

NEPALI Times

#509

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p7

So what is going on with the community forests of Nepal? It's not looking good, but it's not all bad. **p12-13**

The east is the best. The east of Nepal, that is. **p16-17**



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

NEPAL'S NEPAL

Of all the characters in Nepal's political firmament, Madhav Kumar Nepal was the last person anyone expected to be a wily manipulator.

When he was installed as prime minister exactly a year ago, it was his very indecisiveness and lack of leadership qualities that made him the perfect compromise candidate. The country needed a dealmaker to bring the three main parties together, and no one seriously saw him as a political threat.

In the past year, Madhav Nepal's biggest contribution was to keep the totalitarian ambitions of the Maoists at bay. It is only now becoming clear how close we came on the night of 4 May 2009 to a complete Maoist takeover. Now, Nepal has shown that he also knows when it is time to go, unlike many of his peers.

To be sure, Nepal wasn't successful in forging a consensus government. He couldn't rein in his spectacularly corrupt cabinet colleagues. And his most glaring failure was to completely ignore the economy and development.

But by surprising even his close aides with the announcement of his resignation, Nepal seized the moment, wrested the initiative and took the moral high ground ahead of the UML central committee meeting. In his resignation speech, he explained that the only reason for his delay was that he wanted to spare the country the uncertainty of succession. He wanted to be seen as a facilitator and not as the obstacle that he was becoming.

Sure enough, the resignation has already intensified the bitter power struggle between rivals within all three parties to be Nepal's successor. The disagreement is not between the parties but within them, among rival candidates for prime ministership. Till the president's 7 July deadline, Nepal has converted himself from a lame duck to a

caretaker.

The ideal scenario now would be for the two rival leaders in each party (Dahal and Bhattarai in the Maoists, Deuba and Poudel in the NC and Oli and Khanal in the UML) to bury the hatchet and work towards a consensus government.

Coming out of the autocratic shadow of GP Koirala, the NC is now re-emerging as a strong democratic alternative to the Maoists. But it is absurd to foist people like Sher Bahadur Deuba or some of the tired old discredited faces from the past as if they are the only choices we have. It is time for the party to make a clean break and go for people like, say, Kul Bahadur Gurung, who would be less objectionable to the other parties, and let them prove themselves.

KD

Romancing power, courting a constitution

 **GUEST COLUMN**
Menaka Guruswamy

On that fateful day of May 28, 2010, as the midnight hour approached, some members of the CA did manage to rise above party politics. Amidst swirling rumours of a possible state of emergency being declared, women members of the house crossed party lines and came together for a two-hour chant asking for the Constituent Assembly to be extended. Their young male colleagues, uninvolved in the power plays of their seniors outside the house, sat and watched silently. Finally the 'big three' political parties arrived at a three-point program.

Political gamesmanship and formulas for a 'consensus' government, code for who will really be prime minister, are the major concerns of influential politicians in Nepal. The drafting of the constitution doesn't quite seem to consume them as much as one might hope. Constitution-making itself is precariously positioned at present, in terms of disagreement over constitutional choices.

Choices that shape the political and legal fabric of a nation, such as the form of government, whether presidential or parliamentary, and even the basis of the federal state, are in question. Other significant areas where convergence is needed include the appointment of judges and the nature and number of fundamental rights.


The Constituent Assembly's thematic subject committee reports – which came to their conclusions on the basis of a majority vote, usually reflected

popular election for a five-year term. This version of a strong presidential system is often at odds with the needs of fledging multi-ethnic democracies. A parliamentary system, with the space that it provides for the voices and narratives of all ethnicities and for regional diversity manifest through a multi-party system, might be wiser. Alternatively, convergence could be arrived at via a popularly elected prime minister in a parliamentary style democracy.

nine members from the legislature) shall appoint the chief justice and other judges of the Supreme Court. Similarly, structures are in place at the other levels of the court system. Judges of the Supreme Court are to have a term of four years and a retirement age of 65. Further, the powers of the Federal Judicial Committee, astonishingly, include interpretation of the constitution. All of this disrupts the separation of powers between the executive, legislature and the judiciary. This in tandem with a strong president structurally locates all power in the executive.

Finally, the Committee for Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles has provided for around 30 enforceable and justiciable fundamental rights. These include the fundamental rights to food, housing, employment and social security. In principle all nations must prioritise such guarantees. However, to create fundamental rights that the state cannot implement due to financial considerations, implies that drafters

inadvertently compromised the absolute mandate of such a category of rights. It is preferable to have a few generic fundamental rights, for instance the right to life. Within it, one can progressively create jurisprudence that includes, for example, a right to food that the state can afford to implement.

Amidst the game of musical chairs for the prime minister's seat being played by all the major and now even some minor political parties, the obstinate terms of engagement of India, and the coy appearances of deposed monarch Gyanendra Shah, the business of making a constitution and therefore a new nation languishes. Nepal's political elites need to recognise the historical terms of reference of the Constituent Assembly. They need to set aside their personal quests for power, and instead focus on coming to a shared understanding of the idea of their country, and craft its character through a constitution. 

The writer practices law at the Supreme Court of India.

Musical chairs for the prime ministership have obscured the whole of the constitution-writing process and the bones of contention within it

the CPN (Maoist) position. For instance, the committee report on the Determination of the Forms of Governance of the State provided that all power be concentrated in the president. The president is to be the head of state, government and the military; and will be elected by

The method of appointment of judges is also a cause for concern. The Judicial Committee report provides that the head of state on the 'recommendation' of the Federal Legislative Special Judicial Committee (comprising the vice-chairman of the federal legislature, the law minister, and

ON THE WEB
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REAL PROGRESS

I really want to thank Nepali Times and Rubeena Mahato for this issue (Pragatinagar's progress, #508) and for showing us that there are also positive things happening in Nepal and that Nepalese people are capable of improving their lives by themselves. Now, all we need to do is replicate Pragatinagar in other VDCs and DDCs all over Nepal.

KiranL

- I am from this village, this is great. I didn't even know that my village is such a great place to live in. Thanks for posting this article.

Jitendra Gautam, Pragatinagar-4

NATIONAL TO LOCAL

A very good effort by the author to raise an important issue (The lure of the

national, #508). Federalism, decentralisation or whatever you call it, should start from the region itself. As long as the psyche of the people in the hinterlands remains centre-oriented, there can be no federalism or even decentralised governance.

anish

WHO'S FAILED?

It's the reality (The failed people, #508). But I can't agree we are the failed people, although we have selected a bunch of failed leaders. We know what's going on, what's right and what's wrong, we raise our voice, we write nice articles but are divided finally while taking a firm stance in the name of caste, ethnicity, religion and party. The intellectual power inside us should be used to lead the country rather than letting it be *banderko hatma nariwal*.

bibek

DEVELOPMENT SET

While INGOs generally have better governance (Who's bad, #508), higher transparency and offer better career opportunities for employees, they also suffer from problems such as high costs of operation, inefficiency, too much paperwork and lack of innovation and creativity owing to their airtight logframes. The private sector is more cost effective, efficient and innovative compared to the development sector. Both can learn from each other.

GB Banjara

CORRECTIONS

- The bridge over the Modi Khola is not the longest suspension bridge in Nepal (Who needs politics?, #508), it is the highest.
- Pragatinagar has 2690 households, not 2960 (Pragatinagar's progress, #508)

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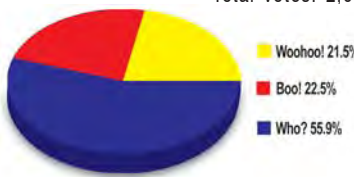
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Q. Did you enjoy Manisha Koirala's wedding?



Weekly Internet Poll # 510. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com
Q. Was Madhav Kumar Nepal right to resign?



Elusive unity



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

Resigning is the best thing Madhav Nepal has done since he took office. He had done little to deserve the position in the first place; his ministers were relics from the past, with little faith in the post-2006 political framework; and the government was the biggest insult to the electorate.

Madhav Nepal succeeded in keeping the Maoists out of power till 28 May, for there were other plans lined up after that (including the dissolution of the CA), which were fortunately foiled. Some may feel that the anti-Maoist coalition helped save democracy, but it has also done enormous damage to the legitimacy of the democratic system, and public perception of the political parties.

But there is no guarantee that Nepal's exit will indeed break the political stagnation. In the next few weeks, we will witness all kinds of permutations.

The ideal, though unlikely, scenario is a national unity government. Till all parties have a share in the formal state apparatus, they will have little incentive to cooperate. One could argue that even an opposition party can collaborate with ruling parties on constitutional issues, or the peace process. But the past year has shown this does not happen.

India, and its Nepali proxies, will not accept Pushpa Kamal Dahal as PM. Dahal will try to block Baburam Bhattarai, even if it means sitting in the opposition again. But the balance of power in the party has shifted and Bhattarai today is in a stronger position than he was six months ago. Let us assume, for a moment, that the Maoists agree to present him as an alternative candidate. Will the other parties, and India, accept a Maoist-led government? Or has his name been thrown in only as a card, to stoke the existing divisions within the party?

