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Game over?

US marines are still engaged in fighting Saddam Hussein's troops in Baghdad, but the Iraqi ambassador to the UN, Mohammed al-Douri, said Thursday, "The game is over." The Americans are now bombing Tikrit, where Saddam is said to have fled. The US and UK are trying to cobble together a government of Iraqi exiles to administer the country.
For special analyses of the media's role in the war, see p10-11.

2060

Nearly 70% of Nepalis think Maoist demands can be met by peaceful means, and 20% will vote for them if they lay down arms.

NAVIN SUBEDI

s Nepal marks the start of a new year and a new decade on Monday, the annual Himalmedia public opinion poll shows Nepalis are generally optimistic about the future and have an overwhelming desire for peace.

This random sample poll was carried out last week by professional enumerators among 1,667 respondents in Kathmandu Valley, Biratnagar, Pokhara, Dhangadi and Mahendranagar and was analysed by the SPSS software.

Highlights:

- A majority favour an all-party consensus for peace talks.
- The king has the biggest responsibility to resolve crisis.
- Rock-bottom confidence in parliamentary parties.
- Even though many want Maoists to give up arms, most are skeptical that they will.
- Most respondents support the Maoists' goals, but are convinced they can be achieved through peaceful means.

Can the Maoists achieve their main demands through peaceful means?

Yes 68.0%

Don't know 14.5%

No 17.5%

In response to the question "What needs to be done to get the peace talks started immediately?" most (30.7%) felt an all-party government was needed, while 21.3% favoured an interim government including the Maoists, and 12.2% wanted an active role for the king.

In answer to the question "Who should be involved in finding a solution to the present crisis?" 37% said it should be the king, while nearly 35% said it should be an all-party government. The Nepali Congress and the UML were seen to have a role by only 2.5% and 3.7% respectively.

continued ➔ p2

Times

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Weekly Internet Poll # 80

Q. Should the Maoists be included in an all-party government of national unity?

Yes 57.8%

Don't know 2.2%

No 40.0%

Total votes: 1,850

Weekly Internet Poll # 81. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. Should the Maoist militia be inducted in the Royal Nepali Army as a part of the peace process?

Thamel, Kathmandu

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Where is Charlie Uniform?

It was about 9:30 in the morning of 31 May last year. At 3,250m up on Bukur Danda on the northwestern reaches of the Arun Valley, the leader of an ornithological expedition and his porters were climbing to photograph a rare bird nest.

They heard a helicopter about 1 km away. "I remember wondering how come it was able to fly so low since it was overcast," recalls the researcher. The weather was changing fast, and he says the helicopter sounded lost because it made a 180 degree turn and headed northeast again the way it had come. "After hearing the rotors for a bit longer, as if it was circling, the sound abruptly stopped."

This is an account of the disappearance of 9N-ACU ('Charlie Uniform'), an Asian Airlines Mi-17, during a flight from Makalu Base Camp to Lukla with eight porters of a French expedition and two crew, including one Russian. The mountaineering season had just ended, an early monsoon was bringing masses of clouds, and climbers were in a hurry to get off the mountain.

The Mi-17 had been in contact with a Simrik Air helicopter also flying in the vicinity, and had reported no trouble. When the chopper failed to arrive in Lukla by 10:30, an immediate search and rescue was launched. Hampered by weather and terrain, the wreckage was never found—leading to speculation at the time that it may have been hijacked by Maoists. A Rs

50,000 reward for information on the wreckage produced no results.

The naturalist did not want his name used, but *Nepali Times* has verified his authenticity and cross-checked the account.

The people at the research camp had also heard the helicopter and everyone agreed that it was flying dangerously low in cloud.

Nobody heard the sound of a crash, so it may have been quite a distance away from Bukur Danda when it went down.

The expedition sent word to the military search and rescue team at Chitre that the search should be concentrated in the Sankhuwa and Apsuwa area. But the weather deteriorated as the monsoon made an early start in eastern Nepal and it was called off.

"We carried out an air and ground search all over the area and resumed after the monsoon, but just couldn't find the helicopter anywhere," says an Asian Airlines representative, who says rescue teams looked at where the naturalist said he heard the craft disappear in the upper reaches of Sankhuwa Khola, or the middle part of Apsuwa Khola.

There is some extremely steep terrain in this area and what could have happened is that the pilot, hopelessly lost, tried to fly out of the valley but went into a side valley and crashed into a mountainside. Still, with such an extensive search, the wreckage should have been found. "It is really very rugged out there," the Asian Airlines official told us. "The only possibility now is that the helicopter triggered an avalanche on impact and got buried under ice and rocks." ♦

A helicopter that crashed in the Himalaya nearly a year ago has never been found.

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NEW YEAR, NEW DECADE

Quite astonishing, how one gets used to peace. It is difficult to imagine that this time last year we were living through some of the most horrific days of the insurgency. An emergency was in force, editors were being detained, schools had closed down all over the country, nearly 100 people had been slaughtered in Mangelsen and Sanfegabar, and a \$20 million powerplant in Jhimruk had just been destroyed. Peace had never looked so distant.

And yet, here we are one year later, watching the Maoist ideologue-in-chief shaking hands with a royal-appointed prime minister. The prime minister says he was tricked, but for ordinary Nepalis it was the first tangible proof that this peace may be the real thing. The two sides may have different reasons for stopping the fight, but they have one reason in common: the overwhelming public opinion against conflict (see p 1, and below).

This is also the last week of the 2050s. Politically, this has been a lost decade. A decade of unkept promises where selfishness, short-sightedness and a complete disregard for the national interest took its toll. Even so, progress was made in education and health. Local self-governance was beginning to work—hinting at how much more we could have achieved in the past ten years if only our national-level political leaders were more accountable.

Alas, disillusionment and apathy with democracy set the stage for the flames of the peoples' war to spread. It is clear now that the Maoists were not particularly clever or strong, it was just that successive elected governments were so feckless, faction-ridden and preoccupied with power. They are back to their antics this week, trying to be more radical than the Maoists by raising the republican slogan. For their part, the Maoists are being deliberately contradictory to confuse everyone, and taking advantage of the anarchy on the streets.

It makes us glad to see the Maoist leadership out in the open, even if they are threatening to go back to the jungle with every breath they take. In the coming weeks, the novelty of hearing their speeches will wear off, and hopefully the mainstream media will not devote so many column inches to the comrades unless they have something particularly important or jargon-free to say.

But the euphoria of the ceasefire should not make us go overboard to let our revolutionaries, who are still technically underground and haven't yet renounced violence, to pretend that they are already on an election campaign trail. By their own admission, the Maoists are outlaws and don't believe in the constitution. But that does not put them beyond the purview of international humanitarian law. As an insurgent movement, the Maoists have an obligation to ensure maximum protection of citizens within their control within peacetime and war.

The government has lifted the Maoists' terrorist label, retracted the Interpol notice, but if the Maoists are genuine in their desire to return to the democratic mainstream this would be an appropriate moment to declare unequivocally that they will abide by international covenants on humanitarian law. What this means on the ground is a strict adherence to the Code of Conduct on threats, intimidation, extortion, forced recruitment, display of weapons. Without that, and with the experience of the previous truce, the Nepali people will have every right to doubt the sincerity of their words.

Both the Maoists and the security forces need to break the cycle of impunity as a basic groundwork for peace-building so that Nepalis do not lose another new year. And another decade.

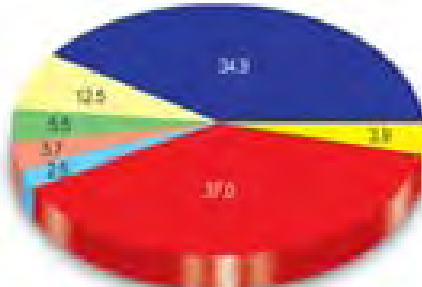
from p1

It has been observed in past polls that there is usually 2-3% less support for political parties in the towns compared to rural areas. And even though this year's poll was urban-centric, many had recently moved in from the hinterland.

The most surprising result was in response to the question: "If the Maoists laid down their arms and took part in

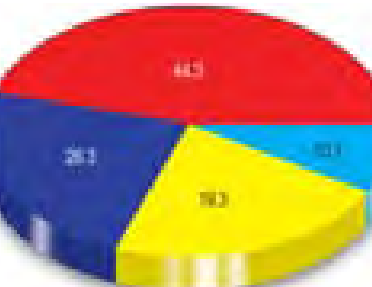
Who should be involved in finding a solution to the present crisis?

- King
- All-party govt
- Others
- Maoists
- Don't know/can't say
- NC
- UML



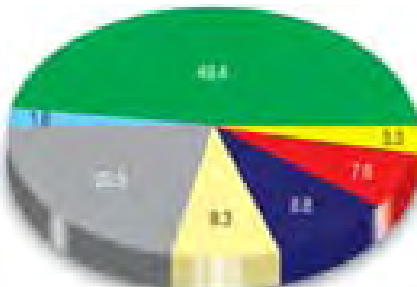
What is your view on the present constitution?

- Amend it
- Complete failure, change it
- It's OK
- Don't know/can't say



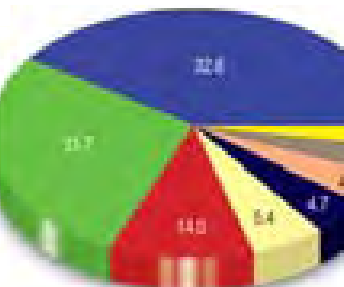
If the Maoists laid down their arms and took part in elections today, who would you vote for?

- Don't know/can't say
- Maoists
- Others
- NC
- UML
- RPP
- NC-D



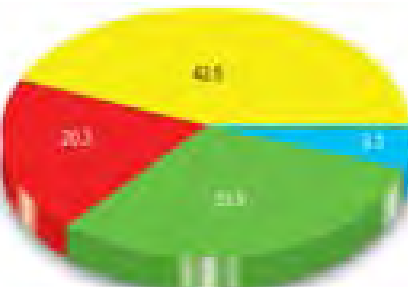
Who is responsible for the present crisis?

- Political parties
- Main party leaders
- Maoist insurgency
- Don't know/can't say
- Palace
- Others
- Parliamentary system
- 1991 Constitution



Do you think the Maoists intend to join the political mainstream?

- No
- Hard to say
- Yes
- Don't know



STATE OF THE STATE
Fear of the future
This new year, let's pray for peace. And sanity.

PUNE—Raj Kumar is a Nepali lad from Pyuthan, eking out a living at a small eatery in this west Indian city. For seven years, almost every young man between the Bheri and Rapti rivers risked being abducted and inducted into the Maoist militia at the point of a gun. The fate of those who escaped was hardly any better: they would often fall into the dragnet of the security forces.

Only the lucky, like Raj Kumar, got away. He has managed to save his hard-earned money and flaunts what he has been able to buy with it: a mobile phone. There on a Pune sidewalk, he generously offers to help me make a call to Kathmandu.

Raj Kumar says he knows it's now safe to go back to his small pasal in Pyuthan, but he's staying put. "These people can't be trusted," he says about the Maoists. Raj Kumar knows

when the Prachanda Path was first announced. Whatever their newly-surfaced leaders may say, there is no doubt who is ultimately to blame for all these wasted years: the Maoists.

And now, we have the nauseating spectacle of the capital's ruling class stepping over itself to greet the Maoist team. What has Comrade Baburam Bhattarai done for this country that he deserves such a hero's welcome? The insurgency did succeed in bringing the grievances of the dalits and janjatis

centre-stage, but was it worth the sacrifice of 8,000 Nepali lives? Couldn't that have been achieved through peaceful political activism?

