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**Times** nepalnews.com  
Weekly Internet Poll # 451

Q. The Maoists' true intention is:

Total votes: 7,405

- Democratic mainstream: 11.8%
- Play it both ways: 8.4%
- Capture total state power: 79.8%

Weekly Internet Poll # 452. To vote go to: [www.nepaltimes.com](http://www.nepaltimes.com)  
Q. What is the most desirable coalition:

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# Nepal's turn?

DEWAN RAI

After marathon meetings and shuttles all week, it now looks more and more likely that the UML-NC+15 small parties combine can reach the magic number 301 to form the next coalition. If that happens, it will be Madhav Kumar Nepal's turn to finally fulfil his ambition of becoming prime minister.

But as with past efforts at government formation, there can be last minute upsets. The wild card is the MJF, which is a kingmaker party with its 53 seats. However, the Forum is internally divided over whether or not to join the government.

The Maoists for their part are reverting to mass mobilisation on Sunday in Kathmandu to shore up their bargaining position. The Maoists have not ruled out joining the government, but their precondition that the president backtrack and the army chief step down is unlikely to be met.

"We first want the civilian supremacy restored and then we will even support the UML to form the government," Maoist leader Barsaman Pun told *Nepali Times*.

However, away from the media glare in the capital, Maoist cadre across the country have been physically assaulting UML and NC cadre. "Chase them away and capture the villages," Maoist central committee member Top Bahadur Rayamajhi

instructed his supporters in Argakhanchi on Monday. In other districts the Maoists have given a one-week ultimatum to NC and UML cadre to resign from the party or face "physical action". However much they deny it, instructions to district committees to carry out these threats appear to come straight from the top Maoist leadership.

Many analysts think Madhav Kumar Nepal's mediation skills and acceptability make him an ideal candidate to lead the coalition. As head of the committee on constitution drafting, he could also re-focus government attention on getting the job done in time.

"Nepal is the right man for the job," said one Kathmandu-based diplomat, "an equilibrium of smaller parties that he leads may be more stable than one dominated by one big party."

Even so, it doesn't look like a new coalition will be possible without the Maoists having some kind of say, which is why they are staging a show of force on Sunday. "The Maoists are deliberately using delaying tactics by obstructing parliament so the new government formation will be delayed," says NC chief whip, Laxman Ghimire.

Given New Delhi's current engagement with developments here, a new coalition in Nepal could also depend on who gets to lead the coalition in India. ●

With additional reporting by  
Kunda Dixit in Argakhanchi



SUBHAS RAI



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## THERE THEY GO AGAIN

Countries in fragile political transition have to be governed differently from stable democracies. Transitional politics require a unity of purpose. It calls for political parties to never lose sight of the goal: preserving the peace, writing the constitution and keeping citizens content.

Unfortunately, consensus has become the first casualty in the conflict of interest between the Maoists and the rest. Chairman Dahal erroneously thought that being the biggest party in the CA gave him the right to decide things on his own. The NC leadership erred grievously by first calling for the CA session and then obstructing its proceedings. The Maoists are now following the example the NC set. The controversy over unilateral dismissal and subsequent reinstatement of the army chief was a consequence rather than cause of the crisis of confidence between the main political parties.

Contrary to what many fear, the Maoists are not in a position to capture the state apparatus through a popular uprising. The lack of public support for the Maoists' protest programs nationwide clearly show that Nepalis are fed up with the shenanigans of Kathmandu's rulers and shakers.

Confrontation between a future Maoist-led coalition and NC-supported configuration (or vice-versa) will ultimately harm them both as governance collapses. The Big Four parties all swear by consensus politics. Yet, their actions speak louder than words. It has become a cliché, but a consensus government is the only thing that will work now. The army row has drawn a lot of bad blood, it's time the parties began looking beyond who forms a government to how they can form a government together.

The Maoists need to prove that they are committed to open and competitive politics. Other parties have to reassure the Maoists that they have no intention of using the government machinery to corner the former guerrillas. There is an urgent need to address integration, rehabilitation and demobilisation of combatants in cantonments. There are too many enormously complicated and volatile problems ahead of us while we finalise the form of federalism in the new constitution to waste time bickering over government berths in what is going to be a fractious state.

There is a commercial of Tata Tea on Indian tv channels these days in which a citizen badgers a campaigning politician with questions. "What is this, a job interview?" asks the irritated candidate. "Yes, you are applying for the job of MP," replies the citizen.

Our politicians, too, have forgotten why they got the people's mandate. It wasn't to bicker endlessly in Kathmandu over power, but to finish the job of constitution writing so this country can be steered back to peace and development. But they are too busy scrambling for office to give a thought to why the people elected them in the first place.

# The jury is out

What an irony that a party that hasn't renounced violence and keeps its own army wants "civilian supremacy"

There has been much debate and public activism of late on President Ram Baran Yadav's action of overturning Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal's decision to fire the Nepal Army chief and appoint a replacement. Curiously, the



**GUEST COLUMN**  
**Kul Chandra Gautam**

constitutionality of the prime minister's action has come under less stringent scrutiny as it is cloaked under the seemingly

populist slogan of "civilian supremacy".

The Supreme Court will soon decide if the president's actions were constitutional. The case could also be taken to the CA, which has the power to even impeach the president. But his detractors have no patience or use for such constitutional and democratic remedies. They have already pronounced him guilty through a self-serving interpretation of the constitution backed up by street pressure and intimidation.

Lost in the hype is the constitutionality of the decision taken by a coalition government during a cabinet meeting boycotted by over half its ministers and objected to by all coalition partners.

Is it not the constitutional duty of the president then to take account of the views conveyed to him in writing by 18 political parties representing the majority of the membership of the CA? And shouldn't the prime minister have responded to the president's constitutionally valid request to reconsider his decision, having failed to secure a consensus support for his action as required by the interim constitution?

It is ironic that the one political party that has not renounced violence, that keeps a private army of its own, and that still subscribes to an ideology of "power comes from the barrel of the gun", claims to stand for "civilian supremacy". All other political parties with a much longer and consistent record of

following democratic norms are castigated as supporting militarisation, and being feudal, reactionary, anti-people, lackeys of foreigners.

No political party in Nepal currently matches the paramilitary youth organisation and other fraternal groups aligned with the Maoists in terms of their capacity to organise demonstrations, agitation, intimidation and even "physical action" which means killing and maiming opponents.

The Maoist cause has been greatly aided by a group of supposedly "neutral" civil society leaders, some of whom had played an important role at the time of the 2006 people's movement, but who seem to have aligned themselves (perhaps inadvertently) with the Maoists since then.

The one-sided vitriol coming from some members of this civil society cohort is breathtaking and reminiscent of Stalin's hired propagandists. A well-known and thoroughly partisan leftist writer known for his poison-pen activism characterises Ram Baran Yadav as "an evil president who is tempted by greed for power, and is desperately seeking a crown and a throne". No one with an iota of objectivity would characterise Yadav, a humble son of a farmer and a life-long democrat, in such hyperbolic terms.

There is something deeply disturbing about civil society members not even granting the benefit of doubt to a president



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

## LETTERS

### VIDEO FIASCO

We have now heard from the horse's mouth about the real strength of the Maoist PLA— somewhere in the vicinity of 7,000 combatants. This number falls in line with most people's original estimation. It was public knowledge that new soldiers were recruited to fill the cantonments in an attempt to inflate the numbers. Now we have proof. The nation had banked on UNMIN's verification process to reveal the truth. UNMIN failed miserably to capture this reality. It betrayed the people of Nepal by not taking its job seriously. With the benefit of hindsight and with the preponderance of evidence, we can now deduce that UNMIN has been part of the problem and not part of the solution. The current video fiasco also brings into perspective the reasons behind the complaints about UNMIN to the SG by no other than Girija Koirala a few months ago.

**Om Nepali, email**

- The videotape of PKD speaking to his commanders has reaffirmed that we have to be devils ourselves to outdo the Maoists. They have continued to lie to us and this time they even tricked

international organisations. Bravo!

**Kishor Kamal, email**

- In your editorial ('Useful idiots,' #450), you fail to give due credit to former UNMIN head Ian Martin for the support he extended to the Maoists in pretext of 'monitoring' free and fair elections here. How does Martin have the nerve to show up back in Kathmandu for a 'personal visit' when the country is disintegrating, thanks to his methods of verification and monitoring? We should all note that by now the UN has never succeeded in maintaining peace or long-term political harmony in any country it has ever put its foot into.

**Prasanna KC, email**

### YADAV VS DAHAL

CK Lal shocked me with his irrational snipe at the president ('Yadav vs Dahal,'

#450). Who is he trying to please with this piece? Mr Lal seems to be of the same ilk as the opportunistic pro-Maoist civil society.

**Kumar Acharya, Bhadrapur**

### ABNORMAL NORMALITY

Reading the piece about how Nepal seems to run more smoothly without a government in Kunda Dixit's 'Abnormal normality' on the *Nepali Times* website ([www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com)), reminded me of what Mother Teresa once said: 'Do not wait for leaders; do it alone, person to person.'

