

NEPALI Times

#388

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Weekly Internet Poll # 388

Q. How would you describe the Madhes general strike?

Total votes: 4,735

Legitimate	13.3%
Anti-election move	43%
To punish seven parties	40.9%
Dangerous gambit	3.5%

Weekly Internet Poll # 389. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Given the crisis in the Madhes should the elections be:

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Dark Ages

Chronic shortages of electricity, fuel, water and now food have brought about a serious dislocation of businesses, trade and livelihoods throughout the country. The shortages come at a time of deepening political crisis in the Madhes in the run-up to elections. They feed the public's perception of government incompetence. What is surprising is that people are still queuing up for fuel, gas and water without complaining. But public patience is running thin, and relatively minor incidents can spiral out of control as seen last week in Bhaktapur.

Photo essay: p 8-9.



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A War on Tolerance

When the people feel abandoned...

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

Not even if someone wanted to deliberately sabotage the country would they be as successful as the Seven Minus One party alliance running this country. We have given them credit where it is due in this space. We have tried to look at the glass as half full and tried to convince ourselves (and you) that we should cut the politicians some slack. After all they have brought us this far since April 2006.

Yes, it has taken longer than it should. Yes, our rulers have behaved as if there is no tomorrow. But the country is now finally coming to the grand finale of this messy transition. What has happened in this country is an extraordinary makeover of our state structure with relatively little violence. The reason it is taking longer than expected is also because of the conspiracies of status quoists and those extremists who still haven't given up their futile dream of a communist utopia.

But the main reason for the current instability is because of the individual short-sightedness of our political leaders and their collective fecklessness. They have achieved what we all thought was impossible: to fritter away the gains of the pro-democracy uprising of April 2006, let the people down once again and be a total failure in governance. Compared to this, at least where it concerns service delivery, the dictatorial monarchy is beginning to look like the golden years. It takes breath-taking incompetence and a complete lack of accountability to succeed in being so unsuccessful.

The breakdown of law and order is so complete that a paramilitary police force armed with automatic weapons cannot open a major highway artery when it is blocked by a couple of tyre-burning hooligans because one of them was arrested for robbery.

It doesn't surprise us one bit that the Madhes has been allowed to burn. At press time on Thursday afternoon, the prime minister had suddenly woken up from deep slumber and was in meetings with Madhesi leaders. Going by past experience, whatever is agreed on will be too little too late.

The people's disgust at the crippling shortages of fuel, power and water is now turning into outrage. Yet, even at a time of deep crisis like this all our rulers can do is sling mud at each other, blame everyone but themselves and warn of dark conspiracies afoot.

The public's opinion of politicians in Kathmandu is mud. They have stopped expecting any statesmanship from this bunch, and are getting on with their lives despite unprecedented hardships.

It is precisely because the people now have a chance to throw out this class of failed politicians that they are so scared of elections. Time to give power (both political and electric) back to the people.

AMSTERDAM—When 'tolerance' becomes a term of abuse in a place like the Netherlands, you know that something has gone seriously wrong. The Dutch always took pride in being the most tolerant people on earth. In less feverish times than these, no one could possibly have taken exception to Queen Beatrix's speech last Christmas, when she pleaded for tolerance and "respect for minorities." But Geert Wilders,



GUEST COLUMN
Ian Buruma

leader of the right-wing, anti-Muslim Freedom Party, was so disgusted by the Dutch queen's "multi-cultural rubbish" that he wanted her to be stripped of her constitutional role in the government.

Wilders, a popular rabble-rouser whose party occupies nine seats in the Dutch parliament, compares the *Koran* to Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, wants to stop Muslims from moving to the Netherlands, and thunders that those who are already in the country should tear up half the *Koran* if they wish to stay. Tolerance towards Islam is cowardly appeasement in his eyes.

He thinks that Europe is in peril of being 'Islamized'. "There will soon be more mosques than churches," he says, if true Europeans don't have the guts to stand up and save Western civilisation.

Some commentators suggest that Wilders, born and raised as a Catholic in a provincial Dutch town, is, like his Muslim enemies, a true believer, driven by the goal of keeping Europe 'Judeo-Christian'. Perhaps, but this is probably a red herring. His war on Islam is also, and perhaps even mainly, a war on the cultural and political elites, the Dutch intellectual establishment, the Eurocrats of Brussels, and the liberal-minded queen. Indeed, his speeches are studded with references to arrogant elites who are out of touch with the feelings of the common man. 'Tolerance' is seen as weak and elitist, typical of people who live far removed from the harsh realities of the street.

This notion of the elitist appeaser is not confined to the Netherlands. In Israel, the educated Jewish activists who criticise Israeli abuses against Palestinians, the peaceniks who believe that negotiation is better than violence and that even Arabs have rights, are called, with a knowing sneer, 'beautiful souls'. The common man, rooted in the real world, supposedly knows better: uncompromising toughness, the hard line, is the only way to get results.

The association of elites with foreignness, tolerance, and metropolitan cities is nothing new. Elites often can speak foreign languages, and big cities are traditionally more tolerant and open to mixed populations. Modern populism is invariably

hostile to capital cities. Brussels, the capital of the European Union, stands for everything that populists, whether left or right, hate. And Muslim immigrants live in Amsterdam, London, or Marseilles, not in the kind of small towns where right-wing populists find most of their support.

Still, the politics of resentment works best when it can tap into real fears. There are reasons for people to feel anxious about economic globalisation, pan-European bureaucracy, the huge and not always effectively controlled influx of immigrants, and the aggression of radical political Islam. These anxieties have too often been ignored. There is a sense among many Europeans that they have been abandoned in a fast-changing world, that multi-national corporations are more powerful than nation-states, that the urban rich and highly educated do fine and ordinary folks in the provinces languish, while democratically elected politicians are not only powerless, but have abjectly surrendered to these larger forces that threaten the common man.

Wilders, and others like him, are not just attacking Islamic extremists. His success is based on that sense of tolerance as betrayal. And, as so often happens, the loathing of elites has found an outlet in the loathing of outsiders, who look different and whose ways are strange. We must fight Islamic extremism, but not by tapping into the darkest gut feelings of the unthinking mob. Nothing good ever came from that. ● (Project Syndicate)

Ian Buruma is professor of human rights at Bard College.



SUBODH SINGH

Can't wait

A deal on the Madhes needs to be struck, and quickly

The prime minister and his NC colleagues are primarily responsible for the present mess the country is in. And it's not just the shortages, Baluwatar never saw the writing on the wall in the Tarai.

It ignored the resentment that was building up and under-estimated the Madhesi groups. Instead of reaching out, national leaders made provocative



TARAI EYE
Prashant Jha

statements. A relatively manageable issue was allowed to escalate into a seemingly intractable problem.

This week has been a roller-coaster with attitudes towards talks changing every few hours. There were informal negotiations one day, then Koirala made his unnecessarily intransigent statement in Biratnagar and that hardened attitudes. A day after Monday's belligerent press conference where Madhesi groups put up additional preconditions, there were preliminary talks. Radical public rhetoric and hectic back-channel communication co-exist, but uneasily, because of the escalation of protests on the ground and the

fierce state response in places.

The deadlock stems from a complete trust deficit. Madhesi groups see any overture by the state as a trap. Government negotiators think that demands of protesting groups are excessive, and engineered from elsewhere.

The government is also incapable of grasping the angst of Madhesis. The people on the streets are angry because of real and perceived discrimination. This requires apologies for past actions and respectful gestures. Instead, the state response includes killings and even attacks on protestors inside hospitals. Politicians are also unwilling to go the extra mile to accommodate moderate Madhesi groups, give them a face-saver, and allow them to look like winners.

In a *Kantipur* article this week, researcher Tula Narayan Sah showed how the demands of Madhesi groups can be flexibly interpreted. Kathmandu understands self-determination as the right of Madhes to secede, but Madhesi groups claim it is the right of people to determine their own cultural, economic and political affairs and is a part of UN treaties which Nepal has signed. There are ways to bridge this divide: setting up a state restructuring commission, guarantees on autonomy,

slight changes in the electoral system, some concrete steps regarding inclusion, and behind the scenes electoral assurances.

