



ALL PICS: MIN BAJRACHARYA



KIRAN PANDAY

Royal disregard

KANAK MANI DIXIT

The king's lack of trust in the parties lies at the crux of the standoff

A deep, personal distrust that King Gyanendra harbours against politicians lies at the root of the standoff between Narayanhiiti and the parties agitating at Ratna Park.

Suspicion holds the populace in limbo even as the polity dips into a tailspin: the economy, state activity and development work lie in tatters. The major road arteries are blocked, Kathmandu Valley and the business centres are cut off and the army and Maoists prepare for a confrontation that will extend far beyond the coming monsoon.

The political solution that could provide a *nikaas* with the insurgents, which can only come from an all-party government coupled with the revival of the parliament, seems to be remote as the king keeps the parties at arm's length.

The origin of the royal distrust is unclear, but it is obvious that King Gyanendra regards the parties as dens of venal politicians, both corrupt and inept. This belief jives with the conviction of certain sections of Kathmandu society, that

the politicians ran the country to the ground after 1990.

Is the king focussing on well-publicised malfeasance of a few to tar the rank and file of the political parties? Does one detect in this a trace of self-interest, the king having expressed his intention of being 'constructive'? Is there a fear that revival of parliament will wrest away too much power?

Whether there was failure of democracy under parliamentary rule remains a matter for debate and not the basis on which an unelected entity can take decisions for the people. In the sliding scale of corruption and mal-governance, the politicians are asking where the parties stand in relation to the three-decade-long Panchayat system, as well as the 19 months of the king's rule-by-nomination (during which period there has been no accounting of public expenditure).

"If the king means what he says about seeking a prime minister without corrupt associations, what does he have against me or, say, Amik Sherchan (of the United People's

Front)?" asked Madhab Kumar Nepal, seeking to call the bluff.

On Wednesday, the king did finally meet the leaders of the five-party alliance but, while asking them to play their hand, as the principal player, he chose not to show his cards. He thanked them for coming but a date for the next rendezvous

was not set. At press time Thursday, rumours were rife on what the palace might do next, the majority opinion being that it would ignore the five parties yet again in selecting a prime minister.

The monarchical distaste for political parties has short-term ramifications with regard to who is

going to head the next government. In the long run, will such excessive animosity allow King Gyanendra to serve as facilitator between the parties in times of crisis? That would have been the hope. ●

Editorial p2
Emergency surgery

Timesnepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll #137

Q. Should King Gyanendra meet the five political leaders together?

Yes 73.8%

No 25.8%

Don't know 0.4%

Total votes: 1,975

Weekly Internet Poll # 138. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. Whom would you trust the most as the next prime minister?

NOTICE

Godavari Village Resort remains fully occupied with all facilities booked during the period from 22nd May till 26th May 2004, we highly regret any inconvenience caused to our respected patrons, guests and well-wishers.

Godavari Village Resort

NEW! Designs

STATION

Expendul, Tel: 33 47 400, 500, 600

Web: www.grisipstation.net

ARISTON

Europe's No. 1 selling Water Heater

HOME FURNISHERS

Tripureswar (way to Thapathali), Kathmandu

Ph: 4254601, 4262240

Deutsche Post World Net

MAIL EXPRESS LOGISTICS FINANCE

More power.

There's a new global standard in express delivery, freight and logistics. DHL. Worldwide Express, global leader in air express, Danzas, global leader in air and ocean freight, and Deutsche Post Euro Express, European leader in parcel delivery, have joined together under the name DHL, to offer an even better all-round service. We can now offer you more performance, more service and more options in more than 220 countries. So whatever your needs we can meet them. Call us on 478 32 48 or visit us at www.dhl.com to get the power of DHL behind your business.

WE MOVE THE WORLD **DHL**



editors@nepaltimes.com, www.nepaltimes.com

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



Remembering Madan Bhandari

What would he have done?

EMERGENCY SURGERY

It has been nearly two weeks since the prime minister resigned and till press time no replacement has been found. The country limps along, trailing blood.

