As urban pressure grows, settlements are encroaching on farms. There is less land to grow the food to feed a growing population. Urban sprawl is most visible in Kathmandu (third picture) but is also happening in Pokhara (top) and other metros like Banepa (middle). With land running out, developers are going vertical with a growth in high rise apartment construction.

Food and lodging

A 9/11 decade
By the Way
by Anurag Acharya

Editorial
Gajanan to Bhattarai
Prime Minister Bhattarai risks being tainted by his proximity to crooks.

See full coverage in our Flat Special pages A-D.
GAJANAN TO BABURAM

Three hundred years ago, Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai’s ancestor Gajanana Bhattarai helped King Dhyu Shah of Gorkha to lay the groundwork for the nation that came to be known as Nepal. The monarchy is now gone. The republic that replaced it is torn by competing demands for autonomy within a proposed federal structure. That Bhattarai is the co-architect of, privately, some Maoist leaders admit that their federalism formula is unworkable and they need a face-saving exit strategy. But they can’t say so in public since the whole rationale for the war and their populist strategy in the 2008 elections used identity politics for recruitment and votes. Bhattarai now needs all the negotiating acumen he is supposed to have to prevent the break-up of a Nepal his ancestors helped forge.

The reason this issue has come up now is because of the murky, ambiguous and reckless four-point agreement that installed Bhattarai as prime minister. The Madhesi votes. Bhattarai now needs all the negotiating acumen he can get from his coalition partners, the opposition and the bureaucracy. And, watch your back, Doc.

Two weeks ago to form a new government, Baburam Bhattarai presented the better option. The NC squandered its chance by foolishly putting up two candidates, and the UML had nothing left to show for itself. The public rates Bhattarai’s intelligence, diligence and honestly highly. He has started well with populist, yet popular, decisions. And he would have moved even faster on the peace process if the Bidya Jansa faction hadn’t tried to put a spanner in the works. However, heing made it to the top job by aligning with a party with which it has little in common; Bhattarai risks being tainted by his proximity to crooks. He will need all the support he can get from his coalition partners, the opposition and the bureaucracy. And, watch your back, Doc.

MAKE OR BREAK

Cartoon hits the spot. (Make or break, #569)

Let’s see how it pans out. Hopefully for better.

Amar

One of the greatest cartoons ever. Who Cares

Danny Birch

You decimate home grown industries, brainwash labour for cheap votes, have most worthwhile people leave the country for better opportunities abroad, and now you try to revive the Made in Nepal tag by riding the Mustang! Bravo!

ASDF

Great cartoon, speaks much louder and much clearer then thousands speeches made by all the narrow minded politicians of Nepal.

Tashi Lama

This one deserves the best cartoon of the year award.

Ramhari

from India since 1989 should also be happy too.

Challenges for Baburam:

1. Taming the extreme militants within the Maoist camp (seems to be doing this well)
2. Madhesi parties 4-point deal, which includes stopping any criminal investigations into their party members. This will be a big stumbling block with human rights organisations, including Amnesty International.
3. Conclusion of the peace process, probably has the best chance among any other leader from any of the parties.
4. Needs to watch his back. His long time foeidian friend Prachanda is a clever, devious, political fox who will be secretly banking on Baburam’s failure in order for himself to resurface again.

The Maoists will eventually civilise as they know deep down their is no return to the jungle, they have the taste of Kathmandu and power. Eventually they will be a party pretty much resembling the CPN-UML of the early 1990’s.

Anonymous

APOLIGISE

I have always appreciated the Ass for its salinity. In all the editions so far I have never found it casting a racist slur. Yet, in ‘Get on with it’, Tonga, #569 the way Amresh Singh is addressed is out-and-out racist and derogatory.

Anonymous

BROKEN UMBRELLA

Re: Ashutosh Tiwari’s column, ‘Broken umbrella’, #569. What do expect from businessmen who are CA members from communist parties. Ethics? What ethics?

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The 9/11 decade
It doesn’t matter if America’s cruise missiles are guided, if its foreign policy is misguided

That day ten years ago today when airliners exploded into the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon marked a signpost in history. It was such a seminal event that everything after that now happens in the “post 9/11 world”.

Despite overwhelming sympathy for the shocking attack and the loss of life, America’s rulers squandered the moral high ground by plunging into a dirty revenge war in Iraq for which it made up evidence of weapons of mass destruction. It is slowly extricating itself from Iraq, but is bogged down in the Afghan quagmire.

In the run-up to the tenth anniversary, commentators are saying of the 9/11 attacks that the United States did it to itself, and that the country never learnt from its mistakes. All the root causes of anti-Americanism in the Middle East (US backing for Israeli occupation of Palestine, its support for conservative dictators to ensure the supply of cheap oil, its indiscriminate use of military firepower) are still there. Some would say the anger at America is greater now than ten years ago.

