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Weekly Internet Poll # 409

Q. Who should chair the Constituent Assembly?

Total votes: 5,481

Subhas Nembang: 43.2%

Chitralekha Yadav: 16%

Kul Bahadur Gurung: 9.7%

None of the above: 31.2%

Weekly Internet Poll # 410. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. What should be the new government's main priority?

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ONE NEPAL: A Grade One student in Dhading poses for a picture in front of a map of Nepal on his classroom wall last week.

DEEPENDRA BAJRACHARYA

The first president

KUNDA DIXIT

In a dramatic last-minute turnaround, the Maoists on Thursday dumped the NC and UML and placed veteran Madhesi republican, Ram Raja Prasad Singh, as their candidate for president.

Even though ideologically opposed to the Maoists, Madhesi parties immediately supported Singh's candidature, making it almost certain that Nepal's first president will be from the plains.

The fact that the NC presidential candidate (Ram Baran Yadav) and the UML

(Ramprit Paswan) are Madhesi shows the importance of the Tarai vote bank for all three parties. Although the post is ceremonial, the president is the nominal commander-in-chief.

The arithmetic of the 594 voting members of the house will now mean that the Maoists with 229 seats and the Madhesi parties with 88 could easily muster the majority needed for Singh to win in the secret balloting on Saturday.

The candidates registered in a last-minute scramble before the 1PM deadline on Thursday at the CA secretariat. For vice-

president, the Maoists have fielded Shanta Shrestha, a former K P Bhattarai aide who later became a Maoist MP in the interim parliament, while the NC put forward Man Bahadur Biswokarma and the UML Astha Laxmi Shakya.

Thursday's drama was a result of the unraveling of the UML-Maoist alliance after the UML refused to give up the proposed joint-candidate, Madhab Kumar Nepal. The Maoists had asked the UML to come up with a name that would be "inclusive".

The NC probably hopes to split the Madhesi vote with its candidate, but Ram Baran Yadav is not popular among Madhesi CA members for having refused to defect from the NC.

Analysts believe that Ram

Raja Prasad Singh being elected will go a long way in addressing the grievances of Tarai Nepalis who feel discriminated by Kathmandu, and could narrow the widening gulf between the hills and the plains.

EDITORIAL
Prime Minister Dahal and President Singh p2

Stung by being let down by the Maoists, the UML once more declared that it will not join the government. Although the deadlock over presidentship is now over, the UML and NC feel humiliated and will try to make it difficult for the Maoists in government formation next week. Friday will see hectic lobbying by all three parties.

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PRIME MINISTER DAHAL AND PRESIDENT SINGH

Ever since this publication started referring to Prachanda as Pushpa Kamal Dahal after April 2006, many readers asked us why we had changed our stylebook.

Now that other newspapers, radio stations and tv channels have progressively dropped the Comrade Chairman's nom de guerre, the answer is self-evident. Prachanda was the chairman's war name, he has now supposedly shunned violence, so we can go back to his real name. If he still wants to be called Prachanda, it proves he hasn't really given up violence as a political tool.

There is proof Prachanda himself is morphing into Pushpa Kamal. The prime minister designate made a speech in the Assembly last week that was a positive indication of the man's evolution from revolution. The speech was almost statesmanlike and conciliatory: he admitted his party's shortcomings, expressed commitment to resolve the deadlock and move ahead.

Till the very last he was trying to divide the UML and NC by dangling presidential carrots. But that actually proves the former guerrilla chieftain is getting comfortable with the ways of coalition politics. If Dahal can show he is a unifier rather than a divider, if he can pacify the young hotheads within his party and if he can publicly renounce violence once and for all, the people will go with him all the way.

But despite the daily lip service to a culture of consensus, political decision-making is opaque and murky. The media falls for the spin hook line and sinker, and spreads cynicism instead of trying to analyse, interpret and warn politicians about growing public disenchantment.

The Big Three failed to agree on a consensus candidate, and the matter will now go to an Assembly vote on Saturday. It may be just as well that elected members will elect a president and vice-president instead of being handpicked in shadowy backroom deals.

Either way, we seem to be finally coming to the end of this political paralysis. Now, the Maoists can move ahead with forming a unity government, the parties must agree on a common minimum program on the economy and service delivery, and that the Assembly can get on with the job of drafting a new constitution.

If that moves smoothly, the current state of statelessness will finally be resolved and fix our debilitating anarchy. The ensuing political stability will allow the economy to finally bounce back.

Prime Minister Dahal and President Singh and the cabinet will quickly have to learn that statecraft isn't about slogans and populist cash handouts. But more on that next time.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Holding the centre

Isolationists and integrationists vie for the Madhesi heart

The ruckus caused by the Madhesi parties is gradually subsiding. The leaders were right in asserting themselves because they were ignored in initial negotiations. They had a point in feeling that the Big Three were not keeping to the spirit of the eight-point



TARAI EYE
Prashant Jha

agreement. It was natural for them to want greater visibility in Kathmandu and popularity back home.

But the episode has also revealed the nature and drawbacks of the Madhesi parties themselves. They have different public and private stands which sharpens internal divisions, opens space for militancy, results in inept tactics and leaves the cadre confused.

When asked where the Madhesi movement was headed, the head of one of three Madhesi parties said recently: "Let Kathmandu keep sovereignty and give everything else to us. We will rule the Tarai. If that does not happen, then we will go where Goitji is."

For this school, the problem in Madhes is colonisation, the diagnosis liberation. These isolationists want minimal engagement with Kathmandu, and maximum autonomy. They claim this is what people on the ground aspire for, as proved by the steady radicalisation.

But there is another view which feels federalism has to be accompanied with a more integrationist approach with the Pahad. They feel the problem is of citizen rights and discrimination, and the diagnosis is inclusion. They point to massive Madhesi participation in polls to show that is what the people want.

Both approaches can go together, but their leaders espouse different agendas, and lead to multiple demands. What we witnessed last week was a combination of these views. Autonomy on the ground is what isolationists want. Participation in the army is what the integrationists want. Kathmandu has to address both within the limits of reason and logic.

But reason and logic is what the Madhesi parties do not have on their side when they push for the one Madhes idea. The state imposed a hegemonic oppressive identity on the Madhesis for decades, a small set of Madhesi leaders is trying to do the same with the rest of the Tarai population.

They may fear that dividing Tarai into smaller provinces will

weaken their political strength, but they should try to convince the rest of the Tarai to get on board. Until that happens, the Mithila mafia of Yadav, Gupta, Thakur, Mahato and Jha (belonging to three out of the 20 plains districts) can't arbitrarily speak for the entire belt.

The Tharus may have more in common with Madhesis than the hill migrants, the Tharu Kalyankari Sabha may have been encouraged by the UML to stage protests, and there are prominent Tharu leaders like Bijay Gachhedar in Madhesi parties. But despite this the Tharus, particularly in western Tarai, do not feel Madhesi. The Madhesi parties have done nothing to listen to their concerns and anxieties at being swamped by Hindu Madhesi caste leaders.

Western Tharus have voted for the Maoists, which is in a sense a vote for the Maoist federal map of a separate Tharu province. The Madhesi leaders have done little to assuage the fears of the Pahadis of the Tarai of what a Madhes province means.

Clubbing the hills and Madhes together in one province, on the lines of old development zones, is neither politically feasible nor wise now. But fusing the entire Tarai is as bad an idea given the diverse demography, the administrative issues involved and the resource question.

The Madhesi parties need to figure out a realistic agenda that gives rights, does not derail the national process, and minimises conflict. Kathmandu has to reach out to moderate aspirations, keep to its earlier promises, and understand Madhesi anxieties of being given a raw deal. That is the only way for the centre to hold. ●

Napoleon to neo-Mao

Liberté, égalité, fraternité and pragmatism

PARIS—Bastille Day commemorates the storming of a Paris prison on 14 July 1789 that marked the beginning of the French Revolution. These days, the anniversary is about pomp with a military parade down the Champs-Élysées and fireworks over the Paris skyline. The guest of honour this year was UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, with the Blue Helmets leading the parade that included Nepali peacekeepers.



