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Big Brothers

They'll meddle if we muddle

KUNDA DIXIT

As Nepal's tri-polar power struggle remains deadlocked, the three main outside powers are increasingly worried about its outcome. In its feeble state, Kathmandu is more susceptible to outside pressure than ever before, and post-9/11 convergence of US, Indian and Chinese interest in the region has changed the nature of that influence.

Nepal's two neighbours and the global power are worried about the possibility of a Maoist victory and the inability of constitutional forces in Nepal to unite against it. Their styles may differ and there may be some irritants, but the US, India and China no longer seem to be working at cross purposes.

Analysts see India's arrest of senior Maoists as a result of Anglo-US insistence that it do more. The Chinese have disavowed any support for 'anti-government rebels' here. Nepali and US militaries have held joint night exercises for the first time involving terrain-hugging EC-130 surveillance aircraft, apparently with Indian and Chinese concurrence.

A senior Indian official confirmed regular consultations between Washington, Beijing and New Delhi about Nepal, adding: "Our bottom line is that instability in Nepal will harm our national interest and there is a danger of spillover of the Maoist revolution."

But within Nepal, distrust of Big Brother still runs deep. Some believe New Delhi has used the insurgency to wrest concessions from Nepal. "It has been proven time and again that India takes advantage of instability here," says foreign affairs analyst Hiranya Lal Shrestha, citing recent bilateral talks on transport, hydropower and security preceding Indian arrest of senior Maoists.

Foreign Minister Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, who served as ambassador in New Delhi for six years denies Nepal has sold out to India in return for a get-tough policy on Maoists. "There is nothing brewing behind the scenes," he says.

Indian officials also deny a correlation. "We are blamed when nothing moves, and we are blamed when we make progress," Indian ambassador Shyam Saran has said. India also denies recent crackdowns against Maoists in India is new. "Our policy on terrorist activities of Nepali Maoists and support for the Nepal government has always been consistent and clear," says Indian Embassy First Secretary Sanjay Verma. Indeed, Indian military support in training and hardware to the Royal Nepali Army far exceeds anything the Americans or the British have given so far.

Pradip Giri of the Nepali Congress (D) says xenophobic rulers in Kathmandu are so used to exaggerating Indian and Chinese omnipresence that they believe their own myths. "India is a factor, we should acknowledge that," he said in a tv interview this week. "Indian support is a necessary, but not sufficient condition, for resolving the Maoist issue."

India, the US and Britain have divided up the work of forging a palace-party rapprochement. So far this year, India has issued three statements strongly advocating that the king and parties patch up. The Chinese probably agree, but steadfastly refuse to talk. Chinese ambassador Sun Heping told a press meet recently: "We never comment on the internal affairs of another country."

The Maoist strategy has been to try to drive a wedge between

the US against India and China by stoking fears of superpower adventurism in their backyard. While there may still be cold warriors in the corridors of power in Beijing and New Delhi who are suspicious of US intentions vis-à-vis Nepal, it is clear that regional geopolitics has moved on. ●

(Reporting by Navin Singh Khadka)



SUBHAS RAI

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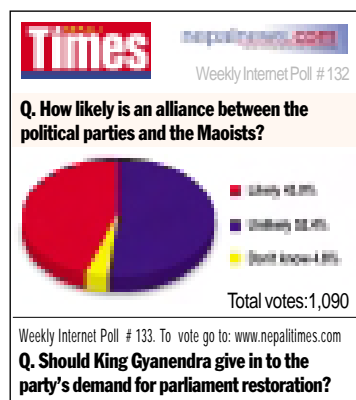
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Q. How likely is an alliance between the political parties and the Maoists?



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Q. Should King Gyanendra give in to the party's demand for parliament restoration?

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CROSSROADS

A brief recap of the story so far:

- The political parties made a mockery of their mandate and frittered away the gains of 1990.
- The royal massacre struck a blow to the national psyche and the country is only now coming to terms with its implications.
- Feckless democrats found themselves incapable of dealing with the savage tenacity of the Maoists.
- Never happy with 1990, the royal right used the disarray to stage October Fourth.
- After messing around initially, the parties got their act together and forged an alliance to fight that retrogressive royal step.
- There is now blood flowing not just in Bhojpur and Beni but also from heads of protestors on the streets of the capital.
- Under pressure to make a face-saving backtrack, King Gyanendra moots elections in Pokhara.
- Defiant parties say nothing doing, Your Majesty, reinstate parliament otherwise we will unleash our student wing.

Things can't stay in this state of disequilibrium for long, something has to give. Someone with vision and statesmanship has to step in to set the country back on the rails. In our polity, that person should have been the head of state. But the monarch is mired in controversy and has lowered himself down to the level of other political players.

We have come to similar crossroads in our country's history before, but none as critical and with such far-reaching consequences as this one. Maybe it was wishful thinking to hope, as we did in this space last week, that sanity would prevail and we would have a ceasefire in the new year.

Nepalis are asking the political parties on the streets: is your agitation going to bring us anywhere nearer to a resolution to the conflict? They are asking the king: why are you letting this drag on? And they ask the Maoists: haven't you done enough harm already?

So, as the country drifts from a tripartite power struggle to a bipolar confrontation between democracy and anti-democracy, the people may be forced to choose a multiparty republic as the least of all evils. Indeed, the slogans on the streets are superceding Maoist graffiti in radical content.

The differences between the constitutional forces are relatively minor, they should be easily resolved with an interim team acceptable to all political parties and the king, and which can be entrusted with the task of holding elections for a new parliament to debate sweeping constitutional changes.

This crisis provides us a chance to make a breakthrough in nation-building and devise a more inclusive polity. After the sacrifice of 10,000 Nepali lives, it is now possible to attain that objective without further bloodshed.

The India card

Time for the Maoists to transform their people's war into a peaceful people's movement

Maoist leader Prachanda tried to put on a brave face after the detention of his comrade and ideological guru,

GUEST COLUMN
Puskar Gautam



Mohan Baidya, by Indian police in Siliguri on 29 March. He said Comrade Kiran's arrest was the result of collusion between the rulers in Kathmandu and New Delhi over

sharing rivers and natural resources. He did not give us the gory details of exactly what he meant.

Even while they were reveling in the military victories in Bhojpur, Beni and Pashupatinagar, the Maoists were at the receiving end of a major counterblow with the loss of a senior leader and important documents in the underground office of their eastern command. Comrade Kiran's arrest has thrown up a lot of challenges for the Maoist movement. India has now sent the message: 'We can catch you if we want' and it has also shown that the Maoists are not outside the Indian security net.

The Maoists' relations with India have always been enigmatic. Nine years ago, when they started their 'People's War', India was enemy number one. They launched a campaign against Indian movies and stopped vehicles with Indian license plates. But for eight years after that, they didn't harm any Indian-owned industry, businesses and personalities. Cadres of the Sadbhabana Party, which the Maoists used to call 'pro-Indian' were never harmed. In fact, the Maoists themselves earned the reputation of being pro-Indian, and New Delhi derived economic and strategic benefits from Maoist policies and activities.

Much more than the United States, it was the Indian military that was propping up the Royal Nepali Army with training and hardware all along. Yet,

paradoxically, it was 'American imperialism' that the Maoists consistently slandered. In 1996, when they launched their armed struggle, the Maoists said with characteristic rhetorical flourish: "The main enemy of the people's war is the domestic capitalist-royalist class which is backed by Indian expansionists." In the next eight years, the "Indian expansionist" part of that sentence vanished.

Now, New Delhi is making up for having ignored or tolerated Nepali Maoists. The recent arrests and extraditions of senior Maoist figures and the declaration of the Maoist-affiliated All-India Nepali Solidarity Society a terrorist outfit indicates that there is now convergence between the policies of the United States, India and King Gyanendra vis-à-vis the Nepali Maoists. It also proves that the Maoist strategy of stoking Indian fears of US geopolitical ambitions in the region has not worked.

The Maoist response to all this was to use Indian territory to launch the attack on the Nepali border town of Pashupatinagar on 7 April. They set fire to 18 Indian-registered gas tankers in Dhangadi, shot and injured the driver and helper of an Indian lorry, and warned cinemas not to show Indian movies in Nepalganj.

After a strong warning from the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu, Maoist spokesman Krishna



LETTERS

LAL

It is high time CK Lal left his pedantry and climbed down from his academic perch. Our problem now has nothing to do with values ('A clash of values', #190). It is about actions. What kind of values do Ram Chandra Poudel and Bam Deb Gautam stand for? In place of these tainted leaders, parties should put people who have lived by their values. The king can't run this country on his own. Parties are indispensable. But parties must produce a clean leadership. CK Lal's contention that there is a clash of values between the king and the parties is plain wrong. He should also get over his obsession with the Maoists. They are going to be around for much longer than he thinks.

Shiva Raj Sharma,
Pokhara

- CK Lal shows the fine writing in his State of the State column is now haywire and inconsistent. In one paragraph of 'Clash of values' (#190), he says "in totalitarian as well as authoritarian systems there is no place of dissent of any kind" and in the very next he says "authoritarian monarchists may show a higher degree of tolerance". His cynical columns have been running in *Nepali Times* for years without any restrictive reaction. Yet, it was during the reign of the elected

governments that Lal wants restored that an editor was jailed for publishing an article by the Maoist leader in a leading daily newspaper. How does Lal explain that? At least yours is allowed to publish columnists like Lal.

Dipak Ratna, Kathmandu

GREEN GOLF

Awareness of the enormous socio-environmental impact of golf courses and measures to mitigate them is required to gain maximum benefit from the economic and ecological opportunities a golf course can offer. ('Golf ecology', by Deepak Acharya, #190)

An average 18-hole golf course needs more than 60 hectares of land. Access roads to courses and their artificial landscaping leave devastating footprints on the ecosystem. If it is not forests then it is agricultural lands. Golf courses are littered with dead ants and other insects, the culprit is pesticides. An average golf course uses 11-18 kg of pesticides per hectare, while in agriculture a common application rate is just over 2.5 kg. The chemicals contaminate surface and ground water. Most pesticides remain intact in nature for a long time and enter the food chain.

Golf courses with lush fairways and perfect greens are also water guzzlers. The Worldwatch Institute estimates that an average course in Thailand needs as much water as required to meet the daily demand

of 60,000 villagers in the country. So, having golf courses in water stressed Kathmandu or Dharan means a huge additional water demand met primarily by heavily extracting groundwater reserves. Replenishment is always lower as most of the water is lost to evaporation. Ground water reserves, forests and open spaces are local commons and when they are unfairly encroached upon by private businesses, resentment of affected communities is an expected outcome. There is no denying that golf generates enough money to take care of its own problems. But we must address the land, water use and pesticides issues so as to ensure that local communities' needs are also properly taken care of. Limiting construction of new courses only in



water abundant areas, strictly applying integrated pest management techniques, avoiding conventional irrigation systems, following mandatory environmental impact assessments and equitably sharing benefits with local communities could be some ways to minimise socio-environmental impacts. We have an excellent opportunity to learn from the mistakes of other countries.

Jugal Bhurtel, Moscow

EYE

As Naresh Newar cites in his article about Tilganga Eye Centre (An eye for an eye', # 188), we are a completely Nepali operation in our technical, administrative, financial and personnel departments. In the early 1990s, a group of Nepalis led by Jagdish Ghimire, sat down with almost nothing but a wild dream to provide worldclass and sustainable ophthalmic services in Nepal and to infect similar countries around the world with this dream. The board of directors, under Ghimire's chairmanship, are all Nepali volunteers from varied professions and businesses, dedicated to promote TEC and its work. There has also been strong financial support from Piyush Amatya, Ananda Sangh and others. As Newar mentions, TEC's eye care has been sought after by organisations such as the Grameen Bank, the Fred Hollows Foundation and others. We still have miles to go,

working in Nepal is difficult, but not impossible.

Sanduk Ruit,
Tilganga Eye Centre

AID BOOK

Bihari Krishna Shrestha's review of our book *Aid Under Stress* ('Stressful aid' #191) is rife with misquotes and misses the main point. It is not a consultancy evaluation bound to the developmental flavours of the month, nor is it a narrative of the failures of foreign aid. We focused our research, instead, on understanding the many nuances of aid in Nepal and its unintended consequences. His misquoting the text, however, begs a question: does *Nepali Times* not require that its reviewer actually read a book before writing about it?

