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**Times** nepalnews.com  
Weekly Internet Poll # 406

Q. What do you predict will happen if the parties keep squabbling like this?

Total votes: 4,140

Its normal	17%
No development	18.9%
No constitution	12.1%
Peace process collapse	51%

Weekly Internet Poll # 407. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

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**GETTING ACROSS:** Women in Sunsari cross the Kosi last week to buy cooking oil, salt and kerosene from a market on the other side. Nepalis have been hit hard by soaring food prices, and look to the new rulers in Kathmandu for relief.

MOHAN MAINALI

# Now, the people

With the politics finally getting sorted out, time to focus on the economy

The political stalemate that had prevented the formation of a new government eased somewhat with the seven-party agreement on Wednesday.

The 21-point deal is now in the Constituent Assembly as a fifth amendment bill, and members are trying to expedite the process to have a vote by Sunday. After that the Assembly can elect a president, vice-president and chairman by a simple majority.

Although Prime Minister Koirala has said he will hand over to a new president: who that president will be and when s/he will be installed is still up in the air.

The political parties compromised after more than a month of hard-bargaining on

issues ranging from the constitutional amendment, demilitarisation of the YCL, PLA integration and other matters. The two intractable points: selection of the president and the opposition membership in the National Security Council were deferred to an assembly vote.

The UML-Maoist alliance, however, may not be as smooth as earlier believed. Although the UML seems to think the appointment of Madhab Nepal is a cut and dry deal, Maoist leaders have kept everyone guessing. This is making some in the UML nervous that they have been taken for a ride.

One Maoist leader said privately that his party would never agree to Nepal as president, and that was just a

ploy to get the UML on board. This is creating a serious rift within the UML between those who have serious misgivings about Maoist intentions, and the party leadership of Jhlanath Khanal which sees internal advantages from the alliance.

"Everything is still pretty much up in the air, don't be surprised if it is Sahana Pradhan, or Ram Raja's name coming back as frontrunners," said one UML leader.

Now that the politics is being finally sorted out, Nepal's private sector is hoping that the next government will get right down to business. In a *Nepali Times* forum this week (see p4), leading industrialists, bankers and investors said the new government had an opportunity to make a clean break from the

failed policies of the past and bring about a "paradigm shift" on the economy.

They were unanimous in calling for a clear strategy to take advantage of agriculture, hydropower, manpower and tourism in which Nepal has a

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competitive advantage. They said a common minimum understanding between the parties was necessary so politics doesn't spill out into the streets and drag down business. ●  
Kunda Dixit

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# Less miserable

## Bihar's poor are better off than Nepal's poor

### IT'S THE ECONOMY, SILLY

There isn't much left to say about the political disarray that we haven't already said in the past two years. Dispensing advice from this pulpit is a pretty futile exercise. In the end, it looks like whatever anyone says, the political parties will always be obsessed with their game of musical chairs.

This week, student wings of the main parties were at the forefront of street anarchy over bus fare discounts. Are the hooligans who harassed commuters and vandalised vehicles under the control of their parent parties or not? Is this what we are going to see for the next two years? At last count, there were eight other agitations going on simultaneously this week, including by transport owners, gas station owners, tanker drivers, civil service unions and finally the four microscopic parties that enforced a strike by vandalising vehicles on Thursday morning. Politicians were too busy with their parlour games to care.

Touch wood, there will finally be an agreement on a president so we can move ahead and form a government to focus on the main agenda: the economy. The first order of business is to tackle the statelessness, and consequent lawlessness, spreading across the land. High school students, agitated at the delay in getting textbooks, bring the nation's highway artery to a standstill for days. A minor traffic accident paralyses the entire tarai. A greedy, high-handed transport cartel in Pokhara stones and damages tourists buses (with tourists in them) and the police blames the bus owners. There is a mutiny in an Armed Police base.

The new government must stop this nonsense. It must immediately move to exert its presence and restore the rule of law. There must be an urgent and strict moratorium on highway chukka-jams, hartals, bandhs and gheraos. (Incidentally, these are all words that we have borrowed from south of the border, along with the political culture that they represent.)

At a Himalmedia Roundtable on Sunday captains of industry laid out priorities that should guide the economic policy of the next government (p 4). There is apprehension that Nepal's regime change also represents an ideological shift, and there will be a temptation to flirt with utopian undertakings and showcase populism.

Actually, the country's economy is in such a precarious state because of past abuse. It will need a dose of realism in the short-term, hard-nosed determination in the medium-term and visionary pragmatism in the long-term.

The private sector is clear about what is needed to immediately start creating jobs: unleashing investment in areas of core national competencies like agriculture, hydropower, manpower and tourism. The budget drafters better get cracking. No matter who comes to power, out of enlightened self-interest if nothing else, please keep your dirty politics out of the economy.

DHANUSHA—For the past month the NC and its cheerleaders in the media have been telling the Maoists: "accept GPK as president or prove your majority." But the Maoists have outsmarted them yet again by winning over the UML and



TARAI EYE  
Prashant Jha

showing they can play the numbers game better than the others. The Kathmandu knot is slowly untangling.

Both the importance and futility of Baluwatar and Baneswor politics can be felt most acutely here in the Dalit *basti* of Lohana, just 10km from Janakpur in Dhanusha district. There is hope that a new government will bring change, but there is futility because of the realisation it will not.

First, the good news: untouchability is not as blatant here anymore, especially with the Dusahad and Musahar communities. Brahmans and Yadavs still do not eat with

them, and intermarriage is out of the question, but notions of purity and impurity are gradually changing, especially among younger people.

Life is tough. Most people live on a meal a day. Children do not go to school because textbooks are too expensive. A landless labourer earns 6 kg of rice a day, but in the off season he can earn Rs 100 a day as a construction worker and the women get half that. A few Dalit families have some land, but they do not always have the money for fertiliser and seeds.

They haven't benefited from foreign employment because they just can't afford the recruiters' fees. It is the intermediate castes, Muslims, and increasingly upper castes who are going out to Malaysia and the Gulf. The poorest have to make do with work in Janakpur, or Punjab. Subsistence is all they can aspire to.

Talk to the Dalits of Lohana or a poor rickshaw-puller in Rupani in Saptari district, go to a meeting of the landless in Dhalke or spend time with a woman vegetable-seller in Sarlahi's

Lalbandi, and two themes immediately emerge.

The first is the multiple claims being made on a weak and dysfunctional state. Diverse voices look to Kathmandu to demand their share of the pie: we want free education; we want a functioning health post; we want land. At least give us the public land lying fallow, we want housing and food.

The Nepal poor

also envy India's poor. There is a sense that the Indian state treats its citizens a lot better. The marginal farmer in the Tarai often looks to the other side and sees ration cards, a fertiliser subsidy, government housing and school midday meals. "When will our *sarkar* do this for us?" asks a mill worker in Biratnagar.

This may be a romantic vision of the Indian situation, for such schemes mostly exist only on paper. But the judgement is valid to an extent. Mohammed Riaz, a Joghani rickshaw-puller says: "Our children go to school and get *khichdi* to eat, we have houses under the Indira Awas Yojana."

In Champanagar village in India's Purnea district, about 100km from Biratnagar, most Dalits and Santhals have ration cards meant for families living below the poverty line. These allow them to buy up to 20kg of rice at IRs2/kg from the local government shop. Even with leakage and corruption, they can get a portion at subsidised rates.

Champanagar, population 10,000, receives Rs 3-4 million per year for development work. Roads are in relatively good shape and children of poor families, across all castes, study in school together. Houses have tin roofs, and agriculture appears more profitable: maize is cultivated along with paddy and wheat during the year, and the government guarantees minimum prices.

Bihar is synonymous with inefficiency, corruption and rotten governance, but the Bihari poor are better off than the Nepali poor because India still has a semblance of a welfare state. That should tell the new government in Kathmandu where its priorities must lie. ●



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARAYA

# Absolute anarchy

## Does the UML's left arm know what its left palm is doing?

The high drama at Shamsheganj APF barracks ended this week when Home Ministry officials surrendered to mutineers. The government did succeed in securing the release of 17 officers taken hostage by their own jawans, but it had to sign a humiliating agreement with the rebellious policemen. This has set a precedence too dangerous even to contemplate.



STATE OF THE STATE  
C K Lal

Residents of Sisdole have been blackmailing the Kathmandu municipality for more and more concessions for the privilege of hosting our garbage. Every few months dump trucks carrying trash to the landfill site are obstructed. Kathmandu is forced to wallow in its own waste. A new set of demand is put forth, and the government relents yet again.

Students blocked highways and stoned vehicles the whole month because text books hadn't reached them in time. Another set of student unions took to the streets to demand hefty discounts in bus fares. Hoodlums of the bus cartel brought Nepal to a standstill because the government was not allowing them to fleece customers at will. A patient died when protesters stoned a car ferrying him to hospital. Several tourists were injured when buses bringing them back to Kathmandu were vandalised in Pokhara.

Suddenly, there are no Maoists to blame for these excesses. The YCL is nowhere to be seen. The APF voted overwhelmingly UML. Sisdole is a UML stronghold. Students affiliated to the UML were at the forefront of the textbook protests, ironically after the UML education minister resigned.

The transportation cartel is dominated by UML-friendly entrepreneurs and student unions protesting the rise in bus fares were led by the student wing of UML.

The Maoists may be masters in the game of manipulating the rural masses, but when it comes to stoking the fires of urban unrest, agent-provocateurs of the Balkhu Palace have no equals.

There were a few spontaneous bandas during the People's Movement of 1990. But bandas in their present form (involuntary closures strictly enforced by organised groups of trained vandals) was invented by the UML in 1991 to compel the majority government of Girija Prasad Koirala to resign.

The month-long protests in July 2001, which laid the groundwork for the suspension of 1990 constitution, was also the handiwork of Balkhu strategists. The UML's intentions back then were quite clear: it wanted to defame and delegitimise the NC. But what do they want now by resorting to tactics that threaten to weaken the state itself? Does the UML's left arm know what its left palm is doing?

Anarchists want to abolish the state, by

persuasion if possible and by force if necessary. Marxists would let it wither away as the state is gradually replaced by the community through a combination of revolution and evolution. In the Leninist interpretation of Engels' prescriptions, the proletariat 'puts an end to the state as the state' by assuming all state powers. In the Maoist scheme of things, sabotage of everything is justified in order to prepare the ground for the emergence of a New Helmsman.

