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Cross Border



KUNDA DIXIT

EYE IN THE SKY: The effect of deforestation in the Tarai is clearly visible along the India-Nepal border in this photograph taken from a Delhi-Kathmandu flight recently. The straight line marks the border between the Valmiki Forest Reserve in India's Bihar state and forests that have been cleared recently to make way for farmlands on the Nepal side.



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MULTITRACKING SOUTH ASIA

If there is one acronym that makes people's eyes glaze over it is 'SAARC'. Even the hint of a write-up on south Asian regional cooperation can induce readers to flip the page.

When the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was set up in 1985, critics said it was way ahead of its time. Now, they say it has outlived its usefulness. But blaming SAARC is like blaming the UN: the organisation can only move as fast as its slowest member. SAARC is by definition the lowest common denominator of one of the least developed

parts of the world.

South Asian countries have shown, as the Europeans have realised now, that all politics is local. You can cooperate on tuberculosis, postal services and sports, but South Asia, which has twice as many poor people as in sub-Saharan Africa, just can't seem to lift the living standards of its 1.4 billion people. Regional cooperation is even more intractable if it is about free

trade, security cooperation and political multilateralism.

Part of the reason the Track One train derailed long ago is because of the gravitational pull of its largest member. India borders all SAARC members (except Afghanistan now), which themselves are not contiguous. As long as New Delhi would rather deal individually with its neighbours, SAARC ain't going nowhere.

Which is why Bangladesh is now looking east and is more excited about BIMSTEC. Pakistan is preoccupied with restoring its strategic depth. Sri Lanka and Maldives behave as if it just an accident of continental drift that located them offshore of India.

SAARC is such a lethargic beast that its inertia has even infected Track 2 initiatives usually populated by retired South Asian bureaucrats. As one wag put it recently at a South Asian conference: "Track 2 is full of Track 1 wannabes." So perhaps we can already look beyond Track 2.

Track 3 encompasses South Asian artists, activists, film-makers and writers who have joined hands across a region that was once one, before the boundaries of nation states cleaved us into many. A good example is the Travelling Film South Asia documentary festival that begins at the Yala Maya Kendra on Friday. Or the Aman-Asha collaboration between Indian and Pakistani newspapers.

Then there are the global South Asians we can call Track 4: Pakistanis, Indians, Sri Lankans, Bangladeshis or Nepalis living in Canada, UK, US or Australia. They are lumped together whether they like it or not, and now mingle, interact and are building a common identity. The Gulf and the Malay peninsula, too, are now part of a Greater South Asia.

And what of Track 5: the cross-border osmosis of traders, farmers, brides and grooms (and even terrorists) that infiltrate across barbed wire and land mines? The India-Nepal border is perhaps the ideal international frontier: all borders should be as open, allowing people and goods unfettered movement. We know that the more regulations we put into border controls the more our law enforcement and immigration officials get a chance to harass and extort our own people.

Track 6: of the South Asian institutes in universities around the world where researchers and academics know more about us than we do.

Borders shackle our minds and bind us to puerile patriotism, forcing a piecemeal approach when our problems and our solutions are transboudnary.



ON THE WEB

www.nepalitimes.com

CLAIMING SITA

Last week's story on Sita Tamang ('Long journey home', Ekal Silwal), coupled with CK Lal's commentary on the same ('Conflict of coverage'), inspired and drew ire. Here's a round-up of what our readers had to say on the former Maoist child soldier's recent statement at the UN Security Council, media coverage of the event, and the Maoist threats to Sita Tamang upon her return to Nepal.

● It isn't the media that exploited Sita Tamang as a child, forced her to join their army against her will and against international humanitarian law. It isn't the media that threatened her when she dared speak out at the Security Council. Yet, Mr CK Lal blames the media. There is not a word against the brutal psychopathic monsters who did this to Sita and tens of thousands of other children in Nepal and continue to do so. I have never been angry reading anything in Nepali Times even if I didn't agree with it. But today I am boiling mad.

KiranL

● Lal got some things very right and some others extremely wrong: he's correct to hold Radhika Coomaraswamy and the media responsible for putting Sita Tamang at risk. However, in absolutely no way, shape, or form was this an intentional trap for the Maoists! How dare you suggest that the criminals who force children into their army and then threaten them when they communicate their hardships associated with that experience are somehow the victims! Coomaraswamy & the media were irresponsible. But the Maoists betray their truly Machiavellian intentions through their wicked deeds.

Hange

● If the UN is genuine in its concern for the brave Sita Tamang did they offer her her family resettlement in a safe haven? They should then finance the moving, housing and employment/education for her and her family. Surely this is the very least that should be done for someone who is brave enough to expose such organised abuse of children.

Dave

● Sita Tamang is a living symbol of truth and reconciliation. If one reads her words carefully, you note that she is simply against bad order, neither has she criticised the maoists ideologically nor has

● He that has no shame has no conscience. Army and Maoists have neither bodies to be punished nor souls to be damned. Maina Sunwar's or Sita Tamang's cases will remain a cry in the wilderness. Yes, laws catch flies but let hornets go free.

Gole

● The Royal Nepal Army also used thousands of children, not as combatants, but for intelligence gathering and lookouts. The UN has its own global agenda in highlighting a Maoist child soldier. But the state also used children during the conflict. Both sides were guilty. Of course, such facts tend to get buried with the passage of time and when your agenda is to portray the rebels as inhuman and evil. One hopes that those in the know see it as a common problem. It's a national shame.

gagalal

● Surprised you are not a shahid yet, Gangalal Comred. The typical way the Maoists respond to allegations of human rights violations is to always say: "But the army did it too." As if that justifies their crime. Yes, the army

was also disappearing people, there were many cases of rape, torture and extra-judicial executions. But by no stretch of the imagination were they using child soldiers. The Maoists should have the guts to admit they made mistakes, that they won't do it again, and that they will compensate the child victims of the war. Unfortunately, I personally don't think the Maoists are capable of such remorse or contrition.

Gangajal



she demonised them. She has recounted the atrocities that she had to suffer and raises her voice for those who had the same fate. Now I wonder if Sita is not a suitable person to lead the Truth and Reconciliation Commission? I forward her name to these international organisations that create floods of money in the name of peace. PS: My tons of thanks to the journalists of Himalmedia for giving her this coverage. She deserves it and I hope she is able to follow what she has decided to.

Nirmal

WATER SOLUTIONS

Nepal should give priority to watershed management, rain harvesting, pond making and check dams immediately, instead of expensive constructions, inviting corruption and commissions (Troubled Waters, #510). Community participation should be the basis of implementing such projects for conserving water and storing the monsoon rain. Groundwater recharge projects should be started as pilot projects. This has been successful in desertified areas in India like Gujarat.

Daniel Gajaraj

GREEN SCENE

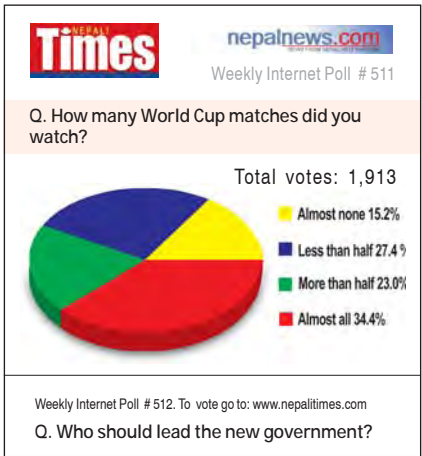
It is heartening to read about the efforts of our youth in promoting bicycles in the city (Cycle city, #510). We are building roads along all the riversides. So we should build cycle lanes too, adjacent to the rivers and the roads, so they will not be interfered with by other crossings. Don't miss this opportunity.

