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**Times** nepalnews.com  
 Weekly Internet Poll # 425

**Q. How will the Obama victory affect Nepal and the region?**

Total votes: 4,165

Weekly Internet Poll # 426. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

**Q. How would you assess the government's first 100 days?**

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**OUTSIDE LOOKING IN:** Rohit Kushait from Janakpur looks in at the gate of President Yadav's residence at Dhaphasi on Saturday while the president was meeting journalists. Kushait wanted the president to help him with a land dispute.



DEEPPENDRA BAJRACHARYA

# Anybody home?

## As the honeymoon period ends, uncertainty looms

**T**he Maoist-led government has been in office for three months, and some of the ex-guerrillas in government admit that waging war was easier.

The Maoists inherited a battered economy, a fuel crisis, a crippling electricity shortage and a standstill in development and governance. Although their 'people's war' was largely responsible for some of these

problems, Nepalis still expect the Maoists can bring change.

However, the biggest challenge to the party leadership is now from within. The Maoists are holding intense backroom consultations before a conference of nationwide cadre opens on 20 November.

"This is a very crucial meeting," says Sarala Regmi of the Maoist Tharuhat Provincial Council. "The CA is just a transitional compromise; we will not give up until all oppressed people are liberated."

Party sources told

*Nepali Times* that there is strong criticism from within of Maoist ministers, and the hardliners look like they are going to be dominating the conference next week.

The Maoists are also facing pressure from the NC, which has stepped up its rhetoric. The NC's Arjun Narsingh KC said: "It's been three months and the Maoists still haven't fulfilled any of their promises."

He said the NC would not join a reconstituted committee on integration unless three conditions were met: the defining of a 'national party'; a balance of power in the

committee; and an agreement on the terms of reference.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal met senior Indian leaders on Wednesday in New Delhi and briefed them on the state of the peace process. The Indians are understood to have urged him strongly to work with the other parties.

Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee is due here next week and is expected to urge the NC not to play oppositional politics at this time because it could undermine the peace process and delay constitution-drafting.

Dewan Rai

**Signature**  
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# Inside the UML

## The party suffers an existential crisis

**T**he core problem in Nepali politics today is intra-party differences. There is a deepening rift between the Maoist dogmatists and pragmatists. The NC's right wing tendencies are re-emerging,



**PLAIN SPEAKING**  
Prashant Jha

drowning out centrist voices. It is a wonder that the MJF is a party at all, given the hatred among the top leaders.

But the most interesting ideological and leadership struggle is within the UML. The UML is thriving, despite being rejected by the people, because the NC and Maoists are fighting. The party is suffering from a severe existential crisis, and can't figure out where it has gone wrong.

Any UML leader begins his assessment of the Maoists by claiming that the rebels had to give up their 'ultra-left adventurism' and accept the Madan Bhandari line. According to this version, the 'people's war' was wrong. The Maoists could rise because of the mess created by the NC, army and then the king. The UML had little role through the 90s and was thus not

to blame. This narrative lauds the party's 'balanced' policy during the peace process, where it adopted a policy of critical engagement with Maoists.

With this line, and a strong organisational base, the party thought it would be rewarded by the electorate. Post-April, there was disarray. Excuses were found, Maoist intimidation was held responsible and the leadership changed. Many in the UML still feel their line was correct but the tainted leadership was being punished for compromises during the 1990-2005 period.

Now voices arguing for greater proximity to the Maoists have asserted themselves. Bamdeb Gautam is the most active proponent of this line. Most of his cadre from the ML days went on to join the Maoists and his stated aim is to merge the UML and Maoists. Jhalanath Khanal may not go that far but believes in 'broader left unity'.

But those demanding greater distance from the Maoists have also gained strength. The conservative KP Oli school has been skeptical of the peace process and has viscerally opposed the Maoists. He draws his support from party workers who have often been thrashed by the Maoists and want to maintain a distinct identity.

If the UML has got the well deserved image of a flip-flop party, it is because of this internal struggle. And the man who has reconciled those interests, though personally inclined to the Oli view, is Madhav Nepal. He is still the decisive player in the party and will stage a comeback during the convention.

What has complicated the plot is that the line between the

ideological battle and personal rivalry is blurred. Oli and Gautam may represent the two extremes, but they have come closer recently. Oli supported Gautam to head the UML team in government, while Khanal was rooting for Amrit Bohara. Oli now expects Gautam to reciprocate the support during the convention, when Khanal's leadership will be questioned. The result of that power struggle will determine the UML's approach to the Maoists, and thus the duration of this government.

Whether the UML can revive itself will depend on the ideological position it adopts, its effectiveness in government, the way the NC and Maoists evolve, the nature of polarisation in the next few years, and whether it can retain its grip on the lower levels of the bureaucracy.

The UML has to confront other challenges. It has dismally failed to deal with the Tarai's identity politics. The party structure is non-inclusive. Its leaders make prejudiced statements. It has lost its base among Madhesi intermediate castes and Dalits, and faces the danger of being reduced to an exclusively pahadi party.

It also needs to reassess its relationship with NGOs run by party sympathisers. These have been the UML's proxy patronage dispensation networks. But getting coopted into funding civil society has blunted the political edge of the cadre. UML workers and other sidekicks in 'civil society' are derisively dismissed as doing 'dollar ko kheti'. Nowhere do democracy, left politics, and civil society intersect as clearly as inside the UML. Its future decisions will have an impact in all three spheres. ●

## DAYLIGHT ROBBERY

Nepalis revolution was supposed to lead us towards a New Nepal. A new set of elected leaders was supposed to bring us a new vision and infuse citizens with hope and a sense of national purpose.

Nepalis haven't yet given up hope. They want to give the government they elected a chance to prove itself both in improving their daily lives and also by charting a new future for this country.

Any country that has suffered war suffers a hangover of violence. But there are other byproducts of insurgency: criminality, bribery, extortion and breakdown in law and order. Most transition states go through this phase: the former Soviet bloc was virtually ruled by the mafia for a decade after 1990.

In Nepal, a revolution that was fought at great human cost has ironically habituated people to kidnappings and corruption. Even if the lives of Nepalis don't improve, we need to have a perception that things are on the mend: that delivery of services is happening, that jobs are being created, that wealth is being spread. The present culture of impunity, the surge in crime and corruption do not give us that perception.

There is daylight robbery going on in Nepal's petroleum distribution network resulting in massive adulteration. The guilty are never punished. Local goondas extort 20 per cent or more from hospitals being built by charities in remote areas. Youth groups are on the prowl, threatening and extorting.

At this rate, it won't take long for the euphoria that followed the elections to evaporate. Among the public there is apathy about corruption, bordering on fatalism. It is seen as a given, it is accepted and its cost is factored into all transactions.

Yet we know that there is a direct correlation between corruption and lives lost because hospitals aren't built, or toxic fumes from adulterated fuels that poison us.

It is argued that corruption lubricates the bureaucracy, allows the middle class to get things done and spreads cash. But numerous studies have shown that corruption hurts the poorest the most. Some say it is poverty that feeds corruption, but actually it is greed.

It is retail street-level corruption that is most visible to us, but grand-scale corruption at the highest levels of government is more hidden and more destructive, deepening inequality and deterring investment.

While we wait for this government to get its act together as its honeymoon period runs out, it may as well start working on public accountability.

Extortion and bribery have become accepted evils, and unless they are tackled first, this government will find it impossible to meet any of its ambitious economic goals.



KIRAN PANDAY

# Made in Japan

## We can learn from the Japanese about successful local government

TOKYO—In a global study on governance a few years ago, it was found that the level of public trust in parliament, government and state officials in countries around the world was overwhelmingly low.

A majority of people said they were more comfortable forming non-government entities and taking care of themselves than waiting for the government to look after



**INTERESTING TIMES**  
Mallika Aryal

them. Japan was no exception: more than 71 per cent of people said they distrusted parliament, nearly 70 per cent were suspicious of the executive, and 60 per cent distrusted public officials.

This suspicion is one of the reasons why in the last 20 years only two Japanese prime ministers have lasted more than two years in office. A prime minister's time in office has decreased from three to two to

barely one year during the past four years. There have been four since 2005.

While they may be skeptical about their national government, the Japanese are fiercely proud of the work their local governments do. Japan's decentralisation model is unique and innovative. As we wait patiently for a Nepali constitution to be written, there are several lessons to absorb here.

Japan is divided into 47 different prefectures, which are further divided into cities, where 80 per cent of the population lives. The 1946 constitution recognises local government as an important part of democracy, and it is strongly focussed on the communities it serves. This has helped control corruption because of greater accountability.

The communities directly elect governors, mayors and members of local assemblies. The Local Autonomy Law, amended in 1999, also empowers local authorities. While the central government

is responsible for national projects, local government looks after welfare, social insurance, security and healthcare, and takes responsibility for looking after the elderly.

In recent years, Japan's local governments have been burdened with the increasing demands placed on them by the country's ageing population. More than 7.2 million Japanese are starting to leave the workforce and move back to their communities. At the same time, more women are going back to work after marriage and bearing children, and are demanding that local government provides facilities for family support.

