

The parliament vote on Sunday may have averted an immediate political crisis, but the fallout is rattling the seven party alliance.

The Maoists have been portraying as a victory the house vote in which they exchanged proposals with the UML to pass their resolution for full-proportional representation and the UML's compromise on republic. They are gearing up for street protests immediately after Tihar with a mass meeting in Kathmandu on 18 November. The idea is to bring the NC under mounting pressure from the streets and the house (which reconvenes on 19 November) to abide by the directives.

The NC, for its part, is trying to put on a brave face saying it alone refused to buckle under Maoist pressure. But it is hobbled by an increasingly frail but autocratic party president who has to also double as prime minister and leader of

the alliance.

The UML went into an alliance with the Maoists last week, but it now appears the party went against the wishes of a majority of its top leaders. This is now creating serious tension in the top leadership.

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“You have to understand why the Maoists brought the proposal, they haven’t yet abandoned their goal of capturing state power through arms,” K P Oli told himalkhabar.com on Wednesday. He said a majority of UML central committee members were against the proposal and the party could never work with the Maoists. “How can we be with a party that doesn’t want elections?” he asked. ●

Subhas Devkota





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Donor amnesia

Peacebuilding is a spectator sport in Aidland

One recent report on a conference in Brussels organized by a northern NGO and interestingly entitled *'Nepal: Looking beyond Kathmandu-Challenges and Opportunities for peacebuilding from below'*, had a cover page with pictures from Nepal (rural women with children—unrelated to the conflict and the conference) and a second page with pictures from the conference



GUEST COLUMN
Tobias Denskus

venue of a nondescript board-room-style meeting room, handsome European women and men and artefacts such as a data projector and video-conferencing equipment.

The French philosopher Marc Augé coined the expression of 'non-places' for such spaces without history or individual meaning that only exist to enable commercial interactions. In the globalized aid world such places exist in Brussels - or in the well-known hotels and resorts in and around Kathmandu where workshops are usually conducted. As long as such exchanges shape the debate about post-conflict societies, real social change for the majority of Nepalis seems further away than any election dates, a new constitution or accountable services in rural areas.

After five decades of 'development' and ten years of violent conflict, Kathmandu has remained in a 'bubble of innocence', as one donor representative described the state of mind in a city that seems remarkably far away from 'underdevelopment', 'poverty' or 'war'. When the people formed a democracy movement last year and demonstrated on the streets, few conflict advisers and inhabitants of the bubble were

able to predict the political changes that were about to happen. But they quickly shared their relief that the promising signs of the Maoist party joining 'mainstream politics', a forthcoming constituent assembly, and parliamentary elections would put Nepal back on the 'road to development'.

Some donors were relieved that they could now continue with work they had planned before the violent conflict, and that the small Nepali elite in Kathmandu seemed to be willing to address the 'root causes' that have kept Nepal in 'poverty' for the past 55 years. A bright 'post-conflict' mirage was visible and donor amnesia quickly replaced reflective practice. Aid specialists from other post-war 'non-places' quickly arrived in Kathmandu to share their approaches, always stressing that they needed to be tailored to Nepal, of course.

'Arms management', 'security sector reforms', 'transitional justice' – the Fall 2007 collection arrived in Kathmandu straight from the peacebuilding catwalks in Europe without looking outside the 'bubble', or searching for stories in the remote villages of Nepal, asking local people about the future direction of their country. A former 'conflict adviser' of a European donor observes:

'When I first attended the meetings of the conflict advisors' group I was surprised to find them talking over simple and conservative conflict analyses and I immediately started to wonder whether these guys [all but one were men at that time] should know these things by now and before coming to Kathmandu'.

If I look at the amount of reports, briefings and notes that arrive in my email inbox, I find that a lot of the insights are not rooted in local realities or have

emerged from interactions other than bringing a few people together for a workshop with flipcharts and red plastic chairs. Harmonising discourses and approaches may be in vogue in today's 'Aidland', but, as this donor went on to comment, donor co-ordination in the peacebuilding community of Kathmandu seemed somewhat over-enthusiastic: *'We had 400 meetings after the February 1 coup of the King in 2005. I knew more about what the Japanese and Americans were doing than about our projects in the field.'*

The professional life-world in Kathmandu was also matched by the sheltered private lifestyle of most international inhabitants of 'Aidland', because the Maoist violence never reached the Kathmandu Valley.

'Peacebuilding' is almost always linked to issues of 'governmentality' – making 'chaotic' and 'unsafe' places fit for (neo)liberal democracy. Nepal is doomed to be a success-story of how a violent conflict can be transformed through peaceful, democratic means and adoption of the latest fashion in 'peacebuilding' and the international spectators in form of UNMIN staff or EU election observers have eagerly arrived in the 'stadium' in Kathmandu. Neither critical voices nor lessons learned from the failed development of Nepal, nor indeed the history of failed 'peacebuilding' interventions elsewhere, will enter the narrative of 'success'. ●

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BATTLEFIELD TO BALLOTFIELD

One could say that the honourable members of the interim legislature, including the Maoists, were at least not killing each other on Sunday.

The sight of Maoist MPs thumping tables instead of throwing socket bombs, raising their hands to vote instead of giving the red salute can only mean progress in the peace process.

We don't want the Maoists to be a mainstream party because the mainstream has discredited itself in the past ten years. This former underground party is different because it wants to change things, which is its unique selling point. It will be its anti-status quo agenda that will attract voters fed up with inaction, lethargy and incompetence of the old leaders of Old Nepal.

But here is the rub: the Maoist party must officially renounce its modus operandi of violence, intimidation and threats. Without demonstrating that it is willing to play by the rules of pluralistic peaceful politics, it will be defeated in the ballotfield just as surely it couldn't win in the battlefield.

Despite the show of following the parliamentary process in the special session last week, there are plenty of indications that the Maoist party hasn't abandoned the old ways of doing things: beating up the cadre of other parties, thrashing people who dared worship at a temple, extorting trekkers and killing journalists.



KIRAN PANDAY

The Maoists finally accepted responsibility for the murder of Birendra Sah this week, but refused to apologise. Worse, a Maoist leader even said his party could not be held responsible for the actions of individual cadre. This is appalling, considering that Sah was murdered after local Maoists in Bara lured him to a story on timber poaching.

Inexcusable also is the behaviour of Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula who apparently knew that the Maoists had killed Sah soon after his abduction last month. He lied in parliament, and he tried to cover up the Maoist crime. We don't know who is protecting Sitaula, but the man needs to go.

The two resolutions on Sunday night represented a political compromise and a face-saving way for the Maoists to extricate themselves from a parliamentary cul-de-sac. This week, the Maoists have tried to portray the vote as a victory, but they'll have to do much better than that to prove to the Nepali people that they have made a clean break with their violent past.

Because the directives were a apolitical compromise, however, the legal issues are still stuck. The proposals only put moral pressure on the government to go ahead with parliamentary ratification, but that still needs a two-thirds majority of house which is not possible without the united NC agreeing to it.

So, Pushpa Kamal Dahal needs to answer how this benefits his party and the country. Because all he has done is extended the lifespan of the monarchy by delaying elections.

The pitfalls of praying alone

Parents of diaspora Nepalis are home alone this Tihar

In the language of poetry, melancholy is the joy of sadness, the feeling that festivals create in the aching hearts of the aging parents of overseas Nepalis.

In the twilight of their lives many of them find Tihar isn't the same without the children and grandchildren. Increasingly,



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

money matters less to those with successful children abroad. But it hurts that the ones with whom you could share the pleasures of prosperity are far away.

