IT'S THE ECONOMY, STUPID

BINDU BHATTARAI

Nepal's economy has never been in such a sorry state. Revenue collections are down, expenditures have soared. Maoists have targeted major tax-paying industries like alcohol, and the turnover of the past three weeks has denuded tourism.

Even before the royal massacre, businesses were sounding the alarm bells; the crippling three-day strike called by the UML and political instability had paralysed the government. Maoist threats and extortion drives had gone into high gear. Government had come to a standstill. Then the Naryaneshi mass murder closed everything down for three weeks, gave Nepal worldwide negative publicity, and the shock and uncertainty of the tragedy affected business and offices.

Now, the Maoists are capitalising on the public's disbelief of the official version of the tragedy to mount an anti-Gyanendra campaign, and sow confusion. They have heightened protests in the capital and accelerated their campaign in the industrial heartland of six tarai districts, including Morang and Chitwan.

A women's organisation affiliated with the Maoists has declared Chitwan "dry" since 15 June. Retailers have pulled beer and alcohol off the shelves, and the campaign is spreading to other districts. Maoists have put up pamphlets calling for making three zones of Gandaki, Narayani and Dhanusha "dry" by mid-July and wholesalers even in Kathmandu are hesitating to renew retailing licenses. "This is turning scary," confided one industrialist in Kathmandu with business in the tarai. "Business runs on future hope, if this is the present mindset there is no future."

Liquor manufacturers and brewers have already seen a 30 percent drop in sales. Soft drinks and mineral water manufacturers have received Maoist threats, some of them ordered to slash prices. One brewhery in Chitwan even shut down as a precautionary measure for a couple of days. The National Beverages and Tobacco Association says the government could lose up to Rs 12 billion in revenue alone. 50,000 retailers nationwide will lose business. Indirectly, sugarcane farmers across the tarai will be hit.

And with the government already into deep red, this would further hit spending in vital development programmes. For the government it has become a Catch-22: to win the hearts and minds of the people it needs to spend more on basic services, but there is less and less money coming in. "It has become useless to gripe about industrial security anymore, only a targeted second phase of sweeping reforms and actions can bail us out from where we are," says Rajendra Khetan of the Khetan Group. "It is becoming urgent to recognise the Maoists as a force and get them to talks. Left to itself I won't be surprised to see the economy reach the point of no return."

The Maoists are out to sabotage the economy. Our politicians better forget about politics for now, and rescue the economy first.

**Business runs on future hope, if this is the present mindset there is no future.**
TIME TO TAKE OFF OUR MASKS

Of the intrigue and back-stabbing that has always characterised Nepali politics, it is still true what they used to say 150 years ago: you will learn more if your eyes are closed, you won’t see much by opening them.

In this never-end of conspiracy, nothing is as it appears. If nothing is happening something is up. If something is happening, it’s probably not.

Yet are we to believe that the history of our country is written in a single year?

In the year 2000, Nepal is the nation with the world’s highest number of new cases of HIV/AIDS. In the year 2000, Nepal is the nation that has the highest number of new cases of tuberculosis. In the year 2000, Nepal is the nation that has the highest number of new cases of malaria.

Yet are we to believe that the history of our country is written in a single year?

In the year 2000, Nepal is the nation with the world’s lowest per capita income. In the year 2000, Nepal is the nation that has the highest number of people living in poverty.

Yet are we to believe that the history of our country is written in a single year?

In the year 2000, Nepal is the nation with the world’s lowest life expectancy. In the year 2000, Nepal is the nation that has the highest number of people living in slums.

Yet are we to believe that the history of our country is written in a single year?

In the year 2000, Nepal is the nation with the world’s lowest level of education. In the year 2000, Nepal is the nation that has the highest number of children out of school.

Yet are we to believe that the history of our country is written in a single year?

In the year 2000, Nepal is the nation with the world’s lowest level of literacy. In the year 2000, Nepal is the nation that has the highest number of people living in illiteracy.

Yet are we to believe that the history of our country is written in a single year?

In the year 2000, Nepal is the nation with the world’s lowest level of infrastructure. In the year 2000, Nepal is the nation that has the highest number of people living in poor infrastructure.

Yet are we to believe that the history of our country is written in a single year?

In the year 2000, Nepal is the nation with the world’s lowest level of investment. In the year 2000, Nepal is the nation that has the highest number of people living in poverty.

Yet are we to believe that the history of our country is written in a single year?

In the year 2000, Nepal is the nation with the world’s lowest level of foreign direct investment. In the year 2000, Nepal is the nation that has the highest number of people living in poverty.

Yet are we to believe that the history of our country is written in a single year?

In the year 2000, Nepal is the nation with the world’s lowest level of technological development. In the year 2000, Nepal is the nation that has the highest number of people living in poverty.

Yet are we to believe that the history of our country is written in a single year?
The 20th session of parliament is a time of crisis and opportunity. Which path will our lawmakers choose?

The present political crisis in Nepal has many facets: economic, social, political, psychological, and psychological. Koirala has tried to address some of these problems in his 14-point plan which includes constitutional, land and women's property rights. But his discussion begins to look at the Maoist insurgency and the psychological impact this has had on the public. The last 12 years have seen new aspirations to address discrimination against dalits, women, jaatis, and bonded labour. This is the question of their inadequate representation in the national legislature. The increasing cost of living has tried to address some of these problems, nor offer alternatives. Similarly, the Nepali Congress could not offer anything to bring about a new era of stability and growth.

The present parliament now faces another challenge: the constitutional monarchy. The UML could neither explain how throwing out Koirala would solve any of these problems, nor offer alternatives. Similarly, the Nepali Congress could not offer anything to bring about a new era of stability and growth.

National consensus
After the restoration of democracy, there should have been a national consensus over the process of economic and social transformation. There should have been progress on making elections free and fair, implementing land reform and delivering social justice. But there was no consensus on these vital matters. The present political parties, their ideological rift, meant that consensus stood no chance. Politics that centered on petty personal interest meant that political parties did not institutionalise themselves. Internally, the parties failed to foster a democratic culture, there was a crisis of discipline and values. This has pushed citizens, political parties and even the country towards uncertainty, causing them to open up between the people and political parties, between the political parties and the constitutional monarchy.