Let's face it: the armed insurgency was unjust and immoral to begin with, and has failed to achieve what it promised to deliver to excluded Nepalis. The utopian republic of Comrade Prachanda is as far away as it was when he was a firebrand at Rampur. The federal structure of Matrika Yadav and Dev Gurung's dream is unlikely to materialise even if their impending talks with the government are successful. None of the Maoists leaders now mention the 1950 treaty with India that once agitated them so much. The Mahara mantra today is the free-market! If that's the new regime, what's so terribly wrong with the old one that so many people had to die?

Democracy was never as weak as it is now after the Maoists have begun to jostle for space in the power arena. Baburam Bhattarai says the constitution is dead and the old regime is a totalitarian set up. Presumably, all that he is bargaining for is his own version of authoritarianism at best, and a share in the ways of the old regime at worst. So much for the new model democracy.

Wonder what Raj Kumar would say about the red carpet being laid out for the Maoist leadership. And from their utterances since they came above ground, it looks like it will be futile to expect them to lift the country out of its misery. There must be a limit to our collective naivete.

By hurrying to confer legitimacy on the Maoists, the government has added firewood to the pyre of democracy in the country. There is no alternative but for them to disarm before they can be allowed to enter the national mainstream as a responsible political force. No election, whether national, local or for the constituent assembly, can take place under the shadow of the gun.

What kind of peace do we want? The 'peace' of North Korea? Compromising basic human values is too high a price to pay for peace. This New Year, more than peace, let's pray for sanity.

COMMENT
Same old, new regime

To figure out why the Maoists wanted a ceasefire and peace talks at this precise moment, we have to sift through the tangle of contradictions that are contained in recent Maoist pronouncements. Pundits as to have their own explanation for why the Maoists decided to go for talks: pressure from India, internal indiscipline among the cadre, waning public support, fear of getting a US terrorist tag.

But the Maoists leaders themselves have painted the town red with often contradictory pronouncements. They say they came out because their armed wing had reached a state of "strategic balance" with the royal army, that there was a "military stalemate", and that they needed to have an outlet for a "new model democracy".



Public remarks by Maoist leaders are contradictory, and sow suspicions they still want to wrest power by force.



the east, and large quantities of arms have been transported across the country. In addition, they have also given a special importance to cadre development in the Kathmandu Valley.

There are indications that the Maoists will use the period of the peace talks to combine long-term peoples' war with a mass urban uprising. This is a qualitative departure from how they used the last truce to rearm, recruit and regroup to take on the army. This time, it is a strategic leap to multiply their military gain by inciting a volatile urban mass in the capital, which they hope will propel them to power.

What proof is there, therefore, that the Maoists are not using this ceasefire and negotiations about negotiations to prepare for the next phase of the revolution? In fact, Maoists leaders have been saying as much in their speeches all over the country in the past week.

"Henceforth, it is clear that a rural war is not enough, in fact we don't need a war in the villages anymore, we need to bring the conflict to the cities," Badal warned at a meeting in Chitwan on Monday. In Nepalgunj Baburam Bhattarai said the next step was to "take over central power".

Among the reasons that the Maoists say they came to the table is the geopolitical situation. Actually, this is just an excuse. Nepal's geopolitical situation is no different than what it was 200 years ago. A favourite Maoist saying is that Nepal is not a yam but a stick of dynamite between two stones. A lot of things don't quite fit. On the one hand the Maoists say they have come out to talk to the Chand government, on the other they want to uphold the gains of the 1990 people's movement. How can the gains be protected by talking to a government that has dismantled the same gains? Besides, the Maoists themselves have done nothing but try to demolish the

LETTERS

NARAYANI RIVER
Thanks to Samman J Thapa for his well-researched expose of the Bhrikuti Pulp and Paper Mills in Gaidakot. That one picture of the pollution flowing into the once-pristine Narayani River tells us all there is to know. So what is the government doing? What is the warden of the Royal Chitwan National park doing? What is the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation of which Crown Prince Paras is now the chairman doing? And last, but not least, what is Bhrikuti paper mills doing to stop destroying Nepal's most famous national park?
JCI, by email

● You people at *Nepali Times* must have realised the futility of doing your investigative stories on the environment by now. You have covered fuel adulteration, but by all accounts it became worse. You have covered the menace of rhino poaching, yet more rhinos were killed for their horns last year than ever before. You have tried to get the government moving on development. And now, you have drawn the attention of the authorities to the appalling pollution in the Naryani River. I guarantee that no one will do anything, just like with all your earlier reports. Where does the buck stop?
Surya J Shahi, Australia

RISHI DHAMALA
I don't know what Mr Rishi Dhamala thought before inviting Baburam Bhattarai to the Reporter's Club function ("The man in the middle", # 139) but one thing is sure: he forgot that Bhattarai is ultimately responsible for taking thousands of innocent lives. Because of him many children have lost their childhood, many parents have lost their only means of support. Mr Dhamala, to make it to the headlines you don't have to humiliate the prime minister, or shake hands with a person whose hands are soaked with the blood of innocent people. There are more decent ways to do that.
Bhumika Ghimire, Kathmandu

● Haven't you unwittingly given Rishi Dhamala even more of the publicity he craves by that profile of him in your back page? What makes this ego-maniac worthy of precious space in your paper? He deliberately manipulated his guests and positioned himself to be on the headlines. If he is going to be a politician, then may

Pahsapatinh help us all.
Lila Pandey, Sanepa

SPRING
Your editorial ("The Kathmandu spring", #139) should have been called "The Nepali spring" since all over Nepal there is a yearning for peace. The shaking of hands and the seeming reconciliation is not an indication of peace, there is still a long way to go with lots of twists and turns. That is why the leaders should desist from activities that create disputes and make each other more suspicious and give direction to the peace process. Nepal belongs to every Nepali irrespective of caste or creed. Neither King Gyanendra nor Comrade Baburam can be excluded. Since we are now in the process of peace-making, let us forget the heinous deeds of the past. It is not easy, the desire to avenge past wrongs will be great, but there is no other way.
"Razesh", Lagankhel

● Thank you for the two excellent travelogues through the Nepali heartland by Manjushree Thapa and Kyoko Ogura ("Peace bridge" and "Spring in the heartland", #139). While attention is focussed on Kathmandu, it is instructive to be taken on a tour of the countryside to hear what ordinary Nepalis have to say. And the message comes through loud and clear that the ceasefire does not yet mean peace, the people are still afraid that the war will start again, there is no presence of government, and the people are not confident enough to return to their villages. If the negotiators on both sides read the articles, it should be clear to them that the longer they delay the peace dialogue the more difficult it will be to preserve the peace. It is too precious to let go again.
M Manandhar, Lazimpat



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War and virus spook tourists



SARS EPICENTRE: A Royal Nepal Airlines 757 flying into Hong Kong from Kathmandu, while a Qatar Airways A300 lands in Kathmandu on a new route to Kuala Lumpur (below).

HEMLATA RAI

This was final proof that external events have more impact on Nepal's fragile tourism industry than domestic instability.

After the ceasefire announcement at the end of January, tour operators scrambled to rescue trekking traffic for the spring season. Arrivals grew by a robust 35 percent in February compared to last year. But the war in Iraq and the SARS epidemic in East Asia dashed all hopes.

"The fear of war and the fear of disease combined, have affected the tourists' psychology, and this will take

time to heal," admits Tek Bahadur Dangi, the newly-appointed head of the Nepal Tourism Board. After the Iraq crisis, NTB had tried to target Gulf-based expats who sought a safe destination as well as tourists from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and China with its 'Look East' policy.

But the outbreak of the war hurt traffic from Europe and America since flights overtly or stopover in the Middle East. Up to 12 percent of the total long haul traffic to Nepal comes via the Persian Gulf.

The Look East policy backfired after the SARS

epidemic spread from Hong Kong to beyond the region. Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN) records show a 30 percent cancellation in bookings. Most hotels have occupancies below 25 percent, and restaurants established to cater to tourists are repositioning themselves to target locals and expats. While the tourist hotels we talked to declined to assess the percentage of their clientele cancelling due to the threat of SARS alone, they all admitted that cancellations from international tourists increased after last month.

Nepal's tourism is affected

because tourism in India, the Gulf and Far East are affected. The only sector that has come through unscathed seems to be mountaineering and high-altitude trekking. The panic really spread after the World



RAJ CHANDELA

A war raging in West Asia and a flu scare in East Asia have dashed all hopes of a tourism revival in Nepal this spring season.

Health Organisation (WHO) advisory on 4 April advising travellers to avoid countries that reported SARS cases. In its first-ever notice of this kind, the WHO asked anyone experiencing SARS symptoms of high fever, dry cough, shortness of breathing and breathing difficulties to consult a doctor. It also called for international travellers departing from affected areas to be screened for possible SARS at their point of departure.

The WHO notice was disastrous for Nepal because it suggested avoiding Hong Kong and Thailand—the major gateways for travellers coming to Nepal. Admittedly, the actual numbers of tourists coming from East Asia itself has never been significant, but a lot of inbound tourists (even from

Tourist arrivals

(March 03, compared to March 02)

US	↓ 23%
UK	↓ 38%
Germany	↓ 35%
Holland	↓ 33%

Europe) fly in from the east because of easier connections.

NTB's 'Look East' campaign is now on hold. "Promotion fairs in Malaysia and China were scheduled for the next two months but the big launches may have to be reconsidered, if not cancelled entirely," says Dangi. Other campaigns to accelerate a tourism revival have also been badly hit: the new Qatar Airways flights from Kathmandu to Kuala Lumpur and the Royal Nepal Airlines flights to Malaysia and



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Expert opinion

The CIWEC Clinic Travel Medicine Centre in Kathmandu confirms what we already know—travellers are avoiding East Asia and Nepal is experiencing a slump in tourist arrivals. What surprises CIWEC's Dr Pratiba Pandey (above) is that SARS hasn't been detected in Nepal yet. "The threat looms large, but amazingly Nepal has escaped the infection so far," she says.

In the CIWEC clinic there are notices that anyone with SARS symptoms should immediately report to the clinic. But aside from masked staff, there are no other visible precautions.

Nepal has fights to all the countries detected with SARS—four weekly connections to Hong Kong, one to Shanghai and Singapore, and daily hauls to Bangkok. Fortunately, Bangkok, from where Nepal gets most of the East Asia traffic, has been able to keep the infection at bay.

Thai airport authorities have imposed a vigorous screening mechanism and so far Bangkok has recorded only one imported case of SARS. India, the other gateway to Nepal, also has not reported any cases of SARS.

Dr Pandey believes it would be naïve to imagine we are safe. "The danger of a Nepali national bringing SARS into the country is far more likely than contracting the disease from a tourist," she says. More than 50,000 Nepalis who work in Hong Kong travel regularly to Nepal. "We are not prepared to handle an epidemic, prevention is the only viable method for us."

Singapore. Royal Nepal Airlines is thinking of terminating its new flight in Kuala Lumpur till the SARS scare blows over. But its Hong Kong and Bangkok routes are doing well.

Assistant tourism minister Rabi Bhakta Shrestha went on the inaugural flight last week and negotiated a visa-on-arrival for Nepalis going to Malaysia on Royal Nepal Airlines and the

establishment of each others' embassies in Kathmandu and Kuala Lumpur. He told us: "The timing may have been bad, but this route has tremendous potential once the epidemic dies down."

With a war raging in West Asia and an epidemic in East Asia, there is just one more idea that could still work: India. Indian tourists are not

travelling because of the war and flu and Nepal could tap these homebound Indians, especially with the hot season only weeks away. "The problem has been that we have never looked at the vast Indian market, and even today we see NTB slow to react," one travel agent told us. "The Indian market is intact, let's start moving them here by increasing flights and offering packages." It seems Nepal needs a 'look south' policy to revive tourism.

But flights to and from Nepal and India are full even though Hong Kong faces a 22 percent cut in all scheduled flights. Singapore is losing \$16 million per week in tourist spending and Thailand is suffering from a 20 percent cut in tourist bookings, which is expected to slide even lower.