**B Shrestha, email**

### CIVIL SOCIETY

I join Tirtha Thapa ('Crisis,' letters #450) in condemning the 'civil society' who are protesting against the president's constitutional decision. They can never summon the courage to stand against the Maoists, who are the real villains. Messrs Devendra Raj Pandey, Krishna Pahadi, Sundar Mani Dixit and Shyam Shrestha

have lost whatever little credibility they had with their ridiculous decision to back the Maoists in the ongoing crisis, which is entirely of the UCPN-M's own making. We have seen Pushpa Kamal Dahal's videotape. We need no further proof of the Maoists' true intention: dictatorship in the guise of democracy. While I supported the civil society in their struggle against former king Gyanendra's authoritarianism, their deafening silence regarding the Maoists' continuing assault on freedom serves as a testimony to their self-serving hypocrisy.

**Ram Chaudhary, email**

### LETTERS

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

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with a life-long record of commitment to norms of democracy, while granting carte blanche credibility to unilateral decisions of a party that waged a violent insurgency against parliamentary democracy.

This is not to blindly defend the Nepal Army or its chief. There are many documented cases of unprofessional behaviour, human rights abuses and impunity perpetrated by the army in the past. But the Maoist army is no less guilty of its own brutalities, forced recruitment, including that of minors, and other violations of human rights and impunity.

One can speculate about the president's intentions, but the Maoist intention to infiltrate the army, destabilise other independent institutions and to capture state power need no speculation. The official pronouncement of the recent Maoist party convention in Kharipati, Dahal's video-taped message to his party cadres in January 2008, and a consistent pattern of follow-up actions ever since, are all there in the public domain.

Yet, it is the humble and decent Ram Baran Yadav, circumscribed by the decorum of his office, and mindful of his constitutional duties, who is being portrayed as the villain. Yadav possibly helped prevent a major national disaster by his difficult but thoughtful decision not to lend constitutional legitimacy to a seemingly unconstitutional and unilateral act of the ruling political party on 3 May.

Yadav demonstrates one quality rarely found in his self-serving detractors: he has been a consistent champion of what he believes to be in the best interest of Nepal as a nation. The Supreme Court and history of Nepal will judge whether he was a hero or a villain. ●

Kul Chandra Gautam is the former Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF [www.kulgautam.org](http://www.kulgautam.org)

This is an updated version of the opinion piece that first appeared in Republica.

# The master manipulator

## PKD has united his flock by playing up Indian meddling

Subtleties being the hallmark of diplomacy, most envoys avoid being dragged into controversies. But pro-consuls have different priorities. They have to kick sufficient dust and generate enough heat to keep the attention of home countries on their assigned territories.

The position of the Indian ambassador in Nepal is part diplomatic, part political, which means that he (it has always been a he) has to be discreet and flamboyant at the same time.

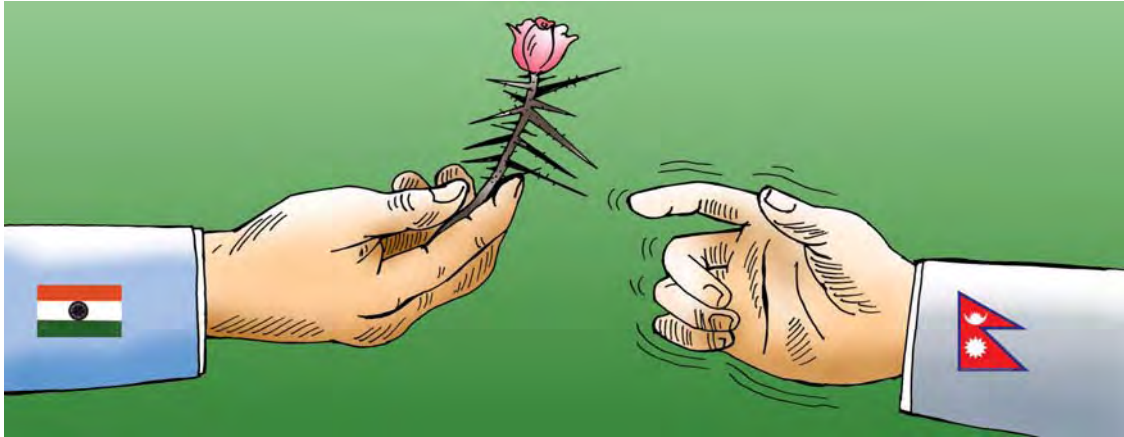


STATE OF THE STATE  
C K Lal

Reticence of South Block and resentment in Singha Darbar notwithstanding, Indian interference in the internal affairs of Nepal is a reality. But the current Indian envoy has broken all past records in commuting between Lainchaur and Baluwatar. With the result that a Nepali prime minister has cited foreign intervention as one of the main reasons for his resignation.

The Indian propaganda machinery has since marshaled its considerable resources to counter Caretaker Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal's allegations that can neither be confirmed nor denied. Ironically, Dahal's accusations carry considerable weight in Nepal precisely because he is believed to have been closer to the South Block than any other previous prime minister.

The meddling has been so blatant in the past few months that Indian damage control measures don't seem to be working. They must be quite desperate over there to think that they can micromanage power-starved Kathmandu's affairs from their air-conditioned Lutyens bungalows in New Delhi. In an attempt to shore up the acceptability of communist Madhab Kumar Nepal in capitalist New Delhi, a phoney story was put out that the



ROBIN SAYAMI

forefathers of the leftist leader from Rautahat actually came from somewhere in Bihar.

The second piece of speculation proved to be even more ephemeral. When the Indian media speculated that Dahal might have been prompted by the Chinese to dismiss CoAS Rookmangud Katawal, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Ma Zhaoxu immediately issued a terse statement from Beijing: "The Chinese government always adheres to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries." Translation: Others too will do well to emulate Beijing's policy towards Kathmandu.

Apparently whoever forms the next government in Singha Darbar will be under pressure to prove that it's not beholden to foreign benefactors. It's difficult to imagine a more spectacular failure of Indian foreign policy in Nepal. The Maoists have reinvented the theory of Panchayat pedagogues that patriotism in Nepal begins and

ends with anti-Indian sloganeering in the streets. New Delhi's material and intellectual investment in the grooming of Maoists seems now to have evaporated.

In their eagerness to oust the monarchy and teach mainstream parties a lesson in 'pragmatic' foreign policy, some Indian theorists went overboard with their open support for leftist insurgents. They probably believed the Maoist leadership would remain beholden and give India more play in Kathmandu than democratic politicians. This assumption was fundamentally flawed: just as it's difficult for an anti-Indian political force to survive for long in Singha Darbar, no Nepali politician can survive without at least keeping up the appearance of being against Indian hegemony.

So far, the Maoist supremo has played his cards well. Some may find the Shaktikhor video damning for the Maoists, but its dissemination has helped raise Dahal's reputation to the level of

master manipulator in the eyes of his flock.

Dahal's apparent helplessness in the face of the combined efforts of "national and foreign elements" to force Maoists out of peaceful politics too appears to be having desired effects. His fractious rank and file have suddenly found a cause to rally behind their besieged leader.

The propaganda mileage Maoists can draw against the parliamentary system if a person roundly defeated from two constituencies becomes the premier with the support of their 'class enemies' might have prompted Dahal to play victim. "Even though you are competent, appear to be incompetent. Though effective, appear to be ineffective," says Sun Tzu in The Art of War.

The game might ultimately go in the favour of Indian strategists. In propaganda wars, fortune favours the one with the bigger fortune. But for now Dahal clearly has an edge over his former handlers in the Indian capital. ●

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# Do or die

"Either we finish what we started, or we get finished."

The most dangerous and worrying feature in the last two weeks is the resurgence of visceral anti-Maoist politics.

The line between the liberals and the right wing has suddenly blurred and they are united in their hatred of the former rebels. The Kathmandu middle class, a part of which gave the benefit of doubt to the Maoists in the polls, had to cough up concessions under BRB's fiscal regime. With the recent video revelations, they have veered away even further. The urban lower middle class suffered during eight months of misgovernance with price rises and collapse of services and is hoping the next government may provide some relief.



**PLAIN SPEAKING**  
Prashant Jha

The army establishment has reasserted itself and is actively hatching plans to undermine the Maoists. Most of the press, with ownership and editorial staff affiliated to 'mainstream' parties, is toeing the NC-UML line. And erstwhile sympathisers in the Indian establishment are now sick of what they see as Maoist duplicity, and the nationalist rhetoric has made it worse.

For the Maoists, allowing so many forces to gang-up against them and in such isolation is bad politics. Their arrogance in power and refusal to heed the concerns of others has now boxed them into a corner. It is a powerful temptation to stay on in power as long as possible by obstructing the house, to hope that relations with India would improve with the arrival of a new government and strike a renegotiated deal.

The Maoists have shown in the past they are capable of making the best of a bad situation. Their organisational machinery and connection at the grassroots gives them the confidence and power to deal with all kinds of adverse situations. Instead of relishing in their discomfort, the broad anti-Maoist front would do well to introspect about its own politics.



