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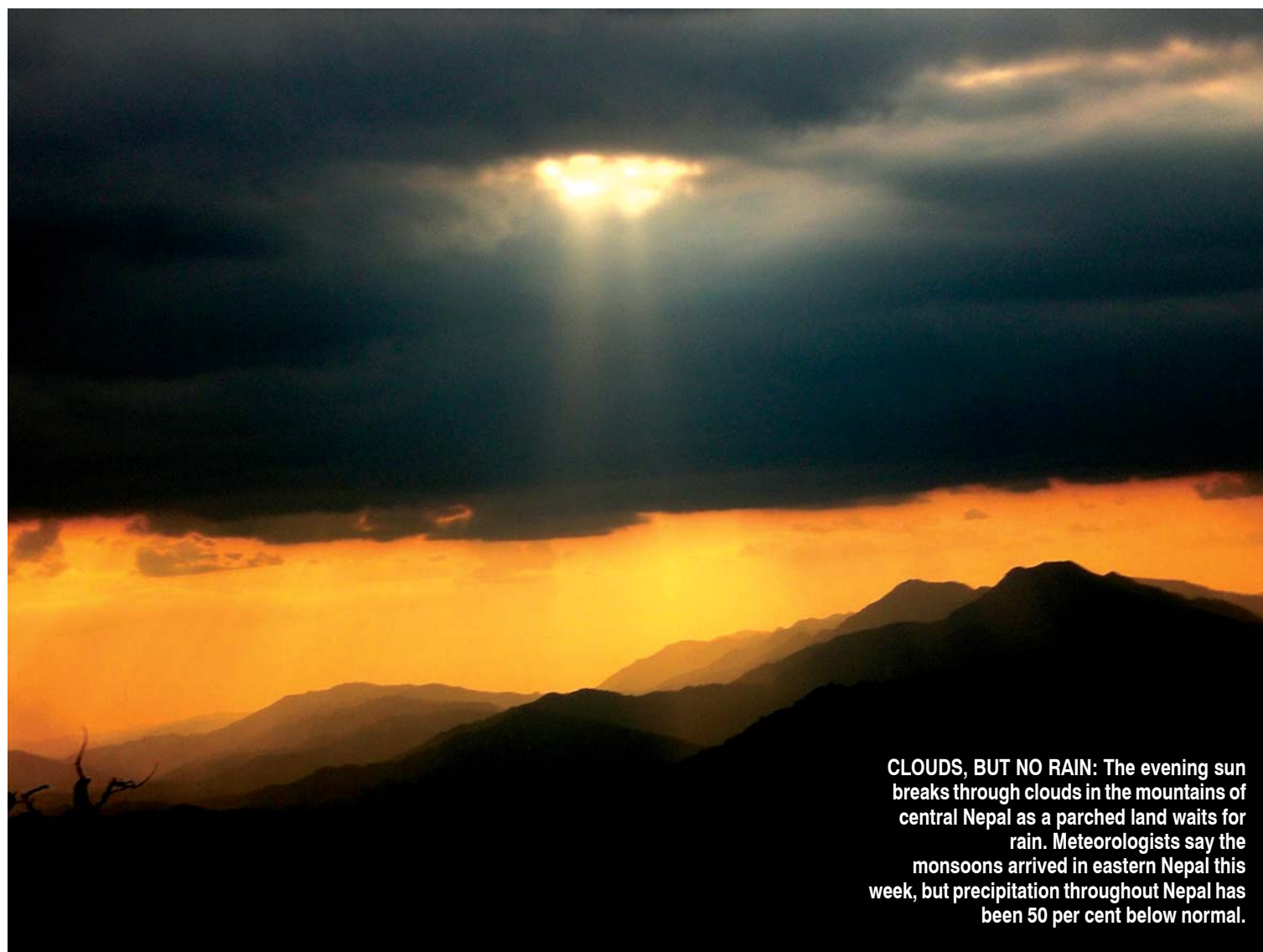
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KUNDA DIXIT

CLOUDS, BUT NO RAIN: The evening sun breaks through clouds in the mountains of central Nepal as a parched land waits for rain. Meteorologists say the monsoons arrived in eastern Nepal this week, but precipitation throughout Nepal has been 50 per cent below normal.

Sky high

The prevalence of infectious diseases among intravenous drug users is rocketing because the fear of stigma and poor support services are discouraging users from seeking help.

Political instability, low literacy levels, poor awareness and a lack of voluntary counselling and testing services mean infection figures are only likely to increase.

Among drug users in Nepal, 61.4 per cent

inject drugs, 29 per cent of whom share needles. An estimated 6,557 intravenous drug users (IDU) are living with HIV or AIDS, which is about 10 per cent of the total 70,000 people living with HIV/AIDS, according to UNAIDS.

In Kathmandu, about 30 per cent of all people living with HIV/AIDS inject drugs. They are

also vulnerable to the incurable Hepatitis C, for which 94 per cent of drug users in Kathmandu have tested positive.

The market for heroin and opium is also on the rise in Nepal with most narcotics being smuggled over the border. The Narcotic Drugs Control Law Enforcement Unit seized 105.6kg opium and 10kg heroin last year. In the first six months of this year it has already seized 225kg of opium and six kg of heroin.

The prevalence of HIV among IDUs in 2003 was 51 per cent. Given the limitations of Nepal's

public health surveillance system, the actual number of infections is thought to be much higher.

Although Nepal was the first country in Asia to establish a harm reduction program with a needle exchange service for IDUs, it has failed because of limited coverage and a short supply of syringes.

A survey conducted by Central Bureau of Statistics in 2007 reported there are 46,309 hard drug users in Nepal with around 50 per cent of them aged 15 to 29. ●

Full story p10

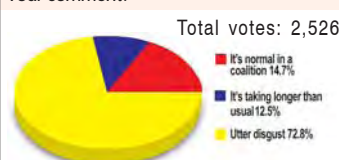
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PLAIN SPEAKING Prashant Jha
Caste away p2

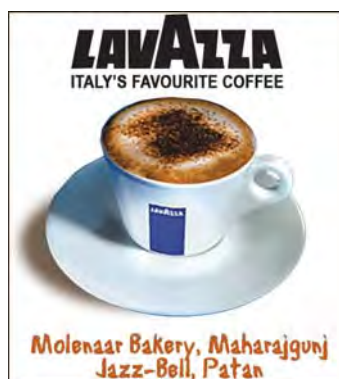
STATE OF THE STATE CK Lal
Lawlessness and disorder p3

Times nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll # 457

Q. Cabinet expansion still stuck.
Your comment:



Weekly Internet Poll # 458. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com
Q. Should the Maoists have been included in the new government?



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Published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd, Editor: Kunda Dixit
CEO: Ashutosh Tiwari Design: Kiran Maharjan
DGM Sales and Marketing: Sambhu Guragain marketing@himalmedia.com
Marketing Manager: Subhash Kumar Asst. Manager: Arjun Karki
Circulation: Prakash Raut
Hatiban, Godavari Road, Lalitpur
GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu 5250333/845 Fax: 5251013
Printed at Jagadamba Press 5250017-19



Caste aways

Impunity, patronage, politics and caste make an explosive mix

RAJBIRAJ—The campus incident in this stagnant Tarai town brings together all the elements that best describes the state of Nepal today: institutional degeneration, patronage, factional



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

party politics, partisan bureaucracy and a pliable judiciary, impunity, violence.

The overwhelming role of caste formed the undercurrent of the brutal assault on campus

chief Devi Dutt Sah.

Here are the facts of the case: there had been a two week stand-off between the administration and a part of the student union. The newly elected union president Ram Chandra Yadav (belonging to a faction of the NC) had put in a dozen demands, ranging from an enquiry into appointments of temporary teachers to allegations of corruption.

