

NEPALI Times

#506

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BILASH RAI

Moving the goalposts, foul play, refereeing blunders and own goals. Will our politicians ever achieve the goals the Nepali people set for them? As the wrangling drags on, it's all too easy to turn away in disgust and towards the rather

more goal-oriented strategic play that will dominate the TV screens of the world for the month to come.

In fact, football fans across the country are sure to expend much of their mental energies debating the rights and wrongs

of the men in shorts.

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

LIFE SUPPORT

Politics has pushed everything else off the headlines. We don't worry about what we don't see, but Nepal's deepening economic crisis is much more worrying than the political disarray.

No doubt the two are interlinked. Political stability is a prerequisite for investment, economic growth and sustained development. Chronic economic stagnation, on the other hand, can only have a corrosive impact on politics and fuel future instability.

Financial analysts are still debating whether to call the country's current cash flow problem a full-blown 'crisis' or just a 'crunch', but for ordinary Nepalis semantics don't really matter. Jobs are harder to get, even employment abroad has shrunk, sugar and other basic items cost nearly double as much as last year. The cost of financing for companies that have borrowed from banks is up

30 per cent, and very soon businesses are going to start going belly-up.

Yet the biggest irony is that one of the world's poorest countries imported Rs 45 billion worth of gold last year. We all know the nuggets and ornaments were destined for the Indian market. The trouble is that the payment for the exported gold didn't really come back to Nepal, but stayed abroad. By the time Rastra Bank banned gold imports earlier this year, it was too late.

The reason for the crisis is simple: we are spending beyond our means. The import bill for petroleum, vehicles and gold has surged and will probably be nearly double that for last year. But exports are down sharply from last year and revenue from remittances is stagnant. Nepal's balance of payments deficit will exceed Rs 20 billion this fiscal year.

One of the reasons the country's economy hasn't collapsed completely is because it is on life-support due to the Indian rupee peg. The shortage has already created a black market for Indian notes. But lift the peg and we could see Zimbabwe-style hyperinflation. Banking used

to be relatively robust, but even the financial sector is feeling the strain of the real estate bubble and the drop in remittances. Capital flight has made things worse as Nepalis snap up apartments in Hong Kong instead of Hatiban.

There is no quick fix. These are structural problems that have built up over decades. But we have to start by cutting imports and increasing revenue. We can ensure higher earnings from tourism, revive remittance flows and increase exports. We may have to contemplate cutting imports of luxury items and injecting liquidity into the market to bring down interest rates. We shouldn't repeat last year's mistake of delaying the budget by six months.

There is one short-term measure to rescue the economy and it is one we can take immediately: resolve the political stalemate.

KD

The intellectual dilemma

 **GUEST COLUMN**
Mohan Bikram Singh

The misguided policies of the Maoists are not just an obstacle to the country's political evolution, they are putting Nepal's future in jeopardy.

The Maoists are neither communists nor bourgeois democrats. They represent neither Marxist-Leninist-Maoist thought nor national capitalism. They are suffering an identity crisis and are drifting towards social fascism. If this trend persists, we won't be making progress towards a dictatorship of the proletariat and we will not see a new people's revolution: we will drift towards a non-revolutionary fascist dictatorship.

The extreme 'leftist' ideology and the war the Maoists waged was a mistake and it was unsuccessful. But even after they abandoned their armed struggle, they haven't been able to shed their extremist tendencies and

anarchist behaviour. The leadership, especially that of Pushpa Kamal Dahal, suffers from a careerist approach that is undermining the people's real interests as well as the peace process and the constitution.

The reason the Maoists get away with a lot of this is because progressive intellectuals and the media haven't really understood where the Maoists come from and

with this illogical line of argument is surprising. Only a party that has the support of a majority in parliament can lead the government, according to the Interim Constitution that the Maoists themselves helped write. The UML-led government got to power constitutionally because the Maoists lost the support of their coalition partners. The Maoists then tried to get to power

democratic-minded civil society leaders.

Nepal's intellectual class can be divided into three groups: those who support the Maoists out of an ignorant nostalgia for revolution, those who have either been bought, coerced or threatened to support them, and the royalists who see a convergence of interest with the Maoists. Somewhere within these three groups are intellectuals who have joined the Maoists not because they identify with their ideology but because they have dreams of getting into government or high positions.

Such behaviour, of course, is not uniquely applied to the Maoists: we have seen the Nepali intelligentsia sucking up to the NC or UML in the past. Lately we see even respected and independent analysts supporting erroneous Maoist policies and actions, and the reason could be a lack of intellectual clarity. Engels once said: "In general, traditionalist thinkers latch on to wrong beliefs."

For example, the Maoists started their armed struggle in 1996 because they thought the

existing order could not be changed without a protracted revolutionary war. That is what Marxism-Leninism taught us. But there is another Marxist-Leninist line that says: "The objective conditions must be right before an armed struggle is launched in any country." In other words, an armed struggle can be an extremist blunder.

A party that has to rely on counter-revolutionaries and opportunists for support is itself weak and can crumble at any moment. The Maoists should realise that what they see as ideological solidarity from the intellectual class is actually undermining them. It is only when the Maoists realise they have taken the wrong turn in history, that once you join a democratic process there is no turning back to violence, that the party will make progress and be honest with itself. 🇳🇵

Mohan Bikram Singh is the General Secretary of the Nepal Communist Party (Masal). Translated from a longer version in Himal Khabarpatrika, 30 May-14 June.

Why can't the Maoists and the intellectuals who support them understand what joining the constitutional process means?

have a tendency to tolerate, excuse or wish away their excesses. This is the why the Maoists have got a free ride in hoodwinking the mass public with their populist slogans of people's liberation and egalitarianism.

For a long time the Maoists have been saying they will not let a constitution be written until they can lead the government. That a large section of the intelligentsia has played along

via the streets, but failed and are now threatening to restart their rebellion.

If you have abandoned armed struggle and joined a constitutional process, you have to use due process to get into government. Even more surprising than the Maoists not understanding this is the inability of our so-called intellectuals to grasp it. This is not to say that there aren't credible, independent and

ON THE WEB
www.nepalitimes.com

FREE PRESS?
I agree with Lal's statement ('Complicity journalism', #505) that state-owned media are the least biased media compared to the free press. Every state has the compulsion to support the national agenda and national development. You can compare with those who hold cross media ownership (Radio+TV+Newspaper+Online) who could incorporate their personal business agenda rather than the national agenda.

NON-RESOLUTION
It is nice to find Prashant moving from Teraism to Nepalism ('Resurrection, deconstructed', #505). His vision has broadened now. This is an indication of his maturing journalism and analysis. I want to see his comments on other communities in Nepal.

Sijan
bb

Political gossip masquerading as analysis. There was never any doubt the CA term would be extended. All the members and parties had too much to lose and nothing to gain by not extending it. The Maoists thought that by playing a game of 'chicken' they could extract some concessions from the other parties. No political issues have been resolved by extending the CA. It is business as usual for another year and the same 'drama' will be re-enacted next year.

