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Almost there and back

RAJENDRA DAHAL

The immediate political future, it seems, depends on whom King Gyanendra chooses to meet. After a series of confabs earlier with Panchayat era names and some others, the king almost met Girija Prasad Koirala on Wednesday. There was electric anticipation in the capital. But then he didn't.

When the king invited the leaders of political parties for consultations after six months of not talking, there were great expectations. A resolution to the nation's political crisis, set in motion by the royal move of 4 October 2002, seemed within grasp. With the king and the parties in one corner, the Maoist would also come to the table—that was the hope.

Inexplicably, the string of royal audiences began with the politically insignificant Badri Prasad Mandal, a former 'pancha' and latter-day king's minister, and several minor players. Slighted, the leaders of the five agitating parties turned down the king's invitation when the call finally came from the office of principal private secretary Pashupati Maharjan.

Even though the continuous month-long agitation against 'regression' has been likened by one wag to a 'leaking pressure cooker that leaves the daal undone', the parties were energised by the support of non-political professional groups. Even the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), formerly termed 'royalist', entered the fray. The international community (donors and diplomats) added 'democracy' to their own list of demands, in addition to 'human rights'.

Suspecting the royal palace of wanting to appoint a prime minister of its choice rather than their's yet again, the five parties made a conditional offer to the king: first release all the detained party workers and lift the prohibitory order on demonstrations. To keep up the

pressure, the parties organised rallies in the capital, even as the government hosted the Nepal Development Forum (NDF).

The government's concessions came on Monday, incongruously the very day that Koirala and Madhab Kumar Nepal were arrested from their homes to prevent them from leading rallies. The prohibitory order was lifted and all detainees were released, other than five student leaders. Nepal and Koirala were now in a mindset to make the Narayanhiiti visit, although there was some disagreement between the two on the level of flexibility to exhibit. Nepal was for the resignation of Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa as a precondition.

With a senior cardiac specialist and a retired banker acting as emissaries between the parties and the palace, Koirala was asked to prepare for the royal rendezvous on Wednesday. He cooled his heels till 2PM, and when no summons came, he left for Biratnagar. He demanded the release of the five student leaders from there.

The conspiratorialists among the politicians believe that the government's conciliatory gestures and the king's meetings were merely to ensure that the NDF did not get derailed. Now that the meet has ended 'successfully' and the powerful development czars are gone, there is less pressure on both the darbars, Narayanhiiti and Singha. The parties now ask: could it be that the government's softened stance had little to do with them and everything to do with the NDF?

While the authorities may feel smug for having tempered the intensity of the movement, this may force the political parties to resort to even sharper slogans on the street.

As we go to press, the possibilities of talks between the king and the politicians has not been exhausted. A country waits. ●

We were so close to a political resolution Wednesday



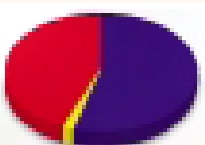
RAM HUMAGAI

SOFTER SIDE: A girl dances at a cultural anti-'regression' rally organised by the Nepali Congress (Democratic) on Wednesday.

Times nepalitimes.com

Weekly Internet Poll # 135

Q. Is it ethical for journalists to join the anti-king agitation on the streets?



Total votes: 1,438

Weekly Internet Poll # 136. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Which one of the following political alignments would be most acceptable to you?

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Published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd, Chief Editor: Kunda Dixit
Desk Editors: Trishna Gurung, Jemima Sherpa
Design: Kiran Maharjan Web: Bhushan Shilpakar
Advertising: Sunaina Shah advertising@himalmedia.com
Subscription: Anil Karki, subscription@himalmedia.com
Sanchaya Kosh Building, Block A-4th Floor, Lalitpur
GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: 01-5543333-6, Fax: 01-5521013
Printed at Jagadamba Press, Hatiban: 01-5547018



EVERY DAY IS PRESS FREEDOM DAY

There is a great deal of frothing at the mouth these days in the media about the government's efforts to muzzle the press. True, there have been crackdowns and detention of protesting journalists in the streets by riot police. But it hasn't been done with any more brutality than that reserved for political leaders rising up against 'repression'.

The media just gave itself more column inches because those beaten up were journalists. Much more worrisome has been the direct Panchayat-style targeting of some journalists and indirect threats against others. The parliament has expired, an elected prime minister has been sacked, local elected bodies disbanded, democratic institutions and oversight bodies are in limbo. Paradoxically, however, the Nepali press has never been freer than it is today.

In fact, scanning the editorials and comments in the Nepali language media, we find there are few taboos left to be broken. But on the week that we celebrate World Press Freedom Day, it would also be important to point out that the current freedom could be a mirage. Draconian security and lese majeste laws are still in place and hang like swords above our heads. They could be activated at any time as excuses to selectively muzzle critical media.

The current strategy to allow media full freedom could also be a sly effort to camouflage the erosion of democracy in the past two years, allow society to let off steam and assure the international community that everything is hunky dory. The challenge for media today is to keep press freedom safe from demagogues disguised as democrats.

And here we include the political parties who use quasi-Maoist tactics by punishing the people and crushing their freedoms with the threats of bandas. Today's rulers are more sophisticated and subtle in exercising control. As we have seen in some countries in our vicinity, constitutionally guaranteed laws on free press do not suffice in ensuring an independent media anymore. Watchdogs can easily be turned into lapdogs by plutocrats putting the squeeze on advertising.

The media can deal with dictators: it has experience fighting repression. But how does it deal with market controls, over-commercialisation that undermines independence? We have to be much more vigilant about political controls on media coming via the marketplace.

Our constitution that was crafted after the fall of Panchayat authoritarianism provides us little protection against this onslaught, especially because the constitution itself is in intensive care. We need more creative ways to respond to threats to journalism from advertising lollipops or outright efforts to buy off reporters and editors. Press freedom needs to be protected by its maximum and fearless application. And it is clearer than ever before that the freedom of the press and political freedom are linked—one can't exist for long without the other.

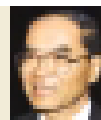
Dithering democrats in our country gave democracy a bad name, but autocrats who believe in trampling freedoms are a bigger threat to press freedom.

Unfettered fourth estate

Free press is not a luxury that can wait until better times

A free, independent and pluralistic media plays a crucial role in the democratic process. Respecting the media's independence and recognising the fundamental right of press freedom, enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal

GUEST COLUMN
Koichiro Matsuura



Declaration of Human Rights, are essential for transparency and the rule of law. These principles are equally important in rich and poor countries alike, in times of peace and in times of war.

In situations of conflict, upheaval, disorder and uncertainty, people's need for reliable information is especially

great—their ability to access provisions, and sometimes their personal safety and very survival, may depend on it. However, they tend to regard much of the information available to them through the media as propaganda. For these reasons, independent and pluralistic media are particularly important in times of war and they remain at least as crucial in the post-conflict phase.

Sadly, each year a number of journalists lose their lives in the course of pursuing their profession. It is the duty of authorities everywhere to respect the media's right to work in conditions of reasonable safety.

All too often, wars are self-perpetuating: conflicts generate more conflict and inevitably bring

death, impoverishment and destruction in their wake. Independent and pluralistic media can make a significant contribution to breaking this vicious circle by enabling dialogue to replace armed conflict.

Even when it is heated, dialogue is crucial for laying the ground for reconciliation and reconstruction. The media can provide a vital space in which different views are aired and information from different sources is openly available for public scrutiny. Furthermore, the correlation between press freedom and economic development has been demonstrated. This relation must be born in mind as the international community seeks to achieve the ambitious agenda of



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LETTERS

CAKE

CK Lal in 'Let them eat cake' (#193) observes correctly that there has been a rise over the last decade in literacy and life expectancy levels while infant mortality has fallen. However, he is wrong in implying that the credit for it is due to the country being 'democratic' during that period. It takes much more than a mere ten years to formulate plans, implement them and achieve such results. Therefore, the fact (however unpalatable) is that the planning and implementation which gave us those results must have taken place during the Panchayat era, which (even Mr Lal would agree) had its good side.

SS Pal, email

LAL SINGH GURUNG

I was pleased to read the testimony of Lal Singh Gurung ('I faked my height', #193). I would like to add that Gurung is also a pioneer in championing the need for family planning services, particularly for ex-servicemen and their families, and thus, is

an advocate for making the services available at the grassroots level. I had an opportunity to visit with him in some distant villages in the early 1980s, where he worked tirelessly to communicate the need for family planning services through the forum of ex-servicemen. As a community leader, Gurung understood the consequences of population problems, and he took it as a challenge to fight it with the same



zeal, courage, planning and steadfastness required to go into battle. In the early 1980s, Gurung was instrumental in helping me establish a family planning service delivery program with the approval of HMG. The program was run successfully with the direct involvement of ex-servicemen in much-needed family planning service for them and their families, as well as for the communities where they lived.

Shyam Lama
Arlington, VA, USA

NDF

The article 'Donors divided' (#194) provides an inkling of bilaterals trying to leverage the multilaterals in the development arena. Historically, the bilaterals prefer grant financing whereas the primary goal of multilaterals is to channel loan money and sprinkle it with a grant component for capacity building. This notion is important in understanding why multilaterals wanted the NDF meeting despite the political vacuum, lack of local government and a parliament.

Do donors think that

development can be achieved in a political vacuum? What are their views of the political situation? While it is true that they wouldn't want to comment on the internal politics of a country, there should be no denying that development is closely related to stability. Is the role of the donor just to channel soft money? The donors' responsibility should ensure that money is used in a proper manner. This is what should have been discussed during the NDF meeting.

It is time to reflect on what was not done and correct it. A lot of time is spent on laying out policies. The NDF could have served a notice to the donors on their failure to ensure real implementation. It is not to be a teacher-student setting where they can chide the government for not achieving the goals.

Development is a joint effort. While donors take pride and credit for successful projects, they should accept a portion of the blame for failure. Nepal is going through difficult times and these meetings should be a platform for some serious brainstorming.

If donors believe that development can move forward in the current political climate, then I challenge them to come forward with the following NDF agenda of its own:

- (1) Donors should provide a strategy for achieving development goals in an absence of the parliament, local infrastructure and a democratic government.
- (2) A self-assessment of its activities in Nepal with an independent study by an NGO.
- (3) Each donor should provide its audited activity account in Nepal to ensure transparency.

A Shrestha, email

SPECTATOR SPORT

The content of 'Spectator sport' (#194) was apt and meaningful. How can the media complain when they are unintentionally hit by stones hurled by agitators and the police? It is not as if bricks and lathis can differentiate between the press and the others. Luckily the car in the picture accompanying the story did not explode. Otherwise newspaper headlines

goals and targets promulgated in the Millennium Declaration.

A free press is not a luxury that can wait until better times. Rather, it is part of the very process through which those better times are achieved. Media freedom is important for building inclusive societies, securing respect for human rights, empowering civil society and promoting development.

Independence does not hinge only on the capacity of private individuals to operate media outlets, it also requires a commitment to professional standards of reporting. The training of journalists is essential in post-conflict situations, which tend to affect countries with limited experience of press freedom. Such training can not only assist the new independent media but also may help to transform state-owned media into valuable public service media.

Governments and authorities everywhere must be prevailed upon to respect the media's vital contribution to building sustainable peace, democracy and development. We must do all in our power to provide journalists with as much safety as possible in the exercise of their profession.

Media freedom is important for all societies, but especially for those whose journey towards recovery, stability and peace is ongoing and beset by uncertainty. Let us applaud the brave men and women who bring us the news in defiance of the risks and dangers. Their freedom to do their work is inextricably linked to the wider enjoyment of basic rights and fundamental freedoms. ●

Koichiro Matsuura is the Director General of UNESCO and this comment is based on his statement on World Press Freedom Day, 3 May.

Differently-abled nation

Our society is handicapped by coercive power and submissive religion

Along with 87-year-old Chhaya Debi Parajuli and 12-year-old Ruben Gandharba, a group of physically challenged people are on the streets every day participating in the ongoing agitation against regression. "We are also part of the society and are responsible for democracy," said one of them in a public program two weeks ago.

STATE OF THE STATE
CK Lal



Like their predecessors in Singha Darbar, governments after the restoration of democracy failed to fully address the concerns of Nepal's disabled. But there is something intrinsic to the dynamics of democracy: society rehabilitated more physically challenged people into the mainstream in a decade after democracy than in the entire history of autocratic rule in the country for over two centuries. Sadly, Maoist atrocities have probably negated some of those achievements by maiming more, but that is a different story. Armed insurgencies are by nature ruthless.