"The arrival from southeast Asia will take more time to pick up than we initially anticipated," HAN President Narendra Bajracharya told us. The SARS panic is spreading faster than the virus itself, and although no cases have been reported in Nepal the government says it is taking precautions, asking passengers arriving from East Asia to give details about their stay. It has also set aside a quarantine area with four beds at the Teku Hospital for suspected cases. Says Dr Benu Bahadur Karki of the Health Ministry, "We are just following WHO guidelines." ♦



DOMESTIC BRIEFS

Indian consulate in Birganj

India is waiting for a green light from Nepal to open a long-proposed business consulate in Birganj. Indian ambassador Shyam Saran said Sunday that New Delhi was waiting for Kathmandu to decide.

Addressing a program organised by the Birganj Chamber of Commerce and Industry this week, Saran also said the ball was in Nepal's court for opening the Birganj dry port. He also told businessmen that a draft trade agreement would be signed soon. Earlier, Saran inaugurated a solar electrification project in Krishnapur of Sarlahi district. This is the second phase of an Indian aided project to provide solar electricity for lighting that also includes electrification of villages in Dhading, Baglung and Parsa. Last year villages in Gulmi and Panchthar got solar-powered lights. Some 17,000 people are said to benefit from the projects which are managed by local users' groups.

Rabin and Rabina

After four months of hospitalisation, Rabin and Rabina Regmi returned to Hetauda Tuesday after treatment at the Sushma Koirala Memorial Hospital in Sankhu for severe burn injuries sustained in a Maoist arson attack.

Rabina, 6, and her four-year-old brother started crying uncontrollably when they got inside the bus. It brought back traumatic memories of the night of 4 November 2002 when the bus they were travelling in was set on fire on the Mahendra Highway near Malangwa. Their mother died trying to save her children.

Rabina and Rabin's father, Bhakta Bahadur Regmi's face showed concern as his children wept uncontrollably. Rabina hugged her brother and father and was inconsolable. The human rights group, INSEC, helped Bhakta Bahadur hire a taxi, and only after they came out of the bus did the children stop crying.

After their tragic story was first reported ("Why the Children?" *Nepali Times*, #121) Rs 200,000 was raised from donations and the Sushma Koirala Memorial Hospital offered to treat the children for free. The money has been deposited in a high-interest savings account. Several schools have offered scholarships to the children, but Rabina doesn't want to be separated from her brother and will wait until he is old enough to go to school. The children still don't know that their mother is dead, and Rabin has regular nightmares of 'maobadis'.

Rabin and Rabina have made a dramatic recovery, but they still need skin graft and orthopedic treatment and will return to Sankhu in August. Before driving off with his children, Bhakta Bahadur said, "We are so grateful to all the people who gave us support. It's because of their help that my children are alive today."



Blood for oil

In a glaring example of how political parties use student unions to make their point, members of the All Nepal Free Student Union protesting the recent petroleum price hike in the mid-western town of Butwal on 8 April were fired upon by police, killing one student and injuring several others. Poudel was in the mob that had started the riots in which several minibuses and motorcycles were set on fire in the town.

The students brought the transportation sector to a complete halt at the Butwal stretch of Mahendra Highway. Official reports say the police we were left with no option but to open fire after the crowd refused to disperse peacefully. But eyewitnesses say the police used tear gas only after opening fire. Student anger quickly spilled over to rest of the country, and on Wednesday several vehicles belonging to the Nepal Electricity Authority were damaged in Kathmandu. Students and police fought pitched battles in various parts of the city. The government has formed a probe committee to investigate the Butwal incident.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

HERE AND THERE

by DANIEL LAK



War is hell

The articulate commander of British forces in Iraq, Air Marshall Brian Burridge, put it succinctly. "Historians," he said, "will be pouring over the details of this for years." He was referring to the American military advance on Baghdad, swift and apparently relentless and able to overcome almost all resistance along the way with only a day or two of serious and damaging fighting.

I've decided that second-guessing the generals and senior officers who call the shots (literally) for the anti-Saddam forces is a mugs' game. Best not to do it, or at least, best to raise questions and await answers. For surely it's apparent to anyone who tries to follow the course of events in Iraq that information is at a premium and very little of what's on offer is particularly enlightening. History, Air Marshall Burridge put it, will tell. But journalism has been hard pressed.

Consider the raging debate in much of the international media about the merits and drawbacks of "embedding" reporters with American and British military units. For opponents of war and journalistic purists, this was anathema. The reporter, it was argued, would bond with the men and women around him. After all, they were protecting the ink-stained wretch in civilian clothing. How could any of us not feel grateful for that. Supporters of embedding argued that it gave readers and viewers a unique insight into life on the battlefield. "War is hell," said the Confederate general William Tecumseh Sherman, famously in 1864 as the rebellious southern states of the US contemplated certain defeat after one of the worst military conflicts of modern times. Might "embeds" not show this to viewers at home in a way that historians can or will not?

The jury is out on such a nuance. I know of no-one with an opinion on this war who has changed their view because of reports from the battlefield. The anti's remain opposed; supporters of every hue remain so. My own



Ali Ismail Abbas, 12, was asleep when a missile destroyed his home. His parents were killed. He was badly burned and lost both arms.

feeling is that too much has been made of the coverage of this war, whether by those embedded in military units or taking immense risks by moving around the theatre of battle on their own. Neither has there been much enlightenment available from the parade of retired military officers and experts who offer their comments on each and every development, or rumour. Too often, they're vented to notions like "the fog of war" or even confessing "I don't know".

Another concern, we've seen far too little about the effects on civilians. There have been exceptions: I think specifically of a devastating photograph of a young boy hit by US or UK bombs, his arms blown off, his burnt body smeared with ointment, his eyes expressing shock, pain, fear. But

We refuse and fail to learn a single thing from the crimes, inactions and failures of our chequered past.

Unfortunately, so far the predominant image of this war is the apparent triumph of technology—smart bombs, fast vehicles, night vision goggles besting evil or misguided resistance. Yet there are other effects of battle that we rarely hear about. Not enough is made of disruptions in food, water, medical care, sanitation and economic life. A child whose school days are punctuated with explosions, fear and violence is a child with a troubled future. Who worries about the post-traumatic stress of the Iraqi civilians, what media organisation—while the war is going on—enquires into such issues?

This is left for the historians and documentary-makers, the authors and researchers who come along when the gunfire ceases. Only then can we return to General Sherman's words and contemplate them, reflect on their scorching truth and how we refuse and fail to learn a single thing from the crimes, inactions and failures of our chequered past.

Journalism, it was once observed is "history in action". But history is the collection of information to impart wisdom and context. So far, the coverage of this war has provided intense imagery and anecdote, but nothing that might be remotely considered history's lessons. War is still hell. ♦

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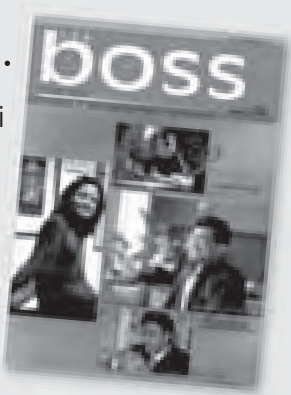
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Boss

A new monthly magazine, *The Boss*, is being launched this week with the professed aim of meshing business and lifestyle for Nepali readers. The full-colour magazine with world-class printing and design will present economic trends and previews, management, entrepreneurs and its lifestyle content in a livelier format. As the name of the magazine suggests, this is a periodical with a difference, and the publishers hope that its departure from the traditionally stolid business reporting will be a welcome change. "The Boss seeks to create a niche readership for itself...a close-knit network of business community, giving birth to a forum to communicate ideas and voice opinions," says Shalini Wadhwa, CEO of *The Boss*. The magazine, published by Speciality Media, will start with a print run of 4,000 and hopes to attain 15,000 in sales throughout Nepal.



The World Bank Office Nepal Position Title: Research Analyst (Economics)

The World Bank Office in Nepal requires a competent, results oriented Research Analyst to provide substantial research, analytical and statistical assistance in support of its team in Nepal. The selected candidate will have the following major duties and responsibilities:

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Interested candidates should send their curriculum vitae with the position clearly marked on the envelope, not later than April 30, 2003, to:

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The middle muddle

Nepalis should never be forced to choose between peace and liberty.

As the monarch and the Maoists articulated their aspirations for our common future last week, it was easy to miss the maturity the political mainstream parties have begun to acquire. UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal's assertion that there was no need for political parties to participate in a peace process triggered by the government and rebels' guns conformed to the standard line. The difference was that he wasn't moaning about the marginalisation of the big parties. Otherwise, he wouldn't have counselled both camps to show enough flexibility to prevent the rebels from returning to the jungles.

Napoleonic prudence would have persuaded Nepal not to interrupt his rivals while he thought they were making a big mistake. It's very difficult not to offer advice when it comes to your own area of expertise. As a member of the panel that drafted today's constitution, Nepal is eminently qualified to suggest that the peace talks should focus on the issues of women, the tribals, oppressed and regional problems as well as the wishes and aspirations of the people. Having sensed that Prime Minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand and Maoist No 2 Baburam Bhattarai were about to share the Reporters Club podium, Nepal left the hall. In retrospect, he did so in a constructive spirit, not because of political claustrophobia.

Which brings us to the larger point. For the last six months, the mainstream parties have been on a frantic search for space, little recognising the room they have occupied for good. It's easy to rail against the Nepali Congress and the UML for failing to agree on how the king should correct his 4 October foray into active politics. Politicians are supposed to think ahead of us, and that's what they're doing. Nepal knows what lurks behind Girija Prasad Koirala's offering to the UML to lead the government in a reinstated House of Representatives. The Nepali Congress parliamentary party has not officially split. All it would take for the kangress to form a majority government is the expulsion of Sher Bahadur Deuba. As a bonus, the chief whip would have one less MP to watch out for ahead of the next no-confidence motion.

As for Nepal's demand for an all-party government, the kangress remember how the



MINI BARACHARYA

comrades reaped all the benefits of incumbency under the Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Koirala governments while evading responsibility for their failures. How many of us remember that Sahana Pradhan was on Bhattarai's delegation to New Delhi that immortalised the term "common rivers"? If politics isn't philanthropy, it's not entirely our leaders' fault.

The centrality of the political mainstream is illuminated by the bright side of the last six months.

Koirala has proved that it is possible to insulate your core convictions from the venality of politics. The UML has never stood so solidly behind this constitution. Who thought the Rastriya Prajatantra Party would still have people worrying about their democratic credentials? The rival faction blames Deputy Prime Minister Badri Prasad Mandal for splitting the Nepal Sadbhavana Party. At a time when we want goodwill to pervade the entire country, maybe the party is onto something marvellous. Don't be surprised if Bijay Kumar Gachchadar decides to contest the next election from Sankhuwasabha.

Narayan Man Bijukchhe, who has emerged as the most

moderate radical, is spoken of as a possible prime minister. How equal could political opportunity be? Amik Serchan refused to meet the king because he had nothing to add since their last talks and could say so.

Nepalis should never be forced to choose between peace and liberty. When mainstream politicians raised that point directly, we questioned their sense of responsibility to the nation. So the UML chief rephrased the debate. The Maoists, who in their earlier incarnation controlled seven seats in parliament, wreaked such devastation. Don't even contemplate what the Nepali Congress and UML, which had 185 seats between them, could do.

Making fun of the mainstream leaders would be fine as long as the upper house is around and the press retains its freedom. Should we start suffocating again, we can always look up to the kangress and comrades. This thought would have been comforting but for the consequence of this commendation-condemnation cycle. Fifty-two years after the dawn of democracy, we're still struggling to cast enough light on the pros and cons of a constituent assembly. ♦



The business of SLC

After all, a skilled workforce is in the direct interest of every business.

In the last two decades more Nepalis have failed the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) exams than passed them. Since the employment segments are leery about hiring and grooming those who failed, we ultimately end up wasting a stunning mass of diverse talent every year. Not counting all the investment in primary and secondary education. This is becoming a nation of SLC-failed citizens.

