KUNDA DIXIT

W hen Surya Bahadur Thapa became prime minister a month ago, most people heaved a sigh of relief. Here was a wily manipulator who could use the executive powers bestowed on him by the king to lead the charge, and yank the politics out of the quagmire. It’s looking more and more like the old horse is running out of steam.

To be sure, the odds are stacked against Thapa: there is the whole question of his legitimacy, the NC-UML alliance sees him as a pretender, the Maoists barely trust him. And then there is the daily list of damage control chores: street protests, school strikes, transport strikes, oil tanker stoppages.

“Nothing moves, things are at a complete standstill, there is no government,” says a senior bureaucrat who has seen governments come and go, but nothing like what prevails today.

Thapa’s check list was to first try and get the political parties on board by promising them a reinstatement of parliament, then crafting a multi-partisan approach to the Maoist talks, and once they agreed, announce a date for elections. He is stuck at Step One. His obstacles are many, but the most nagging is also nearest: the party president Pashupati Rana’s faction feels left out.

But things are changing. The UML is torn by dissension from the KP Oli camp, which is now in open mutiny. Oliji is stirring things up and now wants a party convention, barely six months after the last one. It is hard to see where this is headed other than an open split because Madhab Kumar Nepal still commands the internal party votes. But MKN is being blamed by some in his party for his failure to achieve premiership after getting so close. By washing its linen in public, the UML has frayed the five party alliance. The immediate effect is seen in the strong lobby within the Congress now wanting to go it alone. In the family, Shailaja Acharya doesn’t seem to agree with anything her uncle GP Koirala does, and says so publicly every chance she gets. Girijababu, for his part, doesn’t seem to care what anyone, least of all his own family says, and is launching ever-bolder broadsides against the king.

All this should make Surya Bahadur Thapa’s job easy. But it doesn’t. After the abuse they have hurled at the king and his prime minister, there is no way the parties can now join the government. The only way is to lure defectors in. But there are doubts if such a government can be sustainable in the long term. “Everyone is just sitting it out,” explained one party insider. “This is a dangerous situation. Because no one is in charge, anyone can be in charge.” Hence the paranoia about outside interference on the one hand, and groups like student unions who are exploiting the uncertainty to force closures on the other.

And now, with the prime minister busy with his daughter’s wedding and the whole country gearing up for marathon celebrations of King Gyanendra’s birthday next week, no one is expecting a dramatic clearing of the political air any time soon.  

Stumbling block: Earlier this week, the five agitating parties began a relay hunger strike against the royal move and started a signature campaign calling for the disclosure of all royal assets.

“Because no one is in charge, anyone can be in charge.”

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We thank our customers due to whose support and belief in us, today we have financed vehicles of almost One Billion Rupees. So if you’re thinking of putting yourself in the driving seat of your dream vehicle, give us a call and experience why our Customers have made us Nepal’s leader in vehicle financing. Believe in yourself. And we’ll believe in you.

Call 4761602, 4782333
The Garment Fatwa

The Nepalese garment industry is one of the largest contributors to the country’s economy. However, the recent garment fatwa has created a stir in the industry, affecting its reputation and future prospects.

The fatwa, issued by the government, prohibits the use of certain materials in garments that are deemed to promote superstitions and religious beliefs. The industry has been hit hard by the fatwa, which has led to a drop in exports and a loss of market share.

The government has justified the fatwa by citing the need to protect the country’s values and culture. However, the industry claims that the fatwa is a violation of their rights and freedom of expression.

The fatwa has also created a backlash among consumers, who have expressed their support for the industry and rejected the fatwa. The government is under pressure to撤销 the fatwa and allow the industry to continue functioning.

The fatwa has also affected the workers in the garment industry, who have lost their jobs due to the decreased demand for garments. The government has promised to provide support to the affected workers, but the provision of such support has been slow and insufficient.

The fatwa has also created a debate among religious leaders, who have expressed their concerns about the fatwa and its implications for the country’s culture and values.

In conclusion, the fatwa has created a crisis in the garment industry and has raised concerns about the government’s approach to protecting the country’s values and culture. The government needs to find a balance between protecting the country’s values and respecting the rights and freedoms of the people.
**LETTERS**

**BUREAUCRATS**

Jeff Greenwald has specified 'withdrawn' his boycott of tourism in Nepal in a letter to you (#151), but is he still giving interviews to freedom fighter Jeff (a.k.a., 'Tibet, Tibet', #150). However, it may be simplistic to look at Tibetans in Nepal. As someone who has been monitoring Nepal and Tibetan issues I know we need to take a broader perspective and see the whole story. On the whole, Nepal has been good to the Tibetan refugees, providing over 20,000 of my brethren with home and hope when they needed it the most. Even today several thousand Tibetans continue to live and prosper in different parts of Nepal, many even contributing significantly to the country's economy. Nepal has been expecting Tibetans to follow the laws of the land and that is something that Tibetans understand and appreciate.

There are two aspects to Nepal's attitude towards Tibetans. First is the treatment of Tibetans escaping from Tibet to Nepal's border. While several thousand Tibetans have enjoyed Nepali humanitarian assistance and have been able to live in freedom and security, as in other parts of the world, there have been cases when escapees have undergone problems, including physical abuse, monetary coercion, and de facto imprisonment. Thus, the recent refoulement of the 18 Tibetans was part of what some feared might become a trend.

Second is Nepal's attitude towards Tibetans legally residing in the country. The problem arose several years back when a section of Nepali bureaucrats started clamping down on lawful activities of the Tibetans in Nepal. What hurt the Tibetans the most was when the Nepali authorities did not permit them to observe traditional and customary festivals like the birthday of the Dalai Lama or the Tibetan National Day. In fact, such bars have been sources of concern for a large section of Nepal's Buddhist population who are ethnic Tibetans. The Tibetan psyche was hurt when representatives of the Dalai Lama in Kathmandu were even detained without any unequivocal action in the past when these leaders visited Nepal.

The Tibetans have always been aware of the pressure on Nepal as a result of being sandwiched between two Asian giants. Tibetans are not appealing to Nepal either for perform or permit political activities, which will place the country's security and stability at risk. Although Nepal is not a party to the UN convention relating to the status of refugees, it has been providing a safe haven to Tibetans in Nepal. This should be continued.

I do not subscribe to the theory that the international 'outlier' will spark new tensions between the Nepali and Tibetan communities. The tension has already been there for so long. It is only that the Tibetans have been understanding of Nepal's situation that they have not been making a big case so far. The writers only need to talk to ordinary Tibetans in Nepal personally and informally to see how they feel about the situation.