A visitor to Nepal this week asked: who is in charge of your country? We were stumped for an answer. The king seized power one-and-half years ago, we explained, and he has been working through a list of recycled politicians. Every morning, we read another list of luminaries the king met the previous day. There seems to be no sense of urgency to find a successor prime minister. So far, we have done without a legislature, without local bodies, without an elected executive and without a government. Wonder what else we can do without?

Meanwhile, the Maoists make full use of this confusion, bringing the entire country to a halt for weeks on end with blockades and forced strikes. The people have reached the limit of what they can endure. It is time to end this uncertainty, and rush the country into emergency surgery.

The king and the parties seem to agree that the first order of business is to set up a multiparty interim government (they just disagree on who should do the setting up) that commands the stature to negotiate with the Maoists and persuade them to take part in future polls.

Even for longterm rehabilitation, there is scant disagreement on the kind of polity we need. For a multiethnic, multireligious and polyphonic country like ours, there is really no other way than political pluralism that provides representation to the diversity. The mechanics of implementing pluralism is also clear: a federal structure built on genuinely decentralised governance.

It is in all our self-interests to support democracy at the local and national levels. There is no pluralism without democracy, and there is no democracy without participation. It may sound like a cliché, but participation is also needed to make democracy deliver development. In fact, we had seen that link very clearly in the mid-1990s as grassroots democracy empowered people across Nepal to demand basic services from their elected representatives.

No matter how rousing their rhetoric, neither a dictatorship of the right nor totalitarianism of the left can ensure a system inclusive enough to lift us out of poverty and war. Only by giving a voice and visibility to the marginalised and left-out and by including them in representative decision-making will we be able to craft a polity that addresses the inequities that are at the root of the conflict.

There is a consensus on most of what we have said above. The disagreement is only about who should be in charge to see it through. But even on that, the answer is plain: the people should be in charge. Not an autocratic elite, not the military, not the extremists, not demagogues.

Let's use a scalpel, not an axe.

Would Nepal of 2061 BS have been any different had Dasdhunga not happened? Maybe.

On the whole, the great man theory of history might not carry much analytical weight since socio-economic and political factors generally explain political trajectories better. However, some

GUEST COLUMN
AG Chhetri



charismatic figures play pivotal roles in shaping the political environments of their times. As the towering figure of Nepali politics in the first few years of the post-2046 democratic era, Madan Bhandari played a pivotal role in shaping the contours of Nepali politics of the time.

CPN (UML) had the Naxalite-inspired Jhapa Andolan as a part of its history. Engineering its transformation to a social democratic party was no mean feat. Bhandari deserves praise for steering the UML to the mainstream, without severing its

commitment to a progressive agenda, and making it a formidable political force, despite the fact that those fanatically wedded to Communist dogma would term the transition Khrushchevite. He subscribed to the notion that a genuine revolution need not be violent.

Indeed, blood need not be spilled liberally as if it is *chaulani pani*; fundamental socio-political changes can be achieved without ditching basic *manabiya sambhedana* if one can efficiently mobilise public opinion in pursuit of a noble cause. Bhandari had the requisite capabilities to do precisely that. He possessed the halo of a crusader, the finesse of a statesman, the oratorical prowess of Churchill, the pragmatic touch of a seasoned politician. Most importantly, he displayed undying commitment to a more egalitarian and prosperous



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Nepal. He was the best thing to emerge out of the quasi-revolution of 2046.

"It's not political, it's emotional," said Rahul Gandhi in a recent interview with *Time*. He was referring to the bond he (more aptly, the Gandhi dynasty) shared with the people of Amethi, his electoral constituency. The same could be said of Bhandari's bond



