

**EXCLUSIVE**  
**Royal soundbites**  
 (Excerpts from an unofficial translation of King Gyanendra's interview with Nepal Television's Durga Nath Sharma on 5 June.)



• When we came to the throne it was an unexpected and unimaginable situation. I couldn't have ever imagined things would turn out that way. The biggest and most encouraging thing was that we were able to face the challenge with the people's support. That was most important.

• Nepal's I have met have told me that those responsible for making democracy flourish are not playing the role they should be. And until that happens, the benefits democracy cannot bring peace and security to the citizens.

• Why look at elections negatively? I feel the government, political parties, different classes of society, have to look at it as a positive thing, and prepare for free elections on the specified dates.

• The continuity of the institution of monarchy rests on the faith, trust and respect of the Nepal people.

• Those who cannot deliver (development) should not blame the state.

• Our peace-loving country today is caught in a spiral of violence. If all sides are committed to the well-being of the nation and the people, we believe a solution can emerge from an approach compatible with the constitution.

• I want to tell the Nepal people: Live as Nepalis, be proud to be Nepalis. Let us learn to work for our nation and for its good. This nation will not ask you to make sacrifices, you have to step forward to do so. That is my message.

**More promises**

The government told donors Thursday it had come out with an "immediate action plan" to get its reform drive started. The plan contains a list of promises the government says it will fulfil. One donor told the government: "We've heard all this before, what is the guarantee that you will do it this time?" The pledges come from a caretaker government that does not even have a finance minister. All eyes are now on the 2002/03 annual budget, which will be announced as an ordinance in mid-July.

**Times** nepalnews.com  
 Weekly Internet Poll # 37  
**Q. What is the Prime Minister's role to dissolve parliament?**

Yes 58.2%  
 No 39.8%  
 Total votes: 250

Weekly Internet Poll # 38: To vote go to [www.nepalnews.com](http://www.nepalnews.com)  
**Q. Should the Nepal Congress split and get it over with?**

**PUSKAR GAUTAM**

The Maoists have benefited greatly from the political disarray in Kathmandu. And they seem to be using the time to re-strategise while waiting for the Congress's internal crisis to play itself out, and perhaps prepare for what Baburam Bhattarai calls their "decisive offensive".

They need a big push at this time to avenge the massive defeat in Khara in which the army says at least 200 guerrillas were killed. Then, there is the need to carry out something spectacular near Kathmandu to force the government to give up its surrender-before-talks stance. It has become pretty clear to the Maoists that overrunning an army garrison in the far-west does not make the powers-that-be in Kathmandu sit up and take notice.

Security sources tell us that captured Maoists have been speaking of preparations underway for major attacks on military or infrastructure targets. The shootout in Changa Narayan on Tuesday in which six alleged Maoists were killed was one of the most serious skirmishes inside the Valley so far. Reports from the hinterland confirm that there is assembly-line manufacture of improvised explosives, and massive forced recruitment from every family of one young man or woman. Thousands of boys and girls have fled to towns and Kathmandu in the past month.

The Maoists appear to have decided that the time is ripe for their "war ki par" (do or die) moment. Baburam Bhattarai himself has as much in his interview with the Maoist paper *Jana Awajon* 9 April, where he said: "It is likely that the decisive leap forward can be taken in the next few months."

One contributing factor to this is the political infighting, which is coming to a head, and the polarisation among parliamentary parties. Mao Zedong said "hit the enemy when it is in a crisis," and

his Nepal progress have memorised that line. It is conceivable that the Maoists will wait to make one last attempt to stop the escalation of the conflict to a dramatic new level. The Koirala faction of the Congress has re-opened back channels with the Maoists, and the Maoists, in a classic two-track strategy, have kept the door to negotiations open. Prachanda's last statement on May Day, hinting at negotiations, was one of the most conciliatory he has ever made. But by repeatedly rebuffing these offers, Desha's government has come out looking hardline. And although Britain, the United States and India have supported the government's stance, the Europeans now seem to think there is no reason why there shouldn't be secret talks.

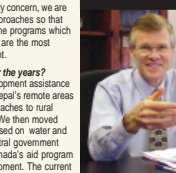
The Maoists also face increasing internal pressures. Hardliners in the military wing are impatient, and ethnic militant allies like the Khumbwun Mukti Morcha have split over whether or not to stay with the Maoists. The militia is feeling the heat from the security forces, and also losing local support due to its extortion, food looting and forced recruitment. All this could indicate that the Maoists have decided that it is now or never.

Meanwhile, on the other side, Shyam Shrestha says this actually presents an opportunity for peace, and that the run-up to the elections could be now ready for conventional battles against them.

The Maoists may feel that they have reached the "Strategic Balance" phase of

**"The government must urgently improve governance"**

**Canada is Nepal's tenth largest donor with annual aid of Rs 350 million. Canadian ambassador to Nepal, Peter Sutherland, speaks to Nepal Times of aid priorities, and Nepal's capacity to use assistance effectively.**



organisations as well as partnerships between civil society, government and the private sector to improve access to basic services and increase productive capacities. We are happy with the results, but more importantly, we see around us strengthened Nepal institutions within local and central government as well as civil society. It is with these partners that we will continue to support poverty reduction and efforts towards equitable and sustainable development.

**There is an ominous calm. Is a storm near?**



Dead Maoist guerrillas after the Battle for Khara on 28 May.

3. Start the process of dialogue for socio-economic reforms and lasting peace; and  
 4. Have an all-party caretaker government to oversee elections, in which the Maoists may also participate.

"These actions may bring the Maoists into the political process," Shrestha told us. "Otherwise the elections may not mean anything." For their part, the Maoists seem convinced that the government will not willingly create these conditions, and are therefore consolidating their forces for an offensive.

The Maoists were considerably encouraged by the ease with which they razed the garrison in Gam, and may have figured that they are now ready for conventional battles against them.

The Maoists may feel that they have reached the "Strategic Balance" phase of

their struggle. In their analysis, the Shining Path and the Colombian revolutions failed because they let Strategic Balance drag on for too long. In Nepal, the Maoists think a quick push when the state is vulnerable will take them to victory. But they don't seem to have reckoned with some other factors. The security forces are now banking on superior intelligence, and have also launched a pay-war campaign with posters, pamphlets, television programmes and even an exhibition of captured Maoist artefacts at Tundikhel. The idea is to portray the Maoists as anti-people and unapologetic. And India is the wild card. The Maoists know that their big push will not be successful if the Indians continue their crackdown on their cadre in India.

Nepal is now polarised between the revolutionaries and the reactionaries, and both could invite outside interference. But Nepal has a third choice: side with forces of democracy, and press for progressive reforms. ♦

**What is your assessment of the government's present ability to use foreign assistance effectively?**

There is scope for the government to increase its ability to effectively and efficiently use foreign assistance. It needs to address urgently issues of governance such as corruption, civil service reform and broad based participation at the grass roots level. The present political instability and insurgency have further constrained the government's ability to expedite development in a balanced manner. In my view, the government has to devolve more authority and resources to local bodies and communities and foster partnerships with civil society and the private sector in order to improve service delivery and better handle conflict at the local level.

**What is your government's views on the current conflict in Nepal?**

Canadians are deeply saddened by this conflict which has claimed the lives of so many Nepalis. We condemn the methods that the insurgents have resorted to, particularly the destruction of vital infrastructure, extortion, torture and executions. Innocent civilians have been caught in the middle of this conflict. In addition to the many who have been killed or injured, hundreds of others have been displaced by the conflict. We urge the Maoists to renounce violence, lay down their arms and return to the negotiating table. Canada supports the democratically-elected government of Nepal in its efforts to protect its citizens and to bring about a return to peace and order in the country. However, we are also concerned about the increasing number of human rights abuse allegations directed at members of the Nepal security forces in connection with such anti-insurgent activities.







# Comradely conduct

What's behind the UML's calm rationality in dealing with this political crisis?



Each time Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and Nepal Congress president Gijja Prasad Koirala pause to lighten their laynes, their designated spokesmen, Jaya Prakash Prasad Gupta and Arjun Narasingh KC, step in to provide enough information to maintain the momentum of the war of words. It was the spokesman of the main opposition party, however, who had the most heart-warming thing to say about the current political crisis. The UML was always in favour of mid-term polls, Pradeep Nepal said, but couldn't demand one because of the burden it would put on the country and people.

Those distressed by the UML's growing irrelevance to oppositional politics are indeed delighted by the comrades' abiding respect for the people's will. You have to study the context to grasp the real significance of their stance. In the post-Deuba council of ministers being worked out under Koirala's broader democratic alliance, the job of deputy prime minister—complete with the home portfolio—was to have gone to the UML. Having been in power during two of the last three elections, the UML was looking forward to the benefits of incumbency ahead of the fourth.

It's easy to see how a newly reunified and police officials is the second important pre-election task, after the designation of polling centres, and comes under the home minister. With Deuba's pre-emptive strike, the UML, low the perks, privileges and prestige that comes

with being the second largest party in parliament. Although they were entitled to raising the loudest voice against Deuba, UML leaders chose to be even-handed. Sure the prime minister had stumbled badly in dissolving the lower house on the eve of the budget session without informing his finance minister. But wasn't the ruling party being a little too pushy?

While Koirala was seeing conspiracies of all colours and Deuba was telling us how long he was behind bars fighting for our freedoms, UML general secretary Madhukumar Nepal cautioned Nepalis to think with cool minds. A country decimated by a decade of distrust shouldn't pay attention to another plot-against-democracy story without sufficient corroborating evidence. The UML's self-assurance stands in sharp contrast to its street-fighting and desk-banging trademark. And this has raised new questions. How could a group of rational people be so certain about the inevitability of elections before the Supreme Court ruled on the lawsuit challenging Deuba's late-night feat? Moreover, how could opposition leaders be so sure that the planetary positions on 13 November would be propitious to a free and fair assessment of the people's will?

