

# NEPALI times



8-9

A home of one's own

**EXCLUSIVE**

**Mao power**

Political power may come out of the barrel of a gun, but hydropower must still come out of a turbine. Even in Maoist land. The 25-kilowatt hydropower unit at Kholu Gaon, Seti Gaad in Rukum was built by local Maoists last year



after they blew up the 150 kW Bjeswori hydro at Chauharhi. The Rs 150,000 plant supplies power to 15 households. Security forces personnel visited the plant twice but did not blow it up as the Maoists would have done because they thought it was "creative work."

**Showdown**

Fifty years after it was set up, the Nepal Congress is closer today to formal split than it has ever been. But it speaks for the hidden resilience of this fractious party that people still haven't given up on a last-minute patch-up. This time, however, the bad blood runs too deep. And unity, even if it is forged, may not last beyond the day the tickets for the November elections are announced. The root of the crisis has always been the party's inability to sort out its inter-generational power transfer. The Young Turks are impatient, the septuagenarian leaders are unwilling to let go, and both have powerful cronies. A party split, however, would collectively hurt all sides: the good the bad and the ugly. Ex-LLC Col Narayan Singh Pun and close Deuba supporter has already registered a party (tentatively called the Nepal Samanta Party). This could be Deuba's Plan B, but Pun says the independent party is his own idea.

This is the birthplace and heartland of the Maoist movement and its "People's War." Seven months into the emergency and the decline of the army, and the residents of Rolpa are dulled by wariness. Travelling in eastern Rolpa this week, the landscape is reflected in two extremes. One is 66-year-old Kumbha Singh Pun who spent 28 years working in India. "I could have settled there, but I came back here in 1993 because this is the land of my birth. It is so peaceful here, but now there is so much conflict and destruction. This is not the Rolpa I came back to live in."

The other is a short, stocky teenage militant, behind whose pleasant demeanour lies a hardened Maoist fighter. He has seen fighting in all the recent districts—Dang, Sarlahi, Lumbini, Karnali and the most recent debacle in Khara. He has seen comrades fall to the bullet, and has obviously himself killed, many times over. Why do you fight, we ask him. "For the people and the country. 'What if you die?' I will be remembered in history."

We are walking high up near the flanks of Jaljala mountain in eastern Rolpa, a mass that is part of Maoist lore. The terrain is steep on all sides, but you can see upon clearing. There are young men and some young

# EYEWITNESS

A first-hand account from the Maoist epicentre.



East Rolpa, 10 June 2002: A company of the People's Liberation Army prepares to march out.

**KANAK MANI DIXIT** in EAST ROLPA, a town in the hills of eastern Nepal, no one meets your eye. No one poses the jovial queries you hear on paths all over Nepal. They don't want to know who you are, where you are going, where you are coming from.

We walked into a full company of the People's Liberation Army at a school in a village of perhaps 25—old for this group—who interrogates us and says that we will have to walk with them further into the jungle, while they contact higher-ups to decide what to do with us. We cannot go, we say, we have a deadline to meet in Kathmandu, but this is ignored, and it increasingly begins to look like he will take us over the pass whether we like it or not, in the rain and the fading light.

It is fortuitous that Comrade Bijaya arrives just as we are about to give in. He is smiling and communicative and identifies the political commissar of the place. "You understand why we have to be suspicious of you. The security forces are active, we have just lost six of our workers, and you come here unannounced, without permission." Finally, convinced of our journalistic credentials and having apparently consulted a leader further

up in the hierarchy, he agrees to be interviewed. We speak to him by candle-light.

Thirty-something Comrade Bijaya introduces himself as a member of the Rolpa District Committee of the CPN (Maoist). A disciple of Bhuraman Bhamar, he started his political career, like his mentor, with the All-India Nepali Students' Federation. He teaches political theory to the cadres, and speaks with an ideological fervour that must be what makes young men and women rush to battle in the name of the Prachanda Path.

Comrade Bijaya starts off listing the Maoist's successful battles against the government—attacks on police posts and the subsequent engagements with the army. "We learnt how to fight as we went along, and Holkei was a turning point. Step-by-step we have polished our skills and proved our claim that we can take on the military. We started with household implements and sticks, moved on to SIMs and 30s, and then to SLRs, LPMGs, GPMGs and 2-inch mortars."

"SIMs", by the way, is the euphemistic acronym the Maoists have coined for single-barrel muzzle-loaders. The weapons and ammunition in this particular company indicates an inefficient army, but the Red Army's relentless quest for armoury may slowly change that. "According to Mao's dictates, we first built weapons and are now at the snatching stage. We aren't buying them yet, but when we need to, we will."

Isolated in these mountains, the fighters tune into Radio Nepal's news

service to learn how their war is going elsewhere. They appear to have the run of this territory, but seem distanced from the insurgency in other parts of the country. Still, Comrade Bijaya is confident sitting in his mountain eyrie. He knows his guerrillas can easily melt away into the folds and valleys of eastern Rolpa. "Our networks are as keen when there is movement of the security forces. The government's informants, on the other hand, are local anti-socials hiding in the sadamukam [district headquarters]."

Bijaya will talk about his fighters' motivation levels and the atrocities of the state, but won't acknowledge questions about the forced conscription of very young people that is so obvious a reality here. He also challenges strategies of the PLA that many in the national press take as givens. "We do not use human shields—the Janamukti Sena is perfectly capable of fighting on its own. And why should we cut heads? I would not like to be identified while alive, but once dead, it doesn't matter."

In sharp contrast to his discus-

sions about local realities and fighting strategy, Comrade Bijaya descends into romanticism and rhetoric when asked about the larger goals of the Nepali Maoists. "Our fight is for the oppressed all over the world. We are no longer fighting the Nepali government. It is the imperialists we are engaged with."

How can Maoism succeed here when it has failed everywhere else? "We learn from the mistakes made elsewhere. The primary mistake in the past was the inability to get the middle class to side along. We will rectify that." Comrade Bijaya also says that under a Maoist dispensation there will be room for all the political parties that exist today, and that the high command is preparing a political document to incorporate this new strategy to take other forces with them. The Maoist plan, he adds, is to proceed simultaneously on the military and political front. ♦

**Kanak Mani Dixit** is a people's war

# War widows

**RITA THAPA** in SURKHET  
As in all conflict areas, Nepal's insurgency has affected the most vulnerable section of the population the worst. Women and children, widows, orphans, and internally displaced families are trying to survive from day to day, the hardships of their ordinary lives now made extraordinary.

In faraway Kathmandu, there is big talk of big money. Millions of dollars to fight the war, more millions in development assistance. There is a lot of talk about governance and delivery. But here on Ground Zero, the widows and orphans, bereaved and now destitute, need immediate relief. They cannot wait. Where are the NGOs, where are the donors, where is the government?

It does not take too long in Surkhet to realise that this once-vibrant hub of the mid-west has turned into a township at the edge of a war zone. There has been a dusk-to-dawn curfew every day in the town and on its outskirts. Mysterious gunshots punctuate the night, and the next morning no one seems to know who shot whom. On the streets, there is the sound of curfew violators being chased and beaten up. The pall of fear is pervasive. The warm and generous people with their happy greetings are a thing of the past. People don't make eye-contact anymore, they avert their gaze.

The town is full of boys and girls who fled the conflict in the hills. In a lodge in Surkhet is 15-year-old Shyam\*. His father had left home, and the boy stayed with his mother. But his mother told him to run away for fear that the Maoists would recruit him. There are similar boys in almost every hotel and tea-shop in Surkhet. Many have come recently, brought by worried parents who were being forced to send one offspring to join the rebels. Among the guests in the hotels are other transient young men, on their way to India or further afield—to try to find work and also to get away from the Maoists, or avoid being picked up by the security forces.

**Times** nepalnews.com  
Weekly Internet Poll # 33

**Q. Should the Nepal Congress split and get it over with?**

Total votes: 1527

**Q. Should King Gyanendra be more assertive to restore political stability?**

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# A people's war

At every turn we meet people denied the choice of being neutral.



ANAND MANI DIXIT

**W**alking in Rolpa is a journey through a map of death—Nuwagoon, Holleri, Lisne, Gam. The last action in these parts was in Gam on 7 May, and the villagers from Pohang, a day's walk from the Sulichaur roadhead, watched the firefight rage through the night, tracers and bombs fighting up the ridge across the valley.

But though it is easy to forget, these are also places with a longer history. Upvalley, Thawang is the village where, deep in the Panchayat years, the locals defied faraway Kathmandu. The most immediate reason that sparked the Maoist movement, so the story goes, was in Gam, where in 1995 a rival between the Samyukta Jana Morcha on the one side and the Nepal Congress and the Rastriya Prajanta Party on the other came to a head when the two groups fought during a fair. The resulting harassment of SJM activists by the political bosses of the day soon snowballed into 'revolution'.