The fact that the Maoists hold on to their coercive apparatus will be held against them by the others. The Maoists will offer to bring the PLA under the Special Committee in practice (the decision was taken in principle ages ago). Will that be enough for the other parties? Today, PLA commanders are with Bhattarai, but it is likely that Dahal will try to block any movement on integration if he thinks moving on the peace process will enable Bhattarai to become PM. The official party decision to move on the peace process and constitution-writing simultaneously remains. Many Maoists genuinely believe that if they give up their army, the other parties will back out of writing a 'progressive' constitution, and



CHECKING OUT: Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal checks his mail next door from his official chair in May.

GEMUNU AMARASINGHE

Madhav Nepal's exit is a positive move, but grants little certainty to the political process

want to keep the PLA until they are entirely secure.

Dahal had told Jhalanath Khanal that he would back him as PM if Khanal got Nepal to resign. But there will be dissent within the Maoists to joining such a government as junior partner to the UML, for the competition over the left space continues. Even if it happens, will the NC be ready to play

second fiddle in what will be a national unity government in name but a left-dominated government in practice?

The NC itself does not seem to be in a position to lead a unity government given the clear fissures between Sher Bahadur Deuba and Ram Chandra Poudel, and the upcoming convention. Even if the NC decides on a candidate, will the Maoists join

such a government? Some Madhesi leaders think it is their chance to lead now, but Nepal already has a Yadav president, and a Jha vice president. Will the conservative hill establishment hand over real executive power to another Madhesi? And is there such a figure from a smaller fringe party who can win the trust of all sides?

Clearly, negotiating a unity government will be a major challenge. But the alternatives are worse. The anti-Maoists will seek to continue with the same 'democratic' coalition, and find a candidate from within the

alliance to replace Madhav Nepal. The deadlock will continue. Certain factions of the UML and the Maoists are fantasising about a left unity government. This does not look achievable at the moment, and last year's game was all about getting the UML and the Maoists to keep fighting. If they do get together, it will antagonise India and the NC, and without them, there can be no consensus on either the future of the PLA or the constitution.

Whatever happens, Nepal will soon have its fifth government of the last four years. The legacy of the 1990s continues. 🇳🇵



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Is it ok to cheat in football?



COMMENT
Peter Singer

Shortly before half-time in the World Cup elimination match between England and Germany on June 27, the English midfielder Frank Lampard had a shot at goal that struck the crossbar and bounced down onto the ground, clearly over the goal line. The goalkeeper, Manuel Neuer, grabbed the ball and put it back into play. Neither the referee nor the linesman, both of whom were still coming down the field, signalled a goal, and play continued.

After the match, Neuer gave this account of his actions: “I tried not to react to the referee and just concentrate on what was happening. I realised it was over the line and I think the way I carried on so quickly fooled the referee into thinking it was not over.”

To put it bluntly: Neuer cheated, and then boasted about it.

By any normal ethical standards, what Neuer did was wrong. But does the fact that Neuer was playing football mean that the only ethical rule is: ‘Win at all costs’?

In soccer, that does seem to be the prevailing ethic. The most

famous of these incidents was Diego Maradona’s goal in Argentina’s 1986 World Cup match against England, which he later described as having been scored “a little with the head of Maradona and a little with the hand of God.” Twenty years later, he admitted in a BBC interview that he had intentionally acted as if it were a goal, in order to deceive the referee.

Something similar happened last November, in a game between France and Ireland that decided which of the two nations went to the World Cup. The French striker Thierry Henry used his hand to control the ball and pass to a teammate, who scored the decisive goal. Asked about the incident after the match, Henry said: “I will be honest, it was a handball. But I’m not the ref. I played it, the ref allowed it. That’s a question you should ask him.”

But is it? Why should the fact that you can get away with cheating mean that you are not culpable? Players should not be exempt from ethical criticism for what they do on the field, any more than they are exempt from ethical criticism for cheating off the field – for example, by taking performance-enhancing drugs.

Sports today are highly competitive, with huge amounts of money at stake, but that does not mean it is impossible to be honest. In 1996, Liverpool striker



German goalkeeper Manuel Neuer missed a rare chance to do something noble in front of millions

Robbie Fowler was awarded a penalty for being fouled by the Arsenal goalkeeper. He told the referee that he had not been fouled, but the referee insisted that he take the penalty kick. Fowler did so, but in a manner that enabled the goalkeeper to save it.

Why are there so few examples of such behaviour from professional footballers? Perhaps a culture of excessive

partisanship has trumped ethical values. Fans don’t seem to mind if members of their own team cheat successfully; they only object when the other side cheats. That is not an ethical attitude. (Though, to their credit, many French football followers, from President Nicolas Sarkozy down, expressed their sympathy for Ireland after Henry’s handball.)

Yes, we can deal with the

problem to some extent by using modern technology or video replays to review controversial refereeing decisions. But, while that will reduce the opportunity for cheating, it won’t eliminate it, and it isn’t really the point. When what you do will be seen by millions, revisited on endless video replays, and dissected on television sports programs, it is especially important to do what is right.

How would football fans have reacted if Neuer had stopped play and told the referee that the ball was a goal? Given the rarity of such behaviour in football, the initial reaction would no doubt have been surprise. Some German fans might have been disappointed. But the world as a whole – and every fair-minded German fan too – would have had to admit that he had done the right thing.

Neuer missed a rare opportunity to do something noble in front of millions of people. He could have set a positive ethical example to people watching all over the world, including the many millions who are young and impressionable. Who knows what difference that example might have made to the lives of many of those watching? Neuer could have been a hero, standing up for what is right. Instead, he is just another footballer who is very skillful at cheating. 🇩🇪

(Project Syndicate)



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THIS WEEK

Nepal resigns

Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal stepped down from office on Wednesday despite firm statements that he was not going to resign before a political settlement was reached, including ex-combatant integration and formation of a national unity government. But with a continuing failure to resolve the political impasse, and the Maoist threat to disrupt presentation of the budget in parliament, he had become an obstacle in the eyes of many.



NHUCHHE MAN DANGOL

Announcing his resignation in a televised address, Nepal insisted that his government continued to have the support of a majority of parliament, but had been unable to proceed with government and parliamentary business due to continued obstruction from the UCPN (Maoist). He berated the largest party in parliament for non-cooperation and active disruption throughout the 13-month period of his government's tenure. Nepal then went on to list his government's achievements, but expressed bitterness at having been unable to bring the peace process to a conclusion, wholly because of Maoist opposition.

Nepal's resignation is unlikely to lead to an easy solution as the struggle for succession will now intensify within all the parties, which have been unable to decide on a prime ministerial candidate. This will prolong the political impasse. Nepal has now made the transition from a lame duck prime minister to a caretaker prime minister.

Hindu leader assassinated

Police arrested the local leader of the Maoist Party, Jalim Miya, in Parsa District on Monday in connection with the murder of the chairman of the Hindu Youth Association, Kashinath Tiwari. He was shot dead near his home in Birganj and died in hospital on Saturday. The Hindu Youth Association shut down Birganj following the killing, but relented once the Home Ministry announced that Tiwari would be declared a martyr and his family would be provided compensation. In addition to Miya, the police have arrested four people in connection with the murder.

Maoists boycott Boston

The Maoists withdrew their participation in a seminar in Boston, USA, on Agreement and State Rebuilding and asked three of its senior leaders to return after another Maoist leader was denied a visa to attend the same program. US Ambassador Scott DeLisi said in a statement that the fourth proposed participant, CA member Agni Sapkota, "could not be approved for travel due to serious and specific human rights allegations associated with his conduct during the insurgency." Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal said Sapkota was not given clearance for travel due to protests by Human Rights Watch, which has accused Sapkota of murder. "There is no case against him," Dahal added. "These allegations are false."



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Reportage

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Columns

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Devendra Poudel: Ten steps to breaking the deadlock
Purshottam Dahal: Small parties make a move
Sarala Gautam: Speak out, Namrata

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Dakhar still by Dinesh Wagle – The Nepali-Khasi conflict in Assam and Meghalaya

REPORT: Niraj Lama on the murder of Madan Tamang and the tripartite talks on the Gorkhaland question
Sanjay Pradhan on the political considerations behind the evolving definition of Gorkhaland

FICTION: The protagonist of Indra Sinha's *Animal's People* on Bhopal and the media

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Freedom to market



ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed

In a globalised world it's not just the markets that are global, it's also the means of protest. There's a certain homogeneity in not only the ubiquitous outlets of Starbucks and McDonald's, but also the protests in Spain, Greece, western China and now, Toronto. The black mask protestors at the G20 Summit who said they were covering their faces to hide their identities perhaps took a leaf from the book of the protestors in Gaza. And baton-wielding cops know just what to do when faced with protests in their countries, at least in part by learning from the experience of others. In this sense, there is little difference between Kathmandu, Dhaka and Toronto.

Protesting has become fashionable and the way resources are mobilised for protests, one wonders if they end up supporting the market. The money that goes into slogan printed T-shirts, the expenses of mobilising supporters

(including travel), and the biggest contribution of protestors – to increase the TRP ratings of mostly privately owned media. Whose interests are such protests supporting?

