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Times nepalnews.com
 Weekly Internet Poll # 429

Q. The number of foreign visits to Nepal is:

Total votes: 2,579

- Perfectly normal: 31.8%
- The world is worried: 42%
- Completely abnormal: 26.4%

Weekly Internet Poll # 430. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. The dissent within the Maoist party is:

FLAMES OF SOLIDARITY:
 Women CA members light candles in Basantapur on Wednesday to call for an end to violence against women.



KIRAN PANDAY

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Loose changes

Amendments in the interim constitution cause further delay

On Thursday the CA made its sixth amendment to the interim constitution. Legal experts and experienced politicians have called on the CA to stop making so many amendments, saying that such changes are thwarting the process of the CA's role—to write the constitution. This one was about the age of voters for the upcoming re-pollings.

Constitution lawyer Bhimarjun Acharya warns against making such frequent re-writes to what is simply an interim constitution. It is not justifiable

to amend the constitution time and again for petty issues and at the whim of the CA, he says.

The Maoists have no intention of penning a new constitution while other political parties are blindly following the Maoists, claims the odd-man-out UML leader KP Oli. "Seven months have passed now but we have not started the process of writing a new constitution, for which the CA was formed," he told *Nepali Times*, "I have been insisting from the very beginning that the Maoists are focussed on staying in power and controlling resources."

The 14 constitution drafting

committees should be formed by 15 December but the political parties have not yet even suggested any names for them.

Oli adds, "It is a serious matter not to be worried at all about the real business of the CA when we have only 18 months left. What if they change the time to complete the constitution and extend their CA term by themselves?"

The delay is not unexpected—the CA election was deferred twice. It took three months for the government to nominate 26 members after the election. The nine commissions which were set out in the interim constitution two years ago have still not been formed with the exception of the Land Reform Commission, which was named this Wednesday. After the CA

election in April, the constitution was amended to elect the president and again to address the demands of the Madhesis and Janajatis.

Political analysts cite another reason for delay as the inherent resistance of political parties to the idea of federalism. The NC and the UML only reluctantly accepted the concept of federalism under a wave of popular pressure while a faction of Maoists is still resistant. Collectively the national parties also fear the loss of control that a federal structure could bring as regional parties gain strength. They fear bedlam in the house as discussions begin on state restructuring—with no sign as yet of the commission being named. ●

Dewan Rai



Enjoy the moment
 a swing at a time



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Terrorism is sideshow

Young alienated men will always perpetrate violence—that mustn't be a distraction from fighting climate change and economic collapse

CONGRESS COURSE CORRECTION

The disorientation of the Nepali Congress is beginning to show. The party was so demoralised by its election upset that it still keeps showing what a sore loser it is.

Girija Koirala, until he was hospitalised this weekend, was trying to be a serious nuisance. After flirting with Maoists and courting the UML, Koirala now wants to build a 'democratic' front with jaded Panchayat-era politicians. With the Maoists taking on former royalists as advisers, this new alignment was an equal and opposite reaction. But kangresi loyalists wedded to the ideology of nationalism, democracy and socialism may find it hard to stomach a political coalition of Sher Bahadur Deuba, Pashupati Samsheer Rana and Surya Bahadur Thapa.

Koirala is probably hoping that an alliance with traditionalists will secure the future of his family in politics. But it's a zero sum game. Such a step may also mean a complete eclipse of the NC from the national scene. If an unlikely grouping of former panchas and discredited kangresis were really to emerge, its leadership would logically go to Marichman Singh or Lokendra Bahadur Chand rather than to Sujata Koirala or other Koirala uncles and cousins.

The NC was always a bit lost after BP but now it suffers from acute ideological confusion. This muddle-headedness starts right at the top. There was no reason for Koirala to lead the parliamentary party. He could have willingly put himself through a party election to show that there is internal democracy in the party. By imposing himself upon his party (I am the parliamentary leader of the NC as I assumed the prime minister's post for four months after the Constituent Assembly elections) he did himself no favours. It just proved our worst suspicions about him.

In more settled times, the NC could have continued with the contradictions inherent in any centrist party. But today, its main challenge comes from the radical left. The NC's right-wing leanings help the Maoists consolidate their populist agenda. The NC has to be a much more focused and disciplined party if it is to project itself as a true alternative to the Maoists.

The only way kangresis can reclaim some of their lost glory is to be the true vanguard of democracy in a polity that is seriously drifting towards extremism. For this, the party itself must go back to its social democratic ideological roots. And it must allow internal democracy to flourish so that a younger generation of leaders can inject new ideas and restore the hope that only through pluralism and inclusion can we have true development in Nepal.



KIRAN PAMDAY

Let's get one thing straight—terrorism, attacks on civilians for a political purpose, is evil. It's wrong and it's equally wrong whether carried out by irregular militant groups or the armed forces of the state.

What happened in Mumbai in late November had no justification. Whether the perpetrators came from Pakistan, Kashmir or any other place doesn't really matter.



NOW AND THEN
Daniel Lak

What matters is what happened. Unarmed, thoroughly innocent people were slaughtered in cold blood and a great city was brought to its knees.

Two nuclear armed countries teeter on the brink of wider conflict. Policy makers in South Asia and around the world are distracted from far more pressing issues—climate change and economic collapse among them.

So the bad guys won that round. Admit it and move on. In fact, it's safe to say that terrorists usually win. It's easy to attack an open, pluralistic society with the most primitive of instruments; box-cutters and suicidal intent enabled 9-11, surplus

AK47s and murderousness propelled Mumbai.

For what we like to call terrorism has always been with us—and yesterday's terrorists sometimes become today's respected leaders. Nepal's Maoist leaders were once South Asia's most wanted men and women. Now, they meet British and American leaders, cap in hand, and get a sympathetic hearing. None of that justifies the horrific impact of what was rightly seen as terror at the time, but there's no doubt that all sorts of violence can be forgiven, if not forgotten.

A glance back through recent history is enough to convince that terrorism will persist. Anarchists bombed heads of state and government in Europe in the 1800s. Extremist left wing factions carried out nihilist attacks in the 1960s and 70s.

Zionist gangs killed civilians in some of the world's first car bomb attacks in British-ruled Palestine in the late 1940s. Indian freedom fighters who rejected the leadership of Gandhi killed their colonial masters in the early decades of the 20th century.

Various African states had violent anti-imperialist movements that led to men of violence once deemed too dangerous to have their voices broadcast on the BBC, now run Northern Ireland's education system and police services.

So what about Mumbai and what appear to be the grievances of those who just might be behind the attacks? If we assume that international jihadi groups are indeed involved and they claim to be motivated by the plight of Muslims in other parts of the world, is there a role for negotiation and tacit recognition

that such conflicts need to be settled—if only to remove the ready justification for all sorts of bad behavior?

There is indeed, but with important provisos. The first is that all sorts of efforts are already taking place to resolve Kashmir, Palestine and even the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan. It's hard to find anyone in Delhi, Jerusalem or NATO countries who opposes stepping up these efforts and bringing peace as soon as possible.

But the question of whether this would reduce the number of terror attacks like Mumbai is moot at best.

Are the young gunmen in the photographs from India's commercial capital really feeling deep empathy for the downtrodden of Palestine or Kashmir as they mow down Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Parsees on the platforms of Victoria Terminus rail station? I would suggest not.

At best, they are alienated, angry young men living out their wildest sick fantasies by having a devastating impact on those around and wielding immense power over the lives—and deaths of others.

We need to accept that terrorism is inevitable and work to stop it in a range of ways—intelligence gathering, covert activity, job creation, generosity while recognising that stopping violence by young men is one of life's impossibilities.