The passage on Bara forests quoted by Shrestha out of context actually says (p150): "Obviously there was a clash but what was it that clashed? Was it two grand cultures, the 'transparent' and 'rationalistic' Western one represented by the Finns and the 'corrupt' and 'hierarchical' one represented by the Nepalis? Hardly. Such coarse cultural stereotypes conceal and mystify more that they reveal and neither side was an undifferentiated block". The first two sentences cannot be read without the two following, as Shrestha has done, to accuse our Finnish colleague of ethnic arrogance. Trying to debunk such stereotypes at the donor end,

Bahadur Mahara clarified that the attacks were “emotional outbursts” and not official party policy. The Maoist leadership seems still wary of stirring up Indian wrath. Meanwhile, Indian deputy prime minister Lal Krishna Advani equated the threat from Nepali Maoists with that posed by India’s own People’s War Group and MCC during his election campaign last week. If Advani’s statement is official policy, it looks like Nepali Maoists are running out of options. In fact they have only two alternatives: join the mainstream political agitation or initiate dialogue with the king.

After last year’s ceasefire broke down, the Maoists have rejected any negotiation with King Gyanendra. It is unlikely that they now want a negotiated settlement, especially because they think they are winning. The government understood this and is trying to respond with increased military pressure. But Mohan Baidya’s arrest in Indian may have changed the scenario and makes a King-Maoist rapprochement more probable.

The Maoists are fighting an increasingly unpopular war in the name of the people. Villagers fed up with Maoist atrocities rose up and killed seven Maoists in Kanchanpur this week. The rebels are also paying the price of public outrage with their frequent and widespread ‘blockade war’. It also ridiculous for a group that boasts about raising a 50,000 strong child militia to ask for UN mediation.

It is now time for the Maoists to transform their people’s war into a peaceful people’s movement and join the mainstream pro-democracy agitation. Otherwise not only will victory elude the Maoists but this may also be the beginning of the end. ●

The Gautam Plan

Despotic states fail, not democratic ones

Dyspeptic monarchists are wont to condemn the political parties that replaced the Panchayat. But if it wasn’t for the People’s Movement, this state would have failed in 1990 itself. It

STATE OF THE STATE
CK Lal



was democracy that pulled the country back from the brink of ruin after nearly two years of the Indian blockade.

Our own Kul Chandra Gautam at UNICEF in New York knows that states with democratic regimes seldom fail, while despotic ones always do. Hence his public displeasure with “the King’s shenanigans” and the priority in his action plan for the formation of a government made up of major parliamentary parties.

Until quite recently, that was all the agitating mainstreamers wanted. But the ruthless suppression of the anti-regression agitation has rekindled the embers of the anti-monarchy fire that had nearly died out in 1990. The two royal governments after the October Fourth takeover has succeeded in doing what the Maoists failed to achieve in the eight years of their brutal insurgency: mainstreaming the republican discourse. The five party leadership may see it otherwise, but as far as the world media sees it, the demonstrations on the streets of Kathmandu are

against the monarchy. The slogans are getting shriller and more extreme.

Through all this, King Gyanendra looks not the least bit perturbed. In his new year message, he once again dared mainstream parties to show a “constructive democratic style”. It appears that he hasn’t lost faith in the capacity of the Indo-American joint enterprise of bringing the Maoist leadership to the negotiating table through force. With CP Gajurel and Mohan Baidya in Indian jails, the morale of the Maoists must be down. But to bring the insurgents back into politics, there is no alternative to making the polity more accommodating. An unequivocal announcement by the king that the sovereignty of the country is indivisible—and it rests with the people to be exercised by their representatives—is the least he can do to end the stalemate.

Fixing a failed state must begin with a four-step plan that starts with understanding the fundamental nature of the problem. Hindsight is 20/20: we now know the tussle between Singha Darbar and Narayanhiti Darbar for the control of the state is at the root of the crisis. Unless the people are restored their sovereignty, insurgencies will be chronic here. It’s a class conflict now, ethnic ones in future will be much more virulent. The only antidote is an independent and

inclusive governance. The 18-point agenda of the parties may not go far enough, but it is headed in the right direction. And the required changes in the constitution to achieve these reforms won’t happen without the restoration of parliament.

Once diagnosed, the second step is to treat the symptoms and make life bearable until the disease is fully cured. This would imply strict monitoring of human rights violations by the warring sides and providing emergency relief. Amnesty International puts Nepal with Iraq in terms of human rights violations. Clearly, it needs more than the rhetoric of Bhekh Bahadur Thapa and Ram Bahadur

Thapa to remedy the situation. The third step is to revitalise the institutions of the state including the military, police and the courts. This means shifting focus from bolstering the military machine to improving the state’s governing capacity. Finally, elections are the fourth and last step in fixing a failing state. It is in the very nature of a regressive regime to have it on backwards. Ultimately, the crowd at the barricade will get what it wants and then some. If the king continues to insist on an election to legitimise his takeover, the masses will vote with their throats for a republic. After a while, neither the Maoists nor the monarchists will be able to control the course of events. The time to begin implementing the Gautam Action Plan is now. ●



RAVI MANANDHAR

we wrote this and the concluding chapter jointly with Prof Koponen.

Shrestha’s claim that we say Nepal’s community forestry is of Finnish origin is surprising news to us. Rather we write clearly (p 121) that its origin was in Nepal’s first forest policy statement by Secretary Emerald Jung Rana in 1952/53, “a progressive and far-sighted leap, predating actual implementation” by a good 25 years! Contrary to Shrestha’s laudatory account of World Bank pressure in 1988 resulting in community forestry, it had been already initiated a decade earlier.

Shrestha criticises us for basing our arguments on the study of only two water supply schemes. He seems to have missed the previous chapter which compares the many schemes of four donors and a Nepali NGO to understand what is actually spent (and how) in delivering services. The two schemes selected for further in-depth study required the classic intensive anthropological field work to examine the issues of ‘sustainability’, ‘equity’, ‘participation’ and power relations at the local level. As an anthropologist himself, we are surprised he was not able to differentiate between the methodologies used in the two chapters.

We do look forward to a spirited exchange with those who disagree with our findings, but only if they

read the book carefully first.

**Sudhindra Sharma and
Dipak Gyawali, Patan Dhoka**

ROYAL SALUTE

I read with interest the articles and letters in the #191 edition of your paper. I salute the officer who fought in Beni and his brave brothers in the security forces for their gallant and selfless action in defending the interests of the nation. I also salute those brave brothers and sisters who fought on the opposite side. At least they showed that they have the courage of their convictions, unlike the failed so-called leaders of the mainstream political parties who are responsible for getting us into this mess and now have nothing better to do than clog up our streets with demonstrations. SN Singh, in the same issue, calls for the mobilisation of British, Indian and Nepal army ex-servicemen in this time of crisis. As one who had the honour and privilege of serving alongside such gallant gentlemen, I wish to declare my readiness to serve king and country and appeal to my former comrades-in-arms to do likewise. For some 200 years the citizens of this country have been prepared to fight and die for the British Crown. It is time that we returned that favour.

**Maj Andrew Duncan,
King Edward VII’s
Own Gurkhas
(The Sirmoor Rifles)**

❖ HAPPY NEW YEAR ❖

2061



We pray for a world of peace and goodwill. May God's light enter the hearts of all and convey truth, understanding, mercy and love. May we all join hearts and hands, so that we can live together, grow together, and build a better world.



Nepal conflict keeps



PRAKASH MATHEMA

NARESH NEWAR

Its strict neutrality and low profile work in looking after prisoner welfare in times of war means the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) doesn't usually figure in the limelight.

But sometimes, as during the release by the Maoists of 37 Beni prisoners, the ICRC makes it to the headlines.

Nicolas Bachmann, communi-

cations delegate at ICRC in Nepal takes pains to stress his group doesn't mediate in conflict and, unlike other national Red Crosses, is not usually involved in delivering relief after natural disasters. Even in the Beni prisoner release, it wasn't the ICRC that made the first move.

"We just acted in the capacity of a neutral intermediary," Bachmann told us. The Maoists contacted the ICRC to facilitate the release, which

After the ICRC's role in securing the release of Beni prisoners, Nepal's warring sides may have finally found the need for this international organisation

they seem to have been done to prove that they respect the Geneva Convention. Efforts are reportedly underway to make contact with the 40 policemen seized in the Pashupatinagar raid on 9 April.

More than most other humanitarian organisations working in conflict zones, the ICRC has to take its neutrality extremely seriously. One slip, speaking either for or against any side, could cost the ICRC its credibility. Its neutral status has earned this non-political international humanitarian organisation the complete trust of governments, rebels and even terrorist groups across the world. This is why Bachmann picks his words carefully, and will not be drawn to comment on any aspect of the Nepal conflict.

The ICRC was founded by Henri Dunant, who saw thousands of wounded soldiers after a 16-hour battle at Solferino in Italy where more than 40,000 Austrian and French were either killed or injured. Horrified, he sought help from locals to get medical attention for all soldiers regardless of

their nationality. A commission was formed in 1863 by five Swiss nationals, including Dunant, which later became the International Committee of the Red Cross. Twelve countries along with Switzerland then worked on each of the four Geneva Conventions after World War II, ensuring protection of civilians during war and of prisoners after conflict.

Now that most wars around the world are domestic conflicts in which civilians constitute most of the victims, the ICRC is kept busy. It reminds belligerents of the limits of war and the behaviour of combatants. It has initiated a worldwide endorsement of international humanitarian law of which almost all the countries, including Nepal, are signatories.

The ICRC has worked in Nepal out of its New Delhi base, but as the conflict became more serious it finally opened an office here in 2001. It got only grudging support from the government. For instance, its vehicles did not have blue plates



KIRAN PANDAY

Clockwise from *l-r*: Pascal Mauchle, head of the ICRC delegation, with interpreter Christoph Abbou (middle), brings home CDO Sagar Parajuli; ICRC team flying to Rolpa; confidential interview with an injured civilian; restoring contact with detainee's family

and carried Geneva numbers till recently.

ICRC delegates in Nepal are involved in visiting detainees, supporting medical care of the wounded and encouraging security forces and the Maoists to adhere to international humanitarian law in warfare and treatment of detainees. They also work closely with Nepal's Red Cross Society in relief of the wounded and providing family links with detainees.

The ICRC team has made many

The mad dynamic of war

A shambling, inarticulate and ultimately dangerous man has just stood before television cameras on and told the world that he intends to allow many more people to die in Iraq. This wasn't one of the motley militias fighting the occupying coalition. Nor was it a crazed cleric, a mad mullah.

This was President George W Bush. "I don't want the men and women who've died in Iraq already to have died in vain," he told journalists and viewers, "so if we end the war, that will be the case." More deaths to justify earlier deaths, the mad

HERE AND THERE

Daniel Lak



dynamic of war writ large in the 21st century, unchanged over 50,000 years of human existence.

Great swathes of Iraq are awash with violence at the moment.

The majority Shia community is finding common cause with the minority Sunni. Once bitter enemies are united in their opposition, not necessarily to the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, but to the lingering presence of American, British and other troops. And the inability of the conquerors to show that occupation means anything more than foreigners on patrol in your streets.

For the Shia, it's particularly galling at the moment. They hated Saddam Hussein.

For Iraqis, as any proud people anywhere including Nepalis, foreigners calling the shots is unacceptable

He viciously suppressed them. He killed large numbers of them during his reign of terror. America assumed, not unreasonably, that the Shia would support them against a horrible dictator. And they did, up to a point. But after Saddam fled, even after his capture last December, nothing seemed to improve for the Shia majority of Iraq. Car bombs,

set by Sunni radicals probably, claimed hundreds of lives in their holy places. The Americans couldn't protect the community from crime, rape, murder, terrorism.

The last straw came a week ago when an American military spokesman, who like his commander-in-chief, had seen far too many cowboy and cop movies, announced

that US forces intended to track down and arrest a prominent Shia cleric. The community rose up against the audacity of the American forces. Never mind that they were only trying to enforce a warrant issued by an Iraqi judge last year. For Iraqis, as any proud people anywhere including Nepalis, foreigners calling the shots in such details is quite simply unacceptable.

