



Times

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Weekly Internet Poll # 369

Q. What is your opinion on monarchy?

Total votes: 7,600

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RAJESH KC

Slashed and burnt

After suffering three weeks of shutdowns since August, the tarai is paralysed by another series of crippling strikes that have effectively closed down the East-West Highway before Dasain. There is deep frustration here with leaders in Kathmandu who are too preoccupied with politics to care. "We are fed up with the endless highway blockades, my business is finished," says Biratnagar transporter Shekhar Niraula. "This is why we need to get these elections over and done with. Politicians should stop punishing the people."

There is one banda after another till Dasain, some overlapping with each other:

- Sunsari, Siraha and Saptarai face an indefinite banda called by the Tharuhat.
- Three-day tarai banda 4-6 October called by Rajendra Mahato's Sadbhabana.
- Two-day Morang and Saptari banda called by the Biswas faction of the MJF.
- Indefinite eastern Nepal strike by the Limbuwan and Khumbuwan.
- Another two-day banda in Bara and Parsa on 9-11 October by the MJF's Biswas group.

With the Kapilbastu highway blockade by victims of riots, these closures have brought the country to a grinding halt at a time when people are travelling home for holidays. Bus companies have stopped taking bookings, schools are closed, term exams can't be held and the sick can't get to hospitals. A hitherto unknown group called the Garib Mukti Morcha held a two day banda last week in the Eastern tarai and set fire to three trucks.

A pregnant woman died after Limbuwan activists set fire to a bus at Belbari in Morang and a young man was killed when MJF activists hurled a bomb at a night bus in Parwanipur in Bara two weeks ago.

Meanwhile in Kathmandu, leaders are deadlocked over the Maoist demand to declare a

BURNING THE MESSENGER: Freshly printed editions of *Kantipur's* eastern edition were taken out of a delivery van and set ablaze by Maoists near Biratnagar on Tuesday morning. The previous day, they damaged the main printing facility in Kathmandu and threatened to kill staffers at the Bharatpur plant.

republic before full proportional representation polls. Prime Minister Koirala is holding out, and the Maoists are smarting from universal condemnation of their attacks on Kantipur. If a deal is not worked out before the deadline for election nominations on Friday, poll postponement looks inevitable. Which means more uncertainty, more protests and even more shutdowns here in the tarai. ●

Kunda Dixit in Biratnagar



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Open border, closed minds

Blaming the border for the madhes crisis distracts attention from Nepal's domestic political failure

Kapilbastu brought into focus the implications of Nepal's open border with India. Ever since the madhesi uprising in January, many Kathmandu politicians and analysts have argued that the border lies at the root of the unrest, and demanded it must be tightly regulated.



TARAI EYE
Prashant Jha

This view is shared by some in Delhi. An Indian editor who knows Nepal remarked: "Good fences make good neighbours."

The elite in the two capitals must not be allowed to change the nature of the border. This view overplays the impact of cross-border elements in inciting trouble, ignores the crucial linkages shared by people and their livelihood and cultural concerns, and prescribes the wrong solution. Better administration and cooperation on both sides is the answer, not more restrictions.

With the law and order situation improving in Bihar, many criminals have decided to make the most of the anarchy in the Nepal tarai. Some people from Bairstonia participated in the Gaur massacre and ran back to India. Jwala Singh spends most of his time in Darbhanga and Muzaffarpur, Goit lives in Supaul and Patna among other places. Madhesi groups acquire their guns from the small arms market in

Bihar. People came from Uttar Pradesh and participated in the recent central tarai riots.

These linkages are inevitable when there is a conflict in a border zone. Despite sophisticated control and fencing, there is constant flow of people between India and Pakistan, between India's Northeast and Bangladesh and Burma. The open border may make these linkages more pronounced but this remains a subsidiary feature.

The real issue is domestic Nepali politics. Gaur happened not because the border was open but because the Maoist-MJF relationship was antagonistic. Kapilbastu happened because political competition, statelessness and ethnic tension came together. Madhesi leaders live in Bihar in the way Maoist leaders did. It was not the active deployment of border forces, but the peace process that stopped Maoist activities. Similarly, once the root causes in the madhes are addressed, these armed groups will come on board or be marginalised.

The other part of the solution lies in more competent and less corrupt administrative machinery on both sides, not in tightening the border. Militarisation will not deter either criminals or politicians who will find a way to keep up the links, crossing open fields and rivers, travelling at night, paying off custom officials. Other ordinary people will be adversely affected: the madhesi woman who is married in Raxaul but comes to teach in a Birganj college every day, the small trader who lives in Jogbani and runs a shop in Biratnagar, the dalit rickshaw puller from Nepalganj who works in Bahraich, the young medical representative in Janakpur who has to take his mother to

Darbhanga for treatment, the Tilhati family which needs to visit relatives in Birpur, the thousands of pahadi and madhesi Nepalis who move to India to work.

Cross border links led many in Kathmandu to suspect that India is fuelling the crisis. That is unlikely. Both Delhi and Lanchaur diplomats were happy with the madhesi movement because it weakened the Maoists. But India is neither pleased about the present situation in the Nepal tarai nor is it engineering the unrest.

India's Nepal policy is dominated by stability, in keeping with the larger vision of a peaceful periphery. The tarai developments not only threaten to derail the entire Indian effort of the past two years, but can also have a potentially destabilising impact on north Bihar and east UP politics. What India wants is a quick, snappy solution, not a conflagration. Those who believe otherwise have not kept up with this basic change in South Block's mindset.

MEA officials in Delhi occasionally meet their counterparts in the central Home Ministry and intelligence agencies. To expect that they are closely working with home ministries in Bihar and UP, local intelligence agents, and SSB to support madhesi groups or create instability in tarai is overstretching it. In fact, there are only two officials in Bihar and none in the UP government who keep track of Nepal. Delhi neither has the motive nor has invested resources to keep the crisis going.

It is Nepal that has to address the madhes issue and the political vacuum domestically, not blame it on the open border. Indeed, the border is the best thing to have happened for millions of Nepalis. ●

MESSING WITH THE MESSENGER

The Maoists call it 'direct action'. In effect it is a kangaroo court, inquisition and paranoid cultural revolution-style persecution all rolled into one.

Perhaps it was inevitable that the revolution would degenerate to this: using militant unions to set fire to newspaper premises, attack printing facilities, damage machinery and threaten to annihilate staff. The worst transgression was by the head of the Maoist trade union Saligram Jamarkattel who in a vicious speech delivered to YCL goons outside Kantipur Publications on Monday publicly threatened to make the paper "history" and to "break the head" of its managing director. The fact that Jamarkattel is also a member of the interim parliament just makes all this much worse for his party.

No longer can the Maoists now hide behind excuses of not being able to control hardline cadre, or of taking the war to class enemies. For too long this peace process has been a one-way street, where the Maoists have been allowed to blackmail the nation with threats of going back to war. The people have seen through their duplicity, the forked tongue of its leaders and their blatant shifting of goalposts. The vandalism at Kantipur was no accident. There is a method to the Maoist madness and its repercussions will be equally serious on the party.

The supreme irony in all this, of course, is that it was Kantipur that helped the Maoists occupy their moral high ground by highlighting the failings of mainstream politicians, the human rights violations of the army, and giving lavish space to friendly columnists. It was Kantipur's job, as a medium for public debate in a democracy, to allow them that space. But when a party no longer cares for public opinion, and has no intention of facing the people in elections, it has no qualms about killing the messenger.

Now that their masks have been pulled off, the Maoist leadership has suffered irreversible damage to the public support it still had. If their threats and attacks on the media don't stop forthwith, they will have no future in open politics. The Maoists have shot themselves in both feet, and not accidentally.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Ending the season of unreason

There is no turning back to the days of dead certainty

- The interim head of state goes to an animist-Buddhist-Hindu living goddess to receive her blessings for his regime.
- A suspended monarch pays his respects to the same deity by cover of night.
- The Maoists bite the hand that fed their egos for the past decade and attack Kantipur Publications.
- The unification of NC prompts one of its last surviving founders to call it quits.



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

The odd, the unusual, and the unbelievable are commonplace every week in Nepali politics. No wonder the cover pages of national newspapers look like pamphlets of this bizarre bazaar. Believe it or not, the news is that there is nothing new today aside from the fresh antics of the same

boring people.

The media has given up trying to make sense of the confusion, and just broadcasts talking heads. News of the escalating disorder in the countryside is raising the anxiety level of the middle class, the section of population that often helps create cohesion in pluralistic societies. Uncertainties over constituent assembly elections have thrown governance out of gear.

Most politicians will be only too happy to be left alone to continue with the status quo, but they know that is not an option anymore. There is no turning back to the days of dead certainty. Society is vibrant with new ideas, but the polity is still trapped in a tomb of dead traditions. That is the contradiction that is fuelling dissatisfaction. Torn between conflicting emotions of continuity and change, the leadership is paralysed. Regular pronouncements by meddlesome envoys complicate the situation even more. Amidst the despondency of unmet

expectations, it's easy to forget that Nepal has come a long way since the ruthless insurgency of the Maoists and the whimsical misrule of the monarchists. We have committed avoidable blunders, but almost every society does so when it is trying to transform itself. There is no reason to panic.