Keep working for peace, order and good government in the world's trouble spots. Be ready for trouble along the way. But keep in mind that there are greater challenges, more existential issues that need our urgent attention. ●

LETTERS

RED HERRINGS

Last week's comment (iRed Herring's #428) raised questions and offered a solution that is both practical and original. When the government is ready to move forward on Security Sector Reform they might wish to consider that, in addition to integrating the PLA and the Nepal Army, they have yet to define a role for the Armed Police Force. This force, raised as a temporary solution to the security problems facing the country at the time, has yet to find a role in the New Nepal. In the wake of the Mumbai bombings, the need to tighten security on our borders has become even more pressing. Deploying this force for border security would give the force a new, positive role and at the same time might help to curb illegal activities at the border including the actions of the various armed groups in the Tarai. It might also offer an option to members of the PLA who are either reluctant or unable to join the Nepal Army. I would be happy to elaborate further if the government should see merit in my humble proposal.

Andrew Duncan, email

ARMY INTEGRATION

It is a fact that no one wants army integration at this point in time. If the NC can influence the Maoists and the Maoists can influence the people and their cadres then the country will not have to face the challenges that come with army integration. It is just as important to rehabilitate those who are not eligible to join the army. East Timor is the latest example: those who could not make it into army felt so humiliated and frustrated that they revolted.†

Kishor Kamal, email

YOUTH FORCES

I write to congratulate Minister Hisila Yami for taking the initiative to try and solve the problem of youth forces, including the YCL. If she is successful in her attempt, a major

security issue will be resolved. The youth wings have been abusing authority and creating anarchy. This has been hampering the peace process. At the moment, youth forces are abusing their authority for personal vendetta. At the same time, one youth force commits a crime in the name of another. The general public doesn't know who to blame in the end.

Dharma R. Gurung, email

HIGH AND DRY

The Government's attempts to alleviate the suffering of people caused by the Kosi River breaching its embankments have not gone far enough (Still high and dry, # 428). Thanks to the government's apathy private operators are benefitting. Passengers are charged Rs 50 for a 10 minute ride in decrepit, unsafe and overloaded boats. There are no safety

devices and passengers have to wait in the hot sun to board the boat.†A temporary shelter could be constructed on either side of the breach. Bus / van operators†at both ends need to be organised so that it is less chaotic for passengers looking for the right bus. A few security personnel should be put in place to regulate traffic on the breached section of the river at both ends. It seems the hundreds of passengers who use this section of the road day in and day out are totally neglected. Given the slow progress of repair work, it seems it will take months before normality†is restored to this highway.

DBN Murthy, Peace Lane, Sanepa

DISUNION

Enough is enough. Ever since the Maoists came to power, we hear tales of murder, extortion, kidnappings, beatings, and industrial shutdowns. Whatever happened to all those people who rose up against the monarchy? Wait, I forgot. they're in the queue for petrol and food!

Prasanna KC, email



Local effect of global crisis

Out of an economic emergency is born the hope for true reform

Industrialist Binod Chaudhary has a flair for flamboyance. In his salad days, he cut a disc of Nepali songs, married outside the caste and publicly admired flashy and abrasive millionaire Donald Trump. Chaudhary created the Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI) to counter the populist FNCCI and



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

made to Forbes. He wangled a UML nomination to the CA under the Madhesi quota. Last week, he asked the government to take appropriate protective measures to shield the Nepali economy from the consequences of the global financial crisis.

Finance Minister Baburam Bhattarai is Chaudhary's contemporary. He excelled in academics, married a peer, organised peasants and prepared the blueprint for armed struggle. From Institute of Engineering in Pulchok to being minister of finance at Singh Darbar, it has been a long journey for the Bahun from Gorkha.

Bhattarai pooh-pooched Chaudhary's concerns and in reply told the assembly that Nepal was protected from the effects of global crisis by its backwardness.



Nepal may have been spared the initial shock of recession in the US and Europe, but no country is beyond the reach of global capital. What Bhattarai should have said is that there is nothing we in Nepal can do about it because our economy is so backward.

But the crisis does provide an important opportunity to review the trajectory of national economy since the mid-1980s when Nepal embraced the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) and laissez-faire with the enthusiasm

of a novice. In an Orwellian twist of the term, 'reform' became the shorthand for giving a freehand to business. A fragile state, weak regulations, ineffective oversight, liberal import regime and easy credits in the late 80s to the 90s transformed brokers into merchants. When the financial sector was privatised, shrewd businessmen became their own bankers, insurers and guarantors. The domestic capitalists that Maoists say they support, built cardboard castles

of dealerships, local agency and commission businesses.

Nepali Workers Abroad (NWAAs) keep the hollow structure of profitability afloat with a constant inflow of their savings into the national economy. Should remittances slow for any reason the whole edifice of a free market in the country will crash under its own weight. The finance minister needs to do more than shift responsibility to an ad-hoc panel.

It's too subtle to notice, but early warning signs of an impending crisis aren't difficult to discern. Banks have stopped lending money to buy land.

Operators of petrol pumps want higher margins as sales prices come down. Blackout hours go up with no sign of new investment in hydropower. Water wars have begun in Dhulikhel. Nothing seems related, but everything is related. The country will have to cope

with intensifying financial, food, energy and environmental crises in the days to come. A corpus for possible bailout of weak financial institutions and small depositors, higher allocation for food-for-work programs and building emergency grain stock, consolidated fund for clean energy and a taskforce for environmental catastrophes need to be formed immediately.

These are some of things Baburam and Hisila Yami can begin without waiting for endorsement of their decisions by the UML, MJF or NC. If prices of petroleum products are kept stable, savings can help ameliorate immediate exigencies.

Revolutionaries create crisis to change trajectories of national policy. Maoists have been served one on a platter. It needs to be used for real reforms this time and not more neo-liberal experimentation. ●

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The buck stops with PKD

The Maoists' dual-track strategy has its limits

Pushpa Kamal Dahal is a clever man. To pre-empt any criticism of his government and style of functioning, he has admitted to lapses, blamed the NC and bureaucracy and threatened to resign. It is smarter to agree with your critics and pass the buck than defend a dismal record. What Dahal forgot was that the buck now stops with him.

Girija Koirala's ambitions are a key obstacle. But how does NC's non-cooperation explain the government's inability to improve law and order or tackle the situation in the Tarai? Can Dahal evade his responsibility of ensuring inter-ministerial coordination and bringing coherence in a fractured coalition? Instead of only blaming the bureaucracy, why does he not engage with them more deeply? In fact, a top bureaucrat was heard complaining he does not even get five minutes with the PM when he has to discuss governance issues.



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

Dahal's mixture of self-pity and anger is not convincing because the root problem lies in the Maoists' own dual strategy. The former

rebels have adopted a two-line policy of maintaining a facade of cooperation with other parties while relentlessly trying to marginalise, divide and weaken them.

This allows them to look like the good guys keen on a consensus while others are portrayed as spoilers. Simultaneously, they can continue with their project of ruthless political consolidation. The Maoists know this strategy will invite resistance. But as a political party, that suits them just fine. They need an enemy.



KIRAN PANDAY

If Girija Koirala allies with édemocratsí like Surya Bahadur Thapa and Pashupati Rana, leaders with little credibility and an even lesser vote share, the former rebels would have found exactly what they are looking for: a right wing consolidation. What better way to project oneself as the champion of change and progress than to have men like these oppose you?

However, the Maoists need to start thinking not just as a political party but as a party in power that has the responsibility of running the government, delivering on basic services and concluding the peace process. If they fail, public disillusionment will grow. And for all their bravado and rhetoric, the Maoists will be exposed as just another party that used the state for its own benefit, not to improve lives.