A paediatrician with a flourishing practice will be celebrating Tihar in solitude. Her daughters are doing well in the United States. They have invited their mother with a promise that Diwali is now an

officially recognised festival in their adopted country. But she refuses to leave her young Nepali patients.

A retired bureaucrat whose words were once law spends his afternoons loitering aimlessly at shopping centres in Pulchok that try vainly to resemble fancy malls in the west. He invested everything in his children: the best education money could buy in an Indian boarding school, college in Mumbai and a medical degree in Manila.

The investment has begun to pay off. His son has a large home in Texas, his daughter-in-law sent him a Rolex which he wears. But they don't want to come back. ("No roads, no electricity, no garbage collection, no peace...") He plans to spend the Tihar weekend video-chatting with his American grandchildren.

Some parents have learnt to cope with the pathos of diaspora separation. An engineer with a successful scion in Silicon

Valley confided that he was planning to escape for Tihar to Tamil Nadu because for him a festival is "whenever the children are home for vacations".

Most Nepali festivals are essentially matriarchal in character. It is the mother or grandmother who preside over preparations for Bhai Tihar, Chhat, Mha Puja, and the worshipping of dogs, cows and crows this week. They offer a welcome diversion from the drudgery of daily life as children and grandchildren congregate for a few days. For mothers with children abroad, the pain of separation at festival time is excruciating.

For the men festivals are usually just an excuse to eat, drink, gamble or grumble more than they usually do. Men can somehow pretend indifference to the absence of children by flicking the remote from the couch.

In absolute terms, the number of

diaspora parents isn't high but they constitute an aspirational layer of Kathmandu society and influence the way all others perceive success. Their lifestyles are the benchmarks for spreading affluenza among the middle class.

With more and more parents home alone in Nepal, their houses get bigger as the number of real occupants decreases. The kitchens have become smaller as they increasingly dine out, and the puja rooms are shoved under the staircase as the elderly stretch to televised instructions from Ramdev in their drawing rooms.

Comfortable, conservative, and rootless in a foreign land, the diaspora espouses values that are modern in thought but retrograde in effect. The political fallout of this is similar to Bangladesh or Pakistan where the obsession of the middle class with efficiency and stability has resulted in the entrenchment of militarism and authoritarian politics. Long-distance patriotism can play havoc with the polity of home countries. To seek its antidote in Maoism is even more dangerous.

There is less to celebrate this Tihar in Nepal, but just being able to celebrate it in Nepal with one's children still means a lot. ●

LETTERS

DELHI VIEW

Why doesn't New Delhi arrest the militants using its soil to prolong the conflict in Nepal? ('Delhi view', #372). That would show it is really serious in resolving current problems. I feel uneasy when Delhi wants to prevent the UN from trying to contact terrorists creating havoc in Nepal and derailing the peace process, then complains about the UN trying to resolve these matters. What really worries me is that we are becoming an Indian protectorate. It's none of Delhi's business to tell Nepalis how long to keep UNMIN and how they should work.

Sandeep Dhungana, Birmingham, UK

- How did we ever get to this? A nation that can't feed 250 million of its own people gets to decide what our national interests are? I blame the politicians, every single one of them, for letting inept Indians call the shots.

Sharina Dahal, email

- Declaring a republic from the present house would sow a seed of discontent, which would eventually lead to anarchy. All said and done, there is still a certain percentage of the population in this country which endorses the monarchy, apart from a majority of the people who still think the fate of the monarchy should be decided by a fresh mandate. Over the past one-and-a-half years the king has explicitly aided the peace process by not trying to use all his rights as a monarch. Until proven otherwise, one should respect this. The king also expressed his delight over the peace deal. Dethroning him without the verdict of the people would be a gross injustice. The political parties have overstepped the mandate of the April movement to decide on the future of the monarchy. This is tyranny in the name of loktantra.

PB Rana, email

- The king is a human being and a Nepali and has his own rights and beliefs. He should be free to practise them ('Happy king', #373). If the constituent assembly was held as scheduled, it would be better for the people and the king. But till then, he is a free man. There are people like us, the silent majority, who support the monarchy.

Name withheld, email

- It's really frustrating to read your editorials each week about what the

Maoists, monarchists, madhesis or 'mahamahims' are doing. In this appalling state of politics the players are behaving like 10-year-old kids. My complaint with the media is that you always make suggestions about making changes but are afraid of being proactive even though you have so much power and ability. The media community should start a non-aligned, non-political, non-biased, Nepal-centric civil movement so we can take ideas to the people to find solutions.

Rishav Shrestha, Geneva

- If the Maoists want to be seen as a legitimate political force, they have to renounce violence once and for all. Every law-abiding, democratic and progressive Nepali must openly condemn the Maoist actions. They threaten democracy.

K Kishore, email



MENTAL HEALTH

Your full page coverage on mental health ('Stigma therapy', #372) is most welcome. Nepali Times has raised the issue of a mentally ill person's rights which for so long has been neglected and excluded from the human rights agenda in Nepal. A person experiencing a mental illness can be very vulnerable. Family, doctors and the DAO make decisions usually without the involvement of the mentally ill person. As a result, people are locked away, men lose property and women are excluded from marriage. Is this not a violation of fundamental rights? The question arises: How can the rights of a mentally ill person in Nepal be protected? Who is responsible to ensure this happens? Mental health is not just a medical issue but also a legal as well as a social issue.

It is essential that the rights of a mentally ill person are appropriately

defined for Nepal. This raises a further question: Who should be involved in this process? Here, there may be something to learn from the experience of developing mental health legislation in my native Scotland where lawyers, human rights defenders, psychiatrists, mental health nurses, psychologists, social workers and people with experience of mental illness all participated and contributed to the development of the legislation.

In Nepal where is the space for people who experience mental illness to raise their voice?

Gael Robertson, Dhobi Ghat

NOT US

I was concerned to see the name of the National Press Photographers Association (NPPA) connected to Internship Nepal in the article 'Gap year ripoffs' (#372). As Executive Director I can tell you that the NPPA does not endorse this program nor does it promote it. At one point a few years ago this internship was listed as an opportunity on our site www.nppa.org. After we received a few complaints from our members who applied for it, we removed the listing and have denied its listing since. The NPPA has been known for professionalism and integrity for over 60 years. I would hate to think that your readers would associate us with any disreputable organization. There are many beneficial opportunities for our members as well as many other benefits and we take pride in protecting the interests of our members and visual journalists as a whole.

**Jim Straight, Executive Director, NPPA
Durham, NC, USA**

- I found 'Gap year ripoffs' very prescient. Four years ago, I went through an organization called Rural Community Development Program Nepal. We paid \$250 on our arrival and then about \$250 a month for food and housing. The initial \$250 covered the first two weeks in which we studied Nepali, and then went to a village to meet the people living there. I was supposed to work in a community forest very close to the Chitwan National Park in a village called Jankauli where I would work in the nursery, replant trees, maintain the forest and so on. Unfortunately when I got there, I was told it wasn't planting season, so there was basically nothing for me to do. I had been in contact with my organization quite a lot before coming to Nepal and they never warned me I wouldn't be doing conservation work.

We learned that the family, which was very poor, only got Rs 700 per month, which I thought was negligible. We sure wondered

where the rest of our \$250 went, and we heard one of the owners of the organization was based in Malaysia and had a new, rather stylish office. I was sceptical of organizations that offered such "volunteer" work even before going to Nepal, and I am even more sceptical now.