Left-wing shenanigans always take advantage of such protests, be it at Davos or Toronto. But the time has come to consider whether these movements have outlived their utility. The reality is, to think

We need to acknowledge the benefits of the market economy while ensuring it works for all

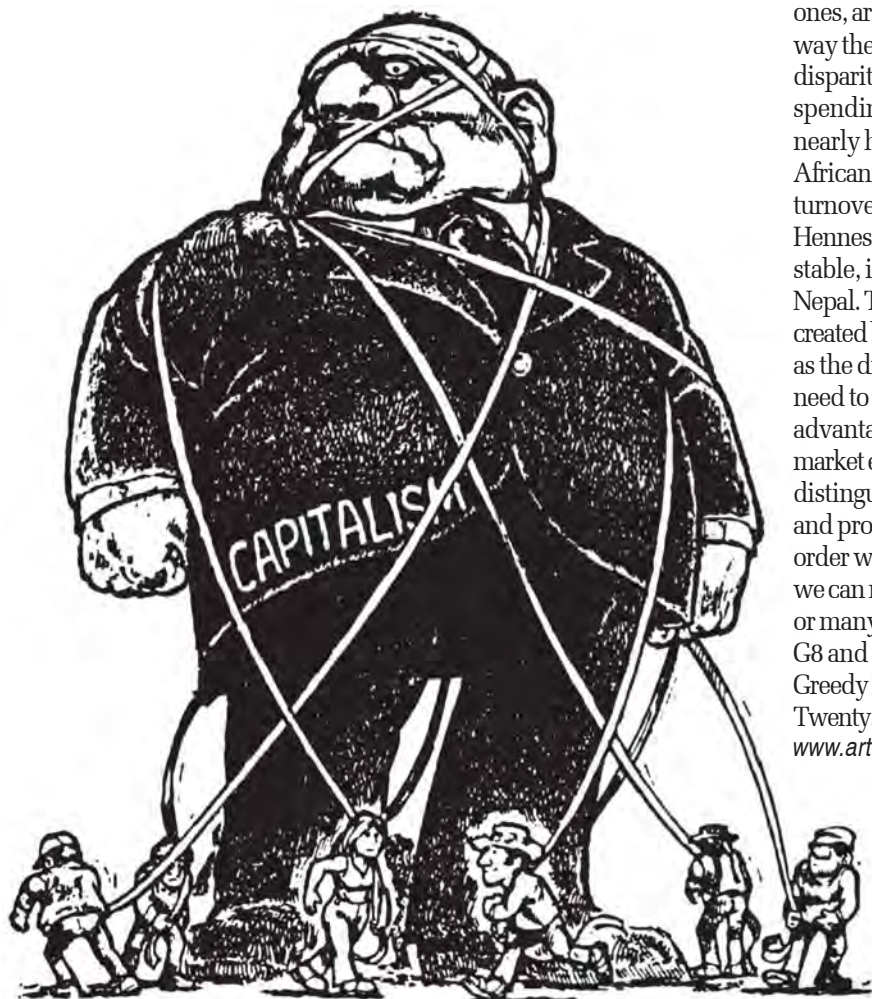
that socialism is going to re-enter the global economic sphere as a viable model, is just wasting time. Market-led models have had more lasting impacts on economic growth, leading more and more countries, including former bastions of socialism, to adopt the same. But the

challenge is now more to redefine the role of the state, sovereignty, political boundaries and market regulations. The focus is more to ensure global monopolies are not created and that there is a level playing field for all players in the market.

This also means reconsidering the laws relating to the freedom to travel. A Nepali company should be able to compete with an American company for a contract in South Africa, but the Nepali company should not be asked to wait for three weeks to get a visa. In that time, the US company can take the next flight, do its pitch, and seal the contract! It's more important to create meaningful pressure in these summits for access to markets than go on about how markets are irrelevant. If the gaps between high-income economies and low-income economies are to be narrowed, then the shackles on movement need to be loosened. Imagine if the citizens of Singapore or the UAE were governed by the same visa regulations as Nepalis. Would they manage economic growth of that magnitude?

It's also worth perusing Gurcharan Das's 'Dharma of Capitalism'. If individuals and nations, especially high-income ones, are not going to change the way they look at spending, then disparities will never cease. The spending on pets in the US is nearly half the GDP of the entire African continent and the turnover of Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy, a high-end brand stable, is equal to the GDP of Nepal. The economic crisis was created by greed. Some see greed as the driver of capitalism but we need to continue to take advantage of the benefits of the market economy while distinguishing between profit and profiteering. The next world order will surely depend on how we can make markets work for all, or many will continue to see the G8 and the G20 as simply the Greedy Eight and the Greedy Twenty.

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Ncell is also introducing 981 indexes for its subscribers along with the older 980 index. With the new 981 numbers, it will not be necessary to add 0 before dialing another number.

Luxury ride



2.0 Liter Theta II and multi-power injection petrol engine, generating a maximum output of 165 ps and maximum torque of 20.2 kgf-m. Sonata is available in 2 variants, GL and GLS, at Rs 4,495,000 and Rs 5,095,000.

Laxmi Intercontinental, an official partner of Hyundai for Nepal, introduced the all new Sonata. The model delivers a powerful performance through its

New store



A new Samsonite and American Tourister showroom has been opened in Pokhara. The 800 square foot store will put on display all the latest products from both the brands including soft and hard luggage, business and computer bags, casual bags, and other travel accessories. The brands have five showrooms in Kathmandu.

Canada dreams

Everest immigration and Legal Services is organising a nationwide convention on migration to Canada. Milan Karki, first Migration Advisor from Nepal, will be travelling through the major cities to give counselling on the legal provisions and procedures for migrating to Canada. The session will be broadcasted live from Nepal Television. The convention will start on 3 July in Kathmandu and fan across Biratnagar, Chitwan, Butwal and Dhangadi to conclude on 24 July in Pokhara.

All exchanged



Sipridi Trading's 18-day Mega Exchange Camp concluded its tour from Butwal, Pokhara, Narayanghat, Birganj, Dharan, Biratnagar and Birtamod to Kathmandu this week. A total of 104 vehicles were sold during the camp.

Saving option

Siddhartha Development Bank's Siddhartha Retirement Fund has introduced a new scheme, the 'Public Provident Fund', for people with taxable income. The fund allows its holders to regularly deposit a portion of their income, the yearly total of which should equal one-third of their yearly earnings or Rs 300,000, whichever is less.



Sexy, smart and tough

On the heels of the success of Cruze, Chevrolet launched a new sporty hatchback, Beat, from the 300 series. With the tagline 'sexy, smart and tough' the new mini-car is available in 3 variants: Base PS, LS and the fully loaded LT. Vijay Motors will be its sole distributor in Nepal.



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SHERRY CHEONG



Around the world and up on the roof



Cycling around the world for 11 years wasn't quite enough for Pushkar Shah. The icing on the cake was Mt. Everest, which he duly scaled with the members of the Everest Peace Expedition after cycling to Base Camp, reaching the summit on the morning of 17 May.

After his epic cycling journey of 221,400 km, what better way to crown his achievement than hoisting the flags of the 150 countries he travelled through to the roof of the world? For Shah, 42, it's not simply about Nepal but global peace. That's a message visitors to Nepal will be happy to embrace in the run up to Nepal Tourism Year 2011.



LAST LEG: Pushkar Shah and his team slog up the summit ridge to Everest



Blizzards for Oz

Last week, the Australian Embassy celebrated the launch of the book ‘Celebrating 50 years of Australian mountaineering feats and friendships in Nepal’. It’s ample proof the even the Red Continent has plenty of connoisseurs when it comes to scrambling up the highest mountains in the world. Last year, over 15,000 Australians visited Nepal.

The book charts the stories of nine extraordinary Australians who came to Nepal for the mountains, but returned for the people. Kicking off with an interview with Alfred Gregory,

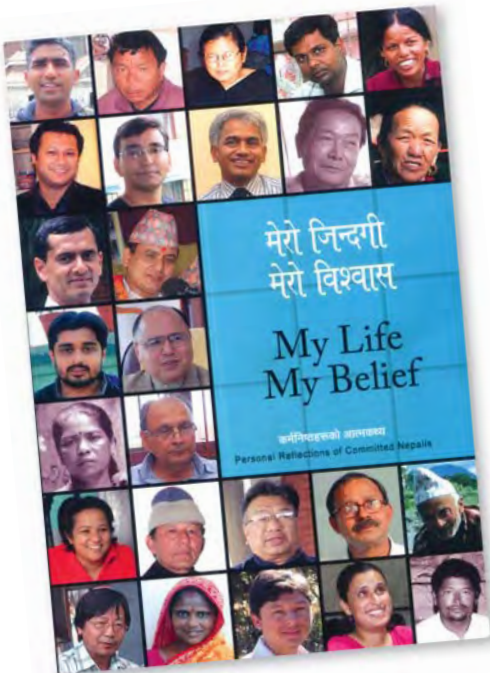


official photographer on the 1953 Everest expedition, the book explores how these mountaineers came to terms with the beauty of Nepal’s nature and culture, and how they sought to do what they could for the country they made a second home, often through the Australian Himalayan

Foundation. As interviewee Brigitte Muir says, “The more I go to Nepal, the more I love it. It has a way of growing in your heart, doesn’t it? For me it’s the people. There’s an exuberance of life I find very addictive. The mountains, the many cultures, the creativity of artists in all fields, from film-making to painting, music and writing. That’s what does it for me.”

