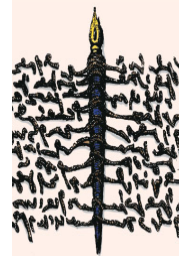
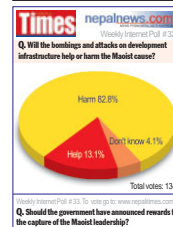


PUBLISHER'S NOTE



PRESS FREEDOM DAY

Today, 3 May, is World Press Freedom Day. Democracy and a free press are two sides of the same coin, and yet Nepal is now the country with the largest number of journalists behind bars. Rulers can't afford to squander the credibility of their nation's media. As we saw in the past 12 months in Nepal, a government needs citizens to trust it, but that can only happen when the independence of the media is safeguarded. It could well be that democracy is not working properly because the media is not functioning as it should. But that is no reason to put away the messenger. The challenge for democracies is to protect press freedom during a conflict, not curb it. Freedom is our only defence against destruction and hatred. We are witnessing the political evolution of our nation, and it is the media that has, in large part, helped steer it towards progress. The media doesn't just hold a mirror to society, it is the mirror. Democracy and free press must safeguard each other. You can't have one by undermining the other.



MEA CULPA

Is Hari Prasad Pandey just too honest for Nepal?

KEDAR SHARMA in POKHARA
When Hari Prasad Pandey came clean last week to declare that he was corrupt and should face legal prosecution, many people thought the former UML hydropower minister and industrialist had finally gone mad. At a four-hour press conference in Pokhara 23 April, Pandey admitted to bribing officials to enrich himself, evading income tax, and covering up his misdeeds to project a clean image. "Now, I am willing to subject myself to whatever punishment the state deems fit," Pandey said. At a dramatic press conference in Kathmandu Wednesday, he blindfolded himself and said he was ready to go to prison. But 55-year-old Hari Prasad says he isn't trying to dare the government to come after him, or aiming for cheap publicity. "I am doing it to ease my own conscience," he said. Pandey has even done the legal homework for the government, and

assigned himself a fine of Rs 15 million, which he said he had already set aside to be handed over if the government could convince him it would be used productively. He added for good measure: "However, if the government should decide that it will confiscate the said amount from me at any point, I will abide by the decision." It was inevitable that such a dramatic confession would hit the headlines the next day. And so Pandey became the butt of jokes, the subject of cartoons, and derisive public reaction came thick and fast. Some said the UML ex-minister had finally "gone off his rocker". Others thought it was smart of him to whitewash himself. Some were certain he was a religious fanatic of some sort. But when we met him in Pokhara, we found a simple man who friends call a "Gandhian communist".



Go to p 3



Pandey leafs through a 42-page confession of his own misdeeds before blindfolding himself.

Red carpets in Thimpu

In a fresh bid to resolve a continued deadlock over the future of the 100,000 Bhutanese refugees in camps in eastern Nepal, Thimpu is on a charm offensive targeted at Nepali politicians. Latest to get red carpet treatment were Chakra Prasad Bastola, former foreign minister and one of the architects of the verification agreement for refugees last year, and opposition leader Madhav Kumar Nepal of the UML. "The Bhutanesse leadership probably reckons that both Bastola and Nepal are prime ministers-in-waiting, and they want to cover both bases," explained one senior Nepali academic. The two met Bhutanese king Jigme Singye Wangchuk, chit-chatting with other officials, including Foreign Minister Jigme Thinley, the point man heading bilateral talks on refugees, and packed in some sight-seeing of the dzongs. The two also stopped by at Bhutan's Chuka hydroelectric project to get a few tips on selling power to India. Madhav Nepal, for his part, brainstormed with the Bhutanese on drafting their new constitution, which could benefit from Nepal's experience of the past 12 years. "It was my first real opportunity to meet the Bhutanese informally," Bastola told us. "I sense there is willingness in Bhutan to get the refugee problem resolved." Bastola asked the king why Bhutan was insisting on going back to the 1994 agreement to classify refugees into four groups: Bhutanese who have been evicted, those who voluntarily emigrated, those who have criminal records, and non-



Bhutanese refugees lining up for lunch packs during verification in the Khudunabari camp last year.

Bhutanese. The king's reply: "Sometimes you have to." Bastola said the king appeared concerned that Nepalis residing in India may have infiltrated the refugee camps at the peak of the influx in the early 1990s. It is this attempt to categorise them that is holding up repatriation of an initial batch of refugees. Nepal officials have been trying to fix a date for the next round of ministerial talks to decide on repatriating those who have been verified. But Bhutan is sticking to its four-group category, which goes by the buzzword "harmonisation". Nepal maintains that there are only two categories of refugees: Bhutanesse or non-Bhutanesse. Nepal and Bhutan completed the joint verification of about 12,000 refugees living in the Khudunabari camp in December, a process that took a year. At this rate it will take at least five years to screen the remaining 88,000 refugees. "On our side we're ready to meet given a week's notice. We are ready," Foreign Ministry spokesman Gyan Chandra Acharya told us. The problem seems to be that there is no timeframe for either talks, or repatriation. Journalist Surya Thapa asked Foreign Minister Thinley in Thimpu why Bhutan was dragging its feet. Thinley replied: "We are also sick of this problem, but it is a complicated issue. Separating real Bhutanesse from illegal migrants is no easy task. The reason for the delay is that it is being needlessly politicised." For Bhutanesse human rights activist Ratan Gazmere, the Bhutan government is just trying to buy time. He concludes: "The Nepal government by itself is not capable of resolving this deadlock, it needs to get the international community to pressure Bhutan the way it did to get it to agree on verification."

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Prisoners

THE PEACE PRIZE

Everyone is talking about the rewards on the heads of the Maoists. But there is a greater reward no one talks about: the reward of peace. The Nepal peoples' prize for anyone who brings an end to the conflict.

But it is going to be the deathly peace of a buried land, or a peace that salvages what is still left? Yes, take it, but talk about what? You can't really blame Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba for flatly refusing to negotiate with the Maoists. Being a plain-speaking, straight forward guy, he takes betrayal personally. And he is not likely to forget how the Maoists used the three months of the last truce to upgrade their fighting machinery and set up a 'Peoples' Liberation Army' to take on the Royal Nepal Army.

And even if only half of the people the security forces say they have killed are actual hardcore Maoists (as opposed to mercenaries, or those forcibly enlisted into the militia), then the comrades must be feeling the heat. The army did not need the Americans to tell them that they need a larger force, much better logistics and much more reliable intelligence to fight a guerrilla war in this terrain. But since the Americans are footing the bill for much of the new hardware, our generals outdressed their heads. With the new equipment, the army is confident it can suffocate the Maoists right there so that when talks do finally happen, the government can negotiate from a position of strength.

Unfortunately, that is also the Maoists' game plan: to improve their bargaining power by destroying, intimidating and spreading panic. They have been forced to go after soft targets: burning down Deuba's house in Daddeldhura, destroying hydropower plants, wrecking airport tarmacs, and snatching up television stations. They are also targeting. These are striking duck targets, but they give the psychological impression of a lightning nose.

In the short term, these tactics are aimed at forcing the government to agree to talks, thus buying time for more to regroup. The Maoists' primary wing needs time to rearm, restore discipline to the fold, and weed out informers. If they get a six month respite, the senior comrades seem confident that they can launch another series of spectacular raids over military installations, and unleash the final stage of their urban guerrilla warfare to propel themselves into Kathmandu.

Our fractious parliamentary parties have finally agreed on an all-party campaign to counter the Maoists with a rally on 2 June. About time. But the myopic infighting within the Congress still threatens to ruin all. If they can't unite when the country is in this state, then they really don't deserve to be in office.

All this bickering is, of course, useful to the Maoists who are waiting for chaos and disunity to create the right conditions for revolution. It is even more helpful for the rebels that the parliamentary parties can't even agree on negotiations or the rewards on the Maoist heads.

These favouring talks are right about one thing, though. There is no point insisting that the Maoists disarm before talks: that is like asking them to surrender. Why should they? They thrive on this disarray. However, it is also true that if both sides are truly serious about peace, there can be secret talks even without a ceasefire. It is so much more important for all political leaders to be open and single-minded. The talks can't be the public circus we had the last time; they have to be serious, secret and sincere. This impasse needs to be broken with a dramatic new initiative that allows the government to look strong, and under a visionary leadership.

That's a tall order. We don't see any signs of a visionary leadership in the ranks of any of the parliamentary parties. But it is now readily apparent that the Nepal people are fed up with the deaths and devastation. They are ready to reward anyone who can restore peace.

LETTERS

STATE OF THE NATION

The situation in our country will continue as long as clever politicians keep on lying a disillusioned and frustrated generation of people with false promises. It is no wonder that these people are venting their anger, and what better way than joining the so-called Maoist revolution. People are being manipulated to fight not for principles, but just because it gives some kind of purpose to life. When we are not sure of the future when did we become bitter that we take pride in killing our fellow citizens for political reasons? We need revolution in our country. But not the kind Maoists want: we need a revolution in the calibre of leaders, a revolution in patriotism.

Ashok Srivastava

North Paltan, Narasara

● Why do poor Nepalis have to be deceived by big people disorganised? The Maoists are taking us back 1,000 years. While other countries are moving forward, we are killing our own people and destroying our own country.

RS Karmal

New York

● Raghu Mainali's blow-by-blow account ('Another poor Nepali', #90) was good, but missed a key point—most of the 112 paramilitary forces were stationed in Sabariga to guard the Home Minister's farmhouse, and only nine civil police were at the

strategic Lamahi post. In attack after attack, our security forces have seen the modus operandi of the Maoists, and yet there doesn't seem to be any real attempt to reinforce the safety of the police under fire. It is also clear that the Home Minister feels the rest of the country can eat cake. The IGP as head of the police force is directly responsible for the security of his force. After Sabariga, even if it means breaking protocol, he must tell us the truth about why the police base was located in such a vulnerable position.

Kabindra Pradhan

Buwral

● I am one of those staunch followers of the state (go with the flow) path of enmity and nonchalance. But even that is not helping me maintain my sanity. Explain this to me.

Anu Khatiwada

North Paltan, Narasara

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STATE OF THE STATE

What next?

We will quietly go on doing whatever we are doing at the moment, hoping that the danger will somehow disappear.

How many focused courses are necessary to prove the utter futility of all this? In any case, what difference does it make stopping vehicles from plying the national highways, when the normal life of the entire population—save the Maoists and the security forces—goes for all intents and purposes, but down anyway?

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba is no less tactless than the Maoist leadership. The declaration "Wanted, dead or alive," with a price on the head of the fugitives, is a sign of desperation, not confidence. Perhaps taking his cue from Sheriff Bush in the unfolding saga against terror in the Afghan desert, Prime Minister Deuba has committed the cardinal sin of democratic politics—adopting patently

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3-9 MAY 2002 NEPALI TIMES

by CK LAL



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NATION

from p1

The cynicism was to be expected, and Pandey soon discovered that the media had got his story all wrong. But he doesn't seem to mind. In fact, he isn't in any particular hurry to correct the story, and he agreed to speak to us reluctantly with a oh-no-to-another-reporter tone to his voice. And when he did meet him in his Kathmandu home, he had the same demure air of idealist at peace with himself.