The self-fulfilling prophecy of a clash of civilisations is coming true because of ill-advised foreign policy in the Middle East and elsewhere. Despite tighter airport security and the removal of Osama bin Laden, America isn’t more secure because it hasn’t bothered to look at the underlying causes of terrorism. The cost of waging a worldwide war on terror has essentially bankrupted America and contributed to its current political paralysis.

Gone are the days when the United States could deploy its military anywhere in the world and not worry about the consequences. If the US has monopolised violence as a means of compliance for this long, the rise of the non-state actors have ended that monopoly. And if the powerful states have misused globalisation to intrude upon lives of people in distant lands, their adversaries have developed a similar capacity to strike back globally. It doesn’t matter if American cruise missiles are guided if its foreign policy is misguided.

And it’s not just America that has become more vulnerable, it has exported its insecurity to its allies around the world. Here in the subcontinent, the war on terror has sucked Pakistan into the maelstrom of terror so it can’t now be a part of America’s exit strategy from Afghanistan. Pakistan’s instability makes India vulnerable, and the dominos keep tumbling.

The elimination of Bin Laden may ultimately give the Americans a face-saving exit from Afghanistan, but it still needs someone to police the region. Pakistan could have done it, but is falling apart. So the Americans have turned to India, making it the target of jihadist terror. This weeks attack on Delhi’s High Court is the latest in series of attack India has witnessed in the recent years.

Nepal gets sucked into this because every time there is a terrorist attack in India, the media there is full of intelligence leaks that the attackers slipped in through the open Nepal border. At a meeting with visiting Nepali editors in Delhi in July, Home Minister P Chidambaram devoted all his time talking about security.

The mistakes America has made on the global scale, India is making at a regional level. One of the enduring after-effects of 9/11 on South Asia has been Washington’s outsourcing of regional security to New Delhi. And in many ways India is behaving locally like the global bully America is. It’s not without reason that the IPKF debacle in Sri Lanka is called “India’s Vietnam”.

The failure to see terrorism as a by-product of bad governance that manifests into violent excesses has led to stigmatisation of communities for their religious and political beliefs. States fail to see how terror groups exploit individual grievances to carry out such strikes, and instead look to pre-empt attacks through suppression rather than prevention.

Closer to home, ethnic tensions, the bombing of churches and desecration of mosques are all initial signals of seething grievances. Terrorism can be countered only when states police their citizens less and govern them more. Brute force will not reduce injustice, in fact there is evidence it will make it worse. The solution is to address wrongs before the extremist few choose to redress them using violence and terror.
The concept of UN-led peacekeeping and peace-building is being applied everywhere from Nepal to Libya.

CARL BILDT

When Dag Hammarskjöld was appointed Secretary-General of the United Nations on 7 April 1953 it was by no means a safe bet that the UN would be so much more successful than its predecessor, the League of Nations, in preventing an outbreak of a new world war.

Hammarskjöld, however, had a firm belief in the United Nations role as an international peacekeeping body and protector of the interests of less powerful nations. He was also a strong believer in the power of diplomacy.

When the Suez Crisis erupted in 1956, the UN Charter did not contain any provisions for using impartial and armed UN forces to stabilise fragile situations. It still does not, but neither has it ever banished such arrangements. For Hammarskjöld, this void was an opportunity rather than a constraint. On the basis of a suggestion from Canada’s Foreign Minister, Lester Pearson, he devised the concept of peacekeeping and managed to assemble the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) within weeks. The basic principles of UNEF’s operation have remained a central feature of UN interventions to this day.

The end of the Cold War gave rise to intangible conflicts of political as well as ethnic and religious stripe. Today, the actors are more numerous and the agenda is broader.

Recently, the discussion on the new challenges has been guided by two landmark publications: the Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations of 2000 (the “Brahimi Report”), and the UN Secretariat “non-paper” A New Partnership Agenda: Charting a New Horizon for UN Peacekeeping of 2009 (the “New Horizon” initiative).

The Brahimi Report found that peacekeeping operations were increasingly deployed not in post-conflict situations, but in stalemate situations where at least one of the parties was not seriously committed to ending the confrontation.

The New Horizon non-paper took stock of the increasing scale and complexity of UN peacekeeping operations. It emphasised the need to forge a stronger political consensus, shift the focus from quantity to quality of troops, enhance the accountability among the stakeholders of UN peacekeeping, and develop a coherent strategy for the UN field support system.

The Brahimi Report and the New Horizon recognise, as Hammarskjöld did with regard to the United Nations as a whole, that UN peacekeeping is an imperfect but indispensable instrument for the international community.

The increasing numbers of international actors do not deprecate the role and importance that the UN plays in global peacekeeping. On the contrary, it is an acknowledgement that many states and actors today feel a direct responsibility to partake in the global agenda for peace and conflict prevention.

