

Isabelle



Shower Room series

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Teku Road, Kathmandu

A portrait of a man with a mustache and glasses, wearing a grey suit, a white shirt, a light blue bow tie, and a black cap. He is standing in front of a building with yellow walls and red pillars. Several Nepalese flags (red with white stars) are visible in the background, and a yellow and green flag is in the foreground.

MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA



A man and a woman are dancing in a grand, ornate hall. The woman is wearing a strapless green dress and has her hair styled in an updo. The man is wearing a black tuxedo with a red bow tie. They are both smiling and looking at each other. The background shows the interior of a large, historic building with high ceilings and chandeliers.



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Eye to eye

How come every time there are India-Nepal bilateral talks our delegations are so loutish?

While stationed in New Delhi last year, I went to the Indian parliament where the director of UNICEF's Innocenti Research Centre was to address Indian lawmakers on yet another study on child rights.

After the speeches were met with the approving left-to-right bobbing of many heads, en route



NEPALI PAN
Robin Giri

to breakfast an elderly Indian gentleman with white hair and starched suit fell into step with me.

After nodding to each other and exchanging a few polite comments, he casually mentioned the naivety of guaranteeing equality to a population of a billion plus. Feeling happy with my job, I gave him the whole UNICEF spiel on children's rights and teased him about everyone

expecting more from the world's largest democracy.

We laughed for a bit and he introduced himself as an 'old hand' who'd lived through India's many ups and downs. Then, he asked me where I was from.

When I told him, he pushed my hand away in mock surprise. "You're joking, you can't be from Nepal," he said.

I told him there were quite a handful of us in the UN actually, and that there were thousands of Nepali professionals within the country and around the planet, including those competing with his countrymen for top jobs in the Bay Area's technology firms.

"Then how come every time we have bilateral talks, only loutish guys from your government come here as if on holiday, and never anyone with real understanding or an ability to engage us?" he asked.

Unsure whether to feel insulted or complimented, I grabbed a cup of coffee, deciding not to lose the old man just then. Good-naturedly we went over other aspects of India-Nepal relations. He mentioned many meetings he'd participated in where the Indian side came prepared with detailed notes to discuss areas of interest and past agreements, some dating back to before Indian independence.

The Nepali side, he said, never failed to send the

same people, designated ministers and representatives in name, who often hadn't done their homework, had nothing constructive to offer in terms of ideas or technical expertise, nor any idea how to seek benefits for Nepal.

"More often than not," he added, "your people come with petty personal requests to enrich themselves, they trivialise the meetings." The Nepalis, he said, were then passed on to lower ranking Indian secretaries and junior level staff who provide the favours, but who then held those ministers to ransom.

"So, do you really think that the central Indian Government has time to meddle in Nepal's affairs when your ministers only deal with our lower-level staff?" And with that, the man vanished into the breakfast crowd.

Many times I have wondered about that conversation and also the veracity of the old bureaucrat's account. I was reminded of it recently by the debate over whether our new prime minister should have gone to Beijing or Delhi first. The last time I checked, we were still an independent country.

Therefore, without sounding too cheeky, I'd like to offer this to the prime minister before he jets off to Delhi next week: if you've done your homework, are knowledgeable about the country's priorities and needs, and are without personal motive, it doesn't matter whether you're meeting with Indians or Chinese, Americans or Scandinavians.

You don't have to look up or down, left or right, just look them straight in the eye and tell them what's really on your mind. And they will listen. ●



KIRAN PANDAY

LETTERS

DAHALSPEAK

Pushpa Kamal Dahal should be made to write 'Actions speak louder than words' (Editorial, 'Business as usual', #416) PKD, repeat this three times every morning before going to work. We heard a lot of nice speeches from the Maoists, but their actions are completely the opposite. If you are committed to take the peace agreement to a logical end, this is the time to perform and show your commitment rather than just paying lip service to democracy.

Ghanashyam Simkhada, Singapore

● Maoists, Maoists, quite contrary. Prime Minister Dahal said the YCL would be disbanded within three weeks, it's been more than a month. They said they will not harm press freedom, and they killed journalist Birendra Sah and continue to intimidate district reporters. They took their own sympathiser, Ram Hari Shrestha, to a UNMIN-supervised cantonment in Chitwan and killed him after torture. The abductors of Dr Devkota's daughter hid at Shaktikhori

after the police started looking for them. The YCL is waging a turf battle against the Youth Force for casino money. Corruption and criminality are too entrenched within the Maoist party for the government it leads to fulfil its promise of democracy and rule of law. There is only so much Home Minister Bam Dev Gautam can do.

Jit Ahdkiary, Thapathali

IAN MARTIN

The UN, our neighbours and the rest of the world must continue to support the peace process and beyond. Ian Martin ('Remarkable peace', #416) should appreciate that it was the overwhelming desire for peace among the Nepali people that brought the peace process this far.

R Rai, Khotang

● What has UNMIN done in Nepal to deserve all that space for Ian Martin's self-glorification in *Nepali Times*? They raced around in their planes and SUVs all over the country spending huge amounts of money. The Maoists were cheating and beating up people right under UNMIN's nose during the elections and yet it was declared clean. The cantonments have become a den of criminals. And yet UNMIN manages to overstay its original mandate because it says integration of the two armies is not yet complete. It will be a happy day for Nepal when we see the last of this wasteful enterprise.

J Schnell, Pokhara

● "Nepal's peace process has been truly indigenous: it has not been mediated or managed by any external party," says Ian Martin. So why did we need UNMIN here? What did they do since 2006 besides burn a

lot of our scarce diesel?

Jagat Regmi, Lazimpat

TREASON

'We are preparing for a possible armed struggle in the future. Our LVs (Limbuwan Volunteers) are undergoing training to use guns.' So says Sangjuhang Palugwa in 'US of Nepal'. How many federal states do we want? How many more armed struggles? People like this should be tried for treason.

Naradmani Sharma, Chitwan

● In any other country, a person like Palugwa would have been tried for sedition and put behind bars. Here in the east we haven't seen an end to conflict because these radicals have blocked the highways for months on end in name of self-determination. How can *Himal* print such incitement to violence? You have crossed the line on freedom of press and given space to someone advocating violence and separatism.

Shanta Rai, Dhankuta



Welcome to India, Mr Prime Minister

In a few days, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal will be in India on an official trip. This is perhaps the most significant visit by a Nepali Prime Minister to India in the past six decades.

There have been visits by eminent prime ministers in the past, but they represented an established order in Nepal and some had been well known to



GUEST COLUMN
Deb Mukharji

their Indian counterparts and others, at times even from before India's independence.

Mr Dahal, on the other hand, led an insurgency for a decade, decided eventually to trust the judgement of the people and was rewarded with an unexpected plurality both in votes received and seats won in the Constituent Assembly.

What lends great significance to the visit is that it could provide the markers for India's relations with what has been described as the 'new' Nepal. These relations are a rich and closely woven skein and have survived the ups and downs of political relations. At the same

time, it is mutual confidence at the political level that provides the stimulus for meaningful cooperation.

The Maoists' 40-point demands of 1996, their recent election manifesto and statements by senior members of the party reflect reservations towards India. These have been occasionally counterbalanced by positive and constructive statements by the prime minister and others.

It would help to clarify thoughts in India if the visit could provide firm and unequivocal clarity on how political Nepal views future relations with India. No less important would be signs that Indo-Nepal relations have risen from the trough of personalised politics to a reflection of the actual interests of the people.

The proposition of India as a threat to Nepal's integrity and sovereignty, first elaborated by the palace in the early sixties to justify its absolute rule, was later to be used by all mainstream

political parties to a greater or lesser degree. The Maoists are no exception. But a continuation of the same approach, justified at times as reflective of the views of the people, does not lead to constructive engagement. Besides, a democratic framework in India and a vigilant press do tend to ask uncomfortable questions on such issues.