Even now, after having brought this upon themselves, political parties continue to be plagued by internal strife and have no time to devote to the country’s vital and urgent problems. The results: most Nepalis equating democracy with economic collapse, lawlessness and social anarchy. Unless the political forces come to an understanding on the lowest common denominator that is necessary to address some of these issues, the country is not going to find a way out of this mess.

Leadership crisis
Much of this is a result of a crisis of leadership. Governance has become a mirage. Leaders have shown political, organisational, managerial, and ethical bankruptcy. In the face of this failure of leadership that consensus, political goodwill and trust could not grow and the country is facing this crisis. Even the Maoist insurgency and the recent royal massacre can be viewed as a by-product of this moral dilemma.

We now have a new king. The Maoist strategy has been to give the constitution a hard time and keep up the pressure on the political leadership. Meanwhile, the time has come for the two main parliamentary parties to evaluate their own leadership and hand over the reins to a new generation of fresh leaders. Only this can point the way forward in the right direction, and allow it to move forward. Let us see if the 20th session of parliament will give us any signs of this new maturity.

Hari Roka is an independent leftist analyst.

THE REAL CONSPIRACY
There is a conspiracy in the country to turn our youth into drug addicts. Even the royal family is not safe! (44) is right on the infinity, but the emerging middle class sector is precisely the target group. The motive? Profit and power. The young elite not only have the money, they are the role models for the aspiring affluent.

Three-quarters of the young people in Kathmandu (the leaders of the next generation), seeking treatment in drug recovery centers are from the upper middle class. It is a common practice in Kathmandu an English Daily on 22 June that next “Meth-altering substances. Now sold legally.” It shows a glorious cash-high photo of a young boy with twirling locked uppered as if he is having a spiritual experience. Note that in the advertisement selling “Shoes.” What is the connection? The message is the unconscious: if you want to be “high,” if you want to run with the kids. Buy our shoes. Dr Devkota, the end of the story.

The DEA CONSPIRACY
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The royal tragedy of 1 June has spotlighted the growing drug abuse problem among Nepali youth.

Can’t hide drug abuse anymore

Can’t hide drug abuse anymore

Alcohol, drug abuse, and AIDS

While the South Asian region as a whole is not immune to drug-related problems, the Royal Government of Nepal has been particularly hard hit. The country’s drug laws, which are based on British colonial-era legislation, are outdated and ineffective. The Royal Nepal Police, which is responsible for enforcing drug laws, has limited resources and inadequate training. As a result, drug use and abuse is widespread, and the government has been unable to effectively combat the problem.

Drug addiction is a complex issue that affects individuals, families, and communities. It is often associated with poverty, unemployment, and other social problems. Treatment for drug addiction is available, but it is expensive and often inaccessible to those who need it most.

The royal tragedy of 1 June has brought the issue of drug abuse to the forefront of the nation’s attention. The government has announced a national program to combat drug addiction, but it remains to be seen whether this program will be effective. In the meantime, families and individuals affected by drug addiction continue to struggle with the challenges of this problem.
Seven-year-old Sumin was saddened by close shots of the dead royals—he said the funeral ceremony of the nine-year-old Dippu to watch.

Euronet, the computerised EURAIL reservation network.

They're talking again—for the eleventh time. The Bhutanese government has agreed to hold further ministerial level talks with Nepal in Thimpu at the end of July regarding the repatriation of the approximately 100,000 Bhutanese refugees in eastern Nepal.

Make it snappy

Whether or not mental health professionals agree that children should have watched the funeral and other coverage with parental presence.

But other child psychologists say children's power of resilience is underestimated, and that glimpses of deaths can actually be a lesson in mortality if parents and teachers discuss it properly with children. Dr. Dhruba Man Shrestha is a senior psychiatrist at the Patan Mental Hospital, and says most children are unlikely to be traumatised by news of the royal massacre. "Television viewers were spared the gruesome details of the shooting, they did not witness scenes of bloodshed and the horror of people being gunned down. There is little chance children will be disturbed," he said.

But in this case adults were particularly shocked because the royal palace incident broke taboos in which minors and adults are seen. "Children will feel sad because the adults are shocked and confused. They will suspect something wrong and sad has happened because their daily routine has been disrupted and adults are disoriented," he told us. However, Kiljunen says children children should have watched the funeral and other coverage with parental presence.

Royal details

Bhutanese refugee camp in Jhapa

The JVT's planned to start by verifying ten families a day, and gradually increase the number. But the team has said that when schools reopened two weeks after the massacre, children were repeating in schools what had happened at home. Children were encouraged to keep journals of their feelings, and older children took part in class discussions in which they talked about the future of the country.

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Children probably coped better than adults in the aftermath of the royal tragedy.

Seven-year-old Sumin was saddened by close shots of the dead royals—he said they looked like frightening dolls.

Birendra's wide-open jaw, the late television with the late King by news of the royal tragedy, traumatised by news of the royal tragedy. Mental Hospital, and says most psychiatric consultant at the Patan Mental Hospital. But other child psychologists say children's power of resilience is underestimated, and that glimpses of deaths can actually be a lesson in mortality if parents and teachers discuss it properly with children. Dr. Dhruba Man Shrestha is a senior psychiatrist at the Patan Mental Hospital, and says most children are unlikely to be traumatised by news of the royal massacre. "Television viewers were spared the gruesome details of the shooting, they did not witness scenes of bloodshed and the horror of people being gunned down. There is little chance children will be disturbed," he said.

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How were children affected?

Show cause

That was the Supreme Court's response to writ petitions challenging the constitutionality of the recently promulgated Public Security Regulations 2001. The petitions were filed by the Nepal Janjati Mahasangh, the Kranti Yuktih Chumlung and three advocates who charge that the regulation is against the spirit of the constitution and essence of Public Security Act. They argue that it gives "unlimited" power to administrators and breaches the constitutional rights of anyone expressing their discontent-ment with the authorities. The Regulation empowers local administrators to detain a person in solitary confinement, confine movement in certain areas and restrict overseas travel, if they are "convinced" that the person will harm the country's sovereignty and integrity, and violate law and order. Deputy Prime Minister Ramendra Paudel defended the Regulation saying that it was only a clarification of the Public Security Act and in no way violates the present constitution.

Meanwhile, Paudel was summoned by the parliamentary State Affairs Committee on 26 June to discuss the government's recent arrest of the editor and publishers of Kantipur. The Committee directed the government to ensure that people's constitutional right of free expression and peaceful gathering are respected. The Public Security Regulation was not discussed during the meeting. The Committee's chairman Hom Nath Dahal said it is being discussed at the Supreme Court.