To be sure, Madhesi groups also have their multiple insecurities. They are privately quite happy with state brutality, which gives their movement more momentum. But it also complicates things by enhancing expectations on the ground.

Madhesi groups are terrified of striking a deal in Kathmandu perceived as dishonorable in the Tarai. This is possible, given the radical sentiment on the ground and the fact that demands hover around intangible and abstract notions of justice and dignity. People of different political hues, including anti-democratic elements, are on the streets. The Madhesi groups do not have the mechanism to pull things back the day they want, and the presence of armed groups complicates things further.

Their other fear is that of facing elections. None of these groups have a strong organisation. Their nascent alliance has weak coordination. They also fear a split. Upendra Yadav is more resistant to the idea of negotiations than the other two Madhesi leaders. At best, this may stem from his bitter experience of striking a deal in the past. But insiders say the resistance

is as much to do with the influence of royalists and the Hindu right on the MJF.

Madhesi groups need to be careful not to overplay their card. Their tactics have generated a lot of resentment in Kathmandu, and could fuel further anti-Madhesi sentiment. They have a strong bargaining position with Koirala on the back-foot, and should use it to win concessions. As long as they remain united and select candidates smartly, they can hope to capitalise on a pro-Madhesi wave in polls. The government is responsible for the current situation, but moderate Madhesi groups must not allow radicals within to derail the national process.

There is Indian pressure on all sides. At press time, talks were going on in Lainchaur to work out the contours of both a public agreement and a behind-the-scenes electoral deal. But whether an agreement happens or not in the next few days will depend on several variables: the nature of Indian manipulation, concessions by the government, and confidence level of Madhesi groups. ●

CK Lal's column will not appear in this week's or next week's issues. However, it will back as usual on 7 March.

LETTERS

DAY OF PRETENDERS

I laughed when I read in 'The day of the pretenders' (State of the state, #387) that the YCL cadres think that Prachanda is going to be president, which is of course unacceptable to anyone other than the Maoists and their supporters. To be a president you should know what democracy means and respect other people's opinions. I don't think he is fit to be president without any improvements in his party and his own politics.

Suraj, email

- Mr Dahal wants to be the president of Nepal but he is not aware of the problems of lower class Nepali people, and he is doing nothing to help them. He just wants the seat of power and is playing the nationalist card to try and get it. I had to leave my home because of the Maoists three years ago and I am currently struggling to make my livelihood in India. They need to know that the Nepali people want them to help the poor, not just intimidate people.

Ishwor Aryal, email

- You are claiming that the existence of the Nepali monarchy and the successful holding of elections depends on the wishes of the Indians. Do you really believe that is true?

Name withheld, email



POLITICAL GAMES

Prashant Jha's article 'Plan A' (#387) seems quite convincing. The Indian government really doesn't have a clear plan for Nepal if the CA election isn't held in April. It seems to be under tremendous pressure from both right and left to get a resolution this time, and so is being more helpful than it has been in the past, but I wonder how long we have to expect something to be done from the other side of border. Our political dependence on India has made most of our leaders look like clowns. They seem to forget that the April Uprising gave them a clear mandate to be followed—instead of doing that they run round in circles. I still believe a sincere engagement from the government can change the scenario in the Tarai. Instead of helping to calm it, the PM's insensitive utterances have fuelled the issue time and again. The other parties play a waiting game, but they should realise they will be the eventual losers.

Uday Adhikary, Hetauda

GOVERNANCE

'Pre-poll poll' (#386) has shown the deepening frustrations among the general public. The political parties have proved that core development issues are not their concerns. Development will not be possible unless they reinstate the local government and authorities. I totally understand that the constituent assembly election is a dire necessity at the moment, but the local bodies' reinstatement is also a necessity and the mainstream political parties have to understand this.

Sanam Chitrakar, Kathmandu

HEALTHCARE

It is very sad to know that the TEAM hospital has been closed down under pressure from the Maoists ('In god's hands,' #387). How can they meddle like that when people's lives are at stake? It is very inhumane of them not to recognise that people should not be deprived of fundamental rights. This one is about the right to live. I hope the article will raise concern among the responsible authorities and help reopen the hospital.

Prerana M, email

- Dear Mr Dixit, I was rather disappointed after reading your article about the TEAM hospital. The subject matter itself is saddening, but you also failed to look into some of the deeper underlying reasons for the closure of the hospital. Why did the Maoist leader say the doctors were "agents of American imperialism"? What were the assumptions on which he based his allegations but was unable to explain due to his own lack of intellectual capacity? What have been the cultural, religious and social implications in the surrounding villages after half a century's presence of an evangelical mission in one of the remotest part of the country? The article would have been more informative if it had tried to address these bigger questions. Filing a field report on a 'blame-the-Maoists' pretext does no more good than communists ranting about 'imperialism' as the root of all the nation's problems. However, I must admit that the title was apt: often in Nepal the government has left us in god's hands!

AK Adhikari, email

- That was a good article from Aruna Uprety ('Free drugs', #387) Regarding corruption, strict monitoring—better decentralised monitoring—is a key to controlling it. Involving young local people in the local monitoring committee can be very effective, and it should be supported through public auditing on a regular basis. However, we live in a country where there is one security person for every 20 people, but 300 people have to depend upon one health person. Obviously, there is an overload of work for health workers—can we do anything to change this imbalance? We should also try and promote alternative and traditional health systems—that would make a real difference.

Prakash Shrestha, Kathmandu

ORPHANAGES

Many thanks to Wilko Verbakel and Susan Van Klaveren for their great article about the uselessness of children's homes in Nepal ('Mushrooming orphanages', #387). The article raises many serious questions which I think both Nepalis and foreigners alike may not have considered: whether children homes should be allowed to open so easily or not, the self-sustainability issue, criminal activities related to children homes, and whether donor money should be used for development in rural areas rather than opening children's homes. I only hope that this article will generate some response from the related authorities and the donors.

Avani D, email

CORRECTION

Due to an editing error, the Norwegian prime minister was misidentified in Happennings (#387). He should have been Jens Stoltenberg.

LETTERS

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

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PICS: DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA

**DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA**

Last December, Nepal was abuzz with news of the first Nepali made aeroplane. In a country where most of the population has not even boarded an aeroplane, it was no wonder the news caused such sensation. But after the Civil Aviation Authority Nepal (CAAN) refused the aircraft permission to make a test flight, the buzz about the Danfe has died down.

Built by eight mechanical engineering students from the Institute of Engineering at Pulchok Campus, the Danfe was unveiled in front of the Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Prithvi Subba Gurung. Team leader Bikash Parajuli says that although the test flight was scheduled for mid-December, CAAN brought up various legal issues and refused to allow it to fly. "Even though this was purely an educational venture and our university project, CAAN's refusal to grant us permission has put all our hard work to waste." Pulchok Campus's IOE chief Ram Chandra Sapkota says that although the campus has already given the green light,

the government is holding the project back. "The students have attempted something new and the government isn't even giving them permission to test it," says Sapkota. "If the test succeeds, all Nepalis will benefit. The government should be facilitating the test."

Minister Prithvi Gurung claims that despite all his efforts, CAAN inspected the parts and their workings and refused permission for a test flight. He told Nepali Times, "I took a risk and gave them the authority to make a test flight but it was CAAN that stopped them." CAAN's chief director Yagya Prasad Gautam refused to comment and through his personal assistant said that all queries were to be addressed to the ministry and not to CAAN. Even so, an official at CAAN said that the problem was with the process and not the aircraft. The official claimed that unless either a minister, secretary or the cabinet sent a statement in writing giving permission for the flight, CAAN would not allow the flight to take place.

Even though it only took a year to build the plane, there were three years of planning behind it. Mechanical

Flight cancelled

Government bureaucracy grounds the first light aircraft made in Nepal

engineering student Parajuli put forth his ideas to childhood friend Ganeshram Sinkeman and together, they drafted a plan. For two years, they researched aeroplanes and after graduating, asked for technical help and manpower from the campus. Avia Club, which conducts commercial flights and is a pilot training school, provided them with an engine, prolevers and various other old aircraft parts. NAST, the Nepal Tourism Board and Nepal Airlines all provided the funding required. "Through various organisations we raised Rs 600,000 but we came up with Rs 400,000 ourselves," says Parajuli.