Lina H%llstr%m, Caracas, Venezuela

ARTHA BEED

Overall I agree with Artha Beed's columns, but he is sometimes too passé, like in his last column ('Cart before the horse', #372). He writes: 'The mortgage and sub-prime issues leading to a dip in the housing market resulted in lower consumer spending and threatened to send the entire economy into a spin.' Actually, mortgage and sub-prime are not two different issues. Sub-prime mortgage, a risky lending practice to customers with below par credit ratings, is affecting the housing market in the US. Secondly, the issue of how much sub-prime mortgage is going to affect the US economy is still contentious. Contrary to what the Beed suggests, the US economy grew strongly in the last quarter, buoyed by a surge in consumer spending.

**Santosh Pokharel,
Charlottesville, VA, USA**

POLL

Your internet poll about the fuel price hike didn't give any real option to vote on (#371). And in the current poll (#372) you have GPK, PKD and King G to choose from about whom to blame for unsuccessful elections. Good luck with your three choice options. Could it be that the media is at fault for elections not happening?

Name withheld, email

THE ASS

The Ass is right as usual about opening momo shops at our embassies abroad to pay for their upkeep ('Mad tea party', #372). May I strongly urge His Political Highness Girija Babu to immediately recall the Nepali ambassadors to the US, UK and India, in that order, and send restaurateurs as plenipotentiaries. Teetotallers must have preference, given the Nepali penchant for delirious drinking. I would even suggest limiting the candidature to real New Road momo shop owners only.

Surya B Prasai, Maryland, USA

- The Ass for president!
Gyan Subba, Kumaripati

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KIMCHI

Indian Maoists have nothing but scorn for Nepal’s revolutionaries

Not comrades anymore



PRASHANT JHA in HYDERABAD

Indian Maoists are feeling vindicated by the recent setbacks suffered by their Nepali comrades and are full of scorn for them.

Here in Andhra Pradesh, which has been a hotbed for Naxalite activity because of government neglect and entrenched caste and class inequities, the Nepalis sold out on the revolution when victory was so close at hand.

Indian and international Maoists always saw Nepal as a vanguard of their revolution. They provided training and material assistance in the early days, and they saw Nepal as a source of hope during the war.

The disillusionment first set in when India’s moderate left which is a partner in



TWIN REVOLUTIONARIES: Telugu poet Vara Varu Rao who is considered the face of the Naxalites (left) with balladeer Gaddar (right) acted as an emissary for Indian Naxalites.

rebels, told us last week. “Your Maoists have neither been able to change the nature of the state nor even abolish the monarchy.”

Ganapathy, the leader of the Indian Maoists, said in a recent interview about the Nepali comrades: “They will either have to get co-opted into the system or abandon the present policy of power-sharing with the ruling class and continue the armed revolution to seize power. There is no Buddhist middle way. They cannot set the rules for a game the bourgeoisie invented.”

Pro-Maoist intellectuals in Hyderabad told us the Nepali Maoists are now stuck. “It’s too late,” said one Maoist-affiliated journalist. “They neither have the gun nor mass support. They should have listened to us.”

What has riled the Naxalites most is the continued hobnobbing of the Nepal Maoists with both the Indian state and the mainstream CPI-Marxist.

“Sitaram Yechury is an agent of the Indian ruling classes and is making money off the present process in Nepal. We cannot trust the Nepali Maoists anymore,” says Gadar, the most popular ‘revolutionary’ poet in the state. He claims that Indian police officials asked him to emulate the Nepal example a year ago. “When the enemy puts up someone as an example, then something is obviously wrong,” he adds.

But the perception of the enemy has undergone a shift as a result of Nepali Maoists’ withdrawal from government in October. In stark opposition to the Naxalite assessment, a top counter-insurgency official in the Andhra Pradesh police says: “The Nepali Maoists have taken everyone for a ride. It was all tactical, they are still violent and will definitely make an attempt at grabbing power.”

Meanwhile, the Naxalites are themselves in a bit of a mess in Andhra Pradesh. Brutal police crackdowns, a dip in mass support, an inability to attract the urban youth and intelligentsia in significant numbers have all been serious setbacks.

The Naxalites are therefore shifting focus to the resource-rich central Indian states of Chhatisgarh and Orissa and plan to pick issues related to land rights of tribals and displacement. ●



DFID

Department for International Development

Leading the British Government's fight against world poverty

Health Adviser

The United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) is working with the Nepal Government, multilateral, bilateral agencies and civil society to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through support that is consistent with the Government of Nepal's development priorities.

DFID's work in Nepal focuses on support for the immediate implementation of the peace process, helping to lay the foundations for an effective and inclusive state, and the promotion of inclusive economic growth

DFID requires a health adviser to contribute to the delivery of its programme.

The health adviser will work with advisers in governance, public sector management, social inclusion, education and health who collectively form the Inclusive and Effective State team. The health portfolio is a major component of DFID's contribution to development and supports the Nepal Health Sector programme, the national HIV/AIDS programme and the national Safe Motherhood programme.

Applicants will need to demonstrate

Appreciation of the health sector

- Experience or strong appreciation of sector wide approach principles and application
- Delivery of public health advice at a policy level as well as solid experience in public health planning, implementation and monitoring at a national programme or sub programme level
- Experience of public social sector management

Appreciation of development

- Experience or strong appreciation of effective aid delivery
- Commitment to development and achievement of the MDGs
- A proven track record of at least 5 years experience of programme management working with Bilateral and/or Multilateral partners to deliver projects/programmes.

The successful candidate will also be competent in:

planning and delivery of work, analysis and use of information, decision making, working with others, communicating with others and influencing, and will have fluent written/oral communications in English and Nepali.

Located in the DFID office in Kathmandu, the successful applicants will work in a fast paced, multi-cultural environment that places a high premium on inclusive team working. The position offers significant opportunities for professional and career growth. Though based in Kathmandu, some in-country and international travel will be required.

There will be an attractive and competitive local salary and benefits package.

DFID is an Equal Opportunities employer and appoints on merit by open competition. Applicants should be Nepali residents or have a relevant work permit to work in Nepal. Applications are welcomed from all parts of the community and we actively encourage interest from women, Dalits, disadvantaged Janajatis, Madhesi and those with a disability. For an application form and more information, including Terms of Reference, please e-mail recruitment-nepal@dfid.gov.uk Please send a completed application form by e-mail to the same address. Only complete applications made on the prescribed application form will be considered. The closing date for applications is 30th November 2007



Sri Lanka wins

Sri Lanka won the Surya Nepal 9th SAARC Golf Championship on Friday. Sri Lankan Tisa Chandradasah played Nepali Tashi Ghale and won the match after 12 holes. Similarly, in a match between Rupak Acharya and K Prabakaran, Sri Lanka's Prabakaran won when Acharya lost the 12th, 13th and 15th holes. In the match between Mithun Parera and Rabi Khadka, Nepal's Khadka lost the match at the 17th hole. In the ladies category, Kesang Lama beat Eu Hazu Thapa. Min Gu Cho won both the longest drive award and the closest to the pin award. Nepal's team manager Rabindra Shrestha won the team managers' championship.

CG expands

Chaudhary Group (CG) has announced plans to enter the energy and infrastructure sectors in the next few years. Nirvana Chaudhary, executive director of Chaudhary Group, told a press conference the group would soon announce plans to set up a huge hydro project to help fill the gap in Nepal's energy supply. He said the cement project would cater to the real estate sector, which CG expects to boom in the near future. Chaudhary said the instability of the past decade had not been easy for the group, but added that CG's FMCG division had grown 20 per cent in the last five years, and its electronic business had grown 35 per cent. He said CG Finco, a subsidiary, has been a key contributor in reducing the proportion of migrant workers' remittances entering the country through unofficial channels.

