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**Times nepalnews.com**  
 Weekly Internet Poll # 433

Q. Is the rift within the Maoists for real or a ploy?

Total votes: 2,121

Real: 32.4%  
 Ploy: 59%  
 Don't know: 8.3%

Weekly Internet Poll # 434. To vote go to: www.nepalintimes.com  
 Q. Did the Maoists miscalculate by replacing Pashupati priests?

# Mood of doom

DEWAN RAI

It wasn't supposed to be like this. When the Maoists came to power through elections, most Nepalis expected improvements in their lives. And by now we should have been nearly half-way into the constitution-writing process.

But, especially in the past month, as the government lurches from one crisis to the next, there is a deep sense of gloom—most visible in the business community.

Having survived extortion and violence in the past decade, business leaders say things have never been this bad. Crippled by union militancy and power cuts, most are on the verge of closing shop. Hotels in Pokhara lakeside have been shut by Maoists from Wednesday. Biratnagar has been closed this week by agitating jute industry workers.

Although Maoists lead the government, their unions are demanding a 30 per cent rise in daily wages, have shut down Joghani border customs and all highways in Morang.

"We thought that after the elections, things would stabilise, but they have got worse," says industrialist Rajendra Khetan, "we are planning to migrate to look for opportunities abroad." Some 100 Nepali industrialists have already moved across the border, and Rudrapur in India's Haryana state has become a Nepali industrial estate.

"We want the government to introduce an exit policy so we can shut down our factories and move to India," says one dejected investor.



Full interview p4-5

*Nepali Times* asked Finance Minister Baburam Bhattarai if he was aware of this mood of doom. His answer: "The situation isn't hopeless, these things happen in a transition. Once the minimum wage issue is resolved the cabinet will ban all strikes and shutdowns."

Multinationals also say the investment climate has deteriorated since the Maoist government came to power. "This has become a land of lawlessness with the YCL, the militants and criminal extortion," says one multinational manager. "the Maoists can't control it. We are all close to giving up on Nepal."

Hoteliers in Pokhara say they are willing to comply with government regulations but are being forced by Maoist unions for an across the board Rs 1,300 pay increase.

Says Gobinda Pahadi of the Regional Hotel Association in Pokhara: "Most hoteliers are so fed up they just want to quit." ●



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YEAR OF THE OX: A view of the inner sanctum of Pashupati on Wednesday as Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal partially retracted his removal of priests.

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# Let's rethink this

## Federalism could be disastrous for Nepal

### CRISIS PRONE GOVERNMENT

The Maoists in government are showing themselves to be crisis-prone. Why would they want to destabilise their own government by bringing these crises on themselves?

It is misleading to think of the Maoists as being split between moderates and hardliners. They are split between hardliners and even more hardliners. Prime Minister Dahal has no time for anything else but to deal with the crisis of the week: the judiciary row, army recruitment, Pashupati, attacks on media, the wholesale shutting down of industry. What's next week's crisis?

The Kharipati National Convention of his party decided to pursue the 'people's republic' and Dahal got a handy message to threaten his coalition partners with: look, you better support me because these guys are even more hardcore.

After every crisis when people with grievances go to Baluwater to complain, they come out exclaiming, "What a swell guy our PM is, we had completely misjudged him, the problem is the party, not the chairman." It is now time to judge the prime minister by his actions, not by his words. Also, we need to force him to take responsibility for the actions of his cadre, whether they are sanctioned or not.

For a while, it appeared that Dahal finally got his comeuppance with the Pashupati row. But he managed to sail through even that one. The Indian priest is headed home, the Maoists have managed to appear 'nationalist' and personally reclaimed the moral high ground by promising to abide by the decisions of Supreme Court.

The responsibility of a head of government, however, goes much beyond plotting and implementing survival strategies. The prime minister needs to extricate himself out of the self-defeating game of fooling all of the people all the time and concentrate instead on winning the confidence of his coalition partners and Nepali Congress stalwarts.

At the end of his term, Dahal will not be judged by his Machiavellian tactics but by whether or not a truly inclusive constitution is written in the stipulated timeframe.

The government has got its work cut out: draft a new constitution, re-structure the country along federal lines and deliver on development. And it has less than two years to do it. These tasks are huge challenges not just because of domestic politics but complicated geopolitics as well.



**GUEST COLUMN**  
**Puskar Gautam**

The notion of self-determination within an ethnic federal framework has now taken root in the psyche of Nepali activists, and a cosmetic territorial federalism will not meet the aspirations of Nepal's identity politics. The demands have also gone beyond the ability of the mainstream political parties to fix and the agenda is being set by pressure groups outside the elected assembly.

We already see evidence of these fissiparous tendencies in the demand for one Madhes, the agitation for autonomy in eastern

Nepal and the stirrings among other nationalities. These groups are now openly threatening a return to armed struggle if their demands for self-determination are not met. The precursors of future ethnic conflict are being laid, the question is—how are we going to respond to this and prevent the country from being consumed by potentially virulent ethno-separatist wars?

Nepal's ethnic mosaic and the geographic spread of various groups means that they do not form a sizeable majority in any region, even in areas where they are dominant. A federal structure along ethnic lines would spell disaster as ethnic exclusivity becomes a political slogan. Experts have argued that even territorial federalism would lead to a violent disintegration of the Nepali nation. Issues that should be discussed with cool heads by sociologists and demographers have entered the volatile political discourse. An issue as sensitive as this can't be resolved with political rabble-rousing on the streets.

The demand of Nepali society is for the transformation of the socio-economic system under real decentralisation of political and economic power so that the marginalised are recognised, represented and given control over their own destiny. This should be achieved with minimum instability, and maximum sensitivity. Mixing identity politics with this is playing with fire.

Geopolitically, there is considerable disquiet among our neighbours about the whole concept of federalism. China is worried about how a federal Nepal with the provision of ethnic self-determination will impact Tibetan nationalism. There is also concern that self-determination is

a western-supported and funded agenda. The Chinese have historically felt more comfortable dealing with a powerful centre in countries on its periphery.

A federal Nepal is not in India's long-term security interest either. Ethnic federalism with a right to self-determination could have crossborder repercussions on the Gorkhaland movement, India's northeast and the Tarai ethnicities across the border in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. India is also wary of how the Maoist victory in Nepal will play itself out among its own Naxalites, and their demand in some states for indigenous and aboriginal rights.

The Europeans and Americans seem to view federalism favourably and feel decentralised decision-making could favour development. But there are serious doubts even among them about sustainability and viability of the federal structures.

Some of the demands of ethno-federalists in Nepal are being supported by Western governments and INGOs. Even when some of these groups publicly espoused violence, their funding continues.

The question that must be asked is why the Maoists have allowed themselves to become tools of 'Western imperialists' by favouring ethnic federalism. After all, Marx always favoured real socio-economic transformation through decentralisation. The truth, perhaps, is that Nepali Maoists are not Marxists at all. They are extremists and there is an unholy alliance between the extreme left and the extreme right. ●

*Pushkar Gautam is a leftist thinker and former Maoist area commander for Okhaldhunga. He wrote regular opinion pieces for Nepali Times between 2001-2004.*



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## LETTERS

### UNACCEPTABLE CRIME

The interview of the prime minister sound good and what he is saying is quite praiseworthy ('Unacceptable crime', # 432). If we have faith in his words, there is no need to worry about delays in writing the constitution, or be nervous about the peace process. However, he seems committed to the country only in his words. The activities of his cadres gives us a different impression of the reality. There's an obvious gap between what he says and what the Maoist cadres are doing. Only when he is able to control his cadre can the Nepali people hope for a peaceful society. He has called the attack on the press "unacceptable," but the hardliners in his parties are challenging him every day—they are openly taking responsibility of the attack and threatening to do it again.

**Samir Bhattarai, email**

● I picked up *Nepali Times* #431 hoping there would be a very strong editorial that would decry the attack on Himalmedia only to find an empty editorial supposedly in protest of the

heinous act committed by the Maoist-leaning organisation. I find this a very lazy strategy taken by the media houses to fight back—similar to closure of schools by teachers and closure of hospitals by doctors in the name of 'protest'. Were there empty editorials when the innocent were being killed, property confiscated and people extorted?

**Sunil Sharma, Teku**

● The urban middle-class has only now begun to see the true colours of the Maoists. What 13,000 deaths and a decade of destruction was unable to impart, a few antics by the YCL has made it crystal clear: the only objective of the Maoist party is to keep a hold on the state power. Everything else, development of the country and equal rule of law for its citizens, is secondary. During

the war years the urban middle class viewed the Maoists as a mere nuisance. Those who are criticising the attack on press today have, in the past, sympathised with the violence and have argued that the war, the murder and disappearance of thousands of Nepalis was necessary to change Nepal. They even vouched for the Maoists in front of the international community so that Maoists were taken as revolutionaries, not the terrorists that they were.

If the Maoists want to remain in power, they shouldn't alienate the middle class. As former king Gyanendra found out two years ago, the buck stops with the people of Kathmandu.