We are here to see for ourselves what living in eastern Rolpa is like these days, and so we are bypassing the district headquarters of Ilam, where civil servants and refugees from the villages fearfully avoid the day the battle-hardened youngsters of the so-called Janamukti Sena (People's Liberation Army) choose to attack. The Maoist fighters are 'jungal bi hagar' here—those who have entered the forest—and their writ runs over this harsh geography.

"The peasantry here in Rolpa are all in a cleft between the Maoists, who have the run of the land, and the security forces, who swoop down without notice," a teacher from Palpa told us. One of the few people who spoke freely with us, he talked at length about how what was once one of the most peaceful corners of the country is now a series of killing terraces.

Everyone in Pohang in Magar, barring eight houses of Dalits. It takes time, but eventually some villagers sit with us and talk about their problems.

about the difficulties that people in Rolpa and Rukum are facing due to the restrictions on the transport of food-stuff, about how the houses of suspected Maoist supporters are razed by soldiers who come out in occasional detours. Not one of these people dares criticise the Maoists. They point to the destruction of the Lutheran World Service development outpost near the village there to serve the whole area, but will not say who did it.

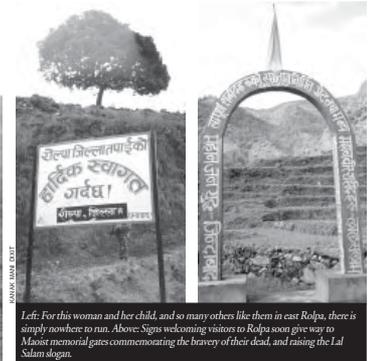
Finally, one middle-aged man tells us in a whisper: "There are no deaths and detas here any more. Pujas-vijas is a thing of the past. And there is no civil life other than the Maobadi's mass meetings. They say that in today's scientific era there is no space for superstition."

On the ridge over the village there is a temple without a roof. The idols of Shiva and Parbat are gone, as is the bell that used to hang outside. The fair that would take place here every Shukla Paksha, the first quarter moon of the month of Bhadra, has not taken place for a few years. Likewise, there is no Baraha Puja in Mangsir, no Siddha Puja during Buddha Purnima in Jeth, no puja to Mahadev during the full moon of Asar.

Political activity, too, has gone the way of religion. Any political activist of consequence from the ward to the village level is away in Ilam or in the townships along the roadheads, waiting for the day the Maobadi are vanquished, or busy creating alternative lives for themselves, knowing that such a day may not be near in these mid-western hills.

Even without the Maobadi, life is tough here, especially in comparison with the obvious wealth of the Madi valley of southern Rolpa. Worse even than poverty is the lack of basic services. The school-houses are dark, with mud floors; the health assistant stands in for the 'doctor'. School teachers, who have always been the vanguard of the political parties, are subdued under the Maoist threat, and do not dare express an opinion. These docile men, mostly Bahuns from the middle hills, and the odd health assistant are the only representatives of the state.

For as long as people here can remember, the Magar men from these hills went to India or even a living.



ANAND MANI DIXIT

Left: For this woman and her child, and so many others like them in east Rolpa, there is simply nowhere to run. Above: Signs welcoming visitors to Rolpa soon give way to Maoist memorial gates commemorating the bravery of their dead, and raising the Lal Salam slogan.



Today those who go are fleeing Maoist conscription.

Wales Rokaya came back to start a shop after a three-year stint as an electrician in Malaysia. Because of the economic blockade at Sulichaur his shelves are today empty of provisions and the instant noodle packets that are increasingly the staple of the Nepali hills. Referring to the three three-month instalments of the state of emergency, he says, "The first emergency was difficult, the second was worse, and now in the third emergency, our suffering is complete." There isn't food to buy, even if you have the money. But worse of all the hardships, perhaps, is the inability to express yourself. At every turn, the people of Pohang—and all the people we meet on our trek—are denied the choice of being neutral, and so they remain silent.

But if Pohang is depressing, it is even more sobering to arrive in Jelbang, in the next valley over to the west. It is a village surrounded on three sides by the tall hills just south of the Jhijala mountain that provide the mythical backdrop to the Maoist 'revolution'. Fifty-one

people from Jelbang are said to have died in the fighting so far.

The entrance to Jelbang is festooned with once-red Maoist banners ("To revolt is the people's right"), now bleached with age. In Jelbang, like in Pohang, those who do speak to us refer to the difficulties of the emergency and the hopeful days of autumn 2001, the four months of ceasefire when the villagers hung on every word that came of the negotiations. "Those were days of calm, even the Maobadi leaders told that peace would come with the Barza. But talks evaporated, and the situation became even more terrifying, and it has become worse over the course of the three emergencies," says one elder, referring to the renaiss.

On the way down valley, a life-size dummy hangs from a tree, representing the "Deuba Sarkar". Beneath the swinging figure, complete with tattered Chinese canvas shoes, women scurry down towards Sulichaur, not looking up at the strangers who have walked to their village to try and understand what the Maoist has done to their district valley. ♦

# War widows of the west

Locals are doing the little they can with the little they have.



The once-bustling centre of Surkhet now looks like this.

Then there are the war widows in Chinchu and other villages in Surkhet valley. They are refugees with nowhere to go, strangers in their own land. The traditional stigma of widowhood in Nepal has been compounded by the trauma of conflict. Many are trying to raise children without any means of support.

Maoists blew up the police post at Chinchu a year ago, and the village has since been a battleground for the Maoists and security officials. Locals told us that they continue to get threats from Maoists, as well as visits by security forces. For social activists working with gender empowerment, skills training and social mobilisation, threats and intimidation have become routine, but they have not stopped their work. They are doing what little they can with what little they have.

Sita's husband was killed by Maoists three months ago for being a Nepali Congress supporter. In a familiar story repeated across Nepal, he was dragged out of bed at night, taken to the centre of town, and executed. The 36-year-old widow now has to raise two children. Sita is still too shocked to speak, and it is her daughter who

answers our queries. Her 17-year-old son has taken charge of his slain father's business now, and is trying to do the best he can to take care of his family.

There used to be a pharmacy in the bazar until a few months ago, when the security forces came and took away its owner, a UML supporter. No reasons were given. Nine days later, his family discovered his body in a shallow grave and cremated him. His widow, Kanchi, is young and uneducated, and has two children. She hasn't been told who killed her husband or why. Chinchu has lost its only pharmacy. Both Sita and Kanchi are relatively well-off, and will probably get by.

But most others have it much worse, and need support. Subadra's 21-year-old Tharu husband was recently killed by the security forces while returning home from the forest at 7.30 PM. She has two infants, and when the family has no land.

At Salma Village Development Committee, Laxmi is raising two children, aged 13 and 11. Her husband was an electrician and was killed by the security forces. Both children are bright students, but the emotional trauma is already

showing in the performance of the younger girl in school. The family is considering sending only the girl to school because the boy has to help out with the work at home. The local SOS Children's Village that was recently attacked by Maoists has been approached for help.

There is a big exodus of young men aged 13-28 from the mid-western districts. They travel in groups of ten or less, helplessness and despair writ large on their faces. Many are unsure where they want to go, or what they will do. They just want to get out, away from the violence and the killings. Most do not have citizenship certificates. They crowd around the DDC office in Surkhet all day for the recommendations they need to get their papers.

Amidst all this need, the NGOs and development agencies which had made the town their base for mid- and far-western operations have left, citing security concerns. But the local community groups are still here, and they are doing whatever they can with their limited resources.

At the CDO office, we tried to raise the issue of state support for

war widows and quickly realised that officials haven't even begun to think about it. We raised Subadra's case, and the CDO's reply was that her husband should have stayed indoors during the curfew. To him the possibility that the Tharu village may not have a radio set, or that the people may not have the time to listen to radio, or that, even if they heard the announcement, they might not have understood what was being said, was inconsequential.

It's obvious that Surkhet is not the tip of the iceberg. After all, this is at the edge of Maoland. In the interior, there must be many, many more in misery. It is time to channel support to local groups such as the People Help Organisation, a non-profit run entirely by women and capable of providing targeted relief quickly. Unfortunately, local groups are not articulate enough to talk to donor bureaus in Kathmandu directly, so how will they get the resources they need? The FHO says it looked for cash from the UN's Peace Fund, but was refused.

The state has not thought out a strategic response to the problem yet, and we cannot afford to allow donors to be their hands and wait for things to improve. Because under the surface of supposed law and order is a volcano that is about to erupt, and that social upheaval might be more difficult to manage than the violence we are seeing now. The donors have withdrawn their stakes. First, what stops them from working with the NGOs still active in the field? ♦

(Rita Thapa founded the women's support group, Tewa.)