Nepal has appalling statistics for disability: 12 percent of the population is handicapped in one way or another. Those with a very severe disability are put at 1.63 percent, a sizeable figure by itself. Recent sample surveys in neighbouring India have put the disability figure at 1.75 percent, with Himachal Pradesh being the worst hit where it was as high as 2.57 percent. Even in absolute terms, these are fairly high figures.

Very few books deal with the



KIRAN PANDAY

status and concerns of differently-abled people in South Asia. In Nepal, it's difficult to find anything other than the dull official reports of donor agencies and INGOs trumpeting their own achievements. In such an arid field, Lakshmi Narayan Prasad's *Status of People with Disability in Nepal* (Rajesh Prasad, Kathmandu, 2003, price Rs 300) is a welcome relief.

The author comes from an illustrious family of physicians, and has himself devoted over 40 years for the welfare of people with different kinds of disabilities in the country. He has put that experience, his access to national and international sources of pertinent information and his insight into this definitive book on the subject.

No matter how often the silken socialites dabble in 'serving' the physically or mentally challenged,

their true welfare can only take place under an inclusive democratic process. Authoritarian and totalitarian regimes have been known to eliminate them: Hitler gassed them, Pol Pot shot them on the spot. People with different abilities need to be accepted for what they are.

On the issue of the place of the disabled in Hindu religion, Prasad does no service to the marginalised by regurgitating the tradition of philanthropy. In every religion that believes in rebirth, suffering in this birth is a result of the karma of an earlier one. To help alleviate it is tantamount to interfering in god's scheme of things. Hence, no Shankaracharya could ever be a Mother Teresa. Unless our society becomes less fatalistic about our present incarnation, it will be difficult to take corrective measures.

The wave of missionary Hinduism, begun in the late 19th century by Raja Ram Mohun Roy's Brahma Samaj in Bengal, was stopped at the Indo-Nepal border by the orders of conservative priests dominating the courts of Kathmandu. The ignoble nobility of the Hindu religion has always excelled at worshipping power. It showed scant inclination to serve the disabled, uplift the downtrodden or offer any solace to dispirited souls. Nepal needs to look for solutions in the realm of secular practices.

Our society is handicapped by coercive power and submissive religion. Nepal needs to build platforms of secular and democratic institutions. Thus empowered, we can overcome social and political obstacles in the path to a truly all-embracing and representative democracy. ●

everywhere might have read, 'Journos killed by burning government vehicle'. With regard to that same photograph, the facts were wrong. I was there in Bagh Bazar when the agitators torched that car. It was not a government vehicle as the story reports. It had a private number plate, was very old and was dragged out of one of the nearby houses. In the same issue, Joti Giri (London Eye) says cricket in Nepal goes back a mere two decades. As far as I know, the Cricket Association of Nepal is the oldest sports organisation, going back more than 20 years. Football came much later.

Shushank Shahi,
Maharajganj

LONDON EYE

It would have been easier to cast aside Joti Giri's intellectual McDonaldism in 'Nepalis Can't Run' (London Eye, #194) as one person's opinion if what he said didn't have any implication for our national sports policy. Rather than distracting ourselves with cricket and its colonial baggage, he seems to suggest we put to use our physical strength, speed and

agility and concentrate on football and carve a niche of our own in this 'global phenomenon'. I appreciate and share his love for football. What I don't share is his unfounded insecurity with co-opting cricket. Sports is not something that can be enforced from the top. If more and more Nepalis are playing cricket, then it's simply because they like it. Perhaps the not so insecure Nepalis even feel a greater affinity towards a South Asian identity? Giri sees the recent successes of our U-19 side as aberrant 'minor league' showings but would the London eye require a set of binoculars to see that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush? A Nepali playing in the English Premiership is a distant dream but if the U-19 successes are any indication, with adequate investment in infrastructure and proper nurturing of young Nepali talent the day when Nepal reserves a seat in a cricket World Cup might not be very far. And when it comes, there'll definitely be more than one proud Londoner.

Binit Sharma, email

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Kala azar patient at Jaleswor District Hospital

NIMAL GUANTILLEKE

CÉSAR CHELALA in JANAKPUR

In the village of Juri near Janakpur, Ram Sewak Adhikari says half his extended family of 35 has kala azar. His wife died of the disease, after he sold his plot of land to pay for her care, leaving him destitute. Unable to take of his 10-year-old son and 8-year-old daughter, he sent them to live with a maternal uncle. Now he doesn't have a home and goes wherever work is available.

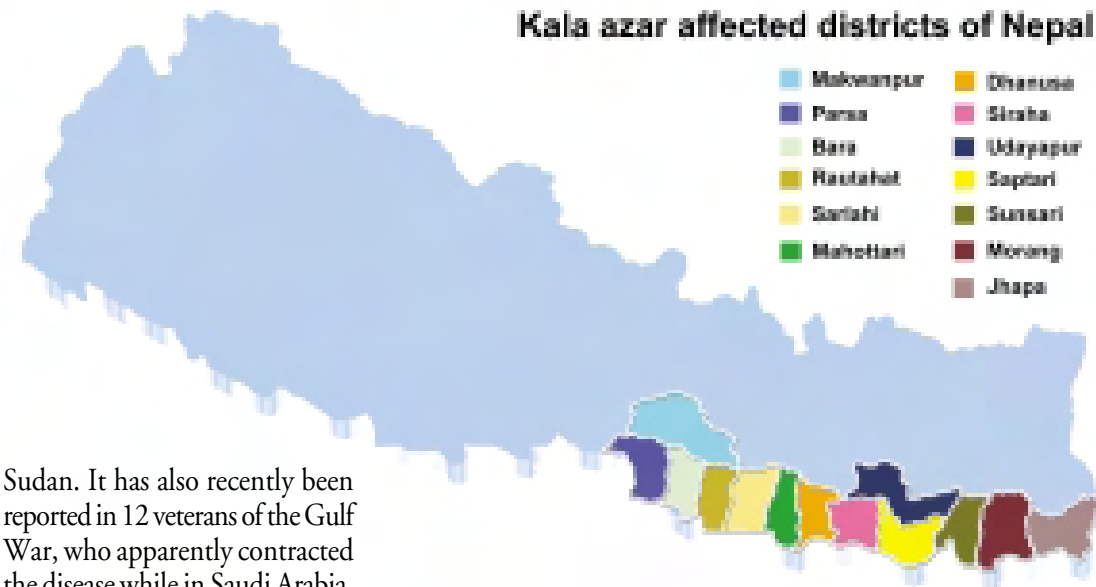
Kala azar is relatively unknown among Nepal's many diseases, and therefore may be the

most neglected. It belongs to a disease group called leishmaniasis which has a wide range of clinical symptoms: cutaneous, mucocutaneous and visceral. These symptoms include highly undulating fever, weight loss, fatigue, abdominal pain, cough and diarrhoea. The local name means 'black sickness', because the skin of some patients darken.

Kala azar annually affects 500,000 people in 69 countries and 90 percent of cases occur in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and

Nepal's black death

Kala azar afflicts the poor in the tarai, so it is ignored



Sudan. It has also recently been reported in 12 veterans of the Gulf War, who apparently contracted the disease while in Saudi Arabia.

The DDT used in India by the National Malaria Eradication Program in the 1940s ravaged the sandfly population and also interrupted the transmission of kala azar. By the mid-1950s, no new cases were recorded and in the mid 1960s it had become an almost forgotten disease in the country. However, when the national malaria campaign was interrupted, kala azar reappeared in 1970 in the village of Vaishali in Bihar. By the late 1970s, kala azar appeared in Bangladesh and shortly afterwards it entered Nepal's tarai. Kala azar is now present in 13 districts in Nepal bordering Bihar.

An important finding is that most infections remain asymptomatic. It is estimated that asymptomatic infections outnumber those that are symptomatic by an estimated ratio

of 10:1, or maybe even higher. Since a high number of persons remain asymptomatic, but can still infect other people, effective control of the infection is difficult.

Panduka Wijeyaratne is resident adviser for the USAID's Environmental Health Project in Nepal and has been working with kala azar for 20 years. "What we have already seen is only the tip of the iceberg, because below are all these asymptomatic cases, some of which will become symptomatic, particularly among the poor," says Wijeyaratne, "but kala azar is a controllable, treatable disease that affects those most neglected."

In Nepal, most cases of kala azar had been diagnosed based on the clinical picture and relatively non-specific tests such as the total white blood cell count or by a test called the aldehyde test. A new test

recently developed is called k39. The test requires only one drop of blood and replaces the traditional diagnosis by biopsy of the liver or spleen or by puncture of the bone marrow or a lymph gland. Nepal presently has the diagnostic k39 kit for kala azar available, and this offers interesting possibilities for eventually eliminating the disease, since it will be much easier to diagnose even those who are asymptomatic.

However, co-infection with HIV is becoming more frequent, which has made treatment even more difficult. There is also an increasing resistance to Pentostam, which had been the best weapon against the disease for more than half a century. Added to that, carriers are travelling more than ever before, making the spread of the disease difficult to track.

A significant recent development has been the identification of the

Remembering Gyanendra

Sometimes chance is a wonderful thing. It was chance, for example, that lead to me an obscure corner of Rosslyn, Virginia this week, down the road from the Pentagon and across the Potomac River from the White House.

It was a place called Freedom Park and it was hard to find. That's because there isn't

HERE AND THERE
Daniel Lak



a park to speak of, just a strip of garden on the balcony of an indoor shopping mall. The "freedom" part refers to a display of the benefits of democracy in America and around the world—a chunk of the toppled Berlin wall, a tribute to the long campaign in the US to give women the right to vote.

It was at the top of Freedom Park that I found the name of Gyanendra Khadka printed on a spiral Plexiglas wall spotted with raindrops. This was a memorial to journalists from many countries who died in the line of duty. There are 1,528 names inscribed on the wall, which curves around a platform at the top of the park. I found Gyanendra's name among those at the end of the loop, among 53 journalists who died in 2003.

Those who work honestly in journalism loathe the targeting of reporters—whether by government thugs or murderous Maoists

I hope *Nepali Times* readers remember Gyanendra Khadka. He was the 35-year-old reporter for the state news agency, RSS. He was based in Sindhupalchok, but had to enhance his paltry salary by working part time in a local school. On 7 September 2003, he was dragged away from the school by a band of armed Maoists. A few days later, the Kathmandu media received a sickening photograph from their stringers—Gyanendra, hands behind his back and tied together to a pole, and his head almost severed from his body. This was Maoist work. The rebels said he was an informer, and his death, his unthinkably cruel execution, was punishment.

At that moment, I hated the Maoists and I still do. Their casual approach to brutality speaks of how dehumanised they are, and what they'd be like if they ever managed to wrest power in this country by violence. Another reason that a return to democracy is well past due here. But I was pleased to see Gyanendra's name on that wall in suburban Washington DC, I was



pleased for his family and for his colleagues, of whom I was once one.

It won't bring him back, but it'll serve as a suitable memorial for a brave man. I hope there was someone from the Royal Nepal Embassy at the ceremony adding this year's name to the wall. I didn't see anyone from the embassy, but perhaps I missed them. No one who works honestly in journalism doesn't loathe those who target reporters, whether government thugs or murderous Maoists. Along with Gyanendra on that wall of courage and tragedy, a Palestinian cameraman killed by Israeli soldiers, an Iraqi democracy activist murdered by Saddam Hussein and an al-Jazeera reporter shot dead by Iraq's liberators, the Americans.

There was Vikram Singh Bisht, paralysed by a gunshot wound in the siege of the Indian parliament by Kashmiri militants, Zahra Kazemi, an Iranian Canadian beaten to death by police in Tehran. Too many journalists died last year, and too many in too many years before that. In Gyanendra's name, let's put a stop to all this. ●

Our energy future

We are reaching a dead end

Where energy is concerned, everything seemed simple before the Iraq War. The US would topple Saddam, Iraq's vast oil reserves would be unleashed after a short period of reconstruction and world petroleum prices would drop to under \$20 per barrel. Instead, world oil prices have soared to \$35 per barrel. New attention is being focused on energy supplies and the message is clear: current energy patterns are risky and must change.

Two interconnected energy issues will shape our economic and geopolitical future for decades to come. The first is that dependence on Middle East oil is increasingly risky. Nobody knows how much oil is left and how much it will cost to extract, but the peak of global oil production will probably be reached sometime in the next quarter century. Remaining oil supplies will be concentrated in the volatile Middle East.

