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Times nepalnews.com
 Weekly Internet Poll # 413

Q. How would you characterise the political developments since the elections?

Total votes: 3,726

Steady progress: 5.7%
 Needless slow: 31.3%
 Akhir yo Nepal ho: 63%

Weekly Internet Poll # 414. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com
 Q. Can a Maoist-led government make a positive difference?

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MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Checklist

What the new prime minister needs to get cracking on

PRASHANT JHA

Finally, we have a prime minister. To help him get straight down to business, here is his to-do list:

Immediate Relief

- ✓ Reassure us that the state exists
- ✓ Provide consumers with basic needs
- ✓ Ensure food for the neediest. Nepal is now on the UN's hunger hot-spot list
- ✓ Ensure security, tackle crime
- ✓ Crack down hard on those blocking highways on whatever pretext

Peace Process

- ✓ Keep the peace process on track
- ✓ In the plains, ensure a just and effective government
- ✓ Address growing discontent among Tharus, Muslims and Dalits
- ✓ Make state structures in the Madhes inclusive, start back-channel talks with Goit
- ✓ Consult Madhesi parties and civil society on security
- ✓ Ensure the Maoists return seized property, stop YCL hooliganism
- ✓ Work with UNMIN on PLA

Integration, make army flexible

- ✓ Address truth and justice, especially for families of the disappeared
- ✓ Reform the police to prevent more mutinies, warn them they're being watched

Development

- ✓ Launch showcase development schemes in the plains
- ✓ Prioritise food security and connectivity in the hills
- ✓ Launch job-creation campaign through investment in infrastructure
- ✓ Install alternative mechanisms for local government
- ✓ Educate donors: tell them we want infrastructure, irrigation, skills training and mass employment generation. Make them accountable.

Economy

- ✓ Restore proper energy supplies, clean up NOC, sort things out with India
- ✓ Fast-track investment in hydropower with short and long-term strategy
- ✓ Reassure small and medium businesses that the state will help revive them
- ✓ Help management and unions resolve conflict
- ✓ Provide basic social security for unorganised labour

Foreign Relations

- ✓ Reassure our neighbours to north and south that their security interests will be met
- ✓ Reassure donors that the state is focused on development



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Government at last

And time for the Maoists, finally, formally and publicly, to renounce violence

US AGAINST OURSELVES

The only thing we can say about the election of the prime minister by the Assembly on Friday is: better late than never.

The country is being engulfed in an Us vs Them confrontation between Madhes, Tarai, Pahad. What should worry us is not what we call each other, but that the short-sighted, self-destructive politics of identity are now threatening our social fabric and national integrity.

Latent prejudices have been whipped up into mutual animosity, animosity has turned into hatred, and hatred into intolerance that feeds a militancy that is forcing the displacement of hill people from the Tarai. It is only a question of time before this provokes a backlash.

In the name of inclusive political representation, political leaders of every ethnic hue are pushing an extreme exclusionary agenda. They seem to think this is a short cut to leadership and power, and a way to keep the Maoists out of the eastern Tarai. How mistaken they are: history is replete with examples of countries that have reaped the whirlwind.

We haven't even started work on the new constitution yet, and the eastern Tarai has now been closed down for over two weeks. Tarai militant groups, agitating bus companies and anyone with any grievance target the highways. Even ambulances aren't allowed to pass. Private cars with Bagmati number plates don't dare head east or south from Dhalkebar anymore. Those that try to avoid blockades by travelling at night are robbed by armed dacoits.

The police force is a joke. They patrol the streets carrying SLRs but make no effort to clear the handful of hoodlums blocking a major national highway. A former health minister's daughter is kidnapped in Kathmandu by an armed gang, a huge ransom is paid. Western Nepal is reeling under a devastating food shortage—not because of drought but because the East-West Highway in Attariya was blocked for three weeks because of a dispute over bus syndicates.

There is one reason for all these examples of anarchy: the absence of the state. There hasn't been a functioning government in this country for two years. We can only hope that all this will change with the election of a prime minister on Friday and, hopefully, the expeditious formation of a government. They have their work cut out.

As the government finally gets formed via the Constituent Assembly, hope abounds: of a return to structured democratic governance, a conclusion to the peace process, drafting the new



COMMENT
Kanak Mani Dixit

constitution, and the arrival of long-awaited political stability to trigger development and economic revival.

Amidst the effervescence of Nepali politics, Pushpa Kamal Dahal will take charge as prime minister following Friday's vote in the Constituent Assembly. Our way to emerge from a 'people's

In no way can the electoral success be read as justification of the armed insurgency. The 10 years of people's war benefited the Maoists, but proved costly for the country. It brought the party to the frontline of national politics but set the people back by a decade in terms of development and economic progress (though there was some ancillary social bonus).

With the government finally in place, the Assembly must work for the people by generating momentum for its twin tasks as parliament and as constitution-writing body. On the former, it is impossible to imagine the Maoists' announced grand designs being fulfilled in the less than two years ahead. Much as we

As prime minister, Pushpa Kamal Dahal will be attending office at Singha Darbar rather than directing affairs from the Baluwatar living room, which in itself will provide tangible momentum to government. The revival of state administration throughout, control of Tarai criminality with its cross-border aspect, restart of service delivery, energising of the civilian police force: all of this is necessary for the ride back to stability, peace and prosperity.

The stillborn post-conflict rehabilitation process must be revived, including support for the victims of both Maoist and state-sponsored violence, the management of combatants, and massive investments in infrastructure and the economy to make up for lost time. Looking ahead, the government must guard against inter-community conflagration and join a countrywide campaign to push back the culture of violence that has overtaken society.

But peace must go hand in hand with pluralism, and as the Maoists enter government they must understand that the public already understands and appreciates democracy. The democratic era between 1990-2002 was derided in unison by Kathmandu's nobility, the donor/diplomats and the Maoists in the jungle, but it was actually an era of successes. Besides concretising the freedoms and rights that we today take for granted, it was those dozen years which made participatory development possible and gave rural Nepal a voice.

If the Maoists underestimate the citizenry's ownership of democracy, there will be much



KIRAN PANDAY

war' has been to gentry the insurgents by handing them the accountability of legitimate power. The Maoist triumph in the elections represented a vote for change, but it was also a calibrated response by the voters to ensure their transformation into peaceful politics.

may want it all (great infrastructure projects, revolutionary land reform, double-digit growth, tripling of the government budget and the promised transformation to Switzerland and/or Singapore), it would be best for the new cabinet to focus on what is doable.

LETTERS

ECONOMIC CLASS

Undoubtedly vocational training would help ('Vocational training is the way to go', #412). All potential migrant workers must be educated and informed about the country they are going to work in. The information must include not only the country's customs, culture, religion, geography, climate, and per capita income but also how locals treat foreign workers with different faith from a poor country like ours. Also, women must not be sent to countries where abuse is common.

K Rai, UK

● The main reason foreign countries import labour is to fill those jobs in which locals refuse to work. It makes sense to train workers before they leave so that they might earn more. This means positions which require training that are slightly more competitive, pay more and give you more job security, especially in Gulf countries, would first go to the locals. It is equally important to research and understand the job market reality in these places before Nepali workers are given false hope. Training outgoing workers will undoubtedly increase remittance. However, the *Nepali Times'* projected graph

('Economic class,' #412) is anything but realistic. How about providing quality education to today's children so that when they grow up, they may not have to go to foreign lands to fill the absolute lowest, most labour-intensive positions.

Name withheld, email

FAST FOOD

Why such excitement over these fast food chains ('Slow interest in fast food', #412)? It is like tobacco companies. After much public protest in western countries they move to the developing world where there are no regulations. In the US, eating in McD and KFC is not something people would boast about.

Ganesh Rijal, New York

● My trekking experience in Lukla or Annapurna says that you don't have to eat dal-bhat non-stop for three weeks on a trek. In Phakding or Namche you can get Italian or American food easily. Furthermore, if fast food restaurants are to be opened in the Valley, they will, at best,

serve as a substitute of already existing food options. The international brands will give a hint of what the rest of the world is like to the local Nepali population. They also illustrate how to protect and expand a brand name, and what a brand name can do for a business.