Who is using whom in the UML-Maoist alliance? Is it the former Secretary General of Jhupali Naxals, Jhalnath Khanal, or is it the present Chairman of the Maoists, PK Dahal? The private duel that their public camaraderie hides will probably create more problems in the coming days. The marginalisation of Koirala, the person the urban intelligentsia love to hate the most, will leave the stage open for the two left parties to try to outmaneuver each other. ●

LETTERS

WARNING

Brave and well-argued editorial ('Prime Minister Dahal', #404). Our politicians must start planning for economic development otherwise even Lord Pashupatinath won't be able to help our future rulers. Don't say we didn't warn you.

Megh Gurung, Pokhara

It is ridiculous to see the so-called civil society of Kathmandu pursuing the single agenda of humiliating the royal family even after its hasty derecognition ('Same old Nepal', #404). The handful of ultra-revolutionary socialites seem to need an enemy and have chosen the mother and grandmother of the ex-monarch. It's a sheer disgrace that civil society is not more concerned about the people's woes: the petroleum crisis, the transportation stoppage, soaring food prices, deforestation, lack of books in schools. Come on, the civil elites pay attention to the statelessness otherwise you will be seen as 'uncivil society'.

P Sharma, Mumbai

Well I guess getting rid of the monarchy didn't solve all the problems did it? What a waste of effort. Other than squabbling over position and power, nothing will change. Same old faces, leading thousands of sheep down a path of destruction as always. But let's not blame anyone, we voted these people in, we are accountable.

A Bhandari, Sydney

ENGLISH MEDIUM

After reading 'Reading, writing, arithmetic, revolution' (#404) it struck me that English should be the medium of instruction in all government schools. It would certainly be a large scale operation but I think it would be worth it. All Nepali high school graduates, and even some dropouts would be able to speak some English and it would certainly go a long way in improving job prospects of Nepalis in the Gulf, Malaysia and the rest of the world. I work in Qatar and see Nepalis toiling in the desert heat for meagre salaries while their Filipino counterparts work

inside air conditioned offices. It goes without saying the latter get paid much more. New political parties may claim they will solve all of Nepal's woes in 10-40 years but what do we do till then? Making Nepalis competent communicators in English would help compete in higher education and the overseas job market.

Manohar Budhathoki, email

RURAL HEALTH

As a medical officer in Dhulikhel I was moved after reading 'Stopping the haemorrhage' (#403). In a developing country like ours, the rural areas is where health care is needed most. Nepal now produces a lot of doctors, and every year more are returning from Bangladesh and China. How do we get them to serve in the districts? After reading the article, I felt glad that I am serving Nepal where my services are most required.

Name withheld, email

RULE OF LAW

A much needed piece ('Work in progress', #404) to open discussion on this topic. As a legal practitioner, my take is that among a host of other factors, two critical elements in establishing rule of law are missing in Nepal i)

dearth of impartial/neutral trial of cases ii) lack of enforcement mechanisms So even if we write the most comprehensive, substantive and procedural law for our country, rule of law will keep evading our society as long as judges are biased and tainted and as long as our enforcement apparatus remains tenuous.

Chanda Thapa, email

CORRECTION:

Due to a layout error, the results of the Nepali Times Internet Poll in #404 got mixed up with the previous week's. The correct results are:

How do you think the government handled the king's departure from Naryanhiti?

Smoothly	40.3%
As expected	24.8%
Botched	34.9%
Total votes:	3943



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# BUDGET 2008

"If you plan for the worst, then you do well if things get better."

The people have very high expectations of the new government, but it faces immediate challenges of resolving the food and fuel crisis. Participants from the business community at a Budget Roundtable organised by *Himal Khabarpatrika* and *Nepali Times* on Sunday said the coming budget should bring about a paradigm shift in governance and development priorities and spur investment. Excerpts from the discussions:



### BINOD CHAUDHARY (Chaudhary Group)

Preparations for the budget are happening at a time when no one knows who will take ownership of it. The Finance Ministry's Budget Division is working with very little political guidance. But this budget provides an opportunity for new ideas to take shape. The question is, will a new

government be formed in time for the budget?

This time, there are multiple crises: inflation is in the double digits, neither the consumers nor the dealers are happy with the fuel price increase, there is a food crisis, Nepal's exports to India are plummeting and this year alone we sold dollars to buy INR 200 billion to finance imports, export of vegetable oil to India has stagnated and industries are being closed down. This winter, there will be a crippling electricity shortage.

Meanwhile, the government-in-waiting plans to employ 1 million youth in 4,000 villages and increase grants to local governments to Rs 2.5 million. But governance capacity has gone down and only half the Rs 30 billion for development in the last budget has been spent. Rapid growth requires investment: both in infrastructure, manufacturing and services. But to have 20 percent economic growth, we need to spend Rs 500 billion a year. It's not just a question of getting and setting aside the money, can we spend it?

There are ways to immediately raise living standards: by training 50,000 workers so instead of earning \$150 a month they earn \$300. That alone will double remittances. The bill to allow private sector into the petroleum sector has been pending for two years. There are applications in the ministry for 28,000MW worth of energy, yet there is a power crisis.



### ANIL SHAH (Nabil Bank)

As a nation we have gone through revolutionary change, people's expectations are very high. The new budget must try to meet some of these expectations, and it should reflect the economic philosophy of a Nepal. The question is, will it do so by making the rich poor and bring everyone down to the lowest

common denominator, or by making the poor richer?

The priority now is to restore business confidence, reassure people that private wealth is safe so as to stop capital flight. Then you have to try to bring that capital back. Only in the third stage do you start trying to encourage FDI.

Our economic vision should concentrate on our core strengths: agriculture, tourism, services sector and infrastructure. Agriculture productivity can be enhanced not by redistribution, but consolidation of farms. In tourism, visitor numbers are not enough, what is the yield? The services sector, IT and banking have great potential, but banks can't be penalised for good performance by further raising taxes. Then, for double digit growth there must be investment in cement and hydropower. Nepal is now the 39<sup>th</sup> most populous country in the world, manpower should be seen as an asset not a liability, and we must try to increase the earning potential of our migrant workers through vocational education.

Whoever comes to power, they have a two year

window to deliver, otherwise the moderates will be replaced by radicals. The Maoists are the largest party, let's give them a chance to prove themselves. We have to therefore completely change the way we do business, business as usual is the path to ruin. Perhaps one way is to set up an independent economic thinktank to come out with implementation strategies to advise the government.



### RAJENDRA KHETAN (Khetan Group)

What were the aspirations of the people during the Jana Andolan of April 2006? They wanted peace, development, end of discrimination, jobs, rule of law? They felt an election to a Constituent Assembly was the path to achieve these. But today, they are already starting to get disillusioned. The rich aren't so

badly affected by the crisis, and their wealth is growing, but the poor are getting poorer and this is an untenable situation.

The future government must try to meet the people's aspirations with the new budget by encouraging business so jobs are created. Cost of doing business here is already too high, we aren't competitive because of the size of economy and transportation complications. It's not just capital that is leaving the country, so are people.

On the positive side, a solution will likely be reached and we will have a new government. Now there has to be a common minimum understanding on economic policies so that businesses can be assured of a certain level of stability and increase their confidence level. We must start planning for post-WTO and attract investment in areas of comparative advantage to create jobs.

The government should stop taxing the sectors that are doing well, and bring those not in the tax bracket within it. For economic growth, it should trigger a paradigm shift by agreeing on a common minimum program to support investment, keep the government out of business, lower the chain of command to give a free hand to the private sector. And stop thinking that only FDI is investment, there are also domestic investors.



### KUMUD DUGAR (KL Dugar Group)

The country is a mess, and only multinationals with a market in India are doing well. Within Nepal, we suffered 180 days of shutdowns in the past year, some 90 percent of manufacturing industries have closed. The only reason some of us have survived is because the prices of some products have gone up.

Hydropower has long been gestating, tourism depends on stability. For immediate impact, we have no alternative but to address agriculture, on which 80 percent of the population depends. We must stop the fragmentation of landholdings and go for large-scale farming through land reform and mass production in agro-based industries. We must encourage value-added products. For example, the same farmer with the same land and same labour cost earns five times more if he switches from coarse rice to basmati. This way, farmers will benefit from the rise in food prices.

Our parties have only talked, there are no results. It is getting late for the politicians to deliver. They should think of high impact programs for short-term, medium-term and long-term impact. Business shouldn't be regarded with suspicion. I could take my business to India where there are better incentives, but I am here because I am a Nepali. Our transit cost is very high, we can improve it immediately by turning the Birgunj dry port into a full port and use the Bombay port for export and import at lower costs.

For immediate double digit growth, investment in agriculture can change the scenario, for the medium term we have to focus on hydropower and in the longterm, investment in infrastructure. We need a 'Vision 2020'.



### KAMRAN BAKR (Unilever)

We must figure out where we want the economy to move? If we go the service route, we have to remember that we need better education. We have to move up the value chain, through vocational training. It is a globalised world economy and to compete with countries in the region we must have a model that takes people to the next

level of experience. Nepal borders the fastest growing countries in the world, in every budget in India and China there are new tax incentives for industries. In Nepal, budgets only add to the tax burden. Why should the investors come here if they can get a tax holiday and other incentives elsewhere? We seem to be waiting for things to happen, but things will not happen on their own. If you want to promote manufacturing, you need to see incentives for manufacturing in the budget.

It will be foolhardy to expect things to change overnight, but we can start the process of recovery through a package of incentives for investors. We are at a very critical juncture, and the private sector must be seen as a partner in growth and job creation.



### SANJIB RAJ BHANDARI (Mercantile)

The next budget will be seen as a political document irrespective of which government announces it. Therefore it will be closely watched by businesses within and outside the country. People vote with their wallets: will there be capital flight and human flight? Will the new government

treat the private sector as a class enemy or as a partner?

We have to reconcile ourselves to the fact that even if there is peace in this country there won't be stability in the foreseeable future. You don't need a great deal of stability for growth, but ours is a unique country both in politics and economy. Energy producing countries around the world are predominantly unstable. So instability alone will not deter investors in the energy sector. People are willing to risk it because the rewards are so high. Manufacturing tends not to do very well in periods of instability, but as long as there is no state of war we can still progress. Even tourism flourishes in instability as long as there is no violence. This and subsequent budgets should plan for several years of instability. If you plan for the worst, then you'll do damn well if things get better.



### DIWAKAR GOLCHHA (Golchha Group)

You can't expect one budget to work miracles overnight. This budget has to meet the expectations of the people for a dramatic improvement in their lives. But the budget will be coming at a time of crises. The new ideology has been promising the world, now they will have to deliver on those

promises. Snatching land and doing some showcase redistribution will not work. We need a clear economic roadmap for the next 10-15 years and we will have to work in an environment where politics will dominate discourse and there will be hung parliaments.

