GUEST COLUMN
Wendy Cue

The Haiti earthquake was disturbing. It was disturbing for professional and personal reasons. I have two simultaneous reactions: as a humanitarian, I want to help. As a mother and a daughter, I want to spend as much time as possible with my loved ones and live far from disaster zones. But then, why am I living in Kathmandu, one of the world's most at-risk cities when it comes to earthquakes?

This tragedy resonates deeply, as I have been working with the United Nations to raise awareness in Nepal about a similar catastrophic scenario. The possible scale of the disaster is so mind-boggling that often the reaction is apathy. The impact of the disaster would be so great, so devastating, what can one do that would make a difference if an earthquake were to strike?

The greatest risk is apathy. There are several cardinal truths regarding earthquakes:

- Earthquakes cannot be

predicted. Most calculations of risk are based upon statistical probability, but can be off by a magnitude of years.

- Most earthquake survivors are rescued by communities themselves.
- People are not killed by earthquakes. More than 75% are killed by falling buildings, and the rest are due to follow-on hazards such as fire and landslides.
- More survivors are then killed because there is a lack of medical service, or clean water.

As disaster risk reduction is a long-term investment, it must address the full range of hazards and risks as well as bring tangible benefits to people's lives. A range of investments would include city planning, decreasing urbanisation, ensuring there are open spaces, widening traffic arteries and evacuation routes. These require commitment by the government.

Investment at the community level is also essential, in first aid training, evacuation planning, and light search and rescue. Most survivors are rescued by friends

and neighbours, so we need to invest in community disaster preparedness. We need to know where the safe places are. In the Great Kathmandu Earthquake of 1934, many people fled into Tundikhel to seek safety. If the same thing happens tomorrow,



many people may die crushed against the fences that line one of the only open spaces in the centre of Kathmandu.

We need to demand better construction for those living in Kathmandu, especially for lifeline infrastructure such as schools and hospitals. Implementation of a building code for earthquake resistant

structures could also bring houses more in line with the climate and preserve cultural heritage (cement is not the best thermal conductive material for cold winters and strong sun). Traditional housing construction in Bhaktapur using a timber beam

system may actually resist earthquakes better than some concrete structures. We know how to engineer buildings with a greater degree of earthquake safety. But it takes money, commitment, and rigorous government regulation and inspection.

These investments will reduce the exposure of millions

of Kathmandu citizens to risk, and at the same time will improve their living conditions (less congestion, better air quality, access to clean water). We need to channel outrage into action.

Some final words about my personal grief. My friend Andrea Loi perished in the Haiti earthquake last week. I remember sharing a bed in a dodgy hotel in Hinche upon our initial deployment in Haiti because we were afraid of the rats, later sharing the only house in the entire town with a flush toilet. Sitting on the balcony, we would listen to Carole King: "I feel the earth move". And now the sky has come tumbling down. I mourn the loss of my UN colleagues. And with the outrage I feel about this loss, compelled to channel this outrage into action to prevent other needless deaths. 🇺🇳

Wendy Cue is currently the Head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Kathmandu. She worked in Haiti from 1993 to 1999. The views expressed in this article do not represent an official position of the UN.

ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

HAPPY SLURPING!

The article ('Minding our manners', #485) seems to imply that Nepali-pan somehow is inferior to the Western-pan. I disagree. There are times when people's manners get on your nerves. But, it's not just Nepal. And slurping? Nothing gives me more pleasure than slurping when drinking delicious *tat-tato amilo* soup. Other mannerism, like saying "Narayan" after sneezing, is quite similar to "god bless" commonly said in the Western world. I don't think our mannerisms give us reasons to feel bad or guilty or inferior. So chill, happy slurping!

Titepati

HAITI HERE?

It is not question of 'if', it is just a matter of 'when' ('Haiti calling', Issue #485). There will be a devastating earthquake in Nepal and the consequence will be horrendous and unimaginable. Post-quake casualties will be much higher as we are not well equipped with search-and-rescue operations. We have no equipment or trained personnel. The example of Haiti is a wake up call for us as we are one of the poorest nations in the world. We will also have to rely on international support. As we have seen in Haiti, it would be difficult to get international support in time.

Prem

- If the recent 'Haiti' happens in Nepal, the consequences will be simply incomprehensible. The sad part it, in this ongoing climate of political chaos and uncertainty, does anybody even have the time and interest to think about this topic? I guess not. I am not sure much of Kathmandu will remain standing if we do experience a 'Haiti' there. Apart from the immediate impact (which will be catastrophic no doubt), I am more concerned about the aftermath. Because just like Haiti, we probably are ill-equipped to deal with the situation.

Bhusan

On the blogs | nepalitimes.com/blogs



East-West: Kunda Dixit assesses the impact of the next big earthquake in the Kathmandu Valley.

The Brief: Daily updates on news and current affairs



Three years later



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

This week marked the third anniversary of the Madhes movement. Over three weeks in January 2007, the spontaneous uprising in Tarai rocked the foundation of Nepali state and nationalism, challenged established forces, ensured federalism, and reconfigured politics. At a time when the Madhes is weaker and more fragmented than it has been since then, it would be instructive to look back at the lessons from the plains.

Here is what the Madhesis told the existing Nepali state: change or perish. In specific terms, this meant political representation, substantive inclusion, reframing symbols of nationhood, and treating citizens who wore dhoti, did not know how to speak Nepali, and had kinship links across the border with dignity and not scorn. If the Kathmandu establishment refused to do so, it would cost the state its legitimacy and erode political authority among one third of its own people. Despite the hiccups, resistance by sections in the capital, and the entrenched social prejudices, the Madhes has won this battle politically and intellectually. What remains is transforming it into institutions.

The second message was to the Maoists: beware of what you have unleashed. Though the Maoists had sowed the militant Madhesi consciousness, the movement itself acquired a strong anti-Maoist tilt. This was due to the failure of the Maoists to push for federalism in the interim constitution, the recklessness of the Maoist

Madhesi leadership, the class character (mid-sized landlords), political orientation (anti-communist), the caste mix of Madhesi leaders, and the perception that the Maoists were a part of the same Pahadi club.

The Maoists have since become more careful, but a similar pattern of ex-Maoists turning to ethnic radicalism can be discerned in the western Tarai. The Maoists and most Madhesi parties remain at loggerheads, but in some ways their commitment to federalism now makes them natural allies.

The people also gave a clear signal to the Nepali Congress, which the grand old party failed to read: reform or shrink. Instead of making the Madhes agenda its own, the NC misread the public

communities in Tarai, and fight for us in Kathmandu. Through the past three years, the trend has been that as any Madhesi leader or party has come close to Kathmandu or joined the government, it has lost legitimacy and credibility back home in Tarai.

Instead of using the period to build an organisation, and force issues, the leaders have been extremely amenable to co-option, and making a quick buck by looting the state. A glance through the last names of the martyrs reveals that people of all Hindu castes, Dalits, Muslims. But the structures of the Madhesi parties reveal they adopted exclusivist and discriminatory practices and did with Dalits, Muslims and Tharus what hill elites had done with them. This is why the various communities are now finding their own ways of political articulation.

The last year has not been good for the Madhes. Its most powerful party split. It has been unable to force the vice-president back into his position, and get language rights recognised. Madhesi reactionary leaders who had nothing to do with the movement have been able to corner all the advantages and win a share in the power structure. The distance with the Tharus, who are actually allies in the battle against the old regime, grew. The inclusion bill was never operationalised. And India (by splitting the MJF and not backing the VP) showed that it will happily sacrifice the Madhes if it clashes with its interests at the centre.

But history's twists and turns should not make us ignore the larger picture. It is far better being a Madhesi in Nepal in January 2010 than it was in January 2007. That is the Madhes movement's biggest achievement.

