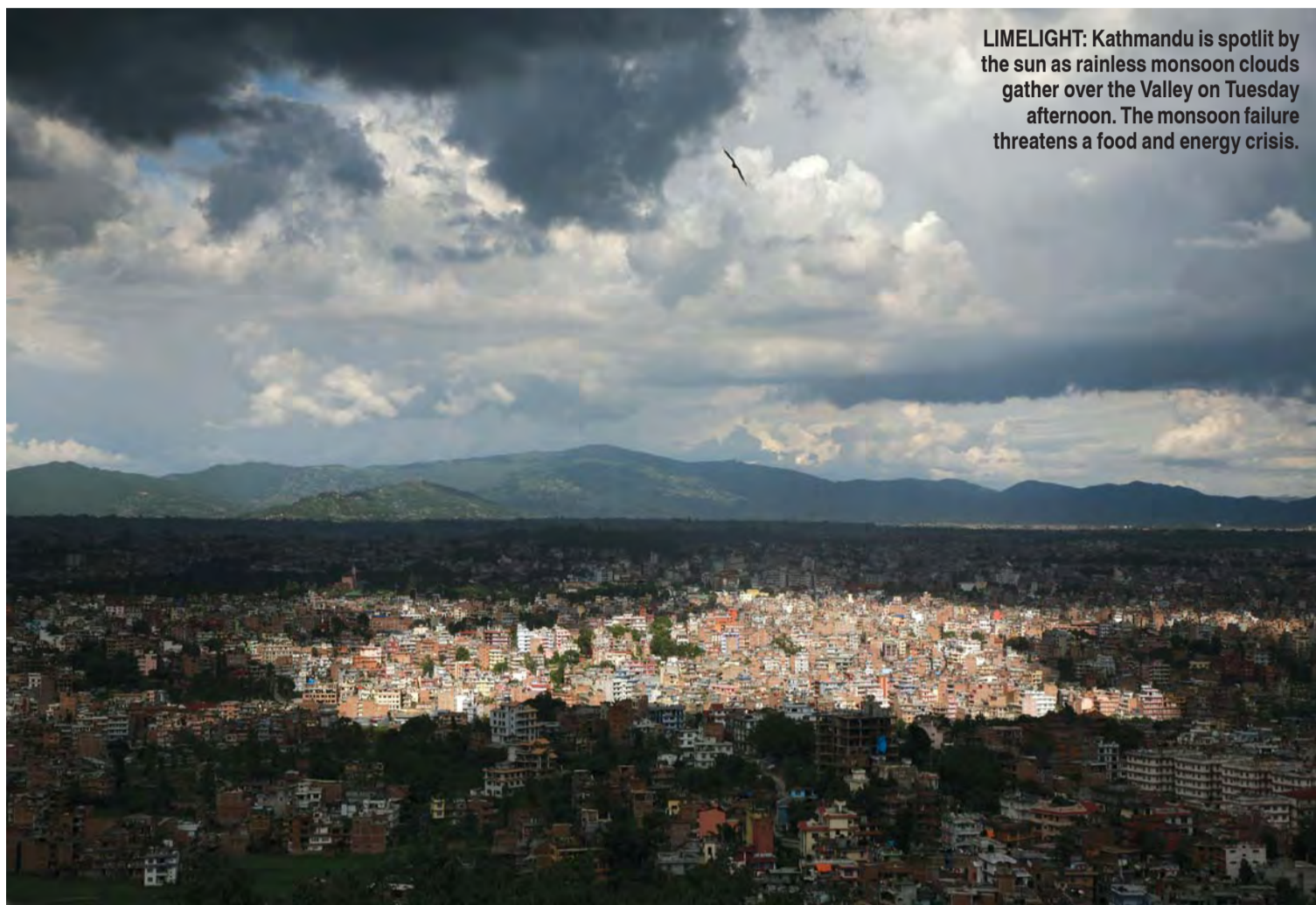


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LIMELIGHT: Kathmandu is spotlighted by the sun as rainless monsoon clouds gather over the Valley on Tuesday afternoon. The monsoon failure threatens a food and energy crisis.

MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

Power struggle

So you thought last winter's load shedding was bad?

DEWAN RAI

It's simple: last winter, there were 18 hours of power cuts a day. By this winter, demand will have risen by 11 per cent, but generation capacity hasn't been able to keep up.

The political uncertainty in Kathmandu has stalled new projects, and the lawlessness in the countryside has forced the abandonment or slowdown in schemes already underway. In addition, the failure of the monsoon means the Kulekhani reservoir is not getting charged.

Forget the dream of exporting our power to India and balancing

our trade deficit, what are we going to do for domestic energy? Experts say winter power cuts are here to stay for at least another six years when, and if, the next slew of power schemes come online.

The generation shortfall this winter will be 40 per cent below demand. Nepal's total installed capacity is 687MW when all plants are running at full force, which happens only in the monsoon because there is only one dam. Precipitation this monsoon has been 30 per cent of normal, which is the other reason why for the first time there are power cuts even during the monsoon.

The only good news is that since last year, 80MW has been added to the grid: 70 from Middle Marsyangdi and 10 from small producers. Also last year, Kulekhani, Kali Gandaki and Bhote Kosi were out of action at various times because of maintenance or breakdowns and the transmission lines importing power from India were washed away by the Kosi. So, if it is any consolation: this winter the power cuts won't be worse than last winter.

But it will be bad enough and it is every household for itself. Everyone needs to start planning now to find the optimum

alternate power source for lights, computers, tvs and water pumps at home. Inverters will be useless because there won't be enough power to keep the batteries charged. Diesel generators are expensive, polluting and make noise. Solar cells can store limited power, but are workable.

At the national level, the government is going for expensive multi-fuel plants. A cheaper option may be to negotiate power purchases from India and fast-track the construction of additional transmission lines.

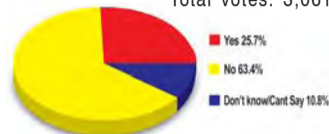
EDITORIAL p2
The great game

Full story p4

Times nepalnews.com
 Weekly Internet Poll # 461

Q. Will the Maoists now join the government?

Total votes: 3,061



Weekly Internet Poll # 462. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com
 Q. Should the government have given a holiday on the day of the solar eclipse?

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THE GREAT GAME

International geopolitics seem to always repeat themselves as a farce. Slaughters are justified in the name of empires, proxy wars raged during the Cold War and the competition for natural resources made perfectly sane democracies do insane things.

In the subcontinent, geopolitics seem to mimic geology. The Indian landmass split off from Gondwanaland and collided head-on with the Eurasian plate some 60 million years ago. Nepal is located in the debris field of that tectonic upheaval. Geopolitically, also, Nepal lies in the colliding spheres of influence of two of the world's emerging powers: China and India.

Prithvi Narayan Shah described Nepal as a yam between two boulders, Pushpa Kamal Dahal modified that during the war and described us as more like a dynamite stick between two stones. Either way, it's inevitable that we'll get squeezed as these titanic nations jostle for leadership as economic and political powerhouses of the future. Nepal's foreign policy strategy should be to minimise the danger of getting pulverised, to take economic advantage of our location, and not to play these two giants against each other.

Our message to the mandarins in Beijing and Delhi should be: look here, we don't have oil, we are not all that strategic and we are ungovernable. Just leave us alone, Nepal is not worth fighting over.

The sub-text in the resignation of the Maoist-led government in May was India's paranoia about Chinese infiltration into the Nepal Army through a Maoist defence minister. And China was paranoid about a democratic government being unable or unwilling to control pro-Tibet activities in Nepal.

We don't want to get into this, we have enough problems of our own. If the Americans and Europeans want to fight the Chinese over Tibet, they should do it in Beijing, not in Kathmandu.

And that brings us to our own fecklessness. At no point in our history has the Nepali nation state been as weak as it is now. This is why there is so much interference in our internal affairs. This is nothing new, of course, Lainchour was the centre of Nepali politics since British India days.

But forget about India interfering in Nepal, for the last 200 years we have gone south to ask them to interfere with us. So, the problem is not that India is playing one political faction in Kathmandu off against the other, it is that we are all so busy stabbing each other in the back.

The sooner the Maoists assuage the Indians by renouncing violence, disbanding the YCL and behaving like a "normal" political party, the better it will be for all of us. The longer this political uncertainty lasts, the more intensely outsiders will meddle in our affairs.



Angry aftermath

'Encounter' killings escalate in the Tarai

On Sunday night, around 10.30 pm, Chandrashekhar, a leader of the Madhes Rashtriya Janatantrik Party (MRJP) Revolutionary, called me up. An old acquaintance who had shifted from social activism to the armed movement, he was committed to the cause of Madhesi autonomy.



PLAIN SPEAKING
Prashant Jha

He was panic-stricken and said, "Our chairman, Ram Narayan alias Manager Mahato, was arrested by Jaynagar police in Bihar this afternoon. They have just handed him over to a Siraha police team, which came to pick him up. We want to spread the news because they may kill him."

