Street battles

Is this the new frontline?

A school boy looks lost on the street as a bandh paralysed Patan on Thursday, while masked students (inset) announced more protests at a sit-in on Ratna Park.

Political parties and their affiliated student leaders intensified street protests this week, accusing security forces of brutal crackdowns. The government responded by putting army and police under a unified command to meet the escalating protests.

The streets of Kathmandu looked like a war zone with burning tyres and vehicles. On Thursday, the student unions declared a bandh in Lalitpur and Banka districts. Students and teachers, unaware of the bandh, were caught in cars that were stoned in Patan. Dozens of other vehicles were damaged. In Nepalgunj, hundreds of bus passengers were stranded at the Indian border.

As pro-republican protests intensified, King Gyanendra himself confirmed the title ‘Emperor of the World’s Hindus’ by the World Hindu Federation (WHF) last Friday. The federation has chapters in 22 countries and its current president is Nepal’s Gen Bharat Keshar Simha. “His Majesty, as a new king, has honoured us by accepting the title of the world’s one billion Hindus,” Simha told us.

Political parties were angered by an interview in Time magazine by King Gyanendra this week. In it, the king reiterated his commitment to democracy and the constitution. But political leaders said the king’s comments were “unconstitutional”, and took umbrage at his sentence: “The reality is: the people of Nepal want to see their King, they want to hear from him.”

A palace insider was puzzled by the criticism: “It is knee-jerk overreaction,” he said. NC president Girija Koirala warned the protests would be intensified. Ex-Indian prime minister Chandra Shukla’s meeting with King Gyanendra this week doesn’t seem to have doused the flames. “I can’t tell you what was discussed, they can if they want,” he said before leaving on Thursday.

Meanwhile, the Royal Nepali Army has responded to criticism of its human rights record by saying it has punished 25 officers, including a major, for violations. Fifteen got jail sentences, and others were either discharged or demoted.

NARESH NEWAR

Pola

Editorial

Into the eighth year

"WHATS NEW?"

NEW MEMBER SERVICE CENTRE NOW IN NEPAL (KATHMANDU)

The service centre will be open Monday to Friday from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm to receive any payments you may owe. It will also provide you access for travel cards as well as any claims for missing mileage. Your service centre can be contacted at:

P.O. Box 201
Tel. 225384 Fax. 231407
Email: info@bhutanflies.com
INTO THE EIGHTH YEAR

How could things have gone so bad so fast? It will be eight years next week that the country began its descent into hell. Nearly 9,000 Nepalis have died violent deaths; hundreds of thousands of lives have been uprooted from their homes and the country left in tatters. It is possible that if the Maoist insurgency had not been ignited in February 1996, we would still be mired in corrupt, go-nowhere parliamentary politics. And if our elite and politicians are unable to look beyond their narrow self-interests even when a rebellion is at the gates, maybe they never will.

But it is also quite possible that the distortions of a democratic polity would have worked themselves out and elected representatives at the grassroots (perhaps even some of those who bear arms today) would now be at the forefront of the war on want. If there had been a momentum for reform from below, it is quite likely that national politicians would have started to behave themselves.

Democracy has built in self-cleansing mechanism, a flexibility that brittle authoritarianism lacks. We will never know. Instead, there is only the certainty that our country is polarised between a hard right and a ruthless left. It’s not much of a choice. No one has asked the Nepali people what they want lately, but most today want neither of the two. In the short-term, they just want an end to the uncertainty that has destroyed their lives, and in the longer-term they want a mechanism to ensure a just and lasting peace. If there hadn’t been a war and if we still had a parliament, we would still need to address the gross inequities in our society. Given a chance, it is possible that parliament would be debating political reforms through constitutional changes. Pushed from below, people might have been brave enough to tear down the exclusionist edifice built by successive Khammellute that allowed only a privileged few to corner power, resources and opportunities. Unless that care address is addressed, we will have another war revolve if we somehow resolve this one. The political parties on the streets and the Maoists in the jungles are both struggling to attain this power transfer, but in different ways. Their common republican ideal should become a code phrase for political devolution.

The writing on the wall is clear. The time has come for the entrenched power centres in Kathmandu to hand back power to the people. For the moment, it looks like they don’t want to give up without a fight. But in the long run, their power will be gone, there will be no winners.

The cost will be exacted on the Maosist and the movement. They will bring both down and destroy the country in the process.

GUEST COLUMN
Seira Tamang

Globally, development organisations including international NGOs have faced periodic charges of the misuse of funds, a lack of transparency and disaster. But therein lies the problem. To take the example of an organisation that has some 10,000 NGOs in Europe, the NGO sector is generally more efficient and productive than the government, and has altruism and justice as its mission.

Activities are thought to be above such base instincts as greed found in business and politics. However, both NGOs and their personnel have to play by the rules of the game prevalent in society. Organisational survival is every organisation’s goal, and one that leads to the pressure to secure funds. This is as true for NGOs and for corporate businesses. Furthermore, NGO people cannot suddenly rise out and above the social milieu, in which one actor on government-organisation corruption wryly describes as ‘a sudden moment of transfiguration’.

Informal rules and institutions form the backbone of civil society. Because such institutions are based on attitudes, culture and social norms, they are instrumental in determining the nature of voluntary civic co-operation in society. NGOs are a component of civil society and can be a channel of corruption if the informal rules of civic society corrupt and criminal behaviour. If society tolerates corruption, NGOs cannot always be uncorrupted. While both the World Bank and Transparency International retain the broad definition, the corruption is in the abuse of public office for private gain, analysts have pointed out its limited utility when applied to non-governmental organisations. NGOs do not have public power charged to them.

However, they are entrusted with public and private resources, a result of their self-representation as independent, non-profit seeking organisations working for the betterment of society. Corruption thus has to be redefined as behaviour for personal gain, or for the benefit of another person or organisation on the part of people who claim to represent an independent, not for profit, public benefit organisation.

Accepting that corruption exists in NGOs in Nepal does not mean there aren’t principled NGOs committed to useful work. However, the continued acceptance of certain levels of corruption in the NGO sector and the fact that they are more accountable to donors than to Nepali citizens.

Specific questions of donor accountability in NGOs are all the more prevalent in the NGO field given the scale of resources and power increasingly accumulated by NGOs and the fact that they are more accountable to donors than to Nepali citizens. Solutions suggested by analysts of corruption in NGOs include the formation of self-regulating bodies which set standards and sanctions, the improvement of a legal and regulatory environment, and increased professionalism of donors. ‘Don’t let the perfect be the enemy of the possible’.

In the face of the lack of legitimacy of the state and political parties, civil society organisations in Nepal today hold to moral authority and power and the general populace is very telling. The confidence of donor funding obviously goes beyond the economic. Re-evaluation of the price at which Nepal is receiving more cost-effective and relatively more ethical services is necessary.

LETTERS

The Ungovernment

We can’t shrug off corruption within NGOs

It allows attitudes, cultural and social norms that prevent the emergence of a new public culture of functioning and living. Much research has gone into studying the links between good governance and corruption, but the field is now restricted to the level of the state. But since NGOs are broadly seen as an alternative to the state, clear guidelines on how corruption in NGOs need to be established. The fight for democracy, human rights and the fight against corruption rest on accountability, representability, transparency and the commitment to equality by both the state and non-state sphere.

Solutions suggested by analysts of corruption in NGOs include the formation of self-regulating bodies which set standards and sanctions, the improvement of a legal and regulatory environment, and increased professionalism of donors. ‘Don’t let the perfect be the enemy of the possible’.

In the face of the lack of legitimacy of the state and political parties, civil society organisations in Nepal today hold to moral authority and power and the general populace is very telling. The confidence of donor funding obviously goes beyond the economic. Re-evaluation of the price at which Nepal is receiving more cost-effective and relatively more ethical services is necessary.

VIEWS

Dewan Rai’s article ‘Business visas for non-businesses’ (FTW) was enlightening. However, it would be a pity if this article was used to make unjustifiable comparisons. Historic geoscience has it that long before the Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman migrations, many of whose bravery is now celebrated in our brief India. As a result, the settlements of all those living and the offsprings of other heroes of Tibet, many of whom live a life of penury in Nepal and India.

Sonam, email

The opening line of the domestic brief titled ‘Tibetan leader dead’ (FTW) was entirely wrong. New information on this issue came from all over the world to find serenity in the unique culture left behind by the ancient people of Nepal. India.

Chakrnemr Vajracarya, Patan

OBITUARY

The Ungovernment

We can’t shrug off corruption within NGOs

It allows attitudes, cultural and social norms that prevent the emergence of a new public culture of functioning and living. Much research has gone into studying the links between good governance and corruption, but the field is now restricted to the level of the state. But since NGOs are broadly seen as an alternative to the state, clear guidelines on how corruption in NGOs need to be established. The fight for democracy, human rights and the fight against corruption rest on accountability, representability, transparency and the commitment to equality by both the state and non-state sphere.

Solutions suggested by analysts of corruption in NGOs include the formation of self-regulating bodies which set standards and sanctions, the improvement of a legal and regulatory environment, and increased professionalism of donors. ‘Don’t let the perfect be the enemy of the possible’.

In the face of the lack of legitimacy of the state and political parties, civil society organisations in Nepal today hold to moral authority and power and the general populace is very telling. The confidence of donor funding obviously goes beyond the economic. Re-evaluation of the price at which Nepal is receiving more cost-effective and relatively more ethical services is necessary.
A king can’t do wrong

STATE OF THE STATE
CK Lal

P
citical predictions are like weather forecasts. And when a gathering storm on the horizon becomes too big to ignore, you pray for divine intervention.

Strange enough, it is die-hard monarchists who are preparing the stage for the rise of republicanism. A hike in the palace budget, a tasteless fancy for luxury cars and a continuing penchant for felicitation ceremonies can all be seen as symptomatic of an institution that seems to crave unnecessary controversy.

In a constitutional monarchy, the crown symbolises sovereignty, unity and integrity of the state. The constitution has burdened the monarch with the additional role of guarding the supreme laws of the land. This requires the king to remain non-partisan. Elected officials are the ones supposed to bear responsibility for every decision taken in the name of the king.

This sovereign immunity for the monarch comes from the maxim that ‘the king can do no wrong’. But if the monarch takes up a mile in everyday politics and sets off a public debate about whether this role should be ‘constructive’ or ‘active’, then he has joined the fray and becomes fair game.

Imagine the public relations mess of someone who refused to accept a move by his loyal royals to increase the palace allowances. After all, Rs 110 million wasn’t a paltry sum, and from there to Rs 700 million is a hefty hike. Again, imagine if the king had vetoed another budget request to augment the fleet of palace limos, saying that he couldn’t make such lavish purchases at a time when the country is in dire straits.

The decision to import three luxury cars, including a Rolls and a Jaguar, worth Rs 142 million isn’t just bad timing, it is terribly insensitive in the state we are in. At least the infamous Pajeros MPs 10 years ago didn’t take cash from the state coffers to buy their obscenely expensive cars. Pomp and ceremony are a part of the royal heritage, but someone should tell the palace advisers when such things turn into a public relations disaster.

Then there is the public felicitation ceremony planned for Nepalganj next Sunday. If the monarch needs to make friends and influence people such Panchayat-style tama wasan’t do the trick.

With all the security handout, Nepalganj will resemble a military garrison. There are 300 welcome arches going up and a former justice of the Supreme Court is heading the public reception committee. What an irony that the Nepalganj felicitation to the monarch is being held just as students all over the country concluded public hearings questioning its relevance.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa has been hurling obscenities at all political parties, including his own. His spokesman Kamal Thapa seems to believe in Muckarthyism: if the doctrine that if you throw enough mud around it is sure to stick somehow.