As the party leader, Dahal's aim is to expand at the expense of others. As the head of government, it is his job to take everyone along, even at the cost of sacrificing his own interest. It is this dilemma that makes Dahal a troubled man. The dual strategy is now confronted with limits inherent in its logic and operation.

Dahal has to make some difficult decision soon. If he continues on this épublicly co-operative, privately confrontationalí path, the government will be in trouble. The fissures within UML are becoming more apparent in the run-up to the convention. Madhab Nepal has seen through the Maoist-Jhalanath Khanal-Bamdev Gautam strategy to kick him upstairs to the PCC and is increasingly uncomfortable with the arrangement. He is playing to the sizeable anti-Maoist gallery within his own party.

With the TMDP submitting its demands and warning of an agitation, there is also pressure on other Madhesi parties to act more radical now. Differences within MJF are to do more with organisational and leadership issues. But when the convention happens, do not be surprised if the district leaders add to chorus, asking the party to withdraw from the government.

It is a seemingly intractable situation. But if he wants to avoid political alignments from taking a different course in the next 4-6 months, Dahal has to reach out to all sides.

He needs to engage with Girija Koirala. If Koirala's aim is nothing less than becoming PM himself, little can be done. But talking could throw out other points of compromise: assurance of a seat for Sujata Koirala in the by-elections, making way for some of his men to benefit financially, taking Girija's advice on key issues and telling Maoist cadre to be less belligerent on the ground. Dahal must give up this strategy of sidelining Madhab Nepal. And he needs to deliver on the eight point agreement signed with Madhesi parties.

This is still a fragmented polity. Alienating too many people at the same time lost them the presidential polls. They should not take on more than they can chew yet again. ●



GTZ

From Germany, with love

An unusual wedding gift from Germany has continued to breathe life into Bhaktapur over the last 40 years

When Heinrich Seemann first laid eyes on the palace and temples of the Darbar Square in Kathmandu, he was completely taken aback by the magnificent architecture. This was a world where culture was not displayed like a show-piece but where it was a part of the everyday life of the people. The medieval past was vibrantly alive.

His impression of the Darbar Squares of Patan and Bhaktapur was just as incredible. He knew he had to do something to preserve this extraordinary heritage. That was back in 1967 when he was First Secretary at the German Embassy.

"I was deeply fascinated by the culture and monuments. I felt like I had discovered an old civilisation," recounts Seemann. From that moment onwards, he couldn't rest. Seemann made several attempts to channel funds to preserve and restore the cultural monuments but without much luck until 1969.

That was the year when the then Crown Prince Birendra was to marry. Among the exclusive guest list for the royal wedding were high officials from Germany. "When you come to a wedding, you can't come empty handed," Seemann says with a smile. "Restoration and preservation of the Pujari Math in Bhaktapur then became the state wedding gift for the crown prince."

And so began what has now evolved as the Bhaktapur Development Project. Seemann met with architect Neils Gutschow who started work on the project with his team. The restoration of Pujari Math, famous for its peacock window, was completed in 1972.

"Bhaktapur was perfect because of its proximity to the capital—it was near yet far enough to implement such a project," Seemann cites as the reason for choosing the city. The project expanded as additional funds flowed in, this time as a gift on the occasion of king Birendra's

coronation. The fund has renovated over 180 pieces of religious architecture.

It only takes a visit to Bhaktapur to understand how important this unconventional gift has been, not just for cultural preservation but also to the people. The project initiated what it calls 'integrated urban development' that aimed to improve the living standards of the residents, concentrating on town planning and development of basic infrastructure like drinking water, sewerage, road construction and solid waste management.

The renovation has also opened doors to develop tourism, creating jobs for many.

"Bhaktapur has now become a model for other cities," Seemann says proudly, "Nepal has an exquisite wealth of cultural heritage. The people have to learn to preserve this richness and not lose it in the process of urban development." ●

Paavan Mathema



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Award winners

General Motors India's Chevrolet Spark and the Aveo U-VA won the top awards in the India Automotive Initial Quality Study announced by JD Power Asia Pacific 2008. The Chevrolet Spark was named best compact car while the Aveo U-VA was top premium compact vehicle.



The challenge



Fifty young people from Technical and Vocational Training institutes and schools from Kathmandu, Chitwan and Nuwakot took part in a business training day organised by the British Council. The challenge was a one-day competition in which students were

asked to come up with new ideas and develop their skills in problem solving, team work and leadership.

NEW PRODUCTS

STREET SMART: Yamaha has launched its FZ16 motorbike in Nepal. It is touted as a street bike with a high level of torque. It features an air-cooled engine, 153cc engine, large-diameter front disc brake and tubeless wide radial tyres. The introductory price is Rs 184,900.



PRICELY TIPPLE: The latest premium whisky brand to be introduced to Nepal is the Antiquity Rare Premium Whisky, which has bagged three awards including the

Gold Monde Selection 2006. It will be the most expensive whisky to be bottled in Nepal. The whisky consists of a blend of malt and old Scotch.

Ancient modern

A sumptuous celebration of contemporary Nepali architecture



CRAIG POTTON

Nepal is widely acclaimed for its distinctive art and architectural styles. Seven of the ancient palaces, temples, courtyards and streetscapes of Kathmandu Valley are protected as World Heritage Sites. Shrines are worshipped daily as part of Nepal's vibrant living culture.

Recent efforts to preserve the architecture of Kathmandu have carefully and authentically restored many of the valley's important public monuments.

Lesser known are the recent

imaginative uses of traditional Nepali architecture and decorative styles in the construction of modern public buildings and private homes. *Kathmandu Valley Style*, a photographic book to be launched in Kathmandu on 16 December by Lisa Choegyol, Craig Potton and Gautam SJB Rana reflects this contemporary style.

The coffee table book captures the wealth of the past and illustrates how influences from the Malla Newar, Tibetan and

Rana architecture have been incorporated into present-day buildings and lifestyles. The use of traditional themes and building techniques in the restored historic and new structures has breathed fresh life into Kathmandu's rich living cultural heritage.

The book features over 40 historic and new buildings, many of them never before photographed or published. Reinforcing national pride in Nepal's vernacular architecture, the collection demonstrates how traditional art and architecture can be successfully incorporated into homes for today's changing world.

Lisa Choegyol has lived in Nepal since the 1970s. She is a specialist consultant in pro-poor sustainable tourism throughout Asia and the Pacific.

Craig Potton is New Zealand's leading photographer and conservationist. He has photographed New Zealand gardens and interiors for House and Garden magazine.

Gautam SJB Rana is an arbiter of Nepal style and created Baber Mahal Revisited. This private restoration project houses Kathmandu's first commercial heritage building with a shopping, office and restaurant complex. ●

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United we stand, divided we fall

Editorial in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 1-15 December
†

हिमाल
खबरपत्रिका

The Maoists now have the verdict of their first 100 days in power. The security situation hasn't improved, the youth wings continue their mayhem, the economy is stagnant, foreign policy is unclear and there has been little progress in terms of post-conflict rehabilitation. The electorate is clearly fed up with their focus on futile and unconstitutional discussions about what sort of a democracy we want.

†But the fact is this government will remain in charge.

†If Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal & Co continue to fail in their efforts, dissatisfaction will only increase. It will not take much to trigger another explosion.

Extremists are sure to take advantage of such a situation. To begin to fight off such a threat the PM needs to get to grips with drafting the constitution.

†PM Dahal also needs the NC and the Tarai-Madhes Democratic Party†to join the government and form an alliance of national cooperation.

Not having the NC in government has broken the brief cooperation between the seven parties and overshadowed the main task of drafting the constitution. If the Maoists continue to ignore the fact that this is an interim government and if the

tension between the parties continues to build, having the NC in opposition could further thwart the constitution drafting process.