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

France today has a practical rather than idealistic approach towards foreign policy. Sustained by a subsidy on baguette and other services, the bourgeoisie can concentrate on the arts, commerce and statecraft. It wasn't always like this. French history has swung wildly between left and right until it found its equilibrium in the Fifth Republic.

'The French peasant was a Bonapartist,' wrote Marx about mid-19th

century upheavals. Present day France has given successors of that peasantry a very strong presidency. But the French are also very proud of the Revolution and the French Commune, and have a strong tradition of street demonstration and powerful local governments.

Marx eulogised the uprising but thought it was not resolute enough to last. Lenin concluded that the leniency that revolutionaries showed towards the traditional elite led to its downfall. Mao considered the event as a first historical step towards the culture of revolution.

Like communists everywhere, Nepal's neo-Maoists also talk about the Paris Commune with watery eyes. But they are all foreigners to a majority of modern French. For Parisians at least, the Commune, like the Revolution or the Restoration earlier, were merely historic surges that purged the society of rotten elements and made it stronger.

A holistic sense of history perhaps explains the popularity of museums, castles, gardens, art galleries, concerts,

operas and theatres. In the cafés the talk is about taxes and divorces, global warming and France's bloated army. Despite his glamorously distracting wife, President Nicolas Sarkozy seems to have his ears to the ground. He plans to cut the army by 40,000 and promises to convince the EU to reduce VAT.

The Maoবাদis want a French style republic so that Pushpa Kamal Dahal can be its president. That would require the Nepali middle class to reach critical mass. There is no fail-proof prescription for ensuring a vibrant bourgeoisie, but refraining from threatening those who champion fundamental freedoms would help. That essentially is the main lesson of the French Revolution: extremes of extravagance and scarcity breed instability that in turn leads to a faster cycle of revolutions.

But maybe that is the gist of history everywhere, and the French seem to have learnt their history well. The French court whichever regime they think will serve its national interest, and that could be why the level of French engagement in Nepal is so

low: they don't need to buy anything from us and we can't afford to pay for what they sell. Bilateral relations over 50 years has been sustained by French mountaineers and intellectuals. Tibet has remained a favourite concern because of domestic public opinion. Unlike Anglo-American market-led economies, France is more state centric.

But the commercial class is influential, often trade unions and owners work in tandem to protect their interests. The world's most comprehensive social security system couldn't survive without collaboration between capital and labour. It is the bourgeoisie that binds these supposedly antagonistic classes together through the manufacture of innovation and a marketplace of ideas in a vibrant democracy.

Perhaps our Maoists, who idolise the French so much, could pick a lesson or two from France's history. That way they can skip the two centuries of turmoil, war and confusion that followed the French Revolution and model Nepal after the cohesive, egalitarian and pragmatic state that France is today. ●



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NABIL BANK

Refugees finally find respect

GOPAL GURAGAIN in AMSFOORT

Sekhar Rizal always wanted to be a doctor. Till last year, the future looked bleak for this Grade 10 student who was born at the Goldhap Bhutani Refugee Camp in Jhapa.

Today, Sekhar is among the first batch of Bhutan's Lhotsampa refugees who have been resettled here as part of a plan under which the Netherlands, the United States, Denmark, Norway, Australia and Canada will give permanent residence to up to 90,000 of the 110,000 refugees.

Sekhar has never been to the country that he regards as his motherland. The Bhutan regime evicted his parents along with tens of thousands of others and trucked them across India to Nepal in 1990. For Sekhar and dozens of others here who arrived three months ago, the novelty of non-refugee life hasn't worn off.

"My bamboo classroom seems a long way away," he told *Nepali Times*, "the teachers here are amazing, they never spank us. The Dutch are so friendly and so respectful to us."

Shekhar is among Bhutanis who are being housed at the Amsfoort Transit Centre. The most dramatic change for them has been the restoration of their human dignity.



HAPPY ENDING: Refugees from Goldhap and Sanischare at a Transit Centre in Amsfoort in Holland recently.

"As a refugee, we had no status. No one gave us any respect," recalls Kamala Rizal, who used to be a teacher at the Sanischare Camp in Morang. "Suddenly, the opportunities for us are limitless." Kamala wants to continue her teaching profession in the Netherlands after she learns the language.

The Bhutanis are all learning Dutch and while at the Transit Centre they get free lodging, food and E 53 pocket money every month.

Rohit Acharya arrived here only a week ago, and he is still in a state of culture shock. He proudly shows a visitor the kitchen and bedroom in his apartment, and says it is difficult to get used to this after the collective camp life where there was never any privacy.

Also for Acharya, the most remarkable thing is that he has respect. "I am now treated like a human being again, people treat you as an equal. They don't look down on you because you are a refugee." ●



SHYAM TEKWANI

Can't wait to leave

KUNDAN ARYAL in JHAPA

Despite a spate of bombings, threats and intimidation most of the 110,000 refugees from Bhutan in camps here in eastern Nepal are in favour of repatriation to third countries as long as their right of return to Bhutan is guaranteed.

Last month, the office here of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) was bombed. Although four different groups claimed responsibility, the suspicion has fallen on a new group of self-styled extremists called the Refugee Liberation Army who are against resettlement.

Since March, 1,900 refugees have been resettled in a program coordinated by the IOM with the UNHCR. Most of them went to the United States, and the rest to Canada, Denmark, Australia, New Zealand and Norway.

The Lhotsampa are Nepali-speaking Bhutanis who were chased out by the Thimpu regime in 1990 and have been living in seven camps in Jhapa and Morang since then. Many have been born in the camps. More than 42,000 refugees have registered for resettlement and their papers are being processed. Refugee agencies

expect this number to grow as news trickles back about how well the refugees are doing where they have gone.

Refugee leaders like Tek Nath Rizal have been opposed to resettlement, but this has widened the gap between him and most refugees here. Hundreds of refugees previously thought to be aligned to Bhutani Maoists and were intimidating refugees who wanted to leave have themselves registered for resettlement.

Despite threats, refugees from Bhutan opt for third-country resettlement

However, not everyone is attracted by resettlement. There are groups who assert that the focus should not be on resettlement but on repatriation back to Bhutan. When these groups failed to persuade the refugees to oppose the resettlement process, they adopted violent means.

"The refugees are not going abroad for financial reasons and so

FAR AWAY FROM HOME: Unlike in Bhutan where her family owned large fields and cattle, Naramaya Tiwari, 70, has to compromise on food, clothing and all other basic needs here at the refugee camp.

the resettlement is not the correct solution. The priority should be repatriation," argues Pahalman Gurung, a refugee in Timai camp in Jhapa. There are some refugees who think the Bhutani regime has got away ethnic cleansing, and should actually be taken to the International Criminal Court.

But this does not reflect the aspirations of the majority of the refugees. Dhaka Ram Pokharel, who also lives in Timai camp, says: "Why should I close the door to a chance for a better life?" Indeed, Beldangi Camp secretary Tek Bahadur Gurung says his foremost concern is safety of the refugees.

He added: "We are not here to tell anyone to go or not go, everyone should be free to make up their own minds. We want to stop violence by those opposing resettlement." ●

See also: ' (No place like home', #306) (Home away from home', #340) (Long way from home', #353)

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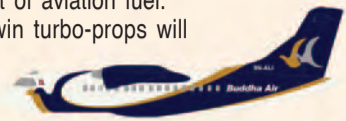
Buddha spreads wings

Buddha Air is adding two ATR-42-320s next month to meet rising passenger volume in Nepal's domestic routes, a surge in tourism and to make-up for the rising cost of aviation fuel.

The fuel-efficient 50-seater twin turbo-props will be deployed in the high-volume Pokhara, Biratnagar, Bhadrapur, Bhairawa, Nepalganj and Dhangadi sectors. The airline will continue to use its five Beechcraft 1900Ds for mountain flights and routes with smaller airports like Simara and Bharatpur and for Mt Everest sightseeing flights. The airline hopes to sell off two of its Beechcraft 1900Cs.