With royalties like these guarding it, the monarchy doesn’t need enemies. The king must return to the state where he can do no wrong.

Die-hard monarchists are pushing the nation towards republicanism

Mike Hastie

In a constitutional monarchy, the crown symbolises sovereignty, unity and integrity of the state. The constitution has burdened the monarch with the additional role of guarding the supreme laws of the land. This requires the king to remain non-partisan. Elected officials are the ones supposed to bear responsibility for every decision taken in the name of the king.

This sovereign immunity for the monarch comes from the maxim that ‘the king can do no wrong’. But if the monarch takes up a mile in everyday politics and sets off a public debate about whether this role should be ‘constructive’ or ‘active’, then he has joined the fray and becomes fair game.

Imagine the public relations mess of someone who refused to accept a move by his loyal royals to increase the palace allowances. After all, Rs 110 million wasn’t a paltry sum, and from there to Rs 700 million is a hefty hike. Again, imagine if the king had vetoed another budget request to augment the fleet of palace limos, saying that he couldn’t make such lavish purchases at a time when the country is in dire straits.

The decision to import three luxury cars, including a Rolls and a Jaguar, worth Rs 142 million isn’t just bad timing, it is terribly insensitive in the state we are in. At least the infamous Pajeros MPs 10 years ago didn’t take cash from the state coffers to buy their obscenely expensive cars. Pomp and ceremony are a part of the royal heritage, but someone should tell the palace advisers when such things turn into a public relations disaster.

Then there is the public felicitation ceremony planned for Nepalganj next Sunday. If the monarch needs to make friends and influence people such Panchayat-style tama wasan’t do the trick.

With all the security handout, Nepalganj will resemble a military garrison. There are 300 welcome arches going up and a former justice of the Supreme Court is heading the public reception committee. What an irony that the Nepalganj felicitation to the monarch is being held just as students all over the country concluded public hearings questioning its relevance.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa has been hurling obscenities at all political parties, including his own. His spokesman Kamal Thapa seems to believe in Muckarthyism: if the doctrine that if you throw enough mud around it is sure to stick somehow.

With royalties like these guarding it, the monarchy doesn’t need enemies. The king must return to the state where he can do no wrong.

Die-hard monarchists are pushing the nation towards republicanism

Mike Hastie
No war, no peace in Sri Lanka

A political power struggle in the south stalls the Tamil peace process.

KUNDA DIXIT in JAFFNA

T he dead coconut trees have lost their tops and stand like a for- est of poles, a reminder of fierce artillery battles that once raged along this thin strip of land joining the Jaffna Peninsula to the rest of Sri Lanka.

Not a single house along the highway is intact. A herd of cattle, many with legs blown off, limps past red skull and bone sign warning of uncleared landmines. At Elephant Pass, where 2,000 guerrillas and soldiers died in a savage siege four years ago, rusting hulks of armoured personnel carriers and destroyed bunkers litter the ground.

The 20-year Tamil separatist war that claimed 80,000 lives has now been on hold for two years, and the tropical vegetation is reclaiming the ruins of war.

Jaffna Peninsula is under government control, defended by 50,000 troops, and the Tigers have set up their administrative capital in Kilinochhi, 50km to the south. At the edge of Tiger territory, there are all the trappings of an international border. Immigration officials post Tamil Eelam stamps on passports of visiting foreigners, and vision have to set their watches half an hour ahead of Sri Lankan time.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam have used the ceasefire period to create a separate state in the parts of northeastern Sri Lanka that is under their control. A customs service collects a strict tax on all incoming goods, a court system is busy settling disputes, and a military police force is almost as active as the Tigers themselves.

Tiger war heroes’ cemetery in Kilinochchi.

Remains of an army armoured carrier at Elephant Pass from the 2000 battle.

Develop this

Implicit in development is the notion of superiority.

measurable goals through jargon and constant moving of the goal posts, occasionally even the attitudes of people from abroad towards their Nepal colleagues. This last, I trust, is rare on the ground although I’m sure a few tales exist to prove otherwise.

Development seeks to make basic changes in the intrinsic nature of society. Many of these changes are indeed desirable. Who, for example, doesn’t believe that women should be equal to men in Nepal? Who wouldn’t like to see dalits, janajatis and other disadvantaged groups have the same basic rights as the rest of us?

But those talks have been stalled since November when President Chandrika Kumaratunga snatched security portfolios from Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe’s government, accusing him of giving away too much to the Tigers.

Southern Sri Lanka has enjoyed the benefits of two years of peace — there are no suicide bombings and tourism has rebounded. In government-held Jaffna, the main highway has been reopened, there is 24-hour power and the phones are working again. But one thing is far from settled.

For now, it is clear that unless...
There are a lot of parallels between the conflicts in Sri Lanka and Nepal.

Dhaththa is the leader of PLOTE, one of the smaller former militant Tamil separatist groups that has now given up the armed struggle. He told a group of visiting Nepali journalists here this week: "Vietnam is a mess. No one knows what is going to happen. Not even the president and the prime minister."

That statement had a familiar ring. He went on: “Unless the president and the prime minister patch up, there will be no solution to the insurgency.” Replace 'president' with 'king' and 'prime minister' with 'political parties, and he could well be talking about Nepal.

One can go too far in drawing parallels between this island nation and landlocked Nepal. There is an ethnic separatist war, while ours is a Maoist insurrection. And despite a stalled peace process their two-year ceasefire has held. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the government have the political commitment to adhere to the agreement. True, conflict between the executive and legislative powers in Colombo and the Norwegian government’s withdrawal as mediator, have for the moment, put the brakes on the peace talks.

The recent past between the president’s Sri Lanka Freedom Party and radical left Janatha Vimukti Peramuna (JVP) has also cast doubts over the outcome of ongoing efforts. However, even though the momentum seems to have gone down several notches, the peace process is still on.

Are the parallels for Nepal here? Can Sri Lanka’s experience with making peace be applicable in Nepal’s context? Actually, the Maoists seem to have more in common with the former militant JVP than the LTTE. The Maoists could take a leaf out of the JVP’s entry into mainstream politics from the fringe of extremism and terror.

Federalism, a judicious mix of self-rule and shared rule is seen as a solution in Sri Lanka, and the LTTE has agreed to drop its demand for a separate state. In Nepal, the Maoists have also indicated previously that they may consider giving up their agenda for a republican state if elections to a constituent assembly are held.

The stalemate in Sri Lanka is a result of a power struggle between a cohabiting prime minister and president from rival parties. There is similar tension between the king and political parties and among parties themselves in Nepal. The solution to the crises in both countries is seen as devolution and genuine constitutional reform.

Although the international community has taken an active interest in mediating in the Sri Lanka crisis, the role of the donors is critical in both Nepal and Sri Lanka. There is a familiar rift between the United States and the Europeans in both countries, as well as some friction between New Delhi and Washington, with the Indians wary of US moves in its backyard in both cases. The crises in both countries is seen as devolution and genuine constitutional reform.

The government and political parties must come to a consensus on a long-term devolution strategy. Maybe Nepal also needs to consider foreign mediation. Our warring sides have failed to resolve the crises on their own. Foreign mediation does have implications, especially because of New Delhi’s opposition to it. The Norwegians were seen to be biased in Sri Lanka’s south. Conflict resolution is technical business. It calls for facilitation and monitoring. If we don’t have the expertise, we may need to import it from a non-partisan source.

Sajag Rana is with Channel Nepal Television.
Meeting mountain guerrillas

BEN WESTWOOD

As I trekked through breathtaking mountain scenery on a recent visit, our group was approached by the Maoists in the foothills of the Annapurna, where our guide, Ram, turned to me and whispered: "Maoists with guns." Ahead of us, a group of men were talking to some local children. They looked no different from the other villagers, except for the antique-looking rifles slung over their shoulders. As we passed them, I thought it prudent to avoid eye contact. After checking in to the hotel, we convened at a table outside, where the Maoists joined us for drinks. Understandably, none of us objected.

I met a man with a jet-black beard and bright-red scarf who seemed to fancy himself as a Nepali version of Che Guevara, addressed us energetically in broken English: "We are the Maoists of Nepal, the true inheritors of the revolution. They call us the Maoists. We call them the false Maoists." The man claimed to be an active member of the Maoist Communist Party of Nepal. "We are against capitalism, against imperialism. We are the true Maoists," he said.

We were served water and cricket custard. "This is the best place in the world," one of the Maoists told us. "This is our party headquarters." He smiled and began negotiating payment of our "donations." He wrote out a receipt for Rs 10,000, which worked out to about $110 each, and warned us to keep the receipt, presumably so that we didn't get charged again. On the back he wrote the address of the organisation's website, then shook everybody's hand before leaving.

I thought it prudent to avoid eye contact. After checking in to the hotel, we convened at a table outside, where the Maoists joined us for drinks. Understandably, none of us objected.

"Maoists with guns." It was an unsettling but ultimately harmless experience, and not one I had been expecting when I booked my trip to Nepal last summer. The British Foreign Office has not advised travellers to avoid Nepal, but an insider told me that the government had come within a hair's breadth of doing so. Nevertheless, the travel advice makes it clear that we are on thin ice. I was surprised but not surprised, given growing concerns about the risk of indiscriminate attacks.

Nevertheless, the travel advice makes it clear that we are on thin ice. I was surprised but not surprised, given growing concerns about the risk of indiscriminate attacks.

"Revolutionaries with guns." The Maoists again and our attentions were noticeably thin on the ground. Afterwards reactions among the group were varied. Clark, 24, from London, said: "I wasn’t happy about it. We’re basically funding terrorism and it isn’t what I had any choice."

"I’ve seen real terrorists in Burma and Cambodia and these didn’t look like hard-core revolutionaries to me," said Peter, a 42-year-old former marine who now lives in Hong Kong.

"Revolutionaries with guns." The Maoists again and our attentions were noticeably thin on the ground. Afterwards reactions among the group were varied. Clark, 24, from London, said: "I wasn’t happy about it. We’re basically funding terrorism and it isn’t what I had any choice."

"I’ve seen real terrorists in Burma and Cambodia and these didn’t look like hard-core revolutionaries to me," said Peter, a 42-year-old former marine who now lives in Hong Kong.

"Yes, but they’re not like the Maoists. The Maoists are careful not to threaten tourists (top) and the writing on the wall.

The Maoists are careful not to threaten tourists. 

speech over, he named to Ram and began negotiating payment of our "donations." He wrote out a receipt for Rs 10,000, which worked out to about $110 each, and warned us to keep the receipt, presumably so that we didn’t get charged again. On the back he wrote the address of the organisation’s website, then shook everybody’s hand before leaving. The next day we passed several military checkpoints. "I’ve seen real terrorists in Burma and Cambodia and these didn’t look like hard-core revolutionaries to me," said Peter, a 42-year-old former marine who now lives in Hong Kong.

"Yes, but they’re not like the Maoists. The Maoists are careful not to threaten tourists."

"Yankee go to your home." On the next day we passed several military checkpoints. "I’ve seen real terrorists in Burma and Cambodia and these didn’t look like hard-core revolutionaries to me," said Peter, a 42-year-old former marine who now lives in Hong Kong.

"Yes, but they’re not like the Maoists. The Maoists are careful not to threaten tourists."
political parties have set a fresh deadline for the king: set aside your political ambition by 12 April or else we will go all out for the abolition of monarchy.

However, this deadline contains a hidden message that the king may not have to reinstate parliament if he appoints someone from The Group as prime minister. After all, the normal five year life of the House of Representatives is going to be beyond the point of resuscitation on 12 April.

Does that then mean the political parties will accept the king only if they get back a bakshish in the form of power? If that is the case, then the parties would only be re-establishing the monarchy in its absolute form. Which in turn would lead to a never-ending confrontation between the two.