The NC seems content in its role as the opposition, but it still has to co-operate in writing the constitution ñ even though it means the second largest party remains outside the government.

So the UML and MJF have taken advantage of the situation to enjoy a taste of power. While the Maoists and the UML might share some principles, the internally divided MJF needs the lure of power to hold it together. †Isn't the closer involvement of the NC at this crucial time vital for writing the constitution and for the future of democracy in Nepal?

There remain plenty who are opposed to the NC being in the government. One faction of the Maoists has even branded them as enemies. But having

recently demonstrated his authority at the† Maoist party convention over the type of republic Nepal should be, PM Dahal should be able to convince his followers that the NC should be onboard.

If Dahal takes that farsighted and generous step, Girija Prasad Koirala will also be under pressure to join the government. Only then will Nepal have a sense of unity and† be able to fulfil the tasks in hand.

If the present uncertainty continues there could be dire consequences. †Dahal and Koirala take note.



Still occupied

Amrita Anmol in Butwal, *Nepal*, 14 December

नेपाल

In 2005 during the conflict the Maoists captured Rastriya Banijya Bank's regional office in Butwal on the grounds that it was occupied by refugees, farmers and the landless. But even months after the peace process began the building remains occupied.

Named the 'red house', the two-storey building is being used by the Maoists to run around 12 district-level brother organisations.

After the Maoists captured the building, the bank's regional office was relocated to Pokhara. The Butwal building was sold to Provident fund for 20 million rupees. Both Rastriya Banijya Bank and Provident fund have been pressuring the Maoists to vacate the building. The district administration office, Rupandehi has also sent several notices in this regard. Yet, the Maoists haven't responded to the notice or the follow-up.

"Even after the peace process, they are still occupying a government building. We have even called the district-level leaders to request them to vacate the building," says Chief District officer Dhurba Raj Wagle, "When we meet them they are very accommodating, they say they will leave in a few days. But, then they never do."

Meanwhile, Maoist district in-charge Basanta Shrestha says that since the Maoists have occupied the building for a long time, they have decided to buy it. "Due to lack of time we haven't talked to the bank about purchasing the building," he says. "If we are going to buy it then there is no reason why we should leave now."



प्रतीक्षा गर्नुहोस्

Save the Madhes

It's about time the Madhes leaders, the State and the Madhesi people took a stance against violence and paved the way for national co-operation.

PRASHANT JHA

Right now the Madhesi leaders are busy giving speeches about identity. Meanwhile in the cities and villages of the Madhes there is a rising dissatisfaction with both the Kathmandu centric system and Madhes parties. The rising anarchy and the wrong promotion of the slogan 'all Madhes, one state' by the Madhesi leaders has allowed the security situation to deteriorate at an alarming rate. Neither the leading party nor the Madhesi parties have done anything substantial since the elections to improve the Tarai situation. The social relations are now strained not just between Madhesi and Pahadi but also among the Madhesi themselves.

As a result, the Madhes is now trapped in a whirlwind of violence and unrest because of Madhesi leaders' irresponsible behaviour, the State's short-sightedness, inter-racial conflict and absence of Madhesi civil society. If this continues, the Madhes might as well become Nepal's Bihar, a region that is synonymous in India with social injustice and underdevelopment- where the guns rule and the common people have no hope for of being liberated from unrest.

It is chiefly the responsibility of the State to manage the conflict in the Tarai, to narrow the gap between Kathmandu and the Madhes. But neither the state nor the Madhes leaders have realised this. The agreement made with the United Madhesi Morcha on 28 February 2008 is now collecting dust. This lack of commitment has made it easier for the Madhesi parties and the armed groups to rally against the government.

The CA has become a battleground for the Madhesi leaders to fight for their rights. But before they do so they have to condemn violence. They must give up supporting

armed groups in Tarai while remaining safe in the cities. They must realise this will backfire in the future and damage them. As representatives of the Tarai, they must take the initiative to stop the killings, robberies and rapes that take place every day in the Tarai in the name of politics. There is an urgent need for these leaders to give up the illusion that these armed groups can be useful. One day the Madhesi parties themselves could be the targets of these armed groups.

The social structure, personal grudges, squabbles about property and ethnic competition are causing this carnage. The Madhesi need to understand this so they can free Madhes from this vicious cycle of violence and insecurity. Conflict resolution should be addressed at a local level. The elders, the respected and the women should play mediating roles to solve fights in villages. Issues of land reform should first be discussed locally, involving people from different sects and ethnicity including the dispossed dalits.

Another burning issue is the relationship with the Pahadi. Is there a place for them in the Madhes? Do Pahadi people need to fear the Madhesi? How can this be changed? What does the Pahadi community expect from the Madhesi leadership and the society? Except for few radical groups, most Madhesi people understand that in the end they have to live together with the Pahadi. At this sensitive time, one positive step could be the formation of a Pahadi- Madhesi United Civil Society.

The leaders of the armed groups in the Tarai will eventually have to understand the aspirations of the Madhesi people. They neither want the country to disintegrate nor do they want violence. What they really want is their rights and peace. Most suspect that the armed groups are, in fact, business profiteers and not



politically motivated. True politics is only possible when you stay among the people and win their hearts. Giving orders from a mobile phone while one stays at a hotel in Bihar may scare the people for a while but it won't win their belief.

It is hard to say whether the government's effort to invite the armed groups for dialogue is genuine. But it perhaps offers them a chance to give up their guns and join mainstream politics. The people in Madhes are waiting for a new peaceful leadership.

In the past six months, there have been 100 murders, 126 abductions and 77 bomb explosions in the Madhes. This poses a serious challenge. If we are to save the Madhes from a long-term low intensity conflict then the state, Madhes leadership, society, the Pahadi community living in the Tarai and also the armed groups, all have to make an effort. Otherwise the Madhesi people will suffer. The true struggle for identity and representativeness will be lost and political stability in Nepal will just be a dream. ●

Out of the darkness

PUNARJAN ACHARYA

When Barack Obama won the US presidential elections, even the Bahuns, Chetteri, Newars and Mongol Kirats all over Nepal rejoiced. Everyone found their own victory in his victory. But the same people are having difficulty accepting that the Madhesi people are demanding their identity, right and opportunity by way of federalism. They feel that this Madhes movement's idea of federalism poses a threat to the country's unity and sovereignty.

The writer Samuel Huntington noted in his 2004 book *Who are We?* that an American is a white English speaking Protestant. He even claimed that anyone who did not fit that description was not a true American. But by choosing Obama, a black, as their president the Americans have proven that history is written by people, not controversialists

like Huntington. The Madhesi, dalits and those of other ethnicities in Nepal too must have felt a sense of pride at Obama's victory. Just as the image of a true American is being deconstructed, the idea that Nepal's culture is

development even though the Tarai is very rich in natural resources. Most Madhesi women know no other language than their own. The Tarai became a remote, under-developed area cut off from the capital. And neither did the

society based on the Hindu caste system. Another population of 180,000 consists of the tribal groups who prefer not to be called Madhesi - but neither does their culture match with that of the Pahadi. The third group of about 110,000 is that of Muslims. The Madhesi movement was brought forward by these three groups. Meanwhile the Pahadi community in the Tarai is 300,000 strong.

Since the Madhes movement was launched, the cultural identity and financial and physical security of the Pahadi community has caused great concern and discussion. But neither does the Madhes community feel secure. They have been treated as second class citizens in their own country for the last 250 years. We may currently sympathise more strongly with the Pahadi and not the Madhes community, but we have to rise above the notion of 'one language, one culture'.

The tension between the Madhesi and Pahadi did not come from nowhere. As the influence of the Pahadis increased in the

Tarai, the relationship between the common Tarai people and the elite Pahadis became strained. The social relations built by the earlier Pahadi generation with the local Madhesi have all but disintegrated.

