



June 1, 2001 page 8-9

ONE YEAR LATER

King Gyanendra balances his constitutional role with the need to help sort out the country's political crisis from behind-the-scenes.

KUNDA DIXIT
One year after his ascension to the throne following the massacre of nearly his entire family, King Gyanendra has had to overcome a deep personal tragedy while working discreetly behind the scenes to seek a way out of the country's political tumult.

Public figures who have met him in the past year told us in interviews that King Gyanendra seems acutely aware of the constitutional limitations to his authority as well as his persisting public image problem. But, they say, the king is impatient to get the country back on track.

Given the bleak and sorrow of one year ago, His Majesty has managed to come out of it, and he has played a very positive role," said one close royal relative. "But he really misses his family, and there are very few left who he can confide in."

King Gyanendra is said to be much more informal than his brother in family gatherings, and consults closely with Queen Mother Rama. Royal sources say Queen Koral has had a harder time. She lost her sister Queen Aishwarya on 1 June, and was seriously wounded by a bullet near her heart. The third sister, Princess Preksha, died in a helicopter crash on Lake Rara in November.

The king meets political leaders regularly, and aides say he tries to steer them towards transcending personal or party grievances and think of the national interest instead. Sources confirmed that at times King Gyanendra shows signs of personal frustration at the political infighting and factionalism that continue despite a serious national crisis. But they denied that he had any intention of

taking the country back to the days of autocratic monarchs. One close aide told us: "You get the sense that His Majesty is keen to influence change within constitutional limits."

Interviewees agreed that King Gyanendra shares his brother Birendra's breadth of knowledge about the Nepal polity, and shows a willingness to listen. But they confirm that King Gyanendra is a much more decisive person. An example is the palace's formal endorsement of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's decision to dissolve parliament last week. The Prime Minister met the king at 9:45 PM, and the public announcement was made within two hours.

Public figures who have met the king say the 55-year-old monarch has already sketched a vision for Nepal in his mind, and the steps that need to be taken to get out of the political mess. "He does not tell us everything," said one close confidante. "He listens keenly, but keeps his decisions pretty much to himself."

King Gyanendra also brings with him his business experience. Some manifestations of his managerial skills may become more visible after 20 June, the astrological date when he officially comes out of the mourning period. His diary is already filling up: the royal visit to India is scheduled for 24-30 June, he returns to Nepal for his birthday on 7 July, and soon after will head off to China.

It is no secret that former prime minister Gijya Prasad Koirala had a strained relationship with the palace and the army. King Gyanendra appears to get along better with Sher Bahadur Deuba, which has prompted Koirala to publicly accuse Deuba of

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From right to left at the Ghode Jans ceremony on 12 April: Queen Koral, King Gyanendra, Prime Minister Deuba and (standing) Chief of Army Staff, General Prajwal S Rana.

officials say they see a clear link between political instability and poor governance.

Concluded one insider: "We are very much aware that the donors

don't trust this government to handle any money. And the international community will also not look very kindly towards an autocratic takeover at this point." ♦

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CK Lal p2
A year after

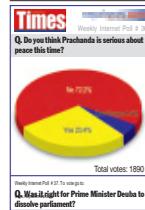
EXCLUSIVE

The mess we're in

It's even worse than we thought. The Central Bureau of Statistics says GDP growth this year will be 0.84 percent—the lowest ever in the past 20 years. The main culprit is political instability which has hit investment, trade, and tourism. Bad weather also affected harvests, which would have otherwise cushioned the impact. Growth in agricultural GDP will be only 1.72 percent, about a third of last year.

Manufacturing is looking even worse, taking a near six percent plunge. Carpet and garment exports are down by a quarter. As if all this weren't bad enough, revenue is down. "At best we may collect Rs 50 billion," a Finance Ministry source told us. This is far short of projections of Rs 60 billion, and will barely cover recurrent expenses. The only silver lining seems to be overseas remittances.

With parliament dissolved, the budget will be passed by ordinance, and donors are worried government may overspend. Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba told donors this week he was counting on them. He is asking for \$100 million as budgetary support, and another \$150 million for rehabilitation reconstruction.



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In the past three years, we have got used to saying that our nation is at the crossroads. Even though that metaphor has become threadbare, at no time has it been more true than today.

Parliament is dissolved, elections are six months away, an emergency is imposed and barely three hours later 170 Nepalis are killed in the latest bloodbath. We don't quite have a constitutional crisis yet, but that is academic. We will get to the constitutional

crossroads in November. Even if some sort of elections are held, what can we expect when candidates will not be able to travel beyond the district headquarters? What kind of representation will be elected when many local leaders from parliamentary parties have either already been killed, or hounded out of their constituencies?

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STATE OF THE STATE



When the serpent-hooded Shaha throne was dethroned out of the ascension of King Gyanendra at Hanuman Dhoka last year, the future of the dynasty had never looked so uncertain. A shocked and confused populace was unwilling to accept the official explanation of the Narayanhiti massacre. Doubts were openly raised about the fate of an institution that had implored from its own citizens.

In a cunning bid to cash in on the popular disenchantment, Dr Baburam Bhattarai wrote an incendiary op-ed piece for Kantipur. There were riots in the city, a curfew had to be imposed, and the army was deployed to restore

the pettiness of their concerns, and their short time-horizons that fed the furnaces of rebellion. The inability of rural cronies in the Nepal Congress to get along has ruined not just a one-crunch political party committed to the ideals of social democracy, but also impacted the nation.

It is futile now to go into the blame game. The Nepal Congress is its own worst enemy. With a party like that, who needs an opposition? Ever since the 1990 elections in which it won a majority in parliament, the

Nepal Congress has been busy trying to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. How can a party that can't even turn itself around see this fractious nation from the throes of crisis?

Egged on by envy and ambition, Gijra Prasad Koirala pushed Shree Bahadur Deuba against the wall and, true to his name, the Shree reacted like a cornered cat. He damned the consequences and dissolved parliament, effectively buying himself six more months in office. The two are now getting into serious name-calling. Deuba, rather unim-

navely, has called Gijra a 'terrorist', while Gijra is Deuba is a 'janta' 'chhaldin'.

The upshot of all this is that we are preparing for an election during a

state of national emergency and a raging insurgency. This is like giving a couple of foxes to guard the chicken coop. The current crisis of human rights abusers by both sides are sure to get much worse when election campaigning takes place at a time of suspended civil liberties.

But let us hope that by some Pashupatinath-engineered miracle, relatively free and fair elections can be held. An independent, technocrat-led, multi-partisan caretaker government is a priority necessity. There is no need to shed tears over the dissolution of Deuba's just-come cabinet which only fattened itself at taxpayers' expense.

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A year after King Gyanendra's reign has got off to a rocky start.

the power paramount in the country, and nobody wants to stain the venerable institution with the blood of the Narayanhiti massacre—especially when the other institutions of state have turned out to be moral pygmies. Many desperately want to believe that the king is their saviour. How the mighty have fallen.

The Royal Nepal Army lost face when it failed to save the life of its Supreme Commander-in-Chief. The enemy, as it happened, was not outside the palace walls, but within.

The Hehen'fason then exposed the weakness of the defence establishment and the contradictions in our civilian-military relations. After that came Ghorahi, which shattered the illusion of the invincibility of the military, and despite later successes against the rebels, the debacle at Manglen was proof that this was not going to be as clean and swift as the government had hoped it would be.