He had already informed local FM stations and Kathmandu-based civil society activists. I tried to reassure him, saying that the police would not be reckless now that the news were out. The next morning, Chandrashekhar called again. His voice was calm, "They did it. The Pahadi state killed him and called it an encounter." I was shaken.

News headlines on websites that day took the police version, which claimed that Mahato was killed after he fired on a police patrol at night. There was no

reference or investigation about his possible handover by the Bihar police, or the fact that he may already have been in police custody.

Mahato was not just another criminal operating in Tarai. A political activist, he was with the Maoists and then belonged to the original group of defectors who walked out with Jai Krishna Goit. He was arrested in Munger district of Jharkhand while trying to collect arms for JTMM.

After his release, he got back and tried to unite Jwala Singh and Goit. After those efforts failed, he brought almost ten groups under a single umbrella to form the MRJP. When other criminal groups took advantage of the government offer of talks (for the lure of money and in order to win legitimacy) he stayed out, steadfast in his belief that the state was not willing to offer real concessions. He was 35 and remained unmarried.

The day after Mahato's killing, the Siraha police shot dead another armed activist. Parshuram Yadav was the district in charge of the Madhesi Mukti Tigers, and a part of the faction that had already held one round of talks with the government.

On Tuesday, Avinash of the Rajan Mukti group died in mysterious circumstances. On Wednesday morning, Akash Tyagi, another armed group activist, with a dreaded reputation as an extortionist was killed by the Dhanusha police as he was returning from Avinash's funeral. The police offered the same explanation in the case of Mahato, Yadav, and Tyagi: of how they were found with explosives and pistols.

One does not have to be an armed group sympathiser to question the government approach, as reflected in these series of incidents. In fact, it can be argued that those killed had lived by the gun, had attacked the Nepali state's legitimacy, and often took recourse to criminal activities: all solid grounds for a

government reaction. But does this give the right to the state to kill at will, and then lie about it? What is the new government's policy vis-a-vis armed groups in the Tarai?

Are these incidents part of a well thought strategy designed in Kathmandu? Do they signal an escalation in the security offensive? Has the government imposed a de facto emergency in the Tarai where rules do not matter and all actions are fair in the name of restoring law and order? Or is it the actions of lower level policemen operating in the districts?

Some of these killings have been greeted with relief in Tarai towns, especially among businessmen suffering from extortion. But the government may have to be ready to suffer the consequences of the simultaneous resentment that is building up among Madhesi political activists who see the "encounters" as an instance of Pahadi suppression? Kathmandu seems to have already forgotten that when you do not follow due process and violate human rights, innocents suffer and alienation builds up. There is no institutional memory of what happened after Kilo Sierra and Romeo.

The Tarai needs better public security. There has to be legal action against those who have murdered and looted in the name of Madhesi rights. The state has to become stronger. And better co-ordination with the Bihar police is essential.

But all this must happen within the laid out procedures and laws. The law and order situation is a symptom of a broader political problem, which needs constant engagement. If policymakers think that the 'Madhesi problem' can be solved only by the stick approach, that will only invite trouble.

Kathmandu will now have to deal with the anger of Mahato's comrades, the rage of Yadav's four-year-old son who cremated his body and the bitterness of Tyagi's friends and family. ●

LETTERS

INDIA-GAZING

Prashant Jha has done it again. Enjoyed his thoroughly perceptive analysis from set of the Indian Empire ('India confused by Nepal's confusion', #460). It is obvious that the babus in Delhi have no idea what is going on in Nepal, and as much as they'd like to influence events here Nepalis have shown that by out-doing everyone in selfishness and greed they are beyond manipulation. Those who talk about foreign interference don't know what they are talking about. Why would anyone even try?

Jayanarayan Sharma, email

● It may be true that India is frustrated about the political instability in Nepal. But India also needs to do its bit and not blame Nepal all the time. The most

effective measure it can take to restore people-to-people trust is to tame its SSB. That force has done more to harm Nepal-India relations than any other entity. The arrogance of the state authorities in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar has also bred animosity.

Chandra Sen, Birganj

ROLLBACK VIOLENCE

Full support for Kul Chandra Gautam's efforts to set up a cross-cutting activism to rollback violence ('Rollback violence', #460). It is really getting too much to bear. It may sound utopian, but we really need to foster a new culture of

settling our differences in a non-violent manner. For that the pre-requisite is political stability which in turn can only come with our leaders burying the hatchet. It may be asking too much, but maybe they can do that at least until the new constitution is written?

Nima Ghale, Hong Kong/Kathmandu

ANARCHIST

As a visitor in Nepal it gives me great pleasure to read the well-written articles and analyses in *Nepali Times*. But as a well-educated anarchist it's a bit annoying to see you succumb to

the populist use of the word 'anarchism'. Anarchism does *not* mean chaos. It is a thoroughly developed political ideology as described by prominent figures such as Noam Chomsky and Pjotr Kropotkin.

Bo Brinch Hansen, email

K9'S

I liked Subeksha Poudel's nice, heart-warming piece on how we should start calling street dogs "community dogs", and the success of the sterilisation program. ('K-9-Friendly', #460). If the quality of life of humans is so low in this city, then I guess the dog's life will also be not that great. But we have to do whatever we can to help our canine friends. After all they are gods!

Usha Thapa, Budanilkantha





KIRAN PANDAY

No dignity in death

Every day, the bodies of three Nepali migrant workers arrive at Kathmandu airport

In the sweltering mid-morning heat, half-naked priests were busy preparing funeral pyres on all five platforms at Pashupati's Aryaghat on Saturday.

Earlier, the bodies of nine out of 12 Nepalis who were killed in a boat accident off the coast of Doha



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

had arrived in the same flight that brought back Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal from the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Egypt.

There was a slight delay in transporting the corpses from the airport as individual death certificates had to be shown to hire the hearse vans. Rules are rules: and no exceptions can be made for those who have no strings to pull in the capital's bureaucratic maze.

The red-coloured coffins began to arrive at noon. There were few mourners as most of the dead were poor peasants from outside the Valley. No politician considered it worthwhile to go and console the kin. There were many cameramen, but no reporter of repute to cover what has perhaps become a routine affair.

On average the bodies of three Nepalis arrive back home everyday at Kathmandu airport. Most victims are migrant workers in the 20-40 age group. Few of their families have the heart or the wherewithal to carry the bodies back to their villages for last rites.

As the Doha victims were being cremated, another coffin arrived from Malaysia with only distant relatives present for the funeral.

Since the Doha victims were retrieved from prolonged submergence in waters 30m deep, their remains were unrecognisable. There was a strong smell as the coffins were opened to put the decomposing bodies on the funeral pyre. The Hanumani locket worn for divine protection had failed to save the life of a young man, but it helped in his identification. The gold image was consigned to the flames with the man who was wearing it.

At least 21 of the 30 victims on the ferry sinking in Doha were from landlocked areas who had never seen the sea before going to work on a ship to earn a living. In addition to 12 Nepalis, there were workers from Rajasthan and Bihar. A mourner couldn't control his tears when a female relative of a victim asked innocently, "Is the sea deeper than the Kosi during floods?"

The remittance economy has shaken some social norms. Contrary to traditional belief that Hindu women should not attend cremations, the wife, mother and other female relatives of Rajiv Kumar Datta had travelled from Mahottari to witness his last rites.

A Greek historian once observed, "In peace, sons bury their fathers. In war, fathers bury their sons." In the grey zone we live in between suspended war and expectant peace, such duties

fall upon the frail and unfortunate shoulders of grandfathers, uncles and distant relatives.

Some mourners indulge in small talk as pyres burn slowly in the sweltering humidity of a rainless July afternoon. The urgency of a crematorium is debated. The uses of firewood retrieved by children are speculated about. The fate of the deceased is discussed. Once back home, everyone will forget that families devastated by the tragedy will carry the scar of the day forever.

The certainty of death is an inescapable fact of life. But the trauma of funerals can perhaps be eased for the families that come to Pashupati. The transportation of bodies can be facilitated to see that coffins that arrive from abroad are delivered to their native places. Many need help with the complicated paperwork to get the body out of the airport to the ghat. These things are too petty to attract the attention of Big Government and corporate NGOs, but they are vital for those who are struggling to overcome their grief.

Nepali Workers Abroad (NWA) are the heroes and builders of Nepal, they deserve at least some dignity in death. Prime Minister Nepal err grievously by not accompanying the coffins that travelled home with him on the same plane. He can make amends by ensuring that the last rites of NWA victims should be at state expense in future. The state owes it to them. ●

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Prepare now for a dark winter

from p1

The question is what are we going to do as individual families and as a nation to prepare for power cuts this winter and the next six years?

Sher Singh Bhat of NEA's Load Dispatching Centre gives a cautious reply when asked how bad it will be. "It would be premature to predict the hours of load-shedding in winter," he says.

But Gyanendra Lal Pradhan of Butwal Power Company can't resist venting about his frustration at the government's lack of action despite last winter's emergency. He says: "At this rate of power generation, the power shortage will continue for another 60 years."

Even if the constructions of major power projects like Upper Tama Kosi and Upper Seti start this year (and that seems highly unlikely) it will be another six years before generation meets demand growth. The next two projects Chameliya (31 MW) and Kulekhani 3 (14 MW) will only be completed in 2013.