**Alaska Subedi, email**

● While deeply sorry at the beatings Himalmedia folks received from Maoist goons, I believe *Himal Khabarpatrika* and *Nepali Times* will now become even more popular for having stood up for press freedom.

**Ramesh Khatri, email**



● Why does your newspaper keep referencing Nepali events to medieval Europe ('Promised land', # 332)? When the parties curtailed the King's rights, it was called the Nepali 'Magna Carta'. Loadshedding in Kathmandu is going back to the 'Dark ages'. Is our country replicating the march of European kingdoms 500 years later in a linear, teleological fashion?

**Gaurav Kunjan, email**

### HELLBOY

I admire your movie critic A Angelo D'Silva's views and his excellent recommendations. However, he, like many other critics seems to forget that movies are meant to entertain and be enjoyed. Not everything is meant to serve some grand artistic design. *Hellboy II* may not have suited D'Silva's tastes but it accomplished the purpose it was made for—to entertain, like its comic-book beginnings. My advice to the critic: try to enjoy the movies you watch and go easy on your vocabulary.

**Shreyash K Piya, Dhapasi Heights**



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Disregarding Chief of Army Staff Katuwal's appeal not to drag the military into political controversy, the NC and UML have all jumped gleefully into the fray.

UNMIN's Ian Martin has declared that any recruitment by parties to the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) violates the letter and spirit of the Agreement on Monitoring and Management of Arms and Armies that his team is committed to ensure. This is as clear an espousal of the Maoist cause as is prudentially possible for the UN.



**STATE OF THE STATE**  
C K Lal

Whether the position of UNMIN constitutes a breach of protocol or merely violates accepted norms of diplomatic decency is for Foreign Minister Upendra Yadav to decide. But the statement clearly ignores the reality that the chief of the PLA currently heads the government and a former guerrilla commander is the defence minister.

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal is responsible for the commitments made by both signatories of the CPA. UNMIN's stand in the changed circumstances has merely given Maoists a convenient stick to beat other political parties.

The moment the NC and UML sprang to support of the army chief, Defense Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa upped the ante by declaring that "appropriate action" will be taken against the erring general for transgressing his limits of authority.

The row over recruitment is a red herring. The core of

controversy lies in differing perceptions about what Maoists call "army integration" and what other political parties and the army brass understand as accommodation of some PLA combatants into security agencies of the government. If it were not so, the government should have been happy that an important instrument of the state was taking timely steps to acquire its sanctioned strength and maintain battle readiness.

Unlike the organic character of Maoist combatants in camps, or its YCL guerrillas who can be mobilised with looted weapons at a moment's notice, the state army functions like a machine. It has a clear command and control structure, specific numerical strength and ancillary services supported by troops that seemingly do little else than march in parades in Tundikhel.

Defense Minister Thapa must know that the most effective way of stultifying an organised army is to deny it replenishment of men, machine and material. You downsize the YCL and it can still be a guerrilla force.

But try reducing the army's troop strength without proper planning and you make it dysfunctional. The more sophisticated a machine, the higher the dependency on its smallest components.

The Maoists do have a point when they say the Nepal Army is too bloated and we can't afford it. Madhesis are correct in claiming that the army is racial in composition, parochial in outlook and is discriminatory. The intelligentsia has the right to disbelieve anything that an army general says in light of what he did in the guise of Ajai P Nath

# It is Nepal's army

The army is not 'above' politics, it is 'below' politics

during royal rule. Citizens have every reason to question whether we need such a large army.

In the days ahead, the strength of the army will have to be reduced according to a national security plan. Its composition will have to be made more inclusive and diverse to foster national unity. The army

leadership will have to learn that it doesn't behoove the chief of armed forces to issue public statements, receive petitions from prosecuted groups and claim openly that the organisation he heads is somehow 'above' politics. It will have to learn that the army in any democratic dispensation is very much

'below' politics.

Until the Nepal Army becomes truly national, clearly responsible and wholly accountable to civilian control, we have to make do with whatever we have. The Maoists better not mess with the army because that is the institution of last resort. ●

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# Two steps forward one step back

The president of the Traditional Religion and Culture Protection Committee lives up a narrow alley opposite the western gate of Pashupatinath. Shiva Sharan Rajbhandari does not seem to be a particularly hurt or angry man. The temple bhandari is clearly enjoying being in the limelight, is enthused by the support of "Hindus across the world" and thrilled at pushing the Maoists on the defensive.



**PLAIN SPEAKING**  
Prashant Jha

Meeting him with an Indian television news crew is revealing, for it shows the symbiotic relationship between the jingoistic Delhi based channels which have blown up the issue and the local protestors.

Rajbhandari was all charm with the Indian reporters. He offered tea, took down numbers ("Can I call you if something happens here again?"), spoke in Hindi and then English for the network's different channels, posed on the terrace, and guided them to the next protest. "Tyres will burn, it will look good on tv," he winked.

The reporters played along, focusing on responses that said the Maoist intervention was a "threat to Hinduism" and asking constantly if it was an anti-India move.

Some distance away, the Gaushala road was blocked. Middle aged and young men in tight jeans and caps, the same ones you see during every road block, were negotiating with the police about what to burn. Starting with about 50 people, they



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began chanting slogans asking for Prachanda to "be hanged" as soon as they saw tv cameras. The crowd swelled to about 400 as speeches began.

So what has this drama been all about? Here is what the bhandaris said: this is a political intervention in temple affairs, there was no need for the Maoists to break with tradition in the appointment of priests, the allegations of corruption are false, the status quo should be restored.

The Maoists and temple administrators countered: the Indian priests had resigned voluntarily, what was wrong in getting qualified Nepali priests when the core

## The Maoists underestimated the media-induced political pressure from India

issue was having a transparent financial system. They said Rs 30-35,000 was now being deposited daily while no one had any clue where the money went earlier.

Privately, pro-Maoist temple authorities said their mistake was in opening two fronts at the same time: appointing new priests and tackling the finances. They said the row had been played up by those who were scared of losing the chance to skim off the money.

The unstated Maoist ambition was to control the institution and get the money themselves, operating on the logic that the palace and NC did it in the past and now it was their turn. They were also sending a message to other temples and guthis across the country: if we can take over the Pashupati, you better fall in line. And they were playing the nationalism card.

The script went wrong for them domestically because Pashupati just became the latest in a series of actions that created a fear that the Maoists are out to capture and control all institutions. Local protests assumed a political colour that they may not have got sometime back.

The Maoists anticipated the Indian reaction, in fact it suited them because it gave them a chance to tell the cadre how they were the only ones resisting Indian hegemony. But what they perhaps did not expect was that the media-induced

political pressure would get so intense from Delhi.

The BJP's reaction is natural because this is their constituency. It comes at a time when they have encouraged the formation of the Nepal Janata Party, headed by a former TMDP leader. Hindu right leaders in Kathmandu say that after years, they hit on an issue on which there was broad support and this could be a turning point in reviving their politics.

Mulayam Singh Yadav's visit was a coincidence. But Mulayam advising Prachanda to respect "Hindu sentiments" is ironic because he has often faced accusations of not having done so in his own UP. He fired at Hindu karsevaks in Ayodhya in 1989-90, which fuelled the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. Yadav relies heavily on the Muslim vote and is often called 'Maulana Mulayam' by BJP leaders.

As negative reaction poured in across the Indian political spectrum (from the secular lobby to Hindutvabadis) the Maoists realised that they were alienating too many people at the same time. So they took recourse to their two-step forward, one-step back strategy and retracted the decision.

And so yet another week goes by in Nepal with all the attention focused on what is a non-issue even as the slide downhill continues. •

# "I am not frustrated,

**Nepali Times: Revenue collection this quarter is 35 per cent up from last year. Is this because you started from a low base, or did you really have to crack the whip?**

**Baburam Bhattarai:** We gave ourselves an annual revenue target of Rs 141 billion and divided it to monthly targets, which we have met. We issued strict instructions to check leakage, we replaced the old team with a new one to eliminate the entrenched bureaucratic malpractices. There was a lot of legalised corruption, we stopped that. We also announced an incentive that led to a 200 per cent increase for customs officials in salary based on performance indicators. We took that to all revenue departments. It worked well. The Revenue Investigative Department has rounded up people, even big shots. I have instructed them not to listen to anyone, in fact they have instructions to be even stricter on those who use our party sources. They are not our people, they are opportunists. They seek political patronage.

**But what about the big fish, the wilful defaulters?**

I am reviewing the situation of small and medium entrepreneurs affected by the conflict. If they are genuinely affected and have difficulty repaying loans, we are setting a taskforce to look at their problems. But we won't let wilful defaulters go.