The media, lawmakers, the graft-busters and the judiciary soon got into a wrangle, ostensibly over a draft law meant to check corruption. Whether the exercise helped improve the bill is debatable—Upper House lawmaker Sher Bahadur Deuba's decision to impose a state of emergency was the final blow. Now, nobody other than the Maoists and the members of the security forces have any

standing outside Kathmandu Valley, and a few other urban pockets of the country. The dissolution of the Lower House of parliament, the re-imposition of the state of emergency, and the relegation of the Deuba government to a purposeless state all indicate the complete depredation of governance.

Forged democracy, politics itself has lost its shine. It is doubtful if even Deuba believes his own promise of holding elections in November. If any voting can take place in the heavily-guarded Janta Bhadras, it will be little more than an action replay of the Museveni-Dusharuzi model. It may not have been by design—let's give Deuba the benefit of the doubt—but the fact is that power now

back at the place. Freed of parliamentary oversight and cut loose from the party, the prime minister lacks the moral authority to enforce the rule of law in the country.

Despite the facade of constitutionalism, it's back to rule by decree.

All eyes are now on Nirmal Niwas, the private residence of the constitutional monarch. As the king comes out of his year of mourning this week, the country awaits his next step with bated breath. Both the extreme right and the extreme left should be happy.

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NATION

MANUSHREE THAPA is Manjushree Thapa hinting at bringing an end to her Nepal literature column just because someone questioned her? (Mid-Column, #95)

I hadn't read much of original Nepal literature until Manjushree Thapa introduced me a few months ago to a horde of already renowned as well as talented contemporary writers through her commendable fortnightly column in your paper. I am indebted to her, or shall I say Nepal literature is indebted to her. What Rabassa did to Marquez is seemingly impossible to repeat, but Manjushree is doing laudable work. Please carry on.

Rizgin Dehshang Boudha Thank

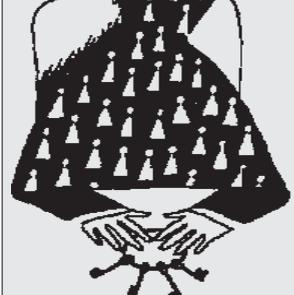
and their works she is handling. That is being one-sided, yes, but that is it—so be it, so what? My good friend Ramesh Shrestha of Bangkok wrote to me after he read Manjushree's translation of Bhuvan Dhungana's short Nepal story originally published in a Kathmandu vernacular magazine. Unlike Ajit Bhai and I, who are fortunate to read both originals and translations in Kathmandu, Ramesh has access only to websites where Nepal publications are hosted. Nepal Times being one of them. Ramesh praised to high heavens both Manjushree's successful effort and Bhuvan's theme and its treatment, even making him claim that "our generation (Bhuvan, Ramesh and I) being MIA mates at

with the penchant for doing translations from Nepali into English. As the writer himself trashes and thirns the rate. Why doesn't she embark on critical writings, make robust criticisms, or hard-hitting comments on literary works by Nepali or foreign writers? I really wish she did not carry on with her usual boring translations. Otherwise, as Ajit Baral says, why should we read her column when we can read the original Nepal work? In writing all this, it has not in the least been my intention to harass and discourage Miss Thapa, rather still I have great regard for her and even highly apologise to her for it.

Rabindra Raja Shahi, Gayatri Camp, Udayapur

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Krishna Paudel, Pokhara



By NARME OUSLEYS Dear Kiran Khatiwada's 'Soul Searching' (Letters, #95) proves that we are still not ready to look within ourselves to identify the cause of the problems plaguing this country. The World Bank and ADB do not see loans as handouts as our national banks have done until they went bust. The two banks in question want their money back. The only means they see are if the NEC raises tariffs. But the fault, dear doctor, lies within ourselves. NEC does not bother to collect money from big institutions and business houses. I have been witness to such practices. While working for a small firm, the management changed hands and we discovered that we had not paid electricity bills for almost two years. Our electricity was never cut although our bills had accumulated to more than Rs 150,000. Strangely our landlord's line, which lighted up only the staircase of the building, was cut because he had not paid on bills of Rs 1,200. The story does not end there. I was sent along with the accountant to clear up the matter. Guess what? They had no idea what we owed, and asked us to come back later. A few days later, the accountant there pulled out ledgers they had laid away. It took him a considerably long time to add up the bills. Finally the bigwigs there told us to pay a fine of 50 percent. After

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desperate pleas it was reduced to 30 percent. We paid in instalments. How many companies pay their bills, or if it cheaper to pay bribes? A restaurant owner in Thamel once told me he was compelled to meet on illicit deals, otherwise his rates would not be competitive. Let us not even talk about government offices. How can we blame the donors? Dinesh Raj, Naxal

DALAI LAMA I enjoyed CK Lal's "The Prince of Peace" (#95), and after reading him, and being a member of the Tibetan diaspora in Nepal, I see a glimmer of hope that one day His Holiness the Dalai Lama will be invited as a pilgrim to visit Lumbini.

D Rinzin, by email

At a recent gathering of his party's general secretary of Nepal Communist Party (UML), Madhav Kumar Nepal, was quoted as saying that the killings of his party activists in 1987 were unfair. He also went on to say that when he and other communist leaders had met Prachanda at the residence of Siliguri a few months back they had all reached an agreement that the Maoists would not kill or punish any UML or any other communist supporters. So, if they killed anyone else that would be fine? This is typical UML duplicity. The UML leadership has never been honest to the nation regarding its role on issues like that of the Maoist problem, while the Nepali Congress is too busy fighting within itself.

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gency. An increased US presence in Nepal would kill unnecessarily internationalising the crisis. As the writer himself points out, USAID and the UN are doing their best to promote trade and investment in the region and boost Nepal's economy. It is being imposed all over the world at the same time as the big multinational corporations are emerging as the new rulers of the world. Such democracy gives us the illusion of participation at the ballot box while at the same time removing us from the political and decision-making process, a process that increasingly is being shifted to the big finance capitals of the world. Elections won't give us back our forests, factories and rivers once they are gone.

When the cause of insurgency is poverty, unequal wealth, environmental destruction and injustice, an insurgency won't be solved by more guns, just as the cause giving rise to the insurgency can't be solved by the guns of insurgents. Most of the time, the war is being won because they are slaughtering people, they cut off the negotiations. Now that the government is getting military support and claims to be slaughtering Maoists, it is no longer interested in negotiations. All war does is benefit the arms industry. The answer of course is democracy, but democracy in which people organise and educate themselves.

Stephen Mikeseil, by email

NEPALI TALEBARI I was deeply saddened by the news of the destruction of Mahendra Sanskrit University in Beljhu by Maoist rebels. There is no justification for this barbaric act. An entire library of rare Sanskrit books and handwritten manuscripts, including the extremely valuable Kalachakra Amkita, has been burnt to ashes. This is just a loss for Nepal but the worldwide Hindu community. These books and manuscripts can never be replaced. They are gone forever. The rebels have no sympathy for us who are equal to or worse than the Talebari. There is no justification for what they have done. They gain no sympathy from us for whatever agenda or cause they might have had.

Books contain a nation's collective wealth, knowledge and wisdom. They are important, because the future generations can learn from them. The famous library of Alexandria in Egypt in the 4th century CE was destroyed by a fire. Similarly Muslims, who invaded India (10th-12th centuries CE), destroyed many of the rare handwritten manuscripts from Buddhist monasteries in Bihar and Bengal. Much of ancient knowledge and wisdom have thus been lost in wars and by the ravages of time. Yet, we continue to repeat history by doing the same things we abhor.

What is even more disturbing is the fact that the Maoists who destroyed the Sanskrit University are said to be students themselves. Why claim to be students if they have no respect for knowledge? The Mahendra Sanskrit University was totally dedicated to preserving an endangered Vedic culture. The printed books and handwritten manuscripts contained in the library, were a part of Nepal's cultural heritage.