LETTERS

BHIMLAL HIRACHAN

By murdering Bhimlal Hirachan ('Good man', #196), the Maoists have destroyed the future of Rasuwa district and its people. He was the only leader who remained in the district, worked for the people and understood their needs. Why was it necessary to kill such an honest person? We Rasuwabasi will miss him for generations to come. The Maoists are doing irreparable damage to the country by killing all the true and honest people. Meanwhile, dishonest and corrupt leaders are running around safely in the capital. If you want to set things right, punish those who destroyed the country and misused 13 years of democracy. We the people have had enough. We saw the death of a whole royal family and we saw our leaders cheating and lying in broad daylight. We have seen too much bloodshed, too many widows, orphans and dislocated families. We see innocent people being

murdered ruthlessly every day. Enough is enough. How long can the Maoists keep punishing ordinary people with their blockades and bandas? And, finally, Girija Koirala and his ilk who are agitating on the streets of Kathmandu, stop fooling around with your own people, stop destroying public property. Try to find answers, don't make things worse. We all want democracy, we want our rights back and we want peace. We don't want leaders like you, who can only see as far as the tip of your nose. It is time for a new leader. No more false promises, no more cheating in the name of the people.

Sherap Sherpa, Rasuwa

- May the souls of Bhimlal Hirachan and Dil Man Gurung rest in peace. And may their killers rot in hell. You need no more proof that the Maoists are the same pedigree as the Khmer Rouge. The most recent murders of these two decent, generous, compassionate and visionary village leaders

and the killings of thousands of others like them from Mechi to Mahakali over the last eight years have shown that the Maoist revolution is nothing but an excuse for sadistic bloodletting. They are aiming for the heart of Mother Nepal, and all patriotic Nepalis must now stand united against these destroyers.

Pravine B Gurung, Pokhara

FRONTLINE

Kudos to Daniel Lak for the bold and hard-hitting article on the murder of Gyanendra Khadka ('Remembering Gyanendra', #195). Journalists are on the frontlines of conflicts everywhere and it is their work that prevents the truth from being the first casualty of war. In Nepal, we must pay tribute to the hundreds of reporters in the districts who put their security on the line while they tell the outside world what is really happening in the villages. These journalists are on their own, they have few protections that their colleagues in the capital have. Yet they prove themselves to

be brave and courageous, facing threats from both the security forces and the Maoists. We must recognise the sacrifices made by journalists like Gyanendra Khadka.

Ganesh Bhusal, Biratnagar

FEMME FATAL

The idea of Charitraheen Chelis is certainly amusing, and even more, it seems, for Kapil Tamot ('Vive les femmes', #196). His complaint boils down to anonymity: is the mystery exciting you there, Tamot? Did you really expect full-blown profiles with headshots? In any case, I must've completely missed out on the men's rights movement.

Sarahana, New York

- We are entertained and amazed at the hullabaloo on what we look like. Thank you, Kapil Tamot, for your article ('Vives les femmes', #195). You, along with many others trying to guess who we may be, still help propagate our message. However, we are sorry to say that you do not convince us why it is important for you or society at large

to know what we look like. What relevance does this have? We would be more impressed if you asked what our thoughts are, how we intend to meet our objectives or what our next actions will be. Faces are only relevant when one extracts (in our society) what family backgrounds we come from, what classes and creeds we belong to, who our fathers and husbands are or whether we go to an elite school or not. This sort of information is irrelevant, and knowing our faces would be just that. We reject and do not fall into those stereotypes. If it leaves you shuffling with discomfort, then we are not sorry. Didn't your teachers tell you not to judge a book by its cover? We are Nepali women of various backgrounds, shapes, sizes and marital status. We have come together to reject the chauvinistic labeling and attitudes of our society, and we all stand collectively to challenge it. That, Mr Tamot, is what is important for you and society to know.

Sita Cheli, email

with the Nepali janta. He connected with the average Nepali citizen; his words struck a chord in the people. Unlike most of today’s political leaders, he was admired and adored by ordinary Nepalis.

Sadly, that storehouse of talent and integrity passed away before he could lead Nepal’s march towards a new dawn. It is a pity that the UML could not preserve his true legacy and degenerated, just like the other political parties, into a cesspool of sleaze, pettiness and corruption after his demise. The march to dawn never came. Instead, the country entered a vortex of violence and uncertainty.

Would his continued presence in Nepali politics have staved off the country’s descent into chaos? It is reasonable to assume that it might have. He had the qualities needed to fire up the imagination of the youth and serve as a rallying figure for the whole nation. Young people need a figure to rally around, a political icon to look up to. In the absence of a charismatic leader, the younger generation can go astray, especially when economic opportunities are limited. It is plausible to argue that Bhandari’s leadership could have channeled the youth’s restlessness and impatience towards the more constructive projects of development and relatively peaceful change.