Prime Minister Dahal's visit to Beijing for the Olympics raised quite unnecessary dust, perhaps more in Kathmandu than in Delhi, and is reflective of the sensitivities that sometimes accompany Indo-Nepal relations. It is, however, true that the description of Nepal's relations with India and China as one of 'equidistance' or 'equiproximity' has been confusing even to the most committed of Nepal's friends in India.

Relations are what they are and adjectives do not add or subtract from them. India herself followed some such policy in the days of non-alignment. But given the current regional context, such

an approach—not in a global abstract but with specific regard to Nepal's two neighbours—arouses questions among sections in India with regard to future prospects of cooperation. This, perhaps, is an area the prime minister may wish to address during his visit.

The question of the 1950 Treaty, or other treaties about which Nepal has reservations, deserve the most serious and urgent attention. India has long made clear that it was prepared for continuation, abrogation or a new treaty to replace the 1950 one. A timetable for future action should be drawn up with regard to reviewing all agreements.

There is, however, a problem in dealing with these purely at a political level. Political compulsions and commitments, and the frequently high-decibel count of democratic discourse, do not always permit cool assessment. While the final decisions would be political, it would be worthwhile

considering first allowing Nepali civil society and experts to look into the details of all agreements to take a view on the balance of Nepal's interests. All revisions must necessarily take into account the interests and views of the other party—in this case India, and the consequences of abrogation.

Unfortunately, it is likely that elements in Nepali politics as well as in India would look for signs of a cooling in Nepal-India relations during the prime minister's visit. One would hope that his openness and ability to face with candour the responsibilities of office would silence critics.

Above all, the visit of Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' is also a celebration of Nepal's wisdom in accommodation and a remarkable transition from despair to hope for millions of his long-deprived citizens. ●

Deb Mukharji was India's ambassador to Nepal from 2000 to 2002.

"The visit could provide the markers for India's relations with what has been described as the 'new' Nepal."



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Underestimating Upendra

For a long time last year, particularly after the Gaur massacre, Upendra Yadav lived more like a man on the run than a politician who had shot to fame because of a street movement.

From the outskirts of Birganj to a housing estate in Patna, from the lanes of Teku to a sympathiser's house in Gaushala, Yadav was constantly on the move. All he carried was a small bag with clothes, a pile of books and two mobile phones. Reluctant to meet outsiders, give interviews or appear at public events, he was

scared for his life and his political future looked bleak.

An MJF campaign to demand the Home Minister's resignation was a failure. J P Gupta had walked away, and



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

when the MJF registered as a party with a broad platform, many activists quit; the organisation was in tatters. The Americans delayed granting him a visa until the night before his departure. In India, where the political establishment disliked the company he kept, he needed Pradeep Giri's help to mend fences.

At home, the Maoists were gunning for him, and armed groups warned him off talking to the government. There were rumours in the Tarai that he had done a secret deal with the Koiralas and sold out. When he signed the 22-point agreement, the party split. From paan shops in the Tarai to the capital's cocktail circuit, Upendra Yadav's political obituary was already being written.

In retrospect, it just shows how often we get it wrong. Yadav has shown incredible survival skills and a sharp political sense, aided by a fair amount of luck. While maintaining multiple political ties, he is also his own man.

Madhesi criticised him for demanding more seats and blocking a Madhesi alliance before the elections. Yet he had clearly judged the MJF's strength accurately and, from a party perspective, was right in going it alone. He used the royalists when he needed to fight the parties and Maoists, but maintained a distance and stuck to his republican commitment in the CA.

His decision to appoint Parmanand Jha drew flak



Upendra Yadav is coming into his own as a national leader

because of Jha's past. But an upper-caste candidate helped allay impressions back in the plains that the MJF was a Yadav party. Despite veering towards the NC during the presidential polls, he did the right thing by backing a Maoist-led government. He has pampered Bijay Gachhedra at the cost of being tainted because besides being a prominent Tharu face, Gachhedra brings experience of power and money politics.

And now Upendra Yadav is coming into his own as a national leader. It is to the credit of Nepali democracy that a man who has thrived on opposing the Nepali state is now the face of that state globally. The extremists may call it co-option without any systemic breakthrough, but this is how gradual change happens.

Even though Yadav may lack the diplomatic tact of a traditional foreign minister, he is trying to wrestle foreign policy back from the PMO to the ministry. In recent years Shital Nibas has been little more than a sinecure. Diplomats have had unparalleled access to Baluwatar, and the PMO issued directives directly to Nepal's ambassadors abroad without going through the ministry.

Apart from basic measures of protocol and ensuring better training for diplomats, Yadav would contribute enormously if he were to come up with a foreign policy vision. What are our goals? How do we engage with a more confident India which is finding a place on the world stage? What do we want from China? How can we use donors but keep them in check?

Just as it was naïve earlier to write him off, it would now be foolish to claim Yadav's political future is secure. He has to manage both the internal contradictions within his party as well as the social diversity of the Tarai. Madhesi politics till now has been all about opposing Kathmandu. Will he succeed in being part of the establishment while retaining his base back home? How will he channel the federalism debate and radical impulses in the Tarai?

We do know that he is ruthlessly ambitious. The prospect of the inscrutable Upendra Yadav becoming the first chief minister of Madhes, or maybe even the first Madhesi prime minister of Nepal, can no longer be ruled out. ●



KIRAN PANDAY

The 90-point plan

DEWAN RAI

Infrastructure development, economic reform, social security and law and order were the main focus of the ambitious 90-point plan laid out by the Maoist-led government on Wednesday for the year ahead.

But critics said there were few new ideas for immediate relief to the people from shortages and high prices, and most of the program was a rehashing of long-term goals of previous governments.

Even so, this was the largest and most ambitious plan ever presented by a government in Nepal. Among some of the projects envisaged: a fuel pipeline from Raxaul to Amlekhganj, free secondary education, a 10-year 10,000MW hydropower investment program, and the completion of a road network linking all district headquarters. But there are also pie-in-the-sky type projects like the completion of a Lhasa-Kathmandu-Pokhara-Lumbini rail link.

The UML's K P Oli criticised the program as vague and ambitious. "There is nothing wrong with having good intentions, but plans must be realistic," he said. "The government's commitment to multiparty democracy, periodic elections and the rule of law are a few positive aspects."

The NC's Prakash Saran Mahat said the program was a "cut and

paste" of previous plans: "In trying to be ambitious, the program does not propose any substantive plan for growth," he said.

Home Minister Bamdeb Gautam was understandably enthusiastic: "It is a program of national consensus, which has incorporated inputs of the coalition parties," he said.

Little progress on any of the large infrastructure projects is likely within the lifetime of this Constituent Assembly, but the plan also revealed a keenness to wrap up the peace process, complete the writing of the new, democratic federal constitution

However, continued threats, harassment and extortion of businesses by Maoist-affiliated youth and militant unions made businesses sceptical about the pledge to increase investment.

The government has pledged to address labour grievances, and to deal with worker-management relations. It reiterated a commitment to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It will also set up a raft of other commissions, including one to look into the fate of the disappeared and others to assess the inclusiveness of women and minority groups. As part of its revolutionary land

But the budget will be delayed by the prime minister's Delhi trip

on time, and seek rapid economic growth to generate a major socio-economic transformation within the country as quickly as possible.

The government has adopted the public-private partnership approach for large infrastructure projects, and is to prioritise export industries. High-level boards will be set up under the prime minister's chairmanship to promote PPPs and create an investment-friendly environment. New foreign investment will be welcomed in export industries.

redistribution program, the government will set up yet another commission to look at land productivity.