It's easy to see how a newly reunified and look for a Ramajuhli. That makes our comrades uneasy, especially since the original Dr Keshar Jung became the first head of a constitutional body to have come out in full support of Deuba's determination.



# Hang economics

Stop thinking about the economy. Watch football instead.

Even at the improvisational, witty-spirited practice of dhoti catches on in restaurants in the capital, the dhoti between the tailors of the Nepal Congress proves that they remain very much of the people, capable of trading velvet and open insults in the best bhojale tradition. A number of readers have asked the Beed to see where the economy is going, in light of the interesting events unfolding.

Elections mean one thing above all else to the some of us: spending, spending, spending. Administering polls is an enormous drain on the coffers of the state anyway, and the fact that the elections will undoubtedly be staggered over a few days, together with the additional spending on security, means that the elections this year will probably be the most expensive ever for Nepal.

The parties will no doubt find it difficult to gauge the funds they need to fight the elections—business has been bad and businessmen will be terribly reluctant to fund candidates. There are very few deals in sight for anyone. But the real fear lies in rural areas and insurgency-hit areas—it will be virtually impossible to raise any funds to contest polls there, and there is real possibility that the political parties will take the election route that has proven so successful in the past. None of this will do anything to help people move communities to democratic party politics.

Everything gets complicated when there is no Finance Minister in a country which needs to lobby hard internationally to fund its gaping deficit. The speeches and promises to punish revenue evaders, the votes to put our fiscal house in order—all this bumbled about the demands made by party ideologues and whimsical dilemmas issued by crony politicians. Perhaps, when it becomes clear that we need more than one person to put the country's finances in order, not a single person is enthused enough to raise his or her hand for the job.

The Beed is told that the budget is ready for promulgation and that with no parliament in place, no debates are necessary. The corridors of power in Bugh Duthar will have a free hand, but should we even waste our money being concerned. After all, as has been pointed out in this column more than once, budgets are increasingly becoming meaningless for Nepal, in part because revenue and expenditure figures are revised so often. Already subject to now, befuddling taxes, the business community now truly fears the unpredictability of the coming budget, and year.

Nepal has managed to draw international attention to its problems and some countries are willing to help. Unfortunately, there are no plans in place through which we can help ourselves, or channel any aid we might get. If \$100 million were to pour in right now, no one knows where, apart from

funding the attendance of cadre at dhoti parties, it would go. Every bilateral and multilateral agency in town has been going on about good governance, and seeing the lack of progress on that front, they are understandably chary of pouring in more money here. The window of opportunity to garner much-needed funds is short. As the global focus shifts to our almost-warring neighbours, it's getting harder to keep Nepal on anyone's radar.

Nepal's leaders are myopic politically, and they display the same unfortunate defect in vision when it comes to economics. We can look forward to more of the same—entertaining, but ultimately irrelevant rumours about grand designs, the threat to democracy, opposing agendas and their opposite. The Beed is able to this year also, as always, point to a distinctly shiny edge of all this. In the neo-conservative thinking of nations, things should soon stop going from bad to worse for Nepal—we only need to slip down four more positions.

As instead of contemplating economic doomday, your columnist will now, with your leave, devote some quality time to a large-screen television. And after the World Cup is over, perhaps we can talk about Nepal football. Thereby, too, hangs a grim tale.

Readers may post their views at [artha@beed@yahoo.com](mailto:artha@beed@yahoo.com)



# WORLD CUP

# Football fantasy

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Time: 17:30 hrs

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**INTERVIEW**

**“We need a total change in the mindset of government.”**

is one of South Asia's largest juice manufacturing units, with a capacity of 6,000 litres per hour.

**How much, in total, have you invested in Nepal?**

We have invested Rs 1.1 billion and now the annual turnover is around Rs 2.6 billion, we are aiming at Rs 3 billion next year. We export about 92 percent of our products; local sales are about Rs 220 million. Investments made for the long term are beneficial to both company and the country as a whole.

**What motivated you to come to Nepal?**

Medicinal plants are widely available in Nepal. We not only collect them in the wild, we also plant them because we know they are a resource that will finish one day. We have a unique state-of-the-art greenhouse that produces three million saplings of medicinal plants and herbs every year. We are cultivating the saplings in 12 locations like Marpha, Manang, Jumla, Sindhupalchowk, Dolakha and in the Terai. We give farmers saplings with buy-back guarantee. We have also done well with chiralts, which even scientists said could not be raised in a greenhouse. There is the Taus baccata. We have our own plantations on leased lands that grow over 800,000 saplings. In five-six years we may be collecting from our own plantations. We estimate we need about 10 million trees for that.

**What happened to your saffron trials in Jumla?**

We distributed 320,000 saffron bulbs in Jumla last year but we could stay there only for four or five days to oversee cultivation. We think that can do well in Jumla. Humla many other places. Marpha has been another good experiment. We grow medicinal herbs in between apple trees and as we care for the plants, the apple trees also benefit. When on one plot the owner got 18 tons of apples before we began growing herbs, a year later he got about 30 tons. Last year the yield was 40 tons. We also took about half-a-dozen beehives there, which helped pollination.

**Have you been affected by the recent spurt in violence?**

Not very badly. Local projects are looked after by locals, our staff only make supervisory visits. In one place one of our staff members was beaten up. Jumla is badly affected. I think we have been affected because everyone understands that what we are doing is good for the people and country. We've helped improve the socio-economic conditions of the farmers. In the Besiashar area you can see the change for yourself. The lives of the people have changed after we began collecting Taus baccata leaves.

**Nepal must be a major success story, even for Dabur.**

Yes. It can be for anyone who wants to tap agro-forestry products and make long term investments. Our business is long-term, it has backward integration

and involves farmers.

**Are you planning more value addition in Nepal?**

Frankly, we are hesitant. The benefits we get in many Indian states are now much better than those we get in Nepal. We were planning to make pineapple and tomato concentrate in Nepal. Last week we were approached by West Bengal state and given a unique package—capital subsidy of 25 percent, interest subsidy of 60 percent for seven years—and we have decided to take the plant to Siliguri. We decided to go there because of what they were giving us.

Government has to accept that companies like ours help the economic growth of Nepal. You get a sense the bureaucracy feels that industries just lost the country, motivated by profits. Well, everybody is motivated by profit; we purchase cheaper goods in the market and make a profit, even if it is only supplementary. Profit isn't a bad word. Second, government should be willing to go out of its way to help any industry that wants to come here. All industries have a multiplier effect and boost the economy. There's another factor: we wanted some forest land, and we didn't get it. After waiting for many years, we are now thinking of shifting the plantations to India. I cannot wait forever.

**How will the new Nepal-India treaty affect Dabur? Is Nepal still attractive to Indian investors?**

We won't be affected. I think there's still room to invest here. If any industry says I cannot achieve 30 percent value addition, I think it is doing something wrong. People shouldn't worry about the value addition. On the matter of surge of the five items, we have the quota system. I feel canalisation has caused some problems and India must do something about it. Copper has been affected. The entire copper industry shouldn't be penalised. I think the Indian government will look into this.

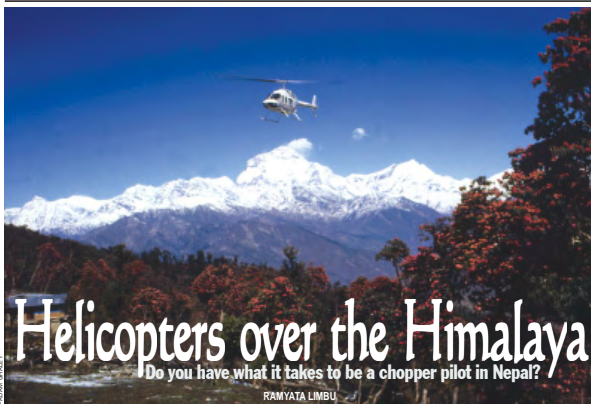
**So we still can't do business in Nepal?**

We don't believe in closing up its house and making the right policies. Now there's an export duty, the new industrial policy takes out tax holidays, there's also talk of freezing royalty payments. The basic problem here is that we make policies, laws and rules copying developed countries. We should make laws and regulations suitable for us.

**Have the Indian quarantine rules been a problem for you?**

Yes. We hope there will be at least two more checkpoints, in Birganj and one in Nepalgunj. Now we have to send saplings all the way to Patankari to send them to Indian markets. Saplings are very fragile and cannot survive such trips. Even within Nepal the logistics are difficult and we've been using helicopters to transfer saplings to planting areas.





# Helicopters over the Himalaya

Do you have what it takes to be a chopper pilot in Nepal?

RAMYATA LIMBU

When the Mi-17 helicopter on a ferry flight from Makalu Base Camp failed to arrive in Lukla on Friday morning last week, Asian Airlines staff left the first twinges of concern.

A group of Spanish climbers had just come in, and the chopper had gone back to bring the rest of the expedition. But pre-monsoon clouds were closing in over the high passes guarding the remote Barun Valley in eastern Nepal. The Russian pilot, A Grevenkov, was a veteran of flying in the Caucasus and the Himalaya and familiar with the terrain.

Search and rescue flights have been hampered by cloud cover, and only able to fly from dawn until 9AM, around when the clouds move in. By now it is certain that the helicopter crashed into one of the mountains, and that even if some of the six passengers and four crew survived the initial impact, they are unlikely to still be alive.