**There is deep gloom in the business sector due to militant labour, power shortages and security. What can you say to reassure them?**

We take these problems seriously. But the situation is not hopeless. And I don't think it is getting worse. When there aren't expected improvements, people naturally get worried. Regarding minimum wages for labour, we have requested entrepreneurs to implement it and after that we don't allow workers to close down industries. The cabinet

Finance Minister Baburam Bhattarai spoke to *Nepali Times* on Tuesday about the doom and gloom in the economy, the worsening investment climate and the lack of development, but he said he was a "revolutionary optimist".

will take a decision to ban strike actions soon. We will strictly enforce the law against closing down highways and against striking in essential services such as industry, health and electricity companies.

**But investors are really demoralised.**

If we allow this instability to escalate it will worsen the investment atmosphere for sure. To encourage and increase investment, we have proposed an Investment Board under the chairmanship of the prime minister on which the cabinet will decide soon. Once that is up and running there will be a single window policy for foreign direct investment for mega projects and the overall investment climate will improve.

**And the power crisis?**

We have prepared a 35-point strategy which envisages ending or minimising load shedding within this fiscal year. For this there was no alternative but diesel to help meet the current 300MW shortfall. Therefore, we call on the private sector to set up diesel and thermal plants, solar and bio-diesel plants. Then, we have waived taxes on medium-term hydro projects to be completed in 2-3 years.



**Doesn't all this make your long term goal of 10,000MW seem like an impossible dream?**

The long term projects should also start simultaneously. Once the Investment Board is formed, we will launch the big projects immediately.

**How can that happen with this instability?**

We must have a minimum common understanding with all the political parties on three things. First, the geo-strategic location of our country means we are a buffer

## Television emergency

The newly-set up union of television stations, Television Broadcasters Nepal, have declared a "tv emergency" and vowed to stop all transmissions between midnight and 5AM because of the power crisis. The organisation includes Kantipur TV, Image Channel, Avenues, ABC, Sagarmatha and has state-owned NTV as observer. "The power situation is having a huge impact on broadcasting," says Bhaskar Rajkarnikar of Avenues TV. Advertisers are pulling out because 40 per cent of the normal prime time viewership can't tune in because of power cuts. Community radio stations have also declared a crisis because of their inability to transmit due to crippling power cuts.

## One stop

Samsung Electronics has opened an IT Plaza in Putalisadak showcasing a range of products including LCD monitors, projectors, printers, digital photo frames, etc. The Plaza is a joint venture between Neoteric Nepal and Shri Siddhi Computer Traders.



## Intel in Nepal

Intel has donated 50 PCs to Nepal to be used in government-run schools across the country. The PCs have been equipped with basic software, internet and educational resources. Intel will also train teachers to use them in classrooms.



### NEW PRODUCTS

**PICKUP:** Paramdu Motors has launched the Ape Truck, a small four-wheel carrier truck, made by the Italian company Piaggio. The truck has a 500cc diesel engine, a five-speed gearbox and mileage of 22km per litre.



**ALL-IN-ONE:** The MFC-6490CW colour inkjet has been launched in Nepal. A printer, copier, scanner and fax machine it has 6000 x 1200 dpi resolution, 3.3" colour LCD display and comes with a two year warranty.



**SURYA:** Surya Nepal has introduced a limited rock band edition pack of Surya 24 carat cigarettes. The pack comes in red and blue and contains quotes by 70's rock artists.

# Spinning out of control

Suppose, on one fine Sunday, young people affiliated with your political party storm into a media house, beat up managers and journalists and smash windows and furniture. The incident makes national and international news. What do you do?



**STRICTLY BUSINESS**  
Ashutosh Tiwari

First, you deny that the incident happened at all, and that even if it did happen, your cadres were not involved. Pressed with evidence, you then say that it was actually the media staff who hired goons to beat up your staff when they had gone for a meeting. Later, you change the story to say that ex-royalists who had infiltrated your ranks were the ones who carried out the attacks, thereby giving your party a bad name.

A day later, you make light of the attack, saying that only light beating had taken place, and that no murder had been committed. But as pressures mount, you finally send two named accused to surrender to the police. For a few days, they are kept in police custody, where they are served food from five-star restaurants and entertained by visits from ministers. Once the accused are

released on bail, which amounts to a slap on the wrist, you make sure that they melt into the shadows. Thanks to your art of spin you carry on as if nothing has happened, while your henchmen gloss over details to paint the whole episode as oppression by feudal capitalists.

Take another example. You force temple priests to submit resignations. You replace them with two local priests of your liking. You don't care about local sentiments nor about hundreds of years of history.

## The Maoists can't go on covering one lie with another lie

You justify it in the name of nationalism, even though patriotism is the refuge of scoundrels. Guarded by goons, you force open the temple gates so the new priests could offer prayers to Shiva.

Still, when a group of disgruntled junior priests stage a press conference to air their grievances, you send your goons again to beat them up in broad daylight in front of the media. Your hooligans also deliberately beat up some reporters and damage their equipment. Then you tell the same journalists on camera that your young communists were there to

protect the temple from violence. The Supreme Court issues an edict to you to not touch the temple. But you carry on as if these man-made laws do not apply to your decisions, and that these protests will run out of steam soon. After a few days of intense protests from the public and negative media coverage in India, you meekly withdraw your decisions.

These two incidents show that in today's 24/7 media, you can't go on covering one lie with another lie. True, you may shout the loudest by using half-truths

to your advantage. Sooner or later, you will be found out, and voters and well-wishers will stop trusting you. When you are seen as untrustworthy, you don't function as a government for long.

Sure, you can harass those in opposition by issuing death threats, but that is not why people elected you to power. They voted for you to get on with the business of drafting the constitution so that 28 million Nepalis can understand what the agreed-upon guidelines of the game are for their success, prosperity and happiness in Nepal. ●

# and no one should be..."



CHONG ZI LIANG

state. Instead of playing China and India against each other, we must take advantage of their proximity and be a vibrant bridge between the two fastest-growing economies. If Chinese delegates come to Nepal, India should not get agitated and when Indian delegates come to Nepal, China should also not be disturbed.

Second is the question of democracy. We have a consensus on fundamental democratic principles like multiparty competition, human rights, rule of law and so on. However, within this we have to decide on our own

model of a democratic system. In my opinion, we need a consensual model within a competitive multiparty system with elections and all-party government. This alone will give us stability. A majority government and minority opposition invites instability, which is what is happening now when what we need is a political consensus.

Third common understanding should be on economic development. We want growth with justice. Big investors in power, infrastructure, tourism will stimulate growth while the small cooperative model will uplift farmers and small and medium entrepreneurs. These two approaches will bring growth with equity and alleviate poverty. If we achieve this, I believe Nepal then can make qualitative change within 10 years. If this does not happen, I see the danger of ethnic conflict that will threaten our sovereignty.

### Aren't you frustrated that five months after taking office things are moving so slowly?

People had high expectations from us. It took us some time to learn as we had no administrative experience. But we have a budget, and the delays in its implementation are structural. We will start seeing results in development and delivery from next month.

### But you haven't been able to spend on development.

This is true. Spending is low because the budget was delayed and the procedural formalities delayed it further. But it is also because of the absence of local bodies. Now, we have an understanding with UML that the local bodies would be set up within this month. Once that happens, development activities will pick up once they get their Rs 3 million grants.

Another reason for the delay was because the NC decided to stay in the opposition. And within the government we have to satisfy all our coalition partners. This delayed the decision-making process. Yes, there have

been hold-ups but I am not frustrated and no one should be.

### Isn't your own party also working at cross purposes? Your militant unions are sabotaging your own plans to be investor-friendly.

Yes, we are worried about that. But you have to understand that this is a transition. We have been through revolutionary phase and the cadres at the grassroot levels were not educated. We didn't have time to politically mould them. But there is no duality in our party line. There should not be any doubt about that. There is one policy. It is our commitment, not a tactical ploy. We want to assure the international community about that.

### Is there any change in your priority for foreign aid?

We have received a commitment of Rs 39 billion for coming year, most of it as grant. We are preparing for the conference of Nepal Development Forum to be held in March in Kathmandu. A team of experts that includes the head of National Planning Commission is working out our aid policy and development parameters. We now want to move away from the term 'aid'. Aid should not increase dependency, it should create an environment for development, investment and trade. And our development partners support us in this, they want Nepal to have our own national priorities and not impose it from outside. There has to be a sense of ownership.

### Outside, we see nothing but gloom. Here inside Singha Darbar you seem to be optimistic.

I am optimistic. I call it a revolutionary optimism. We should not forget the fact that this change has come after 1,000 years. We have been through an epochal change, not just a change in government. Things will take time to settle down.

# Promises not kept

Nepal, 4 January

नेपाल

## Twelve-point agreement, 25 November 2005

The Maoists commit to creating a conducive environment for the locals and other democratic party leaders, who were displaced during the conflict, to return home, live safely in their communities, to have their seized property returned and to be allowed to participate in political activities without fear.

## Ceasefire code of conduct, 26 May 2006

To return seized property, party workers and leaders that has been confiscated to its rightful owners. To solve problems arising during that process via agreement and discussions between the parties involved.

## Agreement on 8 November 2006

To expedite the process of returning seized property. To make the environment safe for the war displaced to return home within one month by creating district committees with members from both parties.