The recent international outlier is not solely on account of the deportation of 18 Tibetan refugees but symbolises the concern of well-wishers of the Tibetan people at the negative aspect of Nepal's treatment of Tibetan refugees as a whole. This is the time for introspection in case if part of the blame is with the Nepali official attitude towards Tibetans. Tibetans are victims in the current development and should not be blamed for seeking external support.

As a country having historical and traditional links with Tibet, Nepal can contribute significantly in enabling Tibetans to reside lawfully and in freedom in Nepal. Already there are signs of Tibet-China détente with envoys of the Dalai Lama visiting China. As and when there is a solution to the Tibetan issue, Tibetans on the other side of the border will remain forever grateful to the assistance rendered by Nepal and its people.

Bhuchung K Tsering,
Virginia, USA

**THE LACK OF PROTESTS**

The lack of protests in Nepal against the deportation of the 18 Tibetan refugees is appalling. There have been protests in the west, but what about protests from our own leaders and the general public? All the actors in our Nepali stage have profited from refugee status at one time or the other. Imagine what would have happened if the Indian authorities had bundled up King Tribhuvan, and had sent him back in 1950. If the Nepal Congress and the leftists had been handed over to the Panchayat regime from their sanctuary in India? If the Nepali Maoists led in India gathered together and turned over to Kathmandu? Or even if all the Nepalis working in India or abroad as economic refugees were sent back? The country is going through difficult times now. But the utter lack of humanity exhibited by our leaders in throwing out the refugees shows a lack of moral fabric. Perhaps it is this lack of basic morality that is at the root of what is wrong with this country's rulers.

Kabindra Ch. Bhandari
Pulchowk

**A BOYCOTT**

I was shocked to read that Ethical Traveler has announced a tourism boycott of Nepal. This total overreaction and absurdity will make a huge negative impact to Nepal. Nepal's main source of income and employment is the tourism industry, and a proposed boycott will hurt a lot of people. Nepal has been giving refuge to Tibetans and Bhutanis even though most Nepalis live below the poverty line. A boycott will never solve the problem. Why doesn't Ethical Traveler take action against China—the ultimate guilty party here? Is it because China is a powerful country?

Buddhi Pant, Coventry, UK

**MARK TURIN AND SARA SHEIDEDERMAN**

AD

The front page of last week’s Nepal Times had 30 percent of its space taken by the newspaper and 64 percent by advertisements. At your current rate of depreciation, readers can expect the complete disappearance of news stories by some time in mid-2004. Why don’t you just charge all of us a bit more for an issue and clean up the look of your otherwise excellent newspaper?

Mark Zimmermann, Patan

(Nepali Times maintains a strict policy of always keeping its ads to content ratio below 1:3, as it is wrong with this country's rulers.

K Acharya, email

**CORRECTION**

In ‘As light as our budget’ (#151), the cap on internal borrowing by the Nepal Rastra Bank Act should actually refer to the overdraft with the NRB and it should have been five percent of revenue of the preceding year, and not five percent of the budget as erroneously stated. The article also missed two details: the IMF’s approximately $70 million contribution for the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility covers three years, and the World Bank’s budget support is through a Structural Adjustment Credit for the government’s Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Mark Turin and Sara Sheideman agree:

As the authors of the initial article ‘Tibet, Tibet’ (#150), we thank Greenwald and Cancelaro for their feedback (#151). Their letter raises several valid points. Here we respond to some of their comments, as well as to those of Bhuchung Tsering (see letter, above). We are delighted that Ethical Traveler and the Tibet Justice Center have decided to ‘withhold action on the Tibetan boycott’. Their alternative tourism advisories are more appropriate and in line with the grassroots situation in Nepal.

However, some concerns remain. While Greenwald and Cancelaro suggest that the decision to withhold the boycott was reached ‘after consulting with several other human rights and Tibetan rights groups’, we are eager to know whether human rights organisations in Nepal were among those consulted. The authors acknowledge the broader human rights problem endemic to Nepal, but their closing demand smacks of a pius moral certainty that is disrespectful of Nepali citizens’ ongoing efforts to inform their own political culture. Within: ‘We hope that, should further actions become necessary, all Nepalis will support whatever actions Ethical Traveler and the human rights community suggests.’ Moreover, if Ethical Traveler genuinely want Nepalis to support their reformulated recommendations they should disseminate their viewpoint in the Nepali language press.

Likewise, Bhuchung Tsering’s analysis of the situation is nuanced, but he would also do well to recognise that there is no single ‘Tibetan’ opinion world the other. He suggests that we should discuss this issue with ordinary Tibetans in the street, but if we had not yet done so. In fact, it was precisely such conversations with Tibetan residents of Kathmandu that shaped the opinions expressed in our original article. While there is a natural diversity of opinion among the 20,000+ Tibetan population in Nepal, several Tibetans of various social backgrounds found the international attention support community’s proposed boycott of Nepal to be out of step with their own feelings.

We must correct Tsering’s misunderstanding. We were not suggesting that a general international outcry would ‘spark new tensions between the Nepali and Tibetan communities’. A fruitful economic boycott specifically targeted at Nepal’s tourist trade, however, would surely do so. As our initial article made clear, we believe that a protest about the Tibetan issue in particular and the Nepali human rights situation in general is absolutely necessary. The question is what strategy will yield the most positive results for all involved parties.

To conclude, we concur with C.K. Lal (‘Imperious Power’ #151) that the Ethical Traveler approach represents a troubling hypocrisy among American action groups on both the left and right. While Nepal is singled out for special condemnation for trespassing international law, the link to the United States on Ethical Traveler’s Resources web page refers to the nation as ‘the world’s first modern democracy. In light of the horrors of the Guantanamo Bay detention centre, the ongoing atrocities against civilians in Iraq and the inability of the United States government to sign international treaties, it is extraordinary that Ethical Traveler remains silent. Why no no-discrimination policy to the White House? Does Ethical Traveler recommend a tourism boycott to the United States, or expect ‘all Americans to support its recommendations? More curiously, what is the point of such questions might benefit travellers and citizens of all countries.

Mark Turin and Sara Sheideman, Kathmandu

**SALUTATIONS TO HIS MAJESTY**

To His Majesty King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev on the auspicious occasion of his 57th Birthday.

May his guidance always take us in the right direction.

Surya Nepal Pvt. Ltd.

**SURESHE OJHA**

What I read about Suresh Ojha (Nepal society, #151) made me very proud of him and his work. When I see his forward-looking attitude towards the country it revives my hope. Thank you Nepal Times for introducing us to a rare kind of Nepali.

K Acharya, email

**FILM**

Mr Cancellaro suggest that the country is going through difficult times. This is the time for introspection to see if part of the blame is with the Nepali official attitude towards Tibetans. Tibetans are victims in the current development and should not be blamed for seeking external support.