Name withheld, email

SLOW BURN IN TARAI

Prashant Jha is right, lawlessness at the top does indeed trickle down to the ground ('Slow burn in the Tarai', #412). I hope we see more and more people raising voices to make it not a Pahadi and Madhesi issue, but rather a Nepali issue. To top that off, a high profile kidnapping case involving a 'rich and famous' person in the heart of Kathmandu has shaken the consciousness of

otheras among the rich and famous. Finally it seems to be hitting home that no one is safe in New Nepal. Preserving our centuries-old Nepali nationhood, our diverse cultural identity and core values is everyone's responsibility. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Our ancestors from all castes and creeds—Magars, Gurungs,

Tamangs, Rai, Chhetris, and Maithali Bahuns—stood up to the British Raj and China, unafraid to shed blood, to give us this gift of a nation called Nepal. No matter how imperfect our nation may have been, like many others, a modern nationhood of Nepal was created by a visionary Prithbhi Narayan Shah and there is nothing to be ashamed of. As an independent nation, it has outlasted many other countries in the world. Change we must, but don't let anyone erase this proud history. Challenges abound and we must work hard to uplift women, Janjatis and Dalits, and create equality between Madhesi and Pahadis. The only way we can do it is by focusing on our similarities, not our differences. How we can create a common thread is the biggest challenge. We certainly are not going to accomplish it by burning our dhotis or topis.

A Bohara, USA

CORRECTION

The credit for the illustration used in 'Prachanda meets Pushpa Kamal' (#412) should have gone to Basu Kshitiz, *Budhabar*.



distrust in the days ahead. A grievous mistake would be, at the village and district level, to seek to monopolise decisions on development projects and the disbursement of funds. For its part, the development community must respect the Nepali public enough to internalise the participatory nature of development that emerged after 1990. The litmus test of the Maoist record in the days ahead will rest on whether citizens' groups are allowed to freely organise and set their agenda, or whether Maoist committees will direct affairs for everyone else.

Many domestic and foreign analysts prefer to project the present-day Nepali polity as polarised—between the Maoists making up the progressive left and everyone else relegated to the feudal, rightist reactionary category. In reality, there is a broad-based vanguard which stands ready to defend pluralism as the way to the future, and its members reside in the larger 'parliamentary parties' and among civil society. These 'classical democrats' make up Nepal's democratic centre-left and they are the ones who fought the king and worked to bring the Maoists into the mainstream. They are not going anywhere.

To be anti-violence is not to be anti-Maoist, but there is certainly the expectation that the Maoists, having been legitimised totally by the April elections, will convert into a fully democratic party—that they will respect the vote which has brought them to the helm of state affairs. As the new prime minister takes his seat at Singha Darbar, society must ask the Maoists to finally, formally and publicly renounce violence as a political tool. ●

Empty role

The vice president would like something to do

When the king was the alpha male of Nepali politics, the Raj Sabha was a forum where politicians past their prime gathered and sang panegyrics in praise of the monarch and his family.

With the fall of the monarchy, the institution passed into oblivion. Its premises at Bahadur Bhaban were appropriated by the Election Commission.



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

However, the north-west wing remained unoccupied for quite a while. Equipped with a lift and designed for comfort, it was once used by the king to relax. Listening to non-stop flattery must have been exhausting. This is the space that has now been allotted to the vice president.

The three-room suite is luxuriously appointed. The interim constitution says that the vice president is empowered to do everything the president does, but only in his absence. Pramananda Jha waits uneasily in his *daura suruwal* in his opulent office as he tries to figure out the relevance of his office to himself.

It is conspicuously empty. There are no papers on his desk. The phone rarely rings. The assistants outside try without success to look busy.

Jha says he finds it disconcerting that his motorcade disturbs the flow of traffic when

he commutes between home and office. His security detail doesn't allow him to offer a lift to neighbours walking home in the rain. Contrary to the media image of an unrepentant and haughty individual, the VP shows conviction and enthusiasm for the sovereignty, integrity and independence of the federal democratic republic of Nepal. He wants to do something, to be useful and keep himself busy, but doesn't know how to go about it.

There are basically three models for the functions of a deputy head of state, but none of them seem to fit an office that has been designed more for form than necessity.

In the US, where the president is an elected monarch for the term of his office, the VP has to keep himself occupied by representing his boss at the funeral ceremonies of foreign dignitaries. In executive presidencies, he is expected to wait out, watch out and then fade away leaving no footprints.

In a parliamentary system, the president replaces the constitutional monarch. The VP, however, functions as an important component of the legislature. In India, he chairs the upper house and fulfils an important role in moderating charged debates between the ruling party and the opposition.

The third model is a hybrid where vice presidents are allowed by their bosses to



MIN RANTA BAJRACHARYA

observe activities of the executive, record legislative actions and function as the repository of a non-partisan knowledge base to resolve contentious issues.

In this form, the secretariat of the VP has to be extremely competent and committed. Jha probably has such a model in mind when he says that he could do with political, economic and constitutional advisers.

He may have committed an

error of judgement in blindly implementing the language agenda of his party during the oath-taking ceremony, but he appears to be a man on the mend who may help mould history.

The new prime minister will probably find that here is a person perhaps more amenable to change than the president.

But whatever the system, he has no role except what the government of the day sets for the post. That's a limitation Jha will have to live with. ●

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Blue skies ahead

Nepal's national airline is finally flying out of turbulence

Generating lift

MINESH POUDEL in TOULOUSE

After trying to find a flight back to Nepal from Europe for Dasain, I finally found a seat on an Indian airline up to Delhi. I now had to book DEL-KTM-DEL, but it was almost impossible.

At a time when the tourism sector is looking at a healthy autumn season, flights to and from Nepal are once more going to be a major bottleneck. It needn't be like this.

There is no point blaming other international airlines. Arranging modern, reliable transport to our own country should be our own responsibility. Making fares competitive and looking at the larger benefits to the country from expanded air connections should be the strategy.

Even more important than tourism is for Nepal's national airline to be the carrier of choice for Nepalis travelling abroad for work. Even Nepalis don't travel on Nepal Airlines because of unreliable and shoddy service. This can easily be changed so that the estimated one million Nepalis working in south-east Asia and the Gulf choose their own flag carrier to travel to and from home.

It just needs proper planning, efficient management and minimum government interference in the running of the airline. There is no point just looking to the past and blaming corruption, mismanagement and political instability. The question is: what are we going to do now?

The strategy should be an efficient regional airline to bring passengers to Nepal from the Gulf and south-east Asian hubs: Dubai, Bahrain, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and Hong Kong. Code-sharing links with international airlines to pick up passengers there could make transfers smooth. But these hubs are also where Nepalis themselves go for overseas work, so it is a double bonanza.

Nepal Airlines comes with lots of baggage, but rescue is possible

Restart India flights. We sit next door to a huge tourism and pilgrim market. For a full year, Nepal Airlines didn't fly to a single Indian destination, and has just restarted its daily morning flight to Delhi. Even if only 0.5 per cent of India's vast middle class in Delhi, Lucknow, Kolkata, Bangalore, Hyderabad, decided to fly to Nepal, our planes would be full.

Fleet expansion is a must and is much delayed. The ageing two 757s were the most modern jets in the world when RNAC bought them in 1985. Today, they are superannuated. For the hub model, we need wide-body, fuel-efficient, medium-range twin jets. For shuttles to India the airline needs narrow bodies and even turboprops.

It boils down to management. Politicians and bureaucrats will be suspicious of an independent management consultant because they are afraid the advantages they derive from the airline will be lost. But there are plenty of Nepalis with international civil aviation experience who could be brought in, and some of them actually have experience in the airline. Bringing them in with guarantees of no government interference could work.

If the airline has lost its international reputation, there may be an opportunity to cash in on its tooling and maintenance facility in Kathmandu and use the cheaper manpower for engineering services, or specialisation in flight operations. If the airline can tap into even a tiny part of the Indian or Chinese market for maintenance or consultancy support for flight operations development, that would be a major step forward. ●

Minesh Poudel is an aviation instructor at ENAC (the National Civil Aeronautics Academy) in Toulouse, France).

DEWAN RAI

Nepal Airlines (NAC) has hit turbulence before, but the national carrier has never been jolted as severely as it has these past two years.

A contractual dispute over the overhaul of the engines of one of its two Boeing 757s led to the grounding of the aircraft for nearly a year. And when the second jet went for an overhaul, the airline had no international flights for two months earlier this year.

Capt Kul Limbu, managing director of the airline, also flies international routes whenever he can. He shakes his head when he remembers how bad 2007 was for the airline, but he sees clearer skies ahead and is planning for a brighter future.

"I believe this airline has great potential, it can quite easily be turned profitable," Limbu told *Nepali Times* in an interview in the cockpit of one of the 757s before flying the aircraft to Hong Kong last week. "All it needs is a board that understands the airline business, a government that leaves us alone and a realistic strategy for the future."

Limbu's plan is, in the short term, to acquire a third 757 in the

coming months to augment capacity and boost income. With both jets now operational, the airline is trying to improve reliability on the Dubai, Bangkok, Hong Kong and Kuala Lumpur sectors that were badly hit last year. It has also restarted its long-standing morning shuttle to Delhi.