All names of places have been changed to protect the identity of interviewees.

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**Development progress**

The UN's Progress Report 2002 of Millennium Development Goals (MDG) confirms what we already knew. Nepal is unlikely to achieve the 2015 goal of reducing poverty to 21 percent, providing universal basic and primary education, reducing hunger by half, reducing maternal mortality, and halving and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS. However, Nepal is doing considerably well at improving drinking water supply and reducing child mortality. Vice Chairman of the National Planning Commission Narayan Khadka said that the government would accord the highest priority to implementing the recommendations, which are in line with the poverty reduction strategy paper. We heard that before.

**Female condoms**

Nepali women might soon use condoms especially designed for women, says the Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA). The centre has been conducting studies on the efficacy of female condoms in Nepal as part of its efforts to reduce the risk of commercial sex workers contracting HIV or STDs from partners who refuse to wear condoms. Free condoms and information materials have been distributed to women from four VDCs of Lalpur district—Bungamati, Chhapogon, Siddhipur and Tikathali. It's important to take into consideration Nepal's social context and awareness levels before introducing such contraceptives, officials at the centre tell us. If the studies indicate that the product is likely to be accepted, the condoms will be marketed at subsidised rates. But even then, the expense—the condoms cost Rs 100-150 rupees apiece—suggests that it may not catch on as fast as social workers would like. "Social marketing of condoms for males hasn't been a big success. Where does that leave condoms for women," asks a public health worker.

**Better health**

The Save the Environment Foundation recently conducted a study on hospital waste management in Nepal and prepared a case study report for the Ministry of Health to help them manage the dangerous toxic waste hospitals produce. As a follow-up, on World Environment Day, 5 June, the SEF and the Clean Clinics Foundation donated to Bir Hospital 15 Needles Syringe Terminator machines that incinerate syringes in two seconds without toxic by-products.

In another effort, some 300 people in Machhe village south-west of Kathmandu received treatment and free medication at a one-day camp organised by The Friends of Kantivar Shiva Vidyayaya (FKSV) and the Australian Embassy in Kathmandu.



# Divided we stand

The best course might be for Kangresis to amicably dissolve the party.

**B**most accounts, Nepal's democracy is facing its gravest threat since we had those two drafts of the post-Panchayat constitution competing for our attention in 1990. In the intervening years, shadowy forces of subversion have been closing in on the mainstream from the right and left. The people have sprained their necks looking over their shoulders but are no closer to pinpointing the plotters. Politicians who say they recognise some of the faces don't want to name names. The country is left correlating cryptic circumstances to sniff the modus operandi of the purported agents of regression.

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and his band of Young Turks insist they were compelled to dissolve the House of Representatives in order to defend the spirit of parliamentary democracy. That kind of talk is Greek to Nepali Congress president Girija Prasad Koirala and his hardy loyalists in the ruling party. They want the Supreme Court to resurrect the house, and they glorify their case in the people's name. It would have been nice to describe this pleading of the people from all sides as the saving grace of the squabble. But Nepalis have been the object of official exaltation ever since our modern state embraced the plumpness of the people as the emblem of the palace's power. Demonise the Ranas all you want for usurping power and undermining the nation's faith in itself.



But they did put a great premium on popular perceptions of their rule. Under their version of the fairness doctrine, swift and ruthless justice was the cardinal tenet of statecraft. If it also became a fool-proof way of extracting complete obedience from the commonality, part of the reason was Nepal's profound sense of fealty. True, Panchayat ideologues went against basic human psychology in outlawing organised political behaviour. But political ideology was the only restriction. You could still organise into clusters of women, youth, elderly, workers, farmers and ex-servicemen and howl against everyone you you thought

came under the convenient rubric of anti-national elements. A lot of people are put off by Kangresis' insistence that they're the only democrats alive in the country. Let the record speak for itself. The left officially exalts the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Rastriya Prajantana Party will probably have to wait another generation before it can biologically cast off all its partyless baggage. The Nepal Sadbhavana Party exudes exclusivity in almost every shape and form, except name. As for the parties outside parliament, well, let's let the people send them inside the chamber before passing judgment. The point is,

whether we like it or not, Kangresis have an exclusive grip on the mantle of Nepali democracy, at least, on the version the world venerates today. The sad part is that this complacency has fuelled much of the party's internal conflicts. For the first week after the party-government coalition, it looked like the rival Kangresis camps hated each other so much that they could no longer consider peaceful coexistence. But, then, middle-of-the-roaders gained ground. For long, Ram Chandra Poudel sounded like a voice in the wilderness. Today he seems to have enough followers in the party that both camps feel comfortable in

projecting him as their future leader. (The descent from speaker to deputy prime minister must have been difficult for our thinker from Tanahun. But it looks like that was as bad as it could get for him.)

There is a clear danger sign, though. The moderates' unity endeavour revolves around ownership of the four-star flag and the tree. That focus contains the seeds of future conflicts. The best course might be for Kangresis to amicably dissolve the party. The organisation has installed democracy in the country twice and a lot of people are grateful for that. But it's time to look ahead. The dissolution accord should specify how the signatories from using the name, flag or election symbol of the defunct body in any way. Members of successor parties would be free to argue over who has the right mixture of democracy and socialism to cure Nepal's ills. But no one gets to make use of the Koirala lineage or legacy. Instead of looking for that flint of soil to recall our duty to the nation, we can reach out for a future where family ties are just one of several tools of political mobility. It might be difficult for some to contemplate a career in public service with the Nepal Congress safely consigned to the history books. But the country can expect to turn a new page. In the midst of more than one certifiably democratic party, our freedoms might become a little more secure. ♦

## In sight

Nepalis are waking up to the importance of donating their corneas, but not fast enough.

**RAMYATA LIMBU** . . . . .  
Kamal Karki, a 17-year-old native of Janakpur, has a lot to be grateful for. He thanks the unknown good samaritan who helped restore his vision by donating his or her cornea before death, but last Sunday at a gathering of donor relatives, medical personnel, and social workers, Kamal paid tribute to the memory of a host of individuals who have made similar arrangements. Sporting dark glasses in protection against the strong morning light—Kamal, who underwent a corneal graft to his right eye two months ago, thanked god for his good fortune. "I've been given a new lease of life," he beamed. "I can resume my education."

The young resident of Karakati VDC, Janakpur, Daxkha district, lost all vision in one eye after an insect bit him while he was out collecting fodder in the forest. "The bite developed into a cyst. Within a year, I lost the ability to see with my right eye." Kamal says he dropped out of class seven at 15 when it became near impossible for him to read. Desperate to regain his vision, Kamal found his way to the Nepal Netra Jyoti Sangh in the capital, where he'd heard there were doctors who could restore his vision. They directed

him to the Nepal Eye Bank at Tilganga Eye Centre, a community-based non-profit that works to restore sight to the corneal blind. Kamal had to wait a year before a cornea was found for him and he was operated upon two months ago.

Kamal is one of nearly 2,000 Nepalis who have regained their vision through corneal grafts. That is not even one percent of the 240,000 blind Nepalis. It is difficult to say how many of these would be helped by cornea transplants, but it is significant that damage to the cornea is the second most common reason for blindness in Nepal, after cataract. In an agrarian society like Nepal, where most people work outdoors in the fields harvesting crops, looking after livestock, collecting fuel and fodder, agricultural trauma to the cornea, ocular diseases, and the lack of immediate medical treatment can easily lead to corneal opacity, leaving the person blind. "When this happens, the only solution is corneal transplantation," says Shankha Twyana, Nepal Eye Bank manager.

Kamal has been lucky, but many have to wait much longer, sometimes all their lives, for the gift of sight. The demand far outweighs supply, and despite a

steady increase in donors and growing awareness about eye donation, there's still a long way to go. In 1994, the year it was established, the Nepal Eye Bank, which was set up with the help of the International Federation of Eye and Tissue Banks in Baltimore, USA, and the Indiana Lions Eye Bank, registered just one local donor. "The number of donors has grown since, and today we receive more than 400 corneas a year, locally," says Twyana.

"It is not enough for people to just fill in a donation form. An environment needs to be created where families, relatives, individuals, understand the need, and are receptive to the idea," says Sarita Mishra, a music teacher at Padma Kanya Campus. It's been 15 years since Mishra donated her eyes to the Nepal Netra Jyoti Sangh through a social workers' group. "Initially I was a bit nervous. I wasn't sure what exactly it entailed. I thought the entire eye was removed. And maybe while one was still alive. After orientation, I found the courage to donate my eyes. It's a bit like donating blood. After you die, you don't need your eyes. Why deprive someone else of sight?" More and more Nepalis appear to be thinking like Mishra. Sixty-eight-year-old Purushottam Das

Timilsina came all the way from his village in Rautahat to register at Tilganga as a donor. "After death, the body rots away. At least I'll have gained some dharm by giving the gift of sight to someone who needs it."