KIRAN PANDAY

For one, the army-UML-NC could be a bit more humble and admit that they have got a lot wrong in the past three years. They thought the Maoists came into the process because they had no choice, that they could bully them into submission, that Maoists would get decimated in the elections, that they would never have the gumption to sack Katawal, that PKD would not resign.

The non-Maoists have repeatedly shown they neither understand the Maoist mind nor do they know how to deal with it.

The conventional wisdom in these circles at present is that PKD is weaker in the party and the unraveling of the Maoist structure has begun. The NC-UML hope that the Maoist potential to disrupt government functioning can be countered by luring it in government as a junior partner. Some others feel that the Maoists can be brought back later at a ripe moment, maybe after General Khadka retires and Katawal can be sent on leave. This means Madhav Nepal's dream of being PM will not last more than a few months.

But most privately want to keep the Maoists out, calculating that they can be 'taught a lesson'. This strategy goes something like this: get a new government, try to make it relatively successful by easing the power and fuel situation with help from India, simultaneously work to increase disillusionment among Maoist cadre with its own leadership, and leave the Maoists with no choice but to get back to the process on terms set by the others.

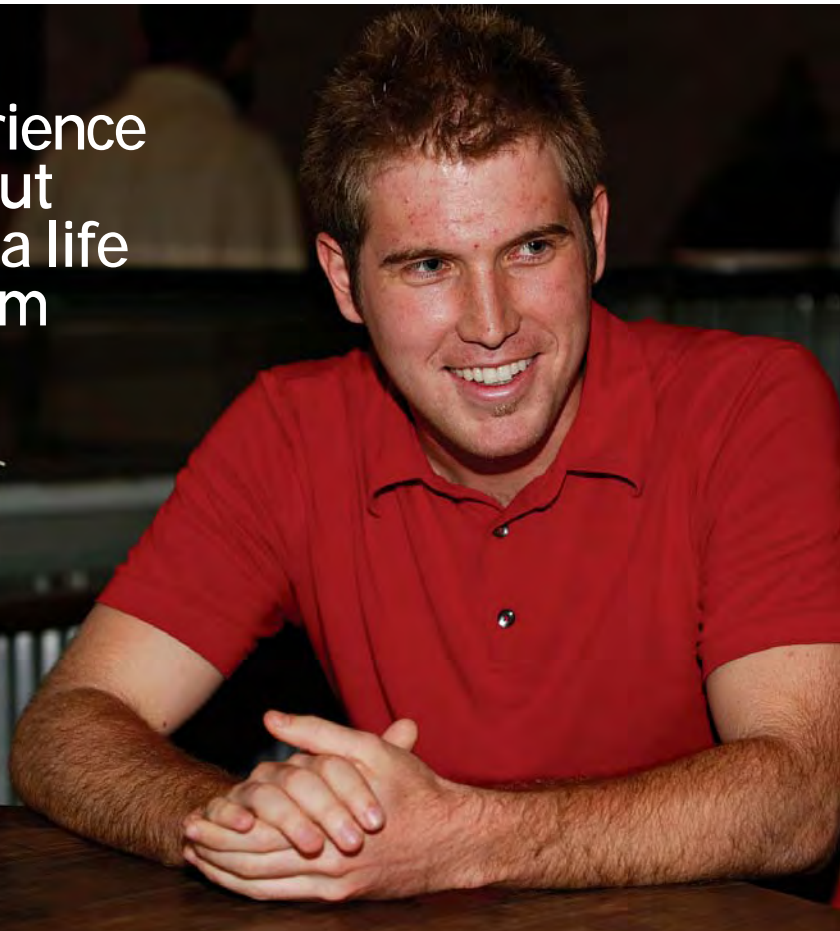
All these plans miss the fact that attempts to divide and weaken the Maoists have fallen flat in the last few years. It underestimates the rage that runs deep among the Maoist rank and file, and gives the party the energy to mount political offensives. It ignores the commitment that a Pasang, an Ananta, a Kiran bring to the table: just compare them to the Ram Chandra Poudels and Bishnu Poudels to know the difference. It is based on the premise that we can happily go back to the 90s political games without bringing any corresponding progressive change. And it recklessly ignores the implications of a Maoist split and emergence of lower level splinters.

Kathmandu is repeating the mistake of talking to itself to make political assessments. The last time it did that in the run up to polls, we know what happened. The stakes are even higher this time. As a young Maoist activist told us: "Sometimes it is do or die. Either we finish what we started or get finished ourselves." ●

## How a near death experience with a peanut turned into a life saving dream



ANUP PRAKASH



# Hard nut to crack

SHRADHA BASNYAT

In May 2007, when US medical student Mark Arnoldy was visiting Nepal he had an experience that would change the course of his life. After eating a paneer dish containing cashews and peanuts, he suffered an immediate allergic reaction. Then a banda prevented him from reaching hospital.

The episode gave him a rare glimpse of what it feels like to not have access to healthcare when it's most needed.

He survived but it got him

thinking more about the properties of peanuts and not just the negative ones— but their ability to beat malnutrition in children.

He realised that what nearly caused his death could actually take the form of life saving medicine for numerous children suffering from malnutrition. Using peanut butter as a cure has already been pioneered in some of the worst afflicted African states— Ethiopia, Malawi, Niger and Sudan.

A third year medical student at the University of

Colorado, Mark took a year off and came back to Nepal, where there are more than 500,000 children under five, who suffer from malnutrition.

Studying peanut butter production with Meds and Foods for Kids in Haiti, Mark saw how fortified peanut butter; known as a ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF) could be highly effective in stimulating weight gain among malnutrition sufferers. Developed by a French paediatric nutritionist in the 1990s the product has already been certified by WHO, WFP and UNICEF as an effective method to treat patients with severe malnutrition and no access to healthcare. Children have been cured of malnutrition in approximately 8-12 weeks after it was given.

Mark has been working with Himalayan Health Care in Nepal and is looking for ways to make fortified peanut butter as cost-effective as possible. *Surbottam pitho* is cheap. But unlike *surbottam pitho*, fortified peanut butter requires no preparation at all and has an extremely long shelf life (up to two years). Also to prepare *surbottam pitho*, mothers or carers require know-how and clean water or milk—none of which is available amongst the poorer and less educated families.

"This initiative is also a way to support the local economy," says Arnoldy adding that he hopes that fortified peanut butter, which contains peanuts, sugar, oil, powdered milk and a vitamin and mineral complex, can be produced in Nepal, rather than imported.

He hopes the project will be fully-implemented in various regions by January 2010. ●

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## Seamless banking



All 29 branches of Everest Bank now operate as a single bank with online communication and transfer of data as the company has upgraded its computer system to Infosys Nepal-developed Finacle. The bank is also using a disaster recovery site that duplicates data if damages occur in the original.

## Home from home

A contemporary home furnishing store from Thailand has opened a showroom in Lagankhel, Lalitpur teaming up with SN Joshi and Sons. It is selling 80 furniture collections under the brand names Konzept and S.B. Furniture. Products use low formaldehyde wood conforming to European standard Class 1 furniture.



## Cash clinic

Laxmi Bank Limited



Laxmi Bank has launched a branch in Patan Hospital, Lagankhel and handed

over Rs 100,000 for renovation of the hospital's paediatric ward. All banking facilities are available at the branch including savings accounts with interest of up to 7 per cent per annum.

## Banking up

KIST Merchant Banking and Finance has converted into an authorised commercial bank. With 24 branches across the country and its head office at Anamnagar, the bank offers a 10.25 per cent savings scheme for women and a 9-12 per cent interest loan scheme for small entrepreneurs.



## High flyer



Qatar Airways has been named best economy class airline in the Middle East in a survey by *Business Traveler* magazine and

best economy class carrier at the annual Skytrax passenger survey awards in Germany. Respondents rated it highly for cabin comfort and quality inflight service.

### NEW PRODUCTS

NOODLES: Pokhara Noodles has launched Chilli Flavoured Hot Pot Noodles priced at Rs 12 for 75g. The company's other noodles include Jojo and Ramba.



# Office politics

## In Nepal, it's not just the government that is politicised

Astute managers know that one undeniable fact of any office life is that you either sense or see all sorts of politicking going around on any given day.

These acts of politicking need not be based on a national party-political affiliation, or on union-



**STRICTLY BUSINESS**  
Ashutosh Tiwari

driven activities. In its harmless avatar, office politics lubricates the social life of a company. It makes it easier for staff to swap gossip, to gripe against irritating managers "who don't know anything", to show off to others that they have privileged information, and to allow some to exercise influence over their peers. When it's harmful, as it often is, it pits one group of employees against another, fans misperceptions about issues and staff, makes the working environment negatively charged, and even derails jobs and careers of otherwise promising employees.

### How does one deal with office politicians (OPs)?

**Acceptance:** When Nepali managers bemoan the very existence of office politics, they are being naïve. A company where people meet to work every day for eight hours is, by definition, also

a social place. In social places, whether we like it or not, people talk about people, and not in flattering terms. The sooner managers accept the existence of office politics, the quicker they can learn to deal with it.