The common ground that has been reached needs to be consolidated and broadened:

1. The success or failure to protect civilians directly affects the success or failure to protect civilians.
2. The nexus between peacekeeping and peacebuilding must be strengthened, with peacekeepers providing security and support for national and international actors to implement peacebuilding measures.
3. The demand for civilian expertise in complex peacekeeping operations must be responded to by strengthening the support for civilian personnel.
4. We should follow the example of Dag Hammarskjöld’s Summary Study and turn our scrutiny to the UN system itself and our working methods.

In conclusion, let us remember Hammarskjöld’s view that the United Nations embodied the “edge of development of human society” and worked on the “brink of the unknown” remains an inspiring vision.
I

Imagine what it’s like to be a child growing up behind cold metal bars surrounded by criminals serving time. That is exactly what dozens of children are doing. This is the story of children who are growing up behind bars for no crime of their own, but they have no choice.

There are as many as 100 children trapped in various jails around Nepal, not because they’ve done anything wrong but simply because they’ve done anything at all to take care of them, the jailer, parent and ECDC.

Even if Bush could be forgiven for taking America, and much of the rest of the world, to war on false pretenses, and for misrepresenting the cost of the venture, there is no excuse for how he chose to finance it. His was the first war in history paid for entirely on credit. As America went into battle, with deficits already soaring from his 2001 tax cut, Bush decided to plunge ahead with yet another round of tax ‘relief’ for the wealthy.

Growing up behind bars

Pushpa Basnet has devoted her life to helping children who are in prison for their parents’ crime without hope for a better future. Without education, and with Puspa herself. It all starts off by locating a child who is stuck behind bars, Pushpa personally travels to the jail herself even if it is in a remote part of Nepal to make official agreements with jailer, parent and ECDC.

After agreements are complete the child is taken to the ECDC home in Kathmandu where a new life awaits them. The child is welcomed by the other children already at the shelter, but this transition phase is the hardest for the child. Many are emotionally, physically and mentally scarred by their traumatising experience in jail. There are children who have seen their fathers kill their mothers, and even young girls who were raped by their fathers.

The children are given necessary attention, from food to health, care and love. All children have different periods of adjustment but they are looked over and monitored through every step. The ECDC residential home provides the child everything they need to ensure that they have the best life possible until their parents are released from jail. The children are enrolled in school, and they get additional tutoring if they are falling behind.

ECDC has also set up a day care center near Sundhara Prison for children less than six years whose mothers are in jail. These children are too young to be separated from their mothers, but at least get to see life outside jail even if it is only for the day.

After winning an interest-free loan from the organization, Change Fusion Nepal, in 2009 Pushpa has also trained mothers in jail to make handicrafts that are exported to generate income for the upkeep of shelters.

The price of 9/11

George W Bush’s war on terror was the first war in history paid for entirely on credit that already-difficult battle. The wars’ collateral damage has been massive: by some accounts, more than a million Iraqis have died, directly or indirectly, because of the war. Not all of the consequences were disastrous. Al Qaeda, while not conquered, no longer appears to be the threat that loomed so large in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. But the price paid in getting to this point, in the US and elsewhere, has been enormous, and mostly avoidable. The legacy will be with us for a long time. It pays to think before acting.

Joseph E. Stiglitz is University Professor at Columbia University, a Nobel laureate in economics, and the author of Freefall: The Global Economy.
The Rajbhandari family lost their pet dog Cyber last year. His friends suggested he purchase a pure breed, but Pranab wanted a mongrel just like Cyber. He turned to the internet and discovered that there are several animal centres in Nepal that offer local mixed breeds for adoption. His family finally selected Scamper from the Animal Nepal dog sanctuary in Chobar, and five months later he is a part of the family. “Scamper is easy to take of and is growing to be a healthy, friendly and a little mischievous,” says Pranab, who is glad he adopted a mongrel instead of wasting money on an expensive pure breed. Animal Nepal and other shelters in Kathmandu rescue stray and abandoned dogs from the streets, treat them for skin and other diseases and put them up for adoption.

According to a dog census earlier this year, there are over 22,000 stray dogs inside the Ring Road. Unlike the Municipality that still poisons stray dogs to control their population, Animal Nepal holds regular mobile sterilisation clinics. Animal Nepal has started a campaign called “Adopt a Nepali Dog” to get dog owners to turn to Nepali mongrels and this year alone 14 dogs from the shelter have found happy homes. “These dogs are used to having people around them, so they are very friendly and good natured,” says Lucia de Vries of Animal Nepal, and adds there are upsides to adopting a mongrel as opposed to the fashionable pure breeds. Mongrels are healthier, easier to take care of and more adaptable. A mongrel pet is also more economical, they don’t have a price tag and the maintenance cost is low.

According to Rato Bangala School, when Kali and Juli were donated as part of a Nepal Police K-9 Unit, they were just six weeks old. Today, the two alert and intelligent adolescents are in obedience training to join the police’s sniffer dog squad.

When Kali and Juli arrived at the Central Police Dog Training School in February they were only six weeks old. They were immediately put into intensive training to join the police’s sniffer dog squad.