COMMENT

Jeffrey D Sachs



Meanwhile, global demand for energy will soar as the economies of China, India, Brazil and other

countries grow. If the Middle East is already at a breaking point, imagine what could happen if competition for Middle East oil intensifies among America, Europe, China, India, Japan and others.

The second great challenge is that our modern energy system is destabilising the global climate. Petroleum and other fossil fuels (coal and natural gas) are causing longterm changes in the global climate, but few people appreciate the risks.

There are three largely unrecognised problems:

- Climate change will shift every aspect and bring fundamental changes in the physical environment. The effects are unpredictable but likely to be huge.
- Climate change may not be gradual. The long history of climate change shows the risks of dramatic and abrupt changes over the course of only a few decades.
- Humans might react badly to such changes, because shifts in monsoon patterns or sea levels and the ensuing economic distress could provoke massive political unrest, refugee movements and violent conflict.

These challenges require clear thinking. Some alarmists declare that we need to drastically reduce energy use on a global scale, undermining the global economy. Efficiencies in energy use are possible, but they cannot solve either the problem of long-run oil supplies or climate change. Others declare that we must kick the fossil fuel habit and make a mad dash for renewable energy sources such as solar or wind power. Yet these alternatives are expensive and cannot realistically replace fossil fuels.

Fortunately, if we plan for the longterm on a global scale, we can find our way through these challenges. Our goals should be reliable supplies of energy that are environmentally safe at affordable prices. We should recognise that even as oil becomes scarce, other fossil fuels such as coal, gas and unconventional sources such as shale and tar sands will remain plentiful for centuries. We must develop technologies and infrastructure so these fuels can be used efficiently and safely.

As these other fuels take up the slack when oil production reaches a plateau or starts to decline, the effects of fossil fuels on the climate must be brought under control. The environmentally sound manner will involve capturing carbon dioxide at the power plant before it is emitted into the atmosphere and disposing of it by somehow burying it in the ground. This process, called "carbon capture and disposal," is being pursued by some of the world's leading engineers.

Our energy future will depend not on one solution, but on a variety of steps: exploration and development of new petroleum sources, especially outside the Middle East, increased energy efficiency, longterm development and adoption of affordable renewable sources and the environmentally safe use of alternative fossil fuels such as coal. Today's course of action—in which we neglect the coming squeeze in global oil supplies, rely too heavily on Middle East oil and ignore the environmental consequences of fossil fuels—is reaching a dead end. Reality will catch up with us.

How then do we think ahead? The world's largest energy users need to develop new technologies for carbon capture and storage, and for alternative energy supplies. We need to make certain that market prices for energy use reflect the true social costs of using energy, so that energy users and energy suppliers make better choices regarding energy efficiency, the development of alternative energy sources and the adoption of environmentally safe technologies. ● (© Project Syndicate)

Jeffrey D Sachs is Professor of Economics and Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University.



Aftermath

Last Wednesday's bloodshed may produce more Muslim 'martyrs'

If the US government can use excessive force in its conquest of Iraq, and the Israeli government can use the same to crush the resistance in occupied Palestine, then why shouldn't the Thai government resort to this to suppress militants in the country's south? That appears to

ANALYSIS

Marwaan Macan Markar

be the thinking of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's administration as it tries to combat any form of insurgency mounted by sections of Thailand's Muslim minority in the five southernmost provinces.

Newspapers here were full of this 'get tough' and 'search and destroy' policy that Bangkok has approved in the wake of this week's bloody showdown in three of the southern provinces that left over 110 people dead. "The army dispatched 500 rapid-deployment forces (Thursday) for a 'search and destroy' mission against an estimated 5,000 Muslim militants in the deep south," reported *The Nation*. In addition, Defence Minister Chettha Thanajaro told reporters that two battalions, amounting to about 1,000 troops, have been dispatched to reinforce the military's muscle in the south.

Last Wednesday, the security forces and police unleashed a high volume of firepower against Muslim militants, most of whom were armed with knives and machetes, and evoked the use of words such as "slaughter" and "massacre" among some Thai journalists and human rights champions. "The government's troops appeared determined not to leave any attackers alive," said Sunai Phasuk, the Thai representative of Human Rights Watch (HRW).

The Krue Se mosque in Pattani, one of the three southern provinces where the

largely teenage Thai Muslim militants struck, has emerged as a powerful symbol to amplify the grisly results of what critics say were security forces going on a firing spree. Thirty-two militants were killed in the 16th century mosque. The mostly knife-wielding Muslim youth, some between 15 to 20 years, launched a coordinated attack on a series of police posts in the provinces of Yala, Songkhla and Pattani. This despite accounts by witnesses who told journalists that Thai troops could have checked themselves and forced the militants to surrender instead.

That the Thaksin government is now stuck with having been the cause of such images does not bode well for the country, says Chaiwat Satha-Anand, director of the Peace Information Centre at Bangkok's Thammasat University: "The political cost can be very severe. It could lead to something very grave." There can be a hardening of feelings by Muslims toward security forces that chose to impose state power and "trample upon our house of God," adds Satha-Anand, a member of Thailand's Muslim minority.

The security forces may have also played into the hands of the militants' belief that they were dying as martyrs. "Already, some of the families are performing the special rituals meant for Muslims who died in the course of defending their faith," Satha-Anand revealed. That includes not washing the corpses prior to burial. This sense of seeking martyrdom has come as a shock to many Thais, the majority of whom are Buddhists in this country of 63 million people. The Muslim minority—most of whom live in five southern provinces near the Malaysian border—make up about six million people. "It was the first time we witnessed people in this country (who are) willing to sacrifice their lives to attack the central authority," said Phasuk about Wednesday's

events.

Concern is being expressed in some quarters that Bangkok's response to the bloodshed, where 108 militants were killed, as against five members of the better-armed security forces could tempt more young Thai Muslims to go toward what some consider martyrdom. That cannot be easily dismissed, given the Thai government's poor record of governance in the southern provinces, where policies over the years have produced a sense of humiliation and alienation among sections of the Muslim minority.

Since early January this year, southern Thailand has witnessed an upsurge in violence, with army camps, police posts and schools attacked. Over 60 people, including soldiers, policemen and Buddhist monks were killed by assailants. The Thai government's military approach to the south has been to contain the activity of Thai Muslim separatist movements that emerged three decades ago. By the early 1980s, Bangkok appeared to have triumphed over the militants.

This armed struggle against the Thai state can be traced to the history of the southern provinces. Over a century ago, the southern provinces of Narathiwat, Pattani, Satun, Songkhla and Yala belonged to the kingdom of Pattani, but it was annexed in 1902 by Siam, as Thailand was then known. But there was hardly a hint of martyrdom in the past rebellions, reflecting how the current resentment towards the Thai state has acquired a new, disturbing language in the south. "There is a level of rage and attitude towards death in the south that the government needs to pay attention to," says Satha-Anand, the peace advocate. "A wrong step can tempt youth who feel humiliated (so) that they have something to gain in death as a martyr." ● (IPS)

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

Abstract

Even analysts believe the parties did not get the people's support. National security specialist Karna Bahadur Thapa attributes this to the immaturity of the parties: "The parties failed to understand that elections are the only way out of the present crisis. They are in the streets complicating the present problem by holding demonstrations." Thapa argues says the parties have not done what the people wanted. "The people want peace, but the parties are adding fuel to the violent situation in the nation, all for state power."

2016

A group of approximately 20 children and a few adults are posed for a group photo in front of a light-colored building. The children are of various ages, mostly between 5 and 12 years old, and are dressed in casual clothing. Some are standing in the front row, while others are arranged in rows behind them. The building in the background has a simple, functional appearance with a few windows and a door.

e-mail:kathmandu.kat@ icrc.org; www.icrc.org

A red-themed banner for Closeupzone.com. On the left, the word "Lonely?" is written in red, next to a yellow sad face emoji. In the center, the text "Timi Closeupzone kina jadainau?" is written in red. On the right, there is a large, stylized red tube of Closeupzone toothpaste, with a smiling woman's face visible inside the tube's opening. At the bottom, a red navigation bar contains several buttons: "Find a friend", "Send love letter", "Fool a friend", "Compatibility tests", and "Any more?". The website address "www.closeupzone.com" is displayed in a small browser window at the top left.

drug Miltefosine as the first oral agent against the disease. Presently, the Nepali government is working with WHO and the Environmental Health Project in the clinical trials of this drug that are being conducted by at the BP Koirala Institute of Health Sciences. If Miltefosine proves its effectiveness, it will be a big step forward in the fight against the disease, since it will replace the painful and highly inconvenient treatments presently used. Nepal and India have also agreed to share information through the National Vector Borne Disease Control Program.

Although the number of cases of kala azar in Nepal is estimated at approximately 2,000 per year, this number does not take into account the number of asymptomatic cases, nor gives an indication of how serious an epidemic of this disease can become if the risk factors are allowed to increase. In addition, the disease has a tremendous economic impact on affected families, as kala azar usually spreads quickly to other family members, including those responsible for the family's economic support.

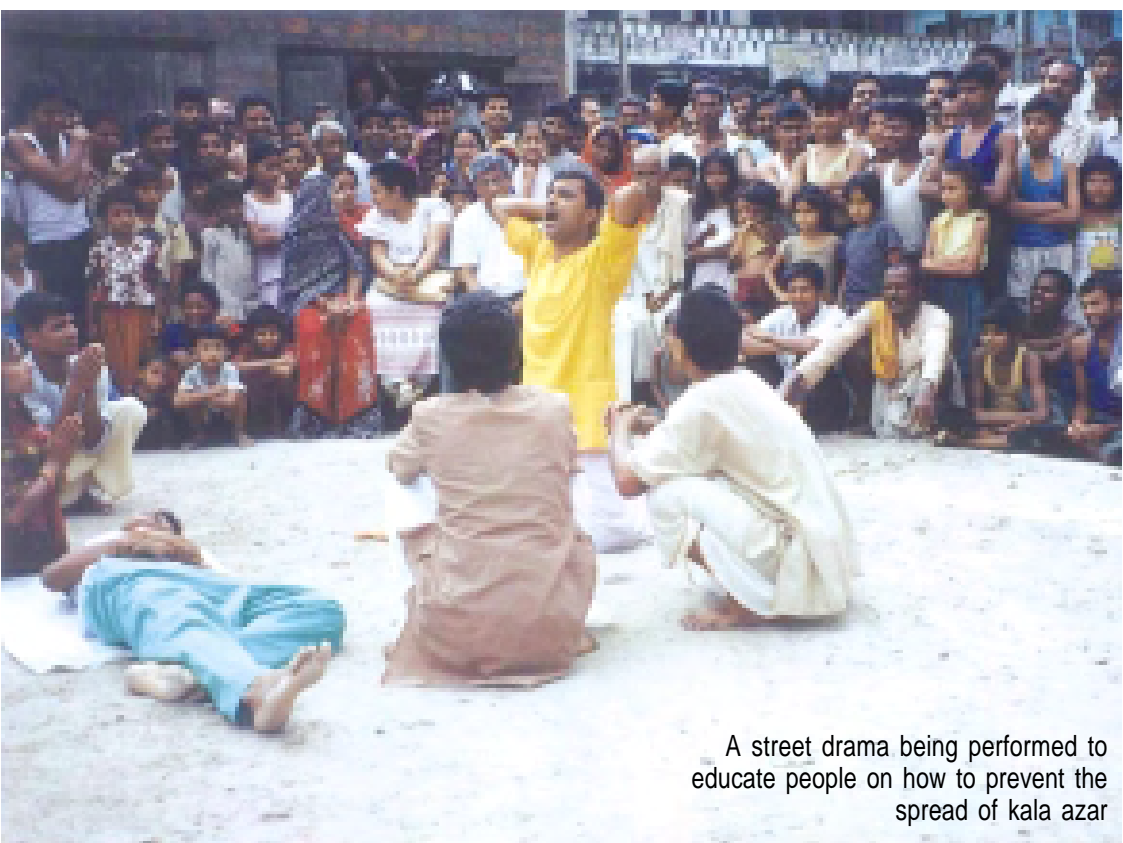
In Kathmandu, Archana Singh is in charge of training female community health volunteers against kala azar. "The volunteers have made a tremendous difference

in helping in a quick diagnosis and putting in place a referral mechanism by which those affected are sent to the nearest health facility that could handle their cases," she says.

In the village of Juri, Sabitri Devi Shah, a 40-year-old volunteer health worker says she feels very useful, but is also frustrated by the inability to provide further help to many patients. Many are poor and can't go to the nearest health facility. The stigma associated with the disease led a couple with kala azar to refuse treatment and later die, leaving four orphaned children.