Last July, the Maoist-led government announced in its policy and program to develop 10,000 MW in the next 10 years to meet domestic demand and to export to India. Prime Minister Dahal went to Delhi and said Nepal was committed to that goal. But it was during his tenure that even the three projects on the Arun, Budi Gandaki and Upper Karnali where Indian companies were involved ground to a halt because of local unrest.

Private producers like Khimti and Bhote Kosi have surplus power that they can sell to NEA, but the deals are mired in legal complications. Instead, experts say, NEA is draining the Kulekhani to generate power in the monsoon when the water should be stored for peak winter hours.

This year, the UML-led government was even more ambitious and announced that it would generate 25,000 MW in 20 years. The government has put Upper Seti dam (130MW) and Upper Tamakosi (456MW) in the priority list this year.

The Asian Development Bank has pledged Rs 5.04 billion for the hydropower sector. The money will be mostly spent for developing transmission lines and substations and some amount will be spent for the maintenance of hydro projects and the CFL program. The ADB has also granted the government assistance of Rs 385 million for Upper Seti project.

Experts say that winter power cuts could be reduced to 16 hours per week if the NEA immediately cracks down on leakage and steps up its CFL campaign. The government admits that last year, a quarter of the electricity generated was stolen. The real figure is probably closer to 40 percent. Other supply side interventions like time of day and



KUNDA DIXIT

DARK FUTURE

Winter 2008	Winter 2009	Winter 2010	Winter 2011
Demand: 878MW	Demand: 966	Demand: 1062	Demand: 1210
Supply: 667 MW	Supply: 747	Supply: 760	Supply: 810

seasonal tariff would also help to reduce peak power demand.

The only other option, and for the moment most feasible, is to import power from India this winter. But there is a transmission bottleneck, with only 132 kVA crossborder transmission lines in eastern and western Nepal. The planned 220 kVA Muzaffarpur-Dhalkebar and Gorakhpur-Butwal lines are stalled with Nepal and India blaming each other for the delay. And even within Nepal, powerlines are not evenly distributed.

And then there is the longer term strategy to export power to India to narrow Nepal's trade deficit and to switch to renewable energy to reduce our dependence on imported petroleum. But given the failure of successive

LYING LOW: The flow on the Kali Gandaki on the border between Baglung and Parbat in this picture taken in early July is below normal because of the failed monsoon.

governments to meet even domestic demand, that seems like a distant dream now. For now, though, the priority should be to build the transmission lines, agree on a tariff and set up the infrastructure to import up to 250MW of power from India to tide over the deficit years.

Even so, private producers like Pradhan say domestic power production will never take off if Nepal keeps depending on India to bail it out. "There should be policies in place to encourage investment in hydropower," he says.

Dedicated export projects like West Seti (750MW), Pancheswor (6,400MW), Kosi (3,500MW) and Arun III (700MW) haven't even started construction. In a visit to Nepal last month, Indian Water Resource Minister Pawan Kumar Bansal said the Kosi High Dam would be built, but Nepali officials seem to be unaware of it. ●

Confidence vote

Two families in Butwal who turned tragedy into hope

On a recent visit, I had a first-hand glimpse of the New Nepal. This time, as soon as we descended from the airport down to Ring Road, it was apparent that the capital had no functioning municipality.

Signs of decay and deterioration were everywhere. Garbage was piled high on street



COMMENT
Alok K Bohara

corners, the rivers were choked with sewage and plastic bags, traffic was unruly, streets were filled with poverty and masked urbanites, and the air pollution was unbearable.

But, like it is for all Nepalis, it was good to be home. And this was especially true outside the capital, where the traditional Nepali traits of generosity, friendliness, fortitude and a can-do

attitude were still in abundance.

Every family I met had at least one member in the US or in Australia, and others were aspiring to follow them. The media was rife with political speculation, and it was quite clear that the only game in town was India and the Maoists. I had not realised that the parties had lost so much of their political space after 2006.

It was clear the public authorities had very little interest, time, or incentive to solve the basic needs of the people. It was all about power and politics rather than development and policies. Within two weeks of our arrival, the capital was shut down seven times for no apparent reason. The situation outside the Valley was not any better.

I kept looking for some good news amidst all kinds of stories of kidnappings, strikes, robberies, ethnic tension, political horse-trading, party break-ups, and a frightening number of motorcycle

accidents. Finally, the good news came from an unlikely source: a community in Butwal.

There was a father of three children who had lost his wife to leukemia, and then there was a young woman with two children whose husband had died in an accident in India. The families got together and arranged a marriage between the two. Instead of spending Rs 100,000 on the wedding ceremony, they donated the money to a charity.

Now, compare that to a recently announced government policy of paying a Nepali husband Rs 50,000 to marry a widow. It's like rewarding a man for not beating his wife. The flawed reasoning behind this raises serious doubts about our government's ability to make sound decisions. The community in Butwal seems more sensible than the political leadership in Kathmandu.

This is what happens when a

government becomes hopelessly dysfunctional, self-absorbed, outdated, unaccountable, unpredictably fragile, and doesn't have to face the consequences of its actions.

The rich and the middle class find their ways to cope by creating their own cocoons through private support systems. With a middle class gradually seceding from the society, millions of Nepal's underprivileged are left at the mercy of a government with no constructive civil oversight. So, how about instituting a mechanism to stabilise the government first by taking away the incentive to bring down the next governments.

This is called the 'Constructive Vote of Confidence Mechanism' and under it, the opposition party is required to pre-announce the slate of the incoming government complete with the names of the

PM, and the ministers. Such a system exists in the German constitution, and could be applicable here in our own new constitution. India, plagued by similar horse-trading, is seriously considering this mechanism to control political promiscuity. Let's start with a stable government and put a watch on them.

That is just one idea to restore political stability in Kathmandu and to devolve political attention away from the lucrative Kathmandu power corridors. The rest of the country seems to be doing pretty well despite a non-functioning government. Our politicians have to learn from people like the two families in Butwal who turned adversity and tragedy into hope. Who says there is no hope for Nepal? ●

Alok K Bohara is professor of economics at the University of New Mexico.
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Chitwan resorts closure "fishy"

Hotel concessionaires who operate resorts inside Chitwan National Park have said they find the timing of the government's closure of their establishments "fishy".

"We were in negotiation with the government over the renewal of the 15-year lease which was about to expire when the order came," said Prakash Shrestha, owner of Machan Resort.

There are eight resorts employing some 5,000 people which have remained closed now for a week. Chitwan safaris are popular among tourists and are part of Nepal's "golden triangle" of tourism which also includes Pokhara and Kathmandu.

"We find it very fishy that this decision was taken on hotels that have been in operation for 40 years now and are the backbone of Nepal's tourism industry," said Basanta Mishra of Temple Tiger.

The government and wildlife activists say the hotels hurt the environment and are detrimental to conservation. Resort owners say their hotels have actually helped raise awareness about conservation and helped fund the national park through royalties.

"It is clear that the smugglers and poachers active in the park find our presence a threat to them and want us closed," said Mishra.

Finance Minister Surendra Pandey said he and the forest minister had been given the responsibility by the prime minister to sort out the problem quickly.

Decorated

Ace Development Bank has been given the 'Best Presented Accounts Award 2008' last week. The award was based on maintaining standards in presenting financial indices, disclosure and report presentation.



Bar-hopping



Kathmandu is now home to an authentic Irish Pub, which opened last week at Ananda Bhawan in Lazimpat. Guinness and Kilkeny beer as well as Irish food will be served while traditional Irish music is played in a traditional setting.

Actions speak louder

Words alone will not attract foreign investors

The new budget has talked about forming an investment board led by the prime minister. The board's aim is to attract domestic and foreign institutional investments for large infrastructure projects. This is a fine goal.



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

But, given Nepal's industrial realities, the hard goal of attracting investments will not work if the private sector-promoting bodies do not think ahead to create, nurture and promote certain jobs that sound 'soft' but are vitally important to attract investments.

What are these investment-attracting jobs that are going to be important in New Nepal?

Community mediators: Almost all geographic, ethnic and business-related communities have been politicised in today's politically super-conscious Nepal. Excess politicisation creates rifts, factions and destructive rivalries among various groups, all of which waste time and money. For instance, when those who want to build hydropower dams visit the sites, they quickly realize that they have to assuage, in an informal manner, all the legitimate and illegitimate grievances of all the disparate communities who live and work in the surrounding areas.

Some communities want money, and then more money and more money. Some want laptops for their children. Some want shares, and quick dividends. Some want roads and schools built immediately. And all this before the potential investors have put in a single paisa. Besides, there's no guarantee that the locals, egged on by party-political bodies, will not demand more once the projects get underway.

One solution to solving this recurring problem is to start investing in the training of community mediators who can, as honest brokers, articulate their communities' concerns to the investors and convey investors' desires to the communities while explaining the scenarios with no investment.

Labour negotiators: Investors are not likely to start factories that employ thousands of workers. That's because trade union politics, ranging from quietly insistent to stridently militant, is a fact of life in today's Nepal. When labour union problems start, lawyers can be of some help.

bad situation worse by reacting too emotionally.