Foreign cuisine

With the intention of bringing food from various countries to one venue, the sixth edition of the Himalayan Times International Food Fest concluded in Kathmandu on Saturday. More than 16 countries were represented, including Afghanistan, Israel, Mexico, Russia and South Korea. Artists like Jems Pradhan, Yogeshwor Amatya, X mantra and others performed at the show. Those attending the festival also found games laid on. The event was organized by APCA-Nepal.

Hip drink

Carlsberg has introduced Jolly Shandy, a cocktail of beer and lemonade with 0.5 per cent alcohol content. The company is hoping to attract young, hip and urban Nepalis to the traditional English drink. Jolly Shandy is available in shops and restaurants.

A price on their heads

Journalists might be safer if they had a monetary value

Last Tuesday, hundreds of journalists rightly condemned the murder by Maoist cadres of Avenues TV reporter Birendra Kumar Sah. Chanting slogans, the journalists demanded that the Maoists issue a public apology and punish the guilty.



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

Outraged though I was by Sah's murder, I was also troubled by the journalists' uncritically recycled demands. These are 'uncritically recycled demands' because they do nothing to reduce the real risks that non-Kathmandu-based journalists face from the Maoists and the government when carrying out their tasks of collecting information for the public.

Take the issue of tendering an apology. The journalists should not have to beg for an apology, especially days after the news of Sah's murder became public. The Maoists should have tendered it by themselves as soon as they found out they had blood on their hands. But they did not.

Instead, their party leaders maintained an icy silence. Others stayed above the fray, as though riff-raff not known to them had committed the crime. Still others, in a classic exploit-every-advantage manner, wanted credit for *at least* initiating an internal investigation of the circumstances that led to the murder.

Given these harsh realities, only a fool continues to insist that an apology now, however reluctant and stale, will somehow reduce the risks for Nepali

journalists. Besides, even if the Maoists' apology does come, that will do little for Sah's grieving wife, who now has to get on with the lonely business of living her life to take care of her child. Yes, there was that moment for a genuinely remorseful apology. But it came and went. And the sooner the protesting journalists accept this and start looking for an alternative solution, the better it will be for the dignity of their profession.

Take, too, the issue of 'punishing the guilty'. Of course, the guilty should be punished. But without giving in to cynicism, let's be realistic. When was the last time you heard about the guilty being punished in Nepal? Years go by before it's even clear who the guilty is, let alone where the guilty is. And with the passage of time, details of every crime recede from public memory. This makes the task of rounding up the suspects all the more difficult. Given court backlogs, the phrase 'punish the guilty' has come to carry little practical weight in Nepal.

But that does not mean the journalists should look to the Maoists for justice. After all, beware the absurdity that such a response leads to: If the Maoists' idea of punishing an innocent person is to murder him, then what could possibly be their idea for punishing the guilty?

And so these shrill demands for an apology and justice have distracted the journalists from asking a far more important, if awkward, question: Just how much is a journalist's life worth in Nepal in plain monetary



terms? To answer this question, a segment of journalists should be busy interacting with domestic and foreign economists, insurance executives, lawyers and bankers to work out a formula for appropriately 'valuing' each working journalist's life. This has become an urgent task, especially with the National Human Rights Commission saying this week that there has been no significant improvement in the human rights situation in Nepal since November 2006. Meaning? Journalists and others are still in risk.

Once the formula for valuing a journalist's life is worked out, then effective protests can begin the moment a journalist is hurt. The perpetrators or their political parties have to pay that much money in cold, hard cash to the victim's family. After all, doling out huge sums of money every time a journalist is hurt may make the killers realize that murdering a journalist is a literally unaffordable activity. ●

OUT NOW

talkin' about our generation



Interview with Ram Bahadur Thapa (Badal) in *Naya Patrika*, 6 November

Naya Patrika: What is the message from the voting in parliament on Sunday?
Ram Bahadur Thapa: First, the people want a republic and full proportional representation. Second, the government and other conspirators are bent on not letting these two proposals through. Third, some international powers are still trying to prop up the monarchy.

Conspirators?
It's clear from the past 10 years of people's war and the 19-day people's movement. Why didn't the Congress support a republic then?

Why not?
Ask them. If they were for a republic they'd have voted. They say republic but don't want it, it's double standards. Congress doesn't really want a republic but it can't say it out in public.

Tell us point by point, what should the government do?
After Sunday, the Congress has lost it's right to head the seven-party government. If they still want to lead the alliance they have to correct their mistakes. They must obey parliament's directives to start the process of declaring a republic and fully proportional electoral procedures right away.

Let's say the government doesn't do that...
The movement will continue. If the government doesn't follow parliament's instructions, we have to set up a new interim government. But we are trying our best to keep the six parties united so that regressive forces and international powers can't take advantage. Sunday's voting has polarized the politics, but there is still room for agreement.

“The NC has lost its right to lead the government”

Are we seeing the countdown to the end of Koirala's prime ministership?
He said in parliament he would not let the alliance fall apart and expressed his commitment to a republic. So it may be too early to say.

And there was a lot of dissatisfaction within the UML about the voting?
That is an internal matter of the UML. But the voting did show left unity and a victory for the progressive wing of the UML.

Is your party trying to increase contradictions and usher in an October Revolution?
The October Revolution was a progressive and positive step, but reactionaries are presently trying to label it terrorism. They are trying to break the alliance and isolate the Maoists. But the special session of parliament made that unsuccessful. There was a lot of wheeling and dealing and open interference by reactionaries to break UML-Maoist unity. They were even getting ready to celebrate, but they failed. Therefore they will attempt an even bigger conspiracy now.

What kind of conspiracy?
First, to split the alliance. They will try to prevent the government from following parliament's directives. They will say this is only moral pressure, it is non-binding. There may be more terrorist attacks and criminal activities.

You are regarded as a hard-liner within the party and you are for armed struggle?
The media has begun labelling us hard and soft-liners. The International Crisis Group reported this a long time ago. This is a dangerous conspiracy. This is an effort to bring a split in the movement: to label someone moderate and another a Pol Pot or Bin Laden.

Are you saying there is no disagreement within the Maoists?
As long as there is a party there will be struggle and counter-struggle. If there are no disagreements we wouldn't exist. There has been

disagreement and serious debate even about the 22-point agreement. But there is a conspiracy to label one side stupid and the other wise and tolerant. We leftists believe in resolving our disagreement through interactions and consensus.

What is your personal view about India's role?
There can't be a personal opinion. Which India are we talking about: the Indian government, the Indian people and the various nationalities and classes? There is one class in India which wants to keep Nepal under its tutelage and there are parties which say India's border is the Himalaya. And then there are the people who support the liberation of the Nepali people and their war. A symbol of the asymmetrical relationship is the treaties. We want them scrapped.

But you didn't have any problems with India's role in the 12-point agreement?
During the war, India sold Nepal Rs 3 billion worth of arms. Those weapons were used to kill Nepali people. History is witness to the fact that the Indian ruling class tried to put down the people's movement. They abet the capture of border territory, the tarai violence and unequal treaties. Still we are dependent on India socially, geographically and culturally.

RIM and COMPOSA are dissatisfied with you.
Not true. You are right that some friends in RIM and COMPOSA aren't happy with the path we have taken. But our relations are stable. During the war we had no relations with India and China. We are now developing our diplomatic ties.