## Comprehensive Peace Agreement, 21 November 2006

Both sides agree to return confiscated and padlocked government, public, private buildings and land and other property.

Both parties agree not to override law and seize more private property.

## Commitment signed on 30 March 2007

The Maoists commit to return private and public land, buildings, industries, offices, and vehicles that were confiscated during 'people's war' to its rightful owners. The administration will take necessary actions against those who create obstacles

in the process. The committee that is formed at this meeting pledges to monitor the return of property and present its report within the next 15 days.

## 23-point agreement 23 December 2007

Confiscated private and public property to be returned to their owners within one month. A body to be set up in districts, under the leadership of the chief district officer, to oversee the implementation.

## Agreement signed on 25 June 2008

CPN (Maoist) to end all semi-military activities of YCL and direct that all property (private, public, government buildings and land) be returned within 15 days. The YCL to remain within the law.

## NC demand to Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, 9 November 2008

Although the issue of return of property has been mentioned in the 12-point agreement and subsequent agreements after that, they have not been implemented. Compensation and relief packages must be arranged from the time when the property was confiscated. The agreement signed on 25 June 2008 relating to the activities of YCL must be implemented immediately. The progress of all the agreements must be made public by the Home Ministry via the legislative assembly as soon as possible.

Two days after the above demand letter was presented, the prime minister spoke to the CA and said that the agreements will be implemented by mid-December. He said that if the confiscated property is not returned by then, government will provide compensation. At a meeting with NC leaders on 1 January, Dahal said he needed at least three months to fulfil those demands.



RSS

# Nepali champions

31 December-12 January, *Himal Khabarpatrika*

हिमाल  
खबरपत्रिका

Interview with Nira Thapa, captain of the Under-18 Asian Cricket Championship (ACC) that won a women's international tournament in Chiang Mai last month.

## Himal: How do you feel after winning the tournament?

**Nira Thapa:** This was a big success for the Nepali women's cricket team. For the first time we were able to make our country proud.

## What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Nepali cricket team?

There is unity and understanding amongst the players. Our bowling and fielding is good but our batting requires more practice.

## The Nepali Cricket team does well in the under 18s, but not so well when they are competing at senior level. Why?

Our players become nervous and lose their confidence. Also, there isn't an environment for making a career out of cricket, so once you get to a senior position you don't get the support and don't play as well. The players need training. Training should start at least 4-5 months before an international game.

## What sort of training support does the Nepali female cricket team get?

You might as well say none. The tradition of just being happy when we win and starting training just a couple of months before the tournament still hasn't gone away. We may have won a big tournament but we only had around 15 days of training. What's more the other teams were weak in this tournament - but they won't always be weak.

## Call for Proposal Writers

An international agency working in Nepal is looking for experienced and high quality proposal writers to work as part-time/ full-time consultants. Currently, the proposal writers are needed in the field of Natural Resource Management, Sustainable Livelihoods, Climate Change, Bio-fuel, Non-Timber Forest Products, Bio-diversity, Non-formal Education and Awareness, Sustainable tourism, Hydropower and Agriculture.

Minimum qualification required is Masters in the relevant field of study with ten years of professional experience including substantive experience in proposal development. The applicant should be capable of conceptualizing a new project idea, framing the project logic and developing a full proposal. Fluency in English, and ability to deliver product in a given time frame and format is necessary.

If short-listed, the agency may provide work on as-needs basis. Remuneration will be highly competitive from local market standards, and in commensurate with experience and expertise of the applicant.

Interested individuals should send in their CVs including samples of their recent work to the email address below by January 31, 2009.

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# Shared rule, self-rule

## You can't wish away ethnicity in Nepal

As the political parties and academics start suggesting models of federalism, Alok Bohara has put forward his own cooperative federal structure ('The boundaries of federalism', #431). He argues that the Maoists' ethnic-based federalism and the One Madhes demand would invite unnecessary complications.



**COMMENT**  
**Balkrishna Mabuhang**

He proposes Kosi, Bagmati, Gandaki and Karnali provinces with ethnic enclaves within them so that they establish a level playing field, economic growth, ethnic tolerance and resource distribution.

But his proposal isn't taken too seriously politically because it seems to ignore what federalism in this country is designed to do: address the long-standing grievances and repression of individual groups by a central feudal state apparatus.

Once the Maoists launched their armed struggle in the name of ethnic autonomy and the right to self-determination, ethnic and regional organisations joined them directly or indirectly. As the peace process began, Madhesi parties ceased to trust the Maoists and began their own struggle. Similarly, Limbuwan and Khambuwan in the east, Tharuhat in west Tarai, Tamuwan in the west, and Tamsaling and Nepal Mandal in the centre are continuing the struggle for autonomy.

It doesn't make any sense to consider state restructuring without considering these ethnic and regional aspirations. The basic principle of federalism is to divide the state rule into two levels: the provincial and the local. How autonomous



the states are is the critical factor and the constitution should lay out provisions for self-governance at the grassroots.

Federalism is itself a cooperative because the local and provincial governments within and outside their areas of authority work both in partnership and separately with the centre playing a unitary monitoring role. It is the concept of shared and self-rule.

The Maoists have proposed 11 provinces and three autonomous sub-provinces, while MJF put forward the United Madhes demand before the election. The NC and UML sidestepped the issue altogether, which led to their dismal performance in the elections.

Bohara is trying to give the NC and UML a viable alternative proposal. It is true that we have to find ways to address the Madhesi demand for united autonomy but we must also accommodate the ethnic, linguistic and cultural differences that exist there. Similarly, the Maoists' federal structure based on ethnicity, region and language, which incorporates the needs of indigenous communities, should be addressed properly.

Bohara's federal units mimic Nepal's own topographical make-up. This, he says, is needed to make the units viable and have a competitive advantage. He argues the mountains, hills and Tarai complement each other. For example, Bohara says, the

creation of a Limbuwan province may deprive Kochila of resources and therefore proposes one state so that the resources could be shared.

His fears that Limbuwan may sell its electricity to India instead of giving it to Kochila are unfounded because both provinces would be answerable to the central government. The issues of economy and resource-sharing are at the heart of any discussion of federalism in Nepal.

Economic factors, however, have been decisive in very few countries drawing up a federal structure. The centre can always balance out the provinces that may feel shortchanged with special packages or redistribution of resources to reduce economic disparity.

Instead of discussing which province has the most or least resources, it is important to use them collectively for human welfare. Provincial or inter-provincial mechanisms must be developed to distribute resources according to need.

Bohara calls for Nepalis to rise above ethnic interests to resolve the nation's common problems. But ethnicity is the reality of our society, it will have to be addressed. True politics is not based on ethnicity, religion or class but a system of democratically elected governments. However, we can't overlook the politics of identity anymore in this country.

The social make-up needs to be studied, affirmative action is required to take the dividend of good governance to the grassroots. The slogan of inclusion should not remain just a slogan. Ethnic slogans will fade away once the state develops a proper mechanism to deliver. ●

*Balkrishna Mabuhang is professor at the Central Department of Population of Tribhuvan University.*

# 'No magic bullet'

## New edition of ethnicity book can help in constitution-writing

REVIEW by  
DHRUBA SIMKHADA

The timing couldn't have been better for the release of the updated new edition of the 1990s academic classic *Nationalism and Ethnicity in Nepal*.

The Constituent Assembly has started deliberating on the structure of the new Nepali state and the role of ethnicity and federalism in it. Unfortunately, the agenda is being set by political sloganeering and not a sound analysis of the ground reality of this incredibly diverse country.

The re-release of the book by Gellner, Pfaff-Czarnecka and Whelpton is therefore a welcome development. One only wishes it also had a Nepali translation.

The original volume was written at a time when ethnic voices were muted and identity politics hadn't yet made a mark. But post-1990 and especially after 2006, the demand for space and voice by the traditionally marginalised has reached a crescendo. The 2008 election to the Constituent Assembly was

contested along a mixed electoral system that included proportional representation rolls. The result has been the most diverse elected legislature in Nepali history.

The original volume was titled *Ethnicity and Nationalism in the World's Only Hindu State*, but was changed because Nepal turned secular in 2006. The new edition has a new chapter: New Nepal, New Ethnicities: Changes Since the Mid-1990s. The authors rightly point out that despite the new voices and new activism the leadership of the political parties remain exclusive, this in turn means that their affiliated ethnic-based organisations are more radical than them. Ethnic and regional movements for autonomy therefore cross party lines and appear to be out of the control of their mother parties.

The chapter lists organisations like the Kirat Yakthung Chumlung, Nepal Thami Society, Magar Association of Nepal and the

Nepal Tamang Ghedung with their missions and aims. A useful table classifies 59 official Janajatis as defined by NEFIN and NFDIN.