The airline has already sent pilots for simulator training with the French manufacturers, Avions de Transport Regional. The deal is financed by the International Finance Corporation, the private sector arm of the World Bank.

Buddha Air's Managing Director, Birendra Basnet told *Nepali Times* the airline plans to upgrade to higher capacity ATR 72s in a few years.



Twenty five



Nabil Bank, the first joint venture bank in Nepal, which started with a technical service agreement with the Dubai Bank, entered its 25th year of service in Nepal on 12 July. The bank, which provides one-stop services, has 28 branches and counters all over Nepal.

Tumour cure

Bangkok Hospital has introduced new technology to cure brain tumours, otherwise considered in-operable. The procedure, which is non-invasive and painless, is touted to be the most advanced option to cure cancers.

Insurance

Prime life insurance, opened under the Khetan group, has started a life-insurance scheme for Nepalis working abroad. The life insurance will be available at a discounted rate of Rs 500 thousand for a period of one to five years.

IT learning

British Council has opened a new IT-based Learning Centre, which has the provision of online access to latest professional and learning resources. The centre, which is aimed at teachers, young professional and students, is equipped with 35 computers and plans to conduct workshops and training programmes.

NEW PRODUCTS

PHONE SPICE: New models of Spice mobile phones were recently launched in Nepal with the aim of providing innovative designs at all prices. The phones feature models that have in-built 'singtones,' and dual SIM card system.



The long tail

Early this month, officials at state-run *Gorkhapatra* daily got into a public fistfight with the head of an advertising agency. The row was reportedly over the agency not paying what it owed to the newspaper despite repeated requests.



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

At the police station, where the agency head had been hauled up, both sides exchanged fisticuffs before they were forcibly pulled apart. Supporting the agency head were members of the Advertising Association of Nepal (AAN), who issued a statement, expressing regret that such an incident had even come to pass. Other media outlets reported the spectacle with nary a commentary.

Inexcusable though *Gorkhapatra* officials' physical assault on an advertising professional was, it nonetheless did raise this question. Just what is the nature of the relationship between ad agencies and media houses in Nepal? The answer depends on who you're talking about.

First, let's talk about the media houses. Behind all the heart-warming self-references about being members of the fourth estate, media houses are private companies that have to make money to stay in business. But the challenges they face are many. In the last one year alone, the cost of printing paper in the international market has risen by 50 per cent, if not more. When these companies plan to launch

new media products or tweak the existing ones, they face a severe shortage of qualified staff—creative professionals who can think, write, edit, design, publish, sell and distribute with little supervision.

Meantime, the manpower they have is getting costlier to hold on to as the costs of everything else continue to go up. The longer they wait to address staff's legitimate and, in some cases, exaggerated grievances, it is likely that they'll end up spending time dealing with trade unions, some of which have overt party-political agenda, which includes even shutting down the

intermediary role, they collect fees from clients, slice off their share, and pass the rest on to the media houses. This flow of task has worked well with a handful of Nepali ad agencies that are professionally managed and exhibit a globally-savvy outlook. Careful about their reputation, they clear up their financial obligations promptly.

But there's a long tail of smaller ad agencies that continue to hurt the credibility of advertising professionals in Nepal. Often run by characters who seem to have been lifted straight out of the movie *Get Shorty*, these agencies offer shoddy services to clients. And by not paying the media houses

Grievances are adding up against some ad agencies

business. Given Nepal's vibrant media market, the competition to attract readers' and advertisers' has never been fiercer. And this doesn't include how free distribution of content on the Internet has shrunk media's traditional money-recovering model.

With their backs against the wall, media houses are slowly, if reluctantly, recasting themselves as being, first and foremost, in the advertising business. And that's where ad agencies play an important dual role. To advertisers, who are the agencies' clients, they offer expertise on ad placements, designs and outreach work.

With media houses, they negotiate clients' ads for placement. For this

for months and years on end, they take advantage of the fact that there is no small-claims court, and that a lawsuit can drag on for years. Unable to offer convincing answers to auditors and promoters about a long list of non-paying agencies, most media executives seethe privately. But some, like those at *Gorkhapatra*, take matters into their own hands.

The *Gorkhapatra* incident has encouraged the AAN executives to offer help to mediate between media houses and ad agencies in the future. Though that's a step in the right direction, they must remain vigilant that the reputation of their industry is not held hostage to the bad-faith actions of the long tail of non-paying agencies. ●

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"No such place as Madhes"

Himalkhabar.com , 7 July

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MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

The Tharu Welfare Council has been struggling to remove the terms Madhes and Madhesi from the Interim Constitution. On 7 July the council torched Article 63 of the interim constitution in 24 districts of the Tarai as well as in the capital. Interview with the Council's Raj Kumar Lekhi:

Why did you set fire to the Interim Constitution?

Article 63 of the Interim constitution mentions the term Madhes. The reality is that there is no geographical area of Nepal that can be identified with the word. Further, the Election Commission has included us ethnic

Tharus under the Madhesi category. When we asked the EC about this, they pointed to the interim constitution. So we decided to burn that section of the constitution.

But do you have the strength in the Assembly to push through your demands?

Nothing is impossible when the people feel strongly about an issue. The agitation has come about because we felt the pressure for it from the districts. That is why we have launched the agitation in the Tarai.

What has been the response from Madhes supporters?

They are trying to trick us. They have been attempting to set a meeting and tried to get us to call off our program.

What have the major parties said?

We will soon put forth our demands before the major parties, intellectuals and the press.

Deadlocked

Khilbahadur Bhandari in Gorkhapatra ,11 July

गोर्खापत्र

The world has seen the character of the political parties in Nepal. They know that after 20 years of NC and UML mis-rule, the people want change. Yet, the ghosts of the past have come back to haunt us: the two parties are behaving as if they are still in power. Girija Koirala very reluctantly resigned, but he is now weaving another web of political intrigue with the Madhesi parties. The scenes at the CA in the past weeks with the slogan of One Madhes One Pradesh, which goes against many of the inhabitants of the Tarai, has raised questions of the integrity of the parties. The roots of this are spread all over. This has spread disillusionment among the people who had expected real change after the elections. How can the party that got less votes than the NC, UML and the Maoists hold the country hostage? The Madhesi parties need to understand this.

Even if the CA is to elect a president with a simple majority, there are now doubts about the Maoist-UML alliance. The UML has been putting up the candidacy of Madhab Kumar Nepal who lost the lection from two constituencies, this is creating an obstacle. The UML should respect the people's

mandate in selecting a presidential candidate.

The biggest party is the CPN-M. The other political parties can't stop the Maoists because it is a party that has ways to get around any obstacle and it has its own methods.

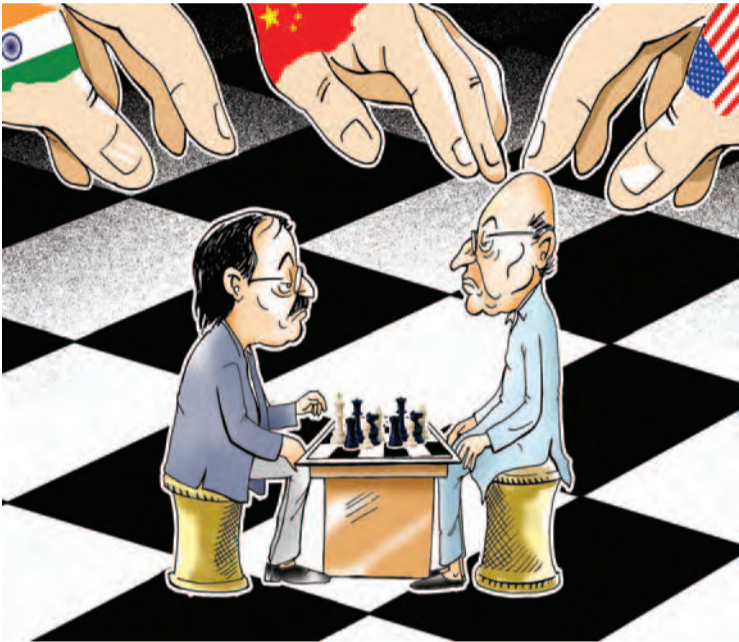
Bhanu Sarani

Kantipur, 15 July

कान्तिपुर

A street in Alipur, Kolkatta has been named after Bhanubhakta on the occasion of the 115th anniversary of the Nepali poet's birthday. The street was named 'Bhanubhakta Sarani' by the

mayor of Kolkotta, Bikasranjan Bhattacharya on 14 July. Also present at the event was the Nepali consul-general to India, Suresh Man Shrestha, and other representatives of Nepali organisations working in India. The street, which is 2km long, houses important government buildings including the central library. Speaking at the event, Shrestha requested the Indian government to introduce Nepali as an optional language in schools. Bhanubhakta Jayanti was also celebrated in West Bengal by awarding scholarships to 29 Nepalis.