The People's Republic of China, which rejected its rich cultural past during the height of the Cultural Revolution under Mao in the 1960s has admitted it was a mistake. Our own Maoists are repeating that mistake. They are destroying the nation's wealth and human lives with blind ignorance, hatred and jealousy.

Dr Deepak Shikhhada Claremont, California

Memories

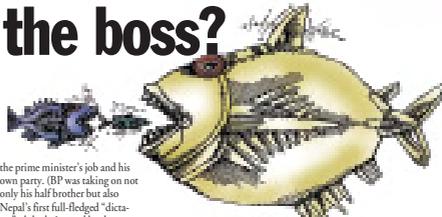
(Clockwise from left) The late King Birendra with his brother King Gyanendra resting during a trek from Tinsuli to Gorkha in 1967; with the late Queen Aishwarya and King Gyanendra at a London car showroom (1998); taking a brisk walk on a London street with Subash Chandra Newmag (1995); crossing a bridge on the 1967 trek; Prince Nirajan and Princess Sitra in front of the Summer Palace, Beijing (1996).





Who's the boss?

The Nepali Congress' pathological disposition to self-destruction when in power has long ceased to be a source of amusement. A comfortable majority in parliament. A history of having led two successful popular movements. A virtual monopoly on the goodwill of the international democratic fraternity. How much better could things get for the Kangresis? From the outset, power hasn't been very propitious for the party. The seeds of today's political rancour were planted during the BP Koirala-Babar Sumshere Rana fuss over the order of precedence at democratic Nepal's first cabinet session. The death of China's Kaji in November 1951, when Rakshya



Dal soldiers opened fire on a procession of students, gave the humbled Rana prime minister the excuse to go after his home minister. In submitting the resignations of all the Kangresi ministers in the coalition cabinet, BP left no alternative for Mohan Sumshere Rana but to resign. Matrika Prasad Koirala's appointment as prime minister marked the rise of Nepal's first popular government. It also institutionalised political bickering in the Nepali Congress. The BP-MP confrontations were essentially a struggle for supremacy between the party and the government. The country never got to know who won, but BP got the party and Matrika Prasad Koirala got

Look at the Congress' history to understand its identity crises.

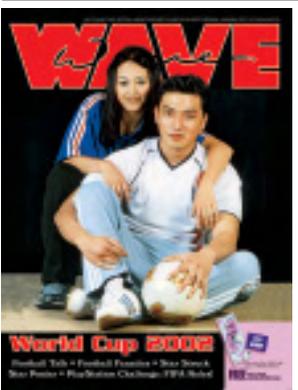
another six-month suspension of fundamental rights, he would have consulted the district, municipal and village Kangresis enmeshed in the security of the capital, instead of members of the central working committee. Deuba, for his part, knew he would eventually have to learn to live without the emergency. But the opportunity to settle scores was just too good to be squandered. Koirala should have given Deuba his six-month extension just to keep all those lower house MPs happy.

I have a strong feeling that Deuba was in favour of an extension motion all along. His comments to the contrary at the airport had nothing to do with je-jag. The decoy allowed him to do his job without having to worry about the next surprise Koirala and Madhav Kumar Nepal might spring. With the Kangresi mantle having passed from the first generation to the third, the relevance of what Yogenada Man Serchan, Dewan Singh Rai, Sanoj Koirala and Tejbahadur Amatya said or did is limited to Martyrs Week discussions. The identity crisis younger Kangresis face

today is perhaps natural. Ram Chandra Poudel considered the party's directive to Deuba to withdraw the extension motion as unfortunate. A day later, he saw the prime minister make a more tragic mistake. By the third day, he was struggling to hold the middle path with fellow travellers. Since everybody expected Shailaja Acharya to denounce Deuba for plotting against democracy, attention automatically shifted to Sushil Koirala. The party general secretary is willing to take the heat for the distortions created by all the Kangresi generations since 1990. That's a noble gesture from a man who has never served as a minister. What we really want to know, though, is what crossed Sushil's mind when he shot off that letter to Deuba. (If you believe Shailaja, Sushil is part of the reprehensible plot which was squandering in public to Deuba's principal rival.)

Where Koirala, Nepal and the five other partners (I feel compelled to avoid the more specific 'speakers' in deference to the silence forced upon Baidri Prasad Mandal) at the Open Theatre mass meeting erred was in trying to whip up the spectre of an alien invasion without considering the corollary. If Deuba was so fixated with deploying foreign troops across the Maoist hinterland to save his job, wouldn't he have had to extend the emergency first?

So, who do you think is the boss, who's the party president or the premier? Before you hand in your answers, isn't it nice that Deuba has finally learned to put his foot down? ♦



the prime minister's job and his own party. (BP was taking on not only his half brother but also Nepal's first full-fledged 'dictator', duly designated by the delegates to the September 1950 Barigayni conference of the Nepali Congress.) More than two-thirds of the political activists who helped the palace build the partyless Panchayat system crossed over from the Nepali Congress. You could argue that the proportionality mirrored the preponderance of the party then. In that case, you would also have to acknowledge that amid such a large floating population, Tulsii Giri

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- High vitamin J
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- High vitamin L
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Chinese herbal cure

Nepal Herbal Industries has begun production of a Chinese herbal health drink using herbs available in Nepal. The company says it has invested Rs 80 million in the venture and already begun marketing its first product.

Rhubarb Health Guard. The company says the medication helps those with constipation and kidney problems in addition to helping control body fat and cholesterol. The drug is based on the herb whose local name is padmachal.

The ozoniser

Greenery Enterprises has begun to market an ozonising device that it claims can sterilise, disinfect, deodorise as well as help get rid of bacteria, mould and harmful gaseous chemicals from your indoor surroundings.

Eye on the sky

The Royal Nepal Army is seeking to buy three aircraft, two helicopters and a fixed-wing aircraft with Short-Take-Off and Landing (STOL) capabilities. The Master General of Ordnance issued the tender notices on 22 May, calling for bids by 11 June. The specifications match those of the Polish Aviation



Factory's Skytruck (fixed wing), the Mil Design Bureau's Mi17 (two seats) by Kazan or Ulan in Russia and the French firm Eurocopter's Fenice, the military version of Ecureuil. The total purchase would add up to about \$9 million. The Mi17s are already the workhorses of the army, the Ecureuil has proven high-altitude capabilities, while the Skytruck, among the cheapest fixed-wing aircraft in the market, can take off and land in most of Nepal's mountain airports.

Plastic, not paper

technology in Nepal. Note Printing Australia has clinched a deal worth \$53 million to print the first Rs 50 million batch of polymer notes of the Rs 10 denomination. (The 'probi plastic,' #54). Nepal's first plastic notes are expected to arrive sometime



during Dasain, when the demand for money in smaller denominations, including tens, soars. The central bank says it is also planning to gradually replace with coins Rs 1, 2 and 5 paper notes, which have a life of less than six months or less.

Case closed

The Appellate Court of Lalitpur has quashed the writ of the Chaudhary Group challenging the Nepal Indusmeat Bank Ltd and its parent French bank Credit Agricole (# CHK). The court came to this decision on 22 May, almost a month after the deal between the NIBL and another group of investors was formalised (on 26 April). The new promoters control 50 percent of NIBL stock. The Rastra Banajoo Bank and Rastra Bessma Sanshan 15 percent each, and the remaining 20 percent is held by the general public.

Dearer gold

When the anti-corruption Bills receive the royal seal and become law, the gold will become available and the bills could have even more diverse and far-reaching ramifications. The trouble begins with the definition of 'public entity', which is not as clear as it seems. It is increasingly all-encompassing from a private company to universities. The other problematic definition is that of a 'task force or a public servant'—this would be the case for an appointed, nominated or elected by His Majesty or the government or by any public entity, allowing or not receiving salary, allowance, remuneration, facility or state benefits.