The book also commemorates the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Australia and Nepal. It was written and edited by Miriam Fisher.

The book of hope



The hugely popular TV series Mero Jindagi Mero Biswas (My life My belief) has come out as a book, published by Antenna Foundation. The book contains the reflections of individuals who rose above personal hindrances and contributed to Nepali society.

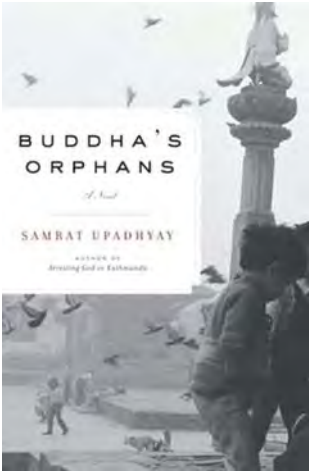
Here, you will find Bhagwandas Manandhar, who at 85 continues to dirty his hands cleaning the Bagmati, and Pushpa Basnet, who embraces the children of jail inmates as her own. And then there’s Tripta Thapa Magar, who launched a lifelong battle against disability, crawling on all fours to get her polio-ridden body to school, finally going on to become a teacher and a leader of the disabled community in Sunsari.

Be inspired as you follow the tumultuous lives of men and women who defied disability, discrimination and social resistance to hold onto their hopes and dreams. Not for sale but available at your nearest libraries.

EVENTS

Tavern Tales, launch of Samrat Upadhyay’s latest book *Buddha’s Orphans*, followed by a reading by the author. *Saturday 3 July, 4pm, Nepal Bharat Library, NAC Building, New Road*

Omkarnations, solo painting exhibition by Gaurav Shrestha that expresses the omkar symbol in its various forms. *Till Tuesday 13 July, 101m to 6pm except on Sundays and holidays, 4241942*



Himalayan Readers’ Bookclub, for the writer in you to showcase your work at the *Short Story or Poetry Recitation* programme and for the critic in you get ready for some serious reviews. *Saturday 3 July, 3.15pm to 4.30pm, British Council, Lazimpat*

Music in the Sky, historian Dr Rajesh Gautam uses a paintbrush to capture the flowing rhythm of sky and clouds. *Till Tuesday 6 July, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal*



Docskool, screening of Italian movie *La Terra Tremma* directed by Luschino Visconti. *Friday 2 July, Docskool, Gaurighat, 4477104*

Info Trade Fair, for all the gadget and technology freaks and what’s more, the event will be inaugurated by a robot developed by IOE students! *Till Monday 5*

July, Exhibition Hall, Bhrikuti Mandap

Career Fair, organised by SAPE, leading educational fair organiser in South East Asia. *From Friday 9 July to 11 July, Exhibition Hall, Bhrikuti Mandap*

Weekly Farmers’ Market, a market like no other with organic and gourmet food, healthy breakfasts, fresh coffee and lots of socialising. *Saturday 3 July, 9am to 12pm, 1905, 4215068*



GETAWAYS



The Great Escape, retreat from the hustle and bustle of the city to The Dwarikas’ Himalayan Shangri-La Village Resort in Dhulikhel. Just 45 minutes from Kathmandu. *The Dwarikas’ Himalayan Shangri-La Village Resort, Dhulikhel, 4479488,*

Simsime Pani, beat the summer heat with a cool summer package from Fulbari Resort in Pokhara. Refreshing discounts and unparalleled services await you at your destination. *Fulbari Resort, Casino, Golf and Spa, Pokhara. Contact 4462248 for prices and reservations*

Relax Package, stay at the Hyatt for Rs 6200 plus taxes for one night’s accommodation for two including breakfast at the Cafe. *Hyatt Regency, Boudha, contact 4491234*

DINING



Boudha Stupa Restaurant and Café, enjoy wood-fired pizza and free wi-fi with a beautiful view of Boudha stupa. *Every day from 9am to pm, Boudha, 2130681*

Roadhouse Cafe, serves pizzas cooked to perfection in wood-fired ovens. *Everyday in Jhamel, 5521755*

Buddha Bar, going since the days of the hippies, offers a warm and cozy space for intimate conversations over a large selection of drinks. *Happy hour 4-7pm, Thamel, 9851053235*



Mike's Breakfast, huge breakfasts and a never-ending supply of coffee amidst a lush garden setting characterise this café, popular among tourists and locals alike. *Naxal, 4424303*

Irish Pub, not only does it feel like one, but it's Irish all the way down to the original recipes from the owner's wife. Go green with their fish and chips. *Ananda Bhawan, Lazimpat, 4416027*

Chopstix, savoury Asian food cooked in true Chinese fashion, sure to charm and impress. Begin your feast with the Dragon Chicken, it's one-of-a-kind. *Kumaripati, 5551118*

Lazy Gringo, fail-safe Mexican restaurant. The lemonade with refills is what won us over, but the food is mighty fine. Bring your own booze though. *Jawalakhel, Open daily 11am- 9pm except Mondays, 2110517*

Casa de Cass, out-of-Kathmandu dining in cosy surrounds with attentive service, what more could you ask for? A martini, of course. *Hariharbawan, 5010100*

Lhakpa Chulo, a relative newcomer to Jhamel, but among the best for food – try the tender steaks and Thai-style salads. *Jhamsikhel, open for lunch and dinner daily except Wednesdays*

Momotarou, nestled inconspicuously amongst the street shops of Thamel, this restaurant serves Japanese food that is top value for money. Extravagant taste yet humble in presentation. *Thamel, Bhagawatisthan (near Bhagawati Temple), 4417670*

Hankook Sarang, serves up the incredible tastes of Korea, including superlative steamed rice to anchor meals fit for kings. *Thamel, near Roadhouse Café*

Vesper Café, has quaint outdoor patio good for leisurely weekend brunch. Serves good salads, and steak-wraps but at a hefty price. *Jhamel, open daily 11am-10pm*

Attic, newly transformed lounge/bar ideal for Friday night drinking before hitting the dance spots. Popular among local celebrities. *Uttar Dhoka, Lazimpat, 984161476*

The Oriental Tearoom at Pipalbot has rather complicated opening hours but a mouth-watering spring menu. Try sake-cured salmon for lunch and twice-cooked caramelised pork belly for dinner. *Wednesday to Monday for lunch, and Thursday to Saturday for dinner, Babar Mahal Revisited, 4267657, bookings preferred*

Everest Steak House, an old-school joint for everything steak. A sanctuary for meat. *Thamel, near Chhetrapati chowk, 4260471*

Summit Hotel, posh Western-style dining area with candlelight and a romantic night view of the city. Get real busy with the succulent ribs basket, and add a finishing touch with a hot Dutch apple pie. *Jhamsikhel, 5521810*

Jazoo, a quiet place ideal for beer and relaxing conversation. Bring a friend and enjoy their special barbeque set for a mix of everything, *Jawalakhel (near the zoo), 5538321*

Haddock, big compound with ample parking space, their Western and Thakali dishes are done to perfection. *Jhamel, 10am-10am, 5546431*



Comfort Zone, expansive restobar that needs to be full to come into its own. A decent range of cocktails and barbequed meats should keep you glued to the massive screen at one end. *Comfort Zone (rooftop of Bank of Kathmandu), Thamel*

Lhasa Bar, enjoy a beer or a splash of cocktail at this springboard for excellent young musicians starting out on the Thamel circuit. *Thamel, 985101043*

Bronco Billy, a new restaurant in town offering Tex-Mex and Indian dishes. They make their own corn tortillas, which gets a big thumbs-up. But really, we can't wait to try their Margaritas. *Pulchowk opposite Namaste Supermarket*

Ghangri Café, a quiet place with comfortable sofas and a lovely courtyard, perfect for those sunny afternoons. Although famous for their open sui mai, they offer a few other great dishes as well. *Pulchowk (near the Suzuki showroom), 11am-10pm except Tuesdays*



Saturday @ Hyatt, take a refreshing dip in the pool, soak away your weekday sorrows and sample the delicious barbeque in the open air. *Every Saturday from 12.30pm to 4pm, Hyatt Regency, Boudha, 4491234*

The Factory, a trendy restobar for a refreshing stopover in the chaos that is Thamel. Great food and drinks, with zesty music. Don't miss out on their cheesecake, it's a must. *Mandala Street, Thamel*

New Orleans, offers a wide variety of western dishes that are scrumptious yet healthy. We got hooked on the rosemary chicken and hamburgers. *Jhamel, 5522708*

Aalishan, a newcomer to the Jhamel scene, serves a mix of both Indian and Chinese cuisines. The posh interior can be a bit intimidating, but don't let that put you off the food. *Jawalakhel (near the roundabout)*

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Cycling recyclers

We all know the *kawadi*, the collectors of glass, paper and metal who pass through our neighbourhoods every day. But they have received little recognition for their trouble in helping our cities sort out their rubbish over the years. They are the original recyclers, true conservationists, though they have not been recognised as such.