The collective silence of the Nepali private sector about this waste is odd. As things stand, they complain about a lack of trained manpower in the country but fail to correlate this to the direct impact of poor SLC success rates. The collective future of the business sector is at stake. As business gets more competitive, and needs people with technical skills, knowledge and abilities, how will anyone line up tomorrow's skilled labour force for any growth-oriented company in Nepal? The cost of basic re-education and training will be high for any one company to shoulder, but collectively it becomes easier and feasible for them to start lobbying with the government for an education system that sees to it that students complete high school with employable skills.

It is a cop-out for business leaders to merely give out cash and medals to a handful of SLC-toppers and consider their job done. They must speak up and look for ways to work with other sectors to cut the indiscriminate waste of potential that the SLC Effects. After all, a skilled workforce is in the direct interest of every business. Secondary education is too vital a subject to be left

to the government and education activists to muddle through. How might business leaders go about tackling the scourge of SLC so that more Nepalis are able pursue a vocation of their choice? I would suggest three ways:

Remove the stigma surrounding SLC-failures: Studies done in the West tracking former students over the course of their careers, have consistently shown that there is very little correlation between educational achievement and on-the-job success. In Nepal too, it's safe to say that most jobs require different sorts of skills than ones tested



by memorise-and-regurgitate SLC exams. A Sherpa boy from Solukhumbu may fail a paper on Nepali grammar and be an out-and-out SLC-failure, as is often the case, but make a great success of a trekking agency.

In Britain, students who do seven O level or equivalent papers, and pass only four can sell themselves as '4 O levels pass candidates' to the job market. Why not allow our students too do something similar, and let the market decide whom it wants to hire? This is where interventions by business leaders can make a difference. A few years ago, the then UML government had

announced a scheme for recognising SLC-failures as job market candidates, but the absence of political will killed the concept.

Market-related skills: Business houses can sponsor SLC-failed students to obtain trade-related skills and later handpick the smartest ones for their corporations. As medicine, dentistry, engineering and even accounting become areas of specialisation in Nepal, there is an unfulfilled demand for related technicians to operate the machines and do the routine work. These technicians need not be SLC graduates, and their work can be performed by anyone with basic literacy skills, appropriate training and common sense.

Entrepreneurship education: This kind of training, often for free or for nominal fees, has fast become the favoured program among donors and NGOs.

Unfortunately these schemes turn a blind eye towards the biggest constraint that entrepreneurs face—marketing and selling their services and products. Business leaders can step in and offer advice with hands-on involvement in designing such educational programs.

All said and done, the trouble with SLC is that it is too closely tied to the job market for all the wrong reasons. The sooner businesses help undo that bond, while pushing the government to revamp the SLC system, the faster Nepalis—regardless of how many SLC papers they fail in—will be able to make a decent living. ♦

“Awareness is not enough”

Communications that inform, educate and motivate a population to practice healthy behaviours are the core of every PSI project.

- Around the globe, efforts to combat HIV and AIDS has concentrated on raising awareness of the issues regarding the transmission of HIV / AIDS for at least 2 decades and experience has proven that merely raising awareness is not enough to change young people's behaviour.

- Social Marketing at Population Services International is a comprehensive approach to behaviour change. It involves both the distribution and marketing of affordable health products and services to people who need them, and effective behaviour change communications to motivate people to use them.

- Globally, PSI social markets at least **One Billion Condoms** every year and promotes other healthy behaviours such as abstinence and being faithful to a monogamous partner.

- In Nepal the HIV awareness among youth is relatively high. However, the expected safe sexual behaviour strategies such as abstinence, being faithful to a monogamous partner and correct and consistent use of condoms during high-risk sex (The ABC's of HIV Prevention) is not practiced by Youth.

- The importance of introducing a highly targeted 'Youth' Condom is evident from the fact that more than 50% of the Nepali population is under 25 years of age, and that more than 75% of all new HIV infections in Nepal are among this sexually active group.

- PSI has conducted extensive market research with over 10,000 youth across the whole country, in addition to, 'Youth' psychographic profiling research to develop a Condom Brand especially developed for Nepali Youth—**"Number 1"**, it is anticipated that **"Number 1"** will further enable Nepali Youth to make informed decisions and adopt healthy behaviour.

- PSI with experience in behaviour change communication and social marketing in more than 70 countries, takes

HIV communications a stage further by addressing not only HIV awareness issues, but also by directly addressing the crucial barriers which prevent at-risk individuals from making informed health decisions and adopting healthy behaviour. Factors include:

- Ensuring safe sexual health products, such as condoms, are readily available where and when at-risk Youth need them most (e.g. cabin restaurants, dance restaurants, truck and migrant worker routes).
- Ensuring a 'Youth' focused condom brand is readily available at youth outlets and is positioned and marketed in a language that youth understand.
- Ensuring the cost of condoms does not become a barrier to purchase by Youth.
- Ensuring Youth have the full arsenal of information to make informed health decisions (knowing that abstinence and being faithful to a monogamous partner are the best ways to prevent contracting HIV, knowing that condoms are an effective means of prevention during high-risk sex).
- Developing essential skills such as condom negotiation and correct condom usage to ensure condoms are used correctly and consistently.
- Ensuring consistent condom use during every high-risk sexual act.
- Ensuring 'Youth' have the social support networks necessary to use condoms correctly and consistently.

- To communicate the essential behaviour change communication messages and skills to Youth, PSI/Nepal aims to use a large array of communication media which Youth will be able to identify and empathize with. This array includes:

- Mass Media such as billboards, press, radio and TV.
- Small media such as rock concerts, drama, street theatre and mobile video shows to reach remote and marginalized groups.
- Interpersonal communications which can be effectively used to increase the essential skills necessary

- for high-risk youth to adopt healthy behaviours.
- iv. Community social mobilisation.

- These media channels are used differently by PSI compared to other health programmers in that PSI adopts commercial private sector marketing strategies to identify the 'buying triggers' to behaviour change through marketing campaigns which mirror those of private sector companies (e.g. Coca Cola & Wai Wai Noodles)

Founded in 1970, PSI is a nonprofit organisation based in Washington, DC, with projects in 70 countries and is the leading social marketing organisation in the world. PSI began operations in Nepal in early 2002 to work in the areas of HIV/AIDS prevention, maternal child health and family planning in support of HMG's National Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS Prevention Strategies.

PSI aims to deliver reproductive and other health products, services, and information to enable low income and vulnerable people to lead healthier lives. For this, it supports His Majesty's Government, Ministry of Health, and the Department of Health Services Health Sector Reform and the objectives of the public health sector system by strengthening the private sector's ability to contribute towards national public sector health goals.

PSI Nepal is funded by the United States agency for International development (USAID) brings private sector quality, speed and efficiency, innovation and entrepreneurship to its work so that high quality and affordable products are widely available. This will enable young Nepalis so these groups are empowered to make informed health choices. Through social franchising, PSI/Nepal hopes to increase access to products and services for reproductive health. It also aims to increase the scope and breadth of HIV/AIDS prevention activities in Nepal through the social marketing of condoms and STI services.

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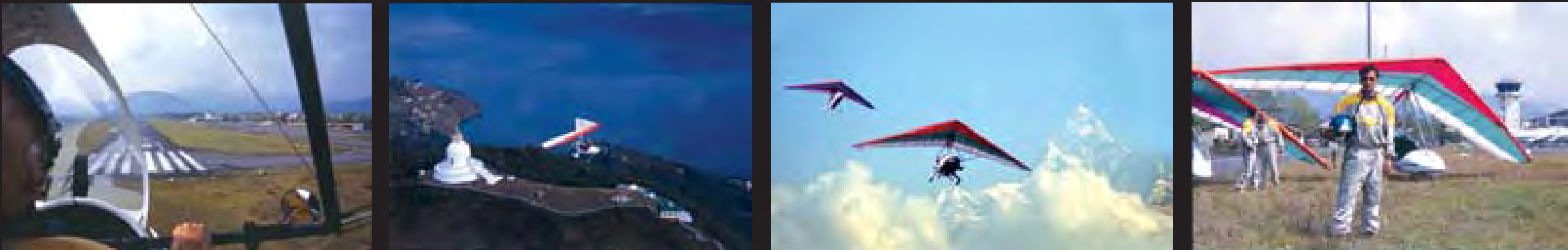


PHOTO: MIN BAJRACHARYA

MIN BAJRACHARYA in POKHARA

Icarus' waxen wings came to mind as we soared into the blue Pokhara sky. Strapped behind pilot Stephen Shrestha before we lifted off the short runway, it occurred to me that microlight aviation is probably the closest experience to being birds that we humans have...not even para-soaring comes closer.

Both microlight and para-soaring are now part of what Pokhara offers to the adventure tourist. And what an adventure! As per advice, I had a light breakfast, and was thankful as my stomach swooped up to my throat every time Stephen banked over Phewa Tal.

Earlier, I had watched a single ground staff tow the 130 kg contraption out of the hangar. It didn't inspire much confidence: it looked like a pram balanced on a flagpole. Or a motorcycle with wings. And, as I discovered, wearing helmets is compulsory for both pilot and pillion riders like me.

"If the engine stalls, there's no where to land," says Stephen Shrestha, the Avia Club Nepal pilot as he did the pre-flight checks. That made me even more nervous, as I felt what sounded like a Volkswagen beetle engine come to life behind us.

Stephen was only half-joking: looking down there didn't seem to be many landing options in the hilly Pokhara terrain. The takeoff was so smooth I didn't even realise we were airborne until the runway started disappearing below my feet.

Far below and growing smaller was Lakeside and the Phewa. The less said about the view of Machapuchre and the Annapurnas to the north the better, since there are no words to describe it. And even pictures give you only the one dimension: it is a 3-D world out there, with the rush of wind, the sound of the engine and the feeling of being literally at the doorstep of heaven.

As a professional photographer who has shot pictures from airplanes, a hot air balloon and



High flier

Durga Dutta Bastola is a 74-year-old farmer and patriarch of a family that includes 22 grandchildren, six married daughters and two sons. He is also the only person, and the oldest one, in his village of Puranchaur near Pokhara to have taken a ride on the "big butterfly" (pic, left). "I had Rs 1,000 with me, and I asked the pilot if he could let me fly," recalls Durga. For seven ecstatic airborne minutes he got his wish. Would he do it again? "Of course I would love to fly again but I don't think I can spare the money. And if I did, I'd let my grandchildren go because flying like that cannot be described in words. They have to experience it."

helicopters, I must confess the microlight took my breath away. The obliging pilot can reduce speed from the recommended 60-90 mph, sometimes down to a near-stall 40.

Maneuverability is key to taking pictures, so I unstrapped the top of my safety belt to swivel around. This was an adventure without any safety nets and the adrenaline sang through my veins. Stephen banked and rolled, doing a gentle under-over move with

another microlight so I could frame the delicate wings against the backdrop of the Himalaya.

There was the peace stupa, serenely punctuating the ridge above the Phewa, the urban clutter of Pokhara's lakeside, and the looming presence of the Annapurna's northern wall. We cruised at 7,000 ft, watched the sunlight play on the clouds, reflect like diamonds off the lake and saw the morning flights from

Kathmandu make an approach to the airport.

Then we got into thermals and the little craft was tossed about like a raft at sea for a while. Catabatic winds, the pilots call them: air forced up a mountain slope along the ridgeline. There are no barfbags on board, so if you throw up it will rain down on the good citizens of Pokhara.

Neither are there any in-flight magazines or hot coffee, thank heavens. This is a gut-wrenching adventure: an open sky and no set co-ordinates. In fact, this is the airborne version of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. The wind, the sharp clarity in the air, the light and an underlying edge of fear is a combination that made me want to shout. I think I even did, because a worried Stephen looked behind to see if I was alright.