In order to avoid that, the parties and the king have to accept certain bottom lines:

a. Executive power does not belong to the king, but he deserves utmost respect as a guarantee to the continuity of the institution of constitutional monarchy.

b. The parties must have a certain common agenda for the government, including a timeframe for holding elections to parliament.

c. Political parties and any affiliated organisations should exercise a moratorium on any protest demonstration that involves destruction of private and public property and causes loss of productivity until a democratically elected government comes to power within the specified timeframe.

The various roadmaps floating around that don’t have such clearly-defined bottomlines carry no meaning in resolving the current impasse. Despite initial hiccups, the process of dialogue between the king and the political parties should not be abandoned. A break in contacts will cause the political process and the existing power centres to fragment beyond repair, with a dangerous fallout on the unity and integrity of the country.

The Maoists hold sway over their areas because of the terror they have been able to create and the absence of the government machinery. Theoretically, they would be justified in hoping that this fragmentation will ultimately benefit them. After all, the comrades have successfully exploited the polarisation between palace and parties to their advantage.

The 12 April deadline has, in fact, rekindled the Maoists’ hope at these uncertain times in the run up to the eighth anniversary of their ‘People’s War’.

The threat by the political parties, however, imperils their own future existence and that of the king. After all, the rebels have neither shown willingness to join the democratic process by surrendering their arms, nor recognised the existing parties’ right to exist and carry on their political activities in the rebels’ areas of influence.

The only meaningful step forward is for the king and parties to agree to the above three points of consensus that conform to the spirit of the constitution and will take us all to a restoration of democracy.

Regional politics is not in their favour in the wake of Bhutan’s successful operation against Indian separatists followed by the collective pledge at the SAARC summit in Islamabad to root out ‘terrorism’.

India is now in a situation where it has to not only act against the Maoists, but also has to be seen to be acting against them. A negotiation process—more sincere in intent and practice than the two previous ones—does not appear unrealistic. But that will not materialise so long as the king and parties are driven by their egos. Both needs to exhibit some pragmatic wisdom to reach a settlement.
The National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) observation station in a Pacific atoll off Guam detected a large formation of hot air over Kathmandu Valley in mid-October 2003. The scientists' fears were allayed when they found out that it was only the first Non Resident Nepali (NRN) conference.

Hot air, hype or a true attempt at resuscitating Nepal's moribund economy? The jury is still out. The UK Nepali chapter was well represented in the first NRN conference held at the Birendra International Convention Centre, but where are the leaders of UK Nepalis now? Were they representing the UK Nepal diaspora or themselves? There has been no feedback or information dissemination to share the output and conclusions of the conference. They had their 15 minutes of fame. Where is the blueprint for the UK Nepal to start contributing, towards, and help the economic transformation of Nepal? We don't see any meetings or strategy discussions. There is a fundamental flaw with the NRN objective in the UK. Apathy is deeply entrenched within an unsophisticated community that has scant knowledge of the country.

Scanning the discerning London eye over the Nepali landscape here, it is very hard to comprehend who in this community will take up this challenge and lead the charge. The UK hosts the oldest Nepali community and consequently the oldest Nepal community association in the West, they are not endowed or affluent. There are a few SME business owners, some large businesses run by entrepreneurial Nepalis, though of course, there are plenty in the catering trade who call themselves restaurateurs.

Who in their sane mind would invest in Nepal under the current political and economic climate? Not the community or the various British companies who have taken a flight from the British Nepal Chamber of Commerce's (BNCC) register. The country's status in the global investment rating is poor and everybody today is in a risk averse mode. So will the restaurateurs invest in Nepal? At least this segment of the community has liquidity and the resources. On average their weekly profit and income probably ranges between £5000 - £10,000. One can put aside the possibility that these houses are money-lending.

Surely they could lead the way, but the question arises: what will they invest in besides the obvious land and property market in the Valley? ICT, hydropower or infrastructure development as per the grand vision of the NRN committee is beyond their skillset and capability. By nature these Nepalis are not risk takers but followers. On the whole, Nepali businesses in the UK have a herd mentality.

If one opens a restaurant, everyone follows. If one opens a Thamel style market stall in Camden, everyone sets up shop. A Nepali beer business? Others will tap in. They've brought Nepal with them: open a travel agency in Durbar Marg, a carpet factory in Boudha, a pashmina factory in Balaju and you will have five imitators by day end.

Karan Bilimoria of Cobra beer, the London entrepreneur of the year, said, “It’s not about invention but creativity. It’s all about repackaging the idea in a better way.” However, Nepali restaurateurs in London do not push their creativity and entrepreneurial boundaries. The NRN are not like the NRI. When leaders of India come to London, the resources available are limitless: captains of industry, a vast MBA alumni network, academics, SME entrepreneurs, businesswomen and professionals are all on standby. Nepal does not possess such a resource base. It is a fallacy and a joke to compare the Nepali diaspora to the Indian one.

While it’s true that the guns must fall silent and the political situation stabilise in Nepal, the Nepali diaspora too must evolve. Get more business savvy before asking what we can do for the country. Till then, NOAA’s observation describes it very well—a large bank of rising hot air.

If one opens a restaurant, everyone follows. If one opens a Thamel style market stall in Camden, everyone sets up shop. A Nepali beer business? Others will tap in. They've brought Nepal with them: open a travel agency in Durbar Marg, a carpet factory in Boudha, a pashmina factory in Balaju and you will have five imitators by day end.

Karan Bilimoria of Cobra beer, the London entrepreneur of the year, said, “It’s not about invention but creativity. It’s all about repackaging the idea in a better way.” However, Nepali restaurateurs in London do not push their creativity and entrepreneurial boundaries. The NRN are not like the NRI. When leaders of India come to London, the resources available are limitless: captains of industry, a vast MBA alumni network, academics, SME entrepreneurs, businesswomen and professionals are all on standby. Nepal does not possess such a resource base. It is a fallacy and a joke to compare the Nepali diaspora to the Indian one.

While it’s true that the guns must fall silent and the political situation stabilise in Nepal, the Nepali diaspora too must evolve. Get more business savvy before asking what we can do for the country. Till then, NOAA’s observation describes it very well—a large bank of rising hot air.
SILVER LINING

Morang Auto Works (MAW) marks 25 years of dealing in motorcycles in 2004. Its slogan, “Moving People for 25 Years”, reiterates the company’s commitment to make quality motorcycles of advanced technology available, provide need-based motorcycles for Nepali customers, quality and timely after services, easy finance schemes, and promotion of motorcycles as sports and pleasure machines. MAW introduced popular motorcycles like Rajdoot, RX 100, YB 125, Libero and Enticer in its 27 showrooms and servicing centres around the kingdom. Currently MAW is the largest distributor of motorcycles, selling about 6,000 units of bikes per year.

NEW PRODUCTS

MADE ANEW: Mount Everest Whisky has been relaunched in the Nepal market by Shree Distillery. The mixture of Scotch and DNA is extra smooth, with an international flavour that the manufacturer claims is affordable. Rs 43 for 750ml. Shree has redesigned the product to give it a fresh new look and taste.

GOING GLOBAL: Almost every Nepali student aims to ‘go abroad’ for further studies, usually the US. US-based International Education in Kathmandu, associated with American Universities Scholarships Program (AUSP), promises to help eligible aspirants obtain scholarships of not less than 50 percent, all for a reasonable fee.

REDEFINING CLASS: True to its tradition of being the premier innovative cigarette marketer in Nepal, Shree cigarette now has the new pack formats: 20s Hinge Lid, 10s Hinge Lid and now also in a sleek 10s pack.

NO SLIP-UPS: Subha Shree mustard oil is made from Australian, Canadian and Indian seeds, but manufactured right here in Nepal by Shree industries at their state-of-the-art factory in Nawalparasi. Price: Rs 95 per litre.

The art of business

Nepali firms should promote Nepali arts.

ECONOMIC SENSE

Artha Beed

This weekend, a three-day Gandhara festival showcasing the minions of Nepal is being held at Yala Maya Kendra in Patan, an upcoming venue for social and cultural events. It is supported by a few corporates who feel there are longer term benefits in sponsoring events such as these.

While donor money will flow in for development, businesses prefer to look for more direct benefits, like visibility. This is the primary reason why large number of Nepali firms are endorsed by third grade Bollywood stars and sub-standard programs. The institutionalisation of sponsorship in Nepal is a key issue in promoting the arts in Nepal.

There are sturdy companies that are putting in money or committing resources to make existing cultural events happen, but it is really in the interest of the Nepali arts? There is hardly any money for reviving traditional Nepali music. Gandhara or panche baja remains outside the purview of satellite television or FM stations. While it is natural for companies to look for better mileage, they must share the responsibility for preserving Nepali culture, it is also important for the state to encourage corporate spending in this sector. The government must not penalise contributions by recovering taxes on them. Yes, being Nepali, such provisions could be misused and that is why regulatory mechanisms must be put in place.

Ashutosh Tiwari, who shares this viewpoint with the Beed, remarked a few weeks ago that Nepali art is making the transition from a hobby to a profession. It is important for new talent to be supported in order to have an environment where the arts flourish with legitimate money from the business world. As gual and dance restaurants get lured off for the increasingly popular...they are economic renegades

As a result, the Nepali dohaie eateries, consumer tastes are becoming clear. The shift is towards more authentic art and music. The challenge is for the corporate world to move in that direction too, as the medium of contact with consumers is getting localised. Acorporates spend hundreds of thousands of rupees on advertisements to congratulate themselves on anniversaries, perhaps it is time to divert some of that money to promoting Nepali arts...
A $75 million World Bank fund for power development is stuck because of a dispute over the appointment of a fund administrator

No money, no power

BIG HEAD: The development of small hydropower projects like this one in Lamjung will be stuck if the deadlock over the Power Development Project is not resolved.

manage a $35 million component of the project to finance private investors called the Power Development Fund (PDF).

A negotiation committee of the government had selected Nepal Bangladesh Bank (NBB) as the fund administrator through a bidding process, fixing the fee at a little over $2.5 million. That was when the World Bank was supposed to provide $70 million assistance for the PDF alone. That assistance was slashed by half to $35 million because of country non-performance, but the administrator’s fee was cut by only 25 percent to $2 million.

“The decision has kept board members from endorsing the government’s decision,” a board member told us. “How can we take the responsibility for mistakes made by the government negotiating team?”

The majority of the board members are said to be in favour of re-negotiating with all three banks that bid to administer the fund: Himalayan Bank, Nabil Bank and Nepal Bangladesh Bank.

“There is no consensus yet,” an official with the Department of Electricity said. “Apart from the fee dispute, there are many other issues that have to be settled.”

He did not elaborate, but another board member told us the government had placed the cart before the horse by making decisions before a board had been convened. “We are just the second party in the entire process because we know if we endorse the idea, we will be held responsible.”

Water Ministry officials admit the board has full authority to make all decisions. “The board has even been authorised to appoint the fund administrator on the basis of the negotiations the government has done in the past,” said one official. PDF rules state that the board has the authority to make the appointment. But without board endorsement, NBB’s appointment as administrator is not valid, and without that the World Bank cannot release the money. If the PDF is stuck, the Power Development Project itself grinds to a halt.

The deadlock means other components of the projects, including the $31 million to strengthen Nepal Electricity Authority and a $5.5 million allocation for micro-hydro village electrification are also in limbo. There are fears the bank may cancel the assistance that is a combination of a loan and a grant.

“The beginning of the project can be extended till 18 months after its approval,” the bank’s senior external affairs specialist Rajib Upadhya told us. “If it doesn’t happen by then, the assistance will be cancelled.”