The CA members are scheduled to debate the plans from 12-14 September. Political parties must register their amendment proposals by Thursday. However, the budget will be presented only after Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal returns from his visit to India on 18 September, since Finance Minister Baburam Bhattarai is also expected to accompany him. ●

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Colonising

Guna Colony's Apartments are preparing 98 flats in two apartment buildings in Lazimpat. Each of the flats has three bedrooms, kitchen, dining, living and three bathrooms. The building is also earthquake resistant and has other services including a swimming pool, health club and 24-hour security. The apartments are priced from Rs 7.9 to 1.65 million. Various banks including Guna Bank will help to arrange payments by instalment.



Dasain deals

Morang Auto Works has introduced Dasain promotions which include a Rs 10,000 discount on some motorbike models, scratch card offers and a bumper prize of a four-day, three-night trip to Japan to one lucky winner.

High interest

Kuwer Merchant Bank has introduced a 'teachers savings account scheme' and an 'easy saving account scheme'. In the former, clients can open accounts with only Rs 1,000 and receive eight per cent interest. The latter account will accept payments of just Rs 100 at seven per cent interest. New customers will also receive discounts for other services at the bank.

NEW PRODUCTS

TUB: Home Furnishers has launched its Kaldewei bathtub, with an easy-clean finish resistant to all cosmetics and medicinal bathing preparations, perfumes and acid. It comes with a 30-year guarantee.

NEW PC: A product of ASUSTek Computers, the Eee PC has been launched in Nepal by Nepal International Business, along with other ASUS products like the Eee box desktop replacement. The PC has an eight-hour battery life and weighs one kilogram. It is expected to appeal to students.



HERBAL: Alternative Herbal Products has recently launched organic coffee, spices and herbal soap under the Annapurna brand name. Spices on sale include ginger and turmeric powder. The products are available in all major departmental stores and mini-markets. The soap is priced at Rs 58.

Common Minimum Standard



One gets suspicious when Nepali businessmen appear on television talk shows to pontificate about the macro-economy. Their urge to strut hard-earned knowledge about GDP growth and the finer points of fiscal and monetary policies is understandable. And it befits corporate titans to want to talk about 'big picture' issues such as

macroeconomic issues is the focus on specific activities. These are activities that are in the direct interest of the chambers of businesses, the federations of industries and other business organisations. As such, these membership-driven business entities can easily take up some of these activities that appear below.



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

Business should take the lead in promoting the Nepal brand

economic growth, Rastra Bank policies, unemployment problems and exchange rate policies.

But at the end of the day, many of these conversations do not matter because their conclusions are impossibly vague, and they end up being a bad academic exercise in which everyone agrees with everyone else all the time. Who, after all, can be against addressing the problem of unemployment? And who says that economic growth is not desirable? Sadly, repeated indulgence in such talk-fests has been the hallmark of the way we discuss business policies.

What really pushes the national conversation forward to eventually address the larger

Brand Nepal: In Bangladesh private-sector companies in recent years have started coming together every year to put on a 'Brand Bangladesh' conference, in which, together with foreign experts, they craft plans to showcase Bangladesh's strengths to the rest of the world. On a greater scale, China has long been doing something similar. And India has grown to the stage where its provinces have begun showing off their uniqueness to attract both tourists and investments. Why can't the Nepali private sector come together every year to do something similar to favorably position Nepal on the global tourism and investment map? Doing this does not require the

government to take the lead.

Doing Business in Nepal: Every year, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) puts out a *Doing Business* report. The report measures the degree of difficulty in starting, doing and closing a business in any country. Not surprisingly, there are fewer hurdles in developed than in developing countries when it comes to starting and growing businesses. If we agree that the one way to generate employment and development in Nepal is to make it easier for all to start and grow businesses, then, one activity that the Nepali business associations must do is to use the report to strongly lobby the government every year to keep on reducing the number of business-related obstacles. After all, no competitive private sector thrives in a country where businessmen have to spend more time with government bureaucrats than with customers.


Invest in Nepal: The two activities above—changing perceptions about Nepal and making it easier to do business in Nepal—help set the stage to undertake the third activity: Making Nepal a credibly attractive destination for small-size investments from abroad. Small-size investments because

before we get too ambitious, it's worth remembering that we are in a country where capital markets are so underdeveloped that even remittance recipients have to look around to find a place to invest their cash.

Putting the elements in place first to help attract and retain small-sized investments from abroad, trumps all other big talk of large-scale investments.

Next time you hear our captains of industry talk about macroeconomic variables, ask them: What's stopping you from coming together, even with your competitors, to finalise common minimum standards about Nepal as a brand, as a country that's open for business, and as a country worth investing in? ●







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"I won't topple the government"



KIRAN PANDAY

Interview with Girija Prasad Koirala in *Ghatana Ra Bichar*, 10-16 September

गठना-बिचार

How are you spending your days?

I am busy with political meetings all day. I have discussions with politicians from different parties and senior diplomats and I am trying to figure out the role the NC should play in the present government.

And your view is?

The time to comment on the current government hasn't come yet. I have been following its behaviour for the past month since it was formed. I've been keeping count of the good and bad things that the government has been doing during that time.

The prime minister says you have been

trying to topple the government.

What Prachanda says are his own thoughts. Right now, it's not my goal to topple the government. If the government moves on without breaking democratic processes and laws, I have nothing to say. But if it does and if it brings about a rule of law that takes away citizens' rights, or if there is any stoppage of the democratic processes, I will not stay quiet. I told Prachanda from the very beginning that we must bring forth a coalition government, but he didn't listen.

What sort of an opposition will the NC be?

The Congress will fulfil the role of a responsible opposition party. Instead of burning tyres and blocking roads, we will be a model opposition. We will protest against those who are guilty.

Political youth
.....
Lakshman Khadka in
Naya Patrika, 8 September

नयाँ पत्रिका

Following in the footsteps of the Maoist YCL and the UML's Youth Force, the NC too has initiated its own youth wing called Tarun Dasta ('Troop'). The force was established this month in Dolakha after the NC's central working committee ended. The group goes by the slogan: 'Party-based security is today's necessity'. The current 250 members of the district committee of the force include all the students from the Tarun Party and the NC's All Nepal Students' Union. While announcing the district-level leaders of the force, Kangresi politicians wore blue T-shirts and caps with 'Tarun Dasta' printed on them, and marched around Charikot to protest against YCL and Youth Force "anarchism". General Secretary of the Tarun Party, Umrat Neupane, is said to have directed his youth "to break bones without hurting yourself".

"We're not YCL"
.....
Interview with Mahesh Basnet,
head of UML's Youth Force in
Samaya, 5-11 September

समय

Your party had demanded that the YCL be dissolved, but you set up another force. We are not a copy of the YCL. For the last 12 years, the Maoists have



KIRAN PANDAY

been violent and unfair, and they still haven't changed. They turned against anyone who did not agree with them. The Youth Force was established to be a deterrence.

But there isn't much difference between the activities of Youth Force and the YCL.

We are very different. The YCL is still running a parallel state, but that is not on our agenda. We don't run courts or punish anyone illegally. We simply help the security apparatus to give justice.

But you too take the law into your own hands.

The focus of our activities is justice. We obey the law of the land. True, some of the old laws are unfair. We need to reform them.

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From beggars to givers

Shanti Sewa Griha proves that charity pays



The Nepali word 'Shanti' is not just about the absence of war, but also about inner, spiritual peace. And that is what one finds at the Shanti Sewa Griha, a leprosy clinic set up 15 years ago in Pashupatinath by Krishna Gurung and Rameshwar Singh, and Marianne Großpietsch of its German sister charity, Shanti Leprahilfe.

Leprosy patients from across Nepal come to the clinic at the temple in Kathmandu seeking solace from the stigma associated with the disease. The ashram is a hothouse of Nepali traditions. It runs a farm near Budhanilkantha where an elderly Newari patient, Jiri Bhai, produces organic vegetables. At the workshops in Gaushala, sisters Rekha and Sita draw Maithili-style patterns for carpets woven by women whose leprosy-damaged fingers can still remember skills learned long ago.