Heavens will not fall if constituent assembly elections are once again postponed. Emergency plans of some international agencies to airlift staff at short notice are unnecessarily alarmist. You can go, we'll sort our mess in our own ham-fisted way.

And despite their public belligerence, the Maoists know that the ground beneath their feet has slipped. The new frontline for the Maoists is the interim parliament, but the commissars will be parroting party slogans. Gunmen in the madhes have lost political steam. With the division of Sadhabana there will be a legitimate force to voice genuine grievances of madhesis.

For the first time since their entry into competitive politics, the UML is eschewing populism and behaving responsibly. Surprisingly, even parties led by former panchas have shown considerable restraint. Perhaps Girija Prasad Koirala is correct in his assessment that bigger beneficiaries of fully proportionate election system would be RPP, RJP and fringe rightists.

Those at the helm of national affairs know that chaotic though the situation may be, it hasn't spun out of control. Tragedies in Rautahat and Kapilbastu have shaken the system, but Nietzsche may have been right after all: that which doesn't kill us makes us stronger. Since their first understanding two years ago, political parties in the ruling coalition have managed to hang together despite doctrinaire adherents. They will probably ride out the current storm. After this season of unreason, Dasain should take us to long-awaited mutual understanding and social amity. ●

LETTERS

IDOL WORSHIP

Read your great editorial ('Idol worship', #368). Now that Prashant Tamang has become the Indian idol and Swami Ramdev a Nepali idol, we must campaign for the removal of the artificial border between Nepal and India. How about that? Let me quote a line from your great editorial: '...the motherland itself is being torn apart by centrifugal identity politics.' You are right, but your publication itself is contributing to the divide. Are you ignorant or are you misleading your readers as usual?

Sushila Tamang, Melbourne

I don't understand all the media fuss over Ramdev. Anyone doing breathing and physical exercises, teaching in high schools, can reap the same benefits. Of course, normally people stop exercising after leaving school, and develop health problems. As usual, we need to bring, at great expense, someone from the south to tell us to stay fit.

Ramesh Khatri, Jorpati

Prashant Tamang may be the pride of the entire country but some people seem to see him only as a way to make a quick buck. There was a sham of a party with Prashant at the Yak and Yeti casino, including snacks, dinner and drinks for Rs 2,000. But there were no

drinks, no snacks and you'd have to cleave your way through the crowd to get a piece of food. At a time when the nation is rejoicing over how a constable from Darjeeling has drawn together the Nepali people in a way no politician has been able to, opportunists only want to make a fast buck.

Nalini Shah, Gairidhara



CK Lal writes against our happiness in Prashant Tamang's win ('Our identity crisis,' State of the State, #368). Has he ever written about why Nepalis in the tarai revel so much when India wins in cricket or why Indians are so ecstatic when an American or British with an Indian sounding name excels in his/her respective country? Yes, Mr Lal, when Nepalis are questioning even the basics of their own history, a sense of communalism helps in this identity crisis.

Sandeep Dhungana, email

Artha Beed is right (Economic Sense, 'Indian idle,' #368). The money collected to

text message Prashant could have been used to buy relief items for our own Nepali brothers and sisters suffering from the insurgency and floods. It was good to see a fellow of Nepali origin winning the Indian Idol and it did help, momentarily, to bring Nepali people of different places and nationalities as one. However, it is disappointing to see how the media and the people of Nepal neglect Nepali talent. Wake up, we have a lot more to do than just bask in Prashant's glory if we want our country to survive.

Vicki Pakhrin, email

I couldn't understand the rationale behind supporting Prashant Tamang on the grounds of nationalism and identity. The fact is he was in the 'Indian' Idol and he is an Indian citizen and he sang Indian songs. Just because he speaks Nepali, how can one look at him as Nepal's ambassador? He represents Nepal's identity crisis rather than our identity and honestly, he was not the most deserving of all the candidates.

Astha Bhatta, email

ARRESTED

Being arrested for taking a photo of the American embassy ('Arrested in Kathmandu,' #368) is not news to me, I am an foreign artist living in Nepal and I faced the exact same treatment for taking pictures of Phora Darbar at Kantipath, not even the embassy. But I didn't let them treat me the way they treated the author. There

are so many stories of people being harrassed like this. I find it ridiculous.

Joe Deneth, email

The American 'security procedure' is just its dumb puppy act. The makers of security policies are puppies so dumb that they cannot distinguish a family friend from a robber. It's pointless to take any offence against the security men doing their jobs but it's high time American policy makers realise that they are turning friends into foes by similar dumb acts.

Suputra Nepal, email

The Nepali people have always been friends of the US of A. This sentiment must be respected by the US government officials and they should stop harassing Nepalis. It was absolutely absurd to put someone through such mental torture for just clicking one harmless picture, and to treat her like a criminal. Maybe it is time for all of us to go the street outside the embassy and take pictures, let's see how many they can catch.

Name withheld, email



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Babies behind bars



PICS: GOVINDA LUITEL

Two-year-old Prerana is in prison at the Palpa District Jail in Tansen. She hasn't committed any crime. When her mother, Laxmi, was convicted in a drug crime she went to prison with her.

Sushil is three, and he is also in jail with his mother, Balkumari Pariyar. "He has done nothing wrong," says

Balkumari. "I wish I could have left him outside where he can get proper food and care. This is no place for children to grow up." Sushil and Prerana have no idea they are in jail, even as they clutch the steel bars of their cell.

It is difficult to say which is worse; that the children of prison inmates go to jail with their parents or they remain

outside. Maya Pariyar of Syangja got a life sentence for killing her husband last year. She has two children, one five and another six, who are being taken care of by relatives in Butwal. "I haven't seen them since I was sent here, and I can't sleep at night because I can't bear the separation," says Maya.

"We try to give special care to inmates who are here with their children," says

superintendent Ram Bahadur Khatri. "We know there can be deep psychological scars when the children get older."

When asked what he could do about the babies behind bars, Palpa CDO Sambhu Ghimire told a visiting journalist: "Why don't you help us find them guardians?" ●

Govinda Luitel in Tansen

Escape to education

A woman's dedication offers children an alternative to jail

When Putul Devi Srivastava was sentenced to 15 years in jail for possessing illegal drugs, her biggest worry was not the horror of prison, but the fear of what would happen to her 18-month-old son, Krishna.

Police in the eastern town of Itahari arrested her and a travelling companion eight years ago, after finding a large amount of injectable drugs. Krishna lived for a time with his mother in the grim confines of Birganj prison. Thinking his life would be better elsewhere, his mother sent him to the Nepal Children's Organisation, Bal Mandir, in Naxal, where he soon began to misbehave.

Srivastava, originally from Bihar, was later moved to the women's prison at the central jail in Sundhara, and Krishna came to stay with her briefly after the orphanage complained of his disruptive behaviour and other children's homes refused to take him.

But by now he was nearly six years old, the age at which children can no longer stay in prison with their mothers.

"I did not know what to do and feared that my son would have to live on the streets," Srivastava said.

Fortunately for her, a woman named Indira Rana Magar visited the jail one day to check on the prisoners' welfare.

In 2000, Magar had set up Prisoners Assistance Nepal (PA Nepal), to help care for children whose parents were in prison. She agreed to take Krishna.

Today PA Nepal runs two children's homes, one in Naya Bajar and another at Sankhu, which together look after more than 80 children, who call Magar 'ama' or mother. She provides a home for 12 more children in Pokhara, and more than 60 in her home district of Jhapa, where she has opened a school and library.

In 2005 Ashoka, the global association of social



MIN BAJRACHARYA

entrepreneurs with innovative solutions for most urgent social problems, recognising Magar's work with prisoners in Nepal, elected her as a fellow.

More than 500 children have passed through PA Nepal's homes and returned to live with their relatives, and Magar's newest project, the Junkiri school, opened in 2005.

"The vision for Junkiri is different," she says. "At Junkiri we believe in learning by doing, and apart from academic subjects, children are encouraged to read a lot and take up extracurricular activities like art and cooking."

From Junkiri, the children can graduate to nearby government schools, although they continue to live, play, eat and grow up together.

PA Nepal has also helped to establish income-generating activities for prisoners, like bee-keeping at Nakhu Jail, knitting and sowing activities, and literacy classes at the women's prison in

Sundhara.

In 2001, PA Nepal linked up with six other organisations working with prisoners' children to create the Network on Children, Prisoners, and Dependants, which shares resources to monitor prison activities and lobby for change. Magar says the biggest challenge is to end discrimination against these children.

"Parents commit crimes, but it does not mean that the children should also be punished," she says. "Who will speak up for them? Who will fight for their rights?"

There is no government funding to ensure children of prisoners receive care, especially beyond the age of six.

"We understand that the government cannot be everywhere, so why not give responsibility to those organisations already working in prisoner assistance and support them instead," Magar says.

THEY CALL ME AMA: Indira Rana Magar spends time with some of the younger children at PA Nepal's home in Naya Bajar.

"If they have nowhere to go, they usually end up on the streets," says Hari Maya Bhujel, whose son Shekhar lives at the PA Nepal home in Sankhu.

Back at the women's prison in Sundhara, mothers are sitting together, eager to tell their stories. Srivastava starts crying as she tells how her husband in Kolkata has abandoned her and Krishna.