The reforms after 1990 were private-sector led, but the deterioration after that can't just be blamed on the Maoist war, the politicians and ministers had a rent-seeking mentality and forgot that they were elected to serve the people. One legacy of that is the current electricity crisis.

Sri Lanka had an insurgency, but investors still flocked in. People are not investing in Nepal primarily because of government indecisiveness.

PICS: MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

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MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

# Umpire or player?

## The government can't be both

Early this week, *Nepali Times* and *Himal Khabarpatrika*, organised a discussion session on the upcoming national budget with leading businessmen (yes, they were all men). The session turned out not so much about the budget as about what the businessmen want the government to do and be (see p 4). They want it to make



**STRICTLY BUSINESS**  
Ashutosh Tiwari

and enforce rules in a transparent and predictable manner. They want it to be an umpire in the competitive game of business. They do not want it to be both the umpire and a player as it often is in Nepal.

The rest, the businessmen said, they can do themselves: whether it's finding new business opportunities, or lining up finances, or offering competitive services to urban and rural customers, or partnering with international firms to offer better products domestically and globally.

Should the new government, which is about to be formed in a few days by the Maoists, pay attention to what the businessmen want? Yes, as these three examples amply show.

Exhibit 1: In the late 1980s, India was not the country that enjoyed over eight per cent growth per year that we know of today. All business-related changes required bureaucrats' approvals, and India's then leading businessmen spent more time visiting politicians than customers. There was no such thing as the great Indian IT industry. By contrast, with guidance from foreign managers, Nepal-based IT programmers were already making and selling software abroad. In 1992, some of them introduced email technologies, which they started selling commercially, even before Indian businessmen did the same in India. And in 1995, *The Kathmandu Post* became the first newspaper in Asia to upload its contents everyday for distribution on the worldwide web.

The dispersion and the use of these computer-enabled communication technologies grew in Nepal not because of directives from the Ministry of Communications but due to the

ingenuity of Nepali businessmen who sought profits by offering new services that customers bought.

Fast-forward to 2008. The government controls all the licensing processes that go into the development of Internet-related infrastructure. What's more, to sell Internet-services, it competes for customers with private-sector players. No wonder with the government's playing the role of both the controller and a player with advantages, its attention is diluted, and its pet project, the so-called IT Park, grows grass, not software, in Banepa. Today, the vast gulf between the achievements of the Indian and the Nepali IT industries is plain for all to see. As we all know, the government mostly stayed away from being a player in the IT industry.

Looking back, if only our government had limited its involvement in the IT sector to the role of an umpire, who knows what further innovations our competitive businessmen could have brought faster to spread the use of IT all across Nepal at affordable rates?

Exhibit 2: Whenever Nepali newspapers talk about the blacklist of bank defaulters, they neglect to mention that the defaulters owed money primarily to government-run banks. Privately-run banks are better at collecting dues, and doing more with less, simply because they are answerable to specific owners who want profits.

By contrast, every time the Prime Minister shuffled his cabinet, a new set of masters was thrust upon government-run banks, which, over time, learnt to give out loans based on which borrower knew which higher-ups. Is it any wonder that wonder that the government has kept two of its flagship banks into receivership for the past several years? Again, there was this confusion about the government's role. In the name of providing banking services to the poor, should it remain a player in the banking sector? Or, would it have been better off putting state-run banks in private hands so that the government could concentrate on ways to make it easier for financial institutions to provide new and better services to more people? After all, it remains that half a century after banks were introduced in Nepal, only 33 per cent of the population makes use of some form of formal financial services.

Exhibit 3: Recently students at state-

run schools across Nepal have turned into rioters. Their complaint is that they did not receive textbooks in time to start classes and to prepare for exams. The students know that passing exams and getting through school are two conditions for success in today's world. But their anger was not directed at textbook stores or schools but at the government which monopolises the business of printing and distributing textbooks.

It's sad when young students have to go on a rampage and block highways to demand to buy textbooks. The government's not so agile that it could even think about putting the textbooks online or speeding up the distribution process through other channels. But this is what happens when it refuses to focus on the big picture (i.e. making sure that Nepali students know their three R's well), and gets caught up in the minutiae that could easily be handled by private firms.

The businessmen at the *Himamedia* discussion session were all veterans of the Nepali industry. They have dealt with governments of all eras of Nepal's recent 50-year history: pre-Panchayat, Panchayat, post-1990, former king Gyanendra's absolute rule, and the present interim one of post-Jana Andolan 2. In all cases, with varying degrees, they found the government of the day having a narrow worldview of the world of business—seeing businessmen as either exploiters or cows that could be milked endlessly. Despite paying lip service to satisfy reform-pushing donors, no government has accepted the business sector as the engine of growth and a source to generate employment.

On the eve of the Maoists' takeover of the Nepali government through the strength they showed at the ballot box, it's worth highlighting the collected wisdom of businessmen: for the growth of New Nepal's economy, let us learn from the mistakes of the past. And the best way to do that is to let the government be clear about its limited and transparent role as an enforcer of rules or as an umpire. Let it not meddle into the game of business as a player. Else, to play on an old joke, 'Nepal is a country full of potential, and it will always remain so.' ●

## Sun light

The solar tuki light and solar dryer projects won an award, on behalf of the centre for renewable energy (CRE), from the World Bank-funded *lau na aba ta kehi garaun* initiative along with 24 other proposals at a function in Kathmandu on 24 June. The award was worth Rs.1.5 million.

## Connect2earth

[www.connect2earth.org](http://www.connect2earth.org), launched jointly by WWF and IUCN and supported by Nokia, is a site where young people have their say on the environment by uploading videos, pictures and comments. Users

vote for a monthly winner of a Nokia mobile phone and the overall winner will get the chance to participate in the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Barcelona this October and present his or her ideas to political, environmental and business leaders from around the world.

## Real winner

Winners of the Real fruit juice 'Guess the Real flavour of the week' competition received their awards at a prize ceremony at the Soaltee Crowne Plaza Hotel. The Mega Bumper winner of the Star Cruise vacation was Anjali Rajopadhyaya.



## New steel

India's Kamdhenu Ispat and Nepal's Maruti Nandan Rolling Mills recently began a joint-venture to produce TMT steel bars. Khamdhenu will provide Maruti Nandan with world-class techniques to manufacture high-quality steel.



## NEW PRODUCTS

FLAME: TVS recently launched its Flame 125 in Nepal with the promotional scheme "Ride the Flame" offering the chance to win colour tvs and gift hampers with each test ride. The bike flaunts sporty DeltaEdge styling and is priced at Rs 1,35,487 (disk brake) or Rs 1,30,428 (drum brake).

RINGS: Are a fun snack in a new shape that carries the freshness of cheese. The product was recently launched by Chaudhary group.



SCOOTER: The Kinetic Flyte, produced in collaboration between India's Kinetic Motors and Taiwan's SYM, was recently launched in Nepal. This gearless scooter features easy front-fuelling, an anti-theft magnetic key, and a 125cc four-stroke engine with eight bhp power output. The introductory price has been set at Rs1,24,900.

FORESTER: Vijay Motors recently launched the new Subaru Forester 2009 model, a stylish new design with more interior space and increased fuel efficiency.



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# Ethnic representation

Om Gurung in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 15-29 June

हिमाल

The people have made clear their desire for change by electing original inhabitants, women, Madhesis, dalits and oppressed groups and communities. Now that the first CA meeting has approved of Nepal as a Federal People's Republic, the country needs to move from centralised monarchical rule to an inclusive and secular state.

The CA polls have provided a positive result for the ethnic communities. Out of the 240 seats in the direct election, 79 ethnic candidates (32.9 per cent) have won seats. Similarly, out of 335 candidates in the PR, 120 (35.8 per cent) of those elected belong to various ethnic groups. Over all, ethnic candidates have won 199 seats, which makes 34 per cent of the total number of seats. A few more candidates are expected to be nominated by the prime minister for the 26 remaining seats.

A good number of ethnic candidates have represented each party, including 93 from the CPN-M, 37 from the NC, 36 from the UML and 7 from the MJF. In the CA elections, 191 women (33 per cent), 117 Madhesis (20 per cent), 49 Dalits (9 per cent) and 16 Muslims (3 per cent) have been elected. The representation of the Brahmin-Chettri has come down to 34 per cent whereas the representation of women, dalits and oppressed groups has gone up. This can be seen as a historical turn in Nepali politics.

The various ethnicities have taken the CA elections as the most democratic way of building a new state structure. They pressured the government to adopt a proportional representation system but the parties disagreed about using this on the basis of ethnic population. The government and the original inhabitants made a 20-point agreement to adopt representational candidates in the direct elections, make the PR system representative in the truest sense, and allow for at least one candidate from each ethnic group in the elections. As a result, in the FPTP system, the NC had 21 per cent, the UML 24 per cent and the Maoists 30 per cent, whereas in the PR the NC had 30 per cent, the UML 34



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

per cent and the Maoists 36 per cent ethnic representation among their candidates. But the party with the largest ethnic representation was CPN-United which had 42 per cent in the FPTP and 41 per cent in the PR system.

While the figures look good in percentage terms, the actual ethnic representation is yet to be inclusive and proportional. Of the 59 listed ethnic groups, 33 have been represented in the assembly. Although this is a positive development, there are still 26 ethnic groups that need to be represented. The third amendment to the interim constitution agrees to have at least one representative from each of the listed ethnic groups. After conducting various rounds of talks the government and the parties agreed to include at least 10, or at the most 13, of the remaining ethnic groups in the 26 seats reserved for nominated candidates. But now the political parties have broken their pledge and distributed the 26 seats among themselves. This leaves little or no room for some of the ethnic groups to have a say in the making of a new constitution.

The struggle for representation in the CA has almost ended and the fight for ensuring individual and group rights in the new state management has begun. We demand that the elected ethnic representatives have a role to play in all processes, including the making of the laws and policies. The government has already agreed to construct federal states on the basis of ethnicity and region. The new constitution should ensure federalism according to the agreement.