Monsore's belly

This monsoon has already proved as fatal as previous ones and not just because of flooding and landslides. More than 75 people have died in an outbreak of gastroenteritis in villages in the far western Bajhang and Doli districts. Hundreds of others, mainly the elderly, women and infants, have also contracted the viral and bacterial infections, which spread mainly due to contaminated water and poor sanitation. Health officials in Kathmandu say Gorkha, Baitadi and Dadeldhura have also hit hard—over 500 people have already been affected. The Ministry of Health says 50 of Nepal's 75 districts are vulnerable to gastroenteritis epidemics. But it isn't only people in remote areas who can catch the bug. Teku Hospital's Epidemiology and Disease Control Division says the infections are spreading fast in Kathmandu too—the hospital sees 20-25 sufferers every day.
We have tried to consolidate priority projects and trying to cut them as much as possible. We are also looking at possible new sources of revenue. Reforms will be key in next year's budget—not adding new programmes, but consolidating existing ones and introducing reforms in critical areas to boost business confidence, better returns on limited investment and minimum administrative expenses. These will be my aims in the next budget.

How has Maoist extortion and violence affected revenue collection and security spending? We have been also ‘taxing’ industry?

That is what I also hear but it is yet to be verified. When security is bad, it is bound to impact every aspect of national life. The economy has also been affected; because security is something we have to ensure at all costs.

How can you assure business that things won’t go out of hand? The government will give full protection, security will be ensured. We have discussed this in government and want to give them our full assurance that we will spare no effort in ensuring that vital economic interests are protected.

Industrial security will be provided at all costs. We will also do everything possible in our power to ensure better investment climate.

How do you do that with an empty purse?

It is difficult, yes. But we will have some reforms in the budget and find ways... we don’t want to lose money at all the time.

How is it being finance minister when you have low revenue and high payment obligations?

It is tough, naturally. Obviously the deficit will widen. Hopefully we will have the understanding and cooperation of our development partners. We hope they will understand our limitations and be more sympathetic to our cause. If we manage our economy rationally and to the best of our ability, we think there will be total understanding. Deficit always widens in critical situations like this, but if it compares with our situation of rest of the subcontinent, there are worse cases than ours. Things are not as bad as they are made out to be by the Opposition. It is bad, but manageable—and that needs common sense and cooperation from all parties. Let us keep our expectations low, not be irresponsible, do away with unnecessary expenses, do away with low priority investment and ensure strong tax administration and better compliance. With these and improved security I think things can be handled.

What about the new hearts and minds programme, will that be a major thrust of the budget?

There will be appropriate allocation. It will be a major programme in areas where the ISDP (Internal Security and Development Package) is being implemented.

So can we understand that you’re going to be tough on the revenue end and also reform the overall budget?

Yes, you will see quite a few reforms in the budget. Consolidation and reforms.

Tears and roses
Catharsis can lie. Parachute journalists who wield then have a pre-conceived notion of the talking heads they need, and what they want the grief-stricken to say....
Weather will.

RAMYATA LIMBU

Meteorologist Krishna B. Manandhar of Nepal’s Department of Hydrology and Meteorology relies on experience and instincts honed over more than two decades to read the weather and make forecasts. But assisting him in his analysis of data from around the world and American and Japanese satellite imagery, “Weather forecasting isn’t like astronomy or guesswork. There’s a lot of expertise and technology involved,” says Manandhar, who is head of the department’s Meteorological Forecasting Division. “Contrary to what people think, we don’t just look up at the skies and predict that it is going to be Sair throughout the kingdom,” Meteorology has no geographical boundaries, and the technology Manandhar and his colleagues rely on is proof. They use a system called SADIS (Satellite Automatic Message Switching System), which Nepal has had access to for almost three years. It provides weather reports from satellites around the world and forecasters had predicted that this was to result in unexpected rains and winds up to 200 kmph in the major cyclone, which can generate pressure points in the Arabian Ocean, that can cause devastating damage in coastal countries like Bangladesh, where they are an annual feature and, in the early ‘70s, can kill over 100,000 people from resultant flooding and building collapse. But Kathmandu Valley does see plenty strongest—up to 100kmph—to the local storms that hit March through May. And the aftermath of a major cyclone which can generate winds up to 200 kmph in the subcontinent (which even meteorological instruments cannot withstand) can result in unexpected rains and snowfall in the Himalayas, causing damage and loss of life. In 1995 more than 60,000, mostly Japanese, died owing to unexpected rain and snow in November. At the time, weather forecasters had predicted that a cyclone originating in the Bay of Bengal would move in a northerly direction towards Assam. Instead, it moved north to Patna, with totally unexpected speed and intensity.
It’s the economy

It has been a steady downhill for the economy in the past year, with the royal tragedy just the latest straw:
- Last June public enterprises, including central bank employees, went on strike
- Hotels shut down in December and March, badly affecting tourism in the two peak seasons
- Leftist parties called a two-day strike to protest the October oil price hikes, which were called off, but the damage was already done
- In December Maoist students attacked schools and a weeklong strike kept 1.5 million children at home
- Another student union burnt buses because they wanted to pay only half fares
- A proposal to phase out old polluting buses was rejected
- In end-
- A proposal to phase out old polluting buses resulted in public transport staying off roads for nearly a week
- In end-
- December the anti-Hritik Roshan riots killed off what was left of the tourism industry
- In February UML joined the protest by disrupting parliament and rampaging on the streets after preventing parliament from working for 57 days. Then it enforced a three-day strike
- In April Maoists killed 70 policemen in one week forcing the government to spend more to meet increasing costs of security

It has become pointless to assess the accumulated losses in money terms anymore. Investors and businessmen have reached the end of patience and they were the only ones who openly supported the controversial Public Security Regulations... Says Pradip Kumar Shrestha, a member of the National Planning Commission. "Industries are our main tax payers, and the base remains very small." National Planning Commission. "Industries are our main tax payers, and the base remains very small." It has become increasingly difficult to cap the deficit," says Shankar Sharma, a member of the National Planning Commission. "Industries are our main tax payers, and the base remains very small." It has become increasingly difficult to cap the deficit," says Shankar Sharma, a member of the National Planning Commission. "Industries are our main tax payers, and the base remains very small.