Shanti, like life, is a destroyer of rigid categorisations. It defies the grim, traditional 'leper colony'. It is a place of colour, laughter and cleanliness, and a hub of activity. Instead of being just a leprosy centre, it is home to those suffering from any social disability and also runs an outpatient clinic.

While taking a short cut to the airport one day, Gurung noticed a plot of derelict government land in Tilganga, squatted by drug addicts and alcoholics. He

convinced the government to let him plant the land with organically grown vegetables, and persuaded the addicts to become gardeners. Today, reformed alcoholic Hari Ram tends the garden with his fellow-workers.

The centre's artisans create fabulous quilt covers from discarded scraps of silk, and a biogas-fuelled power plant produces light from human waste and cow dung. What spare money it has, the centre invests mostly in its own Steiner-Waldorf school in Budhanilkantha.

"We are not looking to educate university students," Großpietsch says. "We need good farmers and good craftspeople."

While plenty of people in the Kathmandu Valley have never heard of Shanti Sewa Griha, it has nevertheless caught the attention of World Challenge 08, a global competition run by BBC World News, *Newsweek* and Shell, to find small businesses or projects that have shown innovation and enterprise at a grass roots level. Shanti is one of 12 finalists selected by the judges. ●

Balázs Szász

Voting for World Challenge 08 will be open to the public from 1 October to 21 November at www.theworldchallenge.co.uk



ALL PICS: SALLY BIERMAN

Sex and the city of Beirut

Caramel, a debut feature from Lebanon, directed by Nadine Labaki who does double-duty as the lead actor, is a sweet and warm concoction celebrating sisterhood. The film picks its stories from an album of characters in a diverse set of situations—Christian and Muslim, young and old—many of whom work or are frequent customers at Si Belle, a beauty salon in Beirut.

Layale (Labaki), the proprietor, lives with her parents and is having an affair with a married man. Jamale (Aouad) is struggling as an actor and feels her age as she waits alongside younger women for auditions.



CRITICAL CINEMA
A Angelo D'Silva

Nisrine (Al Masri) is stressed about her imminent wedding because of the fact that she isn't a virgin. And Rima (Moukarzel) pines over a customer, her

longing neatly sublimated in luxurious shampooing.

Clearly, the stories have their share of pain, but the film is also lightly humorous, touching and (in a largely chaste kind of way) sensual. Caramel happens to be what Lebanese salons apparently use to wax their clients. Labaki shows herself to be a deft visual storyteller by the easy way she communicates this in the opening of the film and the sensual quality that quietly underlies it.



Caramel, a sensual and warm debut from Lebanese director Nadine Labaki, delights

It doesn't require much detective work to realise the symbolic quality of something so sweet and delectable that also happens to hurt. Or the kinds of pain women subject themselves to in the pursuit of being beautiful and desired. However, the film returns to the support and solace that each character finds with the members of their gender. Indeed, the point is more about commiserating with the characters on the screen than anything overly didactic or revelatory.

Feminism, perhaps, sits in the back seat of this vehicle with little that is overtly political. Instead, the message is that sisterhood offers a solidarity between women in the face of society's restrictions and rewards.

Putting together four strong central female characters to deal with womanhood and relationships brings to mind the American television series *Sex and the City*. And much like that artifact, this one prominently features a city that impresses itself indelibly into the material.

Echoing Labaki's dedication to 'her' Beirut, the film is as much a sentimental portrait of a place, diverse and multicultural and sustaining, as it is an aspiration and a promise. Very little overly surprises in this largely predictable film, but with winning characters and some gorgeous cinema the experience is still enjoyable. ●

Caramel
Director: Nadine Labaki
Cast: Nadine Labaki, Yasmine Al Masri, Gisèle Aouad, Joanna Moukarzel
2008. PG-13. 1 hr 36 min.

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Adoption is about finding a suitable family for a child, not a suitable child for a family

Abandoned

In March 2007 Nepal suspended adoptions by foreign families after criticism that children were being sold for thousands of dollars. Files of over 400 parents who had been matched by 'orphanages', were sent back and embassies stopped issuing visas.

Earlier this year, bowing to pressure from the US and European governments, the files that were awaiting approval from the government were processed and the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare began work on a new set of terms and conditions for adoption.



INTERESTING TIMES
Mallika Aryal

Last week UNICEF and the Swiss-based child relief agency foundation Terre des Homes (TDH) released a two-year study on inter-country adoption and its influence on child protection in Nepal.

The report, *Adopting the Rights of a Child*, is deeply critical of Nepal's inter-country adoption policies and says it doesn't always take the best interests of the child into consideration. The report reveals instances of abduction of children and babies put up for adoption without their parents' consent.

The majority of 'orphans' the researchers talked to should not have been in orphanages because their biological parents and relatives were still living. The report says most centres are not up to standard, monitoring of the centres is not properly done and biological parents are not given adequate information about the adoption process.

Domestic adoption accounts for only four per cent of adoptions, families are divided and siblings—including twins—are separated to increase the chance of their being matched. No psychosocial support is given to those who have been abandoned.

The government recently finished drafting a new set of conditions and procedures on adoption. Some 37 Nepali institutional homes

have been accredited by the ministry and officers are running background checks on more than 70 international adoption agencies which have registered with the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare.

A central commission, under the ministry, has been set up to facilitate the adoption process. Foreign parents wanting to adopt from Nepal must first approach the agencies in their home countries that have been accredited by the government. These in turn will contact the commission, which will match potential parents with children from the approved Nepali homes. Officers at the ministry say that these terms and conditions will make adoption transparent because a central authority, not private homes, will be responsible for the matching process.

Although the new rules are an improvement on the old, it is clear they still don't provide sufficient guarantees to fully uphold the rights of the child. Although international agencies are required to register with the ministry, it is still possible to apply through an embassy for adoption. This is no different from private adoption as prospective parents can easily communicate with the child's home. Unless the supervision board and family selection boards take bold steps, children's homes will continue have a lot of power over the adoption process.

Adoption is about finding a suitable family for a child, not a suitable child for a family. We need a leak-proof Adoption Act because, as we know with everything else in Nepal, just passing a law doesn't change anything. There has to be the rule of law to act as a deterrent. Also, the criteria for adoption are still too elastic. At the moment it seems relative deprivation is enough of an excuse to put a child up for adoption.

The government is nowhere close to drafting an Adoption Act, since the ministry has been too preoccupied with elections and politics. Worldwide, inter-country adoption is rife with corruption and misuse. Without legal reform, malpractice will continue and Nepali children will continue to suffer because the system is unable to protect them. ●



Adopting new

International child rights organisations have urged the government of Nepal to prohibit any further adoption of Nepali children by foreigners until domestic safeguards have been put in place to prevent trafficking.

UNICEF and the Geneva-based foundation Terre des Homes (TDH), in a report released in Kathmandu last week, said a two-year study had revealed cases of child abduction and babies being taken for adoption without their parents' consent. Orphanages were in some cases little more than fronts for trafficking by unscrupulous agents.

An undercover report in the *Nepali Times* in March 2007 revealed how a baby had been offered for sale by a Kathmandu 'orphanage' for \$6,500. Public outcry over this and other, similar reports of children being sold to foreign parents who bribed officials, led to the government banning inter-country adoption in 2007 ('Baby bazar' #339).

The government stopped processing files, and those awaiting final authorisation from the ministry were sent back to the respective district offices unsigned. Foreign embassies stopped issuing visas and the ministry said nothing would change until the inter-country adoption process was brought into line with international procedures. Earlier this year, the government allowed 442 pending adoptions to go ahead, but announced new, stricter rules in May.