It is a fact that the alienated Madhesi need the support of the Pahadi people if they are to make any progress. If the aspirations of the Madhes are supported by the Pahadi then development in Madhes has a chance of gaining momentum. This would be progress not just for the Madhesi but for the whole of Nepal.

The good news is that although the Pahadis have not openly supported the Tarai movement, they have not done anything to hamper it. There is one solution that can help heal the wounds of the Madhesi people at the same time as alleviating insecurity for the Pahadi- understanding and future based thinking between the Pahadi and the Madhesi. First of all they have to respect each other's identity. Having held a role of supremacy previously, the Pahadi should first extend the hand of friendship. Perhaps then we could hope for a Nepal of mutual respect and understanding. ●

The Pahadis need to extend a hand of friendship to the Madhesi if Nepal is to have any hope of being a country in which mutual respect and understanding flourishes

based only on the Gandak civilisation is also changing. The Madhes movement has made a great contribution in bringing that change.

The culture of the Madhes community is different to that of the hill people. Particularly in the realm of language. In the past, Nepali was the official language, which thwarted Madhesi

Madhesi have political representation in the likes of Koirala, Acharya, Thapa, Dahal, Bista, Deuba and Nepal were all from Kathmandu.

On the basis of language, culture and religion there are roughly three groups in the Tarai. The biggest group is that of the residents near the border. This population of 500,000 has a

You take the high road



Alternative trails in the Annapurnas as highways displace trekkers

SHAILEE BASNET
in MYAGDI

If what is happening in Myagdi is any indication, we are about to see a transformation of trekking to higher, remoter regions of Nepal.

Driven away by new highways, trekking guides are exploring new routes and also a new model of trekking that benefits local communities more.

With jeeps and motorcycles now raising the noise and dust levels on the road up from Beni, a new 'high road' from Beni to Khopra and Khayar Lake is being reactivated. This had always been the choice of slightly more adventurous tourists because there were no lodges.

However, things are changing under the initiation of internet activist and educator, Mahabir Pun in Nangi village. Two private lodges and a community lodge have been set up and private local entrepreneurs and schools are being encouraged to invest in lodges. This way, tourism earnings goes directly to local education.



SEA OF CLOUDS: The sunset view of Dhaulagiri and the Kali Gandaki gorge from Khayar. A community lodge under construction in Fulbari, resthouses like these for trekkers will directly benefit local education. Khayar Lake (above right) with Bahara Shikhar (Fang) peeking out from behind a ridge.



ANDRIS BJORNSON

Nangi is a steep six-hour climb from Beni, but the views of Dhaulagiri and Gurja Himal make the effort worthwhile. At Nangi, we see Pun's effort to network villages through wireless internet and also telemedicine. Next day's walk is to Swanta, where there is now a community lodge.

From Swanta to Khopra Lake is another eight hours and there are lodges being built there as well as in the next day's night stop- Danda Kharka. The walk is through dense rhododendron and oak forests with spectacular views of Annapurna South—closer and clearer than any low-level trek.

Khopra will soon replace

Poon Hill, Sarangkot and Ghorepani as the scenic viewpoint. From its 3,600m vantage point, the Kali Gandaki gorge (the deepest in the world) at sunset is breathtaking. The valley floor is carpeted by clouds and the mountain glows orange as the full moon rises from the east. In the cosmic movement of the setting moon and rising sun, the horizon wears amazing shades of pink and blue, setting a lovely backdrop for morning-fresh Dhaulagiri. Thanks to Pun, even this lonely place has an internet connection to the rest of the world.

Khayar Lake at 4,600 m is another six hours trek from here,

where there is a big festival on Janai Purnima every year. This is the highest point that the local sheperds go and there are trails. On a November afternoon, the lake is already frozen in its fringes.

After the pilgrimage to the lake, hikers have a choice of either walking towards Bayali and then to Tadapani, Ghandruk and Pokhara. As you join the Annapurna circuit, you finally start seeing trekkers, more shops and fancier lodges. And the more familiar silohouette of Machapuchre to guide you back to Pokhara. ●



SHAILEE BASNET



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A fresh start

Thousands of Bhutan refugees hope for a better life in a new country

GOPAL GARTAULA
in DAMAK

Dhana Maya Pyakurel is 82 years old. She spent the past 18 years penniless and stateless in a refugee camp in Nepal after being driven out of her country—Bhutan.

The food from relief agencies was never enough, water was scarce and she didn't have any warm clothes for the winter. What kept Dhana Maya going was the slim hope that she could see her homeland again before she dies.

That hope is not likely to be

fulfilled. Instead, many of the 110,000 refugees here will be moving further away from Bhutan as they are resettled in third countries under an agreement brokered by the UN. After the process started in March, 7,297 refugees have already been sent to the US, Denmark, the Netherlands,

Canada and Australia.

Human rights activists say that although resettlement addresses the immediate humanitarian needs of refugees, it lets the Bhutan regime get away with a deliberate process of ethnic cleansing. "The autocratic regime in Bhutan has never recognised us



as citizens, and now everyone is washing their hands of us," says Chairman of the Human Rights Organization of Bhutan (HUROB) SB Subba.

However, there is growing support among younger refugees to opt for resettlement. They want to go to a new country to start over. Vice-chairman of the Bhutan Student Union Mukti Raj Gurung, who is also planning to relocate, says: "Our generation wants to belong somewhere, we don't want more uncertainty."

But there is also a fierce revolutionary streak gathering strength in the camps, and the anger is directed at the government that forced them out. More than 60 per cent of the Bhutan Communist Party-Marxist Leninist (Birat) consists of refugees aged less than 30. One supporter, Kalam, says resettlement just shifts the problem, adding: "To relocate the refugees is like rewarding the dictatorial regime in Bhutan." His party now has the avowed goal of overthrowing the Bhutan regime.

The rise of the Maoists in Nepal has bolstered support among the revolutionary-minded refugees in the camps. Kalam is already thinking ahead, "We'll have an international group of Lhotsampas soon."

Radicals like Kalam's group have been accused of threatening those who want to leave. Conflict between those who want to relocate and those who don't is common, although less so than earlier this year.

In May, three people were killed in bombs planted by hardliners opposing the resettlement. The WFP, UNHCR and IOM warned that further attacks could force them to reassess assistance to the camps.

But as news from recently resettled filter back to the camps, the numbers of those opting to go is swelling. "In spite of the conflict and the problems involved, we plan to cross eight thousand before Christmas," says David Dethrik, who heads the relocation program of UNHCR.

Among those who have relocated this year, 7,010 have gone to the US, 393 to Australia, 129 to New Zealand, 17 to the Netherlands, 13 to Denmark and 19 to Norway. The number of refugees who've applied for relocation has exceeded 63,000, while 3,200 are waiting for flights out before the end of the year. ●

Date of First Publication 6 December 2008

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Support to Participatory Constitution Buildings in Nepal – UNDP



The Support to Participatory Constitution Building in Nepal/UNDP is looking for experienced and qualified Nepalese citizens for the following positions with substantive experience, in order to support the Constitution Building Resource Centre operations.

Post Title : **Finance Officer, SB 4- Peg I**
Contract Type : Service Contract
Annual Gross Remuneration : Rs. 848,592.00

No. of positions : One
Duration : One-year, initially (renewable)

Duties and Responsibilities:

Under the overall supervision of the Resource Centre Manager, the incumbent is responsible for the following.