Madhesis have it far better in January 2010 than in January 2007

mood entirely and felt that the andolan would only hurt the Maoists. The NC home minister (Krishna Sitaula) was seen to have suppressed the movement. Leaders like Ram Baran Yadav spent all their time in bashing Madhesi leaders and claiming it was sponsored by reactionaries. And the party was a late and reluctant convert to federalism. The failure to innovate meant life was tough if you were a moderate Madhesi NC leader. This breed, led by Mahant Thakur, waited for a year but then left when the pressure from below became intense. The NC's rout in the elections was a result of its failure in the Madhes.

But the starkest message was to the new Madhesi political class that had created, and capitalized on the Madhes movement: be inclusive of all

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Who's your favourite?



FOURTH ESTATE
C K Lal

JALESHWAR. In these parts of the country, Nepali television means the state broadcaster. If any other channel is on, it usually means someone from Kathmandu is visiting. Nepal Television (NTV) grabs a lion's share of advertising revenue, and its signal strength is also better than any other terrestrial or satellite channel in Nepal.

In software too, the pioneering broadcaster of the country is way ahead of all others. Three of the most popular slapstick teleserials in Nepali - *Tito Satya*, *Meri Bassai* and *Jire Khurshani* - run on the national channel. NTV often sources excellent documentaries from foreign broadcasters and has stringers in far-flung parts of the country.

But government ownership has its downside too. The news on NTV can get a bit dull when its editors have to defend the government or parrot official positions. It hesitates in giving airtime to those who have the most interesting things to say:

government critics. But few private operators can match its resources in reporting straight from the villages and small towns of the country.

Two of the best television anchors in Nepal have their shows on national television. A self-assured Laxman Humagain allows his guests to hog the limelight as he deftly steers them towards the issue being discussed. Raju Thapa appears to have inherited the mantle of the late Indra Lohani and runs his talkshows with the panache of a public prosecutor.

The dominance of government media is even more unassailable in print: Gorkhapatra means 'newspaper' to many. UML loyalists still wait for *Budhbar*, but NC cadres seem to have forsaken *Deshantar*. Sales of Nepali magazines have plummeted, and are no longer in demand right off the buses out of Kathmandu. Indian newspapers too sell fewer copies, even though the *Hindustan* has increased its coverage of Nepali affairs.

The primary source of information and the medium of choice for entertainment are local FM stations. There are three radio stations in Jaleshwar alone. Inexpensive Chinese receivers



ALEKSANDER ANDERSEN

Government media still rules outside the capital

catch the signals of all broadcasters based in Janakpur and Bardibas. Together, they have the entire district listening to young radio jockeys bantering away in Maithili, Nepali and Hindi about things that nobody thought they would ever care to listen to.

All local radios have tie-ups with national networks, and regularly broadcast news and

feature capsules produced in Kathmandu. In addition, NGOs have their own slots to publicise their programs. Then there are the promotional materials of the conflict resolution industry, peace campaigners and pressure groups. Individually, these programs are much less popular than those that play pop Hindi numbers on request. But together, the programs of national networks

and proactive NGOs weave independent radio into a web of solidarity and strengthen national unity.

Much before Benedict Anderson formulated his concept of the nation as an "imagined political community", Marshall McLuhan had intuited that the printed word was the real architect of nationalism. In building bonds of fellowship between the citizens of a country, hard copy still has no equal. Their availability and access imply that physical and market infrastructure for product distribution have been created; and readers are sufficiently literate and sophisticated to pay for information that may not be of much use for their livelihoods.

Radio and television do not enjoy the level of trust of the printed word. However, advertising professionals have long known that an intelligent mix of print, radio and television is the best way to persuade the audience. Perhaps a similar strategy can work to reinforce messages of inclusive democracy, non-violent politics and tolerant nationalism? It may not be by design, but community radios in countryside seem to be working for that purpose.



Bon Appétit !

Gourmets and gourmands unite ! Unveiling the 'The Himalayan Times Food Guide' - an exclusive and comprehensive catalogue of restaurants and eateries across Kathmandu and Pokhara. Besides this, the guide is replete with information on hotels, bars, cafes and night clubs. As 'eating out' is fast catching up with the people of Nepal, this handy reference conveniently connects place to both pocket and palate. Like hearty appetites, you know we're unstoppable.

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The Himalayan Times Food Guide is now available in all leading departmental stores and book stores.

Seven seas

Nepal Investment Bank has extended its remittance services in the United Kingdom in partnership with Samsara Nepal Financial Services UK, a London-based company. NIBL now provides direct money remittance facilities in more than seven countries through twenty of its partners and in the rest of the world through Western Union Money Transfer and Travelex Money Transfer.

Sagarmatha

The third meeting of the Nepal Tourism Year 2011 was held on 12 January. Discussing on how to utilise the budget allotted for tourism sector, the committee decided to mobilise Rs 20



million to mark Sagarmatha Day. In the meeting, Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation Sharat Singh Bhandari also said that development of infrastructure was imperative to bolster Nepal's tourism sector.

Sweet 17

Himalayan Bank celebrated its 17th anniversary last week. It was established with the joint venture of Pakistan's Habib Bank in the year 1993. Himalayan Bank is touted as being the nation's leading bank, and has issued the highest number of credit cards in Nepal.

Bike away

Ganesh Enterprises, the distributors of Suzuki motorbikes, launched new models of its bikes last week. They now distribute the following models: DR 200 SE (Dual), DR 200 SE (multi purpose), GSR 600, GSX-R-600, Intruder 800, Gladius 650, GSX-650, GS 150R, Burgman 400, Hayabusa 1340, and B-king 1340.



Democracy and democracy



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

I had lunch with a 71-year old retired Nepali doctor in London recently. He had left Nepal when he was 31, when Surya Bahadur Thapa was the prime minister.

Forty years later, regardless of what your politics is, the 80-plus years old Surya Bahadur Thapa is still in the running for prime ministership of Nepal, a country where two out every three citizens are under the age of 35. Thapa is one example among many politicians over the age of 60, who were around in 1990, and who are still around now. Meantime, Tony Blair and George W Bush, both still in their 50s, are parts of history.

Even accounting for politicians' lust for power, what's wrong with our particular democratic structure that keeps on returning the same old politicians to power no matter how many Roman numeral *andolans* we have?

Design thinking has not penetrated the consciousness of Nepal's democrats, who equate democracy with truth, beauty and justice: rarely pausing to consider that politicians, like humans everywhere, have every incentive to design and maintain a system that is aimed at keeping them in power for a long, long time.

Architects know that the way rooms in a house or an office space is designed affects the outcomes: how and to what extent people interact, work together and play. Change the design, and you change the outcomes. Likewise, how a political system is designed affects the outcomes of how that system responds to people's concerns.

On the outside, our system has the requisite avatar of a democracy (multiple parties, elections, political horse-trading, etc). Dig deeper, and you will find that it's not the voters who call the shots but the party leaders, who have designed their parties' internal structures in such a way as to keep them in power for as long as they live. Voters can express resentment, but come election time, they have to choose among the same menu of candidates.

Meantime, our democrats love to argue for the capital letter Democracy. That's because doing so is easy and it attracts both the

global attention and the donor funds. But read the papers, and you will rarely find them steadfastly pushing for small-letter democracy: the boring process of making parties accountable to voters, being transparent about finances, handing out election tickets based on candidates' proven ties to localities.

Democracy gets a lot of support, democracy gets almost no support. The result is that Democracy has trumped democracy in Nepal. That is why, to cite one example, no matter how much our free press reports about corruption and bad governance, things do not change because politicians' answer remains the

same: "We have Democracy". To which, the civil society adds, "We have Democracy". Pundits chime in: "We have Democracy." Donors say: "You must have Democracy". Thanks to the good work of

of the devolution of political power, the accountability, the transparency of public decision-making processes, the palpable sense that we are heading somewhere better as a nation. Else,

There is world of difference between 'D' and 'd'

political activists, rights-based organizations and the media, Nepalis know about and appreciate the value of Democracy by heart now. But they don't want to be forever debating its inherent goodness. They now want to move on to the small-letter democracy: the nuts and the bolts

just having Democracy without democracy is like owning a BMW without an engine.