WHAT A GAS
Congratulations to *Nepali Times* for covering such an unglamorous subject ('Biogas moves up', #505). Nepal is indeed a model for other countries in propagating biogas, and it is proof of what can be achieved with sustainable

jange
May

aid policy, political will and government commitment. The technology alone was not the answer, it was marrying it with affordable delivery and the follow-up mechanism of organisations like BSP. Hats off for showing us there are other things happening in Nepal other than politics that are far more important!

LIGHTEN UP!
We are not just looking for cheaper alternatives, we are looking for alternatives ('The age of enlightenment', #505). Solar power is better than no power. Importing thermal power from India? Give me a break. The only reason we are even talking solar is because our netas have bungled completely on hydro.

Thomas G

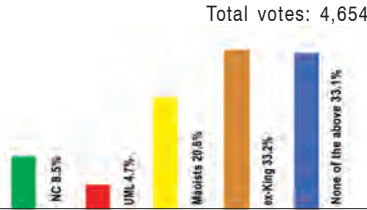
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Weekly Internet Poll # 507. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com
Q. World Cup or Politics?



KIRAN PANDAY

Losing ground



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

On May 28, top Madhesi leaders could be seen strolling around outside the CA complex. Senior TMDP leaders went to the nearby Beijing Roast Duck restaurant for a bite. MJF's Jai Prakash Gupta, Sadbhavana's Anil Jha, and TMDP's Jitendra Sonar were chatting with journalists about what could happen. Others were sitting on the lawns or in the makeshift canteen.

The absence of Madhesi leaders in negotiations that would determine the future of the country was striking. It was symbolic of the steady erosion of Madhesi political strength.

Madhesi parties complain this is because the 'pahadi parties' have monopolised decision-making. Their exclusion from the now-defunct High Level

non-Yadav OBCs and Tharus is a pointer to how there will be even more forces in the future. These parties are also top-heavy and the egos of all leaders cannot be reconciled within a single party framework.

But the India-encouraged split in the MJF last year was a turning point. It shrank the Madhes' bargaining power drastically, and led to widespread popular disillusionment in the Tarai. It also resurrected the conservative social forces of the region. Note that most ministers from MJF(D) in this government had nothing to do with either of the Madhes movements, are implicated in massive corruption cases, come from feudal 'jamindari' backgrounds, and only joined Madhesi politics before the elections to cash in on popular sentiment.

The second reason is that Madhesi parties have been subsumed under the 'national' Maoist-non Maoist polarisation,

Maoist violence, radicalism and anti-Indianism as stumbling blocks towards any understanding with them. The unstated reason is also the conflicting social bases of Madhesi parties (largely upper and intermediate castes) and the Maoists (extremely backward castes, Dalits, landless, janjatis and pahadis) in the Tarai.

India's real or perceived leverage over Madhesi parties has also harmed its standing in Kathmandu power politics. NC, UML and even the Maoists do not quite see the point of engaging with Madhesi leaders when the sense is that Madhesi parties will toe the Indian line. By and large, this is a correct assessment. A Madhesi leader told an Indian official recently, only half-jokingly, "We have put all our issues in a basket and handed it to you. Now it is your responsibility. Once you have dealt with the Maoists, address those as well!"

Support from India helps Madhesi parties and individual leaders in many ways, and is based on the extremely strong and dense links between India and the Tarai. But the resulting lack of autonomy has its pitfalls. The Madhes is but a card for India in its larger strategic objective of having a friendly regime in Kathmandu. The dip in violence by armed groups in the Tarai since Madhav Nepal took over is not a coincidence and reflects how India will use, or defuse, Madhesi forces according to its convenience.

As the controversy over the next PM sharpens, there is a buzz in Madhesi circles about how it is their turn to lead since the top three have failed. Mahant Thakur's name as a compromise candidate has been floated. Nothing can be ruled out in Nepali politics, but he or some other Madhesi leader would have stood a far greater chance if they had been more pro-active, united, autonomous, and connected to their roots. 🇳🇵

Madhes leaders have no one to blame but themselves for their lack of a role

Political Mechanism is cited as proof of the Kathmandu mindset.

But the whining is pointless. No one willingly shares power in politics. Power has to be created. Madhesi parties did that in 2007 and 2008 through agitations. They exercised power after the elections with their impressive numbers. If they are not seen as worthy of even consultations now, they should reflect within about what has changed.

The first reason for the dip in their relevance is the continued fragmentation of Madhesi parties. This is natural, given the heterogeneous social structure of the Madhes. No one party has sought to build a broad-based alliance; the under-representation of Madhesi Dalits, Muslims,

which has been framed as a battle between authoritarianism and democracy. 'Madhes issues' have been relegated to the background.

MJF(D), TMDP and Sadbhavana see NC and UML as natural allies in the fight to preserve democracy. Upendra Yadav's MJF feels the 'save democracy' rhetoric is a trap to block political change and impose a 1990s-type system. It views the Maoists as natural allies in the quest for federalism and inclusion. Privately, even top TMDP leaders admit that the Maoists are more supportive of their agenda, as seen in CA committee deliberations and their federal map, which has a Madhes province. But they cite

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Connectivity and growth



Leading European telecommunications company TeliaSonera recently rebranded Mero Mobile to Ncell. *Nepali Times* spoke to Spice Nepal CEO, Pasi Koistinen. Excerpts:



Nepali Times: What is the business rationale for your investment in the Nepali telecom market at a time when most foreign investors are not very optimistic?
Pasi Koistinen: As with the case of a rapidly growing business player, TeliaSonera needs to spread its wings. Where better than countries with low penetration and good growth prospects? Nepal has a sizeable and young population, low fixed-line and mobile penetration, and good prospects for economic growth. We are a long-term strategic investor, and look decades ahead. TeliaSonera invested in Kazakhstan after the collapse of the Soviet Union and now has a billion dollar business there.

We also feel privileged to contribute to Nepal's economic growth. Ncell was the second largest taxpayer in Nepal in 2009. Every 10 per cent increase in mobile penetration in a developing country drives a 1.2 per cent increase in GDP growth. Telecommunication services drive growth, competitiveness and the transition to a knowledge-based society. The mobile infrastructure we are building in Nepal, using state-of-the-art technology from globally renowned vendors, will serve Nepal and its citizens and also help make Nepal a more competitive economy.

What is the potential size of the Nepali market and when do you

expect the present growth rate of mobile penetration to plateau?
When Ncell was established in 2004, mobile penetration in Nepal was under 10 per cent. Now we estimate it to have passed 20 per cent. Growth will be faster, but it will take some time until the market is saturated. Penetration will to a large extent depend on mobile network expansion efforts. We believe that people in Nepal are in need of communication services, especially in remote rural areas, and that more people will be willing to use our services as we expand our network. Penetration in Nepal will be mainly driven by voice traffic for now, but we also expect mobile data to take off, because the mobile network

offers the fastest and easiest access to the Internet.