With several rolls of film expended, we headed back to terra firma. Stephen aimed for the runway threshold and pushed the elevator bar, sending my heart once again to

the vicinity of my throat, and my ears stopped working because of the air pressure. A gentle flare and we touched down with a squeal of tyres. The engine stopped, and the lack of the sound was deafening for a while marked only by the ticking sound of the engine cooling.

I invited Stephen (pic, top left) for a chat and a cup of sweet airport *chia*: a sugar rush to counterbalance the incredible adrenaline rush. The 25-year-old is Nepal's first microlight pilot—license number 001—and an adventurer at heart. "I was always interested in sports and aviation, and microlights are a perfect combination of both," he says. He trained at Phoenix in Arizona, Tampa Bay in Florida and Moscow. He joined the Pokhara-based Avia Club Nepal in 2001 and is a qualified basic flight instructor. Stephen believes the full potential of microlights have not been exploited in Nepal.

The bi-annual microlight seasons in Pokhara are short: October through November and

March to May, although spring brings more turbulence causing thermals and thunder storms. Microlights have yet to catch on like, say, the Manakamana cable car. Most Nepalis are reluctant to sample even a short joyride. Besides aerial tours, Avia is often called upon to shower visiting dignitaries with flowers from on high, and tow advertising banners. Recently it was featured in a Bollywood movie. With a touch of weary sarcasm, Stephen says that will probably get more punters in. ♦

Air Adventure

Avia Microlight Club, the only aviation club that exists in Nepal, flies the BIMAN-1 delta wing craft. Rides last between 15-45 minutes and cost between \$50-175. Contact Pokhara Airport. Sunrise Paragliding, the first Nepali company to start commercial paragliding, has been in business in Pokhara since 1999 (*Nepali Times*, #77). More than 1,000 people have been airborne since then. Expect to pay between \$50-120 for tandem rides of various durations.

In a well-governed state

After it became the 22nd state in the Indian Union in 1975, Sikkim has under the Chief Minister Pawan Chamling's Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) placed an over-riding priority on good governance. The party has been in power since 1994, and was reelected in 1999 with an overwhelming majority in the state assembly. Sikkim today prides itself in being a real, people-based democracy that delivers development to the population of this former Himalayan kingdom.

As part of its development plans, the SDF has mapped out a long-term strategy of accomplishing 100 percent literacy, poverty elimination, youth empowerment and sustainable fiscal health. Devolution of power to local communities and previously marginalised sections are the mechanisms through which participation will lead to greater grassroots democracy and a demand for sustainable human development.

Economic growth, ecological preservation

Chief Minister Pawan Chamling is deeply conscious that economic growth must go hand-in-hand with environmental protection. His government is convinced that growth cannot come at the price of degradation of Sikkim's unique bio-diversity, natural heritage and ecological wellbeing.

In a bid to invigorate economic growth and social development, and bring some predictability to the system, the SDF undertook an intellectual exercise to formulate a time-bound development strategy on how best these objectives could be realised. The government set up the State Planning Commission to achieve the medium-term goal of creating an enabling context for economic growth. The accent is on infrastructure, and it is being undertaken in consultation with various stakeholders in the development of Sikkim. The Confederation of Indian Industry, international donor agencies, the World Bank and others have been involved in formulating this development agenda.

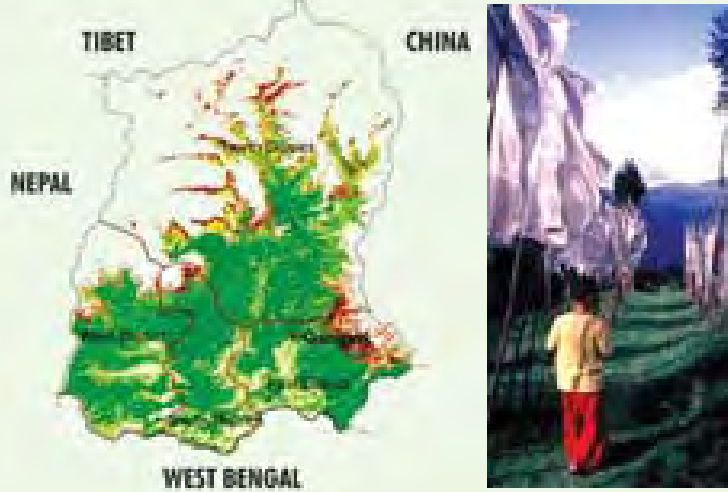
New airport

The new airport in Pakyong near Gangtok is expected to be open by 2005 and will facilitate business and tourism. Also a priority is developing Sikkim's massive hydropower generation and distribution—Sikkim will be a power exporter by 2007. Infrastructure is a prerequisite for investment and economic growth which will create jobs. In a state where almost 60 percent of the population is below 24 years, it is especially important that the job market grows at a healthy and sustained rate. Sikkim is targeting an annual growth rate of 10 percent per year.

Janata Mela

Chief Minister Chamling has also been feeling the peoples' pulse through a series of Janata Mela that brings him in direct contact with people at the grassroots to hear their concerns. He uses these development fairs to engage the people of Sikkim on government policies, encourage them to become self-reliant and empower them to ask for responsibility in governance by emphasising that it is the people's money that the government spends.

Senior bureaucrats from government departments like agriculture, industries, social welfare, forestry also come face-to-face with the



people they are supposed to help. The Sikkim Industrial Development and Investment Corporation (SIDIC) and the State Trading Corporation of Sikkim also set up stalls at the Janata Mela to disseminate information to the people about opportunities for jobs, investment and credit. This format of government—people interaction facilitates a two-way exchange allowing people to gather information on government projects and programs, and how to optimally utilise them. Bureaucrats also get an opportunity to meet the people and get feedback on past policies and plans.

Janata Mela have been held in six constituencies in the first phase and the government has distributed welfare benefits to people below the poverty line through measures like the Rural Housing Scheme, grants to panchayats, land for the landless and old age pensions. Janata Mela have

also been used to distribute cooking gas connections so that people do not have to rely on firewood.

More jobs

Chief Minister Chamling has also unveiled the Chief Minister's Self-Employment Scheme (CMSES) which earmarks INR 180 million per year for the next five years for youth-based business proposals. Young people are eligible for seed capital and technical assistance to start businesses. Forward-looking projects like this with the state playing a catalytic role in developing youth potential are geared towards achieving minimal unemployment by 2015.

Chamling's emphasis on environmental protection is seen in all his exhortations to the people to switch to organic fertilisers rather than rely on chemicals to enhance productivity in the short-term.

A state one step ahead

The present SDF government has a vision of a holistic development of Sikkim. It has intelligent planning, it is people-friendly, and has a responsible and accountable government. One main area of emphasis has been on education. In order to encourage school enrolment the government provides free primary education. It also distributes school uniforms, text books and stationery till class five. A free midday meal program has been launched. In higher education, the chief minister has made a request for a university to be set up in Sikkim, and the groundwork has been laid for a medical college.

The results

The results of the state's investment in development is there for all to see in the 2001 Sikkim Human Development Report. At 69.7 percent, Sikkim's literacy stands above India's national average of 65.4 percent. Female literacy is at 61.4 percent whereas the national average is 54.2 percent. Infant and under-five mortality are at 43.9 and 71 per thousand, well below the 67.6 and 94.9 respectively for the rest of India.

The SDF's governance is based on the principle that Sikkim should be a model state in India for others to emulate. Peace and tranquility is high on the government's agenda and the government sees creating adequate employment as part of reaching that goal. Above all else, Sikkim has relied on its human and physical resources to create a dynamic and well-administered state. With corruption in check, a growing economy and appropriate safeguards to protect the environment, Sikkim is forging ahead to craft its own destiny.

	Sikkim	India (national average)
Literacy	69.7%	65.4%
Female literacy	61.4%	54.2%
Infant mortality	43.9	67.6 (per 1,000 live births)
Under-five mortality	71	94.9 (per 1,000 live births)

War in the global village

Marshall McLuhan's messages echo in the Iraq coverage.



SARAH BOXER in NEW YORK

It was a cold night in the global village. The war in Iraq was about to begin. Across the street from the Empire State Building, in an auditorium at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, a celebration of Marshall McLuhan, the media prophet of the 1960's, was also beginning.

The auditorium was nearly full. McLuhan, of course, is the

man who coined the term "global village" came up with phrase "the medium is the message" and drew the strange distinction between a "hot" or sharp medium—"one that extends one single sense in 'high definition'"—and a "cool," or fuzzy medium. Hot media (like radio and lectures) are packed with data, leaving little room for individual interpretation or participation. Cool media (like the telephone and seminars) leave

a lot of room.

The McLuhan program included a hot medium, a film about McLuhan by Kevin McMahon titled "McLuhan's Wake," followed up with a cool one, a panel discussion. Then everyone was cast out into the cold night to return to their cool media sets (their televisions) to watch the war begin.

Why McLuhan now? This is not an anniversary year for him.

He was born in Edmonton, Alberta, in 1911 and died in Toronto in 1980. His two best-known books, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* and *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, were published in 1962 and 1964, respectively.

And anyway, before he died he had become something of a laughingstock.

He railed against bureaucrats by citing the failure of the king's men to put Humpty Dumpty together again and enthused over a juice commercial: "Glug, glug, glug—that's great television!" But the war in Iraq—particularly the television coverage of the war—brings out something fresh and bright in McLuhan. One of the last chapters of *Understanding Media* is about weaponry. And it happens to come right after the chapter on television.

McLuhan's stroke of genius was to anchor his theory of history in the realm of the senses, as Anne Middleton Wagner, an art historian at the University of California at Berkeley, suggested last month at a Boston symposium, "Mediators: Medium and Its Messages". Because McLuhan saw the media as extensions of the human body—printed books as extensions of eyes, radios as extensions of ears—he believed that each new technological advance would reshape humanity and traumatise it too. "We shape our tools and our tools shape us."

Once upon a time, the city served as "a collective shield or plate armour," an extension of our skins, McLuhan wrote in 1964. But with the coming of the electronic age, McLuhan said, "we put our whole nervous system outside ourselves." We live in a highly sensitised global village. The

world, as Laurie Anderson said in the McLuhan movie, is like "a buzzing forest, stirring all around you."

This was a strange image to take home as the war in Iraq began on television. Suddenly the world and the war took on a McLuhanesque cast.

The tanks rolling into Iraq from the south were not just tanks but extensions of marching legs and protective skin. The night vision goggles were extensions of eyes. And what about those television cameras attached to the tanks? They were harder to classify.

McLuhan declared television a cool medium. He said that television, unlike film, radio or print, presents a fuzzy, low-definition, mosaiclike image, which leaves a lot of details to be filled in by those who watch it. It is a "participant medium," sucking people into its vortex and demanding "maximal interplay of all the senses".

Of course, McLuhan did not live to see high-definition television. But the grainy, jumpy videophone images being beamed back from Iraq would have been familiar to him. Indeed, they give him a second wind as a theorist of television. So what happens when a cool medium like television is attached to a hot weapon like a tank or a Bradley fighting vehicle?

It exerts a powerful effect on the audience. Suddenly everyone watching television is dragged into war. When there is a sandstorm, you, the audience,

can't see ahead any better than the troops. When the fight's going smoothly, you feel that maybe the war will be quick and easy. When the camera is attached to a smart bomb, you might feel that you have become the bomb.

McLuhan understood this kind of tactile television experience. "In closed-circuit instruction in surgery, medical students from the first reported a strange effect—that they seemed not to be watching an operation, but performing it," he wrote. "They felt that they were holding the scalpel." Television, he continued, "in fostering a passion for depth involvement in every aspect of experience, creates an obsession with bodily welfare."