This changed recently thanks to Yatra, a youth organisation working in the field of the environment, when a group of 25 *kawadi* working in the Kathmandu Valley were

honoured as 'Conservation Heroes'. A group of youth, doctors and journalists accompanied them in a cycle rally to the water body of Nagdaha, where they were invited to benefit from an eye and dental camp. The participants were given first aid tool boxes and first aid training to counter the risks they run in the course of their work.

Anand Mishra and Rijana Shrestha, coordinators of the program, underlined the importance of recognising the work of the *kawadi*, who themselves are

largely unaware of their role in reducing urban waste. Respecting them for their work, said the coordinators, will set an example for future endeavours in the field of the environment.

Prabhu Prasad Rauniyar, 48, recounted how he had been working as a *kawadi* for the last 22 years, earning between Rs 50 and Rs 400 a day. Accustomed to being teased by the neighbourhood kids, Rauniyar rejoiced at the fact that for the first time, his work was being appreciated.



HIT THE ROAD: Diwakar Golchha, Sanduk Ruit and Satish Sharma admire the book 'Celebrating 50 years of Australian mountaineering feats and friendships in Nepal' at the Australian Embassy, last Friday.



RAIN DANCE: The Rato Macchendranath festival comes to a close on Bhotto Jatra at Jawalakhel, Sunday.

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BIRD'S EYE VIEW: The view from the Biratnagar airport control tower of Buddha Air's new ATR-72 aircraft as it flew in from Kathmandu on Wednesday on a proving flight. The airline will soon have four ATRs and will be starting international flights to Bhutan and India this autumn.

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WEEKEND WEATHER
by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

We had expected this year's monsoon to reach us a month ago. Every time the monsoon front begins a fresh journey towards the Himalaya, the clouds have been prematurely diffused along the way. There were a couple of heavy showers along the foothills and the mountain stations last month, but they were far short of normal. The Valley received only 50% of its normal monthly quota. The satellite picture once more indicates fresh clouds over the Ganga River plains moving towards eastern and central Nepal. They are likely to bring a couple of fresh showers to the foothills and Tarai from Friday afternoon. Most of the central and eastern midhills will also get weekend rain, but not enough to irrigate the water-hungry paddy fields. Be prepared for a bad case of drought this year.

FRI	SAT	SUN
29-20	30-21	29-20

Chhi-chhi to chichi

KALAM
Rabi Thapa

At Manjushree Thapa's book launch in the plush surrounds of Ramalaya last month, the drink of choice for the literati in attendance was *aila* in clay bowls, supplemented with hearty fare from Newa de Café served up in leaf plates. Such retro chic is also in evidence in the organic stores that have cropped up across the city, where one can purchase not just Nepali coffee and tea but also millet and buckwheat flour, and an assortment of rustic looking foodstuffs not commonly associated with the Kathmandu palate.

Tukche Thakali Kitchen, with a move into more spacious quarters in Lazimpat, remains popular with Nepalis as is Tama in Gairidhara, with its plates of *taas*. Bhattis from Mangal Bajar's Honacha to Kirtipur's Newa Lahana draw not just locals swilling western-style whiskies, but western-stylees sipping local *chyaang*. Folk music in certain forms and presentations (à la Kutumba) has found an urban audience, and trekking! – is now one of the most cherished

getaways for the nation's (youthful) elite. These days, it's not just Johnny Walker and pizza and Pink Floyd and holidays in Bangkok that rock the worlds of the haves in Nepal. As far as eating and drinking and leisure are concerned, there's a certain trend towards the rustic, the authentic, the Nepali, albeit often in more packaged forms, and not to the exclusion of all the other attractions at one's disposal. The irony is that all these things are not just 'local' and 'authentic', they remain the preserve, for the most part, of more traditional, poorer Nepalis.

Are westernised Nepalis embracing their roots or simply sampling the global supermarket of cultural products?

What has always been Nepali culture – including walking up and down hills – is now being embraced in myriad forms by less traditional, richer Nepalis. The latter classes of Nepal (and Kathmandu Valley in particular) appear to be looking inwards, rather than always aspiring to the western. But do these trends represent

a change in values towards a respect for and interest in all things Nepali (including Nepalis themselves), a return to tradition, or are they merely a local 'avatar' of stuffwhitepeoplelike.com? Is this an extension of the globalised hybrid of middle class, liberally inclined, educated people who use laptops, eat organic, go travelling, listen to 'world' music, and express concern about the environment (without doing very much about it)? This in itself is a culture, unique in its global, interconnected reach. Negatively perceived, it represents an

upmarket, highbrow version of the homogenised McDonald's, Levi's and Hollywood culture, drawing as it does on the same American and occasionally European sources. Positively perceived, the particularity of local cultures and the places that we grew up in will define the nature of this hybrid culture. Nepal's post-Rana generation of



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haves were rooted in Nepali culture, yet perhaps sought more consciously to emulate the Western Other while rejecting such rusticities as *chyaang* and *kachela*; their children do not deny their Nepali roots, but having tasted what the West has to offer, good and bad, is willing to embrace these roots. After all, with the confidence to negotiate through cultures beyond one's borders comes the anxiety of having lost something original in the process. It's easy to poke fun if you are so inclined to do so, and there is the risk that for some the renewed interest in Nepali cultures is wholly superficial and based only on products, not values. A bottle of Scotch, a mug of *tongba*, a walk through the Himalaya, a stroll through Manhattan, it's simply another aisle in the global

supermarket of cultural products. And what does it mean to appreciate the festive aspects of one's culture if one no longer subscribes to the religious values that inspire and, some might say, still underpin them? Even on this level, we must be able to appreciate the strengthening of connections. If not for the America-returnee, then for those who make a living through their production of authentic Nepali cultures. After all, it can't be a bad thing if Nepal takes some pointers from Mexico, where locals and tourists can choose from a dozen brands of tequila in a trendy bar, walk the wobbly length of Oaxaca's mezcal festival, and watch the humble cactus turned into multi-million dollar national drinks at roadside distilleries. 🇳🇵

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Village forests go

RUBEENA MAHATO
in NAWALPARASI

Political fluidity and a breakdown in the rule of law has led to rampant logging nationwide and is threatening to undermine Nepal's internationally recognised community forestry program.

Trees are being felled by logging groups that enjoy political patronage and protection from district forest officers (DFOs). Community forestry user groups, on the other hand, have been colluding with timber poachers and corrupt local officials to harvest trees.

Illegal logging is now so rampant and blatant that Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal summoned the Minister of Forests and Soil Conservation, Deepak Bohara, and asked for clarification. The ministry then recalled DFOs from two districts, but no one has been charged. "Elections for membership of community forestry user groups are now more hotly contested than VDC elections ever were," says Raju Ranjan of the Deusathala Community Forestry User Group in Nawalparasi.

Nearly 30 years after the state began to hand over Nepal's forests to local communities for protection and management, the program appears to be a victim of its own success. The adult trees that the villagers nurtured have become so valuable that unscrupulous village elders have been tempted by the timber mafia to plunder woodlands.

The destruction is most visible in the Tarai, but even forests in the midhills that have road connections are being

corrupted in the appointment of DFOs by his ministry.

History has shown that Nepal's forests have always suffered during periods of political transition. The current weak state and the breakdown in the rule of law have allowed a nationwide network of timber mafias to flourish. Since timber harvesting is allowed inside community forests, they have become a vulnerable target.

In community forests across Nawalparasi, community forestry

Richer user groups, however, have found ways to bribe officials to fell more timber than their permits allow them. Nawalparasi DFO Shahirat Prasad Thakur is among 16 officials who are being investigated by the CIAA for graft.

The biggest challenge facing community forestry at the moment is internal governance, says Popular Gentle of Care Nepal.

In many VDCs, the earnings from tree felling can run into hundreds of thousands of rupees a year. The money is supposed to be used for local development, but locals say very little of it actually benefits the poorest in the villages.


The Community Forestry Guidelines of 2009 require villages to set aside 35 per cent of revenue for the poor, marginalised and Dalits, and also require half the members of user groups to be women. Very few of the community forests in Nawalparasi, or even in the rest of the country, have fulfilled this quota. Community mobiliser Bhumisara Phal says it is nearly impossible to get the powerful people in the village to agree to the provisions. "The few women and Dalits who are elected to user groups have no role but to work

SEE SAW: Workers saw timber harvested from the Sundari Community Forest in Nawalparasi, mid-June. More and more community forest user groups are felling valuable trees.

for the influential members," she says.

Surbit Sthapit of Himalayan Community Development Forum says that there is policy level corruption in the community forests. "The user groups set the price of the timber at as low as Rs 10 in their operational plans when they are being sold in the market for Rs 800 to Rs 1200. Legally, they are not at fault but this is a kind of hidden corruption."