Judging by the pride people hold in local government, it is clear this autonomous model, with locally empowered populations, has been a success. To deal with the increasing pressures on local government, Japan regularly calls on communities for help. It is now looking at the idea of giving the

ageing population responsibility for local surveillance and security.

In Nepal, our post-1990 experience in local development proves that community-managed projects—whether forests, roads, irrigation or radio—can be hugely successful. Nepal's Local Self-Government Act of 1998 was revolutionary not just because the decision-making was transferred to the people, but because the communities were also given rights to elect local officials. The act has been in a limbo now for more than five years.

However, in the next 18 months, as Nepal rebuilds its damaged structures and society, it will also be writing the constitution of the new republic with a federal structure. To avoid making the mistakes we made about local government after 1990, it is important that those writing the constitution do not forget the power of the people and learn from good practices—such as those in Japan and our own past successes. ●

## LETTERS

## TIMBER

The report 'Timber to Tibet' (#424) made sad reading. How the local authorities are turning a blind eye to such destruction of forests and illegal cross-border trade in timber is not understood. They have to wake up and stop such blatant misuse of natural resources which are community property. The government has to ensure adequate supply of food, fuel and other essential items to the people of the remote district so that they do not have to cut the valuable forests to get a pittance in return. In fact, planting trees and hence renewal of forests should be encouraged by free or subsidised supply of seedlings.

**D B N Murthy, Peace Lane, Sanepa**

## REMITTANCE ECONOMY

I would like to commend Mr Ganesh Gurung for his insightful comment in favour of opening up the migrant worker market for women ('At what cost the remittance economy?', #423). It doesn't make sense to ban women from working in the Gulf since they are smuggled there anyway by unscrupulous manpower agencies. As Mr Gurung argues, this makes them more vulnerable to exploitation. What should be done is to learn from the experience of Sri Lanka and the Philippines so that labour rights of the women are safeguarded, and embassies should be set up in countries which have a high proportion of Nepali women working.

**P Kumar, Kathmandu**

- Your special coverage of the plight of Nepali workers abroad, especially women, should be read by every official at the Department of

Labour and in the recruiting agencies so action is taken to protect Nepalis from exploitation and cheating by fellow-Nepalis. It is a shame that the very people we rely on to prop up our economy are so shabbily treated. While Dewan Rai exposes abuse, Ganesh Gurung says women should be allowed to go abroad to work. Unless safeguards are in place, it would be criminal to allow Nepali women to be sent to places like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia where they will face abuse.

**Renu Sah, email**

## BACKSIDE

Many people, including myself, read your paper from the backside. I have been following the exploits of your asinine columnist for more than a year and must say that 'Ass for sale' (#423) really took the cake. Not to spoil the fun, but for the sake of us expats in Kathmandu would the Ass give us hints about who the following are: Cloudy, Doc, Laldhoj,

Bhayankar, Bhayanak, Yummy and all those acronyms like WB/IMF DSA? Thanks.

**Sara C, email**

## LETTERS

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

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# Better climate for education



**New school design could revolutionise classrooms**

**KUNDA DIXIT** in BARDIYA

**W**hen Sonam Wangchuk first came to this western Tarai district to look at schools last winter, he was surprised to see the classrooms half empty.

When he entered the schools, it was clear why: the rooms were just too cold. He was determined to do something about it.

Wangchuk is from Ladakh and has been working to improve the curriculum and classroom infrastructure in the harsh climate of the trans-Himalayan region of India where the temperature in winter often drops to 10 degrees below zero. But the classrooms stay a toasty 17 degrees in the daytime.

"The problem in the Nepal Tarai is a bit different," Wangchuk says. "You have a temperature variation of 44 degrees in summer

and nearly zero in winter. This poses a much bigger challenge."

As an engineer, Wangchuk came up with a new design that oriented the classroom to face the sun in winter, and with awnings that shade the windows in summer. The walls are made of compressed mud blocks that retain heat and insulate the rooms.

"Design, orientation and construction materials make a lot of difference," says Wangchuk. Three more two-room school-buildings with this design are being built in Bardiya.

The advantages of the new design are: the building is ready in less than three weeks; the rooms are climate responsive; the classroom is earthquake safe; the mud blocks have good insulating properties; local materials and labour are used; and the construction process empowers the community.

"This building shows that if we work together we can do it," says Hasina Banu Sheikh of the group BASE which supported the construction. Banu says the government should use designs specific to the Tarai and mountains in the 15,000 new classrooms it wants to build in the next five years under an ADB/World Bank-funded program.

The Maoist-led government wants to achieve 100 per cent literacy in the next two years, for which it needs classrooms for 7.8 million children. Many are skeptical that this can be done, but Mahasharan Sharma, Director at the Department of Education says it can. "The money has been set aside for 9,000 classrooms this year alone, and if we launch this on a war-footing it is possible," he told *Nepali Times*.

The prototype school in Bardiya was built in 20 days and

was inaugurated this week by Danish Ambassador Finn Thilsted. The building is part of a program to improve the quality of education for the children of ex-Kamaiyas as well as to upgrade classrooms in schools in the district.

The Education for Freedom campaign is supported by the Danish group, MS, with its local partner, BASE. It is partly funded by high school children in Denmark who set aside a single day's earning every November and have so far collected more than Rs85 million.

The Janatanagar school was built using earth blocks made of 94 per cent mud and 6 per cent cement compressed with a manual compactor. Wangchuk conducted workshops for Department of Education engineers on the process, but says many people have a mental block against mud



**INSTANT CLASSROOMS:** This school building with two classrooms was completed in 20 days using the new earth design perfected by Ladakh-based engineer, Sonam Wangchuk (above).

architecture.

He says: "They think it is for poor people, but this technology is appropriate not just for schools but also for residential buildings." ●

## Mud saves time and money



**HOSTE HAINSE:** Villagers in Janatanagar use a manual compressor that delivers 15 tons of pressure needed to forge stabilised earth blocks for the construction of the school.

**A**s concrete and glass become the symbols of progress, proponents of adobe and mud architecture are fighting a losing battle.

However, research in mud technology has shown that sun-baked adobe bricks can be superior to kiln bricks both in strength and insulation properties. Our ancestors understood this and used mud, which is why old buildings are cool in summer and warm in winter. In stark contrast, concrete and cement structures have poor thermal qualities, making their interiors baking hot in summer and bitterly cold in winter.

Research at the Auroville Earth Institute in India has proved that the bias against mud will need to change if society wants to graduate to energy-efficient, appropriate building practices.

The technology used to build the Bardiya school used Compressed Stabilised Earth Blocks (CSEB). Mud is mixed with cement in a ratio of 96:4 and compressed with 15 tons of pressure with a manual compactor (see picture). The resulting bricks are even stronger than kiln-baked bricks.

In addition, they use much less energy and the kiln chimneys do not pollute the environment. The mud blocks emit eight times less carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than kiln-baked bricks and each school building saves 15 tons of firewood.

The lightness of the blocks also makes the buildings earthquake safe and the walls are reinforced with six horizontal RCC ties and a vertical tie every 1.5 metres.

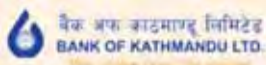
Mud has its down sides: it takes training to use properly, needs maintenance and is generally not waterproof or insect proof. However, most of these disadvantages can be addressed with CSEBs which use six per cent cement to stabilise the mud. The compression technique makes strong, durable blocks as strong as baked bricks.

The technology could be easily used to mass produce cheaper and environment-friendly bricks even for the Kathmandu Valley. For aesthetes, the bricks could easily be dyed red to make them look like kiln-baked bricks.

## New Standard Standard Chartered

Standard Chartered Bank Nepal inaugurated its new branch at Adarshanagar, Birganj. The branch will offer a full range of personal and business banking services. Standard Chartered now has 16 branches in Nepal.

## Money machine



Bank of Kathmandu has installed a new ATM at Chabahil, Chuchepati. The bank now has 14 ATMs.

## Smooth talkers

The two winners of the Horlicks WizTeam 2008 Nepal left for Bangalore to participate in the iHorlicks WizTeam South Asian Finals 2008. The winner of the competition will represent South Asia at a conference in Britain.



## Cold touch



Dabur Nepal has launched a new range of skincare products under its Gulabari brand name. The new range includes moisturising cold cream, moisturising lotion and premium face freshener.

# Imagine Bhattarai's D4E plan will doom this country



**BACHELORS OF WAR?**  
Guerrillas at a camp in Chitwan will be entitled to university degrees under the finance minister's plan.

SAM KANG LI

Imagine no school and no exams either. Imagine the government gives you a degree anyway.

Last week, Minister of Finance Baburam Bhattarai, PhD, said the government was preparing to hand out academic certificates to those who could not pursue formal education due to their involvement in the 10-year-long people's war—a war that left more than 13,000 Nepalis dead and thousands more injured and displaced.



**STRICTLY BUSINESS**  
Ashutosh Tiwari

Bhattarai further stated that those without academic credentials would also receive the certificates. Why? Apparently because they possess sufficient skills and knowledge but could not go to school because of financial or other problems.

