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**Times** nepalnews.com  
Weekly Internet Poll # 400

Q. What should be the priority of the political parties now?

Total votes: 4,355

- Formation of the government: 48.4
- Decision on monarchy: 14
- Political agreement: 17
- Relief to the people: 17

Weekly Internet Poll # 401. To vote go to: [www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com)  
Q. What should king Gyanendra now do?

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# It will happen here

ARUNA UPRETY in XINING

It was 2.32 PM on 12 May when the tables in the office started rocking. There was no panic, and it was only later that the full horror of what was going on 500km away in Sichuan became apparent.

The 7.9 magnitude earthquake flattened many towns in the central Chinese province, and by Thursday the death toll had risen to 19,500 with a staggering 45,000 more still buried under buildings. Here at the edge of the Tibetan plateau in Qinghai province, office and factories are donating blood and organising help.

China has mobilised 50,000 soldiers, deployed its search and rescue teams and provided unprecedented access to the mass media. Emergency relief

and medical services are pouring in.

As a Nepali doctor who has been involved in relief in Iran after the Bam earthquake and post-tsunami medical camps in Sri Lanka, my thoughts turned immediately to Nepal and the unthinkable: a similar quake hitting Kathmandu. A Big One in Kathmandu is not a question of if. It is a question of when.

Even with professional rescue teams, mobility and resources, the Chinese have found it difficult to get equipment and personnel to the epicenter. Many hospitals and school buildings have come down, killing hundreds of patients and children.

With Kathmandu's urban density, shoddy construction, and no state-level emergency plan, a future earthquake would



**NOT IF BUT WHEN:** A family stands in front of the remains of their house Sichuan on Tuesday morning. A Big One in Kathmandu is long overdue.

leave between 100,000-200,000 dead. The last big earthquake in 1934 was of 8.0 magnitude and killed 5,000 people in Kathmandu at a time when the Valley's population was only 150,000 and most lived in two-storey houses. One-third of Kathmandu's population perished in the 1255 earthquake, including King Abhaya Malla.

There has been a big earthquake in Nepal every 70 years and the next one is long overdue. Nepal's planners must start thinking about rescue, relief, rehabilitation, retrofitting seismic-resistant schools and

hospitals and enforcing zoning laws.

Those who survive will face water and food shortages. With roads and the airport damaged, relief will be delayed and social anarchy will spread. Nepal has begun to organise urban self-help groups for building safety and emergency response.

"If a Sichuan-type earthquake were to hit here it would be catastrophic," says Amod Dixit of the earthquake safety group, NSET, "we've just got started, and there's an urgent need to accelerate work on disaster preparedness." ●

## The Sichuan quake is a wake-up call for Nepal



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Published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd. Editor: Kunda Dixit  
CEO: Ashutosh Tiwari Design: Kiran Maharjan  
Director Sales and Marketing: Sunaina Shah  
Marketing Manager: Sambhu Guragain  
Asst Managers: Deepak Sangraula, Subhash Kumar, Tanka Sitaula  
Subscriptions: Nawaraj Guragain Tel: 5542535/5542525

Hatiban, Godavari Road, Lalitpur  
GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu 5250333/845, Fax: 5251013  
Printed at Jagadamba Press, Hatiban: 5250017-19



## DIARY OF A NATION

This is the 400<sup>th</sup> edition of *Nepali Times*. Flipping through the back issues in our electronic archives ([www.nepalitimes.com/archive.php](http://www.nepalitimes.com/archive.php)) is like reading a nation's diary.

When the first issue of this paper hit the stands in 2000, King Birendra was on the throne, the political parties had already lost their way, there were general strikes every other week and the Maoist war was intensifying. Fed up with political instability, royal hardliners were pressuring Birendra to be more assertive.

The newly-elected Prime Minister Girija Koirala was off to Delhi and his main job was to restore ties with India that had soured after the hijacking of IC814. The page one story on our #1 issue of 6 July 2000 was Koirala's India wishlist. It looks oddly familiar today: renegotiating the 1950 treaty, hydropower, signing an extradition treaty. Despite all the changes of the past eight years, we see how little has changed.

The reports, columns, editorials speak of opportunities squandered. Whenever there was a chance to do the right thing, our rulers did the wrong thing. The media analysed, interpreted and dispensed advice, but leadership was trapped by greed, political ambition and inflated egos. We never had illusions that the media could change much, but the past eight years showed the limitations of media in improving governance.

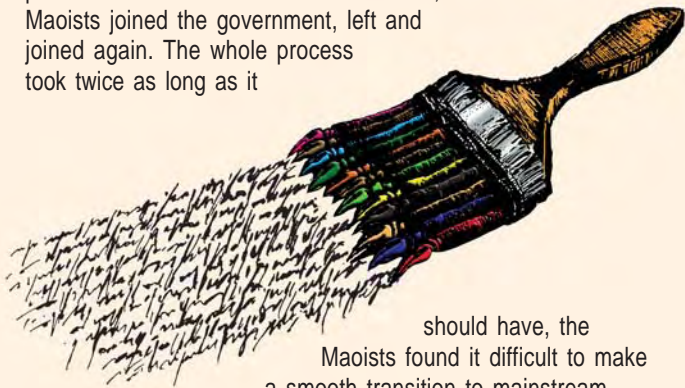
The 100<sup>th</sup> issue in 2002 warned about climate change melting the Himalaya. But there was no time to worry about global issues: the royal family had been butchered, and the conflict had deepened as the army got involved in a dirty war. The issue of 4 July 2002 carried an interview with the British charge d'affaires in which he said Nepal shouldn't be allowed to become a failed state. He prescribed better delivery of services, governance, strong political leadership and a crackdown on corruption as the best way to combat "terrorism".

King Gyanendra was in a vain quest to make his creeping coup work, and famously said: "Those who are loyal are not competent and those who are competent are not loyal."

Soon, he started clamping down on the media, and we wrote in the 200<sup>th</sup> issue: 'Banning the truth doesn't make it disappear. Free speech is not truly free if you are only allowed to say nice things. The government may not like what the media says, but it must protect our right to say it.'

The warning went unheeded and the February First coup blacked out the media with direct military censorship. After that, it took only 14 months for the whole authoritarian edifice to collapse and Gyanendra to fade into a lingering limbo.

By June 2006 parliament was restored, the parties worked on an interim constitution, the Maoists joined the government, left and joined again. The whole process took twice as long as it



should have, the Maoists found it difficult to make a smooth transition to mainstream politics. We in the media were too mesmerised by squabbles in the capital to correctly gauge the anger and despair in the rest of the country.

In his State of the State column in issue #300 CK Lal wrote: 'Unless we find jobs for this restive and angst-filled generation, it will be impossible to establish sustainable peace. Many are internally displaced by the insurgency and counter-insurgency. They have no family, no jobs and no hope. Now they have no cause either. The deprived have no stake in stability.'

The political parties didn't see the writing on the wall, they carried on with business as usual and got swept away by the Maoist storm surge. Has our leadership learnt its lesson? Going by the wheeling and dealing this week, it doesn't look like it. We hope the Maoists will not fall into the same trap, nor go off on vain attempts to enforce utopia.

One lesson from the past eight years is that the Nepali people will not tolerate totalitarianism even if it is justified by the promise of "fast-track" development. For every successful Singapore model in the world today there are disastrous Burma or North Korea models.

Let our future rulers be warned: don't mistake your electoral mandate as a right to trample on rights.



#1, 6 July 2000



#200, 11 June 2004

## The next 400



Eight years ago, *Nepali Times* started with promises. Promises to report the truth with evidence every week. Promises to carry news from around Nepal that is neglected. Promises to elevate design and photography. Promises to consistently offer content of value to discerning readers and premium advertisers.