The newly-elected head of the Federation of Community Forestry Users in Nepal (FECOFUN), Apsara Chapagain, is aware of the problems her member communities face, but blames the government for trying to smear the community forestry movement.

"It may be true that user groups have been infiltrated by unscrupulous persons, but by and large community forestry is a successful model," she says. "The government has a vested interest in proving that it is not." 

Nepal's community forestry movement is threatened by corruption and greed

denuded. In Dadeldhura contractors, with the help of district forest officials and users, are trying to get large tracts of national forests handed over to the communities so they can sell the trees. "When the regulators and protectors of forests are hand-in-glove in destroying the forests, who can stop them?" asks Resham Bahadur Dangi, joint secretary at the Ministry of Forests. He is a helpless witness to the rife

user groups pay up to Rs 60,000 to government rangers to get amendments to their by-laws approved. There is also corruption in getting felling permits from forestry officials. "We have no option but to comply with the demands of the range post office, or they will not give us permits," says Krishna Prasad Aryal, who heads the Deusathala Community Forestry User Group.



ALL PICS: RUBEENA MAHATO

Still going strong

There are still some community forests that have resisted logging. Sitaram Community Forest in Nawalparasi, which is completely run by women, is an example. With years of nurturing, they have turned a barren river bank into a dense forest. But they are content with felling old tress and collecting fallen branches, even if their yearly income is far less than the neighbouring user groups that harvest timber.

“We planted these trees with our own hands. We will not fell them for money,” says Sita Thapa, head of a user group that relies more on non-timber produce like fodder grass and amriso (broom grass) farming for income.

In Shree Kumarwanti Adarsha Buffer Zone Community Forest at Pithauli, growing forest cover has provided safe habitat for the wildlife of Chitwan National Park. Despite frequent attacks

A formerly barren riverbank in Nawalparasi has become a jungle through the care of the Sitaram Community Forest User Group.

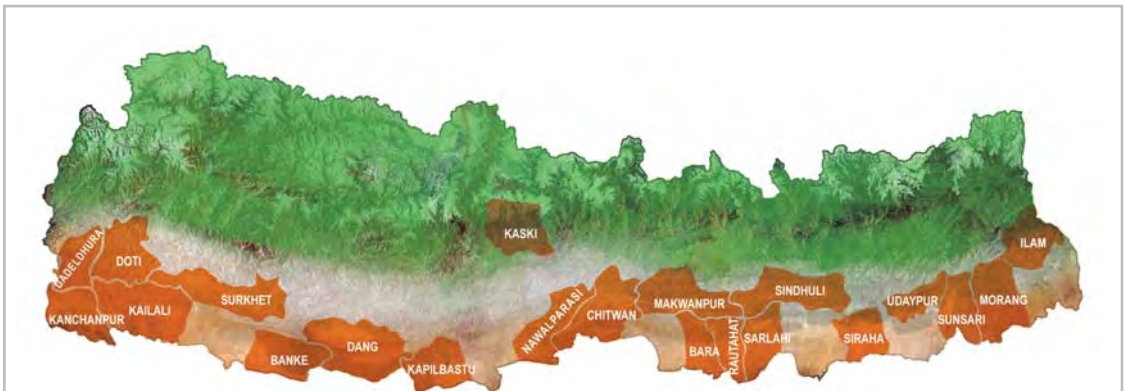
from the animals, the users are committed to conserving the forest. “We are building electric fences to ward off animals at night. But the forests will not be destroyed,” says Indra Bhusal, head of the user committee.

through midlife crisis



“The government has been trying to undermine the community forestry movement because it wants to control timber resources.”

- Apsara Chapagain, FECOFUN Chairperson



Hotspots

Community forestry has never been as successful in the Tarai as in the hills of Nepal because of commercial logging and the pressure on land.

“In the hills, forests are needed for subsistence but the Tarai has more of an industrial demand,” says Resham Bahadur Dangi, joint secretary at the Ministry of Forests.

Forest ownership is also not as well defined in the Tarai as in the hills. The high prices for Tarai hardwoods meant that the

state was reluctant to transfer ownership of forests to local communities. The government’s alternative for the Tarai is the concept of ‘collaborative forests’, which involves traditional users and greater state control.

But community forestry advocates are not happy with this model. “This will create rifts between traditional users and recent migrants in the Tarai,” says FECOFUN’s Mohammad Kar Khan. Not just Tarai, even hill districts like Kaski and Ilam have fallen prey to timber trade.

- Total forest cover: 25.4 per cent
- Annual deforestation rate (2000-2005): 1.4 per cent
- Between 2000-2005, Nepal lost about 2,640 sq km of forest

(Source: FAO, 2005)

Mr. Army Chief, please return my land

Keshav Kami in *Nagarik*, 30 June

नागरिक

Sir,

I am a Dalit by caste and an ironsmith by profession. If the state wanted we Dalits could have lived in this society with dignity. But already oppressed by the state and society, I have been subjected to yet another indignity.

The army confiscated my property and I became homeless. And I think, Mr. Army Chief, it was done with your support. I am saying this because the Army Chief is not a person but an institution who represents the entire Nepal Army.

My illiterate father was misled into signing up for a loan of Rs 44,000, for a sum of five hundred rupees by your Army Jawan Chinikaji Maharjan. No matter how much we paid, we could never pay off the loan. So my father Najarman Kami was mercilessly beaten by Chinikaji everyday.

Years later, our landowners gave us our share of land and we got a piece of land, the only land in this world that we could claim as our own. But our days of misery had not ended.

Chinikaji registered an application with the Shahi Nepali Jangi Adda to issue a stay order against my land and the then Brigadier General of the department wrote a letter to the land reform office in Dillibajar for the order to be carried out.

Mr. Army Chief, can the Jangi Adda issue such an order on private property? How could an honourable military institution carry out an unlawful act to protect the interests of its Jawans?

In 1995, Chinikaji and his two sons serving in the army, Shyam and Rakesh, abducted me and my father and took us to Gorkha. They threatened to kill us and label us Maoists if we spoke out, and forced us to transfer my four annas of land to Chinikaji's name.

The next year, I was forcefully evicted from my home. Then my house was transferred into Chinikaji's name. Mr Army Chief, this is how your personnel got hold of my house and rendered me homeless.

Chinikaji's family is now even more powerful because his youngest son Bipin Maharjan has become a second lieutenant. They remind me of when the women were killed in Bardiya National Park and the Defense Minister's statements following the incident.

Mr. Army Chief, I am just a common man so nobody is bothered about my property that has been snatched. No one benefits by drawing attention to my plight. That is why I could not become the subject of the Dalit Commission, NGOs or political parties. But I do hope that all the human right activists, civil society and journalists will raise my issue as their own.

I also hope, Mr. Army Chief, that you will do justice to me and prove that you are the commander of the entire nation and not just of your army and staff.

Keshav Kami, now homeless, Gongabu



RSS

PM's indiscriminate meetings

Lekhnath Pande in *Nagarik*, 24 June

नागरिक

Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal has been holding meetings with Asian ambassadors for hours in the last few days.

The prime minister's advisor for foreign affairs, Rajan Bhattarai, said that the prime minister exchanged updates on bilateral affairs, the latest political

developments and his position to the ambassadors.

Meanwhile, diplomats have objected to the uncontrolled meetings of the prime minister with ambassadors. Former ambassador Rajeswor Acharya said that the prime minister was making a mockery of official protocol by granting random visits. "Nowhere in the world does the country's leader give updates on the political situation and his views to ambassadors," he said.

Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, who was an ambassador to India and the US for 14 years, said that even in a democracy the practice of pleasing foreigners, which started during the Rana regime, has continued.

According to diplomatic protocol, ambassadors should get the approval of the ministry of foreign affairs before meeting with the prime minister and other ministers.

Exit of a failed government

Editorial in *Janadisha*, 1 July

जतिदिशा

The Madhav Kumar Nepal-led government ultimately collapsed. Nepal was forced to resign as he could not cope with continuous rejection from all sides. His government and allies seemed firm in leading the peace process into uncertainty. They had not stopped indulging in anti-people decisions and activities. But now the chapter of this puppet government has ended. People should take this as a moral victory of the progressive Maoists. There will now be a real fight between the status quoists and the progressives.

Nepal's exit is an outcome of the recent Maoist politburo decision. The Maoists never recognised his government. They struggled on different fronts and established the outgoing government as a gang of criminals and murders. This is an opportunity to bring the derailed peace process back on track.

His resignation has almost ended the obstruction in the process of peace, a new constitution, PLA integration and the issue of state restructuring. Should the government be formed under Maoist leadership or puppet leadership? Nepal's transformation to a democratic republic, CA elections and the abolition of the monarchy was possible under Maoist leadership. And now, a national unity government under Maoist leadership is the need of the hour to write a pro-public constitution and bring the peace process to a conclusion.

Editorial in *Kantipur*, 1 July

कान्तिपुर

Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal resigned one month after the three parties signed a three-point agreement. He was even asked to resign by his own party. His resignation can be considered a positive step in freeing the state, which was being held hostage.