हिमाल Robin Sayami in Himal Khabarpatrika, 16-30 July

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Now you see him, now you don't



A photograph of NC, UML and Maoists, while it appeared with the Reporter's Club coordinator Rishi Dhamal (in red shirt) in the *The Rising Nepal* (left) was printed with Dhamala airbrushed out in the *Gorkhapatra*. Both newspapers are published by the state-owned Gorkhapatra Corporation which comes under the Ministry of Information. The ministry is presently controlled by Maoist minister and government spokesperson, Krishna Bahadur Mahara. Sign of things to come?

YCL clone

Nepal, July 19 नेपाल

Even as the UML has been demanding the scrapping of the Maoist-affiliated Young Communist League (YCL), it has come up with its own clone: the Youth Force. It acts as the strong arm of the party and is a subsidiary of the UML-controlled Democratic National Youth Organisation.

The organisation's president, Ajambar Kangmang, is quick to deny any similarity with the YCL. "We don't live in the barracks, we don't carry arms, we don't take law in our own hands or administer justice through kangaroo courts," Kangmang says. But some of these things is exactly what the Youth Force has been involved with in the past weeks.



SHALIGRAM TIWARI

The YF recently made headlines after manhandling a clerk in Department of Labour who it said was allegedly caught red-handed while taking bribe. The official says he was framed, and he's been the victim of a YF-instigated media witch-hunt.

The YF's Mahesh Basnet says it was not their intention to manhandle the clerk. "The force has been established with an aim to help the state to combat the existing disorder and lawlessness in the country," he says.

Youth Force was formed in early June, but senior UML figures like Pradeep Nepal are still denying its existence. Nepal even says the UML doesn't need a group of such character. On the other hand, Gokarna Bista, who is in-charge of UML's youth wing, claims that the force was formed under the suggestion of the party but as the central committee of the party has not had a chance to meet, it is yet to have a discussion on the issue. But Bista maintains that although Youth Force will not endorse activities similar to YCL, the force will not keep quiet if anyone attempts to assault or harass its workers.



A new life

Young women escape abuse and find a chance to rebuild their lives

DHRUBA SIMKHADA

Uma Khadka was 21 years old when she fled the conflict in her home village in Dolakha and came to Kathmandu. Unable to find any work, she landed up in one of Kathmandu's seedy 'dance bars'. She met a man there whom she married, but he soon started abusing her. One night, he poured kerosene on her and set her ablaze.

Uma was rescued by Rakshya Nepal, a charity dedicated to rehabilitating abused young women. Her body, hands and face are badly scarred but she is enrolled in driving lessons with eight other women rescued from violent husbands or abusive employers.

Sushmita Basnet lost her right arm

when she was hit during crossfire in a battle at Mulkharka, Okhaldhunga five years ago. She was helicoptered out by the army and it took her one year to recuperate at Chhauni Hospital. Today, at 20, she has started rebuilding her life and, undaunted by her handicap, is taking tailoring lessons at Rakshya Nepal.

Rakshya Nepal was founded by Menuka Thapa, who herself sang at one of Kathmandu's dohori restaurants. After personally witnessing the mistreatment and abuse of women in the restaurant, Menuka was motivated to work against it.

As a university student, Menuka also decided to research the plight of young women working in massage parlours, dance bars and restaurants for her master's thesis. Menuka found most girls to be between the ages of 11-25, but some were as old as

45. There are now 300 massage centres in Thamel alone, and each of them employs an average of 10 girls. Most are fronts for prostitution and the police don't try to stop them.

Menuka interviewed 200 women, who also filled out questionnaires. Her study shows that 80 percent of the women working in these parlours were directly affected by the conflict. They came to Kathmandu in search of work and fell into the capital's netherworld of commercial sex. The dancers, the masseurs and the waitresses mostly come from Dhading, Makwanpur, Kabhre, Sindhupalchowk, Nuwakot, Ramechhap, Sindhuli and Dolakha. A majority were married but are separated.

Rakshya Nepal tries to help the women earn an alternative living by providing

skills training. Besides driving and tailoring, the group also trains the women to become beauticians. Thirty former dance restaurant women have quit their jobs and are working in beauty parlours in the city. There are currently 50 women undergoing various types of free training at Rakshya Nepal's training centres.

After her mother died, Suntali Rai was regularly abused by her stepmother. When the Maoists tried to recruit her into their militia, Suntali fled to Kathmandu. She worked in a businessman's house, but when he tried to molest her she fled and started to work in a massage parlour in Thamel. She ran away from there and came to Rakshya Nepal, where she is now a beautician trainee. She says: "Finally, I have the possibility of

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PICS: MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

IN THE DRIVING SEAT: Uma Khadka's husband poured kerosene on her and set her on fire. (Left) Despite the bandages in her hand, Uma is determined to learn driving and find a new life for herself.

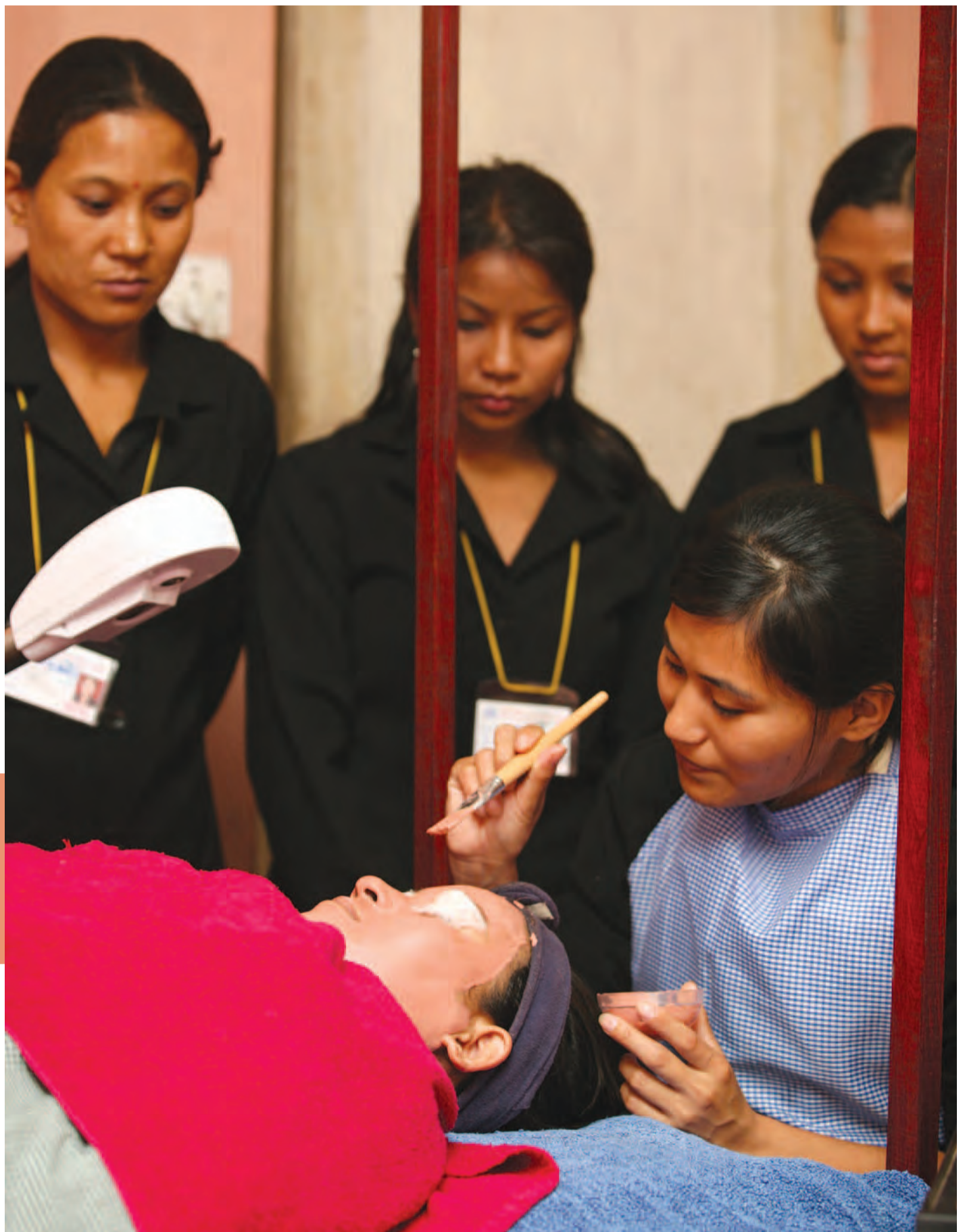
Suntali Rai fled Maoist recruitment in Ramechhap, was rescued from a massage centre in Thamel and is now a beautician trainee (right) at Raskhya Nepal set up by Menuka Thapa (above) who herself was a singer in a dohori restaurant in Kathmandu.