One thing the papers got wrong, he says, is that I never bribed as a minister. "I took misused my position in the hydropower ministry in any way, in fact I am not even a member of the UML, or any party," Pandey told us. He was made minister by the party for his honesty, and was during his tenure in 1993 that the \$400 million Arun III project was cancelled by the World Bank.

UML leaders haven't yet commented on Pandey's disclosures, and say they are still studying his report. The party brass is in a bit. After all, its central committee "disciplined" senior UML members of the parliamentary Public Accounts Committee for investigating of the leasing of a Chinese, Tulusa (below) looks after the family's biscuit manufacturing three years ago.

Pandey has a long list of his own transgressions: As a minister, I was distracted and didn't pay enough attention to the country's industrial development, as a member of parliament I didn't contribute as much as I should have, I negligently allowed the Arun III project to be cancelled without lining up any alternatives, and I was made a people's representative and minister even

though I had given bribes, since after the motherhood and tried to cover up my misdeeds."

It is not surprising that anyone reading this confession would think that the politician was a sub-set of an unstable person. But meeting Hari Prasad Pandey a visitor gets the impression of someone who is genuinely troubled by his past, and not a person given to impulsive self-publicity.

Hari lives with his wife Tulusa, five daughters and a son in Pokhara. Tulusa was 14 when she got married to Hari Prasad, and says her husband always had this intense love for his motherland. "I don't think anyone else has a husband like him. He never does things on his own, we discuss everything in the family first," she told us. In fact, Hari Prasad read all 42 pages of his confession to his family before going public, and family members reviewed it for six hours. Says Tulusa: "I had one objection: I didn't want him to call himself a criminal." But Hari Prasad tried to convince them that any willful wrongdoing while in office was a crime.

Four of the Pandey's five daughters are studying medicine in Pokhara. Tulusa (below) looks after the family's biscuit manufacturing three years ago.

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by example that it was possible to be self-censored by living frugally and reducing consumption.

He was also inspired after a chance meeting on the street with a desperately poor woman in tattered clothes who taught him the meaning of responsibility and the importance of the motherland. Writes Pandey: "Your life, body, knowledge, history, future

must necessarily be a part and parcel of your motherland. You cannot achieve fulfillment until you overcome subservience, misconduct and indebtitude."

It is not hard to imagine that the woman in tattered clothes for Pandey is Mother Nepal herself. After this, not only did Hari Prasad turn vegetarian, but he even reduced his intake of salt, sugar and rice. He carried his own food (roasted corn, radish and stamps) when he travelled abroad. Earlier, he overdid this frugality and he fell sick because of under-nourishment. He was prescribed fruits, but told himself that rather than eat imported oranges and bananas, he would consume domestically-produced meat, and give up vegetarianism.

But isn't all this a bit extreme, we say. "No, it's being pragmatic," answers Pandey. Expelled from the Bural Technical Institute for being a bad student, he idolises Marx and Lenin. But those who know him well call Hari Prasad more of a "Gandhian communist". Does that make him an atheist? Pandey answers the question obliquely: "Gandhi puts god at the centre of things, but I think unless humans being struggle against all forms of injustice, vice and dependence here on earth, they don't have to even the minimum qualification to approach god." So that means he is not an atheist.

He first approached the Commission on Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) as far back as 1995 after confessing to mismanagement, negligence and incompetence that led to losses during the sale of stock options in

the Bhatnagar Jute Mills, and asked that he be prosecuted. Last week's self-disclosure is just an extension of Pandey's 1995 confession. But both times, nothing happened. A country in which corruption is endemic doesn't seem to have the legal mechanism to deal with someone who voluntarily confesses to giving bribes.

As a businessman in Pokhara, Hari Prasad has had visits from Maoists demanding "donations". Sick of threats and intimidation, he wrote an open letter titled "I take My Donation, But Answer My Questions First". He has set aside Rs 100,000 for the Maoists if they can answer these questions:

1. World opinion and the Nepal public are against your war. So why should it succeed?
2. Neither of Nepal's great neighbours agrees with your politics. Even if you grab power, what makes you think you can hold on to it?
3. After decades, the Chinese have admitted that Mao's economic policies were counterproductive and have abandoned them. Why should it work with you?
4. Why should it be a crime even to ask you these questions?

Pandey denies that he is trying to gain prestige and fame, and absolve himself from future blame. He denies trying to preach or tell anyone to follow in his footsteps. "I am saving my soul. To do that I have to give back to society what I took from it. And I want to undergo any physical incarceration, pay any fine, and sacrifice what is left of my personal integrity," he told us, adding: "And if the government does not come forward, I will inflict the punishment myself." ♦

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Elisabetta Pionat

Kathmandu

many such neighbourhoods actually increase. I'm afraid that it is not taken immediately a unique part of Kathmandu's heritage will disappear forever, as cultural and economic damage that Nepal can ill afford.

Nick Langton

Kathmandu

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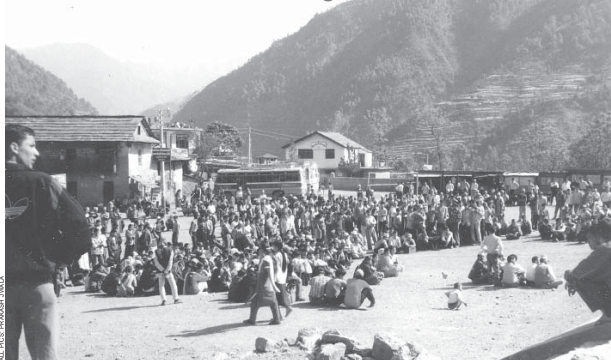
N Malakar

by email

EDITOR'S NOTE
Nepal Times reserves the right to edit letters for length, clarity and language. All letters to the editor must be accompanied by a full name, which can be withheld on request.

Reaping the whirlwind in Rolpa

This is a "peoples' war" in which ordinary people like Purna Bahadur Khatri, Amrit Bahadur BK, Tilak Nepali and Bishnu Prasad KC and Seti Buda are being killed.



PEOPLE POWER: Citizens of Libang gather in the main square for an all-party rally.

Prakash Jwala in Libang

There are winds of change blowing in Rolpa. For the first time in four years, political workers under the protection of security forces have returned to parts of Rolpa that were under Maoist control.

Reading about this in the faraway capital, it may not seem like much. But it is an indication of the changing circumstances of the insurgency that the Maoists (the mid-west area) is as impenetrable as they used to be.

To be sure, this does not mean that the Maoists are on the run. But it is the first sign that the tide may be turning, and it is also an opening for the government and all parliamentary parties to restore hope to the villages that they have

abandoned. Their presence is important to show the people that they care for their welfare, and to get them to participate with their elected leaders to rebuild ruined villages.

Around the time that political parties in Kathmandu were sitting down three weeks ago in joint efforts to take their activism to rural areas, political workers here were already doing just that. They moved into areas of Rolpa that the security forces have managed to liberate: the villages of Thabang, Gam, Mac, Sandabot and Madichaur. The presence of the army has brought new hope to the people who have only one wish: that peace is restored so they can start rebuilding their shattered lives.

Two weeks ago, some 1,000 people had gathered in Gam for a

public meeting. Local political leaders, the Chief District Officer from Libang, and local elected officials spoke about the effort to bring life back to normal. Some days before that, a local voluntary group organised a seminar in Libang to discuss what the people of Rolpa could do in the current political environment.

Representatives of different political parties made commitments to form an alliance against Maoist violence, and agreed to spread the word on the Maoists' double standards and hypocrisy. Especially the fact that after destroying the education system, Maoist leaders had their children in private schools in Kathmandu, India and London.

What was surprising was not what was said at the meetings, but

where the meetings were held: in the heartland of Maoist activity. This is the first time that politicians have tried to re-start political activity. Last year, the UML organised a Rapti Peace March that passed through Dang, Salyan, Rukum and Piyushan before visiting several villages in Rolpa.

At that time, this was seen as a direct challenge to the Maoists, who had begun to fill the political vacuum they'd created in the villages by killing or chasing away local political workers. Even so, thousands of people from the five districts gathered for the public rally in Rolpa. This time, it is not just the UML, but all political parties holding joint public meetings.

Rolpa plunges into darkness after dusk. There is no power, since



FATHER'S GRIEF: Mohan Lal BK, a sweeper in Libang, grieves with his family over the body of his son, Purna Bahadur BK, who was killed during the attack on Sabara.

operate only with the blessings of the Maoists. There has been talk of operating a helicopter service to Libang, but that is just talk.

Rolpa has always been a food-deficit district. Rolpals migrate for work when the food runs out, or depend on grain flown in. Now even that is difficult, since the army is enforcing a food embargo to starve out the Maoists. And the Maoists have plundered whatever food there is left. No one is planting any grain for fear that the harvest will be looted. This has put the price of grain out of reach—rice costs Rs 150 per pathi. Those who suffer the most are the children, who fall sick because there isn't enough to eat. And when they fall sick, there is no health care. The people of Rolpa just try to survive from day to day.

Thousands have fled the Maoist violence in the hinterland to the relative safety of Libang. Many more have already left to work in India. The better off are living in Kathmandu, Dang and other parts of Nepal. But even if they are away, it doesn't mean they are safe. The Maoists attack their houses and their relatives.

A teacher from Korchabang, Mahendra Pun, fled his village two years ago and had been living at the Ghartigone police outpost. He came to the district headquarters after that police station was razed by the Maoists. Some weeks ago, the Maoists razed his home, and now his mother, wife and five children have all moved down to Libang. Pun's wife Purna Kumari said 250 armed Maoists came to their house on 2 April, and forced them out. The school was used as a base for the Maoists for six months. Here in Libang we've had a crisis for six years."

There is an unofficial curfew every evening, and there are reports of people being killed every day. After the battle at Lamhi and Sabara the Maoists delivered dead policemen stored in Rolpa and pulled out a body. It was Purna Bahadur BK, a 25-year-old constable

in the village. To add to the feeling of hopelessness and isolation, Rolpa has been cut off from the rest of Nepal since the Maoists destroyed the Jhimruk power station last month. The people of Rolpa, who had got used to electricity, are now back to burning pine resin dhupi, as kerosene is too expensive. Most ordinary people cannot understand what the Maoists have gained by destroying Jhimruk, and pushing Rolpa's development back by decades.

Rolpa has many problems, but the most pressing is the lack of health care. The district hospital was built many years ago, but because of government ineptitude, never treated a single patient. A brand new building is in ruins. Every time they see the hospital, the people of Rolpa curse the government. And this is the district headquarters. We can only guess how much worse the situation must be in the villages.

Despite Maoist warnings not to go ahead, Rolpa was able to organise its DDC meeting, and attendance was more than 90 percent. There are indications that

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The democracy that came from so much sacrifice hasn't lived up to expectations. Similarly, the vision of Clinton and Blair in the last decade of the 20th century, that you could have a humane society and unbridled free market capital, now seems unrealistic. Those in the horrors of 11 September and you have a heady mixture that's beginning to resemble the foaming hemlock in Socrates' cup. Kalyug is upon us and the convulsive unpredictability of events has banished the ordered certainties. War is us. Sell up, move out, get away, escape, get caught, depressed and give up. It is all there is!