What was the strategy behind the Ncell rebranding and has the response fulfilled your expectations?
We recently rebranded Mero Mobile to Ncell, though our previous brand was very young. The rebranding has revitalised our image and increased the energy and enthusiasm of our employees. It has also been a fresh change for our customers. Ncell, its colour, logo and the whole outlook have generated the desired curiosity and expected feedback. The response has been very rewarding, and our purple colour has set the trend for the country's fashion. The idea behind the new

brand was to position Ncell as a part of a big international group of leading mobile operators, owned by a leading European telecommunication company, TeliaSonera. The message is that we are here for Nepal, we are a reliable and committed industrial investor, bringing much-needed communication services to the people living here. However, although we are part of an international group, striving to implement and maintain all the relevant international standards of fair and equal business practices, employee and customer treatment, we are at the same time a company with a strong local Nepali identity that respects the local culture, traditions and heritage.

Customers have a lot of complaints about connectivity and the quality of mobile phone services in Nepal. Why are services still below international standards?
Over the past year, Ncell has dramatically improved its network quality. We have extended our network to cover about 60 per cent of Nepal's population, a major leap in the country's telecommunication industry. We are continuously working on improving connectivity and I believe our customers have been experiencing this. Building mobile communication infrastructure requires sizeable investment, so we are making improvements gradually according to our business plan. However, I believe that with our latest efforts, we already have very good network quality and in-network connectivity. And we are in continuous talks with our industry partners in Nepal and abroad to improve inter-network connectivity.

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The partisan press

He may be a newsagent, but Deep Sah has seen and heard enough to recognise that independent journalism is merely an ideal



FOURTH ESTATE
C K Lal

JANAKPUR—Until the mid-nineties, only the registration clerk in the CDO Office knew the names of newspapers published from this town. In those days, papers were like calling cards of their owners, who used their publications to advance business interests.

With very little advertising other than government notices, the main source of revenue for local newspapers used to be official grants from the information ministry and unofficial doles from bureaucrats, police officers and politicians.

A prominent bookseller remembers how entrepreneurs would beg him to display their papers, knowing full well that nobody was going to pick up a copy. The purpose of the exhibit would be to impress people who came to buy Hindi or English Indian dailies.

The pattern of media consumption changed irrevocably with the Madhes Uprising in 2006. Most 'national' newspapers began to be perceived as pro-Pahadi and anti-Madhes. Local publications increased their print run and began to attract some advertising. The popularity of FM radio, too, helped enhance the prestige of some papers as journalists often worked across several mediums and emerged as regular stringers for national and international broadcasters.

In addition to half a dozen FM broadcasters, at least nine daily newspapers are now published from Dhanusha district alone. Their circulation figures are still closely guarded secrets. But unlike in the past, almost all these dailies can now be bought from newsstands at the bus depot, the railway station or market streets.

The boom in media has not been without problems. There is a severe shortage of trained personnel. Publishers are still opaque about funding sources. Journalists work for a pittance. Most publications do very little to hide their political inclinations. The best person to judge the tilt of local newspapers is often the hawker who has to push them to separate sets of loyalists.

Deep Narayan Sah has been selling newspapers at Janak Chowk for the last 40 years. He has seen editors cowering in front of the *anchaladhises* of the

repeatedly threatened. Sah dismisses all that with a shrug and pronounces: "Janakpur Today isn't free of shady transactions. Its politics consists of serving the establishment."

Sah is no less scathing in his criticism of the newspaper run with the support of the family of Rajeshwar Nepali, veteran journalist and freedom fighter of 1950s vintage. In his analysis, Jagaran Daily is merely an apologist for Indian interests in Nepali politics. He also dismisses Mithila Dot Com, Tarai Times, Tahalka Dot Nepal, Janakpur

Express, Mithilanchal Bishesh, Naya Mithila and Hamari Awaj as mouthpieces of business manipulators, Pahadi communalists, ambitious intellectuals, local administration, high-caste militants, the Maoists and the fixers of construction contracts, respectively.

He may be a newsagent rather than a media analyst, but Sah has seen and heard enough to recognise that independent journalism is merely an ideal. Freedom of the press cannot guarantee that the media are free of all commercial, political

or cultural interests. It merely ensures that all those with adequate means are not denied an opportunity to compete in the marketplace of ideas. What is true in Janakpur holds true for the rest of the country.

The media stands to play an even greater role in the political contestations of the future. This could be why investors are willing to bear huge losses and hold on to their niches. With the increasing complexity of the cutthroat competition within the media, the responsibility of media watchdogs will only grow heavier. For observers less experienced than the venerable newsstand owner of Janak Chowk, keeping an eye on the media will be more challenging than ever.



Panchayat era. He has watched some journalists act like orderlies for officers of the security forces. He has observed politicians handing out cash. He doesn't like to talk about all that. But he pulls no punches when asked about the political loyalties of the publications he sells.

The first local daily to acquire top category classification from the Press Council of Nepal was Janakpur Today. Uma Singh, a journalist associated with this newspaper, was hacked to death by suspected Maoists in January last year. In early March this year, its publisher Arun Singhania was gunned down in the middle of town. Editor of the paper and local BBC Nepali Sewa reporter Brij Kumar Yadav has been



KIRAN PANDAY

Testing bombs

Three people were arrested on Thursday in connection with a car bomb explosion in Basundhara, Kathmandu. Seven people were injured and the windows of a nearby hospital shattered when a socket bomb went off in a car on Tuesday morning. A previously unheard of group called Swatantra Nepal Dal claimed it had triggered the blast as a 'test case'. In a statement, the group said it was protesting the year-long extension of the Constituent Assembly.

OHCHR extension

The government has extended the term of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal but with a narrowed mandate that means the closure of its field offices. The decision was made after prolonged discussion with OHCHR headquarters in Geneva. This is the fifth term extension for the UN agency. "The OHCHR will not have access to privileged or confidential information of the government," said Minister Prakash Sharan Mahat about the cabinet decision, adding that "The human rights situation has been improving. It is an indication that the presence of the OHCHR will not be necessary once its extended term expires."

Dr Who?

After 19 days in captivity the executive director of BP Memorial Cancer Hospital Bhaktaman Shrestha was freed on Saturday. Shrestha said he was dropped off in Dhading after being moved around blindfolded for the entire period. No ransom was paid or any other conditions fulfilled. Shrestha said his captors were members of (yet another previously unknown group called) the Nepal Hindu Janata Party. Some political parties have questioned Shrestha's version of events because said group has yet to make a public statement about the kidnapping. On Wednesday, the Nepal Police spokesperson said his department was about to release a comprehensive report on the kidnappers, and hinted the police account was going to differ from Shrestha's.

Desperately seeking

As the nation looks for a compromise candidate to lead a national unity government, each party is trying to claim the post of prime minister, and each party has multiple contenders. Although it has publicly stated that Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal will lead the government, the Maoist party's central committee meeting says they should also be open to new candidates. CPN-UML and NC say they will not accept Dahal as the prime minister, and NC says it is also 'willing' to lead a new government. Although Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal has said he will step down, it is still uncertain when he intends to do so.