The rest of the eight member team Ramesh Ranabhat, Rabintra Shrestha, Dinesh Poudyal, Baburam Kharel, Anil Maharjan and Prashant Malla, all gave their services voluntarily. Aeronautical engineer Uday Krishna Shrestha helped the students with the technical and mechanical aspects. They named the aircraft Danfe, after our national bird. Danfe can hold two people, fly up to 200km in the air at 100km per hour, theoretically.

Faced at first with incredulity at the idea of building an aircraft in Nepal, Bikash says that if the testing went through then with a few more years of research, Nepali hands could be building

fully-fledged aircrafts. With an average construction cost of around Rs 2 million, aircraft like these could be a boon for those living in remote hilly areas and could also be a major tourist attraction.

Bikash says that he has fulfilled all the legal requirements for permission. Although Nepal's air code on aviation sports is quite simple, so as to better accommodate micro light flights, hang gliding, heliskiing and hot air ballooning, CAAN says that the International Civil Aviation Board restricts test flights. Parajuli, on the other hand, claims that ICAB has a provision that allows the government to issue permission.

There's even a senior Russian captain, Alexander Maximo, on call to fly the aeroplane. Maximo has been flying planes for the past twenty years and upon seeing the aircraft, gave his word that he would fly in from Russia at any moment.

With the aircraft gathering dust, the students are disappointed and feel incomplete that they haven't been allowed a test flight. Danfe's future is hazy at the moment as only a test flight would tell if it was capable of long distance flight or not. Says Parajuli, "Danfe is an aircraft. How can we feel proud of our achievement when it hasn't even flown?" ●

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Siddhartha Bank's novel new Siddhartha Mega Savings account provides interest on the basis of how much deposit customers put in. The account can be opened for Rs 50,000 and the higher the amount deposited, the higher the interest. Interest starts at 4.5 percent and goes up to six. Perks include free debit cards, inward remittance and internet banking.



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No transparency please

We only have time for murky deals

It is useless now to devote column inches to the supply crisis, as our predictions of a khattam Nepal are finally taking shape (and, as usual, in the time of the crisis our great ability emerges of finding ways to scrape through any situation, however dismal). This Beed was told that during the Indian embargo in



ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed

1989, oil prices shot up five times on the black market, but that is yet to happen this time. In fact, the Tarai crisis and oil crisis are just keeping the real story away from the public at large.

The Nepal Stock Exchange began a process to issue licenses to new brokers and, for the first time in Nepali history, the process was designed to be transparent, using the internet to call for applications which would both maximize transparency and allow the results to be available in real time.

The computer-aided tests would have determined the results instantaneously, and therefore were unacceptable to people who always want their own way. Apparently a sitting minister called the person concerned with the message that either their non-qualifier candidate would be added to the list, or there would be dire consequences.

Despite the fact that the minister made a public statement saying that it was not him but someone posing as him, the selection process had to be

cancelled and a valiant attempt to bring about transparency ended in failure. The Beed definitely urges people to recognise such attempts at improving our working practices. Maybe one day, after so many failed attempts, one will have some success in changing the basic rules of the game.

Lack of transparency is a Nepali problem that never seems to go away. It was at its worst during the Panchayat era, but even with democracy, transparency has been more a word to play with than a practice to implement. Everyone knows the government is not transparent, from the way they allocate licenses to the way they hand over criminals to

their money. How do they manage to spend large amounts on budget heads without actually doing anything on the project? How do NGOs which are run by self-declared intellectuals and activists still manage to get away without their accounts being audited? How do people manage to go on jaunts without the organisation to which the invitation was actually addressed knowing anything about it?

Of course, the private sector is an equally strong believer of non-transparency. Reputed schools do not give a breakdown of the school fees and still get away with it. They perhaps forget that in business terms parents are their customers. Cable companies get away without providing the number of channels they are supposed to provide, and having advert scrolls all over the screen without the knowledge of the principal. Evasion of taxes in Nepal is not considered anything to do with transparency. Publishing houses get away without having their circulation verified by an audit bureau.

And as for the political parties, the word is little more than a painful joke. If we want Nepal to change, a small beginning would be for the political parties to fight to transparency of political contributions. The transparency in political funding and adequate disclosure of party financials would hopefully signal an end to the rampant corruption to which we are accustomed. We need a Young Clean League to bring about this transformation. Any takers? ●

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This week parties field candidates in closed lists.

neighbouring police. Members of parliament do not have to disclose where they spend the funds they receive from government, nor local government disclose to the people how much income they actually receive from power plants. This Beed has written before about the non-disclosure of funds that get into the PM's relief fund and its application.

It is not only the government that does not believe in transparency. We do not know where and how the donors who are so important in Nepal spend

"Suitcases are like cars, only you're the engine. Our brand makes it as easy for the engine as possible."

Marcello Bottoli (CEO of Samsonite) mentioned in 2005 during an interview with Forbes that he would like the brand to stop relying on suitcase sales, and by 2010 reduce them to only 50% of its business. Does that mean that Samsonite thinks the luggage business has limited growth?

Quentin Mackay: No. When 9/11 happened, one of the second things to be hit after travel was luggage. Then, it was 90 percent of our business. What we are doing is basically damage limitation, by directing a bigger fraction of our sales to other products. Also, prior to Marcello joining, Samsonite had 65 percent reliance on the US market and 30 percent on Europe. For the well-being of the brand in terms of financial outlook, we are also trying to bring down our reliance on the market in America, so if an event like 9/11 happens there again, we can keep up our sales in Europe and Asia.

How is the demand of the Asian market different from the rest of the world?

While most brands talk about being global, there are still regional and country differences. For various reasons Samsonite is perceived as a lower-range brand in the US, a middle-range brand in Europe, and a higher-range brand in Asia. Asians prefer smaller, lighter carriers and are bigger users of the hard shell products (hard shell luggage). It is also interesting to observe that Asians favour quality, in terms of style, over durability while it's the other way for the Americans.

Piracy is particularly rampant in developing countries. Does Samsonite have any plans, or precautions to protect the intellectual property of your company?



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Samsonite's Global Creative Director, Quentin Mackay talks to Nepali Times on the similarities between cars and luggage. He also shares the brand's business outlook piracy combating plans, and explains why their luggage is so expensive.

Samsonite is kind of a victim of its own success because it is an innovator in its category. You can walk into a luggage stall and easily pull out one product that is inspired by Samsonite, but you just can't find where these things (pirated goods) are made. We have started patenting innovations and any new ideas we come up with. For example, we filed 75 patents on our X'Lite product, from mechanical to process, not just the looks.

As the Global Creative Director, how do you convince people to spend, say for example, \$775 on an SBL Alexander McQueen?

I'm not a dictator to tell people to spend that sort of money. We know there are people out there who want it. They are the top 10 percent who move the consumer market forward. They love lifestyle magazines, innovations and gadgets, and are more than happy to splurge on certain things. What we're trying to do is make them think about luggage the same way they think about a handbag or a pair of shoes. We achieve this through design and innovation, adding emotion and sensuality to our products.

How do you improve your company's sales and brand awareness?

We intend to globalise the brand by consolidating the products and reducing the styles that we carry, basically creating a more latitude image. Also right now the brand has 17 different logos in different regions and 20 different colours associated with the logos. Our idea is to get one logo, one colour, to build a stronger brand identity.

Spook speak

Interviews on the *BBC Nepali Service* by Navin Singh Khadka, 12-15 February



Hu Shisheng, Director of South Asia Study Centre under the China Institute of Contemporary Relations.

How does China view the peace process and the atmosphere for upcoming constituent assembly elections in Nepal?

The objective of our government's Nepal policy is to ensure the prosperity, stability and integrity of Nepal. We would like to support any force that can make Nepal more stable and developed. The Chinese government strongly supports the current peace process. We would like to see that the upcoming constituent assembly election is held on time and that the future government is able to manage the entire situation smoothly.

"We would be against any activity aimed at disintegrating Nepal"

The Tarai situation is seen as a major challenge for the election. What do you think is the Chinese government's view on the issue?