Eight months ago, the World Bank approved a $75 million assistance package for the Power Development Project (PDF). The money was promised to Nepal after it pulled out of the Arun III in 1995, and would be used for other hydropower projects.

But a dispute between the government and a board formed to manage the fund has meant that not a single cent of that money has trickled through. Some members of the five-member board have decided not to endorse an earlier decision by the government on the appointment of an administrator to

Golden revolution

There is a golden revolution sweeping the central Nepali midhills, bringing income to farmers. The cash crop is orange, and trees in orchards across Syangja, Dhading to Dhankuta are bursting with the fruit. This year saw a bumper harvest, and at present rates of growth Nepal’s orange production will double in a few years.

Last year, Nepal produced 80,000 tons of the fruit and this year it is estimated to have crossed the 100,000 ton mark. The area under orange orchards has grown from 5,000 hectares five years ago to 14,000 hectares today. The biggest orange growing areas are in Tanahu, Dhankuta, Syangja, Dhading and Kathre.

Although Nepali oranges have only been sold domestically, exporters are now expanding to India and Bangladesh as well. Experts say the reason for the export market opening up is that Nepali oranges ripen earlier than Indian or Bhutan fruits and they are also preferred by customers who like its thinner skin, its juiciness and sweeter taste. Five years ago, the Ministry of Agriculture exported 14.4 tons of oranges to Bangladesh at $246 per ton, of which farmers got a bonus of $1 per ton on top of the selling price. Today, private investors are selling directly and last year 5,000 tons were exported to Bangladesh alone.

However, Nepali oranges are more expensive than Bhutan and Indian oranges in Bangladesh because exporters there have to pay double the tax for Nepali oranges. In fact, Indian traders are selling Nepali oranges in Bangladesh saying they are from Bhutan. Exporters say streamlining border procedures for the export route via Phulibari to Bangladesh would increase the market potential.

If the new technology developed in Lumle for cellar storage of oranges is replicated in other districts, it would allow longer storage and the ability for Nepali oranges to compete with cheap Indian imports throughout the season. The main market for Nepali oranges, however, is still Kathmandu where 36 tons of oranges were brought in daily for the past three months.
It’s a long way from his home in Gorkha for 13-year-old Rubin Gandharba. He is in Kathmandu this week with a mission to revive the Gaines musical tradition, established by his ancestors centuries ago. “People in the capital should know who we are and about our contribution to Nepali culture,” says Rubin, who is joining 19 other gaines to participate in the three-day Gandhaba Festival in Patan starting 30 January.

‘Gandharba ka Saathiharu’, a Kathmandu-based community of journalists and musicians, have come together to promote the music of the gaines, Nepal’s travelling minstrels. In the caste system of cable and FM, this sublime music played to the wail of sarangi and beat of the madal falls at the bottom of the pecking order.

Most Nepali folk songs are inspired by the gaines. With them lies the genesis of Nepali folklore, song and music as we know it today. The modern folk genre is commercially successful but its proponents are predominantly Brahmins, Newars, Gurungs and Limbus. While neo-gaines gain nationwide popularity and become wealthy celebrities, the gaines are neglected and on the verge of extinction.

Amrit Gurung, lead singer of Nepathya and Aavaas, a contemporary music composer and singer, went on a talent hunting mission to Kaski, Tanahu, Gorkha, Lamjung and Syangjha districts. Despite the accompanying danger of police harassment, bomb explosions and army-Maoist encounters, the two found 150 gaines and invited 20 to perform at the Gandharba Festival.

“It’s sad that real musicians like them are not getting any opportunity at all. Nepali music will not advance by just copying the modern Western style but by modifying our own indigenous music,” says Aavaas. Gaines are not just singers wandering around with four-string sarangis, but are communicators and reporters, keepers of the collective memory of our land. In the days before mass communication, their music was the medium for rural Nepal to learn of and remember battles, brave soldiers, natural disasters, joys and sorrows of everyday life. The people listened attentively to the gaines and repaid their service with food, clothes and other necessities. Until just before the Maoist war flared up, when people were not at all about death as they are now, gaines composed songs about life’s end. “But with so many deaths everyday, people are not shocked or even curious anymore,” says Aavaas.

Today most Nepalis view gaines as a nuisance—they are shoed away from bus windows, ignored on the city streets or humiliated by packs of young people. Frustrated by their waning popularity in the changing social sphere, alcoholism is on the rise among gaines. “Foreigners have done more for us than Nepalis. They have more respect and value for our music,” says Krishna Bahadur Gandharba from Tanahu.

He speaks of several gaines who were sponsored to travel abroad to participate in the folk music concerts. Lal Bahadur Gandharba went to Vienna two years ago and was surprised to get such a rousing round of applause from hundreds gathered to see him perform. “It was the happiest moment of my life,” he recalls. “We should no longer be ashamed to say that we are gaines and of low caste.”

The old generation says it is up to the young to keep tradition alive. “First of all, they should not be ashamed to carry their sarangi and sing anywhere,” says Krishna, who has given up trying to motivate children from a 17-member clan to follow his footsteps. Krishna feels the only way to prevent his people’s music from becoming extinct is to document the gaines knowledge and skills.

**Gaines are us**

The songs of the gaines carry the Nepali soul

NARESH NEWAR

Gandharba Festival 30 January - 1 February 2004 at Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Contact: 5522113, 2110200

---

DAMN MINSTREL: A sarangi under construction, and a gaine clan in Tanahu.
No-video nights in Kathmandu

On the odd weekend when the party animal inside rears its head, the call must be answered. Let’s start with the premise that Kathmandu is not the liveliest place in the world—well, at least not in terms of glitzy nightlife, but it’s not as if they roll up the streets when the sun goes down either. You could stumble upon good times, or you read on and discover the true hipsters in the city. All this on a whirlwind, fun-filled Friday night.

7PM Perfect for pre-dinner cocktails, dinner and a dessert drink.

Jatra, Thamel: Amazingly peaceful, even in the heart of Thamel. Jatra is fast getting a reputation, a good one. It’s not desperately hip or trendy. In fact, it’s the sort of place you go with children, parents, colleagues or even on a low-pressure date. The live band makes pleasant music, unlike some other venues where it’s like that 1972 rock hit ‘Cum on Feel the Noise’. The outdoor seating is a bit chilly this time of year, but come summer, Jatra is a top pick.

Roadhouse Café, Thamel: This is my personal favourite. If you’re lucky enough to snag the table at the right, you may never want to leave this very tastefully designed neo-Nepali interior. The Roadhouse specialties are their woodfired pizzas which are innovative and delicious. Roadhouse’s presentation must be commended, it even manages to pretty up an ordinary ice tea. The Red Onion Bar, Lazimpat: Just outside Hotel Radisson, Red Onion offers a wide selection of drinks and cocktails from all over the globe. It attracts a slightly upscale crowd from the embassies and NGOs in the area. While admiring the multitude of drinks on display is entertaining, if you enjoy an after-dinner cigar, this is one place where you can savour a fine blend lounging on their fabulously comfortable sofas.

Mandil’s Restaurant, Thamel: A Belgian would recognise the name, because this café has its HQ there. It’s a travellers port of call that attracts a fair share of locals and resident expats. Via Via hosts many dance events with foreign DJs mixing some bumping beats. Oh yes, and they have a very nice cocktail menu.

9PM Dinner’s done but it’s still too early to go dancing. A few mellow drinks are in order as the night builds up.

The Red Onion Bar, Lazimpat: Just outside Hotel Radisson, Red Onion offers a wide selection of drinks and cocktails from all over the globe. It attracts a slightly upscale crowd from the embassies and NGOs in the area. While admiring the multitude of drinks on display is entertaining, if you enjoy an after-dinner cigar, this is one place where you can savour a fine blend lounging on their fabulously comfortable sofas.

Tantara Bar, Thamel: If cigars won’t do for you and a more eastern flavour is what you crave, then Tantara’s hookas, imported straight from Bahrain and available in different flavours, could lend you a little exotic east cache. The Axis band plays live on the others side, but New Orleans has great food, well-mixed cocktails and a good live band. New Orleans is one of those places with an amazing ambience, time just flies by. During the winter cold, it does try its best to keep you warm with plenty of wood fires and heaters.

Kilmey’s at Boardwalk, 1965, Kirtipur: For a romantic gourmet meal without the extra candle bar with candlelight and a pond with white swans, 1905 is the ideal place to start Friday night. With Chef Thomas Kilroy’s menu and the new Jack Lives up.

After a day of breathing out, Jack Daniel’s bar, this could be that one night spot you won’t have to leave, especially if there is a dance party at their sunken garden.

Café Mitra, Thamel: There are people who swear by Kunal Lama’s cosmopolitan café. Housed in an old building, the interior is contemporary, the menu excellent and the cocktails at Mitra Lounge Bar are far from the slap-dash affair available at other bars.

9.30PM Fire Club, Thamel: It’s the sort of place you go with an eye on the wall-sized TV projection in a large seating area. However, there is a rougher side to the Fire Club. If a fight breaks out, as is wont to happen, just move aside.

Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency: Rox is a pick-me-up, a bar that attracts a fair share of locals and resident expats. From a low pressure date to a high profile girl’s night and beyond, the Rox has been there to entertain everyone in Kathmandu. Rox Bar it may call itself, but this is more a swank club: beautiful people sip on expensive drinks or dance to hot new tracks. Till recently, the Rox was the most popular club in the kingdom and on Fridays it still manages to deliver, despite the cover charge, that, to be fair, includes a complimentary drink.

Subterrania – Club Kilroy, Thamel: For those who think Boudha is too far then ‘sub’ it. A relatively new dance destination, Subterrania’s in-house DJ Pritam should have you dancing all night. The club is for members only and they reserve the right of admission to keep the ‘undesirables’ out. Prices are reasonable and the VIP lounge is plush. You could order a bottle of quality bubbly and rub shoulders with the select crowd—if you can get past the door.

Fire Club, Thamel: On the other end of Sub is Fire Club. It welcomes everyone though the bouncers at the door have a final say. The place is always happening thanks to new music and extremely affordable prices. It helps that Fire is at the centre of Thamel. When you get tired, you can contemplate another drink with an eye on the wall-sized TV projection in a large seating area. However, there is a rougher side to the Fire Club. If a fight breaks out, as is wont to happen, just move aside.

Funky Buddha Bar & Café, Thamel: Definitely not mainstream, at least in terms of music and party styles. Happy
hoever said nothing fun happens in Nepal obviously didn’t look in the right place: PartyNepal.com. It all started when three party animals met at a salsa night and discovered that they shared a particular passion…partying! They were part of a rising demand for the latest, ‘happening’, up-to-date information on where to be seen once the sun sets on the Himalayas.

Mandil Pradhan and Robin Sitoula duly noted the information lapse of a reliable source for parties and events. They decided to create a website to provide free access to news, reviews and information related to Nepal’s ‘clubbing scene’ that, no, does not refer to people bashing each other with effigies or batons, both of which are common on the city streets.

PartyNepal.com is the definitive guide to having a good time in the kingdom. They have the latest club and dance-music charts, bulletin boards and a chatroom, updates on the latest parties and bios on the big DJs. The PartyNepal triumvirate is 25-year-old Sitoula, 20-year-old Pradhan and 26-year-old Bhushan Thapa.

Sitoula is a trained DJ who specialises in electronica. After graduating from Sydney, his penchant for traveling, partying and clubbing took him to party, club and rave meccas like Ibiza, Amsterdam, Milan, New York, Los Angeles, Rio De Janeiro and Goa where he met big names like Fat Boy Slim, Carl Cox and PVD. Sitoula says, “It’s my dream to promote more of an electronica scene in Nepal. Hopefully, we can host big name DJs here and be known as a destination for music lovers as well.”