Today, the two alert and intelligent adolescents are in obedience training. Kali, being the more outgoing one, is being trained to detect explosives and Juli is going to be a specialist in sniffing out drug smugglers. Dogs from the school located in Raniban have made some major arrests. Shyova Shrestha, who murdered an entire family, was sniffed out by a graduate of the CPDTS and another one helped find the body of murdered journalist Birendra Shah in Bara two years ago. Police dogs also foiled a potentially deadly terrorist attack by finding a 20 kg explosive at Pokhara Stadium in 2005. Even as Nepali Times was at Raniban reporting on this story, two teams of dogs had been dispatched to the BCC and Singh Darbar for routine inspections and another one was in Kirtipur to help locate a lost child who was later found. Baburam Adhikari, a DSP at the school, says while sniffer dogs used to be imported, today private breeders in Nepal donate puppies, or they are bought from local kennel clubs. “Some donors get really impressed when they see how professional the puppies they gave away have become at the airport, and they promise to give us more dogs,” says Adhikari.

The school was established in 1965 with four dogs from Malaysia, and the number has now risen to 45. Kali and Juli were donated by Rato Bangala School and like others have become members of the Nepali Police. After training, the dogs can join four police units: arms and explosives, tracking, search and rescue...
and the narco unit. “Depending on the dog’s temperament, we give them specialised training for their units,” explains Adhikari. Dogs used by the tracking unit sniff out criminals and missing persons and need nine months of basic training. Airports dogs are trained in six months to detect explosives and drugs. However, all dogs need to undergo the 3-month basic obedience training course when they become five months old during which they learn to lie down, sit, remain still and do the famous doggy handshake. They are also trained to refuse food from strangers and to respond to their handler’s voice only. Some puppies do fail their basic training course, and get an honourable discharge to become pets. Retirement age for sniffer dogs is 10 after which they spend the rest of their days at the School or are adopted by dog lovers.

Pramod Raj Bhatta is a vet at the School, and says it is not enough to look after the physical health of the dogs, sniffer dogs perform best when they are happy and develop a bond with the handlers. “It is important that they are looked after, and this includes the handler spending time with the dogs playing and fetching,” he says. Labradors, German Shepherds and Doberman Pinschers are considered ideal for policing tasks because of their acute sense of smell, muscular bodies, stamina and agility.
**EVENTS**

**VOYE: The Newari Feast, walk with the chariots and have a special feast to celebrate Indra Jatra for charity. 11 September, 2.30pm to 8pm, Kathmandu Durbar Square**

**Fashion Night Out, celebrating fashion and style. 9 September, 6pm to 11.30pm, Gazebo Restro-Lounge, Durbar Marg**

**Poultry and Livestock Expo, international exposition for poultry and livestock. Till 10 September, DECC, United World Center, Tripatheshwar**

**The Blacksmith, a documentary delving into the recent history of a community of Dalit blacksmiths. 9 September, 1pm, Russian Cultural Center, 8841366092**

**Grand Opening of Sphinkx, one stop for trendy clothes and accessories. 9 and 10 September, Times Square Mall, Durbar Marg**

**NEC Fete 2011, performances by celebrated bands, great food and fun games. 9 and 10 September, Nepal Engineering College, Changunarayan, Bhaktapur**

**Theatrical Circus, magical experience with a fusion of circus, acrobatics and theatre. 14 September, 6pm to 7.30 pm, the British School, Jhamsikhel**

**Arbug Drive 2011, Volkswagen Beetle Drive from Kathmandu to Gyantok in Sikkim. 6 to 13 September, 4222636**

**Satangs and Bhajans, celebration of Universal Brotherhood Day followed by talks and hymns from Babaij Bob. 11 September, 2 pm to 5 pm, Police Club Auditorium, Exhibition road**

**Kathmandu Literary Jatra, three day literature festival. 10 to 11 September, Patan Durbar Square Complex**

**9th Annual Wine Festival, taste 15 wines from six countries. Till 15 September, Kinroy’s, Thamel, 4250440-41**

**YES! Course, by the Art of Living for 13-18 year old youth. 11 to 16 September, 2pm to 5pm, The Art of Living New Baneshwor Centre, DI Nivas, New Baneshwor, 8803039750**

**Lyrics from the Junkyard, junkyard sculptures by Meena Kayastha. Till 9 September, 11am to 6pm, The Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited**

**Nepal Rendezvous II, paintings from eminent artists from Bangladesh. 10 to 16 September, 11am to 6pm, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited**

**Cycle 6: Life, nature and wildlife photography by On Yadav. Till 30 September, 10am to 5pm, Galleria CUIC, Maharajgunj**

**Nepfest II, fledging bands to showcase their musical talents. 9 September, 12.30 pm onwards, Fun Park, Birkuli Mandap, 9841721736, 9841277757**
DINING

Music at Neon Pub, music evening for all interested in the town’s underground music scene. 9 September, 12.30 pm to 6 pm. Neon pub, Thamel

Pokhara Concert, catch X-Mantra in Pokhara. 10 September, 5.30 pm to 8.30 pm. Pokhara.