The accident came as we were preparing this survey of helicopter transport in Nepal, and once more underlined the dangers of flying in Himalayan terrain in bad weather. Aside from Maoist sabotage and mechanical problems, helicopter

aviation in Nepal faces the chronic hazards of what aviation experts call controlled flight into terrain (CFIT)—the possibility of pilots misjudging altitude or position and flying into a mountain in poor visibility. But the same dangerous vertical terrain is also what makes helicopters are so indispensable in the Himalaya.

The Russian-built Mi-17 has in the past two years become the Tata truck of the airways in Nepal. Asian Airlines was a pioneer in introducing these versatile heavy-lift helicopters, but has now lost both its craft, one last week, and the other destroyed by Maoists in Surkhet last year. "There's nothing to match the lifting capacity and cost-effectiveness of the Mi-17," says Ang Tshering Sherpa, chairman of Asian Airlines. Sherpa is planning to add three more helicopters, one Mi-17, and two versions of the same certified to carry passengers. With its capacity to carry four tons of cargo or 24 passengers, the Mi-17 ferries everything from hydro-power turbines and construction material to remote parts of the country. The Mi-17 has also become the mainstay of many mountaineering expeditions and the ferrying of grain to food deficit districts.

Although the Russian machines are rugged and cheap, they are no match for the altitude performance of another popular model in Nepal: the French-built Ecureuil AS 350, which is operated by the army, Kamali Air and others. Although much smaller than the Mi-17 or even the Kawasaki BK-117, the Ecureuil has carried out helicopter rescues of mountaineers at record altitudes, such as Madan KC's dramatic flight pick-up of a climber from 20,000 ft on Mt Everest in 1996. That record was broken by Captain BN Sharma who in October 2000 landed on Island Peak at 22,000 ft in a daring rescue of a Greek trekker.

These rescues are hazardous. The treacherous winds in thin air means that helicopters are easily buffeted and toppled over. A Kamali Air Ecureuil came to grief then at Makalu Base camp last month and Madan KC himself hit the Khumbu Glacier on an earlier rescue in the spring of 2000.

The inaccessibility of Nepal's rugged mountainous terrain makes helicopters the ideal mode of transport, but for decades they were out of bounds to everyone but the army and the Royal Flight. Today, thanks to the 1990 deregulation of the domestic airline industry, private helicopter operators are issued licenses and they have never been easier to hire a

helicopter in Nepal.

The Royal Nepal Army itself has opted for Mi-17s and operates three of these to transport troops in its counter-insurgency operations. It is now seeking to add more helicopters to its fleet, and may even need to hire commercial pilots to fly the additional helicopters it wants to order.

For Captain Sabina Basyant, 25, flying choppers is a passion. "Flying in Nepal is addictive. The adventure, the mountains, the rescue terrain, it is a thrill you get hooked on to." In March this year, Basyant, a pilot with Kamali Air, flew a rescue group to Manang to reconnoitre possibilities of heli-landing on the slopes south of Hinduja airport. "Basically you fly skies up to the slope and once they descend you pick them up and fly them up again.

It's pretty taxing and one requires high altitude experience," says Basyant.

Basyant is among many commercial pilots who are already flying charter flights for Maoist raids. Pemba Sherpa of Dynasty Air is another. He says: "When I decided to train as a helicopter pilot, I never thought I'd be flying in combat zones, transporting weapons."

"The army would probably require more manpower," says Captain BN Sharma, General Manager of Kamali Air. "If there was no emergency, business would definitely have been better for us. But so far, we haven't been hit hard like many of the fixed wing airlines."

Kamali Air was the first private helicopter company to be set up by a former army pilot. Lieutenant Colonel Pan who is now looking at India and Bhutan to spread his wings. ♦

Clockwise from left: A rescue flight at 19,000 ft on the Western Cwm; a jet ranger prepares to land at Ghorpani; a rescue flight to Tengboche; an Asian Airlines chopper hovers above Lukla airport; a Kamali Air chopper takes off following a rescue; a climber watches a Kamali Air craft approaching for rescue.



# Cloudy

The monsoon's here again. Go out and get wet.

lightning. From high up on a ridge above Dhulechhe we watched as the afternoon sun was blotted out, and the snowy slopes of Langtang Lirung lost their light. It suddenly became dark and silent like an eclipse. Animals, humans, and even the thorny plants waited nervously as a veil of violet rain advanced from the west.

The wind picked up, the poplars bent like bows, their agitated leaves giving the quickening air a voice. Plastic bags, startled birds and leaves were snatched by the flying yellow dust. The storm edged closer until the flash and crash became simultaneous. A delicate din approached as hailstones hit roofs of houses in the bazaar below. By evening, the pyrotechnics were over, the storm had moved over to the east briefly framed in a double rainbow over the holy ridges of Gosainkund. The vanished leaves dripped, the wet water vapour, the wet water buffaloes were shiny.

If a pre-monsoon thunder shower is an opera, then the arrival

of the monsoon itself a few weeks later is a Socratic symphony. You can smell the rain long before it actually arrives. From the pass above Pokhara, the clouds move about among the Annapurnas like the little curly puffs you see on thangka paintings. The sudden change in high-altitude wind direction precisely between 10-15 June over central Nepal every year is the first sign that the monsoon will soon burst.

By evening, the air suddenly turns humid, a smell of warm wetness swells up from the valley below. A yellow moon rises behind a range of mountainous clouds to the east. They glow in the moonlight, and the inside of the clouds are incandescent with over the storm lightning. By nightfall, there is a sudden sharp coolness as the moisture turns into mist, and the mist in turn into a fine gauze of rain. The Nepali vocabulary has many onomatopoeic words to describe different kinds of rain: at midnight it turns from

drizzly *sim-sim* to heavier *darkane* and by early morning it is a torrential *musai-dhara*.

Forget what the guidebooks say. Visit Nepal in the monsoon. Everywhere, there is the sound of falling water: big waterfalls that thunder right across the valleys, little ones gurgle behind every bend in the track, the deep drone of rivers as they cut ever-deeper gorges. These rivers are older than the mountains and they have been slicing through the rising rock for 60 million years. By ten in the morning, the first clouds hug up the valley, the forecunner of

an ocean of vapour lapping at the ridges below. They move up silently through the junipers, soaking the lichens with droplets of condensation. Before noon, the rain starts falling steadily in that marathonic-like pace of no-nonsense, long-term rain. It falls continuously into afternoon, all night, and stops abruptly at dawn.

By late August, the rain ebbs as the monsoon starts to lose its momentum, the sun comes out again. The sky is navy blue and dotted with kites, and in the terraces the golden rice is ripening in the sun. ♦

KUNDA DIXIT

On the satellite pictures they appear as large dark masses of clouds tuffling up from the Bay of Bengal. The TV forecasts warn you that "there is a bit of bad weather moving up to the Himalaya". Bad weather? For whom?

Nothing could be better than a good, healthy monsoon for three months in a year, the Himalaya from Kashmir to Assam act as a gigantic atmospheric dam to store water vapour. The mountains are such an effective barrier that the Tibetan plateau to the north is

left literally high and dry in the rain shadow.

Pre-monsoon showers are cataphoric events. Pumped by the heat, huge convection currents send cauldrons of cumulus rising vertically into the atmosphere, sometimes more than 50,000 feet. Up there in the stratosphere, the jet stream means their tops into wild angry cobra heads. On one pre-monsoon afternoon, I once watched the entire Ganesh summit dwarfed in the shadow of one of these big cauliflower clouds of moisture. The convection system rose out of the Buti Gandaki Valley to ride on flashing neon legs of purple

ALOK TUMBHAHANGPHEY

L...oking around now kind of Kathmandu most these days, one would think that not all feminists burnt their bras back in the day. And that those who did are now looking for desperate measures to control the drooping effects of the tug of war between mother nature and father gravity.

An informal survey of some two dozen women between the ages of 20-35 in the capital revealed one certain fact: paying attention to women's underclothing is about as common as it gets here. Everyone's doing it. For one woman in her mid-20s told us in all seriousness, "When you're wearing something really raunchy underneath your boring work clothes, it gives you the strength to take anything. Else damn it, you, the relentless nose-picking of your loveless office attendant. You feel like Supergirl." For another, it is very useful in Kathmandu these days to wear intimates that might slow the progress of meandering eyes and nerving hands, or not so the requisite suggestive signals to the interested, usually male, brain.

And finally, there's the matter of a current fashion statement that perhaps owes more to male hip-hop trends than anything else: "posterior cleavage". Fashion is a strange, fickle beast—women have been completely shamed out of the Viable Panty Line that causes others so much offence, but the top of a thigh sitting snugly on a woman's waist even as her hip-buggers barely skim her hips is now the epitome of cool.

As a writer in an online publication said recently, "Girls in low-lying jeans sit innocently on bar stools, 'presenting' their rear like primates in heat. The jeans tug

# Lingering over lingerie

Drying your laundered undies in public needn't be cause for embarrassment anymore.

downwards, the butt balloons upwards, and at least an inch of crack blooms above the belt loops... Other headbangers, which ride above the waistband..." A trendy young Kathmandu woman dismissed it with a flick of the wrist. "It's cool, you can do more wearing less." She was perched on a bar stool, displaying what looked like a piece of string tattered onto her hips. No, there wasn't much to her trousers.

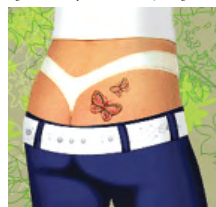
Enter the lingerie store, a place for Nepali women and men to walk into, head held high and mind open to all the suggestions that squinched-groove throw up in the certainty that there will be no loud comments, no ogling, no "friendly" squeeze or pinch. Of course, most of you have probably already touched your forehead to the altar of Femelines on Pulkchow. This little marketplace of an outlet is located right above a fashion boutique, making it easy for more lively-femaled people to lie about their real destination. Femelines, a collaboration between two young entrepreneurs, Jyotsna Shrestha, and Ajita Shakya, was opened early this year with the express aim of taking the sleaze out of women's underclothing. Kathmandu women are moving with the time in every which way, thought the two. So why should they still have to buy boring undies in boring old department stores? Well, they asked themselves, what choice do we have, when the alternative is buying equally unexciting stuff from greyish men overstocked who buy—and separately demonstrate—that the greatest virtue of any kind of underwear is the springiness of its elastic.