**Share information:** OPs trade in distributing (negative) information about others that they think the rest of the staff members do not know. This could be about managers, employees, products and customers. The best way to pre-empt OPs from gaining ground is to share relevant positive and more negative information faster and widely to relevant parties via face-to-face meetings, emails, text messages and memos. Consistent and widespread verifiably true information is a manager's best defence against OPs' corrosive gossip.

**Point to data:** My 10-year experiences in dealing with OPs in South Asia suggest that they are often poor students of data interpretation. That is because their strengths lie not in doing cool-headed analyses but in starting hot-headed, wordy, and emotional flare-ups against those they don't like. Given this, a smart manager should refuse to give in to OPs' emotional sways, and stick to sharing the truth from data tables with regard to what the company is doing or not doing, and what its plans ahead are.

**Focus on the future:** OPs live in the past. If you listen to their conversations, you'll see that they love endlessly exhuming all the past mistakes so that they can blame others for all that has gone wrong. Blaming others is the only way they can present themselves as innocent by-standers. The way to neutralise OPs' draining negativity is to make the managerial language relentlessly focus on the future and on upcoming opportunities for growth. When staff members repeatedly hear about a better future, they will not want to live in the past.

**Go on the offensive:** Through a process of trial and error in their companies, smart managers come to understand which battles are worth fighting for, and which ones are all right to ignore or lose. This knowledge is important because it allows managers to focus their limited energy on activities that give the best results, even if that means strategically going on the offensive against the OP in a manner that publicly shuts them up. When the OP reacts, a manager's defence is to be steadfastly proactive in a manner which makes the OP look like an evergreen complainers in their colleagues' eyes.

Dealing effectively with office politicians is one career-strengthening skill they don't teach at business schools. But not honing this skill almost guarantees the failure of most high-flying executives. ●

# Alternative investment

P rithvi Bahadur Pandé is no stranger to those acquainted with the Nepali banking sector having worked first at Himalayan Bank and now as CEO of Nepal Investment Bank.

A visit to any branch of Nepal Investment Bank will tell you that Pandé prides himself on having a nose for aesthetic investments as well as pecuniary. The walls of the bank - and especially his office - are adorned with eclectic artwork of styles ranging from traditional Newari pawa to contemporary and modern.

"It was my wife who first got me interested in paintings," Pandé says, "and now I've been collecting artwork for almost 15 years."

Pandé is a proud owner of over 500 paintings, mostly by Nepali artists. Although his collection includes such Nepali artists as Lian Singh Bangdel, Durga Baral and Laxman Shrestha, he says the



CHONG ZI LIANG

artist's name is not the only thing that pulls him towards a work. He also owns pieces from various emerging artists whose works have caught his attention.

"Besides my own interest,

buying their artwork is an important way of promoting Nepali artists," explains Pandé, "the artists get encouraged when they know that their work is being appreciated." He says that

there are immensely talented artists here and the interest in art is now growing.

Nepal Investment Bank has also been trying to support new talent. Only recently it bought

works of students from Srijana Art Gallery to allow them to fund their trip for training in India. The bank's calendar and greeting cards also features Nepali art works every year.

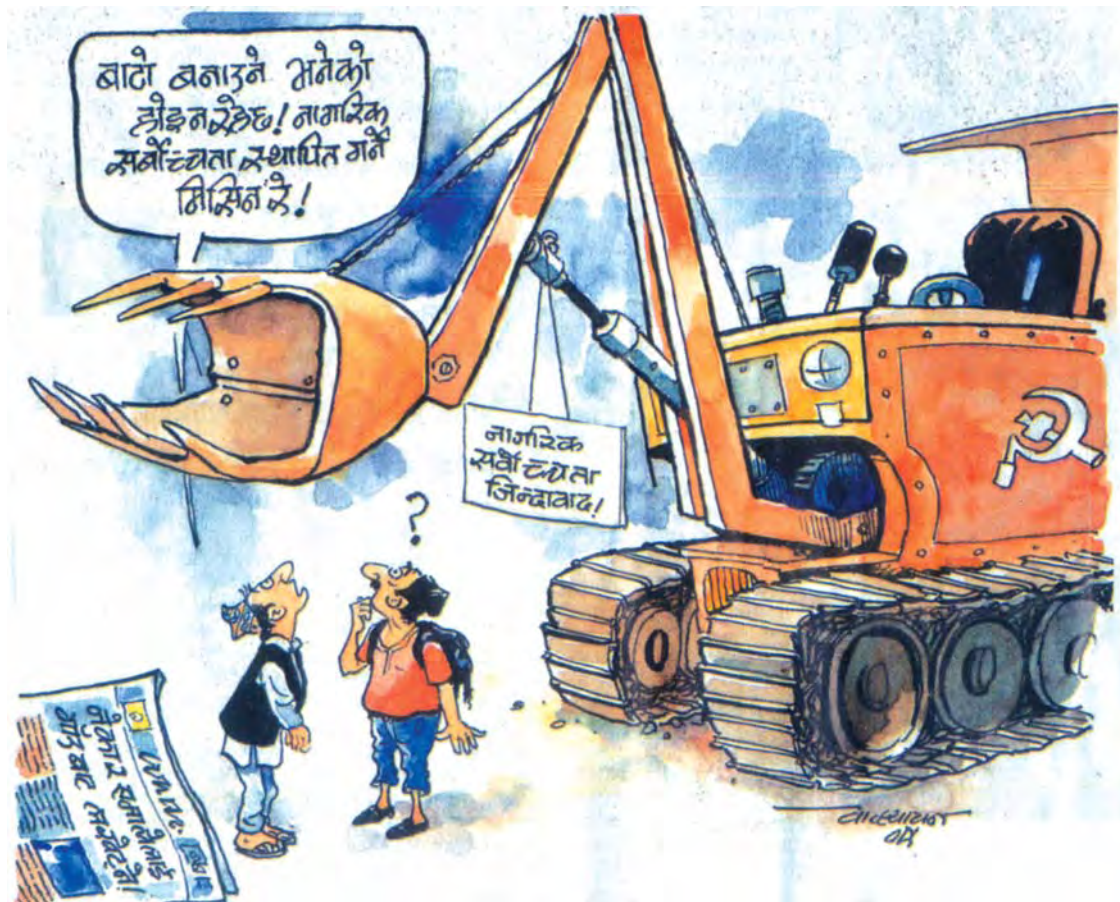
Pandé advises that art is a great investment option and that it is still relatively cheap to buy a high quality work of art here. "Art is an investment I don't think one will ever regret." He recommends investing in the works of Durga Baral, Manoj Babu Mishra, Sunita Rana, Sashi Bikram Shah and Seema to name a few.

Pandé intends to put together a sizable collection and eventually create a trust that will take care of his paintings and showcase them for the public.

"I feel the return on art is better than on a fixed deposit. Both are valuable but a deposit does not give you the satisfaction you get when you have a beautiful painting on your wall." ●

Paavan Mathema





We thought it was a machine to build roads, turns out it is to establish people's supremacy!  
Sign: People's supremacy  
Newspaper: NC and UML party workers chased out from the villages!

कान्तिपुर Batsayan in Kantipur, 10 May



People's supremacy

नागरिक Dipak Gautam in Nagarik, 14 May



Roads: Uprising, democracy

नेपाल Rabindra in Nepal, 17 May



Supremacy of the people? Supremacy of command  
Paper: Law, political culture, process

नागरिक Dewen in Nagarik, 11 May



Am I Ravana or Ram Baran?

जनादेश Janadesh, 12 May



Go! Don't miss the chance to lead the government!  
Lion: challenges  
Chair: government  
Flags: peace process, constitution writing

राजधानी Uttam Nepal in Rajdhani, 10 May



नागरिक Robin Sayami in Nagarik, 12 May



Lackeys of foreigners, traitors, liars, feudalists, corrupts...here, I'd like to end my two sweet words.

नागरिक Rajesh KC in Nagarik, 11 May



# What about Dalits?

YAM BAHADUR KISAN

Ethnicity has taken the central stage in the debate on federalism. Languages and regional criteria have also been mooted. Janajati are pushing for ethnicity-based federalism while the political parties and Bahun-Chhetris argue this will lead to fragmentation of the country and have proposed a federal system based on topography. But what about Dalits?