This week the Ministry of



Women, Children and Social Welfare published a list of 38 authorised children's homes from which adoptions could take place. Ministry officials said a list of approved international agencies, which had to apply for registration by 22 August, would

be announced shortly, and only after that would inter-country adoptions resume.

Prakash Kumar Adhikari, legal adviser at the ministry, said the new regulations were an improvement, and claimed extensive background checks on

French

ROMA ARYAL

Raphaël Laxman Boyer talks like a Frenchman, acts like a Frenchman, carries a French passport and dreams of becoming French ambassador to Nepal. To all intents and purposes he is French, except that he looks Nepali.

Raphaël, born to Nepali parents, was adopted from Bal Mandir by a French couple when he was just three months old, and has now returned to the country of his birth for the first time in 27 years, curious to see what his life might have been.

He has no memories and therefore no emotional attachments to Nepal, except a

A former orphan returns to Nepal to find his roots



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

safeguards



SAM KANG LI

The governm ent tries to clam p dow n on fake orphanages

both international agencies and local children's homes had been done.

"Now a central authority, under the ministry, will facilitate the inter-country adoption process including matching of children with parents, not

individual homes," Adhikari told *Nepali Times* this week.

However, UNICEF and TDH said the definition of what made a child eligible for foreign adoption remained too vague, adding that inter-country adoption should be the last

resort for an abandoned child who could not be adopted within Nepal. The report urged the government to pass an Adoption Act to enforce these safeguards.

"Children should have the right to first grow up in their own country, their own culture and with their own language," said UNICEF's Nepal representative, Gillian Mellsop.

UNICEF said an industry had grown up around adoption, in which profit, rather than the best interests of the child, was the prime motive. The report said that the sale, abduction and trafficking of children—disguised as adoption—was happening in a woefully under-regulated environment.

There are an estimated 15,000 children living in institutional homes in Nepal. Many are genuine orphans, but many others have been coerced. Joseph Aguetant of TDH thinks inter-country adoption should not be left to private agencies.

"A lot of Nepali children put up for foreign adoption are not even orphans, and their parents are misled into parting with their children," Aguetant said. "Poverty alone is not enough reason for inter-country adoption."

Demand for Nepali children has grown in Spain, France, Italy and the US following moves by Latin American and Southeast Asian states to tighten adoption procedures. India too is moving towards prohibiting inter-country adoption. ● *Mallika Aryal*

connection

natural desire to explore his roots.

"He was given all the love and affection he needed," says Mahen Shrestha, who helped Raphaël's parents fill in the adoption forms in 1981 and remains a family friend. "To him, his French parents are his real parents. There cannot be any other."

A law student and school administrator, Raphaël became his town's youngest elected councillor at 19. He is interested in French foreign policy and likes the idea of coming back to Kathmandu one day as a French diplomat.

He is one of thousands of Nepalis who have been adopted by foreign families in the past few decades. Until recently, Nepal's relatively relaxed adoption laws have made the country popular with European and American couples seeking to adopt a child, perhaps because they cannot have their own or because they want to provide a home to an orphan. Raphaël's siblings, an elder sister and his twin brother, were also

adopted by the same family, so he has always had the support of a brother and sister.

It is true that the past may tug more strongly at those who were adopted later in life. But whatever the age, the difference between the life adopted children lead today and the likely life they left behind them in Nepal is stark.

"Adopting parents have to go through very thorough government verification in countries like France, so the parents who adopt will generally bring up their children very well," says Shrestha. The children are usually told by their new parents of their origins, he says.

Raphaël has not felt the need to search for his biological family, but there are others who do come back to Nepal to do just that. Often, they track them down and end up helping them out financially. Some come back to look for their parents, but then come to the painful realisation

that they were put up for adoption because their parents didn't actually want them, and so abandon their search.

Foreign adoption of Nepali children is still permitted if the biological parents are living in extreme poverty. In an attempt to reduce the corruption and the fake orphanage racket there will now be greater ministerial control, in theory.

Raphaël's parents also believe that adoption has turned into a money-making business in Nepal. "But adoption is an action of the heart, not of the purse," they say.

Despite having no memory of his first months of life, Raphaël is pleased he made the journey back. He is well aware of how fate changed his life, and can't imagine leaving without doing something for children in the orphanages here. He came with clothes provided by his community to donate to the children at Bal Mandir. "After all," he says, "I was one of them once." ●

Descent into Hell

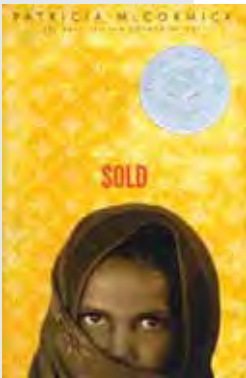
Lakshmi is 13 when her family home in Nepal is devastated by a landslide. Her drinking, gambling stepfather sells Lakshmi to a stranger who promises her a job in the city.

It doesn't take long for Lakshmi to realise, when she arrives in Calcutta, that she has been sold into prostitution like thousands of Nepali girls every year. Lakshmi is forced to work under a cruel madam named Mumtaz.

Lakshmi's idyllic life in the mountains turns into a nightmare of sexual torture and despair. Her mother used to tell her: "Simply to endure is to triumph" and she survives in Calcutta's netherworld out of sheer willpower. She makes friends with other Nepali girls in identical predicaments with similar stories of being sold by relatives and friends.

This is an unconventional book on the trafficking of Nepali women to India, written in a series of stark, individual vignettes. Although it is a novel, Lakshmi's story is repeated every day with the exploitation and oppression of young Nepali women not just in India, but also by ruthless middlemen who dupe or dump them in Gulf states like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

Patricia McCormick travelled the trafficking routes between India and Nepal to research the book. She is the author of the acclaimed novels *Cut* and *My Brother's Keeper*. ●



SOLD
Patricia McCormick
Hyperion, 2006
ISBN: 0-7868-5171-6
Pp 263
\$15.95

Redemption: recovery from a life of misery and despair



Sold, a documentary by MTV's End Exploitation and Trafficking campaign, will be premiered on 12 September in Kathmandu. Despite the similarity in name with Patricia McCormick's novel, the film and book are not connected. The film was funded by USAID and follows three

victims of trafficking to the point of their redemption, and other individuals linked to the trade in humans in South Asia. One of the victims featured in the half-hour film, which is narrated by Lara Dutta, is Pramila, an 18-year-old girl trafficked from Nepal to a brothel in Delhi. The film also tells the story of Gita Tamang, another Nepali trafficking survivor, who is now working on the border between India and Nepal, patrolling it for possible trafficking cases. ●

The documentary can viewed on <http://vodpod.com/watch/481059-sold-mtv-exit-special>

When intervention works

We know the problems of trafficking of Nepali children. So what is the solution?

Some of the best practices of interventions that worked from across South Asia are presented in a new UNICEF report, *South Asia in Action: Preventing and Responding To Child Rights and Trafficking*. Wherever interventions have worked to stop trafficking, the approach has involved awareness-building, community mobilisation, political and social commitment, networking and cross-border cooperation.

The first case study looks at para-legal committees in Nepal that work at the local level to address the push factors that lead to trafficking. The committees started with girls and women being trafficked to the cities and to India, but later addressed the bigger problem of violence and abuse and exploitation of children and women. The committees work on prevention, detection and early follow-up.

An 11-year-old girl is quoted in the report: "I approached the para-legal committee in my village and convinced my father about the hazards of marrying off my sister at such a young age...after much consideration, my father understood the risks and promised not to marry her off before 18."

The report also looks at a regional anti-trafficking network in Andhra Pradesh and the Bangladeshi children who used to be sold as jockeys for camel races in the UAE. ●



South Asia in Action: Preventing and Responding To Child Rights and Trafficking UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, August 2008

West vs the Rest

It's back to the Cold War at the United Nations

THALIF DEEN in NEW YORK

UNITED NATIONS—When the United States and the former Soviet Union were on the verge of a military confrontation over Cuba during the Cold War, the legendary US Ambassador Adlai Stevenson went eyeball-to-eyeball with Soviet envoy Valerian Zorin in the Security Council chamber.

