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KIRAN PANDAY

KILLING TIME: "Isn't it time, comrade?" "We've got all the time in the world. It's a historical necessity."

Running on empty

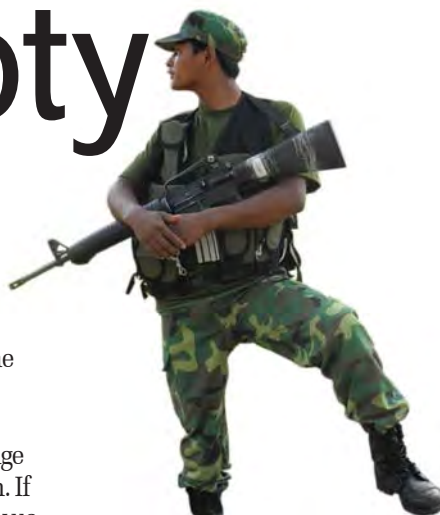
Despite hopes of a breakthrough, the last week saw our politicians entangling themselves further in each other's interests. Even the proposed extension of the Constituent Assembly, the tenure of which is due to expire on 28 May, has not been approved. The fact that such an extension is in the acknowledged interests of majorities within all three major parties (not to mention the nation as a whole), yet still fails to go through, tells us something about the mindset of the players involved.

In short, everyone is jockeying to get into the best position possible. This is nothing new, of course. While all is not lost (and we can expect the Constituent Assembly to be duly extended), this indicates that every step towards the conclusion of the peace process will be fraught with such wrangling and compromises.

The Nepali people are a patient lot. But it's not just the May Dayers and Peace Assemblers of the nation who are running

out of patience. In the cantonments, ex-combatants spend their days, as they have every day of the last four years, playing games, patrolling, and idling the time away. It's testimony to their mental discipline that they appear committed to the change they were taught to believe in. If only their leaders could show us they feel the same.

Over two thousand years ago, the Buddha said, "Everything changes, nothing remains without change." With a week to go before Buddha Jayanti and the deadline for the constitution, Nepalis have to believe that he was right.



PLA speaks

Shaktikhor's residents want dignity above all

p15

Chakravyuha

Our netas squirm into battle positions

p3



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

THE BUDDHA'S MESSAGE

Here we go round in circles again. Like a game of musical chairs, it seems our political players won't stop until someone is left standing. It is a dangerous zero-sum game, and a needless one, because we could very easily have a win-win for all sides, and for the country.

If we take a step back from the see-saw of daily headlines that sway from 'Parties Near Agreement' to 'Gap Between Parties Widens' you can see why this is happening. As we noted in this space as far back as May 2006, we had a conflict that neither side won or lost, despite their claims. It was the Nepali people who lost. The country was devastated and the people brutalised.

This is not a peace process anymore. What remains is a ceasefire, and a tenuous one. The Maoists gave up the gun, but not their use of violence and threats. They were forced to put the war into deep freeze because of a military stalemate and geopolitical pressure. In that sense, a section of the Maoist leadership views this ceasefire as it did previous

temporary cessations of hostilities: an opportunity to regroup and recharge. They have never wavered from their end goal of declaring a totalitarian people's republic, employing Gang of Four methods.

For their part, the political parties have also not given up on their aim of preserving liberal democracy. For parties that believe in non-violence and pluralism, the first priority was to stop the war. Only then could an open society, the rule of law, an independent judiciary and a free market have a hope of surviving.

In this contest, it should be fairly easy for the friends of democracy and freedom to decide which side they are on. Yet we see confusion, a romanticisation of violent revolution, and an effort to tolerate and excuse chronic displays of Stalinistic despotism even by those who should know better.

In hindsight, we could say the democratic parties gave away too much to the Maoists in 2006-7. But some of those concessions were necessary to keep the Maoists engaged, especially since their negotiators kept threatening to pack up and go back to the jungle every time things did not go their way. These differences were sure to come out sooner or later, as they did when the

drafting committees had to tackle the nuts and bolts of the future statute, and are clear to see with the deadline for the constitution approaching.

There are two ways to break this stalemate: go back to war or negotiate in good faith. Since the first option is unthinkable for the Nepali people and neither side has the stomach to fight, they have to talk. The Maoists are willing to test the boundaries of how far they can go with the threat of a return to war, and that was why they punished the people with an indefinite strike. They still think that a show of might and a hint of veiled violence will improve their bargaining position.

In the week that is left before 28 May, the first order of business should be to extend the CA, reconstitute the government and catch up with stuff we should have done last year. It is symbolic that on the eve of the constitution deadline we should be observing Buddha Jayanti.

K&D

Don't kill the CA

 **GUEST COLUMN**
Gagan Thapa

Within the week that is left in the life of the Constituient Assembly (CA), there will either be an attempt at euthanasia, or the body will be rushed to the intensive care unit. Whatever happens, we should remember that this elected House represents a desire for peace among the people though a national consensus.

Since parliament will continue to function for a few days even after 28 May, one hears arguments that the CA should just be allowed to lapse since the other organs of state will still have legitimacy. That line of thought may or may not have legal validity, but it is absurd and unworkable. Some within the NC and UML seem to have surmised that a parliament without the CA will be beneficial to them. And the

Maoists are rubbing their hands with glee at the prospect of cashing in on the political vacuum and public anger if the CA is not revived.

If the CA is dissolved, the peace process comes to a halt. In such a case those in the NC and UML who think they'll benefit will be in for a rude shock. Those who believe in the politics of the gun, of course, will rejoice. And if the country goes back to conflict, the two sides within Nepal will be fighting a proxy war for the national interests of our big neighbours.

Let's use the week before the CA expires to chart a course post-28 May. Blaming CA members for the past year is not going to get us anywhere. The constitution is only going to work if the politics are fixed first. The CA is not supposed to mend the politics of this country, it is supposed to give legitimacy to a political agreement. But if we go on trying to finish each other off, then the constitution is going to be dead, and we will all soon follow.

Hopefully, the urgency of it

all will allow us to find the political consensus on power-sharing to be able to extend the CA and then get the peace process back on track. The parties tried to find a 'package deal' that would include the peace process, constitution and power-sharing. But it did not succeed because they were not

Dissolving the CA would mean officially inviting violence into politics

negotiating in good faith. During and after the Maoist strike, marathon meetings tried to untangle the knots of army integration, but there was a deadlock. It is clear that the transformation of the Maoist party

into a mainstream player cannot happen as long as it has an army.

It is also clear from public Maoist pronouncements that the constitution and peace process are sideshows for them. It is their self-declared goal that first and foremost is state power. The Maoists haven't given up their desire to come to power through the gun, and as long as that is the case nothing else will fall into place. Until the Maoists realise that a federal, secular republican Nepal will not be possible without liberal democracy and pluralism, everything else is just empty talk. And therein lies the knot that has tangled up the peace process.

There are so many contradictions in the Maoists' public statements and their stands in the committees of the CA that there is no space here to list them all. Their idea of a 'peaceful' strike is to brandish khukuris and staves, their idea of an agreement is to threaten interlocutors with a fist. They show one face to the Nepali public and another one to their

sympathisers in the international community. Such duplicity does not build trust.

To be sure, it's not just the Maoists who are the obstacles. There are plenty of problems in the NC and UML too. But both are committed to the peace process and constitution-writing, they can't backtrack. They aren't the ones threatening to go back to violence. Their future in this country will not be determined by the gun, but by what they do here on to win the trust of the people.

The only way forward is the transformation of the Maoists into a mainstream party that plays by the rules, and the moral pressure that the other parties can bring to bear on them. They may not be able to agree on everything right away, but they must prolong the life of the CA and buy time to resolve those issues later and offer the Maoists another chance to change. 🇳🇵

Gagan Thapa is an NC CA member. A longer version of this opinion was printed in Himal Khabarpatrika, 15-30 May.

ON THE WEB

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CREATE JOBS
Let us make Kathmandu a business hub and not a political mess ('Proximate breakthrough', #502). Let us create employment opportunities for the people so that our sisters do not need to go south to work as sex workers. These are some of the agendas we need to advocate. We are not interested in who is going to be the prime minister or the ambassador. For that you need to sacrifice on all fronts.