Chinese herbal cure

Nepal Herbal Industries has begun production of a Chinese herbal health drink using herbs available in Nepal. The company says it has invested Rs 80 million in the venture and already begun marketing its first product. Rubarb Health Guard. The company says the medication helps those with constipation and kidney problems in addition to helping control body fat and cholesterol. The drug is based on the herb whose local name is padmachal.

The ozoniser

Greenery Enterprises has begun to market an ozonising device that it claims can sterilise, disinfect, deodorise as well as help get rid of bacteria, mould and harmful gaseous chemicals from your indoor surroundings.

Guilty until proven innocent

A member of the Upper House says the government's new anti-corruption legislation may let the real crooks go scot free while exposing the innocent to prosecution.

Parliament hurriedly passed two important anti-corruption bills on the last day of 21 May. Sections 2 and 3 of the Corruption Eradication, and the other on the powers of the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA).

The two bills were in addition to two others that were presented at the Lower House in the last week of the winter session: one about Special Courts and Impachment Procedures. An all-party team was formed to rush these bills through—without enough time to listen to, let alone sort out, differences of opinion. Not surprisingly, the two anti-corruption bills were flawed when they arrived at the Upper House, and a number of amendments were proposed. Most of these were accepted by the Minister of State for Home Affairs in the Upper House. The proposed Bills were sent to the Lower House the last day of its sitting, but all the amendments from the Upper House were rejected.

Consider the following: ♦ Tapping water at the Hyatt could be interpreted as corruption, punishable by three months imprisonment.

♦ The house and land you've owned for years may be confiscated because the person from whom you bought it had in turn bought it from a person who engaged in an act of corruption 15 years ago.

♦ An agreement between an incumbent government which has an accident and causes damage worth Rs 5,000 but that too could be interpreted as an act of corruption attracting three months imprisonment.

♦ An employee of yours has been made to pay a bribe of Rs 100 to clear a consignment of calendars from the airport without your knowledge. You could get a three-month prison term for that.

♦ An ex-member of parliament does not return the government vehicle or vacate official residence but he can get away with a fine of Rs 5,000 and no jail term.

The royal seal and become law as the gold will become available and the bills could have even more diverse and far-reaching ramifications.

The trouble begins with the definition of 'public entity', which is not as clear as it seems. It is increasingly all-encompassing from a private company to universities. The other problematic definition is that of a 'task force or a public servant'—this would be the case for an appointed, nominated or elected by His Majesty or the government or by any public entity, allowing or not receiving salary, allowance, remuneration, facility or state benefits.

The third and final definition which will create problems is that of 'act of corruption'. There will now be sections on obtaining, without prior permission, any goods or services at discounted prices from anyone with whom a public servant has any dealing or could have in the future. So, if a public servant seeks a discount or bargain while making a purchase for himself or for anyone, this could lead to a prison term of six to twelve months and confiscation of the goods bought. The law also prohibits, receiving for oneself or anyone else, any donation, gift or financial contribution. So if a public servant invites acquaintances for his daughter's wedding and guests bring presents, as is the custom, the official

could face between three and six months in prison. Interestingly, if a public official receives Rs 1 million as a bribe or commission, the jail term is up to four years, receiving the same amount as a gift or donation gets you six months.

I had proposed that the scope of the term 'public entity' be narrowed to include only those entities fully owned or controlled by the government, or those in which it had at least one-third stake. It was accepted trying to keep the Nepal Bank Limited (NBL) out of the reach of law. I was also accused of trying to keep private organisations outside the purview of the CIAA. This is certainly how it should be. Even in the process of preparation, ownership would pass from the hands of the government to the private sector. In such a situation, the private sector holding the majority

proposed prohibition of such activity only if the intention was to benefit from the public post held to avoid conflict of interest.

The first version of the Bills contained a section imposing a statutory time limit of two years after retirement for a rasta sewal to be investigated and prosecuted. The Lower House removed this, exposing retired public officials to possible investigations for the rest of their lives.

The experience of persons in various countries is that such interrogations are punishing even if those accused are eventually found innocent. I suggested changing the statutory limit to six months, with a provision to waive this if the charge was one that could result in imprisonment of more than five years. It was rejected.

Finally, I proposed an amendment to shield from prosecution all acts undertaken with good intentions. I was accused of trying to protect the corrupt. According to the Bills, in almost all cases malafide intention has to be proven to establish corruption. Of course it is important to deal strongly with those who engage in corruption, but it is equally vital to protect those who are not guilty.

Corruption results in bad governance, but good governance can only come about if rasta sewals are encouraged and empowered to make the right decisions. Moreover, only a court can decide good or bad intentions behind an act. Also it would be the responsibility of the prosecution to establish malafide intention, it would also be the responsibility of the defendant to establish bona fide intention. It cannot therefore be deemed a loophole. This type of provision already exists in many of the other laws. Rejected.

The wording of the CIAA Bill on the confiscation of property acquired by corrupt means is, again, flawed, impractical and unjust. The first part states that the property of a person found guilty of corruption without consent of the board of directors is to be confiscated irrespective of who legally owns it. Two UML MPs proposed that this clause be amended, but this was also rejected. Some MP proposed an amendment clause barring anyone found guilty of corruption from contesting elections for five years.

There are already laws in place that prohibit anyone found guilty of a criminal act or moral degradation from contesting elections for six years

but an act of corruption is not necessarily covered by that. This, too, was rejected.

The commission of wealth and property statements seems to be a main strategy adopted by the Bills to curb corruption. The efficacy of this is dubious, given the context of prevailing tax laws, and modes of sale and purchase of property. We have tax deduction at source (TDS) for income earned as salary, interest and from rent, but documentary evidence of sale of land, building or stocks. Our economy allows for many ways to hide wealth. Such provisions might simply fuel the black or parallel economy. Wealth declaration has worked even in countries with more organised economies and tax systems. In our case, with the lack of confidentiality, it might just become another tool for harsh political enemies.



PHOTO: NIBL

(Dr Roopjyoti is vice-chairman of the Joint Group and member of the Upper House.)

"I think it was premeditated." Anyone opposed to his marriage with Devyani (right), Dipendra said, would "face the consequences".

In April, BBC TV's Panorama programme broadcast a documentary, *Murder Most Royal*, about the massacre of the Nepali royal family on 1 June 2001 at Narayanhiti Palace. Nepali Times brings you an abridged transcript of the film in which eye-witnesses, royal family members and others are interviewed.

On his eighth birthday, at an age when most boys would be playing with toy guns, Dipendra was given a real pistol.

Major General Bharat Kishor Sinha 1989-92
"All the king's sons, from their childhood they were sent to a teacher who would teach them the art of war. Art of war comprises of learning about all kinds of weapons. He was exceptionally good. Good shot. To tell you frankly, he knew more about weapons than me. I am an army man."

King Birendra 1945-2001
Twenty-two years later, on June the first, 2001, the city of Kathmandu was preparing for its traditional family gatherings. Two days earlier Crown Prince Dipendra had checked how many of his relatives would be attending the royal family's get together.

King Birendra 1945-2001
"I was asked are you coming or not. Which means it was important to know whether I was going or not. And that I can only think of is he wanted to know how many people would be in the room."

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Majesty walks into the room.
The crown prince was well known for being able to handle drink and drugs. So his royal relatives were surprised when he appeared to lose control.

Katari Chester
"I did comment to my sister, I said I don't think he is drunk, why is he giving the impression that he is drunk because he is banging into furniture, into people. I have seen him genuinely drunk and he never does that kind of thing."