As old UN hands recall, Stevenson aggressively sought a response from Zorin over allegations of Soviet nuclear missiles stationed in Cuba.

"Yes or no?" Stevenson demanded, and added the punch line: "And don't wait for the translation," as he pressed for an immediate answer from the Russian-speaking envoy.

Zorin turned to Stevenson and said, through a translator: "I am not in an American court of law, and I do not wish to answer the question put to me in the manner of a prosecuting counsel."

Stevenson famously responded that he would wait for an answer "until hell freezes over".

Judging by the recent deadlock in the Security Council over Kosovo, Iran, Burma, Zimbabwe, Sudan and most recently Georgia, one wonders whether the days of the Cold War are back, or at least its political rhetoric.

In January last year, a Western-backed and U.S.-led move to castigate the Burmese government for human rights violations suffered a rare double veto from China and Russia. Last month, history repeated itself when the two vetoed a resolution aimed at



imposing sanctions against Zimbabwe.

The US-Russian political confrontation in the Security Council has intensified in recent weeks with the Russian invasion of Georgia, and Moscow's subsequent decision to recognise the breakaway territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

When US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad sought a response from Russian Ambassador Vitaly Churkin on whether or not the Russians were bent on violating the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia, Churkin said he had already provided an answer to the question.

Maybe, he added sarcastically, the US representative had not been listening when Churkin had given his response. "Perhaps

he had not had his earpiece on," he added.

And when US Ambassador Alejandro Wolff recently blasted Russia for its perceived violations of international law and the UN charter during the invasion of Georgia, Churkin hit back with another dose of sarcasm.

"Did you find any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq...and are you still looking for them?" he asked.

Speeches laced with sarcasm and personal insults are rare in the Council chamber. But the Cold War rhetoric is back.

"The United Nations is not headed for a new Cold War," predicts Phyllis Bennis, director of the New Internationalist Project at the Washington-based Institute for

Policy Studies. As US economic, political and diplomatic power diminishes around the world, military power has become ever more dominant as a viable tool of hegemony.

Partly as a result of that rising militarism and partly out of longstanding habit, she pointed out, governments around the world continue to treat the United States as if it were still an unchallengeable dominion.

"And in the United Nations, that means allowing Washington to continue to call the shots," added Bennis.

Just after the Cold War, Washington was in less of an ideological mode. Maybe it felt it could afford to be magnanimous without behaving in an overbearing and unilateral manner. But in the last eight years diplomats say the Americans have become increasingly ideological and unilateral.

One Asian envoy said the ideological zeal of the United States is also seen in the tendency by the West to try to broaden the definition of what is a threat to international peace and security. In Zimbabwe and Burma, democracy, elections, and human rights all fell under possible new definitions of 'threats'.

Russia and China are becoming more assertive, primarily on issues that bear directly on their own national interests, like preventing the Security Council from producing a resolution on Georgia.

Diplomats here don't see either side backing off for the time being. The West will continue to push the envelope and many among the Rest will continue to resist. ● *IPS/Other News*

Browser Wars II

Google turns ten and declares war on Microsoft

HAROLD JAMES
in PRINCETON

Ten years after its birth, Google is threatening to re-open the Browser Wars of the 1990's, when Microsoft's Internet Explorer eliminated its rival, Netscape's Navigator.

This time, however, it is Google's Chrome that promises to transform the economics underlying the entire software industry, and not only because of its technical innovation in linking very different kinds of software to an Internet browser. In doing so it eliminates the need for a program such as Windows, which previously controlled access to every kind of software.

Google's new technology is impressive, and will no doubt prove convenient for many consumers once the initial security problems are resolved. But the fundamental innovation lies elsewhere. Chrome is a breakthrough because it offers a completely novel approach to a dilemma created by the legal and regulatory regime of competition policy in the world's two major legal jurisdictions, the United States and the European Union.

Between 1995 and 1997, Explorer almost completely eradicated Navigator, although Navigator had initially opened up

the World Wide Web for most users and its dominance appeared unassailable. The major advantage of Explorer was not so much a technical one, but rather that Microsoft's Windows provided the operating software for the overwhelming majority of personal computers. As a result, an Internet browser – and, indeed, other media software – could be integrated into the Windows

framework as an entire software package.

The ability to have operating systems and software bundled together made life much easier for the average consumer. You simply got everything you wanted (and probably much more) with the purchase of a computer. But this also reduced the possibility of choice, of selecting and combining different software.

Microsoft's critics have complained endlessly about this, claiming that the browser's integration into the operating system drove out inherently superior software solutions.

For instance, many users preferred the word-processing program WordPerfect to Microsoft's Word, but the ease of having a bundled solution meant that Word had the advantage of being used more widely, and thus drove its rival into extinction.

Microsoft's advantage, and its business model, goes back to another protracted legal struggle. Computer software was originally not a commodity to be bought, but a service. IBM built up a

massively dominant position because it leased a carefully custom-designed and individualized package. It did not sell anything, computers or software. IBM's leasing model seemed to challenge the entire legal philosophy of US competition policy that was established in the New Deal era.

Google's position is so interesting and so powerful because the legal philosophy that challenges any ascendant position, even in an industry that seems naturally to produce monopoly, remains in place. Google's model is a neat example of what might be termed 'post-modern economics'. The amazing story of technical innovation is that it was, and remains, hard for innovators to benefit from radical technological breakthroughs. Industrial Revolution-era cotton makers in England did not make a great deal of money, even though their products revolutionized personal life and hygiene, and even extended life expectancy.

In our own time, air travel has become much cheaper, but airlines lose money, telephoning is no longer unaffordable, but the telecommunications companies lost fortunes by over-bidding for mobile telephony rights.

Google has taken the logic of loss-making technology to its ultimate culmination of not charging at all for its product. ●

Harold James is Professor of History and International Affairs at Princeton University. His most recent book is The Roman Predicament.



Abusing young hearts and minds

EMMA SCIENTARELLI

Among the organisations working to protect children's rights in Nepal, two of the best known are Voice of Children and Child Protection Centers and Services. They joined forces recently to research the abuse endured by children on the streets of Kathmandu, and discovered that a horrifying 95 percent of children who slept on the streets suffered at least one form of abuse.

The Abuse of Street Children in Kathmandu provides much needed insight into the reality of everyday life for these children. Physical violence and sexual

organisations that claim to have child protection as a key aspect of their mission statements.

It is no surprise then that changing the habits so deeply engrained in a street child is such a daunting task. Before they become teenagers, most of them have learnt one key lesson: you can trust no one. Not Nepalis. Not foreigners. Not social workers. Not police officers. No one.

International NGOs working to protect children from sexual abuse often stress that the majority of paedophiles are foreigners coming to Asia to prey on young, poor children, but the new study shows a different reality. While there still are

not enough simply to provide food, shelter and schooling. Love is required to break the cycle of self-destruction. Patience, forgiveness and understanding are essential when a previously abused child falls back on coping mechanisms he developed on the streets.

It is easy to see the milk bags full of glue pressed against their mouths or hear the vulgarities coming from their lips and conclude that these children sleeping amongst the rubbish are nothing more than a pack of rude boys who will never change.

Pedestrians cross the road to avoid packs of grimy glue-sniffers, but after reading the findings and testimonies, it is clear their behaviour is to a large extent the result of how other people have treated them.

This report is not just a document to be read by social workers, sociologists and psychologists. It is for every person who has ever asked why these children act as they do. ●

The Abuse of Street Children in Kathmandu
www.cpcs-nepal.org
www.voiceofchildren.org.np

Kathmandu's street children have learned to trust no one

predation are so rampant that lacerations, beatings, rape and exposure to pornography have become the norm for many children.