Twyana is cautiously optimistic about this trend. "The concept of eye donation and eye banks is still very new, and people are scared to donate their body parts even after death," he explains. People are often dissuaded by misplaced religious beliefs—Hindus often believe that by donating their eyes, they will be reborn blind. The centre has three grief counsellors or motivators to actually discuss with relatives who bring their dead to Pashupati the possibility of donating the corneas of the deceased. Since an excision centre was built by the Pashupati three years ago, there are always technicians on stand-by to remove corneas in privacy and with respect.

"It is important to explain to people exactly what happens. Donating your corneas is just that—the whole eyeball is not taken out, your face is not disfigured," says Krishna Thapa, who cremates people at Pashupati. Thapa has volunteered his services as a motivator and takes on the difficult task of



speaking with grieving families. "It's hard, but people are becoming more aware. Today, maybe some twenty of every hundred families at Pashupati donate the eyes of their dead."

Since 1998, when the import of corneas from the International Federation of Eye and Tissue Banks was stopped, the centre has been trying to encourage people here to donate. Apart from harvesting corneas at Tilganga, procuring them, storing and distributing them, the Tilganga

Eye Centre and the Lions Club of Pashupatinath have also opened an eye donation and information centre that runs awareness programs and helps in collection of more corneas. A cornea transplant costs Rs 10,000 on average, and since its inception in 1994, the Lions Club of Kailashnandi Rajshahi has been paying Rs 1,000 towards each cornea transplant. It has also distributed 10,000 pledge cards to people to make it convenient for them to donate their eyes. ♦

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# A home of one's own

Instead of building their first homes slowly, brick-by-brick, more and more people are turning to community housing and financing.



**BINOD BHATTARAI**  
For Sanku Pyakurel it was simply the most practical thing to do. He was among the first hundred or so Nepal who booked apartments at Kathmandu Residency, the first major organised housing project that was launched two years ago. The human rights activist, now a member of the National Human Rights Commission will be moving into his apartment later this year, after developer Ansh Chaudhary hands over the keys during Dasain. "It was just right for me," Pyakurel told us. He saw the Kathmandu Residency, developed by the Chaudhary Group and Ansh of India, as safe housing, with guaranteed access to public utilities such as reliable drinking water, sewage disposal and other basic facilities, all things that can be a headache for an independent homeowner. "The other advantage was that we did not have to put up the entire money up-front, and were assured of financing," Pyakurel told us. There are now more than 10 companies that offer a variety of community-style housing options—apartments, duplexes, and stand-alone homes in thoughtfully

designed 'colonies'—and getting financing from any private bank to purchase a home is almost as easy as getting a car loan. The boom could not have come at a better time for Nepal's ailing economy. The growth in housing and construction means more people are putting their money in the sector, more people are getting work, and industry is producing and selling more construction material. By one estimate, investment in organised housing in and around Kathmandu Valley already adds up to over Rs 2 billion rupees. The Ansh Group in its housing venture with the Chaudhary Group here, is into its third project and even newcomer Sunrise Homes is already planning to expand even as it still solicits bookings for apartments at its first venture in Balkumari. Ansh and Sunrise are presently selling apartments and plan to move into stand-alone homes. The market now offers apartments to suit almost any pocket, starting at Rs 700,000 at the low end and going up to Rs 5.2 million. The range of group housing and financing options now available is also mind-boggling, especially to first-time homebuyers who have to weigh their decision to opt for, say,



Construction activity in full swing at Stipaula, where Comfort Housing is building independent homes (top), Grace interiors (above), and a model of the Grace apartments coming up at Naxal (below). Facing page: a ready-to-view building put up by Sunrise Homes at Balkumari.



## From every corner of Nepal to the World Cup.

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that he is trying to build a community by offering clients all the amenities they would want for quality living. Instead of soliciting bookings and advance payments from prospective owners, he decided to go ahead and start building the 60 individual units. He says 70 percent of the houses have already been sold. The Comfort community will start moving in by Dasain 2003. "Our project has taken into account the Nepal desire to have an independent home that can accommodate at least three generations—grandparents, parents and children," Rajbhandari told us. All the projects offer uniform water supply, open spaces, finished exteriors and space-optimising

interiors, and the security that comes with living in something akin to a gated community. Sunrise says it will also be having an independent sewage treatment plant within the complex while Ansh says that it is now planning to "Nepalise" or "Newarise" most of its future designs. "The customers are very choosy and are not looking only for a roof over their heads," says R Babbar, CEO of Ansh Chaudhary Developers. "They are looking for an edge in housing, in terms of effective design and access to public services and infrastructures." A quick survey of the clients of most housing projects reveals that people who book apartments are typically professionals and white-collar workers with stable future earnings, and families where husband and wife both work. The apartments and houses in the lower and middle ends of the market are being snapped up fast and with increased demand and competition builders are becoming more efficient, and promoters are promising shorter construction periods and other add-ons. "In two months we've sold almost half of all flats and apartments we have on offer," says V Rajgopalan, president of Sunrise Homes. They are already planning to move into the second phase of building independent homes. Then there are people who want to invest; they have cash in hand, but no safe place to put it into, because of the political uncertainty, massive liquid in industry due to the conflict, and the fledgling stock market that has also been hit. What's more, apartments are transferrable by law and will be more so once the cabinet approves regulations needed to activate the legislation. A law governing group housing was passed some years ago, but the government has yet to approve the specific regulations which, we are told, have already been drafted. There are some nay-sayers who say that they are waiting for legislation governing the housing

Offers	Location	Product type	Units	Unit cost (in million rupees)
Kathmandu Residency	Bagballe	Apartments	123	Sold
Mount View Residency-I	Harisiddh	Apartments/Duplexes	70	1.8-2.5
Mount View Residency-II	Hattiban	Apartments	140	1.3-1.7
The Comfort Housing	Stipaula	Stand-alone houses	60	3.0-4.0
Sunrise Homes	Balkumari	Apartments/Duplexes	102	1.6-3.7
Civil Homes	Bhainspali	Stand-alone houses	59	2.0-2.8
Subha Avas	Naya Nakap	Duplexes	75	0.7-1.1
Oriental Colony	Kuleshwar	Apartments	500*	0.7-1.5
Shangri-la Villa	Gangabu	Apartments/Duplexes	36	1.2-2.8
Grace Apartments	Naxal	Apartments	56	3.8-5.2

industry to come into force, and cite the poor track record Nepal has of drafting and implementing laws to cover new, rapidly growing industries. Some buyers also say that although they have invested, they'd be a lot more comfortable if they knew their promoters could be forced to comply with building norms and if pricing could be regulated. The industry is also untested on its ability to deliver, another reason for the general nervousness. The regulations remain to come into force, and because buyers make advance payments there is always an incentive for the sellers to cheat, especially when enforcement is lax," one developer admitted. "But that has not happened so far and we hope it won't—something like that can kill the market even before it matures." But many Nepalis seem to be taking the risk, looking beyond "building one dream house" for their families. Says Ghimire, many first-time homeowners have begun to believe that when they buy a flat, they are keeping their options open—if things work out, they could always sell their flat, which is likely to be worth more in five years than what they pay for it now, and build their own stand-alone home. The industry, for its part, is looking at further deepening of the market, as more and more builders and developers join the race. For the moment, though, few are bothered by the increased competition because of what effectively remains a seller's market, due to

large-unfilled demand. Rajgopalan told us that a government study conducted some years ago had estimated the need for over 200,000 more houses in Kathmandu Valley. Even half that number would be enough to keep business going for another 10-15 years, given that the annual supply of new houses every year is only a few hundred, even with the new projects. Industry insiders we spoke with said that, all things remaining more or less constant, the industry is looking at continued growth for at least a decade. Some firms, such as Sunrise, are already conducting market and feasibility surveys to expand to other urban centres such as Biratnagar, Birganj and Pokhara.

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# Royal interviews

Bimarsa, 7 June

His Majesty's interview [last week] was well planned and thought-out. The interview was organised to portray the royal family in a better light after his accession to the throne. Sources told us that because an interview with the Rastriya Samachar (RSS) would reach all newspapers, it was first asked to submit the questions. The chairman and general manager of the RSS (Rajendra Prasad) had put forward the questions. After that, though, it was decided that an interview on television would be more effective and would also be useful in portraying His Majesty's personality and voice, and so it was decided to grant interviews to both state-run media [print and television].