By the time she gets out of prison in seven years time, Krishna will be a young man.

"I used to spend every waking hour worrying about my son," she says. "I will not be able to see him grow up, but at least I know his ama will provide for him and make sure he has a good life." ●

Mallika Aryal



Banking world

Lumbini Bank has started extended banking services from its Narayangarh branch. Banking hours now start at 10AM to 6PM.

Prime Commercial Bank has become the 21st commercial bank in the country and operates from New Road.

Laxmi Bank has launched email banking, through which customers will be alerted of various updates in their accounts.

Sanima Bank has started SMS services. Customers can now access various information about their accounts through SMS.

NIC Bank has launched an awareness program about banking called Banking on Youth. This program will conduct various programs in schools and will spread banking information.

New bottle

Carlsberg now comes in a fancy new bottle. The 650ml bottle has been redesigned and is now easier to hold and transparent.

Chait

Club Himalaya's Changa Chait 2064 had to be cancelled this year too due to unforeseeable complications. Himalaya instead invites everyone to Nagarkot on the weekend of 13 October for pre-Dasain kite flying.

Shoe shop

Singapore Enterprises has opened a new showroom at the Metro Plaza in New Road. This outlet will feature the traditional attire of the Magar and Gurung culture along with casual and formal clothes for both men and women.

Look, listen and learn

Understanding, not antagonism, is the way to better labour relations

The recent labour union attacks on Kantipur Publication have shown that dealing effectively with unions is now a must-have skill for leaders of the Nepali business community. There are three interlocking reasons why the activities of labour unions have intensified, and there are three ways to mitigate risks posed by protesting employees.



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

Population: Watch any labour rally in Kathmandu. What you'll notice is that most participants are barely out of their teens. Almost all grew up outside Kathmandu, where they were repeatedly told that a for-profit business exists not to create jobs and increase everyone's wealth but to do only one thing: exploit many poor people like themselves to enrich a few 'enemies of the people'. When young people, lulled into this sort of one-sided world view enter the workforce, those who hate private-sector businesses can be sure of always having a supportive audience.

Payment: One dirty secret of most for-profit Nepali-owned businesses is that non-family employees are paid poorly and irregularly. On the firm's side, this problem usually stems from bad management, made worse by owners who see little incentive to invest in employees'

career growth. On the employee's side, given how prices of household items have gone up, sustaining even a lower-middle class lifestyle in Kathmandu for a family of four with children in school, requires a monthly income of at least Rs 20,000. That is far above what most desk-and-chair jobs pay. Meanwhile, the business landscape is neither competitive nor dynamic enough for most workers to leave one job easily for another.

Program: When this anti-business mindset of most employees rubs against the indifference-to-employees attitude of most business owners, there is friction. It's that friction which, in blood-boiling words, political ideologues dress up with specious metaphors of epic class struggles. The result is that except for the ideologues, everyone loses. Products and services do not get sold. Jobs become insecure. Morale plummets, and relations are strained, perhaps irreversibly.

So what can be done in times ahead?

Acceptance: Instead of denying the sheer reality of Nepal's youth-led demographics, business leaders need to accept that young people entering the manufacturing workforce today grew up in a completely different Nepal from the one they grew up in. Because of both the absence and the weakness of relevant institutions, the only way most of these workers have ever gotten anything that they consider to be 'legitimately theirs'

is by violence, bandas and mob justice. How surprising is it really that most workers feel justified in trashing their own workplaces to get what they want?

Alliances: The business community's response so far has been defensively ad hoc. An industrialist gets beaten up, and there is a protest march for a day. Likewise, a private-sector media house gets vandalized, and there is another protest march. Marches are all right, but it's time to start creating long-term alliances among all large and small businesses. Such alliances should spread the word about how businesses have created jobs, added value and helped ordinary employees help themselves. Besides, such alliances provide political strength when dealing directly with ideologues whose only agenda is to whip up a frenzy of class warfare.

Arbitration: Business leaders should understand that because of unaddressed employee grievances, the conditions have long been ripe for any outsider to exploit. As such, they should not act surprised and feel hurt. Instead, they should take this opportunity to start creating formal and informal mechanisms within their organisations and trade groups to address employee grievances directly and promptly.

While these may not fully address the problem, being solution-oriented is a wiser move at this time than going head to head with mobs of teenagers who remain fodder for Maoist ideologues.



Seven parties, five days

UML's Jhalanath Khanal in www.himalkhabar.com प्रधानमन्त्री

himalkhabar.com: Why did the seven parties decide to push back the nomination deadline by five days?
Jhalanath Khanal: We had some difficulties about having the elections exactly on 22 November. That is why we had to postpone it by five days. We should be able to resolve problems in five days.

Do you think it is possible in five days for the NC and the Maoists to strike a deal?
If they don't there will be a serious crisis. The situation demands that everyone strive for a compromise. People should understand their responsibilities.

What do you think would be acceptable to both sides?
I don't see any such solution right now. As a system, proportional representation is better. The Nepali Congress could accept that. The Maoists could also accept that a mixed system may be good enough for now.


Is there enough time for a proportional representation election by November?
If there is an agreement, sure it is possible. No question about it.

And if you can't agree in the next five days?
It will be unfortunate. The violence and deaths of the past 11 years could resume. But we're not thinking of a scenario without an agreement. After all, we waded across a flood of blood to get here. If we could come this far with our agreements, there is no reason why we can't agree on the present issue. However, the NC and the Maoists must understand the seriousness of the problem.



Nepali Congress Democratic
आचार्य Abin Shrestha in *Samaya*, 4 October

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

 **“The Nepal Army has very good relations with democratic powers but some forces are trying to jeopardize that”**
Chief of Army Staff Ruk Mangat Katuwal in *Annapurna Post*, 4 October

SELECTED MATERIAL TRANSLATED EVERY WEEK FROM THE NEPALI PRESS



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Loktantra

Rituraj in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 2-17 September विचारधारा

Loktantra means people are in charge. So, you can get away with the following things:
● If civil servants don't want to work, they can simply lock-out their offices and still collect salaries at the end of the month.
● Two people can get together and go house-to-house to raise money.
● Municipality workers can leave garbage collection and other work and go and play football.
● An airline can have no airworthy aircraft and still call itself a national flag-carrier.
● Every incident can be investigated by a commission. But you can't make public any of its findings.
● There are no traffic rules in a loktantra. If a cop asks you for a license you can block the road with your vehicle and create a chukkajam.
● So what if the CIAA charges you? Just sue them.
● As long as you have your party banner, you can beat up any head of a government department.
● If you are nominated special ambassador, you can dispense advice to anyone you want. No need to bother with the foreign minister, you can go straight to the PM.
● You don't have to pay customs, excise or income tax. If you are caught you can always get released on bail.

- If you are a banker you can plunder your own bank.
- You can be glad that after queuing for adulterated kerosene, you at least get a few litres.
- Even if no one elected you, you can be a bigwig and take you salary from the taxpayer's money.
- Even if you are a government teacher you can moonlight as a private tutor.
- Even if the election dates have been announced you can say, you're not sure it will be held.
- In fact you don't need any elections, the parties can just divide it all up among themselves
- Students don't need to sit for exams anymore, they can beat up their teacher or set fire to their classrooms and get a passing grade.
- Even though we are a secular country we can have a holiday on janai purnima.
- You can have a project to give one laptop per child even if there is no electricity.

Stain on freedom

Editorial in *Kantipur*, 3 October कान्तिपुर

The CPN-M has made this a dark time for press freedom by restricting the publication of Kantipur's two dailies, Kantipur and the Kathmandu Post. A senior leader of the party, standing outside the main gate of Kantipur publications, vowed to stop both dailies and Kantipur television forever, and even went so far as to threaten the publishers and journalists with

bodily harm. The Kathmandu printing press was vandalised indiscriminately, while Maoist cadre entered the Bharatpur press to stop publication. Likewise, the press at Biratnagar was cordoned off with promises never to let anything print again.
The few copies that managed to get published were quickly captured from the market, burned straight off the back of vehicles, and on Tuesday, Kantipur's central office at Tinkune was blockaded. The Maoists have used all their power to close down Kantipur Publications, and have already threatened grave consequences should any copies be printed. For any political party to do so is a grave insult to human rights and the very idea of freedom of speech. The Maoists have made clear their subversive nature, and their desire to restrict freedom whenever it suits them.
Disregarding a court order, the Maoist-affiliated trade union has attacked the press and made a mockery of law and order. Despite being a member of the eight-party alliance, the Maoist role in the disruption of the peace process is very clear. Press freedom is a necessary facet of the peace process. It seems that the Maoists are making good on their promises to disrupt the constituent assembly polls. The Maoist actions are testing the mettle of the other political parties and the eight-party alliance.
This action, under the guise of worker dissatisfaction, has shocked not just the free press but all private businesses. Disrupting the political environment, the environment for elections, and the peace process, the Maoists are taking advantage of the growing uncertainty. It is the wish of all political parties, concerned agencies, the free press, the public, and the international community that elections be held and positive steps be taken towards lasting peace. It is time that everyone stood against such atrocities and for the freedom of all.



“An opportunity to accompany me to Sanya, China !”