Various proposals to include Dalits are:

- 1. Separate state: As the ethnic groups, Tharu, Madhesi and Khas Chhetri of Karnali region have been demanding separate provinces, Dalits also have realised the need for a separate province. Various Dalit groups have proposed Siraha and Saptari as 'Sahalesh' province, Parbat and Baglung as 'Sarbjeeet', combined province of Surkhet, Dailekh and Kalikot and far west districts Bajhang and Achham will be sub-provinces.
- 2. Non-geographic province: If provinces are created on the basis of ethnicity and Dalits do not get any geographic state, they should be given non-geographic states. The Maoist-affiliated Dalits have demanded a non-geographic province, which they believe can guarantee Dalit representation. This can be relevant if provinces are created on the basis of ethnicity.
- 3. Sub-autonomous region: Sub-autonomous provinces should be created no matter how the provinces are created and the ethnic groups, minorities, lingual groups and Dalits within a province should be given separate sub-autonomous region. Even if the provinces are not



KIRAN PANDAY

created on the basis of ethnicity, sub-autonomous regions should be created on the basis of ethnicity. Since the country has already been declared a federal republic, the political parties are working on state restructuring and the federal system. There are some parties who are against this idea. Those who favour federalism have understood it as decentralisation, devolution of power and allocation of rights and responsibilities to the people. And those who are against it say that federalism leads to fragmentation of the country. But the basic principle of federalism is to give people their rights uniting them to strengthen as a nation. The Maoists have proposed 13 provinces and sub-provinces based on ethnicity that gave rise to debate on this issue. They have understood the state structuring based on ethnicity can ensure Janajatis opportunities and allow their language and culture to flourish and help build unity. But there is significant difference in understanding between the Maoists and others regarding state restructuring on the basis of ethnicity. Some Madhesi and Janajati leaders believe they can rule the region forever while the Bahun- Chhetri, Dalits and minorities fear that they would be driven away from such provinces. Before we decide on federalism, therefore, the issue raised by Madhesi, Tharu and Janajatis should be taken into account and analysed to clear doubts. Dalits think there is no need for a federal system as there seems no possibility of creating provinces for Dalits. They were exploited by Bahuns and Chhetris for centuries, it makes no sense to replace them with new Janajati or Madhesi rulers in a federal republic. Whichever way the provinces are carved out, Dalits should be represented in them proportionately. Since they were exploited by the state for centuries, they

should be given certain privileges as compensation. The new constitution should have provisions to end all kinds of discrimination and social ostracism. A mixed election system should be followed in all regions and levels. It should be 60 per cent proportional, 30 per cent direct voting and the remaining 10 per cent seats should be allotted for Dalits, women and marginalised communities as compensation. Dalits should be given dual voting rights in the proportional election. The constitution, provincial statutes and laws should guarantee secularism. All citizens should be given freedom to choose or discard religion or simply remain atheist. Similarly, all kinds of exploitation and oppression in the name of religion should be outlawed. ● Kisan is a member of the Dalit Commission.

## Many tongues, one voice

Language and ethnicity are at the heart of federalism, not just geography

AMAR KANTA JHA

If dialogue is to improve between Rajbiraj and Nepalganj then everyone needs to be speaking in Hindi, Maoist leaders claim. But almost 70 per cent in the Tarai speak Maithali, Bhojpuri, Avadhi and Tharu languages. Their voices have been ignored because their languages are not used in education, administration and the media. Many feel that federalism will divide the nation, but in fact its purpose is to unite. If we continue with the present system of central rule, it will be difficult to save the country's geographic unity. Thus we have to adopt a system of federalism that will address this issue of diversity and empower the marginalised communities. Transforming Nepal into a federal state is no easy task. Every person, group, community and political party has a different view and there will inevitably be a clash of interests. Different groups lay claim to the same area. Federalism is indispensable if we are to address Nepal's ethnic



KIRAN PANDAY

diversity. We have to explore the basis of federalism in language, culture, ethnicity, society, geography and history. We have to keep in mind the economic and administrative possibilities. There are 93 languages spoken in Nepal, but only Nepali has received the designation of national language. Non-Nepali speaking communities have therefore been discriminated in terms of jobs, education and media. Language is a social heritage and preserving a language means also preserving its community and culture. Language can be the means for developing education and for overall socio-economic transformation of a society. Language is therefore a vital basis for federalism. We have the prerequisites to establish language-based Mithila, Bhojpuri and Avadhi states in the Tarai-Madhes area. In the hills, Nepali language is predominant, so federal states there should be based on ethnicity rather than language, like Limbuwan, Kirat, Tamsaling, Newa, Tamuwan and Magarat. Because the Tharus hold a majority in the Western Tarai, it might be possible to establish a Tharuwan state to ensure social justice. The areas in which there is no clear ethnic majority can have a mixed approach. In the language and ethnicity-based states, two languages spoken by the majority, besides Nepali, should be used for official purposes. If there is a constitutional provision for this, we will be able to address the issue of diversity in language and culture. There is a possibility that there will be a struggle for identity even within these provinces between ethnicities, in such cases we may have to establish further autonomous regions as well. The 13 autonomous states proposed by the Maoists take language and ethnicity as their basis. The NC and UML also support such a system in their manifestos. Although NC and UML leaders have been proposing a geography based ethnicity, this has not emerged as a party decision. The MJF, TMLP and Sadhabana party have been proposing 'One Madhes One State' which will have Hindi as the common language. But this will disregard the mother tongues of the Tarai and as a result will weaken the socio-economic transformation in the Tarai-Madhes. ● Amar Kanta Jha is former central committee member of Tribhuban University Teacher's Association.



# A generation awa

STEP UP: (l-r) Nepali b-boy Naresh Darlami performs an 'elbow freeze'; a Thai judge demonstrates a move at a b-boying battle at Tripureswor; and DoomSquad stuns the crowd gathered at the same event.

There are more parallels between the streets of 1970's Bronx, USA and Kathmandu than you can imagine—ethnic conflict, dissatisfaction with the state and a population of frustrated youth with little to do but lots of energy to burn.





# kens to hip hop

This abundance of unreleased energy and anger is what the first hip hop 'crews' hitting American streets fed on. They moved their bodies with an unusual freedom, they battled, waved, popped, krumped and saved an entire generation from wasting away to drugs and violence.

"There's little you can do after a session of 'breaking'," says Krisada Kawjanwat, originally a boxing instructor from Thailand who has been promoting 'b-boying' in Nepal.

Here in Nepal a generation of young people is being lured to hip hop not just for identity and release, but as a creative sport and art form. Most hope to make careers out of it.

B-boying, where 'b' is short for 'breaking' is a form of hip hop that is a mix of physically challenging manoeuvres, gymnastics, martial arts and break dance. Already there are a number of crews—from younger b-boying groups that Krisada is helping like Swayambu Monkey Boys, Fantastic Breakers, Basantapur Breakers to DoomSquad, known for their masked performances and synchronicity steps. In the UWTC corridors at Tripureswor, Krisada helps a mix of people that range from 14-year-olds to a Tribhuvan University professor. Some are preparing for the Asian Title qualification rounds.

But Krisada wants to defy the stereotype of violence that hip hop has been historically associated with. As young people become more hesitant to take on traditional jobs, he believes that they can earn a living through hip-hop. "There is scope," says Krisada, "You can become a dance instructor, dance for commercials and music videos and apply to dance schools abroad with scholarships."

Adds Sandip Gurung, one of the crew members of DoomSquad, "Most young people don't want more regulations to those they already have. Hip hop is a relatively free form. You can mix anything with hip hop, including kathak and salsa, but it can't go the other way around."

Without institutions that teach hip-hop well in Nepal, however, almost everyone around is self-taught. Even Nepali Hip Hop singers hardly use any well-trained hop dancers in their videos. "You're on your own here," says Sandip. "Most of us learned our moves from the movies. Once you learn how to do the first ten moves, you're ready to create the 11<sup>th</sup>."

Despite possible hurdles, younger b-boys are optimistic about the future. "Of course I'm going to take it professionally," says 19-year-old Nischal Lama, who has been practising the dance for seven years on his own. "It feels great to dance with all eyes in the crowd watching me." ●

Roma Aryal

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# Semi-automatic

The suspension of the Tharu agitation gives the Tarai some respite



KUNDA DIXIT

KUNDA DIXIT in KAILALI

**T**ravelling from Butwal west towards Kohalpur on the East-West Highway it feels like driving through a war zone. Charred skeletons of trucks and buses, felled trees still

litter the road.

People along the highway call it the "The Second Tharu Banda". It closed down the Tarai for two weeks and paralysed the rest of the country earlier this month. The blockade was called off the day Prime Minister Pushpa

Kamal Dahal resigned on 4 May. The first Tharu banda in March had lasted nearly three weeks and brought the country's economy to a standstill.

The efforts to cobble together a new coalition in Kathmandu this week has overshadowed the Tharu

agitation, but many fear the highway blockades will restart as soon as a new government is sworn in.

There was widespread support across the Tarai for the first Tharu protest in March. Ramkrishna Lekhi's Tharu Kalyankari Sabha

and the Tharu Autonomous State Council led by Laxman Tharu had united against what they saw as Madhesi hegemony and even the hill ethnic groups supported the agitation.

But in the second protest, Tharu and Lekhi split and went

## Close to the edge

KONG YEN LIN in GORKHA

**M**arried to the youngest son of a Kusunda family in Palungtar of Gorkha, Sumitra used to pride herself in her knowledge of the forests. "We could hunt freely for whatever we wanted and build things on our own, life was so free then," she says.

But after disease wiped out most of her clan 15 years ago, she sought refuge in neighbouring villages with her four children, and has been living in poverty and dependence since. Facing ostracism from villagers, Sumitra has since drifted from village to village finally settling down with her three grandchildren, a daughter and daughter-in-law in Deurali. Sumitra's family is believed to be the last surviving Kusunda family in Gorkha.

According to the 2001 census, there were 164 Kusundas in Nepal, but actual figures now may be lower. Those who have drifted to urban areas have assimilated through marriage, but live in poverty and are illiterate.