Gauri Nath Rimal

TOURISM AWAITS

At first glance, I thought the structure on your front page picture was somewhere in Nepal, possibly Boudha (First impressions, #510). It was really amazing to see such a clean and elegant pavilion in China. I am sure it gave a very inspiring impression to the Chinese and many wanted visit Nepal. But the truth is that the country has gone to the gallows with all the political wrangling prevailing in the nation. We could have so many types of tourism. We are blessed with culture, history, and diverse terrain. The only thing lacking is the political will and an enabling environment to develop tourism.

Nepali Suvchintak



Muddy waters



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

The present political disarray has resulted because none of the parties have been able to judge, and coherently answer, two questions. Do they want the next elections, and when? Do they want a constitution, and how much can they compromise to get that?

The Maoists remain the strongest organised force. Their internal assessment is that despite greater disillusionment, voters are willing to give them another chance. This week's revelation that 65 per cent Nepalis are poor shows why the Maoists have a readymade constituency. Ethnic minorities and Dalits continue to invest hopes in them. They are the richest party around, and are capable of instilling fear in their adversaries.

Those who see it this way argue in favour of the present political line. They say that 'institutionalising existing achievements' through a constitution would be a major achievement. If it requires certain compromises on the PLA, so be it,



KIRAN PANDAY

for the Maoists would then remain an invincible force because of their mass-based fronts. But if this line had prevailed and Maoists were sure of electoral success, they would have pushed for a constitution by May 28 this year.

The counter-argument is there are no guarantees in electoral politics. Public sentiment is fickle. Rivals will not be complacent, and 'reactionaries and expansionists' will do whatever is required to defeat the Maoists. This is why there can be no compromises on the PLA till there is a guarantee that a 'progressive constitution' is written, the Maoists are back in power, and till they are sure that the next elections are for them to win. If this does not happen, then the present political line

only has tactical value and the party should just wait for the next opportune moment to strike through a mass uprising.

The existence of this other line, and Prachanda's opportunism, gives other parties enough grounds to suspect their intentions. But they are struggling with their own dilemmas.

The NC has not learnt anything from the 2008 debacle. Only harping on 'democracy' is not enough to win over young, aware, and restive voters. Old-time supporters cannot shape local level outcomes. The party has no clue how to deal with ethnic assertion. It has not brought in newer Madhesi faces, figured out caste alignments, or pushed the 'Madhesi agenda'. Without this, it cannot recover

The political parties are too caught up in their own internal dilemmas to be able to forge a consensus with each other

its base in the Tarai.

Most in the NC recognise the need for a new constitution, but there is a strong element within saying this would only benefit the Maoists as their agenda of 'republicanism, secularism, federalism' would be vindicated. The only way for the NC to re-emerge as the primary national player, they argue, is by allying with the conservatives. This group may be peripheral, but cannot be dismissed.

The UML controlled the state for the past year, which helped it develop a strong patronage network. But while Nepalis are adept at using those in power, it is the anti-incumbency sentiment that prevails at crunch time. Their stint in government has destroyed the credibility of its top leaders. And unnoticed in

the capital, the trend of UML leaders defecting to the Maoists has continued.

Most of the UML rank and file may be committed to the idea of a new constitution, which forces some of their fairly right-wing leaders to toe the line. But the UML is torn between what it was and what it has become, its radical anti-NC roots and its present status quoist democratic orientation.

The Madhesi parties are fearful of the next polls. They want to be in power, for they see it as the only way to enhance their personal and party coffers and keep their constituency intact. Barring perhaps Bijay Gachhadar, who doesn't believe in anything, most Madhesi leaders also want a new constitution, for they see it as a means to expand political power. But this is where the plot thickens. For a constitution with the kind of province they want, the Maoists are natural allies, but in the 'battle for democracy', they prefer the NC-UML combine.

Efforts at a unity government have failed because the parties could not address these internal questions. They need time to do so. In all likelihood, we will witness a major political crisis in about six months. It is only when the next May 28 deadline approaches that all parties, especially the Maoists, will be forced to make these choices. Till then, they will try to expand their power for an upper hand in the final negotiations.

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Follow the river

The development of link roads along the banks of the Valley’s rivers could ease our traffic woes

PAAVAN MATHEMA

It’s rush hour. The Balkhu junction on the Ring Road, southeast of Kalanki, is as congested as all the other Valley intersections at this time. But the Balkhu Bridge could breathe a little easier – if only cars heading towards Thapathali steered their wheels to the right, to take the ‘link’ road that runs along the Bagmati River.

Kathmandu’s chaotic traffic needs no introduction. Journeys across the city now have to be measured in hours, not minutes. There are approximately 444,000 vehicles registered in Bagmati Zone and the capacities of the roads have long since reached saturation. Traffic is often at a standstill, with significant costs in terms of lost time, needless wastage of fuel, and pollution. It’s difficult to put a number on the economic cost caused by traffic jams.

“The number of vehicles in Kathmandu increased by over 100,000 last year, while the roads have hardly been extended,” says Binod Singh, Chief of Kathmandu



Traffic Police. The unplanned development of the valley makes it difficult and expensive to widen existing roads.

But Devendra Dongol, Senior Planner at the Urban Development Department, asserts that building link roads is the most viable option available. “Houses have not yet been built near the rivers’ banks, which makes land acquisition relatively

easier and less expensive,” he says. Dhanapati Sapkota, Head of the Enforcement Division at the Kathmandu Metropolitan, adds that link roads also help in river management and contribute to the development of the area. There is also the possibility of planting green belts along such roads. At present, private construction has been restricted along the banks of various rivers and streams in the

Kathmandu Valley, and the objective is to eventually complete a network of link roads.

Roads are now being developed on both sides of the Bagmati, Bishnumati, Manahara, and Dhobi Khola (see map). Binod Singh says that at present, 25 per cent of vehicles use these link roads, but use would increase if the roads were complete. The 2.8 km Bishnumati corridor, funded by ADB, extends from Teku Bridge to Sorakhutte. Using this route, about 4,000 vehicles travelling between Kalimati and Sorakhutte, which would normally go via Tripureswor and Lainchaur, chop two kilometres off their journey and a whole lot of hassle.

Not all projects have been as lucky as the Bishnumati corridor in terms of funds. The absence of coordination between responsible departments has also led to delays in implementation. Binod Khadka, Community Liaison Officer of the Dhobi Khola Project, says, “This project received approval in 2003 but actual work started only three years ago when it reached the Kathmandu Valley Town

Development Committee”. When completed, a surfaced road will connect Chabahil to the Bagmati Bridge at the end of New Baneswor. “Insufficient funding is now holding up the project. We are hoping that this year’s budget will grant the requested capital.”

Clearly, link roads offer an alternative and logical way of extending the length of the valley’s roads while providing ‘short cuts’ across the different routes. There is potential to build such links at Hanumante (Bhaktapur), Mahadev (Balaju), Kodku (Lalitpur), Nakhu, Karkhusi and Tukucha, and extend the existing connections. The recent confirmation of \$22 million dollars worth of aid from ADB for traffic management will assist the further development of link roads.