Put another way, when this degree-for-experience (D4E) plan is carried out, the path to earning a degree will not be the old-fashioned way of studying hard to fulfill the requirements, but of having a political leader vouch that you were in the jungles of Rolpa toting a gun at a time when you should have been at school in Tulsiapur.

Assuming that the D4E is not

a new rung placed on the career ladder of ambitious young Maoists, it is destined to be a corruption-ridden plan. It won't help anyone in the job market. And there is a better way to teach the former rebels how to fish for themselves.

**Corrupt process:** Suppose the plan goes forward. How will the government verify the facts concerning a D4E aspirant? Will it ask for letters of verification from senior political leaders who were also engaged in the war?

And this act of providing certification letters will expand the discretionary decision-making power of senior politicians, some of whom are likely to use their new-found authority to please not Mao but Mammon by selling favours on the side.

Failed the SLC five times? No problem. Pay a senior politician to vouch that because you spent your teenage years hiding pamphlets in Kirtipur, you are now eligible for something akin to a Bachelor of People's War (BPW) degree.

**Confused signals:** Shown a BPW certificate, how is the job market to evaluate its worth? Since full-time jobs that pay regular salaries do not require employees to engage in even mini people's wars in the workplace, how relevant will the experience

'recognised' by the certificate be to obtain a job?

Or is Bhattarai giving out certificates now to mollify disgruntled cadres and put pressure on the private and the state sectors later to accept the BPWs as new hires?

If so, when those with dubious degrees are seen to be paid salaries, others with genuine degrees will have little incentive to work in Nepal. The counterfeit in effect drives out the genuine.

**Concrete action:** In his budget speech, Bhattarai announced that the next year will be the Year of Construction, while 2011 will be the Year of Tourism. These sectors require skilled workers. Why not find money to pay for short-term, skill-based training programs that help former rebels master skills that they can sell to the construction and tourism markets? The sooner the former rebels acquire skills to earn their own money in and out of Nepal, the less of a burden they will be on the government.

Many Nepalis gave up their student years to take part in the war. In these relatively peaceful times, we must find ways to economically rehabilitate those Nepalis. But the way to do that is not by 'recognising' the ex-rebels as, say, fishermen, when in reality they do not know what a fish is—much less how to catch one. ●



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# "Ian Martin is a communist"

Interview with Govinda Raj Joshi (NC), Nepal, 16 November

नेपाल

## Why is the NC resentful towards UNMIN?

**Govinda Raj Joshi:** We believed that UNMIN would play an important role in bringing the peace process to a fair conclusion and having an independent election. However UNMIN has failed in both these tasks.

## What wrongs did UNMIN commit during the elections?

They made the people go against the candidates of other parties who were being targeted by the Maoists. Then they didn't go to all the constituencies. Shouldn't they have monitored all the places?

## Can you give us any examples?

They used to attend my public meeting all day long and instigated people to go against me. They even said that they would cancel my candidacy.

## Why do you think UNMIN did this?

The main chief of UNMIN, Ian Martin, seems to



KIRAN PANDAY

be a leftist. Being a communist himself, he forgot he worked for the UN, set out to help the communists, and helped the Maoists in every way he could. Plus, he doesn't seem to be able to tolerate the NC. Martin acted unethically. The election for the constituent assembly was not conducted fairly.

## And NC found out about this only now?

We knew about this before, but our party as a whole just found out now.

## So you must be displeased about UNMIN's term being extended.

We are. This is about ethics. Girijababu even told the UN secretary-general that UNMIN did not behave correctly. Yet the government is getting ready to ask UNMIN to extend its term again.

## But the government

probably needs UNMIN.

It's the Maoists who need UNMIN, not the government. UNMIN provides the legality that the Maoists need to be in government. That's why even if the government asks UNMIN to stay on, the NC will not accept it.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

# Learning fast

Saraswati Karki in Kantipur, 12 November

कान्तिपुर

Santi Devi Rajbhangsi, a Maoist CA member, didn't even know how to dial a number on her mobile, but now she uses it a lot. "Now I can make my own calls. When we don't have meetings, I call my friends up for a chat," says Rajbhangsi.

Her 'chats' are at times complaints about not being able to learn English because she is illiterate: "I can speak everything but can't write. Right now I have learnt to write my name in Nepali."

Other female CA members like Rajbhangsi are trying to adjust to the city life by training to use a computer and ride a scooter, and learning English. There are 197 women in the CA from 19 parties.

CA member Asha Kumari Sardar of the MJF feels that to adapt to city life it is necessary to learn all three—computer, scooter and English. At present she is learning English and how to use computers, but is determined to learn all three by the end of the year.

An NGO is aiding 19 other women like her to learn English and computer skills. Jubba Suren of the Santhal ethnic group gives a high priority to learning English. Every morning she spends an hour in a language class.

"I can't understand when the other CA members speak in English during our meetings," says Suren, who is educated up to grade six. "That is why I feel it is extremely important to learn the language." She is also planning to buy a scooter because she has to attend a number of programs.

NC's Kabita Sardar, who used to be a teacher, says: "While I was in the village, I thought I knew something. But I've realised now that there is a lot more to learn."

# Direct the undirected

Yubraj Ghimire in Samaya, November 7-13

समय

Recently the cabinet issued a seven-point directive regarding civil servants, especially about their meetings and interactions with foreigners. The directive, issued at the initiation of Foreign Minister Upendra Yadav, indirectly requests foreign diplomats in Nepal to respect diplomatic ethics and norms while meeting politicians, ministers or government employees.

Minister Yadav must have his reasons but it would be foolish to expect a substantial result by implementing such a code of conduct only at the civil servants' level and not at the political level. Nepal's ministers have a history of rushing abroad at the drop of a hat, often jeopardising national prestige. Neither the government nor the ministers make any effort to formally notify the public of their junkets. This slapdash



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

attitude of the government makes us question their so-called commitment to the right to information.

How effective can such a directive be when the ministers themselves act irresponsibly with regard to foreign visits and don't even care to inform the state? The most recent incident was that of Information Minister Krishna Bahadur Mahara and Defence Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa conveniently cruising into Tibet in a government SUV escorted by a car from the

Chinese embassy. Along with them were Maoist leaders Netra Bikram Chand and Jayapuri Gharti.

This isn't the first time that such an embarrassing incident has occurred. It used to happen all the time during the tenure of Girija Prasad Koirala. Krishna Prasad Sitaula, who was then home minister, made several secretive trips to Jharkhand to meet a 'guru'—an easy excuse.

Under these conditions, how meaningful will Yadav's directive be?

# Toxic school

Dhristi, 11 November

दृष्टि

Bara—A warehouse near the Nepal National Secondary School in Amlekhganj is packed with toxic chemicals causing serious health problems for the students. The smell of the chemicals that are leaking from their containers is overpowering, and the students are having dizzy spells and even vomiting. Besides the students, residents of nearby houses are also affected. The warehouse stores pesticides and agrochemicals that were imported 32 years ago, found to be hazardous and put into storage before being destroyed. There are 140 tons of toxic chemicals like organophosphates and mercury-based chemicals, DDT and other carcinogenic chemicals here. Both the school and the residents have requested the government on numerous occasions to remove this toxic store and relocate it. Students even blocked the Tribhuvan Highway twice to press their demand. VDC chairman Bharat Ghale says locals have given up hope that the government will do anything.