Are you still on the path of armed rebellion?
We aren't using the word rebellion. We are on a peaceful path, but if they don't allow us to do take the revolution forward peacefully, if they put up legislative obstacles, and if they use crackdowns, then our response will also be violent.

Finally, you think elections will happen in 2064?
If parliament's directives are followed, they will. Otherwise they won't. Then the madhes and himal will rise up. The oppressed classes, regions, genders, languages and ethnicities will rise up.



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Jomsom by road
.....
Samaya, 3 November

The army is working on a war-footing to complete the road from Beni to Jomsom. Work on the road started in 1996, the year the Maoist war started, and construction halted also because of the conflict.

Now, with only a few cliffs left to blast through, 2,000 labourers and 300 soldiers are working night and day to complete the road by next month. Graveling has been done on the 41km highway and vehicles are already plying the areas that are completed up to Lete. But there is the strange situation where locals prevent trekkers from riding buses because otherwise they won't stay in their lodges.

But the apple growers of Marpha and Jomsom are happy that their fruits will now have a market. With the road, we won't have a situation where apples would be rotting in Mustang while shops in Pokhara sold apples from New Zealand.

Murder
.....
Editorial in Kantipur,
7 November

It is not only when a journalist is murdered, but when any citizen is killed by a responsible political party trying to participate in the political process, that this deed is bound to have an impact on public opinion. The Maoists' use of violence as a political tool took this country to the brink of disaster, but they are now trying to make a transition by cooperating with other parliamentary parties to take part in open politics. But they are showing a lack of accountability and responsibility in their



KIRAN PANDAY

dealings. This is not just a violation of the comprehensive peace agreement, but also proof they are relying on criminals to put down political roots.

The Maoists had waged war on their opponents and professionals in the districts and villages. But a party that believes in armed struggle as an extension of politics is finding it difficult to transform itself. It is finding it difficult to be accountable to the public about its activities. After violent incidents like this, the Maoists have tried to wash their hands by saying that it is not the party's policy to do such things.

The Maoists have tried from the beginning to wriggle out of taking responsibility for the murder of Birendra Sah. But even after their own investigation proved the involvement of party cadres, the Maoists have tried to cover up and delay. The party promised to punish the guilty, but hasn't done so and hasn't handed them over to the state either.

Meanwhile, the administration has shown its inability to carry out a proper investigation and has failed to make the Maoists accountable for the crime. Ordinary citizens are asking: how can an administration that can't even provide justice to a high profile journalist's murder provide security to the general public.

Shameless
.....
Sambhu Shrestha in *Dristhi*,
6 November

There was prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala, who has been repeatedly unsuccessful in conducting elections, telling the interim parliament: "We couldn't reach an agreement but we are still united." You can fool some of the people some of the time, prime minister, but you can't fool all the people all the time. The Nepali people and the international community aren't fools, they understand what you are up to.

To be fair, it's not just Koirala who is at fault here. Pushpa Kamal Dahal is also equally responsible. As long as we can't have the constituent assembly elections there won't be a loktantrik republic in Nepal. But the seven parties are entangled in their own petty interests and pushing the country towards darkness.

The leaders probably think they are everything here. They are wrong, the people are everything, and they want elections and a loktantrik republic. But the parties are now an obstacle to this and the people can't digest it. What is Koirala up to with his "united in our disunity" speech? Is he trying to throw the Maoists into the dustbin of history?



"You haven't been abducted yet, you haven't been disappeared, you haven't got any threats...tell me, are you really a journalist?"

Abin Shrestha in *Samaya*, 8 November

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“ There is no way the parliament directive will be accepted, it will be overturned in the party. It was only brought in to sabotage elections. ”

The UML's KP Oli in *himalkhabar.com*, 7 November

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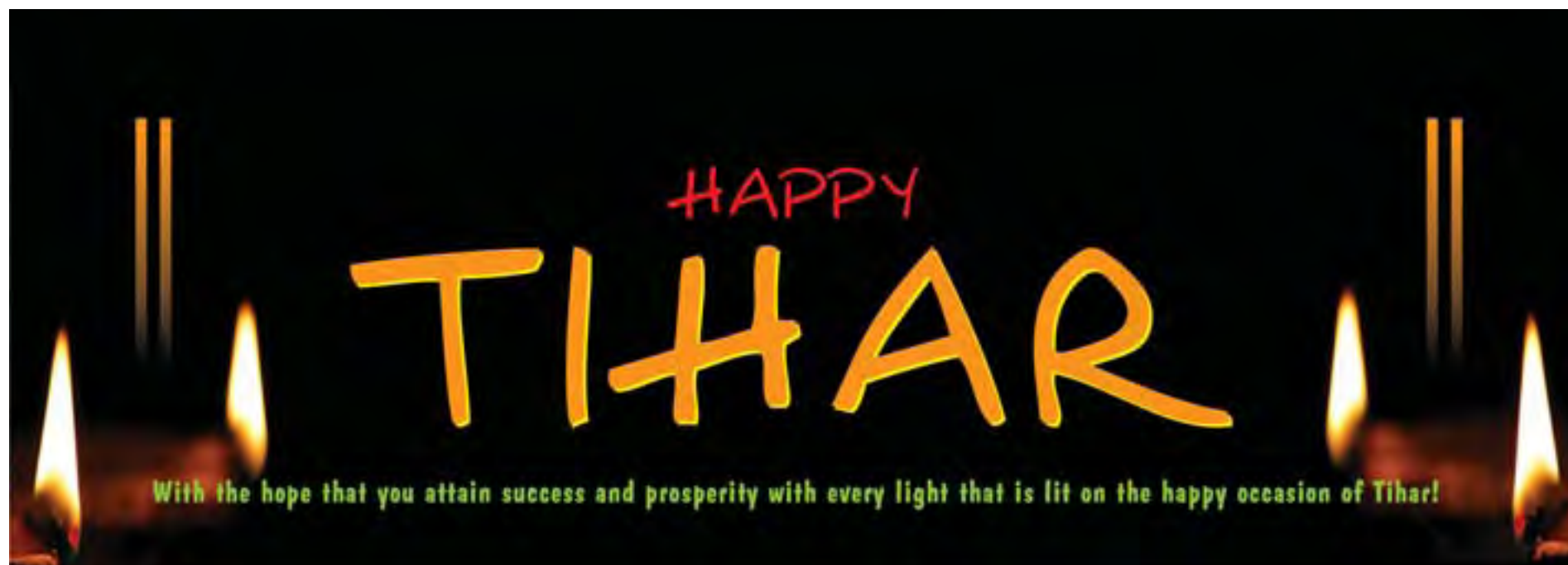
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Manang's battle festival



Ancient ritual is revived, but without the human sacrifices

MANANG—In a dimly-lit stone-walled room in Manang village, men shake the dust out of costumes before trying on brass warrior helmets and rubber devil masks.

It's been three years since the last Badhe festival, a ritual forgotten for more than two decades as urban migration and tourism took their toll on local practices in this scenic valley behind the Annapurnas. But local leaders are keen to see a cultural revival, aimed at young Manangis as well as the 10,000 or so trekkers who pass through here every year.

Badhe is a three-day event, held this year on 25-27 October. The first two days involved outdoor performances which retold the story of a Ghale king sending his army off to battle. While the costumes had to be recreated in Kathmandu, the swords and spears carried by the warriors were authentic relics.