Well, no, it may be so bold. I truly believe that the gloom which shadows our every move is misplaced and more harmful than the deadly events that inspire it. It may be a truisim, but the vast majority of us, within Nepal's borders and beyond, are people of goodwill who only want things to work properly so our children can prosper. Losing our grip right at the time when our kids need us is a crime against the future of far more impact than any terrorist act. It's the we learned to stop worrying and love the bomb as they used to say in the 60s when a US-USSR nuclear war was everyone's favourite fear.

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by DANIEL LAK



Global Kaliyug

If you are depressed about Nepal, just look at the rest of the world.



enlightened and entertain seems capable of only the latter, and only then on conditions that were so gravely lowered that any old drack will do. So long as we can see our minds and escape into the dreary oblivion of junk culture. Even the BBC has to defend itself against accusations of "dumbing down" its usually world-beating programming.

I wonder if what's happened—in Nepal and around the world—isn't just a



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many are fed up with Maoist excesses. Even the Maoists have agreed that the violence had to stop so the district could get back to improving the lives of the Rolpals.

In Libang large numbers of people crowd around the CDO office every day. Most have come for citizenship papers and passports. Since November, more than 6,000 citizenship certificates have been made, mostly for young men fleeing the Maoists. Many intend to migrate to work.

Others are in Libang to pay land taxes to the VDC secretaries, now camping here because the Maoists don't allow the collection of land taxes in the villages. In late March they killed Amrit Bahadur Khatri, a peon of Bhahung VDC. His crime: reminding people in the village to pay their land taxes. Khatri had a physical disability. He also came from a family that did not have enough to eat for more than three months of year. Maoists had already killed the chairman and vice-chairman of Bhahung VDC.

Libang has now been fenced off with barbed wire. The villagers must pass through security checks before entering and leaving the town. It looks like a garrison town, but residents and government employees say they feel more secure. Kumar Dasadi, secretary of the UML in Rolpa, says, "The country has had a state of emergency for six months. Here in Libang we've had a crisis for six years."

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Nepal's food crisis

Nepal is emerging as the country with one of the most serious food crises in Asia, according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). According to FAO's latest global food insecurity survey, South Asia, with 303 million of the 497.1 million hungry people in Asia and the Pacific, is the main hunger hotspot. And Nepal is the hottest spot in South Asia.

It is the only country in South Asia where the number of hungry people increased in the past decade—up from 3.5 million to 5 million and the proportion of Nepals who are chronically hungry has increased from 19 to 23 percent. An average Nepali had a per capita intake of 2,380 kcal/day in 1980, and by 1989 it had gone down to 2,290 kcal. "Poverty and slow growth in food productivity, which is currently lagging behind the national population growth rate, are the main reasons for the increase in hunger in Nepal," says the FAO report.

Women and drugs

A qualitative study on women substance users in and around Kathmandu has revealed some alarming findings. The research, conducted among 200 respondents by The Richmond Fellowship Nepal, Women Research Project, indicated that the majority of women substance users were between the ages of 20-29. They started using substances as young as 12-15 years old, and many use multiple substances. What's more, 74 percent have never been treated for substance abuse, 59 percent are involved in commercial sex work, and 38.6 percent said they had tested HIV-positive. As women and drug users, they face greater discrimination and social exclusion, the study points out. Many have been abandoned by their families, as a result of which their children have been neglected, they are ill-treated by health care providers, and they face harassment and violence.

Peaceful citizens

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Human rights watch

A week after the government put a price on the heads of the Maoist top brass, reactions and sharp criticism continue to pour in. The National Human Rights Commission is the latest to join the chorus of voices denouncing the government's announcement that it would give out cash prizes for the Maoists, dead or alive. The commission says that this increases the possibility of violating the basic rights citizens have to life, and undermines the principles of a lawful state. Left leaders have also been vocal in their disagreement with the government. Leaders of Masal and Ekata Kendra issued a press release Tuesday saying that the government's move doesn't seek to solve the Maoist problem through political means, but by force.

German Technical Cooperation Health Sector Support Programme

Within the framework of the Health Sector Support Programme (HSSP), GTZ provides technical assistance to the MoH / Department of Health Services in four areas: Primary Health Care, Reproductive Health, Physical Assets Management and Community Based Drug Management. For HSSP's Office in Kathmandu, qualified applicants are invited for the following immediate openings:

- (1) Deputy Team Leader, Reproductive Health Component
- Major responsibilities of the post:
 - Assist the team in conceptual planning, implementation and follow up of programme activities
 - Support the Team Leader in day to day management of the project
 - Represent HSSP at stakeholders meetings and working groups
- Required qualification and experience:
 - Medical/Nursing or Social Science degree with a Masters Degree in Public Health (MPH)
 - Understanding of Nepal's health care system, especially reproductive health
 - Experience with project planning and management
 - Relevant research experience
 - Clinical teaching / training experience
- Applicants must be at least 30 years of age and have a minimum of five years working experience in a similar position, preferably with an international organisation. They must be fluent in English and possess good analytical and problem solving skills.
- In addition, they must have the following:
 - Ability to lead teams and act on individual initiative
 - Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
 - Documentation skills
 - Willingness to frequently travel to the districts

- (2) Reproductive Health Advisor
- Major responsibilities of the post:
 - Provide technical advice to the HSSP team in the field of reproductive health, particularly adolescent health, Safe Motherhood, HIV/AIDS
 - Support the technical team in preparing and editing technical reports
- Required qualification and experience:
 - Have a degree in nursing/midwifery, medicine or public health
 - Have an understanding of Nepal's health care system
 - Experience in reproductive health women's health
 - Be a native English speaker with excellent writing skills
 - Have a working knowledge of Nepali

Position (1) is open to Nepalese citizens, position (2) to local expatriates. The vacancy is a contract position for initially 12 months offering salary and other benefits as per GTZ regulations. Interested candidates should apply with a detailed CV, references, passport size photograph and contact telephone number to:

The Programme Manager, Health Sector Support Programme
c/o GTZ Office, P.O. Box 1457 Kathmandu.

The closing date for applications is 15th May 2002. Only short-listed candidates will be invited for an interview. No telephone calls, written or personal enquiries will be entertained in this regard.

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Feats of clay

Kathmandu Valley's famous pottery has to change with the times.

ALEXANDRA ALTER

Everyday since he was a pint-sized 12-year-old, Tulsi Bahadur Prajapati has collected clay and kneaded it with his feet. It's tiring, but nothing compared with what follows. Thimi's Prajapati potter community doesn't use the elegant little wheels most of us picture potters working with. They use old tyres filled with concrete that weigh more than 300 kg. Starting the wheels is so laborious, it is the only aspect of pot-making that Thimi's women don't participate in. The men turn these improvised wheels with a pole at a frenzied pace until the tyre is spinning fast enough for them to throw two

or three pots in about five minutes. "It's incredible that the pots are so symmetrical. They're thrown so quickly and the tyre is so unstable and unpredictable," says Ani Kasten, an American potter who studied potting methods in Thimi. Larger pots, such as the *deodas* used to store *chhang*, are first built up out of clay coils and then beaten smooth with a paddle.

After the pots are completed they are dried in the sun, then fired in communal, makeshift kilns, that are built and destroyed every four days. Pots from each workshop are taken to the town square, where they are stacked up, covered with straw and ash, and then burned in a kind of smoke firing. Smoke and ash billow through the town's

streets. Not surprisingly many Thimi residents have chronic lung problems. When the fire subsides and the ash is swept away, the pots are left to cool. It's common for over fifty percent of the pots to be destroyed during the firing process. Those that survive the firing are carried around in yokes and sold door-to-door. "My father used to walk all the way from Thimi to Swayambhu selling his pots," Santo Kumar Prajapati remembers. Today some potters have resorted to vehicles, but many still sell their wares by travelling on foot.

Tulsi Bahadur, now in his seventies, may have entered the family trade at the age of 12, but claims he learnt the art of

pottery at a much younger age. Like many of Thimi's children, he began making pots as a toddler, playing with clay and imitating his father. Today, he and his wife Chimaya maintain his father's pottery workshop on the first floor of their house, where they spend long hours throwing pots.

But of their four children, only their daughter has chosen to follow the family trade. Their three sons have moved to Kathmandu to work as tailors and in knitting factories. Even their daughter now works in her husband's workshop, leaving the couple with no one to bequeath their studio to. "I had hoped that all my children would become potters, but I didn't want to interfere with their wishes," says Tulsi Bahadur.

Nearly all of Thimi's inhabitants, who belong to the Newar Prajapati caste of potters, say their trade extends far back in their bloodlines. But of the estimated 8,000 Prajapatis who live in the area surrounding Thimi, only 2,000 claim that profession today. The others, like Bahadur Prajapati's sons, have sought more lucrative work in Kathmandu as bus drivers, waiters, or factory workers, leaving many family pottery workshops without an heir.

The high rate of defection from the potter trade is disconcerting, but by no means surprising. Potters all over Nepal work extremely hard for little economic compensation. Most of the potters in Thimi adhere to the arduous traditional methods in which every aspect



of pottery production is completed manually—from mixing and drying the clay to powering the wheel. Of the roughly 1,000 workshops in Thimi, only four or five use modern potting technology such as electrically powered wheels and kerosene-fuelled kilns.

Since they don't have enough land to grow their own food, many potters walk to farms when rice and wheat are being harvested, trading storage pots for grain. They make just enough profit to survive on. "I go to Kathmandu to sell pots when I run out of money," explains Tulsi Bahadur. But even that is a challenge today. Few Nepalis are interested in earthenware pots when they can buy cheaper, longer-lasting mass-produced kitchenware made of steel or plastic.

With such impediments to their livelihood, it's no wonder that so many of Thimi's potters have forsaken their ancestral vocation. "Pottery is a very

difficult profession now. It's hard work for little money," says Santo Kumar Prajapati, who owns Thimi Ceramics. Santo Kumar and his brother Laxmi Kumar realised early on that the obstacles facing the Valley's potters in producing and marketing their wares would only increase, and so in 1985 founded Thimi Ceramics, one of the town's first modern workshops. Moving with the times has allowed Santo Kumar and Laxmi Kumar to be innovative—and remarkably productive. In addition to electric wheels and puging machines to mix clay, the brothers own one of few kerosene-fuelled kilns in the area, which can fire up to 3,000 pieces of glazed ceramics at a time. Unlike the unpredictable straw kilns used by most of Thimi's potters, the temperature in the brick kiln is adjustable, allowing the ceramics to first be fired at a low tempera-



ture and then refired at 1,000 degrees after they have been glazed. The double-firing technique melts the glaze and ensures that the ceramics are durable. "Nepalis don't want to pay for handmade pots that break easily. Potters need to find new methods," believes Santo Kumar.

Retaining traditional procedures isn't always a bad thing—as a tourist attraction at the Bhaktapur potters' square, it is a definite plus. But Thimi's potters have a lot more incentive to alter their archaic techniques—few tourists visit Thimi, and those who do aren't likely to lug home an enormous water storage vessel. But as Santo and Laxmi Kumar have discovered, traditional and modern potting methods can be blended to yield a product as aesthetically pleasing as it is practical. Combining classical designs with modern glaze technology, the Kumar brothers constantly create new models of tableware, garden ceramics, and decorative pieces that quickly get snapped up by hotels, restaurants, and foreigners. Their work is found at Hotel Yak & Yeti, Koto restaurant, and Hotel Kido, and colourfully glazed coffee mugs from Thimi Ceramics appear to be a staple in any expat's kitchen.