The era of old-time politicians will only be over when younger politicians focus more on democracy without getting into the hot air that forever surrounds Democracy. 🇳🇵

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Behind the persona



INTERESTING TIMES
Mallika Aryal

To mark the first anniversary of his death the Indra Lohani Memorial Committee this week launched the book Euta Beglai Byakittwa - Indra Lohani, a compilation of tributes by those who knew the tv talk show host personally and professionally.

The book is a rare glimpse into Lohani's personal life. His mother Hari Maya Lohani describes his childhood, his personality and the pain of his death in poignant poems. In reading Hari Maya Lohani's tribute to her son, we understand what made him the way he was, of his strong convictions and non-chauvinistic nationalism. It is also clear that Lohani's mother is a strong, educated woman who taught Lohani the importance of respecting women and treating them as equals.

Indra Lohani, with his mother and wife Sushma, instilled in their daughters the values of sincerity, charity and education. As we read his daughters' tributes, we understand how close he was to his family, how he loved just being at home and hanging out with his two daughters, inviting friends over and surrounding his house with laughter and conversation.

Lohani was the happiest when he was at home with his family. "Even 15 minutes before his program Bahas was to go live, he would still be playing with us, and we had to literally drag him out of the house to go to the studio," writes Samragi, his ten-year-old daughter.

It is also clear that Lohani was a deeply spiritual man and loved helping the poor. Less than a month before his death, he was visiting his native Jhapa where he had brought herbs from Ilam and Panchthar so that he could start an herb factory there. Hari Maya Lohani says that her son wanted to cultivate Nepali herbs to produce medicine that was easily affordable for the Nepali people.

place where no one would be turned away: "Baba once told me: your house is a place where if hungry people come they will never go back without food, if people without clothes come, they will be given warm clothes and if sick people come they will be given medicine."

From his humble beginnings in Gaura Daha, Jhapa to the National Law School in Bangalore, to Kantipur

Television, it is evident he was strong-willed and very focused. He was a man of a liberal democratic mindset and a great depth of conviction - of pluralism, democracy and the rule of law. Lohani genuinely believed that it was his duty to help fellow Nepalis - he went beyond the call of duty when he rescued people after the 2008 Kosi floods, and he would talk to his mother often about how he wanted to protect Nepali people from the Himalaya to the Tarai.

Lohani understood the importance of talking about issues that others would want to shove under the rug. Not all would have agreed with the way he ran his show - he probed, he asked hard and direct questions and never let anyone off the hook easily. But he was savvy and was one of the rare hosts who engaged with his guests and got them talking. He took issues head on and had Lohani

been alive he would have got lawmakers and the public talking about constitution writing, the rule of law, combatant rehabilitation/integration, accountability and impunity. He has left a void in the lives of Sushma, Samragi and Suhangi, but equally, in the fabric of Nepali society.



Indra Lohani was more than just TV's top public prosecutor

Lohani had a premonition that he was going to die young. He used to talk about death often, sometimes with his daughters and his wife, as if preparing them for the days when they would have to live without him. He was always very generous, and this value held his family together. Samragi describes her home as a

THIS WEEK

Neighbourly love

Indian Minister for External Affairs S.M. Krishna spent last weekend in Kathmandu, and left with a pledge to review the controversial 1950 treaty. His visit was eclipsed by Maoist opposition who are currently running a campaign for 'national independence'. Krishna met Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal on Saturday, following which Dahal hailed "a new beginning"



DPR

between the two countries. He was back to panning India the next day saying Nepal should scrap all unfair treaties with India and claim territories from Tista to Kaganda. India is said to be displeased with the Maoists' anti-Indian sloganeering, which also continued during Indian Army Chief Deepak Kapoor's arrival on Tuesday. Maoists contend he advised Nepal Army not to integrate Maoist fighters into its ranks. India says media distorted his comments.

High-level talks

Nepali Congress President Girija Prasad Koirala accused Maoist leader Dahal of balking at his promise to support geographic federalism by declaring ethnic autonomous states. Koirala said that Dahal had agreed to create federal states on geographic basis during a closed meeting with him in 2006. A day after accusing Dahal of being a liar, Koirala met him in the first meeting of High Level Political Mechanism and sweetly urged the Maoist leader to withdraw their plans for an indefinite strike. Dahal said he would consider it. On Friday, we will find out if Koirala saved peace again and whether the government needs to revise his CV for the Nobel committee.

Keep politics out

The Special Committee on Supervision, Integration and Rehabilitation of Maoist combatants reached an agreement on the code of conduct for People's Liberation Army fighters stationed in various cantonments around the country. The agreement, which had been floundering since September due to Maoist opposition, bars PLA members from engaging in political activities. Under the code, the combatants will not be allowed to sing the international communist song inside the cantonments as they have been doing everyday. They will also be asked to remove pictures of communist leaders, flags and other memorabilia of the communist party. The new code will also prevent Maoist leaders from giving speeches inside PLA cantonments.

Enough is enough

Tired of the bandas and strikes, several mother's groups in Pokhara declared the tourist neighbourhood Lakeside a banda-free zone on Tuesday. Bandas adversely affect our business and create bad image of our country, the organisers said. They have threatened to take to the streets with sticks if anyone tries to shut down the area. Local youth groups have pledged to help the groups, whose members are as old as 73 years.

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FOO CHEE CHANG

Jhameel

AHMAD ISKANDAR and FOO CHEE CHANG

For as long as anyone can remember, Thamel has been the go-to place for wining and dining and a little light music. For the bulk of tourists, this cluster of streets packed with cheap accommodation and souvenir shops has served as a portal into the exotic new world of Nepal. Food, drinks and music are all universal languages, and the jetlagged, disoriented backpacker as much as the seasoned trekker can sit in any number of resto-bars and satisfy cravings

for local dishes or creatively imagined dishes from home.

But over the past few years, Thamel's monopoly is being steadily challenged by another rather more urbane, up-market area across the river. Jhameel is in town.

From Jhamsikhel and Jawalakhel, a new wave of resto-bars are proving themselves an increasingly popular alternative to Thamel. The core of what we call 'Jhameel' is an unassuming street leading up past St. Mary's, to the right just before you crest the hill to Jawalakhel. "Some people call this road Restaurant Lane," says Tara Sthapit, who has been managing Chapter 9 Restro Bar since it opened May last year. The road on which it is situated is also home to at least 10 other establishments, including bars, pizza joints, and live venues.

The cuisines and cocktails to be found here are as varied

as that in Thamel, but the clientele they receive is different. Jhamsikhel and Sanepa have many expatriates and they form the bulk of their clientele.

"Here, you cater more to the residents and expatriates. In Thamel, it depends more on the number of tourists around, which can be seasonal," says Sudesh Shrestha, owner of New Orleans Coffee Shop. In short, the residential environment creates a stable business model, a sentiment that Roadhouse Café owner Chandan Kayestha shares. Both these resto-bars also have a branch in Thamel.

Some restaurants are also witnessing an increase in the proportion of locals among their clientele. Singma Food Court, the longest running restaurant in the area, has seen many more Nepalis recently. "It initially started with the adventurous ones, but soon more locals started trying the food, and liked it," says owner Erick Tan.

The owner of Red Dingo Restaurant (off Jawalakhel), Jonathan Mendies, attributes this shift to the increasing willingness of locals to spend. "Nepalis now have the disposable income, and are ready to pay for good food and ambience," he affirms.

Those who fancy a tippie on Restaurant Lane will first come across Buzz Bar, and may well find themselves jiving at the reincarnation of Moksh at the end of the street. Beyond Hermann Helmers, is Café Bliss, run by three partners, Yunus Shrestha, Ravin Bajracharya and Tilli Raj Ghale. A foreigner is bait for other foreigners.