At the Department of Internal Medicine at the BP Koirala Institute of Health Sciences in Dharan, Suman Rijal is in charge of tropical diseases including the current Miltefosine trials. He says: "The female community health volunteers have a sense of mission, and because of their work they are an asset to any program to control kala azar. But it is really political will at the national level that we need."

Vijay Kumar Singh, a doctor at Janakpur Zonal Hospital has been treating kala azar for over 20 years, seeing over 1,000 patients. He told us one reason not enough attention is paid to the disease is that it affects the poor. Singh is convinced kala azar can be controlled and eventually



A street drama being performed to educate people on how to prevent the spread of kala azar

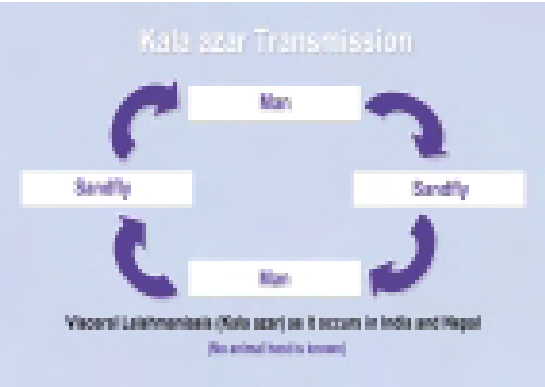
NIMAL GUANTILLEKE

eliminated. "Yes, it can, but we need at least 10 years of sustained effort with early detection at the community level, prompt treatment, regular follow up and completion of treatment, as well as close synchronisation of activities between India and Nepal, and continuing political will." ●

Dr César Chelala is an international public health consultant

Medicine shortage in the tarai

At a time when the kala azar epidemic in 12 tarai districts show no signs of abating, this year has seen a serious shortage of medicines. The Epidemiology and Disease Control Centre (EDCC) in Teku is supposed to acquire the medicine from the supply department, but both are blaming each other for the delay. A tender for the supply of the drug sodium stibogluconate had been issued repeatedly, but officials find it fishy that no decision has yet been made for the purchase. As a result, patients in the disease's epicenter in Mahottari and Dhanusha have been turned back from hospitals because of the lack of medicines. Doctors at hospitals in Janakpur, Rajbiraj and Gaur expect this year's death toll from kala azar will go up because of the lack of medicine. If untreated, kala azar, which is the most severe form of leishmaniasis, has a mortality rate of nearly 100 percent. If treated, kala azar is rarely fatal. The EDCC has initiated spraying insecticide to control malarial mosquitoes and kala azar sandflies in 11 districts and six municipalities in the tarai. Spraying is even more effective in controlling kala azar because sandflies sit on sprayed walls of rooms longer than mosquitoes.



PREVENTING KALA AZAR

- Sand flies are attracted to livestock, breed in animal waste and are then present in wall cracks and on damp floors in homes. Children should therefore avoid sleeping on the floor and wall cracks should be repaired
- Using bed nets and spraying houses with insecticide are effective measures of discouraging contact with sand flies, and so reduce the risk of kala azar
- Community campaigns against sand fly breeding sites and education on modes of transmission help stop the spread of the disease

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GRIND

STATUTORY DIRECTIVE: SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

Yarchagumba goes commercial

An ancient remedy based on a wild Himalayan mushroom found in Tibet and Nepal aids the fitness of sedentary, middle-aged people. The study was performed as a clinical trial with neither the volunteers nor the researchers knowing who took the remedy and who was given a harmless placebo until the experiment was over.

For the 131 volunteers in the trial, there was a significant increase in aerobic fitness when participants took supplements based on fermented extracts of the Chinese cordyceps mushroom, which is known as yarchagumba in Nepal. The volunteers were aged between 40 and 70 and they were monitored for lung capacity, breathing, heart rate and blood pressure during and after short bouts of vigorous exercise and endurance walks. The researchers will present their results this week to the American Physiological Society, saying the study shows the Chinese mushrooms can significantly improve human health and fitness.



The findings support many anecdotal accounts that have attributed health improvements and astounding athletic feats to cordyceps mushrooms or dietary supplements made from them. In 1993, Chinese women athletes took six out of nine possible

Does it really improve our health and fitness?

STEVE CONNOR



Dolpali villagers scour a mountainside for yarchagumba, and the mushroom (right)

medals, including gold in the women's 1,500, 3,000 and 10,000m at the World Championships in Stuttgart, Germany. Their coach attributed the dramatic success to intensive high altitude training and cordyceps supplements.

Jia-Shi Zhu and James Rippe from a California-based company called Pharmanex said they used a commercial mushroom extract called Cordymax, based on an ancient Chinese

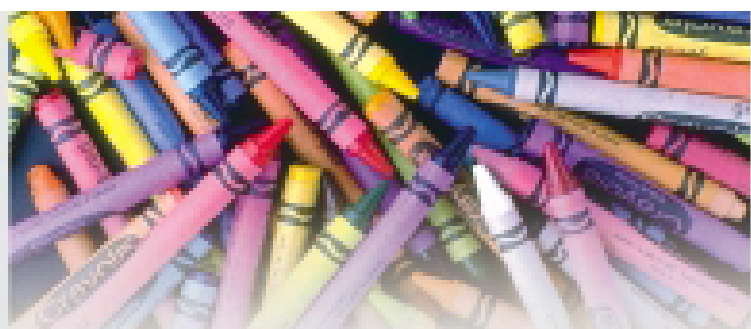
recipe using fermented mushrooms. "This study provides scientific evidence that Cordymax is effective in enhancing aerobic exercise capability, endurance exercise performance and exercise metabolism and alleviating fatigue in healthy humans," they say. "The study employed sports physiology methods, measuring exercise capacity endurance performance, and exercise related metabolic alterations before, in the middle of and after the 12-week

study treatment with Cordymax."

Herdsmen in the Himalaya noticed how the condition of their livestock improved after grazing on mountain-side meadows where the mushrooms grew. Cordyceps became a mainstay of Chinese and Tibetan herbal medicine, and although its expense limited its use, it has been used to treat conditions like male and female infertility for at least 2,000 years. In China, it is still prescribed as an aphrodisiac and a treatment for the elderly to ease general aches and pains.



Chinese doctors also claim it boosts immunity to infections and can help to fight respiratory illnesses, although there was little to support these claims in the published scientific literature. *Cordyceps sinensis* is sometimes called the caterpillar fungus. In Nepal it is called 'winter worm, summer grass' because it sometimes 'fruits' out of the bodies of dead worms or insects. Its rarity in the wild has led to a boom in the commercial cultivation of the mushroom for herbal remedies. ● (© The Independent)



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Himalayan Viagra

Demand for this mysterious mushroom is expected to grow with the arrival of the new performance-enhancing drug, Cordymax

If the new herbal medicine based on the Himalayan yarchagumba, Cordymax, is approved in the United States it could mean a boom in the gathering and cultivation of this rare mushroom in the Nepal Himalaya.

Long before the pharmaceutical industry got wind of it, yarchagumba has been known in Nepal, Tibet and China as a cure-all for everything from headaches to impotency. Commercialisation of its trade would mean even more demand for this rare herb in Nepal.

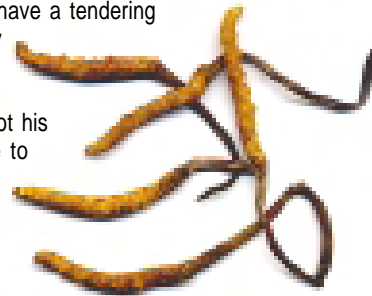
Every May, the people of Dolpa set off to find yarchagumba or the Latin *Cordyceps sinensis*. Until recently, gathering yarchagumba was illegal in Nepal. That changed three years ago, when the government allowed collection of the precious caterpillar-mushroom outside of the Dolpa National Park boundaries.

Just before the rainy season, spores of the cordyceps mushroom land on the heads of caterpillars of the Lepidoptera family that live mainly underground. After the fungus buries itself in the caterpillar's body, it works its way out through the unfortunate insect's head. The parasite soaks up the caterpillar's energy until it dies.

Lately, Maoists in Dolpa are competing with the government to tax the harvest of yarchagumba. In order to bring a bigger area under their influence, 150 of Dolpa's 500 armed Maoists went to Tarap in Upper Dolpa at the end of last May. The Maoists have a tendering system: businessmen who want to buy and sell yarchagumba have to pay a Rs 20,000 advance. If the Maoists find a trader without a permit they loot his yarchagumba. In addition, they have to pay Rs 5,000 per kg.

Between government and taxes, the people prefer to risk individual transactions with Chinese traders. The local officials are aware of the problem but unable to do anything until security is tightened on the northern border. The hostile terrain and the Maoist insurgency has confined both the police and the army to district headquarters. If proper security arrangements were made, the government could earn millions of rupees as royalties from yarchagumba collectors.

The government wanted a share of the lucrative pie: businessmen now need a permit and the government collects Rs 20,000 tax per kg. However, most businessmen say they sell the yarchagumba directly to Tibetan traders. Around 1,000kg of the 'Himalayan Viagra' was illegally exported from Upper Dolpa to China before winter settled in last year. Chinese businessmen bartered food and clothes for yarchagumba and prices varied widely between Rs 60,000 and 150,000 per kilogram, depending on the quality. The middlemen sell the stuff by the sackload in Thailand, Korea, China and Japan for about \$2,800 per kg. ●





KIRAN PANDAY

NARESH NEWAR

When former Health Minister Upendra Debkota mooted the idea of a national health insurance, many pooh-poohed it. But others, who thought it was feasible, were disappointed that the idea was dropped. Even basic health care is an unaffordable luxury in Nepal. With less than \$3 worth of government health investment per person, Nepal spends the least on health in Asia.

In fact, Nepal's support for health care is so minimal that its citizens end up spending most of their earnings and savings medical services. A World Bank survey in 2001 reported that over 70 percent of health expenditures in Nepal were through private spending. And the rural poor spend disproportionately more from their incomes on doctor's fees, medicines and transportation to cities where better medical facilities are located.

Government efforts to improve public health care are limited to health posts and annual drug rations. Health centres are understaffed and under-equipped, facing a constant shortage of medicines. The insurgency has made a bad situation worse. "The only way out is to promote a community-based health insurance scheme," says public health expert Krishna Man Sakya of Patan Hospital.

United Mission to Nepal (UMN) was the first organisation in Nepal to start a health insurance system. Its Lalitpur Medical Insurance Scheme, begun in 1976, helped establish health posts when there was no government infrastructure in south Lalitpur. To make them more sustainable, UMN health workers and local community leaders formed a pre-paid health insurance scheme. Villagers became members after paying a low premium and the posts would supply essential drugs and provide health care free of cost. The health posts have a referral link with Patan Hospital, where members get discounts for OPD treatment and hospital beds. The registration for medical check-ups is also free.

"There is an assumption that poor people will not pay for such schemes. But we have learned even the poorest are interested in investing for their health," says Sakya. The UMN model's realistic approach became so popular that other organisations adopted the idea. The Public Health Concern Trust (PHECT) Nepal replicated the model and started its own insurance scheme. Its goal was to teach people to save for health and it was successful.

PHECT Nepal established health cooperatives where villagers pay a premium of Rs 90 per year. In

return, they get an 80 percent discount for treatment at OPD, 50 percent off doctor's fees, operations and beds at Model Hospital. So far the organisation has established six cooperatives in Kirtipur, Lalitpur, Dhading and Nawalparasi with more than 3,500 members. "Insurance is a necessity for those who don't have money, especially during emergencies. It is sad that they even have to pay at state hospitals," says Basanta Maharjan from PHECT Nepal.

The Royal Nepali Army also runs an efficient medical welfare fund. Soldiers contribute to the fund, giving as much as 75 percent of what they earn in UN peacekeeping missions. With two battalions—each consisting of 800 to 1,000 men—sent for international peace missions every six months, this adds up to plenty of money to ensure free medical treatment, medicines and surgery at all army hospitals. But the military model may not be practical for civilians.

In a country dominated by an informal employment, any national insurance scheme based on Western models will face problems. Health experts say that Nepal does not have enough people working in the formal sector and so a small number end up paying taxes for the population at large. The most logical

Ensuring health for all citizens

It is possible for all Nepalis to have affordable health insurance, and there are community health models already working



KIRAN PANDAY

(left) Patients queue up for treatment at Patan Hospital
(above) The health post at Chapagoan where locals benefit from a health insurance scheme

way would be community-based schemes like Lalitpur, replicated on a national scale.