Bolstered by the success of their own workshop, Santo Kumar and Laxmi Kumar decided to bring other potters in the area up to speed. There have been attempts to modernise Thimi's potting techniques in the past, most notably by Jim Danish, an American potter who lived in Thimi for nine years to teach more expedient potting methods. Danish's most significant contribution to modern Nepali ceramics was glaze technology, which he taught Thimi's potters in 1980. More than just an aesthetic touch, glazing serves important practical functions, making ceramics more durable and hygienic. The red terracotta clay that Thimi potters use is extremely porous, making it unsafe as kitchenware. Food and liquids easily seep into the clay and remain there as fodder for bacteria. Glazing provides a protective shield, and strangely enough, was unknown in the Valley before Danish introduced it.

In 1984, Danish founded the



Ceramics Production Project, a German-sponsored organisation that provided training workshops and sold raw materials relatively cheaply. Ten years later, however, the project was bought up by the private sector and discontinued. The sale of materials to local potters. That's when Santo Kumar and Laxmi Kumar started their own collective, the Nepal Ceramics Co-operative Society, which now supplies materials for 14 pottery workshops and 37 potters from Thimi and Bhaktapur. "You can't get all ingredients for the glaze in Kathmandu. For flint, feldspar, potash, quartz, and chromium oxide we have to go to India. We go once a year and get enough materials for everyone in the collective," says Santo Kumar. The ingredients necessary for glazing would be prohibitively expensive, as well as difficult for most potters to obtain, but through the collective they can procure these materials at a reasonable cost.

In addition to providing the chemicals and minerals necessary for glaze, the collective offers workshops for potters who want to learn new techniques. Three months ago, a Swiss expert came to teach a new glaze method at the collective. Though Nepal's ceramics are still fathoms behind the rest of the world in most respects, the glazed pottery produced here is technically superior to ceramics in Europe, China, India, and America—it is lead-free and non-toxic.

Even today, Nepal's ceramic work has been eclipsed by products from India and China, both of which can mass-produce more durable stoneware. Kathmandu Valley potters have until now been limited to the brittle red terracotta clay locally available and found under the spoil of rice fields. But members of the collective are developing ways to introduce stoneware clay to pottery workshops here. The research is expensive and requires imported Indian equipment. Even the kerosene kiln operated by Santo

Kumar and Laxmi Kumar is unsuitable for stoneware firing, which requires a minimum temperature of 1,280 degrees. At such a high temperature, the brick kiln would melt, resulting in a huge gas explosion. At the collective, however, a small high fire kiln has been constructed and is being used to experiment with stoneware clay and new glazes.

If the research at the collective is successful, there is hope

that domestically produced pottery will one day supplant foreign merchandise in the ceramic market. But Nepal's potters have a long way to go before they'll be equipped to compete with Indian imports. "To rival India, we need to be able to produce longer lasting stoneware ceramics. We'll have to replace all our equipment, and that's expensive," says Santo Kumar. Such an undertaking will

require substantial capital investment and time, but for the moment, the technical advances being made in workshops in Thimi and Bhaktapur signal that a movement to reinvestigate Nepal's ceramic work is underway. If nothing else, the Nepal Ceramics Co-operative society is working to ensure that Kathmandu Valley's pottery tradition won't decline further. ♦

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Say no to consensus



Over recent decades a simplistic view about the fundamentals that govern the theory and practice of development has taken root: that growth requires foreign technology and good institutions. Failure to grow can be attributed to either (or both) of these, the "protection" hypothesis, in which government stymies progress by reducing access to foreign investment and technology, and the other "corruption" pathology, where political leaders fail to respect property rights and the rule of law. The natural remedies are claimed to be economic openness and improved governance, which became the cornerstones of development strategy in virtually every country during the last fifteen years.

Experience presents an awkward fit with this conception. Consider Latin America, where there has been greater enthusiasm for the so-called "Washington Consensus" than anywhere else. Policymaking there was better than here in the 1990s, but few countries in the region grew faster than in the period before 1980. Or consider more successful countries—South Korea and Taiwan since the early 1960s, China since the late 1970s, India since the early 1980s. They have done extremely well under heterodox arrangements. All emphasize exports, none grossly violated property rights. Their strategies bear only passing similarity to today's consensus. South Korea and Taiwan retained high levels of protection for a long time, and made active use of industrial policies. China's reforms are marked by partial liberalisation, two-track pricing, limited deregulation, financial restraint, an unwieldy legal regime, and the absence of clear private property rights. India barely reformulated its cumbersome trade and industrial regime before its economy took off in the 1980s. These growth strategies combined orthodox with unconventional institutional innovations that relax constraints on growth at least cost to the social and political fabric. Of course, heterodoxy doesn't always pay off. Most countries with protected economies and lax protection of property rights languish. But some of the world's most successful economies have prospered while doing things not in the rulebook.

To grasp the deficiencies of the conventional view, begin with the problems of technology adoption. Learning what a country is (or can be) good at producing is a key challenge. Neither economic nor management theory helps entrepreneurs (or the state) choose appropriate investments among the range of modern-sector

activities. Yet making the right investment decisions is essential to growth, because they determine the pattern of specialisation. Today's intellectual property regime protects innovations in advanced countries by issuing temporary monopolies, ie, patents. But investors in developing countries who figure out that an existing good can be produced profitably at home and set up a model for others to emulate don't get such protection, though the social returns can be high.

Laissez-faire is not the optimal solution here, just as it isn't in the case of research and development of new products. Desirable government policy consists of encouraging investment and entrepreneurship in the modern sector ex ante, but, equally important, rationalising production and driving out poor performers ex post. Institutional arrangements also have large elements of specificity. Discovering which institutions are suitable to local conditions requires experimentation. Two-track reform needed well in Deng's China but not in Gorbachev's Soviet Union. Import substitution fosters competitive industries in Brazil, but not in Argentina. Gradualism may be appropriate in India, not Chile. Specificity helps explain why

by DANI RODRIK



For growth, the world needs less consensus, more experimentation.

successful countries—such as China, South Korea, Taiwan, and Chile—usually combine orthodox elements with orthodox policies. It may also account for why persistent institutional differences persist among advanced countries in areas such as the role of the public sector, the nature of legal systems, corporate governance, financial markets, labour markets, and social insurance mechanisms.

The difference between economic principles and their institutional embodiment is that most key economic principles are institution-free. Incentives, competition, hard-budget constraints, sound money, fiscal sustainability, property rights are central to how economists think about policy and its reform, but they don't demand specific institutional solutions. Property rights can be implemented through common law, civil law, or Chinese-style socialism. Competition can be maintained by a combination of free entry and laissez-faire, or by a well-functioning regulatory authority. Because policymakers operate in second-best environments, optimal reform trajectories—even in apparently straightforward cases such as price reform—cannot be designed without due regard to prevailing conditions and weighing the consequences for multiple distorted markets. All adaptations require a pro-active role for the state and civil society, and collaborative strategies that foster entrepreneurship and institution-building. The world needs less consensus now, and more experimentation. ♦ (Project Syndicate)

(Dani Rodrik is professor of political economy at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.)

Fleeing from trouble, to trouble

CANBERRA - Dismissing scores from a leaked video showing a guard dragging an unconscious asylum seeker across a concrete floor have sparked calls for a commission of inquiry into conditions in Australia's refugee detention centres. At a rally outside the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) held earlier in Canberra last Wednesday, the Refugee Action Collective said that there had been a protest last Friday night and this was just the culmination of a series of incidents over the past months. The day before, a 12-year old Iranian child attempted to commit suicide, an Afghani man jumped off a roof into razor wire and two men cut their wrists. The protests at the Curtin detention centre in western Australia are believed to have erupted when asylum seekers grew frustrated at their inability to get phone access to external supporters. (PNS)

The new crusaders

WASHINGTON - Conservationists and campaigners from Guyana, Poland, Puerto Rico, Somalia, Thailand, and the Gwich'in indigenous tribe of North America were honoured Monday by the US-based Goldman Environmental Foundation with the \$125,000 Goldman Environmental Prize. Many, including Fatima Abrol, this year's winner from Africa, have had their lives threatened in their fight to protect the environment against powerful corporate interests. Abrol worked across land boundaries and through a civil war to establish Horn Relief, an organisation that conducts awareness campaigns about the ecological damage caused by unrestricted charcoal production. In Guyana, Jean La Rose, an Arawak woman, has also been harassed for working to stop mining on land claimed by indigenous communities and helping indigenous communities like Guyana's first land rights lawsuit in 1998. The Gwich'in tribe have been fighting for years against drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Pait Chamonon, the Asian heron, an ecologist from Thailand's Chanthaburi province, is fighting on the Malay Peninsula who works to protect coastal fisheries and mangrove swamps from logging, charcoal harvesting, and shrimp farming. The winner from Europe, Jadwiga Lopata, works to preserve and promote Poland's traditional May days. (PNS)

May Day

BERLIN - With the German economy just rising out of the doldrums and unemployment showing signs of slowing, the decision by the powerful metalworkers' union IG Metall to ballot for a strike action over a 6.5 percent pay rise seems questionable to many economists, politicians and employers' groups. A strike by the 2.6 million metalworkers, crucial to the automobile industry, which accounts for just over a fifth of total world production and one-third of Germany's own total industrial turnover—could bring prospects for an economic recovery in the EU's largest economy to a grinding halt. A strike could begin as early as 6 May, if members vote in favour. Employers are willing to offer a 5.5 percent wage rise to maintain the status quo.

The dispute is a problem for Germany and Chancellor Gerhard Schröder who faces elections in September, but also for the 15-nation European Union, which is looking to Germany, its largest economy, to attack sluggish growth. The European Central Bank says wage pressures are a risk to growth and likely to fuel inflation. Such bargaining in Germany affects the Euro zone, comprising Belgium, Austria, France, Finland, Luxembourg, Italy, Netherlands, Germany, Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain. High pay deals in Germany will force the ECB to cancel thoughts of interest rate cuts to push demand, an official said. IG Metall insists a substantial pay hike will stimulate domestic demand in the economy. (PNS)

Wanted: change of heart

by MUSAHAID HUSSAIN



Pakistan must stop putting all its eggs in the American basket.

ISLAMABAD - The opening of a European Union-Mediterranean Conference in Spain, this week marks the second major initiative by the EU in 2002 to move closer to a more broad-based, less US-centric foreign policy. The first was the EU-Organisation of Islamic Conference foreign ministers meeting in Istanbul in February.

For the first time in three decades, a distinct European foreign policy outlook is emerging, perhaps driven by the unilateral direction of the US war on terrorism. It suggests an independent approach on relations with issues concerning Muslims and the Islamic world. European sensitivity to Muslim concerns is evident from three key developments in the last week.

First, the decision of EU foreign ministers, meeting in Luxembourg last week, to send their highest foreign policy official, Javier Solana, next month to "see" Pakistan-India tensions over Kashmir. Like Palestine, this is an unresolved dispute that affects Muslims in the disputed state of Kashmir, in what is the first ever European diplomatic initiative of its kind toward South Asia.