Nepal blamed the Maoists for obstructing consensus politics but also admitted that he could not resolve issues of national importance because of them. This is partially true. But he did not forget to list the achievements of the government, and claimed credit for extending the CA for a year. In fact, the extension of the CA was a compulsion as his government was unable to move the constitution writing and peace process forward. In short, his resignation signals the exit of an average failed government.

The Maoists never supported the government but the government failed to take them into confidence, despite their being an integral part of the peace process. Nepal's government could not even obtain institutional support from his own party. Central committee members as well as CA members ran a signature campaign asking for his resignation. Ultimately, it was the lack of political support that forced him to resign.



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Return without returns

Ram Chandra Bhatta in
Nagarik, 30 June

नागरिक

American Texana Resources Company, licensed to explore oil in Nepal, is preparing to leave the country.

The company got a license in 1998 but suspended work in one and a half years, citing security concerns. It has not responded to the government directive to

resume work. Petroleum Exploration Project Manager at the Department of Mines, Shyam Bahadur KC, said they wrote to the company four times this year but in vain. "The company has one year left for the project and it is now preparing to transfer ownership to Edinburgh-based company Cairn and leave Nepal", he said.

American Texana Resources Company had acquired a license to explore petroleum in the Nepalganj and Chitwan area 12 years ago. As per the agreement, the exploration should have been completed within four years.

Texana was also supposed to pay \$100,000 annually for renting land from the government, with an additional \$10 per sq km tax during exploration. The company paid rent for two years only.

Cairn is also lobbying the Nepal government for the land rented by Texana. "Seismic surveys will be difficult if we do not get the Chitwan and Nepalganj blocks leased by Texana," said an official at Cairn. "We asked the mine department and industries to lease us the land but they have been reluctant, and say giving seven blocks to one company will create a monopoly."

Cairn has leased blocks in Dhangadhi, Karnali, Lumbini, Birganj and Manlangawa for exploration, for which it pays \$250,000 rent to the government annually. The company was set up in 2004. It also suspended work due to the deteriorating security situation but resumed work in 2009.



No donations please



Sabin Priyasan in *Rajdhani*, 29 June

राजधानी

Dang has been declared a donation-free district at the initiative of local businessmen, political parties and stakeholders. The Dang chapter of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry decided that no donations would be given to criminal groups, political parties or their sister wings from now on. They also

decided to cooperate with the police in order to resist donation drives.

In earlier discussions, the industrialists had complained of not being able to conduct business owing to the donation terror. They said they were being forced to donate up to Rs 2.5 million to criminal gangs.

The industrialists also demanded that the administration regulate mobile phone services as they were being used to carry out criminal activities. They said the police should be able to retrieve

information of users when needed and that satellite technology should be introduced in the district to control criminal activities.

All main markets in the district have received letters demanding huge amounts as donations. Businessman Bharatnath Yogi reported that the Tiger group had decreed that all the transport service providers should pay Rs 10,000 per vehicle and register with their party.

Shekhar Koirala's options

Interview in *Naya Patrika*, 28 June

नयाँ पत्रिका

One: The government will be formed by the Maoists but they will have to immediately start army integration, dissolve YCL's paramilitary structure and return confiscated properties. We have no qualms about who will lead from their side.

Two: If the Maoists think they cannot do this now, they will have to join the government under the leadership of the Nepali Congress.

Three: If the Maoists do not want to join the government under Nepali Congress, they will have to stay in the opposition.

Four: If none of these options are acceptable to them, they can salute Madhav Nepal, continue with his government and help establish law and order.



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- Work on an individual story basis to decide on, source and improve graphics, illustrations and other visual elements
- Assist with detail work to ensure consistency and flawless layout

DESIRED PROFILE

- Excellent knowledge of and creativity with Photoshop, InDesign, CorelDraw and other visual editing applications
- Knowledge of typography
- Five to eight years of experience
- Ability to generate new ideas and concepts on a wide variety of issues
- Artistic ability (illustration, photography, etc) considered an asset

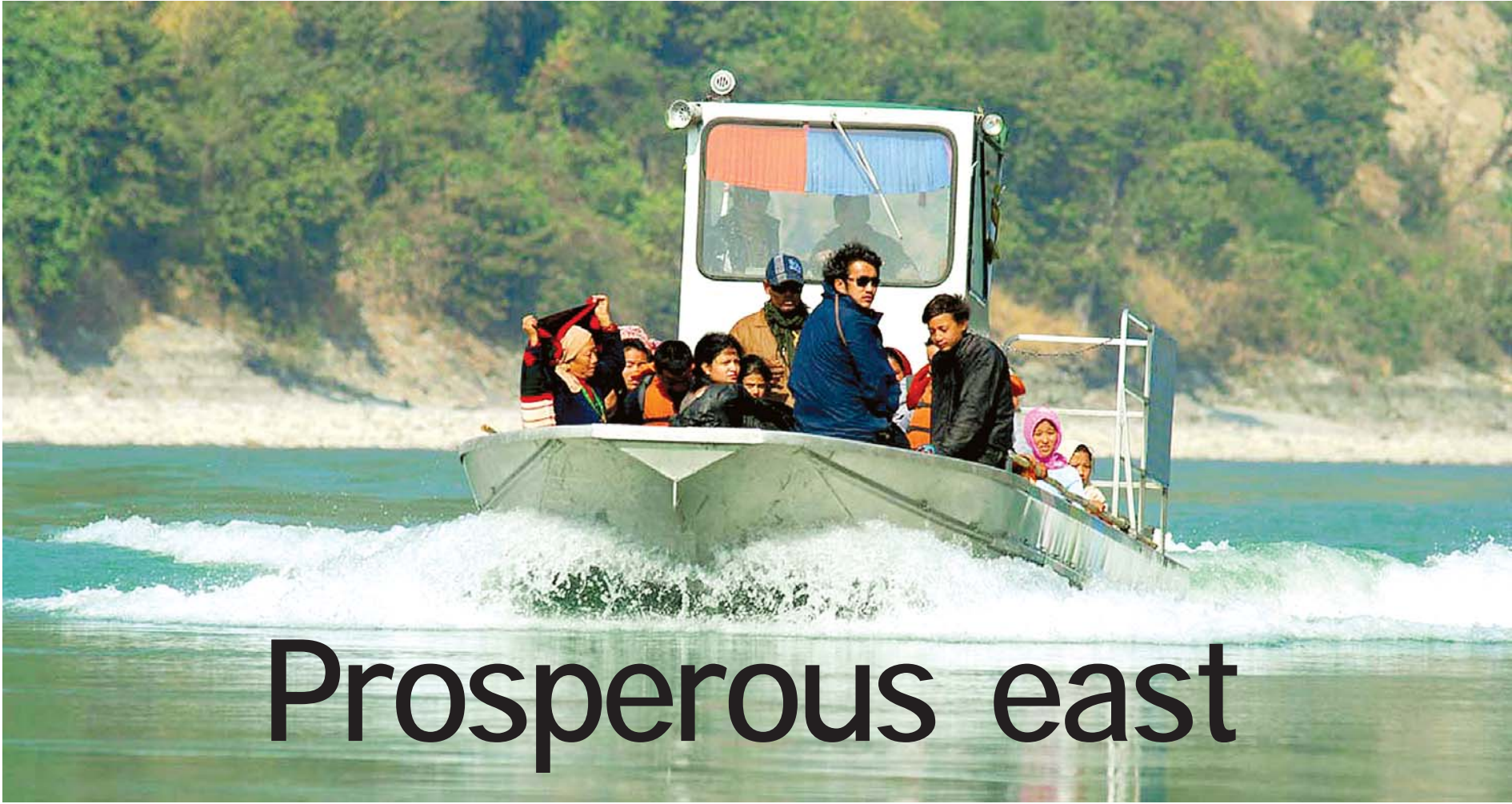
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APPLICATION PROCESS

Send in CV, cover letter and current salary drawn to editorial@himalmag.com

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SOHAN SHRESTHA

In the east, the mountains, hills and the Tarai can prosper as an integrated province

DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA

Federalism throws up more questions than answers, but the eastern region's current setup has tremendous potential. Indeed, various development indexes show it is ahead of other regions. Despite the anxieties roused by communal sentiments, the east retains the integrity of its social fabric, and not even the Madhes movement seriously disrupted this. Geographic diversity is the chief asset of

the region. The Tarai plains are fertile for agriculture, the hills are suitable for cash crops, and the mountains for medicinal herbs and hydropower potential. The eastern region also has a store of copper, iron and stones. The region leads the way in infrastructure and industry as well as on political and educational fronts. The liberalisation of the economy after 1990 boosted commercial production of agricultural and dairy products. Agro-based products such as tea, cardamom, ginger, and medicinal herbs, among others, have hit it

big in the international markets. Sixty years ago, there were a mere eight industries in the east. Today there are over 800 in operation. Cities in the eastern Tarai such as Biratnagar are economic hubs, and well-connected district headquarters are following suit. Agriculture expert Madan Rai (see box, left) says, "Scientific farming and its commercialisation will help the region prosper, and farmers here will own a car and have their houses connected to roads within two decades."