Two months ago only 17 percent of the foreign aid and loans the government hoped to mobilise had come through. Revenue collection stood at about 70 percent of the target. Nepal went into the May-June as a result of strikes and the shutdown for mourning. The Maoist threats to the alcohol industry and some joint ventures are bound to hurt more. "It has become increasingly difficult to cap the deficit," says Shankar Sharma, a member of the National Planning Commission. "Industries are our main tax payers, and the base remains very small." Most businessmen and politicians interviewed for this article agreed on a basic checklist for economic revival:
- Address the Maoist advance through a carrot-and-stick approach
- Forge an all-party consensus to prioritise the economy, and control the Maoists
- Launch a drive to spur domestic and foreign investment
- Declare a moratorium on strikes and shutdowns to give tourists and the economy a chance

It’s the economy

Trading places

As the Nepal-India trade treaty comes up for renewal, business on both sides wants it to stay in place with a few safeguard measures.

BINOD BHATTARAI

Riddles from Nepal and India must next month to discuss the future. The three months until end-September are crucial because, by treaty, this is the window for the other side to decide the other of its desire to amend the 1996 Trade Treaty which allowed unprecedented access to the Nepali market for a variety of products. The other side has something to say, the entire trading regime could change.

India began raising concerns about trade early this year, in the form of a barrage of reports in the Indian press about "dumping" of shoes Nepal produces. Rather than looking into these concerns, Nepal postponed any meeting with commerce officials that was planned. Then early this year the government suddenly "promoted" the minister responsible for the commerce ministry—a Nepal-India trade specialist—and made him a Regional Administrator. The retirement of other government secretaries after that meant the commerce ministry would be playing new hands.

Nepal business sensed these early warnings and held several rounds of meetings with Indian counterparts, and early this year agreed on a thorough review of trade before coming to any conclusions. That process is now complete and business sources on both sides say they have had ways to keep the broader trading regime unchanged. "We don’t think it would be wise to touch the main treaty," says Pubbukar Rana, who is vice-chairman of the Joint Economic Committee of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI), two business groups that lobby jointly for the treaty. "Even CII members and Indian officials are concerned about some products, but we believe we can suggest ways to address them," Rana was in New Delhi last week where both organisations reviewed trade and agreed on some joint recommendations to the main Treaty of Trade that can be renewed automatically.

The two sides are expected to pass on recommendations to their respective governments by August.

Sources tell us that tentative agreements have been reached on dealing with fly-by-night companies, which, India charges, re-export semi-finished imports. The CII and the FNCCI are also working on ways to handle borderline products, which India does not think are real manufactures. One possibility is introducing value addition as criteria to qualify for duty-free export to India for products using imported raw material. This would not apply to products using Nepali or Indian raw material. The two sides are also expected to pass on recommendations to their respective governments by August.

Of course, both CII and the FNCCI sources say value addition may sound restrictive but that it is the only way to go, as it addresses Indian concern but also forces Nepal-based industries to add more value—and ensure that real industrialisation takes place.

Unofficially, even today Nepal has in place a provision to check value addition (about 20 percent) on exports when companies file for duty drawback refunds. That may now become an official requirement of 30 percent. Surprisingly, even today, many of the six “problem products”—polystyrene, copper oxide, copper oxide, copper oxide, copper oxide, copper oxide, copper oxide, copper oxide—singled out as not being genuine manufacturers pass the value addition test. Both the CII and the FNCCI feel that rather than restrict imports of borderline products immediately, the industries should be given time to add value.
In Nepal’s roadless and remote Karnali, the march of time and “development” have finally killed the salt caravans. A once-proud and self-sufficient people are now dependent on handouts. They want their dignity back.

The excursion arose, as so many historic trips have, in search for edibles, and more palatable meals. Food was short on the ground, literally in the remote western regions of the Tibetan plateau, and salt was extremely hard to come by in Nepal’s landlocked hills. The dangers of high passes and scary terrain seemed preferable to the dangers of high passes and scary terrain seemed preferable to the malaria that traders would surely be possessed by if they were to bring in salt from the Indo-Gangetic plain.


People have traditionally commanded high altitude roads like the one to Tibet, but caravans to and from the middle hills and the tarai are generally unexceptional yaks—sheep caravans—because yaks cannot survive at low elevations. And caravans were not ever oddities, the quint custom of tiny nomadic villages, waiting to be made into an Oscar-nominated film. Yaks and sheep caravans were in every corner of Nepal’s remote and roadless western Karnali region.

The skilled people of the upper Karnali evolved the caravan as an ingenious response to their surroundings and climate to get salt from Tibet and food supplies from Nepal’s middle hills and tarai moving where they were needed. Sheep were the perfect transition animal between Nepal’s varied terrain and peoples. And now many sheep caravans in Humla are being replaced by males on new Dutch-built horse trails and by trucks on roads—one of the many effects of economic, developmental and geo-political change that are making most caravans redundant. But we are getting ahead of our story.

A perfect Karnali day. The sky filled with flocks of seasonal migratory ducks. People say they head north in the summer to feed on Tibetan salt and head south during the winter to catch Indian Ocean salt. Karnali’s caravan herders relate their own migratory patterns with that of the ducks flying along the Karnali caravan watershed, the Gaung and out towards the Indian Ocean, back and forth, year after year. A more colourful version has the ducks flying down from Lake Mansarovar deafened by Tibetan salt and those returning blinded by Indian Ocean salt. That, people in the area will tell you, is why they always fly under a single leader who guides the flock and determines what altitude they should be flying at and what their bearing should be. This is more than a story for most caravan herders and their families—it brings home the need to obey the logic of natural laws even as they undertake their journeys of peril and profit. It provides inspiration for the long and bitter trip from the tarai to the highlands as they watch the birds honking high above.