Judging by the rising readership both in hard copy and online eSpecial editions, and the affection it receives from advertisers, it is clear that *Nepali Times* has fulfilled promises it made in 2000. Building up on that success, here's what we promise to do in the next 400 issues:

*Nepali Times* promises to develop additional business, trade and finance content as the country's quality of life, employment levels and incomes rise. It promises to give Nepal's sharpest young journalists the freedom to explore issues that matter to you.

It promises to make full use of multimedia platforms to deliver reliable news and views interactively to you. And it promises to continue informing and entertaining you through its trademark tone of lively language to address serious issues.

Ashutosh Tiwari  
CEO, Himalmedia

## World class



Week after week since the first issue on 6 July 2000, *Nepali Times* has brought you in-depth reporting and expert commentaries on Nepali politics, business, culture, travel and society. All this within an attractive and lively package that has credibility and world-class production values.

In this 400<sup>th</sup> issue, we express our appreciation to the valuable partnership we have had with you, our advertisers and clients. Your confidence in us and unflinching support has been a very important part of this success. We look forward to deeper cooperation in the coming years as *Nepali Times* expands its content and reach.

We will cover issues that matter to people who matter.

Sunaina Shah  
Director, Sales and Marketing  
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#100, 28 June 2002



#300, 2 June 2006



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## LETTERS

### ELECTRIC HORSEPOWER

It is good to see the diplomats going electric ('Flying the green flag', #399). I myself have just bought a Chinese electric bike and it is great for Kathmandu. But will it really benefit Nepal and the Nepalis if the duty for electric vehicles are reduced? Nepalis can't afford to discard the cars that they have now and buy imported e-vehicles. Nepal should immediately ban importation of all new vehicles and convert the taxis and small vehicles to electric power. We could build electric mass transit systems. That could create a lot of jobs and help the economy. It will certainly be a New Nepal that everybody will want to come to or want to come back to.

**Rajendra Khadga, Lazimpat**

● It is a great irony that the diplomats and ambassadors who least need subsidies pay the duty-free price for their electric vehicles, while Nepalis who need a subsidy have to pay 140 percent tax. You really have to admire the intelligence and foresight of the MoF and our rulers. Bravo!

**Gyan Subba, email**

### UNMIN

I absolutely agree with your editorial 'Not out of the woods yet' (#399) that UNMIN should remain with a skeletal team after its term expires in July. Let's not be over-confident, the need of the hour is to take everyone along in the peace process. Precipitous behaviour will not bring peace or progress. It's high time Prachanda and his future team show that they are implementers.

**Nirmal Ghimire, University Of Girona, Spain**

### INDIA SHINING

Thanks to Prashant Jha for his good insight into the great Indian economic divide ('More unequal', #399). Maybe our policy makers will realise that blindly copying the policies of a big economy doesn't guarantee that we will solve our economic woes. If unchecked, booming economic prosperity can lead to over-consumption and a huge gap between the haves and have-nots. However, too much control can lead to slow or even negative economic growth. Therefore the policies should be conducive to rapid economic growth but at the same time ensure that the earnings trickle down to the poor.

**Swagat R Pyakurel, Biratnagar**

● Only in Bihar does it happen that the dacoits become revolutionaries ('South of the border', #398). The Maoists are worse than the UML and NC. They are looters and pillagers and the YCL hasn't stopped doing what it does best. How can you expect them to be better than the UML or NC?

**Kamal Kishor, email**

### DRAGONS

I really enjoyed reading 'There be dragons' by CK Lal (State of the State, #399). Based on the paranoia expressed in Delhi, the future prime minister/president Prachanda should take his cue from this article as to how much South Block worries about China and capitalise on it for the

economic development he has envisioned for the country. Perhaps this could be a leverage also to settle border and water disputes with India.

**Dino Shrestha, email**

● I wonder what makes CK Lal overlook Indian encroachment into Nepali territory, the inundation of Nepali land by embankment building across the border (#399). There is huge Indian interference in Nepali affairs, yet he says China needn't get alarmed with this. Does Mr Lal want Nepal to agree to remain a playground for India?

**Loken Bhatta, email**

### PARTY PALACE

Your Ass's brilliant idea to turn Narayanhiti into a party palace (Backside, #398) 'in stiff competition to the Garden of Dreams' could actually be a boon for this garden, which was neither restored nor ever intended for such a purpose. As frequent visitors to this oasis of peace and tranquility in the busy heart of Kathmandu, we are worried by the increasing number of private parties, weddings and other disturbing events since the beginning of this year, and the concurrent lack of appropriate maintenance and repairs. The central pond has never been as dirty as now, nor have the previously manicured lawns been so dismally dry and overused. In clear violation of its own rules, the garden management allows commercial advertisements on its premises, as well as pop concerts, and without controlling sound volumes to reasonable levels. Only recently, we and all other clients of the Kaiser Cafe left by 4PM due to the unbearable sound-checks for such an evening event.

**Geert Hildebrand (Germany) Bimal Subedi, Biswa Khadka Friends of the Garden of Dreams**

### ASININE AGAIN

The Ass got it wrong in 'An awesome economy' (#399). FYI, in *Animal Farm* (in the movie at least) the dogs Napoleon nurtured were not Alsations but Doberman Pinschers.

**Subodh, email**

### LETTERS

*Nepali Times* welcomes feedback. Letters should be brief and may be edited for space. While pseudonyms can be accepted, writers who provide their real names and contact details will be given preference. Email letters should be in text format without attachments with 'letter to the editor' in the subject line.

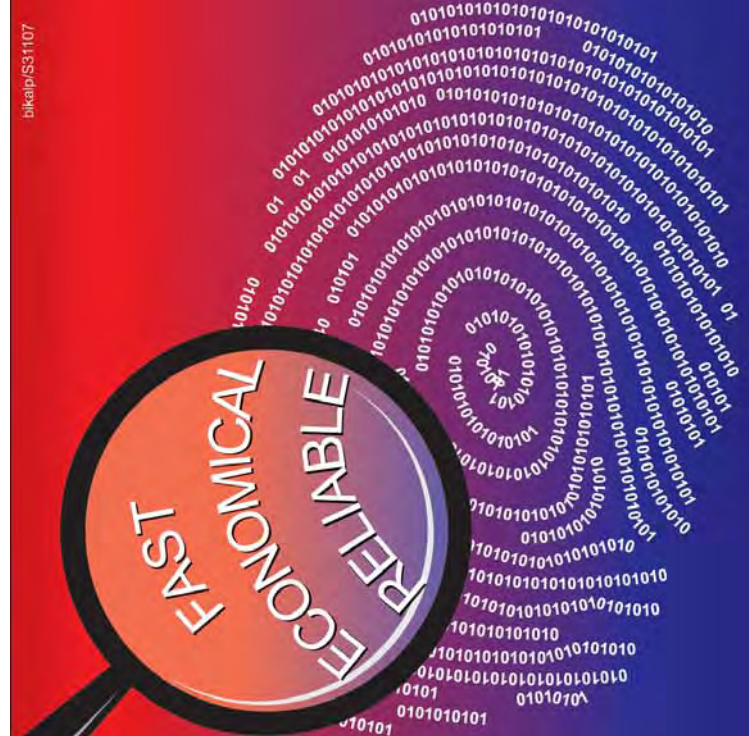
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# The state of our nation state

Preparing the rough draft of history for mythmakers of the future

Over the past eight years, it has been a remarkable experience to see the consciousness of common Nepalis—be they from the Pahad or Madhes—evolve from being loyal subjects of a king to aspiring citizens of a republic of laws.



**STATE OF THE STATE**  
C K Lal

After penning over 400 State of the State columns from the days of pre-launch online issues of *Nepali Times*, the “Zero Edition” in print and the hardcopy #1, I have learnt the pedagogy of punditry by doing.