Diversity counts



Interview with Madan Rai, agriculture expert

Why do you think that the eastern region has been able to progress more, compared to other development regions?

The progress of the region can be attributed to the combination of apt weather, fertile lands, education and the commercial skills of the people.

What is the importance of geographical factors in development?

Most countries in the world are either too hot or too cold. Nepal

however is blessed with snow-capped mountains, green hills and fertile plains. The herbs and produce of the mountains and the hills have found a huge market in the Tarai and vice versa. Let's hope that the proposed federal model will not disturb this balance. Otherwise the basis of the progress of the eastern region will be lost. When dividing states, the model has to allow coordination between the north and south.

Are you against ethnic states?

My belief is that the basis of peace and progress should not be broken when a particular ethnic group gets its political rights. Development will definitely speed up after the states are established, but no one will benefit if the geographic dependency of economic development is destroyed.

What can be done to make the eastern region more developed?

If everyone honestly performs their responsibilities, the whole country will develop. The teachers should produce able manpower, the civil servants should perform their duties well. Our country is a storehouse of water and electricity. In 20 years I think it is possible to build roads to every house, even in the hills.



A cup of prosperity

Moti Ram Dahal returned to Ilam from Qatar, disappointed that he could earn only Rs 10,000 a month, despite working long hours. Now, eight years after coming back home, he can hardly keep count of his income. Dahal, along with his relatives, invested Rs 600,000 and revived his tea plantation. The plantation now produces 4,000 kg of tea yearly, earning him profits of a million rupees. His brand, Dahal Bandu Orthodox Tea, is a popular buy in the market. Now the head of Pathibhari Orthodox Tea Industry, Dahal is planning to purchase a new machine worth Rs 4.9 million. He even stopped his brothers from migrating for work. "Why go elsewhere when our own farming here can reap such profits?"

Cashing in on crops

In 1969, 20-year-old Obindra Bahadur Yakkha of Sumbek, Ilam, had 6 ropanis of land (about 3,000 square metres) and 6 siblings to feed. Last year, Yakkha earned Rs 54,000 from milk, Rs 265,000 from oranges, Rs 125,000 from amriso (used to make brooms), Rs 150,000 from garlic and Rs 50,000 from chilies. He now owns 80 ropanis of land (almost 41,000 square metres) and a house in Ilam bajar worth Rs 1.4 million. Recently he was able to give away 35 ropanis of land (almost 18,000 square metres) to each of his three brothers. Yakkha, who has been felicitated by the District Agricultural Office many times, says all this is the result of his investment in cash crops.



PICS: DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA

Untapped energy

The Saptakoshi has the potential to generate over 20,000MW of electricity. Tamor, Kaweli, Mai and other rivers of the east could also generate electricity. At present, a few projects in Taplejung, Ilam and Panchthar are running and expected to produce 93.5MW. Director of Panchthar Power Company Basanta Kumar Nembang says that in four years, the power produced by the Mechi could eliminate loadshedding in the eastern region.



PICS: DAMBAR K SHRESTHA

Of cardamom, ginger and amriso

If you take a trip to eastern Nepal, the sweet smell of cardamom is sure to greet you. Cardamom, ginger and amriso (broom grass) are the cash crops helping farmers in eastern Nepal make money, and plenty of it. Mostly grown in Taplejung and Sankhuwasabha, these crops are also the favourites of farmers in Panchthar, Ilam and Terathum. Many farmers in Bhojpur and Khotang are also profiting from cardamom farming. Birendra Yongya of Panchthar and Phurwa Sherpa (*top*) of Dhading both grow 4,000 kg of cardamom every year. Ram Bantawa of Lungrupa 4, Panchthar, says that cardamom farming has benefitted 180 families of his area. Chedam Sharma of Sankhuwasabha, Dhading, says: "Cardamom is what buys food, salt and gold in our houses."

Taplejung alone produces Rs 12 million worth of cardamom. According to Dinesh Mittal, Chairman of Nepal Cardamom Traders Association, 10,000 tons of cardamom worth Rs 70 million are exported from the eastern region, travelling through India to Pakistan and the Gulf. This year the rate was Rs 50,000 per 40 kg and prices have been rising every year.

Chairman of the eastern region's Broom Traders Association, Ram Chandra Chaudhary, says that almost 13 tons of amriso (*bottom, left*) worth 1.15 billion are exported every year. According to Raj Kumar Karki, Chairman of the Ginger Producers and Traders Association, 95 per cent of the 13 tons of garlic (*bottom, right*) produced is exported to India.



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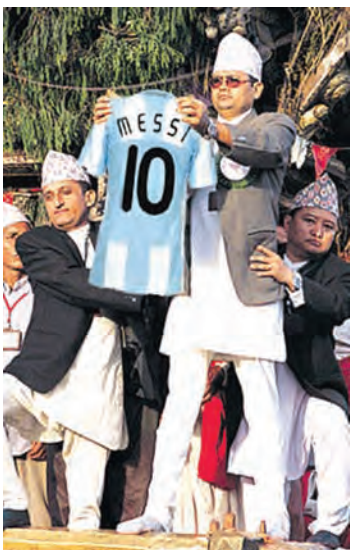
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Don't cry for me Argentina

Nepalis are now split right down the middle. Not between Maobaddies and Rajabaddies, not between kangresis and eh-maleys, not even between the fans and foes of the donkey. No, this country is deeply polarised between those who support **Brazil** and those who support **Argentina** in the World Cup.

For example, while Thimi is for Argentina, neighbouring Dadhikot is Brazil territory. Butwal is Buenos Aires and Surkhet is Sao Paolo. Cities, neighbourhoods, and even families, are now split between the Seleção and the Albiceleste.

So, it was bound to happen. This week, Argie fans got into a fight with the Brazilians in Lokanthali over the size of the flags of their respective countries. Sports psychologists have pondered long and hard about why Nepalis seem to root for Brazil, and the only explanation seems to be that the local KFC sources its drumsticks from a poultry farm in **Fortaleza**. And we seem to have a special soft corner for Argentina because we need to make it up to them for having helped the Brits keep the **Malvinas**.



And in conclusion, the Ass bows its head in humble tribute to the superior genius of the anonymous master who made this fabulous montage (*above*) of bhoto jatra. No wonder the rains are late.

Thanks also to Shitall Nibas for giving us a nostalgic retrospective of the royal days with the massive traffic jam caused at rush hour by the presidential carcade at the bhoto jatra festival last week.

And just like in the good old days of the monarchy, supporters of a Hindu Kingdom

have set up His Majesty King Gyanendra Birthday Celebration 1,565-member Main Committee to mark kingji's 64th **happy budday** for three glorious days.

Miffed that Comrade Ugly had his US visa revoked, Awe-Inspiring last week immediately called up his five-member delegation at the Boston Tea Party and ordered Chandra Prakash Gajurel, Top Bahadur & Co back home pronto from the **Hotbed of World Imperialism**. But the severely jetlagged Com Moonshine, Com Cannon Fodder and Com Pomp-fa were just getting to enjoy the delights of capitalism and gently persuaded their travel agent to not try so hard to confirm their tickets back. So, the Baddie contingent ended up staying five extra days at the Boston Hyatt, boycotting the conference they went to attend, and enjoying a well-earned break. Apparently BRB was also invited and was sorely tempted to go, but declined when he found out the North American Nepalis had pitted him against Gen Cutwall, who by the way, seems to be getting an enthusiastic response from audiences in the **Land of the Brave**.

Which brings us to the faux pas that the Americans made by not doing a background check on Com Ugly. They should've learnt from the Ozzies who had also granted then withdrawn Sap-quota's visa earlier this year. This showed either a) a willingness to have Ugly found out on arrival at Logan, or b) a lack of proper vetting by the visa section of the embassy, which passed the buck on to Human Rights Watch and Advocacy Forum.

The real reason the prime minister resigned was because cartoonists had started calling him **Madhav Kumar India**. But all signs are that the infighting within the parties to find a successor is going to heat up and MKN may remain in office for another year as 'take care' PM. With PKD vs BRB in UCPNM, JNK vs KPO in UML and RCP vs SBD in NC, the three-way power struggle promises to be a long and bruising one and the candidates will cancel each other out. Masterstroke by Makunay kamred.

The country is so strapped for Indian currency that NOC

stopped paying IOC so there is a fuel shortage again. This is going to last until Nepal Oil Corruption once more raises prices and until that happens everyone between Raxaul, Amlekhganj and Thankot is going to hoard and make a killing. With this sort of mentality it is no surprise that Nepal Ayal Nigum decided to send a delegation to Russia where scientists have perfected the technology of mixing **20%** water in diesel without any major consequences. Apparently the Nepalis are going there not to learn, but to show the Russians how you can take it to **50%** and make a lump sum.

A couple of laks in 1,000 and 500 denomination Indian roops were confiscated from the **Home Minister of Naga Land** as he was trying to make a swift getaway at the airport on Wednesday. This means the treasury has replenished our war chest with IC and there is enough money to import diesel to last us till Friday afternoon.

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