Second, in a major public opinion poll released on 17 April by the *International Herald Tribune*, there was a wide gap in European and American perceptions regarding the Palestine-Israeli conflict. The overwhelming majority of French, British, German and Italian public opinion support the Palestinians against Israel, unlike the US where support for Israel runs two times more than empathy for the Palestinians.

Third, history is also catching up with Europe over crimes committed against Muslims in the

Bosnian conflict. On 16 April the Dutch government of Prime Minister Wim Kok tendered its resignation after the report of the July 1995 massacre in the Bosnian town of Srebrenica, where 7,500 Muslim men and boys were massacred by the Serbs under the watchful eyes of Dutch UN peacekeepers who failed to protect them, despite Srebrenica being declared a UN "safe haven". This is what is generally regarded as the worst atrocity in Europe since World War II.

Asian countries are sensitive to these changes in the political complexion of the region, together with the increasingly active role of China and an assertive Arab world, point to profound challenges to the world-view and policies of the "sole superpower", the United States, as it seeks to dictate a direction in the war on terrorism. ♦ (PNS)

But Pakistan prefers, as in the past, to put all its eggs in the American basket. From 1980, for the greater part of two decades, Pakistan had an Afghan-centric policy highlighted by the "joint jihad" with the Americans until 1989, when Washington ditched Pakistan after the Red Army's defeat and exit from Afghanistan. From 1989 to 2001 Pakistan tried to fashion its own Afghan policy, cutting off friends and replacing favourites, until it was stuck with the Taliban. The consequences for the Pakistan state, isolated from its friends in the region, were disastrous. Pakistan's relations with Russia illustrate of this mindset—prolonged rallies have targeted but Islamabad still treats Russia like a Cold War adversary. Russia's relations with former enemies like China and Iran have given after the break-up of the Soviet Union.

Fourth, the emergence of a policy of appeasement of American interests and objectives in the

region—some at variance with Pakistan's own interests—Islamabad needs to join the growing consensus among Europeans and Arabs on key issues. These include Palestine, the Israeli government's atrocities, and President George W. Bush's "axis of evil." And despite what UN Special Envoy Terje Roed-Larsen on 17 April denounced as a "morally repugnant...horrific" spectacle after the Israeli operation in Jenin, Bush the next day called Sharon "a man of peace".

No surprise then, perhaps, that Egypt's President Mubarak, a close US ally, declined to meet visiting US Secretary of State Colin Powell during his Cairo visit earlier this month. The yawning chasm between American policy toward the Muslim world and perceptions among Europeans and Muslims is likely to widen as the US seeks to expand the war on terrorism in the coming months, this time with possible action against Iraq.

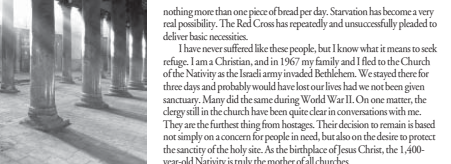
Pakistan needs to take cognisance of these developments and focus its diplomacy in Europe and the Arab world, to be in sync with its own interests, as well as Muslim opinion. The emergence of a European foreign policy, together with the increasingly active role of China and an assertive Arab world, point to profound challenges to the world-view and policies of the "sole superpower", the United States, as it seeks to dictate a direction in the war on terrorism. ♦ (PNS)

(Mushahid Hussain was Minister for Information in Nawaz Sharif's government.)

by HANNA NASSER

Starving in Bethlehem

An eyewitness account of the siege of the Church of the Nativity.



nothing more than one piece of bread per day. Starvation has become a very real possibility. The Red Cross has repeatedly and unsuccessfully pleaded to deliver basic necessities.

I have never suffered like these people, but I know what it means to seek refuge. I am a Christian, and in 1967 my family and I fled the Church of the Nativity at the Israeli army invaded Bethlehem. We stayed there for three days and probably would have lost our lives had we not been given sanctuary. Many did the same during World War II. One morning, the clergy still in the church have been quite clear in their conversations with me. They are the further thing from hostages. Their decision to remain is based not simply on a concern for people in need, but also on the desire to protect the sanctity of the holy site. At the headquarters of Jesus Christ, the 1,400-year-old Nativity is truly the mother of all churches.

Viable solutions to the stand-off exist. The innocent civilians in the church should be permitted to depart without detention by the military. Those for whom there is evidence of wrongdoing must stand trial in their home territory. Neither international law nor the UN Charter permits arbitrary extractions, so it is not an option to transfer the accused Palestinians to a military tribunal in Israel. Bethlehem can not wait. I entered municipal government in 1976 and I have been mayor for 5 years. This is the worst condition in which I've ever seen the city. The tanks have damaged buildings and mosques that are over 10 centuries old. For 16 months, tourism, the lifeblood of the city, has stagnated at the checkpoints. The municipal economy has lost \$220 million in the last year and a half. Unemployment is now over 70 percent. None of this even begins to measure the toll in human lives lost.

The siege of Bethlehem must end. Those inside the Church of the Nativity are not the only ones at risk of starvation. ♦ (PNS)

(Hanna Nasser, mayor of Bethlehem, wrote this comment with Dr. Hana Nasser, associate editor of the Washington DC-based *magazine Middle East Report*.)

Foreign cash in Indian media

New Delhi - The Indian government is reviewing a five-decade ban on foreign investment in print media, leaving a deferred decision to allow selective foreign direct investment (FDI) in non-news journals. Information and broadcasting ministry officials said the cabinet did not take up Wednesday the scheduled agenda of allowing 74 percent FDI in Indian editions of non-news scientific and technical journals, as it wanted to take a fresh look at the comprehensive policy. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pramod Mahajan told reporters that the government felt the issue needed to be discussed in a "comprehensive manner". The government reportedly wants to review a 1956 cabinet resolution banning any foreign investment in Indian print media. At the time, it was believed that allowing foreign participation in the sector would be inimical to India's interests. India's print media policy was primarily the cabinet decision disallowing foreign investment or any role of foreign players in this segment. Though a parliamentary standing committee recently upheld the resolution stating foreign participation in print media could compromise national security and sovereignty, a senior minister told IANS it was not binding on the government. (ANS)

Finally, aid for Taliban prisoners

SHEBERGAN - Two hours west of Mazar-i-Sharif, is the second largest prison for Taliban fighters. Last week, the Red Cross workers put up five giant white tents, designed to hold 128 men each, in the prison courtyard. Right away, they started emergency feeding of almost 100 prisoners who were chronically malnourished. Shebergan is the headquarters for General Abdul Rashid Dostum, an Uzbek warlord who controls much of northern Afghanistan. The local prison, which is run by his soldiers, houses more than 3,000 Taliban fighters who were captured in the first phase of the war when the city of Kunduz fell to the joint Northern Alliance-United States alliance last year. Some 800 are from the neighbouring country of Pakistan. A few alleged leaders were flown to the American base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba in January after interrogation by the US military, while 350 were released on the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha in February. Those who remained have been badly underfed and cells are overcrowded, with 50 men or more crammed into a cell. Doctors have died due to lack of medicine. The humanitarian operation follows months of pleas for help by the local Afghan military doctors who work in the tiny three-room infirmary here, designed to hold about eight patients. (PNS)

More weapons in South Asia

NEW DELHI - India's acquisition last month of sophisticated US-made military equipment symbolises the rapidly growing defence and security ties between New Delhi and Washington in the changed political climate after 11 September. The purchases include US-made fire-fighter control battery radars, capable of detecting enemy artillery guns and batteries and returning fire to neutralise them. New Delhi, reversing its anti-US stance under the right-wing, Bharatiya Janata Party government, was among the first to offer military support to the Afghan war. Though Washington preferred to look to its ally Pakistan, the US was grateful for India's support and Indo-US relations have changed from periodic policy reviews to an inflow of American military hardware. When officials from India's newly constituted Defence Procurement Board signed the deal for the ANTP-37 radar system built by Teles Raytheon Systems Corporation of California in Washington on 17 April, it was the first major Indo-US defence deal in over 40 years. It also reversed a policy that saw US sanctions imposed following New Delhi's 1986 nuclear tests. Negotiations for the anti-airfield radar—the absence of which was felt desperately by the army during the 1999 border war with Pakistan in disputed Kashmir—were called off after India's nuclear tests, which were matched by tests by Pakistan within days. (PNS)

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Peace prescription

Interview with Madhav Kumar Nepal, CPN-UMI, Chhapal, 28 April

What do the government and the Maoists need to do, to bail the country out of this crisis?

First of all, the Maoists have to end their violence and murder, particularly the madness and their attacks on electricity and telecom systems, drinking water, radio and postal infrastructures. Stop hitting basic infrastructures like health posts, bridges, ambulances, VDC buildings and stop looting food stores taken to the people. These acts are anti-people and anti-nation. Such activities don't increase popular support for the Maoists. Instead, people will begin to hate them more. Everyone has been appealing for an end to such acts, and we also repeatedly add our voice to the request.

The government also needs to make efforts to find a political solution to the problem. It should be careful not to make anti-constitutional moves that violate human rights. It has to end bad governance, corruption and irresponsibility, and try to win support from all sides to find a resolution. It must be capable of punishing those against whom corruption is alleged, or those who are already tainted. It must be open to take any path that could end the problems facing the country. It needs to be flexible and alert, and willing to make the changes needed, including amending the constitution.

You've even said that you are ready to mediate. What has been the reaction to that?

We said that if the circumstances were right, and it would help by doing so, we were even ready to mediate. We also appealed to the Maoists to help build an environment conducive to talks. We asked them to do two things—call off the five-day Nepal bandh and stop attacking physical infrastructure. They did neither. It is clear that they don't want to come to the table. They are being very unreasonable and uncaring.

Evidently, they are unwilling to listen to the wishes and requests of other political parties, the people and members of civil society. Government ministers have also been very irresponsible and gone about saying they don't care about talks, saying there is neither rhyme nor reason in that course of action... We have not given up yet. Instead of losing hope, we are trying to do our bit.



By Anand

More questions

Khangendra Sangraula in Kathmandu, 27 April

...Don't we need appropriate means to achieve something? Doesn't cruelty lead to more cruelty? Can a demonic mindset and mass destruction lead to the formation of a sound human civilisation?

But the Maoists don't have answers to the questions... They cannot listen to the requests, suggestions and advice of the political parties, citizens and the general public. It is as if they can only speak the language of ammunition. As if the experience brings in death and music in screams. As if destruction automatically means creation to them. As if their very wish, chaos itself leads to organisation. As if the screaming is, in their view, melodious.

There are some questions for the Maoists—have we now reached the limit to the gruesome acts that can be carried out in the name of Mao? Even if this peak of destruction means victory for the Maoists, what sort of reward will they be getting... they will have to pitch their tents on the ashes of this destruction and rule from there. Is this the goal of the current mass destruction and rampage?

One part of our society is what we know as government, which largely comprises people keen to take whatever they can while they are there. It has turned out to be a capable partner in the Maoist campaign of destruction and violence. The citizens seem to be trapped in the no man's land between the insurgency and counter-insurgency. On one side there are the Maoists, and on the other the government. The country has been abducted to a place of violence and counter-violence. And the citizens have become spectators... The prime minister, the leader of the ruling party and the main opposition are driving their Pajeros and Prados, glances averted as US troops with guns have begun to roam across the country. They went to Achham, Rolpa and Gorkha.

What, we worry?