Pradhan, a young graphic designer is ‘fierce’ when it comes to partying. He manages, updates and co-owns the site. “I party hard: I get to do what I love and I get paid for it,” he says. It’s tough to beat that. Thapa, marketing director of PartyNepal.com, is a Business Management graduate from Sydney. A whiz at marketing and public relations, he even does event management though his actual background is the more staid area of finance and banking. He looks after the trio’s marketing, sponsorship and “makes” clients. “I’m the guy behind the scenes,” says Thapa. “My work isn’t really work: it’s like organising fun.”

PartyNepal.com launched Nepal’s first online clubbing and partying portal on 14 April 2003, the first day of 2060 BS, at a low-budget event in Thamel where more than 300 people showed up! Four days later, they organised “Tranceport: Kathmandu”, still remembered as one of the best trance events in the Valley. They hosted “Retro Night, A memory of the 60s & 70s”, a party intended for the oldies to let loose and boogie. This was followed by PTY LTD, an Australian Electro Funk Band, who performed in Kathmandu as part of their world tour. The “Lounge-A-Rama” event was a live concert that got a phenomenal response from music lovers and the media.
Primary experience

A Nepali recalls working on Al Gore’s campaign four years ago

ASHUTOSH TIWARI

The boss is Nepal’s leading business and management magazine. We offer career opportunities for enthusiastic and well driven individuals with strong people skills, good command of the English language and genuine interest in writing.

Features Writers

Strong command of language with sincere interest in writing well researched articles. The individual should be open to new and creative ideas, be analytical and have the ability to deliver against deadlines.

Reporters / Research Assistants

Enthusiastic young individuals interested in meeting people, with a nose for news and the ability to analyze.

Graphic Designers

Creativity unleashed. We are looking for individuals with real design sense with complete knowledge of graphic software. Knowledge of pre-press and press techniques will be an advantage.

Photographers

Versatile photographers willing to work on a wide cross-section of photography requirements may apply. Should possess your own equipment.

Marketing Manager

A complete people’s person. Highly motivated individuals who believe in team work, and are a step ahead of the market trends. An achiever who not only sets targets, but believes in exceeding them.

Marketing Executives

Result oriented, young, enthusiastic, personable go getters with strong communication skills.

The boss is an equal opportunity employer

If you know you will enjoy being a part of a motivated, committed and enthusiastic team, please drop in your resume addressed to the CEO, the boss along with a passport size photograph to our office located in New Baneshwor (adjacent to the Everest Hotel). Prior work experience is not a must. Please mark your envelop with the position applied for.

G.P.O. Box: 2294, New Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: 4762819 Fax: 977-1-4762100
E-mail: theboss@theboss.com.np

Place: Cambridge, Massachusetts
Time: December 1999.

A grizzled veteran of US elections is giving a two-hour lecture. A democrat with a 30-year of experience with local, regional and national-level elections, described what it was like working on a campaign.

He reminisced dealing with quirky, even psychotic, sides of various candidates. He regaled us with stories of brutally-packed, fueled-by-caffeine 20-hour-a-day work schedules. He talked about election strategies, voter mentality, issues around which pollsters frame questions, ways of dealing with the bad news and the media, and about how he had to play the role of a marriage/relationship counsellor to both the candidates and the campaign staff.

He also described the subculture of ‘campaign lifers’—election junkies who spend their entire lives floating from one election campaign to another often marrying and divorcing one another. “No other work anywhere teaches you so much about human beings in such a short amount of time as working on an election campaign does,” he said.

As a Nepali, I was fascinated. After the lecture, I asked him whether it was possible to work as a short-term volunteer at the Presidential Primary elections in New Hampshire. Who knows, the experience might come handy to work on campaigns in Nepal someday—I gave him a resume, and a few days later, I got a call from Manchester, New Hampshire asking me to come up to the coastal town of Portsmouth to help out with the Al Gore 2000 campaign.

With a Democrat president in the last year of his final term at the White House then, the election year 2000 got off to a rauous start. Candidates from both the leading parties were vying with one another to win their parties’ primaries in New Hampshire. The frontrunners among the Democrats were Vice President Al Gore and Senator Bill Bradley, while Texas Governor George W Bush and Senator John McCain were the Republican frontrunners. Some extracts from the dairy:

Day 5: Our messy single-room office adjoins a law firm, which allows us to use its phones, faxes and copiers. Office adjoins a law firm, which allows us to use its phones, faxes and copiers. After a dinner consisting of limp fries and flat Coke, I start making. After a dinner consisting of limp fries and flat Coke, I start making.

Day 23: Senator Kerry is in town as a surrogate for Gore. My job is to take him from house to house and store to store so that he can ‘press some flesh’ and do ‘retail campaigning’. All these places had been carefully selected and prepared in advance to show to the members of the media who are tagging behind Kerry how enthusiastic the voters are about Gore. I am learning that for a candidate everything he does boils down to how it looks in the media.

Day 27: There’s a giant rally this afternoon at a high school auditorium. Rock music is playing, and cheerleaders, in their slinky outfits, do the rah-rah thing up on the stage. Hundreds of supporters, wearing campaign buttons or holding placards, mill around. The emcee introduces Gore as the “next president of the United States”, and the crowd goes wild. Gore gives his stump speech. He’s using the occasion to prepare for a television debate later tonight. We watch that debate with 30 other people in a supporter’s house. By now, we have all bonded as though we have known one another for years.
**The Islamic democracy deficit**

Despite encouraging signs, it is impossible to ignore a "democracy deficit" in the Muslim world, especially the Arab part of it. Only one of every four countries with Muslim majorities has a democratically elected government. Worse yet, the gap between Muslim countries and the rest of the world is widening.

Democracy and freedom expanded over recent decades into Latin America, Africa, Europe, and Asia, but the Muslim world continues to struggle. By the reckoning of Freedom House, one of the main think tanks devoted to monitoring democracy worldwide, the number of countries with "free" or "partly free" governments increased by nearly three dozen over the past 20 years. Not one has a Muslim majority.

This phenomenon has been noted within the Muslim world as well. In the summer of 2002, a team of Arab scholars produced the Arab Human Development Report, written on behalf of the UN Development Program and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development. It portrays an Arab world lagging behind other regions in key measures, including individual freedom and women’s empowerment, as well as economic and social development.

Dismal trends, such as a demographic "youth bulge" combined with high youth unemployment rates—reaching almost 40% in some places—highlight potentially explosive social conditions. The Arab world faces serious problems that cannot be met by more flexible, democratic political systems.

The second Arab Human Development Report, released in 2003, underscores the close relationship between the Arab world’s educational shortcomings and its lack of democracy. Democracy requires an informed electorate capable of making choices between candidates, parties, and political programs. A well-educated citizenry is also essential if young men and women are to acquire the skills needed to perform the sort of jobs today’s global and competitive world demands.

Alas, instead of progress, what we see is a cycle of inadequate educational opportunity leading to a lack of economic opportunity. Neither freedom nor prosperity can develop in such conditions. Muslims cannot blame the United States for their lack of democracy. Still, America does play a role in the world stage, and in many parts of the Muslim world, particularly in the Arab world, successive US administrations—Republican and Democratic alike—have not made democratisation a priority.

At various times, the US avoided scrutinizing the internal workings of friendly countries in the interest of ensuring a steady flow of oil; containing Soviet, Iraqi and Iranian expansionism; addressing issues related to the Arab-Israeli conflict; resisting communism in East Asia; or securing military bases. By failing to foster gradual democratisation—and yielding to a “democratic exception” in parts of the Muslim world—America missed an opportunity to help these countries adapt to the stresses of a globalising world.

Continuing this policy is not in America’s interest. According to the Bush administration’s 2002 National Security Strategy, US policy will be more actively devoted to the idea that a free and open society is the best guarantor of peace and freedom globally, with no exception for the Muslim world. This commitment was made with the full knowledge that democracies are imperfect and terribly complicated. Leaders in some Muslim states counter democratic systems with their more orderly arrangements and point with satisfaction to the seeming stability that alternative to democratic norms. Yet stability based on authority alone is illusory and ultimately impossible to sustain. Iran, Iraq, and Libya illustrate that rigid authoritarian systems cannot withstand the shocks of social, political or economic change, especially at the pace that characterises today’s world.

Any doubt that promoting democracy now receives greater emphasis in US foreign policy was removed by President Bush’s speech of last November, in which he made clear that the Muslim world’s democratic deficit is not tied to religions, but to “failures of political and economic doctrines.”

President Bush also made clear that Americans had learned from the past. “Twenty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe—because, in the long run, stability cannot be purchased at the expense of liberty. As long as the Middle East remains a place where freedom does not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation, resentment, and violence ten times worse for our export.”

So the US now actively supports the extension of democracy throughout the Arab and Muslim worlds, not simply for humanitarian reasons, or for theoretical reasons, but from self-interest. History shows that societies where opportunity is safeguarded tend to be societies that are good international citizens.

Finally, political reform must go hand in hand with economic and educational reform for all the critics in a society, including the 50 percent who happen to be women. No country can succeed if it denies itself the talents of half of its people. True democracy can only be built and maintained from within, by a country’s people and leaders. Outsiders, however, can and should help. There is a role for governments, international organisations, corporations, universities, and journalism—fundamentally from the US, but also from Europe and countries in Latin America, Asia, and Africa where democracy has taken root. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a more important task for established democracies than helping other countries join their ranks.

**North Korea’s right to food**

North Korea has been using food as an instrument of political and economic control, says a major new report by Amnesty International (AI). An estimated 5 million people, or 25% of the country’s 23 million people, are said to have died over the past two years from starvation. According to the 42-page document, "Starved of Rights," the state—which is based on the testimonies of refugees, reports by humanitarian agencies that have worked in North Korea and other sources—comes amid an ongoing crisis over the country’s alleged nuclear-weapons program and demands by the administration of US President George W. Bush that the program be totally and verifiably dismantled. Negotiations to reconcile the two positions have thus far proven inconclusive. Various sources estimate that famine has killed between half a million and one million North Koreans during the 1990s. Washington has been the biggest single supplier of food aid to North Korea in recent years.

The report noted that about 41 percent of North Korean children under the age of seven suffered severe malnutrition in 2002, and that rations this year were expected to be further reduced in the absence of stepped-up food aid. Amnesty argues that the right to food must be considered a basic human right—on par with political and civil rights—under a number of international covenants, and that governments thus have a duty to feed their people. (AP)

**Bird Flu raises political stink**

A plague of dead chickens is raising a political stink in Thailand, whose government is being pilloried for placing profits over the lives of the country’s rural poor. Also exposed is the government’s disrespect for transparency. Since the weekend, the administration of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has been forced to endure the consequence of its economic bias and its lack of regard for an open, democratic culture.

This has come in the form of the death of two boys due to the bird flu, up to 10 people coming under surveillance for possibly having the disease and 13 provinces being declared epidemic zones. At the international level too, Bangkok is paying dearly for what critics say was a “cover up” by authorities to hide the true picture of avian flu in Thai chicken farms in recent weeks. The hardest rebuke was delivered by the European Union (EU), whose statement virtually accused the Thai government of resorting to lies to protect its country’s highly lucrative industry of chicken exports. Thailand is Asia’s largest exporter of chickens.