Kancha dai

ROMANTICISED
The level of support/interest expressed on the internet by westerners is misleading and entirely disproportionate to the real level of awareness of Nepal in the west ('Letting go', #502). The third world leftist cheerleaders in the west are mainly young and naive, often students,

uncritically taken in by the 'romantic revolutionary' image.

Sarada

AMAZED
A western friend of mine asked me if there had been a tangible change in educational policies after the rebels joined mainstream politics ('Revolutionary teachers', #502). I told her about their interventions in educational institutes and their rationale. She was amazed, and didn't understand why the schools were closed.

Nirmal

BIG BROTHER
It is not a surprise that in the recent elections to the British Parliament, Mr. Brown first lost the televised debate, before his party Labour lost the election ('Television politics', #502). The ever vigilant eyes of the lenses demand a new

culture and accountability from public figures. Party leaders in Nepal, largely groomed in a culture where 'Afno angko bhainsi nadekhne, arkako ang ko jumra dekhne', now confront these lenses.

Devendra Pant

DELUSIONS
It is high time the Maoists came forward and assured the people that they are no longer in support of establishing an authoritarian People's Republic ('Edging closer', #502). Dahal should have courage and stop deluding the young and unemployed.

Tapan

SAVE THE CHURE HILLS
We foolishly and selfishly destroyed most of our forests ('Crushed', #502). We cannot afford to destroy the Chure Hills.

R Rai

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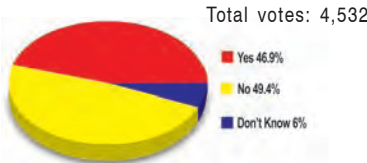
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Weekly Internet Poll # 503

Q. Should PM Madhav K Nepal resign?



Weekly Internet Poll # 504. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. How long should the Constituent Assembly be extended for?



War games



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

The politics over CA extension is based on the assumption that the Maoists are bluffing. They need the CA the most for they lose a legitimate source of strength if it is dissolved. At the last minute, they will – irrespective of whether Madhav Nepal resigns – back the amendment to extend the CA by a year. They may lose face, but they live to fight another day.

This could well be true. The Maoists allow the CA to end, and they will be blamed for being ‘anti-peace and anti-constitution’. They will have to be on the streets even as others continue to enjoy power, despite the diminished legitimacy of each state institution. So the party will be under immense pressure not to play ‘spoiler’. And the risk of a confrontation that will favour the Maoists rises.



The issue of CA extension is being milked for all it is worth by all

In the politburo meeting early this week, there was disappointment at the failure of the strike and questioning of the leadership’s judgment. But another refrain was how the present process was failing to deliver the ‘change’ the Maoists had hoped for and that it was time to consider fresh ideas.

The dogmatists tried to capitalise on the disillusionment and said that the principal contradiction was no longer with the ‘remnants of feudalism’, but with ‘expansionists and its brokers’. Mohan Baidhya (Kiran) and Netra Bikram Chand (Biplab) proposed a new united front with ‘nationalists’ (read royalists and conservatives) against India. This would have been a total reversal of the party line since 2005, and was rejected. The ‘democratic republic’ line prevailed, but it was concluded that unconditional support to the extension would be meaningless, for the fundamental political disagreements would remain. The final decision will now be taken by the central committee that meets from Friday.

But the focus on the Maoists has neglected other layers around the politics of extension.

The ultra-left (and the ultra-right) have a shared interest in seeing the end of the CA with sections of the Indian establishment. Delhi feels that the Maoists are the most vulnerable at the moment, and they should be allowed an extension only if they sign on the dotted line and deliver on commitments. An extension would give them breathing space, and only postpone a crisis. But Indian sources also add they will go along with the general mood of the domestic actors.

Echoes of this, predictably, can be found in the decision of the NC central committee-parliamentary party meeting which made extension conditional on Maoists delivering on issues in the package deal. But leaders like parliamentary party chief Ram Chandra Poudel, who fancies himself as the next PM, supported an unconditional extension. Incumbent NC ministers also went along with the cabinet decision to extend the CA by a year.

For once, Madhav Nepal’s role will be crucial. His role over the past year has been to sit tight, and ensure there is no broad agreement between parties, for he would then lose his job. Some of his aides suggest that Nepal does not want to be in the saddle so he is held responsible for the dissolution of the CA, and is contemplating resigning on May 28 if there is no deal by then. But his conscience is flexible and the temptation to enjoy Baluwatar for some more time could overwhelm it.

One of the most astute observers of Nepali politics has likened all this to the Chakravyuha (*pic*) – a battle formation in the Mahabharata designed by the Kaurava commander, Drona. The Pandava warrior Arjun’s son, Abhimanyu, knew how to break into the ring but not how to leave it. He died while trapped inside.

By locking themselves into difficult positions, Nepali politicians have entered the battle. They hope to have left enough manoeuvring space to get out. We will soon find out if they have succeeded. 🇳🇵

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Quality sells



Panchakanya Group proves that price isn't everything

If there is a Michael Jordan in Nepali industry, it may be Panchakanya Group. In the four decades that the company has been in operation, it has grown from a small family-run business to an industrial powerhouse with a brand name that has come to stand for quality and trustworthiness. Panchakanya's first significant industrial venture was in 1971, when it introduced modern rice mills to Jhapa. Chairman Prem Bahadur Shrestha and family made the move to take advantage of Nepal's status, at the time, as a net rice exporter. The family owned property in Jhapa, where land was particularly fertile. "Our family is from that part of the country, so it made sense to start there. It was very much a local-based operation," says