With the third jet, Limbu hopes to restart the other routes that have been shelved, like Bombay, Bangalore, Singapore and Osaka. But for this, he needs the board and government to agree to his proposal to lease the new jet. Going by past experience, the decision will not be easy because rival political factions will try to prevent each other from benefiting from the deal.

"What NAC needs is a transparent bidding process and a quick decision," says an airline analyst. "For this, there must be a consensus on honesty at the political level."

Once the international destinations are sorted out, the airline would like to revamp its much-neglected domestic routes. For this, there is a plan to add two 50-seater turboprops for trunk routes and find replacements for its Twin Otters for remote STOL airfields.

"None of this would have been a problem if the politicians interfered less and let the managers do their job," says Captain Vijay Lama, who heads Nepal Airlines' domestic operations. He says political parties have used the airline like a recruitment centre, with some staff more loyal to their political masters than to the airline's welfare.

In the long term, Limbu has drawn up a strategy to upgrade capacity with two widebodies after 2010 to launch services to Japan, Korea and Europe. But before that, Limbu would like to push a public-private partnership to get a foreign big-name partner to manage the airline. The board has approved the proposal and forwarded it to the Ministry of Tourism, but it's stuck there because of the political uncertainty.

With the airline restarting its cancelled operations, there is a sense of optimism, but in the end the main question is, can the airline be saved from the politicians?

Vijay Lama concludes: "We have flown through a lot of bad weather, but we now see blue skies ahead." ●

"The priority



Double-digit growth

Some 50 constituent assembly members are discussing how the CA can take up the economic agenda and help Nepal achieve double-digit growth a conference organised by the Confederation of



Nepalese Industries (CNI) at Godavari Village Resort from 14-16 August. Topics of the working papers include: rapid economic growth and its associated issues; trends, constraints and impediments in some selected sectors; labour relations compatible to global trends; and economic vision in the new constitution. The

papers will present practical and workable strategies for achieving growth. The core theme is: 'Rs 12,000 per month earnings for every Nepali—a national commitment'.

Experts from sectors that are seen to have the potential to grow will discuss the challenges and what needs to be done to address them. "We hope this summit will pave the way for a major international investment summit we plan to hold next year," says CNI president Binod Chaudhary.

Grand exhibition

On the 15-17 August, Alfa Beta and WAVE will hold the second Grand Australian Education Exhibition 2008 in the Alfa Beta Complex, New Baneshwor. The exhibition will provide useful information about further studies in Australia.



Air Dragon



DRAGONAIR

In the annual World Airline Survey by Skytrax, Dragonair has been voted 'Best Regional Airline: Southeast Asia'. The survey measures passenger satisfaction across 40 products and services and this is the first time Dragonair has won in this category.

No hassles

Laxmi Bank has recently introduced a Personal Reserve Account service. Customers will be provided with a flexible personal overdraft for use during financial emergencies.



To Singapore



ENTERPRISES

Singapore Enterprises is opening a new showroom in Singapore to promote Nepali products throughout the world. Products available include clothing and Mustang apples.

Vintage

Vintage Café and Pub recently opened at Woodland Complex, Darbar Marg. The café is equipped with wi-fi connectivity and widescreen tv.

High mental bandwidth

Last January, at the risk of appearing self-indulgent, I wrote in these pages about my then experiences as a CEO of a media company. Six months later, it's time for an update.



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

Trust, but verify: Once someone is in a position of authority, employees and others face an incentive to tell him things they think he likes to hear. And what he hears boils down to flattering information about himself, and conspiratorial information about others. At best, these interactions result in providing the CEO with access to necessary 'soft' information, which he can put to use. But at worst—and this can happen much more frequently than one thinks—these sessions can degenerate into time sinks for employees to exchange favours with the boss in return for 'privileged' information, which can be of dubious value.

Since I often do not know which is which, my rule of thumb is to listen to everyone both attentively and skeptically, and then ask for as much verification as possible. This simple act helps filter information that has value from information that could have been shared simply to massage the boss's emotions. As Bill Clinton was supposed to have deadpanned: "I don't understand

why I lose at golf, and why people no longer laugh at my jokes now that I am no longer the President!"

Explain the business:

Most employees do not necessarily understand the basic ins and the outs of their company. Nor do they understand how their company invests, earns and spends money for growth. And matters of external changes such as rise in the price of paper in international markets and the downturn in the advertisement industry in the local market can be too abstract for most employees to grasp. Besides, any seemingly secure and happy job can lull even the most

for growth. Otherwise, in the absence of a common believable business-centric story, there will be a mismatch between how the CEO perceives what the company should do and how the employees perceive the same matter.

Iterative decisions: The aid industry (my previous employer) rewards those who can churn out long-term plans on behalf of, say, the poor in Rolpa or the children of Panauti. These plans have a linear-logic certainty to them. But in a private business, long-term plans are nice to have, but it's day-to-day tactics that take account of evolving situations that are most effective in getting things accomplished.

Decisions made on Monday can change by Wednesday

productive employees into thinking that their company is somehow not subjected to the harsh realities of market competition and the law of supply and demand.

This 'we are immune' feeling can be compounded further by the view that the shareholders have unlimited resources and infinite patience. Faced with these ground realities, the CEO should assume the role of a story teller who seizes every chance, in large meetings and in one-on-one meetings, to repeatedly explain as forthrightly and plainly as possible how the company functions or does not function

At any given moment, there are so many internal and external variables that can go wrong that a CEO needs to develop a 'high mental bandwidth' to make sense of situations fraught with ambiguities. This means that decisions made on Monday could be changed on Wednesday because new information has come up, and, once the CEO walks down this path, the process of decision-making jells into an iterative practice.

In the best moments, this can feel like playing beautiful jazz; at the worst, the crashing of plates. Either way, one becomes less terrified of making decisions. ●

is to add a third jet"

Captain Kul Bahadur Limbu became managing director of Nepal Airlines in January. Last week, *Nepali Times* caught up with him in the cockpit of a 757 before he flew it to Hong Kong as RA409.

Nepali Times: The reputation of Nepal Airlines seems to have nosedived in the last two years.

Kul Limbu: Look, a state-owned airline can only be as efficient as the state that owns it. The instability of the past few years and the political interference was bound to have an impact on the airline. From four jets and seven Twin Otters in the early 1990s, we are now down to two jets and four Twin Otters.

I believe this airline has great potential, it can quite easily be turned profitable which in turn can subsidise non-profitable domestic sectors. All it needs is a board that understands the airline business, a government that leaves us alone and a realistic strategy about the future."

How do you propose to do that?

The first phase is consolidation to restore public confidence in the airline. But to be reliable we urgently need fleet augmentation. We have sent a proposal for the lease purchase by Spring 2009 of a third 757, so that there is crew and maintenance compatibility. Our projection is that we can pay for this machine within two years by concentrating on Nepali passengers going to south-east Asia, Japan and the Gulf. All we need is a green signal for

the board and from the government.

For the moment, we need to concentrate on Nepali passengers, providing them reliable, quality service at competitive rates. Until there is political stability in this country, tourism is too fragile to rely on as the main revenue generator.

So what is holding things up?

There is a phobia from the past about scandals. Everyone suspects that everyone else is trying to cut a deal so nothing moves forward. The decision has to be made by people who understand that without the addition of a new aircraft, you may as well close this airline down.

How serious is the fuel price crisis?

The 757 was a plane way ahead of its time when we bought them in 1985. Luckily, in terms of seat-mile calculations it is still quite competitive with more modern planes. And since we are a small airline, we have an advantage because our fuel bill is not critical. We need a bare minimum of three jets to run this airline properly, if we have that and good load factors to regional hubs, we can turn this airline into a profit in no time.

But we need look ahead beyond the 757s, and for that we have a business plan to induct a fuel-efficient widebody by 2010, restart our Europe flights and add

another widebody by 2011 for Japan operations. But all that in the future, we first need to get the third 757 and take this airline back to cruising altitude.

How about domestic routes?

The ideal situation would be profitable international routes to subsidise the loss-making public service flights to remote areas. We have managed to get four Twin Otters back in the air and have resumed regular flights.

This autumn we will begin five flights a week Kathmandu-Pokhara-Manang and then regularise the Taplejung route to open up Kangchenjunga, and then Talcha for Rara. In the next five years we'll have to figure out what to do with the ageing Twin Otters, but we would need two 50-seaters like an ATR-42 or the Dash 8 series for domestic trunk routes quite quickly.

Flying seems to be a passion with you.

That's right. Ever since I watched DC-3s on food drop missions over my home village in Terathum, I was determined to be a pilot. I got a Canadian government scholarship in 1975 for Twin Otter training, upgraded to 757 co-pilot in 1993 and captain in 1999. Being the captain of an airline that you are also managing director of gives me a real sense of responsibility. But, you know, I prefer the flying part. Because at 35,000 ft it's just you and the plane, you leave all the lethargy and inefficiency back down on the ground.