And I have learnt to face the music that comes from pontificating from the pulpit. But all told, the joys and sorrows of preparing rough drafts of history, as possible testimonies for mythmakers of the future, have been intense.

It's difficult to recapitulate eight years of history running on steroids, but

five issues dominated almost everything written during this period in this column:

- Revolution vs reform as the preferred method of political change
- Constitutional monarchy vs communist regime and the importance of the political centre
- Nepalpan versus Nepaliyata and the question of identity
- Nepal's dependency and doubts over the intentions of India
- The challenges of building an inclusive, progressive and democratic Nepal where the margins and the mainstream compete rather than contest for control over commons and the state.

The Constituent Assembly will

have to struggle with all these issues as it begins to write the supreme law of the land from next month.

The royal palace was never comfortable with the notion of

constitutional supremacy. K P Bhattarai once confided at home that King Birendra thought that the army was his. That was the inspiration for a column on the ‘Royal Nepal Army (Pvt.) Ltd’, a piece that proved to be sadly prophetic when King Gyanendra posted it to watch the prime minister prior to dismissing him from his post.

Civil-Military relations will probably be tougher to handle than the management of Maoist combatants. The April Uprising made the Rhododendron Revolution redundant, but if peaceful politics isn't allowed to exist, warts and all, the risk of chronic coups will remain even when Nepal becomes a democratic republic.

It was the Narayanhiti Massacre that heralded the beginning of the end of the Shah regime. Gyanendra merely rushed the process by desiring to be the son of his father rather than an accidental

inheritor of his brother's throne. The dates 22 May 2002, 4 October 2002 and 1 February 2005 were merely signposts on the road to republicanism.

The journey had begun the day King Birendra refused to let the government use all its instruments, including the army, to fight an incipient insurgency. Once it grew into a full-fledged rebellion, there was no way but to relent. In the coming days, the importance of the political centre to counter the possibility of communist totalitarianism will probably emerge with even greater force.

Reorienting the Nepal-India relationship is more complex with the Madhes claiming its right to be heard and Maoists ready to make any compromise to entrench themselves in Kathmandu. But unless they listen to each other and decide to work together, the dream of an inclusive republic of Nepal will remain a dream.

We will continue to chase that dream. After all, as someone rightly asked, “What are heavens for?” ●



## The Maoists' first budget

Uncertainties about the composition of the new government, and especially about who is going to be finance minister, has put the new budget in a cloud of uncertainty.

However, because the Maoists will certainly lead the government they will be setting out the priorities in the budget estimates. And if their election manifesto is anything to go by, their populist proposals all need fresh allocations.

The Maoists have promised free basic health care, free education, writing off small loans to farmers, allowances for the elderly and safe drinking water to the entire population within five years.

In the medium-term, they have also promised double-digit economic growth, boosting annual per capita income from \$300 to \$3,000 by 2020 and producing 10,000 megawatts of hydroelectricity in the next 10 years.

Where is the money going to come from? At the National Planning Commission (NPC), there is uncertainty about how its estimated Rs 189 billion budget for the next year is going to factor in provisions of the Maoist ‘New Transitional Economic Policy’.

“It is too early to comment on it,” says Dipendra Bahadur Kshetri, the Maoist-appointed member of the NPC. The

The new Maoist-led government will have to balance populism with realism

grandiose Maoist plans for growth would need an annual economic growth of 20 percent or more, and many say this is just an utopian dream.

The government had allocated Rs 98 billion for recurrent expenditure and Rs 55 billion for capital expenditure in the present budget. But at the end of the fiscal

year, Rs 28 billion from the recurrent budget hasn't been spent and less than half the money set aside for capital investment has been spent.

“The reason for underspent capital expenditure is because there were no elected officials in the VDCs and municipalities, but usually the recurrent budget is spent by the end of the fiscal

year,” says Krishna Hari Baskota, joint secretary at the Ministry of Finance.

Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat told *Nepali Times* on Wednesday that budget preparations were “routine” and on schedule. “However, policy level discussion has not taken place,” he said, “that will happen once the exact nature of the new

government is clear.”

Mahat didn't want to comment on whether he would continue as Finance Minister, but said the country's macro-economic parameters were sound. “I would suggest that the next budget be economically sustainable, growth-friendly, rural-oriented and focused on reducing measures.” The NPC is reported to be working on a budget for rural expenditure presented by the Maoist-led Ministry of Local Development.

Nepal's GDP growth may be less than four percent this fiscal year, below the forecasted five percent because of sluggish manufacturing due to labour and power crises.

“The biggest challenge for the Maoists is how to lift economic growth,” said one economist, “without that none of their promises are going to be kept. It's time to be realistic, not populist.” ●

Dewan Rai and Gita Dhungana



### escape

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## Meet dream team



Pepsi has launched a campaign called "Pepsi—Meet the dream team". Those interested will SMS an answer to the question of the week, garnered from catching TV adverts. Every week one winner will get a cash prize of Rs 100,000. At the end of the fifth week, the grand prize winner, chosen through a lucky draw, will win an all expense paid trip to Barcelona to meet the 'Pepsi Dream Team' with stars such as Messi and Henry.

## Youth meet

The Confederation of Nepalese Industries-Young Entrepreneurs Forum and Nepalese Young Entrepreneurs Forum jointly organised an interaction program, 'New economic thought for New Nepal' on 10 May. The program, attended by Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai, focussed on the issue of economic policies as conceived by the Maoists and the perspective and role of young entrepreneurs in changing times.

## Real flavour

After the successful completion of 11 weeks of "Guess the Real Flavour of the Week," Real will now announce the winner of the mega bumper prize through a grand lucky draw. The winner gets to go on a Star cruise for two on the ship liner Super Star Aquarius. The second and third prizes are a laptop and a digital camera.



## Royal scheme

Royal Merchant Banking and Finance Limited has launched the "Royal Tin Ko Paanch Yojana". Under this scheme, if



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## New Gladiator



Morang Auto Works has launched its new 125cc Gladiator SS in the market. The new bike has 28 newly

developed features that add to its performance, styling, handling and comfort. The bike, priced at Rs 138,900 comes in two colours: yellow and red and offers a mileage of 76km per litre.

## Flexi scheme

United Finance has introduced a new United flexi saving account that will allow customers to open an account for Rs 1000 at seven percent interest. This new scheme includes free accident insurance and a cheque book. The customer will also receive a 0.5 percent discount in new loans.



युनाइटेड फाइनेन्स लिमिटेड

## Thai sharing

Thai Airways International Public Company and Royal Brunei Airlines will begin code-share flights from 15 May. As part of the code-share agreement, Thai Airways will code-share on Royal Brunei Airlines' services on the routes Bangkok to Bandar Seri Begawan and back. Tickets are open for sale from 2 May.

### NEW PRODUCTS

#### MUNCHY:

Himalayan Snacks has introduced the new Mayos Munchy Cheese Balls. The product will be available in 10g, 15g, 20g, and 25g packs. The product will cater to children and teenagers.



STIX: Marigold Foods has launched a new snack called U n Me Stix. The product is available in the market for Rs 10 in masala flavour. The company plans to

introduce chicken and vegetable flavoured stix in the coming months.

XENON: Hansraj Hulaschand has launched the Xenon range of inverters, UPS and batteries in the market. The Xenon Ace Pure Sine Wave inverter can run under a heavy load and will not be affected by voltage fluctuations. It also ensures the safety of the equipment. Proprietary technology allows rapid battery charging and provides up to 20 percent extra battery life.



# Digesting inflation

## It's not just price hikes

Supermarket shelves are emptying throughout the world. From Argentina to the UK to Japan politicians have worried looks and the newspapers are gravely charting the rising food prices and dwindling stocks.