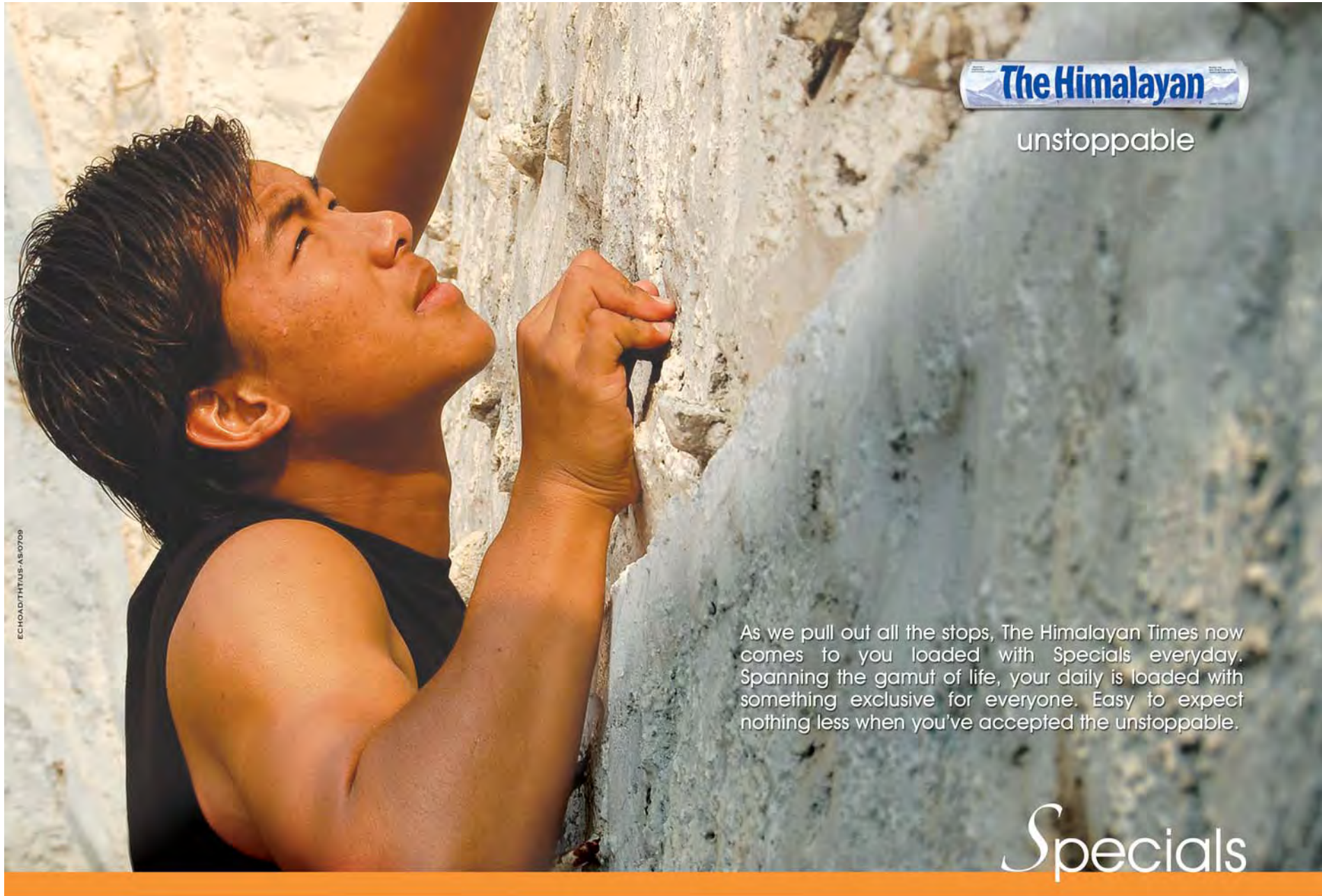



AHMAD ISKANDAR

Managing Director Pradeep Kumar Shrestha (pic, above). The company was named after Panchakanya Temple in Ilam, which is devoted to the five major goddesses of Hindu tradition. The agro-business proved lucrative, and enabled the group to diversify its trade. It entered the timber industry in the mid-70s, building six saw mills in eastern Nepal. But when the government instituted an anti-deforestation policy, the company found itself in an awkward position. "We had to do something new, but our experience at the

time was mainly in timber and local raw materials industry. We thought that we should enter a related sector, so chose construction," explains Shrestha. That sparked a phase of vigorous industrialisation. In 1981 the company established Panchakanya Iron Industries, later rechristened Panchakanya Steel, which pioneered the manufacture of earthquake resistant TMT Reinforcement Steel Bars. It based its steel operations in the west in order to help develop that historically poor region. It began manufacturing PVC and PPR pipes

to replace steel and cast iron pipes that left a potentially toxic residue in the water supply, and took over Nepal Bitumen and Barrel Udyog Limited, the only industry in the country to produce bitumen. And there's more. Today, the Panchakanya Group manages ten companies and trading houses, which deal in products as diverse as plastic, wires and hydroelectricity, and has investments in the financial and utility sectors, to name a few. The journey hasn't been free of challenges. In the early 1970s, there were very few Nepali industrialists, so many didn't think Panchakanya would get very far. Shrestha recalls: "People would say, 'Can Nepalis really run a factory?'" Additionally, the company was up against much more experienced competition, which began a price war in order to throttle the fledgling company. It was then that Panchakanya decided to prioritise quality, even if that meant charging more. The market response was not satisfactory at first, but improved when Panchakanya Iron Industries became the first industry to win the NS Quality Award in 1998. "Today, we can proudly say that Panchakanya products demand a market premium," says Shrestha. Panchakanya Group also sets aside a portion of its profits every year for social causes. It has invested in national level research, campaigns to clean up and improve traffic in major cities, skills development for blue-collar workers, and has sponsored, among others, schools, temples and hospitals nationwide. In the future, the Group plans to remain committed to the core values of integrity and honesty that have brought it so far, and use that as a platform to help build society. "We're a mature company now. It's time we thought in a big way," says Shrestha. 🇳🇵





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Specials

- **Sunday** - Shopping Plus - info, bargains, discounts, destinations
- **Monday** - Hi Tech Plus - technology and gadgets
- **Tuesday** - Health Times ; Medical Board - Nepal's best doctors respond to queries ; Wheels - everything automobile
- **Wednesday** - Campus Plus - collegiate life ; Appointments - careers and jobs
- **Thursday** - School Times - everything kids should know
- **Friday** - Green - environment matters
- **Saturday** - Property Plus - weekend two pager focusing on real estate



Online incline


FOURTH ESTATE
C K Lal

Nepali Times was online for almost six months before hitting the newsstands a decade ago. Back then, access to the internet even within the Kathmandu Valley was extremely limited. Comments from online readers often bristled with the frustration of homesick professionals in self-exile who knew that few took their opinions seriously. Much time has passed, but the tradition of overseas Nepalis complaining

publishers that the cost and effort of being on the web is not being wasted, even if the revenues from internet editions are negligible only *nepalnews* is reported to have crossed the break-even point. Internet editions are favoured for three reasons. The first is the buzz in the profession that the web is the future of media. Second, a cyber presence lends a publication an international profile. Lastly, the marginal cost of having a web edition is insignificant in comparison to the production and distribution costs of the hard copy. The web is where everyone in the media wants to

model of web publications and blogs is yet to evolve. Even a site as lively as *mysansar* is finding it difficult to raise money for server costs. *Dainik*, too, lost popularity because its promoters could no longer fund the in-depth reporting that once made it famous. At the end of the day, what really encourages repeat visits is not simply attractive design and streamed pictures but hard news and thought-provoking commentary.

It's expensive to collect, collate and package news. Comments continue to be cheap. But good commentary costs money. Since the internet doesn't yet offer sustainable returns for journalists, web-only publications don't attract the best talents around. Citizen's journalism is all very well, but there is a limit to what amateurs and enthusiasts can provide to satisfy the information, education and entertainment needs of users of web media.

Media mogul Rupert Murdoch is said to have observed, "Content is not just king, it is the emperor of all things electronic." Unsurprisingly, some of his publications – *The Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*, for instance – charge for access to their online editions. But in Nepal, where less than one per cent of the population has internet access and media houses are just getting their online act together, this will not be an issue for some time to come. Facebook may be all the rage in Kathmandu, but rural Nepal still talks to itself at local *chiya pasals*, with a little help from the headlines in daily papers. 

Net journalism is picking up, but the chiya pasal is still the preferred forum for most Nepalis

about the situation back home is live and kicking (mostly the latter). A critical mass of readers has since evolved that prefers to go online for news. Very few have the time or the inclination to read an entire article, most often clocking the title and pull-quote and scanning the rest of the page before firing off their reactions. The comment sections of web publications are thus often dominated by regular posters shouting at each other in an echo chamber. The contribution of online readers to issues of national importance is thus minimal. But page views and comments provide some proof to

be, even though few can make convincing arguments for it. Given Kantipur's full-spectrum media dominance, its group site *ekantipur* is somewhat lame. By comparison, *nagariknews* has hooked a huge following with simple design and eclectic content. Its sister publication *myrepublica*, however, could do with some innovation. When it comes to page views, independent sites and weblogs such as *nepaljapan* and *mysansar* are not far behind media heavyweight sites such as *ekantipur*, *nagariknews* and *myrepublica*. But the revenue

THIS WEEK

Numbers game
With only a week to go until the 28 May deadline, political parties are scrambling to put together a deal to avert a potential constitutional crisis. Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal seems confident that a deal will be reached, saying the pieces will fall into place as soon as it is agreed exactly how many PLA ex-combatants to integrate into the army. The Maoists say the PLA itself must be consulted, while the NC and UML have proposed figures from 3,000-7,000. Meanwhile, the government has submitted a bill that seeks to extend the CA's tenure by one year, leaving open the possibility of further extensions, under Article 64 of the Interim Constitution. There has been some controversy about the use of the article, with some legal experts saying it has been illegitimately invoked. So far, the Maoists don't appear amenable to the proposal. Maoist Vice-Chairman Baburam Bhattarai said his party will not agree to a tenure extension unless the government first resigns, and has threatened to unilaterally announce a 'people's constitution' from the streets on 29 May if its demands aren't met. Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal has warned that the last banda was only a taste of things to come, but UML chairman Jhulanath Khanal is confident the Maoists will soon agree to a tenure extension.

United we fall
The house of cards at Unity Life International came crashing down on Monday as the government, responding to an exposé in the 14-28 April issue of *Himal Khabarpatrika* and the ensuing public outcry over the firm's pyramid scheme, ordered the arrest of board members and seized the firm's assets. Security personnel removed staff from the compound and apprehended Bhim Gurung and Netra Lal Rajbanshi, two high-level officials of the firm, on Monday. Many other officials are on the run and are yet to be arrested, though the police believe they are still in the capital. However, it's unclear what will become of Unity's assets, as initial investigations have come up dry on a big chunk of the firm's reported earnings, giving rise to fears that they may already have been moved abroad. It has also come to light that the firm hadn't issued licenses to most of its clients, which is itself a violation of the law. Thousands of Unity clients have begun picketing its offices demanding refunds.