Milk Coffee and Cocktail Café, coffee house during the day and a cozy lounge serving cocktails at night, try their yachagumba and molecular cocktails along with homemade pastry and coffee house during the day and a cozy lounge serving cocktails at night, try their yachagumba and molecular cocktails along with homemade pastry and coffee

SOMEPLACE ELSE

Tourist hubs and heritage sites go hand in hand but often yield substandard options for the belly. Restaurants in Boudha thrive more on their terrace, rooftop or room with a view than on the quality of their menu. But stepping off the sacred roundabout is a narrow brick corridor characteristic of an artful brasserie that has particular charm. The stuffed eggplant, is layered with white cheese and chopped veggies that dishes out delish, outstanding its ordinary, grey appearance. Whether medium, rare or well done, the beef (100 per cent) is done simply well. For fearless carnivores, go for the Mixed Grilled Meat Pot Skizzler, a sizzling skillet of tender chicken, beef and sausages marinated and smothered with a tangy BBQ sauce, cuddle by a stack of fries or a mound of real mashed potato—a godsend from another mother. But in the art of pizza, Flavor’s requires a bit more schooling. The Flavor’s Special vegetarian pizza, a 12-inch pie topped with homemade tomato sauce, black olives, mushrooms, green peppers, capers and mozzarella, is a filling round of dough but unbalanced and subpar when matched against the thin-crust creations at Fire and Ice. The flavors are paying an offhand tribute to its original. But for accuracy’s sake, ‘cheese’ should be emphasized: the eggplant and round, clockwise ‘til you tighten your fanny pack. Marco Pollo

Flavor’s diners are paying a few rupees extra for the location but with no additional charges (VAT or service) yet in sight, so tighten your fancy pack.

Join the

Flavor’s

Care

Deal-icious

Service

Bread ‘n water

Repeat?

GETAWAYS

The Last Resort, one stop for Adventure Sports, bungy jump over the Shire Khosi river 160 metres below or mountain biking up to the Tibetan border. The Last Resort Sales Office, Mandala Street, Thamel, 470525

The Dwarika’s Himalayan Shangri-La Village Resort Dhillikhet, overnight package with accommodation, dinner and breakfast. Call 4373498 for reservations

Sanepa Resort, for homemade pastas and chef’s specialities. Sanepa Resort, Thamel, 470525

Milk Coffee and Cocktail Café, coffee house during the day and a cozy lounge serving cocktails at night, try their yachagumba and molecular cocktails along with homemade pastry and coffee

The stuffed eggplant, is layered with white cheese and chopped veggies that dishes out delish, outstanding its ordinary, grey appearance. Whether medium, rare or well done, the beef (100 per cent) is done simply well. For fearless carnivores, go for the Mixed Grilled Meat Pot Skizzler, a sizzling skillet of tender chicken, beef and sausages marinated and smothered with a tangy BBQ sauce, cuddle by a stack of fries or a mound of real mashed potato—a godsend from another mother. But in the art of pizza, Flavor’s requires a bit more schooling. The Flavor’s Special vegetarian pizza, a 12-inch pie topped with homemade tomato sauce, black olives, mushrooms, green peppers, capers and mozzarella, is a filling round of dough but unbalanced and subpar when matched against the thin-crust creations at Fire and Ice. The flavors are paying an offhand tribute to its original. But for accuracy’s sake, ‘cheese’ should be emphasized: the eggplant and round, clockwise ‘til you tighten your fanny pack. Marco Pollo

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TIMELY HONOUR: President Ram Baran Yadav conferred the PP Prasai Foundation’s Lifetime Achievement Award to tourism entrepreneur Tek Chandra Pokharel at Shital Nibas on Monday.

KATHMANDU
WEEKEND WEATHER
by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

FRI  SAT  SUN
27-16  28-16 29-17

BIKRAM RAI
What we are seeing this week is the last phase of the monsoon as a weakening south easterly stream brings moisture into the Himalayan mid-hill. This turns into thunder storms in afternoon and evenings. This process is going to gradually taper off by late next week as the westerlies establish themselves. Clear mornings and afternoon built up into the weekends.

DHANVANTARI
In 1985, Stephen Jay Gould wrote a bestseller in the US entitled, The Median Isn’t the Message. He was a patient with mesothelioma, a deadly form of cancer. He was also a discerning scientist, and so he looked up mesothelioma and found that it was fatal with a median survival time of about eight months. However he saw that the survival curve for mesothelioma was skewed to the right with a long tail on the graph suggesting that some people lived many years longer than the average time of eight months. Gould however stressed on the unlikely probability of a longer life and even wrote the book because indeed, he went on to survive for 20 more years. Lucky guy.