Simply creating a network of link roads will not be enough, however. “The intersections have to be remodelled to let vehicles from the link roads join the main road smoothly,” argues Anand Joshy, a senior traffic volunteer. “Otherwise link roads will just add to the blockage at the junctions on the core roads.”



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- Research films made in and about Southasia, procure films for the biennial film festival, establish links between FSA and Southasian filmmakers
- Organise and be an active member of the selection committee that watches over 400 films every festival year
- Fundraise for the festival internationally, oversee ad-revenue generation within Nepal
- Oversee the design and chart out the media strategy for the festival
- Work to increase visibility of the festival in the region and internationally
- Reach out to national, regional and international organisations and film clubs to promote the production and screening of documentaries
- Promote and market non-fiction films through the Clearinghouse of South Asian Non -Fiction Films

DESIRED SKILLS

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Ignored economy

ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed

Nepali politicians appear to believe in the phrase ‘ignorance is bliss’. Why else would they choose to pay no attention to the issues of the economy?

Listen to what the lawmakers at the Public Accounts Committee have to say on electricity tariffs or the speeches of our politicians on topics ranging from culture to agriculture. One thing they consistently ignore is the economic aspects of the same. Cost issues take a back seat whether we discuss PLA integration or the management of dwindling public corporations such as Nepal Airlines. Transport syndicates have made the cost of transporting goods on the Arniko Highway ten times more expensive than transporting goods on the East West Highway, but who cares? Rastriya Banijya Bank and Nepal Bank Limited continue to be an experiment for donors as part of financial sector reform program even though pure Nepali management has successfully turned around Lumbini Bank.

The country, however, is still not a failed state, as most ‘parachute consultants’ would like it to be, perhaps by the grace of Pashupatinath. In a year that was governed by an ineffective



ANUP PRAKASH

Maybe it's time to take matters into our own hands

prime minister and lackadaisical government, GDP has still managed to grow at 3.5 per cent and the growth of disposable income has not abated. Companies are going to post good profits and the banks will report profit growth despite the liquidity crisis. One MNC CEO quipped, “Can you believe we can deliver such results despite keeping factories closed for 150 days? Imagine our performance if we could operate at full capacity”. This sentiment may sum up the state of the Nepali economy.

While the growth in the formal market may not be visible, the informal sector is buzzing with activity. No wonder restaurants that don't provide VAT bills do a roaring trade. The cash made by plundering natural resources like forests, river beds and medicinal herbs is never counted in income computations. Immigration businesses run

under the garb of educational consultancies and NGOs and non-profit organisations make money in the name of health and education. But political parties have their mouths zipped as these illegal money makers generously fill the party's coffers; so what if the state's treasury is running empty? In any case the government coffers are too often seen as a transit point.

Economic growth could accelerate if the government took initiatives and action-based responses to some questions. Is loadshedding better than buying electricity at prices a quarter of what people spend on running inverters and generators? Are private power producers really welcomed by the government? Could a consistent supply of fuel through private operators instead of getting adulterated fuel after standing in long queues be a solution to the fuel shortage? The government could pool large amounts of untapped funds by setting laws relating to mutual funds and collective investment. It could promote investments rather than be happy that the Foreign Investment Department is not overloaded with applications. The government could put in place a labour law that promotes efficiency and productivity rather than maintain the status quo of political unions working against the interest of labour and enterprises.

A new government will be formed and perhaps this beed will probably write a similar note at the end of the next fiscal year, but one can hope that, like in India, the private sector will begin to defend its own turf rather than fight its own little wars, like the politicians.

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Ace Development Bank, with Winrock International as the lead consultant, has collaborated with the Frankfurt School of Finance and Management's UNEP Collaborating Centre for Sustainable Energy and Climate Finance to target the installation of 5,000 Solar Home Systems (SHS) in rural households through credit financing. The total project cost of the new initiative is estimated to be \$1.8 million.

Buddha's ATR-72

Buddha Air introduced the first of its two new ATR-72 turboprop aircraft with a test flight from Kathmandu to Biratnagar and Bhadrapur on Wednesday. The 70-seater twin-engine plane is the most fuel-efficient plane in its class, and has noise-reduction technology in the cabin. Buddha's managing director Birendra Bahadur Basnet says the ATR-72s will be used on the carrier's new international routes to Kolkata, Lucknow and Patna in the coming year, while the Beechcraft will start operating flights to Paro in Bhutan from autumn on. The plane will initially be used to operate five flights a day to Biratnagar, taking Buddha's daily seat capacity on that sector from the present 180 to 350.

Eco Yeti

Yeti Airlines has planted 600 trees in a community forest in Kailali under its Green Far-West Project. For every passenger that takes a flight with Yeti on the Kathmandu-Dhangadi route, the company will plant a sapling in a community forest in the far western region.

Swift chasers

Hansraj Hulaschand presented two Pulsar 180 motorbikes to Rupandehi Traffic police. The company has been supporting the traffic police of various districts by providing them with bikes.

SLC win

Seabird International Higher Secondary School will continue to felicitate SLC graduates of Madhyapur Thimi who have made it to the top ten with certificates, awarding the highest scorer with a prize of Rs 12,001. The school will provide scholarships to deserving students.

Smarty cells

CG Impex, the sole authorised distributor of LG Mobiles, has launched the android-powered smartphone LG Optimus (LG GT540). The set allows its users to access a variety of applications and also features enhanced social networking functions in a high-powered multimedia environment.

Real scorer

Ashok Adhikari of Jorpati won the Score the Real Goal Campaign from Dabur Real Juice. Adhikari was presented with the bumper prize – a full option KIA Picanto Car, in the National Stadium before the final match of the World Cup.

Grand prizes

Him Electronics, the official marketer of Samsung, announced the 35 winners of Samsung 32" LCD televisions under its World Cup scheme. Prize distribution took place at the Bakery Café, Sundhara.

Biking trophy

After a seven-week promotion, Pepsi announced the final winner of Football Mania. Rajesh Shrestha from Dolakha has won the grand prize of a Hero Honda Karizma ZMR bike. The announcement was made at the Yak & Yeti Hotel.

Branching west

Kumari Bank has opened six new branches in the western region in Kawasoti, Tulsipur, Nepalganj, Salyan, Surkhet and Dhangadi. The bank now has a network of 27 branches and 22 ATMs across the country.

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“Nepali writing does not carry the baggage of postcolonial pretensions and relates dynamically to the changes in Nepali society”



TEAMWORK PRODUCTIONS

Indian writer Namita Gokhale is co-founder director of Yatra Books and the Jaipur Literature Festival (pic, right), which attracted over 170 authors and 30,000 visitors this year. Last month, she hopped onto a plane and dropped in on Manisha Koirala's wedding bash. But she was rather more interested in the Nepali literary scene. *Nepali Times* asked her what she makes of it all.

Nepali Times: Who is Namita Gokhale? Writer, publisher, festival director?
Namita Gokhale: Writer, publisher, festival director...yes, I think it works in that order of priority, although the excitement and intellectual energy and sheer stimulus of the Jaipur Literature Festival tends to take over my life...

What trends do you see in South Asian writing? Where does your own writing fit in?

I'm wary about discussing 'trends' – the real impact of these things shows up in a very much larger perspective. The big story about South Asian writing is in relocating the literary voice in our own cultural and geographical space and context. My own writing is a modest attempt to make sense of my world. I write in many voices, and love working with a sense of the absurd and with social comedy.