HIMAL KHABARPATRIKA 15-29 May

COVER
DEMAGOGUE:
Maoists were too smart by half
Unsuccessful street rebellion
Real people power
Why the locals did not join

Interview: Madhav Kumar Nepal
Agreement doesn't mean surrender

Purshottam Dahal: What will happen, what should happen
Jagannath Khatriwada: Prachanda's ploy
Shiva Gaunle: The media and the andolan

CONSTITUTION SUPPLEMENT
Long Live the Constitution!
Opinion Poll Analysis by Krishna Khanal
No constitution till demobilisation
Save the CA by Gagan Thapa

ECONOMY
More blows to a wounded economy
From dislocation to anarchy



 **ECONOMIC SENSE**
Artha Beed

THIMPU – Driving from Bhutan’s only international airport at Paro to the capital city, one can’t help but notice how different the fifty-kilometer drive is from other hill drives in South Asia. Winding roads recently paved for the SAARC summit, as well as fewer vehicles, make for a smooth ride. Two other features stand out.

Can Bhutan get it right?


First, the conspicuous absence of advertising billboards or graffiti and second, the lush greenery. A walk around the small city of Thimpu, which has a kilometre-long market, takes one back in time. No brands clamour for your attention, be it aerated drinks, instant noodles or


designer wear. The little shops sport homogeneous blue and white signboards for the most part, and do not have much variety on offer. The department store concept is yet to be seen, but this is less to do with a lack of consumer demand than government policy: consumerism is seen to ruin society. The Bhutanese talk extensively about Gross National Happiness (GNH) as a counter to market and consumption driven GDP. For instance, mountaineering in Bhutan is not allowed, as it has been deemed that the mountains should be kept as they are. Their conception of measuring people’s happiness as opposed to consumption or production is unique, and is a counter to western measures of prosperity. While everyone describes Bhutan as a small country, a population of around 800,000 means the country is manageable. The constitution decrees that 60 per cent forest cover is a must, and this has perhaps saved

Himalayan experiments


Bhutan from the kind of ‘excavator terrorism’ that has plagued Nepal. The rulers of Bhutan have definitely learnt from Nepal’s failures, and this can be seen in how they have gone about writing a new constitution, begun their experiments with the ballot box, kept donors in check, adopted global calendars and work schedules, and let English co-exist with the national languages. However, the challenge for Bhutan is to sustain its efforts. While a small population can allow for Singapore-style governance and control, the opening up of information access will be difficult to stem. How long can the local television channel, which resembles the Nepal Television of the early nineties, compete with international channels? How can one ignore the popularity of the first Miss Bhutan contest and the aspirations of Bhutanese youth that make up half the population? How long one can one expect to see this youth in (mandatory) traditional dress, coke in one hand and cell phone in the other? How will the youth challenge those who have been in power for many years in the elections slated for 2013? Does free education and health care

mean citizens will take the state for granted, in a country with over 50,000 migrant workers? Will this lead to an Emirates-style economy, where a wealthy state pays for the social security of its citizens while people from different nationalities actually do the work? Only time will tell how these challenges will be addressed. From an investor’s perspective, Bhutan will become a


hot destination. If a firm governance structure and access to energy can be seen as two big advantages, the biggest remains Bhutan’s parity with the Indian Rupee. This rekindles the Beed’s dream of the ‘Rupa’, a common South Asian currency like the Euro. In the meantime, Bhutan will reap the advantage of India’s growth, and no investor can afford to ignore this.  www.arthabeed.com



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FAIREST OF THEM ALL: Mirror puja to remove the 'essence' of Swayambhu before renovation work started, 2008

PICS: SWAYAMBHU RENOVATION PROJECT CENTER FOR DOCUMENTATION

Renewal: a time for change

The restoration of Swayambhu was a renewal of not only the stupa, but ourselves as well

TSERING GELLEK

Ask how old Swayambhu is and you are likely to hear that it is timeless, self-originating. It is said that a miraculous stupa of light arose upon a lotus growing in the lake of the Kathmandu Valley. Radiating five-coloured light rays, this sacred form acted as a conduit for blessings to flow into our realm. Later, the Bodhisattva Manjushree drained the lake in order to grant ordinary beings access to Swayambhu. Still later, the sacred light-form was enshrined within rock to protect it from the pollution of the Kaliyuga.

Over the past two years, I have worked on the restoration of the physical form of Swayambhu. Here stands one of the world's most sacred monuments: a source of light and renewal, whose blessings sustain the power of enlightenment. Yet people continue to ask the seemingly simple question: "How old is Swayambhu?" But that is like asking the age of an ancient forest. The process of birth and decay occurs naturally in a forest, providing an on-going cycle for renewal and growth. The forest itself has no age.

Similarly, the historical Swayambhu has experienced many cycles, forming and reforming over the ages. Like the

rings of a tree, each renewal of the sacred forms adds another layer of meaning and represents a new expression of faith. The Swayambhu we see now is a culmination of all the Swayambhus that have received offerings from devotees in the past.

Since the early 13th century, 14 major restorations of Swayambhu have been undertaken, roughly one every 50 to 100 years. The last was undertaken by the Tibetan lama Tokden Shakya Shri in 1918.


The current renovation of Swayambhu formally commenced on 1 July, 2008. The aim of this renovation was to restore the metal sections of the existing stupa to the splendour achieved by the last renovation. In so doing an opportunity was provided to restore and reinvigorate many traditional practices and artistic traditions. In this, the renovation was a time of renewal not just for the stupa, but for us as well.

Over 100 artisans and other individuals participated in the renovation, which involved no less than the removal, restoration, re-gilding (with pure gold) and reinstallation of the



Renovations underway at Swayambhu, 2010

vajra, the dharmadhatu mandala, the nine shrines in the dome, the harmika, torans, cornice, and the thirteen rings. Thanks are due to the vajracharyas, priests, and lamas, the Government of Nepal, and all the ministers and officials who granted permission to carry out this meritorious work and offered their advice and guidance; to all the artisans and workers who have given their skills and energy day after day; and to the Nepali citizens and their associations whose assistance and good wishes have been essential. Responsibility for funding was taken up by the Tibetan Nyingma

Meditation Center (USA), including for 20 kilos of gold. The Buddha taught that all compounded things are impermanent. This truth reminds us of the inevitable decay and passing of all things. It also offers us a priceless opportunity to reconnect to the sacred site of Swayambhu and ensure that its blessings continue. This moment of completion is also a time for renewal and a time to reflect on the power of change.  *The Friends of Swayambhu are holding a peace and unity lamp ceremony on 27 May, 7.30 pm.*



Lion face, during and after restoration

Painting dreams

Last Sunday, Korean painter Maia Ruth Lee launched her solo exhibition *Recollections Of The Lonesome Traveller* at Siddhartha Art Gallery in some style. *Nepali Times* caught up with the young artist.

Where did you get the inspiration for the poetry and paintings?

It all started from the dreams I had. I would write down bits and pieces of whatever I could remember in my journal. The dreams were very graphic, and were naturally very good to draw inspiration from. I had new revelations each time I reviewed these writings.

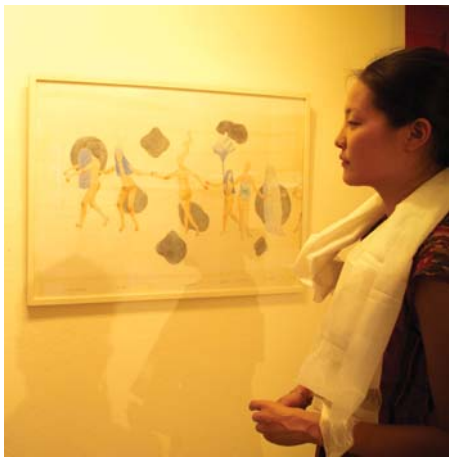
Why the confessional poetry?