With the war rolling ahead on television, you the viewer are made a part of the invading army. Even the local meteorologists participate in the illusion. They give two weather reports: sunshine in New York, sandstorms in Basra. Meanwhile, just as the audience feels a part of the army, the army becomes part of the audience. American troops on an aircraft carrier watch CNN to see how the war is playing and progressing. Soldiers are watching other soldiers on television.

That is, there is general confusion as to who is acting and who is watching. And at the crux of the confusion are the traditional eyewitnesses to war, the journalists, "embedded" with the troops. Are the television cameras the witnesses to war, or are they part of the weaponry? Or both? In this war, the perception of winning is almost the same as winning. If Saddam Hussein can appear to be in power on television, he is in power. If the United States military can show the world that it is winning, then

it is winning.

This, in turn, puts the Iraqi people in a bind. They have to appear loyal to anyone who might be in power. Early in the war, when it looked as if the United States and Britain were going to have an easy victory, an American soldier starting tearing down the image of Saddam Hussein, and an Iraqi man took his shoe off and pounded on the picture, then turned and smiled for the camera. This is what I want you to know about me, he seemed to say. When space is filled with satellites, all the world becomes a proscenium arch, the narrator of the McLuhan movie suggested. The phrase "theatre of war" becomes literal.

Almost four decades ago, McLuhan noted that war had become less "hot", a matter of tanks and soldiers, and more "cool", a participatory event. "The French phrase *guerre de nerfs*"—war of nerves—"of 25 years ago has since come to be referred to as 'the cold war'," he wrote, linking his own lingo of cool and hot with the language of international politics. He understood the cold war as "an electric battle of information and of images."

Maybe it is no accident that in *Understanding Media*, McLuhan's brief chapter on weapons, follows his long chapter on television. He proposed that "all technology can plausibly be regarded as weapons". And now, in his own muddled way, he seems to be right on target. Television cameras are weapons. The battle in Iraq is being fought with cool weapons mounted onto hot ones.

It's a warm war in the global village. ♦(NTT)

Meanwhile, back in Afghanistan

Afghan soldiers. It was the first killings of US servicemen in the country since December. One week earlier—again in the south—three Afghan guards were killed at their checkpoint, apparently in an attack by guerrillas of either the Taliban or of forces led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a Pashtun rebel chief during the Soviet occupation who joined forces with the Taliban after Karzai was named president.

While US military officers on the ground, who have conducted a series of ground and air offensives against suspected Taliban mountain hideouts

over the past 10 days, say they are not particularly worried, most independent analysts have warned that these incidents indicate that "Washington and Karzai's government may be losing the war for "hearts and minds", especially among the Pashtuns, the largest Afghan ethnic group.

Washington has about 8,000 troops deployed in Afghanistan. "The United States is closely identified with the current situation in Afghanistan," wrote another of Karzai's brothers, Afghan-American Chamber of Commerce founder Mahmood Karzai,

who, with Chamber vice president Hamed Wardak and Jack Kemp, a former Republican candidate for president, warned in Monday's "Washington Post" that the regime's foes are gaining ground. The major problem, according to most analysts, is that the United States is relying on local warlords backed up by SOF and air power when needed, rather than the ISAF, to provide security in the countryside. "At best, US cooperation with the warlords serves to alienate the common Afghan citizen," the Chamber leaders and Kemp wrote. "A worst-case scenario is that Afghans will associate US involvement with tyranny and become vulnerable to political manipulation by the Taliban and al Qaeda."

"This is what comes of buying security 'on the cheap'," noted one State Department official, who stressed that Washington's plans for training army and police forces to gradually take over security functions outside Kabul were taking much longer than anticipated, in part due to lack of money to pay recruits. US commanders have also recently formed provisional regional teams (PRTs) consisting of about 500 US civil-affairs reservists to provide humanitarian and reconstruction help so poor communities can build schools or repair transportation in the central

government's name.

But these too have been dependent on local landlords to provide security and may do little to enhance Kabul's authority. And in Pashtun areas, some of their work has been attacked and destroyed by Taliban or allied groups, while the use of military personnel to perform humanitarian tasks has only added to the concerns of civilian relief agencies that they too may be targeted. ♦ (IPS)



Despite US promises of reconstruction, there have been no significant changes.

OPINION by JOHAN GALTUNG



Peace journalism

The constructive approach is more important that a critical one.

NEW YORK—There is a Latin proverb that reads, "*audiam et altera pars*"—listen to the other side too. The failure to do so was the fundamental mistake of the US and UK and led to their misjudging the likely course of their war against Iraq.

With such gaps between myth and reality, the US and UK credibility is, of course, below zero. But revealing this fact, however laudatory, is only part of journalists' responsibility. Peace journalism starts with two questions: What is the underlying conflict about? And are there any possible peaceful solutions to that conflict?

Let us look at what could have been done much better. **Weapons of mass destruction.** The focus is on the classical ABCs (atomic, biological and chemical weapons) and on the US and UK contention that they are hiding them, and on the UN Security Council majority's contention that inspections are working. Journalists focused far too much on the dog fight between the two, and far too little on how the inspection regime could have become more effective. There were many interesting ideas in the French-German proposal for a prolonged, in-depth inspection regime which were not given sufficient critical attention.

It would have involved many more inspectors, lightly-armed UN blue helmets and human rights regimes. Moreover, there was too little challenging of the basis of the US and UK intelligence, particularly why and how they removed 8,000 pages from the 12,000 page Iraq report and how they brought pressure to bear on Security Council members.

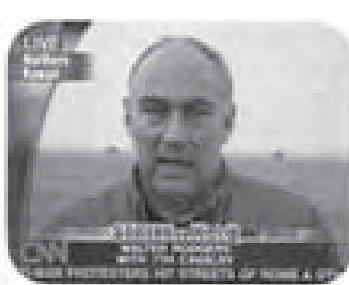
But this would still be a critical approach. The constructive approach is more important:

Oil. Some of this war is about oil. Maybe Iraq should have contemplated some US and UK access to their oil reserves given their demand and distribution capacity? By offering 0 percent maybe they stimulated US and UK urge for 100 percent control through occupation.

The future of Iraq. There is an alternative to a unitary state run from Baghdad and controlling Kurds, Sunni and Shia alike: an Iraqi federation with three parts and a federal capital, maybe not in Baghdad. But how about Kuwait? Once a part of the same Ottoman Empire, it was

detached in 1898 by Britain as a protectorate for black gold, creating conflict regarding oil deposits under the border, as well as harbour and river problems. These can only be solved through some joint regime, while of course retaining Kuwaiti independence. Could the relation between Switzerland and Liechtenstein be a model?

The Kurds. Could a solution be a Kurdistan based on a confederation of autonomies in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey? With double citizenship and passports for Kurds? Many people have ideas: put a searchlight on them, stimulate a positive debate.



The Middle East. With whom do the Iraqis want to relate, given their mainly bad relations with the six neighbouring countries? But Iran now has massive demonstrations against the US and UK war, Syria is helping to smuggle military hardware, Turkey at great economic sacrifice refuses to become a staging area, as does Saudi Arabia. Even in Kuwait there is ambiguity. Jordan is under extreme pressure. How about giving more reality to the 10 Nation Economic Cooperation Organisation, extending from Turkey to Afghanistan, 12 million square kilometres, maybe 400 million inhabitants, with enormous potential?

And for Israel-Palestine. Maybe a Middle East Community of six, Syria-Lebanon-Palestine-Israel-Jordan-Egypt with open borders, for security and cooperation?

There are so many possibilities. Journalists, explore them! ♦ (IPS)

(Johan Galtung, professor of Peace Studies, is Director of TRANSCEND, a peace and development network. www.transcend.org)

Resisting VAT

NEW DELHI—India's central government, which claims that it did not receive adequate support for the measure from the states, in an official note has attributed the failure to implement value added tax (VAT) from 1 April to "collusive corruption". Two failed attempts precede the latest deadline that powerful traders resisted. The VAT is the key to rationalising the country's inefficient and corrupt tax system.

Traders prefer sales tax because it is easily evaded and estimates place the levels of that evasion at around 50 percent. Nationally, annual sales tax collections now total \$17 billion with the levels of evasion differing from state to state and averaging 30 percent. No new dates have been announced as to when VAT will be introduced or if it will be introduced at all in the near future, given that states like Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan have put up stiff resistance. In India, the failure to get the states moving on VAT is also because buyers rarely ask for bills and often benefit with deals from 'friendly' retailers. India continues to have sales taxes and 14 other levies for moving goods through state borders, treating each state as a separate country. (IPS)

Volatile borders

PESHAWAR—In the capital of the North West Frontier Province ruled by an alliance of religious parties in Pakistan, the US-led invasion of Iraq is on everybody's mind. The perception that the United States is moving against Islamic status reverberates strongly and stirs emotions here, even if most peace advocates against the war elsewhere in Pakistan do not view it along the lines of religion.

A sea of 150,000 rallyists pledged to "destroy" America, carrying posters of Osama bin Laden. The pursuit by US soldiers, with Pakistani help, of al Qaeda members have stepped up in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in recent days, which has not made Washington any more popular here, especially with the invasion of Iraq that began 20 March.

There are signs that the Taliban sees the US-led invasion of Iraq as an opportunity to plug into anti-war sentiment. Commander Mullah Dadullah, a senior member of the Taliban reportedly gave the organisation's first interview on BBC since its collapse in December 2001 and spoke about rising anti-US sentiment in Afghanistan. Clashes have been reported with US soldiers in south-eastern Afghanistan in the last few days. (IPS)



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'We won't walk out of talks'

Interview with Baburam Bhattarai in Rajdhani, 1 April

Rajdhani: No one used to take you seriously seven years or so ago, now you are the centre of national attention. How do you view this success?

Baburam Bhattarai: Within a seven year period, there occurred a distinct qualitative change in the communist movement of Nepal that had remained static for over 45-46 years. And this change crossed the national boundaries and acquired a global importance. Our party takes great pride in this development.

The King is being felicitated on Friday in Dhangadi while you are going public on Thursday. Is there a connection?

The King represents the old system of governance. He refers to himself as a constitutional monarch, but why does a constitutional monarch need civic felicitation? He should consider this. So far as our welcome program is concerned, it is just a modest gathering to re-introduce us after seven long years. It should not be interpreted as a demonstration of power. Neither is it a counter to anyone.

There is a widespread perception among the parties that you already have an understanding with the palace.

We found out that they are to some extent apprehensive that the role of the political parties will be sidelined, which I think is absolutely normal. On the other hand, we convinced them that the parties should not be excluded.

On and off, you talk about a new democracy. What is this new democracy?

We want to establish a democracy where the people will have real participation and decide their own futures. We will gradually make its basic structure clear.

Why do you come to the negotiating table if you believe that you have the capacity of taking over state power militarily?

A strategic balance means a state where the new power has not achieved complete victory and the old system is not in its original capacity. In a situation like this, it is natural to look for the solution in a dialogue process. This was the case in China and in other countries.

Why is the pace of talks so slow? At this rate a roundtable meeting will take two years.

That is a little pessimistic, but you are partly right. The truth is that the old regime is stubborn. In some respects I think it is already plotting against the peace talks.

But the government is saying that it is you who is putting forth new demands every day.

We think that our demands are entirely clear and lie within the remit of the Code of Conduct.

हिमाल

What about the parliamentary parties' insistence that your demand for a progressive outlet can as well be fulfilled through constitutional amendments?

No, they have got it all wrong. There isn't even a constitution to amend, and even when there was a constitution we were forced to choose the revolutionary path because it failed to address our demands. How can we call this constitution progressive when it is, in fact, a pack of rubbish? It was this disagreement about the constitution that forced us to take up arms.

Your party has accepted that the king is a power and has agreed to hold talks with him. Where does abolishing the monarchy come in?

History has many examples of the king himself voluntarily abdicating the throne, understanding the voices and sentiments of the citizens. Why is it so improbable here? History can repeat itself...The truth is that the constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, 2047 is pro-royalist. The very preamble to it says 'By applying the royal rights vested in us'. What does it mean? It only means that the people have no sovereignty of their own.