Is there a risk that Indian authors will dominate the idea of 'South Asian' writing, at least in western minds?

'South Asian' writing is no longer bracketed with Indian writing alone. Pakistani authors have established themselves internationally with a distinct and powerful identity, and there has been excellent literary fiction coming out of Sri Lanka. Nepali fiction is getting noticed too, there is so much wonderful writing I have read recently, and we hope to devote a special session to Nepal in the Jaipur Festival next January.

You've been involved in the development of the new \$50,000 DSC Prize for South Asian Literature. How will you encourage submissions from across the region, including Nepal?

This was the first year, so a lot of

effort went into establishing systems. Next year, as the prize gets to be better known, we will reach out with specific initiatives to different parts of South Asia, including Nepal.

Do you think encouraging writing in English through such lucrative prizes will extend the reach of South Asians writing in English at the expense of vernacular and even major national languages?

The fact that the DSC prize is open for translated work from any South Asian language into English actually supports and encourages a more multi-lingual appreciation of literature.

What are the difficulties and opportunities for independent publishers like Yatra in India?

Independent publishers face challenges in distribution and sometimes in the scale of operations they can sustain. But

the commitment in the mindset of the independent publishers, and the lower administrative and overhead costs, often work positively for them.

What is your take on Nepali literature, and more specifically, Nepalis writing in English?

I think Nepali writing is vibrant and rooted and engaged. It does not carry the baggage of postcolonial pretensions and relates dynamically to the changes in Nepali society.

What do you think about the prospect of a Kathmandu Literary Festival?

Kathmandu has loyal friends and

visitors internationally, and is the eye of the storm in a powerful cycle of change. It makes sense to have a literary festival here...

How was the Jaipur Festival when it started out, and did you ever imagine it would grow in size and stature so quickly?

The Jaipur Festival began five years ago with 18 authors, 2 of whom couldn't make it at the last minute. But it integrated Indian language and Indian English writers, as well as international writers, without pomposity or pretension. I think it was the multilingual, plural and determinedly democratic nature of the Jaipur Festival that made

audiences so receptive. Of course I never ever imagined it would grow to this size at this speed, and neither did my co-director William Dalrymple. Then one day we woke up to realise that the world was tuning in to Jaipur!

What is the role of such festivals?

I think literary festivals can resist the consumerist dumbing down that the mass media sometimes seems to promote. Festivals encourage individual voices, alternative forums and democratic debate. They give space to young writers and an opportunity to established writers to renew their connection with what's happening around.



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EVENTS



Health and Beauty Expo, complete health and beauty solutions under one roof. *Till Saturday 17 July, 11am to 6pm, Bhrikuti Mandap Exhibition Hall, 5538878*

Travelling Film South Asia '10 Kathmandu, showcasing 12 outstanding documentaries from South Asia. *From Friday 16 July until Sunday, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka, Tickets Rs 20, 5552141, www.filmsouthasia.org*

Yala Maya Classic, soulful performances on violin, tabla and gayan. *Sunday 18 July, starts 5pm, Baggikhana Hall, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka, 5553767*

photo.circle.xxxvi: scope and role of multimedia, presentation and talk by DJ Clark, Director of Visual Journalism at the Asia Center of Journalism. *Saturday 17 July, 4pm to 5pm, The Bakery Café, Sundhara*

Voyage - Endless Journey, paintings by Sagar Manandhar that traverse his creative journey. *Starts Wednesday 21 July, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal, 9841478945*

The Lion King, a musical by students of Malpi International School. *Wednesday 21 July to Thursday 22 July, Nepal Academy Hall, Kamaladi, 4440120, 4430356*

Poetic Moments, an exhibition of paintings by various artists. *Till Saturday 17 July, 8am to 8pm, Kanipur Art Gallery, Boudhanath Circle, 9851076492*

8th Annual Wine Festival, be there at Kilroy's for the biggest congregation of wine lovers in Kathmandu. *June-September, Kilroy's, Thamel, 4250440*



Weekly Farmers' Market, a market like no other with organic and gourmet food, healthy breakfasts, fresh coffee and lots of socialising. *Saturday 10 July, 9am to 12pm, 1905, Kantipath, 4215068*

DINING

Splash Bar & Grill, great weekend BBQ dinner, *Fridays and Saturdays, 6pm to 9pm, Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat, Rs 1200, 4411818*

Olive Garden, Mediterranean food fest. *Everyday, 6pm onwards, Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat, 4411818*



Lhakpa Chulo, a relative newcomer to Jhamel, but among the best for food – try the tender steaks and Thai-style salads. *Jhamsikhel, open for lunch and dinner daily except Wednesdays*

Saturday @ Hyatt, take a refreshing dip in the pool, soak away your weekday sorrows and sample the delicious barbeque in the open air. *Every Saturday from 12.30pm to 4pm, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, 4491234*

Boudha Stupa Restaurant and Café, enjoy wood-fired pizza and free wi-fi with an unparalleled view of Boudha stupa. *Every day from 9am to 9pm, Boudha, 2130681*

Chopstix, savoury Asian food cooked in true Chinese fashion sure to charm and impress. Begin your feast with the Dragon Chicken, it's one-of-a-kind. *Kumaripati, 5551118*

Lazy Gringo, fail-safe Mexican restaurant. The lemonade with refills is what won us over, but the food is mighty fine. Bring your own booze though. *Jawalakhel, Open daily 11am-9pm except Mondays, 2110517*

Casa de Cass, out-of-Kathmandu dining in cosy surrounds with attentive service, what more could you ask for? A martini, of course. *Hariharbhawan, 5010100*

Vesper Café, has an outdoor patio good for leisurely weekend brunches. Serves good salads and steak-wraps. *Jhamel, open daily*

Attic, newly transformed lounge/bar ideal for Friday night drinking before hitting the dance spots. Popular among local celebrities and passing politicians. *Uttar Dhoka, Lazimpat, 984161476*

Everest Steak House, an old-school joint for everything steak. A sanctuary for meat. *Thamel, near Chhetrapati chowk, 4260471*

Jazoo, a quiet place ideal for beer and relaxing conversation. Bring a friend and enjoy their special barbeque set for a mix of everything, *Jawalakhel (near the zoo), 5538321*



Summit Hotel, posh Western-style dining area with candlelight and a romantic night view of the city. Get really busy with the succulent ribs basket, and add the finishing touch with a hot Dutch apple pie. *Sanepa, 5521810*

Hadock, big compound with ample parking space, their Western and Thakali dishes are done to perfection. *Jhamel, 10am-10am, 5546431*

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

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VIDEO NIGHTS



Crime behind bars

On first sight, young Malik El Djebena (Tahar Rahim) is unimpressive. Almost mute in his illiteracy, the young Arab who has been sentenced to six years in a French prison appears doomed to being as much a victim inside as outside. From the moment he's fingered by the prison's Corsican mafia to kill a fellow-inmate, he's a useful but 'dirty' Arab. But El Djebena, in his quiet, unobtrusive way, begins to gain trust and make friends, and through a mixture of persistence, street smarts and boldness, rises far above what others have designated him to be.

In its gradual build-up, *Un prophète* is as subtle as *Scarface* is not. The results are plain to see – even when it is clear El Djebena has made it, even when he is wholeheartedly embracing violence, he's still

the same vulnerable-looking, likeable young man. This has a lot to do with the complex cast of criminals who inhabit his world – the overbearing yet somehow pitiable Corsican Luciano; handsome, ailing Ryad; drug-dealing Jordi Le Gitan; and the ghost of Reyeb, who El Djebena has brutally murdered.