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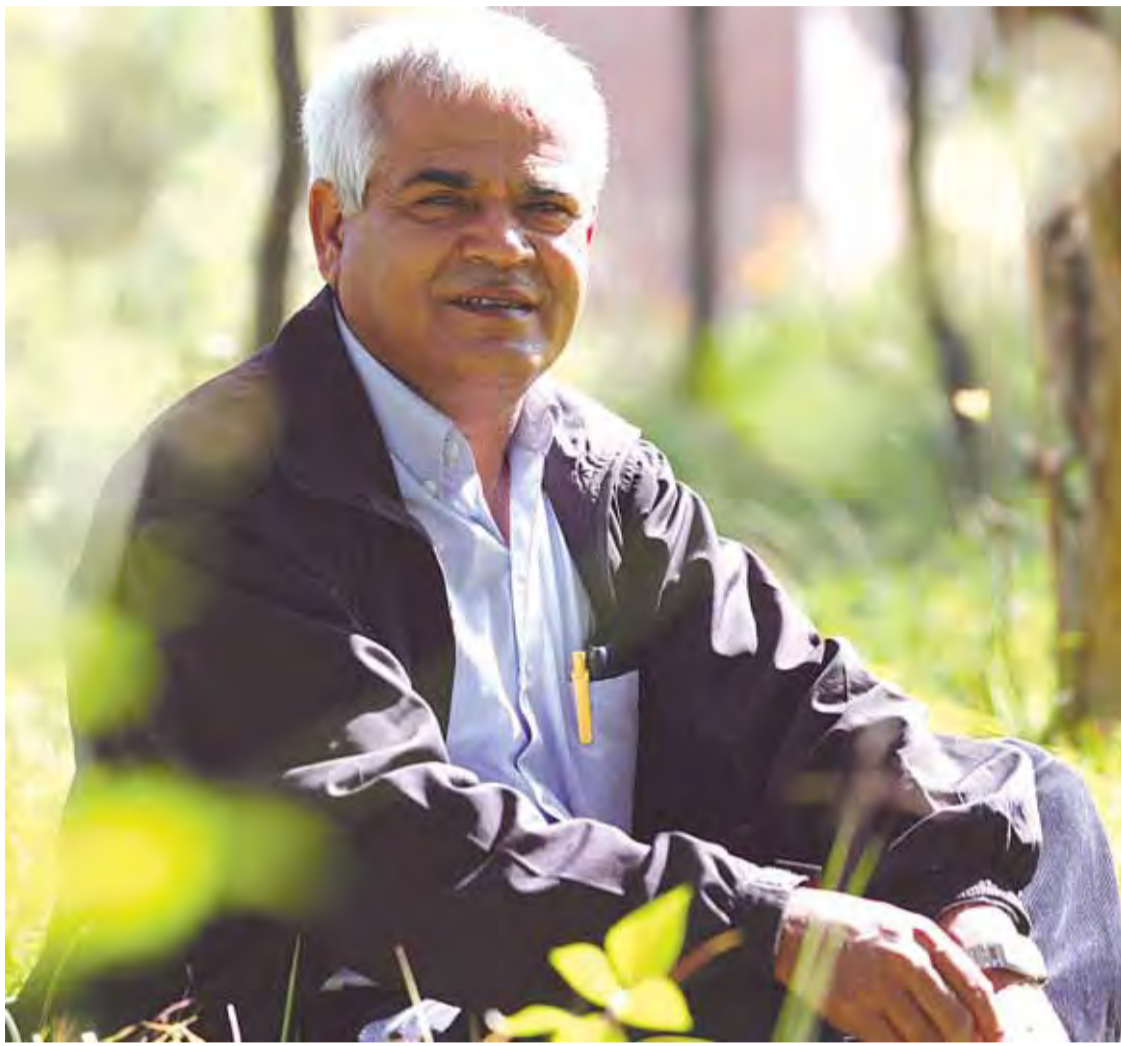
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# Rationale for federalism



KIRAN PANDAY

Many Nepalis, even CA members and political leaders, do not fully understand the concept of federalism. *Himal Khabarpatrika* talked to Krishna Khanal, political science professor at Tribhuvan University, about how federalism might work in Nepal.

**Himal:** What is a federal system?

**Krishna Khanal:** Federalism is a system of government in which the power to govern is constitutionally divided between a central governing authority and constituent political units. These units are called states or provinces, but I prefer to call them provinces as this term is frequently used in the Nepali context.

Each province has its own organs—legislative, executive and

judiciary. These provinces can function independently and are also autonomous. They don't have to wait for the central government to pass acts and regulations. In short, there are two governments—central and provincial—under a federal system.

**Can you clarify the differences between decentralisation and federalism?**

They might sound similar to

most people, which is natural because discussions have not yet started in this regard. But they are completely different in philosophy and concept. Federalism delegates power to the people of a province, whereas the central government gets power from the people. In a way, the federal set-up is bottom-up approach, which is quite the opposite of decentralisation where power is delegated from the centre to the periphery.

**Why do we need federalism?**

Federalism is required in our country due to the structure of society. The previous system could not address the ethnic, lingual and cultural diversity of our society. People's aspirations gradually started rising and there was no other way to address them. Federalism is a means to address all sorts of aspirations.

**Is federalism the only way to address ethnic, lingual and cultural diversity?**

Federalism recognises individual identity. But this identity is not necessarily ethnic or linguistic. Switzerland is a small country but there is ethnic and linguistic diversity which is addressed through a federal system. India is a big country with wide diversity. Therefore, it adopted federalism.

**Are there other reasons for Nepal to become a federal state?**

It is also necessary for the country's development. Decentralisation could not bring development. Those representatives elected from the villages settle in Kathmandu and live a life of luxury. Decentralisation cannot be meaningful as long as the leadership is centralised. Therefore, federalism is necessary to expedite development activities and ensure the participation of the people.

The development and utilisation of existing natural resources is not possible in a unitary state. Take Karnali for instance—rich in natural resources but reliant on food sent from Kathmandu. In a federal structure, there will be internal competition within the provinces. Some provinces have potential for tourism and others for water resources. It is federalism which opens avenues for competition.

**There are 101 ethnic groups in Nepal. Should we have as many provinces?**

This is not logical. It is the argument of those against federalism. It is not possible to give each ethnic group a state or province. We can create provinces in a manner to include major ethnic groups.

**Then what do we do with the smaller groups?**

We always have alternatives. For them, we can create 'cultural

councils' within a province, which is widely practised in countries that have adopted federalism. Some even talk about sub-provinces. But it is impractical to create an autonomous sub-province for each ethnic group.

Decentralisation to some extent can address this issue at VDC level. Nepal cannot sustain too many provinces.

**Doesn't the breakup of Yugoslavia show that federalism is not always the answer?**

The federal system of Yugoslavia was not based on democratic norms, values and systems but on a communist system and principles. It was the same case in the Soviet Union. The party was run centrally while the state was federal. These are examples of how a politburo-controlled federalism fails. Democracy is the first condition in federalism.

**Is federalism not necessary in relatively homogeneous countries like China?**

In principle, China is running under a unitary system, not a federal one. By the time Hong Kong was returned, it adopted a 'one country, two systems' policy. Now we can say it has adopted a 'one country, three systems' policy as there are separate policies for Hong Kong, Macau and mainland China. There are autonomous regions for minorities within mainland China, for instance in Tibet and inner Mongolia.

**Most countries become republics either after independence from colonialism or after winning a war. Are there countries where federalism was discussed as we are doing now?**

Federal states have been established in two ways: sovereign states which had to unite for some reason, for example the USA, where there were 13 separate states under British colonial rule.

The previously unitary state of Belgium went federal in 1993. Voices were raised over ethnic, lingual and cultural issues in 1970, which continued to escalate and there was fear of the country breaking up in 1980. They created a new constitution in 1993 with a federal republic.

## "It's a shame"

Aasha Kumari Sardar (MJF)

**Himal:** Aren't we getting late to write the constitution?

**Shardar:** We have promised people a new Nepal through writing a new constitution. Six months have already passed but the process of writing the constitution has not even started. It's a shame. We can not show our face to them.

**What is delaying the process?**

Political parties, be it coalition partners-including mine-or opposition, are not at all serious about writing the new constitution. People elected them to write a new constitution but they are engaged in a power play.

**The process of writing the CA rules of procedure is said to be delayed by small parties raising the issue of the whip system?**

It's true that the process of writing the constitution was delayed by the absence of CA regulations. At the same time, it is the responsibility of the CA to decide on the state

structure. Therefore, parties should not guide the members but instead allow them the vote using their conscience. Take as an example: if the draft constitution overlooks women's rights, we would never obey the party whip.



SANTA GAHA MAGAR

**Do you believe the constitution will be written within the stipulated time?**

It is not possible at this pace. There is a possibility that the new constitution would never be written in this way. Everyone wants power, not a new constitution.

**What in your view should be the priorities of the new constitution?**

Women account for 51 per cent of the total population but they are given only 33 per cent of the seats in the CA. The state should ensure 51 per cent participation in all levels of the state and half of this should be allocated for Madhesi women. Then, within the women there are elite women, Madhesi women, Janajati women and Dalit women. The state should identify their different problems. Like Pahadi women get leave on Tij, Madhesi women should get leave on Jitiya.

CORRECTION: The interview in this space (For equity, #424) was with Sita Gurung (NC)



The saga of the British embassy in Kathmandu reflected regional geopolitics

# The resident's residence

ANDREW HALL

Following war in 1814-16 with the East India Company, concluded by the Treaty of Sugauli, Nepal was obliged to accept a British Resident at Kathmandu.

Edward Gardner presented his credentials to King Girvan Yudhha at the royal palace of Nuwakot in 1816 and the Residency was established on land gifted by the king—but believed locally to be ‘ill-omened’.

The 50-acre site in Lainchaur (named from the English ‘lines’, the usual name for British enclaves throughout India), included a church, a greenhouse, a miniature zoo and a bird sanctuary. But the 1934 earthquake caused severe damage to the residence, which was eventually demolished in late 1940. Work began the following year on a new building.

The Maharaja of Nepal laid the foundation stone on 1 May 1941, but a confidential despatch sent to London in February 1942 noted that construction work had been “sorely retarded owing to

the difficulty of getting the material of the required standard through the Nepalese Government”.

Eventually His Britannic Majesty’s Minister, Lt Col Geoffrey Betham, moved in with his wife, reporting in a secret despatch: “It is a magnificent two-storied building constructed on the most up to date earthquake-proof plan and is fitted with electricity and modern sanitation.”

But within six years, the building’s shortcomings had become apparent, with a British government official complaining that the house was “built in the New Delhi style which is unsuitable to the climatic and general conditions in Kathmandu”.

The embassy site had passed in 1858 from the East India Company to the government of British India, but with the independence of Pakistan and India in August 1947, properties formerly belonging to British India were apportioned between the new successor states.