As an increasing number of fellow Nepalis become mere statistics in the country’s battlefields and the country is locked into an excruciatingly painful war of attrition, we wistfully remember Madan Bhandari, lament his premature death and wait for a new leader of his calibre to emerge.

We can’t help wondering: what would the visionary leftist leader have done to untangle the nation’s crises were he alive today? ●

(AG Chhetri is a graduate student at Columbia University in New York)

Lessons from India Inc

Bihar has Lalu, Brazil has Lula, what has Nepal?

The assumption that India’s foreign policy is affected by the changing of the guard in New Delhi is probably true, but in our exaggerated sense of self-worth, we often forget that Nepal is not a priority in New Delhi.

On the foreign policy front, Natwar Singh and JN Dixit have



much more pressing concerns to address: calm the nerves of international investors, recalibrate Indo-American cooperation, reconfigure relationship with China, fine-tune the peace process with Pakistan and search for a more effective role in Sri Lanka.

In all probability, South Bloc’s Nepal policy will continue to be dominated by its babudom, which seems determined to let this country stew in its own juice for a while longer. Rather than debate the impact of the Indian electorate’s dramatic turnaround, it may be more important for us to pick tips from a maturing democracy.

The poor, the marginalised, and the oppressed of Bharat delivered a powerful knock on the Shining India elite. There is a lesson for our own free-market fundamentalists: growth without justice is inherently unsustainable.

Telangana’s destitute cotton farmers gave a crushing blow to CEO Chandrababu Naidu in Andhra Pradesh. Voters in Karnataka fired their digital neta, SM Krishna just as they had shown the door to Digvijay Singh in Madhya Pradesh earlier.

King Gyanendra needs to be wary of those who suggested to

him in Gokarna on Monday that he can run this kingdom like a business enterprise with hand-picked technocrats reporting directly to him. The king can learn a lot from Sonia’s theatrics but the COO model isn’t one of them.

In the badlands of Bihar and West Bengal, ruling coalitions of Lalu Yadav and Jyoti Basu romped home comfortably, proving the old adage of politics that it’s neither reality nor possibility that wins on the day of reckoning. Factors that swing the voters in electoral politics are identity and hope. The UML must get some more madhesis in its politburo and the Nepali Congress needs to re-invent its socialist past if these political parties want to have a fighting chance at the polls that King Gyanendra’s loyalists may conduct in future.

The impressive show of the Sonia Congress in India and the better-than-average performance of various left parties extends Brazil’s Lula phenomenon. The colour of the 21st century is going to be pink with state policies veering towards left of centre. All the more reason for a mainstream

party like the UML in Nepal to break itself from its Stalinist past and pursue the path of Bahudaliya Janabad pioneered by Madan Bhandari, whose 10th death anniversary we mark this week (see p2).

Here, too, political scions Prakash Man Singh, Bimalendra Nidhi, and Sagar Shamsher and intellectuals Minendra Rijal, Prakash Sharan Mahat and Narayan Khadka of Sher Bahadur Deuba’s political outfit need to venture out into the hinterland if they want to resume their roles as policymakers.

The widely held view is that opinion polls in the Indian media got it all wrong. In reality, the media simply lost the game by imposing their wishes upon the masses. India Inc’s new media is unabashedly capitalist. It had a vested interest in designing a rightist victory. The talking-heads were trying their best to create an atmosphere of victory for their sponsors. The Indian electorate saw through their game and beat them at it. All these worthies are now eating their words sheepishly, trying to prove that they were



knaves and fools. Consumers of the Nepali media shouldn’t be too taken in by self-proclaimed neutral journalists. A media-person who professes not to have a mission is probably on a commission to serve the status quo. So take the opinions of talking-heads, including this one, with a pinch of salt. We all have our biases. It’s just that some of us are rather poor in hiding them. ●