Women escape and find a to start afresh

starting a new life."

Twenty-two year old Sunita Chaudhary's father died when her mother was pregnant. Sunita came to Kathmandu from Bara when her mother married another man. She was forced to work at a dohori restaurant after the man she married started beating her up. She is now working as a beautician trainee. "I have no relatives left, the didis at Rakshya Nepal are my family now," she says.

Menuka Thapa knows that her work is a drop in the ocean. The plight of the women also shows just how conflict leaves long-term effects. "The government has to formulate clear policies so this blatant exploitation of women stops," she told *Nepali Times*, "there is only so much people like us can do." ●



KIRAN PANDEY

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Fear and want

In June, the UN's Intergovernmental Human Rights Council took an important step toward eliminating the artificial divide between freedom from fear and freedom from want that has characterised the human rights system since its inception.

By giving the green light to the Optional Protocol to the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the Council has established an important mechanism to expose abuses that are typically linked to poverty, discrimination, and

neglect, and that victims frequently endure in silence and helplessness.

It will now be up to the UN General Assembly to provide final approval



RIGHTS AND WRONGS
Louise Arbour

of the Protocol. If adopted, this instrument can make a real difference in the lives of those who are often left to languish at the margins of society, and are denied their economic, social, and cultural rights, such as access to adequate nutrition, health services, housing, and education.

Sixty years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognised that both freedom from want and freedom from fear are indispensable preconditions for a dignified life. Its framers understood that social and cultural stigmatisation precludes full participation in public life and the ability to influence policies and obtain justice.

Yet this unified approach was undermined by the Cold War bipolarity. Countries with planned economies argued that the need for survival superseded the aspiration to freedom, so that access to basic necessities included in the basket of economic, social, and cultural rights should take priority in policy and practice.

Human dignity requires mutually dependent freedoms from fear and want

Western governments were wary of this perspective and they chose to prioritise those civil and political rights that they viewed as the hallmarks of democracy.

Against this background, it was impossible to agree on a single, comprehensive human rights instrument giving holistic effect to the Declaration's principles. Unsurprisingly, it took almost two decades before UN member states simultaneously adopted two separate treaties (the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights) encompassing the two distinct baskets of rights. However, only the former treaty was endowed with a follow-up mechanism to monitor its implementation.

In practice, this discrepancy created a category of "alpha" rights (civil and political) that took priority in the influential and wealthy countries' domestic and foreign policy agendas. By contrast, economic, social, and cultural rights were often left to linger at the bottom of the national and international to-do lists.

The new Protocol establishes for the Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights a vehicle to expose abuse, known as a 'complaint mechanism' similar to those created for other core human rights treaties. By lodging a complaint victims will now be able to bring to the surface abuses that their governments inflict, fail to stop, ignore, or do not redress. The Protocol provides a way for individuals, who may otherwise be isolated and powerless, to make the international community aware of their plight.

After its adoption by the General Assembly, the Protocol will enter into force when a critical mass of UN member states has ratified it. Not all countries will embrace the Protocol. Some will prefer to avoid any strengthening of economic, social, and cultural rights and will seek to maintain the status quo.

The better and fairer position, however, is to embrace the vision of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and promote unambiguously the idea that human dignity requires respect for the equally vital and mutually dependent freedoms from fear and want. ● Project Syndicate

Louise Arbour is United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Pardoning



MALLIKA ARYAL

In June 2007 Nepal's Supreme Court ordered the government to form a commission to investigate cases of forced disappearances during the 1996-2006 conflict and the Home Ministry started drafting a disappearance bill. A year later it is still stuck.

The law is in limbo because of poor coordination between the Home and Peace Ministries, ambiguity about their responsibilities, preparations for elections and political deadlock. "Mostly, it is the sheer lack of political will," says Jitendra



KIRAN KRISHNA SHRESTHA (LEFT), MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA (ABOVE)

Bohara of the rights group, Advocacy Forum.

Another bill for the formation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), drafted by the Peace Ministry, has just undergone a fourth revision because of a controversy over a clause on amnesty for perpetrators of war crimes.

"You can't establish a truth

commission in a hurry," warn experts at the Nepal office of the International Centre for Transitional Justice who say the environment is still not safe for a TRC to start work. But other activists say time is running out on the TRC and disappearance bills, and valuable evidence is being lost. With the Maoists soon forming the new government,

The long,



ONLY MEMORIES: Laxmi Bhandari looks at the photograph of her husband, Tej Bahadur Bhandari, who was disappeared by the army in 2002 (above) and Maiya Basnet (at right, overleaf) with other women whose relatives were disappeared in Lamjung during the war.

the perpetrators

PROLONGED AGONY: War victims like mother of a disappeared, Laxmi Maya Acharya, (*far left*) and former Maoist Ramesh Dhungel who lost his arm to a grenade (*left*) say no to amnesty for human rights

victims and their families are also afraid the commissions may never be formed.

Ramesh Shrestha, a former Maoist, lost his right arm in a grenade attack in Kathmandu in 2000 and was in and out of military custody for 17 months during the war. He is not hopeful for the families of the disappeared. “In the Nepal Army as well as the PLA, those responsible for war crimes during the war are all high-level officers,” says Shrestha, “if a disappearance commission is formed they will all be exposed, the Maoists will never let that happen.”

Laxmi Maya Acharya’s son, Lila Prasad, was arrested by army intelligence in Kathmandu in 2003 and detained at the notorious Bhairabnath Battalion. Lila Prasad was a Maoist and had called his mother in Gaighat a few days before his arrest and told her not to worry. She hasn’t heard from

him since.

Lila Prasad’s picture appears on a Maoist poster of martyrs from Udaypur, but is listed as ‘Bepatta’. Laxmi Maya carries the poster wherever she goes. “I want to meet Prachanda and tell him because of you my son is gone, tell me if he is dead or alive and if he is dead you should take care of us,” Laxmi Maya said.

Although the Maoists are hesitant about the TRC, they supported a disappearance commission before the election. “Perhaps the Maoist leaders now feel there is a lot of evidence against them, which is why they want to push this issue under the rug,” says Bohara. The Maoists have told the families of those disappeared by the state that all disappeared will be declared martyrs, and they should keep quiet for now.

Meanwhile, rights groups are disturbed by a memo from the US-based Holland & Knight law firm that they say proposes a blanket amnesty for perpetrators of human rights violations. The memo states that Nepal doesn’t have a ‘clear, binding, general duty’ under international customary law or Nepali law to

prosecute rights violations. It says there is no ‘firm support’ for claims that Nepal must prosecute violations of human rights and humanitarian law. The memo adds that amnesty is common in times of political transition, especially when truth commissions are set up.