For the last day, the characters changed costumes and joined the head lama in a dance to

drive the devil out of the village. The festival began as a B'on religious ceremony and originally involved the sacrifice of 12 virgin girls, according to oral history. Eventually, goats were sacrificed instead of humans, but these days Badhe is a bloodless affair.

"Before, we used to kill a lot of goats, not with a knife but just by banging them on the ground," remembers 83-year-old Jungme Ghale. "We used to think we'll kill our enemies like that."

In Ghale's youth, the Badhe festival attracted huge crowds, as people came from neighbouring villages to party for a whole week. This year, about 200 locals and around 50 tourists turned out to watch.

The organizers of this year's Badhe, Manang Youth Society and Annapurna Conservation Area Project, hope the 2010 event will attract more young Manangis from the cities and help reconnect them with their cultural heritage. ●

Liam Cochrane in Manang



PICS: LIAM COCHRANE

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Gaining

Women journalists set out their demands, but the road is still long

IRENE PERONI

Logshari Kunwar is the 22-year-old editor of the *Morning Bell*, a daily paper in Kailali. She is a petite, fragile girl, but brave enough to expose a case of corruption in a bylined article.

After the newspaper came out, a group of men stalked her for over a month and eventually beat her up. "Some guys insulted me and punched me in the face," says Logshari, who lost two of her teeth.

Logshari has no intention of giving up journalism. "I am the publisher and editor of this paper. I like my job and I am committed to my career. I will stay on," she told us in Kathmandu last week, where she was among 200 women journalists attending a conference organized by the Federation of

Nepalese Journalists (FNJ).

Logshari's story is not uncommon. Most women journalists work as volunteers or receive only symbolic pay. They are afraid of losing their jobs if they get pregnant, because maternity laws are not implemented. Promotions are very rare, and even the most capable and committed lag behind male colleagues in terms of salary and benefits.

But despite being heavily discriminated against, those who manage to reach key positions end up facing the same responsibilities, and the same dangers, as their male colleagues. Only 16 per cent of journalists in

VOICE OF WOMEN: Sunita Syangtan broadcasting a popular daily Tamang language program at Palung FM on Saturday with studio technician Usha KC.



KUNDA DIXIT

Radio active

The number of women working in the Nepali media is growing dramatically, especially in FM radio. One year ago, there were only two women journalists in Surkhet, today there are 20—most of them working in radio stations but also as correspondents for national newspapers. "I am really excited about my new job," gushes Dipa Koirala, who works 12 hours days at Bheri FM in Surkhet.

Across the street at Bulbule FM, Rita Kandel is also passionate about her new journalism career. "I got into radio by chance, but now I can't leave it," says Rita, who writes and reads the news, reports and also takes care of the technical side of the studio.

Surkhet's new local language programs are also drawing women journalists. Bimala Budamagar reads the Magar news on Radio Nepal's medium wave regional broadcasts.

In Palung valley in central Nepal, 19-year-old Sunita Syangtan handles programming, reporting and procuring on Palung FM's Tamang program. District health authorities in Makwanpur registered a sharp fall in child mortality rates from pneumonia last winter, and they credit Sunita's Tamang language program.

In Biratnagar, the new Purbanchal FM is Nepal's first all-women

ground

Nepal are women, a figure that seems very low in itself but is second only to India among South Asian countries.

Even though more and more women are joining the profession, they are much more likely to drop out than their male colleagues. Many of them are lured by prominent INGOs which offer better pay, others seek a more secure ten-to-five job to be able to look after their families. But many are simply discouraged by the difficulties of doing journalism in a predominantly male world.

The main grudge of Indira Aryal at Radio Lumbini is against local police. “If a male journalist goes to the police station, they are very friendly with him, sharing tea, but if I go I have to work really hard just to convince them that they should talk to me,” says Indira.

Women have to struggle on a daily basis with the psychological stress of reporting because of the unhelpful attitude of colleagues

and the people they interview. “In a society where all decision-makers are men, most sources are sceptical of women’s skills, and sometimes they try to take advantage of the youngest and most inexperienced girls by subtly blackmailing them,” says Nirmala Sharma of Sancharika Samuha, a women communicators’ forum.

A male-dominated workplace can make women feel unwelcome. Even seemingly minor things like the lack of a ladies’ toilet can become a real problem. Creating a more gender-friendly environment was high on the meeting’s agenda.

“Sexual harassment is not only about physical violence, it is also about how people deal with you, the language they use, whether or not they show you respect,” says Yashoda Timsina, a reporter with *Nepal* who is the only woman among 35 male colleagues.

“A year ago I went to the office one morning, turned my computer on and a porn site popped up,” Yashoda recalls. “A male colleague had accessed it from my machine. I got very upset and complained to the editor. They never did it again.”

Despite the difficulties, editors and women activists believe this is a good time for women to embark on media careers in Nepal. There are new websites, FM and TV stations. Parliament has ruled that in every sector, including the media, at least one-third of employees should be female. Some women concede that the real problem is lack of competence.

“To be honest, sometimes it’s difficult for media houses to recruit women, because they haven’t received proper training and are not really as good as their male colleagues,” says Nirmala from Sancharika, which runs journalism courses for women in the districts. ●



women



KAMAL RL

radio station (pictured). Except for the security guard, all the producers, reporters and administrative staff at Purbanchal are women. The station is a cooperative owned by local social organisations, and broadcasts in Tharu, Maithili, Rajbansi,

Jhagand, Dhimal and Santhal. “We are truly inclusive radio,” says Minadebi Biswas of the Sujanshil Community Organisation. “Everyone is happy to finally have a radio that speaks their language.” ●

Tila Bhandari in Surkhet, Kunda Dixit in Palung and Kamal Rimal in Biratnagar

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Global Nepalis come home

They have stopped complaining, and started getting things done

There used to be a time when the main pastime at all Nepali gatherings abroad was a discussion on how corrupt Nepali politicians were and how difficult it was to change the country.

The Third Global NRN Conference over Dasain demonstrated that overseas Nepalis have not only stopped complaining but have become proactive and more assertive



DIASPORA
Jugal Bhurtel

in seeking a role in Nepal's transformation. The meeting was attended by approximately 400 global Nepalis from 40 countries, proving that Nepalis dispersed around the world are more connected with each other and concerned about the wellbeing of Nepal.

No matter how attractive it may look in terms of personal benefits and affluence, migrant communities appear to resist the so-called 'melting pot' theory. The desire to have a distinct identity, fuelled by aggressive globalization of the last decade, is the driving force behind the latest wave of international diaspora networks.

The Nepali diaspora has learnt from its Asian, African and Latino counterparts that through social (networking), intellectual (skills and know-how), political (lobbying), cultural and financial (remittances and direct investment) capital, diasporas can have a lasting developmental impact on countries of their origin.



KIRAN PANDAY

The Non-Resident Nepali (NRN) Association was formed at the first global conference in 2003. The network now has 38 national chapters all over the world, and has also brought direct financial investment and charities to Nepal.

The two previous conferences of 2003 and 2005 were held in the politically-charged war years. The country is still plagued by instability. The constituent assembly elections were postponed on the eve of the Third Global Conference on 15 October in Kathmandu.

Despite this, global Nepalis had an opportunity to assess the diaspora's role

and place in an emerging New Nepal. They identified the role and potential contributions of the Nepali diaspora, looking into legal obstacles that need to be minimised to ensure a total engagement of the two-million-strong overseas Nepali community.