The largest micro insurance scheme in the country, started by BP Koirala Institute of Health Sciences (BPKIHS), has reached a large population in Dharan and the adjoining districts. The Social Insurance Scheme has over 18,000 members from 30 VDCs.

Community-based schemes even prodded the government into action. It found the scheme for a national level health insurance unfeasible, choosing instead to implement pilot programs in selected health posts and hospitals of eight districts two years ago.

Last year, the Health Ministry formed a coordination committee on community health insurance with

NGOs involved in health and the UN's International Labour Organisation (ILO) as key members. But while the NGOs already started implementing most of its schemes, the most the government did was publish an operation manual. "We are not sure when the ministry will start their work but, like always, it may take a long time or perhaps never even happen," says a public health expert who asked to remain anonymous.

"Schemes help in risk sharing and resource sharing," says Gobinda Dahal of the ILO, which began micro insurance for health at Solukhumbu, Nawalparasi and Banke. "These schemes should be established at a national scale so that health risks will be reduced around the country." ●



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NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

Some may have called it a premature show of optimism. Barely a few hours after the inauguration of the Nepal Development Forum (NDF), the country's development partners were handing out invitation cards to mark the 'successful' completion of the tamasha.

A little cautious optimism may not have been remiss: the final communique was prepared a day before the meet began by a committee of five donor representatives and government officials representing the Finance Ministry, the National Planning Commission and the PMO.

Mainly, the NDF was about how you defined 'success'. Lacking a common definition, each side saw success in the one-and-a-half day meeting held at Soaltee Hotel from 5-6 May.

Even though the aid agencies were concerned about the constrictions on development disbursements due to the continuing insurgency, their attention was diverted of late to issues of

human rights, security—and democracy.

Some donor representatives would tott up success for forcing Surya Bahadur Thapa's government to take measures on the human rights front last month, including an agreement to get help from the United Nations Human Rights Commission and a 'commitment document' on human rights. Other donors, particularly the bankers, would find the neo-conservative visage of the present cabinet, and especially Finance Minister Prakash Chandra Lohani, to their liking.

The government, for its part, would take satisfaction in the fact that the NDF was held at all, at a time when the agitating parties were boycotting it and several donors threatened postponement. The face-saving was perhaps more important for the government than the fact that NDF turned out to be more a discussion forum than a pledging conference. The \$560 million that the government wants for its 'poverty reduction strategy' was not really in the pipeline.

The agitating political parties, for their part,

NDF atmospherics

Taking stock of the Forum as it takes stock of development

felt successful for managing to show their strength even while the NDF met. Wednesday's mega rally at the junction of Ratna Park and Bag Bazar, made possible by the lifting of the prohibitory order the day previously, constituted a message sent loud and clear to the donors as well as the royal palace, said one party leader. "Development cannot proceed without the political parties in the driver's seat," he added.

This point of view got strong support from a group of donor governments who demanded a clear signal that there would be representative government before long in the run-up to the NDF. On 4 May, a day before the meet opened, the donors sat in discussion with the agitating parties.

Meanwhile, a group of 10 bilateral donors—Canada, Denmark, the European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland and the UK—released a statement expressing their views on the country's development and political situation. Stressing the need for the democratic process, they said a prime minister must enjoy the confidence of the parties and the king for development to proceed. By extrapolation, their view on the present government was crystal clear.

The European donors also commented beyond the current political crisis, especially with

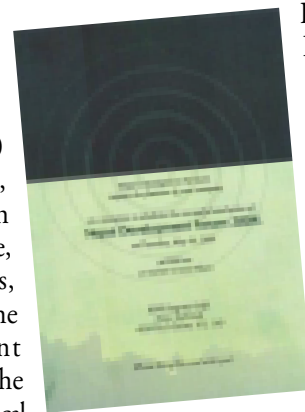
regard to the ongoing Maoist insurgency. Negotiations must take place before elections, they argued. Elections must wait till things improve.

At the inaugural ceremony, Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa and Finance Minister Lohani tried their best to be in the good books of the deep-pocketed donors. Besides responding to the donor concerns over the democratic processes and human rights, Thapa and Lohani also markedly refrained from calling the Maoists 'terrorists'.

The World Bank's Vice President for South Asia, Praful Patel, went out of his way to stress the importance of democracy in development. This seemed a departure from the writings of the Bank's Resident Representative, the prolific Ken Ohashi, which indicates a willingness to work with the present dispensation.

On the whole, government officials seemed happy that the NDF was done with, even if the cash was not on the table. Said the NPC's Vice Chairman Shankar Sharma, "Donors can support us in budget, program and project activities. And they were positive."

Amidst the satisfaction all around, the near-absolute donor dependency of Nepal was not a subject that anyone seemed to really want to talk about. That was taken as a given. ●



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BIZ

NEWS

Policy gaps

After eight years we're going to have a new tourism policy. The government is working on a draft based on stakeholder's suggestions but the major concern is that the insurgency has not been taken into account. Participants at a policy interaction this week said the government has neglected the subject entirely. "There has to be proper plans and policies to sell Nepal as a tourism destination even when there is insurgency," said tourism expert Deependra Purush Dhakal. Nanikaji Thapa of the Nepal Rafting Agents Association added that the political agitation also impedes tourism, adding, "The bureaucracy must speak to the parties while preparing the policy to keep tourists areas free from strikes." Officials from the Tourism Ministry realise this will be necessary though nothing has been put into black and white. "We must learn from Sri Lanka and Indonesia because they tackled tourism with a full-fledged insurgency on their hands," said one tourism expert. The other likely bone of contention is standardisation of services: while this is the ministry's aim, organisations like Trekking Agents Association of Nepal (TAAN) and Nepal Association of Travel Agents oppose the idea. "It will lead to negative discrimination and the government will be seen favouring only upper bracket operators," says TAAN president Deepak Mahat.

Laxmi's union

To establish itself in the remittances sector, Laxmi Bank entered into an agreement with Western Union, a global leader in money transfer and message services. Now all a non-residential Nepali has to do is deposit money with their nearest Western Union agent and be assigned a Money Transfer Control Number (MTCN). The beneficiary in Nepal then visits a Laxmi Bank branch and, with proper ID and the correct MTCN, receives the money immediately with no extra charge. The service will initially be available in Banepa, Birganj and Pokhara.

More in-coming

Surprises abound. In April, air arrivals reached a total of 30,402, due mainly to the Asian markets, which was almost 45 percent more than last April. European markets also remained positive. Even so, potential for growth was affected by the political crisis: one day of strikes in Kathmandu leads to 60 percent tourist reservation cancellations according to a Nepal Tourism Board survey.

Hyundai reaches 2000

When Deep Lama received the keys to his brand new Hyundai on 1 May, he was in for a pleasant surprise. As the Hyundai's 2000th customer in Nepal, which meant considerable fanfare at the AVCO International event at Hotel de l'Annapurna, Lama even got a free Yingang motorbike. With just five years in the market, AVCO's Hyundai sales are nothing short of spectacular. The national dealers stock Santro, Accent, Matrix and Santa Fe.

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DIGI PLUS

Bikas jatra

Foreign aid pulls Nepal's development rath

As the Beed writes this, development wallahs are still debating whether to postpone the National Development Forum (NDF) or not. By the time you read this column, our big development

ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed



do will be over and we'll have seen the same old faces giving the same old sermons, whipping out all the stale promises. Aid agencies have sought commitments from a government that is living from day to day.

Bikas agencies made a good head start with the forums in finding ways to work with the government. This year, while political parties are agitating in the streets for their agenda, donor agencies are fighting to prove their ability to deliver the best bikas to Nepal. This belief is what allows them to be so sure of their position in Nepal's past and future. What hasn't worked for the past 40 years is suddenly supposed to work.

The participation at these forums and its consultative meetings has been a key issue, although it seems that the agencies forgot to update

their mailing lists. We try the same old method of using associations and services of self-proclaimed intellectuals who are responsible, more or less, for the development stagnation in Nepal.

Everyone recommends new faces and thinking in politics, but no one is eager to do the same for consultative meetings. Donors continue to listen to people who have a proven track record of failure. A large section of professionals in and outside Nepali development have been excluded.

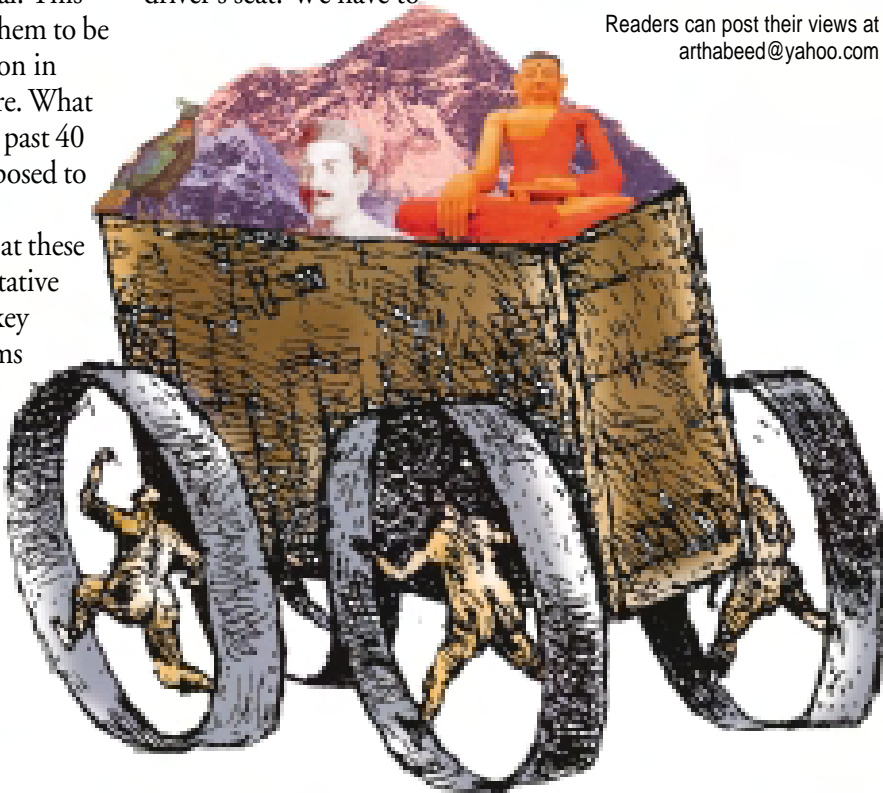
Development can have different approaches. The successes of countries like China and Singapore may have to do with their homegrown development models. Here in Nepal, while foreign assistance may expedite this process, the people have to be in the driver's seat. We have to

examine what really drives development: representation or accountability. Or both?

We scarf down the scotch after seminars we are paid to attend. We buy laptops before we even know what the subject of the new project is. We use multimedia tools with elan without understanding the core idea of the presentation. We are parachute consultants who fly into remote areas of Nepal to engage rural Nepalis in a six-day workshop without understanding the people.

We need to find our own bearings before we seek assistance, not the other way around. The Beed is forced to agree with the irreverent and characteristic remark of Thailand's pre-eminent civil societist, Mechai Viravaidya, who said foreign assistance is like an erection—only good as long as you have it. ●

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The kings and I

Dwarika Das Shrestha's photographs catch royalty at rare and candid moments

When he died last month at age 73, Dwarika Das Shrestha left behind a treasure trove of photographs that document Nepal's recent history.

Dwarika Das grew up with photography. Born in 1932 to Thakur Das Shrestha and Hari Devi Shrestha, the founders of Das Photo Studios in Darjeeling, Dwarika was educated at St Paul's School. It was at school that he became acquainted with then Prince Gyanendra and his brothers Birendra and Dharendra, who were also at school in Darjeeling. This gave him unprecedented access to royal events in later years when he moved to Kathmandu.

If he wasn't taking photographs, Dwarika was usually reading or playing his guitar. Growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, he loved rock 'n roll and Western classics. He was enthusiastic about mountaineering and was actively involved with the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute in Darjeeling. He was to accompany the Indian Army expedition to Everest in the early 60s, but his father didn't let him go.