And so Femelines resembles a cross between the waiting room of a trendy hair and nail salon, and mildly boudoir, circa 1965. The first little room holds a vast array of nightclothes—comfy percale pajama sets and practical vests and shorts as well as barely-there teddies and babydolls, faux-fur trimmed peignoirs, and satin floorcoverers for those who fancy a touch of the Barbara Cartland.

But go through to the next room and there are the lacy thongs so very popular among teenagers and 20-somethings, all the better to wear their low-rise highleggers

with, raceback bras for those who just can't be bothered, animal print for the quirky, fetal woman, nursing bras to pay the price for having worn too many of those in the past, push-up bras (with and without jello for the woman or cross-dressing man) who simply wants to be understood. There are scrappy wisps of nylon that make you wonder why anyone should bother, the usual complement of G-strings with little embroidered hearts on the front, the most outrageously spangled, tawdry, truly unmentionables. Of course, there are also plenty of practical, comfortable, pure cotton options, including orthopaedic-looking grandma panties, all far more appealing than anything the aforementioned greasy men will have to say to you.

Most of the choices here are from China, Thailand, and India, which is a good thing for your wallet, but there are also mainstream western brands such as Marks and Spencer, Jockey, Blason and Lovable. There are other, smaller lingerie shops in Saraji Arcade and Bishal Bazar, but these, while they stock a decent range of international brands as well as Chinese no-nos, won't give you the decadent buzz that Femelines does. For Jyotsna and Ajita all the pre-opening anxiety has been worth it. Everyday the shop is abuzz with beginners buying beginner bras, teenagers trying hard to pay more for less, honeymooning couples casually forgoing a lacy nightgown, and grandmas hoping to find that elusive 48 D. "People are ready for change and we offer them choices," say the two, beaming at their bras. ♦





## The case for refugees

GENEVA - The UN High Commissioner for Refugees issued a statement Friday expressing concern about the current "over-heated" debate in Europe on asylum-seekers, and suggests that it could have dangerous consequences for foreigners seeking help in the country. The UN agency published figures on the refugees arriving in the EU in the last 10 years that show a sharp decline in the total last year with respect to the number recorded in 1992. The report shows that the totals are quite low in some countries, particularly those most outspoken—such as Spain and Britain—in their support for drastic restrictions on the number of refugees to be accepted. In contrast, developing countries receive or accept large numbers in the hundreds of thousands, or, in Iran and Pakistan, millions, said Rupert Colville, UNHCR spokesman.

The number of people protected under the UNHCR mandate worldwide is nearly 22 million, distributed among Asia, where there are 8.5 million asylum-seekers, Africa (6.1 million), Europe (5.6 million), North America (one million), Latin America and the Caribbean (600,000), and in Oceania (76,000). The UN agency's data indicates that the number of asylum requests received in 30 industrialised countries have remained stable in the last decade, at 350,000 to 400,000 asylum requests per year. (PS)

## FELICITATIONS



Best wishes to  
His Majesty King Gyanendra Bir Bireman Shah Dev  
On the auspicious occasions of first anniversary of  
His Majesty's accession to the throne of  
The Kingdom of Nepal

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Social Science Research Council  
**South Asia Regional Fellowship Program**  
Second Announcement, June 2002

The Social Science Research Council (SSRC, New York) is pleased to announce the availability of short-term fellowships (3-4 months) for research in any discipline of the social sciences and humanities related to the theme **Resources and Society**. Twenty research fellowships are available for junior and senior scholars from South Asia to conduct research, continue ongoing research or write up completed research. The objective of the SSRC Regional Fellowship Program is to strengthen links between teaching and research; the competition is open to all full-time university and college lecturers, readers and professors. Eligibility is restricted to faculty with PhDs presently teaching in an accredited college or university in South Asia. Fellows will be expected to attend a workshop in January 2003 before they begin their fellowship period. Junior fellows will receive up to \$2,200, senior fellows up to \$3,000. Application materials and more information can be obtained from: SSRC Fellowship Program, Himal Association, Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur (phone: 5425454; email: ssrc@himalassociation.org) or you may download the forms from the SSRC website [www.ssrc.org/fellowships/southasia](http://www.ssrc.org/fellowships/southasia). The deadline for receiving applications is August 3, 2002. Announcements of fellows will be made in October 2002. This program is supported by a grant from the Ford Foundation.

## COMMENT

# What really matters



## Putin needs support from the Russian people, not the elite.

**W**hile Russia, President Putin appears to be an isolated island, at least among the Russian elite who have singularly failed to embrace his decision to anchor Russia firmly to the west. The elite's gripes about Putin's foreign policy are many, but they centre mostly on the notion that America is rattling neighbourhood over Russian interests. American troops, they complain, are on the ground in the former Soviet republics of Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The next wave of NATO expansion promises to lap onto Russia's border and start invading the old Soviet borders by taking in the Baltic states. Foreign investment has scarcely increased. Putin, they allege, has surrendered Russia's traditional notion of glory and received nothing from the west in return. The

crimes they attribute to Putin sound like the indictment for a treason trial. After his bold moves towards the west after 1 September, Putin undoubtedly expected praise and rewards. The west's intransigence has been marked: America withdrew from the 1972 ABM Treaty and forced Putin to accept a vague disarmament agreement at the summit between Putin and President George W. Bush last month in Russia. The new agreement allows the US to develop and deploy missiles and warheads, just put them in cold storage. Even Putin's Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov, after a KGB colleague often considered Putin's closest adviser, does not fully agree with him on the terms of collaboration with America. If the Russian-western alliance does bring tangible benefits to Russia soon, there is a fear that the

loss of confidence in Putin may weaken him fatally. There's an eerie sense of déjà vu. Khrushchev, Gorbachev and Yeltsin saw their hold on power and influence among the Russian power elite undermined when they sought to please or placate the west only to receive nothing in return. But there's a critical difference between the Russia of today and even Yeltsin's early postcommunist Russia. Under Khrushchev and Gorbachev (and also Yeltsin), Russia was despotic and autocratic society in which control of the elite was the key to power. Civil society didn't matter or even exist. That time, the old palaces were used by homogenous opinions. You kept your by sticking together in thought and belief. And deal. Change, upsetting the apple cart, even if the apple were rotten, was not welcome.

Today Russia has a diversity of

opinions, options, opportunities and interest groups. Democracy is not founded on what the elite think; it's what the people think that matters, or at least what a controlling cable of rival interests think. Russians, now free to think, believe Putin is looking after Russian interests, which include being an unconditional part of the west. Yes, Putin cares that the elite are keeping their distance from his foreign policy. But he also knows that Russia's people are his policies.

The elite may retard Putin's efforts from behind the scenes, but obstructing is not overthrowing. Putin may be as isolated as my grandfather Nikita Khrushchev was in 1964, when Leonid Brezhnev organised his palace coup against him. But he is nowhere near as vulnerable, thanks to his widespread grassroots support among ordinary Russians. In the old days, Russia relied on its strength, mostly military, to determine its self-image. Russia's elite still believes this. But after the disasters of the last two decades, including the military debacle in Afghanistan and the ruinous barbarity of the Chechen war which has blown back its violence into Russia's cities, ordinary Russians are less enamoured of military might. They still want the world to respect their country. But what matters to them is respect for Russia's culture (and also Yeltsin). Russia wants an autocratic society in which control of the elite was the key to power. Civil society didn't matter or even exist.

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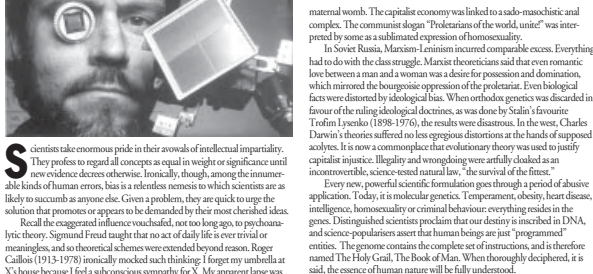
Today Russia has a diversity of

*(Nina Khrushcheva is professor of international studies at the New School University.)*

## COMMENT

# Scientific follies

## Science needs a good, healthy dose of the humanities.



**S**cientists take enormous pride in their avows of intellectual impartiality. They profess to regard all concepts as equal in weight or significance unless new evidence deters otherwise. Ironically, though, among the innumerable kinds of human errors, bias is a recurrent nemesis to which scientists are likely to succumb as anyone else. Given a problem, they are quick to use the solution that promotes or appears to be demanded by their most cherished ideas. Recall the exaggerated inflexibility, not too long ago, on psychoanalytic theory. Sigmund Freud taught that no act of daily life is ever trivial or meaningless, and so theoretical sciences were extended beyond reason. Roger Callois (1913-1978) ironically mocked such thinking: I forget my umbrella at X's house because I feel a subconscious sympathy for X. My apparent lapse was "in reality" a prelude to return to X, and reward my secret affection. I had left my umbrella at Y's, who I cordially detest, my slip was a desire for self-punishment. I azone for experiencing this antipathy, or for wishing Y's disappearance. But what if I forget my umbrella at Z's house, towards whom I am indifferent. Here, the psychoanalytic text is "I am mistaken." In reality? I either love or hate Z, and with unconscious reverence to him. The proof is that I forget the umbrella! In this system, nothing escapes definitive interpretation.