On the morning of 8 June, a student called up Sah and reported that a clash had broken out at the campus. Sah called up the local SP, who promised to send forces but said they would need permission from the CDO to take action. Sah then headed to the college, but only after having spoken to the CDO Ram Bilas Ray Yadav, who promised to give the required orders. The CDO however disputes this, stating there was no way he could have given orders because Sah had not put in a formal written

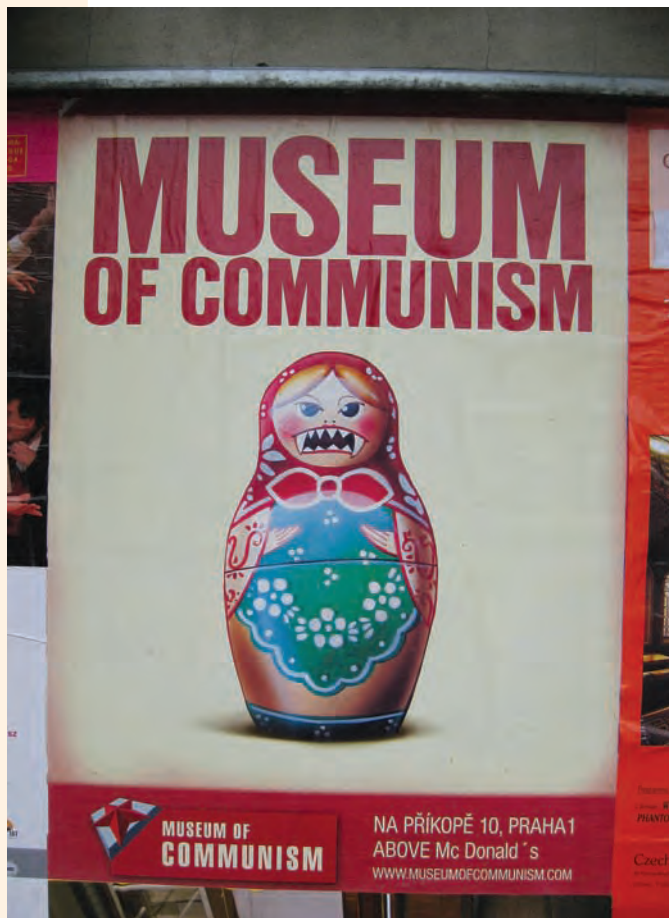
request.

Once in the college, Sah was surrounded by 15-20 students, some of them from the union and others whom he did not recognise. They locked him up inside a room, and told him to resign immediately. When Sah refused, he was stabbed and hit with *lathis*. Sah claims he heard union president Ram Chandra Yadav say: "How dare you think a Teli (Sah's caste) can become campus chief in Saptari or Siraha?"

Sah finally gave in and wrote a resignation note. All this while, the police was right at the campus gate: either misled into believing that the campus administration and students were having talks, or waiting for the elusive CDO orders that never came, or unwilling to take action. After four hours, according to Sah, a group of students and the SP of the APF camp rescued him.

When Sah was appointed campus chief two years ago, he superseded more senior colleagues in the campus. Key appointments in educational institutions across the country were divided among parties who could choose their men. The town grapevine has it that Sah was backed by one faction of the Saptari NC. Since then, some in the teaching faculty (predominantly Yadavs, backed by another faction of NC) had ganged up to oust him.

Certain decisions taken by the chief, like the appointments of teachers, gave them enough ammunition to allege corruption. The Maoists, keen to get a



LETTERS

CIVILIAN PARTIES

After a long time, I could read an editorial which reflects the reality of Nepali politics ('Civilian parties,' #456). The ruling parties, whatever their weaknesses may be, are civilian parties and they try to respect the rule of law. There are some, led by the Maoists, who refuse to accept that violence is not acceptable in mainstream politics. How can you trust a party whose chair does not feel an ounce of shame declaring publicly that the policy of their party is to grab power forcefully? There is no question that the military should be under civilian government, as parliament is the supreme body and the army should be under its supervision. However, the Maoists asking for 'civilian supremacy' is a farce.

Kamal Kishor, email

GOOD EXAMPLE

It would be fantastic to hear more stories of ordinary Nepalis trying to make a difference ('The power of good example,' # 456). Such stories make a positive impact in the national culture, which we are in dire need of in these difficult times. It will also encourage many to start their own similar initiatives. I recently visited a village of Barpak in

Gorkha and met Nepalis who had managed to bring economic and cultural change in their local community. One example that stood out was how the local public toilets were kept so clean in such a remote village through cooperation and coordination. This is just one story, there must be so many all over Nepal.

Amit Thapa, email

DEMOLITION

I was moved to tears while reading CK Lal's piece on how the country is moving from one shutdown to another ('Mutually assured demolition,' #456). It is a true reflection of the reality at the ground level. CK, channel your superb writing along these themes rather than of political ones.

TWO ASSES

After reading two Ass columns ('22 rajahs', and 'A psychedelic Prithbi Narayan', #454, 455) I was confused. But now I get it: the police can't do a thing against those beating up women outside police stations, kids deflating bicycle tyres to enforce a banda, or thugs vandalise a van. The YCL is

extorting money from businesses and contractors because they know no one is going to stop them. How can you run a country like this? I realise it is not possible to deploy the army against the YCL because it would mean the start of another war. But why not equip and support the police in the smaller localities and clean up the act in the small places first? You could actually use the same method as the Maoists: start working up the more remote and poor areas first. It could be done with less money and less force then cleaning up KTM valley and the baddies could be more easily disabled there. Not everything has to start in

the capital. If it worked for Mao Tse Tung, it should work for us. If you want law and order, outlaw the YCL.

Confused Bideshi, email

DUMP

'Tribhuban International airport is a seedy, smelly dungeon'. Thanks to Paavan Mathema for calling it like it is in 'Lounging around' (#455). Kathmandu airport is the

worst introduction to Nepal that a visitor can have, and it also leaves a deep lasting impression on people who are leaving. The airport convinces them that they aren't going to return to Nepal unless the airport is fixed first. We are used to quaintly inefficient Third World airports and can handle the discomforts. But TIA is a health hazard, a den of smugglers and a centre for crime and extortion where policemen at security who are supposed to be checking for dangerous items are the ones robbing passengers of their valuables. Or maybe they should just keep the airport like it is because it epitomizes everything that is wrong with Nepal. But all is not lost: the Upper Deck is proof that given the chance Nepalis can run a clean, efficient, courteous service. Private Sector zindabad!

Girvan Thapa, email

KHUMBU BY NIGHT

Thank you *Nepali Times* for that new perspective on the Khumbu by reproducing those brilliant pictures by Alex Treadway and Hiroyuki Kuraoka. And congratulations to Billi Bierling for having made it to the top!

Lina Sorensen, Dhankuta



Alok Dixit, email

foothold in the campus and curry favour with the politically powerful and demographically sizeable Yadavs, also backed the plan to get rid of Sah.

It was this alliance of some senior (Yadav) teachers in the campus, certain (Yadav) leaders of NC and the Maoists, and the (Yadav-led) student union that mounted the assault on Sah. There are also murmurs that the CDO being a Yadav explains his inertia. Sah himself alleges that in the past few months, a non-Yadav bank manager, district education officer, and other local officials have either been killed or hounded out of their offices.

For their part, the Yadavs privately say this is an upper caste and non-Yadav backward caste alliance to deprive their share of political power. The student union’s Ram Chandra Yadav denies any involvement and claims he in fact helped rescue the chief. He alleges that the chief is trying to give a caste colour to what is a political battle to “protect student rights by ensuring a clean administration”.

However, his argument however is severely weakened by what has happened after the incident. The police arrested Yadav and others on the basis of Sah’s statements. Yadav leaders across the board waged a campaign to get them released. The Maoists and NC together, aided by Madhesi parties, led the charge. The government lawyer was threatened and he ran off without arguing the case. And the judge released the accused. Now, non-Yadav leaders of different parties (Mandals, Sahs, Brahmins and others) are brainstorming about what to do in order to prevent Yadav hegemony.

The Tarai now resembles the Bihar of the 1990s under Laloo Yadav. ●

Lawlessness and disorder

BIRGUNJ—Like relative deprivation, there is something called comparative sense of relief. Here, in Birganj, the kidnapping capital of Nepal, entrepreneurs have begun to take bleak satisfaction in the fact that they are no more or less insecure here than they would be in Biratnagar or Kathmandu.

Considering the brutality of kidnappers in the national capital, crossborder kidnappers in this frontier town actually appear somewhat less vicious.

Mahesh Sharada was reportedly released after paying a hefty ransom in Thapathali. A businessman believed to have been kidnapped from Tinkune is still in captivity. There was the failed attempt to abduct a fourth grade student in Banasthali. Then the dismembered body of kidnapped student, Khyati Shrestha, was found this week in Kathmandu.



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

What gets reported in the media is only the tip of the iceberg. It’s in private conversations that one gets to gauge lawlessness and disorder

has become. In some families, ready cash is often kept at home so that the attention aroused by sudden bank withdrawals can be avoided. Nobody goes to the police.

There are professional mediators here in Birganj whose main job is to maintain contact between kidnappers and the families of victims and earn a cut for safe release.

Biren Pradhan, the accused in the Khyati abduction and murder case, exhibited the callousness of an amateur. But people fear that the wide publicity given to the case may give ideas to future first-time abductors for copycat crimes. Ironically, the sadistic brutality of the murder case in Kathmandu has redeemed minor armed groups in Tarai who are reputed to treat hostages with due respect.