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Making work work



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

In the course of interacting with managers, entrepreneurs and management students as a lecturer, I encountered three recurring themes that seem to be bothering most people who run, manage or work in businesses or public enterprises in Nepal.

Organisational governance: It’s an open secret that most private companies are not good at the practice of corporate governance, which is about how effectively a company is directed and controlled for results. Rastra Bank has laid down some governance guidelines for banks. But corporate governance does not get much play elsewhere in the economy. Instead of hoping that non-financial companies will someday see the light and improve by themselves, it’s better to expect that increased competition will force them to improve in all areas, including governance, or force them out of the market.

The same, however, cannot be said of public or semi-public enterprises such as Nepal Oil Corporation, Nepal Tourism Board or Nepal Telecom. Senior managers who have served for many years

An ecosystem of support is needed if businesses and public enterprises are to flourish

complain bitterly that the tendency of politicians to flout rules to appoint heads as per their whims and party-political requirements is destroying many of these entities. Moreover, such arbitrariness has meant that public enterprises function more like unofficial centres of mass employment for party cadres.

As such, there’s a hunger among public sector employees to understand how they can get governance right at their organisations.

Negotiating with unions: Everyone knows that opening up a large-scale industrial unit is risky in Nepal, not necessarily because of price or quality issues, but because of politically charged labour problems that will crop up sooner rather than later.

Yet most managers remain ill-trained on aspects of labour laws, and on ways of negotiating with labour unions. Even when they want to get information on this, there is not much of a knowledge platform or network to plug into for advice and contacts. This gap became clear as senior managers, who one might think would be informed, asked me many questions on how unions could be tamed so staff members are focused on production and results rather than political rallies.

Instead of merely requesting, time and again, the political parties to rein in their militant labour unions, entities such as FNCCI and CNI should recast their own role. They should be helping upgrade their members’ negotiation skills while educating them about the good and the bad that unions can do in organisations.

Entrepreneurship: Every new bank says that it exists to help entrepreneurs. But entrepreneurs argue that the banks are so heavy on daunting paperwork and light on advisory support that most say no thanks to banks. International financial agencies, usually staffed by those in MBA suits who have never run a live, breathing business themselves, take the approach of clinging on to one or two entrepreneurs, only to write about them as success stories for headquarters at a later date.

Missing from both approaches is an understanding that entrepreneurship does not exist in vacuum. It needs an ecosystem of its own, a network of financiers, lawyers, accountants, mentors and apprentices. Helping develop that ecosystem, over a period of years, is unglamorous and unrewarding work. But as in Silicon Valley or in Boston, doing just that is the first critical step towards ensuring that the entrepreneurial species can flourish in Nepal.

Nepali entrepreneurs are hungry for networks, contacts and advice that they can trust and skills they can pick up. They are not interested in just another lecture on the importance of entrepreneurship.

Turning 10

Himal Power Limited (HPL) marked the tenth year of its successful operation of the 60MW Khimti I Hydropower Project. The company also announced a merit-based annual scholarship in Dolakha and Ramechhap for a talented girl to attend Lincoln School in Kathmandu for three years. HPL has supported schools in Dolakha and Ramechhap districts as well.



Khimti I is the first private sector project under a Build, Own, Operate and Transfer (BOOT) scheme. It has generated over four billion units of electricity. After the completion of another ten years, half of the Khimti I project will be handed over to Nepal Electricity Authority for a symbolic one rupee.

Skoda Yeti

Morang Auto Works introduced Skoda Yeti, a compact SUV, in the Nepali market. Named after the mystical snowman, Skoda Yeti is designed for off-road driving with the comfort of driving on the road. Powered by a 1.8 TSI 4 cylinder with a 118 kw (156bph) petrol engine, it comes equipped with a generous quota of standard equipment. The SUV is priced at Rs 4.9 million and comes in 14 different colours.



Stay cool

LG introduced another product in its medium-large Home Appliances segment, an LG Air conditioner with inverter compressor technology.

Unlike conventional AC cooling systems, the inverter technology in LG’s air conditioners is energy efficient. The company claims the new technology can reduce electricity bills by 44 per cent, which makes it economical and efficient.



Pepsi Mania

Arpan Basnet from Morang and Dhane Thapa from Narayanghat won this week’s lucky draw of a 32” Samsung LCD TV with Pepsi Football Mania. The promotion will continue till 11 July. Two Samsung 32” LCD TVs will be won every week in addition to Nokia mobile phones, Timex wrist watches, T-shirts, key rings and posters of footballers. The next lucky draw will be held at Pizza Hut, Darbar Marg, on 13 June. The grand prize winner will take home a Hero Honda Karizma ZMR at the end of the promotion.

Everest gives

On the occasion of the second anniversary of EBL Bhaktapur Branch, Everest Bank Limited donated a hydrocolator machine to Siddhi Memorial Foundation, Bhaktapur. The machine is used for physiotherapy. Siddhi Memorial Foundation runs Siddhi Memorial Hospital and Siddhi Shaligram Briddhashram with the donations it receives. RK Ummat, CEO of the bank, handed over the hospital equipment to Shyam Sundar Dhaubadel, founder of Siddhi Memorial.

Mega Sipridi

Sipridi Trading, the authorised dealer of Tata Motors in Nepal, is organising an 18-day Sipridi Mega Exchange Camp, an exposition of Tata vehicles along with an exchange facility. On the spot finance will be available for the purchase of new vehicles. The camp will kick off in Nepalganj on 10 June, and tour Butwal, Pokhara, Narayanghat, Birganj, Dharan, Biratnagar and Birtamod, concluding in Kathmandu on 27 June.



SDB for women

Siddhartha Development Bank announced a ‘Khasi deposit’ scheme for women, allowing them to open an account with a minimum deposit of Rs 500. The bank provides 8 per cent annual interest along with a one-year subscription to Nari magazine. Depositors will also get a 50 per cent waiver on a locker system, a free ATM card, e-banking, SMS services, free accident insurance worth Rs 100,000 and a 25 per cent discount at the Kathmandu Revolving Restaurant.

Dabur’s goals

Uttam Maskey from Narayanghat won the monthly bumper prize of a SONY BRAVIA 32” LCD TV for Dabur Real’s ‘Score the Real Goal’. Jay Prakash Tandukar won a SONY BRAVIA 22” LCD TV as the highest correct SMS sender for week 9. Dabur’s ‘Score the Real Goal’ campaign started on April 30; for a chance to win, identify the ‘Real Ball’ and SMS to 5004.

New CG models

CG Mobiles lauched two new models: C763 (CDMA) and D990(CDMA + GSM). C763 is a full touch screen mobile equipped with a music player, bluetooth, and a digital camera. D990 is a dual SIM slot phone with a QWERTY keypad, equipped with a 1.3 MP Camera, FM, bluetooth, internet modem and Java. They are priced at Rs 8,690 and Rs 9,790 respectively, and come with warranties and a free 1 GB memory card.