Callois' ironic point was well taken. Psychoanalysis grew into a formidable, intimidating bog. In the above example, absent-mindedness is first a symptom of a subconscious feeling. Then, the latter becomes what the ancient called the *primus principii*—we name it because the question. Nothing resists the psychoanalytic exegesis. Politics, sociology, history, or medicine: all were grist for the psychoanalyst's mill. Agrarian communism was viewed as a return to the

material world. The capitalist economy was linked to a sadomasochistic and complex. The communist dogma "Proletarians of the world, unite!" was interpreted by some as a sublimated expression of homosexuality. In Soviet Russia, Marxism-Leninism incurred comparable excess. Everything had to down to the class struggle. Marxist theoreticians said that even romantic love between a man and a woman was a desire for possession and domination, which mirrored the bourgeoisie opposition of the proletariat. Even biological facts were distorted by ideological bias. When orthodoxy became was discarded in favour of the ruling ideological doctrines, as was done by Stalin's favourite Trofim Lysenko (1898-1976), the results were disastrous. As the late Charles Darwin's theories suffered no less egregious distortions at the hands of supposed acolytes. It is now a commonplace that evolutionary theory was used to justify capitalist inequality. Illegality and wrongdoing were artfully couched in an incontestable, science-based natural law, "the survival of the fittest."

Every now, powerful scientific formation goes through a period of abusive application. Today, it is molecular genetics. Temperament, obesity, heart disease, intelligence, homosexuality or criminal behaviour: everything resides in the genes. Distinguished scientists proclaim that our destiny is inscribed in DNA, and science popularisers assert that human beings are just "programmed" entities. The genome contains the complete set of instructions, and in therefore named The Holy Grail. The Book of Man. When thoroughly deciphered, it is said, the essence of human nature will be fully understood. A healthy humanism limits these claims. No science can completely explicate human nature at all sciences, even the most exact, are partial and erroneous. A man is more than his genes—he is also his past, his present and his future. Man is more than himself, because the specificity of his qualities can only be fully deployed in society. Thus, the Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955) could truthfully state that "the I of Man is immersed precisely in what is not himself, in the past other that is his circumstance." At times, as scientists, absorbed in research and fascinated by technology, forget this profound teaching of the humanities, they will continue to fall prey to bias. *(Professor Stanchak is (Gonzalez-Crussi is Emeritus Professor of pathology at the University of Chicago.)*

## ASIA

## COMMENTS

# Thou shalt not nuke thy neighbour

**T**he lady at the counter of the Virgin Clubhouse at Heathrow on Friday night looked at us, her eyes brightening with sympathy, her voice down to a husk. Did we know that the British government had just issued an advisory asking all British citizens to leave India as well as Pakistan because of an impending war that could go nuclear? She looked bemused when we began to laugh. We were going home, we said; and she was the way the cookie exploded, well, what could be about it. I am pleased to report that ours was not a singular reaction. The Virgin flight to India was full. I learnt that Air India, flying at about the same time, had been forced to offload 400 passengers.

My very reliable guide to matters of life and death, Yennu Sandil, informs me that on 15 May something happened in the heavens

that made this a dangerous place. Man, Mercury, Moon, Venus, Sun, Saturn and the once-uncomfortable Rahu were in Taurus. In 1942 something similar happened and the sky fell over the British in Singapore and the Russians across a wide front in Europe. This turmoil in the skies will last through June. There may be a story to tell after that if India and Pakistan don't blow each other up first.

The conflict between the two is a problem that has no end to the hypocrisy. India is frustrated by its inability to settle its longest and most cancerous problem, the status of Kashmir; and Pakistan has spent more than fifty years using this to spread the cancer across the region. Given the values of our age, it is in order that hypocrisy hold the edge. Our prime minister often resorts to poetry to express his frustration, although it is a moot point how

many times you can cry "Walla" in verse. My Atal Behari Vajpayee does give the impression that he would rather be a poet than a prime minister, a useful suggestion in a country that professes power to be leavened by a measure of self-denial. At times of crisis he whips out his own poems, hoping they are of some therapeutic value. When dealing with the terrorist attacks launched by elements supported by Pakistan, there was a point in January when the weather was cloudy, but just in case you went away always struck from a clear sky.

Less poetically, it's suggested that the restraint he showed when suicide missionaries from Pakistan nearly destroyed India's parliament on 13 December was a mistake. The famous military soldiers were then mobilised along the world's most dangerous border. They remained immobile since, itself an unstable fact. Armies stare at each other only to a point without someone squeezing a trigger.

India and Pakistan would likely have finished their fifth war by now had they not been nuclear powers. There is still hope that the prospect of MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction) will maintain the peace, but there is also the fear that someone may be too mad to worry about MAD. There are whispers from hawks on both sides that the nuclear option was created to be used. There is enough residual, continuing hostility to make this a real possibility. Pakistan has a first-strike policy that it does not hide, and has said it will implement if India's forces succeed in a conventional war. So India loses if it wins, with unimaginable consequences when it retaliates.

The present crisis is a continuation of the one in December, but with significant differences. General Pervez Musharraf brought the temperature down in January with

a much-admired speech whose candour was even more impressive than its courage. He accepted that fundamentalists and terrorists had created a "state within a state" in Pakistan and warned that they were as much a threat to his Pakistan as to India. He arrested hundreds, banned their organisations and set the mood for a new phase of relations between the warring neighbours.

But a paradox has overwhelmed him—in January Musharraf was a man of glory. By May he was just another general who had stolen a country. The central purpose of General Musharraf's policies and politics this year has been survival. This time the generals of Islamabad have helped from the banks flapping in the outer regions of the ruling BJP in Delhi. These hardliners have taken control of the agenda ever since they moved down the prime minister over Gujarat, and prevented him from changing his Narendra Modi for forgetting riots against Muslims.

The world would probably not bother too much if India and Pakistan destroyed each other if they did not also threaten to contaminate the oil-rich world around them. In the past the world has waited for the two to exhaust their ammunition and return to some, but the first sign of nuclear war came in 1999 when Bill Clinton informed them prime minister Yashwantrao Chavan that some generals were planning a nuclear attack on India during the brief but intense conflict over Kargil. Sharif stopped the fighting and ordered Pakistani infiltrators to return home. One of the chief architects of that war was Pervez Musharraf.

It's safe to assume the antagonists will head advice from abroad before they pursue more dramatic options. Relief comes a week at a time on the subcontinent. But the threat of war has already internationalised the Kashmir problem. *(The Asian Age)*



# War and the law

## BALAKRISHNAN RAJAGOPAL

**O**urs has become the age of threats. India threatens Pakistan with a "limited war" and a complete nuclear annihilation if the use of nuclear weapons first. Pakistan openly threatens India with "first strike." It moves its forces an inch across the Line of Control. Hindu fundamentalists threaten Muslim Indians with annihilation if they don't believe. Lead routinely threatens military force against Palestinians, who threaten retaliation through suicide bombings. President George Bush, the originator of all threats, threatens the entire world—"if you are not with us, you are against us"—and specific countries and groups through his "axis of evil." Terrorists threaten innocents and their governments around the world. There are now a routine way of conducting international affairs. No longer do countries or groups express disagreements in the language of law or even civilised politics. International relations today resembles classic European state behaviour 200 years ago when large powers bullied and threatened each other and peace was the accidental by-product of alliances and balance of power. The contemporary internationalism of the late Victorian and post World War I period, embodied in a commitment to non-aggression, peaceful settlement of disputes, and institutions of dispute-resolution and peace making such as the International Court of Justice and the UN Security Council, appear to be seriously challenged. The threatening postures of major powers are in violation of the UN Charter, which explicitly prevents threats as well as the use of force in international affairs.

It is just war that is being routinised. Mass killings of human beings and brutalities are casually mentioned by both combatants and major powers as that is normal and legal. The New York Times reported a Pentagon "estimate" that seven to 12 million people died in a nuclear war between Pakistan and India. Many Indians and Pakistanis are reported to be calling for "finishing off" the Kashmiri problem. India has been demanding the state-sponsored pogrom in Gujarat that saw the death of almost 2,000 Muslims and the rape of countless women. Defence Minister George Fernandes, calls rape and brutalisation of pregnant women as "nothing new" on the floor of parliament, and the head of the

Vishva Hindu Parishad talks with pride about what happened in Gujarat. Pakistanis casually mention it is prepared to use nuclear weapons offensively against Indian cities while justifying the mass killing committed by jihad fighters as "freedom struggle." Indian strategists calmly discuss how India can "shoot" a nuclear missile at Pakistan and threaten the destruction of the entire population of Pakistan in retaliation. Pakistan's UN Ambassador is quoted in the New York Times as saying that the UN Charter does not prohibit the use of nuclear weapons. While this is technically correct, international law is just the UN Charter, but includes the judgements of the ICJ as well as other treaties and customary international law. In its advisory opinion on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons in 1996, the ICJ declared that states that threaten the very survival of the state is threatened, the use of nuclear weapons is unlawful even in defence. Pakistan's stated "first strike" policy would entirely violate international law.

India's international law that it is entitled to use nuclear missiles in retaliation contradicts its own stated position before the ICJ in 1996 as well as the judgement itself. In its written pleading before the court, India asserted that "even when a wrongful act involved the use of a nuclear weapon, the reprisal action cannot involve the use of a nuclear weapon without violating certain fundamental principles of humanitarian law." In view of the above, use of nuclear weapons even by way of reprisal or retaliation appears to be unlawful. "How can we India justify using nuclear war in retaliation?"