In the early 1980s, the nation’s consciousness was shaken by the murder of school girls Namita and Sunita Bhandari and their friend Neera Parajuli. The triple murder of the schoolgirls remains a mystery to this day, although a royal cover up was suspected. The police closed the case during the reign of king Gyanendra.

The Bhandari sisters came from an elite Kathmandu family. Yet, the tragedy was soon forgotten. Surya Bahadur Sen Oli was the CDO of Kaski. He is now a Maoist, but still isn’t spilling the beans.

In the process of enduring the pathologies of dictatorial regimes and brutal insurgencies, our collective conscience seems to have lost the ability to empathise with the victimised families and pursue a case to its logical conclusion. The public hue and cry tends to die down within a few days as everyone get back to their business.

Whoever now remembers Bara-based journalist Birendra Sah or indomitable freedom fighter Uma Singh? Yet, their killers swagger around as political activists, shouting slogans for civilian supremacy. Invented explanations that blame the victim are often offered to

Killers swagger around as political activists, shouting slogans for civilian supremacy



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

exonerate perpetrators of crime which the society meekly accepts before moving on.

The worst way to approach a murder case is to portray the killer as a psychotic. Yet that was just what the investigators did. Biren Pradhan was a compulsive gambler with a perverted mind. Declare him a deviant, and society can then sleep well with clear conscience. The criminals are exceptions, we tell ourselves.

Modern materialism, class differences, joblessness, the long-term effects of the war on society’s psyche all combine to produce a tinderbox where even a small incident can trigger tragedies of unbearable proportions.

The communal dimensions of crime need to be played down to prevent a backlash. The Indian media appears to be stoking the fire of hatred by stressing Biren’s Darjeeling origins.

But if he has indeed committed the crime, he should get harshest possible punishment. It is impunity, and the sight of the murderers wearing political cloaks walking freely, that has led to this crime wave. ●



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KUNDA DIXIT in NEW DELHI

The Indian government's ban on the Maoists this week, and a Congress-led government that has shed its leftist partners, is expected to bolster the swing to the right in Nepali politics.

The rout of both the BJP and the CPI-M in April's election represented setbacks for the Hindu-right and the Maoist-left in Nepal. In India itself, post-election politics has been dominated

by a surge in the activity of India's restless Maoists, prompting the federal government on Monday to ban the party.

The Naxalites are now active in 165 of India's 604 districts, mainly in the mineral-rich forests of eastern India populated by indigenous people. Fifty-one of these districts in Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Chattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh are said to be 'highly affected'. And in the past few months, the Maoists have returned to West Bengal where they started out as a peasant movement in 1967 and were later ruthlessly crushed by the Indira Gandhi government.

After more or less pretending it didn't exist for decades, India's national media has suddenly started giving prominent space to the insurgency. The occupation of the Lalgarh area of West Bengal and the effort by security forces to retake it displaced even cricket as the main news in India's tabloid tv news which carried sensational bold banners that said 'Red Terror' in big crimson letters. The Indian media has also stopped calling the rebels 'Naxalites'.

How India's state governments now deal with their Maoist insurgencies will have a bearing on Nepal because the Indian revolutionaries have often said they want to "liberate everything from Tirupathi to Pashupati". Similarly, the future political trajectory of the Maoists in Nepal will be keenly watched by both India's ultra-left as well as the central government.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has characterised the Maoist insurgency "as India's greatest security threat". The Indian security establishment was also closely following the Sri Lankan

Army's defeat of the Tamil Tigers as a case study of a successful counter-insurgency operation.

Seen in this light, it is not a surprise that India's military-intelligence establishment took a dim view of the attempt by Nepal's Maoists to sack Gen Katawal and infiltrate the Nepal Army. "That was the last straw, we just couldn't allow that," said one Indian source.

Indian Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon, on returning here after his Nepal visit, denied there were any links between the Nepal Maoists and their Indian comrades. However, there seems to be close solidarity between the Naxalites and the hardliner bloc among Nepal's Maoists.

After April 2006, Indian revolutionaries sharply criticised Pushpa Kamal Dahal for having ended the armed struggle, and in recent interviews they have egged on hardline ideologues in Nepal.

There is also new evidence that the Indian Maoists not just trained their Nepali comrades but even planned and took part in some of the attacks on police stations and army bases in Nepal during the war. On Tuesday, Bihar Police claimed it captured two truck loads of dynamite and detonators in a truck carrying boulders from Nepal.

India's moderate communists were the architects of the November 2005 peace process when they were in a UPA coalition with the Congress. They were hoping to set an example of "taming ultra-left adventurism" by bringing them to the mainstream. The central government now seems to have abandoned that path by banning the Maoists.

West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharji had actually started calling Maoists "terrorists" after an attempted assassination in Lalgarh last November. His police then unleashed a crackdown in the area, and villagers rose up against excesses capturing three districts. The central government mobilised its paramilitary CPRF last week to quell the rebellion and retake the territory.

West Bengal police appear to have behaved much the same way as the Nepal Police did in 1997-98 with its brutal Operation Kilo Sierra, and ended up increasing local support for the Maoists. "Mass anger was waiting to burst... and the Maoists were waiting in the wings," wrote Aditya Nigam of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in a column this week. "In Lalgarh we are in it for the long haul"

Other Indian commentators have been warning the state and central governments that the only solution to India's Maoist insurgency is to address the concerns of the tribal and other marginalised groups whose anger and poverty the Maoists are tapping. But with the ban on the Maoists, the Indian state seems to be getting ready to use strong arm tactics. ●

Revolutions without borders

Implications for Nepal of a Maoist resurgence in India

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Golf coaching

Surya Nepal Khelparyatan and Nepal Golf Association have started the Surya Nepal NGA youth golf coaching program. It was started for the young with the objective of training potential golfers. The lessons will take place at Gokarna Forest Resort, Royal Nepal Golf Club, Army Golf Club, Himalayan Golf Club and Nirvana Country Club from 18 June.



Banking forum

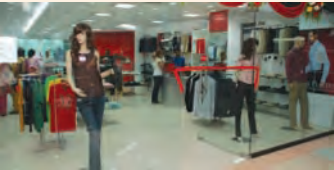
Forum of Nepali Banks was established this month to represent, and , lobby for the interest of all stakeholders in banks and make the country's banking system more accountable. The adhoc executive committee has nine members and will be under Manoj Bahadur Shrestha's chairmanship.

Eco-friendly

Maruti Cement Company has begun to manufacture OPC Cement in Nepal. Maruti cement is being touted as the only one in Nepal to use environmentally friendly technologies to control pollution.



Players



John Players', men's wear brand from Surya Nepal has opened its sixth and seventh exclusives branded outlets at City Center Mall, Kamal Pokhari and Maharajgunj.

Safe biking

In an attempt to promote a safe biking culture and to strengthen motor sports, R15 Nepali riders have been trained by Morang Auto Works and will participate in a R15 championship in Chennai on 28 June.



Branch-less banking

Everest Bank launched branch-less banking 'Everest Ghar-Dailo Banking Sewa' on 17 June. The bank has appointed authorised representatives in the villages, that are connected to branches and will allow deposits and withdrawals with the use of a Smart Card.

Win-Win

Consumers can now collect crowns from Pepsi bottles featuring four of the football players of the Dream Team to win a free trip to Bangkok and Pataya for one couple every week.



Mind the gap

Nepal may have had free and fair elections but the so called representatives have no connection at all with the people

On Wednesday, Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal inducted eight more ministers into his month-old cabinet. That raised the total number of ministers to 30. For a small country of about 30 million people, a cabinet this size is already big. But press reports indicate that the PM is set to add more ministers from different political parties, making what is likely to be the largest cabinet in Nepal's history.



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

At a time when there is growing public disenchantment with Nepal's political process and with the lordly behaviour of elected representatives who repeatedly fail to stick to the priority of drafting a national constitution by an agreed-upon deadline, what purpose does it serve to keep on expanding the cabinet as if there were a mandate to create an unlimited government?

The answers are found in two parts. First, it's instructive to look at the governance of the political process in Nepal; and, second, on ways to fix it.

Unaccountable governance: The UK press has recently been dominated by revelations of how many of the 646 Members of Parliament have abused public funds to pay for personal indulgences that ranged from cleaning up a privately-owned moat to buying fertilizers to paying for flats for their children. The revelations sent a shock wave through the British political system, leading to both the ridicule and resignations of guilty politicians. Those who have retained their jobs have had to continue to govern with a tarnished reputation and diminished stature.