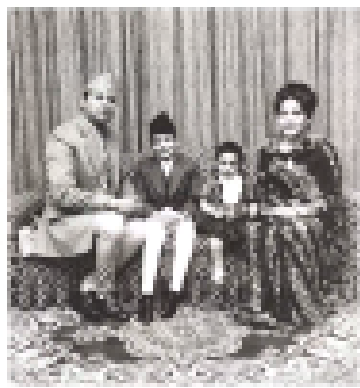
Dwarika apprenticed under his father and then decided to move to Nepal in 1964. He came to Kathmandu with his wife and two sons and opened Das Photo Studios. At a time when most people sent their

film abroad to be developed, his studio became popular with everyone from tourists, diplomats, locals to royalty.

Das Photo first opened shop in Khichapokharai and later shifted to Jamal. Dwarika Das then became the first to produce commercial postcards of Nepal to sell to tourists and offer photography classes. Dwarika's favourite cameras were the Hasselblad, Linhof, Nikon and Pentax. Although he enjoyed experimenting with slides and colour film, for the most part he kept commercial work at the studio black and white.

The people and culture of Kathmandu fascinated him. In order to take close-up portraits, he devised an ingenious zoom lens by manipulating a pocket telescope. He was passionate about walking: he seldom travelled by car in the city and often took trips across the country. In the late 1970s he tried his hand at film, shooting extensive 8mm footage of Chitwan and the Himalaya.

Dwarika left a rich legacy of images documenting the people and places of Nepal. For the thousands of photographs that he took during his lifetime, he never had an exhibition. *Nepali Times* is pleased to present a few remarkable and rare pictures of the royal family taken by Dwarika. ●



Far left, top to bottom: Prince Gyanendra with Princess Prerana and Princess Komal. Prince Gyanendra's bartaman ceremony, 19 January 1964.

Left, above: Prince Gyanendra's bartaman ceremony, 19 January 1964. Left, below: King Mahendra's body is flown into the sea, 1972.

Centre: King Mahendra's coronation, 1955.

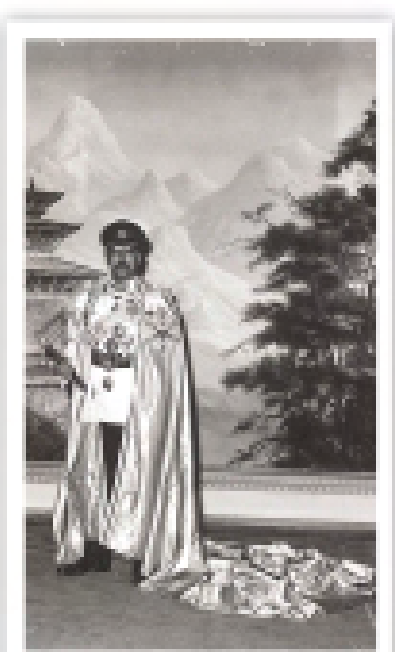
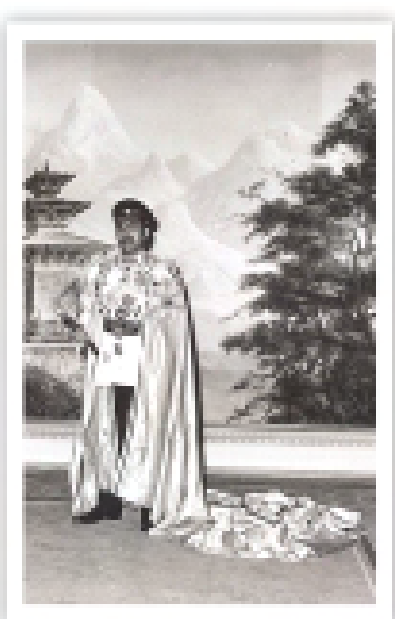
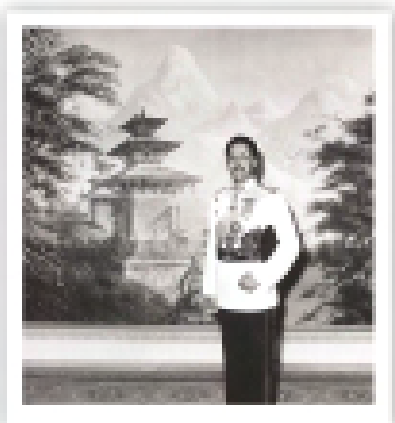
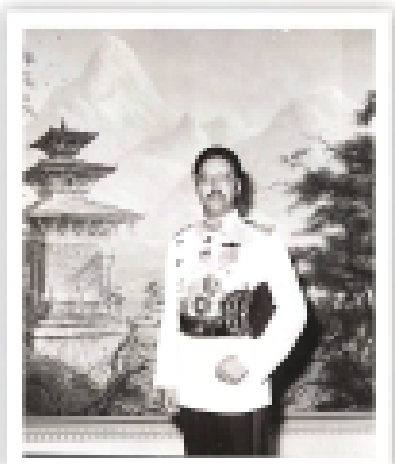
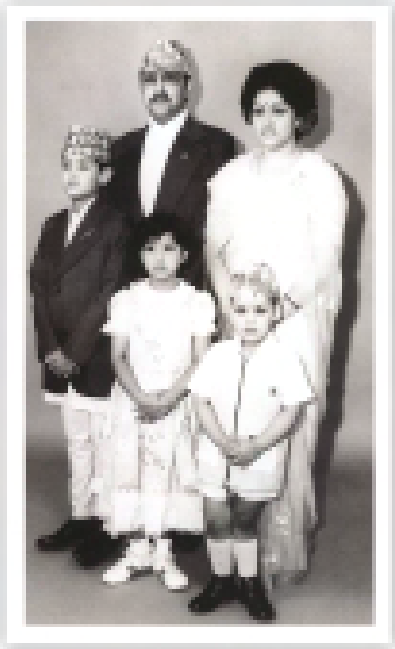
Right, top: King Mahendra and Queen Ratna with Prince Gyanendra, 1961.

Right, middle: Prince Gyanendra salutes his father during the coronation ceremony, 19 January 1964.

Right, below: King Birendra's coronation 1972.

Far right, top: King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya with Prince Shrutika and Prince Nirajan.

Far right, second to bottom: King Birendra posing with his family, 1972.



ALL PICS: DWARIKA DAS SHRESTHA

ness Komal. Prince Gyanendra, Prince Paras,
yanendra. Princess Komal. Prince Paras.

ony, 19 January 1964.
IA after his demise in Chitwan, 1972.

h Queen Elizabeth II during her state visit to
er, King Mahendra, during his bartaman

ya pose with Crown Prince Dipendra, Princess
s for official portraits.



‘We are closer to capitalist democracy than feudal monarchy’



Baburam Bhattarai in Kantipur, 2 May

कान्तिपुर

For the first time in Nepal's history, the 'People's War' in the villages and the people's movement in urban areas are taking place at the same time against a common target: a tyrant monarchy. But there is an irony in these developments. National and international reactionary forces understand only too well the consequences of us uniting, and they are out to foil any chance of that happening.

Ironically, the democratic forces split into different streams and have yet to grasp the importance of the unity. They cannot seem to overcome the conspiracy of reactionaries and create a volcanic united movement.

In this regard, there are some illusions among the parliamentary forces, the urbanites they inspire and in the media that need to be cleared. The first illusion is that the people's movement is against the limited capitalist democracy we had, which was duly hijacked by the October Fourth move.

That is why some people, knowingly or not, believe the royal regression resulted from the people's war and that both the king and the Maoists are equal enemies of democracy. Many reports and opinion pieces in newspapers are carried away by this erroneous argument.

The Maoist people's war was initiated to shape the limited capitalist democracy achieved through the 1990 Movement. The idea is to have a higher democracy and to ultimately reach a stateless society free of exploitation.

Certainly, when we took up the gun in 1996, it was the parliamentary parties that were the government, which is probably what gave rise to the impression that we were out to strangle the limited capitalist democracy. But since 1990 and through the different phases of the Nepal Communist Party (Unity Centre), the United People's Front and our present organisation, we always maintained the same position.

We said the incomplete and handicapped democracy we got in 1990 could be hijacked anytime by the feudal and dictatorial monarchy aided by the royal army. And, even if that did not happen, the majority of people who have been suffering age-old class, caste, regional, and gender exploitation would not be able to utilise the real democracy from within the handicapped constitution. The last 14 years shows our analysis was scientific and based on reality.

What an irony that our parliamentary friends have not understood how international power centres join hands with tyrant monarchies in the Gulf and the military dictators in places like Pakistan and Haiti. To put the record straight, in a society like ours that is transforming itself from feudalism to capitalism, communist revolutionaries are closer to capitalist democracy than feudal monarchy. That is our stand.

The only reservation we expressed is that the political parties did not adopt a real capitalist democratic character because of the backward semi-feudal and semi-colonial social management. This is why they have been unable to struggle against the feudal monarchy.

We urge them that both of our democratic forces must fight against feudal monarchy and establish a people's republic.

Back to safety

Anand Gautam in Spacetime, 1 May

स्पेसटाइम दैनिक

SANKHUWASABHA – About 41 police personnel were given a warm farewell by the Maoists after they were abducted from Pashupatinagar. Everyone was garlanded and paid Rs 500. “We won’t force you to quit your jobs but try not to work with the police force as much as possible,” the Maoist militants told them. Then they were handed over to officials from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

While the abductees were relieved to be freed, they are worried about facing questions at the police headquarters. “We might get reprimanded for not fighting against the Maoists,” says a policeman who claims it took the rebels just 15 minutes to take control of the Pashupatinagar police station. The police surrendered after the Maoists announced through loudspeakers that no harm would befall them if they surrendered their arms.

“We told them that we are not here to fight against you. Give us your guns and you’ll be secure,” confirms Maoist commander Sangram. The Maoists were armed with LMGs, AK47s and SLRs. After they were abducted, the police were made to walk for eight days to reach Taplejung. There was a heavy blanket of security in Sablakhu Bhanjyang and the Maoists were forced to take a difficult mountainous route where it snowed. Policeman Ash Narayan Chaudhary was so tired that he asked the Maoists to shoot him instead of making him march anymore. “Instead, the commander Basant, felt pity and helped me walk,” says Chaudhary.

Activist killed

Dinesh Regmi in Kantipur, 2 May

कान्तिपुर

LANDRUK – Birsuwa Gurung was not just a mother of five. She was regarded as a guardian of her village, a voice for the voiceless and a real activist for Landruk women, a tourist destination above Pokhara. It was her reputation for benevolence that got her killed: a fleeing female Maoist came to her for refuge, followed closely by army personnel. No questions were asked as they opened fire, killing the rebel and 45-year-old Gurung. “We pleaded with them not to open fire but in vain,” recalls Harkaman Gurung, her 70-year-old father.

Many Maoists had stopped at Landruk after their attack on Beni. Security forces had launched a search operation and killed three Maoists earlier on that April day. It’s been almost a month since her death, and despair has taken its toll on the whole village. “Why do good people die for nothing?” asks Chandrakant Tripathi, a local school principal. “We will never have anyone like her again.”

Why RPP?

Deshtantar, 2 May

देशान्तर साप्ताहिक

For the first time in 14 years, former Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) activists joined the ‘anti-regression’ demonstrators. Former Panchayat leaders marching in the streets to protest their own government is no small surprise. Since last Thursday, the RPP has publicly opposed this government. As a major political party, the RPP was the last to join the current agitation. There are now clear indications on what motivated them: smaller parties and even professional groups like

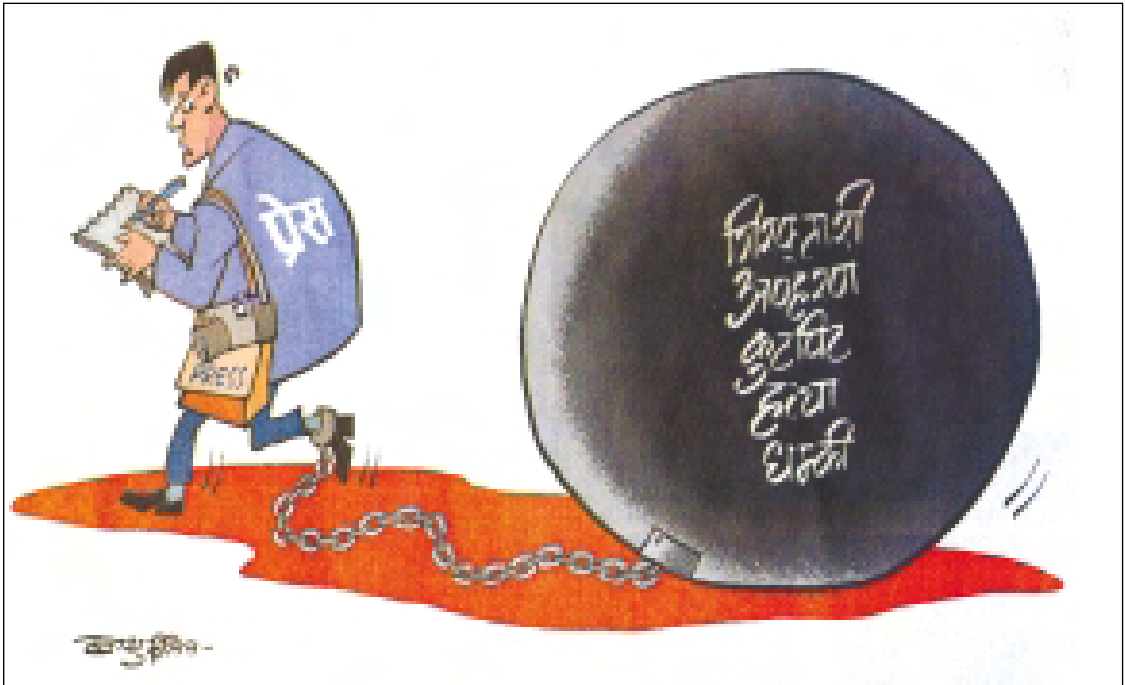


MIN BAJRACHARYA

doctors, teachers, lawyers, pharmacists and journalists joined the movement, which has not only gained international attention but also hugely impacted the current political situation.