In the context between "war" and "law," the former appears to be winning. If we are not to lose the entire edifice of peace making that has been painstakingly built over more than 100 years, we must begin opposing "war" law. We need to revise "law" in international relations and more importantly, prevent the normalisation of war and total destruction. The people of the subcontinent depend on this. *(The Hindu)*

*(The writer is professor of law and development, and director of the MIT Program on Human Rights and Justice.)*

## 28 years of King Jigme

Thimphu - The Bhutanese capital saw celebrations attended by hundreds of Bhutanese in traditional dress last weekend and early this week in honour of King Jigme Singye Wangchuck's 28th jubilee. The king is so deeply admired that his proposals to relinquish his powers and turn Bhutan into a constitutional monarchy have been strongly resisted by government ministers. King Jigme says his priority is bringing his country into the 21st century without undermining Bhutanese culture. He is fiercely proud of the country's Buddhist heritage and is determined that its wide array of plant and wildlife should be protected from the ravages of too much tourism.



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## First Mum-in-Law

Deshantar, 2 June  
Pratibha Bana is a Rastriya Prajatantra Party leader and mother-in-law of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. In an interview with Deshantar, Rana talks about the infighting in the Nepali Congress and the role of the prime minister.

**How do you feel about the Prime Minister's decision to dissolve parliament and announce elections? Was his action appropriate?**  
There was no way out, apart from announcing elections. The prime minister took a very appropriate step.

**The [Congress] party says the prime minister has made a mockery of the multiparty system.**  
According to what we read in the papers, the prime minister informed the party president. When the latter didn't show any signs of objection, the prime minister registered the proposal to extend the emergency with parliament.

**People are speculating that there may be a coup, a constitutional coup. Is that possible?**  
That's laughable. It's like a baby breaking a toy that he didn't know how to play with in the first place, and then bawling at his parents. Ever since democracy was established, only the monarchy has abided by the constitution. The present king has reiterated that he is a constitutional monarch. Despite his repeated assertions that he respects the constitution and multiparty democracy, people say there's going to be a coup. There can never be a coup in Nepal. A river can't flow up stream. Time past doesn't return. The rumours regarding a coup were started to mislead the people, they were started by leaders who want to cover up their wrongs.

**Some say the monarch needs to be more active. Do you think this is appropriate or necessary?**  
All the political parties have said so. But how active they mean, I can't understand. This is a country of rumours. Someone said that Someone did that. I don't believe in rumours. Times are changing. If you cannot flow with the times, you walk the wrong road. There's no possibility of playing a more active role.

**Do you think, contrary to what people say, none of Deuba's ministers are corrupt?**  
As long as there's no legal proof, we can't say whether or not they are.

### QUOTE OF THE WEEK

I have fought for multiparty system all my life, I am not going to stay partysles.

— Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba in *Tanin National Weekly*, 3 June

फुर्दैन। यस्तै फुर्दैन।  
यस्तै हुन पौ नै देस।



Pot Party  
"I won't break, I'm sure it won't break. Don't you believe me? OK, watch!"

हिमालय हिमालय हिमालय

## Clear politics

Editorial in *Chhapal*, 2 June

"...The people should be enabled to vote for the party of their choice without fear or harassment. Everyone needs to be serious about creating that kind of environment, because it is the minimum needed in a democratic society. People must be allowed, through impartial elections, to be the decision-makers. Sweet talk alone cannot help in this regard, we have to show our commitment in our actions.

The government that sought the people's mandate is also responsible for conducting free, impartial elections. There will be nothing more deplorable than if it is unable to fulfil the commitments it made. The existence of this nation will be threatened.

We cannot allow the mistakes of past elections to be repeated this time. We have to get rid of all those weaknesses. The country's crisis can come to an end when we begin to function democratically and address issues in the economic and social sectors. That is what we need today to take the country out of the present crisis. Whoever may have caused it, our main problem today is lack of peace and security. The country has been terrorised by murder, terrorism, violence and acts of looting. The Congress government needs to be democratic, but it is not so in practice. It is dictatorial, and it has ignored the people's concerns, motivated as it has been in the past by the desire to win elections at any cost. It uses the communications infrastructure and other government facilities to support the candidacy of particular factions within its own party. It misused state machinery and past elections were not impartial.

So this time around all sectors should initiate actions to prevent past malpractice from being repeated.

We have to challenge those who are used to simply winning elections to face fair polls. We also need to put in place the mechanisms needed to ensure free and fair elections. Undemocratic election practices are one of the factors that have brought the country to this point, and these weapons we aimed at others in the past may backfire on us now. What is happening in the Congress now is also, in a manner of speaking, the result of such practices. The lack of a clean political process within the party has been one of the major reasons for its never-ending problems.

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are talking about animal rights it's a shame that not one human rights organisation or activist, the law and its keepers, the administration has paid any attention to this case," says a local schoolteacher.

## The party line

*Chhapal*, 2 June

Excerpts from an interview with Bal Bahadur Rai, member of the disciplinary committee of the Nepali Congress that expelled Purna Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba.

As a member of the party disciplinary committee, would you say the



decision to expel the prime minister from the party was an independent one, or was it by a party president?

Bal Bahadur Rai: We investigated the issue on the direction of the party, but the decision on the punishment stemmed from our independent decision. We are obliged to follow party directives, but the disciplinary committee is an active, independent, able and responsible agency within the party. We understand the party constitution and traditions, our desire is based on party values.

**Do you think the punishment meted out to the prime minister was fair?**

Our recommendation is fair. Given the kind of mistake the prime minister made, he deserves it.

**What will you do about the ministers who do not resign from their cabinet positions as per the party's ruling?**

I am not in a position to say what kind of action will be taken against these ministers yet, but the bottom line is that anyone who goes against party guidelines is subject to punishment.

**Who do you think should have advised the prime minister on his move to dissolve parliament? Do you think his advisers have the welfare of the nation in mind?**

I don't want to take his advisers in public yet. But it is obvious that the prime minister is not acting alone, he has a group to advise him. And it is obvious that the he has been trapped by those who want to end democracy here, otherwise they would not have advised him to dissolve parliament.

**Don't you think punishing the prime minister and other ministers will split the party?**

Those members who are faithful would not consider splitting the party, others might break away from it. The Nepali Congress is a party with a proud history, but we cannot help it if somebody wants to leave.

**Of Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Girija Prasad Koirala, who is a better strategist?**  
Both are really top guys. Koirala is very straight forward, and stubborn too. But there is no better leader to head the Congress. It is because of him that our party is strong.

**Who do you think will succeed Koirala as leader of the party?**  
I have not seen an appropriate successor to him in the party leadership, but I am optimistic the party will be able to nurture a new leader.

**You have been criticised by your party for not having very good academic qualifications, how do you feel about that?**  
Academic qualifications aren't all that is needed to develop political vision and leadership skills. A professor has never held that country. One has to be determined to serve the people and have good moral conduct, in order to be a good leader. If academic qualifications are the leadership qualities to individuals, then how come the well-educated ministers are involved in corruption? I might not have academic qualifications, but I have all the qualities needed to lead a country, and I am against all sorts of corruption.

## Jailed journalist

Edited in *Jana Kanta*, 5 June

Ambika Bhandari, a member of the Dhankuta district committee of the Nepal Working Journalists Association and correspondent for *Jana Aastha*, has still not been freed, six months after she was detained. The police brutally tortured Bhandari when she was taken into custody from her lodging in Dhankuta on 16 December without a warrant or any proof. She was arrested around 7PM and then taken to Dhankuta district police office, where she was beaten with pipes and kicked for almost two hours, until she fainted. From 17-21 December the police kept Bhandari on the cold cement floor blindfolded, handcuffed. She was not even given water to drink.

It is said that Bhandari was arrested because she went to watch a mass meeting organised by the Maoists. She also deflected some insurgents. Of the people arrested in Dhankuta [around the same time], two journalists are still in detention. Professor, advocate and journalist Tador Baral also was being kept in six months in detention. When representatives of the International Red Cross went to meet them, the administration hid all the political detainees in a storage room. There has been much talk about human rights abuses on a large scale in Sunsari and Sankhuwasabha, but the situation in Dhankuta is equally bad. Local intellectuals tell us. They talk about how mentally unstable people, wandering musicians, pregnant women, and even septuagenarians have been beaten within inches of death.

People bear physical traces of beatings and destruction even four months after the fact. Innocent people have been victimised by security forces, for allegedly being Maoist supporters. On the other hand, the administration has been unable to take any action against people who have joined or supported the Maoists lured by the prospect of financial or political gain, or simply from fear of retribution. This has increased speculation that even the administration is not free from prejudice.

## NEPALITERATURE

by MANJUSHREE THAPA

# THE STORYTELLER AS POET: RAJAV

Ever since Gopal Prasad Rimel broke traditional form and wrote poems in disarmingly simple language, Nepal's poets have taken up free verse with gusto, not always with memorable results. Reading the multitudes of poems being published today, it is possible to conclude that most of them are mini-essays (or worse, mini-lectures) with broken lines. They look like poems on the page, but they lack rhythm, they lack total complexity, they lack emotional and intellectual depth. For example, "My tears flow off this poverty! So much poverty! Have we no heart? would pass a poem today." Poems should be layered, resonant expressions, suggestive and rich and compressed, but reading most of today's free verse, I would seem as though Rimel did us all a disservice by licensing hours of slack, flat doggerel.

Rajav, who is at his best writing stories, has taken up the challenge of free verse head-on in the poem translated below, but without compromising his storytelling impulse. His is clearly a narrative sensibility; the poem below could have been written in prose form. Yet the content does gain by being a poem: there is a comic effect to many of the line breaks, and the lightness of the tone is well served by the slight, quick movements of the lines. Indeed, the un-poetic content and 'artless' style seem to poke fun at the stodginess of the verse form. By not taking itself too seriously, the poem allows the reader to relax and enjoy its main offering, which is, in the end, its story.