Kishor Nepal in Godharia, 26 April

...The initiative taken by the leaders of the industry and commerce Rabi Baidya Shrestha and Rajesh Kaji Shrestha was commendable. It was the first time groups representing industry and commerce gathered at New Road to oppose the general strike. Still, the scene there did not open... It is a good sign that the industry and commerce sectors, which have been repeatedly subject to Maoist threats and demands for donations, have begun to stand up to terrorism. But despite these efforts, the large stores in the city did not open, while smaller storeskeepers kept their shutters partially open. The well-known Nanglo on Durbar Marg, the Bakery Café in Basantapur, the Tan Guan restaurant on New Road and the Kumari Restaurant on Putali Sadak were among those that were open. Besides these, many small stores and tea-stalls were open in the inner city and bylanes.

...The Maoists have severed communication with many districts. Even newspapers cannot reach districts that do not have air transport. All types of newspapers, big and small, were affected by the last general strike. Doesn't cruelty lead to more cruelty? Can a demonic mindset and mass destruction lead to the formation of a sound human civilisation?

But the Maoists don't have answers to the questions... They cannot listen to the requests, suggestions and advice of the political parties, citizens and the general public. It is as if they can only speak the language of ammunition. As if the experience brings in death and music in screams. As if destruction automatically means creation to them. As if their very wish, chaos itself leads to organisation. As if the screaming is, in their view, melodious.

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The gathering will be addressed by Grijya Prasad Koirala of the Nepal Congress, Madhav Kumar Nepal of the CPN-UMI, Surya Bahadur Thapa of the RPP, Badi Prasad Mandal of Nepal Sadbhavana Party, Naryan Man Bijukchhe of the Nepal Majdoor Kisan Party, Chitra Bahadur KC.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Maoist leader Badal misused the education he received in Russia."

— Russian Ambassador Valery Vartanovich Nazarov in Rajdhani on 30 April. (Maoist military commander Ram Bahadur Thapa, alias Badal, obtained a bachelor's degree from Russia.)



Above: Valuable doctors
Below: Worthless doctors

of the Ratnaya Juna Morcha and Anik Sechan of the United People's Front. For two days before the public meeting, the leaders of all the political parties participating will tour the Valley in open-roofed vehicles to appeal to the people to participate on May 10. The all-party meeting held on 30 April at the central office of the Nepali Congress directed their workers to initiate activities to urge the general public to participate in the meeting, and all seven parties have been collective and individual preparations to do so.

"Kathmandu's public has always stood up for truth, justice and development. We want to tell them that the rights won through the successful People's Movement of 1990 are being targeted and that Nepal's sovereignty is being threatened. It is important to convince the people that the political parties which headed the 1990 movement are again united to oppose the attack on democracy," said Krishna Gopal Shrestha of the CPN-UMI, after the meeting. Shrestha further added that the constitution of parties expects an overwhelming response, with conscious and justice-loving members of the public participating to oppose the conspiracy against the people's rights and democracy.

The next all-party meeting is scheduled for 5 May. A four-point agenda has been fixed for the all-party public meeting on 10 May:

- Protect the achievements made through the 1990 People's Movement;
- protect the country from all forms of extremism;
- protect the violence, murder and terrorism;
- move ahead for progress and change.

Talking heads

Charanjay Master in his satire club on Radio Sagarmatha, 26 April.

Last week all Nepalis were shown, on television, the most recent pictures of Maoist leaders, and were told that they were crooks. The security forces told us: take a good look at these guys, because we have been looking all over for them, but we can't find them.



them. Have you seen any of them? We all dutifully took a long look at them. Baburam comes across like he is a leaver and meener without his beard. Comrade Prachanda has interestingly said a midriff. It was developed to see how the appearance of our revolutionaries has changed over the years.

Anyway, on Tuesday we are told that Chakra Prasad Bastola has taken a letter from Grijya Prasad Koirala and delivered it personally to Dr Baburam in Noida under New Delhi. Huh! Then on Wednesday the government announces a Rs 50 lakh reward for the capture of Dr Baburam and Comrade Prachanda, dead or alive. There is also half that amount for anyone that gives information leading to the arrest of the two. So, that basically makes Chakraji eligible for Rs 25 lakhs since he knows where Dr Baburam is hiding.

Riddle: If you are asking for their heads, then why take if they are talking, then why not deliver their heads?

That's not all. The army is also offering a reward of 15-26 May. He follows in the footsteps of Liv Ullmann, Francis Ford Coppola, Clint Eastwood and Martin Scorsese, whose Gangs of New York has been tipped to open next year. Lynch is a Cannes favourite. —Widit H. Hear was the Palme d'Or in 1990, and last year Molluscan Drive was his best director. Sharon Stone and Michelle Yeoh, of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon fame, will sit on the jury with Indonesian actor Christine Hakim, and director Claude Miller, Regis Wargnier, Raul Ruiz, Walter Salles and Bill August.

American films are the most interesting competition selections this year. Alexander Payne, whose Election catapulted him to the front rank of US film-making, has a new film, About Schmidt, in competition. This is a novel adaptation, and provides Jack Nicholson with a powerhouse role as a widower in his 60s. There's a Cannes debut for another bright hope of American cinema, Paul Thomas Anderson, whose follow-up to Magnolia is Punch-Drunk Love, a romantic comedy with Adam Sandler and Emily Watson. The festival also features Michael Moore's his anti-gun lobby documentary Bowling for Columbine.

After last year's total shut-out of British directors from the main competition, this year the selectors have fitted in three British productions (I told you we've seen since the four that made it in 1999)—Mike Leigh's All or Nothing, Ken Loach's Sweet Sixteen, Michael Winterbottom, a previous competitor with Wonderland and Welcome to Sarajevo, takes his 24 Hour Party People.

Returnees from 2001 include Russian cinema's standard bear Alexander Sokurov, who follows his Lenin biopic Tsar's with a 90-minute, single-shot tribute to Leningrad's Hermitage museum. Israeli director Amos Gitai's Kedma examines Jewish immigration into Israel on the eve of the 1948 War of Independence. David Cronenberg's Spider adds Patrick McGoohan's London-set novel about a schizophrenic, with Ralph Fiennes in the lead. Other international cinema standbys include Iranian Abbas Kiarostami (10), Belgian brothers Jean-Pierre and Luc Béraud (11), South Korean Im Kwon-taek (Strike of Fire), and Portuguese neorealist Manoel de Oliveira



Sushila Koirala

Back at Sundarilal >10

"Revealing myself to myself."

Into his third week at Sundarilal Jail, BP Koirala writes lovingly about his wife Sushila (left). He misses her and worries about her. He also analyses the prison world and the predictability of its rituals. He is introspective, asking why he writes this diary, and decides it is a discovery of the self. Every fortnight, Nepali Times brings you transcripts of BP's diary entries handwritten in English.

16 January

There is no day when I don't remember Sushila. I make sentimental journey to her in Varanasi when we would be taking tea in the morning or in the afternoon. In vacant hours, which are many in a day, she is recalled to my mind. I have left her unprotected. She is a weak girl, needs constant attention and care and love, otherwise she will wilt, like a rare orchid in an unpropitious weather. She has at the same time a very high sense of honour. This combination—state of defencelessness combined with a sense of honour—is a most tragic situation in which she finds herself in my absence. She will now rely upon her God more desperately and cling to her dancing with greater tenacity. I pray, that her God and dancing will save her till I am with her again. I will look after her properly after I am released. She used to tell me that I don't love her enough, that I only take care of her, I being a conscientious man. On the day when I was leaving

for Kathmandu she said in a low voice that if I loved her I wouldn't have decided to go to Kathmandu—to jail. You are wrong dear Sushila. I may not love you enough, enough to satisfy you wholly, but I love you all right. I am not merely performing my duty. I derive happiness from caring for you, from being with you, from just holding your hand. I will not say that my decision to return to Nepal is my way of loving you, my politics is not a reinforcement of my love, a reaffirmation of it. I admit it is some kind of a rival to it. My dear, my political commitments have got to be met. It is a question of the whole lot of Nepalis and my personal honour. Please understand me.

I hope everybody will look after her. The new residence is in a convenient location. She can go to the friends and relations. Nani with her children will enliven her. Gradually she will start facing the situation normally. After all, time makes one get used to everything. Her health is what is worrying me. Let her survive till I get out.

17 January

Jail is a private world within the public world. The surrounding walls not only cut off physically the small area which is then made a jail, from the wider world, they also create a tiny world of the land they enclose—a world with its own rhythm, style and patterns. The most important physical aspect of the pattern of this world is its regularity, or almost punctuality of its events. All important events happened at the appointed hours. Prisoners' bodies get attuned to this rhythm—regularity. If you don't see crowds in the tree at 12:15 PM or the rat (we have a shaggy rat here) at 6 PM or the rhodini bird early in the morning at the corner of the slanting roof or in the evening gambling on the ground, or don't

hear the hoisting of the pair of owls in the evening—you feel that the rhythm of the jail life is violently disturbed. And we start commencing, if our food is not brought at the three appointed hours punctually—if it is delayed by a few minutes, GM immediately puts into rhythm and you can set your watch by the successive activities he does at successive hours punctually to the second.

I can't do it—I am always out of step with its rhythm, hence my jail life harder to bear. Apart from the physical world that the boundary walls create, they create a psychological world also—a world inside the mind of the prisoner. Here I am taken over by this world. The moment I step inside the boundary walls, became moody, introspective, melancholy, sentimental, emotional, remorseful, etc etc. That is why in jail I am regular in writing diaries. Since jail's isolation doesn't permit a prisoner to record in his diary the events happening to him in the physical world, his jail diaries are records of his mental states—mostly they are discovery of the self through introspective analyses of his actions. By reminiscing, by reliving the past events of his life and analysing his reactions to them, he reveals himself to himself. Mostly, jail introspection and reminiscences [sic] are reminders of his shortcomings, of where he faulted or fell short of, of his own valued estimation. You start paying a ransom for your thoughtless actions, for your lack of understanding of other people's ease, for your haughtiness and arrogance. Perhaps this catharsis will do good ultimately to the man in prison.



Can't wait for Cannes

David Lynch heads the jury at the 55th Cannes Film Festival from 15-26 May. He follows in the footsteps of Liv Ullmann, Francis Ford Coppola, Clint Eastwood and Martin Scorsese, whose Gangs of New York has been tipped to open next year. Lynch is a Cannes favourite. —Widit H. Hear was the Palme d'Or in 1990, and last year Molluscan Drive was his best director. Sharon Stone and Michelle Yeoh, of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon fame, will sit on the jury with Indonesian actor Christine Hakim, and director Claude Miller, Regis Wargnier, Raul Ruiz, Walter Salles and Bill August.

American films are the most interesting competition selections this year. Alexander Payne, whose Election catapulted him to the front rank of US film-making, has a new film, About Schmidt, in competition. This is a novel adaptation, and provides Jack Nicholson with a powerhouse role as a widower in his 60s. There's a Cannes debut for another bright hope of American cinema, Paul Thomas Anderson, whose follow-up to Magnolia is Punch-Drunk Love, a romantic comedy with Adam Sandler and Emily Watson. The festival also features Michael Moore's his anti-gun lobby documentary Bowling for Columbine.