Though Nepal follows a British-style Westminster model of parliamentary democracy, the gulf between the public and those who are elected to serve the public remains immense in this country. This is partly because intermediary institutions that check the expanding power of the government are either weak or do not exist. As such, it often looks as if our politics is comprised of two spheres – the first one containing the 601 representatives, and the second one containing the voting population – with the first having little connection to the second once elections are over.

For illustration, consider this example: Khyati Shrestha, a high school student from Biratnagar was found brutally murdered in Kathmandu a few days ago. Hers was not the only murder that has taken place in recent times. Given

the alarming rise in the number of children who have been kidnapped and then murdered, you'd think that our representatives would put pressure on the Home Minister to uphold law and order. You would also think that they'd like to signal they are doing all they can to allay their voters' palpable fears.

But no! In this case, several days after the murder, politicians of all stripes, elected from Biratnagar or elsewhere, have made absolutely no noise in support of the Shrestha family. The family is left to fend for itself to push for justice.

This sort of silence from those elected to represent our interests has happened in many other cases. A bridge breaks down near a temple, like one did last year. Hundreds of pilgrims are killed. Not a word comes from any

residents nor have any stake in the district's affairs.

Herein is the crux of the problem. When all parties, taking cue from one another, field candidates in this manner, voters have no choice but to elect pretty much one stranger over another. When a stranger thus gets to parliament, on the back of the support of voters he barely knew a month before, is it any wonder that he has little to gain by voicing the concerns of those voters, and much to gain by making his leaders happy, lest they not give him the ticket in the next round of elections?

When you have a parliament full of democratically elected representatives who have every incentive to toe the party line, it's only a matter of time before horse-trading starts, before the cabinet is expanded to accommodate every disgruntled party, and before commissions are formed to



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

member of Parliament. Similarly, press reports of food shortages in the hills of Western Nepal. Again, not a word of support, let alone actions that help deliver the grains, from the politicians elected from that region. When these examples add up, you start to wonder: when your representatives do not speak up for you who are affected in times of crisis, what is the point of going through the motion of elections?

True, holding free and fair elections on a regular basis is one feature of democracy. And on this account, few fault Nepal's present democratic regime. Despite reports of Maoist intimidation at some polling stations in the hinterland, most accept that present representatives were elected in what were generally considered to be free and fair elections last year.

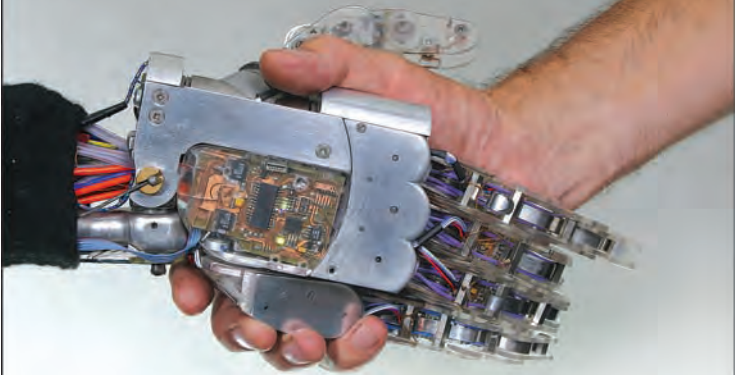
But problems become clearer when we examine the mechanics of how parties have subverted the election process so it is not responsive to the public's concerns. Here is how it works: parties decide who they want to send as candidates to a district. Party cadres fight with one another to curry favours from their leaders to receive the election ticket. Those who receive the election tickets need neither be

provide jobs to hangers-on. All these leave the voters to recede from the political memory for several years, reduced as they are to being mere spectators.

Fixing it Those who complain about the inaction of our large-size government should stop expecting saintly politicians as outputs. They should instead focus on the inputs. That is to say, the one way to make the representatives accountable to the public, so that they and their parties do not keep on expanding the size of the government, is by first correcting how the candidates are fielded to the public during elections. The more tangible connection a candidate has to a district, the more likely he is to listen to the voters' concerns. This simple change in the initial conditions is also more likely to connect national parties with influential local politicians who, in many cases, would not have to either run as independents or cobble together their own parties.

In the absence of such reforms that help tie representatives' actions to voters' concerns, we have no choice but to watch the Prime Minister preside over a ballooning cabinet in the name of letting almost all parties be in the government. ●

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Herbs worth gold

Pradip Kafle in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 15-29 June

Leaving behind the buzz of city life in Kathmandu, KB Gurung quit his job as a government official in the department of agriculture and opted to forge a business growing herbs in Damauli, Tanahu.

The Agricultural Science graduate who studied in Kanpur, India under the Colombo Plan, was determined to cultivate and preserve the endangered herbs of Nepal, and has managed to turn that ambition into gold.

He has grown more than 150 species of herbs on his 15 hectares of land in Patan, Tanahu. The sales of red sandalwood and ginseng, among others is known to bring him hefty profits.

Now, following studies in China, Gurung is planning to start cultivating bamboos that can be used to manufacture photocopy paper. 'Abundant agro forestry could be a major source of income for Nepal,' said the 70 year old Gurung.

हिमाल
खबर पत्रिका



Seeds of disunion

Bishnu Bahadur Manandhar in *Nepal*, 28 June

नेपाल

Many different communist revolutionary ideologies evolved around the world from 1960, including within Nepal. In Nepal the Darbhanga Plenum—a meeting of the central committee of the communist party in 1961—is of particular importance.

In the meeting, three courses of action for the party emerged, a pro-constitutional monarchy line led by Keshar Jung Rayamajhi, a line that wanted to restore the dissolved parliament and launch broad mass movements led by Pushpa Lal Shrestha and a third line which favoured a constitutional assembly and an armed struggle, led by Mohan Bikram Singh.

When an election was held, the majority voted in support of Singh's line. However, the central committee refused to accept the result preferring the restoration of parliamentary democracy.

Right then part chairman Keshar Jung Rayamajhi was alleged to be close to the king. Rayamajhi was dismissed but a three-member committee was formed to hold the party convention within nine months. This case ended with a compromise among the members and the fight for power within the party also diminished. At that time I was elected a central committee member.

The party was banned in 1961 and most of the senior leadership stayed out of the country. Zonal committees were formed to operate it,

although there were no provisions for this in the party constitution. A convention was held through an inter-zonal meeting, which was again against the constitution of the party. The trend of over-writing the constitution continued.

Already there were signs of the party splitting, but the key leaders ignored it. Kamar Shah, another party leader, and I tried to convince the senior leaders against division. Shrestha even went ahead to call for the next convention. But the chairs at the convention were empty. Some leaders were jailed while others boycotted it because of the clash of ideologies. This was the starting point of the party's split.

By the fourth party convention, the party had divided into two, with Rayamajhi heading one of the factions. I was appointed the general secretary. But there were allegations that Rayamajhi had helped arrest Sambhu Ram Shrestha and so his supporters left the party. At that time a demo had been called by pro-Panchayat leaders against Congress's BP Koirala. Rayamajhi agreed to join but I was against it because being against Koirala meant we were against democracy. He did not go but lobbied against me in the party. His proposition against me received only two votes and he was kicked out from the party.

Differences in opinions and ideology have continually threatened the unity of the communist party of Nepal, culminating in countless communist parties that actually started as a single group.

Insecurity

Editorial in *Naya Patrika*, 24 June

नयाँ पत्रिका

The security situation in Kathmandu is deteriorating. While reports of abductions and manslaughter cases are on the rise, the government is doing little to address them.

The abduction of industrialist Mahesh Sarada took place in broad daylight. Afterwards a special police cell was mobilised to look into it and the case was also discussed at the Home Ministry. But their efforts amounted to nothing and Sarada returned home having paid a heavy ransom. The high school teenager who was abducted was murdered and her mutilated body was found in Kathmandu although her parents paid Rs.100,000.

Every time there is a case of abduction the police pay lip



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

service to wanting to bring about justice and to punishing the guilty but they achieve no more than that. Another reason why these abductions persist is because the abductors, even from their prison cells, manage to keep forming new gangs to perpetuate their crimes.

It seems as if the court is providing them with a form of 'shelter' inside jail from where they can pursue these crimes and remain protected. Unless the Home administration deals with this issue there is no hope of Kathmandu becoming a peaceful and secure city.



PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

DEBUT NIGHT: NC leader Ram Chandra Poudel gets ready to meet with the media after being declared the winner at NC parliamentary leadership election on Saturday.

Baglung speaks

Thoughts on the constitution writing process

Baglung is concerned about the delay in constitution writing. The district is dominated by Rastriya Janamorchha leaders. Janamorchha has been against Nepal becoming a federal state. At a *Himal Khabarpatrika* discussion, civil society and political party leaders admitted that there is no other alternative to Nepal becoming a federal state. Excerpts:

Harihar Sharma, Nepal Student Union

The writing of the constitution is taking place at an exceptionally slow rate. Issues like federalism, state restructuring, framework of the administration and other issues have not yet been discussed. The leadership is not at all serious about constitution-writing and is not concerned about what the people want.