Gorakh Rana
"We thought it would be appropriate to take him up to his room. It would have been more embarrassing for His Majesty to come and see him. So the Crown Prince passed out, essentially."

Gorakh Rana
"I don't think he could have just casually disappeared from the gathering. No somebody as important as him. So he needed this excuse, so I think it was premeditated."

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his wish to begin a new era for the creation of a just, dynamic, democratic society. He hoped that his son's western-style education would help mould a modern monarchy to lead a modern country. In 1987 Dipendra was sent to Eton where it was hoped that he would acquire the polish of an English gentleman.

Edward Demetriou, Eton College 1986-91
"He was quite really, really, he wasn't clever with words like most boys were. You know it was cool to be quite sharp with your wit, and he wasn't warty with it."

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and shot him."

MK Singh
"I started looking at His Majesty because I was allowed to go in, he looked all right for a second. Then I see him sliding on the right side. And while this was happening I saw streaks of blood on his right shoulder."

Gorakh Rana
"It just seemed so shocking for everyone in the room, something, which is not conceivable. There was some screaming initially but after that everyone was just looking around, looking at His Majesty. I guess. And nobody actually had the presence of mind to do anything but that."

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palace didn't quite change, meaning it was the same prehistoric system that was 250 years ago, everything around it changed. You can go ahead and cut ribbons as many ways you can, but an educated person needs to see some growth in what he inputs."

When Dipendra was 21 his father appointed him colonel commander in chief of the army. The post was purely ceremonial, but for Dipendra it would prove to be an opportunity to indulge his passion for military hardware.

The king and queen admired the British royal family and embraced the world of western monarchy. But their son was left on the sidelines. His mother had more of a say in royal affairs than he did.

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involved deeper and deeper and deeper."
"I remember asking him in a very casual way, you know, aren't you people going to get married? And I remember him laughing and saying of course she's the only woman I am going to marry and, you know, he'd take out his wallet and show me her photograph that he always carried. And said of course, you know, we will and that you have to understand I need to get the approval of my parents. Because my father is also my king and I am the crown prince."

Deyvany's mother came from the royal family of the Indian state of Goan. In the days of the Raj these vasty rich Maharajas called the highest honor of a 21-gun salute from the British army. Their power remains strong to this day. But all this was not enough for the royal house of Nepal. To make matters worse, Deyvany's father was a politician and from a rival clan to the queen's own. But many felt the real reason for the queen's dislike of Deyvany was personal. She looked ahead, and feared being pushed aside. The queen looked for allies in her battle against her son's lover.

She found them in Dipendra's sister Princess Shruati and her new son-in-law Gorakh.

"More than love, I think ego might have influenced his decision because all his life he had sort of always got what he wanted, nobody would say no to a Crown Prince."

"The look on his face was very scary. I still remember and still it gives me the creeps when I remember his face. He really looked exactly like the Terminator II, absolutely expressionless but very contented. And it still haunts me, that look of his."

As the king lay bleeding Dipendra's uncle (Dhirendra) challenged his gun-toting nephew.

"He shot him point blank. He literally, I mean, flew and landed a couple of feet back. Our eyes met and it was so cold an emotion, it was like he knew what he was doing basically. I thought for a second maybe he was hesitating, but then the next I think I know, I had been hit."

Princess Shruati ran to her injured husband.

"She came close and she saw her husband had been shot also and she said 'put her'... And then she just sat there and put her husband's head on her lap."

"I just grabbed her hand and I pulled her towards me and I told her even I have been shot, if you can run away, it looks like he is going to finish

everyone in the room."

Princess Shruati had left her brother's party with bruises on her face. Dipendra had shocked the young royals by announcing he would marry Deyvany, if prevented the family would bear the consequences.

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"Ke gardeko?"

EDITORIAL, NEPALI TIMES, 10 JUNE 2001
Those were the last words King Birendra spoke as he collapsed in the billiard room on Friday, 1 June 2002. Shock, rather than pain, was writ large on his face. More than the shock of being shot, it was the shock of knowing who had just shot him.

"What have you done," he murmured, as he slowly slumped to the floor. Nepalis will also want an answer to that haunting question as they agonise over what happened that night. As individual citizens, and as a nation, we will have to come to terms with this unspeakable slaughter and move on with our lives in the days ahead. We will soon know what happened, we will hear in excruciating detail of the exact sequence in which the royals were slain, we will get the forensic and ballistic evidence, we will be told clinical descriptions of how many bullets, and about the nature of the fatal wounds. There may even be hints as to motive.

But no one is going to be able to explain what was going on in the head of this young man, and what psychological or chemically-induced rage made him convert what he may have seen as a personal dead-end into a death-deed for his family and a kingdom that he would have inherited. Nepalis will ponder this cataclysmic event and what it means for the direction our society, culture and polity are headed in. An unimaginable tragedy like this isn't just a lesson in morality, it turns our beliefs and value system on its head. Where does insanity end and evil begin? An entire generation of Nepalis alive today will carry this as a burden on its collective consciousness. There are no answers: just a numbing sense of the senselessness of it all. And finally, it will only be the inexorable passage of time that will give us the distance from this moment.

Some of us will try to find solace in the Ramayana and Gita and look for parallels, but we will not find anything there that approaches the magnitude of this crime: the cold blooded murder of parents, the slaughter of siblings and relatives. Even our holy books didn't foresee senseless carnage on such a wide scale—not among the warlike gods or our pantheon, not among lesser mortals.

But the Gita does have a message that is relevant: how to gain wisdom from suffering. The epic battles of Kurushetra, the jealousies, greed and vanity that afflicted our gods bring them down to a human level so that we can recognise our own failings in them. The Gita explores the limits of an individual's free will, the possibility of reconciling conflict when both sides are convinced they are right, it seeks an explanation for the suffering of innocents and our responsibility of the rich and powerful towards the weak and the voiceless. Our holy books, like Greek tragedies, bestow upon readers a sense of relief by catharsis. They give us a glimpse of the abyss, so we do not take the plunge.

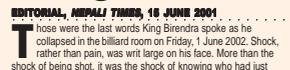
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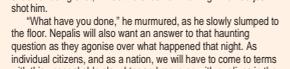
King Birendra 1945-2001



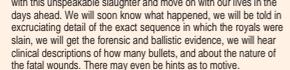
Princess Shruati (Princess Shruati's husband)



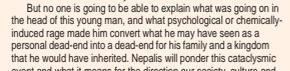
Prabhakar Rana (Princess Shruati's daughter)



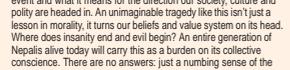
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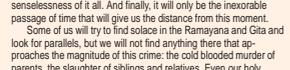
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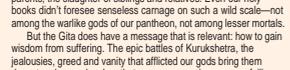
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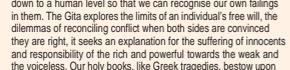
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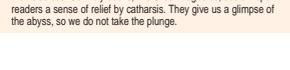
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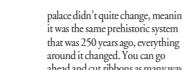
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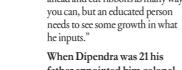
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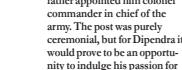
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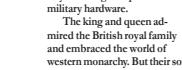
Prabhakar Rana, Dipendra's cousin



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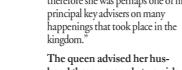
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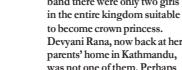
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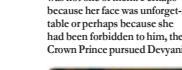
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A crazy system

Jyoti Pyakurel in Himal, 29 March-13 April

We decided to visit the Central Jail to confirm rumours that looked up there along with criminals were women with psychological problems. As we walked past the cells, accompanied by prison employees, both kinds of inmates gathered around us, pouring out their anguish.