The previous round of talks broke down. What is to prevent it from happening again?

We were sincere then, and we are sincere now. There won't be any obstruction from our side in finding a peaceful settlement. We have traveled to this place by putting our lives at risk, so there is no question of us walking out of the talks.

You say you are flexible and there will have to be some give and take. Is there room for compromise on the demand for a constituent assembly?

A roundtable conference, an interim government and the constituent assembly can represent all shades of opinion and give people an opportunity to decide the kind of government they want. Therefore, we see no democratic way out other than this. As far as flexibility is concerned, how much softer can a revolutionary force become than this? There is no chance of us compromising on this agenda, such efforts will be futile.

In the beginning, your group was anti-Indian. But these days you are mum on issues like dam inundation by the Indians.

In the first place, we are not anti-Indian. In fact, we are the vanguard of national interest. Our 40-point demands sufficiently demonstrate that. I am of the view that no one has been as steadfast as the Maoists when it comes to nationalism.

The parliamentary parties are at a loss in this process where you have the royal army on one side and the peoples' liberation army on the other.

The PLA is the people's very own army. It's clear who the royal army is serving. There is a fundamental difference between both these forces and both the armies must be reconstituted as per the need of the country. The army should essentially be under the elected body. The political parties have nothing to be scared of.

A new Nepal

Lilambar Acharya in Kantipur, 28 March

राजधानी

The constitution has accepted the king as an icon of national unity and not as one of the political forces. The king himself has accepted this. The concept of monarch within the framework of parliament has been constitutionally established in 1990. Why then are the Maoists trying to start the talks from a point preceding the achievements of 1990 by projecting the king, parties and themselves as three separate powers?

Yes, these developments reveal that the institution of monarchy and multiparty system were not linked in the past 12 years. An assault on one did not hurt the other. The Maoists took advantage of that situation during the course of the insurgency. If the same policy is included in the agenda for the talks, it would be wrong and unfortunate.

There are still some elements that maintain the people's representatives should not be allowed to run the state. If the Maoists make a bold move to give up violence and embrace multiparty democracy, a strong progressive force can be generated. A sovereign parliament comprising such forces can lead the task of building a new Nepal.

No more orphans

Rajdhani, 5 April

राजधानी

"What we suffered during the seven wars of the insurgency would be a bad dream for most people, for us it was cruel reality, which is why we fear the peace negotiations breaking down." This is the overriding concern of most Nepalis who have experienced the horror of civil war at close quarters.

"The nation must have peace, and we must be able to voice our grievances at the peace talks," says Daisy Singh Sijapati, widow of late SSP Parameshwor Singh Sijapati. "We lost our husbands

for the sake of our country, now the state cannot turn a blind eye to our suffering," she added. Radha Bhandari, who was married to late Subedar Krishna Bahadur Bhandari, is also concerned that war widows may not be on the agenda. With four young children to raise, she asks, "If those who can legitimately plead with the government for assistance are in such dire straits, how much more terrible must it be for the rest of the people?" The Nuwakot resident also said children orphaned by the war should receive free education, and widows should be given skill training and interest free loans to make them independent.

The pain of loss and helplessness has taken a toll on women from both sides of the insurgency. Janaki Tharu of Bardiya was married to Krishna Tharu who was killed by the security forces for allegedly being a Maoist. "There should not be any more widows and orphans," she says, calling for the representation of war widows in the proposed peace talks. Janaki's neighbour Shanti Tharu cannot agree more. Her husband, a Nepali Congress supporter, was killed by the rebels for allegedly being an informer. With the responsibility of rearing and educating eight children, Shanti has often wondered if it may not be easier to just commit suicide. "I did not come here to bemoan my fate, but to see peace return. My hope now lies in that," says Shanti.

Far too many women have lost the heads of households and sole breadwinners, the fathers of their children: today they are in need of help and assistance, the future of their children hangs in the balance. It has become critical that the petition of these war widows is represented in the peace talks between the government and the rebels. Rights workers from various organisations like Rita Thapa of Nagarik Awaz and Lili Thapa of Human Rights of Women Group are pressing for their inclusion in the agenda.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

NEPALITERATURE

by MANJUSHREE THAPA

Can we now go back to being human?



One of the effects of war is the emptying—out of personal content from people's lives: When security is a daily concern, what energy can we devote to engaging with others, to enjoying the pleasures, big or small, that are available in our days? What opportunity is there to be truly human?

Reading Viplob Pratik's poems are as good a way as any to welcome the end of war (in Nepal, at least). A songwriter and poet who is guided, above all political ideologies, by deeply felt humanitarian concerns, Pratibha is a rare poet whose work has been gaining force in recent years, as he has allowed the fullness of life to find expression in his writing.

The first poem below was written during the state of emergency. Though it is not directly political, it speaks of the degrading effect of violence in a way that can be taken as political. It was part of the "Bichalit Bartaman" (disillusioned present) public art protest program last year.

YOU AND I IN THE FURNACE

Just as the fire rages in the furnace
when the wind rushes through the stoker
you are blowing your breath all over
the coals of my anxieties
and the embers of my disorders are alight

As the hammer
dipping into water, heating up in flames
beats molten iron

you beat my mind and emotions
The reach of my sorrow expands

At times I feel: how marvelous is your handiwork
What sort of skill is this? Amazing—
What are you trying to make?
You are so lost in your effort
I am afraid to ask about your creation
lest I should hinder you

Yet—should I stay quiet, asking nothing, I worry
some fearsome creation might take place
Tell me—how long you will keep stoking this fire?
—how long you will beat my mind and emotions?
Could it be that you have mistaken me for metal?

The next poem expresses sentiments that have become rare in these cynical days: wonder, and joy in the pleasure of others:

A PERSON KISSED BY THE MOON

This rhododendron
this rose this marigold
these orchids and amaranths
Have you ever looked at flowers?

And the stream with its babbling waters
The acacia tree
at the saddle of that mountain
The himals and above them
clouds that drift, gather, tear apart—
Have you looked at them?
Have you seen the rainbow?
Have you seen birds dipping and soaring?
Have you seen the sunrise and also the sunset?
Then you've likely also seen fog
A person who has seen the sun
you must have touched rays of light—

but did you finger the soil?
Did you embrace the earth?
Did the moon really kiss you?
If so, then tell me the stories of
Neptune, the sun, Saturn, Mars, Venus and Uranus
Did a flower really sprout from your lap?
Was the rainbow entwined in your arms?
And how did it feel to kiss the moon?

It is a marvel
By some grace I have met you:
a person kissed by the moon

The final poem shows off Pratik's wide range: he is neither a poet of sorrow, nor of joy alone, but a poet who captures the many fine textures of life.

FEAR

I wrote, today, a truly fine poem
and felt inexpressible delight
I was alone in my room
There was no one to hear my words
The lifeless walls enclosing me
were the sides/doors/windows
of my room
When in these confines I read my poem out loud
The walls shouted back louder than me
I got scared I stopped a while
then continued reading my lines
I finished the entire passage
then I repeated the same poem over
very softly, stopping now and then,
I read my poem in a clear voice
I was frightened—I didn't want the walls
to echo my voice
The walls remained grave
I didn't want to repeat my poem of delight

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"The Maobadis let women raise arms and even made them commanders. How could the same party now neglect to include even a single woman in their five-member negotiation team?"

-Sahana Pradhan, a leader of the United Left Front during the People's Movement of 1990 in Budhabar, 9 April.



Rat: "No matter how deep you dig comrade, you will get only me!"

नेपाल समाचारपत्र

Nepal Samacharpatra, 6 April

Off farm

Himal Khabarpatrika, 30 March-13 April

हिमाल

The insurgency has taken a heavy toll on Nepal's agriculture. A six-month long research conducted by the Centre for Economic and Social Development among 23,000 displaced farmers from 53 districts showed:

- 200,000 farmers were displaced in the mid-western region, 100,000 in the far-west, and 32,000 in the east.
- Forty-three percent of them were forced to migrate when their lives were threatened, 31 percent left to avoid extortion from the rebels and 18 percent were targeted for alleged political affiliations. Five percent left after their properties were destroyed and three percent migrated after disagreeing to community farming introduced by the Maoists.
- 20 percent of the displaced had migrated to Kathmandu, 15 percent to Surkhet, 10 percent to Banke, 10 percent to Morang and 9 percent to Kailali. Almost 63 percent of them are now living in rented quarters, while the rest found refuge with relatives.
- One quarter of the displaced are still making their livelihood from the farms they left behind, another quarter earn their livelihood from employment in the formal sector, while 21 percent are living off loans, and 15 percent have begun small businesses. Four percent earn their living from daily wages and 2 percent live on government allowances.
- Forty-four percent of the displaced have allowed other farmers to till their land, 30 percent rented out the land and 14 percent have left their land without supervision.
- The number of those engaged in dairy farming is down from 85 percent to 29 percent. Similarly, 10 percent of the respondent grew fruits, 5 percent had fisheries and other agriculture based industries. Almost all of it was wiped out after their displacement.
- Worst hit is agriculture-based small industries—so far 215 such small-scale industries have closed down.



MIN. BAIKARAWA

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ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Inspired by the Nature of Nepal** paintings by Dagmar Mathes till 22 April at Park Gallery, Pulchowk.
- ❖ **The Characters 2003** paintings by Uttam Kharel till 13 April at Srijana Contemporary Art Gallery, Kamaladi. 4247889
- ❖ **The Twelve Deeds of the Buddha** Tibetan wood block print exhibition till 15 April at the Indigo Gallery.
- ❖ **Kathmandu Vendors** paintings by Mark Jordans at the Lazimpat Gallery Café. 4428549
- ❖ **Natural rock art exhibition** till 13 April at NAFA, Bal Mandir, Naxal.
- ❖ **Shanti—An Art for Hope Project** paintings and poems by Nepali children, 15-25 April at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited. 4411122
- ❖ **The art of Hebrew script** till 20 April at Siddhartha Art Gallery. 4411122
- ❖ **Gallery Nine Opening** at Lazimpat. 11 April: poetry reading, 12 April: Theatre by Sunil Pokharel, 13 April: Slide show by Nick Dawson, 14 April: movie screening, 15 April: Tabla/didgeriduo duet. All begin at 5PM. Details 4436944

EVENTS

MUSIC

- ❖ **Floriculture trade fair 2003** till 11 April at Bhrikuti Mandap, Kathmandu.
- ❖ **Tennis coaching classes** Club Oasis, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 491234
- ❖ **Inter Cultural Film Society** screens "Lagaan" at 5.30 PM at NTB, Bhrikuti Mandap. 4481659
- ❖ **Epouses et concubines** starring Gong Li and Zhang Yimou at 2PM on 13 April, Moliere Auditorium. Alliance Francaise, 4241163
- ❖ **Himalayan Enfielders Peace Ride 2003 party** with Rusty Nails. 6.30 PM on 12 April at Verge Inn Club. Rs 599. Tickets available at Himalayan Enfielders, Moksha, Verge Inn Club and Ideas n' Solutions.
- ❖ **Welcome to the Sixties.** Tickets Rs 250. 7PM on 13 April, Thomas Kilroy at 1905, Kantipath. 4225272.
- ❖ **9th Dharmashree National Open Body Building Championship** 1.30 PM on 12 April at Royal Academy Hall, Kathmandu.