Advocate Mandira Sharma says the memo has many flaws. “Impunity has been the biggest challenge in Nepal, reports like the one Holland & Knight prepared only strengthens this culture,” she says.

But Hannes Siebert, a South African consultant with the USAID-funded Nepal’s Transition to Peace Initiative, says the memo doesn’t state, recommend or imply that international law permits blanket amnesties for serious crimes. (See box)

“That is a terrible misreading, or non-reading, of the report,” adds Siebert, who is also chairman of the Appeal Foundation of the Nobel Peace Laureates for whom the memo was written pro bono by H & K.

Joint Secretary at the Peace Ministry, Madhu Regmi says the H & K recommendations are not binding. “We did not ask for legal advice in our favour, we are

Behind the scenes

Hannes Siebert (*right*) was involved in South Africa’s peace process and is now the chair of the Appeal Foundation of the Nobel Peace Laureates working in Nepal, Sri Lanka and Kosovo.

In Nepal, Siebert has been a consultant with the Nepal’s Transition to Peace (NTTP) initiative since August 2005. The initiative involves Daman Nath Dhungana and Padma Ratna Tuladhar, Maoist leaders Khimal Devkota and Suresh Ale Magar, the NC’s Minendra Rijal and Prakash Sharan Mahat, UML’s Bhim Rawal and Jana Morcha Nepal’s Lila Mani Pokhrel and officers from UNMIN and OHCHR.

The group aims to enable Nepali stakeholders to develop common ground within their often opposed positions and provide support to the Peace Secretariat and political parties. About the controversy over amnesty provisions in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission bill, Siebert says this should be a Nepali debate and “not the place of international advisers to take positions or prescribe”.

He says the foundation has had serious concerns about the draft TRC bill and has sent its recommendations, along with those from the UN OHCHR, to the TRC bill drafting committee.



not obligated to implement their suggestions since the TRC bill is a living document that is open for experts to comment on,” Regmi says.

Devi Sunuwar, mother of 15-year old Maina Sunuwar, who was tortured killed in 2004 while in Nepal Army custody, is outraged about all this talk

of amnesty.

She told *Nepali Times*: “They killed my little daughter, I can’t forgive them. If they killed once they will kill again.” ●

See also:
'Voting for reconciliation and justice', #395
'Disappeared, dead or alive', #351

long wait Families of the disappeared want truth and justice



PICS: RAMKUMAR BHANDARI

RAMKUMAR BHANDARI in LAMJUNG

“We don’t want compensation, just tell me the truth about my husband, is he dead or alive,” says Maiya Basnet, whose husband, Krishna Bahadur, was disappeared by the police nine years ago in Lamjung.

Maiya is the chair of the Committee for Social Justice in Besisahar that works with families of the 26 people from Lamjung who were disappeared during the conflict. “As long as I don’t know about him, it is as if he is dying every day,”

adds Maiya.

When the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in November 2006 the government and the seven parties agreed to inform relatives within 60 days about those disappeared or killed during the conflict. Nearly two years have passed, and families like those of Maiya are still waiting.

On 1 June 2007, the Supreme Court ordered the government to resolve the question of disappearances, including establishing an independent commission of inquiry based on international

human rights standards. The government decided to set up a commission, but immediately came under fire from rights groups which said it was a whitewash.

Instead of making separate laws to deal with crimes such as disappearances, it was proposed that the disappearance clause in the Mulki Ain should be amended. The Home Ministry did form a committee to draft the bill on disappearances, but it hasn’t been ratified yet.

While national and international organisations hold seminars, discussions, and

meetings in the capital, the families of more than 1,000 officially listed as disappeared continue to grieve silently all over the country.

Unless those responsible for writing the laws listen to the victims and their families, they will not be able to draft just laws. The interim parliament, although committed to finding out the truth about the disappeared, dragged its feet on the law. With both the protagonists of the war now in government, there appears to be a hidden effort to sweep truth and justice under the carpet.

But there is hope. Eight members of the Constituent Assembly are family members of the disappeared. Other families are also hopeful that the new Maoist-led government will do more to finally tell them what had happened. The Maoist election manifesto states that a high-level committee will be formed to investigate cases of disappearances and strict action will be taken against those responsible. But for now this has been restricted to lip service. There is a fear among the families that the Maoist will also not fulfil their promises.

There are no records or reports on the disappeared. No evidence to present before the courts. Amnesty and reparations proposed by various draft bills in the past will not help the quest for justice, and may undermine the peace process. The families of the disappeared have no other option but to be organised so they can lobby the new government to fulfil its promises. ●

Ram Kumar Bhandari’s father was disappeared by the Army in 2002. He is the coordinator of Committee for Social Justice. See also: ‘How can we forget’, #389

What leaders need to lead



KIRAN PANDAY

Are leaders born to lead, or do they learn to lead? Are they Alpha Males or Little Big Men?

History is often written in terms of military heroes, but leads to overemphasis of command, control and hard military power. In America today, the presidential debate is between John McCain, a war hero, and Barack Obama, a former community organiser.



**OF MIGHT
AND RIGHT**
Joseph S Nye

The image of the warrior leader lingers in modern times. Smart warriors, however, know how to lead with more than just the use of force. They need the soft power of attraction as well as the hard power of coercion.

Many autocratic rulers in Zimbabwe, Burma, North Korea and elsewhere still lead the old-

fashioned way. They combine fear with corruption to maintain kleptocracies dominated by the Big Man and his coterie. A good portion of the world is ruled this way.

Some theorists try to explain this with an 'alpha male theory of leadership'. Just as male monkeys, chimps or apes automatically begin to assume more responsibility once they attain the dominant status of alpha male, human rulers do so as well.

One effect of the traditional heroic warrior approach to leadership has been to support the belief that leaders are born rather than made, and that nature is more important than nurture. The search for the essential traits of a leader dominated the field of leadership studies until the late

1940's, and remains common in popular discourse today.

A tall handsome person enters a room, draws attention, and "looks like a leader". Various studies show that tall men are often favoured, and that corporate CEOs are taller than average. But some of the most powerful leaders in history, such as Napoleon, Stalin and Deng Xiaoping were little over five feet tall.

The traits-centered approach has not vanished from studies of leadership, but it has been broadened and made more flexible. This definition mixes nature and nurture, and means that "traits" can to some extent be learned rather than merely inherited.

A persuasive experiment recently demonstrated the interaction between nature and

nurture. A group of employers was asked to hire workers who had been ranked by their looks. If the employers saw only the resumés, beauty had no impact on hiring.

Surprisingly, however, when telephone interviews were included in the process, beautiful people did better, even though they were unseen by the employers. A lifetime of social reinforcement based on their genetically given looks may have encoded into their voice patterns a tone of confidence that could be projected over the phone.

Genetics and biology matter in human leadership, but they do not determine it in the way that the traditional heroic warrior approach to leadership suggests. The Big Man type of leader works in societies based on networks of

tribal cultures that rely on personal and family honour and loyalty. But such social structures are not well adapted for coping with today's complex information-based world.

Societies that rely on heroic leaders are slow to develop the civil society and broad social capital that are necessary for leading in a modern networked world. Modern leadership turns out to be less about who you are or how you were born than about what you have learned and what you do as part of a group.

Modern information societies require us to go beyond the Big Man approach to leadership. ●
Project Syndicate

Joseph S Nye is a professor at Harvard and author of The Powers to Lead.

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KIRAN PANDAY

American Nepali dohori

She can match the quick wit and sarcasm required to master the traditional art of dohori singing with confidence and poise. And if you close your eyes, you could swear this was a dohori singer from somewhere north of Pokhara.

But Anna Stirr is from the United States and with her perfect Nepali, clever improvisations and mastery of the art of dohori she could fool a lot of people. The first time Anna heard dohori, she fell in love with it. The more she listened the more she realised how, with a lyrical play on words, it can be used to entertain as well as convey knowledge and make people aware of societal issues.