**ECONOMIC SENSE**  
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In Haiti, the food crisis has already toppled the government. Haitian governments are toppled famously easily, but even in India, the UPA government may lose the next election if the opposition exploits the issue resourcefully enough. The Chinese state think-tanks are working overtime to ensure that the country's vast infrastructure and resources are able to supply food to all of its vast population.

In Nepal, the focus has been on the upcoming government in the constituent assembly, so the food issue has not been much more than a few reports in the papers. But we should not ignore this matter. If inflation fuelled by the food shortage gets out of control no one knows where it might stop. Nepal is lucky to have its currency pegged to the Indian rupee, which is still strong against the US dollar. But a big devaluation of the rupee, as happened in the early nineties could lead to chaos here as much as in India.

The global food shortage is being exacerbated by growing consumption of both foodstuffs and other commodities, which is now close to outstripping supply.

Consumption has increased on four counts. Firstly, the growing affluence in developing countries is increasing the demand for grain. Secondly, the advent of large retail stores like supermarkets and hypermarkets which stock a large quantity and variety of foodstuffs means that more food is in the storeroom. Thirdly, people are eating more meat, which necessitates more grain to feed more animals. And fourthly, now that the search is on for renewable energies and alternatives fuels, much former cropland is being given over to producing biofuels.

The rise in oil prices has only made matters worse. The cost of transportation is



SAM KANG LI

increasing at a phenomenal rate and it is probably not long till a time when in landlocked countries like Nepal, the transportation costs will start to form a large portion of the retail price. Spiralling prices for food and other basic items will naturally hit the public's purchasing power, and then of course it is only a matter of time until possibly violent demands for wage increases start to surface.

These are the times when data, research and economic think-tanks become useful. Unfortunately in Nepal, we know little about the impact of urbanisation and the absence of land use laws on agricultural production. We don't understand the link between fuel prices, transportation costs and retail rates. We are unaware of the supply chain and find it difficult to detect hoarding of foodstuffs. What is the relationship between the changes in eating patterns amongst urban youth and the availability of various food commodities? What has been the impact of large retail stores on supply and consumption? Due to a lack of professional and theoretical expertise, we are still barely equipped to answer these questions.

Now as the CPN (Maoist) forms a new government, the challenges from basic issues of food supply and inflation are greater and more dangerous than they have been for several decades. If the government does not formulate and implement hard-headed and well-considered policies to ride this storm, then they are likely to spend more of their time extinguishing burning tyres than writing a new constitution. ●

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I am in the graceful rush  
Of beautiful birds in circling flight  
I am the starshine of the night  
I am in the flowers that bloom  
I am in a quiet room  
I am in the birds that sing  
I am in each lovely thing.

To our dearest Ranjan, Pooja, Chandan, Anjana & the Kayestha family  
May you find the courage to face tomorrow  
In the love that surrounds you today.

With deepest sympathy  
Rishi and Sunaina

# Smug king

Jana Aastha, 14 May

अस्था

Royalists who met at the king's in-laws' home in Maitighar on Monday evening for a secret discussion on the king's options seemed happy to see him so confident and relaxed. Those who met the king said that the under no circumstances would he quit Narayanhiti, and he is reported to have said: "You don't need to worry. I'm not going to just leave. If need be, I'll ask for your help." What is the reason for the king's confidence?

At the meeting hosted by Baikuntha Shumsher JBR at his place in Maitighar Heights, one royal relative said that the king should not meet with Prachanda just yet. Indeed the king has ignored requests for an audience, and has been using go-betweens like Kamal Thapa to negotiate with the Maoists.

Rumours abound that there was a secret agreement between the Congress, UML, Maoists and king back in 2006, which may be the reason why the king is still sitting pretty in the palace. There is a lot of speculation but no definite proof as to what America, India, the king, Prachanda and Baburam (in Noida in India) UML and Congress agreed to in April 2006 in return for the king restoring parliament.



KIRAN PANDAY

## Dear education

Madhab Raj Acharya in  
Samaya, 10-16 May

अनार

The high tuition and admission fees private schools charge are always a topic of discussion among parents and the political parties.

But to think that the problem will be solved if the government simply places a ceiling on private school fees is not pragmatic. If this was done, fees would indeed go down. But many schools may have to shut down, and even if they stay afloat standards may go down.

Society will have to live with the consequences. Before forcing schools to reduce their fees, the government should first try and raise the quality of government schools so they are a more attractive option. Compare the state-run companies, banks, airlines and schools with private ones and you'll see a lack of proper management, hard work and a sense of belonging, and understand that nationalisation of private schools is not the solution to any problem.

If the government raised the standards in state schools then more children would enroll, and private schools would be forced to standardise their fees automatically.

## New beginning

Ajay Dixit in Kantipur, 13 May

कान्तिपुर

At the recently held Patna Conference, Bihar's Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, like the chief minister in 1992, proposed to construct a high dam on the Kosi, but he also mentioned that the prosperity of Nepal and the Nepali people is equally important. The chief minister said: "First of all the electricity should cater to the needs of the Nepali people. Only if there is surplus power should it be exported to India to generate revenue..."

Employment generators can't be sustained without reasonably priced and easily available power. And without new employment, Nepal cannot prosper. Bihar and the other border states face similar challenges, but it is a welcome gesture from the chief minister to acknowledge that Nepal needs power too.

The chief minister's view that the environment and ecosystems will be strengthened by high dams is not true. The proposed high dams will produce large amounts of electricity, but it's likely that thousands will be displaced, forests, tributaries and biodiversity will be seriously affected. Any hydropower development must also consider these issues.



First date of publication: 16 May 2008

Enhancing Access to Justice  
through Legal and Judicial Reforms Project

## VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT



The Enhancing Access to Justice through Legal and Judicial Reforms is a three-year project supporting the Government of Nepal to enhance access to justice especially for women and socially excluded groups. It builds on the success of the previous UNDP/Government of Nepal's Reform of the Judiciary, Strengthening the Rule of Law and Access to Justice Projects. The Project will be implemented by the Supreme Court and the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs in partnership with other relevant government agencies, donors and civil society organizations. UNDP on behalf of the Government of Nepal invites applications from qualified candidates for the following positions:

### 1. Project Coordinator- SB-5

**Responsibilities:** Under the guidance and supervision of the Project Executive Board, the Project Coordinator will i) Assume overall management and administration including budgeting and planning of the project in accordance with the project document and the prescribed policies and procedures; ii) Coordinate and liaise with all relevant stakeholders (government, donors and civil society organizations) with respect to the implementation of the project activities; iii) Prepare annual Project Reports (financial and technical) as scheduled; iv) Supervise the project staff and local as well as international consultants working for the project; and v) Report regularly to the Project Executive Board.

**Qualification and Experience:** The candidate should hold at least a Bachelor's Degree in law with Master's Degree preferably in law, human rights, management, social science, development studies or any other relevant fields with a minimum of seven to ten years of relevant working experience. Knowledge of the legal/justice sector and practical working experience with Government and/or I/NGOs is required. S/he must have sound experience in the management and co-ordination of development projects/programmes. Knowledge of results based management (RBM) will be an asset. Proven competency in report writing in English and excellent oral and written communication skills in Nepali and English languages as well as computer skills are required.

### 2. Mediation Specialist - SB-4

**Responsibilities:** Under the guidance and supervision of the Project Coordinator, the Mediation Specialist will be responsible for implementing the mediation component of the project in close collaboration with relevant stakeholders and will i) Provide necessary support for the finalization of the Mediation act; ii) Develop a plan for the implementation of the Mediation Act; iii) Undertake mapping of mediation activities and review them in terms of geographical coverage, accessibility and satisfaction from the users; and iv) Review the existing training curricula on court referred mediation and community mediation and develop a new curricula.