Before, I didn't really know how to write

poems. So I started reading up about it from the works of the masters, such as Sylvia Path. I felt a kind of connection with her work, and eventually decided such a style would be helpful in conveying my ideas. Unfortunately, people are more familiar with her life than her works.

This is your third solo exhibition. How do you rate your progress?

Honestly, it feels like this is my first real solo exhibition. I think that I was too young then, and ended up being nonchalant about the exhibitions. I was only concerned about my works filling up the wall space. But now, since I had a strong idea of what I wanted from the beginning, it was much more satisfying. I still feel like I'm struggling, and am definitely far from reaching my peak.



Maybe I have too high an expectation of myself.

Why Nepal?

I've always loved this gallery. It's been here for since as long as I can remember. But it also has more to do with the conducive environment here. Unlike in Korea, there is a culture here where people make the effort to

appreciate such exhibitions and art. People are just too busy in Korea.

What do you think of the work of Nepali artists?

Nepali artists tend to go for a more abstract level of art, and that's a pity. Art starts with the history of it, which form the fundamentals of any artist. Abstract art is important too, but dangerous. There have been many works that are repetitive and lack originality. It's important to know why you're following a style. Nepali artists need to be more daring and keep making more art.

So what's next for you?

I'll be leaving for Korea in July to help out in the next issue of Chillzine, one of my earlier projects. That will be for about a month, after which, I'm looking for a place to settle down where I can focus on my work and do some research. Nepal has been a perfect transition in my progress as an artist, but I've done too much moving around.

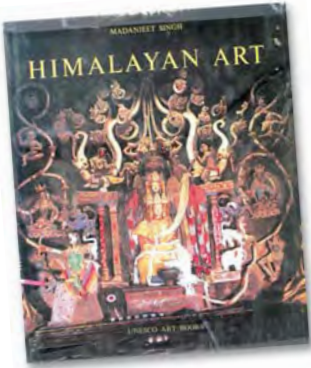
Himalayan Art revived

UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Madanjeet Singh's classic *Himalayan Art*, first published in 1968 by Macmillan and UNESCO, is to be reprinted by the South Asia Foundation.

The unique, fascinating artistic heritage of the Himalayan region, the birthplace of two major world religions, is still largely unknown to the layperson. But the snow-covered

mountains of the northern Indian subcontinent abound in beautiful religious and mythological treasures.

Until Singh coined the term 'Himalayan art' and published his book, there had been no general account of the subject. This was in no small part due to the remoteness of the communities within which this art resided. Singh made it his



mission to travel in the most inhospitable conditions by all available means, covering the entire region including Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. He

collected hundreds of photographs of manuscripts, sculptures and wall paintings.

It was thanks to the popularity of Singh's acclaimed book that thousands of tourists from all over the world thronged to the relatively ignored Himalayan region not just to conquer its nature, but also to see its culture. Even for Singh, expressly looking to document the region's art, this was not always obvious. Among the many anecdotes in the book is the revelation that Ladakh's Alchi monastery was discovered when

the jeep Singh was travelling in fell into a trench. As it was being hauled out, Singh chanced upon a little-known shrine and was astonished to discover the hidden relics that today have made the monastery among the best known in the world.

What might have been as surprising to the author was the incredible success of the book. Even Singh found it impossible to get a copy of the book – until he chanced upon a second-hand copy in the bookshop of the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul. *Nishchal N. Pandey*

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EVENTS



Peace and Unity Lamp Ceremony, to mark the successful renovation of the Swayambhu Mahachaitya, Buddha Jayanti, 27 May, 7.30pm, Swayambhu

The recollections of a lonesome traveller, solo exhibition by Korean artist Maia Ruth Lee (interview, page 8) depicting the metaphorical identities of a traveller. Her works draw inspiration from dreams and journal entries. *Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, 11am-6pm, till 3 June 2010, 4218048*

Paniphoto, Gurukul is restaging Khagendra Lamichhane's Nepali-language play due to popular demand. *Runs until 29 May, everyday at 5.30pm except Mondays*

Poetry and Motion, Caravan Theatre presents two short plays for families: Doctor Concocter, based on the famous Doctor Doolittle books, and Robyn Crusoe, inspired by the classic novel Robinson Crusoe. Ideal for young audiences, and adults who are young at heart. *22 May (1 and 4pm), Sunday 23 May (4pm), Lincoln School, Rabi Bhawan*

Creativity in Business, a discussion of the role of literature in business with Sujeev Shakya (Beed Management) and Sujit Mundul (Standard Chartered Bank) as part of QC's Tavern Tales, *26 May, 5pm, Nepal-Bharat Library, NAC Building*

Tribute to Great Artists, improvisations on the works of artists like Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock and Salvador Dali by Kapil Mani Dixit. Wear red or black to the exhibition to become a part of the show, says the artist. *Runs until 23 May, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka*

MUSIC

Naya Faya, a reggae band with a following in the underground music scene, will be playing live as part of House of Music's effort to line-up the best live performers in the city, *21 May, House of Music, Thamel*

Dance for a Cause, Lakhey's DJ RIPS will be spinning R&B and Hip-hop tunes for a charity dance party for Children N Youth First, an organisation that supports the education of underprivileged children, *21 May, from 7pm, Lakhey Restro N Bar, Darbar Marg*

GETAWAYS



NexGEN Adventure Program, rock climbing and canyoning in Sundarijal: a pleasant respite from the rising temperatures with a bit of adventure thrown in. *Daily departure, 016914541, www.canyoninginnepal.com*

The Last Resort: One-stop for Adventure Sports. Take your pick – be it a bungy jump over the Bhote Khosi river 160 metres below or mountain biking up to the Tibetan border, The Last Resort is paradise for adventure sports junkies. Relax after a full day of fun with great food and a cold beer at the Instant Karma bar before retiring in deluxe safari tents. *The*

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The Great Escape, retreat from the hustle and bustle of the city to The Dwarikas' Himalayan Shangri-La Village Resort in Dhulikhel. Just 45 minutes from Kathmandu, the short ride will afford you enchanting panoramic views and a myriad of nature's best. Overnight packages available for local residents. *The Dwarikas' Himalayan Shangri-La Village Resort, Dhulikhel, 4479488, www.dwarikashimalayanshangrila.com*

DINING



Boudha Stupa Restaurant and Café, for the real taste of Tibetan Gyakok (Tibetan hotpot with dumplings, meat and vegetables). Candlelight dinner options are also available for romantics every full moon night. *Boudha, 2130681*

1905 Restaurant, feast on roasted delights within this converted royal residence. Though it is right beside a busy road, the walled compound features a quiet ambience and green surroundings, making it an oasis within the city. *Kantipath, 4215068*

Café de Newa, won't be surprised if there is a Newari mama in the kitchen churning out chhoila, sukuti, kachila and bara in this restaurant right amidst the bright lights of Thamel. Try Newari delicacies like deep-fried buffalo tongue, brain and intestines. You will be blown away. *Next to Kathmandu Guest House, open everyday*

Aalishan, a newcomer to the Jhamel scene, serves a mix of both Indian and Chinese cuisines. The posh interior can be a bit intimidating, but don't let that put you off the food. *Jawalakhel (near the roundabout)*



Himalayan Java's Summer Splash, Java is known for its coffee, but it now has a new outlet and is offering a selection of chilled drinks to keep you cool in the summer. Sample some kiwi lime, lychee

lime, blended orange and lemonade for free. *Thamel, opposite Himalayan Bank and Thamel Chowk, inside the Food Bazaar*

Lhasa Bar, Enjoy a beer or a splash of a cocktail at this springboard for excellent young musicians starting out on the Thamel circuit. *Thamel, 985101043*

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KIRAN PANDAY

EYES ABROAD: Passport applicants wait outside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the only office issuing passports, after the government failed to meet the deadline for machine readable passports.



INDU NEPAL

IN SEARCH OF GOD: A pilgrim looks for the image of the Buddha on a pipal leaf in Lumbini on Wednesday, a week before the birth anniversary of Gautam Buddha.




TAKE CARE: UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Robert Piper prepares to hand over a cheque for Rs 1 million from the United Nations Women's Organisation to the Chhetrapati Free Clinic to set up a Mother and Child Care Unit, Sunday.