MOUNTAIN MEDICINE

In response to the article on medical tourism in the Annapurnas ('Trekking brings medical care to the Annapurnas', #193) I would like to offer a few comments based on my own experience in Nepal as a visiting western trained physician. I have been working with a village in the Annapurna region for three years helping them identify and implement a health care plan that moves beyond the 'bandaid concept' of stocking supplies. The village committee, mothers' group and health care workers identified key components to a plan designed to improve the health of the villagers while preserving cultural heritage and respecting the environment. The plan included the renovation of a building for use as a clinic, introduction of composting toilets, improvement of the water delivery system, student health education, preservation of traditional shaman teachings and net-working of the health care workers with Nepali physicians in Pokhara via telemedicine for advice

and continuing medical education. The basic design is building a health program run by the local health care workers and supported by the village. The program self adapts to the culture, regional resources and skills available for the area, thereby decreasing dependence on foreign aid. Dependence on foreign aid in the form of supplies, skills or money comes with a high price. Lose of self-respect, dependence on a foreign system that can collapse, misunderstanding due to cultural ignorance and blind acceptance of a system that may seem superior but in actuality performs poorly in the home country are a few of the pitfalls. If an individual, village or even a country does not pay for a product or service, but merely accepts handouts, then the process is devalued. If you do not value something you can not respect it or 'own' it.

Debra Stoner,
Himanchal Educational
Foundation

Learn English

at the British Council

Learning English can open doors to new opportunities. Whether you are currently working or searching for a job or studying in school or university, the British Council's range of English courses for adults and young learners will help to make things happen in your life.

Better English means more opportunities; it will help to boost your self-confidence and give you a head start in the job market or in your studies.

Testing and registration for all of our courses is open now. One of these courses is perfect for you.

Summer term begins:	31 May 2004
Course duration:	36 hours
Course fee:	Rs. 5,200/-

Registration is open from: 23 - 28 May from 8 am - 5 pm.

For more information call 4410798

Lainchaur, next to the British Embassy, Kathmandu. Tel: 4410798. Fax: 4410545. www.britishcouncil.org/nepal

Bring this advert and pay half price for your placement test.

Rs. 600 Rs. 300

BRITISH COUNCIL

Peacekeeping away from home



Can Nepal afford to keep peace elsewhere when there is no peace at home?

NARESH NEWAR

NUWAKOT – On Kakani, paramilitary troops of the Armed Police Force (APF) are going through grueling training: they jog for miles with heavy guns, work their minds at rigorous academic sessions and sometimes even learn a smattering of Serbo-Croat or Swahili. This is all part of Nepal’s tradition of joining UN peacekeeping forces in the world’s conflict zones.

But today, the question is: how practical is it to train for international peacekeeping when Nepal itself has become a hotspot? Nepali troops have earned international appreciation for the calibre of its peacekeepers in the Middle East.

More than 40,000 officers and soldiers have served in peacekeeping operations abroad since 1958. At present, there are about 2,300 Nepali soldiers serving in Sierra Leone and Congo and the figure includes observer groups of army officers in Liberia, Ivory Coast, Israel, Eritrea and several other countries. Another battalion between 600-800 troops will probably be dispatched soon to Burundi. In addition, there are police officers serving in Kosovo.

But Kakani is where it begins with 120 officers and junior rank

police selected out of more than 15,000 APF hopefuls to qualify for a UN mission to Liberia, the second time for the force. The first batch was sent to Kosovo in 2002. The new team is waiting for UN officials to inspect them before they leave on 29 June.

“Many join the army with a dream of participating in peacekeeping. In six months they earn more than what they would make in 10 years of service at home,” says an ex-army officer who asked not to be named. For the Royal Nepali Army, money from peacekeeping is an important source of income for its welfare fund. It is an equally lucrative posting for the Nepal Police and the APF as the pay is several times their salary at home.

“We use international peacekeeping as a reward for our troops,” one senior army general told us. “And, yes, it is an important source of revenue for the army as well.”