Till last Thursday, the Thai government denied that the bird flu was rampaging through the country, despite reports from poor rural farmers that their poultry had been dying in the thousands since last year. The government had been saying that the deaths were due to fowl cholera and that hence, humans were not susceptible. The Thai government’s change of tune, however, came with the harsh economic truth it was forced to swallow by the weekend.
Iraq, the next Afghanistan

Hassan Mirmoq

A fter the onset of the US-led war in Iraq, two competing views shaped predictions about the outcome. The first contended that overthrowing Saddam Hussein’s regime would usher in a democratic era in Iraq that would serve as a model and catalyst for democratic change regionally. The second was that the US military campaign, though potentially successful, may not bring Iraq closer to democracy. This ‘Afghan scenario’ was more likely. They asked: What is the political culture of Iraq? Is Iraq’s collapse into a failed state, with rampant warlordism, tribal, sectarian and multiethnic conflicts, a likely outcome? Whether there is a democratic system in Iraq will still be arduous. But instead of shaping predictions about the outcome, by accepting that a nuclear weapon is ‘small’ enough to ‘contain’ collateral damage, we are more likely to fire them, which means an environmental and humanitarian disaster we haven’t seen since World War II. That’s why we can say that there really is no such thing as a mini-nuke.”

Mini-Nukes: New defence or threat?

The US effort to design a new generation of low-power nuclear weapons, approved in the defence budget for 2004, is politically, technically and militarily unjustifiable, say critics. The so-called ‘mini-nukes’ have a potential of less than the five-kiloton explosion, three of that had destroyed with atomic-strength arms. Among the advantages of smaller nuclear charges, say their defenders, is that they cause less “collateral damage” and allow better control and lower maintenance costs. The US Department of Defence is specifically interested in studying the use of small nuclear bombs, known as ‘earth penetrators’, to destroy underground refuges used by potential enemies to store chemical and biological weapons, considered the greatest security threats of the new century. According to a report presented to the US Congress, the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) believes there are more than 1,400 strategic underground targets worldwide. But critics like Robert K Muli, director of the non-governmental Physicians for Social Responsibility, say: “If warheads prove that a nuclear weapon is ‘small’ enough to ‘contain’ collateral damage, they are more likely to fire them, which means an environmental and humanitarian disaster we haven’t seen since World War II. That’s why we can say that there really is no such thing as a mini-nuke.”

WHO accused government and the UN, 46.2 million Ethiopians are being waged between two paradigms: the Arab and Muslim worlds, a cultural war is hardly neutral, but unwittingly enter the Iraqi scene. A cultural battle.

As a result, the space for a liberal democratic system in Iraq will still be arduous. But instead of succumbing to a ‘Somalia scenario’, dreaming of a ‘Japan scenario’, or settling for an ‘Afghan scenario’, Iraq may yet become a ‘scenario’ for successful intervention in the 21st century.

A World Health Organisation official in Ethiopia has dismissed an article in a respected British medical journal that claimed the United Nations agency was undermining the fight against malaria. The Lancet accuses the agency of approving cheap drugs that do not work, and blocking the use of a newer—albeit more expensive—treatment to combat the disease. This comes as Ethiopia is experiencing a malaria epidemic. According to a joint report by

Will it be the Somali or the Afghan scenario?

The key mistake was the failure of occupation forces to equip and empower the small group of Iraqi liberal democratic forces to shape this middle ground. As a result, the space for a liberal democratic system was blocked and potentially killed. Instead of succumbing to a ‘Somalia scenario’, dreaming of a ‘Japan scenario’, or settling for an ‘Afghan scenario’, Iraq may yet become a ‘scenario’ for successful intervention in the 21st century.
Sustainable medicine
Health care reform has become a chronic disease.

Daniel Callahan

There is hardly a developed country where health care reform has not become a kind of chronic disease of modern medicine: as soon as reforms are implemented, a call comes for yet another round. Costs continue to climb, but nothing seems to contain their growth for very long.

Why? Politics surely plays a role. But a more fundamental reason is the nature of modern medicine itself. Most developed countries have a growing number and proportion of elderly. Since health care costs for those over 65 are approximately four times higher than for those under 65, aging societies place massive claims on medical resources.

This is compounded by the constant introduction of new (and usually more expensive) technologies, together with increased demands for high-quality health care. We want more, expect more, and complain more loudly if we don’t get it. When we do get it, we quickly raise the bar, wanting more, and complain more loudly if we don’t get it. When we do get it, we quickly raise the bar, wanting more, and complain more loudly if we don’t get it. When we do get it, we quickly raise the bar, wanting more, and complain more loudly if we don’t get it.

The net result has been an average general system-wide cost increase of 10 percent-15 percent annually in the United States for the past several years—and with no end in sight. European countries are under severe cost pressures as well, undermining their cherished ideal of equitable access.

Unfortunately, greater use of co-payments and deductibles, privatization of health-care infrastructure, and waiting lists for elective surgery and other non-emergency care are unlikely to work much better in the future than they do now. It has thus been a radical change in how we think about medicine and health care, not simply better ways to organize existing systems.

We need a “sustainable medicine” that is affordable to national health care systems and provides equitable access in the long term.

The notion of “sustainability” comes from environmentalism, which seeks to protect the earth and its atmosphere in order to sustain indefinitely human life of a good quality. As with environmentalism, sustainable medicine requires reformulating the ideas of progress that drives technology costs and fiscal public demand. The Western idea of progress, translated to medicine, sets no limits on the improvement of health, defined as the reduction of morbidity and the relief of all medical miseries. However much health improvement increases, it will never be sufficient—so far progress is always required. But unlimited progress cannot be paid for with finite means. Long-term affordability and equitable access requires a finite vision of medicine and health care, one that does not try to overcome aging, death and disease, but tries to help everyone avoid a premature death and to live decent, even if not perfect, lives.

This implies shifting medical resources sharply towards health promotion and disease prevention. Billions of dollars have been spent on mapping the human genome. Comparable sums must be spent on understanding and changing health behaviors that are most likely to bring about disease. Why is obesity increasing almost everywhere? Why do so many people continue smoking? Why is it so difficult to persuade contemporary people to exercise?

Sustainable medicine also requires computing health care expenditure with spending on other socially important goods. In a balanced society, health care may not always be the top priority. At the same time, we often overlook the health benefits of spending money in ways that have nothing to do with the direct delivery of medical care: education and health, for example, are strongly correlated: the higher the former the better the latter.

In any case, sustainable medicine acknowledges that rationing is and always will be a part of any health care system. No system can give everyone everything they need. Our aspirations will always exceed our resources, particularly since medical progress itself raises public expectations. But, to be fair, rationing requires the knowledge and general consent of all who are subject to it.

One place to start is to evaluate the economic impact of new technologies, preferably before they are released to the public. Evidence-based medicine—a popular technique for controlling costs—is ordinarily aimed only at the efficacy of diagnostic or therapeutic procedures. But if drug companies must test new products for their safety and efficacy, why not also for their economic impact on health care? New technologies should not be dropped into health care systems unless they are found sufficiently cost-effective. Only if a technology does not significantly raise costs, or does so only exceptionally, should governments be willing to pay for it.

Most fundamentally, a finite model of medicine must accept human aging and death as part of the human life cycle, not some kind of preventable condition. Medicine must shift in focus from length of life to quality of life. A medicine that keeps people alive too long is not a decent and humane medicine. We can live to be 85, but we are likely to do so with chronic conditions that leave us sick and in pain.

This is not an argument against progress. I, for one, am glad that people don’t die of small pox at 40 anymore. But aging and death will still win out in the end. Medical progress is like exploring outer space: no matter how far we go, we can go further. With space travel, the economic limitations of unlimited exploration soon became obvious: no more moon walks. Medicine needs an analogous insight.

Slower technological progress may seem a high price to pay for sustainable health care. But our current systems carry an even higher price, threatening justice and social stability. At the same time, only about 40 percent of the rise in health costs over the past century is attributable to medical progress, with the rest reflecting improved social and economic conditions. This trend is likely to continue, so that even if technological progress slows, people are almost certain to live longer lives in the future—and in better health—than they do now. That outcome should be acceptable to everyone.

Daniel Callahan is Director, International Program, The Hastings Center, and a Senior Fellow at the Harvard Medical School.
In India
Nepal Samacharpancha, 27 January
For the first time, the Maoists are reported to have detonated an explosive in Indian territory. They placed a copper pitcher filled with 30kg of gunpowder on a road adjoining the Mahakali River across the western Nepal border. The explosive device was meant for the Nepal security forces that patrol the area but a team from the Indian Special Service Bureau (SSB) discovered the homemade bomb early morning on 26 January. A Nepali security unit and soldiers of the Indian army’s 7th Gorkha Rifles reached the site to defuse the bomb. The SSB cordoned off the area, saying they needed to examine the material. Officers with the Indian army believe the rebels planted the bomb four days ago.

Mad goats
Kathmandu, 27 January
KAPIL BASTU — There is danger that the infectious disease PPR (peste des petits ruminants), also known as goat plague, may get out of control because of an unauthorised supply of diseased goats and sheep from India into this district that is also being sold for meat. The animals are not inspected and experts say that if this continues, Nepal will be unable to control the outbreak of disease.

Worst affected are local agricultural workers who depend on livestock. Although the District Livestock Service Office is actively involved in anti-PPR vaccinations, there has not been much progress in controlling this animal disease. Every year, about 100,000 goats are vaccinated to keep them immune for three years. Fortunately, humans are immune to PPR.

“PPR-infected animals have to be destroyed but Indian farmers bring these animals illegally into Nepal,” says Debendra Shrestha, chief of the District Livestock Service Office. The problem started after the police check post was removed, allowing for an unrestricted flow of people through many unmananned or understaffed animal quarantine checkpoints. Sources say Nepalis are involved in this lucrative activity, among them, secretaries at the VDCs. “Usually people need authorisation from the VDC and secretaries give them these papers. It’s our farmers who bear the loss of their livestock,” adds Shah.

Joining Maoists
Annapurna Post, 27 January
Since the Maoists declared a regional autonomous government in Karnali, DDCs are displaying an interest in working with the rebels. DDC chairmen and their deputies say it would be better to involve the Maoists in development activities since there is no other way to function. “They can be involved when it becomes necessary,” said Dhan Bahadur Adhikari, DDC chairman from Jajarkot. He explained that the Indian army can’t enter the district without written permission from the rebels. “The situation is not secure enough so even walk around the district headquarters,” says Adhikari. The Maoists have requested the DDCs to work together in the construction of ‘a new regime’. “Even if they don’t come to me, there may be no harm if the development work is done without any corruption,” says Adhikari.

Pramila Shah, DDC chairman from Rolpa, says after the Maoists asked her to join their party as a senior member, she had to leave her village and come to Kathmandu. “I haven’t returned for the last two years,” says Shah. This time, she is planning to return to her office in the village, hoping that the Maoists will not trouble her if she takes back a development package to benefit the locals. For now, the ministry has told the DDC authorities to develop their own strategies to start development activities. It also stated that DDC officials should not expect state protection. “Since the officials are political activists, their parties should be the ones to protect them,” said Khemraj Nepal of the Local Development Ministry.

Forced out
Nepal Samacharpancha, 27 January
Terror has spread in the borders of Morung since the Indian Special Security Bureau (SSB) instructed its security forces to demolish houses within 100m inside the Nepal-India border. Without informing either the Royal Nepal Army or the police, Indian security forces suddenly entered Nepal and threatened locals to leave their houses within a week or face forceful evictions. Although the SSB says they are removing houses only from the Indian side, reports of vandalised houses are coming in. This follows the incident at Sunsari where Indian security forces forcefully demolished Nepalese houses and manhandled the locals. India says its action is necessary to reduce cross border crimes and that at least 50 houses will be removed from the border area in Biratnagar.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK
If the regression is not corrected by March, our movement will be oriented towards a republic. — ArjunSherchan, chairman of the People’s Front Nepal (PfN) in Samacharpur, 20 January

FROM THE NEPALI PRESS
“They should have at least informed the Nepali security forces before taking action on their own,” says Mohammed Muslim Muya, ward chairman of Biratnagar-22.