“There is virtuosity in dohori unlike any other form of folk music,” says Anna who is researching dohoris for her PhD on ethnomusicology at Columbia University in New York.

She says that instead of being eclipsed by modern pop, dohori has got a new lease on life because it has been popularised in restaurants and tv shows. Anna herself has appeared in Image Channel’s ‘Khelum Dohori’ and amazed her audience. Village-based dohori requires witty, impromptu improvisations, and that is what caught Anna’s attention.

For the past three years Anna has been travelling to different villages learning and participating in dohori sessions. “Learning this style of music is as difficult as writing an academic treatise,” she laughs, “but at least now I can sing back and make words rhyme.”

In villages that Anna visits, the locals are so captivated that they make her sing hours at a time, sometimes right through the night. Anna’s project is to show that the world of dohori holds more than just the simple tune with snappy lyrics.

“The importance of dohori lies not only in its lyrics and music but in the social context in which it is sung,” she explains. Dohori lyrics open up the world of changing gender roles, Nepali nationalism and the plight of separation in a country where 15 percent of the population works abroad, of ethnic identity.

While there is a need to preserve dohori as a national heritage, there are also possibilities of innovating with the lyrics and style, says Anna whose forthcoming book is about the interconnected web between music and ideas and how one helps to circulate the other.

The American dohori singer is returning to New York to finish her thesis, but hopes to return and maybe even record an album. She says: “I can make people laugh when I sing a dohori, but I haven’t yet been able to make them cry.” ●

Shradha Basnyat

Lost in a crystal maze

Fuzzy plot and cultural chauvinism dulls *The Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*

It has been nearly two decades since the last installment of the Indiana Jones franchise—that 80’s magic orientalism that gave us the idiosyncratic adventurous Dr Jones aka Indiana saving precious artifacts from murderous Nazis and natives—and now with Steven Spielberg’s *Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* we have something, well, older and more tired.



CRITICAL CINEMA
A Angelo D'Silva

From the 30’s where we last left Indy, it is now the 1957, the Atomic Age, the Nazis have been left behind to the new Red Menace. An older Indy seems have taken up the chalk and laid down his whip when he is ejected from his teaching position for suspected communist sympathies. Not long after, he’s drawn into another adventure, this time into Peru playing chase with the Soviets pursuing a crystal skull with alleged paranormal powers.

Crystal Skull sometimes seems less a movie directed by Stephen Spielberg than one assembled by crews of stunt choreographers and CGI animators. But that would suggest that there are no scenes shot with flair and vision. Indeed, there are—clever, packed with references for the film buff to pick out and when the action picks up, often exhilarating. Curiously, the iconism of the genre remains largely intact and potent: Indiana’s fedora igniting that spark of romanticism to those old enough to remember it. But, something of that glamour is lost, or at least dulled in CGI pastiche of Indianas past.

One trouble is that every actor in *Crystal Skull* is weighed down by sheer ludicrousness of their assigned characters. In light of that challenge they all perform admirably. Harrison Ford as Indiana Jones much older since his last outing is called upon to execute improbable feats of athleticism which he follows with grimaces or grunts of protests as if disgust of his circumstance.

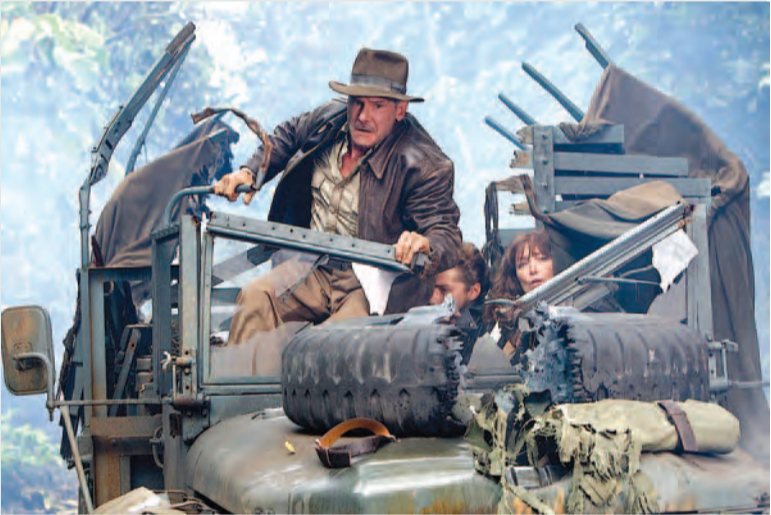
Cate Blanchett, despite being strait-jacketed as the frosty ambitious Soviet operative a in deliberately unflattering uniform and an atrocious accent, manages to camp it up to her advantage. Perhaps the most challenging is Shia Labeauf, the greaser sidekick plied with clichés who seems like Ford’s heir apparent.

An indication that perhaps the franchise should have been left to rest are the uneasy

updating of old prejudices to fit current political correctness standards. Like the academic disciplines that Professor Jones teaches, there is an ambivalence—to say the least—about our protagonist’s relationship with the other. It is poorly resolved here by keeping the people of color to the bare minimum on the screen.

So instead of spear-heaving natives, we have hordes of implausibly giant ants that consume their victims ala *The Mummy*. But of course, this being what it is, you can’t avoid the menacing savage that can be turned away with some fetishistic icon. Obviously, Indian Jones couldn’t be chasing an artifact in Europe, scaring away the French natives with a Big Mac.

Ultimately, it hasn’t shed its sheen of cultural chauvinism, something you could have overlooked when Indy was battling Nazis. It always struck me as a racist the notion that ancient architecture has some extra-terrestrial or Atlanean or some other such outlandish theory, as if the natives were too primitive to ever construct it themselves, a notion that comes into employ here.



And here lies the real failure of the movie: in terms of ludicrousness the plot fares much worse than the characters, more tenuous than the treacherous and rickety ancient walkways they will inevitably have to traverse. In fact, you might nap past the clunky exposition that Ford has to deliver before the action picks up again. With the characters bled out of their drama, it seems George Lucas’ obsession with *X-files* material that delayed the Indy project had finally won out—to the detriment of a story befitting this beloved but flawed franchise. ●

Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull
Director: Steven Spielberg
Cast: Harrison Ford, Cate Blanchett, Karen Allen, Shia LaBeouf
2008. 2hr 3 min . PG-13

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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Tattva** a multimedia and collage exhibition by Chirag Bangdel until 18 July, 5.30 PM at Bakery Café, Pulchok.
- ❖ **4th solo exhibition and sale**, 11 AM- 6.30 PM, 171 Char Narayan Marg, Maligaon, 18-22 July
- ❖ **Connection**, solo Charity Art exhibition by Juju Kaji Maharjan, until 6 August, 2 PM onwards at 1905 Restaurant, Kantipath, 9851050299

EVENTS

- ❖ **Aguirre, Wrath of God**, a film by Werner Herzog, 21 July 2008, 5.30 PM, Rimal Theater Gurukul, 4466956
- ❖ **Lecture Series XXIV** by Susan Hangen on Racial thinking in Nepal, 5 PM, 22 July, Baggikhana, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka
- ❖ **French classes**, next session starts from 23 July-1 October, admissions from 30 June-22 July, Alliance Française, Kathmandu
- ❖ **Ratatouille**, a cartoon film, at Lazimpat Gallery Café, 22 July, 6.30 PM, 4428549
- ❖ **Summer Cult Film Festival** at the Lazimpat Gallery Café throughout July and August
- ❖ **Monsoon madness package** at Shangri-la Village Resort, Pokhara, pay Rs 5999 and get back Rs 5000 to spend on any hotel facility. Also available is the Yeti Airlines special offer. 4435741
- ❖ **Tantric Dance of Nepal** presented by Kalamandapa, every Tuesday 7 PM at Hotel Vajra and every Saturday 11 AM at Patan Museum

MUSIC

- ❖ **Badri & Durga Kharel** a composer/singer duo from Darjeelling performing at nepa-laya's Paleti series, 'r'-sala theatre, 25 July. 4412469
- ❖ **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, 7 PM at Le Meridien, 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