We know that the situation in the Tarai is not good. There may be some elements who want to take further advantage of the current fragile government for their own political benefits, like the Maoists did.

What elements do you mean?

According to some Nepali scholars and intellectuals, the porous border means there may be some foreign elements with ulterior motives involved in causing the volatile situation. Some have even alleged that US or Indian intelligence agencies have played some role behind the scenes. There was an article in the mass media some months ago which alleged that the Indian intelligence agency the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) had played some role in this. It may not be the

government's own work, but some local elements, for various reasons, may have played some games with various local political or religious groups in the Tarai.

But can you really make these kind of assumptions based purely on media allegations?

If the reports are true, then the Chinese government will be very much concerned.

Is it concerned already?

Our ambassador in Nepal has already told the Nepali government that China will strongly support Nepal's efforts to maintain its integrity. We would be against any activity aimed at disintegrating Nepal in a covert or open way. We are very clear on our position. But while developing our relations with Nepal, we also tend to respect and be sensitive about India's concerns. We would do our very best to avoid giving an impression to India that China would use Nepal to harm Indian interest, as we know that Nepal is more influenced by Indian policies than by China.

But many believe that the tensions between China and India would affect Nepal as well.

Of course, because Nepal is located between these two powers. You must make a balance between them. Any improvement in the bilateral relations between China and India will also benefit the development and stability of Nepal.

China is also said to be quite uncomfortable with the US role in Nepal.

Our attitude has been quite negative towards the US presence in Nepal. We have noticed that the Americans want to play some role in the current situation in Nepal. Ever since 1990 and especially after the king's direct rule, their role has been quite ambiguous. They want to prevent the Maoists from coming to power. Even after the Indian government tried to encourage the Maoists to join mainstream politics, the US played a very negative role in this regard.

S Chandrashekhara, former senior RAW official who was with the Indian mission in Kathmandu until the early 80s.

There have been allegations that the Indian intelligence Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) is active in the Tarai.

Is there an allegation that the RAW is providing the groups with arms? They wouldn't need it, as they can buy arms anywhere, from the north and Bihar. The Indian government is not involved in this matter. What the Indian government is not willing to do is hand over the insurgent leaders to Kathmandu, as the Nepal government wants. So long as they abide by the local laws, they can stay in India and hold meetings. But the Indian government also wants elections to take place in the Tarai, therefore supporting the armed groups would be counterproductive to its own objective.

But they appear to be operating from Indian soil and the Indian government does not seem to mind that.

There are a lot of people who have sympathies for what is happening there (in the Tarai). In this situation, if you arrest someone in India, say Jwala Singh, it's not going to work (laughs). You have to see the situation in India too. After the Lahan incident nothing was done (by the Nepali government), so this was a problem. The mindset of the politicians in Kathmandu has to change.

"China will be watching what India does in the Tarai"

There are also allegations that there is overlapping between different Indian agencies, for example between the Indian foreign ministry and RAW while dealing with issues across the border.

Actually, RAW has nothing to do with that, this side of the border. It is the Intelligence Bureau (IB) which is handling.....talking and all.

Handling what?

The IB is responsible for law and order situations like this, people coming from one side to the other. But it has no hand in the Tarai unrest.

Why are we hearing blame games between the different agencies?

I am sure if you ask the RAW people, they will say it's not our job, it's the IB's. The IB in turn would say that the RAW is responsible for the other side (of the border). This is typical of the many agencies in India and it has been happening for many years. But it has nothing specifically to do with Nepal. I understand in border areas it sometimes overlaps.

What about the US role?

They are also interested, we are interested and so are the Chinese, as these are the major foreign powers in Nepal. China will also be watching what India does in the Tarai. Ask the Peasants and Workers Party in Bhaktapur, the Chinese government is in touch with them.

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No ethnic politics

Excerpts from an interview with Ram Baran Yadav of the NC in *Bishal Nepal*, 15 February

Can elections be held without solving the Madhes crisis?

The agitators in the Tarai need to come to the table. The uprising in the Tarai is for the sake of an uprising only. It is not going to free the Madhesis, it is only going to make them poor. Madhesis need to retaliate against the forces that are burning the Tarai.

What will satisfy the Madhesi people?

We have moved towards federalism. Self-governance comes with federalism. The constitution made by 25 million Nepalis will be their self-determination. There cannot be ethnic politics. I am strictly against it. In a country that is taking its first steps as a republic, anyone who talks about ethnic politics is a fool.

Who do you think is responsible for uniting the Madhesi leaders for regional politics?

Some rulers in India do not want to see

a free Nepal. The Tarai violence is definitely supported by Hindu extremists and criminal dividers. All Nepalis need to join hands to save this nation.



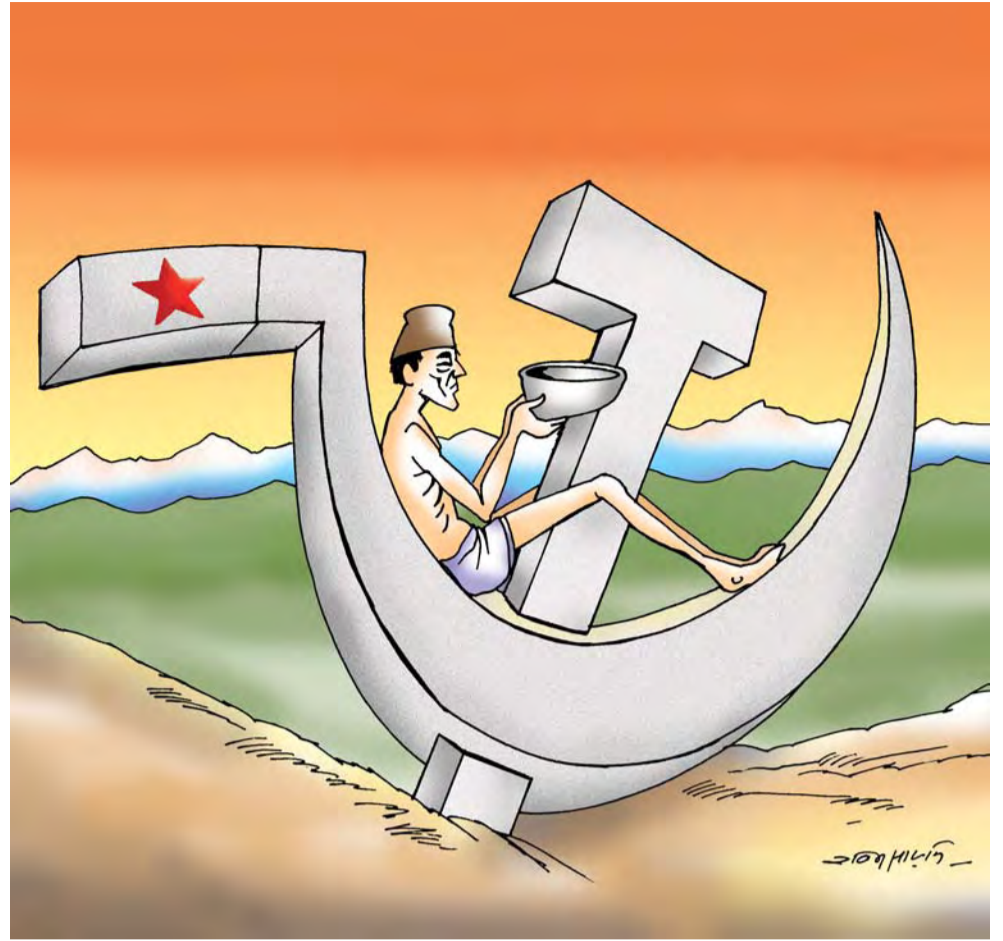
How do you view the people who have turned into revolutionaries in the name of Madhes after being in power for years?

All the leaders including JP Gupta who are involved in the Tarai politics have been defamed for their corruption. Now they are talking about ethnic politics. I am a socialist. I do not want to be involved in either

ethnic or religious politics, democracy is my ethnicity.

Why are the leaders who talk about 'one Madhes one region' silent about nationalism?

Those revolting in the Tarai should be brought to the table. The uprising in the Madhes will lead to more corruption. Representatives and area allocation in terms of population, and proportional representation have been written in the constitution. What is there to give now?