- Maintain the financial accounting systems, ensuring compliance with requirements of UNDP financial rules and regulations, maintain all RC related expenditure, recording and reporting in ATLAS
- Maintain ATLAS generated reports for periodic donor reporting, prepare vouchers and process payments for all the financial transactions done at the RC and also process payment under Direct Payment Request to UNDP for hard currency payments
- Prepare periodic financial reports (Quarterly Reports) to be submitted to UNDP and donors, as well as ad-hoc financial reports as required, provide financial tracking, disbursement planning, cash flow analysis and project financing requirements. Proper planning, expenditure tracking and audit of financial resources
- Facilitate DEX audit as well as internal audit conducted by UNDP, monitor and advise on budget implementation. Prepare project budgets, mandatory and other budget revisions as required.
- Oversee financial management to ensure resources are utilized in most effective and efficient manner in support of programme activities, ensure that all documents relating to financial transactions are properly filed.
- Keep records of Non Expendable Equipments (NEE), conduct physical verifications at least once a year and prepare report on annual physical verifications of NEE to be submitted to UNDP, undertake any other tasks instructed by the supervisor.

Qualifications Requirement

- Master's degree in commerce, preferably an MBA with specialization in Finance
- At least 3 years of hands on experience in finance, past experience in doing similar work in UNDP or other UN/international agencies would be a great advantage
- Exposure to computerized accounting packages would be a great advantage, sound knowledge of financial accounting and reporting
- Ability to perform independently under pressure, excellent computer skills, excellent command in English and Nepali languages (written and spoken), ability to work in a multi-cultural environment

Post Title : **IT Officer, SB 4- Peg I**
Contract Type : Service Contract
Annual Gross Remuneration: Rs. 848,592.00

No. of positions : One
Duration : One-year, initially (renewable)

Duties and Responsibilities

Under the direct supervision of the National Manager of the Resource Centre (RC), the incumbent is responsible for the overall ICT system maintenance and programming to support the RC functions such as: library and audio visual library with Internet facility, training (computer, language, and thematic), workshops and lectures, simultaneous interpretation, and NGO partnership grant. S/he is responsible for developing an ICT strategy and ensuring implementation of the strategy and introduction and implementation of new technologies in the Resource Centre. Specifically the incumbent is responsible for the following tasks:

Web Programming

- Develop online databases for library e-cataloguing, RC user information, and other aspects of the RC functions/services, if required., manage the RC website, advise Management the best ICT technologies/solutions to meet RC core functions

System Administration/Maintenance

- Administer the LAN/Servers of the RC (approximately with 50 workstations initially)
- Manage regular back ups and restoration procedures for servers and critical data., implement necessary measures to keep a high level of IT security in the office.
- Coordinate computer training for the RC clients and staff, supervise IT support staff, undertake other related tasks as instructed by the supervisor.

Qualifications Requirement

- Master's degree in Computer Information Systems or related field with minimum three years or a bachelor's degree in Computer Information Systems or related field with minimum five years of experience involving responsibility of web programming, database development and Network Administration at professional level.
- Web programming skills and experience in Open Source Languages is preferable, industry standard certification like MCSE, CCNA/CCNP is desirable
- Past experience in doing similar work in UNDP or any international agency would be an added advantage, ability to work and deliver outputs under pressure, excellent writing skills in both English and Nepali, good communication skills and ability to work in a multi-cultural team environment

Post Title : **Sr. Administrative Assistant, SB 3- III Peg**
Contract Type : Service Contract
Annual Gross Remuneration: Rs. 830,532.00

No. of positions : Two
Duration : One-year, initially (renewable)

Duties and Responsibilities

Under the direct supervision of the National Manager of the Resource Centre, the incumbent is responsible for the following tasks.

- Oversee the entire administrative aspect of the Resource Centre, and ensure quality of operational and administrative support.
- Supervise Receptionists, Messengers, and possibly other staff., assist the supervisor in the management of the Centre, including his/her daily schedule by establishing priorities and confirming appointments.
- Organize regular and ad-hoc meetings, prepare agendas, take minutes and compose draft minutes for finalization by the supervisor, take initiative to handle routine matters in close consultation with the supervisor, bring urgent matters to the attention of the Manager, and suggest ways of improving business processes.
- Assist in formulation, establishment and execution of established policies and procedures, draft routine correspondence, brief notes, reports, and other documents, when requested., assist the RC manager in planning, designing, reviewing and implementing administrative plans
- Coordinate communications between the supervisor and other professional and administrative staff both within and outside the work unit, follow up on deadlines, commitments made and actions taken, and act and/or communicate on behalf of the RC manager, if necessary, undertake any other tasks as directed by the supervisor

Qualifications Requirement

- A Bachelor's degree in Business Administration with at least 5 years of experience or a Master's degree in Business Administration with 2 years of experience in administrative tasks.
- Experience in UN or other bilateral organization will be an added advantage
- Excellent working knowledge of Microsoft Office programs with proficiency in editing and proofreading reports and other related documents, work prioritization, the ability to multitask and willingness to go the extra mile to support what the job demands is a must
- Ability to maintain a high level of accuracy and confidentiality concerning financial and employee files, good planning and co-ordination skills to ensure a rather wide variety of activities, often with an urgent nature, to be carried out in an efficient and economic manner, good communication skills, excellent interpersonal skills and ability to work in a multi-cultural team environment

For detailed Job Description of the position, please visit the following UNDP website: <http://www.undp.org.np/vacancy>

Applications should be submitted no later than **25 December 2008** by email, to: hrmu1_np@undp.org or in a sealed envelope to UNDP Operations Department (Ref: SPCB/UNDP), UN House, Pulchowk, P.O. Box 107, Kathmandu, Nepal

(Only Applicants who are short-listed will be contacted)

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

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 our 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 a 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 scamalert@undp.org. 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.



With fine and exquisite detail, Hemlata Pradhan's collection of botanical art makes the beauty of flowers come to life. Using only watercolors she brings out the vibrant colour of plants and pays meticulous attention to every root, stem and petal.

While botanical art is a more popular art form in Europe, in countries like India and Nepal it is rarely appreciated. Pradhan, a botanical illustrator from Kalimpong, however, has always been enthralled by plants. Growing up in family that was deeply involved in horticulture, she has always been inspired

Rare specimen

to create art that explored the plant world.

Her exhibition, which is to be showcased at Siddhartha art gallery from 12 December till 1 January, consists of 31 paintings. The majority of the work depicts orchids, which is her specialty. "The mystery and beauty of orchids have always captivated me," she says. The exhibition also features rhododendrons.

Hemlata, who has a diploma in Botanical illustration, says, "The exhibition is my way of exploring the beauty of our flora heritage so that people are inspired to conserve them and their habitat." With fast paced development threatening the habitat of so much of the world's flora, her ambition is to raise awareness about conserving the Indo-Himalayan

orchids and other plants.

The pieces to be displayed and most of Hemlata's illustration blend art and science as she draws only precise, life-size paintings of every specimen. Her work has been featured in many botanical books and she is currently in the process of opening her own school in Kalimpong—

Himalayan Institute of Natural History.

Sangeeta Thapa of Siddhartha Art gallery says, "This exquisite collection is a documentation of the botanical life that most ignore. This collection is sure to make people realise how harmful encroachment of habitat is to their rare beauty." ●

Shradha Basnyat



Fresh take

Striking Nepali films at KIMFF

Every festival season seems to bring about a session of hand-wringing and grumbling about the quality of Nepali film. The upcoming Kathmandu International Film Festival (KIMFF) will probably be no exception. But KIMFF's Nepal Panorama, a selection of films by Nepali filmmakers, once again proves such complaints are wholly exaggerated.

In particular, a number of short fiction films—namely, *Awaken Eyes* by Binod Paudel, *Irony* by Fidel Devkota and *Palush* by Sindhu Pokhrel—suggests an exciting new aesthetic movement emerging. These filmmakers' works feel young and bold,



CRITICAL CINEMA
A Angelo DiSilva

ambitious within their modest means, and unabashedly delve into boundary-pushing themes.