Shameful swindles

Dambar K Shrestha in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 1-15 August

हिमाल

When Gokul Basnyat of Khotang flew to Singapore, he thought that he would earn Rs 100,000 a month as a cook. In hope of this he gave Rs 75,000 to Rajendra Thapa, a manpower agent. Only after reaching Singapore did he realise that a tourist visa had been stamped in his passport. Basnyat came back to Nepal and filed a case in the Ministry of Labour. Thapa was caught on 21 July.

Under the name of a company named Aupair Nepal, Gambhir Raj and Gagan Raj KC duped sums of between Rs 25,000 and Rs 400,000 from people hoping to go to the US, Canada, Australia and Macau. Gambhir Raj was arrested on 12 July but his brother is still out on the streets. According to Posh Raj Chaudhary (pictured), the KC brothers have deceived 18 people aspiring to go to Macau.



DAMBER K SHRESTHA

"They took the money time and again, but didn't do our work," says Rupa Shrestha as she shows a receipt for Rs 350,000. Her husband was one of the 18 deceived. Another six, including Santosh Gurung of Pokhara, were also waiting to go the US through the same company.

Chandra Bahadur BK's story is no different. He left his home in Nanglebare, Kathmandu to work as a plumber in Qatar where he expected a salary of Rs 14,000 a month. Instead he had to labour digging a tunnel in a desert and was not paid well either. He had borrowed Rs 95,000 from a local moneylender at five per cent interest, to give to Surendra Tamang of River Overseas, a manpower company in Kathmandu. Now BK, along with his wife and son, are knocking on the doors at the Ministry of Labour, hoping he will get his money back.

Siddhartha Gautam Overseas, Kathmandu was involved in issuing fake Malaysian visas for a fee of Rs 65,000. When Binaya Gahara filed a case against the owner, Krishna Kuwar, he was kidnapped from the ministry itself on 27 July. Gahara was badly beaten up and pressured to withdraw the case. Keshab Kumar Oli, who went to Qatar through the same manpower company after paying them Rs 83,000, was jailed there for a month. He too is at the ministry seeking justice. "They have threatened that they can do anything if the case is not withdrawn," says Oli.

When Om Gurung of Quality Manpower did not send Narendra Katwal of Morang to Macau, even after Katwal had paid him the sum of Rs100,000, Katwal too ran to the Ministry of Labour for help. This was the second time he had been conned. Earlier, he along with seven others had been cheated by Sunil Rasaili of Kathmandu's Indaman Consultancy, which had taken Rs 275,000 to send them to Afghanistan.

Sri Krishna Gurung offered people employment abroad and swindled money out of them. He would pretend to be a singer-songwriter, reporter or even a policeman. Gurung was caught but the police let him off on the condition that he would pay everybody back. Mandip Rai of Gothatar, Kathmandu was easily fooled by Gurung when he showed him a news piece titled 'Singer Gurung granted multiple-entry visa' printed on 10 June in *Nepal Samacharpatra*. In the hope of flying to the US, Mandip handed over a sum of Rs 300,000.

Copying Kalikot

Tularam Pandey in *Kantipur*, 13 August

कान्तिपुर

Kalikot has never been without problems. Food has always been scarce and prices for the basic necessities high. Schoolchildren do not have enough books, the sick do not have doctors or medicine and news of people dying from curable diseases like diarrhoea, the common cold, measles or pneumonia is nothing new in Kalikot.

The victims of conflict are waiting for relief, the budget has been frozen since the end of the fiscal year because no work has been done, the phone lines are dead and the banks do not have enough cash. The opening of the Karnali Highway has increased deaths and injuries because of accidents.

It may seem wrong to compare Kalikot to Kathmandu. But there are shortages now in both places. Scarcity of food and basic commodities has been a way of life in far-off rural areas like Kalikot. Since the April Uprising, the capital too has been plunged into a life of shortages.

But the well-off population seems to be getting on fine. Even at the time of the worst shortages,

gas, kerosene, petrol and diesel seem to reach their homes without any problem. They don't need to stand in queues for hours. But for the middle and the lower classes, Kathmandu has become a city of crises.

Hoarding is rife and businessmen are profiting from the scarcity of gas, kerosene,



DEWEN

diesel and petrol. The consumers are still silent, but the government needs to address these issues before their patience runs out.

New Nepal?

Vijay Gajananda Vaidya in *Dristi*, 12 August

दृष्टि

For the past few years, no one has dared to invest in Nepal. Foreign investors have gone to Africa or south-east Asia. Politicians must be aware of this, but they have done nothing to attract FDI. There

is capital flight. This country is headed towards financial disaster. Insecure investments have discouraged businessmen from putting money into industry or agriculture and others are pulling out even from the investments they made. Labour problems have now become a threat to industry. Instead of focusing on increasing productivity and earnings, workers are creating anarchy in the name of rights. If the political parties themselves seem to be using the policy of inciting workers to tackle businessmen, why would anyone be interested in investing here?

Unless there is more investment, we won't be able to create jobs here. Three tea companies in

Hile, Dhankuta, which were already running at a loss, have now closed down because of threats and occupation by militant workers. The lockups seem to worry neither the government nor the political parties, who are on a mission to make a new Nepal.

At this rate, the question seems to revolve not around building a new Nepal but whether Nepal can continue to exist or not. If we are actually going to save and build a new Nepal, this anarchy has to be dealt with firmly.

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get set to catch the *i*



i10

Within a just few months of this wonder car's glittering launch, automobile critics were convinced enough to reward it with more than six prestigious awards. Now, it's all set to rule the streets of Nepal. Avco International (P.) Ltd., the sole distributor of Hyundai vehicles will soon be rolling out the i10 from its showrooms across the country. Convinced that this will mark the entry of stylish, performance-driven compact cars with the latest technology and design wrapped in a value for money package, Hyundai knows that the i10 will catch more than just the eye.



i- inspiration

Packed with all of the inspiration that makes the i10 into a new urban challenger. Elegant outside and versatile inside, i10 lifts driving fun to a higher level. New clean economic power coupled with dynamic chassis design delivers sparkling performance and a supple, precise ride. It's the perfect intelligent combination of zest, economy and relaxation. Together with the excellent handling and control of the i10 they form unmatched power of inspiration

i- intelligence

Intelligent and ergonomic interior design, delivers seating for five adults. The i10 is ingeniously designed for easy loading or seat folding. Enter the i10 and you'll find cutting-edge design that puts everything into instinctive reach. Also, the i10 interiors convey a real feeling of quality, high levels of support in the front seats, correctly shaped rear seats and ample through ventilation affords a feeling of spaciousness - rare in a car of this size.



i- inner flexibility

The i10 is for independent people, those who don't wait to do whatever they need or want to. The i10 is flexible, with one or both rear seats down there is room for longer and larger leisure, home or business items. Also there are all the storage features you expect from Hyundai, from the sunglasses holder to door and seat back pockets, the i10 is more than generously equipped.

i- ignition

The i10 has a much improved 1.1 litre gasoline engine which offer superb performance and unmatched fuel economy. The unit develops 66.7ps@5500rpm and has a peak torque output of 10.1 kgm@2800rpm to deliver real fun and that's just the start. Motor driven power steering delivers effortless dynamic control. When it comes to safety the i10 surrounds you with the right protection.



i- innovation

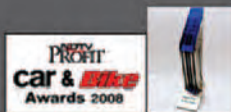
Distinctive and stylish from every angle, the i10 brings a new, more intense, freshness to the everyday. The styling, with the upswept side windows and reflective lower character line, is both expressive and attractive. The high quality, high tech head and tail-lights help refine the whole design, yet improve both driver vision and on-road visibility. In short, the i10 combines fresh design with integrity and innovation.



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A bicycle commute makes you healthier and wealthier

Cycle city

ROMA ARYAL

Kathmandu's travel options are hopeless: take public transport and you'll wait ages for the vehicle to be filled to its ultimate money-making, roof-top magnificence.

Chances are your car or motorcycle will grind to a halt midway, its fuel finished. Or last night's load-shedding will have left your electric bike in a coma. If walking is not an option, you're left with the humble pedal cycle.

It may be simple technology, but with no end in sight to the fuel crisis, more and more people in the city are seeing the advantages of cycling.

Typical is Surabhi Pudasaini. After suffering the tedium of slow, unreliable microbus rides, she took the plunge and upgraded to a bicycle for her commute to work, and she's never been happier. Her small two-wheeler

easily snakes through Kathmandu's traffic and she can be sure of getting to work on time. Her only disappointment is that there are hardly any other women cyclists on the road.

Fellow traveller David Kraklau takes to the road with his bicycle whenever he can. "They're the perfect transport for a place like Kathmandu, especially in Ason and Mangal Bajar," he says.