With the area still growing and loaded with potential, Jhamsikhel is fast replacing Thamel. 🇳🇵



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1 Red Dingo
Go down under and wallow in the red earth ambience while chowing down on Australian specialties such as meat pies and white snapper fillets. Red Dingo also serves a wicked range of smoothies, popular with the local school kids.



2 Higher Ground Café
Higher Ground is a café with a mission – promoting social responsibility through its hiring of at-risk individuals and those without much opportunities. As

you sip a cup of fine local coffee with some carrot cake, rest easy in the knowledge that you are helping to advance a worthwhile cause.

3 The Lazy Gringo
Tucked away in an alley, this Arizonan-style Mexican food joint is a superb find for casual dining. A pleasant Mexican-themed interior and friendly staff won't distract you too long from the excellent menu.

4 Buzz Café & Bar
Whether it be drinks after a hard day's work or catching up with friends over coffee, this cozy café bar also offers a wide variety of bites, notably its spicy-hot buffalo wings. What's more, some of the ornaments and paintings are for sale, so you can recreate a part of the experience at home.



5 Sing-Ma Food Court
In true Singaporean and Malaysian fashion, diners are treated to a casual food court setting, but without the hassle of self-service. Try chicken rice and nasi lemak (rice cooked in coconut cream) or munch on golden goreng pisang (banana fritters) while surfing on your laptop.

6 Masala
Kebabs, biryani and all things North Indian in a classy environment, complete with soothing Hindi music.



7 5 Spices Asian Lounge
Specialising in both Chinese and Thai dishes, the Lounge's wacky oriental interior is as modern as

can be, and with a groovy bar at one end serves family, friends and more intimate encounters equally well. Spicy!

8 New Orleans
New Orleans' greatest pull is its outdoors ambience, jazzed up on Tuesdays and bluesed out on Saturdays. Try a succulent rosemary chicken or hamburger, designed by owner Sudesh Shrestha. Wander around the complex and visit Masala Beads, Rangy Changy or Therapeutics Shiatsu Center. Quixote's Cove, an independent bookstore with an extensive children's section, is adjacent to the restobar.

9 Vesper Café
Probably one of the classiest restobars on the stretch, the immaculate interior and open garden design are a treat. Wood-fired pizzas and continental selections to be enjoyed next to a cozy fire – if you can decide where to sit.

10 Dan Ran
The true taste of Japan will melt in your mouth with sushi and sashimi from chef-owner Junko Naito, but the teriyaki chicken and sukiyaki are just as popular among locals. For an authentic experience, try dining at the low tables.



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11 Roadhouse Café

Recognised as one of the best wood-fired pizza joints in town, Roadhouse is ideal for family and friends. If you can't wait on the pizzas then spice it up beforehand with their special chilli momos.

12 Chapter 9

The spacious garden is the perfect setting for a picnic or birthday party, and feels like home. With an Indian chef at the helm, expect a truly authentic taste.

13 Hadock

One of the few places there that serves Thakali cuisine, Hadock is also a great hangout for football enthusiasts. Sit back with your buddies and cheer for your teams in front of the large television near the bar.



14 Cinnamon

Another living room away from home, Cinnamon has the class of a hotel. Fine dining, grilled food and great coffee. If you're in the mood, go deeper for a drink at the bar.

15 Moksh

The new Moksh is all about space. Ample parking, and a huge garden perfect for sitting around with a drink in your hand. Serious diners can go to the upper floors and chill with continental dishes and their signature momo soup, and there's not one but two concert rooms for the sonically inclined.

16 Café Bliss

A fun orange draws you into a

lively, fresh yet cozy space perfect to hang out lolling about on the deep couches amongst the paintings and books and magazines. Plenty of culinary variety, too, including Japanese snacks and bracing main courses. Real bliss.

17 La Soon Restaurant and Vinotheque

Lunch alfresco in a big sunny garden or an cozy candlelit dinner inside, La Soon has long been the place to go for a wide range of quality continental and pan-Asian spreads. Fortunately the staff can help you choose.



18 Jazzabell Café

Along with a continental selection, there's also an African menu perfected with the help of African expats, and an African Nite to boot. Try their bite-sized chicken basket as an appetiser while sipping on a drink in their exclusive space.

19 Nanglo's Bakery Cafe

Airy, bright and cheerful cafe from the Nanglo chain, strategically located opposite the UN and near the ministers' quarters. Try the famous volcanic sizzler that Bakery Cafes are now famous for and wash it down with a mug of San Mig.

20 Café de Cass

A classy space indeed for exquisite mid-morning crepes or late evening wining and dining, Café de Cass is an intimate, upmarket experience.



21 Jalan Jalan

Off the road between the Summit Hotel and Hotel Greenwich Village, this little kampung-style restaurant is another find, with delectable cuisine from Malaysia. There's an equally delightful view of the Himalaya from the balcony.

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EVENTS

- ❖ **The Mahabharata: An Impression**, painting exhibition by Kurchu Dasgupta, 23 Jan, 1pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited.
- ❖ **Poet's Corner** at Lazimpat Gallery Café, write, read and vote, entries accepted until 24 Jan, voting from 24-31 Jan, 4428529
- ❖ **The Fragile Valley 2**, watercolour exhibition by Late Suzan Maharjan, till 10 Feb, New Orleans Café, Pulchok
- ❖ **Othello: The Sen of Nepal**, performance by Nepal Shakes from 5-14 Feb, Kamal Mani Theatre, Patan Dhoka. Tickets available at Dhokaima Café (Patan), Chez Carolyn, (Babar Mahal) and Nanglo Bakery (Durbar Marg)
- ❖ **Book-a-bee**, children's event organised by Quixote's Cove to promote reading and writing, 23 January. Participation is NPR 1000, which includes a full day of activities and lunch for the participating children. For details www.qcbookshop.com or call 5536 974.
- ❖ **Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre**, Tai Chi 10-11.30am Saturday, Yoga 8.30-9.30am and meditation 5-6pm weekdays, Keshar Mahal Marg, Thamel, 4410402
- ❖ **People After War**, permanent photo exhibition, every day 11am-4pm, Madan Puraskar, Patan Dhoka, for bulk school bookings call 5521393

MUSIC

- ❖ **Donato, Beppe and Anthony**, playing American classics and original compositions, 22 Jan, 6 pm onwards, Lazimpat Gallery Café, 4428549
- ❖ **Celebrating Diversity: A Musical Caravan**, at the Garden of Dreams on 1 Feb and Basantapur Darbar Square on 2 Feb.
- ❖ **JSC Jazz Quartet**, every Saturday 8pm on at Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lazimpat, 9803160719
- ❖ **Chillout Lounge with DJ Miriam**, every Friday at the Bourbon Room, Lal Durbar Marg, 4441703
- ❖ **Saturday African Nite**, with African food and music from 8pm at Jazzabell Café, Jhamsikhel, 2114075
- ❖ **Robin and the New Revolution**, every Tuesday 7pm on at the Bamboo Club, Thamel, 4701547
- ❖ **Live band** every Friday and rooftop bbq everyday at Kausi Kitchen, Darbar Marg, 4227288
- ❖ **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, 4479488 (pic)
- ❖ **Happy cocktail hour**, ladies night on Wednesday with live unplugged music at Jatra Café & Bar, Thamel, 5-7pm
- ❖ **Nepali Ghajals** at D'Lounge Beijing Duck Restaurant, every Thursday 6.30pm, 4468589
- ❖ **Rudra Night** live fusion music by Shyam Nepali every Friday, 7pm at Gokarna Forest Resort, 4451212
- ❖ **Jazz evening** at Delices de France restaurant every Wednesday, 11am-2pm, 4260326