India, as the only one of them represented in Nepal, appeared to

have a reasonable claim to assume title over the old British embassy, but when negotiations became deadlocked over the desire of both India and Pakistan to acquire the Kabul embassy, India opened an embassy in 1948 at the small palace of Shital Niwas, further north on Maharajganj (today the official residence of Nepal’s president).

The Maharaja offered Britain a new embassy site adjoining the old. Rough plans were drawn up, but a political crisis intervened, with the departure of King Tribhuvan and most of his family to India.

Tribhuvan returned to Kathmandu to assume full power on 18 February 1951, promising his people a democratic constitution framed by an elected Constituent Assembly (a promise finally delivered 57 years later, when an elected Constituent Assembly ratified the abolition of the monarchy in May 2008). Inevitably, amid such turmoil, plans to relocate the British embassy were not a high priority.

Finally, in December 1951, the British Foreign Office



BEFORE AND AFTER: The old residence (below) in 1918 before it was destroyed in the 1934 earthquake and the present residence of the British ambassador.

Minister, Herbert Morrison, wrote to the Indian and Pakistani prime ministers proposing to relinquish the Kathmandu embassy to India (while the Kabul property eventually did pass to Pakistan).

Negotiations between the Nepali government and the new British Ambassador, Sir Christopher Summerhayes, soon

faced further problems. The British wished to move temporarily into Shital Niwas, effectively swapping with the Indian embassy, while they constructed their new embassy. Prime Minister MP Koirala was evasive, perhaps because he wanted Shital Niwas for his own use.

Koirala instead proposed that



# Forest House

The new British embassy was to be smaller than its predecessor. A Foreign Office report of 1948 called for a new residence "not of grandiose design, but sufficient to be representative and not to look too modest in comparison with the Indian Embassy, which will be next door".

The proposed construction cost was £66,000, but the initial plans were soon scaled down, presumably due to lack of funds. Now Summerhayes came up with a much cheaper option: to adapt and refurbish the buildings already there. He envisaged the ambassador occupying Forest House, which had been occupied by Evelyn Smythies, the Chief Forest Adviser to Nepal in the 1940s.

When Smythies left in 1947, the house reverted to the Government of Nepal, and by 1952 was occupied by Koirala. During 'a mild rebellion' on the night of 22/23 January 1952, 'the Forest House with comparatively low walls round it was easily surrounded by the insurgents and the Prime Minister was lucky to escape', Summerhayes reported. Koirala immediately moved to a better protected house and the site was vacated for British use later that year.

In February 1953 the British Minister of Works and Khadgaman Singh Basnyat, Counsellor for Foreign Affairs, signed a sale agreement. The UK agreed to pay £11,256 7s 6d. The following month, Summerhayes handed over the old embassy to India.

"It is hoped that this was done without significant loss of prestige and the move in any case took place in a friendly atmosphere after the previous wrangles," Summerhayes reported to British Foreign Secretary Sir Anthony Eden. The Indian chargé d'affaires wrote to "convey deep appreciation and thanks for the handing over of both the Embassy house and furnishings in it in such good condition".

Today uncertainty hangs over the future of Forest House. Structural surveys indicate that the building would perform extremely poorly in the event of another great earthquake, such as that of 1934. Further investigations continue to see if the building can be strengthened to meet accepted seismic standards. ●

*Andrew Hall is currently British ambassador in Kathmandu. The views expressed here are his own.*

# ence

the British move temporarily to Bahadur Bhaban, a large palace off Kantipath (now housing the Election Commission). Summerhayes was not keen and tried to enlist the king's support, but to no avail, and the British finally decided simply to renovate the buildings already available on the new site.

More troublesome was the question of Plot 4, a spur of land attached to the old embassy site which projected southwards into the new site. Its particular importance to the British, given their need for accommodation, was that it was already the site of the Second Secretary's bungalow.

India proved reluctant to part with Plot 4: Summerhayes and his Indian counterpart Sir CPN Singh exchanged numerous polite but rather chilly letters. The Indian, not surprisingly, was impatient to take possession of the embassy to which his government was indisputably entitled but Summerhayes, backed by instructions from London, would not budge until the British had possession of Plot 4. The issue was finally resolved in 1952. ●

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# The Obama inheritance

It is hard to explain to our children what the Obama win means to those of us born of an earlier generation. For many of us, the 2008 election is the completion of the fatally truncated election of 1968—the year of our earliest political education and, tragically, our loss of innocence in the American political process.

I was all of 14 in June 1968, yet full of the enthusiasm that youthful ambition can bring to its inchoate hopes and dreams. Already it had been a momentous, agonised and decisive year.

From LBJ's near-defeat in New Hampshire to Bobby Kennedy's announcement he would run for the Democratic nomination against Gene McCarthy, through the brutal murder of Martin Luther King in Memphis, 1968 had already been a year of profound anger and agony in American politics.



COMMENT  
Keith Leslie

Then, in June, as I slept, with a small black and white tv at the foot of my bed, I woke with a sense of disbelief and confusion after I'd fallen asleep waiting for the results of the Democratic primary in California.

Although RFK had won Indiana, Gene McCarthy had then won in Oregon and all knew the winner of the winner-takes-all California primary (so different from this year's Democratic primary rules) would be the 1968 Democratic Party nominee. That victor would then most likely win this turbulent election to hopefully lead the country out of its devastating war in Vietnam and towards the fulfillment of a civil rights movement that had sputtered then burned on the streets of Watts, Washington and Detroit after King's assassination that spring.

As I awoke staring at the tv, I realized that something had gone terribly, terribly wrong at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles after Bobby Kennedy's victory speech. There were people weeping, crying and screaming on the screen. As I ran upstairs to my parents' room and opened the door, one of them said, softly, painfully: 'Senator Kennedy has been shot.'

40 years later, that scene still fills me with sorrow. The scars of that election, sundered by assassination and paroxysms of street violence, still wound. The end result led to seven more years of war by a presidency that ended in the resignation of both the vice-president and the president, for corruption and abuse of authority respectively.



## The 2008 US election is the completion of the fatally truncated election of 1968

We had reached the nadir of American politics in our lifetime. Now, 40 years later, Martin Luther King and Robert F Kennedy may be looking down with pride on their beloved America.

This week, with the election of Barack Obama, a black and white man, a dignified, eloquent and compassionate man with a wise wife and lovely daughters who represent the best that America can offer, the ghosts of 1968 may at last be laid to rest.

The incomplete campaign of 1968 that meant so much to a teenage American has taken a generation to fulfill its natural goal, an arc of accomplishment, an epiphany of sorts.

Through this election, we can once again believe that the United States of America is a better country than we sometimes imagine, and still hope she offers an unfulfilled promise for people everywhere in this diverse, interconnected world.

For no matter how Obama governs in the coming years (and I believe it will be for the best), a long shadow of hate, discrimination and intolerance is being put to rest.

Now, when our children read of racism in *To Kill A Mockingbird* or hear the idealism in Martin Luther King's 'I Have A Dream' speech, they will know that, although it took the framework of an 18<sup>th</sup> century constitution, a cruel 19<sup>th</sup> century civil war and long decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century suffering, the fulfilment of that noble, democratic enterprise—that all men and women are created equal—has come closer in the 21<sup>st</sup> century's first decade.

A year ago, when my family sat in Kathmandu watching *Bobby*, the exquisite, Altman-esque film about RFK's assassination, I was surprised to hear my son, Ezra, say afterwards: 'That movie made me proud to be an American!'

Although a film about a deadly political assassination, I understood Ezra was speaking of the individual lives who found a purpose through Kennedy's inspiration and motivation. That RFK's message touched so many people at that time gave Ezra hope and, possibly, a greater determination to do something meaningful with his own young life as well.

Maybe, 40 years later, Barack Obama has offered our whole nation, indeed people around the world, this renewed opportunity as well. ●



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

# Downsizing development

The world's biggest development and humanitarian groups are laying off staff or revising programs for 2009 as their income streams flatten because of the global financial crisis.

Fundraising experts of three of the world's top charities—Oxfam GB, Save the Children UK and World Vision USA—said their programs will be scaled back next year.

"The growth we had assumed when putting plans together a year ago is not materialising," said John Shaw of Oxfam GB. Oxfam had envisaged five to six per cent growth over 2009-10, but has now revised this to zero.

Some of the biggest reductions are coming from corporate donors in the financial sector. "Growth from corporations won't be as much so we won't be scaling up our programs as we'd want to do," said Robert Zachritz of World Vision in Washington, DC. The three agencies have an annual income of \$1.8 billion.

Aid groups say they are doing all they can to prevent the cuts from affecting beneficiaries. "We are trying to cut back on support, rather than program costs," Oxfam's Shaw said, estimating cutbacks of up to 15 per cent of staff at headquarters and regional centres to create more cost-effective operations.

While all agreed new money could be found should a crisis break out in the upcoming months, some worry that

neglected, chronic crises, such as that in southern Sudan, may suffer. World Vision fears that recipients of microcredit programs, such as poor farmers who receive loans to buy tools, seeds and fertilisers, could be particularly hard hit. World Vision is the world's biggest international humanitarian charity, with \$2.4 billion in annual funds across all its branches.