Top boss

BOSS Magazine announced the Seventh BOSS Top Ten Business Excellence Awards on Tuesday, honouring the who’s who of



Nepal’s business fraternity. CEO of NTB Prachanda Man Shrestha, Kamal Gyawali of Kist Bank and Om Raj Bhandari of Comfort Housing were conferred with the best CEO awards. Lun Karandas Chaudhary of Chaudhary Group was recognised with the Lifetime Achievement award.

Colourful trip

Asian Paints organised ‘Colourful Meet 2010’, a three-day trip to Pokhara. Dealers and their families from various locations across Nepal attended the meet. Fun games, a lucky draw, live entertainment programs, dancing and a stay at Fulbari Resort were the attractions. Budhaitya Mukherjee, General Manager of Asian Paints Nepal, participated with company employees.

Ninja unveiled

Kawasaki Ninja 250R was officially launched on Wednesday at Soaltee Crowne Plaza. The



250cc sports motorbike was introduced by HH Bajaj and is available in stylish lime green and ebony black colours. At the event, the bikes were handed over to the first five customers to have made a booking.



AFP

Dreams come true

SURESH NEUPANE

After a wait of four years, kick-off is here. At precisely 7.45pm Nepali time today, South Africa and Mexico will face off in the opening fixture of the 19th World Cup at the Soccer City Stadium in Johannesburg. Even for the nation that successfully hosted the 1995 Rugby World Cup and the 2003 ICC Cricket World Cup, 2010's FIFA World Cup is seen as a unique opportunity not only to thrust itself into global prominence, but also to honour the entire African continent.

This momentous event has materialised as a result of three years of hard work and massive investment on the part of South

Africa. A new international airport north of Durban and 10 new stadiums of 56,000-capacity to host 64 matches along with other investments (such as a high-speed rail link) have cost the state \$3.7 billion. This is in addition to the \$800 million spent by FIFA. It is estimated that tourism and business receipts will earn the South African economy close to \$4 billion, boosting growth from 3% to 3.5%.

The global event will also influence the future of the African continent's economies, social development and politics. Participating nations such as South Africa, Algeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Ivory Coast and

Nigeria, which have all gone through growing pains since independence, will take the opportunity to rejuvenate their nationhood and improve regional relations.

As for who will end up hoisting up the FIFA World Cup Trophy, the usual suspects loom large. Brazil fancies its chances of winning the event for the sixth time, but perennial dark horses Spain are considered by many the real favourite this time around, having won all 10 of its qualifying matches. Stars such as Argentina's Messi, Portugal's Ronaldo, and England's Rooney will no doubt give their fans plenty to hope for, and there's no dismissing the dangerous

African teams, well known for regular upsets.

And Nepal? We may be light years away from qualifying, but the World Cup has become a festival to rival any other. The football craze here will feed on the incredible range of promotions by companies such as Coca-cola, Pepsi, LG, Carlsberg and Samsung, with some lucky so-and-sos going all the way to South Africa. Restaurants and hotels will entertain the rest of us with massive screens and stores are all stocked up on football jerseys. Nepali football lovers may live in Nepal, but their hearts will be in South Africa for the next month. 🇳🇵



KIRAN PANDAY



Men with balls

A billion condoms? Believe it or not, the South African government is making arrangements for 1,000,000,000 condoms for the duration of the FIFA World Cup. This is ten times the supply made available during the Winter Olympics in Vancouver this year. Is it the weather? Whatever it is, the South African state's prescience has meant that in this country where almost 12% of the population has HIV/AIDS, those visitors worried about their team will have to worry about one thing less.

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WORLD CUP

Sports Bar, the only sports bar in town boasts a 109-inch screen with surround sound and the usual cocktails and drinks menu. Cover charge is Rs 500, but that will mean you won't have to worry about loadshedding. *Kamaladi, 44438017*



Rox Bar, watch the matches on the big screen at the bar and drink special cocktails prepared just for the occasion. For the sophisticates among you. *Hyatt Regency, Bouddha, 4491234*

Imago Dei, relaxed and friendly, it will be projecting the games with a 250-watt sound system. Seats only 50 so come early and stay on. *Lazimpat, 4442464*

Buzz Café, will kick off the World Cup with a barbeque in the gardens and special cocktails from 3pm on Friday. *Baluwatar, 4429903*

The Factory, a special chef is being flown over to create a menu corresponding with the countries battling it out. There will be games, prizes and pitchers of beer. *Thamel, 4701185*

House of Music, the opening ceremony will be followed by music from Monkey Temple, while the first game is shown on the terrace. Terrace/lounge/music/football: expect lots of options. *Thamel, 9851075172*

1905, it's also about the food at 1905 in Kantipath, which will feature a special menu throughout the World Cup with country-themed food or snacks. Expect margaritas, empanadas, and good old-fashioned beans and sausages. *Kantipath, 4225272*

Cinnamon Lounge, spacious lounge with a menu featuring grilled meat of various kinds. For the hungry man in you. *Jhamel, 5521339*

Vesper Café, a well-stocked bar and an airy patio to cool off during the intervals, and intense cheering. *Jhamel, 5548179*

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EVENTS

Syeda Farhana Exhibition, photographs by Bangladeshi artist, writer and filmmaker Syeda Farhana, whose work is entirely conceptual, exploring ideas of the movement of people in very personal and sensitive ways. *Saturday 12 June, 9.45am, The Bakery Café, Sundhara*

Tavern Tales, a reading from The Oriental Casebook of Sherlock Holmes by Ted Riccardi, Professor Emeritus at Columbia University. *Sunday 13 June, 5pm, Quixote's Cove, Jawalakhel*

In Between Uncommon Factors, yet another exhibit by Kathmandu University's BFA graduates, in which Sheelasha Rajbhandari explores the relation between uncommon factors. *Runs till 14 June, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal*

Geometrics, an exhibition of paintings about the intuitive responses of elements, geometry and colours in Thangkas by American artist Piero Passacantando. *Opens Sunday 13 June, 11am-6pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, 4218048*



Movie screening: Summer Interlude, Swedish director Ingmar Bergman's film deals with a ballerina's first love, and a subsequent tragedy, which sticks with her throughout life. *Friday 11 June, 3.30pm, Docskool, Gaurighat, 4471104*

Putaliko Ghar, a Nepali adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's A Doll's House, which has seen more than 180 performances in Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Denmark and Norway. *Starts Friday June 4 (everyday except Mondays) 5.30pm, Gurukul, Old Baneshwor*

Saturday's Farmer's Market, a weekly farmers' market that is different from all the other farmers' markets in town with lasagne, pies and Mediterranean treats along with organic fruits and vegetables. *Every Saturday, 9am to noon, 1905 Restaurant, Kantipath*



Food friends

If Café Mitra was already renowned as a foodie haven grace of owner Kunal Lama's deft culinary touches, the last few Wednesday evenings with Chef Mohit have been the icing on the cake. On these warm summer nights, guests have been treated to a four course set extravaganza of culinary delights.