Lobbying firms: Lobbying conjures up images of shady dealings and putting spin. In Nepal's case, however, since lobbying is a non-existent industry in a formal sense, it can be started by organisations that specialize on educating the politicians and decision-makers about the importance of trade, markets, competition, and the umpiring role that only the government can play.

If businessmen push for certain policies, their self-interests will be evident, and there's no guarantee that the government will actually listen to



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

But in almost all cases, the lawyers' remedy amounts to throwing bigger and bigger sums of owners' money to the agitating labourers, with the hope that the quiet will come about. Still, even after spending a small fortune, investors cannot rest assured that the labour problems are really over.

This problem calls for the development of labour negotiators who spend time and resources to build and sustain rapport with all national union leaders, union federations and politicians. Most MBA managers, domestic or foreign, are clueless about what to do when continually confronted with table-thumping union netas with loud, booming voices. Being defensive or aggressive, the managers often end up making a

them. But if there are lobbying firms that can couch the wants in broad pro-market terms as opposed to pushing narrow pro-business views, their opinions are likely to sway the politicians. Besides, lobbying firms become good at pressing the buttons of the press, the public and the government at the same time to push for what they want. That's a skill which streams of trade delegations to the PM's office have never developed.

Saying Nepal wants to make it easy to attract investments is easy. In fact, all governments have said that since the 1980s. Unless we can signal to investors that we have collective capabilities to work well with communities, labour and the government, investors will remain polite and distant. ●

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Rewarding the perpetrators

J B Pun in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 16-30 July

हिमाल
खबरपत्रिका

It was still dark when the bus, carrying passengers to Kathmandu to celebrate Eid, started burning. Those who were awake were saved, but five, including eight-year-old Kajol Khatun died in the fire. When asked about this incident to the then Maoist district committee member and present district secretary Ghanashyam Dahal, he calls it



a 'small weakness' in their part to have not taken action against the perpetrators. After much pressure an investigation committee was formed to look into the case. One of the four suspects was Keshab Rimal, who was then Maoists' east Chitwan in-charge. Three months later Rimal was killed in a battle. He was blamed for masterminding the bus-burning and others were let go.



The UN's OHCHR report has revealed that more than 200 people were detained and disappeared by the state in Bardiya during the war years. Of this 153 were disappeared by the army and 14 by the Maoists who were all innocent. Of those who were killed or disappeared, majorities were Tharus and it is clear that the state specifically targeted them. Army officers who were with Ranapur Company, which became notorious for its use of torture to interrogate detainees during the war years were let go. Major Ajit Thapa, who was the Company in-charge then was later promoted to lieutenant colonel and was even given an environment award. Similarly no action was taken against Captain Ramesh Swar, who has now left Nepal Army and is working with the US Army in Afghanistan.

In July 2006 Sapana Gurung of Jhapa Belbari was raped and killed. Fifteen men, working under Nepal Army Captain Pralad Thapa Magar were accused. When locals

surrounded the post the following day in protest, six more were shot dead. No action was ever taken against the accused. Instead, Commander Pawan Pandey sent a false report to the headquarters saying that the six were killed in a Maoist ambush. Ironically, when a committee to investigation and court-marshal the accused was formed, Pandey was made the head of the fact-finding committee.

On 8 August 2006, Maoist leader Devendra Paudel told the victims of the Madi bomb blast that the main culprits Sujan and Sahas have fled, while the other two, Kisan and Harka are in Maoist captivity. At the time of the incident, Sahas was Maoist district member in Chitwan and Sujan commander of the special task force in Chitwan. Sources claim that Sahas and Sujan were kept hidden by the party. Kisan still serves as the coordinator of Chitwan's All Nepal Trade Union Federation and Harka remains the chief of a Maoist affiliated farmers' union.

Maina Sunar's killer Amit Pun came back with a degree in Human Rights from the UK last year. He was promoted from captain to major instead of being put under close investigation. Captain Sunil also received a promotion and currently lives in Sydney, Australia. On 19 February 2004, 15 men dressed as Nepal Army took Maina Sunar captive, torturing her to death. After



much international and national pressure the perpetrators admitted to the crime. On 21 April 2004, three of them were taken for a court martial. They were issued a six-month prison sentence which they never served.

Reporter Birendra Sah was abducted and killed in October 2007. His perpetrator Kundan Phoujadar of Tharuwan Mukti Morcha, then district chief was 'awarded' for murdering Sah and was made the chair of Brijeshwor High School management committee in Bara.



"Increase the salary of civil servants!"
Dinosaur: Cholera epidemic in Jajarkot and Bajura

कान्तिपुर Batsayan in *Kantipur*, 19 July

Cholera epidemic

Nagarik, 21 July

नागरिक

Although the government has said it has sent teams of doctors and drugs to Jajarkot, the locals say they have seen neither. It's been 77 days since the epidemic started but death tolls continue to rise in the far west, reaching 150 in Jajarkot alone and more than 200 in the neighbouring regions. The situation in the rural parts of Dasera VDC is even more critical as all the medicine and health workers from Kathmandu are restricted to health posts and temporary health camps.

Poor villagers have been forced to take the sick to expensive private clinics as the 30 camps set up by the government are inadequate. Mules carry medicines to many villages, but not enough.

Ahewa Khatri of Bishnu Medical says contamination of water and stale food are the two main reasons for the propagation of cholera in Jajarkot. He added that the epidemic could be

controlled if health workers were sent to each village, antibiotics provided to each patient, awareness programs on health and sanitation organised and the entire water bodies treated.

Meanwhile, two and half months have passed since the epidemic started and the government

still hasn't figured out whether it's cholera or diarrhoea. On the request of the government, World Health Organisation first sent a team to distribute food to the blighted area and collect stool and blood samples. After lab tests in Bangkok, WHO identified e.Coli bacteria in the samples from



Jajarkot and coliform in the samples from Rukum. The Epidemiology and Disease Control Division admitted that it doesn't know what the epidemic is although it has studied several samples. All in all, the ministry of health has reported that currently 294 health workers are working in Jajarkot and that eight kg of medicines have been distributed.

I survived

Ramesh GC in *Kantipur*, 21 July

कान्तिपुर

Ramesh GC is one of two survivors of the helicopter crash in southern Afghanistan. Four Nepalis died in the crash.

It had only been four days since we came to Afghanistan for employment. On Sunday morning, an MI-8 carrying six of us Nepalis took off from Kandahar airport to Stimbudek base, where we were due to work at a construction site. We sat at the rear end, our seatbelts fastened. A few minutes after the take off, we felt the wheel hit ground and heard the back door-lever open slightly. Smoke engulfed the cabin and blinded us.

Abishek Adhikari, a fellow Nepali passenger sitting

next to me, suggested that we jump off the chopper. We unfastened our belts and leaped through the back door and ran for our lives. Fortunately, we only suffered minor injuries on our knees and hands.

While a hotel worker in Baghdad, Iraq, I had never experienced anything as horrifying as this. Even more traumatic for me is the fact that my fellow Nepalis didn't survive. I am very fortunate to have survived the fatal accident.

Gloomy verdict

Political leaders, civil society members, professionals and intellectuals of Dang participated in a discussion on the constitution-writing process and state restructuring.

Do you think the constitution-writing process will meet people's expectations?

Shiva Kumar Subedi (University Teachers Association): The events so far have frustrated the people. The political issues have taken central stage and the constitution-writing process is off-track. I doubt the new constitution will be written as expected by the people.



Dilliraj Dhital (lawyer): The political parties have drafted their own constitutions. I don't understand whether people are supposed to endorse the draft by the political parties or write a new constitution. 40 million questionnaires were distributed for public opinion but only 400,000 were collected. Politics is becoming increasingly confrontational. We are not sure if there will be a constitution comparable even to the one of 1990.



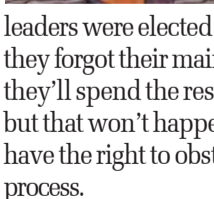
Shreeman Neupane (civil society member): The peace process is at risk. The constitution-writing process will not be completed until the PLA is in the cantonments. No effort was made to resolve the integration issue. The Maoists, NC and UML are all to blame for not taking the responsibility seriously.



Bishnu Mani Dhital (Appellate Court Bar): The parties haven't agreed on the basis on which constitution-writing should begin. By overlooking the democratic norms and values, political parties are lobbying to make the constitution in their favour. Federalism was not the mandate of Jana Andolan. The political parties are still not clear about it.



Nanda Kumar Tharu (Tharuhat Autonomous Province Council): The game of making and felling the government is on. I don't think the constitution will be written to meet the expectations of the people.



Huma DC (Single Women Concern Forum): These leaders were elected to write a new constitution but they forgot their main task. They probably think they'll spend the rest of their lives in parliament, but that won't happen. The political parties don't have the right to obstruct the constitution-writing process.



Sajida Siddiqqi (social worker): Instead of ensuring the rights of various castes and communities, the parties are politicking in the name of people. It seems as though we're stuck in the 16th century. In this situation, how can the rights of marginalised communities be ensured in the new constitution?