To accompany Miss Nepal to the Miss World beauty pageant all you have to do is fill in the contest form and send it along with 4 Vatika Soap Wrappers (Vatika Honey & Saffron Soap or Vatika Saffron Glow Soap with Sandal) to Dabur Nepal Pvt. Ltd. at P. O. Box: 14375, Kathmandu or place it in the Vatika Miss World Offer Drop Box at the nearest outlet. And you could win a trip for 2 to see Miss World at Sanya, China !

Miss Nagarnuhola !

Shashma Chaudhary - Nepal's representative for the Miss World 2007.



Contest forms available at www.missnepal.com.np, leading dailies and the outlets below.

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CELEBRATING DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES IN NEPAL

The Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI) is Celebrating 20 Years of Development Initiatives in Nepal



By: Erica Stillo

The Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI), a Canadian INGO, is celebrating its 20th anniversary in Nepal. CECI began in 1987 with the arrival of its first Canadian volunteer to work with local partners on community development initiatives in western Nepal. Twenty years later, CECI is sharing its lessons learned and best practices. CECI's Nepal based projects focus on reducing rural poverty and social exclusion, improving natural resource management and strengthening local community governance.

To celebrate the anniversary, CECI is organizing a national seminar *State, Civil Society and Nation Building* on October 8th and a two-day Development Exhibition, *Partners for Development and Change: Knowledge, Skills and Practice* on October 9th & 10th at the United World Trade Centre.



Jointly organized by Kadambari Memorial College of Science and Management, St. Xavier's College, and National College, the development exhibition will feature over 20 exhibitors ranging from community based organizations to national NGOs who will show-case their work in mountain regions and the terai of Nepal. The exhibition will "provide the public and other civil society actors the opportunity to learn about development, share experiences, show-case their work in Nepal and network with like-minded individuals and other organizations" says Julia Sanchez, Regional Director for CECI Asia.

In addition, CECI is releasing *Celebrating 20 Years in Nepal: a Retrospective*, a publication which highlights best practices and CECI's approaches in economic development, social development, good governance and humanitarian assistance.



Since its inception, CECI has implemented 34 projects in over 40 districts of Nepal in all five development regions in the areas of economic development, health, good governance and humanitarian assistance with national NGO partners, cooperatives, private sector firms, local government bodies and central government ministries and departments. At present it is implementing 5 major programs and has 48 national staff, 8 volunteers and 2 international staff in Nepal.

The timing of CECI's involvement in Nepal has been significant considering the political transformation and on-going tensions which has prevented rural communities from fully benefiting from development activities. CECI, on the other hand has mainstreamed and adopted Conflict Sensitive Development Approaches including Do No Harm and Peace and Conflict Impact Assessments for all its projects in conflict-affected areas. This has enabled it to continue working amidst the conflict and has empowered local people in convincing conflicting parties that the work going on is benefiting everyone.

Moving forward, CECI is seeking to replicate successful models and projects and to strengthen the governance sector. Says Ms. Sanchez, "while local governance has been a cross-cutting theme in all our projects, the current political context makes it a particularly relevant time to work with our partners on governance issues in a practical and specific way".

The Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI) is a not for profit organization founded in 1958 and incorporated in 1968 in Canada. CECI combats poverty and exclusion by strengthening the development capacity of disadvantaged communities, supporting initiatives for peace, human rights and equity, mobilizing resources and promoting the exchange of know-how.

For more information on CECI's anniversary events, please call CECI @ 4414430/4426791 or visit <http://www.ceciasia.org>



Turning the Tide for Small Farmers

Shallow Tube Wells – Increasing Agricultural Yields and Income for Farmers with Less than 1 Hectare of Land

Latit, a 35-year-old farmer from Dangihat, switched from rainwater to shallow tube well irrigation and now grows bananas, vegetables and wheat. In one year, he doubled his agriculture income and now runs a shop selling seeds and fertilizers. He is a member of a Water User Group mobilized under the Community Groundwater Irrigation Sector Project (CGISP).

CGISP began in 1999 and is part of Nepal’s overall 20-year Agricultural Plan. It was designed to address past development failures resulting from decades of bureaucratic, top-down approaches to agricultural and irrigation programs, which only benefited well off farmers. CGISP is the first irrigation project in Nepal’s history with no capital subsidy for water schemes.

The project is funded by Asian Development Bank and technical assistance, provided by CECI is funded by the Canadian International

Development Agency. It aims to improve irrigation for small-scale farmers with less than 1 ha of land in 10 Districts of the Terai. Under the project, farming communities have been mobilized into Water User Associations in order to provide a support network for the management and sharing of local resources and the coping of environmental challenges.

The project also involves district-based partner NGOs and the mobilization of Water User Groups (WUGs) which are made up of 4-5 farmers with adjacent pieces of land who own and maintain their groundwater schemes. These WUGs then form Water Users’ Associations at the VDC level and receive technical training to maintain works and strengthen their management capacity. All members have a central role in deciding contracts and negotiate directly with suppliers.

Poor farmers who have benefited from CGISP services speak of how their lives have

been transformed. By joining a Water User Group and accessing shallow tube well irrigation, a typical poor and food insecure Terai family can grow three crops a year (instead of one), achieve food security, and increase cash income to the point that education and health care become affordable. Non-members of WUGs are purchasing water from shallow tube members at Nrs.100 per hour.

To date, the project has installed 2, 400 shallow tube well irrigation systems servicing approximately 43,000 hectares of land and transformed the life of more than 48,000 poor and marginalized households. More impressive is the fact that 60% of Water User Group members are women.

Because the CGISP model is easily replicable, it has the potential to further revolutionize the lives of millions of Terai farmers, thus making a tremendous impact on sustainable development and poverty reduction.

Sahakarya “Working Together”

Integrating Community Health & Economic Development



Started in 2003, Sahakarya (Working Together) is a continuation of several CECI initiatives launched since 1998. It focuses on improving the economic, social and environmental sustainability of communities in mountain regions of Nepal. The project has involved 20 district-based NGOs in delivering health related services and 17 CBOs in delivering economic services. The latter are closely supported by their national level federations.

Sahakarya’s integrated multi-sectoral community development model emphasizes the integration of community health, economic development, basic small-scale infrastructure and institutional development of community based organization networks. It recognizes that development in mountainous regions requires minimizing the isolation and producers are marketing off-season vegetables to national markets through cooperatives that have been able to establish linkages because of the comparative advantage of the hills and mountain regions.

Progress has been impressive. After 4 years, over 45, 000 households from 126 VDCs are members of 1, 255 Producer Cooperatives and Saving and Credit Cooperatives mutually supporting each other with loans for micro-enterprises, agricultural activities, etc.

At the same time, the project aims to increase the ability of communities to prevent and manage diarrhoea in children under 5, improve nutrition and prevent and manage acute respiratory infection among children, and increase the condition of ante-natal and post-natal care.

With an under-five mortality rate of 61/1,000, Nepal is ranked among the highest countries where thousands of children still die from preventable diseases and conditions every year. Malnutrition among children under the age of 5, and pregnant and lactating women, is still widely prevalent. 49% of children under 5 suffer from stunted growth, 39% are underweight, and 48% are anaemic (Demographic and Health Survey, 2006).

Sahakarya’s health programming has since rehabilitated 24,000 children through its Nutrition Education and Rehabilitation Centres (NERP). NERP Centres use “local food as medicine” so that mothers and caretakers can use and cook what is locally available for improved diet of children and family members. In doing so, mothers and communities have changed their cooking and eating habits in inexpensive and healthy ways.

When Sahakarya was launched the conflict affecting Nepal, and particularly its poor and remote rural areas, was raging. Some districts, such as Jumla, were considered as the most severely conflict-affected area. Consequently, the project had to adapt its strategy within the context and develop innovative approaches to working in conflict affected areas.

The strategy developed combines a “Do No Harm” approach (setting principles for working in conflict), the Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA), a Rights-Based Approach, and other approaches such as non-adversarial negotiation and mediation. These methods, while largely new to Nepal, have enabled activities to continue.



Congratulations from the CECI Canada & Regional Office

It is our immense pleasure and privilege to be part of the 20 year celebrations of CECI's engagement in Nepal. It is an important moment for us to take stock of the many achievements, lessons learned and best practices throughout these two decades, and to look ahead to our future contribution as Nepal embarks in a new phase of its history.

Both of us are very proud to be associated to a program that has had such positive impacts overall and that is so central to what CECI is more globally. Nepal was the first country where CECI began working in Asia, back in 1987, and it is from here that we have been able to develop programmes in other countries of the region. In addition to benefiting hundreds of thousands of households in Nepal, the successful approaches and strategies pioneered here, as well as the extraordinarily professional and dedicated staff that we have here, have been the catalyst of new programming for CECI in countries like India, Vietnam, Tajikistan and now Afghanistan.

Our Nepali colleagues, in collaboration with the Canadian staff and volunteers that have worked and lived here, have played key roles in developing and then spreading the "CECI ways" in the region and have never stopped innovating and pushing our organizational learning process, on such issues as social inclusion, rights-based approaches in economic development projects, public-private partnerships, conflict-sensitive approaches, and mountain specific development modalities – to name a few.