We should be very careful in the process of creating new

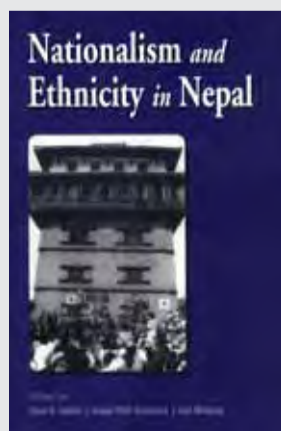
provinces/states. The problem is already fueling conflict in the Tarai where Madhesi parties demand the creation of a single Madhes province from Kakarvitta to Kanchanpur, but this is rejected by many Tharus. The authors urge caution over the proposal for ethnic states and indicate that it could face considerable difficulties.

They also suggest that ethnic autonomy might perhaps be better served by devolution to small blocks of villages or, as suggested by political scientist Mahendra Lawoti, by a system of 'non-territorial' or 'cultural' autonomy. But the titular group of Adibasi-Janajatis would enjoy a 'right of primacy' (agrashikar). Activists have raised the voice of 'self-determination', but this can never extend to a right to secession. While the Maoist want 'self-determination', NEFIN wants 'internal autonomy' because granting full right of self-determination would lead to disintegration. Even though the

JTMM-Goit has openly espoused separatism for the Madhes, most other Tarai and Janajati groups have not gone that far.

The main challenge before the Constituent Assembly will be to find a solution acceptable to two-third majorities of its 601 members and to do so within two years without passions spilling out into the streets. With Nepal's immense ethnic diversity, the demands and dissatisfactions have to be politically managed while the process of constitution-drafting is actually taking place. The authors write: "The study of the diversity and of ethnic relations elsewhere suggests that the CA is no 'magic bullet' that will resolve all the ethnic and other tensions."

The book also includes chapters by Prayag Raj Sharma (on nation-building in a multi-ethnic state) and Harka Gurung (on state and society). The authors suggest the constitution builders bear in mind that ethnic boundaries were often consciously created, have been deliberately maintained, developed, contested and have changed over time. ●



**Nationalism and Ethnicity in Nepal**  
Edited by David N Gellner, Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka and John Whelpton  
663+ pages  
Rs 1,100  
Vajra Publications, 2008

# Don't curse the darkness, s



ALL PICS : CHONG ZI LIANG

SHRADHA BASNYAT

It's hard to be optimistic when the power goes off from 4-10AM and then again from 2-8PM. It's hard to see the bright side of things when sitting in the cold, dark contemplating the country's future.

And, the worse is yet to come. They tell us the Kulekhani reservoir is empty and the rivers are running dry. From next week, brace yourselves for 16 hours of power cuts a day. NEA's load-shedding schedules will just list the hours that there will be power: 10PM-4AM and 2-4PM. Easy to remember.



RAJESH KC/MY REPUBLICA.COM

How much for these generators?...  
I need one to recharge my inverter

Still, we at *Nepali Times* are optimistic that Nepal will pull itself out of the darkness. There is no point cursing the darkness, let's look at the bright side and try to make the best of things. We have picked some gadgets that will make this winter more bearable.



## Notebooks with stamina

Even the best laptops cannot cope with the eight hour power cuts. But not all notebooks are created equal and some have better endurance than others.  
Mac book (Lasts at least 5 hours)  
Evo store, Durbar Marg  
Starts from Rs 99,000  
Acer Aspire Netbook (Lasts 4 hours)  
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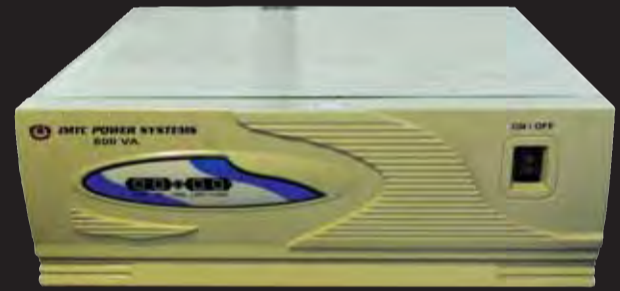
## Let the sun shine in

With such lengthy power cuts inverters don't get time to recharge, so another option that many are starting to look into is solar power. Though the initial set-up is quite expensive, solar represents a clean renewable source of energy. Solar can generate enough power to fuel computers and tvs.



## Solar Tuki

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## Inverters

Using inverters is like using a pump to suck water out of the mains. It cannibalises energy when there is power, and actually increases the load in the system. But when there are no other options, even this is OK. IMTC ranges from 50-5,000Watts and costs Rs 3,500-Rs 45,000  
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# How a light



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## Mobile torches

Some of us use the mobile phone screens for light, but some ingenious dudes have designed a mobile phone that actually has a torch instead of a camera. Available at Nokia stores in Tamrakar Mobile Complex.  
Nokia 650, Rs 3,700  
Nokia 555, Rs 4,000  
Nokia 580, Rs 580



## Light is all you need

There are emergency lights and there are emergency lights. We have even seen emergency light systems that have sirens, flashing amber lights and even one with a CD player. Forget the gimmicks. The most cost-effective one we have seen is the Ricona. Small, handy and cheap.  
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# On the right track



KATY ELLIOTT

In the teeming alleyways of Thamel's bustling streets, Shona's trekking supply shop is an unprepossessing, indistinctive hole in the wall that hardly lures you in. But ask any experienced trekker or mountaineer where to go to rent or buy kit in the capital and they will say Shona's.

What singles out the 15-year-old business is not only that it is run by a woman, the charismatic Shona Lama, but that she is from the mountains—Taplejung and is an experienced and passionate trekker herself.

"I love trekking and I know what you need and what you don't need. I have seen how often people make mistakes and how they suffer," Shona told us after *Nepali Times* selected her shop as Company of the Month for January 2009. "Unless you trek yourself you can't give out advice."

In fact it was while trekking in 1981 that Shona gave birth to her second daughter in Jomsom. Shona started hiring out and selling equipment because her first husband was a climber. In those days, she says, it was

## Business is about luck and passion for Shona's trekking supply in Thamel



KIRAN PANDAY

common for climbers' wives to run such businesses in Thamel, but many have since launched hotels or emigrated to the US. She is now a rarity.

What is also rare, and somewhat disarming, is her reluctance to sell her customers anything that is surplus to their needs. Why go for the pricier thermals when the cheaper ones will keep you just as warm? Why

buy two fleeces when you really only need one for 14 days in the Everest region? Meanwhile, she enthusiastically dispenses mountain advice for free.

In a market which is highly competitive and in which word of mouth is everything, it's a brilliant sales tactic for a company that has never done any advertising. Talking and laughing with clients who hail from all

corners of the world and dispensing advice and encouragement regarding their impending adventure keeps her going.

"We deal with every nation in the world. Meeting famous climbers, writers and photographers is nice. Every day is different. When people go and come back and give you two bottles of beer because they were

happy with their equipment, it feels nice," says Shona.

When it comes to trekking she likes to be alone, carrying her own equipment rather than taking porters, which may explain why she urges hikers not to purchase too much and keep their packs as light as possible.

Renting out mountain equipment such as plastic boots, crampons and sleeping bags to those scaling all the trekking peaks of Nepal accounts for most of the business. Shona works seven days a week and sells, or rents out, 120 sleeping bags and 90 trekking jackets each month of the season.

She claims that business remains steady though the shop can weather the slower periods because she and her husband live a pretty humble life. "We have lunch for Rs 30 and dinner for Rs 50," she says. Her children are grown up and have independent means, so she doesn't have to worry too much about the ongoing business.

Nevertheless, these are worrying times for the dozens in the trekking equipment industry. Tourism is bound to be severely dented by the global economic crisis. And those that can still afford to come to Nepal will be deterred if the country returns to political instability.

But putting aside such macro issues, which make starting out in the trade a pretty daunting prospect, Shona concludes: "Business is about luck as much as it's about business. And it's about interest and passion too." ●

# Women show the way



SURYA CHANDRA BASNYAT

BHAWANI KARKI in DOLAKHA

If you decide to trek in the Gauri Shankar area, the spectacular panoramic view of the mountains will not be the only thing that will catch your eye. Your guides and porters are most likely to be women.

Here at Simi village in Dolakha, women are being trained to be guides under a unique eco-tourism project that aims to reduce poverty by boosting grassroots tourism.

"The main occupation of the people in Simi is trekking and it has increased family income," says Tseringdipi Sherpa. "In other places, the men go out to work and the women stay home, but here women work as guides and the men farm."

The majestic twin peaks of the 7,181-metre-high Gauri Shankar dominates the sky above Simi. The land is rugged and villagers depend on the rains to grow potato and millet. Northern Dolakha has always been poor, but with trekking

## Simi's women break traditional barriers and become trekking guides

family incomes are rising, children are going to school and people can afford solar lights.

Simi hit the headlines last year when three young women from the village, Pujan Acharya, Nimadoma Sherpa and Pembadiki Sherpa, all climbed Chomolungma. They were neighbours who worked as trekking guides and became interested in mountaineering.