"I'm worried about the continuation of the Kusunda bloodline but we have no say over what's written in our futures," says Kamala, Sumitra's daughter-in-law.

Human rights activists are concerned that the continuation of this trend may soon drive the Kusunda to extinction. Dil Bahadur Basnet from the Human Rights Organization of Nepal estimates that there are only seven Kusunda individuals in Gorkha, three in Tanahun and 18 in Dang.

"Because the Kusunda have been living away from civilisation for so long, they have been hidden from the

The Kusunda are not just facing poverty and alienation, but extinction

attention of the public and government," explains Basnet, "they themselves are unaware of their rights and means to access social support."

Ram Saran Basnet of the Rural Strengthening Centre in Gorkha calls the possible extinction of the Kusunda a national loss: "The disappearance of any of Nepal's ethnic groups and the extinction of their culture, heritage, history and lifestyle is a tragedy, and the Kusunda is the most endangered of Nepal's ethnic groups."

Sumitra's son is working in the Gulf while the rest of family takes up odd jobs as farm labourers, firewood cutters, alcohol manufacturers and bus conductors to earn a living. "So many foreigners have come to enquire about us, they make money from selling their books and stories while I remain poor," says 69-year-old Sumitra, "I want to speak to someone who can give me money directly."

The Kusunda can't roam freely in the forest anymore and have been forced to find other ways to earn money to feed themselves. The government's social security system is supposed to provide Rs 500 per month to marginalised and minority ethnic groups. But Gorkha LDO Raj Kumar Shrestha admits the amount, even when available, is too nominal to make a big difference to the lives of the Kusunda.

Says Shrestha: "The first step to empowering the Kusunda is to include them in all spheres of development policy, and this needs to be guaranteed in the new constitution."

Says Kamala: "All we want is to live life like the other groups, to be treated with respect and dignity like any human being." ●



**OUT OF THE JUNGLE:** Believed to be the last of the Kusunda in Gorkha, Sumitra (white hair) is the matriarch of this family of former hunter gatherers. The Kusunda are not just an endangered ethnic group, but are also finding it difficult to survive.



# autonomy

**ALL FIRED UP:** One of many dozens of vehicles torched by Tharu activists for defying their highway blockade earlier this month on the Kohalpur-surkhet highway.

ahead with a crippling two week shutdown despite opposition from moderate Tharu leaders. “All the support that we got from the people during the first agitation we squandered in the second,” said one Tharu businessman in Kailali’s highway hub of Atariya. The slogan this time was for “Jal, Jamin, Jungle” signifying the Tharu demand for control over their water, land and forest resources. Local Tharu last week took control of Kailali’s scenic

Ghoda Ghodi Lake. They burnt down more than 24 VDC buildings in Kailali. “Their tactics are identical to what the Maoists did,” said one Tharu journalist in Dhangadi. That is not surprising since Laxman Tharu was a Maoist battalion commander and broke away when he wasn’t made a CA member last year. He was also accused of engineering his own abduction to demand a Rs 1 million ransom from the party. The party also suspected that he failed to hand over all his weapons after the war, and these guns are now reportedly in possession of the self-styled Tharuhat Army. Maoist distrust of their former Tharu comrades runs deep here in

the west. It boiled over after the murder of Maoist journalist JB Joshi by Tharu Maoists last year. Joshi was loyal to Maoist Labour Minister Lekh Raj Bhatt who has rejected the Tharus including the far-west in their Tharuhat territory. Local journalists say there is intense competition between the Maoists and their Tharu ex-comrades over control of timber or quarry contracts and payoffs from smuggling syndicates. “We can’t write about these things, about how they ride around in stolen Scorpions with black shades,” one reporter told us, “it’s just too dangerous.”

As with the Limbuwan agitation in the east, which is also led by ex-Maoists, the most radical faction sets the terms. Even Dilli Chaudhary, the maverick leader of BASE, the Tharu welfare group, and an NC candidate in the last election, has joined Laxman Tharu. Some FM stations in Kailali and Bardiya haven’t been able to resist pressure to broadcast provocative programs. In the second agitation, Raj Kumar Lekhi, found many of his cadre joining Laxman Tharu’s more hardline group in massing up along the highways. Sometimes, as in Lahan in the east and Nepalganj in the west, tensions boiled over into ethnic riots between Madhesis and Tharus during the agitation. For many, this is a warning about much worse to come not just here in the Tarai but also with the competing hill ethnic militancies in the coming year as the CA discusses federalism. ●

## The Tharu

The Tharu form the country’s third largest ethnic group (after Bahun-Chhetri and Magar) even though they make up just seven per cent of the population. This shows just how diverse Nepal’s ethnic mosaic is, with a 'long tail' of nearly 100 smaller groups. The Tharu are one of Nepal's few aboriginal groups and have population concentrations mainly in the Tarai, Chitwan, Dang, and in the western Tarai, and have been historically exploited with such practices as the Kamaiya tradition, which was outlawed in 2002. Recent protests were triggered by politicians lumping them together with the Madhesi people in the interim constitution. They reject the One Madhes demand, and want their own Tharuhat territory, although it is not clear how the non-contiguous areas will be woven together. There are three main Tharu groups: Tharuhat Autonomous State Council lead by ex-Maoist Laxman Tharu, the Tharu Kalyankari Sabha led by Raj Kumar Lekhi, which is sympathetic to the UML and the Maoists’ own Tharu State Council.

# Not red enough

LONDON—On Saturday afternoon, your little brother found himself in a sunny room above an East London chicken shop. As the dim roar of the high street ebbed and flowed outside, a passionate debate on recent political developments in Nepal was in full swing. And there weren’t even any Nepalīs. Even as Nepal’s Maoist prime minister resigned last week, the Revolutionary Communist Party of the USA (RCPUSA) have made public their concerns about the United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) reconciliation with the ‘old reactionary comprador-feudal imperialist-backed state and further extension of the revisionist degeneration of the Party’s line’. Although their rhetoric sounds anachronistic, the RCPUSA is not an idle bystander to Nepali politics. It has been publishing reports and analysis, pamphlets and books on Nepal’s revolution for 10 years and usually takes a radical, uncompromising line. I thought that my stamina for lengthy politico meetings was



**KHAIRE BHAI**  
Tom Owen-Smith

fairly high, but after four hours I was exhausted, and the dialectic was still going strong. Many who spoke were eloquent and well-read with substantial points to make. And while not everyone agreed, all were passionately engaged with the issues regarding the future of Nepal. The RCPUSA feel the Maoists sold out by abandoning the armed struggle. They embraced revisionism and adopted a ‘bourgeois federal democratic republic’ rather than continuing to advocate a true proletarian state. It may be easy to preach from America about what comrades in revolutionary situations should and shouldn’t do in order to preserve ideological purity. But, they may be reasons why the Maoists’ path since 2006 appears such a betrayal to American Maoists.

## International communists weigh in on the Nepal revolution

‘Earlier this year, a new development in the high Himalaya mountains in Asia gave heart to oppressed people everywhere—a Maoist people’s war began taking its first steps in the country of Nepal!’ This is the opening sentence of the first report on the ‘People’s War’ in the *Revolutionary Worker* (August, 1996). It shows the exhilaration the war in Nepal ignited amongst communists tired of occupying an ephemeral political space in their own countries. In a letter to Maoist comrades in Nepal in January 2009, the RCPUSA say they had hoped Nepal could become ‘an advanced outpost of struggle against the world imperialist system’. American Maoists seem disheartened that the most advanced revolution in the world is slipping away, and with it the hope for world revolution. However, the RCPUSA’s criticism of the Nepali Maoists is strongly countered by other members of the Revolutionary International Movement who say that Prachanda has proved himself to be a master strategist. The Americans also seem to give more importance to Nepal’s role in an international struggle than the objective reality in Nepal, public opinion there and the choices taken by the Maoist leadership. If the former Soviet Union and China didn’t manage in the best part of a century to fan the flames of global proletarian revolution, it’s a bit of a tall order to expect Nepal to manage it now. Most of the soldiers who fought in the People’s War did not fight to begin the Weltrevolution, but for a better life and future in the social and political context they knew. Jana Andolan in 2006 was the decisive moment in ending the brutal stalemate between the then government and the Maoists. The majority of those who took part did not intend to create a dictatorship of the proletariat, but to end the autocratic rule of the king. And the reason the Maoists agreed to join the peace process was because they realised there was no military solution to the conflict. They knew that the public, tired and demoralised after 10 years of war, would not forgive them if they did not take the chance to catalyse real and significant change through the participatory process which was on offer, and instead returned to violence. When I returned to Nepal in December 2007 after an absence of more than three years, there was a broad consensus to break decisively with the past, a raucous ferment of political debate, and an exhilarating belief that things really could get better. It was an atmosphere which I had never known before in Nepal or in any other country. I hope the great strides Nepal made in the last three years will not be reversed now, and the fragile optimism which followed the end of the war will not be squandered. ●



KONG YEN LIN



# Operation Democracy

Nepal needs to look beyond South Asia at how democracies manage their armies

From Kabul to Karachi, Kanyakumari to Kathmandu, civilians and soldiers have been interacting and the results are a cautionary tale to all of us.