Throughout the last two decades, CECI's program in Nepal has been one of the most dynamic and diversified donor-wise – a sign for us of its strong results and credibility. In addition, Nepal has been at the forefront of CECI's efforts to decentralize and regionalize its management structures. The Asia regional team has worked relentlessly to overcome the natural challenges that a profound process of restructuring brings to any organization, and have managed to surpass our highest expectations with respect to rigor, reliability and accountability. The advantages and viability of nationalization of our senior positions and overall leadership of our programs have been demonstrated unambiguously in Nepal.

We look forward to further collaboration with all of you – NGO and CBO partners, other INGOs, donors and Government of Nepal instances - in the construction of a New Nepal. We join our hopes to those of all Nepalis for a more just, equitable and prosperous Nepal.

In solidarity,



Michel Chaurette
Executive Director



Julia Sanchez
Regional Director, Asia



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: Over 37,000 households have improved their health through access to safe drinking water and sanitation infrastructure and 24,000 mothers have improved their family's nutrition through basic health education services. 24,000 malnourished children have been rehabilitated through Nutrition Education and Rehabilitation Centres.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Approximately 191,000 rural households have increased their income through production and marketing of high value commodities. They have benefited from improved access to appropriate production technologies including irrigation, improved seed varieties and economic services such as marketing and financial services delivered by saving and credit unions.



PROMOTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS: CECI has supported and promoted over 2,500 Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and civil society organizations in various sectors. As a result, partners' (NGOs, CBOs, cooperatives) management and technical capacity to deliver services to their members has been greatly enhanced.



REDUCTION OF GENDER INEQUALITY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION: In all programs and projects, CECI has strived for a minimum of 50% participation of women and proportional participation of Dalits, Janajatis and other marginalized groups. CECI's support has resulted in an increase of women in decision-making positions in CBOs and other excluded groups are able to demand their rights and advocate for their needs with different stakeholders.



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT: CECI's partners have built their capacity in a series of technical and administrative fields, as well as in the application of the Rights Based Approach and Gender and Social Inclusion. In addition, partners have enhanced their capacity to include Conflict Sensitive Development Approaches (CSDA) in their programmes.



COORDINATION WITH LINE AGENCIES AND GOVERNMENT: Partners have accessed resources at the local level and through the joint planning mechanisms amongst partners and line agencies. This has resulted in the mobilization of financial and technical support from local government and line agencies for community initiatives planned and implemented by the NGOs, CBOs and their networks.



VOLUNTEER COOPERATION: CECI has hosted more than 200 Canadian and National volunteers and interns on mandates ranging from 2 weeks to 2 years to support partners to build capacity in various areas.

From Social Inclusion to Governance

CECI's Major Programmes in Nepal

Jana Awaaj

As the country is embarking on a "new" phase, CECI along with its partners FECOFUN and WorldView began the **Jana Awaaj Project** which supports wide scale participation of community groups, particularly women and the socially excluded, in 16 districts covering all 5 development regions, in the process of the election of a constituent assembly (CA) and the adoption of a new constitution for Nepal. The project also enhances the capacity of civil society organizations at district and local levels (CBOs and their networks) to conduct awareness raising sessions and advocacy campaigns on constitutional issues and democratic rights in a non-partisan manner and promote wider participation of people in the constitutional process. Jana Awaaj is funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

Community Groundwater Irrigation Sector Project
The Community Groundwater Irrigation Sector Project

focuses on improved irrigation for small-scale farmers in 10 Districts of the Terai. Under the project, farming communities have been mobilized into water user associations in order to provide a support network for the management and sharing of local resources and the coping of environmental challenges. CECI has provided technical assistance to the Department of Irrigation for the implementation of this ADB loan funded program. CECI's support was funded by CIDA.

Sahakarya

Sahakarya or "Working together" is a CIDA funded project whose main goal is to contribute to poverty reduction in the mid and far western regions of Nepal. It aims to improve the socio-economic conditions of hill communities by strengthening the capacity of CBO's with equitable representation to manage local resources and interact with locally elected bodies and government agencies. It also supports health, social and economic development initiatives.

UNITERRA

UNITERRA is CECI's volunteer cooperation programme. It began in 2004 and is funded by CDIA. This volunteer program develops long-term partnerships in order to strengthen the capacities of participating organizations to better attain development targets outlined in the Millennium Development Goals and poverty reduction strategies of host countries. It builds sustainable multi-directional partnerships between and among Nepali and Canadian stakeholders and enhances the capacity of Nepali organizations to be influential participants in the development of Nepal. Specifically, UNITERRA in Nepal concentrates its exchange of human resources in the areas of Agriculture and Rural Development and Health and Nutrition. Priorities, strategies and goals for each sector are determined with local partner organizations.



Celebrating Years in Nepal



DEVELOPMENT EXHIBITION

PARTNERS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE
KNOWLEDGE, SKILL & PRACTICE

October 9th – 10th, 2007
Venue: United World Trade Centre, 5th Floor
Tripureshwor Party Palace
9 am – 5 pm

Exhibitors

St. Xavier College
Kadambari Memorial College of Science and Management
National College
CECI (Centre for International Studies and Cooperation)
IDS Nepal (Integrated Development Service)
NIWF (Nepal Indigenous Women Federation)
FEDO (Feminist Dalit Organization)
NTAG (Nepali Technical Assistance Group)
RRN (Rural Reconstruction Nepal)
FECOFUN (Federation of Community Forest Users of Nepal)
FECOFUN Baitadi District Chapter
IDES (Integrated Development Society) Daddeldhura
RUDES (Rural Development Environment Management Society), Baitadi
JSDC (Jumla Samajik Kendra), Jumla

NEFSCUN (Nepal Federation of Savings & Credit Cooperative Unions LTD)
Janasevak SDO- Dailikh
CDCAN (Central Dairy Cooperative Association of Nepal)
DMPCU (District Milk Producer Cooperative Union), Daddeldhura
Sunsari District Water User Association
WorldView Nepal
JAPEC (Jumla Agriculture Producer Entrepreneur's Cooperative Society)
FTG (Fair Trade Group Nepal)
SUDEC (Digo Bikash Tatha Batabaran Samachyan Kendra), Dailikh

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Contact CECI @ 4414430/4426791 for More Information


Congratulations to Canadian Centre for International Studies and Co-operation (CECI) for completing 20 years of valuable contributions in the development of Nepal.

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- Shivpur - 528680
- Pokhara - 525715
- Baglung - 522194

- Birtnagar - 526213
- Itahari - 580741
- Dharan - 530130
- Nepalgunj - 524221
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CECI
for completing 20 years
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Happy 20th Anniversary
CECI

Congratulations CECI for completing
20 years of dedicated service in Nepal.
We WORLDLINK family wish you many
more successful years to come.

WORLDLINK

Happy 20th Anniversary - CECI.

Congratulations to Canadian Centre for International
Studies and co-operation (CECI) Celebrating 20 years'
involvement in the development of Nepal.



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We extend our warm felicitations
to the CECI on the occasion of
20th years'
valuable contributions in the
development of Nepal.



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Happy 20th Anniversary - CECI.



*Congratulations CECI for
completing 20 years of
dedicated service in Nepal.
We RINGMO RESTAURANT
family wish you many more
successful years to come.*

Cosmic Dreams

Orionid shower for Dasain



It is the nature of human beings to be curious, and our species has the capacity to inquire and explore. Who possesses these qualities in abundance more than us astronomers, both amateurs and professionals?

Exploring the universe satisfies not only our intellectual need to know, but also provides an emotional satisfaction through



STARGAZING
Kedar S Badu

the wonder and awe we experience when we consider the vastness of the universe compared to the small speck of dust that is our home planet, Earth.

Those folks who are not familiar with stargazing might be sceptical if I say that there is incredible beauty and inspiration to be found in the depths of the sky. The globular cluster of 300,000 stars in Hercules, known as M13, or the Helix Nebula (NGC 7293) in Aquarius would be just as popular for their grandeur as

any terrestrial wonder like Mt Everest or the Pyramids of Egypt.

But the problem here is that many of the celestial objects are not available to the naked eye, and we need the help of a telescope to see them. Therefore, let's do everything in our power to take astronomy to the citizens! The government should consider providing binoculars and telescopes to schools and colleges.

Back to business. The warm, clear skies of October provide a wealth of viewing opportunities. After sunset, you could see the zodiacal constellations of **Taurus, Aries, Pisces, Aquarius** and **Capricornus** from east to west. Just overhead, find the **Great Summer Triangle** formed by three brilliant stars: Vega, Deneb and Altair. To the east of the Summer Triangle there is the **Square of Pegasus**, which looks like a large box-shaped figure. In the southern skies, you can enjoy a lonely white star, **Formalhaut** at the 'mouth' of the Southern Fish.

Regarding planets, **Mercury** sets only a few minutes after

sunset and is at inferior conjunction (in front of the Sun) on 23 October, so we won't see it this month. **Venus** is a spectacular 'Morning Star' rising in the east just after 3am. It reaches greatest elongation west of the Sun (46 degrees) on 28 October. **Mars** is rising in the north-east at about 10pm and appears significantly brighter than any of the nearby stars.

You could still find **Jupiter** in the western sky after sunset but the 'King of Planets' grows dim throughout October. **Saturn** is rising in the early hours of the morning, and is well up in the south-east by dawn. Don't miss the meeting of Saturn, Venus and the crescent Moon on 7-8 October in the pre-dawn sky. On 3 October you could enjoy the meeting of Mars and the crescent Moon.