The UN salary is about \$1,000 a month. There was a time when 80 percent of this was deducted for the army’s welfare fund, but today less than 50 percent is taken. “Missions are like prizes,” says an army officer

Travel advisory

In a warning issued this week, the US State Department ordered all non-essential staff and dependents of Nepalis to depart America immediately. All other US citizens are advised to leave as soon as possible. “America is such a dangerous place,” said State Department spokesperson Lars Ego, “that we can’t in good conscience advise US citizens to remain.”

The warning advises Americans that dangers in the US include random shootings, school massacres and armed

robbery. “Because the US refuses

AMERICA LITE
John Child

to control the spread of guns, Americans are at very high risk,” according to the statement, which says that more than 90,000 Americans are killed or injured by guns in the US each year.

The statement reports that acts of violence against Americans residing or traveling in the US are common, and that the random nature of the violence in America creates a risk of US citizens being in the wrong place at the wrong time during a violent incident. The warning adds that US citizens who visit or reside in America should factor the potential for violence into their plans and maintain a low profile while in America. The statement advises American citizens to avoid public places, to watch their

If the State Department upgraded its travel advisory for the United States, even Americans would have to leave America because it is too unsafe

valuables at all times and to maintain a high state of alert while in the US.

“There is a continuing high volume of reports of threats, harassment, robbery and extortion against Americans in the countryside, cities and tourist areas in the US,” spokesperson Ego continued. He said that criminal gangs are common and continue to prey on Americans in the US, despite decades of government attempts to subdue them.

Terrorism continues to be a major danger for US citizens in America, according to the report. “Terrorist spokesmen continue to publish anti-American rhetoric and to threaten US-associated organizations,” it says. The warning points to major attacks in Oklahoma City, Atlanta, New York and Washington DC and warns that, “More such attacks are possible without warning in any part of the country.”

Travel in the US poses major hazards for Americans, according to the State Department. The warning says that there is “a shockingly high risk of mutilation or death on American highways,” and quotes a US government source that states more than 43,200 Americans were killed while

traveling by motor vehicle in the US last year. “We urge US citizens who choose to remain in America to avoid non-essential road travel,” Ego said.

The statement cautions Americans that the control of major US media outlets by a handful of corporate conglomerates can result in censorship of unpopular political expression. When asked to elaborate, Ego

pointed to attempts to quash recent films about Fidel Castro and Ronald Reagan and said that the Disney Corporation was blocking distribution of Michael Moore’s latest project, a critical examination of the US war on terrorism and occupation of Iraq. “We are gravely concerned about the erosion of freedom of expression in America,” he said.

Ego went on to say that other civil rights that Americans in the US take for granted are in jeopardy as well. Quoting from the statement, he said, “Recently-enacted legislation allows the government to monitor anyone in the United States without his or her knowledge and without a court order.” He noted that American citizens in the US were detained for long periods without access to counsel by declaring them terrorism suspects or material witnesses. “Without basic legal protections,” he said, “American citizens’ freedom and liberty cannot be guaranteed while they are in the US.”

While the warning was pessimistic in tone, it also expressed hope that conditions in America would soon permit US citizens to return. “Perhaps after the elections scheduled for November,” Ego said. “We are confident that once there is a popularly-elected government in America, conditions will improve.” ●

John Child is an American who has already heeded the warning and lives in Kathmandu.



on his second international stint. "It is the best way to boost our morale and earn money."

But there are critics who question the army being busy elsewhere when they are needed at home, and also crossing the self-imposed 2,000 limit for troops abroad at any given time. "The RNA promises to send even more, and this is surprising considering the insecurity in our own country," remarks a retired army officer.

The RNA dismisses this. "It is a small portion of the army, and doesn't affect our full operational strength," says army spokesperson Brig Gen Rajendra Thapa, who was a peacekeeper to Lebanon in 1978. The army's strength has grown and is now approaching 80,000, which means more soldiers can be sent. "We have a larger force today, enough to spare for non-military activities like maintenance, disaster relief and Maoist rehabilitation programs," adds Thapa.

The UN's demand for Nepal's contribution to international missions has grown also because developed countries prefer the involvement of nations like Bangladesh, Kenya, Fiji, Pakistan and Ghana in Third World peacekeeping. In 2002, Nepal was among the top 10 troop contributor nations.