A crime movie as epic as any that have come before, and far more than the prison study it appears to be in the opening scenes.

RT

Un prophète (2009)
Dir. Jacques Audiard
150 minutes



Once, and again

Seldom do they make movies that don't adhere to the traditions of genre. *Once* is a boy meets girl musical, but that's where the similarities to a musical end. Writer and director John Carney has here a unique story of unrequited love between two musicians, skilfully played by Glen Hansard and Marketa Irglova. The lead characters of Hansard and Irglova do not have names, but they interact and bond so naturally that you hardly realise it. Hansard's character is a street performer and a part-time vacuum cleaner repairer while Irglova plays a trained pianist who works as a maid and sells flowers for a living. The girl is first drawn to the street performer's octave leaping songs and as the movie progresses, they discover each other in their passion for music. As they work together on a recording, the two are linked by an unforced intimacy, even though both of them have their hearts set on someone else. Set in Dublin, this Irish love story is buoyed by a fantastic soundtrack, composed and performed by Hansard and Irglova themselves. The best part about *Once* is that nothing feels strained or over the top. It's a delightful experience.

PM

Once (2006)
Dir. John Carney
85 minutes

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Extreme cleaners

It's not just revenue that Everest climbers bring to the country, but tonnes of garbage. And with hundreds of climbers aspiring to conquer our pristine mountains every year, the junk only seems to be growing. Thousands of kilos of oxygen cylinders, plastic wrappers, bottles, tents and mountaineering gear have been carelessly dumped in the mountains, scarring their beauty and causing pollution in ecologically sensitive areas. Even the bodies of those who have perished on the mountains have sometimes been left behind, to the grief of their families and the horror of those who come across them today.

There have been Everest clean-ups before. But a homegrown initiative has taken it even further with the Extreme Everest Expedition (EEE) to clean up the mountain above 8000 metres, in what is called the Death Zone. Over 40 days beginning on 25 April, a team of 20 Sherpas (led by Namgyal Sherpa, coordinated by Chakra Karki) collected upto 1800 kilos of waste. On 29 May, International Mount Everest Day, participants of the Everest Marathon joined in. Despite the punishing run they were undertaking, 30 foreign participants and 70 locals helped carry garbage down to Namche Bajar and delivered it to the

Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee. EEE also evacuated two bodies from above 8000m, which were helicoptered off the mountain. EEE is conducting an awareness campaign to deter future climbers from littering, and will be heading for the lofty heights of Everest next spring, too. The expedition was sponsored by Nepal Investment Bank, Hulas Steel Industries, The Himalayan Times, the Nepal Medical Association, Ace Development Bank, Hotel Association of Nepal, and Surya Nepal. A feature documentary chronicling EEE's efforts will be screened in Jai Nepal in December. www.extremeverestexpedition.com



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

WHEN'S YOUR NUMBER? Students line up outside Nepal Telecom office at Teku to subscribe to new pre-paid SIM cards on Saturday. Nepal Telecom has introduced a discounted rate of Rs 525 for students.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

LYRICAL STANZAS: Poet Viplob Pratik recites his compositions at Gurukul on Saturday.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

CHARGED: Last Thursday, police presented to the press the alleged kidnappers (with the motorbikes used) of Bhakta Man Shrestha of BP Koirala Memorial Cancer Hospital, Bharatpur.



KIRAN PANDAY

FOLK STROKES: Artist Mayuka Kozawa exhibited her Mithila art collection at Chai Chai Café, Jhamsikhel, this week.

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WEEKEND WEATHER
by **NGAMINDRA DAHAL**

The sudden shift of the westerly jet stream north of the Himalaya finally paved the way for the monsoon trough to carry moisture-laden clouds our way early this week. As a consequence, most of the eastern half of Nepal received nearly one third of the monthly quota of rainfall this week. Fresh satellite pictures indicate the monsoon is taking a breather but will come back on the weekend. This time, however, the focus is likely to be in mid-west Nepal due to emerging low pressure, which will draw moisture from the clouds. Conclusion: prepare for sweaty afternoons and cool nights with brief showers over the weekend.

FRI

30-21

SAT

31-20

SUN

28-19

Himalmedia Pvt. Ltd.
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DINESH MAHARJAN

Social in the capital

Knowing me knowing you, is there nothing we can do but attend on end each others' big fat weddings, bratabandhas and pasnis?



KALAM
Rabi Thapa

I'm hardly alone in heaving a sigh of relief that in inverse proportion to the much-anticipated monsoon, wedding invites have ceased to flow. To a lesser or greater degree for everyone with a social circle, but especially those firmly ensconced in Valley society, the last few weeks have been clogged with the obligations of engagements, ceremonies, and receptions. In recent years, weddings have morphed into many-headed monsters, as have bratabandhas and pasnis, meaning a single event that would have taken place in the confines of the family home now sprawls out into party palaces and five-star hotels, depending on the balance between your name and your game.

Add to these gala occasions, events and the more mundane meets with family and friends, as well as professional obligations, and it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the demands on your time. It's gratifying to be wanted (if not actually needed), but the oft-denigrated atomisation of certain western existences sometimes has its own charm in so much as you have more say over picking your engagements, not they you.

Assuming that apart from me, there are others who feel the press

of humanity is a little too tight round these here parts, why do we do this to ourselves? It may appear to be a natural consequence of simply *knowing people*. Knowing me knowing you, is there simply nothing we can do but attend so as not to offend? Can we not strike a balance so an individual attends the events he actually wants to, for whatever reason?

Of course, we find a balance somewhere along the line. But sometimes it does seem as if we have entrapped ourselves into a benevolent spiral of socialising, whereby we invite people we barely know simply because they will do the same because we will do the same because. The downside is the time we expend, and the amount of moolah lavished on social overkill, wherein a pasni is now regularly accompanied by a party for hundreds, never mind the poor bewildered babe-in-arms who has no idea what is going on.

Social capital may be defined in many ways. Perceived positively, it is the value derived from the power of social networks, value that can be used to achieve what mere individuals cannot. But it can also be construed negatively, in the sense that 'bonding' social capital serves to disproportionately strengthen the links among individuals linked by radical ideals, or individuals marginalised from society.

It's clear that many marginalised groups across Nepal have taken the initial, necessary step of building 'bonding' social capital so as to find their voice. But by limiting themselves there, some of these groups isolate themselves further from the mainstream polity they are trying to break into. 'Bridging' social capital, on the other hand, reaches across such boundaries. It's more difficult to achieve, but its effects are more positive for society as a whole.

In the Valley, however, the bonding that goes on is hardly an expression of marginalisation in the conventional sense. Quite the contrary. It's a celebration of socialisation within set circles that, alas, has come to burden our financial and temporal resources, and only reinforces our magnificent, privileged isolation from the rest of the country.