DINING

- ❖ **Boudha Stupa Restaurant and Café**, for wood-fired pizza and free wi-fi Internet, 012130681
- ❖ **Famous stews of the world**, enjoy famous stews of the world at the Rox Restaurant, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, from 6.00PM onwards, 4491234/4489362
- ❖ **Wine and cheese**, every Friday & Saturday, 5-8pm, **Strawberry High Tea**, 4.30-6.30pm, The Lounge, Hyatt Regency, 4491234/4489362
- ❖ **Arabian Nights** for Middle Eastern specialties every Friday from 6.30pm, **Oriental Nights**, flavours and specialities of Asia every Wednesday at The Café, 6.30pm, Hyatt Regency, 4491234/4489362
- ❖ **Chez Caroline** for French and Mediterranean cuisine, Babar Mahal Revisited, 4263070
- ❖ **Live continental BBQ Fiesta**, exclusive BBQ Dinner at Splash Bar & Grill, Radisson Hotel, from 6.30-10.30pm everyday
- ❖ **The Corner Bar**, 5-7pm, 3-11pm, Radisson Hotel Kathmandu, 4411818
- ❖ **Lavazza Coffee and Baskin n' Robbins**, at Blue Note Coffee Shop, Lazimpat, 4491234
- ❖ **A café's café**, Dhokaima Café, Patan Dhoka, 5522113



- ❖ **Jazzabell Café**, TGIF, 10% discount all day, happy hour 6-8pm, Jhamsikhel, 2114075
- ❖ **Al Fresco**, for homemade pasta, steak and freshwater trout, **Kakori**, for biryanis, curries and kebabs, 7-10.45pm, Soaltee Crown Plaza, 4273999
- ❖ **Teppanyaki** meat items and garlic rice at Le Restaurant, Gairidhara, 4436318
- ❖ **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, **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri-La, Lazimpat, Rs 600, 4412999
- ❖ **Himalayan Rainbow Trout** at Hotel Yak and Yeti, Darbar Marg, 4248999
- ❖ **Tiger for Breakfast**, breakfast everyday at 1905, Kantipath, 4215068
- ❖ **Gokarna Forest Resort** for a variety of sizzlers at Tripti bar, 44512126



KIRAN PANDAY

SPRING IS HERE: The troika of President Ram Baran Yadav, Speaker Subhas Nembang and Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal at the Basanta Panchami ceremony at Hanumandhoka on Wednesday. The kings of Nepal used to officiate this ritual.



KIRAN PANDAY

QUAKE DEMO: An earthquake-resistant house stands while a less seismic-proof one crumbles in an "shaking table" demo at Jawalakhel on Monday.



KIRAN PANDAY

UNWELCOME: Motorcyclists at New Baneswor intersection on Tuesday below a black Maoist banner protesting the visit by the Indian Army Chief, Gen Deepak Kapoor to Nepal.

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Weekly Internet Poll # 485

Q. What should be the highest priority for the nation?

Total votes: 3,528

Nationalism	21.3%
Ethnic rights	3.8%
Development	32.9%
Peace process	42%

Weekly Internet Poll # 486. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. Do you agree that Prithvi N Shah is the founding leader of Nepal?

WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The winter drought continues apace with forest fires raging in the Annapurna and Gorkha areas. Machhapuchhre is a black pyramid, the rivers are running low. There are no westerlies in sight in this satellite picture taken on Thursday. Dry and cold in the coming week, with warm noontime temperatures.

FRI	SAT	SUN
18-2	19-3	23-3



KIRAN PANDY

Our boys

SUVAYU DEV PANT

When Nepal's U-21 Cricket team sets off for the South Asian Games next week, we can be sure that our boys will be in good hands. Since veteran Sri Lankan batsman Roy Dias (*above*) became coach in 2001, Nepal's age-group cricket teams have won nearly every tournament they have competed in.

Roy Dias played for the Sri Lankan national team from 1973-1987, and was the first Sri Lankan batsmen to score 1000 runs in test matches. He was also on the first Sri Lankan squad to qualify for the Cricket World Cup in 1979, and would go on to coach the national team during the 1999 World Cup. Since he came on board as national coach, Nepal's age-group teams have won several ACC Trophies and the Plate Championship at the 2006 ICC U-19 Cricket World Cup, among others.

Dias' unique contribution as coach has been a focus on the basics.

"I want them to have a solid footing in basic techniques. The top world players, like Sachin Tendulkar, all have excellent technique," says Dias.

Cricket enjoys grassroots support that is rare for Nepali sports. The national cricket teams are fairly diverse, with many members coming from Tarai districts. Local enthusiasm for cricket is

Nepal's cricketers have done well despite limited resources

motivated in part by the success Nepal's neighbours (four of seven countries in South Asia are test-playing nations) and, more recently, our own age-group teams, have had on the cricket pitch.

Nepal cricket also enjoys a fairly robust structure. There are six cricket development regions, many college-level cricket scholarships and the domestic league is reasonably lively.

However, cricket infrastructure is poor. We have few cricket grounds, many of which substitute mats for actual pitches. Batsmen who practice on these grounds are usually unprepared for the slower pace of bowling on real pitches. Binay Pandey, president of the Cricket Association of Nepal, says this goes a long way in explaining some of the difficulties the national team has had in batting.

Part of the reason for Nepal's poor cricket infrastructure is that it was never colonised. "In India, the British left behind many wealthy cricket clubs that can afford good equipment," explains Pandey.

This is partly why, despite the impressive feats of our age-group squads, the national men's side continues to struggle, ranked 21 out of 94 non-test playing nations. Cricket pundits, however, are quick to add that the men's side plays against much tougher opponents, since other countries allow expatriates into the national team.

So, what chance does Nepal's U-21 team stand at SAG, where it is in the same preliminary group as cricket-powerhouses India and Pakistan? Dias is optimistic.

"If we play in a relaxed manner and remember the basics, we can cause an upset," says Dias. 🇳🇵

Take our chances

SURESH NEUPANE

The 11th South Asian Games (SAG) are set to begin on 29 January in Dhaka, Bangladesh. As participating countries gear up for the tournament, Nepali preparations have been hindered by complications within the National Sports Council (NSC) and various sports bodies. And this only scratches the surface.

NSC Vice President Pitambar Timilsina says, "political disturbances have delayed training, so not all of our players are fully prepared."

Meanwhile, sports teams are strapped for cash. While NSC requested Rs 110 million for SAG preparations, they have only received Rs 90 million.

Nepal is sending around 300 men and women to compete in 23 events. The expectations of our martial artists, who have won medals in past Games, are high. But their chances look bleak in light of the extensive preparations the Afghani, Indian and Bangladeshi sides have undertaken.

When martial artist Mukunda Maharjan, who won five gold medals at the National Games, lost 6-0 to an Afghani competitor during a tournament in Bangkok, it became clear our martial artists aren't on top of their game. Taekwondo player Deepak Bista, who is hoping

Nepal's sports contingent is ill-prepared for the upcoming South Asian Games

to win his fourth SAG medal, explains, "In other countries, you would train for ten months and rest for two, here, you train for two months and rest for ten. So how can we be expected to win a medal?"

Within the athletics contingent, which is our largest this year, runners in the marathon and 5000-metre events have the best record. But here too, support is lacking. Marathon runner Arjun Basnet, who won a silver medal in the 10th SAG, says, "There's pressure on us to win a medal even they we haven't received enough support."

But there's good news too. If Anil Gurung and Jamuna Rai keep up their good form, then there's a strong chance our football teams, by far the most famous of the lot, will win a medal. Bangladeshi soil has proven lucky: Nepal won a gold medal at the 6th SAFF games in Dhaka in 1993.