हिमाल Robin Sayami in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 13 - 27 February

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“ No person or group can make stubborn demands and say they will obstruct the polls. It is not only haughty but treacherous. If the government consents to the demand for one region, it will start afresh an unimaginable rebellion in the country. ”

Central Committee member UML, Ramchandra Jha quoted in *himalkhabar.com*, 21 February

SELECTED MATERIAL TRANSLATED EVERY WEEK FROM THE NEPALI PRESS



Smoking is Injurious to Health



A woman collects water at a public well at Patan Dhoka.

ALL PICS: SAM KANG LI

Running out...

Chronic shortages are beginning to take their toll both in the capital and throughout the country



A man scrambles to board a full microbus.



The Kumaripati petrol pump shuts early.



With nothing else left to do, microbus drivers play cards inside their vehicle while waiting for diesel at Kumaripati.



A shop assistant counts empty gas cylinders.



A girl carries water from a public tap.



A World Food Programme storage at Jhota in Bhajang. Here too supplies are running low.



Empty water cylinders are loaded to be taken away.

No safer

Women are still highly vulnerable to domestic violence

UMA KHANAL
in NAWALPARASI

Last month, four women in Rupandehi and Nawalparasi districts lost their lives due to domestic violence in the same week. In all these cases the husband and his family were involved.

Human rights activists and various organisations had declared Nawalparasi and Rupandehi domestic violence-free districts in the first week of December but a recent spate of wife murders suggests otherwise.

On 22 January, 23-year old Manauti Saru was killed with a sharp weapon by her husband, Sher Bahadur Saru, a police constable who was still on duty at the time. He disposed of Manauti's body in the Giruwari River, 3km away, with the help of his family. After Manauti's family filed charges against Sher Bahadur and his family, the police took them into custody.

In Pragatinagar (Nawalparasi), Ganesh Sapkota hanged his wife, Chandrakala Sapkota to death. On hearing about Chandra Kala's murder, her family too filed charges at the police station in Kawasoti. Police have arrested Ganesh and according to DSP Keshavraj Bhattarai, both cases are under investigation.

In another incident, 37-year old Resham Thapa beat his wife Krishna Thapa to death in the



DESPERATE MEASURES: Nawalparasi women protest police inaction at the recent spate of domestic murders.

UMA KHANAL

The government's failure to enforce justice is rapidly eroding its grip and may be contributing to Nepal becoming a failed state.

Intensive

JOHN NARAYAN PARAJULI in BELBARI, MORANG

As the transitional period drags on, spiraling lawlessness and impunity continue to erode the state's authority and capacity to get things done. While the seven parties are considering a truth and reconciliation bill, there are many who feel that the government has denied them justice by delaying it.

On 28 April 2006, indiscriminate army firing in Belbari, Morang, killed 6 people and 43 others, most of them innocent bystanders, sustained serious injuries. Two years on, no one has been punished or held to account.

Hem Sagar Dhakal, a young dentist who was standing just outside his clinic after seeing a patient, got hit in the head. He still has a piece of the shrapnel lodged in his skull. Doctors have warned that complications may arise if he tries to remove it here in Nepal.

The government gave him Rs 10,000 for treatment. But he has already spent more than Rs 200,000 from his own pocket. A neurologist in Kathmandu has advised him to go and see an expert in India and get the piece of the metal removed. "But it costs a lot and I can't afford it," says Dhakal. "It is very condescending. All the government has done so far is barely keep us alive," he laments.

In the same incident, a bullet whizzed through Gopal Chandra Gautam's cheek and popped out of his ear – knocking off his jaw and bursting his ear drum. He was in fact trying to hide in a safe place with some human rights activists, but that didn't help. A soldier deployed at the village bank started spraying bullets and one of them found its way to him. He continues to have problems opening his mouth.

As one meets more of the victims, the magnitude of this tragedy grows. There is real grief and pain here, but those at the helm seem too occupied with the grand

narrative of new Nepal to have time to do anything about it.

Firoz Khan, an Indian national who sold bangles, had his wedding planned for just twelve days later in Bihar. Not only did he lose mobility in one of his legs after the incident, but his fiancée left him.

A day after king Gyanendra conceded power to the parties, a group of locals went to thank the local army officials for avoiding any untoward incidents during the 19 days of uprising. The same night a local hotelier, Sapana Gurung, was gang-raped (a fact confirmed after DNA tests conducted by the parliamentary probe committee) by army personnel and later shot dead.

The next morning irate locals surrounded the joint security camp demanding action against the culprits. The army under the command of Captain Prahlad Thapa Magar resorted to firing indiscriminately at the crowd.

The parliamentary probe committee headed by Pari Thapa has just submitted a report indicting 28 officials including then chief district officer of Morang Narendra Dahal, police Superintendent Jagat Bahadur Bista, head of the Itahari-based army division Major General Om Bahadur Pun, head of the Bishnu Dal Battalion Sanu Tamang and Captain Prahlad Thapa Magar of Bishnu Dal.

Although the army says that captain Magar was suspended in the wake of the tragedy, locals claim that no action was taken against him and that he recently took a girl from Belbari as his wife.

Local political leaders say that the army was too trigger-happy. "The government's failure to act swiftly just adds to the growing culture of impunity in the country," said Iran Rai, a UML leader in the area.

At this rate, the government's actions or rather lack thereof may already be contributing to Nepal becoming a failed state. ●



LIVES REMEMBERED: Photographs of the seven people killed by the army in April 2006 hang in a bus shelter in Belbari.



Sabitri Gaudel, who was killed by her brother-in-law two years ago.

set free after paying Rs 600,000 in bribes. Ek Narayan has even managed to flee the country. Sabitri's family blame the carelessness of the police and the administration in letting Ek Narayan off scot-free.

The area police office in Nawalpur stated that the investigation into Chandrakala's murder took longer because her post-mortem report was inconclusive. Her body has been sent to Kathmandu for further investigation after Bharatpur Hospital failed to ascertain whether her death was a murder or not.

Police sub-inspector Yam Bahadur Bohara, who is investigating the two cases of domestic violence in Kawasoti says: "the recent rise in the number of domestic violence cases is because people believe that during this time of insurgency, any crime can be easily hidden."

"Inadequate laws, family background, social outlook towards women and lack of awareness amongst women are responsible for the increasing number of domestic violence," says Parvati Tiwari, a human rights worker and the chairman of Himwanti Nepal.

Gita Khanal, the sister of the deceased Chandrakala Sapkota says, "Men still think of women as subordinate to them." Gita fears that her sister's murderer will get away scot-free. ●

Laligurans Hotel in Butwal at 1AM. Krishna had taken her husband to Butwal for a medical check up. He was arrested on the spot and charges have been levelled against him.

After the series of domestic violence cases, women in Nawalparasi blocked the highway and demanded that the police and the administration take strong action against those responsible.

Legal advocate and journalist Hari Narayan Regmi says, "The increasing violence against women is the result of widespread poverty and lack of awareness amongst the people."

Two years ago, Ek Narayan Gaudel murdered his sister-in-law Sabitri Gaudel and was recently released from prison. Family sources claim he was

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impunity



JOHN NAYARAN PARAJULI



Gopal Raj Bhandari
1921-2008

Himalmedia mourns the passing away on 17 February of Gopal Raj Bhandari, founder of the Mercantile Group.



Lifting the veil

How to check charities actually do what they say they do

Suppose you are concerned about children in Africa dying from preventable diseases. You want to donate money to a charity that is working to reduce the toll. But there are many charities doing that. How do you choose?

The first thing that many people ask about charities is, "How much of my donation is spent on administration?" In the United States, that figure is readily available from Charity Navigator, a Web site that has five million users. But the information is taken from forms that the charities themselves complete and send to the tax authorities. No one checks the forms, and the proportions allocated to administration and program expenses are easily massaged with a little creative accounting.