It costs the UN \$4 billion for the upkeep of an estimated 50,000 soldiers and police personnel from all around the world. There are plans to raise 70,000 additional troops by year end—more soldiers are needed as conflicts crop up. "The international community is keen on Nepal because we are a non-Muslim country and can be perfectly neutral, especially in the

Palestine-Israel conflict," says a military analyst. "Israel would never accept troops from Muslim countries as they may harbour sympathies towards Islamic militants."

This could be why the UN has not followed the Europeans in coming down hard on the RNA's human rights record. At the 60th session of UN Human Rights Commission in March, the Swiss government sponsored a harsh resolution against Nepal citing secret detentions, torture, harassment of civilians and indiscriminate arrests.

There was fear that this would tarnish Nepal's image and affect the RNA's involvement in UN peacekeeping. But Nepal seems to have benefited from the UN's own bureaucracy, which has separate departments for peacekeeping missions, political affairs and policing of human rights. It usually takes the UN a long time to address a common agenda and agree on similar grounds, say analysts. Nepal also received strong backing in Geneva from the US and India, which helped soften the resolution. "Nepal would be in big trouble if the Geneva Convention had been approved at the UN," says a former senior army officer. "Former US Ambassador Michael Malinowski played a key role too."

Critics, however, believe that future international peacekeeping missions by the RNA will be affected if reports of human rights abuses continue. But as long as there is great financial benefits from peacekeeping, it will probably also help the army be more conscious of respecting the Geneva Convention back home. ●



Nepali knights

Two Nepalis have been honored with the prestigious Finnish award of Knight First Class, the Order of Lion of Finland in recognition of their contribution towards promoting biodiversity conservation in Nepal. Chandra Gurung (*right*) and Mohan Man Sainju (*left*) received the award on 17 May. Founded in 1942, the Order of the Lion of Finland has been awarded to a large number of foreign diplomats and top industrialists around the world. Nepal is one of the few South Asian countries to receive the honor.

"This is such a great honor and inspires us to do more," says conservationist Chandra Gurung, the architect of the worldclass conservation project Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP). The country representative of the World Wildlife Fund for Nature Conservation (WWF) Nepal, Gurung also worked at the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation.

Economist Mohan Man Sainju heads the Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS) a national think tank. A former Royal Nepali Ambassador to the US and Canada, Sainju was also the vice chairperson of the National Planning Commission, Nepal.

One Stop Imaging Solutions.

We are open to serve and take care of all your Imaging needs.

Online Studio
Developing & Printing
Outdoor & Commercial Photography
Large format Printing
Lamination and Framing
Pre-Press Service
and more...

We have it all and we do it all using state of the art equipment and world class technology in a totally digital environment. Our expertise, well trained staff & strict quality control procedures insure quality service & products.

• Studio Photography • Lamination & Framing • Developing & Printing • Merchandise • Digital Works

DIGIPLUS P. Ltd. Near Baidaryan, Sundhara, Kathmandu, Nepal. Tel: 4 245 500, 4 258 080 Fax: 977 1 4 238 024 Email: info@digipus.com.np, info@digipus.com.np, www.digipus.com.np

Nation Building is our Goal

Reach out to the world

RELIABLE INTERNATIONAL TRUNK SERVICE AT ECONOMY RATE...

Nepal Telecom announces further reduction in Budget Call Charges Except SAARC Countries

NRs. 25/- per minute

(NRs. 5/- per 12 seconds)
Dial 1425 + Country Code + City Code + Telephone No.
Or
Dial 1445 + Country Code + City Code + Telephone No.
(Effective from 17th May, 2004 for two months)

- 50% discount offer in all the SAARC Countries (from 8 pm to 6 am everyday) is still available
- '00' access code is also available

* The above rates are exclusive of Government Tax.

24 Hour Service

Nepal Telecom
(Nepal Doorsanchar Company Limited)

Minimum 8 Minutes
Rs. 200/-
Rs. 45/-
Per Minute

Learn French !