As a country having historical and traditional links with Tibet, Nepal can contribute significantly in enabling Tibetans to reside lawfully and in freedom in Nepal. Already there are signs of Tibet-China détente with envoys of the Dalai Lama visiting China. As and when there is a solution to the Tibetan issue, Tibetans on the other side of the border will remain forever grateful to the assistance rendered by Nepal and its people.

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Jajarkot’s tense frontline

“We can deal with poverty, we’ve always lived with it. But we can’t deal with the brutality.”

Guns and medicines

In the most ominous breach of the ceasefire since it went into effect six months ago, a Royal Nepali Army patrol and the Maoists engaged in a three-hour battle at a hilltop village in Jajarkot on 18 June. The villagers here were already very anxious because the risk of a siege of gunfights reverberated across the valley, they thought the war had started at last. The Maoists accuse the army of trying to protect their forces in their ‘model’ village under the pretense of establishing a health camp. The army says the local people are in great need of aid and can’t be left in the lurch. We were not able to be on the spot, and this is part of their nationwide campaign to bring pressure.

There are conflicting accounts from the two sides about what exactly happened. The army says the Maoists opened fire on their patrol which was going on patrol, establishing the medical camp near Dali, and eight Nepali soldiers were injured in the exchange. The Maoists deny that anyone from their side was killed. Both sides agree on one thing: a civilian was killed in the crossfire.

Britain, China and India have all been urging the two sides to respect the terms of the ceasefire, and the United Nations has called for an immediate ceasefire to prevent further violence. The battle has raised concerns about the future of the peace process.

The district headquarter is a long and hard walk from the village. There are no health posts nearby. There is nowhere to go. People here are used to misery. The old man struggles to speak and tell us he hasn’t seen anyone else besides regular army patrols. “Are you the government people coming to help me? Are there patrols. “Are you the government people coming to help me? Are there patrols. “Are you the government people coming to help me?”

According to the contract, we are supposed to be up here in one or two days, but there was no news of them all day. The local people are in great need of medical attention which the Maoists have not been able to provide, and this is part of their nationwide campaign to bring pressure.

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According to the contract, we are supposed to be up here in one or two days, but there was no news of them all day. The local people are in great need of medical attention which the Maoists have not been able to provide, and this is part of their nationwide campaign to bring pressure.
A group of about 10 families is camped out in a forest near the Banara River, just out of Mahendranagar. According to a local worker, they had been chased out of a Wildlife Reserve Extension area nearby, for which they had lived, about illegally, for 30 years. Since they moved in this particular site a few months ago, they had sold all of their animals to pay for food. Now they had even sold cooking utensils. Sitting tight by the East-West Highway, the camp consisted of 30 or so ‘tents’, makeshift structures covered by tarp. There was one hand-pump.

They lived on whatever day job they could find, and whatever people would give them. Many children showed signs of malnutrition—unusually light hair and skin, distressed stomachs. They were not out of school, but had no access to water. Three children had already died of hunger or disease.

One man, holding a very young child, said he had not found any job and that he had not thought there was anything about it. He had happened to have a box of biscuits in my backpack. I knew there were no trees for shade for the children gathered around me, but I felt compelled to offer them anything I could. I doubt most of the children were hungry, but older children let the younger ones take the food and dignity made him even sadder.

Worse yet, they told me that the Department of Forestry had served a notice that they had to move again. I was pleased to discover that he had been hard at work. He had asked a team of experts to analyse the problems of landless Dalits and recommend solutions. He was planning to take that plan up with his minister soon. Upon hearing about the latest problem of encroachment, he immediately contacted various officials concerned to stop the unlawful eviction without giving sufficient notice when it comes to people might go or how they might make living. He would also look into providing them with some immediate relief. I was hopeful that some solution may be found for these people.

But that was then. A new government has since taken over. And I do not know what has happened to the good work Parajjali began. But the question in my mind is why this should have required an intervention by an assistant minister in the first place? The Banara River residents do not consider the DFO’s responsibility is limited to controlling encroachment and that finding a permanent site for them was a responsibility of another ministry. I have no doubt that to them, the DFO represented the government, not just the Foresty Department. He was their local social worker. An internal problem of coordination should not become the citizen’s problem, especially when it comes to powerless and deprived citizens. When Nepal is in need of government institutions that are truly responsive to the people, old attitudes must change.

That is not my responsibility, does not cut it. If government officials see situations in this bird, they should figure out how to help them. If the matter is outside their responsibility, they should mobilize local community. In short, they should become advocates for the vulnerable. That is what one should expect from a good government, isn’t it? Behind the plight of the Banara River people, there is much a large problem of thousands upon thousands of landless poor. And, the problem is also related to the migration of people from overcrowded hills to relatively land rich area. The DFO in Kalchapa has a point. If the government gave the Banara River people land to settle on, that may encourage more people to encroach on the forest areas in the hope of receiving their own land.

The government has tried to identify those who had lived on government land for many years as having a certain claim, while discouraging further encroachment. Setting a ‘cut-off’ date like this makes no sense. And, in fact, I understand that at least some of the families at the Banara River were recognized by the Chha Commission, one of the several efforts to identify people who deserve certain claims to land. Whether this approach is effective is open to debate.

But, the point is that by all accounts the Banara River people have been already given certain recognition by the government. Their destination is evident. I think they simply need to be helped. The debate over an appropriate long-term solution should not become an excuse for leaving them stranded.

Post Script: Nearly 1,000 landless families living in camps like those by the Banara River are currently gathered in the vicinity of Mahendranagar, protesting the government’s eviction order, the breaches in the family’s rights, to encroach on the forest areas in the hope of receiving their own land.
Prachanda’s new path

The palace must take the Maoists’ pressure for a resumption of talks seriously and rapidly move towards de-escalation.

The race to save rice

We have to market the competitive advantage of traditional varieties of Nepali rice.

Commercially, these genes could have earned billions for Borlaugh, but he decided to share his knowledge.

Various international laws will now make it unlikely that farmers in Nepal will have free or even affordable access to the new miracle seeds. Even if they did, it is unlikely the majority of farmers will have the means to take advantage of their genetic potential to produce rice at a price that can compete with the huge and growing agro-economy in India or the ever-expanding rice-producing world. Nepali rice has been devastated not by pests or floods, but by cheap Indian rice.

If we cannot fight the other rice growers on the technology or price front, the future of rice is bleak. The higher prices would then offset the competitive advantages of the traditional Nepali rice.