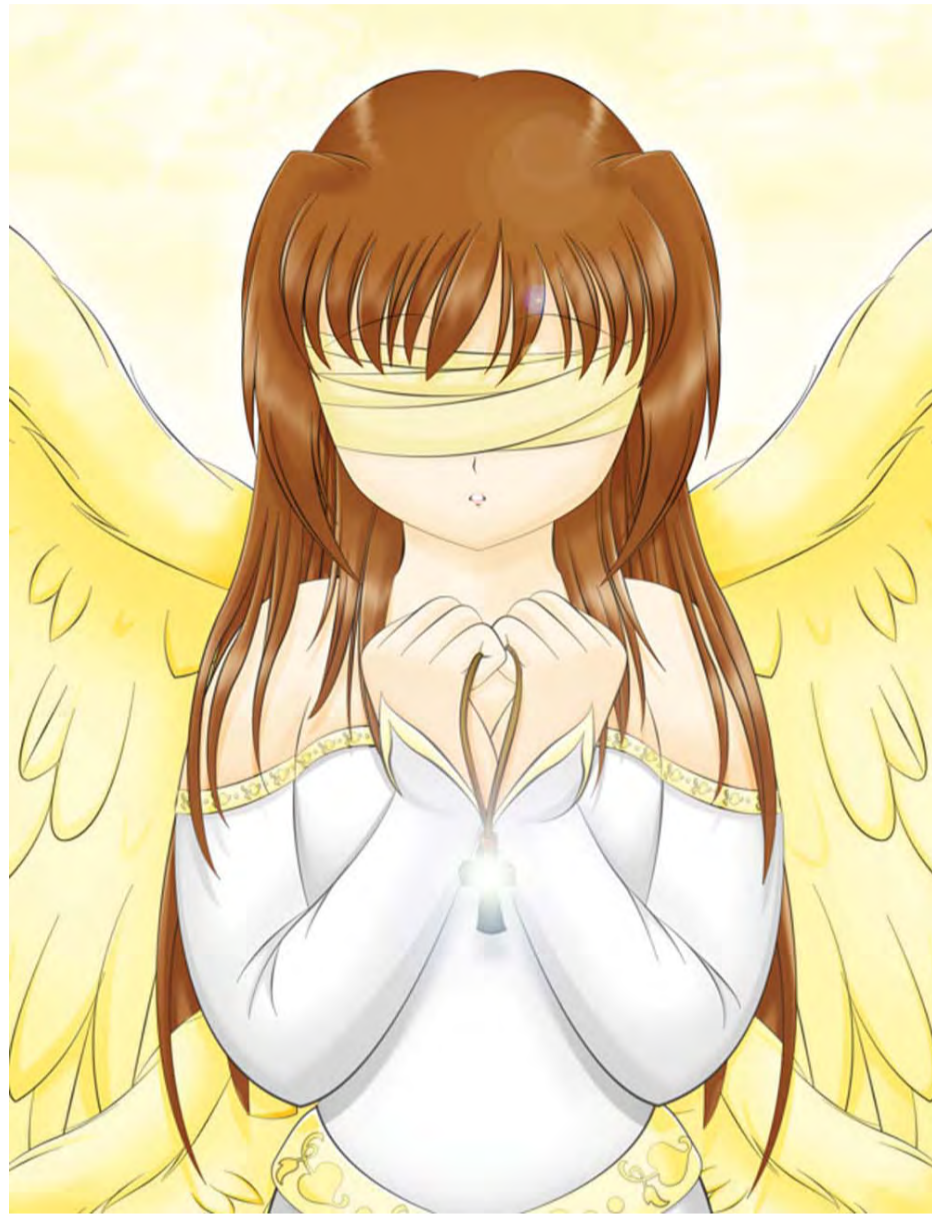


ANALYSIS
Peter Singer

Worse still, that figure, even if accurate, tells you nothing about the charity's impact. The pressure to keep administrative expenses low can make an organisation less effective. If, for example, an agency working to reduce poverty in Africa cuts staff with expert knowledge, it is more likely to end up funding projects that fail. It may not even know which of its projects fail, because evaluating them, and learning from mistakes, requires staff—and that adds to administrative costs.

In 2006, Holden Karnofsky and Elie Hassenfeld faced the question of which charity would make the best use of their money. They were in their mid-twenties, earning six-figure incomes at an investment company—more than they needed—and were thinking about donating money to help make the world a better place. As investment advisers, they would never recommend investing in a company without detailed information about how well it was achieving its goals. They wanted to make similarly well-informed choices about the charities to which they contributed.

So Karnofsky and Hassenfeld got together with six friends who also worked in finance and divided up the field to find out which charities could be shown to be



effective. They contacted organisations and received lots of attractive marketing material, but nothing that answered basic questions: what do the charities do with their money, and what evidence do they have that their activities help? They called many charities, but eventually realized something that seemed extraordinary: the information was just not there.

Some foundations said that information on their work's effectiveness was confidential. This, Karnofsky and Hassenfeld thought, is not a good way to go about charitable work. Why should

information about how to help people be secret? The fact that charities were unprepared for such questions indicated to Karnofsky and Hassenfeld that other donors and foundations give more or less blindly, without the information needed to make sound decisions about whom to support.

Karnofsky and Hassenfeld now had a new goal: to obtain and publicise the information. To that end, they founded an organisation called GiveWell so that other donors would not have as hard a time extracting it as they had had.

After raising \$300,000 from their colleagues, Karnofsky and Hassenfeld left their jobs and began working full-time for GiveWell and its associated grant-making body, The Clear Fund. They invited charities to apply for grants of \$25,000 in five broad humanitarian categories, with the application process demanding the kind of information that they had been seeking. In this way, a substantial part of the money they had raised would go to the most effective charity in each category, while simultaneously encouraging transparency and rigorous evaluation.

The first report on which organisations are most effective at saving or transforming lives in Africa is now available on GiveWell's website, www.givewell.net. Population Services International, which promotes and sells items like condoms, to prevent HIV infection, and bed nets, to prevent malaria, came out on top, followed by Partners in Health, an organisation that provides health care to poor rural populations. The third-ranked organisation was Interplast, which is more narrowly focused on correcting deformities like cleft palate.

Evaluating charities can be more difficult than making investment decisions. Investors are interested in financial returns, so there is no problem about measuring distinct values – in the end it all comes down to money. It is more difficult to compare the reduction of suffering brought about by correcting a facial deformity with saving a life. There is no single unit of value.

In other ways, too, evaluating charities takes time, and can be expensive. Perhaps for this reason, many organisations, including some of the best-known anti-poverty organisations working in Africa, did not respond to GiveWell's request for information. No doubt they calculated that a chance to get a \$25,000 grant wasn't worth it. But if donors start to follow GiveWell's recommendations, then a high ranking from GiveWell could be worth far more than the value of the grant.

This is why the potential of GiveWell is revolutionary. In the US, individual donors give about \$200 billion to charities each year. No one knows how effective that vast sum is in achieving the goals that donors intend to support. By giving charities an incentive to become more transparent and more focused on being demonstrably effective, GiveWell could make our charitable donations do much more good than ever before. ●
(Project Syndicate)

Peter Singer is professor of bioethics at Princeton University and the author of several books on the subject.



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One left foot



SAM KANG LI

SHEERE NG

Under the orange spot lights, Rashmi Kharel sways her body gracefully like a flickering candle flame, and her arms curve like ocean swells. It is only when she starts spinning, with her red skirt flaring like a lotus flower, that you realise the stunning performance has been executed with only one leg.

When she was seven years old, a public bus hit her while she was on the way home from school. After being thrown several metres, she collapsed. The driver immediately reversed his vehicle; not to save, but to kill her. Medical bills could build up to an exorbitant amount that a normal salaried worker can't afford. If an accident happens, it costs much less to compensate for death than for injury. In other words, it is cheaper to kill. Although the driver did not succeed, he ran over her right leg, injuring it so badly that it had to

be amputated.

It was an ironic blessing that Rashmi was very young when the accident happened. She got over the crying and grieving very quickly, even though adults were still lamenting her misfortune.

After the accident, she had to learn to walk all over again, with crutches made by her father. But she sees the walking aid as a hindrance rather than a help: "my friends would be playing *kabaddi* and it was impossible for me to play with crutches."