**Qualification and Experience:** The candidate should hold at least a Bachelor's Degree in law or social science with a minimum of five years of working experience in the similar field. Knowledge of the legal/justice sector and practical working experience with Government and/or I/NGOs is required. Fluency in oral and written Nepali and English languages as well as computer skills are required.

### 3. Access to Justice Specialist – SB-4

**Responsibilities:** Under the guidance and supervision of the Project Coordinator, the Access to Justice Specialist will be responsible for implementing the paralegal component of the project in close collaboration with relevant stakeholders and will i) Provide necessary support to Paralegal Committees (PLCs) in the selected districts, including revising the criteria for existing paralegal committees to make them more inclusive; ii) Review the existing training curricula on paralegal issues and make necessary revisions; iii) Organize training to PLCs on human rights, child protection, domestic violence, legal issues related to discrimination, negotiation and advocacy skills; and iv) Provide training on (directly or through NGOs or other service providers) on human rights based approach (HRBA), access to justice using HRBA and inclusiveness to relevant actors.

**Qualification and Experience:** The candidate should hold at least a Bachelor's Degree in law with a minimum of five years of working experience in the similar field. Knowledge of the legal/justice sector and practical working experience with Government and/or I/NGOs is required. Fluency in oral and written Nepali and English languages as well as computer skills are required.

Applications should be submitted no later than 6 June 2008 by email, to: [hmu2.np@undp.org](mailto:hmu2.np@undp.org) by stating the position applied for in the "Subject" line or in a sealed envelope to UNDP Operations Division, (Ref:A2J /UNDP), P.O. Box 107, Kathmandu, Nepal  
(Only Applicants who are short-listed will be contacted)

Applicants must submit the updated standard UN Personal History Form available from the UN House Reception or UNDP Programme Office Nepalgunj (PON) or the UNDP webpage <http://www.undp.org.np/vacancy.htm>

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# "We don't have to do as India says"

Interview with Baburam Bhattarai,  
Himal Khabarpatrika, 14-28 May

**What is the 'Prachanda Economic Model'?**

This is an economic policy that is relevant to Nepal's reality. We are in the process of ending the backward ultra-feudal economy and ushering in a progressive industrial capitalism. This is a unique case and we have called it the 'Prachanda Model'.

**How is it different from what we already have?**

Our excessive dependence on under-productive agriculture is an obstacle to economic growth. It is not creating jobs and people are forced to migrate. We have to replace this medieval and feudal means of production with a modern profit-oriented model. Absentee landlordism must end, land must go to the tiller and only then will agriculture be transformed. The state's job is to provide irrigation and infrastructure and join fragmented landholdings into cooperatives.

**Doesn't your revolutionary land reform contradict your industrial capitalist model?**

No one should be afraid of developing modern agriculture through a capitalist system. In fact we will encourage it and help it along with infrastructure support.

**What are your other priority areas?**

We must concentrate on areas where we have comparative advantage such as tourism and water resources, and invest in infrastructure to create the conditions for industrialisation. This way industries can be set up even in remote areas like the Karnali. We must get a railroad to join China with India. Invest in education and health.

**What is the policy on education and health?**

These are basic human rights and the responsibility to

हिमाल



SAM KANG LI

provide them lies with the state. We want to edge out the private sector from education in a timebound fashion and there should be public-private partnership in higher education and health. We welcome the private sector in projects where large investments are required.

**How will you resolve the need to develop water resources with geopolitics?**

By focusing on Nepal's national interest. We will develop small and medium projects for domestic energy to end the power crisis. Multi-purpose projects will be financed through shares, remittances and foreign investment. But we will choose the projects, not foreigners. Just because we are dependent on India on a few things doesn't mean we have to do as they say, we have to deal with them on the basis of mutual benefit.

**Foreign aid comes with strings attached, how will you deal with that?**

Past governments have accepted aid in a haphazard way.

We won't let that happen. We will end the anarchy in foreign aid and drive it according to our national policies and priorities.

**What problems do you see in the private sector?**

The state's policy on the private sector is faulty. Private companies are in a crisis because of dependence, the open border is creating losses.

**And the politicisation of labour?**

The politicisation of labour is not the problem, there are other problems: loadshedding that is creating 40 percent losses, money is lost on commissions, there is feudalism. The relationship between labour and management has to be improved, if management can transfer money spent on commissions to increase salaries by just Rs 1,000 a lot can be achieved. And productivity can be improved if the state invests in energy and infrastructure.

**How will you deal with the fuel and food crisis?**

We will explain to the people why there is a price hike. We will provide relief to the poor with schemes similar to the ration card system in India. The distribution system must also improve.

**How realistic is a 25-30 percent economic growth rate?**

This has been achieved during revolutions, it's not unusual if you look at the history of different countries.

**What kind of a party are you?**

We are a communist party that believes in reaching the goal of communism through capitalism and socialism.

**Have you renounced violence?**

After the peace agreement, violence has ended for now. But this is relative. If someone uses violence there will be counter-violence. In the past we did not commit violence, we just reacted to the state's violence.





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0600HRS: Soldiers take karate training aw

# J C

It is 11AM and the Shaktikhor cantonment is a massive sports field. Some of the People's Liberation Army fighters are jogging, some practice karate drills, others play football and volleyball. And the camp swimming pool is being inaugurated.

The war has been over for two years and the former rebels are poised to form the new government after getting the most votes in last month's elections. The PLA's energy is being refocussed from guerilla training into competitive sports and targeted learning. "Before it was a jungle war. Now it's a table war," one battalion commander tells us.

Two soldiers, Sijan and Nayan, welcome the change. Despite obvious difficulties, the



1700HRS: Jitendra, one of the better students during English class.





ay from the cantonment’s morning bustle on a nearby riverbank.

# Jungle camp

two make an effort to speak to each other in English because they believe that language skills will help them get good jobs.

After being constantly on the move, going from one battle to another, sleeping at makeshift campsites for years, cantonment life has been a relief to many. Although things were rough in the beginning, they have now put up sturdy wooden buildings, stone pavements, water supply and street lights. In one-and-half years the jungle has been turned into well-tended allotments.

The former combatants ply visitors with food and smile bashfully when greeted in Nepali. It is easy to forget that not long ago they were fighting a brutal war. Motivation and commitment to the Maoist cause is still high. The words

“revolution” and “New Nepal” crop up often in conversation. The ex-guerrillas feel their army was founded on a shared-belief in liberation, but that the national army is made up of conscripts. This is likely to make integration difficult.

Integration is the best chance for many who have no other professional experience to have a professional military career. But many want to get back to civilian life, and the camp is serving as a skills training centre.

At 3PM Sijan and Nayan take medical training, but they will not be certified. They still face an uncertain future, and when asked where they see themselves in a few years’ time, they could just shrug and say, “*Khoi?*” ●

*Sheere Ng in Chitwan*



0700HRS: PLA commanders march on the football field during regular drill practice.



0800HRS: Soldiers on cooking duty prepare lunch in one of the 100-odd messes around the cantonment.



1100HRS: Platoon 1 of C Company, 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion, tidy the garden around their living quarters.



nts, practises with a visiting foreigner



1500HRS: Brigade commander Saral waits to be the first person to plunge into the new swimming pool.



1300HRS: Sankalpa and Asha enjoy a moment with their son who has just woken up from an afternoon nap.



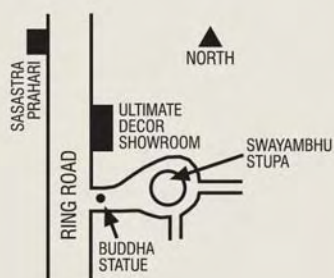


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गया पत्रिका

# Post-identity politics

## Madhesi groups will now have to move to the next stage

Madhesi parties are enjoying being feted in Kathmandu power corridors, and have ratcheted up the rhetoric on immediate implementation of past agreements. But this hides the incoherence between their statements and actions after elections.