Bicycle sales may not be as high as in the days before people could afford cars, but retailers say they have seen a significant

increase in the past two years. Even upwardly mobile office workers are buying them, though few use them all the time. Petrol may now be as rare as a bottlenose dolphin in the Karnali, but there is clearly no shortage of petrol-burning vehicles waiting for their rations.

"Our customers are still stuck in the fuel queues," says Sidhi Bahadur at Govinda Cycle Shop in Kamalachhi.

The condition of Kathmandu's roads does little to encourage cycling. "The main roads are fine," says Surabhi. "It's the *gallis* that have lots of potholes." And in the monsoon, when the drains are often clogged, riding a bike can be like wallowing in a mud-bath. The Department of Roads is constructing a few cycle lanes in places like Gongabu, and from Maitighar to Tinkune and Sinamangal, but like everything else we don't know when they'll be complete.

"We are working on them," Tulasi Prasad Sitaula, the department's director-general assured us. "But our priority is the main roads." And the cycle paths are not linked together, so they won't make long-distance cycling through the city any easier.

Kesar Mahat, a bike shop owner in Patan Dhoka, says people in Kathmandu associate cycling with low status. "In Chitwan, you are incompetent if you don't ride a cycle," he says. "Here, people on the road make fun of you."

But views seem to be changing, and in recent months more middle-class cyclists have been seen donning their riding gear. "If there were suitable roads like in Amsterdam and China, a bicycle culture would flourish," says Tirek Manandhar at Pancha



PEDAL POWER: Surabhi Pudasaini (left) and David Kraklau (right) see the benefits of cycling, as volunteer Amanda Talbot (far right) attends a VSO Nepal rally to promote cycling in the city.





ALL PICS: KIRAN PANDAY



Asta Narayan Cycles in Kamalachhi. Even the last Dutch prime minister rode a bicycle.

Anywhere inside the ring road is in easy riding distance. "But some people are just lazy," says Kraklau. "They'll take their car even if work is just a kilometre away."

They may be better for the environment and for people's health, but not everyone wants to see more bicycles on the streets.

"If everyone used cycles, the rate of work done would be slower and our economy would collapse," says Laxman Ratna Tuladhar, director of Hero Honda Motorcycles in Nepal. "What we need most is a means of mass transportation."

Tuladhar believes the future is in electric vehicles, and says Nepal should be using its hydropower resources to become a leader in sustainably-powered electric vehicles instead of relying on petrol imports. ●



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VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

United Nations Development Programme in Nepal

UNDP, to support implementation of its Country Programme Action Plan (2008-2010) and to ensure results, is developing a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework. Field monitoring is a key component of this framework, essential to ensure that UNDP's interventions are relevant, reaching target beneficiaries, and bringing about real change in people's lives. UNDP is therefore looking for dynamic, results-driven Nepalese citizens for the following positions:

Field Office Coordinator

Level: SB-4
Number of Positions: 3
Contract Type: Service Contract
Duty Stations: Nepalganj, Biratnagar or Dadeldhura
Initial Duration: 1 November 2008 – 31 December 2009
 Service contract will be issued annually, with possibilities of extension

Duties and responsibilities:

Under the supervision of the Deputy Resident Representative (Programme) (DRR/P) and the Programme Analyst, M & E, the Field Office Coordinator will be responsible for the overall management of the Field Office. The incumbent will be responsible for representing UNDP in the region, building partnerships with UN agencies, local government officials and other development partners, managing the Field Office, and supporting implementation of the UNDP Field Monitoring Strategy by guiding and supervising field monitors in planning, undertaking and reporting on field monitoring visits, and by conducting field monitoring visits.

Qualifications - requirements

- An advanced university degree (Master's or equivalent) in the social sciences (such as but not limited to development studies, economics, political science, gender studies, sociology, anthropology, or geography), engineering, public administration, or business
- 5 years of experience in development settings in a multi-cultural environment, with specific experience in monitoring and evaluation and field work in remote areas
- Proficient in use of computers and office software packages (MS Word, Excel, email, etc)
- Fluency in written and spoken English and Nepali; fluency in other languages spoken in Nepal an asset

Field Monitor

Level: SB-3
Number of Positions: 8
Contract Type: Service Contract
Duty Stations: Dadeldhura, Banke, Dhanusha and other districts to be designated
Initial Duration: 1 November 2008 – 31 December 2009
 Service contract will be issued annually, with possibilities of extension

Duties and responsibilities:

Under the general supervision of the UNDP Programme Analyst, M & E, and the direct supervision of the Field Office Coordinator, the incumbent will be responsible for supporting implementation of the UNDP Field Monitoring Strategy by planning, conducting and reporting on field monitoring visits. The incumbent will be responsible for reviewing project implementation at the community level, assessing quality of beneficiary participation, with particular attention to gender equity and social inclusion, assessing relevance of project interventions for the beneficiary communities, and ensuring that interventions are fostering peace and harmony.

Qualifications - requirements

- Bachelor's degree in the social sciences (such as but not limited to development studies, economics, political science, gender studies, sociology, anthropology, or geography), engineering, public administration, or business
- Five years of experience in community development, including in remote areas; experience in monitoring and evaluation an asset
- Proficient in use of computers and office software packages (MS Word, Excel, email, etc)
- Fluency in written and spoken English and Nepali; fluency in other languages spoken in Nepal an asset.
- Valid motorcycle license an asset

Administrative/Finance Associate

Level: SB-3
Contract Type: Service Contract
Duty Station: Nepalganj
Initial Duration: November 2008 – 31 December 2009
 Service contract will be issued annually, with possibilities of extension

Duties and responsibilities:

Under the direct supervision of the Field Office Coordinator Nepalganj the incumbent will be responsible for the assisting in the day-to-day management of the Field Offices. Responsibilities will include preparing vouchers and processing payments for all financial transactions for the Field Offices, maintaining complete sets of books of accounts according to the principles of accounting, keeping complete personnel files and records for Field Office staff, maintaining other log books and records, managing correspondence, providing logistics support to missions, and providing other administrative support to the Nepalganj Field Office.

Qualifications - requirements

- Bachelor's degree in Commerce, Management or Business Administration.
- At least three year's hands-on experience in office administration and finance, with a UN or similar development agency, or with a reputed private organization
- Sound knowledge of financial accounting and reporting
- Proficient in use of computers and office software packages (MS Word, Excel, email, etc)
- Fluency in written and spoken English and Nepali; fluency in other languages spoken in Nepal an asset

Applications should be submitted no later than **3rd September 2008** by email, to: hrrmu2.np@undp.org or in a sealed envelope to UNDP Operations Department (Ref: Field Office/RC), UN House, Pulchowk, P.O. Box 107, Kathmandu, Nepal. The application should specify which position is being applied for. **(Only Applicants who are short-listed will be contacted)**

Applicants must submit the updated standard UN Personal History Form available at the UNDP webpage <http://www.undp.org.np/vacancy.htm>

The detailed TOR is available in the UNDP vacancy website.

Work experience and/or academic knowledge in relation to gender and social exclusion will be an added advantage. Women, Dalits, Janajatis, Madhesis, people with disabilities, and other minorities are especially encouraged to apply.

UNDP has a policy to have a gender balance in its staff at all levels by 2010.

UNDP, as a matter of practice, does not charge any application, processing or training fee at any stage of the recruitment process. If you have any questions as to vacancy announcements you may have received, please refer to UNDP website.

UNDP is currently aware of fictitious vacancy announcements that are being circulated through the internet, the purpose of which is to get people to register for training and send in a fee. If you believe that you have received such a notice, please forward it, and any other related information you have received, to . Since logos, emblems, names and addresses can be easily copied or reproduced, you are advised to take particular care in applying for vacancies, including undertaking all appropriate measures to protect against the unauthorized use of any personal information you may have provided as a result of the scam.

Better in Patan

SHRADHA BASNYAT

When Jim and Marilyn Simons' son Nick drowned in Indonesia 2004, they knew they wanted to honour his memory by doing something for the country he loved.

Nick had intended to dedicate himself to improving healthcare in Nepal, which is why his parents wanted to continue this ambition.

A \$4 million private donation allows community hospital to expand maternity wing

Jim and Marilyn wanted to do something more for Nepal that would make a real long-term difference in rural health. They set up the Nick Simons Institute (NSI) which has been working for the past three years to select and train health personnel who are most likely to remain in the villages and not migrate to the cities once they learn the skills.

And it was while touring Patan Hospital in 2005 that the Simons were astonished by the sight of the overcrowded and chaotic maternity ward. They subsequently decided to fund a new \$4 million maternity wing for the hospital.

"With the help of NSI we are able to build a more efficient and better equipped ward with improved services," says Rajesh N Gongal of Patan Hospital. The hospital presently carries out 7,000 deliveries and 2,500 Caesarean sections a year, and the new ward will help improve the quality of the services provided.