For the thousand-plus children fending for themselves on the city streets, abuse is a daily part of life. They have learnt what even the most highly trained social worker sometimes fails to realise: anyone can be a predator.

Of all the horrific anecdotes of molestation and abuse they tell, most startling is that for many children it is the adults with the responsibility to act as protectors who turn out to be the abusers.

Young interviewees in the CPCS/VOC survey reported sexual and physical abuse occurring within the confines of

foreign paedophiles, the new data show there are more locals forcing young boys into prostitution than the average resident of Kathmandu would like to admit.

The report does an impressive job highlighting the abuses occurring in the lives of street children and identifying the abusers, but fails to explore the long-term psychological damage incurred by the abuse and neglect. Children suffering deep psychological trauma are possibly the hardest to assist.

Yet, despite the statistics of institutional abuse and molestation cases, there are many organizations with clean records and they truly do care about street children. So why are there still so many young people living on the streets and so few rehabilitated?

Victims of abuse suffer from long-term psychological damage. A lack of self-worth and stunted emotional development are common, and many street children learn to deal with problems through violent confrontation or by numbing the mind through alcohol or drugs.

The report states that a child's desire to be loved is the number one reason why they are willing to endure sexual abuse. So why wouldn't that also be the best way to keep them off the streets? It is



From Curaçao with love

In his exhibition of paintings, 'Bridges of Love', Netherlands Antilles artist Tony Monsanto explores a wide range of contemporary issues—from the death of Benazir Bhutto to the ethnic melting pot of his home, the beautiful island of Curaçao in the Caribbean.

There are 20 different paintings on display at the Siddhartha Art Gallery at Baber Mahal, most of which date from the past year. Monsanto mainly uses mixed media, collage and paint, amidst a selection of metaphorical images.

One of the most striking and controversial pieces on display is 'Pregnant Woman', in which a woman in an advanced state of pregnancy stands before a cross while a pig stares out at the viewer. To Monsanto, the piece stands for the irony of the Catholic Church in the Americas and through colonial history.

Monsanto, on his first visit to Nepal, says he has always been mystified by the 'Shangri-La' description of the Himalayan state. In the exhibition, some aspects of his art—such as the circular form of his subjects—resemble those found in Nepali art.

"In my paintings, I aim to make a connection between my hometown Curaçao and Nepal," he told *Nepali Times*, "the exhibition is his tribute to the people of Nepal. ●

The exhibition will run at the Siddhartha Art Gallery till 27 September.

Sleep in, eat out, doze off



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

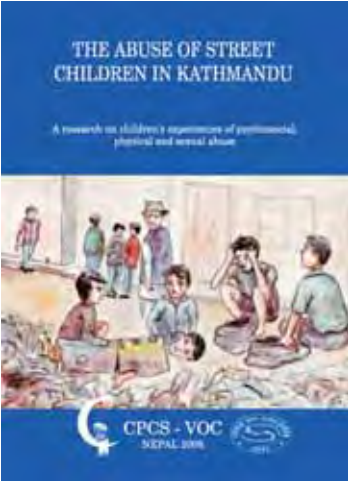
If you're planning one of those lazy Sundays—sleeping in, then lolling around in the sun while listening to mellow music—it's not a bad idea to hit the Hyatt Regency's garden for the Sunday Jazz Brunch. The rain clouds are a fading memory, and the crisp organic salads are a reminder that Kathmandu's best season is getting under way. Mariano's jazz ensemble provides the

perfect accompaniment to chef Bhanu Bhakta's charcoal-barbecued meat courses, which vary each week—from delicate trout to hefty pork chops—helped along by pasta dishes, fresh vegetables and desserts.

The main course is cooked in the garden to the sound of sizzling fat and the aroma of smoking charcoal, then delivered to you straight from the grill. "The charm of a barbecue is in the richness that charcoal brings to the flavour of the food," says Bhakta, who is reluctant to continue cooking indoors when there's no longer a need to hide from the showers.

Choose from penne, spaghetti and a choice of sauces, or grab a Mexican quesadilla bursting with cheese and spiced up with a hot salsa and sour cream. Dessert might be a light chocolate chiffon cake, hot pancakes or a home-made crème de menthe ice cream.

The barbecue sizzles every Sunday at Rox Garden from 12-3:30PM and costs Rs1050++ per person. ● *Roma Aryal*



escape

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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

❖ **Bridges of Love**, an exhibition of paintings by Toney Monsanto, 12-26 September, Siddhartha Art Gallery, Sunday- Friday 11AM-6PM, Saturday 12-4PM. 4218048

EVENTS

- ❖ **The Illusionist**, a film by Neil Burger at Lazimpat Gallery Café at 12 September, 6.30 PM. 4428549.
- ❖ **2nd Copyright evening session** at Alliance Francaise, 12 September, 6.30 PM, Rs 200, Tripureshwar
- ❖ **Thai traditional Puppetry Show** by Joe Louis Puppets Troupe, 14 September, Nepal Academy Hall
- ❖ **Lecture Series XXVII** by John Cameron on Development in the Republic of Nepal, 4.30 PM, 16 September, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka
- ❖ **Monsoon madness package** at Shangri-la Village Resort, Pokhara. 4435741



MUSIC

- ❖ **29th Yala Maya Classic**, a classical musical series, 18 September, 5PM, Yala Maya Kendra (Baggikhana), Patan Dhoka, Rs 100. 5553767
- ❖ **Poesie and Fags** a jazz vocal trio from Holland, Saturday at Patan. 5522708, Sunday at Thamel. 4700736. New Orleans Café, 7PM.
- ❖ **Some like it hot** every Friday BBQ and live music by Dinesh Rai and the Sound Minds, 7PM onwards, Rs 899 at Fusion, Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488
- ❖ **Happy cocktail hour**, 5-7PM, Ladies night on Wednesday with live unplugged music at Jatra Café & Bar
- ❖ **HyJazz Club** every Friday from 8.30 PM, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4489800
- ❖ **Dance and Cocktails** at Cube Bar, Kamaladi. 4438017
- ❖ **Fusion and Looza** Band every Friday night, Bhumi Resto Lounge, Lazimpat. 4412193
- ❖ **Rudra night** fusion and classical Nepali music by Shyam Nepali and friends, every Friday, 7PM at Le Meridien, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **Sufi music** by Hemanta Rana, every Friday at 7.30 PM at Dhaba Restaurant and Bar, Thapathali.
- ❖ **Fusion and Classical Music** by Anil Shahi every Wednesday, rock with Rashmi Singh every Friday, Sufi & Raga with Hemant Rana every Saturday, 8 PM onwards, Absolute Bar. 5521408

DINING

- ❖ **Thai Food festival** at Shambala Garden café, Hotel Shangri-la, 12 September, Rs 600. 4412999
- ❖ **Sunday Jazz Brunch** at Hyatt Regency with performances by Mariano and his band from 12- 3.30PM. 4491234
- ❖ **Pizza & Pasta** every Monday and Tuesday at Rox Restaurant. Hyatt Regency. 448936
- ❖ **Fusion** of Marcela Regan's new menu and Mannie's new bar at Dhokaima Cafe. 5522113
- ❖ **Masala**, an Indian restaurant on Jawalakhel, St.Mary's school road. 4421634
- ❖ **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri-la, Kathmandu, Rs 600. 4412999
- ❖ **Pasta pesto passion** at La Dolce Vita, Thamel. 4700612
- ❖ **Steak special** with free Irish coffee at K-too! Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel. 4700043
- ❖ **Continental and cafe item** with Live band every Friday at Vintage Cafe and Pub, Woodland Complex, Durbarmarg.
- ❖ **Home made pasta** at Alfresco, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **Reality Bites**, The Kaiser Café, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, 9AM-10PM. 4425341
- ❖ **Steak escape** with Kathmandu's premier steaks at the Olive Bar and Bistro, Hotel Radisson. 4411818
- ❖ **Cocktails, mocktails and liqueurs** at the Asahi Lounge, opening hours 1-10PM, above Himalayan Java, Thamel.
- ❖ **Ily Expresson Coffee** at Hotel Shangri-la, Lazimpat and Mandap Hotel, Thamel
- ❖ **Retro Brunch Barbeque** with live acoustic music by Sound Chemistry, every Saturday, 12-3PM at LeMeritien-Kathmandu, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **Starry night barbecue** at Hotel Shangri-la with Live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs. 666, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7PM onwards. 4412999
- ❖ **Kebabs and curries** at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619
- ❖ **Socially Responsible coffee** at Himalayan Java, Thamel