In a sense, the American medical system especially as regards terminal problems like cancer care, end stage lung/heart disease, has been built around the improbable: the long tail of the graph. This means spending millions of dollars to entertain the notion of hope, that perhaps this particular patient is an exception. Unfortunately even in the US health care budget is limited, and this has lately hit home with the passage of the health care bill. How is all this relevant for a deprived country like Nepal? Take malignant lung cancer, an increasing form of cancer, thanks to smoking and air pollution. The median survival time no matter what you do is generally a year for this cancer. Receiving chemotherapy, radiation, or even surgery for this cancer is possible here, and there may be clear cut indications for doing this in some instances. But in many cases in Nepal proper control of pain in the patient and promoting ‘hospice’ like care may be more relevant and acceptable. This would mean that the patient and the family rather than spending lakhs on ineffective treatment would spend more time together. In the US the likely scenario is that in the last stages a lung cancer patient will be in intensive care with tubes and catheters. Amazingly even in the US, and especially due to the budget crunch, many people are opting for hospice care for a more satisfying exit. In Nepal we do not seem to have a choice.

GANDHINAGAR: Artist Bidhata KC gives US Ambassador to Nepal, Scott DeLisi, a tour of the Sri Ganesh exhibition at Nepal Art Council on Thursday. More than 45 interpretations of lord Ganesh by various artists were exhibited.

FACE-LIFT: A boy cleans up as the Gaddi Baihak, Basantapur Darbar Square, gets a fresh coat of paint on Tuesday, ahead of Indra Jatra on Sunday.
KALAM
Rabi Thapa

“So what’s new? 2-1? 1-1? 3-2? Eh?”

My cousins smile at my little joke and continue with their sports chatter. I’ve no idea who’s playing who in the eternal round robin of the European football leagues, nor do I care. Don’t get me wrong – I do think football is a beautiful game and once every four years I pick the wrong team and thank the lord above for giving us beer to drown our sorrows in. I just don’t care to follow the undeniably talented yet obscenely paid mercenaries who gurn across the world’s screens day in, day out.

It’s impossible to say in what proportions a Manchester United fan, who’s not a Mancunian, cares about the city of Manchester, the quality of football it purveys, and the glamour attached to its multi-billion dollar global franchise. One suspects there are plenty who claim to love football, but are equally enamoured of the glitz.

Getting local United fans to follow the national leagues of Nepal might be the acid test. Would they rather head to a bar and be transported to Old Trafford or hike down to the Rangsala to catch Manang Marshyandi vs Police Club? Better still, how about a trip to Sonpur, Bihar, to see a youth club from Birganj battle against a ‘running tie sheet’ of regional Indian teams?

Oh, the glamour! The boys featured in Girish Giri’s sports documentary Team Nepal, 2005, (pictured) reach Sonpur to find they are to put up in a train carriage for the duration of the ‘Late JN Singh Memorial Football Tournament’. They do so, most cheerfully, and in full knowledge of just how far away they are from the glory of their Premier League idols. Fingering a football jersey, one of the lads quips: “Maile Chelsea bata lyeeko?”

The others laugh. “Chelsea kun desh ma cha thahacha?” “Malai Lampard le diye ko...” “Lampard!” “Chelsea ma toilet sapha garne thees hola hahah!”

Jokes aside, the joy of playing for a local club (for Rs 100), and in their own understanding ‘representing’ Nepal against Bihar, elevates these boys above the mercenary footballers Nepali youth so idolise. If only we could bring ourselves to support the countless sportsmen and sportswomen who truly represent us, rather than saving our callow jingoism to counter perceived insults.

Sport, of course, in the words of Mandela, ‘has the power to unite people in a way that little else does.’ Search for Common Ground has taken this quite literally by supporting the production of parallel television series in seven countries that follow the trials of a football team cobbled together from all parts. NGO-fied it may be, but Nepal’s Hamro Team is possibly the best-made program ever to be broadcast on Nepali television (which admittedly isn’t saying much). Judging by the positive response, Hamro Team has tapped into a reservoir of passion not just for the sport of football, but for the ideal of a national team that draws on the full strength of Nepal’s socio-cultural and ethnic diversity and works together to achieve, literally, ‘goals’. The irony of course is that Hamro Team is a microcosm of Nepal in much the same way the CA was meant to be. I am not going to insult the reader’s intelligence by casting about with the hope that our past, present and future MPs and PMs will manage to coexist in a state of exalted harmony. A parliament represents a country in a rather more complicated manner than a national team does. But the lesson’s there to be learnt. It may seem naïve to hope for life to imitate art, but in some sense Team Nepal the documentary is a real life reflection of Hamro Team the TV series. Even at this late stage, it’s not impossible to believe that the aspirations of millions of individuals will not coalesce into collective achievement at the highest level.
“You can’t eat slogans”

Many in the Madhes feel that a united federal Madhes will actually make them poorer

RAMESWOR BOHARA in SIRAHA
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drologically poles apart, the Madhesi Front and the Maoists have struck up a marriage of convenience. The extent to which the Maoists have compromised to woo Madhesi support is evident from the fact that they are even willing to accept a united Madhes from the fact that they are even willing to accept a united Madhes federal province.