The RPP leaders know that if the situation gets more intense, they will be pushed further from mainstream politics along with Surya Bahadur Thapa. It is clear in words of RPP’s central member Jogmohar Shrestha, “We were compelled to join in for solidarity. Is it possible to keep quiet now?” Former Panchays like Pasupati Samsher JB Rana, Lokendra Bahadur Chand, Deepak Bohara and other key RPP leaders are in the street in a desperate attempt to prove they are different from their party-led government and prime minister.

But to the people, what seems apparent is that all the RPP wants is to replace the present government and the prime minister and ministers with people of their own choosing. Unlike other parties, the RPP is not there to protest against the king. They took the initiative after they sensed that Thapa’s days in the government are almost over. This is why the RPP has not announced any specific protest campaigns.



The Press
Arrested, abducted, beaten, killed, threatened,

स्पेसटाइम दैनिक Spacetime, 2 May

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“If this government is unable to hold a dialogue with the peacefully demonstrating party leaders, how can it possibly have peace talks with the Maoists?”

Human rights activist Padma Ratna Tuladhar in Prakash, 3 May

US game over?

From Fallujah to photos, it has been one fiasco after another

JIM LOBE

Judging from the outrage expressed in the US so far, the broadcast and publication of the photos of physical and sexual abuse of prisoners by their guards in Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad are having a demoralising effect, but the impact on the broader US 'war on terror' may be felt more acutely abroad.

Juan Cole, an Iraq expert at the University of Michigan mused, "I really wonder whether, with the emergence of these photos, the game isn't over for the Americans in Iraq. Is it realistic, after the bloody siege of Fallujah and the Shiite uprising of early April, and in the wake of these revelations, to think that the US can still win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi Arab public?"

A 53-page report by Army Major Gen Antonio Taguba called for disciplinary action against 10 members of the army, including a brigadier general, a colonel and two civilian contractors hired by the military to help conduct interrogations, and possible criminal prosecutions against at least six people. According to Armed Forces Chief of Staff, Gen Richard Myers, the abuses were isolated and committed by "just a handful" of soldiers, and should not be seen as representative of the military's overall performance.

But Taguba's report described the abuses as "systemic and illegal" and suggested that the problem might be far-reaching. Taguba found that, in apparent violation of army regulations, interrogators

from military intelligence asked military police (MPs) guards to "set physical and mental conditions for the favourable interrogation of witnesses". Those directives resulted in the performance of what Taguba found were "numerous incidents of sadistic, blatant and wanton criminal abuses" committed against detainees, including "punching, slapping and kicking detainees; videotaping and photographing naked male and female detainees; forcibly arranging detainees in various sexually explicit positions for photographing; forcing detainees to remove their clothing and keeping them naked for several days at a time; forcing naked male detainees to wear women's underwear; (and) forcing groups of male detainees to masturbate themselves while being photographed and videotaped".

Those abuses were documented by direct evidence, including photographs, while Taguba also found "credible" evidence of threatening male detainees with rape, sodomy and threatening detainees with a pistol, among other abuses. The report also noted the existence of "ghost detainees"—prisoners who were shifted from unit to unit within Abu Ghraib prison so as to be hidden during visits by representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

While Taguba's report did not directly address abuses committed by prison authorities outside Iraq, he suggested that similar practices might have been used against



other prisoners both in Iraq and elsewhere. In that connection, his report noted that a team from the US detention facility in Guantanamo Bay visited Iraq eight months ago to see how better intelligence could be acquired from detainees held there. The team, which was headed by the Guantanamo commander, recommended that MP guards act as "an enabler for interrogation". More than 60 percent of the detainees at Abu Ghraib, according to Taguba, were innocent civilians who had simply been caught up in sweeps and were

thus of little or no intelligence value.

The notion that humiliating practices against prisoners might be practiced beyond Abu Ghraib was endorsed by Amnesty International (AI). "Our extensive research in Iraq suggests that this is not an isolated incident," the group said in a statement, noting "frequent reports of torture or other ill-treatment by coalition forces during the past year". Human Rights Watch (HRW) also suggested the behaviour of the US soldiers in the photos "suggests they felt they had nothing to hide from their superiors". (IPS) ●

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Development amidst war

“Wars are devastating wherever they occur.”
– UNDP Human Development Report, 1997

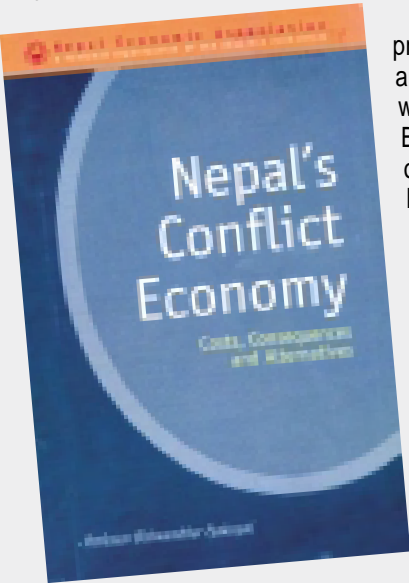
For Nepal, mired in poverty and ravaged by conflict, the ramifications of the nine-year Maoist insurgency is severe for the economy and development and leading Nepali economist, Bishwambar Pyakuryal, explores the link between conflict and the economy in his new book, *Nepal's Conflict Economy: Costs, Consequences and Alternatives*.

Pyakuryal's objective is to develop a methodology for calculating the economic cost from the Maoist insurgency, review the impact of the conflict on the economy, establish links between underdevelopment and conflict, and make policy recommendations for public policy in the current scenario. In its approach

BOOK
Shyamal K Shrestha



paper to the Tenth Plan, the government has stated that Nepal's negative growth rate of 0.6 percent during the last fiscal year 2001/02 of the Ninth Plan could be primarily attributed to escalation of the conflict. Another non-government study has estimated an average loss of 1.25 percent of GDP since 1997. Trends like declining production, falling exports, shift from tradable commodities to non-tradable commodities and increased aid dependency indicate economic stagnation.



Rural-to-urban migration is pressuring civic infrastructure and leaving whole villages without able-bodied labour. Both farms and firms are operating below capacity levels and cost overruns have become a normal feature of business. By identifying Nepal's poor performance in meeting human development goals as the primary cause of the insurgency, Pyakuryal ignores other issues like unequal production relations and the perpetuation of a growth process that has been neither rapid nor equitable until today.

Given the conflict has put a strain on scarce resources, how can growth be fostered? Unless a resolution to the conflict is found, the economy will continue to reel under the 'shock'. In the immediate future, Pyakuryal proposes that the state forge partnerships with non-state actors (both the 'revolutionaries' and the private sector). It is unlikely that the Maoists will suddenly have a change of heart.

Donors threaten to cut aid if the situation worsens. An expansionist fiscal policy is proposed so that investment, employment and, ultimately, growth are stimulated. It is doubtful that such a policy will suffice. State-owned banks are faced with mounting debts and non-performing assets, insurgents frequently rob public banks and everyone is subject to extortion.

The contributors echo the need to intervene meaningfully rather than be complacent with macroeconomic stability. Once peace is restored, the economy will rebound. Large-scale reconstruction and development strategies to address the roots of the conflict must be tackled. Therein lies Nepal's future prosperity.

Nepal's Conflict Economy: Costs, Consequences and Alternatives
Bishwambar Pyakuryal
Nepal Economic Association, Kathmandu. 2004.

Shyamal Krishna Shrestha is a Research Associate at Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS), Kathmandu.



“Glory or death”



Lal Singh Gurung's company of British Gurkhas fought the Germans in the famous battle of Cassino in Italy during World War II. Orders to 'advance to contact' are met, lives are lost, brave men die but victory belongs to the Allies. Gurung is in Italy when the armistice is signed in 1945. The fighting ends on the Western front but he is sent back to battle in Burma. His story appears with that of several other Gurkha soldiers in Himal Books' *Lahure ka Katha*. It has been translated by Dev Bahadur Thapa for *Nepali Times*.

I had been promoted to sergeant major when we fought at Cassino. We planned to launch the attack at the end of May. To do this, we had to cross a river. We started late in the evening, and a small boat had to ferry all of us across. It took close to an hour to get the last man to the shallow waters of the other shore. We had to stay half submerged until about one o'clock that night. Incidentally, this was the last time the Germans launched an offensive. They had exhausted all their artillery and we were in a position to retaliate. But they had the advantage of higher ground. Smoke enveloped us and visibility was down to a few yards. There we were—waist deep in cold water, the top half coated in dust. Later, someone wrote a Nepali song describing those hours: “While attacking Cassino, we could see nothing because of the dust and we were forsaken by our companions.”

By noon the next day, the German bombardment had lessened and visibility was better. I remember reciting verses of the Durga Kawach because we believed it protected us. I heard a few soldiers saying I must be dead, as a bomb had exploded near my bunker. The jamadar ordered them to remove the debris, when I spoke out, “I am not dead yet.” We were

ordered to march on.

At last, we fought at the village of Cassino and lost about 150 men. The Germans fled, so we don't know how many they lost, but I'm sure we took a heavy toll on the retreating enemy. They tried to hold us off at Mutuleni, but failed. Their strategy was to obstruct our advancement while they got to Gotherlini where they had a solid defence, but they could not contain us and we 'advanced to contact'.

I was in platoon number eight of company one of the first 5th Gurkha Rifles. We positioned ourselves at a hill called Sainbotle. Lt Harvey, who had been posted here from Burma, requested two assistants and permission to advance. I told him we had to retreat to trenches, and that he would probably be killed if he advanced alone. He ignored my advice, so I gave in and sent two servicemen, Bam Bahadur and Thaman Gurung with him. They snuck up on a group of resting German soldiers, and Thaman opened fire saying, “It is our prime duty to kill the enemies.” He fired 28 rounds and killed 35 Germans before he was shot down. Bam Bahadur and Harvey came back alive, and started helping the rest of us dig trenches.

This incident caused turmoil among the Germans as word

spread that the British had a large number of troops who could kill 35 men in a single encounter. This rumour prompted the Germans to retreat from the last defence at Gotherlini, and soon afterwards the armistice was signed on 6 June 1945. At the time we were stationed at Mutuleni. I received a military medal for my services and Thaman Gurung was awarded a Victoria Cross.

We seldom talked about home in the thick of war. I have no idea how the men thought in other regiments, but we would say, “Either a cluster of medals will bedeck this chest or flies will swarm over my face.” For us it was either glory or death. Every recruit thinks of only two things: how to get promoted and how to win honours without dying.

According to the agreement between British India and the Rana government in Nepal only 45,000 Nepalis were enlisted in the British force. Many servicemen laid down their lives in Burma and Italy. I can't even imagine the number of those who died. The war in Italy ended. After Italy, we were posted back in Burma but were allotted 84 days of leave. During that time, we heard the Americans had dropped an atom bomb on Hiroshima and that the Japanese had surrendered. We danced with jubilation because we were spared fighting in Burma.

BIGBEN



Nepal: Sailing in Pokhara

Early start



The benefits of introducing golf to youngsters

We start educating our children young because their minds are receptive. The same applies to helping them explore the skills and mental strength involved in excelling at sports.