At the same time, Sunni Muslim militants were fighting the Americans in Fallujah and other places in the so-called Sunni Triangle.

Hundreds of US troops were killed or wounded in just over a week of fighting, countless thousands of Iraqis lost lives, family members, livelihoods. We'll never know the real toll of Iraqi victims of George Bush's war.

At his tongue tied news conference in Washington on Tuesday, the president was asked if he had any regrets, if he'd made any mistakes in his time so far as leader of the world's most powerful country. He stumbled and he stuttered, and his words meandered well off topic, covering Osama Bin Laden, ordinary Americans fear of terror and death in Iraq. None of that was presented as a mistake, but by way of illustrating, however convolutedly, that this was a man who thought he'd made no mistakes. None whatsoever.

Now that is something truly frightening. ●



the ICRC busy



ICRC

visits to army barracks and police stations to assess the condition of detention cells, the treatment of detainees and record disappearances. It doesn't use Nepali staff during these visits and even the interpreters are non-Nepalis. "This is so that we don't lose our neutrality and objectivity," Bachmann explains.

After the visits and interviews with detainees, the team submits a confidential evaluation report and recommendations to improve the conditions of detainees. The ICRC has completed about 900 visits in more than 300 detention posts around Nepal. "We have easy access to detainees as we always keep our reports confidential," adds Bachmann.

The ICRC has also collected complaints from the relatives of detainees and submitted a list of missing relatives to the authorities. Families are informed as soon as news is available. With the cooperation of the Nepal Red Cross Society, the ICRC also exchanges messages between family members and detainees.

There was a time when the ICRC only hired Swiss citizens but today it is a patchwork of different nationalities, although there are restrictions. For instance, the French aren't hired in Rwanda. And in Nepal, a British or American ICRC delegate would not be a good idea. ●

DOMESTIC BRIEFS



Government wants aid commitment

The pre-consultative meetings of the Nepal Development Forum (NDF) end on Friday, and have brought heightened donor concern about Nepal's parliamentary crisis and the conflict to the fore. Most donors have made restoration of democracy and conflict resolution conditionalities to future aid, with some even including respect for human rights by the security forces as a pre-requisite.

Government officials admit the crises have made it difficult to ask for more aid, but say they need to know the level of program, sectoral and project support to plan future activities.

The fortnight-long consultations focused on revising progress since the last NDF in 2002 and reviewing changes given the altered security, development and governance scenario. "We have been discussing future strategies to continue the programs that were decided during the last NDF," said National Planning Commission Vice Chairman Shankar Sharma.

The discussions focused on how to keep the development momentum from slipping under the conflict situation. Both bilateral and multilateral donors have stressed the need to change development models given the problems Nepal is reeling under. "We have received some new funds despite the conflict," said Sharma.

Some bilateral donors have placed their programs under the UN umbrella while others have started work without associating themselves with government networks to avoid Maoist confrontation. Some donors have argued again that service delivery should be attempted in Maoist-held areas, even if it means working with the rebels.

But by far the major disagreement between the government and donors is over making specific aid commitments. Government officials want donors to commit before the main conference on 5-6 May. Donors have been saying that there has to be adequate discussion on aid policy first, while the government has been insisting that they ease their conditions.

to be a star

Attention all you girls, who want to be supermodels. Lux Beauty Star 2004 is here. Put on your best outfit and walk into any of the Lux Beauty Star 2004 selection centres for your shot at fame, fortune and glory. If you are one of the lucky girls selected, you win 10 days stay at the Hyatt Regency with grooming in beauty and style by experts. You also get your portfolio shot by leading fashion photographers, be on television and even walk the ramp at the Grand Finale at Hyatt Regency. The two most beautiful girls will be crowned Lux Beauty Stars and win a cash award of 50,000/- and 25,000/-. The two will also win a trip to India to attend the Lakme India Fashion Week 2005. Are you ready?

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Vacancy announcement

An open letter to Nepal's movers and shakers

Wanted: a hero.
Must be farsighted, charismatic and humble. Must put the nation's interests first. Compensation: a better country and the loyalty of the people.

To His Majesty:
You sense correctly that the people want a strong leader. But what your advisers won't tell you is that only a few of your subjects want you to be that strong leader. Fewer still want anything to do with authoritarianism or a return to the Panchayat. You can't turn back the clock. Your subjects know what freedom of expression is: they won't give it up. And they want to elect their leaders, however flawed.

NEPALI PAN
Janardan Chand

Most of the people believe you when you say you are a democrat. That's why the only demonstrators in the streets right now are hard-core party cadres. But that could change. Ordinary Nepalis are appalled by stories of the security forces' brutality and what seems to be a 'shoot first and hide the truth' policy. Your subjects are also wondering why your governments aren't any more effective than the parties. What happened to the anti-corruption drive? What about all those wonderful intentions to be pro-business, pro-poor and to operate efficiently?

The good news is that you could easily be the nation's hero. Be flexible, intelligent and diplomatic. We know you have those skills. There is no desirable future for Nepal without the political parties. Patch up a working agreement with them. By stepping back you could move the country forward: the people would love you for it.

To party leaders:
You surely don't believe you are personally responsible for ruining the country, and perhaps you have not grown wealthy by abusing your positions. But you must understand that the vast majority of people blame you and think you are corrupt. Ordinary Nepalis don't believe for a minute that your movement against 'regression' is based on principle or that you would do anything differently the next time you are in power. Those of you over the retirement age should step aside gracefully. Those who held senior berths in the successive failed governments should apologise individually and publicly to the nation. Turning over party leadership positions to new faces would increase your credibility a lot.

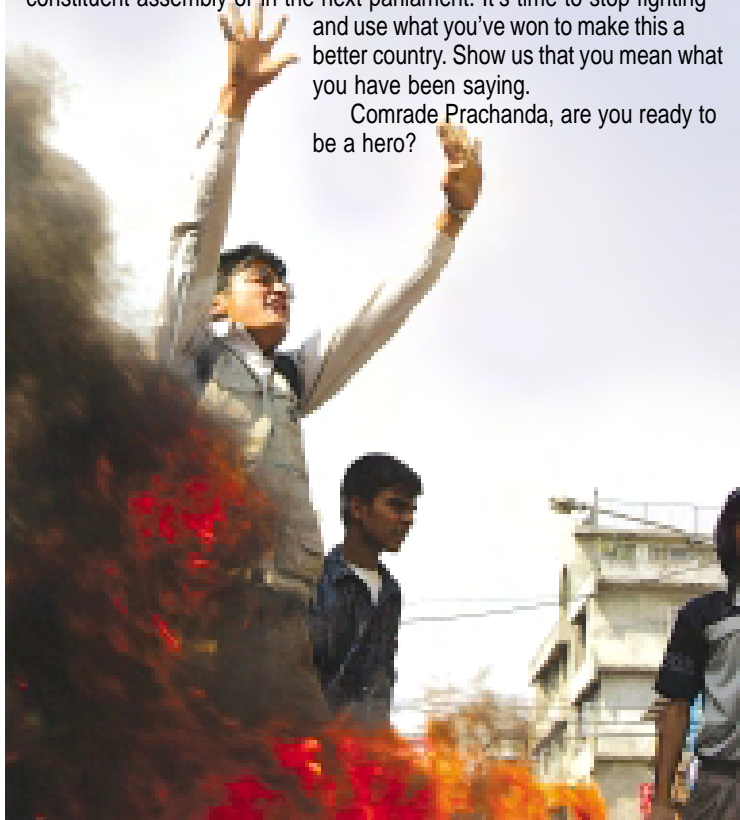
Now the hard part: you have to explain to the people why they should trust you and give you another chance to serve them. What can you do to identify your own mistakes? How will you clean up corruption and deliver services efficiently? If you can't do that, why should anyone vote for you? It will be hard work to convince your fellow citizens that you mean it this time and then to do it. But there is no other way. Get off of the streets while you do it. Your movement is hurting your credibility and polarising the situation.

Want to be a hero? Pursue reconciliation and restore peace, and your party can rule the nation for decades.

To the Maoists:
Congratulations. You have won. Actually you won two years ago and have been losing ground since. Bandas, blockades and bombings hurt and alienate the people you say you are fighting for. Every brutal murder and every terrified citizen weighs against your cause. The Great Helmsman would have told you so. It may not be the victory you planned, marching into Singha Darbar at the head of a battalion. That's never going to happen. But you can march into Singha Darbar at the head of a majority party.

You control enough territory to ensure your representation at a constituent assembly or in the next parliament. It's time to stop fighting and use what you've won to make this a better country. Show us that you mean what you have been saying.

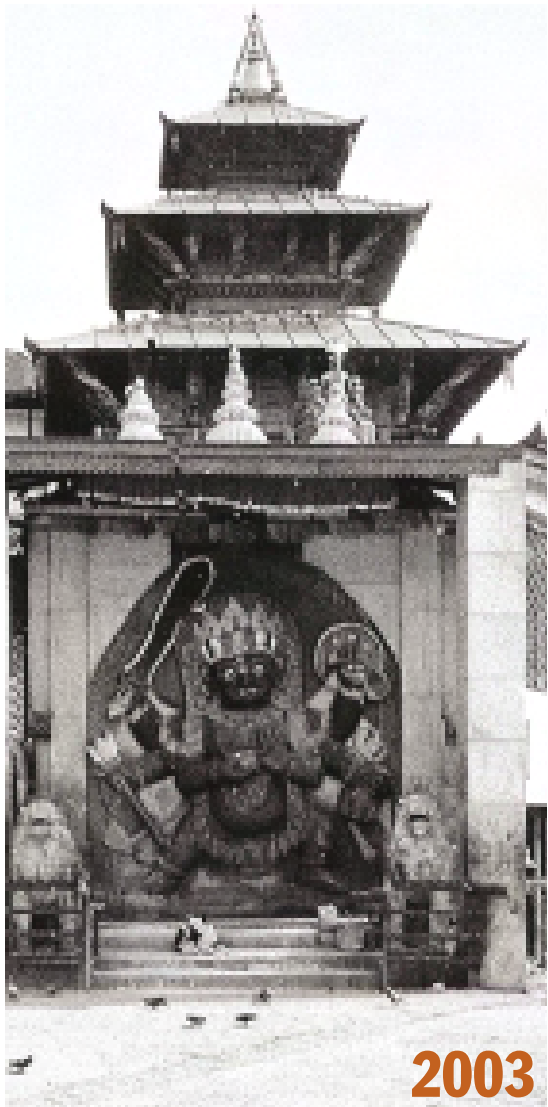
Comrade Prachanda, are you ready to be a hero?



KIRAN PANDAY



1910



KVPT

2003

Old glory

The Kal Bhairab gets a facelift

JEMIMA SHERPA

The 17th century Kal Bhairab statue in Kathmandu Darbar Square looks as ferocious as it did centuries ago with its wide eyes, upraised sword and fierce grimace. But over the years, the wild manifestation of Shiva was tamed and encased in a cage of marble and concrete. It seems that 2061 BS may see the figure, which legend claims metes out Shiva's wrath on anyone who dares tell a lie, finally set free.

This is the latest project for Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT) in its mission to protect Kathmandu's eroding cultural heritage. Formed in 1990, the US-based KVPT has completed over 18 restoration projects, including the Sulima Ratnesvara temple in Patan and the Radha Krishna temple at Patan Darbar Square.

As the Kal Bhairab shrine shows, locals in the Valley are more in favour of 'modernising' monuments than preserving them. Even so, things may be changing. Gautam Rana, KVPT's director for development, is ecstatic with his latest fundraising coup: Rs 400,000 from the Nepal Investment Bank (NIB), along with another Rs 1,300,000 in pledges for the trust. Add a \$22,392 grant from the American Ambassador's Cultural Fund and KVPT will stretch donations till the last rupee to restore seven temples marked for the Kathmandu Darbar Initiative.

The Indrapur temple is already completed and the Narayan temple is nearly done—again a result of co-funding, this time with the Robert Wilson's World Monuments Fund matched by Rs 1.2 million from the Soaltee Group. While the figures sound impressive, they reach only a small proportion of sites in Kathmandu that need restoration.