About 30 per cent of World Vision USA's funding comes from the US government, 30 per cent from foundations, and 40 per cent from individual supporters and corporations.

## The global recession has hit the aid community

Agencies are trying to innovate their way out of the financial squeeze. Some like Oxfam aim to increase funding from institutional donors which they see as being steadier in the long term. Save the Children is trying to carve out more funds from wealthy individuals.

While corporate funding is dropping off, lay-offs provide an opportunity for redundant staff from the corporate sector to volunteer for charities, putting their skills to good use. Many humanitarian and development NGOs are revising their fundraising plans.

There are some encouraging signs amid the uncertainty. Major institutional donors such as USAID and Britain's DFID are taking a long-term view and not pulling back.

US government funding is going to stay at the same level as 2008 according to World Vision's Zachritz, partly because the funding cycle runs from October 2008 to the end of September 2009, and it being an election year, Congress has passed a continuing resolution keeping US government funding steady.

But it is too early to say if this strategy will endure. According to Shaw: "At the end of the day,

government funding is down to governments balancing their books, and politics comes into it so it is too early to tell, but the commitments made so far are encouraging."

Zachritz said World Vision is largely protected from corporate cuts because the bulk of the NGO's corporate donations are 'gifts-in-kind', in other words, medicine, building supplies and clothing, rather than money.

But while financial experts have not yet seen substantial reductions in individual giving, they anticipate potential dips as they approach the holiday fundraising season. ● IRIN

# Swapping crampons for studs

DEWAN RAI

Sherpas are known worldwide for their mountaineering skills, but now one of their number, Karma Tsering Sherpa, is carving out a different path to lead his community to the top of the Nepali soccer league.

He set up the Himalayan Sherpa Club as a 'C' Division team of rookies three years ago, and promptly won the division title in the club's first season to gain immediate promotion to the 'B' Division. Here they again won several tournaments, and finished second—a performance which has earned them further promotion to the Martyrs' Memorial 'A' Division for next season.

"Next year the league will be a test for us—but we are optimistic," Karma says. But there is more than just the

competition from other soccer teams for the HSC to overcome if they are to top the league.

For the past two years, a squabble between the All Nepal Football Association and the National Sports Council has left the 'A' Division teams without a competition as both bodies tried to run the league.

## Football team seeks to prove that Sherpas can do more than climb mountains

However, Karma is optimistic that the arguments will be resolved by the start of next season, which would allow the teams to battle it out once more for the top division title. "It doesn't make any difference whether ANFA or the NSC organise the league, but it should be held," he says. "We

are depriving players of their right to play."

Karma has been into sports since childhood. He learnt martial arts at school, and while at college established the Kamal Pokhari Sports Club. Now he is vice president of ANFA. He was also involved in student politics as a central

committee member of the Nepal Student Union and later a member of Tarun Dal. "I am not active these days but I have not given up yet," he says.

His football club has elected him president for a four-year term, and he hopes in that time to make HSC the

best team in Nepal. His aim is also to develop the club's football ground and supporters' network. "We cannot run a club on donations and aid from well-wishers all the time," he says.

Sherpas from across the world support the club, and its success on the pitch has attracted growing numbers of supporters from outside the Sherpa community. The club has provided scholarships for 12 college students and two school pupils at Trungram International Academy.

"Our players are from all ethnicities," Karma says. "It would be better if we could discover a few more Sherpa players." Karma says he set up the club to prove that Sherpas are also good in management: "Though our old identity is not bad, we need to look for new identities." ●



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# Seriously wicked

A more sombre, tortured Bond is no longer playing for laughs

**Q**uantum of Solace, the 22<sup>nd</sup> James Bond film, is Daniel Craig's second round as Agent 007, a role which he has infused with much gravitas and sombreness. With Marc Forster at the helm, that seriousness doesn't let up; if anything it is amplified. Like Christopher Nolan's reinvention of Batman in *Dark Knight*, the trend seems to be grittier, grizzlier, even now with characters sacrificing their humanity for their quest, blurring the line between hero and monster.

Just as Nolan jettisoned the suave playboy for the obsessive dark knight, Forster has opted for a humorless Bond. *Quantum of Solace* is a retooled Bond movie, its conventions altered to depict a world of shifting global politics that serves as a tableau for a crackling, violent tale of revenge and obsession.

Bringing in Dan Bradley from the latter Bourne films as second unit director smartly updates the action, granting a more lethal kind of cinema than its predecessors. And *Quantum of Solace* puts you straight into the thick of things, literally in mid-car chase, with harsh edits and tight camera work.

You have scarcely recovered from the adrenaline rush before Bond is giving chase to a double agent who has taken a shot at his boss (Judi Dench as M) and is escaping through (and over) the streets of some picturesque Italian city. It's breathless, frightening stuff. You can be pretty sure of the outcome, but somehow the direction lends Bond, bounding along like a jungle cat, a paradoxical vulnerability, as if he could be killed in the first 20 minutes of the film.

*Quantum of Solace* could be described as an unruly outgrowth of its prequel and not simply with the violence an octave higher and Bond wound a turn tighter. Immediately following the events of the previous movie, *Quantum of Solace* (unfairly) depends on your powers of recollection to make sense of some major plot lines. James is still raw from the death of Vesper Lynd, the previous Bond girl, for whom he had momentarily hung up his cufflinks and quit the agency; and revenge for her death is the ugly undercurrent running beneath his almost psychotic pursuit of the secretive cabal, Quantum, that had blackmailed her. Yet the slickness and glamour still a feature in *Casino Royale* are all but left behind here. This isn't a Bond who seems at home in a tuxedo.

In our modern, cynical age, the labyrinthine plotting and clandestine politicking of the global players seems perfectly ridiculous, yet somewhat plausible. Dominic Greene, the Bond villain with the maniacal look (Mathieu Amalric has said he fused the smile of Tony Blair with the craziness of Nicolas Sarkozy), pretends to be an environmentalist CEO but orchestrates a coup in Bolivia for a former military dictator at the behest of Quantum and with the approval of CIA. It is an age of compromised principles and unscrupulous pragmatism, which finds Bond's Britain floundering amidst the sea change in global power dynamics.

There will undoubtedly be complaints that Bond is no longer the camp and amusing agent of old. Even the requisite Bond girl, the hard-edged Camille (played by the sultry Olga Kurylenko), no longer plays the paramour, but is a confidante Bond can identify with over their respective vendettas of revenge. Maybe Daniel Craig's Bond will mellow after his grieving (the action disguises how much the character has evolved in the space of the past two films), but for now, and after a score of Bond films, this ambiguous yet earnest Bond is a perfect fit. ●

*Quantum of Solace*

Director: Marc Forster

Cast: Daniel Craig, Olga Kurylenko, Mathieu Amalric, Judi Dench

2008. PG-13 106 mins.

# Quick on the

Editorial cartoonists from across the region gather in Kathmandu



**T**ranscending language, editorial cartoons are able to convey hard-hitting, poignant socio-political messages, often through laugh-out-loud humour. Not only do cartoons humble pompous politicians, they also play a crucial—often unnoticed—role in nurturing the public space for social and political dissent and commentary.

To salute this under-appreciated genre, *Himal Southasian* is organising the region's first cartoon congress, a gathering of 36 editorial cartoonists from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka to discuss censorship, the challenges unique to cartooning in South Asia and of doing so in local languages, cartooning's status within journalism, and much more.

The three winning cartoons of the Southasia Cartoon Competition on the theme 'Dramatic Divide: The distance between the powerful and the powerless' will also be on display. (Winner: top and runner-ups: middle, bottom) The response to the competition, launched by *Himal* in June, was overwhelming, with 376 cartoons submitted from across South Asia, as well as neighbouring Iran, Turkey, Azerbaijan, China and the Philippines, and from as far afield as Brazil, the US and Russia.

The three-member jury of senior journalists Sadanand Menon, Madhuker Upadhyay and Kunda Dixit, awarded the first prize to Husejin Hanusic ('Hule'), from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Tied for second place were Oktay Bingöl from Turkey and Jamal Rahmati from Iran.



HUSEJIN HANUSIC (HULE) (BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA)



JAMAL RAHMATI (IRAN)



OKTAY BINGÖL (TURKEY)

# Subina and Nargis



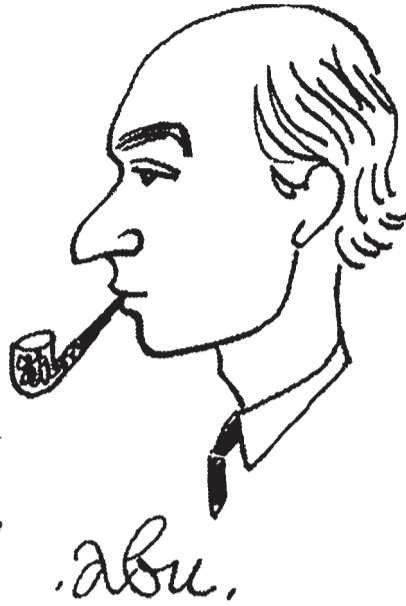
# draw

**The Pea under the Mattress:  
An Abu Retrospective**  
14-22 November  
Yala Maya Kendra, Patan

Selections from the work of Indian cartoonist Abu Abraham during the turbulent years 1966-1988 will be on show at the cartoon congress. The sketches are a testament to Abu's fearlessness, perceptiveness and mastery of critical humour.