The government has agreed to amend the recently promulgated NRN Bill to incorporate recommendations of overseas Nepalis. The government has transferred the NRN Desk from the Ministry for Industries and Supply to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, symbolizing the shift in its perception by the Nepali bureaucracy,

which in the past was more inclined to see the NRN community only as a source of financial investment.

The 15-point Kathmandu declaration at the conference expressed commitments to explore new employment destinations for Nepali youth in developed countries, utilize skills obtained by returnee migrants in trade schools, establish workers' welfare funds for people on short-term employment, and establish a \$100 million Nepal Investment Fund within a year.

In addition, overseas Nepalis will help in the 'Send Home a Friend' campaign introduced by the government, operate at least one welfare project on behalf of each national chapter of the organization in conflict-affected areas, and mobilize overseas Nepalis to highlight Nepal's cultural heritage and help uplift the flagging tourism industry.

The political establishment in Nepal appears to have finally recognized the collective potential of the extended family abroad for Nepal's development. The organization needs to reap the benefits of this positive situation both in Nepal and abroad and show concrete and tangible progress on commitments made in global conferences.

From now on there will not be any more complaints of lack of favourable laws, dual citizenship and political instability to hold things back for the global Nepali. ●

The author is the spokesperson of the NRN Association (www.nrn.org.np)

Brain gain



HOMEWARD BOUND: "We want to reverse the brain drain," says Sagar Onta of the NRN Youth Forum.

Young Nepalis abroad, tired of hearing only about the best and brightest going abroad to work, have started a project to try and reverse the flow.

The NRN Youth Forum last week signed an MoU with the Nepal Youth Entrepreneurs Forum to push a campaign to lure young Nepali professionals back to Nepal on short and long-term internships with selected organizations in Nepal.

"We thought: let's stop complaining about the brain drain, let's do something about it, that was how the idea came about," says Sagar Onta, vice-president of the international coordination council of the NRNA.

To start with, the program will look for applications from young Nepalis at universities and companies in the US, Japan, Canada and Australia for short-term internships in Nepal. The group has already signed agreements with several business houses in Nepal, including IT companies, media houses and banks, and in the travel and tourism industry.

"We are really glad to be working with the Youth Forum, and this could be the seed of something that could really grow into a movement in future," says Saurav Jyoti of the Nepal Youth Entrepreneurs' Forum, which has already launched a 'Made in Nepal' program to urge Nepalis to buy Nepali products wherever possible.

Besides the internship program, the Youth Forum also wants to start a mentoring program to market Nepali products abroad and bring into the country experts of Nepali origin on everything from transport management to civil aviation and information technology for short-term consultancies.

"The advantage is that we tap into a huge reservoir of goodwill towards Nepal on the part of people of Nepali origin who want to give back to their society," says Onta. "The advantage is that because they are Nepalis they will fit in better than non-Nepalis."

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American eccentricism

How the death of a dog leads to radical self-invention

The last decade in the United States has witnessed a gathering of film with an offbeat sensibility that champions the misfit, the loser, the freak or the generally maladjusted.

This genre we may call American Eccentricism, although inadequate evaluation has often led it to be tagged with unwieldy monikers like 'The New New Wave', 'Quirky New Wave' or 'Neo-Humanism'. Its master, Wes



CRITICAL CINEMA
A Angelo D'Silva

Anderson (*The Royal Tenenbaums*, *The Darjeeling Limited*), with his melancholic characters lovingly propped against gorgeous sets, is already being called an auteur. Noah Baumbach (*The Squid and the Whale*), Miranda July (*Me and You and Everyone We Know*) and Mark Mills (*Thumbsucker*) are others who have left their mark, and the recent success of Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris in *Little Miss Sunshine* owes much to the Eccentricists.

Already renowned for writing comedies like *School of Rock* and *Nacho Libre*, Mike White recently made a not-so-surprising foray into Eccentricism with his directorial debut *Year of the Dog*. Protagonist Peggy, played by the excellent Molly Shannon (*Saturday Night Live*), is a secretary in a nondescript suburban firm. Single, in her forties, her one source of happiness is her beagle named Pencil. Although on the face of it Peggy seems well-adjusted, happily delivering donuts to her workplace and being the sympathetic ear, there's an undercurrent of dissatisfaction. That veneer begins to crack when her much-loved dog tragically dies. The event puts her on a path to some radical self-invention. Befriending and consequently falling for the animal shelter guy Newt (Sarsgaard) who persuaded her to adopt another dog, she finds herself slowly awakening to a new political life of veganism and animal activism, which

eventually up-ends all normalcy in her life.

What White borrows from the Eccentricists is the brilliant juxtaposition of themes: humour in a completely demure world, irony in the (post-9/11) paranoia of America, and meaning in an agonizingly alienating society. Our misfit Peggy commands our real affection even as we are asked to laugh at her oddity. Eccentricist films have always relied on a broad ensemble of secondary characters that reinforces the humanist spirit of the films. Here, however, they serve as a foil to the saintly persona of Peggy. The script White pens plants harsh phrases into their mouths that disturb the viewers with their callous narcissism. And these moments sting, but don't always tickle. It becomes too evident that each person will eventually disappoint, only to highlight the

simple loyalty and innocence of
our feathered and furred
counterparts.

In this story about finding meaning and purpose, White's film fails to match the perfect balance of pain and humour accomplished by its Eccentricist cousins. Its ending, with Peggy elegiacally yet determinedly summarizing her discoveries about herself in an email over a montage of her loved ones, goes far in rescuing the film from the drudgery that infects it by that point. Sadly, despite this correction, the estranged individuals and Peggy's disaffection with humanity through most of the film sour *Year of the Dog*. ●

Year of the Dog
 Director: Mike White
 Cast: Molly Shannon, Peter
 Sarsgaard, Regina King, Laura Dern,
 Josh Pais
 2007. PG-13. 97 min.

Dutch elephant

At a smashing event at the Summit Hotel recently, Cas de Stoppelaar, Consul General of Nepal to the Netherlands, and author of the recently translated *Elephant Polo*, was comfortably in his element, surrounded by friends, businessmen and Summit guests. The evening took on the flavour of a chapter from the book, where fact slips gently into fiction and then trips back again.

The evening's UN flavour was quite strong, particularly fitting given that this international organization began populating the Summit just as the tourists who used to frequent it tailed off during the years of conflict. The translator, Adriaan Verheul, was linked up by live video feed from Virginia (thanks to Skype and Worldlink). Both he and the chief guest, Ian Martin, are serving members of the United Nations.

Elephant Polo charts the trials and tribulations of Oscar Oomen, a Dutch biologist who decides to establish a hotel (the thinly disguised Summit) in Nepal. Many of the characters are drawn from de Stoppelaar's own partners and acquaintances, who will be intrigued to discover how they are rendered in the novel. The book romps along at a fair pace, with belligerent locals, indolent carpenters and imperial foreigners driving the plot. Contemporary politics intersects ever more with the revelry, and when a group of Maoists actually kidnap a number of Oscar's tourists, it appears that his carefree fun is finally over.

De Stoppelaar is an accomplished writer, with two published collections of short stories: *The Lotus Eaters* (1983) and *Beethoven in Darjeeling* (1990), both in Dutch. With *Elephant Polo*, his first novel, he has tried his hand at a new style which will prove to be popular with readers looking for culturally-rooted escapism. We leave you with a sample:

'Oscar doesn't waste a second. He runs down the staircase, almost slips and falls while making the turn under the bamboo shrubs, runs through the vegetable garden and sees through the gate of the trekking field a number of Sherpas hacking away at each other. If it wasn't for the survival of the tourist season, he would have taken a moment to absorb this scene that seems to have escaped from a medieval painting by Brueghel. Large fires light up the field and in the flickering of the flames shadows are fighting with whatever object they can lay their hands on. Everybody seems to be swinging their knuckles at everybody else. Sixty completely drunk men are in the process of eliminating each other, his entire trekking staff.'