In order to meet the demand for heritage conservation, KVPT is organising its annual fundraiser that is set to be a major event, although a little less flamboyant than past endeavours which once included a 19th century costume ball. Susan Boggs, Chris Kresge, Courtney Preston and Filipino pianist, conductor and singer Agnes Quimpo are classically trained musicians busy rehearsing for this Sunday's

show 'A Little Night Music'. Their selection has everything from opera to Broadway, and Susan Boggs expects popular US music from the 40s and 50s to be a hit. Even if it isn't your cup of tea, the Diplomatic Notes promise "something for everyone". Fittingly, the event is at Baber Mahal Revisited—Gautam Rana's personal project that turned the old family cowshed into a thriving, upscale culture centre.

Meanwhile, just a riot-prone area away, Kal Bhairab is already undergoing a facelift. Since work started three months ago, the KVPT team led by Rohit Ranjitkar has already removed the marble shroud. Like with any restoration, they are already up against some unforeseen problems: some of the original stonework has been damaged by the cement used 12 years ago and the carvings they expected to find under the marble are gone. However, Ranjitkar is upbeat as he recalls past projects, including restoring a private shrine at a Patan home that leaned seven inches off centre.

Bigger challenges lie in ignorance and apathy, as the team often struggles to convince people that restoration is important. Thankfully, more people are waking up to the aesthetic value of original structures instead of slapdash plaster jobs. Many want to reconstruct rather than restore, preferring to tear down the original and simply rebuild an exact replica in its place. Ranjitkar is violently opposed to the idea. He estimates at least 75 percent of the original material is lost even when the old material is used in reconstruction, eroding the site's historical value. "Structural work isn't the most challenging part, as modern engineering has a lot of solutions. Actually, nobody wants the old ways, everyone wants to modernise," he says.

It takes a special group like the KVPT to remind us to extend our ancient heritage with the respect and care it deserves—show your support and dust your party togs for a fundraiser that will restore a bit of Kathmandu's old glory. ●

A Little Night Music performed by the Diplomatic Notes
5.30 PM on 18 April at Baber Mahal Revisited
Tickets Rs 1,000 available at Baithak Restaurant & K2 Bar,
Chez Caroline 4267346 4263070

This conflict is child's play

The Maoists are recruiting the only people still left in the villages: the young and elderly

RAMESHWOR BOHARA in JUMLA

Even though the Maoist leadership has consistently denied that the rebel group uses child soldiers, across western Nepal the sight of 10-year-old children in combat fatigues, carrying guns, socket bombs or grenades has become a common sight.

The Maoists are sensitive to criticism that they are using child soldiers since they want to be seen following international warfare norms. They have either denied it outright or tried to keep the presence of child soldiers secret. However, local Maoists don't seem aware of this and freely admit recruiting children.

Rajukala Rawat of Jumla is only 10-years-old but she already has a *nom de guerre*: Comrade Samjhana. When we spoke to her, she was carrying two grenades and told us her job was to sit by the trail and fling them at any army patrol passing by. "If the enemy come, we are supposed to throw it and run away," she told us matter-of-factly.

Her friend Serena Buda is known as Comrade Sirjana, and she is 11-years-old. The two form part of a six-member sentry, all armed with grenades. Serena tells us defiantly: "Today we are carrying grenades, but when we grow up we will take part in attacks on Royal Nepali Army bases."

Neither Serena nor Rajukala seem to know what or why they are fighting. When asked they reply: "To defeat imperialism." But they don't seem to know what imperialism is and just repeat what they were taught in their training camp.

The head of the 'people's government' of Jumla, Gajendra Mahat has a bodyguard: 14-year-old Comrade Bimarsha. He was studying in grade eight in the Raralihi Secondary School last year when the Maoists forced him and 25 other classmates to join the 'people's army'. "In the beginning I was reluctant, I wanted to study, but later I went along," Bimarsha told us. Twelve of those abducted managed to get away, but there is no escape for Bimarsha. He knows the Maoists will come after him or his family if he does.

Unlike their top leaders, local Maoists haven't even tried to hide their campaign to recruit children into the militia across these remote mountains of western Nepal. "We will be victorious in our people's war, and for that we will raise a 50,000 strong force of child soldiers," Kamal Shahi of the Maoists' student wing told a gathering in Utharpur in Banke district last month.

The Maoists are actively trying to turn every school into a recruitment ground for child soldiers into militia units, which are the lowest rung of their people's army. The Maoists justify this, saying that the army has been killing school children in places like Mudbara in Doti, and the school children needed to be trained for "self-protection". A Maoist student wing meeting in Thawang in January concluded: "To guarantee their education, school children have no alternative but armed resistance." The Maoist campaign has the slogan 'One School, One Strong Militia'.

Many villages are nearly empty, forcing the rebels to enlist children and even the elderly. In Dang's villages, children have undergone basic militia training and ideological indoctrination. "We will fight

exploitation, suppression and atrocities prevalent in society, we may be martyred but we will not give up the struggle to liberate our brothers and sisters," says 15-year-old Jibika Sharma, who joined the militia while studying in grade eight at Dang's Srigau Secondary School.

However, the Maoists are not getting as many recruits as they had planned. To make it look more exciting to join the movement, they are using school yards and playing fields for parades and military training. Recruits are given training in 'hit and run' and other warfare techniques.

All 39 VDCs in Dang now have two militia units and 200 new units have been set up, according to the leader of the Dang district people's government, Indrajit Chaudhary. ●

(Reporting also by Sagar Pandit in Dang)



RAMESHWOR BOHARA



SAGAR PANDIT

Rajukala and Serena pose for a photograph in Dang. Both carry two grenades each (left, top).

Comrade Bimarsha is the body guard of the head of the Jumla 'people's government' (left).

The only people left in the villages in Dang are the really young and really old, both are recruited into the militia (above).

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Opening our sky



Indian private airlines are gearing up to fly to Nepal

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

Starting 12 May, passengers who have suffered inflated ticket prices and shoddy service from the state-run airlines of India and Nepal will have more choice with India's private Air Sahara plans for a new daily New Delhi-Kathmandu connection. Its rival, Jet Airways, is expected to launch its own service soon after.

An Indian cabinet decision in January opened the skies for India's private operators to fly to international destinations and Jet and Sahara have already started operations to Sri Lanka. Nepal is next.

The Air Service Agreement

between Nepal and India allows each side to operate 6,000 airseats between the two countries weekly. So far, Royal Nepal and Indian Airlines use only 60 percent of that volume and trade analysts say that at the rate traffic is growing there is a market for double that number if service is improved and competition brings prices down.

Air Sahara's local agent Joy Dewan of Zenith Travels told us: "The groundwork for the flight-operation is in the final stages." The airline will use its brand new Boeing 737-800 between Kathmandu and Delhi. Meanwhile, Jet Airways is

shopping for a GSA in Kathmandu, and has reportedly settled for the Lufthansa agents. Sahara's crew is currently undergoing flight simulator practice for landings and takeoffs from Kathmandu airport.

New Delhi is regarded as a bottleneck for Nepal's tourism, and if the Kathmandu-Delhi shuttle can be improved, it will boost travel. Inbound air traffic to Nepal increased by 60 percent in March 2004 compared to the same period in 2003, and half the increase was from India. This increase could have been much greater if Royal Nepal had not dropped its

morning flights to New Delhi.

Besides the benefit of more tourists, the government is also happy about increased revenue from air traffic. "We will make money from landing and parking charges, as well as passenger service," says Nagendra Prasad Ghimire, director general of the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal. While it is understandable for the government to be interested in squeezing carriers, analysts say it should be working harder to shorten the Kathmandu-New Delhi air route by overflying Nepalganj. This would reduce airtime from the current Lucknow route by up to 14 minutes, and allow massive savings in fuel for the airlines.

Bhola Thapa of President Travels says the arrival of private Indian airlines will force Indian Airlines to also upgrade services. "Since Royal Nepal is more or less out of the picture, it is Indian Airlines that will have to compete to survive on this route," Thapa said.

The additional flights will augment a new bi-weekly link between Kathmandu and Chengdu by Air China. China Eastern is interested in a direct Kathmandu-Beijing flight and Philippine Airlines is negotiating a Manila stopover for flights to the US from Kathmandu. The new year also began on a favourable note with PIA resuming its Islamabad flights after a two year Indian ban on

overflights. However, passenger growth on a sector that has the capacity of 25,000 seats a year is reported to be sluggish.

In more good news, existing international operators have applied for increases in frequency and seat capacity to meet the higher demand. Thai Airways plans to double its single daily flight between Kathmandu and Bangkok by December. The airline has been suffering load penalty on its 777 takeoffs from because higher temperatures do not allow fully-loaded takeoffs from Kathmandu short runway. Last year, Thai carried 80,000 passengers into Nepal, a whopping 33 percent increase from 2002.

The Dutch charter airline Martinair will double its flights to twice weekly between Amsterdam and Kathmandu later this year. The KLM subsidiary is now operating a 274-seater Boeing 767 and plans to carry both cargo and passengers to Amsterdam with a stopover in Sharjah.

Meanwhile, Qatar Airways, the fastest-growing airline flying into Kathmandu, operates 15 flights a week, 11 between Kathmandu and Doha and four between Kuala Lumpur and Kathmandu. With 85 percent occupancy rate in both its A300-600 and A320 aircraft, Qatar plans to add three more flights to Doha this year. ●

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खबरपत्रिका

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757 lease hits snag

Royal Nepal Airlines' plans to lease a 757 while one of its two jets is grounded for regular maintenance has hit a snag, threatening to throw the flag carrier's international schedules into disarray during the peak tourist season.

In preparation for one of the airline's two 757s being out of action for two months starting this week, the management had invited tender bids to lease an additional jet in March. Seven suppliers applied, but none of them were found eligible.

Left with only one 757 to handle all its routes to Delhi, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Osaka, Hong Kong, Dubai, Bangalore and Mumbai the airline is facing another one of its legendary disruptions.

"We have rescheduled passengers for one week," Managing Director MP Khanal told us. "After that we will see what we can do." After the applications were rejected, the state-run airline even began direct negotiations with suppliers and one company was shortlisted. But that deal fell through on the lease price.

Sources told us Royal Nepal is now in negotiation with a Chinese carrier to lease a 757 for two months, but the deal will take 10 days to be finalised.


Given past scandals, airline officials are wary of lease deals and want everything to be above board. They can't take short-cuts even if it has become seriously urgent to expedite a lease because they know the CIAA is watching. The anti-corruption watchdog wants Royal Nepal to go for global tendering and follow all official procedures for aircraft lease. ●

BIZ

NEWS

Brewing partnerships

Carlsberg Asia and San Miguel Corporation extended their cooperation to include Nepal by recently signing an agreement allowing Carlsberg to brew San Miguel beer through its joint venture company Gorkha Brewery. Nepali consumers now get teamwork in every sip. Cheers!




Noodle jackpot

Since they entered the crowded noodle market in 2003, Asian Thai Foods' 2PM noodles have become well-known for their innovative advertising and marketing schemes. The latest is the '2PM Jackpot' where each noodle pack contains a coupon with three scratch boxes. If the amount revealed on each box are identical, the consumer wins the same amount in cash. An added bonus comes in the form of Nepali movie star Rajesh Hamal, the brand ambassador for the offer, who will personally present prizes over Rs 10,000 to the winners.




Mad about Manang

Chame, the district headquarters of Manang district, finally saw the much-awaited inauguration of Destination Destination Manang 2004 on 12 April. Originally slated for 22 March, the event began a yearlong celebration to promote Manang as a unique cultural experience, a must-visit destination for national and international thrill seekers alike. Organised by Manang Youh Society, a group of young professional Manangis, Destination Manang aims at promoting sustainable tourism growth in the district.



NEW PRODUCTS

OPTRA OPTION: Catering to Nepal's growing midsize sedan market, the Chevrolet Optra 1.6 is set to brave the roads and the competition armed with more power, increased passenger space, luxurious interiors, special safety features and a 16-valve engine. Marketed by Vijaya Motors, the Optra is just the car for some sylish cruising.





MIN BAJRACHARYA

Dr Antoinette JA Rüegg, president, and Ilse Spritzendorfer, vice president of International Federation of Business and Professional Women were in Kathmandu for a recent congress. They spoke to *Nepali Times* about the social role of women and the importance of economic independence.