There are a couple of meteor showers to entertain us during Dasain. The **Draconids** are a very brief storm lasting only one day – on 9 October! The **Orionids** are usually the best shower of October, peaking on 21 October. You could catch as many as 25 meteors an hour. These are bits of Halley's Comet and produce fine trails that swiftly disappear. At the end of the month the **Taurids** begin, peaking in early November.

Finally, there's one bit of exciting news from NASA: the **Dawn spacecraft** blasted off on 26 September to visit two of the largest asteroids in the solar system – Ceres and Vesta. No other spacecraft has ever orbited two bodies after leaving Earth.

I wish you all clear skies and a Happy Dasain! ●
kedarbadu@gmail.com

"Compromise should be found"

Finland's Under-secretary of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Marjatta Satu Rasi, met top government officials, key political parties and Maoist leaders on an official visit to Kathmandu. She spoke to *Nepali Times* about her government's concerns:

Are you here on a special mission?
Yes and no. We haven't had bilateral consultations for a long time with the government of Nepal for obvious reasons. The timing is perfect but didn't know I would be here during such interesting times.

Will there be an increase in aid from your country?
I can't promise that now as it depends on what happens here.

What is your perspective on Nepal's political progress?
There is of course a deadlock situation. Some sort of compromise should be found. It is quite important that elections take place as planned in November and help the country get back to normalcy.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Has the current political crisis posed obstacles to your aid?
We have stayed here throughout all the turbulent years. We will continue our cooperation.

What are you expecting from your aid in Nepal?
We have two top priorities. One, Finland is concerned about climate change, which is on every international agenda these days with environmental issues and sustainable use of natural resources. In the years ahead we may concentrate on these issues. Two, we are also trying to help countries emerging from a conflict and crisis situation and also trying to help in peace processes.

It seems that a large chunk of aid money is going to peace-building and less to development.
You can't have development without security. You have to have security and a politically and a militarily stable society to build it.

What is your crucial concern for Nepal now?
My personal feelings are a bit confused to be quite honest about what's going to happen, and if the elections are postponed hopefully it will not be for a long time. The Nepali people deserve stability and development. We want to see more tourists coming to this country, which is so beautiful, but tourists also require stability.

OPPORTUNITIES IN FINANCE

A reputed multinational company based in Kathmandu is looking for high-caliber professionals with integrity and commitment for their Finance Department.

CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER [CFO]

The incumbent will be responsible for treasury, accounting, taxation, budgeting, reporting, legal and secretarial functions of the company. The person will be expected to establish a strong professional relationship with the bankers, auditors, lawyers and Government Departments related to taxation and VAT. He will also be required to represent the Company at all regional level conferences and meetings.

As a key member of the top management team, the successful candidate will require a high degree of strategic planning skills with broad management focus and vision to oversee all aspects of the financial operations and drive an aggressive growth for the company.

Candidate should be ideally be Chartered Accountant/Chartered Certified Accountant with at least 3-5 years' experience in the company of repute. Experience in Management Accounting will be a definite advantage. Computer skills will be essential.

ASSISTANT FINANCE MANAGER

As a key member of the Finance Department, the person will be expected to have knowledge of financial accounting, preparation of financial reports, managing working-capital, cash management strategies, capital budgeting, and cost-effective uses of the Company's financial resources by utilizing effective financial management practices.

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Movie masala

Film festival celebrates South Asia's finest talent

It is documentary season once again as Film South Asia (FSA) returns for the sixth time. With 45 films from all over South Asia vying for the coveted Ram Bahadur Trophy, FSA 2007 promises to be a visual treat. As always, India, with its tradition of documentary filmmaking, leads the race with the largest number of entries, but this year Nepal showcases four films and there are even entries from Afghanistan and Bhutan.

Out of nearly 300 films, there are 48 (45 competitive, 3 non-competitive) on cultural, social and political issues, natural disasters and their aftermath, and reconciliation – all themes very familiar to South Asians. There are also films on South Asian subjects from countries outside the subcontinent. As always, many filmmakers will be present at the showing of their respective films and will be available to discuss their work.

A three-member jury, led by Saeed Mirza, will judge the films. The Ram Bahadur trophy, awarded for best film, carries a cash award of \$2,000. A Best Debut award is also available, along with \$1,000, to encourage filmmakers to try their hand at documentary making.

This year, the festival opens with *Living Goddess*, a celebrated film on the lives of the Kumaris. The film's director will be present, along with a special guest, the Bhaktapur Kumari.

A one-day music video festival will follow the four-day FSA, charting the evolution of music videos throughout the region.

Film South Asia is a biennial, contemporary documentary film festival that showcases the best in documentary filmmaking from around the region. It is the only event dedicated to showing quality non-fiction films in South Asia. Since its inception in 1997, FSA has been showing documentaries every two years. *Continuous Journey*, directed by Ali Kazami, was voted Best Film at FSA 2005.

FSA is organised by the Himal Association and will take place on 11-14 October at Kumari Cinema in Kamalpokhari. Tickets are priced at Rs 30.

Living Goddess

Worshipped as living deities, the Kumaris are hold-overs from an ancient culture. *Living Goddess* unfolds through the eyes of three young girls – goddesses and witnesses to the unfolding of an ancient prophecy. An out-of-touch king who survived the notorious palace massacre of 2001 wrests power for himself as a Maoist-led civil war rages. Defying the king, ordinary people take to the streets demanding freedom, only to be confronted by the might of the king's army. As the Kumaris watch, their world changes irrevocably as their lives collide with the ushering in of a modern era.



Bostrobilakara (Garment Girls of Bangladesh)

This captivating documentary focuses on the garment girls of Bangladesh's notorious sweatshops. The camera tracks the lives of these girls, the hardships they have to endure, the meagre salaries they earn and the indifference of those who employ them. Filmmaker Tanvir Mokammel follows these girls from the factories and sweatshops into their personal lives, which makes for an entrancing film.



Casting Shadows

Set in the heart of the B-grade movie industry in India's heartland of Mumbai, this light-hearted documentary takes a look at the unusual lives of two look-alikes. With contrasting ages, ideals and personalities, these two men have nothing in common save the alias they share, that of the greatest star in Indian cinema history, Amitabh Bachchan.



Every Good Marriage Begins with Tears

British filmmaker Simon Chambers comes through with a charming documentary on the lives of two rebellious London Bangladeshi sisters who go back home against their will for arranged marriages. The film explores the universal theme of love, but also touches on issues of conflict



Moustaches, warts and all

DIWAS KC & A. ANGELO D'SILVA

Whoever thinks that art, entertainment and politics don't co-mingle is only going to be disgruntled by looking at the contemporary film scene. Even the biggest Hollywood houses have been unable to stave off the allure of 'current affairs' in recent years. But whereas the mainstream keeps on with tentative, wishy-washy innuendos, documentary films have set off a global movement with a watchful, moral authority.

Home-grown film festival Film South Asia, which this year brings an assortment of 48 documentary films, is part of that movement. There is a wide selection, and the festival directors have made sure that the sundry joys and miseries of the South Asian experience are adequately represented.

One not to miss is a highly moving and exquisitely made documentary by Helene Klowdowsky, *No More Tears, Sister: Anatomy of Hope and Betrayal*, which chronicles the life of the brave Sri Lankan activist Rajani Thiranagama. An unwavering commitment to human rights and a definite disillusionment with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) probably caused her assassination in 1989.

Through sensitive enactment (Rajani's role is portrayed by her youngest daughter) and deeply personal testimonies, the film traverses both the private tragedies of Rajani's family and the public scars of Sri Lanka's ongoing civil war. The story of Rajani, particularly her relationship with her radical sister Nirmala Rajasingam, is a heartrending account of how the world-shaking optimism of the 1960s New Left succumbed to brutally narrow nationalisms and ethnic struggles.

Documentary film festival brings vivid realities to the silver screen

There's a sense of that betrayal in Syed Ali Nasir's documentary *The Miseducation of Pakistan*, which wisely begins with Jinnah's cautionary words about the importance of education in independent Pakistan and then plunges into the deplorable state of contemporary public schools.

The statistics come fast and heavy and the organisation is messy, but the message of the utter disarray, mismanagement and corruption that plague most of the public school system is made abundantly clear with some excellent footage and reportage. Admirably, the filmmakers still seem to hold steadfast to the indispensability of public schools. And the film delights with plenty of delicious scenes of politicians squirming at the pointed questions of our reporter, Naziha Syed Ali.

A very different film, *Moustaches Unlimited* is a charming, irreverent entry from Kolkata. Made by Vasudha Joshi, the film is an assemblage of interviews, opinions, poetry and story that explores the stubborn legacy and allure of the eponymous facial feature of men and some intrepid women. Somehow both celebratory and satirical, *Moustaches*' exploration of the male body politics is amusingly illuminating. It will take the bushiest of moustaches to hide the grins that this film elicits from its audience.

The ironies of gender politics in India get more serious treatment in Thomas Wartmann's *Between the Lines*. The documentary follows photographer Anita Khemka, whose ambition of comprehending the alien lives of Mumbai's hijras may appear presumptuous but is ultimately endearingly compassionate. The kind of connection she manages to establish with the hijras, and the intimate access through which the film permits us to know the characters, testifies to the capacity of documentaries to reveal the power of human empathy.