Marketing of these varieties could initially be a problem. Holding an event to introduce these varieties to the public could help, but there has to be someone who can go around the country identifying these varieties and the farmers who are willing to grow these varieties. This is difficult considering the government stepping in to do this, so perhaps it should be a private group. After all, the government is not a market for rice, and car farmers, why not a rice for our staple crop?

Kabindra Pradhan runs a farm in Butwal.
The dynamics of consumer banking has crossed the threshold...

How do you look at the increased focus towards consumer banking in Nepal?

Historically, in Nepal and other emerging markets, a bank for an individual has always meant a place to open an account and deposit money. The main utility of a bank was safe-keeping the savings of individual depositors. Today a bank is much more than that. It is now looked upon as a provider of financial solutions for individuals, which provides products and services that complement their lifestyle. And that is what consumer banking is all about; it includes home loans, auto loans and personal loans. We will always have our hands on the pulse of Nepal’s customers to determine what products they need and be ready to deliver them.

Historically banks used to concentrate their lending activities to companies and institutions, but the stagnation of the economy and the growth of competition forced most banks to provide a loan to a car, we wanted to provide a solution to put the customer in the driving seat as it were.

The dynamics of the consumer market in Nepal have also crossed the threshold required to make it a feasible proposition. At Standard Chartered our aim is not only to be a player, but to be the leader in all the consumer products that we introduce.

But has it worked according to your expectations? Isn’t everyone else also getting on the bandwagon? Then do you think that first and foremost we are a part of the service industry. Customers can go anywhere, but a bank has to work on its main differentiator and for us at Standard Chartered, that is service and security. It is our challenge to an already existing market and also to raise the benchmark and create a new market.

In Nepal, we feel that we have been able to do just that with several of our consumer products.

Our first foray into consumer lending was with our auto loan product, and we did more than just repackaged and relaunched a generic service that almost everyone else was providing. We have provided a loan to buy a car, we wanted to provide a solution to put the customer in the driving seat as it were.

It was packaged and marketed to be educational as well as promote the idea of having a car, to buy and sell a car. We wanted to make auto loans understandable.

Looking back, who could have predicted that the window of referral worth millions of rupees that was potentially ours would be shut because of Tibet?

You who were sent back? Who could have known how such remotely linked activities would affect one another and cause serious distress and angst in Nepal’s business sector?

Note that such an unlikely confluence of activities—no, a chain reaction would say, a series of non-linear events that, open-ended, somehow ended up being connected to one another—has taken place, we must ask ourselves whether we can claim any experience. We must devise strategies to assist Nepal’s private sector businesses through similarly unpredictable paths of international trade in the coming years. Obviously, many of the wider benefits of international buyers will get us nowhere. Neither will indulging in rhetoric and hailing of treaties by dangling all thought-out letters of apology, we need to take a different, more strategic and work hard to have a framework in practice so that Nepal is ready to respond effectively to events that relate directly to our commercial interests as they unfold internationally.

One tool we have talked much about in the past but have not made much use of is that of economic diplomacy—the kind that opens doors in other countries for Nepal to sell her goods and services with ease. As it happens, exactly a year ago, Kathmandu-based Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA), after months of interviews with former ambassadors and key private sector players and additional research by the Policy Study Group, submitted a report titled Nepal’s Economic Diplomacy to the then government.

Pointing out that “foreign aid is not in itself a bad thing but it is important that the aid is directed towards products and services that have the potential to pay for itself in the long run”, the report suggested that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MEA) transfers itself to play the role of a facilitator to help the Nepalese take advantage of global opportunities in “trade, tourism and employment generation”. The report also detailed how the institutional mechanism at the MFA could be rearranged to help adjust the MEA to its new role as a facilitator by private sector players looking to trade abroad.

It is our challenge to an already existing market and also to raise the benchmark and create a new market. In Nepal, we feel that we have been able to do just that with several of our consumer products.

The Chinese government has finally lifted its ban on tourism with Tibet after the SARS scare. Air China, which has previously been one of the global operators of flights to Tibet, will launch a direct service from Beijing to Lhasa starting from next month. The Chinese government has fixed its flight schedule at 34 flights a year. At present, a total of 18 Tibetans who were sent back to the then government.

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You don’t have to go far to see the looming crisis with water. Just look at Kathmandu Valley. There are taps here in this town out of which water has not flowed for decades, tapping underground water has lowered the water table, the little water there is contaminated with organic and chemical pollutants.

So, I’ll drink bottled water, you may say. Uh-huh. With most consumers too desperate or ignorant to care about quality, and the regulators doing little quality control, there is no guarantee that just because water comes in a plastic bottle that it is bug and chemical-free. Meeting the demand are some 20 companies ranging from the multinational giants to cottage industry enterprises that hold licences to sell water. There are plenty more that are not registered but are fully operational. It’s a brisk business. Often mistaken and misrepresented as ‘mineral water’, bottled water has found a permanent place at most restaurants and offices, and is making rapid inroads into private homes and other institutions. As long as taps are dry and the government encourages boiling all drinking water, the demand for bottled water—perceived to be hygienic and bacteria free—is bound to grow. But are they as hygienic as they are made out to be?

Records with the Department of Food Technology and Quality Control are appalling. “Almost all the brands have one problem or the other,” says Urmila Joshi, chief of the food inspection unit. The most common test the bottled waters fail is the mesophilic bacterial count. While the official standard allows 25 of these microbes per ml of water, most Nepali bottled water substantially exceeds the limit. Last year, the department tested 79 samples of bottled water and found 28 to be substandard. The year before, 17 of the 49 samples had a higher bacterial count than

Think before you drink

Checklist

- Read the label for:
  - Brand.
  - The manufacturer’s complete address.
  - Ingredients used in packaging.
  - Quantity of water.
  - Price, batch number and ‘best before’ dates.

Look for clarity, there shouldn’t be any sedimentation.

Make sure the bottle is properly sealed.

Source: Department of Food Technology and Quality Control
the prescribed limit. The Food Act allows the department to initiate legal action against those who adulterate or sell contaminated goods for human consumption and numerous cases have been filed at the District Administration Office (DAO). It’s a lengthy process and many fly-by-night operators shut up shop only to resurface under another brand name. There are only a handful of success stories: Yes mineral water was closed after it was found to be contaminated. Seven years ago, in an unprecedented move, the then CDO of Lalitpur arrested the owner of Olympic Mineral Water after the department found it contained four times the threshold of bacterial contamination. Now, several bottling companies have begun to pressurise the government to do away with the bacterial count altogether. Bizarrely, department officials agree that a higher presence of bacteria does not make water undrinkable, even if it is substandard.