- Will you allow us to go home?
- I was badly beaten up by my husband for no mistake of mine, and then he had me locked up here
- My husband married another woman, and I did not even get custody of my children.
- I fell madly in love with a man, but discovered too late that he was already married.
- I'm willing to take up any work, please just let me out of this place.

These statements sound like dialogues from a play, and the scenes we saw were equally surreal. The situation of the women in the central prison reflects the state of Nepali women as a whole.

Of the 107 female inmates in the Central Jail, 45 are in for being "mad". They are between the ages of 14 and 56, and some have been there as long as 34 years. They are crammed into six dark, stinking rooms with no facilities for cooking, washing or bathing. They are supplied with jail rations and asked to cook for themselves, but how can those women who are mentally disturbed be expected to cook. Many women have contracted diseases here, but the prison offers no treatment. Some women are here on grounds as slight as their parents and husbands writing to their chief district officer requesting "imprisonment and treatment" for these "mad" women.

Nepal law allows a man to marry again if his first wife is mad. Mentally ill people are not entitled to inheritance, and their families are not obliged to support them or provide their treatment. The easiest way to get rid of a woman is to declare her "mad". Society will turn a deaf ear to any declaration by a woman about her own state of mind.

The living conditions here could drive any woman crazy. There is an acute water shortage, and the situation gets worse for these women when they have their periods. When we visited, one woman was playing with her own blood, making patterns on the floor. This scene spoke volumes about the condition inside the jail. The government 'treats' these women— with sleeping pills.

Bishnu Maya, 48, was released from the Central Jail after seven years of imprisonment, but was brought back here. She told us, "I am not mad. When I was released from here, my husband's second wife and her daughter-in-law used to denigrate me constantly. I was hurt, so I quarrelled and cried, which was all they needed to prove that I am mad. My husband brought me here by force to be locked up again."

Most women are here on charges of abortion. A 1997 study shows that 20 percent of women prisoners in Nepal are serving sentences for abortion, but only 0.3 percent of male prisoners were being prosecuted on the charge. Usually, men flee their village as soon as they discover they are responsible for an illegitimate pregnancy. The few who get caught use their political connections or buy their freedom. These statistics from 1997 tell another bitter truth: a man is supported by his family and society even if he is a rapist, but society is always unsympathetic to a woman even if she is just a victim.

Emergency elections

Deshantar, 26 May

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba dissolved parliament saying it was

essential that the emergency remain in force for another six months so the security agencies could remain mobilised against the Maoists. The emergency ended on midnight, 24 May, but the security forces are still on the move and the Defence Ministry has been reporting on their actions against the Maoists. The new emergency was announced on 27 May. I would have been something else if the dissolution of parliament had gone together with an extension of the emergency.

Deuba has also called for elections, which means there might not be a state of emergency immediately. For an election you need to allow people to assemble, to speak their views in public and allow them to organise. Chances are, an emergency order could be issued even now, and run for three months at most. If the Nepal Congress decision to not extend the emergency would have lowered the morale of the security forces, as the prime minister claimed it would, discontinuing the emergency will do the same? Are there provisions to take action against the prime minister for being responsible for that?

Deuba must ensure the continuation of the emergency to keep the Maoists at bay, and he must also prepare for elections. For an emergency to be effective, civil rights must be suspended, but elections can only be held when people can exercise their full rights, or if the environment is conducive to doing that. We can't have both things at the same time. One wonders about the motivation behind the prime minister's decision.

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UML conditions

Bimarska, 24 May

Exceptions from UML General Secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal's letter to the Chairman of the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) seeking their 'attention' to the following issues:

- Immediately stop killing acts such as beating up and inhuman acts



party workers, and others harbouring different ideologies. This also goes for killing innocent citizens or charging people you do not like with being informants and killing them.

- Stop forcing members of our party and others, and their supporters to give you refuge in their houses. Do not force them to form large groups, or take donations by force. Stop forcing the wives of political representatives and political party members to seek divorces.
- Stop the restrictions on the movement of citizens and the curfews you impose in certain areas. Do not force people you want to create problems for by forcing them to give up their property and flee.

Stop evicting the elderly, women and children from their homes at night and taking over their houses.

- In many places, members of our party and other parties and even ordinary citizens have been abducted and tortured. This must stop, those abducted should be immediately released.
- In many places elected representatives from our party and other elected officials have been forced to resign or been prevented from doing their duties. VDC buildings have been burnt and [you] have prevented local bodies from carrying out development work. Stop such acts immediately.

- Immediately stop the destructive attacks on telecom towers, electricity projects, forest offices, airport offices, bridges, drinking water systems, health posts and government buildings.
- You call people from every household to send a member to fight for your cause in some districts, causing people to flee their homes in panic. This forced recruitment must stop immediately.
- In districts where you have influence, you have prevented political parties from carrying out their activities. Criticism has not been tolerated—[you] don't engage in discussion, just attack those who raise questions. [You] harbour an undemocratic single-party ideology and don't want people with differing views to even enter areas you control. You must create an environment where others can go to the people who support them.

If some [among you] engage in such acts even after they have been asked to stop, you must take action against them, and take necessary measures to keep those [in your ranks] who do not want peace under control.

If you are willing to resolve the problem peacefully, in this manner, you need to publicly announce that such acts are coming to an end. Because [you] broke the negotiations and went down the road of violent struggle, you must immediately end the violence and murder and announce that you are putting your weapons down and are willing to help build a new environment.

Deuba, the pawn

Interview with Shailaja Acharya in Dristi, 28 May

How do you interpret the action taken against Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba?

The state is in a crisis. Local elections were [put off] because of the Maoists and political activists are unable to go to the villages. The Lower House has been dissolved in a secretive manner—the council of ministers had no say in the decision. I cannot support this. This is a well-orchestrated step to endanger democracy, and the party is right to have taken such action.

Is Deuba to blame for the dissolution of parliament? Girija babu did the same before, but no action was taken against him.

It's the prime minister's prerogative to dissolve parliament. But this wasn't appropriate in the current circumstances, when under no circumstances can elections be held. Today, the army is playing a deciding role. It's even been issuing political press releases. Even if we were to hold elections, it would be similar to Pakistan's limited democracy, not an actual election. I don't see how elections can be held nationwide.

Prime Minister Deuba says the action taken against him is dictatorial?

If I were sure there was no threat to democracy, I would think it was a bit extreme, but I think his actions have endangered democracy.

Won't the disciplinary action taken against Deuba split the Congress?

The same people who've encouraged corruption and the rise of a mafia within the party in the last 12 years are responsible for the current national crisis. That is why the party is moving towards a split. I don't believe a new party formed by the same personalities can create a new society.

There are extremists on both sides. It's important to overhaul the party and clear out the trash. The people only believe in moral leadership, the number game doesn't count anymore.

Won't a split in the party weaken democracy?

That's sure to happen. I've been fighting for party unity.

Do Deuba's actions suggest to you that he is now someone's pawn?

He is a pawn, he's always worked that way, since [1995/1996]. As a pawn, he consciously brought in horse-trading to parliament, as well as the Pajero culture, all to undermine the parliamentary system.

Whose pawn?

I am not with the intelligence agency, so I can't say, but he is a pawn.

Deuba, the righteous

Interview with Bimalendra Nidhi, Central Member, Congress, in Dristi, 28 May

How do you see Prime Minister Deuba's expulsion from the party?

It is extremely irresponsible, prejudiced and unfortunate. It is the prime minister's special privilege to dissolve parliament. Girijababu, too, dissolved parliament without consulting the party, many of his cabinet ministers didn't know.