Although Lalitpur is adjacent to the capital, there are outlying VDCs in the south of the district where the maternal and child mortality levels are nearly as high as remote northwestern Nepal.

Patan Hospital was started in the 1950s by Chirstian missionaries, and used to be located in Shanta Bhaban in Jhamsikhel. After it moved to Lagankhel it turned its focus to community health care.



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MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Demand far outstrips the provision of decent maternity services in Nepal, and there is a particular shortage of facilities that can provide neonatal and paediatric critical care. The new ward, with about 150 beds, will help meet this demand, boosting the hospital's total capacity to about 450 beds.

The new ward will have a special care nursery to provide better treatment for vulnerable

new-borns, and there will also be two new operating theatres and an energy-efficient heating system. The new complex also has a top floor to be used as an academic centre.

The new wing will be inaugurated on 17 August by Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal, the Simons will be here for the occasion, and the ward is expected to be fully functional in two months. ●

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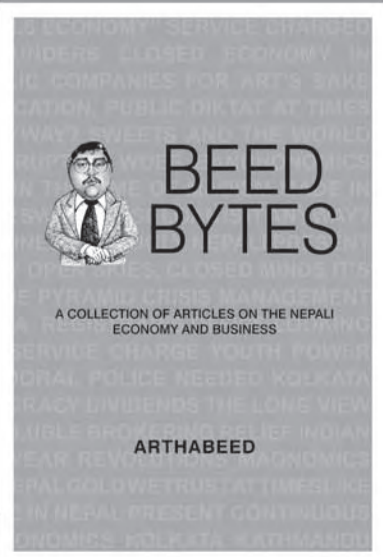
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Comrade Prachanda to

KUNDA DIXIT

So little was known about him during the first five years of the war that many in Kathmandu were convinced Prachanda didn't exist. Other leaders of the Maoist movement, like ideologue Baburam Bhattarai and his activist wife Hisila Yami, were public figures before they went underground. Some like Krishna Bahadur Mahara were even members of parliament. But few had ever heard of Prachanda.

By 2000, a drawing started appearing in pamphlets and newspapers (*second pic*) of a moustachioed man in a turtleneck sweater. Then the army captured a group photo in with a bearded Prachanda (*third pic*).

death and the counter-revolution in China. Nepal is a small country, we are a small party, but we have a big perspective. Our People's War may be a spark, but a spark for a prairie fire...the People's War in Nepal is contributing to making and accelerating this new wave of revolution. And Maoism should be the commander of this new wave of world revolution.'

Prachanda has given many interviews since then, and in these has contradicted himself many times, or at least tried to rationalise. Eight years ago, Prachanda sounded vehement: 'I hate revisionism. I seriously hate revisionism. I never compromise with revisionism. I fought and fought again with revisionism. And the



SUBHAS RAI

From farmer's son to teacher to guerrilla chief to government

The chairman had named Nepal's brand of Maoism after himself: Marxism-Leninism-Maoism-Prachanda Path. This played on the word 'path', meaning 'way' in both English and Sanskrit. But more importantly, it had resonance with the 'Shining Path' of the senderistas in Peru.

As far back as 1993, the writing was—quite literally—on the wall. Trekkers hiking in the mountains would find red graffiti scrawled on boulders: "Release Comrade Gonzalo." The revolution had leapfrogged from the Andes to the Himalaya.

In an interview with *Revolutionary Worker* in 2000, Prachanda gave a hint of what was to come: 'Right now, subjectively, the proletarian forces are weak, after Mao's

party's correct line is based on the process of fighting revisionism.'

Today, Indian Naxalites and international revolutionaries accuse Prachanda himself of revisionism. The chairman has explained that the party's ideological brainstorming in 2006 concluded that due to the domestic and international geopolitical situation, military state capture was untenable. Therefore, the party had analysed where socialism had gone astray in other countries, why the revolution had failed to deliver: because of the absence of multi-party competition.

In other words, comrades elsewhere had taken the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' to mean dictatorship in governance. Nepali

Maoists, he said, were different.

That led to the Maoists joining hands with Nepal's bourgeois parties in November 2005 to bring down King Gyanendra. By April 2006, when the king was forced to step down, it was clear that what the Maoists could not achieve through 10 years of war and 15,000 deaths they could attain through unarmed street protests and elections. Pushpa Kamal Dahal still won't admit it, but this was a moral victory for non-violent political struggle.

Now in a position of power, Dahal has already been forced to be more responsible in his comments. The man who used to denounce "American imperialism and Indian expansionism" and accuse those countries of trying to assassinate him, now meets the ambassadors of both countries and assures them of his party's adherence to multi-party democracy, the free market and support for foreign investment.

He also has to answer a lot of people from the moderate left parties who are asking: if you were for private property and

the free market all along, why did you wage war and kill all those people?

Dahal was born in a poor bahun family from Tanahu which, like tens of thousands of others, was resettled in the cleared jungles of Chitwan after the eradication of malaria in the 1960s. His father was a frontiersman, farming and raising a family at the edge of the jungle. Life was hard in the mountains, but it wasn't easy in the plains either. It was a struggle to survive—against wild animals, ruthless moneylenders and a government which abandoned resettled farmers to fend for themselves.

In college, Dahal was strongly influenced by communist ideology. He had seen Nepal's yawning economic gulf at first hand while growing up in Chitwan. "I never really understood why we had to struggle so hard to survive from day to day while our neighbours had all the luxuries," Dahal once told an interviewer.

In 1980, at the age of 25, Prachanda became a member of the Communist Party, which was in the throes of a split, reflecting

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Prime Minister Dahal



fissures in the international communist movement itself. Prachanda came into contact with Nepal's senior communists, who made a strong impression on him but with whom he later disagreed about the relevance and need for waging armed struggle.

Prachanda enrolled at the Agriculture Campus in Rampur, Chitwan, which was set up with American aid and had become a hotbed of student politics. After graduation in 1976 he spent two years in a teaching job in Gorkha's Arughat.

Satrugan Shrestha is an ex-student of Prachanda, and remembers "Dahal Sir" as a talented teacher who stood out because he seemed to take his job of mentoring very seriously. He gave every student individual attention and in the evenings would even drop by at the homes of his students to see if they were having any problems with homework.

A faded photograph (first pic) from the period shows Prachanda sitting on a boulder with two of his colleagues, dressed



in a black jacket with a stern expression on his face. Even then the young Dahal seemed to know he was headed for greater things. He had a passion for Hindi movies, listened avidly to songs on the radio and was a keen dancer, but he also kept a stack of books by Marx, Lenin and Mao under his bed.

A fellow teacher in Arughat told *Nepali Times* Dahal had once said to him: "If I want to be minister, I can easily achieve that."

After his teaching job, Dahal did a brief stint working for the US-funded Rapti Project. Dahal remembers thinking just how wasteful foreign aid was, and also noted the segregation between Nepalis and Americans in the project office. He says he saw how little of the aid money actually went to improving people's lives, and even the little that did just made the people more dependent. By the mid-1990s Salyan, Rolpa, Jajarkot and Pyuthan were as underdeveloped as ever; only the rusting hulks of American jeeps remained.

Unlike other communist leaders, Dahal

stayed underground even after the ban on political parties was lifted in 1990. While his comrade-in-arms Baburam Bhattarai engaged in open politics with the United People's Front, Dahal was working behind the scenes to prepare for armed struggle with his trusted comrade Mohan Baidya. The strategy and tactics were straight out of Mao's red book. When the war started in 1996 it spread rapidly, not because the Maoists were exceptionally brilliant or militarily strong, but because the state was so brutal, factionalised and corrupt.

For Prachanda, like all revolutionaries, the end justified the means. He said: "In a revolution, we had to weaken the repressive state, and any institution or structure that represented the government was a legitimate target."

Many committed social workers, popular teachers and enlightened farmers were killed by his cadre. Most were tortured in front of the entire village or their families in an effective use of terror. When asked about this in a meeting with editors recently, Dahal said: "I never ordered our forces to torture anyone. If anyone had to be exterminated, I told them they should do it quickly, with a bullet to the temple."

Dahal said his worst moment during the conflict was when 36 bus passengers were killed when his guerrillas blew it up in Chitwan in 2004. "I couldn't eat for three days and I couldn't sleep," he said, "it was a big blunder."

He says this in his party office where the portraits of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao hang above his head. "Why Stalin?" we ask him. "Stalin made mistakes, but he was a great revolutionary and he

defeated fascism," Dahal explained.