Prior to this, because His Majesty had granted audiences only to journalists from the private press, and there had been comments about that. It was for that reason that Durga Nath Sharma, general manager of NTV had to submit his questions for the television interview beforehand. After both parties had submitted written questions, some similar questions in both were retained, and some different questions were also included. For example, one set kept the query on SAARC and the other on Bhutan. The general manager of NTV and RSS: Both interviews were non-controversial. The interview was recorded on 3 June. The previous day, NTV technicians were taken to Mangal Sadan to arrange the technical aspects—chairs, tables, lighting in a way "that would be good." The television interview was recorded at 4PM, and lasted for about an hour. Dalai was called in for his audience after that. His Majesty's secretaries had advised [Dalai and Sharma] on when the interviews should be published or broadcast, and how. Dalai and Sharma both sent their final manuscript and tape to the palace for the final approval, and what came back to them was put out for public consumption. The prime minister had also informed that His Majesty was granting interviews to NTV and RSS. Both interviews were non-controversial.

His Majesty's views were relevant and serious. The questions ranged from issues relating to the time when His Majesty was briefly in the throne in 1950 to the recent situation of the parliament. The interviews also included questions on restoration, monarchy, democracy, good governance, terrorism, SAARC, Bhutan, and economic development, among others. There were no unnecessary or controversial answers. His Majesty's voice, personality and presentation were also effective. It was evident that His Majesty wanted to answer each of the questions briefly and with the use of symbols. Those journalists who have met the king in the past and those who have studied the published material attributed to His Majesty had expected him to be clearer and more open, instead of open discussions between His Majesty and the interviewers, there was plenty of formality. As a result, it is being assumed that many questions that are on the people's minds might have been excluded, as the formality hinted at the greater influence of overly traditional officials...

## Blame Deuba

Bimarsa, 7 June

**DEUBA FAULT**  
Excerpts of an interview with Narahari Acharya, member of the Nepali Congress

**Who is responsible for the present state of affairs in the Congress?**  
I hold Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba responsible, looking at the present state of affairs. But many past incidents have also contributed to bringing the situation in this pass. If the party president had been able to control the prime minister in his final and concerned departments to provide a list of red passports distributed to date, along with details.

**So the party is also responsible?**  
There are two parties in my fight. Many fights are available. If the party can remain controlled and use its common sense.

**But with whom does Deuba lie—the prime minister or the party president (Girija Prasad Koirala)?**

It was the disciplinary committee's decision to expel the prime minister from the party. The Central Working Committee retains the authority to cancel that decision or amend it even now. But Prime Minister Deuba, by discarding parliament, has done something that even he cannot reverse or correct, so I find him more at fault.

**What options did the prime minister have after the party ordered him to withdraw the government proposal to extend the emergency?**

He could have spoken his mind in parliament and retracted the proposal—that would not have diminished his prestige. Even after the party's decision of the prime minister was convinced that an extension of the emergency was essential, he could have taken the proposal to the parliamentary party meeting after the party's decision was made. If the parliamentary party had approved, he could have informed the party and taken his proposal forward in parliament. If he had done that, it would've been difficult to

criticise the prime minister either politically or legally.

## In the red

Dristi, 11 June

The Commission for the investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) is gearing up to take action against the wives, children, and relatives of high-ranking government officials and ministers who have misused official privileges of red special issue official passports. The CIAA decided to act after investigating appeals regarding the misuse of red passports and has directed the Foreign Ministry and concerned departments to provide a list of red passports distributed to date, along with details.

The Commission has decided that only government officials, and not their kin, are entitled to use red passports and even they may only use them for official visits.

The passports have to be returned to the CIAA once the department completes the official trips. In a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and concerned departments, the CIAA has warned that the directors have to be informed within three months, otherwise stern action will be taken.

According to reports, among those that have misused their official passports are the spouses of ministers. The Commission has warned that if this trend does not stop in the specified three months, it will take action against the members of the parliament, council of ministers and their better halves. Even now, the youngest wife of Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Arjan Jung Bahadur Singh was seen at the airport. Several wives have travelled using red passports to Japan and South Korea to watch the World Cup, and for shopping trips abroad.

## Unfilled forms

Dristi, 11 June

The judicial commission probing corruption has warned that it will make public the names of government officials and political appointees who have yet to submit forms detailing their property holdings. Following warnings by the commission, some bureaucrats, parliamentarians and concerned individuals have turned in the forms. Others, however, have not. Some have challenged the commission's authority and say they will not submit the forms to a judicial probe commission that does not have the legal right to conduct the investigation.

What action will the commission take against such individuals? Sources at the commission told us that some names are powerful individuals within the council of ministers, including Chiranjiv Wagle, Kham Bahadur Khadka, and National Planning Commission member Dr Prakash Sharma Mahat. Some former Chief Justices Narain Bahadur Khatri and Biswanath Upadhyaya, and senior advocate Mukunda Regmi were also among some prominent names that had not complied with the rules.

Will the commission dare make public the names of such individuals and initiate action against them? The commission set up on 18 March this year to complete its work in six months. So far, it has distributed 35,000

forms, and got back about 4,000 completed forms. The commission says that it has begun to compile a list of individuals who have not submitted details of their property, but has not said when it will make the names public.

## The list

Jana Astha, 12 June

Seventy-five of the 250 leaders who have held the post of either the prime minister or minister since 1990 have still not submitted completed property valuation forms that the judicial commission to investigate assets handed out earlier this year. Among these, surprisingly, are comrades who never utter of talking about equality and good work.

Information from reliable sources says the list of defaulters includes former ministers such as former Minister for Education Devraj Prasad Ojha, former Minister of Local Development and Transport Chandrakishor Prakash Manai, former Agriculture Minister Tilokhan Dhakal, former Minister of Industry Henraj Rai, former Minister for Tourism Yanilal Kandel, and former Assistant Minister for Information and Communication Yagya Raj Neupane. Even Hari Prasad Pandey, former Minister of State for Water Resources in the CPN-UML government has not filled in their property valuation forms include former minister without portfolio in the Home Ministry Binay Bahadur Kadayar, former Minister of State for Labour Govindanath Upate, former Minister of Tourism Sanjiv Mirta Ansan, former Minister of State for Health Binay Bahadur Pradhan, and former Minister of Law and Parliamentary Affairs Sitananand Raya.

Three ministers in the present government of Sher Bahadur Deuba are also on the list, including Minister of State for Housing and Development Kshav Thapa and Assistant Minister for Water Resources Govind Khatiwada Kanaudya. I Jeevick Lokendra Bahadur Chand, who was a Rastriya Prajantari Party prime minister, Prakash Chandra Lohani, Rajendra Sharma, Kamal Thapa and Padma Sundar Lawoti have not turned in their forms either.

When the forms were handed out, the judicial commission asked respondents to return them in 15 days. There are currently about 40 Nepali Congress leaders and former ministers who have not done so, including Jagan Chandra,

Shalaja Acharya, Arjan Nasirangh KC, Narhari Acharya, Binakendra Nidhi, Prakashman Singh, KB Gunung, and Minister Finance Minister Devrajendra Pandey. Congress lawyer Mukunda Regni, former attorney general Sarvagangotri Tuladhar and Kishorji Shukla, and government attorney Balram KC have also disobeyed the commission's order. Ninety percent of those in the legal service have already submitted their forms, but National Planning Commission member Rameshmananda Vaidya has still not done so.

Commission sources say CPN-UML general secretary Madan Nepal and member Banderaj Gautam have already given their property valuations.

## Dream come true

Editorial in Rajdipati, 10 June

A well-known leader once said that even a chicken is entitled to a house and a match cook. Fulfilling that was defined as socialism. This vision has almost come true in

Mirge village in Dolakha district. Here every household has a latrine and the villagers are engaged in a campaign to build biogas plants.

Mr. Don't know what the sanitation in the village was 40 years ago when the politician promised all villagers a home and a cow. But today no one in the village is homeless, and we know that because they are talking about building not homes, but a latrine in every home. We understand that every home in Mirge also has cows, because without cows to produce dung, there would have been no talk of biogas. BP Koirala's dream come true, or 45 years ago has become a reality in this village. In other words, Mirge has achieved socialism.

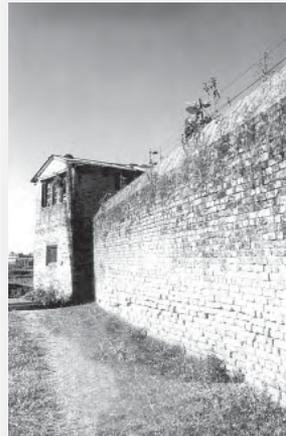
Does that give us a sense of how long it can take for the dreams we dream today to come true? Today we don't even know the people of the village might not be dreaming of roads, telephones, hospitals, drinking water and schools. The younger generation may be dreaming of computers and color televisions. At least 40 years ago we had a leader who had a vision of giving "one home and a cow" to every household. Today we don't even have someone who will dare say something like "the Internet is everywhere"—even if just for the sake of making money.