**Cycle city**  
Gunaraj Luintel in  
*Kantipur*, 24 June

कान्तिपुर

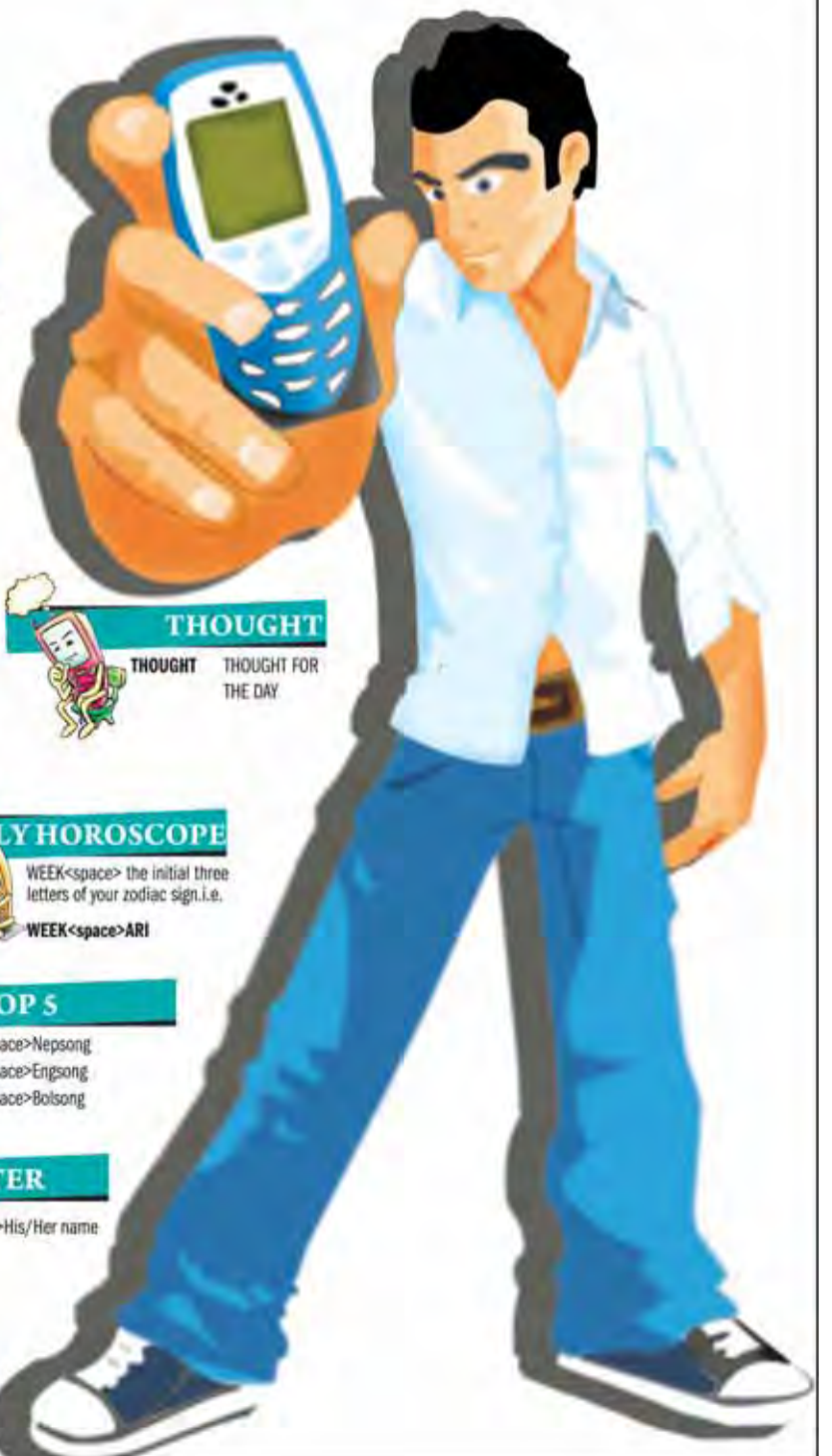
Restricting public transport saves the government Rs 150 million and about 100,000 litres of petrol and diesel per day. The money saved could instead be utilised to construct cycle paths.

Today, the world price for oil has risen to a whopping \$140 per barrel. Yet, consumers are compelled to purchase this expensive but necessary product, making their difficulties greater than ever. Modern marketing regards the consumer as all-powerful. But here, businesses rule. They can arbitrarily close down the roads, and the layperson is forced to either ditch their car and take to the roads or pay the high prices for public transport. Either way, the public loses out. The only way that the public interest is served is if the government puts a stop to petroleum-powered vehicles. In addition, electrically-powered vehicles should replace public transport.

Even when transport services were closed down by transport entrepreneurs, the government failed to take action. If we hadn't done away with government-run public transportation in the first place, the entrepreneurs wouldn't have the power to work their will. Consumers suffer not only at the hands of businesses but also of these transport syndicates. There



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### DAILY HOROSCOPE

AST<space>the initial three letters of your zodiac sign. I.e.  
AST<space>ARI

### STOCK

SHG Top 5 gainers of the day  
SHL Top 5 losers of the day  
SHH Stock related help

### DICTIONARY

DICT<space>the word you want to know the meaning of. i.e.  
DICT<space>tut

### CRICKET UPDATE

cri

### NEWS

NEWS National news  
SPO Sports news  
ENT Entertainment news  
INT International news  
LIVE Breaking news

### FOREX

FOREX<space>BUY  
FOREX<space>BUY  
FOREX<space>CURRENCY ID

### CALENDER SERVICE

Calnep ddmmyyy Nepali to English  
Caleng ddmmyyy English to Nepali

### WEATHER

CLI<space>city name I.e.  
CLI<space>dharan

### JOKES

JOKE  
JOKE<space>DOC  
JOKE<space>SILLY  
JOKE<space>LAWYER  
JOKE<space>SANTA  
JOKE<space>BLONDE

### THOUGHT

THOUGHT THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

### WEEKLY HOROSCOPE

WEEK<space>the initial three letters of your zodiac sign. i.e.  
WEEK<space>ARI

### TOP 5

TOP5<space>Nepsong  
TOP5<space>Engsong  
TOP5<space>Bolsong

### LOVE METER

LM<space>Your name<space>His/Her name

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is nothing more ironic than closing public transport to increase fares. Instead, increasing the quality of service would automatically justify a higher fare.

The people of Kathmandu can reject petroleum-powered vehicles by themselves. There's no reason we should accept being crammed together like cattle. Instead, we should take control and make use of Kathmandu's breezy weather and scenic beauty—which are perfect for cycling.

## Flee to India?

Ghatana Bichar, June 25-July 1

घटना बिचार

In the midst of expectations that he would flee the country, Gyanendra made a bold decision to stay in Nepal as a normal Nepali citizen, shocking the entire world. Experts had predicted that as soon as the monarchy was abolished, Gyanendra would run away to India for good, fretting for his security.

It was assumed that Gyanendra would follow in the footsteps of Tribhuban, who took refuge from the Rana regime in India, and BP who did the same in 1960 when Mahendra led a coup. In times of political

upheaval or threat most seem to take off for India. Maoist leaders took to the security of India during the war and the CPN was actually created in Kolkata. Why Gyanendra on the other hand chose a jungle in Nagarjun over the security of New Delhi remains a mystery. Experts are torn between two possible explanations: either Gyanendra harbours hostility against the involvement of India in overthrowing the monarchy and bringing about a republic in Nepal, or he is skeptical of India's intentions of using him against Nepal in the future. His pride may have been hurt during and after his powers were completely withdrawn, when India refused several of his attempts to tour the country.

Despite those refusals, India hinted, especially through televised media, that it would readily give Gyanendra refuge. He remains one of the few major political figures to have resisted and stayed in Nepal in times of threat to his security. The ex-king's gesture has even been likened to that of bravado and some of his critics say they fear they might turn pro-monarchical.

**HIMAL SOUTHASIAN'S JULY ISSUE IS OUT THIS WEEK!**

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 Romila Thapar, Mubarak Ali, Ramesh Dhungel, Rita Mandchanda, Afsan Chowdhury, Bruce McCoy Owens and more!

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 Whither now, Darjeeling?  
 - Sharda Chhetri  
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Highly developed management and communication skills, the ability to work effectively to meet deadlines with minimal supervision, excellent internet research capabilities and a proven ability to produce concise, well-written reports in English are all essential, as is the need to be able to think 'out of the box' and find innovative solutions to development challenges.

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Interested candidates are requested to send their CV with Cover Letter and two referees to nepal@snvworld.org with vacancy code 20088. Please note that only short-listed candidates will be contacted.

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# Resignation

Interview with UML Minister for Tourism Prithvi Subba Gurung in Nepal, 29 June

नेपाल

**It has already been two months since the UML quit government but your resignation hasn't been accepted yet. Do you think you made a mistake by resigning?**

The prime minister hasn't accepted our resignations yet. He says the government hasn't finished its 'mission' yet and even told us to reconsider our resignation. Yes, I think it was a mistake to resign. The polls may have been a success but the process of bringing about a proper republic is still going on. That is why we shouldn't have resigned after the polls just because of our loss. The party made the decision, and to keep up with my party, I resigned too.



DAMBAR K SHRESTHA

**Do you still go to the ministry?**

Since resigning, I don't go to the ministry. On my way to the parliamentary party office, I sometimes go in but as a commoner and not as a minister.

**How are you doing the ministry's work then?**

If there is urgent ministerial work then I do it. I can't even say I'm not a minister anymore because our resignation hasn't been accepted. I untangle the problems.

**Instead of working from home, why not just go to the ministry?**

I have not been taking my office file home to do the work. Whenever I am there, I do the work.

**Why haven't you also resigned your quarters, car or guard?**

I have already lost Rs 16,000. Immediately after resigning, I rented an apartment at Nakkhu chok, costing Rs 8,000 a month. I even moved some of my things. But without my resignation being accepted, it seems I cannot let the guard go. I could have let go of the car but it would be difficult to take my guard to my new quarters. The owner of that apartment keeps asking when I will move. I am in a difficult situation now.

**Your resignation hasn't been refused either, and at a time when the resignation should have been effective as soon as it was tendered, isn't all the work you've done illegal?**

This is not a time when the work I did as minister can be discredited. That is why we have handed in our resignations to our party only.

**It seems the country can even run without ministers?**

Even half the ministers can run the country it seems. I told our leaders that either our resignations should be accepted or a situation should be created where we can go back to work. Right now, our situation is like that of a person hanging over a cliff.



LINING UP: A journalist from Ilam takes pictures of the morning assembly at a community-run madrasa in Siraha.

PICS: MOHAN MAINALI

# Uniting the hills and plains

## A unique journalists' exchange bridges the gap between Madhes and Pahad

MOHAN MAINALI in ILAM

To bridge the gulf between the plains and hills of Nepal, the first step would be to familiarise Madhesi journalists about the Pahad, and Pahadi journalists about the Madhes. And that is exactly what 20 journalists have been doing for the past month.

Ten journalists from Saptari, Sunsari and Siraha have been touring Ilam, Sankhuwasabha and Terathum and vice versa in a unique journalist exchange that participants say have revealed things they never knew about each other's regions.