K.B Rana Magar, Parents' Organisation Nepal

We hear that the suggestions put forward by the people of Baglung have been shelved in some corner of the district development office. Indeed CA members are attempting to write the constitution irresponsibly.

Durga Dutta Acharya, Nepal Press Union

CA members visiting rural Nepal is just paying lip-service. Constitutions have been written in the past, it is now important to evaluate how much they addressed people's grievances. If the leaders are sensitive towards what Nepali people want, they have to deliver on their promises.

Man KC, Nepal Teachers' Union

The fact that the CA members visited rural areas to seek the opinions of people at the grass roots is noteworthy.

Netra Bahadur Bista, Akhil Nepal Teachers' Union

Leaders are distracted by the formation of government and who is going to get what cabinet portfolio. A consensus government can help us move forward towards constitution writing.

Bir Bahadur Biswokarma, Dalit rights activist

The questionnaire developed to ask for suggestions for the new constitution was complicated. More outrageous is the fact that the CA members did not prioritise the rights of the underprivileged Dalits. There is a risk of Dalits being left far behind in the new constitution.

Raju Gautam, President, Nepal Bar Association

All the dilly-dallying in constitution writing only proves that the CA members are not serious about it. There's a fear that this new constitution will be passed like the interim constitution, where a handful of CA members decide the clauses. Those CA members who were collecting suggestions took no responsibility for the complicated questionnaires they were carrying.

Ram Sharma, advocate

The questionnaires that were taken to the people were hard to understand. Until just a month ago the suggestions from the people of Parbat were not taken to the right place. Whose responsibility is that? It is not too late, if we unanimously push for democracy the new constitution will be written on time.

Mukesh Chandra Rajbhandary, journalist

The draft that the political parties put forward has not yet reached the people, who doubt that their views will be represented.

Shakuntala Sharma, Inter Party Women's Alliance

The majority of women never received these questionnaires. All groups are appealing to be represented in the new constitution. In such a situation, are issues relating to press freedom, rule of law and human rights just not being prioritised?

Din Bahadur Thapa, vice principle

Taking locals who speak the language to interpret questionnaires would certainly have been more fruitful. There is a possibility that the country may be divided along linguistic lines. To prevent this division issues regarding languages must also be tackled.

Dharma Bahadur Kunwar, Rastriya Janamorchha

Federalism is not the only option. If the CA members really wanted positive feedback they should have also suggested an alternative framework to federalism. This could have been reflected in the questionnaires. No space was given to the fact that federalism divides a nation and its ethnic groups and destroys camaraderie amongst communities.

Should the constitution be based on ethnicity, language, culture, or region?

Anju Lamichane, women's rights activist

Federalism should not be formed on the basis of language or ethnicity. It should include all sections of society. There's fear that a federal structure may encourage separatism. Political parties should not thwart constitution writing.

Prem Prasad Sharma, social worker

There is a process to writing the constitution of a country. That process involves every citizen being involved in discussions so as to help decide how Nepal must become a federal state.

Amit KC, activist for the disabled

Special rights must be given to marginalized communities. Leaders have to study the geography and understand the psychology of the Nepali people. If some communities do not think that Nepal should be a federal state, it is their right to think so.

Sunita Gauchan, social worker

There is a tendency to use young people for political purposes and abandon them when the political interests have been fulfilled. The need of the hour is to provide employment to the youth of Nepal.

Bharat Poudel, CDO

Unless we Nepalis change our intrinsic behaviour, democracy will only remain in slogans. Democracy has given the people the opportunity to voice their opinions. We must cherish the diversity while addressing issues related to ethnicity and not point fingers at each other.

Life behind the veil



KONG YEN LIN

WOMEN OF SUBSTANCE: Mohammadi (right) and Maimoona set up the Fatima foundation that works for the upliftment of Muslim women in Banke, like this one (left) who is learning to sew so she can be financially independent.

KONG YEN LIN in NEPALGANJ

When Mohammadi Siddiqui's husband died 17 years ago, the mother of three children had to struggle to take care of her family.

She had spent most of her married life within the confines of her house, donning a burka in her rare trips to the market. But a supportive mother-in-law encouraged Mohammadi to work as a human rights activist, especially to empower fellow Muslim women.

Six years ago, Mohammadi and her sister Maimoona set up the Fatima Foundation in Banke to uplift Muslim women. The organization now has 22 volunteers and tackles problems like child marriages, polygamy and domestic violence.

"There is a dearth of religious laws in Nepal safeguarding social justice for women," says Mohammadi, "on top of that, there is also a lack of female participation in law enforcement and the judiciary."

Two Muslim sisters show it is possible to fight for rights in the Tarai's conservative society

Since the lack of education is such a barrier for Muslim women to be financially independent, Fatima has started a skills training centre to teach Muslim women how to sew and paint. "This makes them less dependent on the family and gives them confidence," says Maimoona, a 45-year-old mother of three and graduate from Gorakhpur University.

Fatima is trying to prevent child marriages and has set up a watchdog community operating undercover on tip-offs. Fatima recently conducted classes for women from 23 VDCs of Banke to educate them on their constitutional rights. "Awareness is the first step towards reform and equal participation," says Maimoona.

The sisters have survived threats and intimidation from some male members of their community and mullahs. "At first even my brothers-in-law disapproved, now the mullahs have written letters recognising my efforts," says Mohammadi with a smile. She is now a CA member, and recently completed her Bachelors degree in Sociology from Awadh University in India.

Mohammadi is excited about the new constitution: "Finally the laws of the land will pave the way for greater participation of women from different castes and ethnicities." ●



Holding up th

PAAVAN MATHEMA

Captain Bhawana Pant gently pushes the throttle on the starboard engine of her Beech 1900D, scans the dials carefully to ensure everything is ok. To her right is co-pilot Rita Pyakurel who takes instructions from air traffic control and looks out for ground traffic, as the plane with its all-female crew takes off. The aircraft is cleared for takeoff from Runway 20 and Capt Pant guns both engines as the plane takes off with an all-female crew.

What is unusual is how routine flights with women on the flight deck and cabin have become in Nepal's domestic aviation.

Buddha Air and Yeti Airlines are the only two that operate flights where the captain, co-pilot and stewardesses are all women. But as more and more women opt for careers as pilots, this isn't so rare anymore.

"I used to watch my father wear his pilot's uniform and I knew right then that I wanted to fly too," says Pant, who has been flying for 12 years. "When I took my first flight I felt like I had achieved a big victory." Pant became a captain three years ago at the same time that Buddha Air introduced all-female crews to take charge of their flights.

Co-pilot Pyakurel says there is just too much to do in the cockpit to think about breaking stereotypes. "But," she admits with a smile, "I feel a tinge of pride when the captain is also a woman."

Both Pant and Thapa are now also licensed to fly Buddha's new and bigger ATR-42 twin turboprops. Komal Basnyat and Yasodhara Thapa are two other female pilots with Buddha Air. Komal says the comfort level is higher when she works with a female captain and says the women crew send a positive message to the public about gender equality. Pant adds: "Although one's gender doesn't really make a difference when you work together to control a flight, it's very encouraging that things are changing."

The first step towards all-women crews taken by Yeti airlines in 2006 when, on the occasion of women's day, Capt Sabina Thapa and co-pilot Jeena Ligden flew together. "It was a wonderful experience," recalls Thapa who now flies BAe Jetstreams for Yeti. "You have to prove yourself here to gain respect. This is not a profession where women get concessions simply because they are women. You have to show what you are capable of."

Although things have come a long way since Sony Rana (now the only woman flying 757s for Nepal Airlines) became Nepal's first woman pilot in 1988, female crews are still very uncommon than their male counterparts. Of the 300 or so certified pilots in Nepal, only 10 percent are women. Of the 69 pilots in Yeti, there is one woman captain and five co-pilots. Of Buddha Air's total cockpit crew of 42, there are two female Captains and four co-pilots.

Nearly all women pilots fly domestic routes, regarded as the most challenging flying terrain in the world. So the experience Nepal's women pilots are earning will give them an advantage over others. With more women pilots returning from training abroad, passengers will soon become familiar with the sight of women in crisp pilot uniforms in the cockpit. ●



All-female cockpit crews become common as more women pick piloting careers



PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

the whole sky



Sniff or inject?

Confessions of a former drug user

International Drug Day on 26 June reminds me of the past that shaped my present, and the present that is so different from my past.