The excursion arose, as so many historic trips have, in search for edibles, and more palatable meals. Food was short on the ground, literally in the remote western regions of the Tibetan plateau, and salt was extremely hard to come by in Nepal’s landlocked hills. The dangers of high passes and scary terrain seemed preferable to the malaria that traders would surely be possessed by if they were to bring in salt from the Indo-Gangetic plain. And there were vast open pastures in the Karnali valley for sheep, caravan-ready animals. The logistics of caravans worked out because of the complementary needs and skills of the people from northern and southern Karnali—interestingly, the names of both these broad groups are considered derogatory now. Natives of northern Karnali, Jadas are said to be people of Mongolian stock who entered Nepal through the high-altitude Tibetan deserts and brought with them sheep-trading skills. The people of southern Karnali, Khasas, tell of trading skills. The people of southern Karnali, Khasas, tell of trading skills. The people of southern Karnali, Khasas, tell of trading skills. The people of southern Karnali, Khasas, tell of trading skills. The people of southern Karnali, Khasas, tell of trading skills. The people of southern Karnali, Khasas, tell of trading skills. The people of southern Karnali, Khasas, tell of trading skills. The people of southern Karnali, Khasas, tell of trading skills. The people of southern Karnali, Khasas, tell of trading skills. The people of southern Karnali, Khasas, tell of trading skills. The people of southern Karnali, Khasas, tell of trading skills. The people of southern Karnali, Khasas, tell of trading skills. The people of southern Karnali, Khasas, tell of trading skills. The people of southern Karnali, Khasas, tell of trading skills. The people of southern Karnali, Khasas, tell of trading skills. The people of southern Karnali, Khasas, tell of trading skills. The people of southern Karnali, Khasas, tell of trading skills. The people of southern Karnali, Khasas, tell of trading skills. The people of southern Karnali, Khasas, tell of trading skills. The people of southern Karnali, Khasas, tell of trading skills. The people of southern Karnali, Khasas, tell of trading skills. The people of southern Karnali, Khasas, tell of trading skills.

Between the northerners and the southerners, and with access to food and salt, the people of Karnali had a pretty good idea for a thriving business. Tibetan salt in Nepal was valued like gold. A sack of salt could be bartered for 15 sacks of rice here, and vice versa in Tibet. For as long as they can remember, virtually the whole of Karnali engaged in salt trading. The various nomadic Tibetan traders (collectively called Khampa) in western Nepal didn’t acquire any permanent land and migrated between the tarai and the hills with families and livestock. Constant interaction with the Hindu Khasas of the southern middle hills, has meant the Tibetans adopted some of their ways, and ugly themselves with people of southern Karnali. Humla and Mugu Khampas forge links with Thakalis and Gurungs, while Dolpo Khampas associate with the Magars. While the Khampas were always on the move, the semi-nomadic sheep caravan herders like the Humla Nyinba and the Sathi Kholya set up villages—every village and settlement in Karnali is where semi-nomads set up permanent homesteads. The herders usually pass through their homes twice a year, on their Tibet-tarai circuit.
When trade fades, so does the K

Canny Karnali traders therefore had extra salt from Achham and salt from Tibet. It seemed as dependable as the sunrise in the east—the land of provisions was the Achham and the holy Manasarovar. An economic transaction changed into a social one, adding new meaning to an exchange between peoples of two different religions and cultures. This economics of travel that arose from basic need put down roots like a wayward tree, generating every aspect of the lives of trading communities. Many of the resultant practices and phenomena took on a patina of natural, age-old phenomena and it was not until the caravans started slowly coming to a stop in the mid-1970s what they were revealed to be the centre of a vital web.

What forced the change? Geo-political realities and the inexorable march of “development”. The Chinese arrived in the remotest parts of Tibet, India fought a war with China, Nepal got more mobility—the country forged more roads and it was not until the caravans started slowly coming to a stop in the mid-1970s what they were revealed to be the centre of a vital web.

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The parties make their promise to tread this loop forever. The land of provisions was the Achham and the holy Manasarovar. An economic transaction changed into a social one, adding new meaning to an exchange between peoples of two different religions and cultures. This economics of travel that arose from basic need put down roots like a wayward tree, generating every aspect of the lives of trading communities. Many of the resultant practices and phenomena took on a patina of natural, age-old phenomena and it was not until the caravans started slowly coming to a stop in the mid-1970s what they were revealed to be the centre of a vital web.
Karnali’s economy and social fabric

Along the Nepal-Tibet border, they used to hold an alternative year on the Tibetan and Nepali sides. But after the 1950 Nepal-Tibet treaty, this became history. Haat bazaars in the tanA, on the other hand, were flourishing with Indian goods and iodised salt. Migrant western hill people could fill many of their needs more easily at the bazaars in the south than in the north. Initially, the caravans with Indian salt meant alternative trade routes from Tibet and India into Nepal in the early 1950s. The urgency for border posts is now the only region to be affected by these changes, but this is most desperate here. The people of the Karnali have been proud and self-sufficient for centuries. They don’t want handouts, they want a life of self-sufficiency and dignity. But the march of time, the encroachment of the outside world, and an uncharitable foreign capital has forced them to speak out. And now that they are speaking out, the government considers them a nuisance. They are seeking their rights not as bohemian caravans outnumbered in the outside world, but as citizens of Nepal. All they want is their dignity back.

Chitresh Bahadur Lamichhane is a former communist MP from Humla.
Iconfess

STEVE BODOW

“The Internet is an excellent instrument for evangelisation and religious dialogue, but it cannot be turned into an online recycle bin for sins in place of face-to-face confessions, a senior Vatican official said Tuesday.” - from an IDG News report

Your Eminence:

I. It was with perfect wisdom that you forbade the taking of communion via Federal Express. In accord with what surely was divine guidance, you similarly banned cell phone administration of last rites. However, I must humbly urge you to reconsider your decision to outlaw the performing of the sacrament of confession through the Internet.

II. Indeed, though we have not solicited it, confessional e-mail has been pouring over the Vatican’s virtual transom in great waves. This is not necessarily a bad thing. With so much electronic data, Your Grace, we now have a more accurate picture of our flock than ever before. It turns out that our faithful besmirch themselves a great deal more often, in more ways and with far greater enthusiasm than we had previously had any reason to believe. The demand for absolution is bigger than we even imagined.

III. Admittedly, this situation requires us to bear some new burdens. But this is largely a matter of mere resources. For example In stark contrast to you, Your Grace, our technical team is in fact deeply fallible. We have found skilled programmers difficult to recruit; apparently they still prefer to be granted options instead of indulgences. The advent of the devilish Blackberry has only made matters more challenging. With some of our more eagerly flagellant believers now requesting forgiveness every 10 minutes, we are often overwhelmed. Of course we are eager to hear immediately about every instance of someone fibbing, cursing or touching themselves. But we simply do not have the bandwidth to respond. Put simply, we need a great deal more VC funding. Vatican City, that is.