They reflect crucial political events that were taking place not only in India but throughout South Asia, including the 1971 Bangladesh War of Liberation, the 1975-77 Emergency in India, the 1979 hanging of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the 1984 assassination of Indira Gandhi, the mysterious death of General Zia ul-Haq in a plane crash in 1988, and the controversial Indian involvement in the Sri Lankan war in 1987.

Throughout this period, Abu saw himself as a socialist. *The Guardian* once described him as "the conscience of the left and the pea under the princess's mattress".



**Toons in Trying Times:  
The Best of Nepali Satire**  
14-22 November  
Yala Maya Kendra, Patan

Durga Baral (Batsayan), Abin Shrestha, Basu Kshitij, Rabin Sayami and Rajesh K C explore a wealth of issues through their cartoons, including the astounding show of people power in restoring democracy to Nepal; the tumultuous peace process, culminating in the Maoists joining mainstream politics; the holding of polls to elect a Constituent Assembly, and the subsequent abolition of the monarchy.

Batsayan will open the session with a brief overview of Nepali cartooning.

Both exhibitions are open to the public for free. After a week in Kathmandu, the Abu Retrospective and the Nepali Exhibition will travel around South Asia, with the next stop in Dhaka

Southasia Cartoon Congress  
14-15 November  
Yala Maya Kendra, Patan  
Dhoka  
[www.himalmag.com](http://www.himalmag.com)  
01- 5547279

Friday, 14 November  
17.00 ñ 19.15

- Congress opening, public lecture by Manjula Padmanabhan
- Talk on Abu Abraham by Mark Bryant
- Introduction to Nepali cartoonist exhibition by Durga Baral ãBatsayaní.
- South Asian Cartoon Competition award ceremony.

Saturday, 15 November  
9.00 ñ 17.00

- History of political and editorial cartooning
- Censors of humour
- Editorial cartooning: step-child of journalism
- Divided through words
- Does Southasian cartooning lack subtlety?
- Evolving with an evolving media

## Nepali tv journalist is finalist for the Rory Peck Award

Nepali tv journalist Subina Shrestha is one of three finalists for the prestigious Rory Peck Awards for her Al Jazeera reportage of the aftermath of the devastating cyclone on Burma's Irrawady Delta in May.

Subina posed as a Buddhist from Nepal delivering food aid and was the first journalist to reach the area. She spoke to shocked survivors in villages along the river as the victims lay unattended on the riverbanks. The survivors had no food, water or government help and a week after Cyclone Nargis, were becoming desperate. Subina produced, filmed, edited and voiced the report herself.

Subina's report is among three finalists in the news category that also includes an ITN documentary on Somalia and another Al Jazeera report on a Kenyan slum. One of the judges praised Subina's enterprising news gathering, adding: "This is a powerful piece with some extraordinary shots. But at the same time the restraint of the reporting matches the quiet dignity with which the villagers share their stories with an outsider."

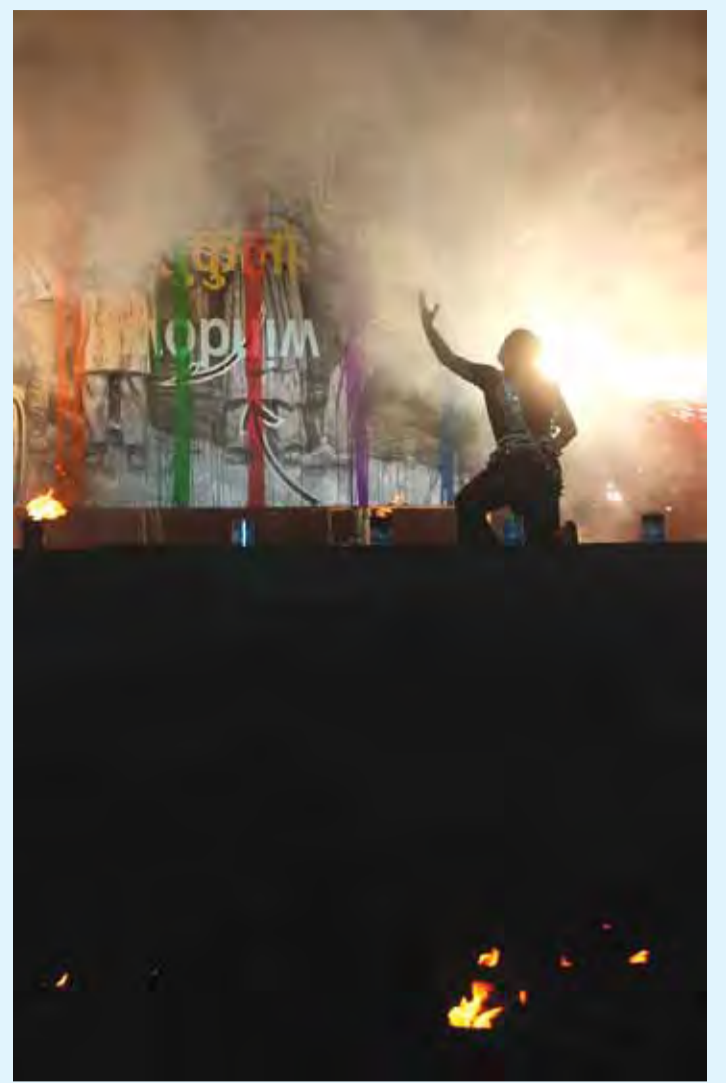
†Subina is based in Nepal and was trained in

journalism in the US and India. She has been working with documentary films since 2001. To bypass Burmese controls, Subina had to sneak in on a tourist visa and sidetrack officials, who were on the look out for foreign journalists, on her way to the parts worst affected by the cyclone.

Says Subina: "The sun was relentless and it was difficult to ignore the smell of the decaying bodies. And yet, the dark cloud made everything look so beautiful. After talking to the villagers, I came back feeling helpless, angry and sad. Sometimes the journey down the river still haunts me."

†The Rory Peck Awards recognises the work of freelance cameramen and camerawomen in TV news gathering and current affairs worldwide. The Awards ceremony on Thursday evening in London was attended by senior broadcasters, freelancers, bureau chiefs, commissioning editors, diplomats and journalists.

†Besides the news category, there is also a prize for freelance news footage on humanitarian issues and another one for in-depth features. ●



KIRAN PANDAY

## Fireworks at the Manch

The audience gasped as streams of carefully choreographed golden, red and green fireworks illuminated the dark Kathmandu sky on 7 November. This was unlike anything most of those gathered at the Khula Manch had ever seen—and it was unlike anything Khula Manch had ever hosted.

A magnificent concoction of various forms of art, *Divinity of Common Life* was a multidisciplinary, artistic performance by Nepali and French artists collaborating to bring to life the beauty present in each human and every moment of life. The unique use of light, sound, colours and dramatisation guided the viewers to the spellbinding climax of the evening.

Creating their personal magic at the event organised by the Alliance Française were French pyrotechnician Pierre-Alain Hubert, American installation artist Karl Knapp, actors from Gurkul, the folk music ensemble Kutumba with DJ Sharad, thanka painter Tenzin Norbu and the narrator, Salil Subedi. Their passion for life made a deep impression on the audience.

The second instalment of the event opens at Siddhartha Art Gallery from 14 November and will go on till 30 November. Though the magic of Hubert's fireworks will be absent, don't miss the chance to see Knapp's art or Nayan Tara Gurung Kakshapati's pictures, Norbu will complete his massive thanka as Kutumba performs. ●

*Shitu Rajbhandari*

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ABOUT TOW

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Divinity of the Common Life**, an exhibition by Karl Knapp and Nayantara Gurung Kakshapati, 14 November, 5.30 PM, Nepal Art Council
- ❖ **Himal Southasian magazine** presents a cartoon exhibition The Pea under the Mattress: An Abu Retrospective and cartoons in the Trying Times: The Best of Nepali Satire, 14-22 November, 9AM-5PM, Yala Maya Kendra (Free Entry). 5552141
- ❖ **Once Upon a Time**, an art exhibition by Donato Rosella on 17 November at 6.30 PM with live music, Lazimpat Gallery Café. 4428549
- ❖ **Wd**, an exhibition of paintings by Wayne Edwards till 18 November at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, Sunday-Friday 11AM-6PM and Saturday 12AM-4PM. 4218048
- ❖ **Chance Encounters**, a group art exhibition of artists from Bangladesh, France and Nepal till 19 November, Kathmandu Gallery, Lazimpat. 9851050493

EVENTS

- ❖ **School Bullying**, a talk program by Rakshya Nepal, 16 November at The New Era. 4482868
- ❖ **3<sup>rd</sup> Yala Maya Classic**, a classical music series, 17 November, 5PM, Yala Maya Kendra. 5553767