It is always interesting to see a Nepali with global experience try to make an impact back in Nepal. Chef Mohit worked in London and Washington DC and earned fame as one who can make desserts that melt in your mouth. Back home, he has tried to bring the best of

ingredients locally available in Kathmandu to concoct some excellent dishes. He starts shopping for organic on Saturday, plans his menu and works hard from Sunday to Wednesday, and with what results.

There are only two choices per course (and a vegetarian extra for the mains), but diners face tough choices. Gazpacho or Fennel and Potato soup? Eggplant, Beetroot and Yoghurt Mousse or Smoked Salmon and Red Snapper Terrine? Chicken Leg or Roast Pork? Once you make your decision, you can marvel at the clever use of local

spices and ingredients. How about the use of cumin in the Eggplant et al mousse and the fresh mango salsa with the terrine? If that doesn't do it for you, the thyme cream in the truffle torte should!

Chef Marut Sikka, the great Indian food consultant, has adapted local items to bring about some of the best contemporary dishes in India. Now, thanks to Kunal and Mohit, Kathmandu seems to have found its own globalized gastronomical niche. Chef Mohit is taking off next week, but the Wednesday sagas will be back.

Foodie beard

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CLEAN RIDE: Goma Dulal, a quadriplegic, inaugurates the Spinal Injury Electric Vehicle Rally from Maitighar Mandala to Sangha, Saturday, World Environment Day.



SHELL SHOCK: A girl looks out after a socket bomb destroyed a car in Basundhara, Kathmandu, on Tuesday. Four people were injured and windows of neighbouring buildings, including Ishan Bal Nursing Home, were shattered.



TREE PEOPLE: People from various districts rallied for the 4th National Convention of the Federation of Community Forest User Groups, Tuesday



COME DANCE WITH ME: A Magar chundi dance in Betanigaun during a trip organised by Gorkha Tourism along the Manakamana to Gorkha trekking route. Homestays are planned in the future.

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WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The monsoon is well on its way, even if it is not quite the early bird we predicted it would be because of the effect of cyclone Phet. The westerly jet stream is weakening, and the Bay of Bengal arm of the monsoon is creeping up to the Himalaya. This should bring us heavy rains over eastern Nepal by Friday. The Kathmandu Valley should be getting its first precursor showers by the weekend, and it will start chucking down in earnest sometime next week.

FRI	SAT	SUN
 27-20	 27-21	 26-20



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When Germany hosted the FIFA World Cup football tournament in 2006, there was no iPhone. Twitter was just preparing its launch. Books were only made of paper, and middle-aged folks had yet to discover, let alone join, Facebook.

Starting today, more than a billion people around the world will hear the sound of the vuvuzela, the South African plastic horn, as the World Cup hogs the fibre optic networks like nothing has done before. For the first time in history, coverage of this worldwide event will be delivered through live 3D, HD television, online streaming and mobile technologies, surpassing traditional media outlets like television, radio and newspapers.

A lot can change in four years. And events like these become not just an excuse for wearing bright nylon jerseys and drinking, but also milestones for measuring technological, political and social progress.

The biggest story this year, unless the United States wins the cup, will be about the host. Until 1994, the World Cup hadn't even been televised in South Africa. This year, it has spent billions of dollars building world class stadiums for the multi-national event that Archbishop Desmond Tutu described being as "important as Obama getting into



Blow your own trumpet

The world has made giant strides since 2006, how about us?

the White House." As the country's former President Thabo Mbeki has said, South Africa hopes the tournament will be another Mandela moment, "when Africa stood tall and resolutely turned the tide of centuries of poverty and conflict."

More than 300,000 football fans from around the world will arrive in South Africa this week. Thirty-two teams and 736 players will play in 10 venues across the country. Did anyone living under apartheid, when 90 per cent of the

population had no voice or voting rights, think this was possible? Did Nelson Mandela envision this day when he walked out of Robben Island prison in 1990? Today, South Africa carries the mantle of pride for the entire continent, as it welcomes the world to Africa.

Here in Nepal, the World Cup fanfare will be centred on urban areas, as when my father bought his first television for the World Cup in 1994, the same year South Africa held its first democratic

and multi-racial elections. Most Nepalis will hear of the tournament through special advertising campaigns by noodle companies, even if they are delivered to their villages by mules.

For those of us who like indulge in self-reflection, South Africa's experience is not about when Nepal, or South Asia for that matter, will host the games. Nor is it about when our team will make it to the games, although just imagine how

wonderful that will be if supporting proxies can be so much fun (Go England!). We got a peace agreement soon after Fabio Cannavaro kissed the World Cup trophy in 2006, and abolished the monarchy subsequently. But do we have anything to show for the years since, beside the utter political disarray and the proliferation of MSG-laden ramen brands? Perhaps the South Africans can lend us their vuvuzelas to wake us up from this slumber. 🇳🇵





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Rethinking poverty reduction

JOMO KWAME SUNDARAM

NEW YORK – Last year, FAO announced that the number of hungry people in the world increased over the last decade. In 2008, the World Bank announced a significant decline in the number of poor people up to the year 2005. But if poverty is defined principally in terms of the money income needed to avoid hunger, how can announcements such as these be reconciled?

In Sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia, poverty and hunger remain stubbornly high. International agencies estimate that more than 100 million people fell into poverty as a result of higher food prices during 2007-2008, and that the global financial and economic crisis of 2008-2009 accounted for an increase of another 200 million. Delayed job recovery from the global downturn remains a major challenge for poverty reduction in the coming years.

The mixed record of poverty reduction calls into question the efficacy of conventional approaches. Countries were advised to abandon their national development strategies in favour of globalisation, market liberalisation, and privatisation. Instead of producing sustained rapid growth and economic stability, such policies made countries more vulnerable to the power of the rich and the vagaries of international finance and global instability, which has become more frequent and severe due to deregulation.



RSS

The most important lesson is the need for sustained rapid growth and structural economic transformation. Governments need to play a developmental role, with implementation of integrated policies designed to support inclusive output and employment growth, as well as to reduce inequality and promote social justice.

Such an approach needs to be complemented by appropriate industrial investment and technology policies, and by inclusive financial facilities designed to support them. In addition, new and potentially viable production capacities need to be fostered through complementary developmental policies.

By contrast, the insistence on minimal

government and reliance on the market led to precipitous declines in public infrastructure investment, particularly in agriculture. This not only impaired long-term growth, but also increased food insecurity.

Advocates of economic liberalisation policies cited the success of the rapidly industrialising East Asian economies. But none of these economies had pursued wholesale economic liberalisation. Instead, governments played a developmental role by supporting industrialisation, higher value-added agriculture and services, and improvement of technological and human capabilities.

Structural transformations should promote full and productive employment as

well as decent work, while governments should have enough policy and fiscal space to enable them to play a proactive role and to provide adequate universal social protection.