After last year's total shut-out of British directors from the main competition, this year the selectors have fitted in three British productions (I told you we've seen since the four that made it in 1999)—Mike Leigh's All or Nothing, Ken Loach's Sweet Sixteen, Michael Winterbottom, a previous competitor with Wonderland and Welcome to Sarajevo, takes his 24 Hour Party People.

Returnees from 2001 include Russian cinema's standard bear Alexander Sokurov, who follows his Lenin biopic Tsar's with a 90-minute, single-shot tribute to Leningrad's Hermitage museum. Israeli director Amos Gitai's Kedma examines Jewish immigration into Israel on the eve of the 1948 War of Independence. David Cronenberg's Spider adds Patrick McGoohan's London-set novel about a schizophrenic, with Ralph Fiennes in the lead. Other international cinema standbys include Iranian Abbas Kiarostami (10), Belgian brothers Jean-Pierre and Luc Béraud (11), South Korean Im Kwon-taek (Strike of Fire), and Portuguese neorealist Manoel de Oliveira

(The Uncertainty Principle). The star of the competition is Roman Polanski, whose Waseen Ghetto—the Pianist looks an early favourite for the Palme d'Or. The race-of-competition screenings look promising: Woody Allen's Hollywood Ending makes the opening, a 20-minute segment of Gangs of New York will be aired, and Robert Evans' documentary, The Kid Stays in the Picture gets a European premiere.

Films in competition:
Punch-Drunk Love, Paul Thomas Anderson, US
Bowling for Columbine, Michael Moore, US
About Schmidt, Alexander Payne, US
Demolisher, Olivier Assayas, France
Inevitable, Gaspar Noé, France
L'Adversaire, Nicole Garcia, France
Marie-Jo et ses deux amours, Robert Guedes, France
L'Or de Religione, Marco Bellocchio, Italy
Spider, David Cronenberg, Canada
De Filis, Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Belgium

Kedma, Amos Gitai, Israel
Chivasone, Im Kwon-taek, South Korea
Unknown Pleasures, Li Zhang Ke, China
The Man Without a Past, Ali Kaurimaki, Finland
10. Albus Kaurimaki, Iran
All or Nothing, Mike Leigh, Britain
Sweet Sixteen, Ken Loach, Britain
24-Hour Party People, Michael Winterbottom, Britain
O Principio da Inerteza, Manoel de Oliveira, Portugal
The Pianist, Roman Polanski, France
Russian Ark, Alexander Sokurov, Russia
Intervention Divine, Elia Suleiman, Palestinian
Films showing out of competition:

Hollywood Ending, Woody Allen, US (opening film)
Adams, Luc and Gertie, Claude Lelouch, France (closing film)
Spirit, Kelly Asbury and Loren Coates, United States
Dezas, Anam Eyyan, Canada
Chelada, Fernando Meirelles, Brazil
Munder by Numbers, Brad Schneider, France

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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITION

- Paintings from Bangladesh by Khalid Mahmood Mithu and Kanak Chandra Chakma. Until 5 May, 11AM-6PM, except Saturdays, Siddhartha Art Gallery, 41122
- Paris—city of lights: Exhibition of photographs. 30 April-9 May, 9AM-6PM, except Saturday at the Alliance Française, Thapathali, opposite Rotary Club. Organised by the French Embassy and Alliance Française.
- Synthesis of tarai art by SC Suman. 8AM-6PM, until 5 May, Indigo Gallery, Naxal, 413580

EVENTS

- Mahendra Narayan Memorial Day Rastriya Sabha Gria, 3 May, 1 PM
- Workshop on Presentation Skills and Public Speaking at ELD, 9-10 May. Details at www.eld.org.uk, eld@wlink.com, 524202
- World Press Freedom Day forum on Right to Information: Constitutional Provisions and Practices. The Everest hotel, all day, 3 May, registration starts 9AM. Organised by the Nepal Press Institute, Press Council Nepal, Federation of Nepalese Journalists and UNESCO.
- Endodontic Workshop by Dr Richard Moore, USA, Hotel Yak & Yeti, 4 May, 8AM-6PM, for more information contact Dr Neil Pande, CDE-Nepal, National Dental Hospital, www.smilenepal.com
- New dates - Festival of War based on episodes of the Mahabharata. Annual drama production of Studio 7, 3/4/5/10/11/12 May at the Nagya Theatre, Hotel Vajra, duration 1hr 15 min. Tea and show Rs 700, reduced student tickets available, vajra@mos.com.np, 271545
- Sixties and seventies night Buffet dinner and dance party. 4 May, 7PM, Rs 699, La'soon Restaurant and Vinotheque, Pulchowk.
- Nepal Education and Book Fair 2002 Discount on academic and general books, study abroad information, on-the-spot admission to foreign universities and colleges, career guidance, contests and more. 3-11 May, Bhrikuti Mandap exhibition hall.
- Planete Enfants World Peace Cup Football tournament for street children in Kathmandu to promote child rights. Jawahar Grounds, 4 May, qualifiers kick-off 8AM, semi-finals 1PM, finals 4PM. Planete Enfants and South, 524217, 411078

MUSIC

- Club Rumba Latin band, salsa food until midnight. Early bird discounts between 8-9.30PM, buy one, get one free, Hotel Shangri-La, 412999
- Dineesh & Pemba Live every Friday 7PM-9PM, Himalatale Cafe, Thamel, 262526
- Down Memory Lane Teesta plays tunes from the 50s to the 90s, Wednesday nights, Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, 491234
- Live music by Catch 22, Friday nights at the 40,000 1/2 ft Bar, Rum Doodle Restaurant, Thamel, 414336

DRINK

- Beer Mug Club Talk beer, drink beer. Monday nights, Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, 491234
- Metro of Malt Single malt Scotch exhibition. Shot on the rocks, or 12 single malts economically packaged for Rs 999. Pura Bar, Hotel Yak & Yeti, 248989
- Classic teas Thirty teas including all Dilmah Tea's herbal, greens, blacks and Oologs. Also Ilam, Darjeeling, Makabari and more. The Coffee Shop, Hotel de l'Annapurna.

FOOD

- Friday Night Sekewa with live music by Himalayan Feelings. Rs 555 net per person, Rs 1,010 nett per couple, Dwarika's Hotel, 479488
- The new Roadhouse Cafe Completely redesigned with separate bar seating and coffee bar. Original Mediterranean specialties, and wood-fired pizzas coming soon. The Roadhouse Cafe, Thamel, 479488
- Krishnanarayan Restaurant Six-16 courses of ceremonial Nepali cuisine in authentic setting. Dwarika's Hotel, 479488
- Weekend Brunch Rs 350 per head, special package available with bowling, Oriental and continental lunch or dinner by the pond, 1905 Boardwalk, Kantipath, 252272
- Saturday Live Buffet with unlimited draught beer and live music by the Rusty Nails. The Fun Cafe, Radisson Hotel, 11.30AM-2.30PM, Saturdays, 411818
- Authentic Thai food Everyday at Yin Yang Restaurant, 425510
- Paddy Foley's Irish Pub A wide range of drinks and food. Live music on Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday nights, 416096

GETAWAYS

- White rhododendron getaway at the Horseshoe Resort in Mude, three hours from Kathmandu. Two days of rhododendron walks in forests, package tours at \$30 per day, all meals and sauna included. Email: resort@horseshoe.wlink.com.np
- The Great Godavari Getaway Special weekend packages including room with breakfast and dinner, 25 percent discount on health club facilities, Godavari Village Resort, 506075
- Chiso Chiso Hawana Summer package with two days, one night with breakfast, dinner, transportation and activities. Rs 1,500 per person with twin-sharing. For Nepalis and expats only. Call Himalaya Nepal, 414432, 680083
- Overnight packages including TGIF from \$99 per couple at Dwarika's Hotel, 479488
- Taste the difference Cose Nepal-style home on an organic farm in Gamcha, south of Thimi. Up to Rs 1,200 per person per night including meals, saas@wlink.com.np
- Shivapuri Heights Cottage 30 minutes from Kathmandu, staff guides to monastery, peak and reserve. Rs 1850 per person with dinner and breakfast, Rs 925 per child 5-14 years, children under five free. info@escapetonepal.com

For inclusion in the listing send information to editors@nepalitimes.com

NEPALI WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The wet days are nearly over, but isolated thunderstorms will still strike without warning late afternoons next week. Reason: the prevalent northwesterly front is being replaced by a low pressure system bringing winds from the southwest. This will raise daytime temperatures, suck in the yellow dust from the Indian desert into Kathmandu, reducing visibility. The higher temperatures will also activate mountain convection systems and trigger storms along the southern slopes of the Himalaya.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
29-14	30-16	29-16	29-15	30-16

YAK YETI YAK

by MIKU



BOOKWORM

Taking the Kalachakra Initiation Alexander Benzin
New Lion Publications, Ithaca, New York, 1997
Rs 1,065

Kalachakra is the highest tantric practice to overcome the limitations imposed by historical, astrological and biological cycles. Benzin explains in everyday language the theory, the views, commitments and their implications, the factors relevant in deciding if one is ready to attend as an active participant, and the most important thoughts and feelings for participants and observers at each step of empowerment.

Secrets of the Blue Cliff Record: Zen Comments by Hakuin and Tenkei Tomoko Clary, trans. Shambhala Publications, Boston, 2000. Rs 2,465

The commentaries of Hakuin and Tenkei in this volume are important not only because of the renown and historical importance of the two masters, not only because of the rare scholarship they bring to the task, but because of their penetrating Zen perspectives. The question of Zen meaning, rather than literary criticism or academic analysis, is the crux of their tasks as expositors.

Changing Mindful Contributions to the Study of Buddhism and Tibet: In Honour of Jeffrey Hopkins Jay Newland, ed. Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca, New York, 2001. Rs 2,465

Hopkins' contributions as a scholar and teacher make him an 'opener of the way' in the academic study of Tibetan Buddhism. The essays in this tribute volume deal with, among others, notions of ethics, the meaning of 'foundational consciousness', prose and poetry on the path, authorship and literary production in classical Buddhist Tibet and perspectives on Buddhism from psychoanalytic object relations theory.

Born in Lhasa: The Autobiography of Nangyal Dhamo Taktia
Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca, New York, 2001. Rs 1,230

In this evocative narrative, the author, who is married to a brother of the Dalai Lama, recounts his life in Tibet before the Chinese invasion—in private households as well as public places. She describes her education in India and under the Chinese in Tibet, her life in Europe overseeing secretment projects, her education in the US and her emotional return to India, where she served in the cabinet of the Government-in-Exile.

Courtesy: Mandala Book Point, Kantipath, 227711, mandala@ccsl.com.np

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CULTURE

The curious reader

Take time out this week to see what's happening in the world of books.



ALOK TUMBHAHANGPHEY

Y ou are in the corner with the glasses. Yes, you with your head stuck in a book. It's time to venture out. Starting today, bookworms and aspiring students of all hues will be found prowling around the annual Nepal Education and Book Fair at the Bishnu Mandap Exhibition Hall. The fair, which last year attracted 50,000 visitors, displayed close to one million titles and generated some Rs 1 billion in revenue, is one of the biggest crowd-pullers in this city where bibliophiles have a place to indulge their guilty pleasure on such a large scale.