## A LIFE-THREATENING COLL

Important persons in the office have come down with colds. This is why these important persons are not performing any work now.

The important persons who have come down with colds are the peon and the boss.

As soon as the boss caught a cold the whole office got into a muddle. No signs of approval were scrawled on the files.

No stamps were affixed on the letters. Lacking the boss's signature all outgoing letters were halted. All visits ended for those not dealing in cash. The only thing to leave the boss's room were his sneezes: ha-chio!

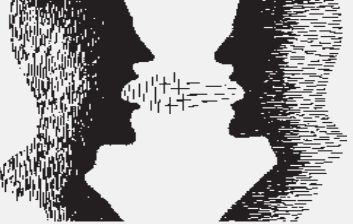
Those who asked "What's that?" were told: "The boss's nose caught a cold." Dreadful!

The peon has also caught a cold. He's shuffling in and out wiping snots from his nose, sneezing, bringing the boss drinks of hot lemon and serving tea to the boss's visitors.

The cold has made no difference to the peon. Wiping snots from his nose and sneezing: ha-chio! he continues with the boss's assignments. To cure his fever he came without eating his meal. He's famished but this hasn't dampened his zeal.

The cold has affected the office, though. Office matters aren't moving ahead. The boss hasn't signed all the letters, only those that bring him some cash. The cold has earned him a tidy income.

"The boss has caught a cold. Come tomorrow. No files will be approved today. Leave now. Don't crowd around it," says the boss's emissaries as



they have the papers signed of those who whisper in their ears about money. The cold-embattled boss wipes snots from his nose with cash and scolds the peon. "Take all these away. Oh! How my nose itches!" Rubbing his nose and wiping away the snots he starts to sneeze. Bring them back another day. Oh! What I could've I caught. It spread to me from this ass."

Outside, the peon starts bragging. "I caught the boss's cold." Proud at having caught the boss's cold he pinches his nose and tells everyone, "The boss passed on his cold to me. What to do? Sneezing: ha-chio! and enjoying himself he tells everyone he meets, "What to do? I'm ruined, I caught the boss's cold."

Those who overhear him tell on him to the boss, and the boss rages like Jang Bahadur of the old days: "What? He says I gave him my cold? He gave me his cold? Call him in!"

The peon is felled. Sneezing five times he offers a humble namaste. Without acknowledging his greetings he bows his head. "I gave you my cold?" This is what you claim? "No hajoor, I haven't said that. No hajoor, I haven't said that. No hajoor, I haven't said that. No hajoor, I haven't said that."

Now the peon sneezes: ha-chio! vigorously wipes snots from his nose but never mentions that he's caught a cold. Rather he prays in silence: Eh Kashi, may I never catch a cold that proves life-threatening to my employment.

I haven't said that. I haven't said that, hajoor." The peon adds, "Rather, I gave you my cold." Then he gets leave from the boss's room. And again he starts to feel proud. Pinching his nose and wiping away the snots he starts to sneeze. "I gave my cold to the boss!"

Pleased at having given his cold to the boss he now says, "See, I caught a cold and passed it along to the boss."

The boss hears about this too and again the peon is felled. The boss rages like a double Jang Bahadur: "You gave me your cold?"

"No hajoor, No hajoor! After saying sneezes and dreams of this the peon understands all, at last and says, "I don't even have a cold, hajoor." Pleased that this is a highly original cold as befitting his station the boss wipes snots from his nose and after sneezing, snaps, "I wonder whose cold I caught?"

Now the peon sneezes: ha-chio! vigorously wipes snots from his nose but never mentions that he's caught a cold. Rather he prays in silence: Eh Kashi, may I never catch a cold that proves life-threatening to my employment.

# My brother-in-law's wives

Yes, she's like that. She stands with her hands on her hips, puffing away at a hand-rolled cigarette called "paper" bought at the local palak at Rs 3 for a bundle of 20. She wears Hong Kong nylon saris, pink flowered ones with metallic gold borders over canary yellow flared petticoats. She slips an imitation DKNY bag over her shoulder, and wears Chinese velvet strappy shoes, size 27. She is white-wigged, but not enough for two and believes in viewing metropolitan Kathmandu perched precariously on the balcony wall. She is my relative from the village. I am the urban sister-in-law. I must now forego my gaste in the kitchen to cook cool-kind in smoky wood fire kitchens.

I who had read of Yeats and Keats must now have to try and find inspiration in separating chalk from grain, try to visualise those visitations of the Muse, while she lets out a raucous cackle of delight at the mechanical gyrations on Channel V. One never stops learning in the socialisation process.

She is the fifth, the Pyar Kanchi wife of my brother-in-law. She can charm him and harm him, and twist him round her little called finger. While L, the modern emancipated woman, figures out ways to extricate herself from a convoluted relationship, mired in liberation theory and feminist crusade.

She has no hesitations about making decisions, no dithering, no flit affections. She commands the other shared partner, the poor pathetic, anemic, barren Malli wife like a brigade commander. Lucky are the other wives who are long dead, hopefully in Valhalla, who have not tasted the whiplash of her acerbic tongue. She magnanimously hands out one and two rupee notes to her step-daughters with a benevolent "Ja, ke, kin kha".

But she will not let life be easier for poor covering Malli. Husband dear not offer a word of solace. Should the day ever come to pass, then its manifestation of Chandi in its truest form until she has been appeased, has her blood sacrifice in char amni ko chyaloti or ticks to see

Thabadi, depending upon the intensity of wrong done. She will not let me buy steel utensils for the house, which I in my naive altruistic way thought would lessen Malli's suffering, who has to turn chopped fingers scrubbing ancestral Manjupale chaul with kitchen ash in the cold waters of the Himal. Says I'll spoil her. I must learn. If you want to assert your authority you must always try and maintain your upper hand. Be assertive, otherwise you are fated to a life of misery. How does one grace one's people with wealth? No more the accommodating, self-effacing, devoted and doing wife. Here are the gender roles, the divisions of labour and the power-constructs! It is just women vs women. We like to say we are a patriarchal society, why then do we look down with such disdain at our own?

We discriminate against the children, barren women and call them apatali. We look at the widow and ostracise her, calling her apahang. The baby is called alachina because it's a she. If you haven't already killed her before she is born by having her consanguineal. Having been born, we lead her with the aid of our mothers, we over work her, do not treat her equal to our sons, bring her down to our downtrodden



## ABOUT TOWN

## FILM

♦ **The Dybbuk of the Holy Apple** Yossi Somer, Israel, 1997. Russian Cultural Centre, Kamalpokhari, 9 June, 5.30 PM. Inter-Cultural Film Society.

## EXHIBITION

- ♦ **Three Men's Perspective** A three-man exhibition of photographic art 9-27 June, 10AM-5PM, except Saturdays. Park Gallery, Paudok, 522307
- ♦ **Iconographic Calligraphy** by Pooasapal Parameshwar Raju, Unil 12 June, Siddhartha Art Gallery, 11AM-6PM, except Saturdays, 411122
- ♦ **Art of the Past** Exhibition of sculptures. Unil 12 June, Siddhartha Art Gallery, 11AM-6PM, except Saturdays, 411122

## FOOTBALL

- ♦ **Bookie's Bar** Watch World Cup games, win free buffets and other prizes with every match. Free entrance, everyday at the Hotel Yak & Yeti, 248999
- ♦ **Word Cup Football Show** All the World Cup matches on the Summit big screen. Free Entry, 521810
- ♦ **World Cup Watch** St Xavier's alumni watch World Cup matches from quarter finals onwards on big screen for Rs 240, including free popcorn and a year's membership at the GAA. Includes the 7 June England vs Argentina match. All at GAA, Thamel, 414785
- ♦ **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, Launchour.

## EVENTS

- ♦ **Skill development workshops** Telephone Skills and Welcoming Visitors Workshop 10-14 June, 7AM-9AM, Rs 400, Negotiation Skills Conflict Resolution 11-13 June, 10AM-4PM, Rs 600, eds@winlink.com, 524202
- ♦ **Mike's Breakfast; Cooking in Nepal** and then some Book launch of Mike Frame's memoir published by Mera Publications. Mike's Breakfast/Indo Gallery, Naxal, 10 June, 7PM.
- ♦ **Friends of the Bagmati** A group of activists aiming to clean up the Bagmati River. Email friends@bagmatinep@yaho.com for details.
- ♦ **Namaste Banepa** education project is looking for volunteers to provide input and ideas. wawet@winlink.com.np.