It was only after the Maoists agreed to support the formation of an autonomous Madhes with the right to self-determination that the Front joined the government, barely hours before the CA was to vote for a new prime minister. Things couldn’t have worked out better for the Madhesi Front, which now has half the portfolios in government, most of them key ministries.

The demand for ‘One Madhes’ derives its rationale from CA’s State Restructuring Committee’s report and the Maoists have been pushing for ethnic federalism, so they couldn’t refuse it.

But here in the eight poorest Tarai districts between Parsa and Saptari where most Madhesi Front leaders come from, there is no jubilation. Instead, we saw overwhelming disillusionment with the leadership’s disdain for their welfare. Madhesis themselves say that their leaders have used the slogan of ‘One Madhes’ to cover up the neglect of their home constituencies.

Surendra Lahit, Janakpur-based scholar and lecturer told us last week: “The call for a united Madhes, was misinterpreted as a call for one Madhes”. Other Madhesis academics and civil society leaders say federal provinces that isolate the plains from the hills and mountains would create even more economic imbalance.

Rajhraj-based lawyer Himmat Singh puts it bluntly: “If we separate the Madhes from rest of the country, there will be nothing left.”

National-level Madhesi leaders, however do not accept this. The TMLP’s Hridayesh Tripathi argues that the Madhes is self sufficient when it comes to resources and agriculture. Its location astride the Indian border gives it unparalleled advantage for trade and commerce, he adds.

Besides the economic and political challenges of the Tarai, however, there is the added problem of population explosion fuelled by high birthrates, and migration from both India and the hills. Depletion of the Chure hills in the past four years have worsened floods, and sedimentation has raised river beds. Droughts and flash floods have made things worse for farmers here in the eastern Tarai.

A federal Madhes unit would have to depend on upstream provinces for water for irrigation and power for its industries. If federalism is not smooth, this could lead to future water wars.

Sadbhavana leader Rajendra Mahato likes to say that since 80 per cent of Nepal’s tax revenue is collected from the Madhes, this should be used to develop the Madesh. But Arun Kumar, a professor in Janakpur argues that most of this tax is collected for goods exported or imported for the whole country. “The revenue collection and its allocation is jurisdiction of the center,” says Kumar, “all regions have equal claim to it.”

Experts based in the Tarai say the only way to ensure balanced economic growth into the future is to have districts within each province complement each other. Electricity generated from hydropower projects in Dolakha district of Janakpur Zone could help in the industrialisation of its Tarai districts like Dhanusha.

Even when it comes to tourism, the potential of Lumbini and Janakpur are linked to pilgrim arrivals in Swayambhu, Boudha and Pashupati, and vice versa. Only with close economic and social linkages between mountain, hill and plains, can a federal Nepal be stronger than the sum of its parts, they add.

But Madhesi leaders are engaged in populist identity politics that overwhelming numbers of people in the Madhes themselves don’t agree with. Identity without progress and dignity without development will, it seems, neither benefit the Madhesi population nor help in the development that geographically integrated provinces can.

Because their political rhetoric has now become so strident, Madhesi leaders have painted themselves into a corner and can’t moderate their views even if they want to. The Kathmandu establishment, including Madhesi leaders at the centre cannot ignore the identity and dignity of the Madhesi any longer. And many in the Madhes are convinced that a united federal Madhes will actually make them poorer.
Interview with Suraj Vaidya, President of Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI) in Naya Patrika, 4 September

Naya Patrika: How hopeful are you after meeting the new prime minister?

Suraj Vaidya: I am quite hopeful for the private sector after meeting Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai. The country finally has a prime minister who understands the nation’s financial circumstances. We brought him up to speed on the situation of the private sector and future plans to develop the economy. The private sector is aware that the prime minister’s hand may be tied due to the political uncertainty. But he expressed the desire for the private sector and the government to work hand in hand to develop the economy, and that has made us hopeful.

What are you proposing?

We have three requests. First, the budget has become a victim of political uncertainty. Second is the energy crisis, the state is likely to face if there are no specific plans to end it within 4-5 years. Third is the labour situation. While past governments have never taken responsibility to manage the country’s manpower, we hope this time the government will be more proactive.

Do you still have misgivings about the “three pillar” economic policy in the budget that includes cooperatives? Private-public partnerships exist in economies worldwide. But we don’t understand what the Nepali government is trying to do with the three-pillar model. Cooperatives are part of the private sector as well, and the prime minister agreed with this view.

What should PM Bhattarai do?