This seems to have inspired Simi women to look beyond Dolakha. Tsering herself has taken tourists to Khumbu and the Annapurnas. "We've been trekking since we were kids," she says, "so it's not such hard work." And Tsering says they also enjoy the freedom and adventure that comes with being guides. Some Simi women have set up trekking shops in Kathmandu.

Simi and the Rolwaling Valley saw a significant increase in trekkers last autumn. Tourists are coming not just to Dolakha, but to traverse the Tashi Labtsa pass to Khumbu.

Maili Tamang earned Rs 60,000 last year and is hoping to earn even more this spring. "More work means more money,"

says Maili, smiling. "I walk four to seven hours a day carrying up to 50kg of bags, tents and food." That is nearly Maili's own weight, but she doesn't find it difficult as she has her husband to help her.

Tourism in Dolakha is being promoted under the Rolwaling Eco-Tourism Development Project supported by the Austrian group, Eco Himal. The project has built lodges, trained locals in running restaurants and hotels and promoted an environmentally-friendly tourism that benefits locals.

Money generated is invested in local schools, drinking water and health.

Eco Himal has built over 10 community lodges in Bigu, Chilangkha, Laduk, Orang, Lamabagar, Karthali and Ghorthali and has handed them over to the locals. More than 5,000 families have benefited. Chief of Eco Himal, Rameshwor Kadhka, says: "There is great potential in Dolakha, and this model can be replicated elsewhere in Nepal." ●

See also: 'Dolakha's hidden charm', #420



RAMESH POUDEL

# Banking on women

RAMESH POUDEL  
in POKHARA

Not so long ago, it would have been rare to find a woman bank employee at any level, let alone management. But the Pokhara branch of Shangri-La Bank is bucking the trend because it is run entirely by women—from the clerks to the manager. Only the security guards are men.

The Bhadrakali Chowk branch of the privately-run Shangri-la Bank is the first all-women's bank in Pokhara. Kathmandu has one all-female bank too, a branch of the Development Credit Bank.

Currently, there are five permanent staff at Shangri-La's Pokhara branch. Branch manager Sujata Hamal says: "I think we've proved that women can work harder than men."

Sujata, like several others

here, comes from a remote village in Myagdi, where she studied at a local school. Now, she juggles her job and her studies at Prithvi Narayan Campus where she will soon graduate. She adds, "Women are capable. It's just about giving them responsibility and representation."

This branch of Shangri-La Bank has only been open for a month and a half, but employees have already collected Rs 40 million in savings. One of the reasons the bank is doing well seems to be because the employees are women. When the marketing staff go to nearby communities to bring in possible clients, people are delighted to see smartly dressed women. Some locals even promise to come by, even if it's just to look.

With most men away overseas, money matters are handled more and more by

**HEADING UP:** With more women heads of households in Nepal, a branch of Pokhara's Shangri-La Bank is cashing in with an all female staff.

women. Having a bank with female staff makes women heads of household more comfortable coming to a bank for deposits, withdrawals and other investment queries.

"We've realised that there's a difference when the employee is female," says Hamal, "More female customers come to us."

Hamal has asked the head office to arrange for a special scheme for women customers and the board has agreed to introduce low interest loans. The branch also seeks to help neighbouring communities in Pokhara by assisting local women to create accounts and start saving and investing their money. ●

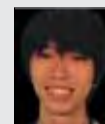
# Don't let me down

## A Singaporean's optimism for this new republic may soon wither

It was midday when my flight landed at Tribhuvan International Airport exactly one year ago. After a 45 minute wait for my luggage, I skipped through the customs into the bright sunshine but felt no warmth. It was winter in Nepal. My first winter.

I had come to be a photojournalist intern. Like all lucky Singaporeans who take our utilities for granted, I discovered a whole new lifestyle of ice-cold showers and total darkness. Naturally (and immediately) I fell in love with the country.

Despite being armed with a first-world education, my impression of Nepal then never extended beyond the text-book knowledge of the Himalaya and the Maoists. As a photojournalist, nothing excites me more than bloodthirsty



**COMMENT**  
Sam Kang Li

jungle-romping guerillas. This excitement was heightened by the fact that Singapore has a political scene as quiet as Bagmati after midnight.

But the Maoists were neither bloodthirsty nor jungle-romping. They didn't even look like guerrillas. The first PLA fighter I met did an unthinkable thing: he fed me a half-boiled egg. Granted I was part of a self-administered media entourage following a Baburam rally around Gorkha and we had stopped for a mid-morning tea break. But how can you not love someone who peels an egg for you?

In months to come, I would become fast friends with many Maoists who had in more ways than one treated me with extreme generosity. Thank you Raja-dai for offering me a seat on an incredibly crowded Rolpa-bound bus. And thank you Mohan-ji for serving me the largest portion of buff in the small hotel at Tila. No thank you, Jitendra for offering to give me a PLA haircut.

And I thought to myself: "With enemies like these, who needs friends?" When my Mao-buddies captured the most votes on 10 April, I was hopeful for Nepal because they seemed to display a strong conviction towards positive change for fellow-Nepalis.

But six months later, instead of a strong conviction, my Mao-buddies are behaving like strong convicts. They gave a few of my former newsroom colleagues a thrashing right where I used to share stories of Maoist samaritans. Have my Mao-buddies become Mao-baddies?

Dear Mao-baddies, let me give you some pointers: "To stop the press from writing bad reviews, give them nothing to write about."

By resorting to violence, you have just single-handedly (pardon the irony here because it was actually many fists and an occasional kick) done the opposite. Media CEOs thank you for gifting them something to play and replay over the next five months. Editors thank you for a one-day break from coming up with a publishable editorial. Hurray, no editorial to write and yet a message to sell.

It really wasn't the cold showers and dark nights that made me adore Nepal more than the modern city state I came from. It was the gentleness of the people and how they find a working solution to manage every adversity thrown at them: petrol shortages, power failures included. But I don't see the same tolerance from the perpetrators of violence.

If investigative articles or biting editorials don't work for Nepal's leaders, then maybe a journalist's flying leather shoe will. ●

Sam Kang Li interned at Nepali Times in 2008 as a photographer and visited many parts of Nepal during this period, during which he introduced himself as Shyam Bahadur Tamang.



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# Air farce

'Jokes or inappropriate remarks regarding security could lead to your arrest'

I have been a frequent air traveller since I was a few months shy of my sixth birthday, when my parents packed me off to boarding school two plane rides away from home.

Those days of being willingly handed from air hostess to air hostess as an unaccompanied minor made me blasé about the rigours of air travel. Going abroad to study as a teenager, and joining the United Nations at 22,



**WORLDLY WISE**  
Shashi Tharoor

confirmed my ease with the world of the frequent flyer. I saw the average airport terminal as a familiar haven, like a friend's sitting room.

But 9/11 changed all that. The assorted divestments, the enthusiastic frisking, the suspicious prying open of your bag, that bleeping wand pushed into awkward spots, have all combined to make flying less fun than ever. Passengers at airports now look so chronically morose that a passing vulture flying overhead would sense a business opportunity.

The episode of the shoe bomber Richard Reid has suddenly meant more feet being



bared at airports than at the average Hindu temple. My solution has been to replace my customary lace-up Oxfords with a pair of slip-on loafers when I fly. Generals are always fighting the last war, and security screeners are the same. I'm just grateful it was a shoe bomber they were reacting to. What on earth would they do if

the next Richard Reid tried to ignite his underwear?

Then, came the terrorists who planned to explode liquid chemicals on board. Since the plot didn't work the first time and no one has tried it since, the only beneficiaries of this are the recyclers, who receive a truck-load of discarded water and shampoo

bottles from airports every day, and the concessionaires on the other side of security, who charge exorbitant prices to quench the thirst of parched passengers suddenly deprived of their drinks.

Indians such as myself whose features might pass for Middle Eastern have learnt to put up with the misadventures of flying. "There was a time during the 1970s oil boom," a fellow Indian told me, "that I rather enjoyed being mistaken for an Arab. People assumed I was richer than I was and treated me with respect. Now, after 9/11, I'm anxious to demonstrate that I'm Indian. If I were a woman, I'd wear a sari all the time, just to show I'm not *that* kind of brown."

In all fairness, you don't have to be brown to be selected for extra-special attention, though it helps. In their desire to prove the randomness of their biases, I've also seen security people pick passengers in inverse relation to the likelihood of their being a terrorist—elderly women making their way through security using a walker, say, or a certain white-haired senator from Massachusetts. (It is normally not difficult to tell the difference between Ted Kennedy and a terrorist fanatic bent on mass murder but I guess they wanted to prove their even-handedness, or their bloodmindedness.)

A mother carrying breast milk in a bottle for her baby was

ordered to drink it to prove it wasn't a lethal toxin. A friend tells me about his handicapped young son who flies with an oxygen tank. How do we know it's not a deadly poison gas, they wanted to know.

But every time you think you've got the formula down some new complication crops up. It's bad enough that you have to take out your laptop, empty your pockets, slip off your shoes, loosen your belt and shed your jacket to facilitate the inspections: they'll still ask you to spread your arms and legs. Worse, you have to smile through the whole ordeal. Because if you dare to complain, they really come down on you.