Mechi police

superintendent, Bigyan Sharma, recognised Rajbiraj journalist Jitendra Kharga whom he knew from a former posting, and called out to him: "Oh-ho, Jitendraji, when did you get there?" Before he could answer, ten other Madhesi journalists came out of a tea shop. The superintendent was so shocked he was speechless for a while.

The Madhesi journalists were full of admiration for the famed industriousness of the people of Ilam. Not an inch of land lies fallow, there is paddy, cardamom on landslide prone areas, tea bushes everywhere.

When he found out one couple in Jil village makes Rs 200,000 a year just selling coriander leaves, one Madhesi reporter marveled: "Money just grows out of the ground here."



BRIDGING THE GAP: Ilam reporter Roshan Sawa (left) interviews villagers from the Mushahar community in Lahan while Saptari reporter Hem Shanker Singh interviews herb traders in Khandhari.



Other journalists from the plains were so impressed with Ilam's cool climate that they saw its great potential as a hill station. "In one hour, you can get from the heat of the Madhes to an air-conditioned Ilam," said another reporter from Lahan, "if there were better lodgings, many

Madhesis would come here just to cool off."

Then it was off to the rhododendron wonderland of Tinjure and Milke. Suryanarayan Yadav from Sunsari is more used to walking on flat land, and was having trouble with the climb. But

even he was amazed by the scenery when the group got to the ridge. "It was hard, but it was worth it, I can't imagine there are places like this so close to the Tarai," he said.

In Terathum, Madhesi journalists visited the District Development Council which



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has decreed that priority must be given to helping the poorest of the poor. The neediest in the community don't have to pay for health care, education, or even pay tax while buying land or getting a passport.

Madhesi journalists also experienced the difficulty of getting around the mountains and how inaccessibility makes everything expensive. There is no road linking Terathum to Sankhuwasabha so the group had to drive back down to Biratnagar from where they had to fly to Tumlingtar.

Then it was the turn of the Pahadi journalists to visit the Madhes, and to shed their own misconceptions and stereotypes about the plains. The journalists visited madrasas in Sunsari and saw how everybody, rich or poor, donated a proportion of their income for community schools. The money pays for the education of underprivileged children.

Siraha's Lahan is a town that most journalists have only passed through at night while traveling in long-distance buses. They are surprised to visit Lahan's Sagarmatha Chaudhary Eye Hospital that performs 55,000 eye surgeries a year, more than any other hospital in the world. Eighty percent of the patients are from India, and they help subsidise the operations of Nepali patients.

However, the reporters learn that the hospital has seen a drop in patients since the Madhes Uprising last year. "The hospital was forced to close 136 days last year because strikes blocked highways, and this reduced the number of surgeries by 17,000," the hospital's Sudhir Thakur told reporters who scribbled the statistics in their notebooks.

The violence has not only affected the hospital but all aspects of life in Siraha, especially business. And crime is a sensitive subject. "We can't tell you what is going on here, and you can't report it," CDO Bal Krishna Panthi told startled reporters. Siraha journalist Rajesh Verma nodded his head silently.

Names created confusion. Many thought reporter Jitendra Kharga from Rajbiraj was actually a Khadka from the hills. Both Madhesi and Pahadi had difficulty pronouncing Ramala Singak's last name. Madhesis had trouble with Terathum's Aoyakjung and Khamlalung.

"The aim of this program was to promote tolerance and understanding between the two geographic regions of the country to promote better understanding," explained Hasta Gurung of the Nepal Press Institute which organised the program.

At least for two Madhesi journalists, the trip was an inspiration for further travel. Said Saptari journalist Rajesh Jha: "Jitendra and I were really excited to get to places we had heard about but never seen, we are going back to Terathum the first chance we get for some reporting." ●

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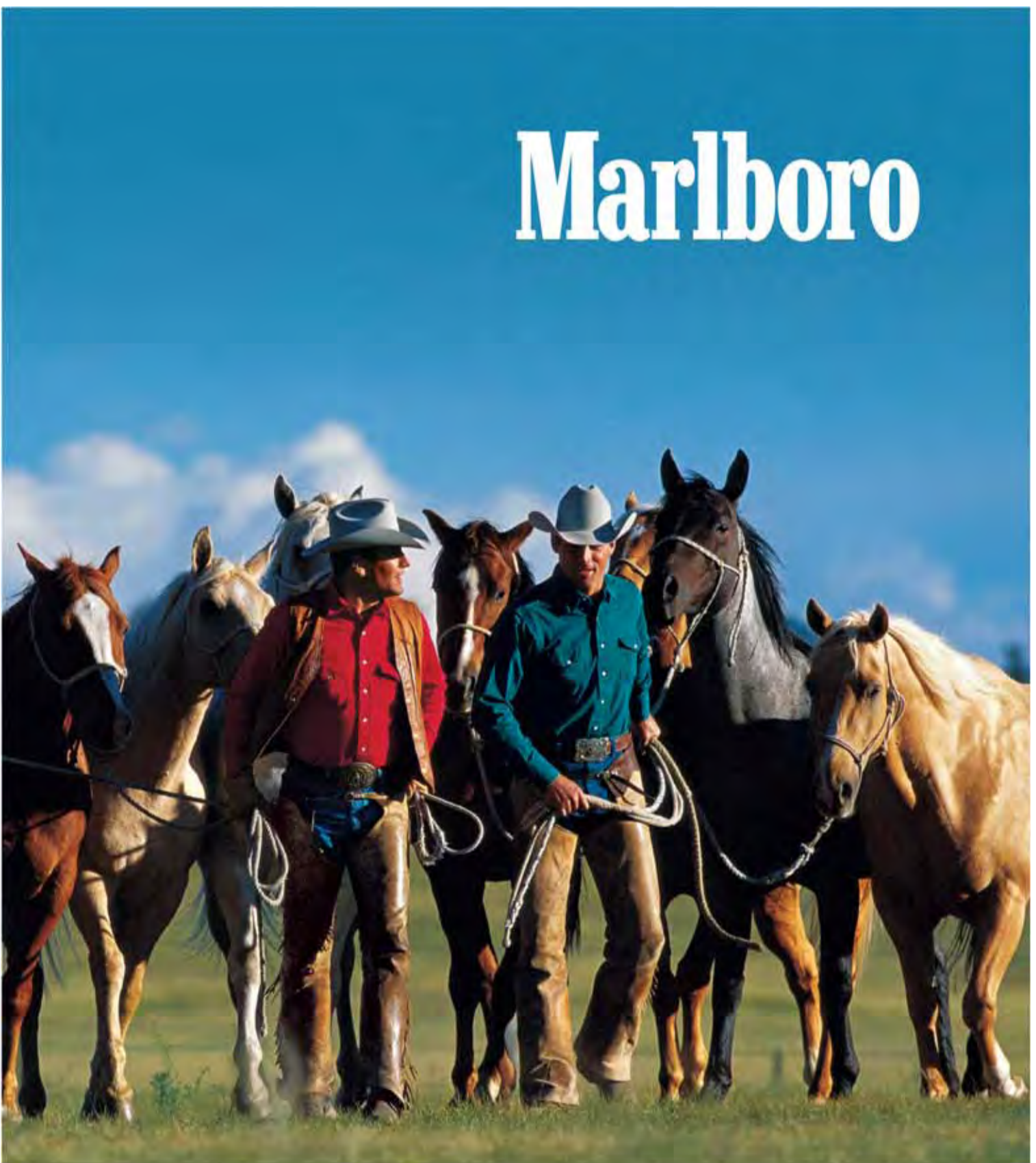
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SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

# Not just any doctor

Across Nepal, when you ask people in a tea shop, office, or out on the road about health care, almost everyone replies: "What we really need in our town is a doctor." What they should actually be saying is: "We really need an MDGP doctor."

Many young people all over the world want to become doctors. Nepal will soon be producing over 1,000 new doctors every year. But what kind of doctors does Nepal really need?

In Nepal a young doctor earns an MBBS degree, and follows that with a 3-5 year post-graduate specialisation to become a surgeon, pediatrician, obstetrician, internist, pathologist or radiologist. Specialised doctors are fine in their field, but aren't very competent outside their area.

MDGP doctors are specialists, but with a difference: they're all-rounders trained to be competent in each of the main medical fields.

After a three-year course, they know how to care for children, deliver babies, perform essential operations, take care of sick adults with a variety of medical problems. MDGPs are the frontline primary care doctors in the cities and in the districts they are the life-savers.

General practice (or MDGP) training began at the Institute of Medicine in 1982, and was the country's first post-graduate doctor training. In the last six years, the BP Koirala Institute of Health Sciences and the National Academy of Medical Science (NAMS) have started MDGP training.

Nepal's MDGP program is a leader in South Asia, and even the Christian Medical College of Vellore gets academic accreditation for its GP program from Nepal's Institute of Medicine. Compared to general practice (or family medicine) doctors in the US or UK, Nepal's GP doctors are more skilled in surgical procedures, such as caesarean sections.

Because one MDGP doctors can cover a range of medical areas, they are the most appropriate for district hospitals across Nepal. In late 2007, when there was a hospital crisis in Dadeldhura the Health Ministry promptly transferred two MDGP doctors there. A dusty, old hospital, which was under-used for years, immediately picked up and started doing 40 deliveries and 30 operations a month.

## To upgrade rural healthcare, Nepal needs general practitioners

Baglung used be a lonely government hospital that patients ignored, preferring to go to Pokhara for treatment. That was until Tarun Paudel arrived in 1999. This MDGP doctor helped transform Baglung into a model district training hospital where 800 babies are delivered every year and caesarean sections and other operations are regularly conducted.

Two years ago, the Sindhupalchok district hospital in Chautara was severely damaged in a fierce battle. The resident MDGP, Nanda Lal Sikarmi, survived the attack by hiding under a bed all night and stayed on to rebuild the hospital (see: 'Nepal's unsung heroes') and add new services.

In 2000, UNICEF adopted the Panchthar district hospital hoping to provide better care for mothers and children. It worked, and the main reason for the success was the dedicated work of one MDGP, Gunaraj Lohani.

Compare this to government hospitals where MBBS doctors are posted. Most cannot perform operations, conduct difficult deliveries, and they have to learn as they go.

Considering the medical needs of remote communities and the success of MDGP doctors one would expect that there would be hundreds of MDGPs all across the country by now. But there aren't, and the main reason is lack of recognition by the public and by the Health Ministry itself.

For most people in Nepal a doctor is a doctor, they haven't yet learnt what sets an MDGP apart. A community survey in rural Nepal showed that less than one percent of people had any idea what an MDGP doctor was. Only after a town actually has an MDGP come and work there do people realise the difference.