In *Awaken Eyes*, a

newly-wed couple share their tiny quarters with the groom's ailing mother in a squatter's camp. There is something inherently humorous in the situation, but it is fundamentally a story of hard circumstance and sexual frustration that elicits pathos effectively.

In a similar vein, Pokhrel's *Palush* takes the point of view of a young man with a serious physical disability that sequesters him in his room, requiring assistance with even his basic needs. His vista onto the square below with its women bathing and washing, provides the material for his erotic imagination. The focus on the public square, with the camera mimicking the male gaze, peels back the sensual undercurrent and sexual politics behind the everyday without moralising. Its treatment of its subject, even as he deals with his natural desire, is unflinching without being patronising.

Fidel Devkota's *Irony* which could be said to embody a slacker sensibility of a Nepali sort, only touches on sexuality tangentially, but it also possesses an appealing impertinence towards conventions. Devkota reveals a fine dry wit with his literal illustration of the film's title.

That fluency in the language of film speaks most lyrically in Pooja Gurung's offering. Her *Changai* is a perfectly executed piece of cinema—captivating, assured and enchanting. It's a simple premise; a boy receives a kite from his father and longs to fly it. Like the best of films that centre on children, Gurung manages to subtly differentiate the child's experience of the world from the adults around him. She elicits performances from her actors that seem utterly natural; you suspect that she had wisely allowed her young protagonist to be himself. Set in the streets of Patan and inside the home of a small family, every frame is a delight to watch with lush cinematography from Pramod Karki. Gurung herself lends her voice to a charmingly jazz-inflected soundtrack. It isn't an idealised picture of a childhood, and yet captures something genuinely magical. I haven't been so swept away by a piece of work in a long while.

Such a striking line-up should finally put to rest the constant complaining over the quality of Nepali cinema and direct attention to supporting talented independent artists. But will it?

As per usual, documentaries make up the meat of this festival with some impressive entries in the international show case. Jeremy Gilley's *The Day after Peace* can be either exasperating, naïve or powerfully inspiring depending on your point of view but is nonetheless an impressive document of one person's attempt to infuse the International Day of Peace with real meaning, reach and practical consequence.

Soma Josson's *I Want My Father Back* must be one of the political heavyweights this season, tackling the enormous subject of the widespread suicides of debt-stricken Indian farmers. It compresses the interconnectedness of failed policy, agribusiness and the plight of farmers in an incisive and persuasive package—and manages to retain the nuances of its decidedly complicated criticism. Folke Ryden's *Full Cover Girl* visits Iraq and follows two aspiring women politicians just as Iraq revives its democratic process in an atmosphere of hope and excitement before the country spiraled into mayhem. ●

In the threshold

Tarai tale opens mountain fest

In a short film the director has to grab the audience and be done with the plot by the time the average Nepali audience is just settling down for the three-hour Bollywood or Kollywood blockbuster.

Deepak Rauniar is obviously as courageous as he is capable. This is clear from his 31-minute directorial fiction debut *Chaukaith*, which opened the Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival (KIMFF) yesterday.

At no point does the director lose his hold over the camera, script, editing or actors. His masterpiece production will surely inject energy into the genre of short films in Nepal.

The writer-director-editor has weaved a subtle plot where an urban woman, a census enumerator (acted by Asha Magarati), visits a Maithil household to find a young mother alone with her chores. The story is about how, during one afternoon and evening, the social horizons open up for the woman (Ranju Jha).

The strength of the production lies in the powerful and understated acting, a script which constantly shuns melodrama for subtle suggestions, and editing that shows complete grasp of the medium. Frame to frame, the camera expertly catches the close-contact dialogue, the downward gaze and timid glance, the little world of the courtyard and indoor spaces, the progressively setting Tarai sun in long shot.



The film is essentially carried by Jha as the central character, whose relationship with the camera is confident and natural, making every scene a joy to watch.

The observant viewer will note how Jha's ghunghat (ghumto) recedes from the position of a purdah to nothing but an afterthought as the camera follows her growing self-realisation. After continuous attempts to maintain distance, sister-bonding comes instantly when Jha, having invited Magarati into her kitchen, burns her fingers on the kadai.

At every turn, Rauniar shuns the melodramatic potential in the plot. It would have been easy to turn the shopkeeper husband into a mysogynist ogre, and one is

programmed to expect so. He certainly emerges as the male living by the dictates of his culture and desires, but also comes across as a well-meaning family man rather than a vile caricature.

What was a production rooted firmly in the plains doing as the opening feature of a mountain film festival? One would hazard a guess, that it has to do with the subtext about mountain-plains harmony. At a time of a sudden distancing between the hills and plains societies of our country, *Chaukaith* quietly makes a call for reciprocal appreciation. This is done with such grace that the message becomes embedded without the viewer realising it. ●

Kanak Mani Dixit

Framing the war

The war is over, but there isn't peace yet. Especially for the relatives of those who disappeared, those who were wounded and for those who lost their parents.

This is the sad central message of Kesang Tseten and Prem BK's documentary, *Frames of War*. Tseten and BK follow the photo exhibition tour of the book, *A People War* across eastern Nepal, interviewing families of the disappeared, the wounded, visitors to the exhibitions and photographers.

What emerges is a powerful emotional journey that reminds us what this country went through between 1996-2006. We see that the war didn't just leave behind a damaged physical infrastructure but also psychological trauma, especially among children. It elucidates the unfulfilled quest for truth



and justice. In the same way, nepa-laya's book, *Frames of War* reminds us to remember those that the state has forgotten.

The warring sides are now in government, and they seem in no hurry to compensate victims, provide justice or acknowledge violence that could be construed as war crimes. Even the media seems to have forgotten the non-combatants who are victims of the war.

Here is my son. It says here he has disappeared, it doesn't say he is dead, Laxmimaya Adhikari tells the interviewer in Udaypur, pointing to a picture of her son, Lilaraj, in a Maoist poster. I want to meet Prachanda, and ask him to take care of me. After all, he is the king now.

Srijana Pakhrin's father was accused of being a Maoist and killed by the security forces. She breaks down in front of the camera: I see all my classmates laughing and I want to be happy too. But ever since my father was killed I only get negative thoughts.

At a recent preview, there wasn't a dry eye in the audience. Tseten's direction and BK's camera work are unobtrusive, yet powerful. Amrit Gurung's music and lyrics add a haunting ambience to the images. They all reinforce the message that without truth, justice and acknowledgement of our past, there can never be true reconciliation. ● Binita Dahal

Frames of War
by Kesang Tseten and Prem BK
40 min
Nepali with English subtitles
nepa-laya and Shunyata Films

ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Inside Prisons & the Rights of Detainees**, a photo exhibition by OHCHR at the Nepal Art Council, till 13 December.
- ❖ **India's wild orchids and other plants** by Hemlata Pradhan, Siddhartha Art Gallery, 12 December-1 January. Sunday-Friday, 11AM-6PM, Saturday 12-4PM.