Mohanlal Wali (NC): The various committees of the CA are doing their tasks. I don't see any problem in the constitution-writing process. I believe the constitution will be written on time and will incorporate the people's aspirations.

What should CA discussions focus on?



Sarjan Gautam (Maoist): The politicians should have a clear vision of the model of democracy and the basis of federal structure. They need to reach an agreement on the point. The political party should not raise unnecessary issues for the sake of their selfish interests.



Nirmal Nepali (National Dalit Alliance): The discussion should be on the model of federalism. It is frequently argued that creating provinces on the basis of ethnicity would lead to the country's disintegration. It is time we better talk about the kind of representation of different castes and communities within a province. What about inclusiveness? What kind of state structure and election system? Who should be executive head of the state?



Pramod Dhital (Maoist): The political parties never reached a consensus. The political parties seem to have realised this fact now. Because of their varying political ideologies, they have many differences on issues that really boil down to a clash of the classes. But the public has already endorsed a federalist republic. There is no need to discuss it.



Saugadhir Chaudhari (NEFIN): The real big movement will come when the provinces are decided. The ethnic issues cannot be suppressed now. All Nepalis should take the single surname Nepali for true national unity.



Bin Bahadur Wali (associate professor): All political parties have defined democracy in their own way. The democratic constitution cannot be written unless there is a single definition. We have a number of issues to discuss. Although we have already decided to go for a republic, we are not aware of its basic principles. We need to discuss these issues.

"We have no confidence in our leaders"

BP Yadav, CA member MJF, Saptari



How have you spent the last year in the CA?

During the elections, we promised people we'd pay more attention to writing the constitution than to economic development. But that hasn't happened. We expected experienced politicians to guide us, but they haven't done so. We are new people from a new party, but even then, we're no less mature than the most experienced politicians, especially with regard to the constitution. We've also seen traditionalist thinking in the committees. This has cast the constitution-writing process into doubt. It's also been difficult because a few committee members double are also parliament members. And selfish politicians only make things worse.

Will the constitution be written on time?

I can't bear the flag alone. Only with agreement and reconciliation, not another political contest, will the constitution be made on time.

What is holding it up?

The Constitutional Committee, which has been without a leader for months, is the main problem. Without the brain, how will the hands work? Even if we, the subject committees, finish our drafts, it's the Constitutional Committee which will make them into law. There should have been senior leaders and people with legal backgrounds in the separate committees.

Aren't you satisfied with your work so far?

I'm sad that the committees haven't been effective. They haven't been because of our selfish leaders. Prachanda and Girijababu came to the committees only a couple of times.

Why did you meet the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala?

We wanted to understand why India hosted the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan refugees. We were appealing for general religious rights and freedom. We ask that the Nepali government treat Tibetan refugees just as we treat the Bhutani refugees. The Bhutanis get to go to the US, but the Tibetans get shot at. What kind of foreign policy is that?

"Selfish politicians have delayed the process"

Uma Karki Bista, CA member, Maoist. Sankhwesaba

What do you think about the CA's achievements this year?

We've declared Nepal a federal democratic republic. We've established the rules of the assembly, the work schedule and the committees. We have been to the villages to ask what the people want the constitution to be like. The analysis of their comments and the preparation of the drafts have begun. Four committees have finished their drafts, and others are still working to that end. They will finish in a matter of months.

So the constitution will be written on time?

Only if the politicians stop being selfish and work for the country.

We've heard your party has delayed things by constantly raising new issues.

We haven't done that. We asked for a people's assembly to enable the people to realise the changes they want to see in Nepal. We proposed mandatory army-training for 18 year olds to rescue the state's integrity. We also said that the decade-long war, which we fought for the liberation of Nepal should be called the 'people's war' and the fighters the 'people's army'.

So, you're not trying to derail the process because your party is out of power?

No. We're doing just the opposite. But selfishness, the challenges of 'civilian supremacy', and the delay in army integration have all been hurdles. Also, we can't finish the constitution when unelected people rule.



ALL PICS: INDRA SHRESTHA

A flat life

Kathmandu makes an uneasy transition to apartment-living

SUVAYU DEV PANT

A billboard advertising an upmarket apartment complex in Kathmandu shows a well-to-do young woman practicing yoga in a garden. It's an obvious allusion to lifestyle western apartment dwellers enjoy: ambitious recent college grads renting out sleek new units and dabbling in post-modern diets and lifestyles. How realistic is this in a city where the apartment culture is just making its debut in the capital of a country that is one of the poorest in Asia?

Sociologists say that in Kathmandu, apartments more often house middle-aged couples and families rather than young professionals.

Ashish Garg and Sanjay Ladsaria of the pioneering green firm Clean Developers say new apartments are being bought by wealthy families who have moved out of their bungalows. "There are not many young bachelors at all," says Garg.

The reason is largely financial. Apartment complexes are often built downtown where land prices are high. Young professionals can't afford to live in these units, although many purchase them as investments and not to live in them.

Apartments first emerged following World War I in European cities as government-sponsored housing for out-of-town municipality and railway workers. Flat-living brought about a societal shift from community towards individual living.

The private sector, helped by technological advances like the elevator, eventually transformed these dingy dwellings into today's glittering high rises that target a wealthier population. In the subcontinent it has come to be known as the "Gurgaon Effect", after the highrise New Delhi suburb.

Given the frenzy of construction that is currently going on, within four years Kathmandu will have a new skyline of new, tall apartment blocks. And since young bachelors can't afford them, these apartments will serve entire families.

"In Kathmandu, apartments won't bring about a social revolution as they did in Europe, they will preserve old lifestyles in new settings," predicts Prabal Thapa of Prabal Thapa Architects.

New residents have therefore struggled to meet the compromises that apartment-dwelling demands. Having grown accustomed to living in suburban bungalows, many habitually ignore the concerns of their next-door neighbors. Meanwhile, those who have lived with large families in inner city bahals seem to do better with their neighbours, but have a difficult time discarding past habits.

Thapa adds wryly that some families that move into apartments try to conserve so much of their old lifestyles that the only thing they don't bring to their new flats are their chickens and the family cow.

To make matters worse, there aren't many people who can help them cope with this new lifestyle because few in Nepal have experienced life in a modern apartment. Older Nepalis apartments were just a couple flats and rooms, not at all like the chic structures we know today.

Architect Arun Dev Pant of Design Cell says the new imported style has set a high "baseline" that is above what Nepalis are used to. This makes the job of developers doubly hard. Not only do they have to build apartments, they have to educate residents about the social etiquette in these new settings.

Not surprisingly, then, apartment tenants routinely complain about their neighbours. Binod Upadhaya grew so frustrated with his neighbors in his apartment block that he moved back to a house. "The little things were the most annoying," he says, recounting an experience with neighbours who would hang out laundry dripping water onto the balcony below. Garg and Ladsaria remember answering questions from potential residents about the caste of neighbours.

Residents, developers and architects believe the shift from individualism to community-living will take time, but Nepalis will get used to it. Garg says the Joint Apartment Act, which requires that apartment complexes be wholly owned by their residents, will help.

By this act residents are free to manage the apartment complex themselves by forming home owners associations or to surrender that responsibility to the developers.

These associations can achieve wonderful results. Upadhaya says that through them, residents can collectively organise medical and security provisions at very low individual costs. When a community flourishes, residents may also be able to safely leave their children alone or apartments unguarded.

Garg and Ladsaria say the plusses of community-living outweigh its drawbacks and will ease the transition to this new lifestyle. What will help will be the tradition of community-living in close quarters among many of Nepal's ethnic groups. Anthropologist Suresh Dhakal of Tribhuban University calls this kind of close cooperation "problem-based solidarity".

The transition to apartment-living could very well be smoother than expected, but the municipality must also fulfil its responsibility of ensuring security, access, utilities, fire and other emergency services. There is also bound to be a surge in legal disputes, and the government needs to step in to enforce the rights of tenants. ●





Cabin fever

Living so close to one another means everyone must make sacrifices

CHONG ZI LIANG

SINGAPORE- "Honey, the police are outside, and they want to see you." Make that the mosquito police. In the supposed police state of Singapore, it's not the men in blue that we're afraid of. It's the officers from the National Environmental Agency that strike fear in our hearts.

These government agents have the authority to do a spot check on any home (even cops need a search warrant for that) for stagnant water in pails or flowerpots. If mosquito larvae are found, a hefty fine is slapped on the homeowner.

In land - scarce Singapore, high-rise government flats house more than 80 per cent of the population and draconian measures against blood sucking insects are just one of the things apartment dwellers have learnt to live with.

And while some of the rules make sense - dengue fever remains a big problem in Singapore - others are outdated. Racial quotas are placed on every single apartment block to ensure that they reflect the demographics of the country. The rule was put in place in an effort to allow Chinese, Malays and Indians, who together form the majority in Singapore, an opportunity to learn to live together instead of living separately in their own enclaves.

Kathmandu, let alone the whole of Nepal, with its myriad of different ethnic groups, would have a nightmare implementing such a law.