A witticism in an airport security line is like a Swiss tap: turn it on, and you instantly find yourself in hot water. 'Jokes or inappropriate remarks regarding security could lead to your arrest,' signs humourlessly warn you at strategic points. And until they actually close Guantánamo, I'm taking no chances... I have watched in mounting incredulity as one of my own books, which I was carrying as a gift, was taken away to be inserted into a special device after it had already passed security to make sure, no doubt, that my words wouldn't explode mid-flight.

I feel sorry for the next six-year-old who needs to fly alone. The innocence with which I first embraced air travel is simply inconceivable today. ●

अन्नपूर्ण पोस्ट  
गजब छ!

अब हप्ताको सातै दिन  
फरक विशेषाङ्क सहित

अन्नपूर्ण पोस्ट

गजब छ है गजब छ!!

ऐन त गजब!

# Slumdogs and millionaires

REVIEW by MILAP DIXIT

From 1996's acerbic *Trainspotting* to the soulful horror of 2002's *28 Days Later*, Danny Boyle's best films are bold, stylised works filled with rare wit and energy. After 2007's *Sunshine*, a somewhat frustrating experiment with science fiction, few would have predicted that Boyle would expand his repertoire even further. *Slumdog Millionaire* is his most ambitious project yet, with the most challenging of subjects: India. Set in Bombay, the film's very premise demands a knowledge and sensitivity that recent cinematic forays into India have lacked, and which Boyle delivers.

Based on a novel by former Indian diplomat Vikas Swarup, the film is composed as a series of non-linear flashbacks filmed documentary-style. When accused of cheating while competing to win 20 million rupees on India's *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, Jamal Malik, an eighteen-year-old orphan "slumdog" from Bombay, reflects on his tumultuous childhood.

Extensive editing and repetition of imagery colours Boyle's Bombay with an eerie familiarity and a singular aesthetic. Buoyed by the avant-Bollywood musical stylings of AR Rahman, the film moves at an exhilarating pace, following Jamal from his fecal encounter with Amitabh Bachhan to the death of his mother during Hindu-Muslim riots to his work as a 'chai wala' in a telemarketing centre.



## Mollywood goes international with epic that is India in microcosm

For a film so colossal in scope, *Slumdog's* charms lie not in the straightforward and seemingly sentimental plotline (as the cheesy trailers would have you believe) but in its understated direction and attention to detail. This is exemplified by the way Boyle directs newcomer Freida Pinto as Latika, Jamal's childhood friend and lost love. In spite of the enormous importance of Latika's character in the story, the role entails little actual screen time and relies more on the actor's natural presence and the nuanced editing of images interspersed throughout the film. The acting rarely falls short of the excellent cinematography: the child actors who play Jamal and his brother Salim are impeccably directed, largely overshadowing their older counterparts, while veterans Anil Kapoor and Irrfan Khan are sharp, comical contrasts to the innocent exuberance of the rest of the cast.

Just as importantly, the film seldom falls into the pitfall of catering solely to a foreign audience. There are awkward moments in which Patel's British inflection can be heard and his character's English sometimes comes off as implausibly refined; however, for the most part, the screenplay is consistently well researched and authentic.

While movies produced in Bombay delve increasingly into the fantasy worlds of the Indian elite, *Slumdog Millionaire* portrays the genuine, grotesque Bombay: both a realistic portrait of contemporary India and an all-encompassing one. In spite of its fairytale plot, the film touches on contemporary Indian phenomena such as media mass hysteria, 'India Shining', beggar syndicates, child prostitution, police corruption and communal religious violence. Few feature films of recent times have dared or even tried to depict any of these realities. The film ends, fittingly, with a rousing, tasteful, Bollywood-inspired dance sequence set on a platform of VT station, where last month's terrorist attacks took place.

Slumdog is both an aesthetic triumph and a crowd-pleasing success. Boyle has proven that even the simplest of storylines, if told intelligently with heart and style, can be uplifting. ●



Date of First Publication 7 January 2008

### VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Support to Participatory Constitution Building s 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 : **Civil Society Grant Manager, SB4- Peg II**  
Contract Type : Service Contract  
Annual Gross Remuneration: Rs. 1,088,316.00

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

#### Duties and Responsibilities:

Under the direct supervision of the International Project Manager, the incumbent is responsible for:

- Grant management: Using UNDP Results-based Management (RBM) tools, oversee the development, management and monitoring of all grant-funded Civil Society activities and achievement of results. This includes identification of approaches and modalities in support of UNDAF, CPD, CPAP and UNDP Development and Management Work Plans, preparation of annual and quarterly work plans and required progress reports.
- Financial management: In consultation with the UNDP Program Officer, prepare, consolidate and assess the Civil Society Outreach NGO budgets, monitor expenditures in accordance with UNDP financial rules and cost-recovery policies and implement adequate internal controls.
- Human Resource and Procurement Management: With the advice of the UNDP Operations Division, advise and ensure that NGO partners meet UNDP standards for the transparent and inclusive recruitment of project staff, as well as the assessment staff performance, knowledge sharing and learning, capacity building and the promotion of effective team work.
- Ensure timely procurement of any goods and services including in the grants by regularly supervising the NGO partners to ensure the delivery of quality work.

#### Qualifications Requirement

- A Master's degree (or its equivalent) in management, finance or a related field.
- A minimum of four years of relevant work experience in financial or project management and coordination, as well as experience with a recognized national or international organization.
- Previous experience in the UN or a recognized INGO preferable, ability to create supportive relationships with partners while focusing on impact and results, respond positively to feedback.
- Consistently approaches work with energy and a positive, constructive attitude.
- Demonstrates openness to change and ability to manage complexities, ability, results-based management and reporting.
- Strong oral and written abilities in Nepali and English (particularly financial management and presentation skills), strong conceptual familiarity with issues related to constitution making in Nepal.
- Basic computer skills, particularly word-processing in English and Nepali., excellent writing skills in both English and Nepali., ability to work and deliver outputs under pressure., ability to work in a multi-cultural team environment.

Post Title : **Roster of Experts**  
Contract Type : **Special Service Agreement (SSA) – Short-term**

The Constituent Assembly (CA) will soon start its work on drafting Nepal's new constitution.

The UNDP is now preparing for possible requests for advice by setting up a roster of Nepali experts who will be available if called upon to provide neutral, professional advice on constitutional issues. The roster will eventually consist of experts from a wide variety of disciplines. It will be socially inclusive list of national experts reflecting the ethnic, caste, religious and linguistic communities of Nepal. It will include women as well as men.

We are therefore inviting expressions of interest from experts in the following fields:

- Law (constitution making, federalism, local government, human rights etc.)
- Political Science (electoral systems, systems of government etc.)
- Social Inclusion (indigenous/Dalits/gender/minority rights, advocacy, etc.)

#### I) Types of services provided by the members of the Roster

Members of the roster will deliver the following services as requested:

##### Advisory Services

- Providing expert advice to stakeholders including members of the CA and civil society on issues related to constitution making such as federalism, human rights, indigenous rights, social inclusion, gender equity, resource allocation etc
- Facilitating discussions and meetings., assisting in the preparation of concept notes and position papers and other outputs

as may be requested.

##### Research, Analysis and Interpretation Services

- Conducting research and analysis on topics relevant to constitution making, writing reports and briefing papers.
- Preparing non-technical resource materials in six national languages in order to enhance full, active and representative participation in the constitution making process.

##### Training Services

- Designing, facilitating and documenting workshops as well as thematic training and orientation seminars on constitutional issues., preparing background papers for conferences, workshops, and seminars.
- Functioning as resource persons on specific topics related to constitution making.

#### II) Assignments to Members of the Roster

The specific assignments of the members of the roster will be decided as requests are received and in cooperation with those making the request.

UNDP will enter into a Long Term Agreement (LTA) with roster members. Fees will be paid on the basis of services provided. No entitlement to remuneration will arise solely on the basis of appointment to the roster.

#### III) Minimum Qualifications and Experience for Appointments to the Roster

Expressions of interest will be evaluated on their responsiveness to the requirements of the Terms of Reference as well as on each expert's qualifications and experience. The minimum requirements will include:

- A Master's degree (in the above mentioned disciplines) or the equivalent level of professional experience.
- Excellent command in written and spoken Nepali with preference for local experts who can also demonstrate fluency in other national languages.
- Good command of English would be an advantage, knowledge and understanding of one or more local ethnic/caste/linguistic communities or remote geographic areas of the country would be an advantage.
- Experience as a professional advisor and in conducting and facilitating trainings, workshops and seminars would be an advantage.
- Ability to work effectively and efficiently in a demanding multi-cultural team environment., positive and professional team spirit.