It reminds me of my youthful days as a drug addict wandering the streets of Kathmandu. In the mid-1990s, I was about 20 and had been using drugs for four years. My first drug was something that was available in the local pharmacy for just Rs 20: the then famous cough syrup, Phensydyle. Many people my age in the 1990s probably tried Phensydyle. For me it represented the beginning of a long and treacherous journey, the life of a junkie.

The rest of the world believed that it was me and only me who



EYE WITNESS
Rajiv Kafle

was to be blamed for what I became. Since the rest of the world believed this, I believed it too. However, at the back of my head was

always the conviction that it wasn't just my fault.

For four years I did Phensydyle and similar codeine-based syrups. When new policies went into effect to control these drugs, the law enforcement agencies tightened their grip on narcotic drugs. Phensydyle and Heroin were the ones worst hit. Phensydyle was sold in 200ml bottles, and therefore too bulky to sneak through the southern border. The supply may have been cut off, but the demand hadn't reduced. The demand shifted to other drugs, namely Tidigesic: buprenorphine injections were available once again in the local pharmacy for as little as Rs 12 for a 2ml ampoule. One dose could cost as little as Rs 6 and was enough for a whole day. A clean syringe cost Rs 5.

Ironically, government crackdowns resulted in an introduction of more lethal drugs into the market. The result was that HIV prevalence among injecting drug users in Kathmandu rose from zero in 1994 to 70 per cent in 1998. That figure includes me.

We had the tools, we had the knowledge and yet we failed to prevent HIV infections among injecting drug users during this period. We lacked the political will to admit that there was a problem and, therefore, to do something about it. Brave outreach workers entered the netherworld to distribute clean syringes, but were often harassed by the law enforcement agencies. The Ministry of Health approved needle exchange as an effective means to ward off HIV, but the more powerful Home Ministry still believed that distributing needles would encourage drug use. When the drug was cheaper than a syringe, who cares about using a clean syringe? It was as simple as that.

To see the Home Ministry's mistake, consider how an abuser would think: one doesn't buy a new lighter to light a new cigarette. So, should I keep the syringe in case I need it later? Well, no, because I could easily get caught carrying a syringe.

The Home Ministry thus systematically fuelled the epidemic.

The government succeeded in wiping out the 200ml Phensydyle, but they couldn't do the same to the 2ml Tidigesic that is still being smuggled across the southern border.

Today I am out of drugs and leading a healthy life. Ten years of HIV and 19 years of drugs has taught me many important lessons. One that I think is important to share on International Drug Day is this: don't ban glue sniffing, since sniffers will end up injecting. ●

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Lethal dose

Nepal has no hope of eradicating drug abuse, but it must prevent its rise.

DEWAN RAI

Jeevan Ghale used drugs for 11 years. He never cared what his family thought or about being socially excluded, but when he began to witness the death of friends and his own deteriorating health, he quit.

He joined the Richmond Fellowship Nepal, a rehab centre for substance users and gradually overcame his addiction. "I regained respect and recognition from a society that despised me as a drug user," he recalls. Ghale now works as a director at the Mother Tongue Centre Nepal that develops a local language curriculum and also as a counselor for drug users.

He is celebrating his fifth 'birthday' on 26 June marking his fifth year since quitting drugs. "The life I am living is my second life," he says.

Jeevan, a 5 feet 6 inch man was 38kg when he joined the centre. He now weighs 74kg and is married with a daughter.

He had started smoking marijuana at school, switching from marijuana to nitrazepam tablets and then injecting buprenorphine within a year. He

is one of the lucky ones to not be infected with HIV.

Among drug users, 61.4 per cent inject drugs and among them 29 per cent share needles. An estimated 6,557 intravenous drug users (IDU) are living with HIV or AIDS, which is about 10 per cent of the total HIV/AIDS cases according to UNAIDS. In Kathmandu, about 30 per cent of all people living with HIV/AIDS are IDUs.

"There is a 100 per cent chance of transmitting HIV by needle sharing," says Rajiv Kafle founder and coordinator of rehab organisation Nawa Kiran Plus. HIV prevalence among IDUs in 2003 was 51 per cent. Given the limitations of Nepal's public health surveillance system, the actual number of infections is thought to be much higher. Kafle says many of the users don't even know about the disease.

Nepal was the first country in Asia to establish a harm reduction program with a needle exchange service for IDUs. However, the program has been ineffective due to limited coverage as well as a short supply of syringes. The problem is especially acute now that the potency of drugs has significantly deteriorated, moving users to take bigger doses. "A drug user might need more than the two needles a day that they offer," Kafle says.

Bishnu Sharma, program manager of Richmond, says drug users are also highly likely to transmit Hepatitis C. He added that about 94 per cent of drug users in Kathmandu have tested positive for the incurable disease. "Effective prevention interventions need to be scaled up among IDUs," he says.

Political instability, low levels of education and literacy and a lack of voluntary counseling and testing services mean infection figures are only likely to increase.

A survey conducted by Central Bureau of Statistics in 2007

reported there are 46,309 hard drug users in Nepal with 1.2 per cent of them being under 15 years of age. But the problem mainly lies within the age group of 15 to 29, to which half the abusers belong.

The major drugs abused in Nepal are cannabis and codeine which is found in cough syrup, nitrazepam tablets and buprenorphine injections, glue and opiates. Heroin is the second most prevalent drug in the country says SSP Hemanta Malla, chief of the Narcotic Drugs Control Law Enforcement Unit.

According to him, the drugs are mainly smuggled from across the border or sold in pharmacies.

The government drug regulatory body, the Department of Drug Administration, has to get approval from the International Narcotic Control Board to import the drugs that the country needs but this has done little to control the abuse of prescription drugs. "Treatment is not a cure for addiction. The rate of relapse is about 95 per cent in our country while new drug users appear every year, increasing the total number of drug users," he says.

The unit seized 105.6kg opium last year while 225kg opium has been seized in the first six months of this year, a significant rise from the 4.5kg of opium first seized by the police 15 years ago.

The largest heroin haul was the 23kg seized in 2003, while an average of 10kg is seized each year.

But the size of the raids is not indicative of the magnitude of drug abuse in the country. It simply reflects the effectiveness and failure of law enforcement, he says.

There are four measures to be considered in controlling drug abuse: control on production, supply, demand reduction and treatment, rehabilitation and detoxification. "We can not make a drug free society but, we can curb drug abuse," Malla says. ●



PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

Take a stand

Women must boldly seek 50 per cent representation

Last year's CA elections gave women 33 per cent of seats in the assembly and gave Nepal and South Asia good reason to celebrate. It was a fantastic victory for women across the region. In many constituencies women leaders from new parties crushed veteran male leaders from old parties. New women leaders were born and there was no stopping them.

INTERESTING TIMES
Mallika Aryal

Although the ratio of 33 per cent female representation was stipulated in the interim constitution, many feared the political parties would not adhere to it, but the women's lobby was so strong that they would not settle for anything less.

Not all of the women elected were political party leaders. Some were war widows and others had no training in politics. Some experts worried that since the process of constitution-writing involves a lot of legal matters those lacking the right education, experience or training may not cope.

The challenge for the veteran political party leaders and the women's lobby groups who fought so hard for greater representation to prove the skeptics wrong was a big one. But just because there are more women in the constituent assembly

does not exactly mean the struggle for women is over.

The main agenda of the political leadership was not to get distracted from the constitution-writing process. There is no doubt that issues surrounding federalism, inclusion, ethnicity and representation of minorities are of great importance in the new constitution, but so are issues relating to women and children's rights.

Despite their initial victory the women CA members still haven't been able to discuss and channel their issues through the 11 committees, though each has at least one female member. Women CA members also claim they haven't forgotten what they promised and assure that their fight is still for 50 per cent representation in all sectors. So why is it that at a time when women's voices regarding equality in judiciary and administration should be the strongest that we do not hear them at all?

These are not new questions and women CA members have recognised their weakness in raising their voices in the CA. This is perhaps why a caucus has been formed in the assembly which will discuss and push these issues through but that alliance too is still very weak.

Women CA members were not elected to voice only women's issues in the assembly but it is important to keep it in



KIRAN PANDAY

mind that there is no one else who is going to do it for them. Asking for 50 per cent representation is not an unreasonable demand. Women make up 51 per cent of the total population of Nepal so why should they feel any sense of discomfort in asking for 50 per cent representation in the assembly?

Nepali society is not going to change overnight. Waiting for the patriarchy to end is a waste of time. During the collection of suggestions for the new constitution, CA members were warned by people all over Nepal not to repeat the mistakes of the past, to think beyond the Valley and speak up for the people who put their future in the hands of the elected members.