This is not to argue for some kind of jackbooted state quota on how many can attend this and that, as has been unsuccessfully attempted in the past. People have the right to assembly in as vastly wasteful numbers as they desire, even if government has the right to advise otherwise. But perhaps we should reflect on whether we are making the best use of our social capital when we find ourselves greeting last night's weary faces at Party #3 of Shirish Weds Anjali with a resigned, "So, are you coming tomorrow?" 🇳🇵

I Love Prachanda



NEPALI PAN
Ranjan Adiga

Revolution Books is a small chain of bookstores located on the west coast of the US and Hawaii. In the mecca of capitalism, this bookstore is unique because it supports communism and promotes and sells works by writers from around the world who rally for a communist revolution. Well, nosey by nature, I once stepped inside one of its stores in Honolulu to check what the big fuss was all about.

To my pleasant surprise, or shock, I found a huge portrait of Prachanda adorning the wall beside other revolutionaries like Lenin and Marx, Castro and Che. Beneath the gigantic black and white picture was the caption, 'Prachanda – the Brave One'. A corner of the bookshelf was devoted to books about the 'People's Revolution in Nepal' written by western authors I could not recognise.

For some reason, my heart swelled with pride for the glory that was heaped on Nepal in this tiny shop and I went to the lady behind the counter and proclaimed, "I am a Nepali. I am from Nepal!" This old lady looked at me as if she'd seen a real revolutionary for the first time and held my hand, exclaiming, "Oh, how nice to meet you. I LOVE Prachanda!" She then sat me down, ordered coffee and proceeded to ask me all kinds of questions about the 'brave one'. Had I ever met Prachanda? What was he like in real life? How did it feel to be born in a country that was a shining example around the world? Her feverish excitement did not allow me to interject. When another elderly lady walked in, I was introduced to her as "from Nepal, the land of Prachanda". Without asking me for my opinion they took me as their fellow comrade and invited me to a light lunch to share my revolutionary experiences with other 'fellas' of their community.



"He's from Nepal, the land of Prachanda"

I politely declined the offer, thanked them for their kind words, and headed out. Out in the street, surrounded by touristy kitsch and corporate high rises, I wondered at the elderly ladies' fascination for communism. What did they understand by such heavy terms as communism and revolution? Were they serious or was it a retirement fetish, something to be fascinated by for a few months? Because the views of this bookstore would be considered an extremely tiny minority view in a country where the word communism can elicit the same fear in people as terrorism, the ladies' admiration for Prachanda seemed even more audacious.

But I felt sad. Sad at their naiveté. Prachanda is no longer the 'brave one'. Perhaps he never was. He, like all the others, has turned out to be just another petty politician. Nothing more.

Perhaps a trip to Nepal is in order for those two ladies. 🇳🇵

INVISIBLE FORCE



CHONG ZI LIANG & ZAKARIA ZAINAL
in SINGAPORE and NEPAL

Shortly after Singapore left the Federation of Malaysia in 1965, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew was temporarily moved out of his home at Oxley Road while security was beefed up. When Lee returned, he found Gurkha policemen posted as sentries. At that time, the Gurkhas were mainly used to quell riots and protests that were rampant during the '50s and '60s. Now, the safety of the prime minister was their responsibility as well.

The Gurkhas still guard 38 Oxley Road today. Forty-five years after our nation's independence, these soldiers from Nepal continue to protect Singapore's most important places and installations. Precious little is known about the Gurkhas except their reputation of unwavering loyalty and bravery. Yet the 60th anniversary of the Gurkha Contingent (GC) slipped by quietly last year.

pension paid out upon retirement. "Since the time I retired 10 years ago, prices of basic items like rice and gas have tripled in Nepal," says Netra Gurung, vice-chairman of the Singapore Gurkhas Pensioners' Association (SGPA). The association has scored a couple of small victories, with occasional pension reviews, but Gurung adds that the Gurkhas hope for an inflation allowance instead of arbitrary reviews.

The families of the Gurkhas remain another contentious issue. Widows of deceased servicemen do not get any part of their husbands' pensions and though the widows of Singaporeans on pension are subject to the same policy, the SGPA contends that the situation is not the same. The wives of Gurkhas are not allowed to seek employment during their time in Singapore and so have no skills other than being a housewife.

Singapore Gurkhas give the best years of their life to the Lion City, but could do with a better deal once they retire

Presently, the British conduct recruitment of Gurkhas yearly. Some 15,000 youths from all over Nepal vie for about 400 slots, around 100 of which are for the Singapore Police Force. The strength of the GC has been growing consistently over the years, from 760 in 1990 to over 2000 today.

Naturally, the Gurkhas are proud of their unique service to Singapore. "Without the GC, there is no peace and security in Singapore," retired Station Inspector Buddhi Gurung says. Underlying that pride is also a mountain of goodwill and genuine affection for a country they called home for almost thirty years.

But recently, rumblings of unhappiness have begun to surface among those who have retired and returned to Nepal, as Singapore law requires them to do. The biggest issue surrounding the retired Gurkhas is that of the

And while their children attend local schools in Singapore when their fathers are still in service, they are only allowed to finish their education within the institute they are enrolled in upon their fathers' retirement. They face great difficulty obtaining student visas once their fathers have retired. This is all the more perplexing as foreign students, even those from Nepal, usually have no problems obtaining student visas as long as they qualify for schools here. The Gurkha children seem paradoxically handicapped by their fathers' service to Singapore. Haridhoj Gurung, who was recently appointed chairman of the SGPA, says: "There is only one way to describe this situation – discrimination."

Official statistics show that slightly more than one out of three people living in Singapore are not citizens, but permanent residents and expatriates.



The Mount Varnon camp in Singapore houses 2000 Gurkhas and is something of a closed community (above). SGPA Chairman Haridhoj Gurung (left) laments the Singapore government's neglect of Gurkha issues: "We have been patient, but how long can we wait?". Tulsi Gurung (below) served as a Gurkha from 1951 to 1972, a tumultuous phase of Singapore's history.

Ministers go out of their way to explain the need for tolerance towards newcomers, stressing that we need them to boost the population because of falling birth rates, and to provide the skills the country needs.

Yet after spending more than half their lives protecting the island state's most important people and places, the Gurkhas and their families find themselves unwelcome the moment they hang up their blue uniforms.

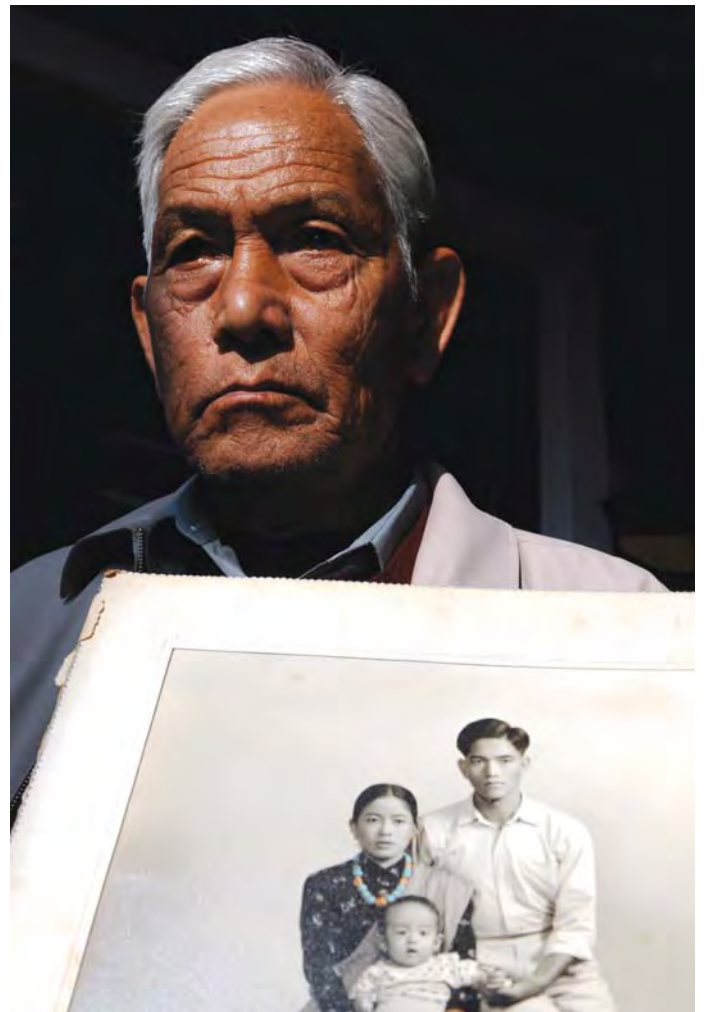
Most Gurkhas do not seek citizenship or even permanent residence for themselves. After all, they arrive on our shores as