If only we had to worry solely about microscopic bacteria. In February bottled water tested in India by the Centre for Science and Environment including best-selling multinational brands like Coke’s Kinley, Pepsi’s Aquarian and Nestle’s Pure Life, contained a cocktail of deadly pesticides like linden, DDT and chloropyrifos. We tried to get a response from Coke about its Nepali Kinley, but it said this was against official company policy to comment. The expose forced the Indian government to revise its standards for bottled water. It is safe to assume that Nepali bottled water could also contain chemical contaminants, but the department has standards only for organic contamination and there are no labs that can test for traces of dangerous chemicals.

“Budget constraints keep us from conducting required tests,” admits Joshi. Gas liquid chromatography is the usual way to detect chemical compounds in water, but solvent used in the process are expensive. To cut corners, lab scientists use other processes that sometimes miss traces of chemicals. The department has got reports that some unregistered bottlers are collecting used plastic bottles and simply refilling them with tap water, but if it doesn’t do spot checks public health could be in serious jeopardy.

At the Kantipur Mineral Water at Sinamangal, proprietor Neelam Aggarwal sits in her office and admits she is not concerned about where and whether her engineers get the water tested. Her products share the same shelf space as more quality-conscious operators. Her company is not registered, and does not have a licence, yet it continues with full-scale production. The department knows the existence of these companies but is unable to terminate them. Many bottlers keep changing their brand names to escape detection, especially when they are hauled up on charges of contamination. With lax laws on copyright, unscrupulous water barons often pirate the popular brands.

One such sufferer is Sanjay Dugar and his Aqua 100 brand. He has received numerous complaints from consumers who mistake his water for others with similar names. “We are tired of defending ourselves,” he told us. “It’s bad for both manufacturers and consumers when brand names are misused like this.”

Dugar is one of few companies that does its own tests for both biological and chemical contamination. “This way our product also gets double checked,” he says.

The other risk associated with the bottled water is the cleanliness of the jars and bottles, an issue overshadowed by the quality of water. Even if the water is treated well to international standards, dirty carriers having pathogens, chemicals and microbes that make them harmful. Many bottlers use hot water and chemical detergents like Surf to clean the jars manually but these leave behind residue that don’t show up in lab reports because no one is looking. U
How to create a new Eurosolidarity

By Aleksander Smolar

The final defeat of Thomas

The age of the population explosion may be coming to an end.

T he UN recently revised its population projections. Some 6.3 billion people now live on Earth. Fertility rates in relatively poor countries continue to follow the trends set by today’s relatively rich countries, we are within shouting distance of the world’s total population—9–10 billion—to be reached in 2050–2100.

But population may well decline thereafter. Literate, well-educated women with many social and economic options in today’s rich countries have pulled fertility below the natural replacement rate. The problem is not that such women on average want fewer than two children; in fact, on average they want to have a bit more than two. But because many of them delay childbearing until their thirties, actual fertility falls short of what they desire.

A world population that peaks at 9–10 billion is not one we should be too worried about. Parson Malthus, the English 19th-century economist who prophesied a future in which people multiply faster than the resources needed to sustain them and hence starve to death by the millions. Indeed, it comes as somewhat of a shock to realise that the age of the population explosion may be coming to an end.

Just 30 years ago, people like Stanford University’s Paul Ehrlich were telling us that the Malthusian, Angel of Death was at the door. They assured us that it was too late to stop the famines that would kill hundreds of millions in the Indian subcontinent, and that humanity’s destiny in the 21st century was one of war and struggle for the resources to feed national populations an extra crust of bread.

Today, however, the political flashback over food is not that there is too little, but that there is too much. Developing-country politicians and populations complain bitterly that the rich industrial countries are growing too much food. “Exporting food is one of the few ways we can earn the foreign exchange we need to buy modern industrial technology,” they say. “But your agricultural subsidy programs block us from establishing any sort of comparative advantage in most agricultural products. You say free trade is good in those manufactures that you export—you say that enforcing property rights is critically important for your investments—but somehow you go deaf when the topic turns to a level playing field in agricultural trade....”

They are right. None of developing country can grow by making and exporting computer chips, or plastic toys, or bananas. Some need to export steel. Others will have to export furniture or textiles. Still others will have to export citrus, grains, processed foods etc. Yet there has been little forward motion in opening up world trade for nearly two billion people, with another billion in the developing world, to live in an era of universal and global poverty.

The sense of equality and solidarity is a necessary foundation of any democratic community. In the 1950s the British sociologist T.S. Marshall wrote about the progress of rights, from civil rights in the 18th century, to political (democratic) rights in the 19th century, to social rights in the 20th century. These three dimensions—liberal, democratic and social—describe the modern European nation state. Solidarity played the most central role in the 20th century. Indeed, it was the driving force behind the development of the European Community in both its “early” World War II, and led to their transformation into “social states” emphasising social security and a variety of welfare programs. We can measure this “institutionalised solidarity” in a nation state by the share of redistribution in GDP. There is also another level of solidarity, which we can call universal or global solidarity. Its importance—reflected in forms of international aid—has been very limited until now. Its objective is to ensure the equality of citizens, but this quest guarantees minimum life conditions.

Humanitarian interventions, much discussed in the 1990s, are another manifestation of this global solidarity. Between citizen solidarity at the national-state level and humanitarian solidarity on the global level lies a third level of solidarity, which we can call “Eurosolidarity.”

The means of redistribution is still the main function of the state, but solidarity has been very limited until now. Its importance—reflected in forms of international aid—has been very limited until now. Its objective is to ensure the equality of citizens, but this quest guarantees minimum life conditions.

Between citizen solidarity at the national-state level and humanitarian solidarity on the global level lies a third level of solidarity, which is most interesting for Europeans: the EU level. In its early years the European Community was mainly concerned with peace, stability and democracy. But institutionalised solidarity has become increasingly important in European consolidation and intra-European redistribution played a key role in the modernisation of Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Greece, and the UK. Today, the political flashback over food is not that there is too little, but that there is too much. Developing-country politicians and populations complain bitterly that the rich industrial countries are growing too much food. “Exporting food is one of the few ways we can earn the foreign exchange we need to buy modern industrial technology,” they say. “But your agricultural subsidy programs block us from establishing any sort of comparative advantage in most agricultural products. You say free trade is good in those manufactures that you export—you say that enforcing property rights is critically important for your investments—but somehow you go deaf when the topic turns to a level playing field in agricultural trade....”

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Malthus?

The other side of Bihar

If you live in the back of beyond in rural Bihar you can be safely assumed to be well out of reach of the media marketers as we know them, right? Wrong. No matter where you live in this seemingly backward state two newspapers and several FM radio stations catering to the organisational forms and technologies built since the start of the Industrial Revolution than the school of exporting.