The prime minister is already committed to curbing corruption, which is hindering development. We also feel that all the political parties should promote a suitable working environment for the prime minister.
Trading her childhood for war, Kamala Roka, became the first trained female Maoist guerrilla during the conflict. Now she is the first female guerrilla who has become a minister. Stepping into politics in 1989, she became a whole-timer of the Maoist Party in 1991. Wife of YCL Chief Ganesh Man Pun, she started out from her native district Rukum where she became a member of the district committee in 1996. Working in various committees in the Mid-Western Region for six years she shifted her focus as a PLA fighter in the Maoist Gandaki brigade in 2001. She was nominated to the interim parliament and is a CA member from the PR list of the maoist party and served a whip in the Maoist Party for the last three months.

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**Guerrilla to minister**

Nagarik, 5 September

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**Probes essential**

Editorial in Nagarik, 7 September

Suspection over the growing proximity between Maoists leaders and some private telecom companies has been fuelled further by recent Wikileaks revelations. According to leaked cables from US embassy in Nepal, Smart Telecom had allegedly sponsored Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal’s Singapore trip to meet the ailing Girija Prasad Koirala in 2009.

The contents of the cables may not be entirely accurate, but shrugging off diplomatic cables by terming them American propaganda is also foolish. Especially at a time when news of Maoist leaders trying to interfere with Nepal Telecom to benefit Smart Telecom and other companies have surfaced.

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A Singapore-based company has 70 per cent of the shares of Smart Telecom. Even back then the Maoist chairman and his team’s expensive trip to Singapore made headlines. The information was provided to the US embassy in Nepal by a person from the same firm who made arrangements for the trip. A parliamentary investigation established that Smart Telecom benefited through the intervention of a Maoist minister of communication. The Nepal Telecommunication Authority subsequently issued directives to stop them.

Although Wikileaks also shows how Dahal’s tickets and expensive hotel lodgings in Singapore were paid by Smart, there is still not enough basis to prove the chairman’s wrongdoings. However, given his anchoring role in the peace process and constitution writing, it matters that his credibility is under the scanner. The evidence so far indicates wrongdoing and only an independent probe can clear the matter.
Dr BRB’s first ten days in office were accompanied by major national crises, as indicated by the following award-winning headlines from the daily press this week, only one of which is made up:

- NAC Rats Out After Air Crew Rats on Rat
- Valley Sweet Shops Have Sour Experience
- Garbage and Politics Turns Capital Stinky
- Phora Fries Suck: Wikileaks

With the prime minister fully engaged in fire-fighting mode from Day One, it’s no wonder he is now getting to Singha Darbar as early as 7:30 AM with his tiffin box and returning to Balu Water only at midnight. But as the crises pile up, even this may not be enough and he may have to start sleeping over at the office. He may as well bring along his kitchen cabinet to Singha Darbar, too.

Despite BRB’s strict orders not to have sycophants put expensive ads in the papers congratulating him on his prime ministership, there are still some who can’t resist the temptation to be noticed and are coming out of the woodworks. Meanwhile, taking his cue from his boss, Hridesh Tripathi has refused the official limo and residence and has decided to stay on at his private residence and drive around in his own car. What happened to the bullock cart?

The show of unity between the three factions of the Baddies in Sindhuli the other day seems to have gone down well, and brought the party back from the brink of a split. But we hear Com Kiran has amassed 40 per cent of the central committee votes and hopes to have a showdown this weekend. He wants to stage a coup in the party by out-voting Com Pukada. In this, he has the backing of Com Cloud, Com Hitman, Com God, Com CP and a long tail of other comrades. The irony of it all, of course, is that if PKD and BRB stick together MBK has little chance to get the required numbers. Alert readers will recall that it was MBK, Cloudy and BRB themselves got together not so long ago at the Siddharth Cottage in Dhobi Ghaut to clip PKD’s wings. Just goes to prove the axiom that there are no permanent enemies or permanent friends in politics, only back-stabbers.

Gachhu the Godfather was so nervous about taking over as Homely Minister that he got the astrologers to find the time of the exact alignment of the planets when to enter his office. But it really ticked him off that no one was there when he arrived. How is a guy who has been publicly seen hobnobbing with K-town’s prominent gangstas ever going to curb organised crime? But the minister has other pressing headaches: to get his nominee for defence minister, comrade-in-arms Sarat Singh, to be sworn in. Sarat got a call an hour before last week’s swearing in from Gachhu himself saying there was a hitch and “we’ll do it some other time”. There are conflicting reports about what happened. Some have it that the army brass put pressure on Gachhedar to drop Sarat because they didn’t want Madesi leaders to lead both army and defence (even though neither are technically Madesi). But others say Gachhedar came under enormous pressure from purer Madesis who felt it was their right to lead both the army and police.

BRB has been busy splitting ministries in order to accommodate all those who want portfolios. After cutting in half Forests and Soil Conservation, Water and Sewage it looks like he may have to even split the Ministry of Foreign Affairs into the Ministry of Foreign and Ministry of Affairs.

We’ll cross that bridge when we get to it

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