A racial quota sounds great in theory, but in practice Singaporeans, perhaps having grown used to living in such close proximity to total strangers, hardly interact with their neighbours anymore. Instead, the well-meaning rule has drawn criticism as it makes it difficult for minorities to sell their flats.



Ethnic Indians, making up just 10 per cent of the population, would naturally have a harder time finding a buyer from the same race. This has led many to complain that they are forced to sell their flats at a price lower than the market rate in order to find buyers. Despite such criticism, the rule is still in place today.

Other unwritten rules emerge as people learn to accommodate others living in the shared space. Laundry must be wrung before it is hung to dry so water doesn't drip down onto the balconies below. Common corridors are not to be cluttered with personal items.

When these codes of conduct are broken, apartment dwellers have to work out their differences themselves. Just last month, my father knocked on my upstairs neighbour's door to get them to stop the kids from dropping marbles on their floor (our roof) at midnight. My mother has had to venture further. She went three floors up to tell off the family whose laundry was dripping blackish water and soiling our newly cleaned bed sheets.

As the population grows, new apartment blocks are getting taller. The block that I've lived in for the past 20 years is 12 storeys high. About 10 years ago, 30 storey blocks began to rise up. Now, there is a 50-storey housing building being constructed. The sky is truly the limit.

This can only mean one thing—bad news for people with a fear of heights. No point getting a flat on the 45th floor with a view of the sea at sunset when looking out the window induces a fainting spell.

But Kathmanduites should have no such fear even if apartment blocks are built as housing solutions. After all, Nepal's capital lies at 1,400m above sea level. What is another 12 storeys up? ●

Queering the pitch

Until 2007, Nepal didn't really have laws on homosexuality. However, any sexual act considered 'unnatural' by the Nepal's Criminal Code was penalised with up to a year of imprisonment or monetary fine.

But in a landmark decision in December 2007 the Supreme Court ordered the government to scrap any discriminatory laws against the LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay,



INTERESTING TIMES
Mallika Aryal

Bisexual, Transsexual and Intersex) community. Provisions are to be made to recognise them in government documents and third gender status was to be granted in citizenship certificates.

As the news of this decision spread, more closet homosexual and transgender people started coming out all over Nepal. Support groups started in Chitwan, Birganj, Itahari, Nepalganj and Kathmandu. Political parties put the rights of third genders in their election manifestos while campaigning for the CA election last year.

Gay rights activist Sunil Pant represents the community in the constituent assembly.

Almost two years since the decision, only one person has so far been issued a citizenship certificate that recognises third gender status. Individuals from the community say that transmen and transwomen are turned back by the district administration saying they

Celebration over Nepal's same-sex marriage legislation is a little bit premature



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

haven't received word from the authorities to grant citizenship under the third gender status. It may be much safer to come out as a LGBTI individual today than before, but discrimination still persists and many feel they live in a state that cannot protect their community.

A year later, in November 2008, when the apex court directed the government to form laws that guarantee equal rights to homosexuals, including the right to marry.

Since the end of the armed conflict Nepal's transition from war is being closely watched by the international community and the foreign press. Lately, Nepal has been making headlines with absurd stories such

as airport officials wearing pants without pockets, locals in rural Nepal marrying a pair of frogs for rain and electrocuted crows causing power outages. News of a cholera epidemic is ignored, while the government's decision to give money to those who marry a Dalit or a widow grabs headlines.

With all eyes on Nepal the apex court decision last year received widespread international media coverage and made Nepal sound like it is a gay nirvana. The decision was interpreted as if gay men and women could start getting married right away. A bill on same-sex marriage has yet to be drafted, voted on and passed by the cabinet before it becomes a full-

fledged law.

It was only in June, that a committee was formed to study laws on same-sex marriages in countries that have allowed such unions. We seem to have bitten off more than we can chew. Governments have come and gone and yet it is remarkable how every party thinks the same way: if it looks good on paper it must be good. We like signing agreements and drafting bills. Yet, no one in the leadership puts any thought into what the repercussions are, how the international convention will be worked in local laws, or how domestic laws are actually implemented.

Both court decisions came at a time when minorities all over Nepal are asserting their identity. The lobbying skills of the LGBTI community is commendable. We would all like to think that our decision-makers are free-thinkers and the decisions on sexual minorities were made after careful thought, analysis and discussions. We want to believe that we are ahead of other societies around the world where discussions on same-sex marriages are still taboo.

However, so little has changed on the ground. There has been no follow-up, no concrete homework and the LGBTI lobby seems to have fizzled out. Therefore, a skeptic can't help but wonder if the decisions were made to keep the pressure groups quiet and to just give the impression that the government is seriously progressive.

As we progress further in the constitution-writing process, this is the perfect time for the government, lawmakers, CA members and activists to realise what the priorities are. Everyone should be allowed to live freely in a society, which is why the rights of all minorities, sexual or otherwise, are important.

But isn't it also important to educate a society that understands this, and ensure that the people are healthy and have enough to eat so they can enjoy their rights? ●

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Keyword
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JOKE SILLY
JOKE DOC
JOKE BLOND
JOKE OFFICE

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Silly jokes
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Office jokes

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meaning of LIVE

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CALENG DDMMYYYY

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Out of the closet and proud of it

Third gender individuals in eastern Nepal come out despite stigma

SITA MADEMBA in DHARAN



EMBOLDENED: More individuals like Suhani Rajdhami (right) and Khushi Rai have come out since the Supreme Court directed the government to make provisions for the recognition of the 'third gender'.

SITA MADEMBA

The summer that Chaiyun Chaudhari of Itahari turned 16, her parents received a marriage proposal for her from the family of a boy in the neighbourhood. From a very early age, Chaiyun knew she was not attracted to men. When she refused the marriage proposal, her brother asked her to leave her parents house.

"That was more than 10 years ago," she says, "I had no home and people called me names, I have been mistreated ever since." She lived with a partner for a very long time, and now has returned home to take care of her aging father. She is butch, dresses and acts like a man and has been working as a peer counsellor at the Human Welfare Section in Itahari since last year.

Sarita Chaudhari was born as a woman and now goes by the name Samrat who used to work as a labourer and met Nikita a few years back. The two eloped and got married last year. The couple say that they have been pressured by both their families, political parties and friends. "Nikita's parents went to the Maoists who accused me of being a pimp and then took us away for three months to Lachani village," says Samrat. They forcefully urged both to join the party. "When

they saw that we weren't going to leave each other they left us in peace," adds Samrat.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender men and women are still not tolerated in Itahari. However, gay men say that lesbian women have a harder time than they do.

Kristina of Ekabma in Sunsari doesn't want to be called Krishna Magar anymore. Born as the only son among two sisters, Kristina just passed the SLC exams. She says it was difficult for her to explain to her friends and teachers in school that she was third gender. She is now preparing for higher studies and is again worried that her new friends and teachers in college may not accept her sexual identity and prevent her from attending school.

"It took me so long to grow my hair out, I will never chop these locks off or wear a man's uniform to school," says Kristina. Although her parents used to pressure her to act like a man in the beginning, now they have accepted that Kristina wants to remain a girl.

Morang's Bhaikaji Priyar is now 28. He got married to a woman and also has a son. However, Priyar now goes by the name Kanchi and identifies as a

woman. "I also have a husband, who is exactly like me and wants to be with a person like me. I was forced to get married to a woman back then," says Kanchi.

Suhani Rajdhami Belbari, Morang may have been born as a man, but when she realised that she is a woman trapped in a man's body and wanted to be more like a woman, her family supported her. Today she injects hormones and takes pills to change her body. She even stood first in the 'Beauty and Brains' competition held in Biratnagar last year.

It is not easy to come out as a gay, transgender or third gender person in Itahari. Many have been kicked out of homes and rejected by society. They are refused jobs and the only way they can survive is through prostitution. Gagani Chaudhari, 42 of Sunsari, sells his body to survive. His clients are mostly married men who have not come out of the closet.

More homosexual and transgender people started coming out when Human Welfare Section was established in Itahari three years ago. Since a lot of transgender men and women are involved in prostitution, the group is very vulnerable to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. The Blue Diamond

Society, an organisation that advocates the rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Intersex (LGBTI) people in Nepal has been coordinating with Itahari-based Sahara Society in distributing condoms and lubricants. The Society, established by Samrat a year ago for lesbians, is in touch with more than 500 gay women. Three people of third gender stood for the CA election last year in Sunsari.

In 2007 Nepal's Supreme Court declared that all discriminatory laws against LGBTI people must be repealed by the government and provisions must be made for the recognition of 'third gender' on government documents. A year later the SC again directed the government to form a committee to study the possibility of recognising same-sex marriages. In June a seven-member committee was formed to study same-sex marriage bills in other countries. ●

LGBTI 101

- Lesbian:** Sexual attraction or behaviour between two women.
- Gay:** Sexual attraction or behaviour between two men.
- Bisexual:** Sexual behaviour with or physical attraction to people of both genders (male and female).
- Transgender:** Individuals who cross gender boundaries or a man or woman that adopts the attributes of the opposite sex. The sexual preference of a transgender person often varies.
- Transsexual:** Those individuals who alter their physical appearance either by operation or hormones to become members of the opposite sex. Transsexuals can be either female to male (FTM) or male to female (MtF) and are sometimes referred to as "post-opt" after surgery.
- Transvestite:** Men or women who dress in the clothing of the opposite sex. They are also known as drag queens (men who dress in women's clothing), drag kings (women who dress in men's clothing) or cross dressers.
- Intersex:** Those born with mixed sexual physiology. Often at birth their gender is decided either by surgery or the parents chose to raise the child as male or female.