And such instances of insight and genuine empathy are what Film South Asia promises with its packed roster of documentary films. ●

between migrants and their children, dispels cliched myths about the treatment of women in Islamic society, and presents the tender, human face of a community that is often misunderstood and targeted as a result of terrorist attacks on the West.

Eviction

American filmmaker Grady Walker chronicles the lives of Bhutanese refugees languishing in camps in Nepal. *Eviction* focuses on different perspectives and stories from camps in Jhapa, and also follows a refugee seeking asylum in New York City.



Chaama deu; tara nabirsa (Forgive! Forget not!)



A former detainee of the infamous Bhairabnath Battalion tells of his horrifying experiences during the 15 months he was held without any proof of his guilt. The journalist detainee goes through the painful detail of an experience that not many others survived.

Hami Kunako Manche (We Corner People)

Kesang Tseten's monumentally successful *Hami Kunako Manche* follows the lives of the 'corner' people, those residing in the farthest reaches of Rasuwa district. Here there is no electricity and not a single shop. The only school goes up to grade 3, and villagers have to walk four hours just to buy salt or chilli, or to sell their meagre bamboo weavings, their only means of subsistence. The film documents what happens when a bridge comes to this place, radically changing the lives of the inhabitants.



Jashn-E-Azadi (How We Celebrate Freedom)



Every year on 15 August, the Indian flag goes up in the heart of Srinagar, Kashmir, staking India's claim to the land. But the empty streets and sullen silence that greet this action spark off old questions about freedom. The war over Kashmir has left 60,000 dead and 7,000 missing. Using a beguiling mix of rare archival material, poetry and text, this film is a proactive look at Indian democracy in the 60th year of India's independence, and a reflection on power, resistance and the terrible cost of freedom.

Mast Qalandar (The Ecstatic)

One of the most legendary mystics of ancient Islam, Mast Qalandar was a 13th century Sufi saint who spread his teachings of love, tolerance and ecstasy. Every year, almost a million devotees from all over Pakistan, India and Afghanistan journey to Sehwan Sharif, the site of Mast Qalandar's shrine, and seek individual and collective ecstasy. The film follows the pilgrimage and explores the ancient mystic Islamic way of life.

Seven Islands and a Metro

This film is a tale of cities: Bom Bahia, Bombay, Mumbai – the multilingual Bombay, the Bombay of intolerance, the Bombay of closed mills, of popular culture, sprawling slums and real estate onslaughts, the metropolis of numerous ghettos, the El Dorado, and Mumbai, city of dreams. The documentary follows the journey of an insignificant settlement to the coveted status of a metropolis.

A Very British Bollywood

When the British government created tax breaks for foreign filmmakers to produce feature films in the UK, they were expecting Hollywood. Instead, they got Bollywood. Having landed on British soil, Indian filmmakers are breaking with Bollywood traditions and moving into different genres. Out with the musical and in with story lines aimed at a western audience. *A Very British Bollywood* follows the making of these films, principally *Private Moments*, an erotic comedy that revolves around the sex lives of four young women in London.



ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **photo.circle.x** presentation by Dinesh Shrestha on his book *Timeless Kathmandu*, 6 October, 9.45 AM at the Sundhara Bakery Cafe.
- ❖ **Spiritual abstractions** collage paintings by Gaurav Shrestha at the Art Shop, Darbar Marg, 11AM-6PM until 6 October. 4267063
- ❖ **Buddhahoods** an exhibition of photography by Daniel Collins, 13 October onwards, 2-6PM at the Saturday Café, Boudhanath Stupa. 2073157
- ❖ **Exhibition of Tibetan furniture and Thangka** paintings at the Kathmandu Gallery, Thamel, until 13 October. 4248094
- ❖ **Soshana** an exhibition of drawings and paintings by Soshana, on occasion of the 20th anniversary of Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, until 20 October, 11AM-6PM. 4218048

EVENTS

- ❖ **Women in concert** featuring various women artists, fund-raiser for Sewa Kendra Leprosy Relief, 5 October, 7PM at the Hotel Yak and Yeti. 9851000695
- ❖ **Shastrartha** on romanticism with DP Bhandari, 6 October, 4-6PM at Martin Chautari. 6910277
- ❖ **Western classical for students** with the Ragazze String Quartet, at the Rato Bangala School auditorium, 11AM and 2 PM on 7 October, Rs 100.
- ❖ **Geheime Wahlen** launching of the German translation of Manjushree Thapa's *The Tutor of History*, reading and discussion with the author and translator, on 10 October, 5:30 PM at Dhokaima Cafe. 9841226112
- ❖ **Celebrating Womanhood** Navadevi Awards 2007, 12 October, 4PM at the Radisson Hotel. 9851029356
- ❖ **Kite flying festival** with food and music at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot, 13 October, Rs 100. 9841324880
- ❖ **Dr Kanak** a play directed by Sunil Pokharel, presented by Aarohan Gurukul, at the Rimal Theatre, Gurukul, New Baneshwor, until 13 October at 5.30 PM. 4466956
- ❖ **Film South Asia 2007** Festival of South Asian documentaries, 11-14 October, at the Kumari Cinema Hall, Rs 30. www.filmsouthasia.org
- ❖ **Toastmasters** a communication and leadership program, organised by Kathmandu Toastmasters Club every Wednesday 6PM at Industrial Enterprise Development Institute (IEDI) building, Tripureswor. 4288847

MUSIC

- ❖ **Fifth Anniversary** at Moksh, biggest jam session of the year, rock, blues, jazz and acoustic, 6 October at Moksh, Pulchok. 5523212
- ❖ **Jazz at Jatra** every Saturday 7PM onwards, at Jatra Café and Bar, Thamel. .
- ❖ **Ciney Gurung** every Wednesday and Rashmi Singh every Friday, live at the Absolute Bar, Hotel Narayani Complex, 7PM. 5521408

DINING

- ❖ **High tea** at the Hyatt Regency, taste pear and berry crepes at The Lounge, 4.30-6.30PM. 4491234
- ❖ **Italian barbecue lunch** at Alfresco, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Saturdays, 12.30-3.30PM, Rs 300 plus taxes. 4273999
- ❖ **Jazz in Patan** with coffee, food, drinks, and dessert at the New Orleans Cafe, Jawalakhel, 11.30 AM-10PM. 5522708
- ❖ **BBQ, chilled beer, cocktails** and live music at the Kausi Restaurant and Bar, Darbar Marg, 6218490
- ❖ **BBQ Unlimited at Splash Bar & Grill** Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat, every Friday 6.30 PM, Rs 899 nett.
- ❖ **Cocktails and jazz** with the JCS Quartet and a choice of cocktails at Fusion – the Bar at Dwarika's. 4479448
- ❖ **Lajawaab** curry, kebab and biryani festival, every Friday, 7PM onwards at Café Horizon, Hotel Himalaya. 5523900
- ❖ **Shangri-La's pasta, pizza, pie, and pool** a special swimming package with a complimentary beer, Rs 650 nett per person, every Saturday and Sunday at Shangri-La Hotel. 4412999
- ❖ **Kebabs and curries** at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619
- ❖ **Light nouvelle snacks** and elaborate cordon bleu meals at La'Soon, Pulchok, behind the Egyptian embassy. 5537166
- ❖ **Calcutta's rolls, biryani, kebabs** Indian cuisine at Bawarchi, Bluebird Mall Food Court. 9741000735
- ❖ **Rediscover fine Italian cuisine** at La Dolce Vita, Thamel, all new exciting menu. 4700612
- ❖ **Pizza** from the woodfired oven at Java, Thamel. 4422519

For inclusion in the listing send information to editors@nepalitimes.com

Quest Entertainment



'Dhol - Kiska Bajega' revolves around the lives of four friends - Sam (Tusshar Kapoor), Pakky (Sharman Joshi), Maru (Rajpal Yadav) and Goti (Kunal Khemu), who're bound together by their child-like notoriety and aimlessness. Things get worse as the four decide to take some desperate measures to end their misery once and for all. According to them, the only way to get rich without working hard is to get married to a rich girl. Arrives the rich girl Kanchan (Tanushree Dutta), so all four set out with their individual plans to marry her but end up discovering an unexpected truth.

Call 4442220 for show timings at **Jai Nepal**
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WEEKEND WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

This year's monsoon has gone on a week beyond its expected expiry date, but the 50mm of rain that fell throughout the country last Saturday surely signalled its death throes. This has not been a normal monsoon, with severe droughts in the early days and devastating floods in the lower hills and plains later on. Three of the four monsoon months received less than the normal amount of rain. Satellite images on Thursday morning showed most of South Asia free of clouds, with calm conditions in the Bay of Bengal. On the other side of the subcontinent, a northwesterly, dry cold wind streaming into the Tibetan Plateau is likely to stop a couple of weeks from now. Sunny intervals, breezy afternoons and fresh mornings are in store for the weekend. Localized light showers are also possible due to convective clouds in the northern hills and mountains.