Martin Grassi



Elephant Polo: The Rise and Fall of a Hotel in Nepal

by Cas de Stoppelaar
Translated from the original Dutch by
Adriaan Verheul
ISBN 978-1-60402-705-1
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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **The Work of the Wind** by Italian artist Giovanni Battista Ambrosini at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, 13-27 November. 4218048

EVENTS

- ❖ **Kukur Puja** 8 November
- ❖ **Laxmi Puja** 9 November
- ❖ **Mha Puja/Laxmi Puja** 10 November
- ❖ **Bhai Tika** 11 November
- ❖ **Dasain Swing Festival** at the Garden of Dreams, Kaiser Mahal, 10AM-6PM, with evening lighting from 6-7PM and Festival of Lights on 9 November. 4425340
- ❖ **Dipawali** with music, dance and bonfire at the poolside and garden at the Grand Norling Resort, Gokarna, 7.30 PM onwards on 2 November, Rs 400. 4482993
- ❖ **Bingo Nights** at the Welcome Food Plaza, Darbar Marg, starts 6PM every Monday. 2337201
- ❖ **Play and Learn** German at the German Info and Culture Centre, Thamel. 4700832
- ❖ **School Bullying** a workshop by Niti Rana, 24 & 25 November at The New Era, Battisputali. 9851023958
- ❖ **Toastmasters** a communication and leadership program, organised by Kathmandu Toastmasters Club every Wednesday 6PM at Industrial Enterprise Development Institute (IEDI) building, Tripureswor. 4288847

MUSIC

- ❖ **Dipawali Jam Night** at Moksh Live, 8 November at Moksh. 5526212
- ❖ **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

- ❖ **Steak** at Olive Bar and Bistro, available for lunch and dinner at a-la-carte rates with live band in the evenings, Radisson Hotel. 4411818
- ❖ **Nauratha** special vegetarian dinner at The Café, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Vegetarian alternative** at Stupa View restaurant and café, Boudha Stupa. 4480262
- ❖ **Steak Fare** a la carte steak menu at Rox-Hyatt's Signature Restaurant from 6PM onwards till 12 November. 4491234
- ❖ **Sunday Jazz Brunch** Hyatt's BBQ brunch with live jazz music at the Rox Garden, Hyatt Regency. 4491234.
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Crepes and Smoothies** - Come for Hi-Tea to taste our tempting crepes and fresh smoothies at The Lounge from 4.30-6.30 PM. Please call 4491234
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- ❖ **Lajawaab** curry, kebab and biryani festival, every Friday, 7PM onwards at Café Horizon, Hotel Himalaya. 5523900
- ❖ **Starry Night Barbecue** at Hotel Shangri-la with Live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs. 666.00 nett. per person, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 6.30 PM onwards. 4412999
- ❖ **Kebabs and curries** at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619
- ❖ **Krishnarpan** Nepali specialty restaurant at Dwarika's Hotel, six to 22 course ceremonial lunch and dinner. 4479488
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WEEKEND WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

A powerful low pressure system is sitting over the eastern Tibetan plateau, gathering clouds across the Himalaya, some of which sneak through to give us unseasonal rains like those we saw on Tuesday afternoon. A countervailing high pressure system over northern India, however, is cancelling out the Tibetan trough and the clouds should peter out by early next week. This satellite image on Wednesday morning suggests no significant change to the current scenario for the weekend. It means days are calm with sunny intervals and shallow cloudy layers in the afternoon. The winds are still from the southwest, so the temperature will not drop much and Tihar will be hazy.



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KIRAN PANDAY

SRSg: UNMIN chief Ian Martin addresses the media on Tuesday on his return from New York, emphasizing that elections were a vital part of the peace process.



KUMAR SHRESTHA/NEPALNEWS.COM

HEALTHY GROWTH: Prime Minister GP Koirala on Wednesday attends the Silver Jubilee celebrations at Patan Hospital, which is adding a new maternity wing with support from the Nick Simons Foundation.



KIRAN PANDAY

MACAQUE MISERY: Primatologist Jane Goodall unveils a report on the sale of Nepali monkeys for lab testing, published by the Stop Monkey Business Campaign Coalition, in Kathmandu on Monday.



MILAN RIMAL

SELF-WORSHIP: Grade Five students at a school in Patan celebrate the Newari festival of Mha Puja on Wednesday by blessing themselves.

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Hic, hic hurray!

Let's not split hairs here about whether Comrade Lotus Flower and Comrade Red Banner were summoned to Lainchaur last weekend, or they rushed over when they heard His Excellency was about to meet the prime minister. What is sure is that PKD and BRB got the shock of their lives when they were ambushed by hacks after meeting Shivbhai. The surest **kiss of death** for a politician in Nepal these days is to be seen to be sneaking out of the Indian embassy under cover of darkness. The Indians themselves have realized that the best way to pull the rug from someone they don't like is to leak it to the press that so-and-so had a 90-minute tete-a-tete with the ambassador, and **poof!**

Ironically, the very next day Comrade Janardan Sharma of the unsuccessful-attack-on-Tansen fame was delivering a tirade against "imperialists and expansionists" from the rostrum in parliament. Among the Maoist rank-and-file, where Red Banner is already called Big Brother's **sidekick**, there were snide remarks all week about their leaders going to the embassy with their tails between their legs—the same comrade leaders who in 2004 told them to dig tunnels and bunkers all over the country to prepare for an Indian invasion.

Too bad Janardan Babu and Suresh Sir haven't got US visas even though 37 other MPs have got theirs for the mass junket to attend the UN general assembly and play shell games in NYC. No wonder they were in such a hurry to wrap up the special session. Some MPs are taking their wives and husbands, which reminds the Ass, is anyone monitoring whether they come back? The Australians, Danes, Malaysians and French still haven't said either yes or no to our Maoist ambassador designates. The donkey's mole in the UML says the Maoists cleverly deployed **Comrade Leftist God** to dangle prime ministership before Makunay to get

him to agree to vote together in the house. Cross my heart.

Now that Nepal is the world's cardamom superpower, it is shameful that our only railway line from Janakpur to Jaleswor is out of action, the baggage carousel at Kathmandu airport was not working throughout Dasain at a time of peak traffic because someone forgot to propitiate it with a goat sacrifice, and they're still mixing our diesel with 40 percent kerosene. How are we going to show our faces at the **International Cardamom Congress** this year?

As the interests of the Maoistas and the monarchistas converge more and more, it was only natural that there should be **jubilation** at Narayanhiti and Nirmal Nibas on Sunday night. With the Maoists determined not to let elections happen unless they can win, which is probably never, it looks like the monarchy's future is now assured. No wonder they are celebrating. Hic, hic, hurray!

In a week when it looked like elections would be held next decade if at all, an NC central committee member was killed in Lahan, news of a journalist's murder was admitted by the Maoists and the country is poised for another **paroxysm** of street agitation after Tihar, what is our cabinet doing? It decides to devote half the meeting to denounce Musharaff's coup and pass a solution. The mouse has roared. But then what do you expect from a prime minister who devotes three-fourths of his speech to parliament before it voted to why everyone should vote kangresi because otherwise the international community would be ticked off. That's even worse than being summoned to Lainchaur.





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