Our second meeting, which was at Bhrikuti Mandap, came one week after her performance. When I arrived outside the National Disabled Rehabilitation Centre, she grinned at me and hugged me like she had known me all her life. Dressed in a colourful white and yellow *kurta surwal*, Rashmi sat cross-legged on a white plastic chair during the interview. Whenever she's not dancing, she puts on her prosthetic.

The first time Rashmi tried dancing, she couldn't even balance herself. She fell, she cried. But fear got her back on her feet again. "I imagined my life without my parents to take care of me, which I knew would eventually happen," she said. At that point, dancing wasn't simply an interest. It was a test of her independence.

She would secretly memorise the steps whenever her friends danced, and lock herself in her room to practice. At 18, she signed up for a dance competition organised by Patan Campus. "My brother cried when he saw me dancing," she said. Her younger brother, who was a student at the campus at that time, closed his eyes throughout the performance. He was afraid that she would fall.

A young dancer proves that one leg is enough

Today, when Rashmi dances, not only eyes will be wide open, jaws will also follow suit. Her husband fell in love with her after he saw her performing on stage. "It's a love marriage," she said proudly.

The 23-year-old does not feel that the accident made her different from others, but instead, she thinks it had brought her closer to experiencing life. "Life is a struggle" she said, adding that everyone encounters their own set of challenges, and the pain she went through probably isn't unique to her.

She hopes to set up an arts school for the disabled in the near future, so that they too will be given a chance to showcase their talent. The dancer has not only convinced others to see her without being reminded of her disability, but has also proven the power of her will. Just like she said, there is nothing she cannot do—her perseverance and eventual success should stand as an example to anyone.

Rashmi has gone to Cambodia as one of the two representatives from Nepal to participate in a dance competition for the disabled in the Asian region. We wish her all the best! ●

Mughal-e-Hindustani

A regal romance, an epic bore

Director Ashutosh Gowariker keeps great interest in history but has no qualms about flouting historical accuracy. The wiles of his filmmaking were already evident in the charming *Lagaan* (2001), relating rural India's espousal of cricket as a patriot's wet dream. With *Jodhaa Akbar*, however, mired in controversy even before the release, he is finally learning the grim responsibility of historical representation.

Rajasthan was witness to protests against the film last week, claiming that *Jodhaa* is the wife not of Akbar but his son Jahangir. But let us not fuss—like the modern day progenies of the virile Rajputs and their VHP cohorts—about who Queen *Jodhaa* really was. Gowariker's researchers may not care that the misnomer comes mainly from the spurious source of the 1960 film *Mughal-e-Azam*, but suffice it to say that Akbar had a Hindu queen, daughter of Rajput, Raja Bharmal, who we will temporarily call *Jodhaa*.



CRITICAL CINEMA
Diwas Kc

Gowariker depicts this strategic marriage as an epic love story, perhaps to evoke the distant amiability of Hindus and Muslims in India. To find a 'good Muslim', acceptable to Hindus, it is as if the film had to hark back all the way to the Mughal Akbar (played by hunky Hrithik Roshan), whose good-heartedness is to be evinced by his love for Hindu *Jodhaa* (Aishwarya Rai). Akbar defies Islamic mores and the baddie Imams of his court to accommodate *Jodhaa*, even marrying her Hindu-style. The queen, who was in reality rechristened Mariam-uz-Zamani, does not even give up her name in the film. The only concession she makes to Islam is to write Akbar's name in Urdu, which neither of them can enunciate—Akbar because he is illiterate and *Jodhaa* because Hindu wives are not allowed to utter their husbands names.



What really went wrong for Gowariker is that, coming from an age of extreme Hindu-Muslim animosity, he was looking for drama where there was none. Akbar is an empire-builder, commander of innumerable brutal wars. But he is really a kind, liberal sort of person. *Jodhaa* is a fierce, assertive kind of princess, deft enough in swordplay to almost beat Akbar. She may protest being betrothed to a Muslim, but like a good Hindu girl, a champion of willful submission, she gives in without much drama. Her most outrageous demand is to be allowed to build a Krishna temple inside the Mughal palace, which is no ado for tolerant Akbar. Our main villain is Maham Anga (Ila Arun), a gross diminution of the actual figure, but even she is disposed half way through.

At the end (at which point you should congratulate yourself for having sat through), you will be left wondering how Gowariker even managed to fill the tedious length of three and half hours. The sets look opulent, but despite the monstrous budget of IRs 40 billion, the film stands as a dull imitation of the real court of Akbar. You may ask, where is Birbal and the *navaratas* of Akbar's court? Where is the bustle of artists, architects and poets? Where are the courtesans and the populous harem? Where, in fact, are the numerous other wives of Akbar?

To criticise these distortions is not to sanctify history. Accurate depiction can hardly be a basis to judge a work mostly meant as fiction and entertainment. But really, having taken the artist's license, Gowariker still manages to be dull. ●

JODHAA AKBAR

Director: Ashutosh Gowariker

Cast: Hrithik Roshan, Aishwarya Rai, Ila Arun, Kulbhushan Kharbanda.

2008. 200 min.

HIMAL
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COMPANY PROFILE

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- Fluency in English is a must, Nepali is a significant benefit
- Willingness to travel outside Nepal
- An appreciation of the challenges of working with a pioneering magazine that seeks to open up the field of Southasia-wide sales and marketing

ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Remains of a smile** sculptures and prints by Jamal Alafaghani, 11AM-5PM, until 28 February, at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited.
- ❖ **Metamorphosis** paintings by Christian Salzgeber, until 9 March, at the Indigo Gallery.
- ❖ **Design show** with Kripa Joshi and others at the Pulchok Bakery Café, curated by photo.circle, until 29 February.
- ❖ **Tibetan Lhosar photographs** by Daniel Collins at the Saturday Café, Boudhanath stupa, until 31 March.

EVENTS

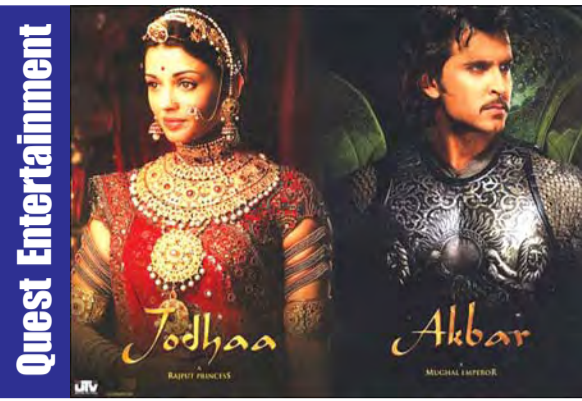
- ❖ **Taare Zameen Par** a film by Aamir Khan, 15 February, 5.30 PM at the Lazimpat Gallery Café. 4428549
- ❖ **School Bullying a talk program** by Niti Rana, 29 Feb at The New Era, Battispatali. 9851023958
- ❖ **ANFA politics and the future of football in Nepal** discussion with Lalit Krishna Shrestha, Indra Man Tuladhar, Niranjana Rajbhanshi and Hari Khadka at Martin Chautari, 3-5PM, 22 February. 4238050
- ❖ **Bingo Nights** at the Welcome Food Plaza, Darbar Marg, starts 6PM every Monday. 2337201
- ❖ **Play and Learn** German at the German Info and Culture Centre, Thamel. 4700832
- ❖ **Toastmasters** a communication and leadership program, organised by Kathmandu Toastmasters Club every Wednesday 6PM at Industrial Enterprise Development Institute (IEDI) building, Tripureswor. 4288847

MUSIC

- ❖ **Rob Garza with Jerry Julian and the Power of Joy** performing at 1905 Restaurant, fund raising program sponsored by WFP, 7PM on 23 February, Rs 1,000.
- ❖ **Jeremy Borthwick with Trouble Clef** live at Moksh
- ❖ **Anil Shahi** every Wednesday and Rashmi Singh every Friday, live at the Absolute Bar, Hotel Narayani Complex, 8PM. 5521408