Harder to understand is why the government doesn't yet seem to see the need for MDGPs. The Ministry of Health and Population has a goal of providing emergency delivery services in all 75 districts. Today, while city hospitals regularly conduct lifesaving caesarian sections, less than 20 percent of the district hospitals do. One reason is the lack of MDGP doctors available to do this operation.

Another reason is that the Health Ministry still has no post for MDGPs and they are treated the same as basic MBBS doctors. As a result, fewer doctors want to enter this specialty. Government health services are like a three-legged stool: one leg preventive, one leg promotive, and one leg curative. In Nepal, the first two legs are reasonably strong. It is the third, curative leg of the stool that is weak, and without it patients in rural areas suffer.

Over the years, I have met and become friends with many doctors in Nepal. They range across all specialties and I know excellent doctors in many fields. Many are famous and admired throughout the country. But I have come to see that one real medical hero of Nepal has not yet been recognized: the MDGP doctor.

Mark Zimmerman is Director of the Nick Simons Institute in Kathmandu.

# Nepal's unsung



MALLIKA ARYAL

More than a decade ago, Kul Bahadur Sapkota began to suffer from uncontrollable fits almost daily. When the seizures became more frequent four years ago, he retreated to his bed, too distrustful of the local district hospital to seek treatment there and too poor to travel to Kathmandu.

But when 36-year-old Sapkota took his daughter to Sindhupalchok District Hospital two months ago, he told the hospital's general practitioner, Nanda Lal Sikarmi, about his symptoms. Sikarmi did some tests and diagnosed epilepsy. He gave Sapkota some medicine to control the seizures, and he hasn't had a fit since.

"GPs need to know everything—we have to be able to diagnose all kinds of diseases,"

explains Sikarmi. "Our work is quite multidisciplinary."

Sikarmi's day at the hospital in Chautara starts with his routine early morning rounds of the 17-bed general ward, which is almost always full. The outpatients department typically handles about 80 cases each day. A team of 12 medical officers, paramedics and nurses deals with both emergencies and minor surgery at the hospital, and is also responsible for dozens of health posts and clinics around the district.

"The day goes by so fast that usually we don't even have time to get lunch," says Sikarmi, who has been at the hospital for more than seven years, four of them alone with no other medical support. He was there two years ago when the hospital was virtually destroyed in fighting between the army and Maoists, but decided to stay on to help

**BAREFOOT DOCTORS:** Nanda Lal Sikarmi, chief doctor of the Sindhupalchok District Hospital (above right) counsels a patient in Chautara, where the wards were destroyed in a battle in April 2006.

rebuild it.

Now, with the war over, Sikarmi still sees a future for himself at Chautara. "There's no point looking back when there is so much we still need to rebuild," he says. "I got my medical degree in Nepal and I don't feel like I need to recoup the money I spent getting the degree. I was in Chautara when no other doctor was around—I'm attached to this place."

He says there is an urgent need for more GPs, especially in rural areas, where many people cannot afford to go to the towns to seek specialised treatment. It is obvious, seeing Sikarmi's dedication and his all-rounder

## Desperately seeking

### Belgian reality TV show wants to hear from Nepali 'birthday twins'

So you think you're an outgoing, curious person with an interesting life story, do you? And perhaps you've sometimes wondered how life would be if you'd been born on the same day but somewhere else—let's say Belgium? And you want to be a TV star too?

Answer a confident "yes" to these three questions and the people at Woestijnvis, a Belgian television production company, would love to hear from you. But only if your birthday matches the list below—and you can prove it!

The idea for this 'birthday twins' project came from Steve Verhaeghe and Dirk Van den Houte, two Belgians who wanted to compare the lives of people of identical age all around the world. Woestijnvis liked the concept and selected 22 Belgians to take part.

Now the company is on a worldwide trawl to find interested

people of the same sex who were born on the same dates. They have chosen 120 people from about 40 countries so far, and are hoping to find a few in Nepal.

"We are looking for Nepalis who would be interested in learning about Belgian customs and traditions," says Annelore de Donder at Woestijnvis.

For men, the dates are:		For women, the dates are:	
April 29	1933	April 5	1943
July 18	1948	May 2	1950
July 19	1948	July 20	1963
September 25	1949	March 24	1964
February 11	1952	March 26	1975
January 18	1956	December 27	1979
May 5	1956	July 24	1982
December 30	1960		
July 24	1962		
January 14	1965		
January 27	1965		
October 5	1968		
February 5	1969		
December 1	1971		
May 3	1981		



**SAME SAME BUT DIFFERENT:** (l-r) Marie Jacqmin, Cemil Belek, Chiu-ling Kuo, Annelore De Donder and Tess Uytterhoeven are members of Woestijnvis' research team scoping the world for the Birthday Twins Project.

# health heros



KUNDA DIXIT

skills that Nepal's health situation would be much better if there were more doctors like him. And that is the challenge: how do we make more Sikarmis?

The good news is that a growing number of young doctors are showing an interest in becoming GPs, says Urmila Bharati, who is one herself and has worked in the Myagdi district hospital. She believes incentives from the government would encourage more GPs to work in remote rural hospitals where their services are most required.

She also says the government should send more than one GP to each district to lighten the work load. A doctor often ends up doing the administrative work of the District Health Officer, coordinating the health posts and dealing with emergencies, as well as doing their own medical work.

Adds Bharati: "GPs are used to multitasking, but reducing the admin load will help us devote more time to the overwhelming health needs of the people." •

## Great idea

Minister for Health and Population Girija Mani Pokhrel, an MP from Janamorcha Nepal, may not be health minister for much longer, but his work while in office for the past two years has been recognised by the Ministers' Initiative for Global Health.

Pokhrel was in Geneva this month to attend the annual meeting of WHO, and was cited for his ministry's proposal to bring health services within the reach of very poor Nepalis. The trust, which was established with support from Bill Gates, analyses the proposals made by health ministers of developing countries and awards the five best ideas.

The trust then funds the selected proposals. The other countries that received the award were Senegal, Ethiopia, Mali, and Syria. Pokhrel says, "I am really happy that our proposal to take health services to the 28 percent of the country's poor population who don't get it now was deemed worthy."

The prime ministers of Britain and Norway and the World Bank have also pledged to help Pokhrel's plan through the International Health Partnership. "It would be really good if others also learnt from this initiative of the health ministry," says DfID's Nepal representative, Bella Bird.

Under Pokhrel, the Health Ministry has made it free health services to the poor possible in various health centres around the country, although it may take time for it to go nationwide. And it will also depend on who becomes the next health minister.



## doppelgängers



Each Belgian participant will have three birthday twins from different countries, whom they will visit in turn to compare their different lives, cultures and environments. They will be able to see how their lives could have been totally different had they been born elsewhere. At the end, they will pick 10 Belgians with the most fascinating set of twins. Every visit will be filmed and the results will be broadcast in Belgium in the second half of 2009.

The production company will provide a Nepali-Dutch translator, so don't worry about your foreign language skills. But don't expect to be told too much about your Belgian twin in advance.

"We'd like the twins to be curious about each other and find out about their lives themselves," De Donder says. •  
Srishti Adhikari

If you are interested and your birthday matches, send an email to [twins@docfish.be](mailto:twins@docfish.be) or call on +32 2 303 35 88.

## Highest priority

As a child, Audrey Hepburn suffered from hunger and malnutrition. She was traumatised by war, and abandoned by her father. She suffered from anemia and whooping cough, and had a near death experience when she was six weeks old. As an adult, she had three painful miscarriages, just like so many mothers today in developing countries.

Deep inside, Audrey Hepburn was sad: sad about the plight of children in the world, which she could empathise with having experienced a traumatic childhood herself.



NEPALI PAN  
Kul Chandra Gautam

Perhaps because I came from a small village in the mountains of Nepal, where there was no road, no school, no post office, no radio or television, no telephone, where illiteracy was near universal, and modern health service was non-existent, and I was myself a malnourished child, and I too had a near death experience, I feel a special connection with Audrey.

Jim Grant, my former boss at UNICEF, used to say that there has been more progress for children in the last 50 years than perhaps in the previous 500 years. Consider these examples:

- Twenty million children used to die in the world annually in the 1960s. Although world population has doubled since then, the number of child deaths has been halved to less than 10 million per year.
- In Nepal the child death rate has been reduced by half in the last decade in spite of a war.



SAM KANG LI

## Children bear the heaviest burden of poverty

- Smallpox used to kill 5 million people a year, it has now been completely eradicated. Polio which used to cripple millions is on the brink of eradication.
- There are more children in school today than ever before, and gender disparity is rapidly declining at the primary school level.
- Over a billion people have been lifted out of poverty in Asia alone in the past half century.
- Overall, children and their rights are much higher on the world's political agenda.

But much of this progress has bypassed the bottom billion people in the world, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and parts of South Asia. The recent dramatic rise in food and petroleum prices is bound to further impoverish the already poor, and as usual, children are likely to be its main victims.

Because children bear the heaviest burden of poverty, all efforts to combat poverty must give the highest priority to children. The damage caused by malnutrition, infection and poor childcare in early childhood often lasts for an entire lifetime, and cannot be easily reversed later.

Now, some say that poverty has always been with us, and it will never be completely eliminated. That maybe true in the case of relative poverty, but we simply cannot and should not accept the indignity of absolute poverty as the unavoidable fate of humanity in this world of incredible wealth and prosperity.

At this time of unprecedented global prosperity, in which someone new becomes a billionaire every second day, nearly 1 billion people live on less than \$1 a day, 800 million people go to bed hungry every night, and 1 billion people without access to clean drinking water. We now have a global plan of action to fight poverty in the form of the Millennium Development Goals. It will take massive efforts by developing countries to achieve, and needs an additional investment of about \$50 billion a year in external aid.

That isn't a lot of money considering taxpayers in US, Europe and Japan pay \$1 billion per day in farm subsidies to protect their farmers against (guess what?) competition from poor farmers in developing countries. It is not that the world does not have enough resources to fight child poverty, it is more likely that world leaders and us citizens do not give enough priority to combating such poverty.

Children of the world need peace as much as they need food and water, health and education, love and a caring touch. So much of the poverty, injustice and even the consequences of natural disasters that haunt children are really man-made tragedies, for which there is only one man-made solution: peace. •

Based on a speech at the ceremony in Atlanta last week in which Kul Chandra Gautam was conferred the 2008 Audrey Hepburn Humanitarian Award. Gautam is the former Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF.

## Learning from classroom collapses

**S**ichuan quake highlights vulnerability of schools around the world. The enormous loss of life in collapsed schools around China's quake-stricken Sichuan Province could have been significantly reduced using known methods for designing or retrofitting structures in earthquake zones.