IV. Other issues are more ecclesiastical, and we beg your judgment. BCC-ing e-mail feels like a sin of duplicity, but we are not sure. Is the viewing of unclean websites more or less of an offence if one pays the requested fee? It is also worth pointing out that Hail Marys, Our Fathers and other prayers well-suited to repetitious penances are rendered useless with simple "copy and paste" technology. This is probably best tackled by the fellows in repentance services, but I wanted to bring it to your Righteous attention.

V. We might employ some fast-track tactics to make i-confessions work:

i. Implement a CRM (Catholic Relationship Management) solution: The leading provider seems to be Oracle, if you’re not unduly bothered by the heathen Greek connotation, or by doing business with Larry Ellison, who, with all due respect, is an even sharper dresser than is Your Beneficence.

ii. Outsource to India: An increasingly popular option in the e-services business, Your Whiteness. Of course we would try to staff our remote contrition centres with as many converts as possible, but it may be necessary to hire some heretics. Muslims, who generally “get” the heaven vs. hell concept, should do fine. Hindus may present more of a training challenge.

iii. Explore Alternate Platforms: We suspect e-mail’s lack of immediacy may hinder the validity of a confession. But how about instant messaging? NB: We would want to consider very carefully the possibly confusing signal sent by an AOL/Holy See pact. I frankly do not see how they could have taken over Time Warner without at least a little help from down under, and I do not refer to Rupert Murdoch.

VI. Once you have thought this over, please contact me at my Yahoo address or send me something on vellum, either is fine. Finding the right i-confessions formula will be hard, Holy Father, but I believe it is at least worth giving the old college try.

Devotedly,

Fra Benedictus

(Industry Standard)
Ecuador's President Rafael Correa has said that 60% of the country's public health services are being privatised. The government has signed contracts with foreign-based companies to provide health services, including in rural areas. Correa, speaking at a press conference in Quito on May 5, 2009, said that the government was facing pressure from international financial institutions, particularly the World Bank, to increase the role of the private sector in the delivery of health services. He said that the government was committed to maintaining public control over the healthcare sector and that it would work to reduce the level of privatisation in the coming years. The government has also announced plans to increase funding for public health initiatives, including the expansion of primary care services and the provision of free medication for chronic diseases. Correa has also expressed concerns about the potential impact of privatisation on the quality of healthcare services, particularly in rural areas. He said that the government was committed to ensuring that all Ecuadorians had access to high-quality healthcare services, regardless of their ability to pay. In response to the government's actions, a number of civil society organisations have called for protests and demonstrations to demand that the privatisation of the healthcare sector be reversed. The protest on May 5 was attended by thousands of health workers and activists who demanded an end to the privatisation of healthcare services and the restoration of public control over the sector.
Afre the hype, what?

How will Junichiro Koizumi do?

He thinks this will lead to a more open and fair Japan. Heedeting questions of Koizumi during a parliamentay debate by Naoto Kan, spokesperson for the opposition Democratic Party of Japan, resulted in a flurry of annoyed telephone calls. “Don’t bully the prime minister,” said an angry caller to Kan’s office. At the same time, there is apprehension. “A more personal approach is welcome in politics, but people must look at things rationally,” warns Ogawa.

SHIPPENGYO

SYRIA, Jordan and Turkey are key elements in the proposed addition to the UN Oil-for-Food program in Iraq.

DILIP HIRO

Neighbours, Not Friends: Iraq and Iran after the Gulf War. London-based journalist Dilip Hiro’s latest book is Neighbours, Not Friends: Iraq and Iran after the Gulf War.

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Decision-making, Congress style

Saptahik Bawani, 22 June

In a meeting to decide who should be nominated for the Upper House, Koirala said that he had given his word to two people, and those present at the meeting could decide about the others. People were surprised and had no clue who these two were. They were Ashok Koirala and Bab Bahadur Rai. After this, Druba said that he also had two nominees who had to be elected. His nominees were Bal Dev Borthakur and Akhal Bahadur Bista.

Then Bhattarai got into the act and said that even he had given his word to two people, Majya Devi Shrestha and Dr Narayan Khadka. He told the meeting that these two people had given their lives to the party and that they were very deserving. Other members then put forward their nominees. Khum Bahadur Khadka took the floor and said that he had been retired and had no option but to resign. The prime minister should be held accountable and should resign. The prime minister responded: “Who has not accused me? Even Bhattarai and Druba have said all they could. So forget about that objection.” Druba was surprised, but replied in a jolly manner: “All I did was ask for the prime minister’s resignation. Bhattarai is the one who left nothing unusual. I did not say anything much.”

Dr Ram Sharan Mahat also supported Adhikari—in fact, everyone did. Druba was asked to choose one of the two names he had proposed. He agreed to Bista. Although he had committed himself to about a dozen people, Sushil Koirala kept quiet during the meeting. He did not support or oppose anyone. Laxman Chhitdar put forward the names of Purnottam Baniyat, Birendra Duhai, Bhum Kumari, Chandra Singh Bhattarai and many others. Ram Chandra Poudel stated that Ram Chandra Pokhrel too was an ideal candidate. Majya Devi was accepted by all, but Dr Khadka did not get through. In the end Bhattarai proposed that Bista should step down for Khadka. He tried to convince Druba, who suddenly exploded: “Why are you never just to the far west? Just because you are ineffective you never just to the far west? Suddenly your ears are telling you to step down”?

The pair used to buy each other very luxurious gifts. Apart from each other, the palace could not get by with Rs 2.4 million. As a result, Devyani had to get up early and go to the banks of the Manahara river where she used to do exercises. She never knocked on the main door of Bijay Bas, but used the side door. They did not want to see her.

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EVENTS MANAGER REQUIRED!

Nanglo International, home to all Nanglo and Bakery Café-outlets, is on the lookout for a very special person. Events Manager would have to:

- Be young, spirited and outgoing (20-30 years)
- Have strong management skills
- Have strong English and Nepali (other languages welcome) communication and PR skills
- Be creative, with the ability to use the computer for a decent level of designing
- Be able to manage company websites
- Smile!

If you think you’ve got all this to offer and more, or are willing to learn, phone, fax, email or better still, visit us by July 15, 2001.