#### IV) Applying to join the Roster

Interested individuals with suitable background and experience are requested to submit their expression of interest along with the following documents:

- UN Personal History form and Curriculum Vitae
- Statement indicating
  - (a) The field of work on which the applicant possesses expertise:
    - i. Advisory services
    - ii. Research, analysis and interpretation services
    - iii. Training services
  - (b) The level of experience:
    - i. Senior experts will have high level policy experience and will be capable of supervising others. Remuneration: Rs. 20,000 per day
    - ii. Mid-level experts will have experience in advisory support; research, analysis and training. Remuneration: Rs. 15,000 per day
    - iii. Junior experts will have experience in research, analysis and training. Remuneration: Rs. 12,000 per day
- Written references from recognized experts/previous employers.
- Published writing samples (if any).
- Statement indicating the cost per person-days and person-month.

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 **28 January 2009** by email, to: [hmu1.np@undp.org](mailto:hmu1.np@undp.org) or in a sealed envelope to UNDP Operations Department (Ref: Grant/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](mailto: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.

ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

❖ **SPARSH : Touching Waste with Love**, an architectural art exhibition by Raju Khadka at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited till 13 January. 4218048

EVENTS

- ❖ **Zeitgeist Part II**, a movie show at 2PM, 11 January, Mind Body Library, Stadium Gate, Tripureswor. 984189600
- ❖ **The Obama Ball**, unofficial Kathmandu inaugural celebration, 20 January, Shankar Hotel Ball room, Rs 800
- ❖ **Walk, eat and do good**, a scholarship fundraiser walk from Banepa, Rs 1500, 7 February. 9841183921

MUSIC

- ❖ **Tuesday Melody** at Jazzabell Café, Happy hour 6-8PM. 2114075
- ❖ **74 Twister** playing live every Tuesday at Moksh, Pulchok. 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
- ❖ **Live Sensation**, live performance by Yankey, every Saturday, 9PM, Hyatt Regency. 4491234.
- ❖ **Dance and Cocktails** at Cube Bar, Kamaladi. 4438017
- ❖ **Fusion and Looza** Band every Friday night, Bhumi Resto Lounge, Lazimpat. 4412193
- ❖ **HyJazz** at the HyJazz Club every Friday from 8.30 PM onwards. Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Rudra night** fusion and classical Nepali music by Shyam Nepali and friends, every Friday, 7PM at Le Meridien, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **Sufi music** by Hemanta Rana, every Friday at 7.30 PM at Dhaba Restaurant and Bar, Thapathali.
- ❖ **Fusion and Classical Music** by Anil Shahi every Wednesday, rock with Rashmi Singh every Friday, Sufi & Raga with Hemant Rana every Saturday, 8PM onwards, Absolute Bar. 5521408



DINING

- ❖ **Nhuchhe goes Thai** at Nhuchhe's Thai Kitchen. Baluwatar. 4429903
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Continental and cafe item** with Live band every Friday at Vintage Cafe and Pub, Woodland Complex, Darbar Marg.
- ❖ **Unlimited wine offer** for Rs 990 at La Maison wine and cigar lounge. 9841333628
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Strawberry Etagere** at The Lounge from 4.30-6.30 PM. Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **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 Barbecue** with live acoustic music by Sound Chemistry, every Saturday, 12-3PM at Le Meridien-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
- ❖ **Illy Expression Coffee** at Hotel Shangri-la, Lazimpat and Mandap Hotel, Thamel
- ❖ **Socially Responsible coffee** at Himalayan Java, Thamel

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**Chandni Chowk to China**, is a Bollywood Kung fu comedy that takes Sidhu (Akshay Kumar), a vegetable cutter on a journey from the by-lanes of Chandni Chowk in Delhi, to Shanghai, the Great Wall and rural China. Sidhu longs to escape his dreary existence and looks for shortcuts- with astrologers, tarot readers and fake fakirs, despite his father figure Dada's (Mithun Chakraborty) best efforts. His luck finally starts to change when two strangers from China claim him as a reincarnation of a war hero in the past and take him to China. Along the way, he meets Sakhi (Deepika Padukone), who has embarked on her own journey to pay homage to the land of her birth and her dead father and twin.

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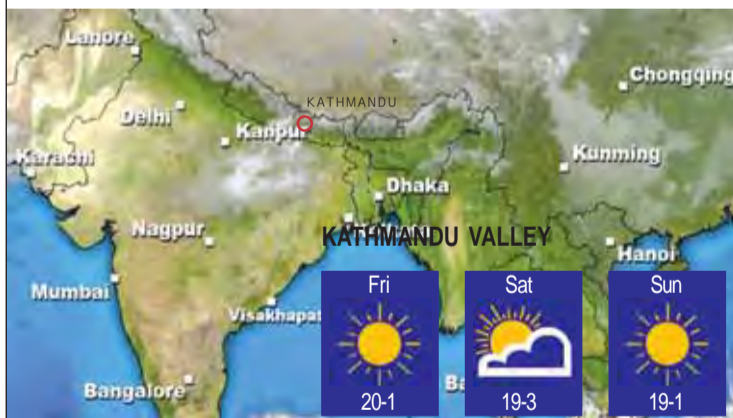
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WEEKEND WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The power cuts have affected even the Mausam Beed's ability to make forecasts because satellite images can't be downloaded. The absence of westerlies means the dry spell will continue, which means the rivers will remain dry and cripple power generation. At this rate, brace yourselves for daily 16 hour power cuts. This satellite radar image taken on Thursday morning shows a high pressure system over the southwestern Tibetan Plateau that is blowing in cold, dry air from the northwest. This has brought Kathmandu Valley temperatures plummeting to 1.2 degree celsius, the lowest of the season. Expect the cold snap to continue with thick smog in Kathmandu in the mornings that will delay all flights by up to three hours.



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'MANDU MANDALA by PRERANA PAKHRIN





KIRAN PANDAY

**LOOK WHO'S IN TOWN:** Mulayam Singh Yadav, President of the Bharatiya Samajbadi Party, visits Patan Darbar Square after his entourage was diverted by the protests at Pashupati on Sunday.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**CELEBRITY FOR A CAUSE:** Bollywood actress and SAARC goodwill ambassador for HIV/AIDS Shabana Azmi, speaks at a press conference organised to launch the SAARC regional strategy on HIV/AIDS at Hotel Yak & Yeti on Monday.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

**OUT OF CHAINS:** Members of the Tharu community from Dang and Deukhuri protest at Bhadrakali on Tuesday against the Kamlari tradition of sending girls away as bonded labourers.

**CONFUSED??#!**

LET'S HAVE CHINESE TODAY!  
WHEREVER WE GO I NEED WI-FI HA!  
NAH, LET'S HAVE SOMETHING LIGHT SANDWICHES OR ROLLS.  
I PREFER ITALIAN PIZZA WILL BE COOL!  
MAYBE SOME JUICY TIBETAN MOMOS?  
NEWARI! KHAUN NA YAAR!  
IT'S HOT SO I NEED A/C  
DON'T WANNA MISS DA GAME. NEED A BIG TV.  
NO LET'S SIT OUTDOOR

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# Taking on the Almighty

After placing their political appointees in the national airline, handing supporters ambassadorships, vice-chancellorships, padding the bureaucracy, and trying to get the army chief sacked, the Maoists seem to have bitten off more than they can chew by taking on God.

Being atheists, the comrades probably didn't realise they were meddling with the Lord of Animals. The Baddies have now collectively earned so much **bad karma** that they risk being reborn as tapeworms in their next life. By sacking Indian priests we also exposed ourselves for tit-for-tat expulsions of Sister Nirmala and Nepali high priests of Rameswaram and Kasi Vishwanath. Operation Mul Bhatta seems to have been purposely timed to embarrass the prime minister during a week when everyone knew Mulayam would be in town at the invitation of the president to pay homage to Pashupati. And Govinda and Shabana would also be around. Otherwise, why sack the priest now?



Five months after Comrade Pukada stated that the YCL had changed and would henceforth be engaged in helping the people with development works, the ex-gorillas this week hacked off both legs of a UML supporter. Looks like the **leopard** has changed its spots into stripes, and has now become a **tiger**.



And we thought Terrifying said last week he was not going to any more inaugurations, ribbon cuttings and lamp lightings. But there he was on Thursday **jumping off a cliff** on a paraglider. All domestic flights were diverted because a VVIP was freefalling somewhere over Kot Danda. But we should give the man a break, as it were, because he has been through one too many political cliff hangers lately.



At the rate PKD and GPK hit it off every time they meet, the Ass' theory is that the real danger of the Maoist-led govt being toppled comes not from the opposition kangresis or the UML comrades pulling the plug on them but from their own restless commanders. At a gathering in Naya Bajar this week to plan for the **PLA Day** parade in KTM on 13 Feb, division commanders are said to have used undiplomatic language to shake Awesome down.

The **warlike warlords** weren't really so worried about the party's ideological purity, but about their own salaries and perks. Also, we now have a clue as to why Kali Bahadur Kham was never arrested for terminating Ramhari Shrestha because the commander of the PLA 3rd Div was the only one who spoke up in support of the Supreme Commander at that meeting.



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