But China is just one of many countries with known earthquake vulnerability that has been slow to transform schools from potential deathtraps into havens. Hundreds of students are thought to have perished in schools in the May earthquake, among more than 70,000.

Experts on earthquake dangers have warned for years that tens of millions of students in thousands of schools, from Asia to the Americas, face similar risks, yet programs to reinforce existing schools or require that new ones be built to extra-sturdy standards are inconsistent, slow and inadequately financed.

While earthquakes can sometimes exact a far wider toll on other public buildings, school collapses are particularly wrenching because students are often what propel a struggling nation from poverty to prosperity.

In 2004, the 30-nation Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development released a study, 'Keeping Schools Safe in Earthquakes', concluding that schools 'routinely' collapsed in earthquakes around the world because of avoidable design or construction errors, or because existing laws and building codes were not enforced.

The risks are growing, experts say, as populations in poor regions continue to rise and the world, rich and poor, shifts ever more towards urban centers, many with well-charted seismic threats. In recent years, there have been deadly school collapses after earthquakes in Italy, Algeria, Morocco and Turkey. Most notably, in Pakistan on 8 October, 2005, at least 17,000 children died as more than 7,000 schools collapsed after a powerful jolt shook Kashmir. More than 80 percent of schools in Pakistan are still unprotected from earthquakes.

In 2006, Brian E Tucker, an earthquake expert who runs a private group, GeoHazards International, presented a study on schools to the Economic Cooperation Organization, a group of 10 countries in Europe and Asia. The analysis found that 180 million people, including 40 million school-age children, faced an earthquake risk equal to that of northern Pakistan.

"Delays in addressing such threats sometimes result less from financing and engineering than from societal inertia, given competing problems and the unpredictable nature of earthquakes", said Ben Wisner of the California State University and a founder of the Coalition for Global School Safety. "Often, money and technology are not the issue", he said, "so much as access to basic information about risks and simple ways to bolster buildings".

There have been some successful efforts to reinforce schools, in places including Kathmandu, Nepal, and parts of Turkey, he said. Progress often is a result of persistent pressure by a particular engineer or safety campaigner.

"The successes are far outnumbered by places that still face calamity on the scale of that seen in Sichuan", he and others said. And the risks are not limited to poor countries. "In some countries and cultures, inaction is shaped by a fatalism that somewhat indemnifies governments from responsibility for what are seen as 'celestial acts'", said Thomas Parsons, a geophysicist with the United States Geological Survey.

"It's so disappointing to see these things happening again and again, little kids caught in a collapsed school building," Parsons said. "As always, in the short term we are balancing the probable event against real, right-now problems. But in the long term, probable becomes inevitable."

Andrew C Revkin, NYT

# Could it happen

The writing's on the wall for earthquake-prone schools

**BUILT TO WITHSTAND:** Locals of Chaling village, outside Bhaktapur collected money from the villagers to build Nateswari Primary School, which uses earthquake resistant architecture.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

DEWAN RAI

**T**he death of so many students in the recent earthquake in China highlighted the tragic consequences of corruption and shoddy school construction methods there. Is the situation any different here in Nepal?

"About one third of schools across the country are earthquake resistant now," says Yub Raj Paudyal, an engineer at the Department of Education, who has been working for the past 20 years to reinforce old schools and construct new classrooms to earthquake-resistant standards.

Nepal lies in a highly active seismic zone. The last big earthquake in August 1988 killed more than 700 people and destroyed 1,200 schools in eastern Nepal. Seismologists believe Nepal is overdue for another earthquake of similar magnitude.

After the 1988 earthquake, the government launched its Earthquake Affected Area Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Project, and in 2003 enacted a national building code for public buildings

including schools.

The Department of Education's records indicate that 52,000 classrooms have been built since 1988, but a further 41,000 are needed just to serve current student numbers, and an additional 10,000 will be required by 2012 to meet the demand of the government's Education For All (EFA) program.

The department's budget has been increased to allow the building of 6,000 new classrooms

this year, up from 2,000 per year. Schools can choose from a range of designs, including two-room blocks and multi-storey designs, according to their local requirements. If they draw up their own designs these must be approved to ensure they meet the standards of the national building code.

The designs are not guaranteed to be earthquake-proof, says Amod Mani Dixit, of the National Society for Earthquake

## Model school

Mangal Dvip School buildings in Bouddha were built in 1980 without considering precaution against natural hazards like earthquake and fire. After the 1988 earthquake, the classrooms remained intact, but it forced the school to plan for bigger future disasters.

"We sent our teachers to participate in safety and first aid drills which they pass on to our students later," says Khenpo Chonyi Rangdrol, principal of the school. The school then started retrofitting the buildings, which was completed last year. Retrofitting is done by adding external columns, jacketing beams and columns to bear the load during quakes. Drills are held three times a year.

Yub Raj Paudyal, engineer at the DoE, says most private schools in the capital are located in buildings that were originally family residences. The classrooms are overcrowded and not quake-resistant—a recipe for disaster.

Says Paudyal: "We can reduce the risk by retrofitting."

# Closeup

12<sup>TH</sup>

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# here?

Technology-Nepal (NSET). They are intended to reduce loss of life by giving people time to escape from the building before it collapses.

Nepal has no medical response capacity to deal with a disaster on the scale of the recent Sichuan earthquake. "Earthquakes don't kill people, bad buildings do," says Dixit. "They are not natural disasters, they are manmade, and there are solutions to reduce risk."

The reality is that Nepal is woefully unprepared. Nepal is the 11<sup>th</sup> most vulnerable country to earthquakes, and Kathmandu is the world's most vulnerable city in terms of its lack of preparedness.

NSET says it is largely a myth that earthquake-resistant technology is expensive, and argues that good design rather than expensive materials is the key to making a house safer. Yet, 86 percent of new houses are built without engineering oversight.

NSET, with support from international NGOs, has trained masons in building techniques, advised teachers on how to organise evacuation drills at schools, and built model earthquake-resistant schools

in 26 districts.

Sonam Wangchuk, an education adviser with the Danish group, MS Nepal, has built a school in Bardiya district that is both earthquake-resistant and suitable for different climatic conditions—naturally cool in the hot Tarai but also solar-heated for the mountains.

"Rich nations spend a lot of money and artificial energy into making their schools comfortable," Wangchuk says. "Countries like Nepal and India can neither afford to nor need to."

MS Nepal has been looking at ways to make schools that are safe yet cheap to build and maintain, and use local materials and labour. Their design uses compressed, stabilised earth-blocks for the walls and thin cement sheets reinforced with chicken-wire for the roof. The ground floor lies three feet below the surface.

This not just insulates them from heat and cold, but also are less risky in an earthquake. "Nepal is setting out to build 50,000 new classrooms under the EFA programme in the next five years, it would be a good idea to test prototypes using different methods before plunging into just one," Wangchuk says.

At a time when the subcontinent is crying out for good school design, if Nepal is able to come up with an effective design it could become a model for the whole region. ●

# Lourd of the dance

## Indian salsa king shows Nepalis the way

"Salsa is not just a dance but a lifestyle, a universal culture, liberal and open to influences from all genres of music," claims Indian dance guru Lourd Vijay. A world-renowned salsa instructor and a remarkable dancer, Vijay talks eagerly about the art form to which he has dedicated his life.

He began dancing for fun while at school but, blessed with the right physique, he quickly discovered his overwhelming passion for this sensuous art form. He also loved performing in front of others, experiencing on stage an adrenalin rush so addictive it inspired him to push himself further each time.

His big break came when he choreographed the hugely successful theatre production of Dirty Dancing. Since then he has established dance studios throughout India and opened workshops across the world—though not without problems along the way.

His biggest difficulty was in overcoming the reluctance of Indians to try his "foreign" dance styles. Most of his first students needed a lot of convincing that Indian dance was not just Kathak, and that they were capable of mastering the Latin dance moves. What made him persevere was the standing ovations he received

after his performances.

After winning international competitions and the Asian open dance championship, he has now reached a level where he is able to contribute new ideas to bring change into the world of salsa. His experimental Indian Salsa Sutra marks the start of his dream to infuse

Indian classical dance with Latino Salsa.

His aim is to promote and expand the influence of Latin dancing throughout the world. He intends to open an academy for performing arts in India, to provide an opening at home for talented up-and-

coming Indian dancers without them having to go abroad for expensive training.

"Not everyone wants to be a professional dancer, but everyone has a need to perform," Vijay believes—which is why he thinks there is great potential even in Nepal for people to become interested in salsa.

Not only is it fun, but it is a great stress reliever and helps people become fitter. And its very simplicity means anyone can do it—even, claims Vijay, those with two left feet. A step forward, a step back, a slight hip sway and you are on your way. ●

*Shradha Basnyat*



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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **From Harm to Home** photo exhibition by the International Rescue Committee at Indigo Gallery, Mike's Breakfast until 29 June.
- ❖ **MaterialScapes** solo collage painting exhibition by Gaurav Shrestha, until 30 June 10AM-6PM at Gallery 32 at Dent Inn, Heritage Plaza, Kamaladi. 4241942
- ❖ **Nepalscapes** exhibition of paintings by Jolanda Aucott and Gyanmani Ray, until 9 July at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited, 11AM-6PM, daily. 4218048.
- ❖ **Tattva** multimedia and collage exhibition by Chirag Bangdel until 18 July, 5.30 PM at Bakery Café, Pulchok.