Lights, camera, zzzzzzz

Most Nepali movies are so bad even the actors are ashamed of them

Last week, a report in this newspaper asserted, 'Nepali movies are changing (for the better) with the times'. ('Some can even make me cry', #191) As evidence, it presented the news about the premier of Tulsi

STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari



Ghimirey's tearjerker *Dui Kinara*, the success enjoyed by Nabin Subba's *Numafung*, and the documentary *Bhedako Oon Jasto*. True as those examples are, they add up to only a tiny fraction of the movies made in Nepal every year. The fact remains that a majority of movies are so bad that even top actors publicly admit they are ashamed of being Nepali cinema artists.

On the other hand, Nepali music videos seem to be getting better, slicker, bolder, more creative, technically sophisticated and a lot more entertaining year after year. You can't really compare a full-length feature film and a five-minute music video, but since both are forms of audiovisual expression, one can't help but ask: if the quality-starved Nepali movie industry were to learn a few tricks from Nepali music video makers, what would those be?

The people making music videos are young, educated, English-speaking urban hipsters who are flexible enough to borrow and mix ideas from a wide variety of influences from fashion, retro art, advertising, computer graphics, hip-hop, Kathmandu's underground music scenes and changing aspects of urban Nepali societies. They don't

call themselves *kalakar*. Nor do they demand that the state and the public honour them. They form loose alliances among themselves and appear to have chosen to concentrate on their work.

In contrast, people calling the shots in the movie industry are from the older generation with fixed views about what a 'Nepali' movie should be. Most are often so busy declaring themselves National Treasures that one wonders when they ever find the time to think seriously about making

experiments with style, technique and substance in the hands of creative directors. In contrast, most privately financed Nepali movies are stuck in being the usual three-hour-long fare that cannot afford to take any risky experiments.

This is where a state-funded body such as Film Development Board should step in and use the money it already has to fund new and old filmmakers to make a diverse range of films in which they have the freedom to take stylistic and

technical risks. Lessons thus learned can be applied to make better mainstream movies. Otherwise, in the absence of experiments and artistic playfulness, Nepali movies will remain dull and boring.

Anyone can make and act in music videos in Nepal, and music video makers have no formal association of any sort. This makes entry into and exit from their industry easier, with talented people floating to the top while others drift out. But players in the Nepali movie industry are members of various serious-sounding associations that don't seem to bargain for higher wages and better working conditions but merely attempt to keep others out. As a result, the industry remains hobbled by its own inward-

looking, protection-seeking pseudo-nationalistic insecurities that are embarrassing to any thinking Nepali.

To be sure, some aspects of Nepali cinema are indeed changing. But for much to change for the better, younger Nepali music videos can teach the older movie industry about the importance of right people, experimental attitude and an openness that helps it adapt to changes. ●



good movies. So, unless some of today's most creative music video or documentary makers graduate to full-length films, the quality of talents sustaining the mainstream Nepali cinema will continue to remain low.

A piece of good work is often the result of many experiments. One reason why music videos are good is that their brevity and relative low-budget make them ideal for

“Women can bring peace”

Nepali Times: Why did the International Federation of Business and Professional Women chose Nepal for the meeting?

Antoinette JA Rüegg: We are a worldwide organisation founded at Geneva in 1930 with the main aim that women participate more as professionals in economics, politics and society. BPW will be celebrating its 75th anniversary next year. We are very active in networking, lobbying and learning from each other.

And that is why we chose Nepal. Nepal has an excellent strategy and has been a part of the federation since 1975.

Ilse Spritzendorfer: Nepal took the initiative. My compliments to the members of BPW Nepal. They did excellent work and are very active. I was surprised how many attended the congress. We are very pleased that Nepal is so active at the international level.

What is your overall impression of Nepal and its people?

IS: This is my second time here, and I like the country and the people very much. I regret the trouble going on because the Nepalis are such peaceful people, which make this situation hard to understand. Despite the difficulties, we had a very good conference. I must say the women in Nepal organised everything in a very professional way. I'm really impressed. The international delegates had to walk to the meeting [because of the banda]. This was really very exciting.

Apart from this conflict and despite the problems with travel, how did the conference go?

IS: It was very successful. BPW is, at the moment, working on the 'World of Peace' theme. We want to bring peace to Nepal as well. How can we do that? We want to strengthen women

because women and children suffer most in any conflict. Women can bring peace. There must be more women in decision-making positions.

Where does the professional Nepali woman fit in?

AR: We heard different topics at the congress—peace, the environment, economic independence. I am convinced that economic independence is absolutely basic to the development of the nation.

Did anyone stand out?

AR: I can say that, if ever you have a leader in a country who is able not only to put herself forward but the whole group, then you have a very, very strong situation.

IS: And if we have to mention her name, it would be Ambika Shrestha.

Any role for the menfolk?

AR: We like to work together with men in a real partnership, to take part in the development of women's work. It addresses our whole society's evolution. Forty years ago, women stayed at home and took care of the children. The men did the earning. But after raising the children, mothers are still strong and that means the rules had to change.

IS: At BPW, we believe in life-long learning. This means even if you're in your 40s, you're not too old to learn. Children grow up and women begin new careers. Our aim is to see that girls are well-educated.

AR: Because when women have that, then society benefits as a whole.





Liril

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2004/2005

April 2004

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May 2004

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June 2004

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July 2004

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Aug 2004

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Sept 2004

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Yes to constituent assembly

Pradip Giri of the Nepali Congress (D) *Nepal*, 4-11 April

When Napoleon Bonaparte was returning from his victory in Italy, tens of thousands gathered to welcome him home. His bodyguard said his popularity was so immense that all of France had come to honour him. "More people will come when I am hanged," Napoleon replied wistfully.

If King Gyanendra is under the impression that the people are turning up to felicitate him because of his popularity, then he is wrong. The reason they are there is because of who he is: the brother of Birendra, Mahendra's son and heir to Prithbi Narayan Shah. It is the same as Sonia Gandhi, who rose in public estimation for being Rajiv Gandhi's wife.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

If Prachanda were to come out today, Tundikhel would not be large enough to hold people anxious to see him. Politically, this is defined as Bonapartism. During the king's tour of rural Nepal, the people who met him poured out their sorrows, asked for employment, electricity, water and above all, peace. But he can't do much, and their hopes will be dashed.

This is not the same as when Jang Bahadur and Chandra Shamsher travelled around the kingdom to meet their subjects. Society is different today. The king must not assume that he is popular just because villagers thronged to see him. If he really cares for the people, then he must reinstate their sovereign right.

I don't want to question the king's intentions. He may be motivated by genuine concern for the people's welfare. But it is also true that his tour is happening at a time the country is going down a spiral of violence, brutality and authoritarianism. The need of the hour is peace and right now the king's priority should be to restore peace by defeating the Maoists. Public felicitations don't serve that purpose.

Both the king and the rebels have serious national concerns. While the king wants to restore and strengthen the state as his ancestors had by uniting Nepal, the Maoists want to form a new society. Unfortunately, both have become too headstrong. They have deviated from the right path. Just as the king fails to recognise the realities of a modern world, the rebels have not learnt from the mistakes of the communist movements in Russia and China.

It's good to study Marxism in order to understand the world, but unwise to linger and stagnate in it. The Maoists studied old ideas and philosophies that failed to evolve with the times. An underground leadership is like being held immobile in a spider web—it distances them from the masses. This is exactly what is happening with the rebels. The ideological and philosophical leaders are in India while the guerillas are here in Nepal.

The Maoists talk about democracy but they lack vision. More importantly, they lack confidence in the people. How long will they keep on killing innocents? How long will they remain underground? We are losing our trust in them: they say one thing and do another. Why do they deprive other political parties of the right to express their views openly and prohibit political activity? They have reached a dead end and that is why they always talk about a roundtable conference and a constituent assembly.

I strongly believe that a constituent assembly is the only way out of the national crisis. Our country is not ready for another new constitution under the king's terms because we have been betrayed too many times. This time too, the king says he believes in the constitution but his actions are different. Initially, when the Maoists demanded a constituent assembly, I objected to the idea strongly because it would jeopardise our constitution. But since the king started his active rule, I have started to believe democrats should not be afraid of a constituent assembly. It is time for all political leaders to advocate this. It is really surprising that the major political parties are still undecided on this issue.

Cops 'n children

Samacharpatra, 11 April

On Saturday's demonstration near the Padma Kanya Campus, riot police grabbed and dragged young boys and girls into vans when they failed to arrest real demonstrators. A policeman was seen chasing an innocent bystander, 12-year-old Suraj Khadgi, in Bagbazar who was beaten up in his house and then yanked towards the van. In another scene, a young girl, Kunsang Lama, was just walking towards the bus stop when she was suddenly surrounded by police and forced inside the van. When she could not reason with them, she started hitting back and screaming with frustration, "I am not a demonstrator. I'm just going home." The police were given strict orders that only the female police should be handling female demonstrators, but the arrests were getting out of control. One young woman in a red t-shirt was seen pelting stones at the police. Later, all women wearing red clothes were arrested.

Assault on history

Editorial in *Rajdhani*, 11 April

The Maoists bombed and completely destroyed the statue of King Prithbi Narayan Shah in Devighat of Nuwakot district. The destruction of this great Nepali unifier is a tragedy and unbearable for everyone proud to be Nepali. This action is a direct assault on our nation's integrity, unity and existence, the virtues and symbols of what King Prithbi Narayan Shah stood for. Each country has a symbolic national hero that all citizens identify with. King Prithbi is the historical



KIRAN PANDAY

A female protestor injured during demonstration at Bag Bazar

leader who united the nation and brought integrity to Nepal. He is will always be cherished as a great father of the nation. Without him, Nepal would not exist. The Maoist leadership should be concerned about the destruction of his statue, because even the Maoists are first of all Nepalis. Everything else is secondary.

Broken legs

Himal Khabarpatrika 13-27 April

Yambahadur Sunwar was working in his metalsmith shop when six Maoists came by two weeks ago and asked him to give them his goat. "It costs Rs 5,000," he told them, "pay the money and take it." The enraged Maoists told his family to go inside the house, dragged him away and crushed both his legs with rocks. Sunwar begged them to kill him instead of torturing him. This angered them even more and they beat him mercilessly. Sunwar thinks the goat was just an excuse, the Maoists targeted him because his son is in the army. Sunwar, who is recuperating in Surkhet hospital, says: "We thought they were fighting for poor people like

us, I never imagined they would make me a cripple."

Foes to friends

Samacharpatra, 13 April

It has become a routine affair—students and riot police scuffling on the streets of the Valley. But in the general chaos, we detected a change: for the better. After hours of stone throwing and latthi charges, at the end of the day the two sides shake hands and adjourn proceedings till the following day of the ongoing agitation of the five political parties. It's an interesting phenomenon. "Why not?" says a protester, when we asked him about these amicable partings. "We have to fight against each tomorrow too." Turning to a group of riot policemen he jokes, "You'd better eat well tonight." A policeman, equally in jest, says, "You may want to return that baton you snatched from us earlier." Another protestor joins the conversation and wishes the police, "A happy new year and may you not lose the will to suppress our movement!" Quick as a flash, an officer replies: "The same good wishes to you too."

New Year Greetings!

विमल Robin Sayami in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 13-27 April

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"There is no need for a movement now. If the king wants to hold elections, let us give him a chance."

Manisha Koirala, Bollywood actress and BP Koirala's granddaughter on *Kantipur Television*, 11 April

May you rid yourself of the habit of pelting stones and bricks, and learn how to protest peacefully.” By the time the exchange was over, the two sides had reached a satisfactory compromise: the protesters would not chant slogans and hurl stones and the police would not make any arrests. Female agitators of Padma Kanya Campus took the lead and laid down their ammo of bricks and stones. The police then retrieved the batons that were snatched from them. That was Bagbazar and Putalisadak on new year’s eve.

Safe abortions
.....
Samacharpatra, 10 April

Women are rushing to the state-run Maternity Hospital in Kathmandu after the government introduced a medical service for safe abortions in March. More than 20 women between the ages of 20-30 years have already arrived. “We are finding it difficult to provide services for so many women,” says Yasobardhan Pradhan, director of the family health unit at the hospital.