The situation is different now. The conditions are not right for elections.

You can't take action on that basis. The dissolution of the House hinged on extending the emergency. Once the party directed the government to withdraw its decision to extend the emergency, there was no way parliament would assist the executive.

Why wasn't the prime minister prepared to face parliament?

What party decision has the prime minister flouted? The party president directed him to withdraw the proposal for an emergency. But if parliament is dissolved how can the proposal be returned? You don't need the party's approval to dissolve parliament.

There's a feeling that Deuba's action endangered democracy from within, through the constitution?

Once the date for elections has been set, it's in the interest of democracy to ensure they take place. To be suspicious of elections and spread rumours that they can't be held upsets the elections and endangers democracy.

The government was unable to hold local elections on time. Can it hold mid-term elections?

That's meaningless. Should elections be put off until terrorism is brought to an end?

Will the Congress remain unified, with the expulsion of the prime minister?

The party disciplinary committee is not the final authority. The final decision comes from the central committee, the main committee and the general assembly.

Prime Minister Deuba says he won't appeal to the central committee. The decision can be revoked by the general assembly. We are preparing to call a general assembly.

Do you have a majority?

Yes. The majority that elected the party president at the Pokhara General Assembly can be overturned with regard to this decision. The situation has changed, many who supported the president then are now with the prime minister.

If the general assembly is not in your favour, will the party split?

Whoever expelled the prime minister started the split in the party.

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QUOTE OF THE WEEK

When the nation is searching for an alternative and a change no one should create a hurdle.

— CPN-UML General Secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal in Dristi, 28 May.



Bridge: Emergency Porter's load. Mid-term polls

Basu Kshijit in Budhabar, 29 May

ABOUT TOWN

FIILN

- ◆ **Pokhara International Film Exhibition**
- ◆ 31 May, 11.30 AM: Ganek, Mirosław Dembinski, Poland, 1998. A father and his three-year-old son are both climbers, sort of.
- ◆ 31 May, 2.15 PM: Lost on Everest, Peter Firstbrook, UK, 1999. An expedition's search for the body of Mallory.
- ◆ 31 May, 1.30 PM: Chickenshit and Ash—A visit to Paradise, Karl Prossliner, Austria, 1997/8. Two Tamang villagers discover and analyse a foreign, western world.
- ◆ 31 May, 3PM: Yet: The Call of the Snowman, Jerome-Cecil Aulreiff, France, 1999. Friendship blooms between a Yeti and a Sherpa. All screenings at the International Mountain Museum, Pokhara. Email wavelax@winlink.com.np for details.

EXHIBITION

- ◆ **Inhabitants & Reminiscence** Paintings by Bhairaj Maharjan and Binod Pradhan at Park Gallery, Pulchowk. Until 6 June, 11AM-6PM, except Saturday, 522307
- ◆ **Spote** An exhibition of drawings and paintings by senior Indian artists on the occasion of 2546th Buddha Jayanti. Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited.

FOOTBALL

- ◆ **World Cup Passion** The largest TV screen, special menu and discounts on beverages at the Coffee Shop; 30 percent off beverages and snacks at the Juneli Bar. Prizes to be won, including \$10 to two in London. Hotel de l'Annapurna.
- ◆ **World Cup Football Show** All the World Cup matches on the Summit big screen. Free Entry, 521810
- ◆ **World Cup Kick-off** Watch inaugural match on 25 screen with buffet dinner and lottery. Hotel Radisson, 4.30 PM onwards, 31 May, Rs 999. Nepal German Chamber of Commerce, 226101
- ◆ **Football on show** Posters, national team jerseys, equipment, football newspapers and magazines, stamps, memorabilia, photographs and lots more. Also surf websites of the Nepal Football Fan Club, the British Council, and World Cup sites. From 26 May, British Council, Lainchaur.

EVENTS

- ◆ **Party with pizza and live music** at the newly-refurbished Roadhouse Café. 7PM-until late. No cover charge. Reservations at c_kayeshita@hotmail.com, 260187.
- ◆ **Organic vegetable market** Sundays and Wednesdays with complimentary tea/coffee and cookies. 10AM-12.30 PM. Summit Hotel, Kopunole.
- ◆ **Friends of the Bagmati** A group of concerned activists with the aim of cleaning up the Bagmati River. Membership open to all. friendsofthebagmati@yahoocom.

MUSIC

- ◆ **Club Rumba** Latin band, salsa food until midnight on Thursdays. Early bird discounts between 8-9.30PM, buy one, get one free. Hotel Shangri-La, 412999
- ◆ **Dinech & Pomba** Live every Friday 7PM-9PM, Himalatte Café, Thamel, 262526
- ◆ **Live music** by Catch 22, Friday nights at the 40,000 1/2 ft Bar, Rum Doodle Restaurant, Thamel, 414336

DRINK

- ◆ **Mountain Madness** Cocktails, happy hour every 4PM-8 PM, two for the price of one at Rs 250. Kiroly's of Kathmandu, Thamel, 260440
- ◆ **Fusion Bar at Dwarika's** Live blues and jazz, snacks, European ambience 479488

FOOD

- ◆ **British Week** British speciality food. 2-9 June at Summit Hotel 12.30 PM - 9.30 PM and Patan Museum Café 1.20PM - 4.30 PM, 521810
- ◆ **Monsoon Madness** Barbecue every weekend from 6.30 PM onwards at Rs 250. Kiroly's of Kathmandu, Thamel, 260440
- ◆ **The Tharu Kitchen** Dikhai (steamed rice dumplings) with special jungle sauces and hot coriander chutney. junglesidecamp@yahoo.com, 061-25954
- ◆ **Wood fired pizzas** at the new Roadhouse Café. Completely redesigned with separate bar seating and coffee bar. The Roadhouse Café, Thamel.
- ◆ **Weekend Brunch** Rs 350 per head, special package available with bowling. Oriental and continental lunch or dinner by the pond. 1905 Boardwalk, Kantipath, 225272
- ◆ **Vegetarian Specialties** and day-evening pizzas at Slupa View Restaurant & Terrace, Boudha, 480262

GETAWAYS

- ◆ **Jolly Jomson Stopover Package** One night, airport/ resort transfers, return airfares Pokhara/Jomsom. ACP permit, airport tax extra. Resident expats \$150 per head, Indian nationals, IRs 4,999 per head, Nepalis NRs 4,999 per head, taxes included. Until 31 August at the Jomsom Mountain Resort, jm@sc.winlink.com.np, 485110
- ◆ **Secret Garden Overnight** package at Dwarika's Hotel, \$99 plus taxes for one or two people. 479488
- ◆ **Bardiya National Park Getaway** Full board, luxury on stilts' cottages and pickup, \$10 a day (park activities at Jungle Base Camp Lodge. junglesidecamp@yahoo.com, 061-25954.

NEPALI WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

The unseasonably heavy pre-monsoon showers made May an abnormally wet month. Despite this, the monsoon seems to be on track, with Kerala and Assam getting the first showers. Usually, monsoons in the subcontinent are delayed during years when pre-monsoon showers are above normal, and that may still be the case this year. But if all goes according to plan, the first showers should hit eastern Nepal 7 June and Kathmandu 10 June. The distinctive feature of monsoon showers are diving relentless rain without the fanfare of thunder and lightning.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
26/16	27/15	28/15	29/16	29/17

YAK YETI YAK by MIKU



BOOKWORM

The Great Military Thinkers of the World Indra Jai Rai Himalaya Book Stall, Kathmandu, 2002 Rs 150

The principal of the British Gurkha Academy explores the lives, military careers and fighting philosophies of 20 military thinkers including Sun-Tzu, Kautilya, Niccolo Machiavelli, Sebastian Yauhan, Fredrick the Great, Prithwinarayan Shah, Napoleon Bonaparte, Antoine Henry Jomini, Carl von Clausewitz, Marshall Ferdinand Foch, Sir Winston Churchill, Adolf Hitler, Edwin Rommel, Mao Tse-tung, and Che Guevara.