If global development is at risk, then so is the final defeat of Malthus. The poorest countries stay poor, their rates of population growth might fall much more slowly than the United Nations predicts. Falling birthrates depend on a rise in the status of women, confidence in public health, growing prosperity, and strong cultural cues to convince people that there are other, better indicators of success than a large family. The fact that most countries are completing the demographic transition does not guarantee that all will. Perhaps Malthus will rule again, in geographically small but densely populated and immensely poor parts of the globe. The world’s high—and middle—income countries should not imagine that the relatively rich can fence themselves off indefinitely from poverty and misery in the poorest countries. Nationalism has long been a powerful cause of political violence. Nothing is more likely to strengthen nationalism and turn it into violence than a sense that one’s own homeland is being exploited—by poor and powerless—by other nations to satisfy their own selfish interests.

The world today is too small for any of us to be able to afford for any corner of it to be left out of the conquest of Malthusianism. (O P Roy, Sociology) J Bradford DeLong is Professor of Economics at the University of California at Berkeley, and a former Assistant US Treasury Secretary.

AHAIDR RIZVI AT THE UNITED NATIONS

Wireless revolution

While rich nations of the world continue to reap hefty profits from the use of wireless internet, most poor countries remain shut out from this phenomenon and technology. A UN official, policy makers and information technology experts about 200 delegates from all over the world, who attended the first-ever conference on “The Wireless Internet Opportunity for Developing Nations”, called for urgent and effective measures to help developing countries achieve easy access to wireless internet technologies.

There are estimated 429 million people online globally, but fully 41 percent are in North America. That total number of 429 million also represents only 6 percent of the world’s entire population. It is also very surprising that the size of the cellular phone market here is the national average? Or that the size of the cellular phone market here is notably small.

Another thing worth the aid are a poor substitute for even $1 worth of exports, because there are fewer better schools in which to invest. In other words, the organisational forms and technologies built since the start of the Industrial Revolution than the school of exporting.

Across Nepal’s southern border in Bihar, the media is riding a consumer boom.

Experts agree that the wider use of wireless internet could empower people in countries where little or no infrastructure exists. How to get there is another matter. The conference brought representatives of developing countries together with leading information technology businesses, including Microsoft, IBM and Intel Corporation, the United Nations’ World Bank and World Field practitioners say although it is not difficult for developing countries to set up wireless internet projects on their own, certain problems like a hot climate and lack of expertise need to be addressed.

“It is very interesting to get out of the lab. In rural areas, the hardware needs to be extremely rugged,” said Amir Hasson, a field practitioner who worked at the US-based Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) before experimenting in India with Wifi networks for what he calls “first mile access.” In developing countries, “the most significant challenge is the poor access to equipments,” he said. “You can get it, but often times pay 30 to 50 percent duties on import, and the delivery can take three to four months.”

Experts say it was possible to promote wireless internet in developing countries by making it more cost-effective. Hassen’s experiment with wireless internet was set up on a variety of vehicles in India. His team would drive a bus that would automatically synchronise with another computer located in the village. The hardware his team used cost about $350 per vehicle.

Industry experts say wireless internet would cost much less if governments changed their policies on licensing and regulation. “We see many of the actions of the developing nations to be scarcity mentality, meaning, to minimise the amount of unlicensed spectrum to maximise their regulatory position for a few dollars of regulation or licensing benefits,” said Pat Gehrig, Intel Corporation’s chief technology officer. “That’s exactly what is limiting the growth of this technology in emerging nations.”

Mohsin Khalil, a World Bank official, offered a somewhat different perspective. “Our concern is trying to promote access per se rather than a specific technology,” he said. “Unfortunately, the advances are mostly on the telephonic sides and less on the internet and broadband side.” If they...
Political murders rock Darjeeling

Darjeeling is experiencing a new wave of assassinations. A decade and a half ago there were an estimated 300 politically motivated deaths in this hill station during the Gorkhaland movement. Since then, twelve prominent leaders associated with different political parties have been killed. Murders in India are not uncommon but to have such a spate of it in a place like Darjeeling is an indication of a deeper malaise.

A few months after Subhash Ghising accepted the idea of New Delhi and Calcutta forming the DGHC, the popular senior leader of the Indian Communist (Marxist) Party and former member of the State Assembly TS Gurung was murdered near his home in 1989. Despite being a leftist, he was a staunch supporter of the Gorkhaland movement.

Sudarshan Shrama, the general secretary of the Gorkha League and a leader of the Nepali salt movement was gunned down in 1989. In 1990 alone four supporters of the Gorkhaland movement were murdered.

Rudra Jumar, a DGHC member and a political leader, was hacked to death by unknown assailants in the middle of the Darjeeling market in March 1999. scarcely a week after he was victor in the elections.

Karen Rapai, deputy chief of the Gram Parishad in Takbari lost estate was killed in March 2001. Yet not even Subhash Ghising, the chief of the Gorkha National Liberation Front and Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC), is safe. He was attacked in Kurseong two years ago. Ghising survived the bomb but his driver and bodyguard both died in the incident.

About a month ago, Prakash Thing of the DGHC was murdered near his house.

The West Bengal government and the police do not seem very worried about the growing number of assassinations. Ghising himself does nothing, and people suspect he may have had a hand in some killings. With no investigations and no answers forthcoming, conspiracy theories abound: some believe the murders were connected to the Gorkhaland movement while others say it’s the grand plan of the Marxist Communist Party to quell the Gorkhilaad liberation movement.

The murder of CK Pradhan created uproar in Ghising’s party. Thousands of his supporters attended his funeral but Ghising did not turn up, nor did he offer any condolences. This eventually led to many activists, including Pradhan’s widow, establishing a breakaway party, the Gorkha National Liberation Front (C). They are widening their base in Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kunreong and Siliguri. The party holds the West Bengal government and Ghising responsible for Pradhan’s death because he was a strong supporter of Gorkhaland. “My husband had the dream of making the Gorkhaland movement successful,” says Sheila Pradhan. “He always revered Ghising as his father but there was an attempt to link him to the attack on Ghising. He paid with his life.”

Maximus Kalikote, the youth leader of ONLINE (C), charges the West Bengal government and the local Dagopop government of being hand in glove in Pradhan’s murder, and has named a Nire Gurung for carrying it out. "The administration had not even bothered to interrogate with him."

No dowry

Sukedantu 27 June

Before her marriage last year, Rajni Devi Yadav’s parents promised her a dowry of Rs 50,000 in cash, a TV and a bicycle. But after her marriage, Umesh Yadav of Tangar, the girl’s future in-laws felt threatened. Things went from bad to worse. Two days after her marriage, Yadav and his family had already left.