There is a strong lobby within the MJF, especially of old timer activists on the ground, which is against joining the government. They fear co-option, a blunting of the party's radical edge, and giving their opponents opportunities to accuse them of selling out. This school wants the party to occupy the opposition space and aim for the next national and provincial elections. But there are



**TARAI EYE**  
Prashant Jha

others who want to enjoy the perks of power, and be in a position to extend patronage.

The party leadership will bargain hard, both for plum

posts and some visible commitment by the Maoists to an autonomous Madhes. Whether they finally join or not will depend on the contours of such a deal, the attitude of NC and UML to government formation, the degree of Maoist flexibility, and the nature of Indian pressure.

But even as Kathmandu politics hogs all the attention, there is discontent and rumbling among Muslims. Only 16 Muslims have made it to the CA, which is about 2.5 percent of the house although the census shows they constitute four percent of the population. (Muslim activists insist they are at least seven percent.) Muslims feel the parties, including Madhesi forces which claim Muslims are Madhesis, have treated them as a mere vote bank.

The discontent is at a nascent stage, but there are voices arguing for the formation of a separate Muslim party and more militancy. It is essential that the national and Madhesi parties address the legitimate grievances and demands of Muslims immediately: representation, protection of their religious and cultural rights, education issues which may entail combining madrasa and scientific teaching.

If they fail to do so, Muslim politics will assume a more strident tone. The absence of a strong and mature mainstream Muslim leadership will only compound the problem. Radical Islamist politics will invite a Hindu rightwing reaction turning communal relations volatile, add another conflict fault-line, make the paranoid Indian intelligence agencies even more worried about 'ISI influence' in the Tarai, and arouse US interest.

There has also been a surge in crime in the Tarai. Last week, a Kathmandu based Madhesi engineer traveled to Goithi village in Saptari for a development project. He was ambushed by four men claiming to be from the Madhesi Virus Killers. One had an SLR, the rest possessed local pistols. They began by asking for Rs 20,000. After intense bargaining, a deal was struck for merely Rs 200. The incident reveals how everyone is easy prey, the political cover used by criminals, their desperation, and the administration's inability to rein in even weak fringe groups.

There is now a yearning among Madhesis for an agenda that goes beyond just identity. This is only bound to grow in the medium-term as identity chauvinism hits a glass ceiling. "With more than one-third of the CA made up of Madhesis, the representation issue has been addressed to some extent. The Madhesi groups will now have to move to the next stage," says Martin Chautari researcher, Bhaskar Gautam.

This next stage must be to lift living standards. None of the Madhesi parties have an economic and development vision for the Tarai. The plight of landless Dalits, employment generation, skills training, raising agricultural productivity and ensuring food security are absent from their agenda.

These are early warnings. If national and Madhesi parties do not listen to the Tarai's Muslims, deal with lawlessness and address economic issues, we may be on the brink of new conflicts. ●





# “Maybe we are different”

PLA children are growing up in the cantonments

SHEERE NG in CHITWAN

At 4 o'clock in the afternoon, 600 Maoist soldiers are massed in an empty field at the Shaktikhor cantonment. In the searing heat and humid air, few are able to give their full attention to the pronouncements being delivered by the division vice commander from the stage.

Some of the soldiers even look bored. After two years in the cantonment they are still waiting. Between the lines of soldiers, a toddler in squeaky shoes races up and down. A fallen tree trunk near the stage is teeming with children playing on it.

After the peace agreement was signed and the PLA housed in cantonments two years ago, many children ended up moving into camp with their ex-guerrilla parents. In the Chitwan cantonment alone there are about 300 children under the age of 10.

While these children have not been mentioned specifically in the peace accord, their welfare has been a matter of concern, especially because of disrupted domestic lives, exposure to military activities and likelihood



SAM KANG LI

of being recruited.

“These are unnecessary fears. We have no plans to recruit these children and we have not allowed them to participate in any military training,” says Sanjib, vice commander of the third division. The soldiers also don’t

wish to see their children with guns in their hands. They say the reason they fought the war was to give them opportunities in life.

As there is no education here, the Maoists have set aside part of their food allowance to pay fees in private schools at Jutpani

Chok. But there is never enough money. Bishnu, who has four children living at the cantonment, says “I don’t think the party has enough funds, and I certainly don’t, so what can I do?” He has not received his allowance for 10 months.

Some children are eager to go back home to their extended families. Others from poor families are glad to have shelter, free food and healthcare in the cantonment. Ten-year-old Amish tells us life in the camp is strict. He had just been told off by one of the soldiers for climbing a tree. With more than 6,000 soldiers at Shaktikhor, there are more than enough adults to keep an eye on them.

They often play hide-and-seek, and sometimes pretend to be soldiers and play with toy guns. Their classmates at school are afraid of them and refuse to play together. “Maybe we really are different from the others,” says nine year-old Dipesh.

A helicopter passes overhead and the children leap to their feet shouting “UN! UN!”. For the most part they are well-informed about the political situation in the country, and can reel off names of political leaders and closely followed election results.

But no one know how much longer they will be here. Dipak, 10, who listened attentively to the commander’s message, says he will stay till “Naya Nepal” is set up. ●



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# Striding out

## The Surya Nepal Golf Tour

Nepal Professional Golfers' Association (NPGA) recently signed an agreement with Nepal's largest corporate house, Surya Nepal, to set up a national golf tour and organise tournaments in Nepal to provide a platform for professionals and aspiring amateurs who want to compete at a top level.

Time and again, Nepal's golfers have expressed the need to establish a national tour which would not only sharpen the skills of the players, but also introduce Nepal as a real golfing destination. The journey towards achieving this goal may be long and tough but at least we have made a good start.



**TEE BREAK**  
**Deepak Acharya**

With adequate tournaments and exposure, Nepali players will soon be able to make their mark in international golf. Realising this, Surya Nepal, which has been the largest sponsor of golfing in Nepal for the last fifteen years, took this fresh initiative to develop the game and improve the livelihoods of local professional golfers.

Personal development is even more important in a sport like golf than in team sports. The golf tour that was established in India twenty years ago has paid off and we can see players like Jeev Milka Singh, Jyoti Randhawa and Arjun Atwal competing at the highest level.



The first event of this tour, Surya Nepal Central Open has already kicked off and as you read this, players will be preparing for the final 18 holes. If you wish to see them in action then come and catch them on 16 May at the Le Meridien Gokarna Forest Golf Resort and Spa.

The tour will boost the morale of top players, who will get a better living from playing, and give amateurs more opportunities to enhance their skills over four days and 72 holes.

NPGA also has a special agenda to encourage caddies and give them opportunities to compete in this tour. Nine caddies are taking part as amateurs in the first event and, who knows, one day these village boys may turn out to be some of the region's finest golfers.

Surya Nepal's bid to support excellence in sports is highly commendable. Other corporations are now contemplating their involvement to add to this growing momentum. ●

Deepak Acharya is a golf instructor and Golf Director at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, Kathmandu.  
prodeepak(at)hotmail.com







SAM KANG LI

# Painting KTM red

## At five, Party Nepal rocks

SHEERE NG

If you go out in Thamel on a Friday night there is a good chance you will bump into at least one of Bhushan, Mandil and Robin. Everyone loves a good party, but these three enjoy it so much that they decided to make a career out of it.

It's five years this month since they founded Party Nepal. In the meantime the brand name has become almost synonymous with Kathmandu's nightlife, and its website ([www.partynepal.com](http://www.partynepal.com)) has become the most visited, with 25,000 visits every day.

Back in 2003, Mandil had the idea of setting up a web portal to provide up-to-date information about what was happening around town. The problem was that the party scene was so dry that they soon ran out of content to fill their website. So the trio decided to make their own news by hosting parties, organising functions, club nights, concerts and corporate events.