It is not too late for the caucus in the assembly to gain in strength. The women's

movement all over Nepal must understand that the fight for equal rights is not over just because more women are in the CA. And it is important that the CA members do not forget that they are responsible for the women in the far west who die of sicknesses that are so simple to cure, of the women who live with a prolapsed uterus for most of their adult lives because they do not have health facilities, of the young brides in the Tarai and the hills who are beaten up and kicked out of their homes because they did not bring in enough dowry, or of the young girls who are burnt because they are 'witches', of the widows of war who are waiting for reparation, and of the wives who wait every day for their husbands who were disappeared during the war years to come back. ●

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Worlds Apart

Emotionally the US and Europe are the mirror images of each other

PARIS – Since the arrival of President Barack Obama in the White House, there has been an undeniable rapprochement between Europe and the United States. But on the deeper and more fundamental level of emotions and values, is it possible that the gap between the two sides of the Atlantic has widened?

 **COMMENT**
Dominique Moisi

Today, there is much more collective hope and much more individual fear in America in the wake of the global economic crisis. But the reverse is true in Europe. Here one encounters less collective hope and less individual fear. The reason for this contrast is simple: the US has Obama, and Europe has the welfare state.

So what can be done to promote an “Americanization” of Europe in political terms and a “Europeanization” of America in social terms? Comforted by a new



President who incarnates a return of hope, who inspires and reassures at the same time, Americans are starting to believe that the worst of the economic crisis is behind them.

What was at the beginning of this spring no more than “a glimmer of hope,” to use Obama’s phrase, has become a more serious and positive trend. Animated collectively by a combination of natural optimism and deep nationalism, Americans have

made their president’s campaign slogan, “Yes, we can,” their own.

Meanwhile US journalists report tragic stories of middle-class Americans losing their jobs and homes, potentially putting their lives at risk without any social protection. “Cities of Tents are Filling with the Victims of the Economic Crisis,” read one headline a month ago on the front page of a mass-circulation American newspaper.

Who will pay for your cancer

treatment if you lose the health insurance policy that came with your job? The absence of social protection does not make you stronger. The ambition of a country and a society cannot be to create a people armed to the teeth with guns yet entirely disarmed in the face of illness.

Moreover, in a society that “lives to work,” where one’s job is such a central component of one’s identity, the loss of work is more destabilizing than in a culture where one “works to live,” as in Europe.

In Europe, meanwhile, there is undeniably less collective hope and probably a little less individual fear. Perhaps because they are older and more cynical, European societies seem to bask in a “collective moroseness,” from which they have difficulty emerging.

The record level of abstention in the recent European Parliament elections is further proof of that growing cynicism and alienation. Of course, it is neither possible nor desirable to “clone” Obama in each of the European Union’s 27

member states. But what is needed to reduce the deficit of hope that plagues Europe today?

The answer is far from obvious. Europe suffers from a shortage of leaders who can speak in its name; from a shortage of ambition (what, after all, is the collective ambition of Europeans now that the EU is perceived more as part of the problem than part of the solution). But, above all, Europe suffers from an identity deficit, for no one seems to know what it means to be a European nowadays. America, by contrast, seems to have an abundance of all the things Europe lacks.

Formulated in such terms, the European challenge seems even more formidable than the American one. Nevertheless, it is far from clear that the US will find it easier to reform its health and social security system, and thus alleviate the individual fears of its citizens, than for Europe to inspire its citizens with a sense of collective hope.

In reality, Europe and America should represent a source of mutual inspiration that would reduce the human consequences of inequality in the one and restore a sense of hope in the other. ● *Project Syndicate*

Dominique Moisi Visiting Professor of Government at Harvard and author, most recently, of The Geopolitics of Emotion.



Bon Appétit !

Gourmets and gourmands unite ! Unveiling the 'The Himalayan Times Food Guide' - an exclusive and comprehensive catalogue of restaurants and eateries across Kathmandu and Pokhara. Besides this, the guide is replete with information on hotels, bars, cafes and night clubs. As 'eating out' is fast catching up with the people of Nepal, this handy reference conveniently connects place to both pocket and palate. Like hearty appetites, you know we're unstoppable.

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ANUP PRAKASH

Balancing concepts

In one of her poems artist Keepa Maskey recalls her most cherished memories—as a child in Nepal surrounded by dragonflies, butterflies and flowers, playing with brick dirt

and water by herself as her mother cooked and her father gardened. “That was that back then, now it is the/memory that fills my eyes with tears,” goes the poem. She went to high school in

India and then left for the US. After graduating with a degree in fine arts from Marymount Manhattan College, New York, she spent a decade living and working in the US before coming home to

Kathmandu. “I just wasn’t satisfied with the redundant lifestyle I was living”, she says, “I came back for a better quality of life”. She is currently exhibiting a series of predominantly pastels in Kathmandu under the title ‘Concepts in Balance’ based on the theme of motherhood. She reveals that the series is dedicated not only to her own mother, but

to everyone who can relate to the complex and intertwined identities that persist within the mother-daughter relationship. She depicts in her paintings a personal journey based on her own experience with her mother—the transition from pregnancy to birth, a mother’s devotion to her daughter and how this stops a mother from seeing reason when her child wants later to break free to create her own identity. She also depicts on a more positive note how the two are pulled together at every bend in life. Such is the nature of the mother-daughter bond. Maskey’s yearning for her childhood days inspires her work at every juncture. She used to watch her grandfather Krishna Bahadur Chitrakar, who was an artist himself, prepare panels of work for national events. She recalls daydreaming of colours and forms throughout her childhood, a tendency that still persists and which she demonstrates in the peculiar way she lays her ideas out on the canvas, always beginning her work with an oval. This play on oval forms and the importance she pays to colour seems to be what sets her apart from the traditional forms of artwork in Nepal, that depict culture or scenery. ● *Sabhyata Timsina*

Keepa Maskey’s exhibition on ‘Concepts in Balance on Motherhood’ is being held at The Art Shop, Darbar Marg From 26 June - 2 July



Pieces for peace

Kathmandu is fast developing an eclectic music scene. From jazz music festivals, to reggae in clubs, trance and hip-hop, Nepali classical music and now, opera. American soprano Lindsay Feldmeth and Japanese pianist Ayako Watanabe are in town to give us a glimpse, for the very first time, of opera as part of a two week ‘Music for Peace’ festival. The soprano and pianist, who have been performing throughout the world together since 2001, were awarded a David Projects for Peace grant, allowing them to play here to promote world peace and cultural exchange. The Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, which is staging the event with the support of Hope Partnership Nepal, is also offering workshops and opera masterclasses with the musicians as well as live performances by Nepali group 1974 A.D, Luniva, Hindustani fusion groups, singer Priti Kaur and others. The aim is to coalesce diverse cultures on the stage and promote a sense of oneness among people from two opposite sides of the world through musical performance. “Music and peace is indistinguishable,” says Feldmeth, for whom music has been the sole source of tranquility since she was 15. Having played at several countries all over the world—Austria, Japan, Italy, Moscow, the US—they strongly believe that ‘the universal language of music’ has the power to make the world a peaceful home. Feldman will also present peace scholarship awards for talented Nepali musicians to study for a full year at KJC. ●

The Music for Peace Festival is from 27 June - 3 July. For more information and schedule visit <http://www.katjazz.com.np>

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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **The Locust of Continuity**, an exhibition of mixed media art works by Sunita Maharjan at Hotel de l' Annapurna ,19 til 30 June
- ❖ **In a Different Light** an exhibition of Photography by Zoe Childerley at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, 1-18 July
- ❖ **Nepal Rendezvous** paintings from Bangladesh and Nepal at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited 21-26 June, 11AM-6PM. 4218048
- ❖ **Concepts of balance** , an exhibition of artwork by Keepa Maskey at The Art Shop, Darbar Marg from 26 June-2 July.4267063

EVENTS

- ❖ **Call for entries for Film South Asia** till 30 June, documentaries made in and after January 2007 qualified. 5554121

MUSIC

- ❖ **Kathmandu Music For Peace Festival** by the American soprano Lindsay Feldmeth and the Japanese pianist Ayako Watanabe, 22 June-3 July
- ❖ **Baja gaja**, every Tuesday at Moksh, 7.30 PM onwards, Pulchok. 5526212
- ❖ **Live band** every Friday and rooftop bbq everyday at Kausi Kitchen, Darbar 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
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Live Band Sensation** performance by Aprilrush, every Saturday till late, Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 4489362
- ❖ **Sunday Jazz Brunch** by Inner Groove with barbeque, Sunday, 12PM-3.30 PM, The Terrace at Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 4489362
- ❖ **Nepali Ghajals** and songs at D'Lounge Beijing Duck Restaurant, every Thursday 6.30 PM onwards. 4468589