Democracies are strange. They are robust and seem able to survive almost anything. Venal politicians, angry or apathetic electors, floods of money from



**HERE AND THERE**  
Daniel Lak

vested interests, natural catastrophe and terrorism: democratic societies take the hit and carry on.

A key element of a sturdy democracy is largely lacking across this region though, with the notable exception of India. That's the notion of a civilian-led military. Among major South Asian capitals, only New Delhi's political leaders indisputably call the shots over the men and women in uniform.

Elsewhere it's a sorry picture of covert and open military supremacy and the impact on local democratic space is palpable. Pakistan springs most obviously to mind. Impatient and imperious generals have grabbed power in that country more often than elections have been held. Not once in the country's 62 years of

existence has an elected government been voted from office.

Prime Ministers lose their jobs in Pakistan when they're sacked by generals, not the people. Sometimes that's a coup, other times it's a provision put in the constitution by the army to allow a president chosen by limited franchise to dismiss an elected head of government.

Scholar Ayesha Siddiqi, in her compelling treatise, *Military Inc*, shows how Pakistani military officers have exploited hostility with India and American paranoia, first about Russian communism then about radical Islam, to stay firmly in charge of economic and political life in a country they're sworn to protect.

By some estimates, 75 per cent of national income over six decades has been sopped up by a force that has outlasted every major war it's ever fought. Democracy has paid a grim price and this past week's assertions by President Asif Ali Zardari that he is firmly in charge of his soldiers and spies rings as hollow as his claims of innocence in myriad corruption cases against him around the world.

There's a semblance of democracy in Sri Lanka, regular elections, high voter turnout and peaceful transfers of power from



loser to winner. But the beautiful island off the southern tip of India has become the most militarised state in the region, thanks to nearly three decades of brutal civil war with the Tamil Tigers.

Sri Lanka's military and national security elite have used that conflict to increase the stature of the army and its claim on the country's limited revenues. Soldiers are armed to the teeth, serving and retired officers occupy key positions in public life and government.

Procurement budgets for everything from high tech aircraft to boot polish and rations have enriched a military-civilian nexus of middle-men and those who receive their kickbacks. A cowed

media, decimated by death squads connected to high places in some shadowy way, doesn't dare to cover issues of corruption, malfeasance or atrocity.

Look to Bangladesh for another democracy badly damaged by its soldiers and their penchant for an ever-increasing share of the national polity. Democracy limps and staggers, wounded by partisan bitterness yes, but shackled to an army forged at the country's difficult birth in 1971.

One might wonder who Bangladesh's fighting men are supposed to combat if and when their country goes to war. But that question is impossible to ask of an officer corps that sees itself as

guardians of ideology, and entitled to operate without civilian oversight or society's consent.

The lessons for Nepal are obvious. The Nepal Army needs to be under parliament's supervision, not autonomous or able to lay claim to a quasi-mythical status as defenders of the realm. Army chiefs and senior officers serve at the pleasure of the government of the day. But they are also apolitical and follow orders regardless.

The Maoist model of an indoctrinated fighting force may have helped the Great Helmsman abolish feudalism in China but Nepalis want sloppy civilian democracy, not military-Marxism. A nation needs its armed forces but voters and elected leaders must set the rules, budgets and mission statements, with openness and consensus building.

No side of the current argument in Nepal has this mix right. As the country's politicians struggle for power, they need to look around the region, around the world, and consider how prosperous democracies organise their affairs. In those countries, soldiers work for the taxpayer, not the other way around. ●

Daniel Lak's latest book is *India Express, The Future of a New Superpower* by Penguin

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MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

# Electric ‘car’-nival

Most of Kathmandu’s battery-operated vehicles will be joining a charity electric car rally next month to raise money for the rehabilitation of patients with spinal injuries. More than 30 cars, three wheelers, vans and even some electric bicycles will take part in the rally that will start from Maitighar Mandala and travel to the Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre (SIRC) near Banepa on 13 June. They will cover a roundtrip distance of 50km. “SIRC is organising the event to support two causes: electric transport and spinal injury rehabilitation,” said the centre’s Ojashwi Thami, “all the money raised from the event will go to fund free rehabilitation services to indigent patients.”

In Nepal, spinal injury is overwhelmingly linked to subsistence living (climbing trees for tree fodder, cliffs for grass) and a large number of SIRC’s

patients are not able to pay even the minimal charges applied. In addition, the rally hopes to pressure the government to announce tax rebates on electric vehicles to proactively protect the environment and reduce the nation’s fuel bill so that transportation can rely more on domestic hydropower. Electric vehicle owners will need to raise a minimum of Rs 30,000 per car to be eligible to participate in the rally. There will be fun games, a jungle hike and a free lunch at the destination. There are 27 Reva cars, Nepal-made vans and new model Safa Tempos in operation in the Valley. Says Thami: “Cars that run out of juice can recharge their batteries for the drive back to Kathmandu.” ●

Inquiries:  
infosirc(at)wlink.com.np  
011-660848/7



# Festivals of the Valley

US-born Scott Fiia’s photographs reveal the seldom-captured on film side of Nepali life—a man with jamara bunched up over both ears, an agore baba chatting in the sun. This week, he will display at least 50 photographs of 16 different festivals celebrated in the Valley including Teej, Shiva Ratri, Samek and Mataya. “The festivals here are really alive,” says Fiia, “so colourful and full of energy.” Professionally, he is an environmental engineer and his skills as a photographer are strictly self-taught. He started taking pictures while he was working in Ethiopia, in the late 80s, when he needed to escape from the gloom enveloping the country at that time. He also wanted to photograph the other side of Ethiopia, closed to the rest of the world, beyond the famine and war. “It’s similar here,” says Fiia, “there are hardly any tourists at these festivals and everyone participating is a local.” Fiia, whose photographs have been used on a number of US calendars and brochures, is presenting a Nepal that is quite different to the stereotypes that cloud its image. Fiia lived in Kathmandu for 7 years almost 10 years back. When he came back last year, he started photographing festivals, sometimes even coincidentally finding the same people he photographed a decade ago. Most of his pictures are a product of relentless cycling around and pure serendipity. ●

‘Festivals of the Kathmandu Valley’ will be exhibited at the Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisted from 15-29 May.

# Nepal to the Nile



When one talks about Nepal’s tourism industry, most people think of foreign visitors coming to Nepal. But outbound tourism from Nepal to various parts of

Asia is catching on, both among Kathmandu-based expats and a new generation of affluent young Nepalis. Nepal is usually a springboard for people going to the beaches of

Thailand, Malaysia or Sri Lanka in winter, or shopping holidays in Singapore. Nepalis are even booking cruises in the Malacca Straits. But one of the best-kept secrets about outbound travel

from Nepal is how cheap and easy it is to visit Egypt. With five West Asian airlines now flying from Kathmandu, the Persian Gulf region, Turkey and Egypt have suddenly become much more accessible. Of all the destinations, it is Egypt that is a once-in-a-lifetime holiday. With its historic sites, museums, fabulous food and culture and the Nile, a trip to Egypt is not just enjoyable but also educational. The best way to see Egypt is in a cruise up and down the Nile. The river is Egypt’s lifeblood and the country’s historical sites are dotted along this mighty river. “Nepalis used to go to Goa,

Malaysia and Mauritius, but the Nile cruise is becoming increasingly popular,” says Nili Shah of Marco Polo Travels that organises outbound tours to Egypt from Nepal. Marco Polo has teamed up with Spring Tours in Cairo to offer surprisingly affordable eight-day packages for Nepali tourists with roundtrip airfare, hotel and Nile cruise. The cruise itself is like a floating five-star hotel. ● Ram Krishna Banjara in Cairo Eight-day Egypt Package from Marco Polo Travels: Rs55,300-71,100 Marco Polo Travels: malaysiaholidays\_marco(at)polo.com.np, 4247215

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## ABOUT TOWN

## EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Silent Witnesses**, an exhibition by Aymeric Hamon at the Allaince Francaise Garden, 16 May, 10 AM.
- ❖ **Festivals of the Kathmandu Valley**, an exhibition by Scott Faiia at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited till 29 May, 11AM- 6PM. Daily. 4218048

## EVENTS

- ❖ **3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of Yala Maya Classic**, 16 May, 5PM, Yala Maya Kendra. 5553767
- ❖ **The Australian Film Roadshow**, 16-19 May at the Russian Culture Centre. Free passes available at the Australian Embassy and Gurukul. 4371678
- ❖ **Waiting for Godot**, a play by Samuel Beckett, Hotel Vajra, till 24 May at 7.15 PM. 4271545
- ❖ **Workplace Bullying**, a talk program, 24 May at The New Era Institute, Battispatali. 9851023958
- ❖ **IPL 2009**, watch IPL 2009 live matches at Rox Bar Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 4491234
- ❖ **Call for entries for Film South Asia** till 31 May, documentaries made in and after January 2007 qualified. 5552141