रेडियो सगरमाथा
एफएम १०२ थोप्लो ४ मेगाहर्ज

नेपाली रेडियो नेपाली आवाज

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Revolts of the righteous

Driven by their beliefs some take risks that most of us would regard as foolhardy

Can religion also be a force for good? Indeed, are there cases where religious faith comes to the rescue even of those who don't have it? Since I have never had either the benefits or misfortunes of adhering to any religion, it might smack of hypocrisy for me to defend those who have. But watching the Burmese monks on television defy the security forces of one of the world's most oppressive regimes, it is hard not to see some merit in religious belief.

Burma is a deeply religious country, where most men spend some time as Buddhist monks. Even the most thuggish Burmese dictator must hesitate before unleashing lethal force on men dressed in the maroon and saffron robes of their faith.

The Burmese monks, together with nuns in pink robes, were soon joined by students, actors, and others who want to be rid of the military junta. But it was the monks and nuns who took the first step; they dared to protest when others had mostly given up. And they did so with the moral authority of their Buddhist faith.



WORLD IN WORDS

Ian Burma

Romantics might say that Buddhism is unlike other religions, indeed, more a philosophy than a faith. But Buddhism has been a religion in different parts of Asia for many centuries, and, like any other belief, it can be used to justify violent acts. One need only look at Sri Lanka, where Buddhism is lashed to ethnic chauvinism in the slow-burning civil war.

Just as the Buddhists risked their lives to stand up for democracy in Burma, Christians have done so in other countries. The Marcos regime in the Philippines was doomed in 1986 from the moment the Catholic Church turned against it. Thousands of ordinary citizens defied the tanks when Marcos threatened to crush People Power with force, but the presence of priests and nuns gave the rebellion its moral authority. Many political dissidents in South Korea were inspired by their Christian beliefs, and the same is true in China.



True believers would no doubt see the hand of God in these stirring events. Ferdinand Marcos's main opponent, Cory Aquino, actually boasted of having a direct pipeline to the Lord. But the moral power of religious faith does not need a supernatural explanation. Its strength is belief itself, belief in a moral order that defies secular, or, indeed, religious dictators.

Despite the horrific violence of Islamist fanatics, it should not be forgotten that the mosque can also be a legitimate basis for resistance against the mostly secular dictatorships in the Middle East today. In a world of political oppression and moral corruption, religious values offer an alternative moral universe. This alternative is not necessarily more democratic, but it can be.

Nevertheless, the danger of all dogmas, religious or secular, is that they lead to different forms of oppression. The revolt against Soviet domination in Afghanistan was led by holy warriors who then imposed their own form of misrule.

Moreover, charismatic leadership can be problematic even when it takes a benign form. The Madonna-like status of Cory Aquino in the Philippines was inspiring in the heady days of People Power, but did little to bolster the institutions of a secular democracy.

Faith has an especially important role to play in politics in circumstances where secular liberals are rendered impotent, as in the case of Nazi occupation, Communist rule, or military dictatorship. Liberals are most needed when compromises have to be made, but not nearly as useful when faced with brute force. That is when visionaries, romantics, and true believers are driven by their beliefs to take risks that most of us would regard as foolhardy. It is, on the whole, not beneficial to be ruled by such heroes, but it is good to have heroes around when they are needed. ● Project Syndicate

Ian Burma is Professor of human rights at Bard College. His most recent book is Murder in Amsterdam: The Killing of Theo van Gogh and the Limits of Tolerance.

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Hidden treasure

The ruins of Surkhet's Kankre Bihar wait to be discovered

It's quiet, serene and green. Thousands of intricately carved stones of various sizes litter the ruins at Kankre Bihar on Surkhet's Latikoili hill. Huge moss-covered plinth stones with floral and geometric patterns lean on smaller stones carved with idols of various deities, including the Buddha.

Prayer flags strung across trees flutter in the early morning breeze, thick vines swing across the tall sal. There is a sense of timelessness here amidst these ancient stones scattered in the lush undergrowth. Who built this temple complex? Where did this civilization vanish? What did

Surkhet Valley look like then? Locals believe the ruins date back to the stories of Hindu mythology. "We grew up hearing that this was built by the Pandavas during their long exile," says Sher Bahadur Karki, caretaker of the Kankre Bihar, "and they used to travel across the lake to go to Patal Ganga for daily rituals." Indeed, there is geological proof that Surkhet Valley used to be a huge lake. And just like Manjushree is supposed to have drained Kathmandu's lake, locals believe Bhim drained Surkhet with his spade. Archaeologists who started excavating the site in 2005, however, say the ruins date back to the Khasa Malla rulers of

midwestern Nepal 800 years ago, and were probably destroyed by invaders. The archeologists took two years to catalogue more than 2,000 stones, then the budget ran out and the work stopped. Today, picnickers have scrawled graffiti and etched initials on the scattered stones. "I try my best to protect this place, but how much can one person do?" says Karki, 56, who is allowed to take his salary from the entrance fee and earns up to Rs 2,500 a month. During the height of the conflict, he had no income. "During the war there were few visitors and even those who came didn't ask any questions,"

Karki recalls. The mandala-shaped bihar has been restored up to plinth level and the steps leading up to it have been restored. Missing stones have been replaced with new ones, but even these are now covered with moss. Karki has heard the government allocated Rs 1.5 million this year for restoration, but says he'll believe it when he sees it. So Kankre Bihar waits. Restoration will probably bring tourists and visitors from Surkhet and beyond. But walking down the hill from Latikoili, one wishes the ancient monastery is left as it is in its ageless serenity and solitude. ● Rupa Joshi

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Tara Tara	Aashita	Rs 92
Agi Bhai	Sunil Barne	Rs 84
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Hindi Ringtones

Song	Artist	Price
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Kisse Seham Pyar Kare	Anand	Rs 161
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KIRAN PANDAY

SNAP SHOT: More than 50 members of the National Forum of Photo-Journalists stage a sit-in at the Maitighar Mandala on Wednesday to protest the continued attacks on media houses by members of a Maoist-affiliated trade union.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

SPLISH SPLASH: French Ambassador Gilles-Henry Garault and publisher Shanta Dixit launch a French translation of the popular children's book *The Adventures of a Nepali Frog* by Kanak Mani Dixit at the Alliance Francaise in Kathmandu on Wednesday.



KIRAN PANDAY

OFFSIDE TRAP: A player from the red-shirted Nepal Student Union chases the ball in a “republican football match” against the All Nepal National Free Students Union in blue, at the Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus in Kathmandu on Wednesday.



KIRAN PANDAY

UNDER ARREST: Police parade four handcuffed men in front of the media at a press conference at Police Headquarters on Sunday. The men are accused of being behind the three bomb blasts in Kathmandu that killed three people on 2 September.

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Psst...petrol's here

Don't expect the fuel crisis to ease till about the day before Dasain. Fed up with empty promises from Kathmandu to clear our huge debt, Indian Oil Corporation has been persuaded to resume supplies. The prime minister knows IOC won't even speak to him, so when petrol riots broke out last week at the pumps, the old man picked up the phone and called Man Mohanji directly and told him that if IOC didn't send oil, the Maoists would use the anger in the streets to spark off an uprising. Girjau must have been pretty convincing because tankers started arriving from Barauni. But, you may well ask, how come there are still lines at the pumps? Don't tell anyone the Ass told you, but the oil is being hoarded at the Amelkhanj and Thankot depots, possibly for a price increase on the eve of Dasain.



The hyperactivity in the political scene these days is due to the fact that the nation is about to go into a two-week Dasain coma. Even the prime minister is hurrying up: he's going from snail pace to turtle pace officiating as head of state, head of government, head of the army and head of household.



In fact, our Primordial Minister was so busy playing king this week, he didn't realise he had been upstaged by Kingji until it was too late. The prime minister as self-declared head of state went and got his blessings from the living goddess on Sunday. But in a move that was almost as carefully choreographed as the February First coup his erstwhile majesty's motorcade waded into Basantapur Sq under cover of darkness. The crowd seemed to have been primed to expect the royal visit and greeted the underground king with "Hamro Raja Hamro Desh". The spin pundits at the palace had even tipped off one of the new tv channels, which broadcast the visit live.

Needless to say, the prime minister found out too late that his old royal nemesis had pulled a fast one. His reaction was to summon COAS Katuwal to Baluwatar the next morning and find out from him how come the general hadn't told the government about the visit. Katuwal reportedly said: "You talkin' to me?" Or words to that effect. As punishment, the general was summoned again and told to reduce palace guards by half.



The balance of power between Baluwatar and Bhadrakali is based on the tacit understanding that the prime minister won't rock the boat on the army. Whether Katuwal knew about Kingji's Operation Kumari is not actually as important as whether the COAS can keep royal dissidents within the army quiet and for how long. The prime minister is relying on him to keep things under control but Katuwal is under pressure from the jarsaps. Katuwal was never overly popular because his blood is not blue

enough and the Thakuris think he's allowed the PM too much say in promotions. Then there are predecessors, like General Conflagration, who think the army chief is (pardon the expression) an ass. If they had their way they'd make Lionheart prime minister for the sixth time. The Maoists wouldn't mind that either, since they ran circles around Deuba during the war.



Now that ambassadorial appointments are out of the way, Foreign Minister Sahana Pradhan is at the UN General Assembly in New York keeping herself mighty busy. On Monday she signed an MoU to establish diplomatic relations between Nepal and the Dominican Republic. We sure have our geostrategic priorities right.



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