Suicide

Kalimpong 30 June – 1 July

Yabarb Khandel decided to take his own life after unbelievable harassment at the hands of both the Muslims and the security forces. The 40-year-old from Barbour village in Ula was a UML activist who was arrested by the security forces two years ago and tortured in detention. On his release, the Muslims took him in for ‘questioning’ which lasted for four months. The Muslims and the security personnel would take turns in coming to his home during this interrogation. Khandel could not cope with the mental trauma and he wrote a farewell letter to his family, his friends and the district administration office before hanging himself from a tree.

Compromise

Nepal Samacharpatra, 3 July

Classes will resume as normal after an agreement was signed between the seven student unions involved in the agitation and schools organised under Private and Boarding Schools Organisation Nepal (PBSOON) and Private and Boarding Schools Organisation Nepal (PBSON). School organisations, student unions and government representatives attended the talks initiated by Nepal Parents Organisation and the Education Journalist Group. The two national level school organisations agreed to the nine-point demands put forward by the unions. They conceded to give up their education to children affected by the insurgency as well as those of martyrs, 25 percent scholarships and the creation of a post to recommend a fee rebate for private and boarders in the schools for a month.

The latter will have two representatives each from the government, student, private, and boarders and politicians.
Uday Niroula writes poems with an essayist’s sensibility: he prefers to explore ideas in his verses, rather than to delve into sentiment, as most Nepali poets do. This makes his work stand apart from the expressionistic impulse of the day.

In the first poem below, translated from his 2053 BS collection *Jaraaharu Kimartha Mardainan*, Niroula expresses the contradictions, hypocrisy and pretensions of modern Nepal, all of which may be quite familiar to those of us in Kathmandu:

*We Reap Land Deeds from the Soil*

So many plants we should have harvested from the soil
So many peaks we should have erected from the soil
Avoiding all we should harvest,
evading all we should erect,
we reap from the soil
our citizenship certificates and identity papers

Was creativity slain in the appraisal of land?
Was creativity slain in the notebooks of projects?
It’s been a while     flowers have not bloomed from our soil
It’s been a while     flowers have not sprouted from our soil

Spreading the name of Buddha in the dust
we set imported customs to boil on the stove
Having sold our inner enlightenment
do we nurture another’s Buddha in our hearts?

We should sow mint plants of creativity
but instead sow artificial etiquette
We inject imported technologies
trampling upon our beings
plucking out our own consequences
We taunt the poor
We assure the future
We urge those who should be rising to lie down on beds
and measuring Sagarmatha with our eyes
we urge those those who should sleep to rise as peaks

The second poem, translated from an earlier collection *Kolaahal Piyera*, explores the more universal theme of consciousness, focusing on the false consciousness that we easily slip into despite our claims to enlightenment thinking.

*The Human ‘Chemical’ Is Being Translated*

Who doesn’t know who doesn’t say
that people have consciousness?
Only humans do not know this
Only our consciousness does not say so
In my thoughts on being human I find—
surviving the present moment
people chew through consciousness
And gradually, gradually
transform are transforming will
transform into beasts
In images reflected in
people don the coat of consciousness
but bear the soul of animalhood
as they chant ‘Hara Ganga, hars Ganga’
washing in the waters of turbid emotion
People nurse their athiritic pains
in the frostiness of consciousness

Human rights!
INHURED? Amnesty? The security council?
The wars raging within wars give off a stench
in the bogs and swamplands
This is why people have not exploded
or why they have not ingested patriotism
Have no death sentences been sounded
in the contracted judiciaries of the world?
The veto has become someone’s inheritance
The bids and tenders of human rights work
do not scratch the sovereignty of nations
This is not a pack of wild men
but a human-shaped     human-sized assembly
fragrant with the course of reason
The matters of Arafat and Jerusalem
do not so much as scratch
the private affairs of any nation
There is no free nation    or a free nation is rare
in the geography of the world
Humans beings are capable of consciousness!
And that is why in the present
the ghosts of humanity lurk in the shadows of truth

The sole universal truth now is death
No battlefield has been prepared
The warriors are all sheltering in oblivion
It could be
the history of humanity is crooked
today’s intelligent person
is living on the plain of truth
mixed partly in the size of a person
partly in the shape of a beast
It could be that science’s ‘chemistry’
has finally been translated.
Rs 520
The author arrived in Nepal a few days after the horrific events of 1 June 2002, and cobbled together an account of what happened. It is interspersed with Shah and Rana history, a few Hindu myths, quotes from the Official Enquiry Report and eyewitness accounts from the BBC documentary, Murder Most Royal. Gourley makes no mention of the Masons, or tensions between the palace and the political parties.

Rs 200
Corruption is often studied from a legal perspective. Deliberating corruption as primarily an organisational problem, Regmi presents it in a managerial perspective. It challenges the conventional wisdom about confronting corruption and offers a people-centered solution to the problem. It also demonstrates the power of democracy to take on corruption.

Urgent request for Kathmandu Valley residents

Kathmandu cannot take it anymore. Nothing will happen unless you emitting black smoke?

What you burn is what you breathe. Is your vehicle emitting black smoke?
We humbly extend our loyal greetings
to His Majesty the King
on the auspicious occasion of His Majesty's 57th birthday!

We pray for His Majesty's long life, good health & happiness.

Hotel de l' Annapurna
No. 1 Address in Kathmandu

We extend our hearty felicitations to
His Majesty King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev

On His 57th Birthday.

Vijaya Gajananda Vaidya
Chairman
Vakya's Organization of Industries & Trading Houses and Family
VORITH Complex, Teen Kuns, Srinarendra, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: 4473331-820

Hearty Felicitations & Best Wishes
for a Long, Happy and Prosperous Life to

HIS MAJESTY KING GYANENDRA BIR BIKRAM SHAH DEV
On the auspicious occasion of His Majesty's
57th Birthday

Chairman: Pradha Jyoti • Vio Chairman: Dr. Poo Jyoti
Jyoti Group, Jyoti Bhumani, Kantipath, Kathmandu
The designer baby myth

We are told that a world of genetically enhanced humans is just around the corner. STEVEN PINKER is highly dubious.

In his fifth anniversary of the discovery of the structure of DNA, we face some profound implications of the nature of the human brain.

Futurology, the science of behavioral

genetics and human nature itself.

Even in mundane cases, technological progress is far from inexorable. Many futurists write as if current progress can be extrapolated indefinitely. It takes a large number of more or less discoveries, together with the psychological and sociological impossibilities that make people adopt some invention in mass. The Achilles heel of genetic enhancement will be the rarity of single genes with consistent beneficial effects. The effect of a single gene is much more than a disease. Genes have failed to find single genes that consistently cause schizophrenia, autism or manic-depressive disorder, even though there is overwhelming evidence that these conditions are substantially heritable.