- ❖ **Live Music** Friday at 5.30 PM. Saturday movie at 4.30 PM. Jivin' Joe's Restaurant, Kuponole.
- ❖ **Abhaya with the Steam Injuns** 7PM every Friday at Moksh in Hardic Club, Jhamsikhel. 5528703
- ❖ **Live acoustic jam** 7PM on 12 April at Himalatte Cafe, Thamel. 4256738

FOOD

byNGAMINDRA DAHAL

- ❖ **Traditional favourites** at The Sunrise Café for breakfast and lunch. Yak & Yeti Hotel. 4248999
- ❖ **Nepali Thali Lunch** at Patan Museum Café 11AM-4PM. 5526271

NEPALI WEATHER

byNGAMINDRA DAHAL

VIS-09-04-2003 10:00 GMT

Two significant features of the weather system is the moisture content in the mid-atmosphere (which would otherwise be dry in this season) and the incursion of dense haze in the lower atmosphere. An active westerly jet stream coupled with a series of low pressure zones in the Himalayan foothills will bring isolated violent thunderstorms into the weekend and next week. As this satellite picture from Wednesday afternoon shows, there are build-ups along the Himalayan arc. The tarai will see temperatures approaching the mid-30s, while Kathmandu Valley's mid-day heat will be tempered by haze.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
29-13	28-12	28-12	29-13	30-13

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In the April Himal

HIMAL

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Rethinking health strategies in Nepal

Tale of the war widow

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Tamil refugees in India

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BOOKWORM

Homo hierarchicus: The caste system and its implications Louis Dumont Oxford University Press, 2002 Rs 600

Dumont's modern classic simultaneously supplies the most cogent statement on the Indian caste system with a provocative advance in the comparison of societies on the basis of their underlying ideologies. *Homo hierarchicus* is deftly contrasted with his Western antitheses, *homo aequalis*.

War plan Iraq: ten reasons against war on Iraq Milan Rai Verso, 2002 Rs 772

This book rigorously dissects official propaganda to argue powerfully against an illegal war with Iraq. It argues there is no evidence that Iraq has chemical weapons or is involved in terrorism. Brilliantly persuasive and never dull, this book is essential reading. Includes a chapter by Noam Chomsky.

The atlas of literature Malcolm Bradbury (ed) DeAgostini Editions, 1996 Rs 1,584

Exploring the fascinating connection between writers and place, this ambitious book focuses on authors and works that are intimately bound up with a place and time. Scores of cities and regions all over the world that have been immortalised through literature are included in more than 80 essays.

Courtesy: Mandala Book Point, Kantipath, 4227711, mandala@ccsl.com.np

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Kathmandu is sizzling to a new beat.

Viva la Salsa!

who has truly felt Salsa will know it is as much about breaking internal barriers as it is about dissolving external differences. The exhilaration is far more than just a song and dance. "It unites people who have different beliefs and backgrounds. Whatever the problem, after a dance you come through with more spirit to overcome any adversity—that's the magic of Salsa," marvels Diego Sáenz (*pic, left*), a 43-year young Ecuadorian who has been teaching dance here for six months. A former marine biologist—"The field's temporary loss is our gain," quips a student—Diego is committed to bringing about a Salsa revolution to the Valley. His students, mostly Nepalis with a sprinkle of expatriates, are spellbound as he demonstrates romantic combinations leading his partner through a series of turns ending with a graceful dip.

"Nepal has a culture of dance so it wasn't very difficult to persuade people to try Salsa," he says. Diego prefers to dance and teach the New York style, which is similar to the Puerto Rican and Ecuadorian Salsa he grew up on. He feels a deep sense of responsibility in presenting his culture through the medium of dance and he takes his classes very seriously. "A teacher's mistakes can last forever," he says. Having trained and conducted workshops with some of the best dancers, Diego's determination is reflected

mountain kingdom in the Himalaya?

Five years ago Salsa was introduced to Kathmandu through German dance master Andreas Lehrke. Today his classes have quite a following: a steady stream of over-30s crowd his Nattarj Dance Studio where he teaches beginners, intermediate and advanced groups. "Salsa is expressing vitality, energy, joy of life and feeling good in your own body while dancing with a partner," says Andreas. Though his specialty is Tango, ballroom and Latin ballroom dances, Andreas loves the Salsa because is more fun oriented. "The most important thing is that everyone has a good time," he says.

At the core of Salsa is an uninhibited zest for life. Anyone

intensive sessions, serving as an introduction to Salsa. Merging various styles of the genre, the sessions culminate in a feverish night of Salsa dancing at the Hyatt where the glasses steam up with all the floor activity.

From the look of things, the Salsa revolution is definitely here to stay. A Salsero, waiting to be unshackled from the imagined terror of two left feet, may be hiding inside you. There's nothing to lose and a whole world of dance to discover. Let's Salsa! ♦

Diego Sáenz: 981046430 "Salsa Night" alternate Fridays at Shangri-La Hotel. 4412999. Andreas Lehrke: 4422033. www.kathmandudancers.net Kaytee Namgyal: www.salsa-india.com.

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Surya Lights Rhythm Nites. Featuring Blindfaith on Friday & Saturday (28th & 29th Chaitra 2059) and Deepak Bajracharya on Nepali New Year's Eve, Sunday (30th Chaitra, 2059), 8.30 pm onwards at Rox, Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu.

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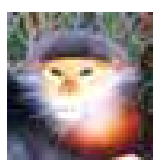
Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

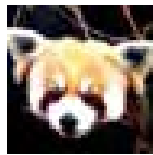
Nepal's wildlife

Before Nepal became known across the world as the highest per capita consumer of instant noodles (Sponsor's announcement: "Each pack comes with free diamond necklace.") we used to be renowned for the diversity of our priceless flora and fauna.

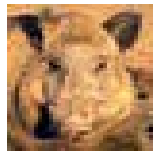
From the political invertebrates in our Animal Kingdom, to the carnivores that move in herds across the business landscape, Nepal's fauna is as diverse as it is extensive. But how many of us, sitting here in Kathmandu, answer to the call of the wild? Will we ever know we're looking at a Greater Himalayan Red-vented Titw when we see one? Will we be able to tell the difference between Singha Durbar Nature Sanctuary and Bagh Durbar Hunting Reserve? In order to make it easier for us to find our way around Nepal's concrete jungles and identify the animals therein, we offer below a useful guide for wildlife enthusiasts:



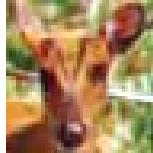
Grey Langur (*Bandar seri bhagawan*): Handsome and clever, solitary and without scruples, spends much time foraging for juicy contracts. Believes in give and take, and spreads his wealth around. Diet: rarely observed eating anything other than paan and will mark the perimeter of his domain by spitting red juice along the corridors of power.



Himalayan Red Panda (*Habray nepalensis rosso*): Shy and reculsive, resides on the jungle canopy with occasional forays down to the undergrowth to dig for subterranean tubers. Once thought to be nearly extinct, but has made a dramatic comeback. Range: Everywhere, but nowhere.



Wild Boar (*Sus extortionum*): Endemic across the midhills and in the Kathmandu Valley rim. Raids farmers' crops at harvest time, but eaten by humans if caught. Diet: food grains, electronic consumer goods and any moveable items in the house. Known locally as "khaobadi".



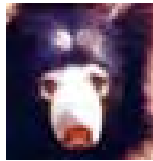
Barking Deer (*Cervidae woofwoof politicus*): Garrulous, and has a loud hooting call to magnify its stature. Mobile and mischievous, commonly found addressing large gatherings, moves in family groups and gathers in herds at election time. Diet: Voracious appetite, can be destructive to shrubs and trees, but if push comes to shove will even eat hard cash.



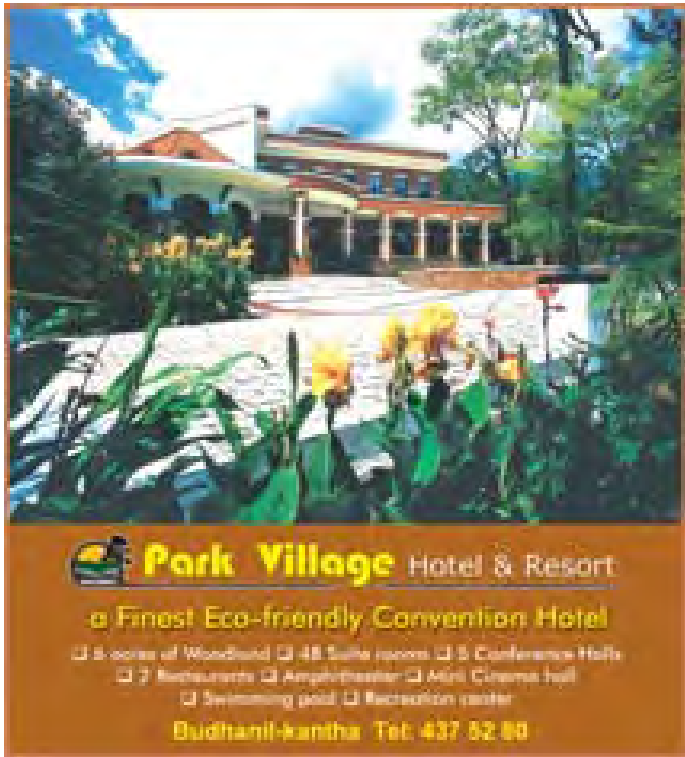
Lesser Eurasian Red Herring (*Pisces maozedongeria*): Roams in large schools with strict social order, scavenging bottom-feeder with strong jaws, often hunts at night and is famed for its whooping, blood-curdling cry similar to one emitted by extinct sub-species in Fengyang County. Habitat: Semi-underground, surfaces from time to time.



Chitwan Marsh Mugger (*Crocodylus rumsfeldivum*): Omnivore, will eat anything that moves in a globalised world. Well endowed, famed for mass migrations every four years from as far afield as Panama to Korea. Has huge hinged jaws which lets it consume medium-sized nations, can survive for months after a big kill.



Sloth bear (*Ursidae soporificus*): Indolent and sluggish, sleeps during the day with head on desk at Singha Darbar, emitting distinctive snore. Approach with care, can be vicious if disturbed. Diet: copious amounts of tea between naps, dry instant noodles (with free diamond necklace) for midday snack. ♦



NEPALI SOCIETY

Nepali chhora

When Brot Coburn spent four years in Syangja as a Peace Corps volunteer in the 1970s, he came to know an elderly Gurung widow. He was so impressed by her simplicity, wisdom, compassion and generosity that in 1982 he published a pictorial book on her called *Nepali Aama: Life Lessons of a Himalayan Woman* which is now in its fourth edition. The book captured the

essence of the Nepali soul, that uncommon combination of common sense, humour and hard work.

Ten years later, when Aama was 84, Brot took her to America, recorded her reaction to the unimaginable but everyday luxuries of the American way of life in a sequel, *Aama in America: A Pilgrimage of the Heart*. Along with Brot's girlfriend, Didi, Aama was taken on an adventure-filled journey across America: the Twin

Towers, Disneyland, Las Vegas. But what amazed Aama were the everyday things around the house to make life easy: washing machines, microwaves, lawn mowers.

She talks to American wheat farmers in the great plains and gives them a few useful tips about seeds and fertilisers, she takes a holy dip in the Pacific Ocean and prays at the Old Faithful. "The reason America is so rich is because it is a holy place," Aama concludes, but she senses that many of its people lack soul. Brot has taken Aama's odyssey on the lecture circuit all over the United States to spread her wisdom, and even on a celebrity cruise ship. He now plans to translate Aama into a children's book in Nepali.

In 1997, Brot's third book, *Everest: Mountain Without Mercy* reached #17 on the New York Times bestseller list and sold 350,000 copies—making it and the IMAX film *Everest* that it is based on a big boost for Nepal's tourism. His other books include *Triumph on Everest*, a photo-biography of Sir Edmund Hillary and his 2001 collaboration with Jamling Tenzing Norgay, *Touching My Father's Soul: A Sherpa's Journey to the Top of Everest*. In that book, Jamling talks about how he saw a vision of his father when he reached the top of Sagarmatha in 1996. Wherever Brot goes, he keeps coming back to Nepal, the land of his Aama. He says, "This is where I belong, Nepal is where I feel most at home." ♦ (http://broughtoncoburn.com)