EVENTS

- ❖ **Zeitgeist Part I**, a movie at Mind Body Library, 13 December, 1PM, Tripureshwor. 9841896000
- ❖ **Odissi dance performance** by Diya Sen, Indigo Gallery, 14 December, 7PM, Rs 500
- ❖ **Alternative Book Fair (ABF) 2008**, 11-15 December from 10AM-5PM. Rastriya Sabha Griha, Bhrikutimandap.
- ❖ **6th Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival (KIMFF)** from 11-15 December at the Rastriya Sabha Griha and the Nepal Tourism Board. 5542544
- ❖ **Short Tai Chi Course**, 16-19 December at Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre, Keshar Mahal. 4410402
- ❖ **TaOchi Camp at Lakuribhanjyang** from 26-28 December, Base Camp Trek. 4411504



MUSIC

- ❖ **Live music: Donato's Birthday Farewell Concert**, 14 December. 6.30 PM, Lazimpat Gallery CafE. 4428549
- ❖ **Christmas Jazz Special 2008** at 1905 Restaurant by Possie and the Fags, 24 December, Rs 400. 421506
- ❖ **Kathmandu Chorale** presents Tis the Season, a Winter Concert, 13 December at 3.30 PM and 6PM, The British School.
- ❖ **Tuesday Melody** at Jazzabell CafE, Happy hour 6-8PM. 2114075
- ❖ **74 Twister** playing live every Tuesday at Moksh, Pulchowk. 5526212
- ❖ **Robin and the New Revolution** playing live every Tuesday, 7.10 PM 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 CafE & Bar.
- ❖ **Live Sensation**, live performance by Yankey every Saturday, 9PM, Hyatt Regency. 4491234.
- ❖ **Dance and Cocktails** at Cube Bar, Kamaladi. 4438017
- ❖ **Rudra night** fusion and classical Nepali music by Shyam Nepali and friends every Friday, 7PM at Le Meridien, Gokarna. 4451212

DINING

- ❖ **Christmas Special**, 3 Course menu, 1905 Restaurant. 4215068
- ❖ **Nhuchhe goes Thai** at Nhuchhe's Thai Kitchen, Baluwatar. 4429903
- ❖ **Christmas Goodies** at The Lounge, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 4489362
- ❖ **Strawberry Etager** at The Lounge from 4.30 PM-6.30 PM, Hyatt Regency. 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.
- ❖ **Fusion** of Marcela Regan's new menu and Mannie's new bar at Dhokaima Cafe. 5522113
- ❖ **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri-la, Kathmandu, Rs 600. 4412999
- ❖ **Pizza & Pasta** every Monday and Tuesday at Rox Restaurant, Hyatt Regency. 448936
- ❖ **Pasta pesto passion** at La Dolce Vita, Thamel. 4700612
- ❖ **Steak special** with free Irish coffee at K-too! Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel. 4700043
- ❖ **Unlimited wine offer** for Rs 990 at La Maison wine and cigar lounge. 9841333628
- ❖ **Home made pasta** at Alfresco, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Starry night barbecue** at Hotel Shangri-la with live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs 999, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7PM onwards. 4412999
- ❖ **Kebabs and curries** at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619
- ❖ **Ily Expression Coffee** at Hotel Shangri-la, Lazimpat and Mandap Hotel, Thamel.

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

Quest Entertainment



Jason Statham returns as Frank Martin, the ex-Special Forces operative who specialises in high-risk deliveries. In *Transporter 3*, Frank is pressured into transporting Valentina (Natalya Rudakova), the kidnapped daughter of Leonid Vasilev who is the head of the Environmental Protection Agency for the Ukraine, from Marseilles. Along the way, with the help of Inspector Tarconi, Frank has to contend with the people who forced him to take the job, agents sent by Vasilev to intercept him and the general non-cooperation of his passenger. Despite Valentina's cynical disposition and his resistance to get involved, Frank and Valentina fall for each other while escaping from one life-threatening situation after another.

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WEEKEND WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The morning fog may convince you that we're in for a spot of rain, but you'd be wrong. Weather patterns usually depend on two major conditions—pressure and moisture. Analysis shows that declining winter rainfall in the Himalaya is mainly due to moisture deficiency rather than lack of low pressure conditions. The source of moisture for winter rainfall is the Mediterranean Sea. But it is too far away for a single pressure system to carry it all the way to the Himalaya. For this to happen, several pressure pockets need to be synchronized and driven by a strong westerly jet stream. Satellite pictures taken on Thursday morning indicate the presence of a low pressure pocket over north India and Nepal, so it is natural that clouds will accumulate but they will not rain because of the lack of moisture. Even the approaching westerly front seen over Kashmir is unlikely to reach west Nepal due to moisture deficiency.



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KIRAN PANDAY

MARCH ON: PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal attends a program organised by NHRC-Nepal on the occasion of the 60th International Human Rights Day on Wednesday.



RAM HUMAGAI/NEPALNEWS.COM

VOICE FOR THE FUTURE: Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of UN Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, speaks at a press conference during her visit to Nepal on Friday.



NPA/RSS

BEHIND BARS: OHCHR's Richard Bennett and UNMIN's Ian Martin view a photo exhibition- 'Prisons and the Rights of Detainees' by photographer Kiran Panday, at Nepal Art Council on Tuesday.

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Photo: Kiran Panday | Nimatgraphics

Uneasy lies the head

For someone whose guerrilla name is 'Awesome', it is surprising that ever since he became PM, PKD has become a bit of a whiner. He whines all the time, and threatens to take all his toys and go home whenever he doesn't get what he wants. For someone who took his party to victory, attained his life's ambition of replacing the king, why is he so insecure? Must be cuz the head that wears the crown is always uneasy.



Despite having defused tensions within his party during the cadre meeting, PKD had internal intelligence that his mentor, The Doc, was again plotting mutiny in the central committee, so he decided to take the **wind out of the parachutes** of the ex-gorillas by preempting criticism that he had gone soft. The other thing bothering the Lotus Flower seems to have been the disgruntlement of the MJF, which is under pressure from its own hardliners led by JP, to leave the government. So to keep the Forum in its toes he says he's going to quit. But PKD better be careful about crying wolf too often because at some time in future when he says he wants to leave the government he leads, and he really means it, no one will believe him.



While throwing his tantrum in Dhangadi this week, PKD also accused a) GPK, b) the civil service and c) the internationals of trying to drive him out of office. About Girjau, he's probably right because that's his job as an opposition figure. But with the bureaucracy it's actually the other way around because his party is ruling directly and bypassing the civil service. In every ministry that his party controls, like information, labour, tourism, finance, etc, it is the Maoist cadre who dictate policy now, the bureaucracy is **nowhere in the picture**.

Even in the ministry that is not under a Maoist minister, like the home ministry, the PMO is regularly dealing directly with the district admin without bothering to inform Homeless Minister Leftist God, who is said to be **livid**. Just as Upendra is angry about PKD's foreign adviser sending instructions directly to Nepali ambassadors abroad without informing his ministry.

About the internationals, can the PM really blame them for being distrustful? They are getting fed up with a country's leader who **lies through his teeth**, keeps promising industrial security and his krantikaris keep doing just the opposite. And for a party elected to lead the govt his cadres are still behaving as if they need to keep threatening to murder or maim anyone who doesn't agree with them, or who refuse to **fork over the moolah**. Baddie dudes just prove they are their party's own worst enemy.

It is not clear if Dahal's radical remarks will quell the criticism in the central committee. The prime minister has the trust of the people who voted for him, but his position is shaky because the 35-member central committee is split exactly in half over support for him, well, not exactly because you can't have a half of odd number. But Cloudy is apparently staying neutral in the feud, so it is 17-17.



Just after accusing GPK of trying to oust him, guess what PKD does: he goes off to Maharjganj to pay the old man a visit in hospital. Comrade Fierce reportedly seconded the doctor's orders that the 84-year-old slow down and not run around so much. GP's reply: "You start behaving like a legitimate political party and I'll stop running around the country." **Touché**.



Makunay came back from his latest junket to Brazil to find out that he had been **plunked** into the high-level committee for government coordination. Ever since his plane landed, Nepal was in a foul mood because he has to answer to Deb Gurung. MKN says he'll only serve if it is the PM or DPM who are in the committee. **My-my**, aren't we protocol conscious?

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