DINING

- ❖ **Greek food festival** with chef Georios Vagionas, 7-10.30 PM, until 29 February at The Café, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Full moon night** with BBQ dinner and a short hike at the Shivapuri Heights Cottage, 22 February, Rs 1,550. 9851012245
- ❖ **Continental and Chinese** cuisine and complimentary fresh brewed coffee after every meal a Zest Restaurant and Bar, Pulchok.
- ❖ **Illy espresso coffee** at the Galleria cafe, every Friday espresso cocktails.
- ❖ **International four course buffet** at the Sunrise Café with a range of Boris' signature dishes at The Chimney, Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
- ❖ **Wine and Cheese** every Friday and Saturday at the Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency, 5-8PM. 4491234
- ❖ **Jazz in Patan** with coffee, food, drinks and dessert at the New Orleans Cafe, Jawalakhel. 11.30 AM-10PM. 5522708
- ❖ **Saturday special** barbeque, sekuwa, momos, dal-bhat at The Tea House Inn, Windy Hills, Nagarkot every Saturday. 9841250848.
- ❖ **Dice-licious brunch** at Kakori, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, roll the dice to the number of the day and get 50% discount on an individual meal, Saturdays and Sundays, 12.30-3.30 PM. 4273999
- ❖ **Scrumptious wood fired pizzas**, cocktails and specialty coffees at Roadhouse, Bhatbateni 4426587, Pulchok 5521755 and Thamel 4260187.
- ❖ **Cocktails and jazz** with the JCS Quartet and a choice of cocktails at Fusion – the Bar at Dwarika's. 4479448
- ❖ **Starry night barbecue** at Hotel Shangri-la with Live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs. 666.00 nett. per person, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 6.30 PM onwards. 4412999
- ❖ **Kebabs and curries** at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619
- ❖ **Calcutta's rolls, biryani, kebabs** Indian cuisine at Bawarchi, Bluebird Mall Food Court. 9741000735
- ❖ **Lavazza coffee** Italy's favourite coffee at La Dolce Vita, Thamel. 4700612
- ❖ **Little Britain coffee shop** fresh organic coffee, homemade cakes, WiFi internet, open all day, everyday. 4496207
- ❖ **Pizza** from the woodfired oven at Java, Thamel. 4422519



Jodhaa Akbar is a sixteenth century love story between the great Mughal emperor Akbar (Hritik Roshan) and a Rajput princess, Jodhaa (Aishwarya Rai Bachhan). Akbar marries Jodhaa to strengthen his relation with the Rajputs but gets more than he bargained for when he starts to fall in love with her. The daughter of King Bharmal, Jodhaa is a fiery Rajput and Akbar's biggest challenge will now be winning her love.

Call 4442220 for show timings at Jai Nepal
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WEEKEND WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

Thursday morning satellites pictures show a strong westerly front appearing in the western Himalaya, indicating a gradual break in the current dry weather. Although there have been sporadic rains in parts of eastern and western Nepal as results of collisions between the warm southerly and cold northerly winds, the Valley has remained completely dry for over a month but may now get part of its monthly quota early next week. Expect colder weekends as clouds emerge and a cold afternoon breeze brings down daytime temperature.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Fri	Sat	Sun
20-4	19-4	18-6

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GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Relax Package** with a one night stay, full buffet breakfast at The Café and access to Club Oasis at Hyatt Regency, until 29 February, Rs 5,000 plus taxes, valid only for Nepalis and local residents. 4489800
- ❖ **Fulbari Resort and Spa, Pokhara** Rs 10,999 for Nepali double, \$219 for expat double, two days and three nights package, with transportation from the airport, drinks, tennis and swimming, discounts on food and beverages.
- ❖ **Weekend getaways at Le Meridien, Kathmandu**, Resident Night Rs 4,999 and two nights package Rs 9,998. Also includes breakfast, lunch, dinner, spa facilities, swimming pool, steam sauna, Jacuzzi and gym facilities.

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

रेडियो सगरमाथा
एफएम १०२ थोप्लो ४ मेगाहर्ज

नेपाली रेडियो
नेपाली आवाज

हालचाल
ताजा सबर थाहा पाउन
हालचाल
विहान: ८.४५-११.४५
अपरान्ह: १.४५-४.४५
राति: ६.४५ र राती: ८.४५

अंग्रेजी सिक्न सघान्ने कार्यक्रम
Tuning In To Language and Culture
प्रसार हुने समय : हरेक शुक्रबार बेलुका (८:१५-८:३५)
हरेक आइतबार दिउँसो (१:४०-२:००)
"रेडियो सगरमाथा नियमित सुनी, अंग्रेजी सुधारी"
(रेडियो सगरमाथा र अमेरिकी राजदूतावास, अमेरिकी केन्द्रको सहकार्य)

सम्पर्क: ५२२८०६१, ५२२८२२२ पोस्ट बक्स: १६२८, ईमेल: info@radiosagarmatha.org

हरेक विहान ५:०० देखि राती ११:०० बजे सम्म सूचना शिक्षा र स्वस्थ मनोरञ्जनका लागि धरपर्दा साथी रेडियो सगरमाथा १०२ थोप्लो ४ मेगाहर्ज



KIRAN PANDAY

IF ONLY: No rest for motorcyclists queuing for hours to get petrol.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

OVERLOADED: The few buses running this week were packed to bursting.



KIRAN PANDAY

A GOOD SHOW: Nepal Army soldiers on parade at Democracy Day on Tuesday.



KIRAN PANDAY

MASQUERADE: Masked dancers represent Bhaktapur District at the Democracy Day celebrations.

LOADSHEDDING?

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Prachanda Bonaparte

News just in: protesters in the Tarai are running out of petrol for their petrol bombs. Hurrah, the government strategy is working. Heard on the gas queue: the reason there is no petrol is because there is no diesel, the reason there is no diesel is because there is no government.



It is a time-honoured Nepali tradition that whenever one political party wants to challenge another one, it goes to the people. And punishes them. Pretend I'm having an argument with you. Instead of hitting you I choose a passerby smaller than me and smack him on the nose. Seeing that, the chap I'm having an argument with also pulls a small kid out of the crowd and bashes him up.



That is how our politicians have always behaved and that is how they are behaving now. Madhesi parties want their six demands fulfilled, so they declare a war on their own people and shut down the Tarai. Farmers aren't able to sell their produce, and Madhesis have suffered a lot more than anyone else. As long as it is poor Madhesis, leaders don't care.

Kathmandu also has a gas shortage, but that's not because

of the Madhes. It's because we have such a bunch of bungling idiots running this country. Even an Ass would do a better job. Ass for president.



Is it just the Ass or do many of you out there also notice the growing resemblance between our Eternal President, Prachanda Bonaparte, and Joseph (Uncle Joe) Stalin? But if Comrade Chairman would shave his moustache he would actually look like Great Leader Kim Il-Sung. Comrade Jit Bahadur is reportedly not pleased with the personality cult being built around President Lotus Flower, but can't say so in public.



For those of you who are a bit behind on the fraternal relations between the DPRK and GONE, Maharababu went to the North Korean birthday bash and looked mighty uncomfortable when his host not just shook hands but entwined his fingers in those of our Honourable Informatics Minister and wouldn't let him go for most of the evening. This must be what they call the Juche Idea.



The Ass mailbox is full of crackpot fans who send in unsolicited gossip, most of

which is so libelous that it can't be published. But one of you has sent in a brainwave, which if implemented would solve our electricity crisis overnight. The only problem is: do we have the political will to implement it? 'How about,' writes the correspondent, 'giving every one of the 18,954 Maoists in the cantonments a stationary bicycle with a dynamo so that they can pedal away and generate some electricity?'

Wonder why the NEA hadn't thought of that one before. This way, the young comrades could get some

exercise and shed some of that accumulating flab and the cantonments could be hooked up to the grid. The Ass' back of the envelope calculation shows at least 5 megawatts can be generated in this way, enough to light all the liquor billboards on Bagmati Bridge.



The Maoist members of the Joint Monitoring Team get the UN's subsistence allowance of \$300 a day, but apparently don't spend a cent of it during their inspection visits and lets UNMIN pick the hotel tab. Whether it goes to the party

coffers or into the JMT member's own pocket is not clear, but one wonders where relatives are getting the dough to make the down payment to the manpower companies to go to Malaysia and attend computer classes. Also, the JMT comrades have now changed their revolutionary ringtones on their mobiles. Now they have the hit song from 'Dhoom' like the rest of us.



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