KIRAN PANDAY

ON ITS WAY: After a month of being grounded, the Rato Machhindranath chariot is pulled along by devotees on the third day of its journey at Mangal Bajar, Wednesday.



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WEEKEND WEATHER
by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

This week marks the onset of the monsoon as a giant cyclone has dumped rain along much of the Bay of Bengal. Another cyclone, fueled by a westerly jet stream over eastern Tibet, has also moved south and will collide into an advancing front. This may produce heavy rainfall in northeast India and east Nepal. On the other side of the subcontinent, the western arm of the southwest monsoon will bring rain to the hot climatic zones. Nepal's central and eastern regions will get rain through this weekend but western Nepal may see only passing clouds. An early monsoon is likely.



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PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

Flagellating the self-flagellators



KALAM
Rabi Thapa

In yet another stroke of oratory genius that he has since had cause to publicly regret, Pushpa Kamal Dahal recently redefined the class war as that between the sukilo-mukilo of Kathmandu (to be seen at peace assemblies) and the mailo-dhailo of the hinterland (to be seen at May Day rallies). His rage at the former's alleged impudence and condescension towards the latter was quite understandable.

Of course, on the whole, the Peace Assemblers were better-off than the May Dayers, even if white tends to accentuate cleanliness. But the May Dayers were as motley a crew as the Peace Assemblers as far as motivation and attitudes to each other were concerned. Many media commentators understood as much, and chose not to fall wholesale for Dahal's crude demagoguery. But certain commentators of the sukilo-mukilo variety took it upon themselves to use this alleged divide for their own ends.

Shradha Ghale's 'All too predictable', published in The

Kathmandu Post two days after Dahal delivered his tirade against the media and the sukilo-mukilo, was a case in point. No doubt many May Dayers came of their own accord in the hope of contributing to peace and prosperity, and Kathmandu residents would do well to appreciate this. But to present the May Dayers, en masse, as poverty-stricken, noble revolutionaries in polar opposition to prosperous, self-centred, patronising elites is unforgivable.

I cannot understand why Ghale cannot even bring herself to accept that the majority of those who assembled in Basantapur did so for a peaceful intent, and feels compelled by the force of her own rhetoric to apostrophise the event as a 'peace rally'. She deliberately ignores the fact that comedian Madan Krishna not only noted the presence at the assembly of educated professionals, but also welcomed farmers and workers. Worst of all, Ghale quotes Madan Krishna as saying "You are the respectable, intelligent and law-abiding section of this society. You shape the destinies of simple, ordinary folks. Aren't you the ones most entitled to have your say?" Either I was deafened by the chorus of peace, or Ghale is indulging in some all too

predictable, liberal translation.

Undoubtedly the May Dayers were 'the people', as she notes. But isn't everybody? Since when has it been a crime to be sukilo-mukilo when this is what everybody in the country aspires to be, not least Dahal of the 'glistening, bulging' jowls? Is it possible that certain elites, stung by the charge of elitism, feel obliged not only to chastise wholesale their fellow denizens, but also imply they are vigilantes and troublemakers? But then this

through threats, beatings and vandalism – to actually use the term 'vigilante' in reference to those who dared defy the banda. Peaceful the banda may have seemed for the UN convoys that were waved through, and the minions of human rights observers who were well-received by those on the streets. But it certainly wasn't for those daily wage labourers who presumed to work, those who attempted to open shop, or members of the press and public who decided to

morality that can only be the result of wallowing in the paradox of liberal arts lefty sympathies, guilt at being part of Kathmandu's elite, and the inability to actually do anything to change things. Ergo, self-flagellation.

So what if people chanted against Dahal? If the Maoist chairman can threaten specific segments of society on a regular basis (never mind promising massacres that would have him swimming in blood), then in the interests of peace, the rest of us go to great pains to avoid offending him and his cadre. To listen to some self-flagellators in Kathmandu, you'd think the YCL deserved a medal for not beating to a pulp, on occasion, those who dared to (for the most part non-violently) defy them. And since everyone self-censored and even 'volunteered' donations, you'd think extortion didn't take place. Think again.

Everyone knows one-sided broadsides are more exciting, but do they really open up new perspectives or ultimately undermine themselves? It's possible (and permissible) to be anti-Maoist and pro-people. Go figure that out, dichotomists of the world. 🇳🇵

Incredible as it may seem, it's possible to be anti-Maoist and pro-people

is only one of the many perversions that have come about when everyone treats the Maoists as if they are wild animals. *We'll tolerate it if they growl at us, as long as they don't bite.* It should be merely laughable when Maoist leader Dinanath Sharma claims his right to (violently) enforce peaceful protests is infringed upon. It should be absurd for those operating outside of the remit of the law – not by holding protests but by enforcing them

chance their luck by exercising their freedom of movement (presumably more fundamental than the freedom to protest).

The perversion continued when you heard some sukilo-mukilos implying that those who defied the banda were, if not vigilantes planted by the government, at the very least foolish people provoking the cadre. To get to the point where you defend the right to enforce bandas speaks of a warped

उज्यालो ९० नेटवर्कमा

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RUBEENA MAHATO

Malla knows very well his family of eight would go hungry were it not for his two sons, who have been toiling in the Indian sun for the last eight years. His seven ropanies of rocky land can hardly feed the family for more

It is not that people go entirely without food. People will say they haven't had food for days. Upon closer questioning it emerges that they have different ideas about what constitutes food. "Of course I didn't eat any food for days. I ate millet bread," says Junkiri BK, 60. But food is scarce and for the people

There are also no irrigation facilities in the village, all farming is rain fed, and improved seed and farming techniques are unheard of. People farm the same way their forefathers did hundreds of years back, and are ill-equipped to deal with the prolonged droughts and frequent natural disasters that have bedeviled the region and contributed to

Inevitably, more young men will have to travel to India in search of work while their fields lie barren back home. Their families will be forced to purchase rice on credit from unscrupulous dealers. No doubt, rice is a lucrative business for everyone concerned – except for those who most need it. 🇮🇳

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Buddhaland

It's more circle of life than tourist circuit for the locals of Lumbini

INDU NEPAL

RUPANDEHI – It was hard not to think of Siddhartha Gautam's first walk outside his father's palace in Kapilbastu as a passenger on our bus journey to Lumbini howled in grief. Her young daughter had passed away that morning.

But suffering is as real for the people of Lumbini now as it was two millenia ago. Despite the area receiving nearly 780,000 domestic and international tourists each year, according to the Lumbini Development Trust, the locals at the periphery of the top cultural destination of the Tarai remain mired in poverty.

Lumbini, the birthplace of Gautam Buddha, is a study in contrasts. Inside the three-mile by one-mile compound are a cluster of newly built monasteries ranging in style from Thai wats to Manange stupas. This is a part of an ambitious plan outlined by Japanese architect Kenzo Tange in 1978 to transform Lumbini into an international pilgrimage and tourism centre. Forty-two monasteries and meditation centres were planned: 14 have been completed and 12 are currently under construction. The result is a mix between a giant construction site and Disneyland.

This massive endeavour seems



INDU NEPAL

to have brought meagre benefits to the locals who live in the periphery of the compound in mud huts, toiling on fields for landlords. The construction itself is 14 years behind schedule, and the villagers who were displaced at the time are increasingly frustrated.

"They said there would be lots of employment opportunities," says Birendra Mishra, who was 10 years old when his father was relocated. "Now, the only jobs available are for gardeners and security guards."

In spite of impressive visitor numbers, Lumbini is a transit destination, say local business owners. Most visitors start their journey in India, which hosts three of the four pilgrimage spots declared sacred by the Buddha: Lumbini, his birthplace; Bodhgaya, where he obtained enlightenment; Sarnath, where he preached his first sermon; and

Kushinagar, where he passed away.

"They rent cars in India, use their own guides, stop over for a few hours and return to hotels in India," says Lila Mani Sharma, who runs a lodge. "Getting them to extend their visit is our biggest challenge."

Despite occasional riots and online campaigns to stop India from allegedly claiming the Buddha was born in India, the

battle to market the Buddhist circuit may already have been lost.

"I have been to Bodhgaya and it seems like they spend a lot of money to preserve their sites," says Prahlad Yadav, president of the 18-member Local Tour Guide Association. "What we could do is to promote the Lumbini circuit as a package deal."