## MUSIC

- ♦ **Dinesh & Pemba** Live every Friday 7PM-9PM, Himalite Cafe, Thamel, 262526
- ♦ **Down Memory Lane** Wednesday nights with Teesta. The Rox Bar at the Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, 491234
- ♦ **Live music** by Catch 22, Friday nights at the 40,000 ½ ft Bar, Rum Doodle Restaurant, Thamel, 414336

## DRINK

- ♦ **Fusion Bar** Now open at Dwarika's Hotel. Live blues and jazz music. European ambience, 479488
- ♦ **Metro of Mals** Single malt exhibition and tasting. Twelve single malts for Rs 999. Evenings, Piano Lounge, Hotel Yak & Yeti, 248999
- ♦ **Mountain Madness** Cocktails, happy hour everyday 4PM-8 PM, two for the price of one at Rs 250. Kilo's of Kathmandu, Thamel, 250440

## FOOD

- ♦ **British Week** British speciality food. 2-9 June at Summit Hotel 12.30 PM - 9.30 PM and Patan Museum Cafe 1.20PM - 4.30 PM, 521810
- ♦ **Monsoon Madness Barbecue** every weekend from 6.30 PM onwards at Rs 250. Kilo's of Kathmandu, Thamel, 250440
- ♦ **The Tharu Kitchen** Dikhti (steamed rice dumplings) with special jungle sauces and hot coriander chutney. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com, 061-29564
- ♦ **Wood fired pizzas** at the new Roadhouse Cafe. Completely redesigned with separate bar seating and coffee bar. The Roadhouse Cafe, 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 clay-oven pizzas at Srupa View Restaurant & Terrace, Boudha, 480262
- ♦ **Saturday Live Buffet** with unlimited draught beer and live music by the Rusty Nails. The Fun Café, Radisson Hotel, 11.30AM-2.30PM, Saturdays, 411818

## GETAWAYS

- ♦ **Jolly Jomson Stopover Package** One night, airport/ resort transfers, return airfare Pokhara/ Jomson. ACAP permit, airport taxes 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 Jomson Mountain Resort. 489110 jpr@setwinlink.com.np
- ♦ **Overnight and short stay packages** at Dwarika's Hotel. Unbeatable prices. 479488
- ♦ **The Great Godavari Getaway** Special weekend packages including room with breakfast and dinner, 25 percent discount on health club facilities. Godavari Village Resort, 560675
- ♦ **Chico Chilo Hawana** with Rusty Nails. Live band every Friday at the Club Himalaya Nagarkot Resort. Rs 1,500 per person with twin-sharing. For Nepalis and expats only, Club Himalaya Nagarkot, 414432, 680083

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

## NEPALI WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

OK, here it comes. The monsoon is stirring over north-eastern India and Burma, which means the rains are now right around the corner. The pre-monsoon showers this week gave us a sign of things to come, but expect sustained hard rain by 10 June. A moderately strong high pressure zone over the central Himalaya is the reason the pre-monsoon troughs played a tug-o-war over Kathmandu Valley this week. It looks like the monsoon winds are the clear winners. The gap between the maximum and minimum temperatures is now going to fall to ten Celsius, or even single digits.

## KATHMANDU VALLEY

Fr	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
19-16	29-16	29-17	27-17	29-17

## YAK YETI YAK

by MIKU



## BOOKWORM

**WTO, South Asia and Nepal** Dr. Sijam K. Shrestha and Nirajan Baral  
Book Palace, Kathmandu, 2002  
Rs 135  
The authors, a professor at Tribhuvan University and a joint secretary with the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies, detail the main purposes and tasks of the WTO and the Uruguay round of negotiations as it relates to least developed countries, and finally, track Nepal's preparations, independently and through SAARC, for accession to the trade body. They also set out a vision and practical suggestions for Nepal's accession.

**Business of Bureaucracy** Madhu Ramon Acharya  
Phulchoki Enterprises, Kathmandu, 1996/2002  
Rs 500  
Acharya discusses public administration, management and development administration with reference to Nepal. He specifically addresses notions of good governance, transparency and accountability, and explores the difference between generalist and specialist. Acharya then explains how value addition to people, and economic, conflict and disaster management can all benefit from reforms in the administrative and organisational structures.

**Good Governance and Decentralization in Nepal** Dev Raj Dahal, Hari Upadhyay and Phandisa Subha Center for Good Governance and Development Studies with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Kathmandu, 2002  
Rs 200  
The authors explore the state, the market and civil society as crucial vectors of good governance, and detail the links between good governance and decentralization. They propose a typology of decentralization in Nepal and ask how Nepal's political economy and institutional framework for local self-governance can work, with cooperation from donors, to create new conditions and policy options for decentralization here.

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

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## SPORT

## SUCKER FOR SODDER



**B**y the time you read this I'll be in Japan, but I spent most of the first week of the World Cup watching games in Nepal. Last Friday, I headed out to a Lazimpat hotel for a fancy-schmancy opening night party. I was struck by two things. First, despite the Rs 1,000 ticket, the room was packed, with hardly an expat in sight; and second, virtually everyone in the room was cheering at the top of their lungs for underdog Senegal.

It's much more common, in my experience, for sports fans from countries with poor teams to root for countries with great teams. But Nepal's don't seem to refer defending world champion France as much as Argentina, Brazil and England. The lone goal, by Senegal, was total shot and France was extremely unlucky to hit the posts and crossbar several times, but a win is a win and the shirt-and-tie crowd at the party was more than happy to spend a couple hours shouting at the big screen in support of Senegal. Karma Thapa, an educational consultant from Kathmandu, was in a philosophical mood after the match and said that the result was "very nice"—France is a very powerful and even they can lose a game. Every team has to keep improving; no one knows what will be tomorrow."

Later in the weekend, I went to Kathmandu University's student canteen to watch the

Argentina-Nigeria match with about 50 male undergraduates. The atmosphere was certainly different—Friday night's uniformed waiters replaced by a backroom kitchen staff, and trays of hors d'oeuvres and whisky swapped out for institutional-sized vats of *dhal bhat* and short orders of egg chowmein. And all the students were vociferously supporting the heavily-favoured South Americans.

Many of the students seemed focused on watching the game to improve their own football skills: During the game, I heard "luvy pass" more than any other comment, which is exactly what these guys say incessantly when they're on the football field themselves. But there was still plenty of flag-waving (Argentina's sky-blue and white stripes) and chanting "Ar...Gen...Tina! Ar...Gen...Tina!"

KU is holding exams this month, and Umesh KC, 20, from Banepa, says he's trying to salvage his school year by watching only the matches of Brazil, Argentina, England, France, and Italy (which still means he's booked for over 40 hours of TV time this month). Regardless, his studies are taking a beating. "Saturday I watched football all day and I had a math test today," he said. "I passed, but that's all."

But as addicted as these Nepal fans are, I wondered if things would be the 10 times worse if their own national team were in the tournament. In a recent editorial, the *Kathmandu Post* suggested that it might take something like 50 years before Nepal could make a good run at

## Football and the Nepali mind

What we talk about when we talk about football.

qualifying for the finals, but a few of the exuberant fans I spoke with were much more optimistic, saying they could see it happening within 8-16 years.

Any appearance in the finals would, of course, be a huge boost to Nepal's national pride. Every time a World Cup comes around, the sports sociologists roll out of the background to talk about how football is the primary vehicle

through which modern nations express nationalism, and if Nepal were competing this month I'm sure we'd all watch their matches and scream our heads off in hope from beginning to end.

Even though they're not, another pet theory of the sociologists is that football teams sublimate and express certain elements of national character—and we already have considerable evidence to support this one. Not

that his or her camp is the one that is officially recognised by the rest of the world, rather than developing the game. One Nepali fan I spoke to speculates that national character



might manifest itself in absurdity on the field of play—left backs would pass only to left midfielders, and right midfielders would look to set up only the right wing. And both camps might plot to bring down the team by scoring deliberate own goals in an attempt to remove the keeper—who is the one player of whom there can be only one—and install someone of their particular ideological stripe, even if that person is in fact an inferior choice. Sound familiar?

(Bill Brewster, an American living in Dhulikhel, provides Nepali Times readers with a weekly football World Cup column from Japan and Korea.)

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## Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

# Man of the match

In the studio now I have Bhaichung Bhutia, and we are watching the Brazil vs Turkey match. Tell me, Bhaichung, was that a performance by Rivaldo or what?

Bhaichung: "Well, Gary, to be honest, I couldn't agree less."

Thank you Bhaichung. Now, back to Bharati. Run, Rivaldo, run. Can Rivaldo run? Yes, Rivaldo can run. Can Rivaldo act? Yes, Rivaldo can act. Act, Rivaldo act. Now, see Rivaldo collapsed at the corner flag, clutching his face and rolling in agony after Hakan Unsal kicked the ball into his leg. See Korean referee Kim Young-Joo give Unsal the red card. Rivaldo doesn't deserve to be banned from the World Cup for the next five games, he deserves an Oscar for Best Actor in a Leading Role.

With all these celebrities running around all over our TV screens for a month trying to pretend that they are morally injured, it is sometimes difficult to tell the difference between the Football World Cup and the annual Oscars. But with all the other world events competing for attention, it has become imperative for FIFA to try to do something to make football less boring. This time, for instance, the World Cup came within eyeball-to-eyeball and a hair's breadth of being upstaged by an India-Pakistan nuclear exchange, and in Nepal by the first ascent of a major Himalayan peak without oxygen by a Lifa motorcycle climbing alpine-style. FIFA's Governing Body, being a democracy, is also distracted by its own politicking, threats of a split within the ruling politburo, allegations of corruption, vote-buying and rumours of a coup. But it must rise above these petty governance issues and take immediate steps to ensure that there are more

goals. In this day and age how can you sustain viewer interest with a game in which, on average, there is only one goal per match? (Except if the Saudis are playing.) Here are some ways to get more goals into a game:

1. Double the width of the goalposts.
2. Eliminate goal-keepers.
3. Allow off-sides.
4. Increase the number of players on each side from 11 to 56.
5. Reduce the ball size to that of a tennis ball.

In this manner, football will be much more exciting, and it would not be inconceivable to have a Brazil-China match with a score of 43-21. More goals also means more time to have commercial breaks, which means there will be enough sponsors to have the World Cup every year instead of every four years.

The other thing that slows football down is the rule that you can only hit the ball with your foot or your head. Look at the Americans, they took a boring game, changed the shape of the ball from a round object into something resembling a near-earth asteroid so it would bounce much more crazily, and then allowed Thai-style boxing, wrestling, and hand-to-hand combat in the field. Soccer, in comparison, is a slow and awkward game because players are banned from using their god-given hands. FIFA has made a start by considering legalising hojoganism inside the D-area, but this is only a small first step. The next big step is have a tournament with mixed teams with men and women, and allow everything in the field except kicking. Yes, Bhaichung, you wanted to say something?

Bhaichung: "I want to know why I have to wear this suit. Not only is it tight around the armpits, but I look like a total dork."



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