After becoming a household name in Nepal, they went on to expand their business to other countries, promoting and organising international tours for Nepali artists like the band 1974 AD, who have toured Asia and Europe.

"We aim to promote Nepali music and culture, so that when people think of Nepal, they don't think it's just mountains and rivers," says Bhushan.

Kathmandu is a much more happening place than most of Nepal, but even here sometimes the scene can feel small. Some regulars of the party circuit told *Nepali Times* that they see the same people all the time at these events, which could be taken as a sign that the party scene has reached saturation.

Mandil laughs this off, saying that the entertainment industry in the country is growing fast, and Party Nepal has started to meet more competition in recent years than in the time when it started. Some have called the trio's career path frivolous, given

the dire state of the country in the last few years. To this Mandil replies, "People need avenues to relax all the more."

Apart from the party circuit, Party Nepal has put a lot of energy and investment into helping local talent break into the music industry, cutting albums for bands such as ByPass. "Our local musicians are not lacking in talent, they just need chances for exposure," says Robin.

Their website has become a coveted publicity space for advertisers such as clubs, breweries and clothes retailers. Some advertisers, such as a Malaysian university, may seem slightly out of place on a party website. But Bhushan explains, "Our audience is exactly the market they want to target."

Even with all their business concerns to take care of, the three guys make sure they still take enough time to do what they set up the company for in the first place: having a good time. Muses Mandil: "That's the whole point." ●

# Schooldays over

## Gus Van Sant's portrait of adolescent turmoil

*Paranoid Park*, a new feature by director Gus Van Sant, is a slight but powerful film. The title comes from a skater-park whose proportions are legendary in the mind of the film's protagonist, Alex, a complex teenager dealing with some heavy problems. When Alex relates to his friend Jerrod that he doesn't think he's ready for *Paranoid Park*, the reply is "No one is every really ready for *Paranoid Park*." Bit by bit we come to realise that *Paranoid Park* is a veiled metaphor for the threshold of adulthood, and the film is above all a naturalistic portrait of the moment, which comes in everyone's life, when adolescence ends and adulthood begins.



**CRITICAL CINEMA**  
A Angelo D'Silva

The film is led on by intermittent narration from Alex, a voiceover to events which he records in a notebook. In what becomes like a confessional to an unknown recipient, we gradually learn of his involvement in a death of a security guard. The narration renders the plot disjointed and circumventive, the story jumping back and forth with Alex's thoughts. But this structure accurately reflects confusion and panic which are churning around his mind. And, as a gimmick, it is largely successful in keeping your attention.

The oscillations in the plot are reflected by digressive, lyrical vignettes of skateboarders in motion. No doubt much of the beauty of these scenes can be attributed to the talents of the film's two cinematographers, Christopher Doyle (long-time Wong Kar-Wai collaborator) and Rain Kathy Li. Shifting to Super 8 film and back to 35mm, there is a sense of otherworldliness that makes the youngsters seem angelic and lost. Sometimes accompanied by ambient music, the clips are moody, mournful. These cinematic compositions keep buoyant a film that might have been bogged down by maudlin drama.



Van Sant expresses an enormous empathy with his adolescent subject to the point of beatifying him. The part is well played by Gabe Niven, a non-actor whose pokerfaced delivery suits the private struggle that is both emblematic of the kind of existentialism particular to teenagers and specific to the circumstances of this character. Minute shifts in demeanour (possibly imagined on the part of the audience) translate Niven's cherubic face from bland to defensive, from unfeeling to suffering.

In *Paranoid Park*, Van Sant seems to have constructed an intentionally minor offering. Absent is the provocative material typical of his other ambitious work. But this is not a purely artistic exercise. Instead a modest story is interestingly and artfully told, simply realising a genuine portrait of remorse and disaffection. Satisfying and empathetic, *Paranoid Park* succeeds as an insightful and intimate document of adolescent struggle.

PARANOID PARK

Director: Gus Van Sant

Cast: Gabe Nevins, Dan Liu, Taylor Momsen, Jake Miller, Lauren McKinney.

2008. 78 min. R

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## ABOUT TOWN

## EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **An open show** of water colour paintings by Kiran Manandhar, until 16 May, 10AM-6PM at Park Gallery, Lazimpat. 4419353
- ❖ **Photo.circle.special.edition** featuring India by Magnum, 17 May, 10.15 AM at Allianz Francaise, Tripureswor.
- ❖ **Transformations** furniture exhibition 9-24 May at the Imago Dei Gallery Café, Naxal
- ❖ **Silhouettes in Time** paintings by Erina Tamrakar, 13-30 May at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited. 4218048

## EVENTS

- ❖ **Rupak Memorial Cup 2015** cine stars versus television comedy stars, 3-6PM on 17 May at the Dashrath Stadium. 4261669
- ❖ **12<sup>th</sup> Nepal Education and Book Fair** release of the Nepali edition of A People War with book signing by Kunda Dixit, 10-18 May at the Bhrikuti Mandap.
- ❖ ***Children of Men*** a film by Alfonso Cuaron at the Lazimpat Gallery Café, 20 May, 6.30 PM. 4428549
- ❖ **Sky is the Limit** open painting competition by Chhetrapati Club for kids aged between 11-16 at Chhetrapati Chok on 20 May, 7-10AM. 98510251031
- ❖ **Lecture** on unraveling the mosaic spatial aspects of ethnicity in Nepal by Pitambar Sharma at Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka, 21 May, 5PM. 4472807
- ❖ ***Reineke the fox*** a drama performed by Studio 7 at the Naga Theatre, Hotel Vajra, 7.15 PM until 25 May every Friday, Saturday and Sunday.
- ❖ **CSGN monthly lecture A Porter's burden-** the untold story of Nepali Mountain Porters by Ben Ayers at Hotel Shanker, 30 May, 9.30 AM



## MUSIC

- ❖ **Live karaoke** with special thai cuisine, every Wednesday at Holiday Karaoke Restaurant and Bar, Lazimpat. 4445731
- ❖ **Rudra night** fusion and classical Nepali music by Shyam Nepali and friends, every Friday, 7PM at LeMeridien, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **Sufi music** by Hemanta Rana, every Friday at 7.30 PM at Dhaba Restaurant and Bar, Thapathali.
- ❖ **Yankey and friends** live acoustic music every Friday at the Bourbon room Restro-bar, Lal Darbar.
- ❖ **Anil Shahi** every Wednesday and Rashmi Singh every Friday, live at the Absolute Bar, Hotel Narayani Complex, 8PM. 5521408