When the fair was first held in 1997, there were only 47 participants from Nepal, India and the UK, mainly from the education sector. The organisers, Global Exposition and Information Service (GEMS), were in for a bit of a surprise—the turnout wasn't quite what they'd expected. In 1999, GEMS teamed up with the National Bookellers and Publishers Association of Nepal (NBPAN) and together they managed to entice major bookellers from Nepal and India to put their goods on display. There were 40,000 visitors in 1998, compared with the 30,000 who came the previous year, and the participants were pleased to be associated with what was turning out to be a solid annual event.

As any regular at the fair, and they'll tell you the reason it works is the combination of things on offer. There's an enormous diversity of textbooks, academic treatises, art books, children's literature and plain old fiction. Add to that the burgeoning number of stalls that dispense advice and application forms to feed the hunger of young Kathmanduans to get an education, and you have a winning combination.

This year there will be 142 participants—59 in the book section

and 83 in the education and career section. The book section will include international names such as the Cambridge University Press, Orient Longman, Addison-Wesley Longman, the Krishnamurti Foundation and Macmillan India. Nepali standbys like Rama Pustak Bhandaar, Hindal Books, Eka Books and Mandala Book Point, and even INGOs like WWF Nepal, WFP, UNICEF and the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation. As with most events this year, the spotlight will be on mountain issues. The pavilion of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development will include participants from various related sectors from around the world.

Colleges, universities, and other educational institutions from India, USA, Malaysia, Australia, Switzerland, UK and Canada, and career counselling organisations from Nepal will be looking to lure young students to study abroad. There will also be plenty of IT institutions, such as Singapore's ATIS Information Technology Institute, Apex, Pentafost, and Manjuli IT Education.

The fair will be held from 3-11 May, but the education and career section will only run until 6 May. Tickets for the exhibition are Rs 10 per head and students get 50 percent off if they are in school uniform or have valid ID.

The fair is not without problems. In most parts of the world, merchandise is meant for exhibitors and fairs get up and day breaks. But there's no such incentive in Nepal. The economics of book fairs, exports and imports simply haven't been sorted out. There isn't a clearly defined policy, so publishers from overseas have to go through a time-consuming procedure at customs where each bill is verified and the part of the consignment being returned is counted down, one by one. Nepali

book exporters are also not provided any facilities to make their job easier. Under existing laws, books and hardware are in the same category. The Nepal diaspora in north-east and north-west India is a rich potential market, but because books do not come under the Open General Licence (OGL) regulations, the foreign currency restrictions make imports and exports tedious.

Sanshodh Chettri of GEMS says the basic point is that this fair is not just a profit-making venture. "Visitors may not necessarily buy books or enroll in the colleges, but at least they have access to an array of information." Says Madhav Dangol of Mandala Book Point, which has been involved with the fair since 1998, "An increase in visitors need not necessarily mean monetary profit for us. There is hardly any profit in organising these events. Our concern is that we hope this will help develop a reading habit among Nepalis, that it will open their minds to a whole new world."

The NBPAN is already working on that with its associations from the SAARC region. The idea, which they developed last year, was to organise an annual book fair with support from the SAARC Book Development Council in New Delhi. The plan is that each SAARC country will host the book fair on a rotation basis, and the other six countries will participate with a good selection. All publishers will be requested to donate a display copy to the SAARC library. The NBPAN also envisions promoting co-production, joint authorship, and the sale of subsidiary rights. If all goes according to plan, they anticipate that the regulations governing cross-border trade of books will be made less cumbersome. The first SAARC book fair will take place in September this year in Dhaka. ♦

Books to buy

Spy on the Roof of the World Sydney Wignall Penguin Books India, New Delhi, 2002 Rs 472

The author's 1950s climbing expedition to the Himalaya turned out to be a life-threatening adventure that involved the Chinese and Indian governments at the highest level. Betrayed by one of the many spies operating on Nepal's border with Tibet, his group was captured by the People's Liberation Army. Their subsequent escape over the Himalaya in mid-winter is one of mountaineering's great epics.

Women War and Peace in South Asia Rita Manchanda Sage Publications, New Delhi 2001 Rs 472

This volume challenges the centrality of men's experiences and theorisations of conflict in South Asia from Kashmir to Sri Lanka, Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts to tribal conflicts in Assam and Nagaland, and Nepal's Maoist insurgency. It focuses on women's experiences as representing alternative and non-violent ways of negotiating the construction of conflicting identities and on women's conceptions that privilege the notion of a 'just peace'.

Mother Sister Daughter: Nepal's Press Sanchika Samuha, Kathmandu, 2002 Rs 325

This collection of newspaper articles from English-language newspapers and translated from the Nepali-language press focuses on how society sanctions inequality and cultural control, and how this affects women's health, discrimination and violence. It also showcases stories of women empowering themselves, and first-person accounts and opinion pieces on gender issues.

Dangerous Wives and Sacred Sisters: Social and Symbolic Roles of High-Caste Women in Nepal Lynn Bennett Mandala Book Point and Columbia University Press, Kathmandu, 1983/2002.

Rs 800

Bennett, a developmental anthropologist, examines the social construction of gender among Bahun and Chhetri Hindus in rural Nepal. Through a detailed examination of the social, mythic and ritual structures that shape the interaction between men and women, this study reveals the symbolic roots of women's power and the complex social institutions, norms and beliefs that seek to contain that power and direct it to perpetuate the patrilineal group.

Stayed Alive: Memories of Women in Prison Durga Ghimire Jagdish Ghimire Kathmandu, 2000, Rs 350

The Dreadful Night: Carnage at Nepalese Royal Palace Aditya Man Shrestha Kathmandu, 2000, Rs 500

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Harassed to suicide in Bangladesh

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On news stands now!

NT predicts the bestsellers at this year's book fair

Why Men Don't Listen and Women Cant Read Maps Allan and Barbara Peasne Manjuli Publishing House, Bhopal, 2001 Rs 312

The controversial book that suggests that though of the same species, men and women live in different worlds, in part because their brains perceive things in different ways and their chemical make-up is radically different. The authors say they focus on different things, talk and listen differently and have very varied abilities with understanding space—all of which has an impact on love, sexuality and relationships.

*"Kay Gardeko?": The Royal Massacre in Nepal Prakash A Raj Rupa & Co New Delhi 2001, Rs 200

My Quest for the Yeti: Confronting the Himalayas Deepest Mystery Reinhold Messner Macmillan London, 2000 Rs 1,500

Staying Alive: Memories of Women in Prison Durga Ghimire Jagdish Ghimire Kathmandu, 2000, Rs 350

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Stay



Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

Idiot-proof idioms

For be it from me to cock my snook at all of you there who think this country has come to a grinding halt, but having just attended a three-day national-level seminar-cum-workshop at the Himalayan Hotel on the theme "Participatory Approaches to Figures of Speech in Post-Industrial Journalism: Retrospect and Prospect", we now know that there is still hope for some of our old and tired clichés.

Many intrepid editors are rescuing some of these hackneyed phrases and idioms from their dustbins of history, restoring them to daily headlines and thereby giving them a clean chit so that we, the readers, can take up the gauntlet and carry coals to Newcastle. In other words, the point I am trying to make here is that we are talking in terms of eating humble pie (or, god forbid, robbing Peter to pay Paul), even if we have to pass the hat around while trying to tie the Gordian knot betwixt Scylla and Charybdis.

For those of you who in high school never had to memorise the textbook, The Student's Companion by Wilfred D Best, I take the liberty of presenting below a sample of my favourite figurative expressions (with examples of usage). I know that it may be looking for a needle in a haystack after casting pearls to swine, but this brief guide is essential to make head and/or tail of today's newspaper headlines and I hope my valued clients will take it in the spirit that a stitch in time will save nine. Yes, you may take notes:

"A rolling stone gathers no moss."

Never quite been able to figure that one out, but I think it has something to do with keeping the balls rolling in your court.

Eg: Decades after leaving the Rolling Stones, it suddenly occurred to Mick Jagger that he hadn't yet gathered Kate Moss.

"A bad beginning makes a good ending."

Correct me if I am wrong, children, but I think it means that a homework well begun is half-done.

Eg: After he jumped the gun in the 100 m dash, Phanindra was overheard muttering to himself that bad beginning made good endings.

"If wishes were horses, beggars would ride."

This is my all-time favourite, and I use it every chance I get. Eg: After receiving a request for 19 helicopters, Minister Mahat said off the record: 'How the hell am I going to pay for them?'

"Zeal without knowledge is a runaway horse."

As you can see, horses are a recurring theme in English proverbs.

Eg: A beggar would put his or her cart before a runaway horse with zeal if he or she had his or her wish.

"A bird in hand is worth two in the bush."

I love this one. It means the little one possesses is worth more than what one is likely to obtain.

Eg: As night fell, the poacher realised that the rhino horn in his rucksack was worth two that were still attached to their owners.

"Too many cooks spoil the broth."

From personal experience I know that this is not true. If it were, I would be able to make up a mean sweet and sour apricot duck all by myself. But I can't. I need a roomful of helpers.

Eg: Fifteen heads in the kitchen are better than one.

"At wit's end."

This one exactly describes my feeling at this very moment.

Eg: As he got ready to hang his hat, this columnist was at his wit's end as to how to stir a home's nest with a bee in his bonnet, as well as cock his snook at a blot on the escutcheon.

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NEPALI SOCIETY

Citizen Bharat

Call him Mr Daura Surwal and he just smiles. For Bharat Basnet, Nepal's national dress is a tailor-made mission statement. Even the fabric says something—it isn't some imported synthetic material, but handspun kagali woven by Nepal's hill women. "What's the use of extolling the virtues of good old Nepal to tourists if we don't practice what we preach?" asks the award-winning tourism entrepreneur and environmentalist.

Depending on how you look at it, Bharat Basnet is either a vanishing breed, or a pioneer in the renaissance of Nepal's culture and a new eco-consciousness. But most of all, he doesn't just sit around like so many of us, moaning about how dirty the streets are, or how polluted the air is. He does something about it. And it isn't just his Explore Nepal Group's much-imitated

eco-friendly, traditional Kanipur Temple House, Bhojan Griha, or Koshi Tappu Wildlife Camp. Walk around Tundikhel on any given day and chances are you'll see Bharat and his staff with surgical masks on their faces, brooms in hand, cleaning the green.

When he saw the mounting piles of garbage and litter at Tundikhel, Bharat took it as a personal affront. He got the Kathmandu Metropolitan City to allow his volunteer group to clean it up. After they finished with the grunt-work on the grass, they even cleaned up the painted old statues of Paras on horses. There are now signs everywhere reminding people that Tundikhel is a litter-free zone.

Bharat would not leave even Mayor Keshav Shitpath alone until the KMC stopped using Tundikhel as a garbage dump.

"People have to learn to be responsible themselves and stop gaping at the authorities every time something needs to be done," he says passionately. All things considered, the municipality took the rebuke pretty well—they recently awarded Explore Nepal their annual Environment Prize.

This isn't Bharat's first campaign. Explore Nepal helped throw out the diesel dinosaurs called Vikram Tempcos, cleaned up the Valley's parks, and launched an anti-plastic bag campaign. Twenty-two years ago when he came to the capital from Khotang, Bharat had his sights set firmly on a college degree. He got that and more. Today he's much more than just a successful entrepreneur; he's a model citizen.



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