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Sacred valley

Old Kathmandu is waiting to be re-discovered



SONIA AWALE

Everyone is blaming global climate change for the failed monsoon and the winter drought. The Machhendranath chariot fell, there was a total eclipse of the sun, Nepal turned secular. Are these ominous omens?

If one reads Desmond Doig and Dubby Bhagat's classic *Down History's Narrow Lanes* (just re-released after ten years by Braaten Books) one learns that Kathmandu Valley's vibrant culture and traditions were all governed by the heavens and the signs that came down from it.

It looks like Nepal always had droughts, even before global warming was discovered. In fact, one particularly bad one lasted decades until the Machhendranath chariot with its

Karkat snake god and the deity from Assam brought the rain. Read about this and other festivals in Doig and Bhagat's book, which first came out in 1999 and had been out of print until recently.

The long-awaited new edition brings back to us Doig's exquisite line drawings of Kathmandu Valley temples, bahals and stupas (carried in weekly installments in this paper from 2000-2005 under the banner 'Saving Faith'). And it's not just the drawings, the language also has fairy-tale quality to it with chapter titles like: 'The Gate of the Vermilion God', 'Where Serpents Breathe Fire', 'The City Vishnu May Have Built', 'The Jewelled Gift of the Snake God', 'The Gorge of the Flaming Sword'.

They're about shrines we

pass every day on the way to work, now dwarfed by taller, more recent constructions. It's about festivals in our midsts. It is therefore essential reading not just for expats but also for Kathmandu residents who have forgotten about their rich heritage.

Doig and Bhagat look at the Valley's history and myths, the shrines and courtyards of the Newari towns and their origins. Like a cherry on top are the illustrations which give the book a fairy tale aura by putting the story-telling and the sketches side-by-side. But above all, the book makes it possible for readers to sense the antecedents of this mythical land and its mysterious past.

Doig and Bhagat have a great affinity for Nepal, and especially Kathmandu Valley,

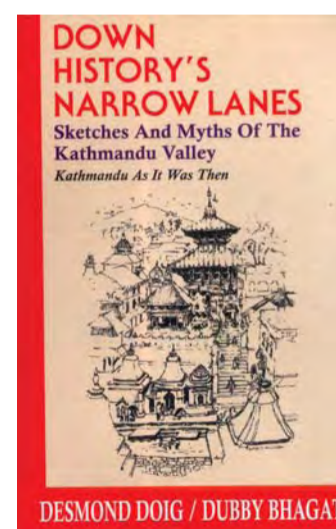
which becomes evident through affection with which they treat the subjects of their chapters. Doig died in 1984 and Bhagat lives in Kathmandu and is a writer for the *The Himalayan Times*. Both should have been made honorary Nepali citizens.

Let's hope that through this book, there will be more Nepalis who will research, write and communicate as well about our history and culture. In fact, a movie series based on the chapters of this book would be immediately doable, even though the old town has seen serious urban degradation since these sketches were done 30 years ago. Such a documentary series would take the message of our national identity and cultural diversity to a larger public at a time when we are looking for differences among us, rather than what binds us together as Nepalis.

Despite the fact that the chapters and sketches were done so long ago, they don't come across as dated at all. You realise the Valley's timeless quality when you read this lyrical concluding paragraph of the chapter on Bhaktapur:

'As the afterglow of sunset lingers on the snow sumits, the procession of shadows come home. Walking conversations. Laughter. Temple bells. A flute playing Nepalese love songs with its echo somewhere. A guitar plunking out tentative Paul Simon. That's magic enough for a lane anywhere. Even in magical Bhaktapur.' ●

See also: 'Doig's kind of Kathmandu' by Jug Suraiya, #53



Down History's Narrow Lanes
Kathmandu As It Was Then
Desmond Doig and Dubby Bhagat
Braaten Books, Denmark 2009
Rs 450

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WAYNE AMTZIS

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hungers for the kill

hawk eyes
thirst for the marrow

Busted bones
darken the sky

Let me tell you
the reason why

What happens
when vultures are crossed

with sheep?
A nation of souls

puts conscience to sleep
Each brutal act

has its excuse.
To be in on the kill,

to run with the pack —
a righteous wind at your back

nothing's better than that.
Blood thirst and loss

one and the same,
predator and prey

a singular name
Cross beak with hooves

a nation of citizens
forfeits its rights

Each shadowed witness
votes by day

for unending night

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the rule of law

Death rules
man follows

Perfectly aligned
phrases taut,

knock back the whiskey
file your report

You've been
you're gone — false alarm

For those who stay
it's follow or pray

Far away,
you'll save the day

Coup d'état!
They've gone too far

Fists in air,
the victors cry

(you'll catch the beat
and tell us why)

*Kow-tow, ladies,
it's time to... die!*



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Loan lifeline

Sri Lanka gets \$ 2.5 billion in credit from the IMF to bolster its sagging foreign exchange reserves

FEIZAL SAMATH

COLOMBO – Sri Lanka finally clinched a crucial agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) this week for a standby credit facility of \$ 2.5 billion, which will help bolster the country's foreign exchange reserves depleted by the sharp impacts of the global economic downturn and an expensive war.

Dominique Strauss-Kahn, IMF's managing director said that a staff mission had reached this agreement with the Sri Lankan authorities, and that the program is expected to be considered by the Fund's executive board on 24 July. Its approval "would enable Sri Lanka to draw an amount of about \$ 313 million immediately."

In February, Sri Lanka requested an IMF credit facility of \$1.9 billion urgently needed to shore up sagging foreign reserves.

Last year, the central bank lost \$ 600 million after foreigners pulled out their money in bonds as stock markets began tumbling across the world due to the global economic crisis. Attempts to stave off shortages in the money market have further depleted reserves. By December 2008, gross official reserves stood at \$ 1.7 billion compared to \$ 3.5 billion in the previous year, which was barely enough to sustain 1.5 months of imports.

Colombo stock markets, boosted by the news, witnessed share prices climb up sharply on Tuesday. This, along with the end of conflict in May, is also expected to trigger a surge in investments.

While most IMF standby credit facilities are approved quickly, considering they are usually meant to offset contingencies, the Sri Lankan application was delayed amid allegations of mounting civilian deaths and other human rights allegations as the government entered the final phase of its war with Tamil Tiger rebels.

On June 21, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that it "is not an appropriate time" to consider the IMF facility, considering the US government was "trying to convince both sides," the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil Tiger guerrillas, to stop fighting.

However, Muttukrishna Sarvananthan, a Sri Lankan economist, believes the issue had nothing to do with politics but economics and meeting fiscal targets.

"My understanding of the real bottleneck is that the Central Bank

is yet to put forward a convincing fiscal, monetary, and balance-of-payments stability package to the IMF, taking into account the latest post-war economic imperatives," he said.

Negotiations with Turkey on a similar facility is taking longer than it did with Sri Lanka, he points out.

But another economist, who is close to senior officials at the central bank, said international pressure was dampening Sri Lanka's prospects for the



credit facility.

"There was a lot of pressure from western powers to delay the loan until Colombo gets its act together on the political and human rights stage," said the economist, who requested anonymity.

An experienced foreign diplomat, who also spoke off the

record, believes that Indian influence on the West saved the day for Sri Lanka.

Last week, on the sidelines of the Non-Aligned summit in Egypt, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh met Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa and praised his leadership in winning the war.

"[Singh told] Rajapaksa that he was most suited to enforce a political settlement," the diplomat said. "It looks as though India and Sri Lanka reached some deal to provide Tamils some of their rights. In return, India [supported Sri Lanka] on the IMF loan issue." ● (IPS)

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EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Nepal Rendezvous**, exhibition of paintings by Bangladeshi and Nepali artists and concert by Bangladeshi ensemble Prachyanat, 27 July, 6PM.