## DINING

- ❖ **Lajawab** tandoori and kabab festival, 7-10 PM every Friday at the Hotel Himalaya, Rs 550.
- ❖ **Hot summer spicy food** at the Jalan Jalan Restaurant, Kupondole Heights. 5544872
- ❖ **The Kaiser Café open now** at the Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, open from 9AM-10PM. 4425341
- ❖ **Kakori** special rate of Rs. 365 per item from an exclusive menu at Kakori, Soaltee Crowne Plaza until 24 May.
- ❖ **Sunday jazz brunch** design your meal with pastas, salads and barbeque, with jazz by Mariano and band, at the Rox Garden, Hyatt Regency. 4489361
- ❖ **Steak escape** with Kathmandu's premier steaks available for lunch and dinner at the Olive Bar and Bistro, Hotel Radisson. 4411818
- ❖ **Thakali** and local cuisine at Marpha Thakali Restaurant and bar at Kathmandu business Park, Teku. 4104504
- ❖ **Bourbon Room Restro-bar** now open for lunch and dinner with over a 100 cocktails, Lal Darbar.
- ❖ **Cocktails and grooves** with jazz by Inner Groove at Fusion-the bar at Dwarika's, every Wednesday, at Dwarika's Hotel.
- ❖ **Cocktails, mocktails** and liqueurs at the Asahi Lounge, opening hours 1-10PM, above Himalayan Java, Thamel.
- ❖ **Continental and Chinese cuisine** and complimentary fresh brewed coffee at Zest Restaurant and Bar, Pulchok.
- ❖ **Illy espresso** coffee at the Galleria cafe, every Friday espresso cocktails.
- ❖ **International buffet** at the Sunrise Café and Russian specialties at Chimney, Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
- ❖ **Steak Fare** variety of steaks every Monday and Tuesday at the Rox Restaurant, Hyatt Regency, 7-10.30 PM.
- ❖ **Jazz in Patan** with coffee, food, drinks and dessert at the New Orleans Cafe, Jawalakhel. 8.30 AM-10PM. 5522708
- ❖ **Saturday special** barbeque, sekuwa, momos, dal-bhat at The Tea House Inn, Windy Hills, Nagarkot every Saturday. 9841250848.
- ❖ **Dice-licious brunch** at Kakori, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, roll the dice to the number of the day and get 50% discount on an individual meal, Saturdays and Sundays, 12.30-3.30 PM. 4273999
- ❖ **Scrumptious wood fired pizzas**, cocktails and more at Roadhouse, Bhatbateni 4426587, Pulchok 5521755 and Thamel 4260187.
- ❖ **Retro Brunch Barbeque** with live acoustic music by Sound Chemistry, every Saturday, 12-3PM at LeMeridien-Kathmandu, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **Dhamaka** a Nepali style barbeque with a pan-Indian fusion at the Splash Bar and Grill, Hotel Radisson, Rs. 1399 7PM, every Friday. 4411818
- ❖ **Kebabs and curries** at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619
- ❖ **Lavazza coffee** Italy's favourite coffee at La Dolce Vita, Thamel, Roadhouse Café Pulchok and Thamel. 4700612
- ❖ **Pizza** from the woodfired oven at Java, Thamel. 4422519

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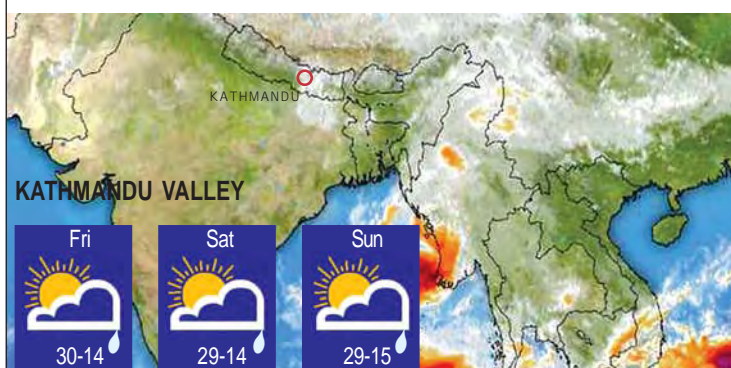
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## WEEKEND WEATHER

by **NGAMINDRA DAHAL**

The satellite picture on Thursday morning shows the precursors to the monsoon massing up along the west coast of southern India. There is also another circulation which is not quite a cyclone over the Bay. The combination of these two systems will continue to pump in moisture into the Himalaya, and this will provoke thundery afternoon showers into the weekend. The monsoon is another month away, but expect pre-monsoon storms along the Mahabharat and the high valleys. Allt his will hopefully top up the Valley's rainfall quota, of which only half has fallen so far this month. Temperatures will remain stable over the weekend.



# रेडियो सगरमाथा

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KIRAN PANDAY

**HEAVE HO:** The chariot of Rato Machhindranath is dragged through Patan Darbar Square on Monday. Its journey around Lalitpur will last several months.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**NEXT IN LINE:** The Central Working Committee of the UML meets on Thursday morning to discuss who will be the next general secretary of the party, following the resignation of Madhab Kumar Nepal.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**ANTHROPOMORPHOSIS:** The theatre group Studio 7 stages *Reineke the Fox*, a dramatic adaptation of Goethe's poem *Reineke Fuchs* at the Naga Theatre, Hotel Vajra.



**BUDDHA'S WATCHING US:** Human rights activist Kapil Shrestha (left) before addressing a group of Nepali Tibetans at Boudha on Saturday to express solidarity with monks in Tibet.

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# Mr Raja's neighbourhood

The new government is going to have a **Ministry of Youth**. Brilliant. But just so no one will call us ageists how about also a Ministry of Adolescents that will hire all the YCLs and, while we are at it, a Ministry of Octogenarians for the superannuated politicians in the party ranks?



So we are soon going to be called a Federal Democratic Socialist Republic of Nepal (FDSRN). Our new comrade rulers shouldn't be too worried by this, it doesn't mean we really have to be democratic. After all, DPRK is also supposedly "democratic". We won't really have to be socialist, either, just Stalinist.

The only thing that has not yet been changed in this theatrical transformation of our great nation is the country's name. Politically incorrect in this day and age that Nepal is the name bequeathed to us by a feudal medieval monarch.

So what to call us? The Ass' informal poll at a focus group discussion at the neighbourhood watering hole the other evening came up with several replacement names. The most popular was **Democratic Republic of Yarsagumba**

(DRY) after the caterpillar fungus that is worth its weight in gold and has overtaken vegetable fat as this country's biggest item of export. A close second was **Federal Republic of Yam** (FRY) so named because we are supposed to be a sweet potato between two boulders. Another suggestion was to simply rename ourselves the **Fiercely Democratic Federal People's Socialist Republic of Prachanda** (FDFPSRP) and get it over with.

All this, of course has to be ratified by the Constituent Assembly with a two-thirds vote, but what do we do till then? We definitely need an interim name for our country. And it's cumbersome and wordy to call everything this New Nepal and that New Nepal. So, to simplify it, let's just call this country **Newpal**.



Faced with his imminent eviction from Naryanhiti, kingji has appealed to a higher authority for help. Even though previous blood-letting through five-animal sacrifices to appease the goddess Kali hasn't helped him much in the past, this week he again had a buffalo, goat, duck, chicken and an egg decapitated

(in that order, although the Ass isn't sure which came first--the chicken or the egg). Having already angered human rights groups, kingji is now also drawing flak from animal rights groups. If Kali still doesn't save the monarchy this time, then maybe Rajan can save the raja.



It's been quite some time since we had a bearded ambassador in Nepal. But Rakesh Sood seems to have started a new trend. Not to be outdone by its arch enemy, Pakistan is also sending a bearded ambassador to Newpal. There could be a link between new dips with facial hair and the fact that our comrades all swear allegiance to hirsute European philosophers like **Marx** and **Engels**. Kisne kaha? KhooD ne kaha ki Sood ne kaha?



UML women are livid at being left out of the party's PR list, and the Maoists are far ahead with the most women in their list. So what if most of them are wives, sisters or nieces of card-carrying comrades? It's the thought that counts. And it also helps that the assembly members will all draw a salary of Rs 45,000 a month. The Ass was never good at arithmetic,

but a back-of-the-envelope calculation shows that in two years the constituent assembly will cost us **Rs 6.5 billion**, and that's not including allowances and overtime.

And even if all 601 members get to deliver their preliminary statements just once and are allotted 30 minutes each, there will be more than 300 hours of opening remarks. At four hours a day and not counting the interruptions and points-of-order, but making allowance for recesses and holidays, the speeches are going to last well into **January 2009**.



Whatever Nancy Powell told the Fearsome One during their tete-à-tete, don't expect the State Department to lift the baddies from the US terrorist watch list. The legal procedures are so cumbersome it may take years, if not centuries, for a terrorist group to be delisted. For example, **Nelson Mandela** and the ANC are still tagged terrorist, and so are pro-US militias in Iraq.

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ISSN 1814-2613

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