Freed

Space Time, 26 January

DOTT – A dalit family was beaten and evicted from their village after refusing to remain as haliyas. A haliya is a kind of bonded agricultural labourer, usually from a low caste. Despite a movement against this custom, this is the first incident where a family has been brutally treated and thrown out of the village. Narayan Singh Bista, the chief of Durgamadau VDC, and his brother Thagi Bista beat 75-year-old Laxi Kami, her sons and her husband when they refused to work as haliyas. Their family has worked under the haliya system with the Bistas for generations. Laxi spent her whole life working for the village chief but when she got old and weak, the Bistas asked her son Bhagi to replace her mother. Unlike his mother, Bhagi could not endure the treatment and quit because he felt exploited and was underpaid.

The Bistas asked her son Bhagi to replace his mother. Unlike his mother, Bhagi could not endure the treatment and quit because he felt exploited and was underpaid.

Maoist effigies

Annapurna Post, 28 January

It is now the turn of the effigies of Maoist chiefs Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai to burn on the streets of Kathmandu. The Nepal Maoist Victim Association have organised the bonfire for 13 February after they received threats from the rebels to dissolve their organisation. “We got a letter from Prabhakar of the Maoist Kathmandu Valley coordination committee last month,” says chairman Ganesh Chiluwad. “He asked us to stop campaigning against the Maoists and to dissolve our association.” The association chose 13 February because it marks the eighth anniversary of the Maoists’ ‘People’s War’. The rebels have accused the association of spying on the Maoists and being funded by the US Embassy in Kathmandu. Chiluwad said that his organisation is not afraid of the rebels’ threat.

Any interview with the king is carefully scrutinised. However, the latest one had a different tone because it was King Gyanendra’s first foreign-media interview. Interestingly, it was given to Time, the American newsmagazine known for its in-depth and sometimes flashy coverage of world issues. It looks like the king wants to portray his October Fourth move as legitimate and necessary before the international community. In the course of the interview, he also expressed appreciation for America’s outstanding contributions to Nepal.

The king’s words were carefully chosen and deliberately used. Nevertheless, the interview gives the impression that politically the nation is in the process of retracting its step back to an autocratic regime. This means the accomplishments of the 1990 Movement, which was brought about by the Nepali people by paying a heavy price, is being stamped out. The ‘appropriate’ words the king used for the interview were so ambiguous that it can deceive people into believing what he says is the truth and nothing but the truth. His rhetoric is impressive. Somewhere in the interview the king said, “My roadmap and agenda is my people and the nation itself.” What does this mean? And what does he imply by saying, “Gone are the days when kings used to be seen, but not heard. We are in the 21st century now?” Is he is talking about 21st century monarchy and that it should, as anyone would agree, be constitutional? Monarchy should come under international approval?

The king also used a veiled threat: “The reality is that people of Nepal want to see their king, they want to hear from him”. By saying this he implies his active role will continue. In short, the interview gave clear indication that the king will carefully review the reaction and response coming from the political parties and also from the international community before taking appropriate action. What is more ominous is the reflected confidence that he can easily quell the street protests through brute force. Did he give this interview to seek international approval? The country will therefore definitely move backwards and remain there. Those who advise King Gyanendra should warn him that his course of action could be detrimental to the institution of monarchy in the long run—like burning one’s own house to warm oneself. If the king wants his own way, then it could spell the beginning of the end of monarchy in Nepal.
“The king’s politics has ceased to be relevant”

BP tries to assure Ganesh Man Singh that they have not made a mistake by returning to Nepal. BP’s analysis is that their return at a time when the Janata Party is in power in Delhi proves that they are not guided by India, or dependent on it. “It is my declaration of faith in our future and also of independence from India,” BP writes in these pages from his diary.

21.11.77

Veena letters to Chetana + Shailaja—small letters more like notes than letters. Feeling better. GM seems to be suffering from a sense of futility—almost of frustration. He doesn’t seem to share my optimism. His analysis of the situation is different from mine, and about this very objective and the purpose of our return to Nepal from India he seems to be more uncertain. In his heart of hearts, he feels that the decision to return a second time has been a mistake in view of the change in the political scene in India after the Janata party came into power. He reserves all his wrath for India for not helping in the seven years that we were in exile in India. It had been a total waste, because India—Indira Gandhi—didn’t help us, etc. etc. I tell him that the situation is very much in our favour, and that we have to stand on our own legs, that our activities during over 8 years exile have contributed not only to our survival but also the building of our image as an alternative power to the present king’s power—where would we have been if we hadn’t carried on those activities—where are the others now? We are the only force, outside the establishment, which counts. Politics of opposition is considered successful if the opposition remains relevant and is treated with respect. If you are not relevant even if you are in power, you are lost, sooner or later. I feel that the King’s politics is gradually ceasing to be relevant. This is why I have a feeling of optimism even tho I am in prison + don’t know what would be my fate. In a sense, I don’t guide the situation in personal terms. I may even die in prison, but my death will not have been in vain because of the acute relevance of our politics. I tell GM that it was a stroke of good luck that India didn’t help us, because the favourable turn of the situation or our relevance would I. The decisive factor may have been attributed to help. Now we are on our own—a force to be reckoned with in our own right. The fact that I returned to Nepal second time voluntarily (when Janata government is in power in Delhi) is my declaration of faith in our future and also of independence from India. I therefore don’t agree with GM’s statement that Indira Gandhi made it impossible for us to remain in India. We could have stayed in India in spite of Mrs Gandhi if we had felt that our cause would have benefited thereby—and at heart I had the opportunity to stay away from Nepal this time when our friends are in power in India and I didn’t.

22.11.77

Shailaja told me once, after going through my old diaries that 22.11.77 friends are in power in India and I didn’t. Opportunity to stay away from Nepal this time when our cause might have been attributed to help. Now we are on our own—a force rather than slowly sat in it. I don’t know what to eat in that case. About a week ago I had an attack of this dizziness was that I felt that I had been pushed down by a force + when I attempted to sit in the chair, I felt on it propelled by a force rather than slowly sat in it. The doctor thinks it may be due to the blood pressure which must have gone down suddenly as a result of which I take in the afternoon for half an hour. He has advised me to report to him urgently if there is such an attack of dizziness again. I think the symptom of diabetes is doing to tensions that the long uncertain detention is producing in me. I also pass very highly obscured urine—yellow. This may also be due to tension. I am by all counts + demonstrably under severe tension—GED. But it is very curious that politically + otherwise also I am very optimistic—as a matter of fact I have never been as optimistic as today—but still I suffer from some kind of unknown tension (because pure of physical reasons?) Can physical conditions of adverse + unnatural cause tensions when psychologically contradictory condition obtains? Is not tension eventually a psychological manifestation on the physical plane?

9.12.77

Received a parcel of books sent by Chandra Shekhar and others. A Kashmiri shawl of very good quality and a box of dry fruits from Chandra Shekhar. I am touched by this gesture. Do I deserve all this love and regard from friends + relations for whom I haven’t done anything? Against this expression of warmth and love from friends I appear in my own eyes as a cold and self-centred person.

12.12.77

Wrote two letters—to Shailaja from here—mostly words are inadequate + it sometimes I find words to express my sentiments for her I can’t express them in letters in prison. Businesslike letter is worse than no letter at all. She comes to the gate on my interview day and waits for half an hour there. Jail doctor (Achyut?) came to see me. I am having dysentery for which I want some medicine, but the doctor himself came. The blood in urine examination has recently shown that I am suffering from diabetes not of a serious nature but still calling for some dietic control. Since a few days past I have given up eating rice, sugar, potatoes. Today the doctor says that I should give up bread also because in the process of its manufacture some sugar is added to the dough along with the baking powder to raise it. I don’t know what to eat in that case.

I attempted to sit in the chair, I felt on it propelled by a force rather than slowly sat in it. The doctor thinks it may be due to the blood pressure which must have gone down suddenly as a result of which I take in the afternoon for half an hour. He has advised me to report to him urgently if there is such an attack of dizziness again. This is my expression of warmth and love from friends. Do I deserve all this love and regard from friends and others. A Kashmiri shawl of very good quality and a box of dry fruits from Chandra Shekhar. I am touched by this gesture. Do I deserve all this love and regard from friends + relations for whom I haven’t done anything? Against this expression of warmth and love from friends I appear in my own eyes as a cold and self-centred person.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

20 JANUARY - 5 FEBRUARY 2004 #181

Back at Sundarijal

“The king’s politics has ceased to be relevant”

Nepal Quaret

1. Exile
   A brute gauntlet. A widening moat
   Twice barred fields sobbed with stone
   Nourished those who’ll never leave
   What distant castle commands these heighs?
   What thorny outposts sentence men
   To blunted bridges. And legs
   Between home and land, exile takes hold
   A terrain. A birthright

2. Truce
   Unfed. The rutted earth throbs
   Stubborn fields insist on yielding chulhas and graves.
   On a schoolhouse slate, the numbers add up
   Households minus sons and daughters
   A brute gauntlet. A widening moat

3. Riverstrike
   What are your rivers for?
   Boulder broken streams stammer to a ha ha alt
   What are your rivers for?

4. Malaise
   An nation reft of sense
   Where the heart can do
   Cold Cold Call
   A nation reft of sense
   To know its distant (distanced) pain,
   like the Himal it hides beneath,
   a source, a gathering force
   that never closes in, but leaves each
   less sure
   of what the heart can do
   and people be
   Kathmandu. 10/03

POETRY

by WAYNE AMTZIS

Admissions Open

Rato Bangala School will be admitting students to Grade I for the academic year 2004/2005.

Application forms will be distributed at the School from February 2 to 6, 2004

Parents are requested to come in person to pick up the forms and make an appointment for school visit.

Rato Bangala School
Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur
Phone: 5522614 / 5534318 / 5542045

Mandata House APARTMENT HOTEL

Visit us at www.ernandhsila.com

BUDDHA’S FEET

Visit us at www.ernandhsila.com

#181
just as we realise the need to start interacting with, and educating our children at very young ages, excelling or building a future in sports is best done early in life. One can see that in Nepal, excelling in team sports has been difficult as infrastructure and training resources are limited. We find that individual sports are where Nepalis achieve worldwide recognition and excellence. A person’s will and tenacity can provide the drive to succeed alone, as opposed to having to depend on a whole team and all the back up services and resources that a team needs to excel.

With such a vision, the Sports Council in the 1970s encouraged individual sports such as Tae Kwon Do. The results of this foresight and investment in the future of individual sports are apparent with today’s successes. When I was a young golfer, I had plenty of ambition. However, in those days, there were no proper training facilities or competitions that could improve my game. The support I received was mostly from individuals, because going abroad to play in tournaments or training was unaffordable. While there is no point looking back ruefully, the past is a lesson for the future. Sports rarely develop on a national level with just the support of that sport’s fraternity. This is very much the case with golf that receives little recognition and no support from Nepal’s sports authorities. For the development of this or any sport, youth must be supported with organised training programs and opportunities. It is vital to expose more young people to individual sports and encourage them to be future stars by providing training opportunities and facilities. A future in the sport is quite lucrative. If one has talent and works hard enough, there are a host of opportunities at professional tournaments like the regional Indian PGA tour, the Asian & European PGA tours and the most coveted United States PGA Tour with a total prize money in excess of $200 million a year! Golfers from any part of the world can participate in any of these tours. You just have to be good enough to qualify. Nepal professional golfers playing on the world money tours is not going to happen overnight. It certainly won’t be easy for an individual to go it alone. The players need the support of integrated plans from all the golf clubs and sustained commitment. The golf clubs should unite, and through Nepal’s Golf governing body, solicit maximum cooperation and help from the Sports Council to promote golf among young Nepalis.