Nepal's U-21 cricket team, led by team captain Gyanendra Malla, [see box below] will compete in a

20-over competition. Malla also led the U-18 team at the Youth World Cup in Malaysia. However, the team faces steep competition in world cricket powerhouses India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. If they manage to come away with a win, it will be a historic occasion indeed. 🇳🇵



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

"Gold will be difficult"

Malaysian badminton coach Annamalai Sankar (*above*) is in town for two weeks to train the Nepali badminton squad before it heads off to the South Asian Games. *Nepali Times* caught up with him on Tuesday:

Nepali Times: Tell us a little about yourself and what brought you to Nepal?

I was invited here to help the national side with their training. In Malaysia, I have coached two top state teams, Kuala Lumpur and Perak. Many of my players, including current world number one doubles player Kin Keat Koo, now play for the national team. I also coached the Sri Lankan girl's team which qualified for the 2008 Olympics for the first time in many years.



A. Sankar: What do you think about the Nepali team?

They are all so young, many just 16-22 years old, and eager to learn. They are also strong and fast. But their strokes and form need improving. I'll focus on that.

What do you think of the badminton establishment here?

First, the infrastructure and system are not good. There aren't enough domestic tournaments, the lighting in the main stadium is bad, and the same court is shared by many different sports teams. I could only train them for two hours today because of a schedule conflict. Second, players only train in the lead-up to major tournaments so naturally

lag behind other teams.

What are our chances at SAG?

A gold medal will be difficult. Our players are very young, and will be competing against experienced players, some in their 30s and 40s! Also, the Indian and Sri Lankan teams are very good. But some Nepali players show promise. On the men's side, Ratnajeet Tamang and Sajan Krishna Tamrakar are good and I've asked the Badminton Asia Confederation (BAC) to sponsor them. I think our women's team has a very real chance at getting a medal. Watch out for Sara Devi Tamang, Pooja Shrestha and Sabina Panthi.

You have trained several teams in the region. Who are you rooting for?

Let the best man win. I have no preference!

Counting on Nepal

INDU NEPAL

At the end of February, 60 enumerators will be dispatched to six districts around Nepal for a dress rehearsal of the 2011 census. They will ask people questions about their age, gender, occupation, ethnic group, housing, and education. When the real thing happens next year, they are expected to gather raw numbers from about 28 million people.

For a country that is supposed to have 33 million gods, our overly fecund population will soon be overtaking non-mortals in number. And that may be the only thing certain about the census 2011.

The census, which will be conducted over two months next year by 80,000 enumerators, will be the most accurate census to date, says Rudra Suwal, Director at Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). It is expected to cost over 2.7 billion rupees, most of which will be funded by donor agencies.

With state restructuring is in the works, the new census will also bet the most closely watched census in history. It is expected to show dramatic changes in the composition of ethnic, religious and urban populations.

“Due to the 10-year long conflict and economic reasons, people, especially from rural



KIRAN PANDAY

areas, have moved significantly. We know that population concentration is not what the politicians thinks it is,” says Vijay Thapa, of the United Nations Population Fund

(UNFPA). The proportion of Hindu population, for example, may remarkably decrease in the new census, if not significantly. “Substantial number of people

belonging to hill ethnic groups may possibly disassociate themselves from Hinduism, and affiliate to other religions like Buddhism, Kirat etc. Worshipping some of the so-

called Hindu gods and goddesses does not necessarily mean that worshippers are Hindu, according to some ethnic leaders,” says statistician Pawan Kumar Sen. Some Gurungs, for example, are

Rural upheaval

Urbanisation is changing relations between and within Nepali communities

SUVAYU DEV PANT
in PALPA

Caste relations are being transformed as urbanisation gathers pace in the Palpa village of Hungi, a village on the banks of the Kali Gandaki which is a microcosm of the country.

Hungi is remote, but it is no backwater. Proximity to a river ensures that farmland is fertile and well-irrigated, so most people have enough to eat. A few even have televisions.

“Nobody is starving here, there are only a couple of households struggling. There’s more than enough food to go around,” asserts Baikuntha Pant, a young returnee.

For generations, this relative prosperity sustained a division of labour between the Brahmins, who occupied the fertile lowlands, and the

Magars, who lived high up in the adjoining hills. A few Brahmin households owned most of the land and commissioned the Magars to work the fields for a share of the harvest.

But much has changed with people leaving for the cities. The key landowning Brahmin families have sold their property piecemeal to finance investments in the city. Many of the buyers are Magars.

“Before, all my parents’ neighbours were Bahuns, but the demographics have definitely changed now,” says Janak Raj Pandey, who works and lives in Kathmandu.

With city jobs and farmland of their own, the Magars now have more lucrative alternatives to working on Brahmin-held land. This has closed income disparities between ethnic communities, and given rise to a new, more diverse village elite. Inevitably, some people have come to resent these changes.



KIRAN PANDAY

devotees of local Devis (Hindu goddesses) but may not necessarily call themselves Hindus.

There will also be remarkable changes in the ethnic composition of population in the Tarai due to internal migration. Migrants from hill and mountains make up 85 percent of the total migrants, most of them moving to Tarai. Consequently, concentration of population in Tarai region will be higher than in the hills.

The most dramatic increase will be in the urban population projected to be between 20 to 30 percent of the total population in the new census. The number of people leaving rural areas stands at 30 percent, says CBS Director Suwal, one-third of which leave the country for foreign employment.

The new census may be sensational but it should not sidetrack the urgent issue, which is population management.

The last census in 2001 projected a fertility rate (average number of children per couple) of 4.5. With campaigns for contraceptive use, family planning and increase in female

literacy, the number has gone down to 3.5 percent, says Suwal. Despite the lowered rate, we are looking at a total population of 33 million by 2016, making population management a challenge for the new decade.

Population management becomes more pressing if we consider our GDP growth rate, says Suwal. "It used to be around 3 percent but has lowered to 2.5 percent. Our neighboring countries have a growth rate of 6 or 7 percent." Economic growth is not keeping pace with even population growth.

In spite of being the most densely populated mountainous region in the world, Nepal's population is manageable considering its resources, says Thapa, of UNFPA.

What we have in our favour is a large workforce. Nearly a third of country's population is in the working age group. How we turn this large population into a productive workforce will be crucial in shaping our country's future. And, the new census will provide vital information to development planners about how to tap into that future.

GPS-assisted

The Central Bureaus of Statistics will be using a Global Positioning System (GPS) in the new census, which it says will provide the most accurate data since the first census conducted in 1911. Until now, the data was aggregated on political divisions of the country, but the new system will be able to map settlements geographically. It means each individual will be put on a map, instead of being lumped into the data for a particular political division such as VDCs. This will be important if the country adopts a federal system where old political boundaries like VDCs and wards may no longer become relevant. More importantly, it will be able to map natural resources like water source and agricultural land, which will be crucial in planning development work.

"Look, there's the new rich," scowls my companion, gesturing to a richly adorned Magar woman during a walk through the village.

For the most part, however, these changes have been received peaceably. The bigger danger to social harmony comes from a different angle. While income disparities between communities have narrowed, those within them have widened. Many Magars buy property in the lowlands with remittances from relatives working abroad. Those less fortunate continue to toil high up in the hills.

"Life is still tough for me. I have two children and sometimes I struggle to feed them. Before I would get some help from my neighbours, but most have left for the lowlands," says Sujata (*name changed*), whose husband works odd jobs in Kathmandu.

Among Brahmins, too, income gaps have widened between families with children doing well in the cities, and those that rely solely on farm income. The impact of these changing sources of income has been keenly felt in the local

school. As the value of education, in preparing students for city jobs, has grown, enrolment figures have soared.

Urbanisation has benefited those communities with the means to take advantage of it, leaving the marginalised out in the cold. Hungi's experience is mirrored by the Nepali Living Standard Survey, which shows that while the income poverty rate has dropped, income disparities between communities have widened across the country.

Anthropologist Mukta Singh Tamang explains, "The poverty rate among the mostly high-caste groups who live in or near urban centres and are educated has declined more rapidly than the poverty rate among communities in rural centres." Tamang attributes this in part to rising remittances and low agricultural productivity.