Whatever the destination, whether BP's slogan or whether the desire came from the villagers themselves, we need a set example by

Mirge as well as by the biogas plants. We need similar campaigns in other parts of Nepal. Maybe that would happen if Mirge village were Kathmandu and Singha Darbar, the VDC, officials...

## Back at Sundarjal >12

# Nepal, India and China



The winter and his incarceration drag on during BP's third week in detention. He is in a somewhat better frame of mind now, thinking more about keeping body and soul together with good food and tobacco. BP feels that the king's take on foreign relations is unacceptably anti-Indian because, while Nepal is always and unquestionably important to India, for China it is simply a bargaining chip. Every fortnight Nepali Times brings you extracts from BP's unpublished diaries, handwritten in English.

## 22nd January 1977

Sundarjal

We had, perhaps the coldest night of the season. The whole compound is covered with heavy frost. The sun appeared at about 10AM, GM says a Kotara of water for birds in the open. In the morning a thin crust of ice is formed. Today a thick crust was formed. But there has been no snow at all yet on the hillsides.

Today being Saturday there was no newspaper supplied to us, and there is no expectation of anything happening. Surprisingly however, Chinese food, fruits, cheese came from GM's house. Perhaps his daughters had come to the gate with Mangalaji with these articles. They have bought two cigars for me. A tin of tobacco has also been bought for me but it has been sent to my HQ along with an alarm watch which GM had sent for security. I don't know what will scrutinise. In their overcautiousness, lest we get clandestine message from the inside, they would like to see if the tin of tobacco and the timepiece contain anything objectionable. When I have got cigars all right, then this non-delivery of tobacco is not meant that smoking wouldn't be allowed inside the detention camp. Mangalaji has also bought a thick sweater type garji, but since it is too big for GM I have taken it for my use. GM thinks that the cotton sweater is meant for me, otherwise Mangalaji wouldn't have brought a sweater to suit my size. Anyway, it is a very warm thing and comfortable. In the evening we had a good Chinese dinner—Chowmein, fried prawn, sweet and sour pork. There was some curd also, but we have kept it for tomorrow's lunch.

Everyday the pile of laundry increases. I can't do the washing because the water is unbearably cold and soap doesn't wash off so. We have a very small kettle meant for boiling water for tea. Hence hot water is not available in sufficient quantity. My clothes become dirty soon, because I rub mustard oil everyday all over my body.

## 23rd January

Sundarjal

We are informed that in view of the inadequacy of food allowance of Rs 12/- it has been decided to rise to Rs 14/-, I did so for pathological reason. My mood is a little better today. I sent some exercise, asan pranayam and bathed. I take scrub bath everyday at 10:30 for about an hour when I rub mustard oil over my body—when there is sun, I don't know if long stay in the sun is good, for me. I smoked a cigar after breakfast. I am smoking for the first time after having given it up for four months. I have been advised by my Bombay doctor that I should avoid smoking in view of chronic bronchitis, which is producing, emphysema. The doctor had recommended deep breathing to tone up my lungs. I am resuming smoking, but still do it sparingly. I feel the need of smoking sometimes, like in the morning immediately after bed and in the afternoon after tea. In prison smoking helps. It helps when there is mental strain or tension. It may be bad for your body, all right, but it does good to your soul. At my age I have to take care of my soul more than my body. In jail condition it is the mind that suffers more than the body—hence what keeps the mind soothing and tranquil, even if it may have a bad effect on your body, should be adopted. In order to give up smoking on my doctor's advice I have started taking Zarda, which I am now taking in bigger quantity since I am in prison. If I resume smoking, it may be in addition to my new addition of chewing Zarda. I take a small piece of betel nut occasionally, and a few pills of Jatan. If drinks were provided, I would love to spendly well with detention. As it is I can't even smoke cigars as the price of good ones are prohibitive—Rs 3/- per cigar.

The atmosphere is so cold and the wind is so dry that I sometimes get bleeding from my left nostril. The room heater may also be responsible for the dryness of the air in the room. I, however, shut off the heater before I go to bed [at about 9PM and put it on again morning at about 4:30.

## 25th January

Sundarjal

(From 23rd of February)

The King has pet propositions—thatertain to foreign relations.

1. Nepal to be accepted as a Zone of Peace.
2. Nepal has inherent right as a land-locked state of access to the sea through India.

Both of these propositions are in themselves unquestionable, but the manner in which they are presented is unpropitious because the impression is that these proposals are moves weighted by foreign elements to create a relationship of perpetual tension between Nepal and India. Moreover they have an india bias. In order to expect that India would accept these propositions would be foolish. The only consequence of these moves would be a long standing embittered relationship between India and Nepal—So on our part we should accept the nationalistic move of these proposals—accept them in theory and as an ideal to be achieved. But the task to achieve it should be handed over to us—or such elements as the body politic of Nepal that are strictly nationalised, but at the same time are not regarded as anti-India.

There is a possibility that China would accept these propositions should also be acceptable to China as being not wholly sold out to India. The crux of the matter is in which the King has to understand that Nepal's vital interest for India is not a negotiable matter—whereas with China it is only a stick to beat India with. If there is a restoration of friendly relations between India and China, Nepal will certainly be of no interest to China. Moreover, apart from predominant interest for security and other reasons that india has in Nepal, the historical linkages between the two countries has left a bulk of Indian influence, greater than any other powers, which we can't wash away. In this situation we have to be very cautious when formulating out policy with India. Unfortunately caution has been thrown to the winds by the makers of foreign policy in recent years. This is a task for which we are eminently suited. This should be impressed upon the King. The qualification an aspirant party should be that— it must be

1. which commands the confidence of the people, and hence can govern with their consent.
2. nationalist in its overall approach and recognised as just inside and outside the country.
3. Everyday the pile of laundry increases. I can't do the washing because the water is unbearably cold and soap doesn't wash off so. We have a very small kettle meant for boiling water for tea. Hence hot water is not available in sufficient quantity. My clothes become dirty soon, because I rub mustard oil everyday all over my body.
4. must be acceptable to India.
5. must not be anti China
6. Our party qualifications are good, because I rub mustard oil everyday all over my body.

# Windows on Nepal

**ART REVIEW** BY SOPHIA PANDE  
A new show at the Park Gallery cements its reputation for showcasing innovative art in Nepal.

The Park Gallery, run by photographer Navin Joshi and his family, lies in an old house off Pulchowk. Joshi took over the run of the gallery after the death of his father in 1988 and, like his father, uses his gallery to promote local artists and their artwork.

The current exhibition, 'Three Men's Perspectives', is an amalgam of three distinctly different perspectives on Nepal. Joshi's photographs capture tiny everyday actions, scenes, and objects that we take for granted. The images are presented in variations of black and white, because he believes that this eliminates the distracting colours in scenes that cause our eyes to dismiss them as mundane. After all, everything is worthy of being photographed. Drying chilies and hanging garbs, beates wheat and the man around a Buddhist temple that our hands run over but our eyes ignore—all these have been captured and the importance of daily routines born of old traditions have been lovingly rendered into detailed, evocative records.

Nick Dawson, a British man who has lived in Nepal since 1978, has a very different aesthetic. His work is abstract, quirky and visceral. His photographs are alive with colours and textures. One feels like one could reach in and touch the veined leaves, and the bright, fleshy pink and orange petals of his flowers, and that one's fingers might be bruised by the rough, grainy surfaces that dominate his photographs. The photographs range from the very abstract to the very detailed. A photograph titled Deep Blue is in an unidentifiable, fantastically blue mosaic which sucks you in to matter where you are in the gallery. When I asked him what it was, he grinned and said that it is the swimming pool at the Hyatt. Another photograph called Light Switch is a close-up image of Nepal's workmanship: a crooked light switch that cannot help but bring a smile to your face. Dawson talks about Nepal being a mixture of the traditional and the modern, and his perspective comes through in his idiosyncratic, whimsical images of crooked light switches and turmeric sellers crouched in the yellow powder that is their livelihood, smoking imported, white cigarettes.

Resting while in a modern machine, Navin Joshi.