## MUSIC

- ❖ **Smooth Ambient Jazz** with Helen Louise Jones and Eric Slaughter and Nick Jost, 16 May, 7PM, New Orleans Cafe, Pulchok. 522708
- ❖ **The Kathmandu Chorale** presents -Enjoy Life, a spring Concert at the British School, Jhamsikhel, 16 May, 3.30PM-6PM
- ❖ **Louis Bertignac & Bijaya Vaidya concert**, with SAC MUSIC, Academy Hall, 23 May.
- ❖ **TGIF** at Jazzabella Café every Wednesday and Friday. 2110475
- ❖ **Kathmandu express**, performance by International Acts, 7.30 PM onwards free entry at Moksh.
- ❖ **Live band** every Friday and rooftop bbq everyday at Kausi Kitchen, Durbar Marg. 4227288
- ❖ **Sunday Jazz brunch** barbecue and live jazz music at the Terrace, Hyatt Regency from 12-3.30 PM. 4491234
- ❖ **Jazz evening** at Delices de France Restaurant every Wednesday, 11AM-2PM. 4260326
- ❖ **Epic**, at the Brunchilli- the Acoustic Lounge every Friday, Thamel. 9851035437
- ❖ **Strings Band** live every Tuesday at G's Terrace Restaurant and Bar, Thamel.
- ❖ **Wednesday Melody** at Jazzabell Café, Happy hour 6-8PM and TGIF party with live band Epic every Friday at 8PM. 2114075
- ❖ **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.
- ❖ **Live Sensation**, performance by Yankey every Saturday, 9PM, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4491234.
- ❖ **Fusion and Looza** Band every Friday night, Bhumi Resto Lounge, Lazimpat. 4412193

## DINING

- ❖ **Weekend Brunch** by the Poolside every Saturday and Sunday, Soaltee Crowne Plaza Kathmandu, 11AM-3PM. 4273999
- ❖ **Pizza & Pasta** at the Rox Restaurant every Monday & Tuesday, starts from 13 April, Hyatt Regency. 4489362
- ❖ **Pasta pesto passion** at La Dolce Vita, Thamel. 4700612
- ❖ **Home made pasta** at Alfresco, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **Gourmet trout** at Olive Garden, 6PM onwards at Rs 850+, Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat. 4411818
- ❖ **Chez Caroline** for French and Mediterranean cuisine, Babar Mahal Revisited. 4263070
- ❖ **High tea** with scones and sandwiches everyday at the Lounge from 4.30-6.30 PM, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4491234
- ❖ **Mediterranean cuisine** every Friday from Greece, Italy and the Middle-East at The Café, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Nhuchhe goes Thai** at Nhuchhe's Thai Kitchen, Baluwatar. 4429903
- ❖ **Fusion** of Marcela Ragan's new menu and Mannie's new bar at Dhokaima Café. 5522113
- ❖ **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri La, Kathmandu, Rs 600. 4412999
- ❖ **Reality Bites**, The Kaiser Café, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, 9AM-10PM. 4425341
- ❖ **Starry night barbecue** at Hotel Shangri-la with live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs 999, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7PM onwards. 4412999

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

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## WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The bolstering westerly fronts which we have been waiting for since January are here now, lowering temperatures by some five degrees and bringing good rainfall to the Valley for the first time this year. Earlier this week farmers in Mustang, the other side of the Himalaya, were pointing to the snow-free mountain tops overlooking their villages at 5000 m. Farmland remained bare due to lack of snowmelt for irrigation on one side, while unusual stormy rains of the previous week had heavily eroded the fragile landscapes on the other side. Satellite pictures of Thursday noon show vibrant fronts heading towards the eastern side of the Himalaya in response to a strong low pressure trough over the region. However, the concern is these delayed westerly fronts could possibly push back the onset of the monsoon. Expect heavy rainfalls in the eastern mountains of Nepal and sunny intervals and afternoon thunderstorms in the Valley.



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KIRAN PANDAY

**GRAVEYARD SHIFT:** Maoist cadres carry mock corpses of President Ram Baran Yadav at a protest in Ratna Park on Monday, demanding that he reverse his move to reinstate the army chief.



KIRAN PANDAY

**HINDU SOLIDARITY:** Religious devotees rally against a secular federal state on Sunday at Sundhara.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**VIVA EUROPA:** The EU delegation in Nepal celebrate EU Day on Saturday at the Hyatt Regency.




KIRAN PANDAY

**YOOF DONE GOOD:** An art exhibition organised by the Manang Youth Society at Yala Maya Kendra to raise funds to build a community lodge in Larkepass, Manaslu region.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**PATAN ROCKS:** Veteran Nepali singer Deep Shrestha and Nepali rock band 1974 AD perform at a concert on Friday at Patan Museum.



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### Climate Change and Natural Resources Adviser (A2)

DFID, the Department for International Development, is the part of the UK Government that manages Britain's aid to poor countries. Our work is focused on achieving the Millennium Development Goals – the United Nations targets for fighting poverty that must be met by 2015. We work with the governments of poor countries, charities, and international organisations to find lasting solutions to the global problem of poverty.

DFID Nepal is responsible for managing the British Government's contribution to development in Nepal, set out in our new country business plan 2009 - 2012<sup>1</sup>. Its objectives are to (a) Support a sustainable and inclusive political settlement (b) Help build a more capable, accountable and responsive state, (c) Promote inclusive, low carbon, economic growth and better jobs for the poor (d) Reduce the vulnerability of the poor and improve their resilience to climatic shocks.

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Closing date for applications is Friday, 5th June 2009.

<sup>1</sup>[http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications/nepal-country-plan-brochure\[1\].pdf](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications/nepal-country-plan-brochure[1].pdf)



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# Civil society supremacy

Stalwarts of the civilian society have been demonstrating their supremacy by joining nationwide protests by **krantikari buffalos** this week. But the buffalo rallies backfired when the animals refused to denounce the president's move. In numerous district headquarters, the buffaloes threw off their presidential impersonators and hoofed it. Several Ram Baran lookalikes were hospitalised. The protests ended up looking like a cross between a **rodeo and the Pamplona bull run**. They should have just used donkeys.



Given the new confidence with which Comrade Makunay is fielding questions at tv ambushes, it does look like he is finally getting the chance he has patiently waited for 15 years. In the past, every time he got to within striking distance of PM-ship, MKN has had the rug pulled from under him. Even if he makes it to Baluwatar, it would put Nepal's **democracy to shame** that after elaborate elections last year we get a new prime minister who was defeated in not just one but both his constituencies. But let's give the man a medal for sheer persistence.



Bum Dev himself is uncharacteristically quiet these days, and his role in the coalition has raised suspicions within the party that he is actually a Baddie **deep penetration** agent. Some seniors reportedly refused to discuss sensitive policy matters about party strategy in cobbling a new coalition when **Comrade Dwarf Divinity** was around at the central committee's caucuses this week. JN apparently agreed to MKN as PM only on condition that he (Jhallu) gets to appoint all other ministers.

Comrade Ian's return to Nepal has created quite a flutter, with one paparazzi even sneaking in to shoot him sitting with his successor at the Summit the other day. Much as one would like to connect dots, seems the ex-SRSGUN is here to pick up his stuff and take a break from all the Israeli wrath at his report on the bombing of six UN premises in Gaza. Back home, Israeli papers have **poured scorn** on him, linking that report to revelations in the Shaktikhor Tapes, saying Hamas hoodwinked Ian just as the Maoists duped him in Nepal over actual guerrilla numbers.



Meanwhile, with Gen Cutwall now firmly ensconced once again at Bhadrakali, the generals are trying to distance themselves from the JMCC verification process. They allege the army's rep in the JMCC, Shivaram Pradhan was a Cool Budder loyalist and therefore a Maoist plant.

Some expect the new government on Friday, but others say nothing will happen until the outcome of the Indian elections are known over the weekend, especially if Manmohan and Yechury get together again. But anything is possible, including the Maoist **compromise formulae**: Get Ram Baran to resign, make GPK president, retire off Cool Budder and make Cutwall step down and kick CB upstairs. But then BRB is lobbying actively for PMship. And does a new govt mean we are going to have new ambassador candidates to UK, US and India and hearings all over again? How about the new NRB governor? And Com Yummy's siblings who all got govt jobs? Meanwhile, **Nepal's Asstrolgers** (the only group that still puts national interest above all else) have pitched in with their prediction that the Maoists won't be leading the government anytime soon because they are under the influence of Saturn, just as Kingji was when he was **ousted**.



Chairman Chhabilal is now getting ensnared in his own doublespeak. He told the *Hindu* he lobbied hard to get Indian approval to sack the army chief. Wait a minute, isn't he the one complaining about **Indian arm-twisting**? Squatting in Noida for ten years during the war isn't Indian interference, but when Delhi outflanks him it is. And PKD is on a charm offensive in the Indian media: NDTV for 20 mins, exclusive on CNN-IBN, Hindu, TOI. Why don't we all just accept that this country is only partly sovereign and do away with all the drama?



As usual, Terrifico was **too smart by half**. In his bid to woo the Indians he has again ticked off the Chinese by telling the *Hindu*: 'None of the Chinese delegations came to Nepal at my invitation.' So, to please his cadre, he abuses India, to please India, he calls the Chinese **gatecrashers**. Way to go.



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