EVENTS

- ❖ **Ghanchakkar** staging of a play based on Sanjeev Upreti's novel, at the Rimal Theatre, Gurukul, 5.30 PM daily until 29 June.
- ❖ **Change** fundraiser concert with performances by Kutumba, Indira Lachhimasyu, Indira Joshi and Himali Dixit at Rimal Hall, Gurukul, New Baneshwor, on 12 July, Rs 350, 985103477
- ❖ **Summer Cult Film Festival** with Reservoir Dogs, The Proposition, The Thing, starts 13 July at the Lazimpat Gallery Café.
- ❖ **Tantric Dance of Nepal** presented by Kalamandapa, every Tuesday 7PM at Hotel Vajra and every Saturday 11AM at Patan Museum.
- ❖ **Toastmasters** a communication and leadership program, organised by Kathmandu Toastmasters Club every Wednesday 6PM at Industrial Enterprise Development Institute (IEDI) building, Tripureswor. 4288847

MUSIC

- ❖ **The Yale Whiffenpoofs** performing classical jazz, folk songs and Motown hits, 1 July at the Hotel Yak and Yeti, Rs 1,499 net. 4248999
- ❖ **Make Monsoon Music** at the Jazzabell Café, Patan every Wednesday and Friday, 6.30 PM with a live music jam.
- ❖ **Live karaoke** with special Thai cuisine, every Wednesday at Holiday Karaoke Restaurant and Bar, Lazimpat. 4445731
- ❖ **Rudra night** fusion and classical Nepali music by Shyam Nepali and friends, every Friday, 7PM at Le Meridien, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **Sufi music** by Hemanta Rana, every Friday at 7.30 PM at Dhaba Restaurant and Bar, Thapathali.
- ❖ **Yankey and friends** live acoustic music every Friday at the Bourbon room Restro-bar, Lal Darbar.
- ❖ **Anil Shahi** every Wednesday and Rashmi Singh every Friday, live at the Absolute Bar, Hotel Narayani Complex, 8PM. 5521408



DINING

- ❖ **Sixth Annual Wine Festival** with 15 wine choices for all of June/July at Kilroy's, Jyatha. 4250440
- ❖ **30/30 Enhanced Buffet** 30% discount on entire bill for a group of four or more for the month of June at The Fun Café, Radisson Hotel. 12.30-2.30 PM and 6.30-10.30 PM, Rs. 800. 4411818
- ❖ **Lajawab** tandoori and kabab festival, 7-10 PM every Friday at the Hotel Himalaya, Rs 550.
- ❖ **Japanese lunch set**, Rs 445 at Shogun, Japanese restaurant, Babar Mahal Revisited. 4263720
- ❖ **Chinese and more** at Chopsticks Restaurant and Bar, Teku, 4104503
- ❖ **Home made pasta** at Alfresco, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **Hot summer spicy food** at the Jalan Jalan Restaurant, Kupondole Heights. 5544872
- ❖ **The Kaiser Café open now** at the Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, open from 9AM-10PM. 4425341
- ❖ **Mango étagère** mango delicacies 4.30-6.30 PM at the Lounge, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Steak escape** with Kathmandu's premier steaks available for lunch and dinner at the Olive Bar and Bistro, Hotel Radisson. 4411818
- ❖ **Bourbon Room Restro-bar** now open for lunch and dinner with over a 100 cocktails, Lal Darbar.
- ❖ **Cocktails and grooves** with jazz by Inner Groove at Fusion-the bar at Dwarika's, every Wednesday, at Dwarika's Hotel.
- ❖ **Cocktails, mocktails and liqueurs** at the Asahi Lounge, opening hours 1-10PM, above Himalayan Java, Thamel.
- ❖ **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 buffet** at the Sunrise Café, and Russian specialties at Chimney, Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
- ❖ **Local Drinks Cocktail** selection of favorite cocktails with local flavors while watching EURO 2008 on the big screen at Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency. 4489361
- ❖ **Jazz in Patan** with coffee, food, drinks and dessert at the New Orleans Cafe, Jawalakhel. 8.30 AM-10PM. 5522708
- ❖ **Saturday special** barbeque, sekuwa, momos, dal-bhat at The Tea House Inn, Windy Hills, Nagarkot every Saturday. 9841250848.
- ❖ **Scrumptious wood fired pizzas**, cocktails and more at Roadhouse, Bhatbateni 4426587, Pulchok 5521755 and Thamel 4260187.
- ❖ **Retro Brunch Barbeque** with live acoustic music by Sound Chemistry, every Saturday, 12-3PM at LeMeridien-Kathmandu, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **Dhamaka** a Nepali style barbeque with a pan-Indian fusion at the Splash Bar and Grill, Hotel Radisson, Rs. 1399 with 60ml Royal Stag or a complimentary a bottle of coke, 7PM, every Friday. 4411818
- ❖ **Starry night barbecue** at Hotel Shangri-la with Live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs. 666.00 net. per person, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7PM onwards. 4412999

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

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In *The Incredible Hulk*, scientist Bruce Banner (Edward Norton) scours the planet for an antidote. But the warmongers, who dream of abusing his powers, won't leave him alone. When he returns to civilisation, the doctor is ruthlessly pursued by The Abomination (Tim Roth)-a nightmarish beast of pure adrenaline and aggression whose powers match the Hulk's own. A fight of comic-book proportions ensues as Banner must call upon the hero within to rescue New York City from total destruction. Bruce needs to make a choice: accept a peaceful life as Bruce Banner or the creature he could permanently become: the incredible hulk.

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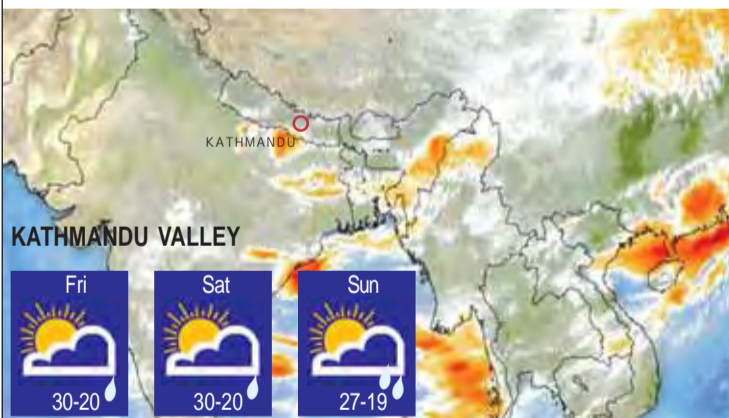
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WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

As the monsoon moves into its fourth week, we would expect the heavy downpours to become more frequent. Satellite pictures on Thursday morning show a huge cloud mass entering central Nepal from Bihar. A deep low-pressure trough along the foothills is set to produce heavy rains from this cloud. Some of the moisture will advance over the mid-hills where moderate but continuous rain is likely to occur throughout the weekend. Valley dwellers should prepare for a weekend of warm, sticky days and rainy nights.



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अंग्रेजी सिक्न सघाउने कार्यक्रम  
Tuning In To Language and Culture  
प्रसार हुने समय : हरेक शुक्रबार बेमुका (८:१५-८:३२)  
हरेक आइतबार बिर्से (१:४०-२:००)  
"रेडियो सगरमाथा विचलित सुनी, अंग्रेजी सुधारी"  
(रेडियो सगरमाथा र अमेरिकी राजदूतावास, अमेरिकी केन्द्रको सहकार्य)

सम्पर्क: ५५१०००१, ५५१०००२, मोबाइल: ९७७-९७७२२२२, ईमेल: info@radiosagarmatha.org

हरेक विहान २:०० बजे राती ११:०० बजे सम्म सूचना सिला र स्वस्थ मनोरञ्जकता लागि चरचर्चा साथी रेडियो सगरमाथा १०२ थोप्लो ४ मेगाहर्ट्ज



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**DOG DAYS:** Canine denizens of the Constituent Assembly parking lot enjoy the peace and quiet as the capital came to a halt yet again on Thursday because of a strike called by four minor parties to protest inflation. Towards the afternoon, the dogs had to make way for the arrival of the assembly members.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**EDUCATION BLUES:** Uniformed students burned tyres and vandalised vehicles on Monday as they protested high bus fares outside the Education Ministry. The nearby western gate of the former royal palace, which used to be out of bounds for rallies, was also affected.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**REPUBLIC OF GARBAGE:** Garbage piles up in Patan as Sisdole residents once more blocked the landfill site for Kathmandu trash.



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# Constituent Ass-embly

**W**ith the monsoon setting in, the load-shedding schedule has gone haywire. Lights that were supposed to go off at 7:00 PM are now going off at 7:15 PM. Is NEA already on Indian Standard Time, or what?

After the **Brits** and **Ozzies**, it is the **Swiss** who have now moved visa procedures for Nepalis to Delhi. The Swiss embassy website: 'Visa applications for residents of North India, Bhutan and Nepal who wish to travel to Switzerland should be submitted to the Visa Application Centre at New Delhi.' When he becomes PM, Awesome should just ask all embassies which don't have visa sections to pack up and go. That way maybe we can really be Switzerland in 20 years.



As the Maoists go around dangling the presidential carrot in front of everyone they meet, the list of 'Almost Presidents' is growing by the day. Makunay took the bait, and his suit is already pressed for the swearing in, so what if the UML is now going to be a vassal party of the CPN-M? Makes one wonder what Comrade JN is getting out of all this, and if he has any fears of being swallowed up by the Stalinists. Maybe that is why he has set up his own Youth Force and even got some YCLs to defect to the UML **Testosterone Brigade**. Methinks he vastly underestimates the Jugends.



Can the Comrades take their armed bodyguards into foreign embassies or not? This better be cleared up before there is another major diplomatic incident like the one at Lainchour the other night when Comrade Laldhoj tried to smuggle in a sidekick bearing a firearm to an embassy dinner with **Comrade Shahid**. A Fourth Anglo-Nepal War was averted, but only just. Kudos to Andrewji for sticking to his guns, as it were.



Is it just this asinine columnist, or do you out there also tune off at news time these days? Who wants to hear a talking head bad mouthing another talking head on tv news while a strategically-located Mr Dhamala lurks at the edge of the frame? The Constituent Ass-embly should declare a **moratorium** on all pronouncements on camera. Half our political problems could be resolved if the tv channels jointly decided not to give any air time to politicians' soundbites. Whatever the baddies do in private, if they are never seen on the evening news calling the kangresis running dogs, the kangresis will never be provoked into retaliating in kind and 90 percent of our problems would be resolved.



News about **Toiletgate** may be dropping off the media radar, but the Matrika Yadav Shrink Fund has, as of press time, brought in Rs750. That may only pay for one couch session, but every minute of counseling counts for Matrikababu. One hears the politburo is also getting fed up with their bête noire.



The circus that ensued after Gyanji left his press conference at Narayanhiti earlier this month earned the media well-deserved brickbats. Some hacks climbed on sofas with their shoes on to interview fellow hacks, they queued up to take pictures sitting on kingji's chair while it still radiated royal warmth. Some journos got so excited they tried to cart away the stuffed tiger as souvenir. The **Press Council** is now thinking of making an appeal to the journalism fraternity to return a missing ass-tray and three whiskers which were plucked from the tiger's cheeks. Give 'em back, they are now museum pieces.



And now the moment that all of you have been waiting for, the winners of this week's New Name Contest. The runner up is Subhas from Sorakhutte for his new name for Kanti Path: **Kranti Path**. And this week's winner is (a round of applause ladies and gentlemen) Sanju from Narayan Gopal Chok for his entry: change the name of Durbar Marg to **Museum Marg**.

New Name Contest: [ass\(at\)nepalitimes.com](mailto:ass(at)nepalitimes.com)



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