Prachanda's transformation into Pushpa Kamal Dahal started during the election campaign this year. In speech after speech, he glossed over his party's brutal past. He tried to force people to look to the future and championed the cause of the poor and oppressed. In a country where 95 per cent of the people are poor, this was a failsafe strategy. Dahal was more surprised about his party's victory than anyone else. He was so unsure about his own win that he tried to negotiate with the other parties a guaranteed win for himself and his senior leaders.

Dahal had not just underestimated the people's desire for change, but also their tolerance and forgiving nature. Through the vote, the people were telling Prachanda: don't you dare take us back to war.

But there are detractors, even within his party, who say Dahal has gone soft. After decades of being underground, the father of three likes the finer things in life, dresses well and can't resist good food. Public expectations are very high, and his party will have to start delivering on his promise to turn Nepal into the 'Switzerland of Asia'.

Dahal may find that waging war was the easy part. Now that he may be heading the government that he fought to overthrow, he must be wondering how to start rebuilding a country destroyed by a war he started.

Dahal will be tempted to achieve all this with unsustainably populist economic measures, or by clamping down and asserting the authoritarianism that he is familiar with. The real battle of Dahal's life is just beginning: how he can lead a party in power to deliver the goods. This is what he will be judged by in history. ●

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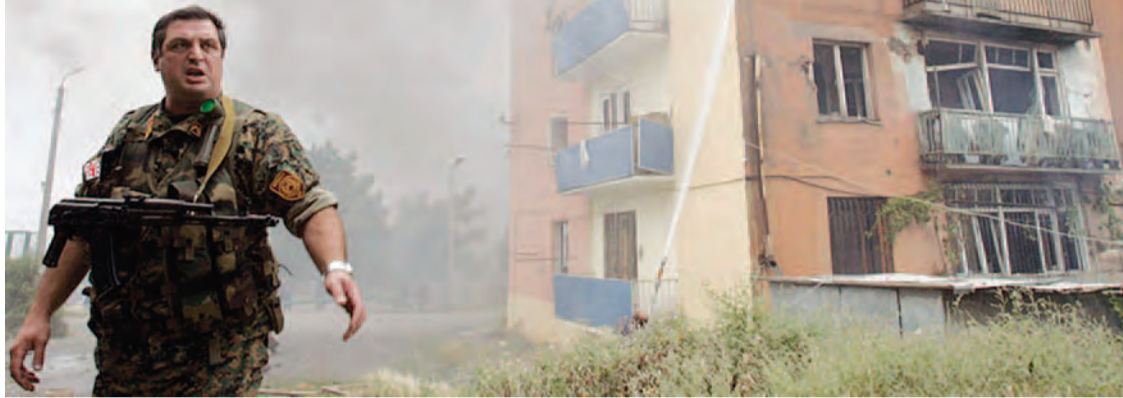
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Where the Cold War never ended



ZOLTAN DUJISIN in PRAGUE

Despite a ceasefire, the fighting hasn't ended in the fierce war that has broken out in the Caucasus in a geopolitical struggle between the US and Russia.

The conflict started after Georgian troops tried to take control of the Georgian breakaway region of South Ossetia, which had been de facto independent and protected by Russian peacekeeping forces since 1992. Russia has responded by

launching an extensive military operation in South Ossetia, repelling Georgian forces from the regional capital Tskhinvali, 100 km northwest of the Georgian capital Tbilisi, and advancing into Georgian territory. Mikheil Saakashvili,

president of the Caucasus country of 4.6 million people, claims the Russian "invasion" was premeditated. Abkhazia, another breakaway region in Western Georgia that proclaimed independence in the same year, has also become entangled in the conflict by taking Russia's side.

Sporadic clashes between Georgian and separatist soldiers were not rare, but hostilities

military action. Even if the Georgian actions were provoked by the South Ossetians, this is a serious political mistake."

Georgia seemed determined to expose Russia's involvement in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and present the conflict as one between Western democracy and Eastern authoritarianism, possibly hoping to obtain a more decisive Western intervention in the conflict.

Georgia is the frontline in the new battle between East and West

never reached the current extent. The Georgian move apparently took Western leaders, who had warned against attempting a military solution, by surprise.

Says Caucasus specialist Ivan Sukhov: "Saakashvili took a position that is awkward for the West, since Georgia has consistently positioned itself as a principled opponent of

The attempt to revive cold war rhetoric was palpable in Saakashvili's parallels of Georgia's situation with the 1956 Hungarian and 1968 Czechoslovak interventions by the Soviet Union.

One possible goal of the Georgian leadership's military intervention was to internationalise the conflict so as to change the format of the present Russian-dominated peacekeeping mission, and facilitate the regions' peaceful or forcible reintegration.

The move has encouraged the separatist claims of the South Ossetian and Abkhaz leaderships, and Georgia's renewed determination to fully regain its territorial sovereignty.

Unhappy with the U.S.-promoted Kosovo independence, Moscow had promised an adequate response to the latest violation in international law, and its first step came with the institutionalisation of ties with Georgia's two breakaway regions in March.

Besides Kosovo, Russia was irritated by Washington's enthusiastic promotion of NATO membership for two of Russia's neighbours, Ukraine and Georgia, as well as US plans to build a missile defence system in Eastern Europe which it claims will alter the balance of forces in Europe.

Many elites in the post-communist countries tend to believe that Russia is inherently inclined towards authoritarianism and expansionism and that the Soviet Union was just another expression of this impulse.

But the Western European member states, aware that Georgia's commitment to liberal democracy was dubious and territorial tensions were on the rise, decided to postpone the discussion on Georgia's membership of NATO.

The US has also been openly providing military support and training to the Georgian army while often encouraging Georgia to see itself as a crusader for democracy in the midst of authoritarianism. But as a member of NATO, a young and nationalistic state like Georgia could have drawn the entire alliance into a direct military confrontation with Russia. ●

(IPS/Other News)

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SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

Bhisma Prasai's beat

MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA



Kathmandu traffic police chief Bhisma Prasai has an unenviable job. But where others would just throw up their hands in despair, Prasai is determined to make a difference.

Where does one start to sort things out in a city where maniacal motorcycles, speed-freak microbus drivers, stationery taxis, rickshaws, bulls and jaywalkers all share the same potholed streets? Bringing order to this chaos is a mammoth task, but Prasai is making a dent.

"In the last 10 years there have been only 40kms of new roads built in Kathmandu, but the number of vehicles has gone up by 400 per cent," Prasai told *Nepali Times* in the traffic control room at Putali Sadak, from where he looks at live images of intersections from experimental CCTV cameras.

Prasai says public awareness is low and the traffic police can do little except fine lawbreakers. "There has been more support for traffic management from the people than from the government," he says, pointing to the concrete lane dividers and corporate support for the Valley's traffic police.

As a former journalist, Prasai has got newspapers and FM stations to help raise public awareness of traffic issues. He has set up a phone hotline (103) and an SMS hotline (4321) with traffic information. He also wants to see more intensive checks for vehicle roadworthiness and a get-tough policy for traffic violators.

Can this keen traffic cop sort out Kathmandu's chaotic streets?

The fuel shortage has given Prasai and the 875 officers under his command some respite because traffic volume has decreased dramatically. But he says the queues for fuel at petrol stations have created another problem.

Prasai joined the police in 1983 in the belief that where there is a will there is a way. He topped his class in basic training and early on became a police instructor at the National Police Academy. During the insurgency he found himself posted in hotspots like Rupandehi, Ilam, Palpa, Nuwakot, Nepalgunj and Jumla. He has served with UN peacekeepers in Croatia and Sierra Leone.

Prasai says the city's streets have now reached choking point: "Traffic management can help, but there is no alternative to developing an efficient and reliable public transport system." ●
Paavan Mathema

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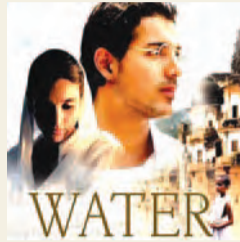
ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **The Group Painting Exhibition** by Bipin Raj Shrestha, Kishor Nakarmi and Madan Shrestha, 16-23 August, 4.30 PM, Light and Shade Gallery, Thamel.
- ❖ **Health and Fitness Expo 2008** from 21-24 August, at United World Trade Centre, Tripureswor. 4117104
- ❖ **Duet of Fantasies** by Promina Shrestha and Ranendra B. Mali till 7 September, 10AM-6PM, Gallery 32, Dent Inn at Heritage Plaza II, Kamladi. 4241942
- ❖ **Amalgam-2008** an exhibition of paintings by national and international artists till 8 September at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, Sunday - Friday 11AM- 6PM and Saturday 12- 4PM. 4438979.