The last three decades also saw the divorce of social policies from overall development strategies as a consequence of the drive for smaller government. National economic development strategies were replaced with donor-favored poverty-reduction programs, such as land-titling, micro-credit, and 'bottom of the pyramid' marketing to the poor.

Such fads have not succeeded in significantly reducing poverty. This is not to deny some positive consequences. For example, micro-credit has empowered millions of women, while important lessons have been learned from such schemes' design and implementation.

Unfortunately, poverty remains endemic, with more than a billion people going hungry every day. There are also growing fears that climate change will more adversely threaten the lives of the poor.

The United Nations' biennial *Report on the World Social Situation*, entitled *Rethinking Poverty*, makes a compelling case for rethinking poverty-measurement and poverty-reduction efforts. For the world's poor, 'business as usual' has never been an acceptable option. 🇳🇵

The author is United Nations Assistant-Secretary-General for Economic Development. Project Syndicate, 2010

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Ex-combatants pass the time playing carom in a gazebo littered with communist paraphernalia. Maoist party indoctrination invades every corner of their lives, giving them no opportunity to begin their transition to civilian life.

They were meant to be freedom fighters, but they have neither physical nor mental freedom

Walled in

TEXT and PHOTOS **BENJAMIN BROWN** in CHITWAN




Three PLA members walk through the cleared jungle that has been their home for the past four years. The cantonment rests between fertile valley grounds and dense Chitwan jungle.

After spending almost a week in Chitwan's Shaktikhor cantonment, talking with members of the PLA's 3rd Division, one thing is clear: their indoctrination runs deep.

Talking about what they want from the overdue peace process and constitution, they seemed literally incapable of straying from the party line. One platoon commander appeared unaware that he was using 'we' instead of 'I', even though our conversation was focused on his wishes for the future. As an Armed Police Force inspector told me in Kathmandu, integration is not a matter of numbers or physical standards, but changing the mentality of combatants. "They must entirely change their mentality to be effective," he said. What happens to the PLA mentality once the PLA is dismantled?

As I talked to them, the ex-combatants told me about their rigid schedule, which includes daily exercise, shifts at guard stands, and 'cleaning time'. The schedule has been designed simply to keep them busy, and the watch duties are next to useless, as no one is threatening to go anywhere, never mind come in. The inhabitants of Shaktikhor can be seen relaxing, watching TV, and sleeping with the help of a fan, fruitlessly trying to hide from Chitwan's unrelenting summer heat.

While they boasted of their strict schedule and harsh camp rules, all other structures felt like a façade to show outsiders that they are staying busy. Stuck in UN cantonments, unable to talk about their desires or come and go as they please, it seems that the 'freedom fighters' of yesterday are no longer free. They simply wait for their leaders to determine their future. 



A PLA member stares at the camera during one of his watch duties. Along with his fellow ex-combatants, he has little to do but wait.



A Maoist gun pointing at the Nepali flag is symbolic of what the PLA fought for. But little has changed for the ex-combatants since they entered the camps four years ago.

“Time not ripe yet”

An interview with NC spokesperson Arjun Narsingh KC, *Dristi*, 8 June



Dristi: Though the CA tenure has been extended, the political deadlock has not been resolved.
Arjun Narsingh KC: The extension has laid a foundation to make a fresh start towards forging a consensus and moving ahead. But the time has not matured enough for an agreement.

What is preventing them from forging a consensus?
Maoist fighters in cantonments and the weapons they possess are the obstacle. The Maoists are not ready to put down their guns just yet. A party that has weapons cannot be a democratic force. The Maoists want to affect opinion through force. A constitution should not be written under the shadow of guns.

The Maoists have been demanding the resignation of Madhav Kumar Nepal.

Resignation of the PM is not a problem. He has time and again urged the political parties to reach an agreement so that he can resign. He should not leave the post and push the country into uncertainty. There should be a guarantee that the past commitments will be implemented and the constitutional calendar should be finalised, then he can resign.



Are you saying the PM won't resign unless the Maoists accept the package deal?
Why should he? The package deal is to ensure the peace process and constitution writing. It is not only the commitment we are looking for but the implementation of the commitments.

Is a Maoist-led government acceptable to the NC if the Maoists accept your package deal?
This opens an avenue for forging a consensus. A consensus leadership is one that is acceptable to all. How can we accept Maoist leadership in government if the party still possesses weapons and fighters?

Is NC claiming the post of PM then?
Concluding the peace process and constitution writing are the real issues. NC will cooperate with a government without NC if it ensures peace and PLA integration. NC will not hesitate to take up the responsibility if all other political parties approve of our leadership. But our priority now is not the government, but constitution writing.

Dangerous waters



NICK MEYNEN

Chitranga Thapa in *Kantipur*, 5 June

कान्तिपुर

Everyday Shankar Dutta of Sunsera crosses the Mahakali river on a rickety ropeway to get to the neighbouring town of India in search of work and comes back the same way in the evening with his earnings. Crossing over a bridge would mean a whole day's walk so instead he uses the ropeway, knowing that a little mistake could cost him his life.

At least two locals from Darchula lose their

lives every year trying to cross the dangerous waters of the Mahakali river on a weak and unstable hand-operated ropeway. The issue of constructing a bridge across the river has been raised during Nepal-India border meetings but like most agreements, it is yet to be implemented.
“We have been requesting the government to construct at least one suspension bridge in this area, but in vain,” says Mangal Singh Dhami, a teacher from Sunsera. At present there are three suspension bridges across the Mahakali in Darchula district, in Khalanga, Dattu and Joljivi. But for the locals from rural Darchula it takes a day to get to any of the bridges and the ropeway is the only alternative.
“I have used the ropeway many times to go to Sunsera,” says assistant CDO Dhan Prasad Poudyal Sharma, adding that there have been agreements to build two more bridges at Tigdam and Huti. Although the state government of India has agreed, the central government is yet to give the go-ahead. Funds for a bridge at Huti have been set aside in this year's budget but no work has been started.

Costly cabinet

Sagar Pandit in *Nayapatrika*, 8 June

नयाँ पत्रिका

PM Madhav Kumar Nepal's jumbo cabinet has spent more than what was allocated in this year's budget. Rs 75 million has been expended on salaries, fuel and travel expenses for 43 cabinet members in the last 10 months. This amount is twice the budget allotted by the government. Initially, the government had allotted Rs 40 million for the cabinet but an additional Rs 60 million was requested within five months.

Pass the budget

Editorial in *Karobar*, 9 June

कारोबार

This year too, the budget is likely to be affected by the ongoing political wrangling over power. The budget delay will have a negative impact on the country's economy. The Maoist-led government was unable to present the budget and its plans and policies due to a delay in forming a new government after the CA elections. The UML-led government budget that followed was also delayed by five months due to the Maoist obstruction of the parliament, and failed to bring the expected results. Many programs were not implemented.