The government introduced an abortion law in 2002 giving women the right to terminate unwanted pregnancies. So far, only the Maternity Hospital in Kathmandu is authorised to carry out the procedure. The government is planning to set up

abortion units in all five regions and at teaching hospitals around the country. They need a separate licence to set up abortion services and gynaecologists must undergo special training.

Nepal is among the five countries with the highest record of maternal mortality, 20 percent of which are due to unsafe abortions. Even though it is illegal to carry out the procedure in any clinic other than a designated hospital, estimates put the number of abortions in Nepal at 57,000 annually. The Maternity Hospital has been trying to tell women when abortion is legally and medically possible.

Killed at 75
.....
Kantipur, 13 April

On 30 March, two Maoist commanders were killed when an explosive they had hidden in Jarmi of Jumla district went off accidentally. Villagers who came to see what happened kicked the corpses saying they were responsible for hardships in the villages. Ten of those involved in kicking the corpses were later abducted by the Maoists and tortured. Among them was 75-year-old Man Bahadur Buda of Tatopani, whose body was found in Kanche Khola on Saturday.

Nepal will remain

Lok Raj Baral in *Deshantar*, 11 April

देशान्तर साप्ताहिक

I don't believe King Gyanendra is our national unifier. This is why I don't subscribe to the theory that without the king there will be no Nepal. It is illogical to say the nation won't exist without a monarch just because we are geographically sandwiched between China and India.

In this day and age, a country can't simply annex another. People must stop worrying about Nepal being overrun. China is engaged in its own affairs and though we have problems with India, they are relatively small and usually stem from having an open border. Of course, both our neighbours are interested in Nepal. When we establish ourselves as a republic, we must not be used by one country against the other. If we adopt a balanced foreign policy, we will face no danger from these neighbours. They don't care what system we have in Nepal. Therefore, the theory that the monarchy is necessary to save the country is nonsense.

It is stupid to compare Nepal with Sikkim. The latter was never an independent state, not even like Bhutan. If anyone thinks that the government of a republican Nepal will Sikkimise the country, that means they have no faith in the people. We must

bolster national interest and protection among Nepalis. Our leaders do not run the government properly, they lack longterm vision. All they have done is rely on India to grab state power. Then, when something goes wrong, they worry about India, thinking it can make or break them.

Nepal cannot have a constitutional monarchy anymore, we have come to the point when there will either be an active monarchy or a republic. I see a strong possibility for a republican Nepal. Those advocating the monarchy lack confidence and vision. The political parties are also unclear about their future course and this has made them unable to lead the republican agenda.

During the Panchayat era, there was much speculation that the country would split under the multiparty system. It didn't happen. Now we hear predictions that we will lose our national identity if we opt for a republican system. We have already seen that we cannot have a figurehead monarch like in the UK. No one wishes to see an active monarchy. This leaves us with no option but a republican system. There is no guarantee that even this will be permanent. Some republics have brought back their king. We need to think things through before we finally settle on a republic.


KIRAN PANDAY



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India does IT better

And job outsourcing thrives despite US backlash

RANJIT DEVRAJ in NEW DELHI

Despite massive political backlash in the United States, the outsourcing of jobs overseas not only thrives but is drawing more global information-technology (IT) companies to invest in the outsourcing industry in India.

Last Wednesday, International Business Machines (IBM) announced the purchase of Daksh e-Services, one of India's leading business process outsourcing (BPO) firms at an estimated \$150 million. According to figures released by the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM), an umbrella organisation, IT and BPOs together earned India \$12 billion this past year and is slated to touch \$148 billion by 2012. Nearly 200,000 people are employed in the BPO sector.

The growth in outsourcing to countries like India of services such as accounting, billing, transcription, call centres, medical transcription and diagnosis, number-crunching, administration and anything that is information technology-enabled reflects a desire by big companies and the US government to save on costs at home.

But it has also become a political hot potato in the US, where firms



that have been outsourcing these jobs have been accused of being traitors in an election year. Laws were also passed in January to curb outsourcing. In 2002, the US spent \$450 billion on services outsourced to India and other countries that have educated high-speed data transmission facilities and English-speaking people, such as the Philippines and Ireland.

A clear trend was discernible earlier this week when the US outsourcing firm Keane Inc announced plans to invest an additional \$25 million to expand existing BPO and IT operations in India—where it already has 1,600 professionals on its rolls. “We are seeing increased demand for solutions that leverage application outsourcing, business process

outsourcing and offshore delivery to achieve significant cost deductions and business improvement,” said Brian Keane of Keane Inc.

Union Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunications Arun Shourie described the IBM purchase as “great news” but one which demanded that Indian companies now begin to look beyond call

centres and IT outsourcing—and consider handling legal outsourcing, accountancy, architecture and contract research and development of global companies. Indian companies could set up companies in the North America Free Trade Area (NAFTA), employ locals and repatriate profits to India, Shourie suggested.

Some of that is already happening. Wipro, for example, works on a large scale integration project for Nokia, the Finnish cellular phone giant, using centres in Bangalore and the US although it mostly hires Indian personnel and sends them to work in foreign on-site locations. But Singh said that in the coming years, as many as a fourth of Wipro's employees in the United States could be from among local people. This, he said, would certainly silence the widespread and politically explosive criticism in the US that jobs are being taken away from that country and moved to India.

According to the US business consultancy firm AT Kearney, India continues to be a major destination for outsourcing of jobs because of a combination of two factors—low costs and the availability of skilled labour. ● (IPS)



MARWAAN MACAN-MARKAR in BANGKOK

An ambitious project to link major cities and capitals of Asian countries through a network of highways is due to begin its hopeful journey late April, at a regional conference to be held in Shanghai, China. Already, 32 Asian countries have shown interest in the proposed Asian Highway, which is expected to span over 140,000km, say senior UN officials. Of them, 20 countries are ready to sign the highway agreement in the Chinese city, which will host the 60th session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Bangkok-based UN regional agency, from 22-28 April.

They include Japan, on the eastern corner of the highway, to Georgia, on the western fringes of the territory ESCAP covers. The other countries also stepping up to support this transport project are Afghanistan, Bhutan,

Cambodia, China, India, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

According to Raj Kumar, ESCAP's chief economist, the network of roads that enable goods to move overland from, say, Ho Chi Minh City to Moscow will help boost trade in the region. “It will offer countries an alternative to transporting goods by air or by sea,” he added. “Landlocked countries like Bhutan, Nepal and Laos stand to gain from this project.”

This is “the first time (that) countries made a formal commitment to the linkages and alignment of highways totalling over 140,000km and connecting 32 member countries,” states a new study, ‘Meeting the Challenges in an Era of Globalisation by Strengthening Regional Development Cooperation’. The genesis of this plan dates back

Drive thru

The ambitious dream of linking the continent by the 140,000km Asian Highway

to 1959, adds the report that was released last Friday.

With concrete support for the Asian Highway coming from one-third of ESCAP's 62-member countries, the region will mark “a major step towards the realisation of a massive land transport network linking (Asia's) capital cities, tourism sites, industrial and agricultural centres and sea and river ports,” the report observes.

What had slowed plans for this project till now was the Cold War, said Kim Hak-Su, ESCAP's executive secretary. “During the Cold War period, we could not think of linking highways in China, the former Soviet Union and Korea.” Other political realities had also put the brakes on the Asian Highway blueprint, the report states. “Conflicts and lack of trust caused considerable damage to the land transport infrastructure in many countries and created barriers to international land transport.”

For ESCAP, which is leading the way in this transportation effort, the agreement to be signed in Shanghai will underscore the willingness among Asian countries to forge a new level of cooperation after decades of mistrust and hostility towards one another. The agreement calls on countries endorsing the idea to work on existing roadways that will become part of the Asian Highway. That



will include conforming to a common standard for road signs, design standards and also uniform measures, including rules and regulations, to facilitate border crossings.

However, ESCAP officials are unable to give a date by when this sprawling web of roadways will become a reality. Nor, for that matter, can they give an estimated cost of this venture. “This highway is really necessary to connect neighbouring countries,” admits Kim. “It will take a long time to complete but we have to start somewhere.” ● (IPS)

Love thy neighbour

As the EU widens, it must reach out to its less developed neighbours

According to the European security document adopted in 2003, “It is in the interest of the European Union to promote a ring of well-governed countries on its borders with whom it can enjoy close and cooperative relations.” The European Commission is now elaborating this principle in the form of a “Wider Europe Initiative.”

ANALYSIS

George Soros



But the initiative cannot fulfill its great promise as long as it stays within the Brussels bureaucracy. It needs to become a political initiative. The EU needs to reach out to its less developed neighbours. This is of vital interest to Europe, but it cannot succeed without adequate political and financial support.

The most powerful tool that the EU has for influencing political and economic development in neighbouring countries is the prospect of membership. Unfortunately, the problems created by the current enlargement make it unrealistic to hold out membership to additional countries beyond the ones now under consideration—Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and possibly the Balkan countries.

In the past, the road to membership was paved with Association Agreements. The defining characteristic of the countries on the eastern and southern borders of Europe is that they lack many attributes needed for membership. The Wider Europe Initiative is meant to help develop those attributes. Association Agreements, although desirable, may not be adequate, as the EU’s Balkan experiences indicate.

The EU began with the right idea in the Balkans: to bring those countries closer to each other by bringing them closer to the Union. Foreign ministries translated that idea into the Stability Pact, but finance ministers refused to finance it, so the pact remained an empty shell.

Then the European Commission

took the idea and translated it into bilateral Stability and Association Agreements, but the original idea—regional reconciliation—got lost. As a consequence, developments in the Balkans are unsatisfactory, as the recent riots in Kosovo and Serbia demonstrate.

The Wider Europe Initiative also starts with a good idea: recognition that relations between the EU and its neighbourhood are inherently asymmetric. The EU must promote democratic development in neighboring countries without expecting or demanding reciprocal concessions.

It should, however, expect and demand progress and tailor its assistance to the performance of the countries concerned. Conditionality may not be the right word to describe the relationship, because it implies that certain conditions must be met before the Union bestows benefits. Today, however, the EU must take the initiative and offer incentives. Concessions could then be withdrawn if expectations are not fulfilled.

This means that EU policy must be tailor-made for individual countries. It would be desirable to set up joint working groups with the countries concerned to establish, monitor and adjust individual action plans. The European Commission is already engaged in preparing such plans. They need to be given greater substance.

There is a fundamental difference between the EU’s Eastern and Southern flanks. I am personally involved in the neighboring countries to the east, so I shall confine my remarks to that region. Wider Europe in the east happens to coincide with Russia’s “near abroad”. While the EU cannot hold out the prospect of membership, Russia is happy to offer membership in a reconstituted empire. The EU must therefore offer inducements that outweigh pressure from Russia.

Such inducements are not hard to find: greater access to Europe’s common market, more favorable visa

regimes, job and immigration opportunities, access to capital, cultural contacts, and technical assistance. Admittedly, the Union’s budget does not have space for the Wider Europe Initiative before 2007, but where there is a will there is a way. Giving substance to the initiative would offer an attractive alternative to the Bush administration’s policy of spreading democracy by military means.

I established Open Society Foundations in all the countries of the former Soviet Union. They do on a small scale what the Wider European Initiative ought to do on a large scale: promote democratic development by supporting civil society while working with governments when possible. The less receptive the government the more important supporting civil society becomes. The same principle ought to guide the EU. A civil society component must be included in every action plan.

Individual action plans are urgently needed even before the general Wider Europe Initiative emerges. Elections are pending in Ukraine and Moldova, and abuses normally accompanying elections are on the increase. It ought to be



possible to persuade governments in those countries to curb such behavior by holding out the prospect of substantial rewards.

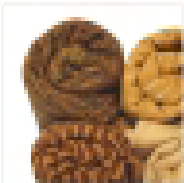


Georgia’s peaceful revolution is not replicable elsewhere, but it has made neighboring regimes nervous. They ought to be persuaded—through a judicious mixture of carrots and sticks—that strengthening the rule of law and democratic institutions would work to their advantage. Georgia itself needs all the help it can get, which requires an emergency action plan different from the others.