The well-known but less visited Lumbini circuit includes other sites associated with the

Buddha including Tilaurakot, the ancient capital of Kapilbastu, and the Ashoka Pillar, which bears a stone document marking the birth of the Buddha.

Yadav and Sharma blame government apathy for the failure to harness the pilgrims' goodwill into a source of income for the locals. A proposal to convert Bhairahawa's airport into an international airport, which would allow Buddhist pilgrims to start their journey in Lumbini, was scrapped in favour of an airport in Bara.

The Lumbini Development Trust is in charge of implementing architect Tange's master plan and runs a few promotional activities. In order to celebrate Buddha Jayanti, which falls on 27 May this year, it is holding a debate competition among local students. It also hopes to honour senior monks and lamas in Lumbini but that will depend on the president's schedule.

Buddhists might tell you Tange's plan for Lumbini and other promotional campaigns will do little reduce the suffering of human life. If successful, however, such campaigns to attract tourists would certainly ease this suffering for the people of Lumbini.



Lumbini circuit

How to get there: A number of commercial airlines fly daily to Bhairahawa airport. You can take a cab to Lumbini at a cost of about Rs 700, and buses leave every 15 minutes. An information brochure provided by the Lumbini Development Trust says bullock carts are also available, if you so fancy.

What to see: Mayadevi Temple, restored and reopened in 2003, contains the foundation of the original temple dating back to the third century BC. The Ashoka Pillar bears the first epigraphic evidence mentioning the birthplace of the Buddha. Tilaurakot is the ancient capital of Kapilbastu and a museum holds artifacts depicting life in the Shakya kingdom.

When to go: Best to avoid the summer heat.

Where to stay: There are a couple of high-end and many budget lodging options in Lumbini, as well as in Bhairahawa. Monasteries in Lumbini offer accommodation for a donation, including meals.

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BIKASH KARKI

International interference

Deepak Gajurel in *Rajdhani*, 19May

Foreign interference in Nepali politics is on the rise. Recently, China, India, America and even the EU have openly shown they are concerned about Nepali politics. China feels intimidated by the unrest in Nepal as it knows Nepal's geopolitical position might be used against her. China's priority now is to maintain internal security by fighting against the West's idea of 'Free Tibet'. It has been reported that the Chinese President Hu Jintao asked Pushpa Kamal Dahal on

whose suggestion he resigned from the premiership last year. India's focus is to expand its influence in the region. But it has not recognised that the regional and international power equations have shifted because of the rise of China. The American ambassador has recognised the role of these two countries. "India and China should play roles in ending the current political deadlock," was his recommendation. His other message was, "I am already in the region and you cannot go against the will of Washington." Washington has shown interest in South Asia recently.

In the strategic document 'Vision 2020', the US has clearly said South Asia will be a major interest in the years to come. Washington's reading is that India has already lost influence in the region and it should accept this fact. Barack Obama, during his Beijing visit, said that China should play a role in mediating in Kashmir. Delhi duly objected. The recent events in Nepal have demonstrated that India has fallen into the pit that it dug for others. India got the political parties to sign a 12-point agreement, and hoped to bring Nepal under its umbrella, as it has Sikkim and Bhutan. The

failure of this plan has exposed India to the world, and it is now under tremendous pressure from international power players to be transparent. Nepal is turning into a battlefield for international heavyweights, for which our political leaders are setting the stage. The last week saw diplomats meeting with leaders, and leaders inviting them for consultations. Diplomatic decorum has been reduced to zero. Leaders are waiting for 'orders', weighing up which are the most profitable to them. But neither India, China or the US will give up jockeying for influence in Nepal.

Buzz the fuzz

SP Ramesh Kharel, chief of Metro Police Range, Hanuman Dhoka in *Kantipur*, 17 May

We want all kinds of professions to be well managed. But night operators should not forget the ground and be fly-by-night businesses. They should have their own guidelines. Not all are decent but a few are enough to destroy the image of this sector. This does not mean that all police in uniform are good, dutiful and loyal. But we all have to bear the blame. Why? Because you keep quiet when corrupt police officers exploit you. Therefore, you are also guilty.

Why don't you have guts to say "I won't be paying you bribes or protection money any longer?" Why don't you speak for your occupational rights? You have to have the courage to speak out against corruption. Entrepreneurs have a hard time because of the enforcement of the regulation to shut down businesses at 11pm. We don't have any other rules regarding this sector, so we should work together to address this issue to make it a manageable and decent profession. But for this, we need both entrepreneurs and police to be honest.

If Nepal Police fails to take notice of the corrupt activities of police personnel, as a department head I will take action against them. Tell me if some entrepreneurs are operating unlawfully, I will not spare them. Did you take note of the last police raid in Thamel? You must have been disgusted. There was a restaurant on the ground floor, a guesthouse on the first floor and a brothel on the upper floor, where teenagers were seen with clients. This is not tolerable for anyone.

Like one of the participants in this interaction program rightly pointed out, we will take action against restaurant owners rather than workers from now on. We will take action against them under the Anti-trafficking Act 2008.

Cultural shows are good as long as they are decent. But you cannot make teenage girls dance naked to make money. The law does not permit anything for the sake of making money.

I keep my mobile on round the clock, please call and inform me about such activities. I will take action against the owners and managers, not the workers. Not only this, if police personnel in uniform come to your restaurant and order food and alcohol, please let me know. I will take care of them.

If you do not inform the police, it will seem as though you are harbouring criminals in your establishments. If you really want to avoid possible trouble in the future, please tell me about what you know. Dial 100 for police control or you can call me on my mobile at 9851078100. Together we can build a crime-free society.

This is an abridged version of Kharel's speech at an interaction with dance club operators.



Call for Expressions of Interest Program to Promote Demand for Good Governance in Nepal – PROD and Peace-building Fund National Research Institute

The World Bank Office, Kathmandu

The Program to Promote Demand for Good Governance (PROD) is a US\$3 million World Bank initiative to help improve governance and institutional performance in Nepal and transparency and risk mitigation in World Bank financed projects – through social accountability (SA) mechanisms by civil society organizations (CSOs) and other institutions.

The World Bank intends to finance the assignment described below under the State and Peace-building Fund (SPF), a trust fund financed from the Bank's administrative budget and the Netherlands and Norwegian governments. A suitably qualified Nepali CSO is required immediately to lead the research, monitoring, evaluation and learning component of the PROD – initially for one year, renewable annually based on performance.

Activities to be performed include i) developing a monitoring and evaluation framework for the Program; updating the PROD Results Framework and indicators; analyzing data collected by PROD institutions; conducting a baseline survey of PROD result areas; defining participation and collective learning approaches; preparing and executing annual work plans and an indicative 3 year M&E plan; identifying and conducting analytical studies of relevant themes; developing learning notes and case studies from lessons learned and best practices; disseminating lessons and best practices; and, conducting mid-term and end term evaluations of the Program.

The successful applicant will be a CSO, think tank, research institution, survey firm or other relevant private entity with an active presence and good professional reputation in Nepal; sound knowledge of the political economy of state-CSO engagement; a track record in development and governance related research and engagement; proven expertise in monitoring and evaluation, and promotion of learning; experience in networking with Nepal's development partners and using grant funding; knowledge of the capacity needs of Nepali CSOs; reliable financial, management and administrative systems; and, a cadre of staff capable of supporting the above requirements.

The World Bank now invites eligible organizations to indicate their interest in providing the required services. Applicants must provide information indicating their qualifications for this assignment that include details of: past experience of similar assignments, experiences in similar conditions to Nepal, organizational charts and information on core skills of available staff, most recent audited accounts, performance awards, and testimonials from previous clients. Applicants may associate (in the form of a joint venture or intended joint venture) to enhance their qualifications.

Applicants will be selected in accordance with selection Based on Consultant's Qualification method as per the procedures set out in the current edition of the World Bank's Guidelines: Selection and Employment of Consultants by World Bank Borrowers.