For inclusion in the listing send information to editors(at)nepalitimes.com

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Education and Politics
SEPTEMBER ISSUE

WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

It is not unusual for the monsoon to begin fizzling out about now, but this year the westerlies have been active much sooner than normal. Right across north India a high pressure system dominates and the wind direction has switched, allowing the weakening moisture-laden east winds to be pushed right off track. Straggling late-monsoon fronts therefore dumped their rains over the plains of eastern Nepal and fled. For those ravaged by the Kosi this year, this is a blessing in disguise because normal precipitation would have compounded their misery. But in the central and western hills there has been a 30 per cent rain deficit this season. The good news is that there is an emerging circulation over the Bay which, if it strengthens into a cyclone, could bring us another bout of rain next week. Expect a sweltering weekend with showers at night.

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अंग्रेजी सिक्न सघाउने कार्यक्रम
Tuning In To Language and Culture
प्रसार हुने समय : हरेक शुक्रबार बेसुका (८:१५-८:३२)
हरेक बाइतबार विर्दो (१:४०-२:००)
"रेडियो सगरमाथा विचलित मुनी, अंग्रेजी सुधारी"
(रेडियो सगरमाथा र अमेरिकी राजदुतावास, अमेरिकी केन्द्रको सहकार्य)

सम्पर्क: ४४३०००८, ४४३०००९ मोबाइल: ९७८०८०८०८, ईमेल: info@radio.sagarmatha.org

हरेक विहान २:०० देखि राती ११:०० बजे सम्म सूचना शिफ्ट र तयार गरी राख्नेका लागि धन्यवाद साथी रेडियो सगरमाथा १०८ थोप्लो ४ मेगाहर्ट्ज



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

BROAD TENT: President Ram Baran Yadav and Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal with Indian Ambassador Rakesh Sood at the tea party organised by the president at Shital Nibas on Wednesday.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

GENERATION GAP: CA member Prathibha Rana (RPP), left, has a chat with her daughter, Arzu Deuba (NC), at the president's tea party at Shital Nibas on Wednesday.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

AND THE ANSWER IS...: Nabil Bank's CEO Anil Shah and DHL's Country Manager Mukunda Malla cheer for their teams at the Surya 24 Carat Boss Brainstorm Quiz on Friday. DHL took the trophy home.



KIRAN PANDAY

HOLDING HANDS: Nepali athletes walk the ramp at the Nepal Sports Journalist Forum's Player of the Year 2008 awards ceremony on Wednesday.

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Delightful Years AROUND THE WORLD

Goodies and Baddies

It was bound to happen sooner or later. A section of disgruntled Baddies have gone off and set up a splinter party called Revolutionary Armed Wing (RAW) accusing **Comrade Bhayanak** of going pink and selling out on the revolution by turning into lackeys of running dog imperialists. The Madhesi armed groups are ex-Baddies and so are the assorted militants in the eastern hills, but those are ethnic-based splinters. This one is in-house.

There is also growing disillusionment among mid-level guerrilla commanders about the same comrades getting to be ministers again and again, while the ones who sacrificed and suffered during the revolutionary war haven't been rewarded with ministerships. Bhayanak is under pressure to expand the government by making some dissidents state ministers and balancing the cabinet composition

with excluded ethnicities and women. But there are no houses left in the ministers' quarters at Harihar Bhaban, and the government has given away its last black **Kia** for the personal use of First Lady Sita.

✍

So, Mr & Mrs Dahal are both getting their US visas after convincing Nancy at a **visa interview** conducted in Singha Darbar on Tuesday that they're not high-risk visitors and will return to Nepal. Seems it was touch and go. After all, this is a country where when a Nepali singer gets a five-year multiple entry visitor's visa, the news makes it into the papers. It does look like the prime minister's Norwegian visa may be home delivered, though.

✍

One shouldn't get too worked up about Maoist squatters encroaching on a community

forest in Dhading last week. All it means is that the Baddies aren't going back to the jungles because there are no jungles left to go back to.

Also, as someone said last week at Reporter's Club, no way the Maoists are going back to the jungle because you can't drive a Pajero in the jungle. To which another kangresi retorted: "A leopard will never turn into a vegetarian." News just in: GPK has become vegetarian while PM has turned **carnivore** again.

✍

There are so many foundation stones to be laid that our honourable prime minister just hasn't had the time to figure out what on earth he's going to do in India. Neither have the Indians, for that matter, who hadn't been told by press time who was in the entourage, or why they were coming. So, they're packing the PM off to Bangalore for the

weekend to get him out of their hair. At the rate **Chabilal Baje** has been meeting Godmen and blessing new school buildings with akshyata while priests chant mantras, it wouldn't be a massive surprise if the Dahals snuck in a little side visit to Puttapharhi.

✍

Awesome's waiting for his party's instructions about what not to talk to the Indians about, and we're told it's a fairly long list. But this being the man who once said Nepal was not a **sweet potato** but a **dynamite stick** between two boulders, he is sure to lagoon things to a tarkik niskarsa. If the Chinese were sending a message by presenting the visiting PM with a double bed ("Give it a rest, Comrade") maybe the Indians will outdo them by giving Mr Dahal something symbolic like a couple of jerry cans of diesel.

✍

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, it looks like BRB is still in a deep sulk. But the Ass can confirm that rumours about him resigning after delivering the budget speech next week are exaggerated. As soon as he became financial minister Comrade Laldhoj liked to say that he would announce a budget that would transform Nepal's economy from slithering like a **snake** to leaping like a **toad**. But looks like he is planning something even more ambitious because he told a gathering this week the budget would "hop like a **kangaroo**".

✍

And this week's winning entry for the New Name Contest is Major Anupam, who wants the dhojabahak, Nepal Airlines, to be renamed **Laldhoj Airlines**, since Mrs Laldhoj is Truism Minister.

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Australia has become a popular choice for overseas students and the number of Nepalese students has risen sharply over the few years. According to the statistics published by Australian Education International, the number of enrolment of Nepalese students has gone up to 500% at times. In the year 2007, Nepal became the 13th largest source country in terms of number of student enrollments. In this year also number of students going to Australia has gone up compare to last year. The maximum number has commenced their studies in Vocational Education and Training Sector.

With the aim of attracting non-European migrants by the Australian Government, Nepalese started to migrate to Australia from 1975. There is no official data before 1975 and only 4 Nepalese permanently migrated to Australia in the year 1975-76. It is interesting to stipulate the Nepalese migrated to Australia from the year 2000. Nepalese migrants were 228 in 2000-01, 166 in 2001-02, 2002-03 in 178, 2003-04 in 235, 302 in 2004, 304 in 2005-06, 480 in 2006-07 (Source: Australia Bureau of Statistics). The number of Nepalese migrated to Australia is increasing every year and Nepalese community has been well recognized by Immigration Department.

People who want to live permanently in Australia must apply to migrate or, if already in Australia, apply to change their status to permanent residents. There are four parts to Australia's migration program and they are:

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2. Family Stream
3. Special Eligibility Stream
4. Refugee/Humanitarian Program.

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