DINING

- ❖ **Risotto and gnocchi** at the Rox Restaurant, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu, till 20 July from 7-10.30 PM
- ❖ **Walk and lunch**, 26 July, Shivapuri Heights Cottage
- ❖ **The Fun Cafe**, discounts available at lunch 12.30-2.30 PM and dinner 6.30-10.30 PM at the Radisson Hotel, Kathmandu, Rs 800, till 31 July, 4411818
- ❖ **New menu** at the Dhokaima Cafe, Patan Dhoka, 5522113
- ❖ **Sixth Annual Wine Festival** till September at Kilroy's, Jyatha. 4250440
- ❖ **Steak special** with free Irish coffee at K-too! Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel. 4700043
- ❖ **Thakali and local cuisine** at Marpha Thakali Restaurant and Bar, Teku. 4104504
- ❖ **Hot summer spicy food** at the Jalan Jalan Restaurant, Kupondole Heights. 5544872
- ❖ **Reality Bites**, The Kaiser Café, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, 9 AM-10 PM. 4425341
- ❖ **Mango étagère** mango delicacies 4.30-6.30 PM at the Lounge, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Steak escape** with Kathmandu's premier steaks, available for lunch and dinner at the Olive Bar and Bistro, Hotel Radisson. 4411818
- ❖ **Cocktails and grooves** with jazz by Inner Groove at Fusion-the bar, every Wednesday at Dwarika's Hotel
- ❖ **International buffet** at the Sunrise Café, and Russian specialties at Chimney, Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
- ❖ **Jazz in Patan** with coffee, food, drinks and dessert at the New Orleans Cafe, Jawalakhel, 8.30 AM-10 PM. 5522708
- ❖ **Saturday special** at the Tea House Inn, Windy Hills, Nagarkot every Saturday. 9841250848.
- ❖ **Scrumptious wood fired pizzas**, cocktails and more at Roadhouse, Bhatbateni 4426587, Pulchok 5521755 and Thamel. 4260187
- ❖ **Starry night barbecue** at Hotel Shangri-la with live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs. 666, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7 PM onwards. 4412999
- ❖ **Kebabs and curries** at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619
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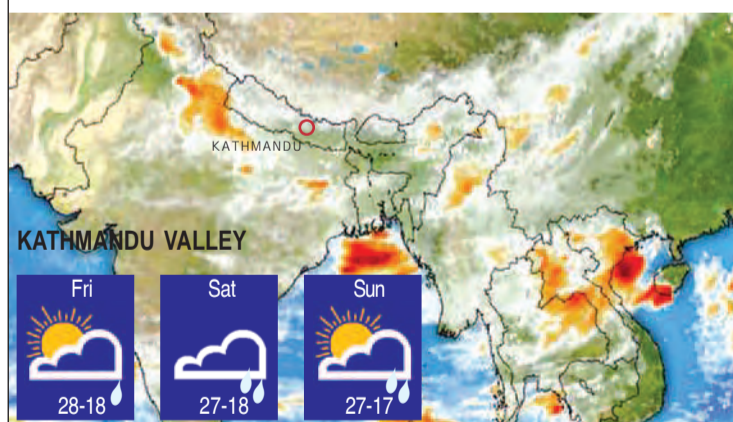
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WEEKEND WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The monsoonal trough in northern India turned the wind direction from the west for a period midweek, resulting in the unseasonal sun that made the days hot and sticky. But the winds have righted themselves again, and the squall front is heading westwards again. The first week of July was nearly dry in Kathmandu, which also suffered below average precipitation for June. A fresh monsoon pulse is now halfway up to Nepal from the Bay and this should bring us moderate to heavy showers in most midhill districts and plains. Expect daytime temperature to go down, but the humidity levels will still be high.



रेडियो सगरमाथा
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PICS: MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

'TINTA RAM': The Maoist vice-president candidate Shanta Shrestha and NC general secretary Ek Raj Bhandari. NC presidential candidate Ram Baran Yadav with the TMLP's Hridayesh Tripathi. NC's vice-presidential candidate Man Bahadur Biswokarma. UML's vice-presidential nominee, Astha Laxmi Shakya and Maoist leader Khim Lal Devkota. All pictures taken as candidates registered just before deadline at 1PM on Thursday at the CA Secretariat. The elections for the president and vice-president are slated for Saturday.



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Pukada, the president-maker

What's going on with the photo-section of our Maoist-controlled media? RSS transmitted a bucolic picture of Grindenwald in Switzerland with fat cows munching juicy grass and captioned it 'Scenic view of the Annapurnas from Poon Hill'. One can understand the Baddies are in a hurry to turn Nepal into **Schweiz**, but why would *Kantipur* splash that picture across the top of page 1 on Thursday?



Then there is the still unresolved Reporter's Club Photo Mystery. Was Rishi Dhamala wiped out of the front page of *Gorkhapatra*, or was he inserted in the group picture with RCP, PKD and JNK in *The Rising Nepal*? (See p6) Given their Stalinist tradition of airbrushing history, one can be sure the Maoist hakims at **Gorkhe** can't stand the ubiquitous Dhamala, but their colleagues across the balcony at *TRN* seem to totally adore him. In fact, they seem to love him so much they printed Dhamala's full page profile of PKD titled 'Prachanda: Towering Personality' last Friday. PM Awesome has dialectic gems like: 'Love and sex are purely personal matters and these are linked to social relationship...it can set in anarchy

in any other combination. Sex is essential for healthy life.' Something lost in translation there?

There are other revelations: His Fearsomeone used to smoke a pack of cigarettes a day (Zhong-Hua or Wills?) he still enjoys a peg or two (**Red Label**). His greatest non-living role models are Lenin and Gandhi and his greatest living role model is (gulp!) Girijababu. He doesn't use hair gel, and the current Chief Sa'b was milao-ing talmel between him and kingji pre-February 2005.



Since he's going to be executive prime minister any day now, we might as well get Awesome's nomenclature sorted out. Prachanda, Chhabilal Baje, or Pushpa Kamal Dahal? The best thing may be to have it both ways and call him Prime Minister Prachanda Dahal, the President-Maker.



In the Tale of the Three Brahmins Makunay, Giprako and Pukada, Girjau was knocked out first. The Maoists couldn't help blurting out to Makunay during a private meeting that his biggest liability was that he was a

Bahun, a guy and a Pahadi and any one of those was enough grounds for disqualification.



That the Maoists have nothing but contempt for UML comrades can be gleaned from the snide comments they pass in private about them. For a month, Awesome displayed awesome political acumen by dragging Makunay along by his nose by promising presidentship. MKN never guessed that Venerable Comrade Mohan Baidya would never allow it and **Raja Ram** was the Maoist choice all along.

Then Laldhoj got to work on JN to think about how he could take over as General Secretary if MKN was kicked upstairs. JN started wholeheartedly backing the Makunay for Prez lobby completely ignoring his own UML colleagues who told him he was being had. Behind the scenes, President Raja was wining and dining Madhesi leaders to lobby for his candidacy all week.



Nepal Film Bored's recent Oscar Night was something to behold. With a Maoist Minister of Information and Broadcasting controlling

the Film Corporation and self-confessed Bollywood buff Comrade Awesome present in person as Guest-in-Chief, it was perhaps a foregone conclusion that the film *Janayuddha* would sweep the awards, especially bcos it was produced by the Maoist **People's Cinema**.

So what if this was director Bimal Poudel's first feature film, he used to be the head of the Maoist Cultural Department. The man's genius: *Janayuddha* bagged Best Actress, Best Actor, Best Film, Best Lyrics and Best Editing—beating 30 other blockbuster Kollywood hits. The Ass thought the PLA guerrillas collectively deserved the best actor awards since they were playing themselves pretty convincingly. Come to think of it, a lot of people that night were reminded of film awards ceremonies during the royal days.



This week's winning entry for the New Name Contest is from C Tuladhar and his prediction that Nepal will not be a **Switzerland** by 2020, but a **Sewageland**.

New Name Contest entries: [ass\(at\)nepalitimes.com](mailto:ass(at)nepalitimes.com)



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