Interested organizations may obtain further information at the address below, between 09-30 AM and 5:00 PM, and expressions of interest must be delivered to the address below by June 10, 2010 at the following address:

Attn: Sulochana Nepali; World Bank, Nepal Country Office; Yak & Yeti Hotel Complex, Lal Durbar, Kathmandu, Nepal.
Tel: (977 1) 4226792 Ext. 148 Fax: (977 1) 4225112; email: snepali@worldbank.org



The PLA speaks

TEXT and PICS: EKAL SILWAL

Ex-combatants in Shaktikhor are getting restless, but remain committed to their cause

SHAKTIKHOR, CHITWAN – The future of the nearly 20,000 Maoist ex-combatants in seven cantonments across the country has long been a sticking point in the peace process, now more than ever. The Technical Committee has worked out rehabilitation packages, including an option to join politics with cash support, vocational training for self-employment, business loans and education. But as the politicians continue to argue over numbers and modalities, Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal has refused to be pinned down, claiming that those in the cantonments have to be consulted. What does the People’s Liberation Army think? What do the real stakeholders of integration and rehabilitation want?

“We can’t understand why the political parties are fighting with each other in the name of the number to be integrated,” says Janak Bahadur Bista (Kuber), the secretary of the Maoist cantonment in Shaktikhor, Chitwan. He suggests the politicians sit together to find a consensus. He is clear on how to proceed. “Open up the options, then individuals can choose freely as per their needs, interests and physical condition,” Bista argues. “How can you prescribe without diagnosis?” He feels that the number of ex-combatants to be integrated into the national security forces depends on the other options that are available. “If a number in the thousands is fixed for integration and only 100 want integration, what happens then? Shall we fulfill the predetermined quota by opening new recruitment into the PLA?”

The other political parties are concerned that if the number isn’t fixed beforehand, the majority of ex-combatants will want to join the security forces. Bista, who himself was seriously injured during the conflict (he still has an iron fragment in his mouth because of an explosion), waves this away

firmly. “No, seventy-five per cent of us were physically wounded and many don’t want to serve as security personnel.” He adds, “There are also a number of mothers with four to five kids who dream of having a normal life outside of the armed forces.”

According to Bista, integration and rehabilitation is secondary to the dignity of ex-combatants. “We fought to move this nation forward. If there is a political agreement that addresses our aspirations then we can leave the camps without a paisa. We’re not goods to be sold.” Bista takes issue with the term ‘social rehabilitation’ which implies, he says, that they are *jungli* (wild).

Surya Bahadur Khadka (Apil), an ex-combatant with a chronic physical disability, is also opposed to fixing the number of combatants for integration. Supported by his crutches, he insists that he should also have the right to join the Nepal


Army. “Fixing the number to be integrated may prevent my joining the Nepal Army. That’s unjust since there are many soldiers serving in the Nepal Army who were disabled during the war. I’m just like them. If I have to be separated for rehabilitation, why not discharge them too?”

The issue of justice is clearly one that resonates with ex-combatants. Udaya Chaulaune (Dipak), the Vice Commander in Shaktikhor, says that a common agreement on a progressive political transition would sit well with the ex-combatants. For Chaulaune, this means a guarantee of a new constitution with powerful provisions for the rights of poor and marginalised people. “Our fight ends when the losers of the current system can get something from the upper classes, who oppressed them so much in the past,” he says.

It’s not surprising that many in

Shaktikhor express political views similar to those of the Maoist leaders currently negotiating their futures. Shanta Pokhrel (Aruna) is the Health Battalion in-charge and feels her future is attached to that of all the oppressed people in the country. She says, “I’m not worried at all for myself as we want gender and class liberty first. So there won’t be any blocks once we get rid of the political deadlock.” Aruna and her husband, Jyoti Adhikari, are waiting along with their five-year-old son Ujwal for such a political settlement. But she is offended that there have been “excessive exercises to break the unity of the PLA”, which she terms “unacceptable”.

But as they wait for the deadlock to end, it’s clear patience is at a premium. Bista concedes that the ex-combatants didn’t expect to stay in the camp for years, with an uncertain future ahead of them. “We thought we’d be here until the Constituent Assembly elections,” he says. “Some people must be just waiting for us to get tired and depressed.” Camp scenes confirm his assertion that it’s “boring”. At noon on Monday, ex-combatants kept themselves busy with carrom, chess, ludo, volleyball, football, TV, radio, and simply sitting under trees, taking turns to patrol every two hours. According to official PLA records, Shaktikhor and its three satellite camps are shelter to 3935 ex-combatants.

However, anticipation is still alive in the young ex-combatants. Numakanta Acharya (Binod), who as health department chief runs the hospital inside the cantonment, says they are waiting for consensus, but that they are willing to be flexible if their guardian party, the UCPN-Maoist, reaches an agreement. Toeing the party line is probably what is keeping the ex-combatants cool in the summer heat of Chitwan, or their mounting impatience may have boiled over a long time ago. 



Ahl iz well

The talk of the town this week was the **Primordial Minister** lashing out at the Europeans and telling them to Foxtrot Oscar. In his interview with FT, MKN revealed a snarling, hissing side of himself no one knew existed. The question on everyone's lips is how come the Right Honourable Makunay (never known for his intestinal fortitude when it comes to decisiveness) has suddenly got a second wind?



There are worse places on Earth than KTM, believe it or not. Mogadishu, for instance, where they go 'dishu...dishu' on the streets day and night. Or Eastern Congo, where loony gun-toters need Nepali troops to stop them massacring each other. What's even more uncanny is how the rest of the world follows our footsteps:

>Parts of Pakistan now have ten hours of load-shedding per day and they have added the element of surprise cuz you don't know when the lights go off.

>A Bolivian indigenous group that wants more autonomy for its resource-rich ethnically demarcated federal province has decided to announce an



KUMAR SHRESTHA

indefinite nationwide band. Tell me they didn't get that from us.

>Both Hugo Chavez and Evo Morales are sounding more and more like **Chairman Superfluous** when they threaten media critics with dire unspoken consequences.

>Britain is aping our coalition politics, and this could mean Westminster will start resembling BICC one of these days.

>Also in the UK, police have banned 500 Euro notes because (same reason we used to ban 500 and 1,000 Injun roops in Nepal) they found that 90 per cent of high denomination Euros were used by the underworld.

>And who would have thought

the Thais of all people would begin to follow our path towards urban chaos and republicanism? So, ahl iz well.

The late Girija Babu, before he started seeing Baddies as allies in the last year of his life, is remembered for having famously said that Maoists and Monarchists were one and the same. The trickle of Mandalays defecting to the Maobaddies is now becoming an exodus. Royalists and hindoo fundos have suddenly started accusing kingG of losing his nerves and crossing the floor to join hands with godless commies. Padam Dai, Tankababu have gone

over and Loktantra Man has offered his home as a safehouse. And from the way Kamal Thapa is dishing it out on Mau Mau TV, it may only be a question of time before **saffron meets red**.

While the Prachanda vs Baburam duet plays in the background, there are some comrades who are quietly projecting themselves as reasonable folks who can be trusted. Comrade Cloudy exudes the brooding confidence of a man who seems to have it all under control. Mahara Kamred has a couple of trump cards up his sleeves. Comrade CPG has gone a step further and hinted that maybe neither PKD nor BRB should be PM right now. CPji was in pretty confessional mode when he admitted to the party having been swindled by the folks at Unity Life. So it takes a pyramid scheme to bring out the greed in the baddies, and even **extortionists can be extorted**. But let it be known that the president, prime minister, various coalition ministers and secretaries have also graced various launchings organised by Unity's mastermind Kashi Prasad.

The bush telegraph is throbbing as May 28 nears with news that Jhusil Koiralo went to meet El Capital at the Pistachio Palace the other day for a meeting that not even aides were let into. Then Comrades KPO and BRB **burned up** their hotline to come up with a solution. So, what's it going to be: an NC-led govt in which the baddies have a berth?

Meanwhile, there is a roaring ongoing honeymoon between **Cash Kumar Juicy** and Comrade Awesome. FNCCI seems to have decided that if you can't fight 'em, join 'em and has started behaving like a political party. Juicy and Ferocious have been having lunches and dinners together to plan a mass rally at the behest of the baddies.

Awful has ended up saying sorry to just about everyone he abused in his Munch speech, but not yet to the media. Is that why his cadre in the districts haven't stopped threatening and intimidating jourmos they think are too independent?



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