With the 2011 census expected to reflect these changes, it's time the government figured out how to make urbanisation work for everyone.

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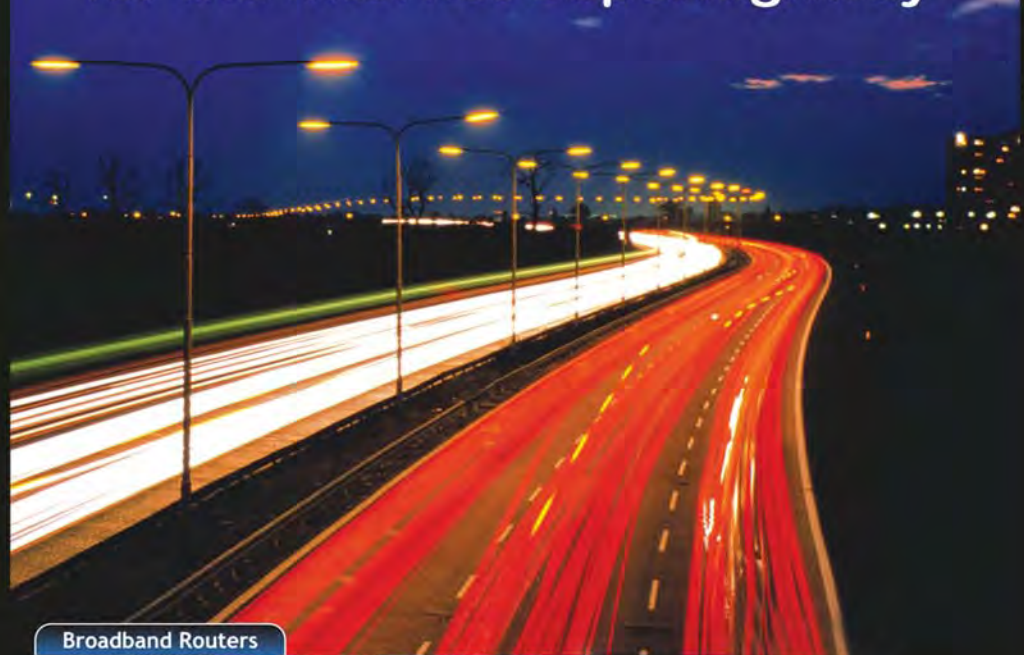
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Maoist media policy

Parshuram Kafle in *Rajdhani*, 14 January

राजधानी

The Maoists have decided on a two-pronged strategy to make the media speak in their favour: inveigle, if not intervene.

The preliminary draft of the party's national media policy has advocated a strategy of neutralising its critics and transferring media ownership to the hands of its sympathisers. The



RAJESH KC

internal meeting of the party's Publicity and Publication Department of the State Committee has categorised media based on ownership: government run, party run and privately run. Based on contents, they are: pro-party, neutral and antagonistic media. The meeting also proposed the establishment of a "pro-public" daily newspaper and television channel as well as a media mechanism at the South Asian level.

A five-page long draft policy has suggested a strategy to have more favourable coverage and to bring the media into the Maoist fold. It has proposed separate regulations for print, audio and visual media. Dinanath Sharma, head of the

Publicity and Publication Department, in a joint meeting with Pushpa Kamal Dahal and representatives of "revolutionary" journalists, proposed a central publication house in public-private partnership.

Under the heading of 'publication house', sub-clause of Clause 11 says the party's publication department should look after editorials while the opinion pieces should be monitored by the publication house. Article 12.2 says specifically that 'initiatives should be taken to make ABC, Sagarmatha and Avenues television pro-Maoist'.

Clause 6.1 on Policy on Government Media, says 'efforts should be put to exploit government media to their benefit' and recommend training and mobilisation through the

Revolutionary Journalists' Association. The same clause however has mentioned the need to 'establish rights as per democratic norms' and warns those who go against these norms 'should be dealt with'.

The policy recommends a good relationship with media staff rather than the owners. The paper states the quality, trend and content of the media will be closely monitored and 'negative aspects' should be dealt with on political and theoretical fronts. It has also proposed all media (print and radio) be run under a single roof to operate radio and cable TV in the regions and districts.

Boy killed

Kantipur, 17 January

कान्तिपुर

It was Saraswati Puja, and 10-year-old Santosh Karki got up early to go to school and pay respects to the goddess of knowledge. At school, he also got the results for his Grade Two exams. He came first, and was overjoyed. It was while walking back to his home to tell his parents when he was caught in a hail of bullets fired by hired gunmen of Maoist Kavre committee adviser, Ratna Lama. Raja Ram Thapa and Ratna Lama had had an altercation about construction material that Lama had piled on the street. Lama's hitmen fired at Thapa, injuring him but a bullet also hit Santosh Karki in his back. Lama had mobilized ten gunmen from Kavre who arrived in motorcycles and shot at Thapa indiscriminately. Maoist Kavre district in-charge admitted Lama was retained as an advisor. Before rushing to school that morning, Santosh had asked his mother: "What will you give me if I come first in class?"



"Yuck, what's with that moustache? You look like someone who doesn't know what he's saying."

कान्तिपुर

Batsyayan in *Kantipur* on 17 January

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Back to square one

Prasanth Aryal of *Nepal* spoke with Mohan Bikram Singh, secretary of CPN Masal, affiliated with National People's Front, about their anti-federalism movement for the 24 January issue. Translated excerpts below:

Nepal: What do you want to achieve through anti-federalism movement?

Mohan Bikram Singh: Two objectives: first, to make people aware that federalism does not suit Nepal and second, to prevent the country from possible ethnic and regional conflict and disintegration. History will show that our protest is sensible and realistic.

What alternative do you have to federalism?

Unitary system is the alternative. Over 170 countries follow this system, both capitalists as well as socialists. Unitary system should not be a centralised feudal system, but have decentralisation and local self-governance. We want local self governance to be named a fundamental right in the constitution. The local bodies should be freed from interference from the centre. The court will decide if conflict arises in such issues but the government must stay away.

Everyone already believes federalism is the best way forward. How can you persuade them to support a unitary system again?

There is huge public support for the protest against federalism. Survey and public poll results show that people are beginning to oppose federalism. There are anti-republic voice in NC and UML. Public supported our anti-federalism protests, and we didn't intimidate them to support us. This shows nationwide support for anti-republic sentiment.



RABINDRA MANANDHAR

Communists talk about class. Why do you think the Maoists raised ethnic issue?

This is unfortunate. The Maoists have come forward for ethnic autonomy while the class struggle is supposed to unite them all. Ethnic division leads to conflict and the Maoists are adding fuel to the fire. This is the result of departure from communist principle. That's why they are not true Marxists and Leninists.

Your party and the pro-monarchy RPP are launching anti-federalism protests at the same time. Is this intentional or a coincidence?

RPP has been insisting on referendum, and so has Sujata Koirala of the NC. There has been a realisation that the leadership jumped into federalism without giving it a second thought. Our protests have made people aware of its merits and drawbacks. The Maoists themselves will stand up against federal republic once they face the consequences of what they are advocating for.



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अब सधैँका साथी

“Citizen’s point-of-view is important”

Nepali Times spoke with Pekka Hallberg, President of the Supreme Administrative Court of Finland and President of the Councils of State and Supreme Jurisdictions of the European Union, about constitution-writing.

Nepali Times: How important is the constitution-writing process?

Pekka Hallberg: The constitution is the basic law for all citizens. The citizen’s point of view, therefore, is paramount. The modern constitution should guarantee basic political rights, and also economic, cultural and social rights, which are relevant to a country as diverse as Nepal. They should be written as clearly as possible but we should be realistic at the same time.

Constitutions should delineate a separation of power, and the appropriate relationship between legislative, executive and judicial powers.

We discussed presidential and parliamentary models with Nepali legal experts. I can tell you Finland’s experiences, but can’t suggest what is suitable to Nepal.