EVENTS

- ❖ **Public Enemies**, the 2009 American crime film screening at Lazimpat Gallery Café, 25 July 5.30 PM. 4428549

MUSIC

- ❖ **American Idol Fever**, contestant Sean Michael performing Gospel and Blues at Comfort Zone Bar and Grill Thamel at 24 July 8PM and New Orleans Coffee Shop, Patan 25 July 7.30 PM
- ❖ **Baja gaja**, every Tuesday at Moksh, 7.30 PM onwards, Pulchok. 5526212
- ❖ **Live band** every Friday and rooftop bbq everyday at Kausi Kitchen, Durbar Marg. 4227288
- ❖ **Sunday Jazz brunch** barbecue and live jazz music at the Terrace, Hyatt Regency from 12-3.30 PM. 4491234
- ❖ **Jazz evening** at Delices de France Restaurant every Wednesday, 11AM-2PM. 4260326
- ❖ **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**, performance by Yankey every Saturday, 9PM, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4491234
- ❖ **Live Band Sensation** performance by Aprilrush, every Saturday till late, Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 4489362
- ❖ **Sunday Jazz Brunch** by Inner Groove with barbeque, Sunday, 12PM-3.30 PM, The Terrace at Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 4489362
- ❖ **Nepali Ghajals** and songs at D'Lounge Beijing Duck Restaurant, every Thursday 6.30 PM onwards. 4468589

DINING

- ❖ **BBQ Obsession**, on Fridays and Saturdays at Splash Bar & Grill, Radisson Hotel til 31 July, 6PM. 4411818
- ❖ **Wine Festival**, until 15 September, Kilroy's Thamel. 4250440
- ❖ **A cafe's cafe** Dhokaima Cafe, Patan Dhoka. 5522113
- ❖ **Pan Pizza & Risotto** - for pizza cooked in pan with various toppings in wood-fired oven at the Rox Restaurant on Sunday, Monday & Tuesday. 4491234
- ❖ **The Corner Bar**, 3-11PM, 5-7PM, Radisson Hotel Kathmandu. 4411818
- ❖ **7th Annual Monsoon Wine Festival 2009**, from until 15 September, Kilroy, Thamel. 4250440
- ❖ **Mango Etagere** with hi-tea at The Lounge from 4.30- 6.30 PM. Hyatt Regency. 4489362
- ❖ **Weekend Brunch** by the Poolside every Saturday and Sunday, Soaltee Crowne Plaza Kathmandu, 11AM-3PM. 4273999
- ❖ **Pizza & Pasta** at the Rox Restaurant every Monday & Tuesday, Hyatt Regency. 4489362
- ❖ **Chez Caroline** for French and Mediterranean cuisine, Babar Mahal Revisited. 4263070
- ❖ **Mediterranean cuisine** every Friday from Greece, Italy and the Middle-East at The Café, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Teppanyaki** meat items and garlic rice right at Le Resturant, Gairidhara. 4436318
- ❖ **Plat Du Jour** at Hotel Shangri La, Kathmandu, Rs 600. 4412999
- ❖ **Reality Bites**, The Kaiser Café, Garden of Dreams, operated by Dwarika's Group of Hotels, 9AM-10PM. 4425341
- ❖ **Starry night barbecue** at Hotel Shangri-la with live performance by Ciney Gurung, Rs 999, at the Shambala Garden, every Friday 7PM onwards. 4412999
- ❖ **Himalayan Rainbow Trout** at Hotel Yak and Yeti, Darbar Marg. 4248999

GETAWAYS

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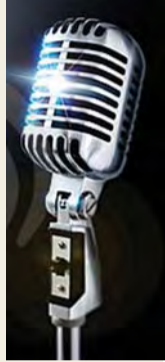
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Quest Entertainment

Emboldened by the return of Lord Voldemort, the Death Eaters are wreaking havoc in both the Muggle and wizarding worlds and Hogwarts is no longer the safe haven. Also, Harry's long friendship with Ginny Weasley is growing into something deeper and Ron has also got romantic entanglements. But as romance blossoms, one student remains aloof with far more important matters on his mind. He is determined to make his mark, albeit a dark one. Love is in the air in *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince*, but tragedy lies ahead and Hogwarts may never be the same again.

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WEEKEND WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

It is now time to declare this monsoon officially failed. July precipitation so far is one-third the normal, Nepal's Tarai grain-basket is reeling under the combined onslaught of winter drought and dry monsoon. Somehow, the monsoon troughs travel normally up to eastern Nepal, shedding rain, and then they dissipate when they reach central Nepal as happened this week. We can ascribe this to abnormally high stratospheric temperatures this summer, and the effects of the el Nino phenomenon. This satellite picture taken on Thursday morning shows very few cloud bands over southern Nepal and the plains of northern India. Which means no respite till early next week from sultry days with scattered thunderstorms in the midhills and mountains and light night rain.



RECIPES

Barbequed Tuna with a red onion Mascarpone sauce

(Serves 4)

4 pieces	tuna fillet (approx. 2 cm thick)
2 tablespoons	lemon juice
1 teaspoon	dried red chilli flakes
3 large	red onions, sliced
3 cloves	garlic, finely chopped
¼ cup	olive oil
¼ cup	raspberry vinegar
2 tablespoons	raw sugar
500g	Mascarpone cheese
	salt and pepper to taste

Mix half the olive oil with the lemon juice and chilli flakes, and season well with salt and pepper. Marinate the tuna for 5-10 minutes in this mixture.

In the remaining olive oil sauté the onion and garlic on a low heat until soft without changing colour. Add the sugar and the vinegar and simmer for 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the mascarpone and season with salt and pepper.

On a very hot grill, bbq the tuna for 2-3 minutes on each side. Tuna should be eaten medium to medium rare otherwise it becomes dry. Serve the tuna with boiled new potatoes, steamed green asparagus and the mascarpone sauce

This dish will be available for orders from Sunday 26 July for lunch & dinner at the Summit Hotel - For reservation 5521810 ext 500



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KIRAN PANDAY

HOMECOMING: Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal welcomed at Tribhuban International Airport on Saturday by the Nepal Army on his return from the 15th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Cairo.



KIRAN PANDAY

REFLECTED GRIEF: Relatives of Jaya Bahadur Pun Magar of Rolpa, who was killed in a ship mishap in the Persian Gulf off Doha, receive his body at Tribhuban International Airport on Saturday.



MIN RATNA BAJRACHARYA

BURNOUT: Members of Nepal Student Union set ablaze a microbus on Tuesday during a chakkajam at Jamal held in protest of an attack on a peer at White House College the day before.



KIRAN PANDAY

DRIED UP: Villagers in Kirtipur resort to using a hoe instead of their hands to plant rice in a field that has become parched because of inadequate monsoon rains.



KIRAN PANDAY

SPEAKER'S CORNER: House Speaker Subash Nembang on stage during boss magazine's annual Top Ten Business Excellence Awards on Friday in Soaltee Crowne Plaza.

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A totalitarian eclipse

There are many signs that we are regressing as a nation, and the latest was the government-declared solar curfew on Wednesday to celebrate the totalitarian eclipse. Not only has the Nepal government gone back to the days of the Panchayat, it has even pushed us back to the good old days when us Nepalis groaned under the Rana yoke and when eclipses (either lunatic or otherwise) were holidays. Looks like the New Nepal is actually the Nothing New Nepal.



The talk of town this week was the spat at the launch of Young Comrade Manushi's re-launch of her Dad's party mouthpiece, **The Red Spark**, based on Lenin's own mag, Iskra (which, the donkey has been told, is what "jhilko" means in Russian).

But the launch went badly

awry as comrades started to verbally lynch each other in public, proving just how far our reds are from turning theory into reality. First to let himself go was Guest-in-Chief Awesome himself, who was laughing and chatting with Comrade Jhallu before the ceremony. But what is it with our lefties that as soon as they get behind the podium and have a mike thrust on their faces they just have to lash out at fellow comrades? Which is exactly what happened, PKD called JNK names like "imperialist lackey", "jackboot of the military", "running dog revisionist". For a moment it looked like JNK was not going to take this lying down as his face turned into the colour of a tomato ripe for revolution. If he had got up when his turn came and called Ferocious a "bloodsucker", he would actually have been

telling the truth. But, Lotus Flower was in home territory and Jhallu thought the best thing to do was to stage a walkout. And he did.



But it didn't end there. Comrade Formidable's next target was his very own Baburam whom he proceeded to tear asunder over an article he did for his dotter's mag called 'Marxism Today' in which BRB writes, and I quote: 'Us modern Marxists have to remember that today's world is more Trotskyite than Stalinist'. Being a closet Trot, Baburam should've known that this would be unacceptable to a Dear Leader who hangs portraits of Uncle Joe on the wall above his office desk. Maybe Laldhoj is past caring, but that bit rankled PKD so much he publicly criticised his Ideologue-in-Chief. When his turn came to

speak, BRB delivered a stinging rebuttal in which he said good communists should be able to call a **spade a spade**, or words to that effect. Baburam knows what he is talking about because he was actually disciplined by his party back in 2004 when he dared criticise the personality cult of Prachanda Path.



The reason Chhabilal is so cranky of late is probably because of something he ate, he has been feeling so nauseous that he was actually bed-ridden earlier this week. Must also have been the tension at the CentCom meeting where he's had to defend his position tooth-and-nail against the Waffen-SS faction led by Old Doc and Biplop. But, surprise, surprise, Biplop stunned everyone at the Central Committee on Tuesday,

when instead of launching the expected tirade against the Chairman he ended up delivering a motherhood-and-apple-pie speech. Must give it to Fearsome, just when his party looks like it is on the verge of **binary fission** he somehow manages to defang the hardcore wallahs.



Now that the crisis spawned by the sacking of the army chief is going to automatically disappear with the scheduled retirement of Gen Cutwall next month, Baddies are in a bit of a quandary. After all, they run a **perpetual revolution machine** and need to focus attention on another agitation. It is a party that needs to keep itself agitated all the time, otherwise it loses it raisin d'eater.

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