MUSIC

- ❖ **Tuesday Melody** at Jazzbell Café, Happy hour 6-8PM. 2114075
- ❖ **Possie & the Fags** playing live on 14 November at Moksh. 8PM onwards. 5526212
- ❖ **Twister** playing live every Tuesday at Moksh, Pulchowk. 5526212
- ❖ **Robin and the New Revolution** playing live every Tuesday, 7PM onwards at Bamboo Club restaurant, Thamel. 470157
- ❖ **Some like it hot** every Friday BBQ and live music by Dinesh Rai and the Sound Minds, 7PM onwards, Rs 899 at Fusion, Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488
- ❖ **Happy cocktail hour**, 5-7PM, Ladies night on Wednesday with live unplugged music at Jatra Café & Bar
- ❖ **HyJazClub** every Tuesday and Friday from 8.30 PM, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4489800
- ❖ **Dance and Cocktails** at Cube Bar, Kamaladi. 4438017
- ❖ **Fusion and Looz** 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
- ❖ **Fusion and Classical Music** by Anil Shahi every Wednesday, rock with Rashmi Singh every Friday, Sufi & Raga with Hemant Rana every Saturday, 8 PM onwards, Absolute Bar. 5521408

DINING

- ❖ **Thanksgiving Celebration**, 27-29 November, K-too! Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel. 4700043
- ❖ **Thanksgiving dinner**, 27-29 November, Kilroy's Restaurant. 4250440
- ❖ **Coffee & Chocolate** at the Lounge in Hyatt Regency. 4.30-6.30 PM. 4491234
- ❖ **Take away** at Te Restaurant from Bluebird Food Court and Welcome Food Plaza at Bakhundole, Sanepa. 5549331
- ❖ **Salmon Delicacies** at the Rox Restaurant from 7PM onwards. Hyatt Regency. 4489361
- ❖ **Organic Salad Bar and Steak** at Jalan Jalan restaurant every Friday from 6PM, Rs 650
- ❖ **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri-la, Kathmandu, Rs 600. 4412999
- ❖ **Pasta pesto passion** at La Dolce Vita, Thamel. 4700612
- ❖ **Steak special** with free Irish coffee at K-too! Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel. 4700043
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Reality Bites**, The Kaiser Café, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, 9AM-10PM. 4425341
- ❖ **Steak escape** with Kathmandu's premier steaks at the Olive Bar and Bistro, Hotel Radisson. 4411818
- ❖ **Cocktails, mocktails and liqueurs** at the Asahi Lounge, opening hours 1-10PM, above Himalayan Java, Thamel.
- ❖ **Retro Brunch Barbeque** with live acoustic music by Sound Chemistry, every Saturday, 12-3PM at LeMeridien-Kathmandu, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **Kebabs and curries** at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619
- ❖ **Ily Espresso Coffee** at Hotel Shangri-la, Lazimpat and Mandap Hotel, Thamel
- ❖ **Socially Responsible coffee** at Himalayan Java, Thamel



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

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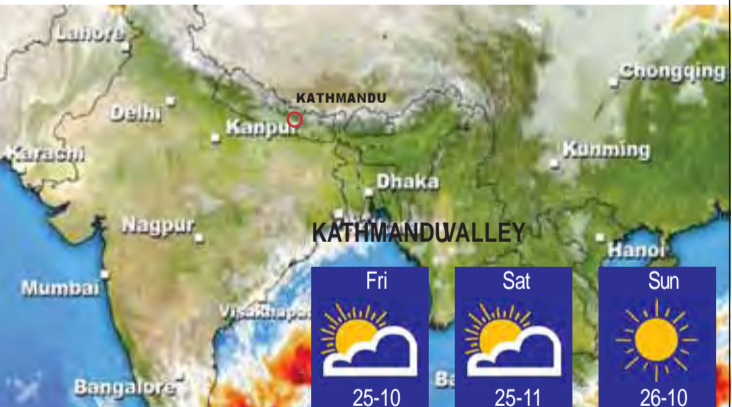
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**WEEKEND WEATHER** by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The weather situation is likely to change this week due to falling barometric pressure over the eastern Himalaya coinciding with a powerful circulation that is building up in the Bay. A high pressure sitting over Central Tibet will counter its advance. This satellite picture taken on Thursday shows a moderate westerly front advancing into western Nepal, but it will just graze the north slope of the Himalaya. Conclusion: central and eastern Nepal are likely get patches of clouds and some drizzles over the weekend with snow flurries higher up. The thick smog haze from India will persist over western Nepal. Night temperature in the Valley can climb back into the double digit while maximum will dip by at least 1 degree.



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"रेडियो सगरमाथा विचलित सुनी, अंग्रेजी सुधारी"  
(रेडियो सगरमाथा र अमेरिकी राजदूतावास, अमेरिकी केन्द्रको सहकार्य)

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AJIT TIWARI

**OFF THE RAILS:** Passengers from a train that derailed on Nepal's only railway between Janakpur and the Indian town of Jayanagar on Tuesday make a valiant but doomed effort to push the locomotive back onto the rails.



KIRAN PANDYA

**FLYING THE FLAG:** The crowd waits for the competitors to appear in the XIV<sup>th</sup> Asian Mountain Bike Championships at Chobar last weekend, which were dominated by Japanese riders.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**HELPING HAND:** Economic journalist Gajendra Budathoki receives a cheque for Rs 50,000 from Sujit Mundul (right), CEO of Standard Chartered Bank Nepal, for his rehabilitation and recovery from a motorbike accident two months ago. Also seen is Kiran Nepal, president of the Society of Economic Journalists of Nepal (SEJON).



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\* कार्यालय बुधियाका सर्किट गर्नु हुने मातृकाजयवृत्तकाटले हरेक सर्किटल SQUARE CLOCK कात्र फलत गर्नु उपयुक्त हुनेछ ।

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# Whiplash in the assembly

**E**x-king G is apparently looking for a good editor to get his memoir to the press for release on the first anniversary of his stepping down next year. But being quite a wordsmith (he wrote all his speeches himself while king) it does sound like he won't need much rewriting. Publishers are keen because they are sure it will outsell PKD's biography. A whole chunk of the forthcoming book is reportedly a **blow-by-blow** account of the palace massacre of 2001, and part of an effort to clear his name once for all.

But guess it won't bring us up-to-date with sonny boy's shenanigans in S'pore with wife-battering and exceeding the speed limit on the ECP in his Lamborghini.

☞

Politics in Nepal always comes full circle, so it was a given that sooner or later the Maoists would take on Mandalay advisers. Nepal is a secular democratic federal republic, but the new buddies of the baddies are all blasts from the past: Hira Budder, Loktantra Man Singh, Ramesh Nath, etc.

☞

So the assembly committee tasked with making rules and procedures

has finally decided to allow all parties to whip their representatives into shape. The reason for the delay was that the patriarchal and conservative party bosses were scared stiff that women and janjati representatives would forge alliances that would cross party lines when they voted on critical clauses in the new constitution. The deadlock was delaying deliberations on the constitution drafting process. The parties have therefore decided to compromise, leaving out all mention of **whips and leather studs** from the rules and procedures.

☞

Next week's nationwide cadre jamboree is making so-called 'moderate' Maobaddies nervous. Which is why BRB has now got a fan club on Facebook, and he's trying to sound really hardline by threatening to nationalise private schools and make Pasang C-in-C. **Dr Babu** has also been trying to cajole the hardliners by promising them university degrees: Bachelors of War for the radicals, Masters of Revolution for those who hacked off limbs of class enemies, honorary SLCs for whole timers, and a special PhD

for Comrade Terrific. With the Doc and Gaurav sharpening their knives, El Supremo may be pushed to chose between BRB and the hard core.

☞

Whatever degree they get, the new pressure groups in town should stop calling themselves OBCs (Other Backward Classes). How can a downtrodden group ever liberate itself if it describes itself as 'backward'?

☞

The Ass hears Mahara Dai and Pampha Didi are so concerned about disenchantment within the party about **nepotism** ahead of their cadre confab that they met Chairman Terrifying specifically to warn him that there was growing talk of his offspring getting preferential treatment, and of Mrs Parbati padding up ministries and corporations under her command with cronies and relatives.

☞

How will the Financial Minister ever raise revenue to fund his populist budget if his own cadre don't ask for bills and don't pay VAT when they buy **winter tracksuits** on wholesale for guerrillas in the cantonments?

And at the rate rural hospitals and education projects are being extorted, forget about the private sector: even the money that is trickling in for charity will dry up. When the YCL forced an army plane in Nepalganj to dump sacks of rice destined for Humla and forced them to take passengers instead, it was seen as a one-off incident. But then they started terrorising the private airlines, vandalising Yeti's office in Surkhet. The airline has stopped operating in the far west since then. The Baddie ministry of **uncivil aviation** is threatening the airline to resume services to remote areas or have

its license revoked; the airline says no way Jose.

☞

PKD, despite his pressing schedule, just can't seem to turn down a launch or inauguration so he can deliver yet another sermon from the pulpit. At the ex-royal National Academy of Science and Technology (NASTY) the other day, Terrifying gave these pearls of wisdom: "Science is a field where cheating is not allowed, but in politics cheating is allowed." Huh?

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