In the beginning, Finland had a mixed parliamentary and presidential system. Nowadays, it is more of a more parliamentary system: parliament elects the prime minister, but the president is fairly influential.



GANESH MAN PRADHAN

How was the constitution of Finland written?

First, the constitution was written by committees of experts and elected political representatives, which completed the task after decades of consultation. The parliament was quite unanimous in endorsing the constitution with only two votes against it.

How do you assess the direct involvement of political representatives, including nominated members, in the constitution-writing process in Nepal?

It is impressive to see active participation. It is very good to discuss differences of opinions before the final constitution is drafted. The constitution is legitimised by the people. Remember, the constitution is not a theoretical instrument but for the people. In Nepal, there have been open-minded discussions

and active canvassing of public opinion. It’s good to see what these opinions are.

The Maoists say parliament should control the judicial system, determine interpretations of the constitution, and that the chief justice needn’t be a judge prior to his appointment. What is your take?

The independence of the judges and judiciary are not for the judges only but to guarantee the people’s rights. An independent judiciary would be better able to interpret the laws of a country.

There are many models according to which judges are appointed. However, it’s important that judges be able to remain in office without political pressure from the outside. Our constitution says that a judge shall not be suspended from

office except by a charge by the court. Independence is not isolation but the integrity and the identity to make an impartial decision.

How can you ensure independence?

Transparency is the most important solution. Criminal procedures are not enough to ensure good governance. There should be boards which take the initiative to investigate cases of corruption. But there should be no political influence, and that the court must have the final say.

What kind of a judicial setup would suit a federal system?

There are different models. The general model is to have a general court at three levels. Europe does it differently: there is a general court for civilian criminal matter and administrative court for

Pekka Hallberg, president of the Supreme Administrative Court of Finland (third from the left) talks to Maoist CA members at a program in Kathmandu on Tuesday.

administrative matters. What matters most is that the system should work properly.

What about the constitutional court in federal system in the context of Nepal?

Federal countries often have constitutional courts. But in Finland we have a provision concerning primacy of constitution, which means that if ordinary laws with constitution, we give preference to constitutional provisions. I would say that constitutional court may do well in many countries but at the same time they isolate constitutional problems from people’s daily lives.

“The constitution will be written”

Akkal Bahadur Thing, UCPN Maoist, Kavre -2

What do you do when the CA is adjourned?

Even if the CA is out of business, parliament sessions are going on. I have to lobby for the development of my district in the house and also do party work.

Is the conflict between Tamsaling and Newa states getting serious?

Our party declared the states in principle only, demarcation has not happened yet. Conflict might arise when demarcating



the state boundary. In district-wise division, Kavre is in Tamsaling but what if Tamangs claim Swoyambhu like Newars’ claim Banepa?

Where will you make the capital of Tamsaling?

We have not decided yet. The capital should be at a convenient distance for the people so that they don’t have to walk for more than 3 hours to reach services. It will be decided only after consultations with the people.

Tamsaling state stretches from Ganesh Himal to Gauri Shankar. Doesn’t that make it impossible to deliver service in three hours?

We can make autonomous units within a state to address this issue.

Helmo and Chepang are against the declaration of states, aren’t they?

They don’t have what is needed to make a state/province. Jirel, Thami and Danuwar are also in a similar situation. They should be given autonomy anyways.

Will you still remain CA member even if the constitution is not written by 28 May?

The CA clause of the interim constitution says the CA members shall remain until a new constitution is written. We’ve had good discussions about the constitution so far. The CA will continue until the next constitution is promulgated. The constitution will be written for sure.

“CA members have no role”

Sanjay Kumar Shah, State Minister for Physical Planning and Works, Dhanusa-4, MJF (D)

What do you do when the CA is adjourned?

We read constitutions of other countries in the morning and evening, and go to the ministry during the day.

How far much of the constitution is written?

It is going satisfactorily although there are some differences left to resolve. The Maoists move to bypass the CPA and interim constitution has endangered the process. Before, many were worried that the constitution wouldn’t be written on time. Now they’re

worried if it will be written at all.

Are the Maoists the only obstacle?

Status quoists NC and UML are also obstacles in this process. Leaders of the major political parties are dishonest. Corruption used to occur only at the centre, but now occurs everywhere. People are being exploited.

As a minister, why don’t you control the corruption?

Political party presidents are the kings. Nepali politics is in the mafia’s grip. People’s representatives are helpless. Most of the CA members can do nothing but applaud what their party leaders say. Some CA members

had to give party leaders money to be nominated. How, then, can the constitution be written?

Which Maoist-declared state do you belong to?

When in the government, the Maoists attempted to capture the power by removing the army chief and appointing the person of their choice. As they failed to do so, they are now using ethnic groups as a ladder to grab the power.

Has your party been demanding one Madhes province?

Madhesi people want one Madhes Pradesh and we won’t compromise on it.





Generals in labyrinths

Lately, it does look like the Indians and the Chinese are competing over which country sends more delegations and senior dignitaries to visit Kathmandu. In late 2009, there wasn't a week that went by without Beijing dispatching the PLA brass, or the entire TAR government machinery or its MoFA honchos on Nepal visits. Now, the Indians are doing the same: no sooner had Foreign Minister Krishna flown back to Delhi, it was the turn of Gen Kapoor to fly in. And because the Chinese last year had visited Birganj, Kapoor made it a point to go to Mustang as well. The two **regional alpha males** doth look like they are watering the perimeters of their domain. Or, shall we say, spike their spheres of influence with urinary markers?

Our own Gen Gurung must have had a dialogue of the deaf with Gen Kapoor, however, because news of the Indian Army Chief's hearing problems (apparently he wasn't wearing ear muffs while shooting off guns during a US Army weapons demo last year) was splashed by Indian tv while he was in Nepal.



And the Baddies, with their impeccable sense of timing, visited various disputed border hotspots just before the Injuns invaded. There were some interesting paradoxes: Kaji Narayan Kamred, who was caught on candid camera shaking hands with the Indian SSB on the other side of Nawalparasi was, only a few days later, raising his fist at the Indian Embassy sit-in on Wednesday. Awesome gave broad hints to Minister Krishna that he should install him (Ferocity) as premier, and a few hours later went down to Udaypur to call for the abrogation of the Sugauli treaty.

But at least Awesome seems to be reading the Ass, which advised Comrade Chairman last week not to stop at the Mahakali but plant the Rato Ra Chandra-Surya on the banks of the Sutlej. Here are the Maoists refusing to give back property they seized from fellow-Nepalis, and they want the British to return territory it took away from us in 1816. Forget the Indians, the Baddies should **declare war on Britain**.



OK, let's get this straight. PKD says he wants to talk directly to India. A few days later he says BRB is an **Indian stooge**. So why doesn't PKD just talk to BRB and save us all the bother?



A vigilant reader has written to the Ass with a suggestion that the high-level committee entrusted with drawing up Girijababu's curriculum vitae for the Nobel Peace Prize Committee not to leave out the part under 'Work Experience' that GPK once waged an armed rebellion, helped hijack a plane, and that he even admitted in a tv interview once that he used to forge Indian currency. To this, we could add that he forced the government make his dotter DPM, and **SuzieQ** just scrapped the tender bids for Machine Readable Passports because the cabinet refused to change the TOR that would suit her favourite bidder. And when news of this leaked to the press, she berated Farang Ministry employees and (literally) threw the book at her PA, injuring him.



Breakneck News: with PKD and Makunay nearly coming to blows at the meeting of The Mechanism the other day, the Three Wise Men have decided to form a taskforce to suggest ways that their High Level Political Mechanism can take the peace process forward and write the constitution. The task force is made up of two members each from the big three parties. To summarise: **the NC, UML, UCPNM JLPM TF will do a TOR**. Why do we have a government made up of 44 ministers, remind me?



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