EVENTS

- ❖ **Water**, a film by Deepa Mehta, Lazimpat Gallery Café, 19 August, starts at 6.30 PM. 4428549
- ❖ **Dancing/yoga-latey with Shabira Rao** 1-14 September, Rs 300 per session, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan. 9803673551
- ❖ **Monsoon madness package** at Shangri-la Village Resort, Pokhara, Rs 5999. 4435741



MUSIC

- ❖ **28th Yala Maya Classic**, a classical music series, 18 August, 5PM, Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka, Rs. 100. 5553767
- ❖ **Rock and Roll Friday night**, Jazzabell Café, Patan. 2114075
- ❖ **Ladies night** at JATRA Cafe & Bar on Wednesday with live unplugged music by D Shewan.
- ❖ **HyJazz Club** every Friday from 8.30PM, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4489800
- ❖ **Fusion and Looza Band** every Friday night, Bhumi Resto Lounge, Lazimpat. 4412193
- ❖ **Rudra night** fusion and classical Nepali music by Shyam Nepali and friends, every Friday, 7PM at Le Meridien, Gokarna. 4451212

DINING

- ❖ **Indian Food Promotion** at The Café, Hyatt Regency from 7PM onwards until 17 Aug. 4489362
- ❖ **Shiraz Promotion** at La Maison Wine and Cigar Lounge, Baluwatar, throughout August. 4429903
- ❖ **TFC Buffet and Lunch** for Senior Citizen, 50 per cent discount offer throughout August, Radisson Hotel. 4411818
- ❖ **Sixth Annual Wine Festival** until September at Kilroy's, Jyatha. 4250440
- ❖ **New menu** at Dhokaima, Patan Dhoka. 5522113
- ❖ **Masala**, an Indian restaurant in Jawalakhel, St.Mary's school road. 4421634
- ❖ **Asparagus Promotion** at Hyatt Regency from 7PM onwards till August 21. 4489361
- ❖ **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri-la, Kathmandu, Rs 600. 4412999
- ❖ **Lavazza coffee** Italy's favourite coffee at La Dolce Vita, Thamel, Roadhouse Café Pulchok and Thamel. 4700612
- ❖ **Mexican Food Special** at Jalan Jalan restaurant, Kupondole height. 5544872
- ❖ **Continental and cafe item** with Live band every Friday at Vintage Cafe and Pub, Woodland Complex, Durbar marg.
- ❖ **Home made pasta** at Alfresco, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **Hot summer spicy food** at the Jalan Jalan Restaurant, Kupondole Heights. 5544872
- ❖ **Reality Bites**, The Kaiser Café, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, 9AM-10PM. 4425341
- ❖ **Steak escape** with premier steaks available for lunch and dinner at the Olive Bar and Bistro, Hotel Radisson. 4411818
- ❖ **Bourbon Room Restro-bar** open for lunch and dinner, Lal Darbar.
- ❖ **Cocktails and grooves** with jazz by Inner Groove at Fusion-the bar, every Wednesday at Dwarika's Hotel.
- ❖ **Cocktails, mocktails and liqueurs** at the Asahi Lounge, opening hours 1-10PM, above Himalayan Java, Thamel.
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- ❖ **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 pan-Indian fusion at the Splash Bar and Grill, Hotel Radisson, 7PM, every Friday. 4411818
- ❖ **Starry night barbecue** at Hotel Shangri-la with live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs 666, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7PM onwards. 4412999
- ❖ **Kebabs and curries** at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619
- ❖ **Pizza** from the woodfired oven at Java, Thamel. 4422519

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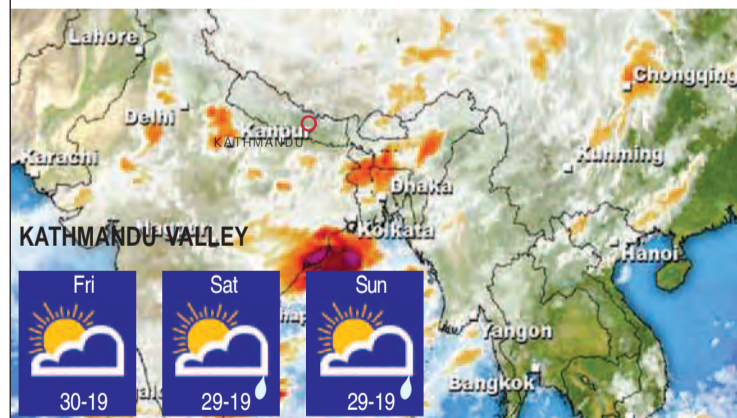
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WEEKEND WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

Our observations over the past 10 weeks show that this year's monsoon has been weaker than normal. Newspaper reports of record-breaking maximum temperatures in August, and of paddy farmers in Kavre and some other districts still awaiting sufficient rain to transplant their seedlings indicate the frailty of this monsoon. Satellite pictures on Thursday showed fresh cyclones over the Bay feeding a moisture-hungry, low-pressure zone over northern India, which may advance to parts of central and eastern Nepal to produce moderate rains. The same pictures indicate that western Nepal will get moisture-laden clouds from the Arabian branch of the South Asian monsoon. The Kathmandu Valley will continue to get light or moderate showers towards evening or at night, with sunny intervals during the day.



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KIRAN PANDAY

POLITICAL SPIN: (l-r) Maoist CA member Amrita Thapa Magar, UML youth leader Ram Kumari Jhakri, NC central committee member Prakash Sharan Mathat and Maoist leader Barsha Man Pun attend a cycle rally to mark International Youth Day at Maitighar on Tuesday.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

ANGEL DELIGHT: Miss Nepal 2007 Sitashma Chand, Sushil Malla from Kathmandu Jaycees, and Gopal Kakshapati and Subarna Chettri from The Hidden Treasure announce new dates for Miss Nepal 2008, postponed after complaints from leftist women's groups.



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Offence is the best defence

The Ass is beginning to suspect that the public disagreement between the NC and the Maoists over the defence ministry portfolio was a bit of a **red herring**. Just a hunch: wasn't the real issue over the finance ministry?

After all, if finance turns the tap off, the army gets no moolah, right? But for some reason the army brass that had got all antsy about a Maoist president is also getting rattled about the prospect of a Maoist defence minister because of what it would mean for PLA-army integration.

The defence ministry post was always ceremonial anyway. It's the PM who can call the shots. Besides, under the interim constitution, army policy is supposed to be governed by the National Security Council of which the defence minister is only one of the members. So why were the kangresis pretending it was so important that they were willing to stay out of government for it? And if they stay out, they have even less say, no? And why were the Maoists so dead against the kangresis getting defence? That they considered CP Mainali as DefMin proves what little importance they attach to it.



Girjau's whole strategy has been

to try to delay the Maoist government formation as long as possible by setting up one obstacle after another. The real issue here was that GPK just didn't want to allow PKD to become prime minister because PKD vetoed GPK as president. But in his quest for revenge, the Old Fox didn't realise that time had run out and he'd also run out of clever tricks. His personal quest has led to his party now being left out of the government with nothing to do but lick its wounds. But don't count out Girija 'Sour Grapes' Koirala yet, the man is still capable of pulling another joker out of the pack.



The UML is playing coy, and is happy enough to have the home ministry in return for voting with the Maoists on the prime minister. **Jhol Nath** got himself a good deal this time by using his brains for once.

But if there is such a grand alliance between the Maoists and the UML at the leadership level, why are their Armed Adolescents trying their best to break each others' skulls? The Youth Force and YCL have landed themselves in a mafia-style extermination battle over an extortion racket at Kathmandu's casinos. The stakes are high, and both are gambling

on big long-term payoffs for whoever gets to keep the division of the spoils that the royals used to pocket.



The MJF for its part is sitting tight because it has been assured of the foreign ministry by the Maoists. A couple of its leaders have got used to jet-setting during their kangres ministerial days, and long to get back to junketeering. The irony of the situation is that the while the president gets to occupy Shital Nibas, a madhesi foreign minister could occupy Naryanhati. But if the Maoists suddenly change their minds (which the MJF thinks is a distinct possibility), then it is going to gun for hydropower. No one seems to want the supply ministry at the moment because it is such a thankless job despite there being huge opportunities there for **hanky panky**.



In all this wheeling and dealing, the **Big Four** totally forgot one thing: their much-publicised attempt to come up with a common version of their common minimum program. One kangresi task force delegate in an unguarded moment admitted that in the meetings set aside for CMP all they did was bargain over

portfolios. So what else is new?



Is the fuel situation in Nepal so critical that the US Air Force had to fly in a KC-10 Extender midair refueling tanker aircraft to augment petrol supply? Why else would there be an emergency visit by an airborne tanker at **Gauchar** that didn't even have to pay landing and parking charges?












This week's New Name Contest winner is Alonzo Lucius Lyons with his renaming of the Nepali Congress as **Nepali Regress** and the Constituent Assembly as **Constant Disassembly**.

Runner-up is CK Shrestha with a new name for GPK: **Gidda Prasad Koirala**.

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