Protracted political conflict tends to increase regular administrative expenses while freezing the development budget. The deficit budget every

year has caused inflation, which is on the rise. We have not been able to achieve the expected economic growth rate, which is why we have had a double digit inflation rate for three consecutive years. Policymakers should keep in mind how difficult life has been as a result.
There are ways to object to government policies and programs in parliament. These objections can be discussed in parliament, but it is undemocratic for the Maoists to say that they will not let the budget pass. The budget session was supposed to have started on 8 May for the budget to be presented on 9 July. The Maoists should well know what difficulties a budget delay can cause. An agreement should be reached on passing the budget while politics is negotiated at the same time. Who leads the government should not matter to economic development.





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So far, so ok



KIRAN PANDAY

The CA got some important things done, but the most heated battles are yet to come

DHRUBA SIMKHADA

The 28th of May, 2008, was a momentous day for Nepal. The first meeting of the Constituent Assembly (CA) declared Nepal a 'Federal Democratic Republic'. But much that followed that bold and historic declaration has been muddled not only by the ambitions of the political parties that make up the CA, but also the many contentious issues that have arisen in the last two years.

So what has actually been accomplished, and what does the CA have to deal with in the year's extension that it has been granted?

Two years of the CA have passed, during which the following tasks were completed:

- declaration of the republic
- election of a president and a vice-president
- formation of 14 committees

(Constitutional Committee, 10 thematic committees and 3 administrative committees)

- first collation of public opinion on the new constitution
- preparation of preliminary drafts by the thematic committees
- proposal of a 14-province model by the State Restructuring and Power Sharing Committee

CA Chairperson Subhas Nembang claims '80 per cent' of constitution writing has been completed, and many other political leaders agree. But the reports of the thematic committees are like thesis papers that haven't yet been submitted for peer review. Contentious issues have not yet been discussed, only compiled and stored in lawmaker Agni Kharel's Report Study and Suggestions Committee. It may be the remaining 20 per cent that is the most difficult. The tasks that remain include:

- preparation of the preliminary constitutional draft by the

Constitutional Committee

- receipt of 7 thematic committee reports by the Constitutional Committee (only three have been submitted so far)
- second collation of public opinion
- preparation of the constitution bill
- passing of each article of the constitution on the basis of consensus as far as possible, if not by a 2/3 majority of CA members
- signature by all CA members and verification by the CA Chairperson

Much of the delay in the submission of the thematic committee reports can be attributed to disputes related to:

- fundamental principles of the new constitution
- type of political system to be adopted
- basis of federal structures and province models
- structure of the judiciary and its independence
- management/integration of Maoist ex-combatants

- addressing concerns about ethnic and regional identity

Instead of forging ahead with the drafting process, the politicians continue to wrangle over who should succeed Madhav Kumar Nepal. Constitution writing is still not a priority, despite the last-minute extension of a fortnight ago. The song remains the same: integration first, or a national government?

According to NC central committee leader and CA member Man Mohan Bhattarai, we need to officially put an end to the 'gun-loving culture' by disbanding the parallel army of the Maoists. Only then, according to Bhattarai, can we embrace peace and give constitution writing some momentum. But Maoist politburo member Janardan Sharma insists that Madhav Kumar's resignation has to precede a timetable for concluding the peace process and forming a national consensus government. The clock is ticking once more.

Pizza Hut

INTRODUCING

Stuffed crust PIZZA

Eat it Backwards.

Cheese Bhareko Crust PHARKAYERA Khanu chha Must!

VISIT US at Durbarmarg, Kathmandu

350 days for new constitution

Fifteen days after the breakthrough 3-point agreement between the 3 leaders of the 3 parties it is now clear that none of the 3 meant a word they said. The only reason they **agreed to agree** was because all 3 needed a CA extension: the NC and UML because it was too embarrassing to let it lapse and the Baddies because it is such an important source of money for the party. Which is also why the comrades don't want to disband the cantonments because they make billions from the monthly Rs 3,000 levy on each of the 19,000 or so ex-ladakoos, and get to sell off donor-funded clothing and other paraphernalia at the Hong Kong market. So, the clocks have been reset and the new countdown is 350 days to go for D-Day.

You know the country is back to normal when the only news in the **national broadsheets** is about who met whom and where. So, KPO met JNK, PKD met RCP, BRB secretly met MKN at a top secret hideaway, the NC all met in Lainchaur but KPS was missing, and so on and so forth. In fact, the BRB and MKN meeting was so secret that the

hound dogs of the Nepali investigative journalism fraternity still hasn't sniffed out where they met. All we know is that they didn't meet in Comrade Maharjan's living room in Kumaripati.

Information about these top secret meetings are divulged to the press in off-the-record leaks that are all part of the **psywar arsenal** designed to keep rivals guessing about alliances and counter-alliances.

Chairman Bhayanak was so spooked by the gunfire at the Pistachio Palace last week that he doesn't believe even his own party's official explanation that it was caused by the "accidental discharge of an automatic weapon". PKD is now so paranoid about security that Sindhupalchok APF had to send two pickups full of Sasastras to guard him to Melamchi and back. All this comes at a time when Com Awe-inspiring is getting more and more suspicious about BRB, especially after he heard from usually reliable sources that his Ideologue-in-chief met Makunay to tell him to stay put and not resign now. Which is why **Chairman Supremacist** is promoting Com Cloudy and



Com Krishna as alternatives to himself as PM.

Laldhoj's newfound confidence comes from the fact that all four PLA commanders are backing him, and in fact Gen Pasang is so ticked off with PKD for not including him in the integration committee that he has gone off into a deep sulk. So the long and short of it is that Macoonay will continue to be PM because the other parties can't decide within themselves who should replace him.

We knew that sooner or later the criminal warlordism within the Baddie movement was going to end up in incidents like the murder of Ram Hari Shrestha and the kidnapping of Bhaktaman Shrestha. The Chitwan comrades seemed to be aware that the

Good Doc was skimming off moolah from local fundraising, and the abduction was staged to shake him down. When Nagarik exposed the link to Cloudy, Chitwan pyromaniacs set fire to the newspaper's van. Then, to extricate themselves, they pinned the blame on a non-existent Hindu group. This was such implausible disinformation that not even comrades in the party hierarchy believed it, and said so in public. **The Maoists and Royalists** really have a lot in common: they can't even come

up with a believable fall guy, and both think they can fool all the people all the time.

It looks like the Asian ambassadors have finally had enough and diplomatically reminded their Euro counterparts last week about which continent they were in, and that if they love communism so much **how about staging revolutions in their own countries?** This is probably the only place on the planet where the South and North Korean envoys are on the same wavelength. The cocktail circuit is also abuzz with rumours of the Everest Marathon organisers snubbing a brown Hindu ambassador during the awards ceremony in Namche while going out of their way to schmooze with a tall blonde beefeater.

The trend of turning down awards is spreading. Now it's Kollywood celebrities who have refused to take the Maoist-dominated National Film Bored's annual awards, the **NOSCARS**, even before they have been announced.

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