Contact:
249633, 434504, 232163 (fax)
23408
Kathmandu, Nepal
nanglo@ccsl.com.np

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The pilgrims were plunged by spirits infesting the Valley and so various shrines had been built at the spot to give them spiritual courage. Reason. They may not have liked the new mural, for every year the same family of artists from Patan comes to renew the painting, and from a comparison of photographs and my own sketches, their inspiration differs from year to year. This year the demon's face is smaller and he wears a crown, rather than a necklace, of human hands. The old dhunge roof has been replaced by corrugated aluminium sheeting, and the whole building has been raised a few more feet above the river level. Half of the stone that Ravana cut is still there. There has been a shuttered by the fury of the Water. There remains the pot set in its low altar, but whether it is the same one is doubtful.

How was it that a temple associated with Ravana became dedicated to Bhairab? It seems that when a high-powered party from the Kathmandu valley went to Asan centuries ago to cause the god Machhindranath to take up residence in Nepal, they travelled this way. They were protected by four fierce Bhairabs against a pursuit of angry demons. One of the Bhairabs decided to stay at this lovely and strategic river crossing to guard the escape route. It is his bold likeness that is painted on the wall of the shrine. His silver mask, that adorns the pot of river water, stands on the low sacrificial altar. And it is to him that these sacrifices are made. Interesting to remember is the fact that Bhairab is the most famous manifestation of Shiva, and it was Shiva's pot of water that Ravana left at Tikka Bhairab. For god and devil both, the spot is sacred.

(Excepted with permission from The Kingdom of the Gods, Harper Collins, 1994)
**MOVIES**
- Nepali and Hindi movies online ticket booking at www.nepalshop.com
- The Cranes Are Flying 1957 Cannes sensation, Russia, 4 July
- The Living Dead, Russia, 5 July
- All About My Mother Almodóvar's latest that beat Caravà to the Oscar, Spain, 6 July

**ABOUT TOWN**

**NEPALI WEATHER**

- **Max Temp:** 27° in Kathmandu, 28° in Pokhara, 29° in Butwal, 28° in Biratnagar, 31° in Jaleswori, 32° in Igram, 30° in Myagdi, 31° in Palpa, 34° in Ghorkha, 33° in Siraha
- **Min Temp:** 13° in Kathmandu, 13° in Pokhara, 15° in Butwal, 16° in Biratnagar, 17° in Jaleswori, 18° in Igram, 17° in Myagdi, 18° in Palpa, 19° in Ghorkha, 19° in Siraha
- **Precipitation:** 0.3 mm in Kathmandu, 0.0 mm in Pokhara, 0.1 mm in Butwal, 0.2 mm in Biratnagar, 2.7 mm in Jaleswori, 0.0 mm in Igram, 1.2 mm in Myagdi, 0.8 mm in Palpa, 0.5 mm in Ghorkha, 0.3 mm in Siraha
- **Wind Speed:** 4.1 m/s in Kathmandu, 3.0 m/s in Pokhara, 2.9 m/s in Butwal, 4.2 m/s in Biratnagar, 5.0 m/s in Jaleswori, 2.7 m/s in Igram, 3.4 m/s in Myagdi, 3.5 m/s in Palpa, 4.0 m/s in Ghorkha, 3.9 m/s in Siraha

**BOOKWORM**

- The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain: Popular Pilgrimage and Visionary Landscape in Southeast Tibetan Toni Huber
  - Oxford University Press, New York, 1999
  - Rs 1,500

**CLASSIFIED**

- **Visit The New Bishalnagar Nursery for flowers you will not find elsewhere!**
  - Just two minutes from Bishalnagar Chowk on the Dhumvarahi Road. Specialities: Fuschias in many colours and varieties, young plants of early-fruiting German vine, and many other.
  - Tel: 419836, 241163, 242832.

- **View on Reality**
  - Solo show by Sunil Sigdel. Organised by the Artists’ Society of Nepal
  - Every Saturday until end-September.
  - $130 per couple. Dwarika’s Hotel
  - Reservations recommended. 248999

- **Mountain Biking HMB**
  - For all your mountain biking needs—full workshop, repair facilities, all models. Pick up, delivery, professional mechanics. Bike clothing, spare parts, accessories. Hire, buy, sell, new and second-hand bikes. Himalayan
  - Rs 2,400

**MONDAY**

- **Buddha’s Saturday Escape**
  - Spa at the Rox Restaurant, use of pool, health club, spa and breakfast.
  - For two at the Rox Restaurant, use of pool, health club, spa and breakfast. Every Saturday until end-September.
  - $130 per couple. Dwarika’s Hotel
  - Reservations recommended. 248999

- **Kathmandu Environment Education Project, Thamel; Thursdays 7-11.30am-2.30pm. Radisson Hotel. 411818**
  - Beginnings. Rs 400 per lesson, includes breakfast. Dwarika’s

- **Spiny Babbler Museum Readings and presentations of contemporary Nepali literature and art Saturdays 5-6pm. Thamel. spinybabbler@mos.com.np. 542810, 546725**

- **Hotel Mandap. 419836**
  - Mexican Tequila and more. Music and free popcorn. Reggae on Saturdays.

- **Stress Free Weekends**
  - Breakfast with birds
  -perfect preventive therapy and also for your blood circulation, energy flow.
  - trained naturopath, therapist. Improve your condition. Rs 1,00,000. 223040.

- **New and second-hand bikes. Himalayan**
  - professional mechanics. Bike clothing, spare parts, accessories. Hire, buy, sell, new and second-hand bikes. Himalayan
  - Rs 2,400

- **Himalayan Yoga and Breakfast**
  - Six-week course in Hatha Yoga for beginners. Rs 400 per lesson, includes breakfast. Dwarika’s Hotel
  - Rs 412999

- **Wet and Wild Summer**
  - Swimming in a cool pool and a buffet lunch. Saturdays at Godavari Village Resort.
  - Rs 600, children Rs 350. Taxes extra. 560675, 560775

- **LaSoNo Restaurant and Vinotheque**
  - Lunch, tea and dinner with European and American food, fine wines. Pulchowk. 535290

- **Enlightenment**
  - Reading and presentations of contemporary Nepali literature and art
  - Saturdays 5-6pm. Thamel.

- **Yak Yeti Yak**
  - Car for sale 1970 Ford Maverick. White, six cylinders, 2200 cc, 5000 miles, automatic transmission. In good condition. Rs 1,00,000. 223040.