The third artist in the show is Kishor Kayastha, a 23-year-old photographer from Bhatkpur who was exposed to the world of photography at the age of nine at his grandfather's studio. This man's photographs radiate a certain romanticism. His images are dreamy and permeated with a sense of expectation, as if something were just about to happen. Temples, lush banyan woods, through thick mist, a girl looking out onto an open vista, and stick figures that are childhood endeavours at star arte out from the end of the wall, each image the portrayal of a possibility. Kayastha talks of all the many different processes that he works with in the darkness in order to achieve the results he has already pictured in his mind's eye. As he talks it becomes apparent that all of his work is laden with meaning. He points to a photograph of a girl with her hair swinging backwards, away from her head, and dissolving into storm clouds. He says that the photograph is a representation of every Nepali girl's dream. A Nepali girl has a dreamy quality, he says, she has hidden hopes and desires, and when she gets married, all of these hopes dissolve and are swept away like clouds in the wind. Kayastha uses his technical skill and innovation to flesh out his insights. The result is a wonderful collection of vivid, glowing photographs.

It is quite an experience to walk into one space and be confronted with three such different perspectives on Nepal and Nepali life. Each photograph has his own style and within minutes one can match the photographer with the artist. Navin Joshi talks about his efforts to expose the public to various different styles and viewpoints. It is indeed an admirable job in this exhibition. The odd and the wonderful to about the three such distinctive collections is that they all have one underlying common theme: that every little aspect of life is worthy of being photographed, and that there is beauty and mystery in the simplest things. ♦

'Three Men's Perspectives' is running through 22 June at the Park Gallery, Pulchowk, 10AM-5PM, except Saturdays. Email park.gallery@hotmail.com. 522807

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

We don't have any economic policy now.

—Himalaya Sumshere Rana, Chairman of Himalayan Bank, in Nepal Samachar, 7 June



Ram, Ram Ram (Good Lord)

स्पासिने 9 June

ABOUT TOWN

**EXHIBITION**  
 ♦ **Three Men's Perspective A** three-man exhibition of photographic art 9-27 June, 10AM-5PM, except Saturdays, Park Gallery, Pulchowk, 522037  
 ♦ **Life and nature Exhibition of paintings** by Sharada Chitrakar, 16-21 June, Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal.

FOOTBALL

- ♦ **Bookie's Bar** Watch World Cup games, win free buffets and other prizes with every match. Free entrance, Hotel Yak & Yeti avenue, 248999
- ♦ **World Cup Football Show** All the World Cup matches on the Summit big screen. Free Entry, 521910
- ♦ **Uncork the good times** at the Fusion Bar, Dwarika's Hotel, 43<sup>rd</sup> TV from World Cup matches, introductory offer of 30 percent discount on food and beverages. 476989
- ♦ **Games, questionnaires, prizes and cocktails** such as Bend it like Beckham, Ziv's Kick, Bianco's Left Foot, Piero's Punch, and World Cup special meals. The Fun Cafe, Corner Bar, Splash Bar & Grill, The Radisson Hotel.
- ♦ **Catch of the match** Every World Cup match, everyday, with food and drink at The Jazz Bar, Shangri-La Hotel, 412999
- ♦ **Best steaks and ESPN World Cup** games at K-tool Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel. Buy two beers, get a can free, daily special, 433043.

EVENTS

- ♦ **Football meets bowling** The ten pins: your opponents, the strikes: goals. Starts 19 June, 6PM on, semi-final and final on 20 and 23 June, 6PM on. Rs 1,000 per head includes entry to tournament, drinks and official World Cup jersey/toppy. Bowling Boulevard Indoor Stadium, Kantipath. mybowl.com.np
- ♦ **Sinners in heaven** MTV VJs Nikhil Chinnappa and Naifisa Joseph, DJ from Djinns in Delhi, buffet, bottomless bar. 7PM onwards, 14 June, The Atrium, Hotel Yak & Yeti. Tickets Rs 1,299 singles and Rs 1,599 couples at Bhabhatanti, Bhubaidar, Thamel Yak & Yeti.
- ♦ **Second Bagmati River Festival** Friends of the Bagmati environmental group open to all, next meeting Wednesday 26 June, 3PM, Dwarika's Hotel. Friends@bagmatinepal@yahoo.com.
- ♦ **Namaste Banepa** education project needs ideas and input. Email: wahevetx@wink.com.np for details.

MUSIC

- ♦ **Dance down memory lane** Wednesday and Friday nights with Teesta. The Rox Bar at the Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, 491234
- ♦ **Live music** by Catch 22, Friday nights at the 40,000 1/2 ft Bar, Rum Doodle Restaurant, Thamel, 414336

DRINK

- ♦ **Metre of Malt** 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. Rs 250. Kiloxy's of Kathmandu, Thamel, 250440

FOOD

- ♦ **Potatoes potential** Potatoes at The Fun Cafe for dinner until 20 June, the Radisson Hotel, 411818
- ♦ **Malaysian food** Rojak, popiah goreng, kokoi jagong and more. All through June, Shambhala Garden, Shangri-La-Hotel, 412999
- ♦ **Monsoon Madness Barbecue** everyday weekend from 6:30 PM onwards at Rs 250. Kiloxy's of Kathmandu, Thamel, 250440
- ♦ **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 pool. 1905 Boardwalk, Kantipath, 225272
- ♦ **Vegetarian Specialities** and clay-oven pizzas at Stupa View Restaurant & Terrace, Boudha, 480262
- ♦ **Authentic Thai food** Everyday at Yin Yang Restaurant, 425510
- ♦ **Paddy Foley's Irish Pub** A wide range of drinks and food. Live music on Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday nights, 416096.
- ♦ **BBQ and movie evenings** 5PM onwards at Nanglo Cafe and Pub, Darbar Marg, 222636
- ♦ **Special Thai cuisine** at Ban Thai Restaurant, Darbar Marg, 243271

RETAVES

- ♦ **Beat the Heat** Large new swimming pool at Dwarika's Hotel, Rs 500 per person, Rs 250 per child all year. Membership details on request, 479489
- ♦ **Writing Retreat** Full board package at Park Village Resort, Boudhanikhanda, 375280
- ♦ **The Great Godavari Getaway** Special weekend packages including room with breakfast and dinner, 25 percent discount on health club facilities. Godavari Village Resort, 560675
- ♦ **Taste the difference** Cossy Nepali-style house on an organic farm in Garmaha, south of Thimphu. Up to Rs 1,200 per person per night including meals. aza@wink.com.np
- ♦ **Shivapuri Heights Cottage** 30 minutes from Kathmandu, staff guides to monastery, peak and reserve. Rs 1,850 per person with dinner and breakfast, Rs 925 per child 5-14 years, children under five free. info@escapetonepal.com

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

YAK YETI YAK



BOOKWORM

**High Exposure:** An enduring passion for Everest and other unforgetting places David Breashears Foreign Books India, New Delhi, 1999  
 Rs 72  
 David Breashears, legendary rock climber, mountaineer and high-altitude filmmaker, discusses the public's fascination with climbing and tries to answer the basic question: why climb? He discusses his early climbing experiences in Colorado, USA, and the Yosemite National Park, his lifelong passion for the Himalayas, and the filming of the IMAX film on Everest during the 1996 disaster.

**True Summit: What Really Happened on the Legendary Ascent of Annapurna**

David Roberts Touchstone, New York, 2002  
 Rs 1,000  
 In June 1950, a team of mountaineers led by Maurice Herzog was the first to conquer an 8,000 m peak. Herzog's Annapurna has long been regarded as a climbing classic, but here Roberts presents a revision of the fascinating tale using newly available documents and a rare interview with Herzog. He lays bare Herzog's self-serving determination and how he long delayed credit to the more accomplished and unsung heroes.

**The New Leaders: Transforming the Art of Leadership into the Science of Results** Daniel Coleman, Richard Boyatzis, Annie McKee Link, Brown, London, 2002  
 Rs 632  
 Goldman's *Emotional Intelligence* changed our concept of being 'smart', proving that how we handle ourselves and our relationships matters more than IQ or technical skill in educational success. Now the authors explore the consequences of EI for leaders and organizations.