foreign young men. What the Gurkhas do want are the same working opportunities extended to other foreigners and for their children not to be discriminated because of their fathers' service.

Such requests, made to the Singapore government through letters from the SGPA, continue to be ignored. The authorities are under no pressure to act anytime soon and Singaporeans are unaware of this situation. This is unlike the United Kingdom, where a very public lobbying effort led by actress Joanna Lumley pressured the British government into according full residential rights in 2009 to

Gurkhas who serve more than four years. Kharga Gurung, an executive member of the SGPA, says: "The UK Gurkhas had support from the UK people and even the MPs. Maybe if the people of Singapore support us, we will have success too."

One Gurkha, who spent the '60s here fighting communists when the Malayan Communist Party was at the peak of its power, says: "I love Singapore. If anything bad happens, I am ready to fight. I am ready to go back and die for Singapore." What does it say when we repay such devotion by saying no to their requests to remain among us? 🇳🇵



BUDDIES ACROSS GENERATIONS: Ishor Thapa and Lal Ale share a beer in a Kathmandu restaurant (left) while Umesh Rana and Dino Gurung, born and raised in Singapore, appreciate fast food in Nepal.

Maoists’ one-sided proposal

Editorial in *Kantipur*, July 11

कान्तिपुर

In order to end the political impasse, the UCPN (Maoist) brought out a working plan on Saturday to manage ex-combatants within three months. The plan mentions keeping the combatants under the Army Integration and Rehabilitation Special Committee. The Maoist proposal to separate the combatants from the party by keeping them under the special committee is positive. But this in itself will not result in sustainable peace. How, when and where the ex-combatants will be managed is the most crucial question here, and this is also the bone of contention among the political parties.

Contrary to the demand of



KIRAN PANDAY

other parties, the Maoists have not specified the number of ex-combatants to be integrated into the security forces in their working plan. The plan says that the committee will hear out each ex-combatant. The Maoists have

been saying that it is necessary to first separate those who want to enter social and political life and those who want to take up a rehabilitation package. After this has been done, they say, the remaining ex-combatants should

qualify for integration. The Maoists claim that with such a model, they can separate the ex-combatants in two months and integrate the rest in the remaining one month. But until the dispute over whether security force integration numbers should be determined in the camps or through political consensus is resolved, their plan will not materialise. In this sense, the core of the debate on ex-combatant integration has not really changed. The Maoists argue that integration should be based on the standards outlined in the Comprehensive Peace Accord, as opposed to existing legal provisions, and that personal admission cannot be a model for integration. But this is unacceptable to the government, as it puts the Maoist army and the

Nepal Army on the same footing. The Maoists have also proposed an alternative model of organising ex-combatants to form a new special security department. But since nothing of this sort was mentioned in the peace accord, it is highly unlikely that the parties will agree to it. The Maoists’ proposal may not be acceptable to the other parties but they can table an amendment proposal or a different proposal based on it. Because until the issue of ex-combatant integration has been settled, constitution building and the peace process will not move forward. The formation of a consensus government, which is the most pressing need of the hour, will also not go materialise until the ex-combatants are successfully integrated.

Rays of hope

Annapurna Post, 12 July

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

Although development works could not progress significantly this fiscal year as well, there have been improvements in the areas of hydroelectricity, roads, communications and education. Finance Minister Surendra Pandey on Sunday unveiled this year’s Economic Survey, which presents progress in the following areas.

Private sector hydroelectricity
The Lamjung Madhya Marshyangdi hydroelectricity project (70 MW) was completed this year while work started on the Chamelia hydroelectricity project in Darchula (30 MW), the Kulekhani III hydroelectricity project in Makwanpur (14 MW), and the Upper Trishuli A hydroelectricity project in Nuwakot/Rasuwa (60 MW). Projects with private investment such as Pati khola (0.996 MW) and Seti II (0.979 MW) were completed this year. In addition four other projects will be completed within the year with a total capacity of approximately 6MW.

Transportation
Construction of a 16 km road connecting Kathmandu to Nijgad has been completed and an additional 60 km

will also be opened. By the end of the year, 210 km will be surfaced and 110 km of new roads will be constructed. Work will have commenced on an additional 60 km.

Telecommunications
Out of 3,915 VDCs telecommunication services are now available in 3,624 VDCs. Over 1.3 million new telephone lines of different technologies have been distributed.



Community schools
Under the provision to handover school management to communities, this year 6,644 primary schools, 2,136 lower secondary level schools and 1,030 higher secondary schools will be handed over by the end of this fiscal year. This year 24,773 day care centres were opened.

Mortality rate
In line with the Millennium Development Goals, the child mortality rate has decreased to 14 per 1000 live births from 43 in 1996. Similarly the maternal mortality rate has decreased to 289 per 100,000 from 539 in 1990.

Toilets
1.1 million toilets are being built across the country under the one family one toilet scheme.

Advance defeat

Editorial in *Karobar*, 14 July

कारोबार

Unable to bring out the budget in the stipulated time, the government has had to bring out an advance budget to meet basic expenditures. Finance Minister Surendra Pandey’s prediction that this could lead to the downfall of the national economy has shown how weak our economy has become. For the third consecutive year, the budget could not be implemented in time. Two years ago, too, an advance budget preceded the regular budget and last year, it took almost five months to pass the budget. As a result timely allocation and spending of the budget for development projects could not take place. With this arrangement, economic development and job opportunities brought about by development projects will dwindle but daily expenditure will continue. The prospect is similar to that of an industry which has no production but continues to pay salaries to its staff while incurring other expenditure. If the government had presented its programs and policies on time, investors could have worked out the feasibility of investing in certain sectors. For aid, too, the government needs to show donors its budget and its expenditures of the past year. With an advance budget, getting foreign aid for new projects will be as impossible as continuing work on ongoing ones.

The political parties who have pushed the country into this state of uncertainty have no concerns for the development projects that are in limbo or the youth that are forced to leave the country for want of jobs. Shouldn’t the UCPN (Maoist), which proclaimed that all problems would vanish once Madhav Kumar Nepal resigned, take the responsibility for the missed economic and development opportunities? If only the Maoists had not created hurdles, this government would have presented a regular budget and at least some economic activities would have been taking place now. But it seems the Maoists do not have a care in the world whether the economic state of the country deteriorates or the poor have to starve, as long as it helps them to ascend to power.