Let us facilitate and encourage educational institutions to participate. Young people should take up this wonderful sport. Nepal can produce champions.

Deepak Acharya is a golf instructor and Head Golf Professional at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, Kathmandu.

Deepak Acharya is a golf instructor and Head Golf Professional at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, Kathmandu.

Deepak Acharya is a golf instructor and Head Golf Professional at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, Kathmandu.

Deepak Acharya is a golf instructor and Head Golf Professional at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, Kathmandu.
**FESTIVALS AND EXHIBITIONS**

1. **Sadhus: The Great Renouncers**

2. **Cosmic Cocktails**
   - Presented by Annapurna Garden Grill from 26 January-5 February at the Piano Lounge, Hotel Yak and Yeti.

3. **Kiwi Cocktails and Desserts**
   - Presented by Drummer's Circle from 26 January-5 February at the Chimney, Himal Khabarpatrika, Pashupatinath.

4. **Hand-woven Dhaka exhibition**
   - Held on 8 February at Gurugram, Kathmandu.

5. **100 Stone Statues of the Buddha**
   - Presented by Buddha's Feet, 4425931, 15 February at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited.

**EVENTS**

1. **Cosmic Cocktails**
   - Presented by Annapurna Garden Grill from 11AM-4PM on 2 February at the Piano Lounge, Hotel Yak and Yeti.

2. **Kiwi Cocktails and Desserts**
   - Presented by Drummer's Circle from 11AM-4PM on 2 February at the Chimney, Himal Khabarpatrika, Pashupatinath.

3. **Kiwi Cocktails and Desserts**
   - Presented by Drummer's Circle from 11AM-4PM on 2 February at the Chimney, Himal Khabarpatrika, Pashupatinath.

4. **Kiwi Cocktails and Desserts**
   - Presented by Drummer's Circle from 11AM-4PM on 2 February at the Chimney, Himal Khabarpatrika, Pashupatinath.

5. **Kiwi Cocktails and Desserts**
   - Presented by Drummer's Circle from 11AM-4PM on 2 February at the Chimney, Himal Khabarpatrika, Pashupatinath.

**MAUSAM BEED**

The unexpected rains last week did the job of cleaning up Kathmandu’s foul air. The concentration of PM10 (particles that are small enough to enter the human body) in the air on 18 January along busy roads like Putali Sadak and Chandragiri nearly reached the national standard. Otherwise, for the rest of the week things were as bad as normal. Even Tribhuvan University had PM10 levels that crossed the safety threshold in five out of seven days last week.

**KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Mostly Good</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-60</td>
<td>&gt;60</td>
<td>61-120</td>
<td>121-350</td>
<td>&gt;350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KATHMANDU VALLEY**

That powerful wettest brought substantial snow and rain for the second time this winter. Parts of the country received as much as 50mm rainfall and almost a meter of snow in the higher reaches. This is the first winter in seven years with normal precipitation. Brief sunny spells will be overaken by another weaker front moving in from the west. The moisture will bring fog to Kathmandu and Sauraha towns into next week. Kathmandu’s night temperature will plummet to freezing while the days will be warmer when the sun shines through the clouds.

**ABOUT TOWN**

**CLASSIFIED**

Visit **Ground Zero** Fine wines, designer candles, cards, gifts, stationery, wooden items, perfumes and more. Darbar Square, opposite Hotel de l’Annapurna

Visit **Femilines**, the Exclusive Lingerie Store for ladies undergarments, nightwear, bathrobes and more. Ladies staff. Opposite Sahaja Yatayat, Harihar Bhawan, Pulchowk. Tel: 547428

Get 10% exclusive discount on the normal subscription rate of Himal Khabarpatrika, Himal Times and Wave magazine. Only at the Gritni Department Store Limited, Baluwat. Water: 441518

Wanted: Nepali pilot, interested person should have experience for ultra light aircraft with Rotax 582 engine. Apply with cv, photo and contact address within 7 days to Aria Club Nepal Pvt. Ltd., P.O. Box 13680.

**Rise and shine**

Get ready for a brand new day with BBC World Today. Every morning on 102.4 FM from 5:45-6:15 AM

**BEEF RALLY**

The 4th Great Himalayan Volkswagen Beef Rally will happen on Saturday 28th February 2004. Great prizes to be won, great opportunity to support the production of peace stickers, cuff link and patale surgery in Nepal, and women’s health services in remote areas.

**BOOKWORLD**


Thirteen contributors, including leading scholars, professionals and experts from a diverse range of national and international fields examine the causes of conflict, the ongoing human rights violations as well as alternatives to violence and ways of initiating peace negotiations. This compilation includes contributions from DB Gurung, Dwarka Kumar and Hemming Karcher.

**STUFF**

Visit **Mandala Book Point**, Kantipath, 4227711, mandala@ccsl.com.np

**CONFERENCE**

**Next change**

From 5 February

Lord of the Rings: Return of the King

Now showing

Khaeko

11:45 AM, 3PM, 6.15 PM

**JAINEPAL CINEMA**

Call 444220 for bookings Call for show timings. 11:30 AM, 2:30 PM, 5, Pop FULL www.janepal.com

**BOOKWORLD**


Thirteen contributors, including leading scholars, professionals and experts from a diverse range of national and international fields examine the causes of conflict, the ongoing human rights violations as well as alternatives to violence and ways of initiating peace negotiations. This compilation includes contributions from DB Gurung, Dwarka Kumar and Hemming Karcher.

**STUFF**

Visit **Mandala Book Point**, Kantipath, 4227711, mandala@ccsl.com.np
23

HAPPENINGS

NEPALI SOCIETY

Ramesh Badi Nepal is not embarrassed to say he’s a Badi, a caste from western Nepal traditionally involved in commercial sex work. “Today, society can no longer point a finger at us and say that we sell our women,” says Ramesh who is working in Kailali to discourage young girls from following in their mothers’ footsteps.

For the last seven years, Ramesh (centre, in picture right, with fellow-Badis) has been able to motivate hundreds of Badi girls to go to school. “Now, Badi men are willing to marry them as well,” says the 42-year-old who can remember a time when marrying within his community was out of the question.

Although some families were not involved in commercial sex work, they were still tarred with the same brush. Most Badis adopted the surname Nepali to disassociate themselves from their collective past. Ramesh migrated to India so that he would not have to face harassment from society. He tried to get into Bollywood, but in vain. Then he decided he’d rather return than stay on waiting for a break in filmland.

Back in Nepalgunj, Ramesh worked as a cook. He learnt about social work, and soon he became a social activist with SAFE, an NGO working for the upliftment of the Badi community. Ramesh’s job was to educate sex workers within his community about sexually transmitted diseases and HIV. “To begin with, I am a man and then, I had to take them a message that nobody else dared deliver,” says Ramesh.

For the first few months, he was not allowed to enter into Badi households. “They abused me and even threatened to kill me, thinking I was there to destroy their traditional profession,” says Ramesh. But perseverance and patience paid off. Before long, Ramesh became their friend and confidante.

Today, most of the sex workers have become peer educators, too. They are the first line defence in educating clients, mostly truck drivers, local men and Indians, about HIV/AIDS and using condoms. Ramesh is happy that the number of commercial sex workers within the community is dwindling.

Despite the hero’s welcome that he receives when he visits Badi hamlets in Muda and Tikapur, Ramesh is level headed: “There is still a lot to be done and it’s time that the government helped the Badis. We can’t do it alone.”

(Naresh Newar)

BILATERAL: Officials from Nepal and India at the opening of a meeting to discuss trade issues in Kathmandu on Thursday.

HAPPY CHILDREN: Kagatigau in Kathmandu used to be famous for child marriages on Sri Panchami, but this year on 26 January teachers and students from Sri Bhawani Primary School organised a dance to celebrate the end of the practice.

OUCH: Sujata Koirala of the Nepali Congress shows a welt from a police beating she endured during a street protest on Wednesday.

A better Badi

Pandit Jasraj occasion of the 55th Republic Day of

FINE TUNING: Famous Indian flutist Pandit Jasraj performing in Kathmandu on Friday 23 January.
For those of you out there who watched the first two episodes of the Tolkien trilogy, it has befallen upon this humble servant to provide you eager beaver readers with an executive summary of the third installment: *The Return of the King*. This is to spare you the trouble of having to sit through another three torturous hours (there is an intermission) trying to pronounce the names of its hobbit, elf and swiftit protagonists.

So, without further ado, let us rejoin Gandalf and Pippin as they reach Minas Tirith in Gondor in time to meet Denethor, father of Boromir and Faramir who have just rendezvoused with Frodo in the company of Aragorn who looks into the planarit with Arwen’s assistance to confront Sauron accompanied by an army of ghosts.

Are you still with me? Right, so Aragorn and his comrades reach Erech where he is proclaimed Heir of Isildur. Not to be outdone, Orcs, Trolls, Woses of Druadan Forest and the Lord of the Nazgul confront Eowyn, finding out in the process that he is actually a she. From hereon the plot thickens as platoons of Gondorians and Rohans arrive at the gates of Mordor on the flaming slopes of Sammath Naur as Frodo confronts Gollum (or is it the other way around?) at the Crack of Doom.

The Return of the King was filmed in New Zealand, but we hear the producers are already working on a sequel to be filmed in Nepal with a fully local cast of characters. The shooting starts in spring. Here is a sneak preview of the fourth episode: *A Kingdom in Regression*.

Novice hobbits and trolls who left the Shire to pursue higher studies at the Mata Tirth Multiple Campus have been told by Gandalf and Pippin to burn some tyres on the streets to keep warm through a cruel winter. The Steward of Gondor suggests it may be a better idea to just climb on top of the nearby social volcano, Mt Crack of Doom, so they can be warm and toasty. But the novice hobbits are trapped in between Gondor and Mordor at Ratna Park. Confused, they turn to the Republican Guards for inspiration against the demonic pressures of the Ring. Only by diverting the attention of Sauron and making him believe in the second coming of the Ringlord can the hobbits hope to convince the army of ghosts to join them against Saruman. The rebellion exacts a heavy toll, Hobbiton is destroyed and Barad-dur is about to be declared an autonomous region. But the ghosts arrive at the nick of time, preventing Gondor from also being transformed into Orodruin. Good sense prevails, international mediators arrive, peace and tranquility finally returns to the Shire. 

---

**UNDER MY HAT**

Kunda Dixit

---

**BORED OF THE RINGS**

Eowyn, finding out in the process that he is actually a she. From hereon the plot thickens as platoons of Gondorians and Rohans arrive at the gates of Mordor on the flaming slopes of Sammath Naur as Frodo confronts Gollum (or is it the other way around?) at the Crack of Doom.

By this time in the movie, Gollum has run out of popcorn and is so hungry that he bites off Frodo’s finger and swallows the ring by mistake. Thus ensues an epic struggle to employ laxatives and have the magic ring extracted from Gollum’s alimentary canal. Eowyn, Celebros, Galadriel and Arwen all lend a hand, but to no avail. I don’t want to give away the ending to those of you who haven’t seen the movie yet, so let me just say that after three hours wandering aimlessly in Middle Earth, one would be excused if one didn’t care how it ended.

---

**GOOD NEWS FOR WORKING PARENTS!**

INTERNATIONAL CRECHE/DAYCARE CENTRE FOR YOUR CHILD

Montessori Children’s House is the only international creche/daycare centre run by ABP trained professional and dedicated staff for children above 3 months. Our programme is based on the Montessori philosophy taking into consideration a child’s mental and physical development phase.

In our not just taking care, it’s taking care professionally.

Opening Hours: 9am - 5pm

---

**GROG:**

*GROG* Regd. No. 19/5/65/1 Lalitpur, Central Region/Price Regd. No. 04/05/65