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

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- ♦ **Wanted: Flat in Lalitpur** at Rs 3,500 per month approximately. Contact: shrutidebi@home.com.np
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- ♦ **Flowerflowers don't miss our special FUCHSIA exhibition!!!** More than 60 new and very beautiful varieties of FUCHSIA, recently imported from Europe, are on sale now, for the first time ever in Nepal. Only at THE BISHALNAGAR NURSERY, at 413797, five min from Bhabhatanti Supermarket, two min from Bishalnagar Chowk (turn right and downhill).
- ♦ **Landrover Defender 110** 1990, 146,000 kms. Duty not paid. Price negotiable. Contact: 521105 between 10AM-12 noon.
- ♦ **House to let** Silapala Heights, 5 min. from Ring Road, 15 min. from Lincoln School. Big compound. Western style five bedrooms, two bathrooms. Servants' quarters. Motorable road. Ring: 356074, 901030322 for Hari, Shanta, Sanju or John.
- ♦ **Nagarkot special at Naked Chef** Bed and breakfast, three-course gourmet dinner. Rs 800 per person. For reservations ring 441494, 680006
- ♦ **House for rent** Ground floor: living room, kitchen, dining room, one bathroom. First floor: master bedroom with attached bath, one bedroom, bathroom, party. Second floor: one bedroom with attached bath, store, lobby. Third floor: terrace and laundry room. Location: Galfutar. Tel: 412094.
- ♦ **Stupa View and Restaurant & Terrace** at Boudhanath Stupa. Well-appointed restaurant and terraces with views of stupa and Himalayas. International vegetarian specialties, pizza from clay oven, ice cream, soft guitar tunes on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays from 5PM on. Special events on full moon. Open daily 11AM-8:30PM. 480262.
- ♦ **K-Tool Beer and Steakhouse** not the "longest", "highest", "first" or any other superlative. Just a relaxed, easy-going bar and restaurant with the coldest beer and juiciest steaks this side of the map. by the Kathmandu Guest House, 433043
- ♦ **The way to Mexico** is too far. Boteja Restaurant and Taquila Bar is near Thamel Chowk, 266433, 15 percent off season discount

For insertions ring NT Marketing at 543333-36.

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SUCKER FOR SOCCER

The real stars



WHO'S THIS MAN? Nepali watching the Cameroon-Saudi Arabia match were surprised to see a man in a white and green Japan flag. Nepali flag in the stadium. Shresh Bhatta (above) had the captain's armband. A Japanese Nepali knee, Koji Kanayama, was responsible for the large sun-and-moon TV viewers across the world.

While my first trip to Japan has at times felt like a disorienting the festival atmosphere of the World Cup is clearly here, and that familiar frenzy—ephemeral though it may be—has helped me feel at home. My favourite part of the World Cup is the fans, and their enthusiasm and excitement don't change, regardless of where the games are being played.  
 My first day in Tokyo I went to my ticket-scalping kiosk to suburban Ibaraki for the Italy-Croatia match. But I overslept after all the travelling, and missed the special trains to the stadium. So I headed to a pub in the entertainment district of Roppongi instead, and plopped myself down on a stool for some football.  
 Next to me was a hunky Japanese guy proudly wearing the Italian national team jersey. "My name is Teesu," he said. That means philosophy. "Since I studied philosophy, I figured he'd be a good companion."  
 Teesu graduated from an agricultural university, but his major field of study seems to have been football. And his favourite team in the world—even more than his home country's—is Italy. Several times

by BILL BREWSTER

Kick ball to football



The best thing about a World Cup is the fans. In both and a strange pair of shoes made of walnut shells that clacked feverishly when he danced. And everyone, everywhere, was hanging on to him, blowing whistles and chanting.

But I still didn't have a ticket, and was feeling a little pessimistic a half-hour before kick-off, when most of the crowd was already seated in the stadium. Then I saw a group of middle-aged Mexican guys hurrying towards the gate. They had an extra ticket and, I decided because of my recent experiences haggling in Nepali bazaar, I got an unbelievable score for half-price. It rows up from the field, right behind the Mexico bench. I ran with the men from whom I bought the ticket, and they even let a victory goal after Mexico came back from a goal down to pull out a 2-1 win. On the train home, I chatted with a newly-arrived Ecuadorian named Avelo who lives in New York City and works in a meat factory. Not the greatest job in the world, but he could save enough money to fly across the world with a friend to see his home country in its first-ever World Cup. Even after his team lost, he was still amused that he was in Japan, everyone on the train was cracking jokes in Spanish. Plus, he sees another Ecuadorian match this week, and it doesn't really matter that it will almost certainly be their last. That kind of dedication and joy is what makes World Cup fans so much fun to be around.

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**NEPALI WEATHER** by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

Here's how to tell when there's a hard rain coming: just stand for a moment and take in the hot, still air. There will be plenty of opportunity to do just that when the monsoon hits us this week. The satellite picture shows the southeasterly monsoon ready to make its grand entrance, and masses of moisture laden clouds are heading towards eastern Nepal. By mid-week there will be massive downpours throughout the kingdom, recharging all the springs and causing landslides and floods.

**KATHMANDU VALLEY**

31-20	30-20	29-18	28-18	29-18
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**Under My Hat**

by Kurda Dixit

**2050 FIFA World Cup  
Kathmandu Lalitpur**



Given the rapid pace of renovation and beautification taking place in the nation's capital these days, we can be fairly certain that Nepal can make a successful bid to host the 2050 Football World Cup. One of the most important criteria that FIFA attaches to cities applying to organise the games is whether or not the host metropolis is self-sufficient in crazy hats. And as the world's major supplier of lunatic hats for the last three World Cups, Mayor Sthapit has assured FIFA's Site Selection Committee that there is no danger of Kathmandu running out of headgear in the run-up to the 2050 games.

So that just leaves us with the knotty question of ensuring that the Tinkune Intersection Beautification Campaign will see completion by January 2050. The Transportation Sub-Committee of the World Cup Organising Main Committee (Unified Marxist-Leninists) is optimistic that this should be possible, given the breakneck speed at which Obayashi-san and its subcontractors are rushing to make sure that the intersections intersect interestingly in keeping with internationally-certified norms and procedures.

According to a timetable made available to mediapersons this week, the sidewalks in Tinkune, Singha Durbar, Maniagar and Patuli Sadak are scheduled for completion by 2010, the zebra crossings will be painted over by 2025, field trials and simulation exercises for traffic management are expected to be conducted in late 2032 and the traffic light synchronisation is expected to go into effect by 2049 in time for the formal handing over of the intersections to the Cup Fathers.

Since we are a nation that can now afford to hire Japanese contractors to build our pavements, there is little reason to doubt that we can also host the World Cup in 48 years time. 'Wanna bet? Heads I win, tails you lose. Bets once placed cannot be altered. Terms and Conditions apply. The decision of The Management is final.

Kathmandu and Patan have traditionally had a healthy competition ever since the Malla period when the two kingdoms fought wars and hounded each other's citizens. Today, this competition is manifested in the way in which the Patan Municipality, not to be outdone by the Kathmandu Metropolitan City, has made sure that not a single halogen street lamp installed during the SAARC Summit is in working condition. And once Kathmandu found out that Patan streets were dark, it has also decided to be one up on its friendly rival by switching off all street lights between Babar Mahal and Min Bhawan until further notice.

Patan's illustrious mayor's pet project is the gate that has been under construction at Bagmati Bridge since approximately the Bronze Age. The mayor has assured us that the gate will be complete by the time Patan co-hosts the 2050 World Cup. And, going by past experience, we have no reason to doubt him. ♦

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**NEPALI SOCIETY**

**Positively Bibha**

A 17-year-old Bibha Shah has already met the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan and given him a piece of her mind. She was chosen by MTV to represent the Asia-Pacific at a meeting with Kofi in New York last month, and she drew his attention to the plight of children worldwide and the need for the United Nations to make the world a better place for them.

Bibha was among ten short-listed candidates selected from more than 1,000 Nepali applicants as part of a campaign by UNICEF, MTV and Levi's Speak Your Mind initiative to bring out an Asian Youth Charter. Bibha joined 12 other winners from Asian countries to go to New York for a summit on children where, for the first time, children addressed the United Nations General Assembly to express their concerns about their futures. Bibha was chosen (along with a Thai winner) to see the Secretary General because she

was articulate, confident and outgoing. "When I was selected to represent Nepal and other Asian youth I felt both proud and nervous. It was a big responsibility," recalls Bibha. "I was nervous that I might disappoint the others I was representing." But her nervousness evaporated as soon as she met Kofi. "For a man of his stature, I found him a very down-to-earth person. He put all of us at ease, and he listened to us." Bibha told us on her return to Kathmandu.

Bibha, an idealistic 12<sup>th</sup> grader from Sanepa, also has a few things she would tell Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba if she got a chance to meet him. And that is? "I'd tell him to try to restore peace to Nepal and I'd tell all politicians to stop playing politics with the future of the students and the country."

Bibha now feels even more confident and determined to make a difference in Nepal. "My horizons have widened. I don't have any specific plans

yet, but I think small things make a big difference so I can change myself and my community, it will add up." Bibha's inspiration is her father, who keeps telling her "if life is tough, you have to be tougher".

Bibha plays volleyball as a hobby and would like to make a career in medicine. But for the immediate future, she already has a pledge: she is going to have a positive outlook on life, and everything she does. ♦



Bibha chatting with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and Ms. Annan at the United Nations in New York last month.

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