In a previous column, I said excelling in a team sport is difficult—one is only as good as the rest of the team. This is why golf is an ideal choice of individual sport. Anyone can work towards competing, even on a global level.

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya

I was fortunate enough to have learned golf early. This had nothing to do with belonging to a the economic bracket that golfers are stereotyped into: my family was not wealthy, but but it just so happened that my father was a golfer who worked for a golf club. When I started, there a few other young players. Today it amazes me that almost all of them have either become professional golfers or won golf scholarships to US colleges.

Making a career out of a sport is not easy. Along with talent, you need inner drive and hard work. Certainly, every one who takes up a sport is not going to become a professional, but in striving to be better, or even the best, you gather good working skills and benefit from the learning experience.

Golf is a sport where you play and compete with all age groups because of the handicapping system. This gives you an opportunity to mix with a much larger variety of people and professionals, broaden your knowledge and expand your horizons. If along the way you happen to hone your skills, you can join lucrative golf tours where prize money is quite substantial.

The role of the young in ensuring the future of anything is important. Golf is no different. The future generation follows the footsteps of existing good players, and as always happens, will end up even better.





SURYA

STATUTORY DIRECTIVE : SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

Golf is one of the fastest growing sports in the world today, and in other countries, new golfers are mostly young people. Sadly, this isn't reflected here in Nepal. One reason could be the lack of adequate knowledge about the sport, or the feeling that it is an old, rich man's game. The best way to get our youngsters started is through existing golfers.

The present generation must persuade their children to try golf. Then, in turn, these youngsters encourage others to play, which would then bring in educational institutions too. We would be well on our way to producing golf champions.

Parents, give it more than just a passing thought. Kathmandu, Pokhara, Dharan, and Nawalparasi all have easily accessible facilities. Give your young ones the chance to try their hand at the sport. The ones who take to it will always thank you for the introduction. The ones who are not interested will lose nothing. ●

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



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4th Great Himalayan

Volks Wagen Beetle Rally

2004

says THANK YOU!

The 4th Great Himalayan VW Beetle Rally was a great success thanks to the generosity our promoters, supporters, and sponsors listed below - some of whom wished to remain anonymous. The four causes received a total of almost Rs 300,000, which, with the awareness raised, will benefit many for a long time to come.

Of course, we also thank the enthusiastic beetle drivers and other beetle nuts, without whom, there would be no rally! Almost 40 Beetles went safely from Patan Durbar Square to the Himalayan Horizon, Sun and Snow Resort in Dhulikhel, with only one flat tire and one episode of passengers having to get out and push.

Please check out our web site (www.beetlerally.net) to see the photos posted! Thanks everyone for your support and participation! It wouldn't have happened without you!

The VW Rally Organising Committee for Maya Foundation, Ganesh Foundation, Peace Stickers of Antenna Foundation, and Porters' Progress

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"Lata ko desh ma gaando tanderi." (In a land of fools, a man with a goatee is a hero.)



To see all the Adventures of Herojig - Tanned Man in Nepal, go to www.extreme-nepal.com (c) 2001 by Jigra galon - permission to be procrastinate.

ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Healing Elements** Acrylic paintings by Chungpo Tsering and Reiki carpets by Rupert Smith from 1 May at Indigo Gallery, Naxal.
- ❖ **Diary of Portraits** and jewellery by Carolyn Boch till 15 May at Gallery Moksh, Club Hardic, Pulchowk. 5528703
- ❖ **Expressions** Paintings by Reeta Manandhar till 16 May at Park Gallery, Lazimpat. 4419353
- ❖ **Traces of Buddha** Photographs by Godam Choi till 17 May at Buddha Gallery, Thamel. 4441689



EVENTS

- ❖ **Re-incarnation** CD launch and performance by Max Lolo. Tickets Rs 300. 6.30 PM on 8 May at Moksh, Club Hardic, Pulchowk. 5528703
- ❖ **Earthquake Crisis Management in Kathmandu Valley** Research findings by KUSOM EMBA 2004 Batch - Group 2. 11AM on 9 May, KUSOM Building, Manbhavan.
- ❖ **The Fire Raisers** by Studio 7 at Hotel Vajra. 7.15 PM from 7- 9 May.
- ❖ **Macbeth** by Rato Bangala School, 7-9 May at the Russian Cultural Centre. 5522614
- ❖ **Rock N' Bark** CD for AnimalNEPAL.org launch on 14 May. Tickets Rs 150 / Rs 350 with CD. Moksh, Club Hardic, Pulchowk.
- ❖ **Learn Reiki – I** from Elif, 11-12 May at the Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre, Thamel. 4249270
- ❖ **Sur Sudha with Anil Shahi Concert** in aid of girl child scholarship fund. 5.30 PM onwards, 8 May at Radisson Hotel, Lazimpat. Ticket Rs 1,199 (dinner and drink)

MUSIC

- ❖ **Deo** at Not Just The Jazz Bar. Fridays, Hotel Shangri-la, Lazimpat.
- ❖ **JCS Trio** at Fusion every Friday, Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488

FOOD

- ❖ **Summit's Barbecue Dinner** with vegetarian specials. Summit Hotel
- ❖ **Friday Nights** at Subterranea Club Kilroy. 8PM onwards. 4412821
- ❖ **Vegetarian Creations** at Stupa View Restaurant. 4480262
- ❖ **Organic Market** Saturdays, 10AM to 2PM at Baber Mahal Revisited.
- ❖ **Sunny Side Up Weekend BBQ** at Soaltee Crowne Plaza Kathmandu.
- ❖ **The Beer Garden** at Vajrayantha, Godavari Village Resort. 5560675



Dexo House

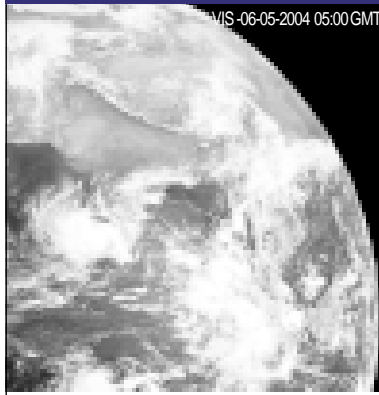
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NEPALI WEATHER



by MAUSAM BEED

After a month of almost daily showers of rain and occasional hailstorms, the current trend favours sunny and warm. The satellite image from Thursday morning shows a calm over the Himalaya and the Gangetic plain as the southwesterly monsoon is sweeping through the west coast of India. Its tentacles reaches all the way to the Bay of Bengal where it will gain more moisture before heading northward. It should reach eastern Nepal in a month. Meteorologists generally believe the hotter the pre-monsoon months, the stronger the monsoon. In a week of rain-free days, the temperature in the Valley went up by about 5 degrees to hit the 30 degree Celcius mark. The weekend should be balmy, but don't leave home without an umbrella come early next week.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

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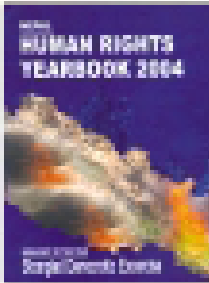
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CE

BOOKWORM

Nepal Human Rights Yearbook 2004 Krishna Gautam (ed)
INSEC, 2004
Rs 500

This is the Informal Sector Service Centre's (INSEC) 12th annual report on the human rights situation in Nepal. The yearbook for 2004 is not only a compilation of INSEC's research, but also includes assessments made by other stakeholders. Reports were compiled by a wide network of INSEC representatives who worked under extremely perilous security conditions.



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

Popular choreographer Farah Khan turns director with her ambitious debut project *Main Hoon Na* starring Shah Rukh Khan, Suniel Shetty, Sushmita Sen, Zayed Khan and Amrita Rao. Anu Malik composes music in the RD Burman mode and Javed Akhtar pens the lyrics. Farah follows the current Bollywood trend of an Indo-Pak theme repackaged as a mission film. Throw in humour, romance, action and plenty of song and dance and *Main Hoon Na* makes for a masala mix worth the ticket price.

JAI NEPAL CINEMA



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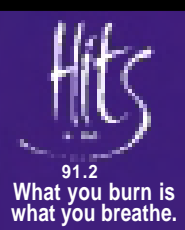
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KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY



Surprisingly, the air quality continued to improve in most places in the Valley with the most noticeable drop in PM10 (particles small enough to enter the human body) particles being in Putalisadak, from a weekly average of 246 to 204. Patients at Patan Hospital should take a deep breath of relatively clean air while they can. There, PM10 particles dropped by about 20 per cubic metre. Be warned though – pollution levels in most parts of the Valley still fall within the 'unhealthy' range.

Good	<60
Ok	61 to 120
Unhealthy	121 to 350
Harmful	351 to 425
Hazardous	>425

25 April 1 May in micrograms per cubic meter.
Source: www.mope.gov.np

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HAPPENINGS



MIN BAJRACHARYA

PRESS-URE: Police turn on local photojournalists and a TV cameraman who were trying to capture the student riots on Lekh Nath Margh, near Amrit Science Campus on Wednesday .



MIN BAJRACHARYA

SPEAKING UP: To commemorate World Press Freedom Day on Monday, UN representative Matthew Khane gives a speech at the Department of Information in Sinamangal.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

PATIENCE: Youth line up on Friday in front of the Egyptian Embassy in Pulchowk where they each paid Rs 1,800 to apply for work visas.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

LOOK SHARP: Security forces bathe their eyes in water after being affected by the tear gas they used on agitators, when the wind blew it back in their direction at New Road on Sunday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

BOOKISH BIKERS: Paul A Rayner (*l*) of Credit Suisse hands a cheque for \$19,000 to David McQuillen (*centre*) and Nicolas Bertjche (*r*) who cycled from Lhasa to Kathmandu to raise the amount for the Room to Read organisation on Wednesday.

Government cracks down on anti-government protests by government

It is when journalists themselves start making it to the headlines that our esteemed readers should know that we have run out of things to write about. Our valued clients are therefore advised to sit back, relax, keep their seat belts loosely fastened and refrain from smoking in the toilet. As a matter of fact, it is getting difficult for clowns like yours truly to write satire in a



country when there is such stiff competition from the daily papers. Things have

never looked so gloomy for those of us in the media entertainment business, and at the rate our legitimate role in society is being usurped by upstart hacks, those of us who make a living from poking fun at all and sundry are in serious danger of extinction. Before you all break into a round of enthusiastic applause, let me present below some recent actual headlines, which should give you an idea of what we are up against:

- ‘Water-induced Calamities Control Subdivision office bombed’
- ‘Vegetable Cooperative Bears Fruit in Kavre’
- ‘Chinks in the Peace Process’
- ‘Scribes Opine Cops Raining Batons on Their Headlines’
- ‘Democracy Is Unfinished Business: Khum Bahadur Khadka’
- ‘Headless Body Found in Topless Bar’

Faced with such sophisticated and superior wit, this scribe willingly admits defeat. Keeping up is just too much work. Therefore here is this week’s news in detail, shamelessly plagiarised from this morning’s daily papers:

Bhutan Takes Back Two More Crocodiles

BY OUR ZOOLOGICAL CORRESPONDENT

KATHMANDU— The royal government of Bhutan took back two more Nepali-speaking crocodiles and Druk sources said it indicated an accelerated repatriation process agreed upon during the last Joint Ministerial Meeting. “It is a giant leap forward, and we are glad that the talks on harmonisation have gone well making this repatriation of bonafide crocs possible,” said a Foreign Ministry spokesman, adding that at the present rate of repatriation of two gharials a year, it would take another 220,000 years for all genuine crocodiles to go back. As a part of this exchange of endangered species between the royal governments in Thimpu and Kathmandu, Bhutan will be handing over to Nepal another hundred or so Lhotsampas.

Government Announces Anti-Government Protests

BY A POLITICAL NEOPHYTE

KATHMANDU— Riot police this week rounded up several members of the government who were caught shouting anti-government slogans at Ratna Park. Senior political leaders of the ruling RPP got off their Pajeros on Bag Bazar, pelted it with bricks and set the vehicles on fire in front an angry mob of government officials. Several senior members of the government who were manhandled by policewomen wielding rattan canes, and were physically lifted on to trucks seemed to enjoy the manhandling and were heard asking for more. A senior security official told this scribe before raining batons on his head: “We were just following orders. They told us to manhandle them, so we did.” Similar scuffles were also witnessed outside other government buildings as ministers and government officials shouting anti-government slogans gheroad their own offices.

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