- **Mountains Living, Himalayan Yoga & Spa**
  - Spa at the Rox Restaurant, use of pool, health club, spa and breakfast.
  - Rs 1,500

**NEPALI TIMES**

- **For inclusion in the listing send information to editors@nepalitimes.com**
Korean images

The contemporary Korean art exhibition 'The Dialogue With Nature' touring internationally is now in Nepal. Viewers have been thronging the show that opened on 20 June after delays. Korean paintings come from a traditional background that draws on the precision of Chinese calligraphic paintings. The paintings on show display, through their modern media, the influence of traditional Korean painting. Lyric Scenery by Lee Suk-Ju seems, at first glance, as if it is the product of traditional technique, with the most minute detail painted. But it isn’t. The artist is helped by printing technology to maintain the verisimilitude of traditional paintings. A shot used to frame the view of a train chugging along and the smoke from the train floating up in the distance is a print, cut out and pasted, with touches of acrylic applied to make it appear drawn. The same can be said of a painting by Ji Suk-Cheol, The Story of Nonexistence. The paintings of artists like Park Hang-Buk, Kim Young-Chul, Kim Kyong-In are realistic, but hardly hyper-realistic as critic in the catalogue suggests. Kim Kyong-In naturescapes in muted colors are soothing and bear an uncanny resemblance to the work of Nepali artist Sambh Dengol.

There are other, more abstract paintings including impressive pieces by Kim Jong-Hak and Suk Rai-Hai. Kim Jong-Hak’s White fused medium—black over unevenly white painted panel—evokes tactile sensory perception. Suk Rai-Hai’s Nature done predominantly in blue is a pure visual delight. A touch or two of another grey and green are applied on blue picture plane, perhaps, to break the monotony of blue monochrome and to create the depth through which you are keep looking into an eternal distance.

The Korean artists have used a myriad of media—colored paper, very textured canvas, acrylic bars, metal granules, panel, etc. But the use of an interesting is not the only thing that makes a work of art interesting. The medium used must be subconscient to the theme of a painting. Nepali painters tend to focus too much on medium, but in the case of this show they need to keep in mind that the Korean artists have used their many media as a means of expressing their emotion and driving home their point, rather than as an end in themselves.

The bottom line on the show: The stylistic differences of the artists are clear in the exhibition, and this suggests that care has been taken to give us a show that represents different facets of Korean contemporary art. But the show disappoints by not providing insight into the socio-cultural situation the art was created in.

Back to Mangal Man

60-year-old Mangal Mohan Shrestha is proud of the love and care the Nepali royal family have given him. Mangal, whose father and grandfather were both photographers, took his first pictures at the late King Tribhuvan’s funeral in 1954 at the age of 13. Five years later, his photographs of the football match between the Mahendra 11 and the BP 11, shot him through the ranks and to the position of royal photographer. In 1962, he was appointed Nayab Subba of the Prachar Vibhag.

There are perhaps few photographers who love the royal family as much as Madhav Mangal does. For him, they go beyond just being a professional concern. Mangal has taken pictures of virtually all the religious ceremonies involving members of the royal family, from the late King Mahendra to the late King Birendra, the late King Dipendra and the present King Gyanendra.

But what Mangal likes to think back on most is the love the royal family, especially the late kings, showered upon him. Recalling the times he went with both King Mahendra and King Birendra on their trips around the country, Mangal says, “I used to think I really loved the king and the royal family—but I found the king loved me, a commoner much more than I did him.”

Mangal has been awarded the Gorkha Dakshin Bahu of the fifth order, and is the only photographer to have received the Prashyat Tri Shakti Patta, one of Nepal’s highest civilian honours. But he says that happy memories of the times he had with his beloved royal family are worth more than anything else. Recalling the grief he felt when he heard of King Mahendra’s death he says, “I loved him more than my own parents, for my parents only gave birth to me, but he gave meaning to my life.”

Since he has lived through and documented two generations of kings and palace goings-on, we asked Mangal Man what he thought of the recent events. His reply was one only a person with love, humility and plenty of experience with the rarefied world of royals could give. “Life is a battle between the past, the present and the future, and if a balance is not maintained there will be conflict,” says Mangal Man. If only more people could see through the eyes like his.
It is beginning to worry us in the journalism profession that the press gets bad press. Without beating the bush around it would be fair to assert with cautious optimism that in certain quarters the media has, ummm, a public relations problem; or to put it more politely: people hate our guts.

It is not true that we are self-important mercenaries, holier-than-thou hypocrites, preachy bigots, annoying and morally repugnant nosy parkers, smug and arrogant hacks who hunt in packs. In fact, we are much worse, and if you have any problems with that, well, tough. Our image problem starts with Hollywood movies in which reporters are invariably portrayed as if they are a shoal of pet piranhas—the kind which can nibble off in under six seconds a heavily armed baddie thrown into a swimming pool-sized aquarium by James Bond. What only few people know is that Hollywood uses actual real-life piranhas acting as journalists for those scenes. (Director: “Lights. Camera. OK, fishies, now just be yourselves. Action.”)

Blaming the messenger, of course, is not a new phenomenon. Genghis Khan was known for his crackdowns on the freedom of press with his draconian Public Security Regulation which was vehemently opposed by every human rights organisation worth its salt east of Samarkand. Legend has it that whenever an inquisitive newsperson during the regular five o’clock press conference at the Hack & Yeti asked Gen Genghis a particularly embarrassing question like “Mr Conqueror, we have learnt from unusually reliable sources that you personally received kickbacks from a Manchurian horse trader for the supply of cavalry chargers. Would you care to elaborate?” Genghis Khan would fudge it: “Yes, it has come to our notice that some of the horses may kick back, but in the heat of battle that is not something completely unknown. Next question.” After the press conference, Genghis would gift the muckraking investigative reporter a suckling piglet, and that would be the end of the story.

Journalism has, of course, moved away from such crude and ruthless methods of controlling information. Today, we live in an Age of Information Technology which means that modern newspeople belonging to at least two genders exercise much greater self-confidence, self-esteem and self-censorship. The Ministry of Non-information and Doublespeak has made it abundantly crystal-clear that journalists should not make anything up—except during a national emergency. This rule will henceforth be strictly enforced so that if any domestic or international hack is caught red handed spreading the truth during a national crisis the punishment will be that they will be sent to a school of piranhas for a crash course on journalistic ethics.

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