Beyond the Himalayas KN Dhakal Ferntrade International, Boudha, 2002 Rs 150

KN Dhakal, who writes under the name Pratek Dhakal, has been a liaison officer for Belgian and Japanese trekking teams, and is also a poet, singer and writer of travel columns in Nepal. Here Dhakal gives an account of his extensive travels in Dolpo and Mustang, meditating along the way on natural history, religion, and architecture. The volume is well-illustrated with colour photographs.

A Beautiful Mind Sylvia Nasar Faber & Faber, London, 1998/2001 Rs 475

A 31, mathematician genius John Nash had a breakdown and was diagnosed with schizophrenia. Yet, after three decades of leading a ghost-like existence, he re-emerged to win a Nobel Prize and world acclaim for his contribution to game theory. Nasar's award-winning biography, the inspiration for Ron Howard's film, is a drama about the mystery of the human mind, a triumph over incredible adversity, and the healing power of love.

The House of Blue Mangoes David Davinder Viking or Penguin Books India, New Delhi, 2002 Rs 632

The history of modern India ebbs and flows with the story of the Doria family in Kerala, south India, their fortune inextricably linked to it. The early struggles for independence, the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress Party, World War II and finally the new India—the great events of the 20th century form the backdrop to the story of an extraordinary family, richly detailed, skillfully narrated and peopled with vibrant characters.

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Slupa View and Restaurant & Terrace at Bauhanthara Street. Well-appointed restaurant and terraces with views of stupas and Himalayas.

Namche Bazzar, which is the business hub of the Khumbu region could potentially benefit from the airport, but lodge owners there aren't happy either. Syangboche airstrip is a half-hour climb above Namche. "It definitely means less business," says Jangbu Sherpa, proprietor of Café Dante, one of Namche's numerous lodges. "As tourists usually spend more money and time on their return treks, we're going to lose that income if they fly out from Syangboche."

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NATION

Air war over Lukla



Khumbu braces for a renewed row over the airstrip at Syangboche.

RAMYATA LIMBU

A six-year-old row over direct flights between Kathmandu and Syangboche has resurfaced after the Civil Aviation Authority announced plans to lengthen the airstrip at 4,000 m to accommodate short take-off and landing (STOL) aircraft.

Villagers living between Lukla and Namche Bazar on the Mt Everest trail fear they will lose their livelihood if trekking and cargo traffic flies directly into Syangboche, bypassing Lukla.

"It means trekking groups, lodges, porters will lose about five days' worth of business," says Penorice Sherpa, Chairman of Lukla Village Development Committee. Flying to Syangboche will shorten the popular Everest trek from 14 days to nine days roundtrip and the traditional zokpo and yak trains which transport goods will be out of business, he says.

This month, business and representatives from Namche, Lukla, Phakding and Kharikhola gathered at Namche to discuss the repercussions of having an airport at Syangboche. In a memorandum submitted to the tourism ministry and cited to 30 organisations, including airline operators, UNESCO, and the civil aviation authority, the Namche VDC says the extension of the airport will benefit 5 percent of Khumbu's businessmen but affect the livelihoods of 95 percent of the local population.

Namche Bazar, which is the business hub of the Khumbu region could potentially benefit from the airport, but lodge owners there aren't happy either. Syangboche airstrip is a half-hour climb above Namche. "It definitely means less business," says Jangbu Sherpa, proprietor of Café Dante, one of Namche's numerous lodges. "As tourists usually spend more money and time on their return treks, we're going to lose that income if they fly out from Syangboche."

The Everest region got a boost when Sir Edmund Hillary converted potato fields near a small village called Lukla into the famous airstrip with its inclined runway. Suddenly, the two-week walk via Lamnaga and Jiri was shortened, and the entire Everest region became accessible. Now, with the airport higher up the valley in Syangboche, the upper Khumbu will be even easier for tourists to visit.

Arg Tiberting estimates 20,000 additional trekkers will visit the area once Nepal and China allow trekkers to pass through the Nang-pa base on the Nepal-Tibet border. The high pass north of Thame is the traditional trade route used by Tibetan traders who sell their wares in Namche's weekly Saturday market. Syangboche could possibly get a bulk of this traffic.

But Lukla locals say they will try to ensure Syangboche never opens for STOL traffic. They are even prepared to repair their 1997 sit-ins on the runway to protest cargo and passenger helicopters flying tourists directly to Syangboche. The runway improvement has already been delayed because of vandalism of some construction

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Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

Touching raw nerves

I have spent the better part of the past two weeks in the company of a dentist in a hard hat who has been rooting deep inside my oral cavity with a pneumatic drill to reach the bedrock so that he can construct a root canal with approximately the dimensions of the Suez Passage in my jaw bone. Here is a blow-by-blow account of my ordeal:

Day One:
Today, while lying fully reclined on Dr Frankenstein's chair with the footrest in an upright position, I had ample time to reconstruct in my mind the entire family tree of the Romanovs. This is getting to be almost as bloody as the Russian Revolution, but Czars had it relatively painless in comparison.

Day Three:
I ruminate that if somehow don't make it through this one, I would like to be reincarnated as a dental surgeon in my next life. Not only do you get an inside look at the nooks and crannies of a cross section of Nepali society, you can also carry our archaeological diggers to excavate fossilised remains of a family barbecue which, after carbon dating, are found to be the relics of an ex-goat from the winter of the year 1977 AD.

Day Four:
No pain, no gain. That is my philosophy. Dentistry is one of the few professions ever invented in recent human history where one is actually paid handsomely to inflict pain on other human beings. The only other profession is, of course, that of a Thai-style boxer masquerading as a masseur who can dislocate every ball-and-socket joint in one's skeletal system at a highly discounted off-season rate right there on the beach at Koh Samet.

Day Five:
Today I got my first bill. The doc said I can pay in installments. Maybe I need a bank loan. There seems to be a direct correlation between the degree of pain and the size of the bill. I have come to know that dentists take a mandatory semester in medical school in which they practice extracting tusks from unanaesthetised African bull elephants before they are allowed to use the same techniques on hominoid patients.

Day Ten:
At the risk of touching a raw nerve here among those who don't see the humour in having their precious ivories plundered by bounty hunters disguised as dentists, let me recount a professional trade joke told to me by my dentist. It comes from the horse's mouth.

Q: What is the difference between a dentist and a New York Yankee baseball fan?
A: One yanks for the roots, and other roots for the yanks.

Since laughing gas is not used any more as an anaesthetic, dentists sometimes tell their patients jokes like the aforementioned witicism in order to kill the pain. "Harharharharhar. Didn't feel a thing, doc. Tell me another one."

Dentist: Open wide.
Patient: My mouth or my wallet?
"Hohohohoho. Good one. Hey, doc, did you just pull out my lower number six molar? Hal'Hal'Hal"

Day 15:
As the days go by, there is less and less to laugh at as one by one I lose my incisors, my canines, my felines and finally my wisdoms. At this rate, pretty soon, I will only be able to gnash my gums while worrying about the state of the nation.



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Felicitations

We join the nation in extending our loyalty to **His Majesty King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev** and **Her Majesty Queen Komal Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah** on the auspicious occasion of the first anniversary of enthronement. Our best wishes for the peace, prosperity and progress of our country under His Majesty's dynamic leadership.



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