And we can't find a gene for schizophrenia, we can't even find a one for humour, musical talent, or likability. Because it is easier to disrupt a complex system with a single defect than it is to improve by adding a single beneficial one.

The human brain is not a bag of genes. The human mind is not a computer. It is a complex system with many different genes that function in concert with other genes. The human mind is not a bag of genes.

The notion of enhancement has one important, but it is not particularly likely to be true. It is a complex system that can function even if any of its parts are out of order. Geneticists have failed to find single genes that consistently cause schizophrenia, autism or manic-depressive disorder, even though there is overwhelming evidence that these conditions are substantially heritable.

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Renaissance of romance

The rebirth of Kaiser Shumsher's Garden of Dreams.

reviving the Kaiser Library. Project manager Ladhumalla Hungerhuber agrees that future maintenance and management is the greatest challenge when the garden opens next year. "To get a garden like this, dormant and untended for so long, restore it to its former glory, and open it up to the public is very satisfying. Now we have to make sure it also runs by itself."

Shahid, the lost winter pavilion, is being reconstructed to house a restaurant aptly called the 'The Six Seasons', along with a Venetian-style 'Kaiser Café at the Basanta pavilion. A gift shop selling quality handicrafts and garden products and a walk-in aviary showcasing a range of Himalayan birds is also planned. The garden, birds, trees, andash, it all adds up to a Kaiser Shumsher Theme Park. Kathmandu will soon have another oasis of tranquillity right in the heart of the city, and rapt couples can sit beneath Omar Khayyam's immortal poem:

Ah, Love! Could thou and I with Fate conspire To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire, Would not we shatter it to bits- and then Re mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

Omar Khayyam's stanza from The Rubaiyat is inscribed on marble just above a door's eat for two. The cracks running through the stone slab, a legacy of the earthquake of 1934, is painted on either side with leaves and flowing to resemble a vine. Inside the Garden of Dreams you forget the world outside, which is probably what Field Marshall Kaiser Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana intended when he lavished so much attention and detail on this remarkable garden.

It was supposed to echo the grandeur of the Versailles at France, but with a Nepali sensibility with its fine Newari art as well as Western neo-classical leanings. In one corner he put a figure of Laxmi with five conch shells overturned in one corner he put a figure of Laxmi. It was supposed to echo the grandeur of the Versailles at France, but with a Nepali sensibility with its fine Newari art as well as Western neo-classical leanings. In one corner he put a figure of Laxmi with five conch shells overturned in one corner he put a figure of Laxmi. But urbanisation took a toll on this island of tranquillity. The palace became the Ministry of Education and the garden by neglect. All but three of the seasonal pavilions fell to Thamel's urban sprawl, reducing the garden to half its original size. It crumbled slowly into decay, almost forgotten under chocking weeds and overgrown trees.

Sitting at prime real estate, just opposite the royal palace and the road into Thamel, it was an enterprising business people proposed tearing the gardens down to create a row of shutter shops. It seemed almost inevitable. But in 1998 a project for the renovation of the garden was finalised through Austrian Development Aid with the support of the Ministry of Education and Sports and implemented by the project team from the Austrian group, Eco-Himal.

A team was put together that included Lok Bhakta Rana (Kaiser Shumsher’s youngest son), Götz Hugsführer (the man behind the renovation of Patan Museum), Eric Thospile (the designer behind Baber Mahal Restored) and architect Prabal Thapa. The hard work is beginning to show. The renovations are recent and they hold the essence of the ancient aesthetics that was part of the original plan. The new entrance gate made ‘Dreams’ on the inside and Garden’ on the outside. The Swapna Garden Development Board is modelling itself along the lines of Patan Museum for self-sufficiency. Head of landscape design, Helga Gropper, explains: “We have to design this garden for people, which means that there will be lot of maintenance and upkeep.” But its location near Thamel is expected to yield revenues from visitors who will pay for the running cost and anything left over will be spent on reviving the Kaiser Library. Project manager Ladhumalla Hungerhuber agrees that future maintenance and management is the greatest challenge when the garden opens next year. “To get a garden like this, dormant and untended for so long, restore it to its former glory, and open it up to the public is very satisfying. Now we have to make sure it also runs by itself.”

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The rebirth of Kaiser Shumsher’s Garden of Dreams.
**Under My Hat**

by Kunda Dixit

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**News roundup**

And here is our weekly roundup of sensational news from around the nation that somehow didn’t make it to the papers:

**Relay hunger strike huge success**

**BY OUR THEATRE CORRESPONDENT**

Katmandu: Effigies of regression used at a rally in Kathmandu refused to catch fire Thursday, and a commission of inquiry has been formed to look into the matter.

An angry throng then set fire to Assen. “When you are fighting for freedom no price is too high,” a leading torch-bearer said, playing his fiddle. Pro-democracy demonstrators suspect the contractor hired to supply the effigies used substandard non-flammable material.

“Either that or the kerosene used was adulterated,” one effigy, who did not want to be identified, said. Effigies had decided to set up an All-Nepal Effigy Solidarity Front since they were getting bored with self-immolation. “I don’t understand why we have to be reduced to ashes. Why can’t we just be manhandled like everyone else?” the effigy asked rhetorically.

**Split in birthday celebration committee**

**BY OUR POLITUICALLY-CORRECT REPORTER**

CHITWAN (RSS) - Two male gharials which are registered under the Essential Services Act. The government source grudgingly admitted.

Besides the obvious health benefits, the strike was expected to put strong moral pressure on the government of the day to give in to their demand for power distribution to the needy. “Of course it will force the government to make a decision,” one union leader.

“Just give me the time to see out leaders go hungry, I think we will now give in to their demand.”

**Gharials genuine bhutanis?**

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**Effigies refuse to catch fire**

**BY A STAFF RACONTEUR**

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**Lack of locks hits nation**

**BY OUR ECONOMICAL CORRESPONDENT**

A dire shortage of padlocks in the Nepali domestic market has created a multiplier effect in the national economy with several planned lockouts of educational institutions having to be suspended this week.

National strategic stockpiles of locks ran dangerously low after a surge in demand from political unions this week and efforts were afoot to rush in lock-laden trucks from China.

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**Pen-down strike**

**BUREAU REPORTS**

Kopundole: A 15-party alliance of journalist unions has decided to stage an indefinite pen-down strike until their demands are met.

“We don’t know what our 108-point demands are yet, but let me assure you that we will not budge an inch and we will not be responsible for the consequences if they are not met,” said one union leader.

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