Sign:
Please leave your shoes outside

Prachanda: “Bring the chair here. I’ll keep my feet outside.”

कान्तिपुर

Abin Shrestha in *Kantipur*, 13 July

Climate refugees in Mustang

Dhruvasagar Sharma in
Nepal Samacharpatra, 12 July

समाचारपत्र

Myagdi: People of Mustang have been forced to migrate from their native land because of the impacts of climate change. More than half of the 16 families in Samjung and 22 families in Gheya village of Upper Mustang have migrated elsewhere because of climate change, said Bishnu Sharma, a journalist who has been conducting research in the region. The village springs have dried out and grass has stopped growing in the grazing lands. Consequently, agriculture and livestock rearing have suffered. The villagers complain that with their main sources of livelihood in jeopardy, they had no option but to leave. Kami Gurung of Gheya village had to descend to Jomsom after he was unable to grow buckwheat and potatoes in his fields. “After all this, staying back in the village is like waiting for death,” he said. With the rise in temperature, previously unheard of diseases are being reported in Upper Mustang. According to



KIRAN PANDAY

Narendra Lama, head of the Annapurna Conservation Area Project, Lo Manthang, migration has been reported mainly from settlements above 3000 metres above sea level. Niwa Gurung, an inhabitant of Upper Mustang, said that the government did not respond to their plea to move the village.

Claiming that their village was no longer habitable, the locals had demanded that Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal relocate them when he visited Upper Mustang a year ago. The government promised a relief package, but nothing has been done so far. Upper Mustang has a cold climate and

arid topography. It receives less than 180 millilitres of rain annually. Since last year, meteorologists say, this has decreased to 150 millilitres. The locals are concerned that even with the displacement of an entire village’s inhabitants, the government remains unperturbed.

Incorrect priorities

Bal Krishna Gyawali in *Aarthik*,
Nagarik, 13 July

नागरिक

The country's politics have always overtaken economic development as the priority issue for the government of the day. This has led to delay in presentation of the budget every year. This delay not only disturbs resource allocation but also obstructs timely implementation of projects. In the end, the country's development suffers. Not bringing out the budget on time means that the government will have trouble sourcing the funds and then spending them on development projects.



The government accumulates funds from internal and external sources. The delay in the budget means that the government will be unable to change the revenue policy in July and will have to continue with the previous rates. The chain effect is that the government will not be able to collect high revenues, and subsequent plans will have limited budgets. Getting the required aid from donor agencies will also be a problem if they are unaware of the specific projects they can fund on time. The main problem will be in implementation of prioritised development programs. Even if the new budget is passed in mid-August, it is unlikely that the prioritised programs will be implemented even by the end of September. This will affect the entire process of development in the country.

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DFID, the Department for International Development, is part of the UK Government that manages UK aid to poor countries. Our work is focused on achieving the Millennium Development Goals – the United Nations targets for fighting poverty that must be met by 2015. We work with the governments of poor countries, charities, and international organisations to find lasting solutions to the global problem of poverty. DFID Nepal is responsible for managing the British Government's contribution to development in Nepal, set out in our new country business plan 2009-2012.

DFID Nepal is a fast moving environment that prides itself on being responsive to new opportunities. DFID Nepal is looking for **two** advisers – Economic and Local Development Adviser; and a Health Adviser – to enhance its workforce. They must have the enthusiasm and authority to build relations with, and influence, senior government officials, the private sector, civil society and donor partners to help address fundamental issues that hamper Nepal's growth and the ability of the poor to lift themselves out of poverty.

1. Economic & Local Development Adviser

Competencies and Qualifications:

- The post holder must have been formally trained as an Economist and possess at least a Masters level and/or have a proven track record of delivering high standard economic advisory work.
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Closing date for applications is Sunday, 1 August 2010.

Asstrology for beginners

When politics gets uncertain, politicians start seeing stars. Rulers vying for top jobs are all turning to astrologers. **Unfed Marxist-Leninists are OD-ing** on the opiate of the masses, and the Maobaddies are turning to the ex-royal soothsayers for advice on appeasing the planets. While the comrades shun astrophysics for astrology, Hridayesh the Tripartite has added another lapis lazuli to his only unemployed finger, the Leftist God now consults the zodiac before every major party decision so he has the upper hand against Comrade Oily, and for all his tirades against Brahminism Lionheart has conducted a marathon home in his home employing a plethora of bahuns. So, as we get closer to the 21 July election for the prime minister in parliament, black bokas are being lined up for slaughter at temples across the land, and the Ganeshes are getting ladoos.

Instead of sacrificing or worshipping buffalos, however, Mrs Awesome has this time taken to rearing them. Remember while still underground hubby boy had told the TOI (in that famous interview from Noida in which he



NHUCHHE MAN DANGOL

confessed to having a crush on Karisma Manandhar) that he drank two glasses of buffalo milk a day? Well, it looks like Comrade Bhayanak could not stand the plastic milk sold at the Naya Bajar corner shop and misses the creamy whole milk of Delhi Dairy. So Sita Ma'm, who has already inducted a jersey cow in the parking lot of the Pistachio Palace, now wants to expand the **Red Cow Dairy Farm** with a she-buffalo from Chitwan so that the Dahal clan will be self-sufficient in milk and honey.

Even after being stymied by EOIKTM, Awesome has still not given up trying to get an audience

in Delhi to explain his case. You have to be either half-empty in the brain department or a blind supporter to still trust the guy after the Shaktikhor tape in which the Chairman basically tells his audience: "Ha ha ha I really hoodwinked everyone, you'd be a fool to trust me. I'm actually a compulsive liar. Ha ha ha." And it has happened again. After demanding the prime minister's resignation for one whole year, the Comrade is now saying oh no, we'll decide the integration numbers after we come to power.

Two weeks ago, the entire nation watched Awe-Inspiring being

ambushed by reporters as he said he was being "besieged by people within my own party". Well, on Monday Com Dina repeatedly denied on Image tv that his boss ever said such a thing. The ink hadn't even dried on PKD's outburst and his spin doctors were already lying about it. Remember how all the pictures of the Kremlin ramparts don't have a single image of Trotsky from the second anniversary celebration of the Russian Revolution? The Soviets were airbrushing history a whole century before photoshop was discovered.

The question puzzling everyone is why PKD, BRB and the entire baddie brass stayed away from the presscon in which the Maoists announced their high-level talks team. Only Kaji Naran Kamred was there. We can understand that the Chairman has been working overtime to lobby for next week's election in parliament, but BRB? Meanwhile JNK (jilted by PKD after MKN resigned) better watch his BP when shouting at the PM during UML meets.

Many of you have written to the

donkey asking what will happen next. **Who do you think I am, an octopus?** The astrologer has consulted the oracles, and here it is:

1. The baddies can't muster the numbers and reluctantly agree to a Jhallu-led coalition that they will support from the outside
2. JNK belatedly discovers PKD has been promiscuously wooing Upadro Yadav too and says to hell with it and the UML-led coalition with the baddies in the opposition continues
3. The Maoists decide to make the best of it and agree to a UML-MJF-NC coalition led by Madhesi and support from the outside (this will mean the prez, vice-prez, PM will all be Madhesi, yay!)
4. NC-led coalition with RCP as PM with baddies in opposition
5. The world gets hit by an asteroid and Nepal's travails will pale into insignificance

Belated happy 64th to kingji. BTW, were those YCLs in mufti we saw outside Nirmal Nibas providing security?



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