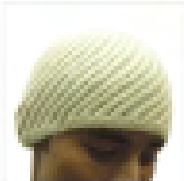
Belarus seems beyond redemption, but appearances are deceptive. Because President Alexander Lukashenka’s behavior is so outrageous, a change of regime becomes possible. EU member states reacted strongly when Lukashenka tried to sack the rector of the



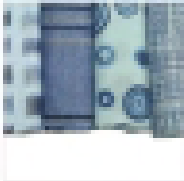
prestigious European Humanities University, and this, along with other developments, weakened his position.

Unfortunately, political conditions in Russia are moving the wrong way. After a chaotic period, Russia is shedding the few attributes of an open society it had acquired. Having failed to provide effective assistance, the west is no position to exert much political influence. The best way to encourage openness is by strengthening commercial and economic ties while ceasing to treat Russia as a nascent democracy. It is all the more important for the EU to take a more proactive role in the neighboring countries whose political orientation is not yet set in stone. ● (© Project Syndicate)

George Soros is Chairman of Soros Fund Management and the Open Society Institute.









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In this final installment of his recollections as a Gurkha soldier in the British Army, Lachhuman Gurung speaks of receiving his Victoria Cross for bravery in Burma. He shares his views on war and describes the horrors of the final days on the Burma front. This and other testimonies of living Gurkha soldiers are taken from *Lahure ka Katha*, published by Himal books and translated for *Nepali Times* in this space every week by Dev Bahadur Thapa.

“If we didn’t kill them, they’d kill us.”



I have no idea where I was kept for five or six days. After that I was on another plane. We arrived at Comilla at a well-equipped hospital. Some were bleeding from fresh wounds and others are recuperating. I had a lot of trouble because of my wounded hand. It had to be operated on three times. In the first operation, the hand was only shortened a little, yet it would not heal. So I had another operation where my hand was amputated. I stayed for 22 days in Comilla and was then shifted to Calcutta from where I was taken to Murshidabad for three months. By then I slowly started regaining my strength and was walking a little. After that I was sent to Poona to get an artificial limb. A Gurkha captain and a lance corporal went as escorts. I was brought back in time for the Dasai festival. I was then told that I was to go to Delhi for the

investiture ceremony. It was earlier proposed that I to go to London, but I had never been there before and did not know any English. So, I chose Delhi instead of London. My father, mother and elder brother arrived from home for the ceremony. I was awarded the Victoria Cross for bravery on the Burma front, and then I went home. In the meantime, the armistice was signed. I was on the front only a short while compared to others who spent up to seven years fighting. One of my instructors served right through the war but remained unscathed—well, they command from the rear and face little chances of being hit. On the other hand, we were involved in the front. A number of my comrades-in-arms laid down their lives. Many millions had died. The sole purpose of the war was to lower the population, which it

succeeded in doing. Politics warranted the state to lessen its people when it could not provide food and shelter. The sons and descendants of rulers were spared. Ordinary people became victims. Many just disappeared. In the war we focused on fighting and how to do away with the enemy. If we didn’t kill them, they killed us. Since we were recruited by the British, we had to fight on their behalf. We knew they were fighting the Japanese and the Germans. At that time, Germany was a big power. Physically too, they were big. They were strong enough to thrust in the bayonet in the body of a Gurkha soldier and then raise his body up. They could squeeze a Gurkha to death using one arm. Quite a few Nepalis died in the war. One of them was my brother-in-law. Unfortunately, no one can collect his pension because his father and mother were long dead and as he joined the army as a lad and died in the war, he never had the chance to marry. I enrolled at the age of 22 and was a bachelor. I married only at the end of war. In those days no one could refuse to enlist in the army. I did not inform my family about my own voluntary enlistment till after I had joined the army. I knew how to read and write a little, so I sent them a letter. Since we belonged to the family of headmen, our grandfathers had taught us to read and write. Quite a few of the other soldiers were illiterate.

Making the world a better place

The Ashoka Foundation’s guide to social entrepreneurship

When Fr Eugene Watrin passed away on 29 February at the age of 84, most of the eulogies praised his contribution to Nepali education and social service. Although his association with the Fulbright commission was mentioned, Fr Watrin had kept a low profile and few knew that he was also a volunteer representative of the Ashoka Foundation, a global fellowship dedicated to identifying and supporting social entrepreneurs.

The Ashoka Foundation works to create a critical mass of social innovators worldwide. Like business entrepreneurs, not all social entrepreneurs succeed. However, the ones that do help transform society. Journalist and media trainer Bharat Dutta Koirala is an Ashoka Fellow who went on to win the Magasaysay Award two years ago for his contributions to the institutionalisation of media in this country.

Environmentalism and heritage conservationist Anil Chitrakar, journalist Rajendra Dahal and women’s empowerment activist Rita Thapa are some other Ashoka Fellows who have made their mark on Nepali society. There are many like them all over the globe. This book is a saga of some of these remarkable people and their pioneering work. Fr Watrin’s story is not in this book, but his life is reflected in almost all narratives in the collection.

Despite its title, *How to Change the World* is not a DIY social entrepreneurship handbook or a how-to guide for dummies. Even if it were possible to teach entrepreneurship of any kind, it would be too ambitious to attempt it through a single book. What the author sets out to do instead is profile personalities he chooses to call “restless people”.

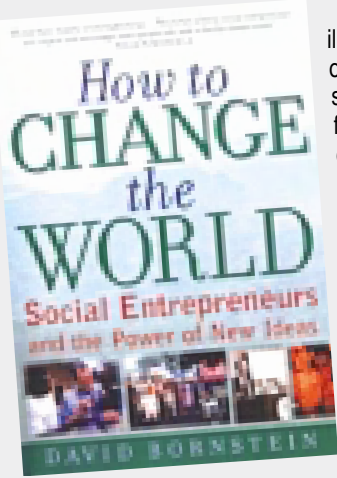
The author’s justification for illustrating a trend through the stories of selected achievers is disarmingly simple: “An important social change frequently begins with a single entrepreneurial author: one obsessive individual who sees a problem and envisions a new solution, who takes the initiative to act on that vision, who gathers resources and builds organisations to protect and market that vision, who provides the energy and sustained focus to overcome the inevitable resistance, and who—decade after decade—keeps improving, strengthening, and broadening that vision until what was once a marginal idea has become a new norm.”

From Javed Abidi in India campaigning for the rights of the disabled to Veronica Khosa in South Africa advocating care for AIDS patients, the book profiles restless souls who had the courage of conviction to see their ideas through the travails of implementation.

Like its commercial version, social entrepreneurship too requires a certain amount of commitment and risk-taking: hence, “the first ones usually spring from the middle and upper classes, largely because they enjoy access to resource and information”. This sometimes prompts the criticism that social activism is the playfield of the elite. Bill Drayton, the man who dreamt up the Ashoka (a-shoka—absence of pain in Sanskrit) Fellowship realised that unencumbered existence was a pre-requisite of independent action. He has devised the scheme to free internally-fired individuals from the worry of daily necessities for a few years so that they can devote themselves fully to their transforming missions.

The book is a tribute to the innovative idea of supporting persons rather than their projects, an ode to Bill Drayton. If only the book itself was a little more readable, and the price tag more affordable than \$28. Wait for the Indian edition before you rush to buy this one.

There is now an opportunity for the legions of Fr Watrin admirers in Nepal to contribute to a fellowship set up by the Ashoka Foundation in his name. The Ashoka Fr Watrin Fellowship for Social Entrepreneurship is a fitting tribute to the late educator. ● (CK Lal)



How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas
David Bornstein, Oxford University Press, New York, 2004, \$28

आर. बि. मिर्ते पात्रो



हिमाल



आर. बि. मिर्ते पात्रो



बिज्जी बितरणको लागि सोमै सम्पर्क राख्नुहोस् ।

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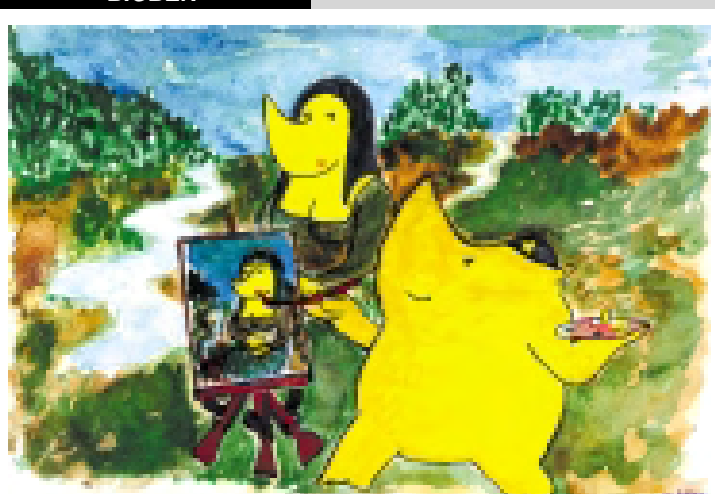
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BIGBEN



Deep down, Babu Ram felt there was more to life than fighting.



DEEPAK ACHARYA

Turning pro

Young Nepali amateur all set to go

The name Chuda B Bhandari is well known in Nepal’s golfing circles. Fondly known as CB, he has consistently been Nepal’s top amateur. He started golf quite late, but has worked his way up to being a scratch golfer (zero handicap) within just a few years. CB is now 26 and all set to further improve his game through intensive training abroad. His ambition is to be a successful professional in the not too distant future. CB practices at least 6 hours a day, and can be seen at the Royal Nepal Golf Club working on his game through rain or shine. He is very passionate about the game, and in fact is so in love with it that he aims to make it his career. “Golf is my passion. I feel very lucky to be able to say that I want to make it my profession one day. I will put in every thing I have to be a successful golfer, and now I am looking for some sponsors to support my training.” I caught up with CB while he was practicing at the RNGC and stole a few moments of his practice time.

Deepak: How long have you been playing?
CB: Without counting my initial visits to some golf driving ranges, it has been six years now.

How did you start the game?
Through my uncle who lives in Scotland. He invited me for a holiday in Bangkok in 1997. While we were wandering around, we came across a driving range and he asked me if I wanted to try to hit a golf ball. That was the first time I held a golf club in my hand. I knew of the RNGC back home, and right there and then I decided to pick up this sport. I saw an advert for a cheap golf set and bought it right away. That’s how I got started.

Who supports you and what is your source of inspiration?
My uncle. He has been very supportive and wants me to be a successful golfer. He is my source of inspiration.

What kind of future do you see in golf?
Golf is gaining popularity every day. It’s a very lucrative sport and the prize money in professional golf tours in the continent is very substantial. If the economy of our country improves, it would also be much better here.

What are your goals?
I don’t want to sound too optimistic, but I plan to go for intensive training in the summer, play as many regional amateur tournaments as I can and establish myself as a good amateur player. Then in two years time I plan to turn professional.

What are some essential things Nepal Golf Association should do to bring up the standard of golf in the country?
Well, what we really need here is more regional amateur tournaments. The Nepal Amateur Open that started last year was a perfect example and needs continuity. More regional golf tournaments should be organised. This would get top golfers into the tournament mindset and result in better performances in international golf tournaments.

Who is your idol?
I like watching Phil Michelson and Vijay Singh play, but don’t have any idol.

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

Martial love affair

Everybody is taekwondo and karate fighting, and winning

SRADDHA BASNYAT

It was the taekwondo flyweight finals at the South Asian Federation (SAF) Games in Islamabad two weeks ago, Nepal vs India. Sangina Baidya was fighting for gold. The crowd supported her, but with an injured right hand and knee, Sangina found herself sizing up a much taller opponent. That’s when she switched strategy, using her feared slap kicks aimed at her opponent’s face to defend herself. Sangina won. “I was confident I would win,” says the 27-year-old champion (*pic, bottom right*).

How is it that Nepal has become such a powerhouse in martial arts? Sangina replies diplomatically: “Nepalis are very hard working, especially in this sport.” Her own training regimen is proof: Sangina practiced up to six hours a day two months before the SAF Games this year.