DINING

- ❖ **A cafe's cafe** Dhokaima Cafe, Patan Dhoka. 5522113
- ❖ **The Corner Bar**, 3-11PM, 5-7PM, Radisson Hotel Kathmandu. 4411818
- ❖ **7th Annual Monsoon Wine Festival 2009**, until 15 September, Kilroy, Thamel. 4250440
- ❖ **Mango Etagerie** with hi-tea at The Lounge from 4.30-6.30 PM. Hyatt Regency. 4489362
- ❖ **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, Hyatt Regency. 4489362
- ❖ **Chez Caroline** for French and Mediterranean cuisine, Baber Mahal Revisited. 4263070
- ❖ **Mediterranean cuisine** every Friday from Greece, Italy and the Middle-East at The Café, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Teppanyaki** meat items and garlic rice right at Le Resturant, Gairidhara. 4436318
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Himalayan Rainbow Trout** at Hotel Yak and Yeti, Darbar Marg. 4248999



GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Relax Package** at Hyatt Regency Kathmandu for Rs 5555 plus taxes, for a night on double occupancy with breakfast, complimentary use of spa and, offer valid to Nepalis and local residents only. 4489800
- ❖ **Feel the Hyatt touch**, a 60-minute Ayurvedic massage and access to pool and spa with breakfast or lunch at The Café or hi-tea at The Lounge. 4491234

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



In *Paying Guests*, four young and fun-loving boys (Shreyas Talpade, Jaaved Jaffrey, Ashish Chowdhary and Vatsal Sheth) begin a crazy house hunt which takes them through a series of ultra comical hurdles in a bid to find that one roof that can tolerate and shelter their combined problems. Ballu (Johnny Lever) has just the place for them but he has one condition: he needs only couples and bachelors are a big no-no. The boys now have their work cut out for them. They need fake wives and in a hurry, leading to a whole lot of madness and mayhem later.

Call 4442220 for show timings at Jai Nepal
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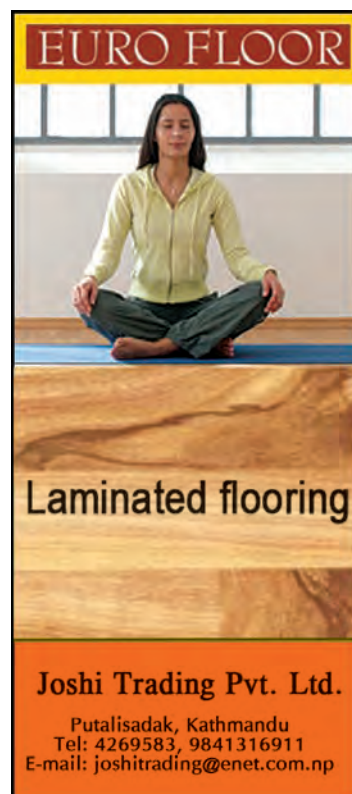
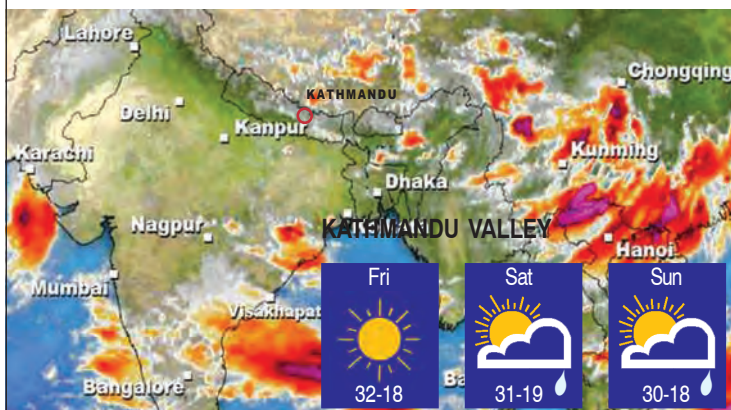
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WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

Despite a couple of night-time downpours, this year's monsoon has yet to arrive in Nepal. The eastern region of Nepal received rains early this week from breakaway clouds from the Bay of Bengal. Satellite pictures from Thursday afternoon suggest that we won't see rain until next week. The monsoons have been late because of a poor delivery pressure system. But the signs of its imminent arrival are looking good. The pictures show fresh cyclones swarming the Bay, ready to scatter clouds out to the hills. This will be helped by soaring temperatures across the Tarai and hills. Expect brief afternoon showers over the weekend in central and eastern Nepal.



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WE SWEAR: Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal administers oath of office to new minsters from Madhesi Janadhikar Forum and Tarai Madhes Loktantrik Party at Shital Nibas on Wednesday. President Ram Baran Yadav was also present at the ceremony.



BLACK IS BACK: Police arrest a member of Revolutionary Left Wing, a breakaway Maoist faction, on Saturday near Tribhuban International Airport for protesting against 'border enroachment' by India in Nepal and showing a black flag to the Indian Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon .



NOT BUDGING: Maoist CA members stage a protest in front of Singha Darbar for hours on Tuesday, obstructing traffic and preventing civil servants, including a disabled singer, from entering the premises.



COOL DESCENT: With the delayed onset of the monsoons and rising temperatures, Satdobato swimming pool attracts crowds of locals eager to cool down.



GRIEF IN COLOUR: UNHCR's photo exhibition 'Real People Real Needs,' showcasing refugee camp images from Nepal, Afghanistan, Australia and the US, closes on Wednesday in Kathmandu.

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Ministry of Murder and Mayhem

As the **donkey's ardent fans** will tell you, we don't indulge in idle gossip here. Just the juicy ones. And one of the most intriguing ones doing the rounds these days is that the Baddies just won't let go of the "civilian supremacy" bone because they want to force Prez Ram Baran to resign to pave the way for PKD to be president. After all, "the First President of the Republic Nepal" was the campaign slogan of Comrade Awe-Inspiring and one he took extremely seriously indeed. Awesome has also moved the party HQ from Buddhanagar to Shantinagar, buying the house for Rs 30 million. The party got a hefty discount from the sau because the house is supposed to be haunted.



But for the time being Ferocious is having a tough time clinging on to even the Chairmanship at the Politburo where he has presented his White Paper. However, the comrades are wondering how a document they hadn't even seen was already in the hands of some embassies. Comrade Laldhoj, who has no love lost for Chabilal and was going along with it just to keep the Indians happy, has hinted darkly at the cult of personality that is plaguing the party. BRB's main **gripe** is against Kaji Narayan, whom PKD plucked out of nowhere and made #2 in the party hierarchy. Ram Babu is justifiably proud of his achievements at the Finance Ministry and would have liked to see some of his programs through had the leadership not bungled relations with India so badly.



The guy who was responsible for all this, Comrade Cloudy, meanwhile has been so busy **fence-sitting** that he doesn't realise the storm he has unleashed. It was Cloudy who set the cart careening down the mountain with his letter to Gen Cut Wall. But there he is clinging on to the Golden Middle in the Politburo, holding his cards close to his chest, keeping both sides happy and his options open. Smart guy becos the Politburo is split 50-50 between the hardliners and not-so-hardliners and by being coy, Badal gets to keep the swing vote. Smart chap, this is the guy to watch out for. Cloudy is in it for the long haul.



This may not be a jumbo cabinet going by the precedent set by Lionheart in 2002, but definitely comes close. Maybe we should call it a Wide Body Cabinet going by the girth of the individual ministers included in it. At least someone is reading this paper's back page, because we now see that they've **bifurcated** Irrigation and Energy as well as Tourism and Civil Aviation in order to make way for new collision partners. But the Forum still hasn't made up its mind, which means we have to quickly come up with new line ministries. So how about: Ministry of Bandas and Hartals, Ministry of Daylight Robbery, Ministry of Highways and Blockades, Ministry of Murder and Mayhem, Ministry of Abduction, Extortion and Kidnappings.



We all poked fun at Girjau when he called the YCL 'Young Criminal League' two years ago, saying **ha-ha pot calling the kettle black**. But it does look like the Old Fox was prescient, given the kind of rackets the young louts are involved with. Having captured Kathmandu's casinos, it looks like they now control the sand mining business, the Pashupati puja bookings, the sandalwood smuggling, all trade with Khasa, the Thamel restaurant and night club businesses. Name a honeypot and there will be YCL hands in it. Failed your driving license test? Just approach the Young Communist who's in League with the Dept of Transportation.



The person most troubled by the downward slide of the country is none other than KingG, who is apparently working on a "**deshbasi ko nam ma sandesh**" timed 7 July, his 63rd birthday.

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