Karate coach Hira Singh Dangol, who led the team to Pakistan, believes the martial arts appeal to the Nepali psyche. “The biggest thing in karate is discipline: how to respect your elders and behave with peers is taught from the beginning. This is why martial arts gained such a popular following in Nepal.” It is part of Prakash Pradhan’s job as deputy director of the National Sports Council to discover what drives athletes to perform better. He says Nepalis perform well consistently in martial arts because they are very self-motivated. As Nepal’s first PhD in sports science, Pradhan understands that both nurture and nature play a role. “Martial arts suit Nepalis because a good fighter is determined by courage and coordination. The fighting spirit is something training alone cannot bring, it’s hereditary,” he says. Then there are the physical attributes. Nepalis aren’t very tall, this means they have a lower centre of gravity which is suited to speed and balance. “Biomechanically, we are built for it,” says Pradhan.

Brig Gen Chhatra Man Singh Gurung is director of physical training at the Royal Nepali Army and a taekwondo blackbelt. He thinks Nepal’s rugged terrain has built us to be physically tough. “Nepali people are fit and their physical structure is good for this type of training, and they are very interested in taekwondo so they have the aptitude as well.” But fourth place at the 9th SAF Games in Islamabad was a disappointment for Nepal, which had come second in the medals tally on home turf last time. The taekwondo team garnered all the major wins: Nirmal Shrestha and Renuka Magar clinched the deal in the men’s and women’s bantam weight category, Deepak Bista (*pic top, red vest*) and Rupa Kumari Shyangtan together took men’s and women’s feather weight titles, and



NPNA

Niranjan Shrestha the lightweight title. Squabbles over controversial decisions in karate and boxing affected the morale of Nepali athletes, but we still took nine karate medals, including two silvers by Surendra Shrestha (under-80kg) and Kushal Shrestha (under-65kg). Deepak Shrestha was the true karate kid, winning first place in the under-60kg category. “Karate is what I know best,” says Deepak. The 27-year-old started learning the sport since he was 12 and works as assistant coach at the district head dojo in Lalitpur. Despite winning gold this year, he is concerned that his fight has not improved as much as it could have. The karate team held closed camp trainings just a week prior to the games. Deepak thinks it should have started at least six months ago. “The Nepal Karate Federation just took it for granted that we’d win because we did well in the 8th SAF Games. We plateaued while



other nations got better,” he explains. “This year, we had such good results only because of our motivation.” Prakash Pradhan admits that martial arts is often neglected: “If they are given priority, I don’t see why we can’t win golds at the Olympics.” And that is exactly what Sangina Baidya is aiming for as she prepares to head off to Athens in August as the first Nepali to qualify for the Olympics. ●

KALINTA

picture framing

East side of Royal Palace
Nag Pochhari
Kathmandu
Tel: 4442437

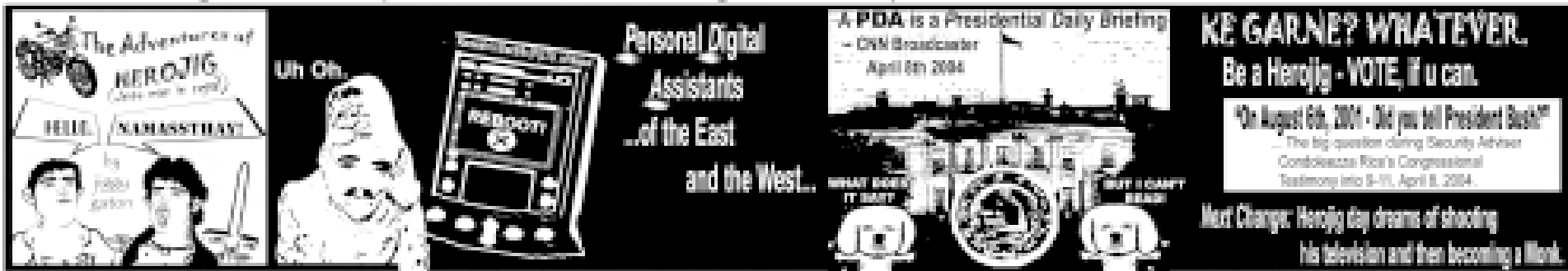
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To see all the Adventures of Herojig - Tanned Man in Nepal, go to www.extreme-nepal.com

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ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVALS AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Genius at work** Paintings by senior Nepali artists till 23 April at Gallery Nine, Lazimpat. 4428694
- ❖ **Still Life/ Street Life** Photographs by Wayne Amtzis till 3 May, poetry reading 5:30 PM on 15 April at Siddhartha Art Gallery. 4218048
- ❖ **Samadhi: A journey through Sri Lanka** mixed media of Buddha images till 26 April at Lazimpat Gallery Café. 4428549



EVENTS

- ❖ **A Little Night Music** by The Diplomatic Notes to benefit Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust. 5.30 PM on 18 April at Baber Mahal Revisited. Contact: g2@mail.com.np
- ❖ **Film Club Presents: Satyajit Ray Special** from 18-26 April at Baggikhana, Patan. 5542544

MUSIC

- ❖ **Chris Masand and The Modern Jazz Live Band** at Not Just the Jazz Bar, Friday and Saturday nights. Shangri-la Hotel. 4412999
- ❖ **Abhaya & The Steam Injuns** Friday nights at Dwarika's. 4479488

FOOD

- ❖ **Splash Spring BBQ** 6PM every Wednesday and Friday. Hotel Kathmandu, Lazimpat.
- ❖ **Executive Lunch** Weekdays at Toran Restaurant, Dwarika's. 4479488
- ❖ **Sunny Side Up** Weekend BBQ at Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **The Beer Garden at Vaijayantha** Weekends with beer and snacks at the Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **Café U** dinners Friday and Saturday. Opp British School. 5523263
- ❖ **Roadhouse Cafe** for woodfired pizzas. Opp St Mary's School, Pulchowk. 5521755
- ❖ **Traditional Newari Thali** at Kathmandu Guest House. 4431632

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Wet & Wild Summer Splash Weekends** at Godavari Village Resort, Taukhel. 5560675
- ❖ **Pure relaxation** at Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge. 4361500
- ❖ **Luxury package** for Shivapuri Cottage, Dadagaon. Highland Travel & Tours. 4253352
- ❖ **Bardia National Park** \$10 a day at Jungle Base Camp Lodge. Email: junglebasecamp@yahoo.com
- ❖ **Golf** in the Valley's last pristine forest at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa. 4451212
- ❖ **Weekend Special** for Rs 3,000 per couple, Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha. 4375280
- ❖ **Early Bird** discounts at Hotel Shangri-la during April. 4412999

BOOKWORM

Manual for Urban Rural Linkage and Rural Development Analysis Pushkar K Pradhan
New Hira Book Enterprises, 2003
Rs 800

Pushkar Pradhan's book centres around the theme that, contrary to common focus, simply concentrating on development in rural areas isn't enough. Rather, he encourages simultaneous planning for development in small towns and urban areas as well to make development an collective, well-balanced effort.

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



Ajay Devgan, Vivek Oberoi, Lara Dutt, Amrita Rao and Aftab star in the Indra Kumar's romantic comedy about extra-marital affairs. Marriages are supposedly made in heaven but all too often become hell on earth. *Masti* is a story of Meet, Amar and Prem who decide to spice up their lives. Only they intend to do it by having as many affairs as possible in a month and then exchanging notes—all in the name of fun, hence the name of the movie. Smacks of sexism and gender stereotypes? We'll just have to see if *Masti* redeems itself with a twist in the tale.

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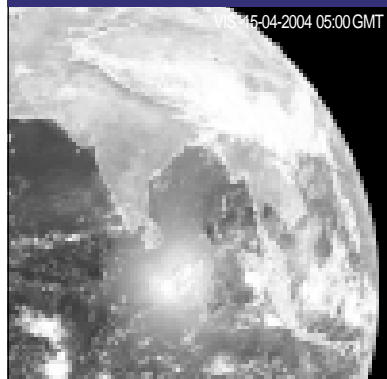
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NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



The heat is on, and it will continue to sizzle in the low valleys and tarai next week. Eastern and central Nepal will experience local thunderstorms in the afternoons and at night, but in the absence of moisture infusion these will not bring much by way of rain. After a brief respite, the wind direction has shifted again to southwesterly which means more wind-blown sand up to 3,500m and increased temperatures. Expect clear mornings with brick-stack smog in Kathmandu Valley obstructing visibility.

KATHMANDU VALLEY



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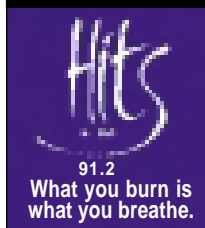
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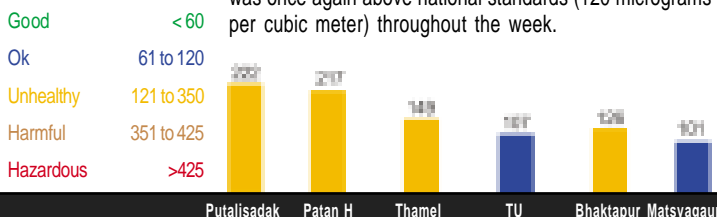
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CE

KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY



There was a significant improvement in Kathmandu's air quality last week. Part of this was due to reduced vehicle movement due to the daily demonstrations in central Kathmandu. Overall, the average PM10 (particles that are small enough to enter the human body) concentration in Kathmandu's air went down by more than 40 percent. However, even with this improvement, Kathmandu's air is still harmful for health. In urban areas, the PM10 level was once again above national standards (120 micrograms per cubic meter) throughout the week.



रेडियो सगरमाथाको समाचार बुनेटिन
“हालचाल”

बिहान: ६:४५, ७:४५, ८:४५, ९:४५

दिउँसो: २:४५, ४:४५

बेलुका: २:४५, ६:४५, ८:४५

सम्पूर्ण सामग्री सहित रेडियो सगरमाथा दिनभरि नै तपाईंको सेवामा

नेपाली रेडियो नेपाली आवाज

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HAPPENINGS



MIN BAJRACHARYA

TOP BRASS: The royal family attend the annual new year reception hosted by the Royal Nepali Army at their headquarters on Tuesday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

RETAIL THERAPY: Police take time out between clashes to shop for new year gifts at Bhotahiti on Wednesday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

GOTCHA! Photojournalists from Getty Images and the Associated Press are captured capturing the moment at Bag Bazar during street protests on Sunday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

KUMBAKARNA: Noisy protestors on Tuesday fail to wake any political fervour in this sleeping man at Chettrapati.



KIRAN PANDAY

HOT FOOT: A passer-by's toes are caught in the frame at Wednesday's torch-lit procession at Ratna Rajya Campus, Bhrikuti Mandap.

Puja's palo

At a time when most Nepali youth are either mired in cynicism or desperately trying to win a visa lottery, Puja Gurung has found her niche in Nepal's booming television industry.

At 20, she has a respected television show which she presents with a maturity that belies her age. *Aba Hamro Palo* (Our Turn Now) on Kantipur Television is definitely not your standard call-in music video program. Held in a comfortable cocktail of English and Nepali, it is a forum for urban youth to speak their minds on subjects ranging from politics to social attitudes, entertainment, careers and anything else that matters.

"I was always hanging around with my friends talking about politics and social issues when I realised that I could do this on camera," recalls Puja. Her challenge lay in finding teenagers who had opinions on more than just music and movies.

Aba Hamro Palo became an instant hit and the friends she recruited to appear on her first few episodes gave way to a deluge of interested participants. "I was surprised to find so many intelligent and radical

young people," she says. "Most of the time they talk sense, unlike what adults assume about us." Within 38 episodes, Puja has had school students, engineers, architects, business people, underground metal heads, rappers, gays and lesbians on her show. The only criteria seems to be age: no one above 25 allowed on camera.

Puja began her tv career hosting the fashion-based program *Pahiran* on Channel Nepal. Puja has proven that if Nepali viewers have access to relevant and interesting programming in

Nepali they prefer it to anything on foreign channels. "What we really need to do is connect ourselves with Nepali viewers, give them something that is more lively and unconventional," she says.

Puja is happy to be thought of as an example to her peers. "There is no need to go abroad for jobs because there are lots of opportunities right here in the country," she says echoing something she said in a recent program. "All you need is focus." ●

Aba Hamro Palo airs at 9PM every Thursday on Kantipur Television



KIRAN PANDAY

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