A New Session Begins :
27th May to 4th August 2004
All levels from beginners to conversational
Come and register from 17th May to 24th May 2004 !

New Location !
Alliance Française de Katmandou
Tripureshwor, Tel: 4241163, 4242832

Mandala House

APARTMENT HOTEL

Tastefully decorated and perfectly located in a quiet residential area close to city, shopping centers, business houses and diplomatic enclaves. Ideal for expatriates on short or long stay.

Contact 4412412
98412-45814 (after 5:00 pm & Saturdays)
or
check: www.mandala.com

Destruction, despair

The army sweeps into the Maoist heartland

RAMESWOR BOHARA in RUKUM

After a two-week special operation, the army has entered the Maoist base areas of Rukum, occupying the home village of the Maoist guerrilla chief, Nandakishore Pun (Pasang). Described as the first offensive of its type, the operation aims at minimising the influence of the Maoists and demolishing their strongholds.

The focus of the first phase of the operation is to dismantle the rebel-declared Magarant Autonomous Province through temporary military camps to launch offensives. Lt Col Yagya Bahadur Rajaure of the Western Division headquarters of the Royal Nepali Army told us: "The plan is to destroy their so-called bases, strongholds, model areas, refuges and training areas. We also intend to ensure security for the people and create a climate that allows rebels to surrender."

The rebels decided not to confront the army head on and have dissolved into the surrounding mountains from where they try to harass the army camps with occasional long-range mortar barrages. This has prompted the army to declare that the Maoists' claim of a base area is a myth and that their strength has been greatly reduced.

"It was only an illusion," says Maj Gen Rukmangat Katuwal, chief of the Western Division. "There is no rebel base or stronghold. We will prove it once we reach the villages." But Rukum's villagers, who have lived under Maoist control, know that the relative peace of the past four years is now going to be shattered. The army is only passing through and once they go, the Maoists will return and punish anyone they suspect of aiding the army. "This is temporary, once they leave it will be the same old story and we will suffer again," says a visibly worried villager in Rukumkot.

The army has been busy uncovering rebel arms caches, explosives and uncovering training areas deep in the forests. The army has also brought along its hearts and minds unit and is distributing relief and offering medical care to the villagers.

With a combination of surface and helicopter-borne activity, the government has mobilised the Armed Police Force and Nepal Police under the command of the army.

Asked about the duration of the operation, army officials guess it will go on till the monsoon, but added it will depend on how much resistance they face from the Maoists.



The Maoists' attitude suggests they have made a tactical retreat before they organise counter attacks. They have spread rumours of an imminent attack on the Rukum district headquarter in Musikot to force the army to halt its operation. The Maoists sent letters to businessmen and civil servants to leave Musikot if they value their lives. The threats had remarkable effect: shops closed and many have gone. ●



The pond built by Sandhikharka's ancient kings gave an ambience of deceptive calm last week

KISHORE NEPAL

The scars are still raw in Argakhanchi

KISHORE NEPAL in SANDHIKHARKA

At the checkpoint outside this district headquarter of Argakhanchi, the security forces notice that our car has a tape player. They have a strange request: could we play a cassette they have just seized from the bag of a teenager?

It turns out not to be a revolutionary song, just a tape of dohori geet. "Sorry, sir, we don't have a player so we had to use yours," says one soldier politely and hands the tape back to the boy.

It is one o'clock in the afternoon when we reach Sandhikharka, where some of the government buildings destroyed during a massive Maoist attack on 8 September 2002 have still not been rebuilt. Fifty policemen and some 70 Maoists were killed in that night-long battle. Sandhikharka is still tense. There are reports of a fierce battle raging 10km to the west. By evening, we hear that 12 Maoists attending a cultural program have been killed, and that the senior-most Maoist leader in the area, Birendra Chhetri, escaped.

The people here take the news

stoically. They wonder how many of those killed were real Maoists and how many were commandeered by the rebels to be the audience. The day before, the army did kill Comrade Sisir, a commander of No 3 area during a search operation in Dhakabang Village. Eight others were captured, but were reported to have been killed "when they tried to escape".

Sandhikharka is the district headquarter, but except for the security forces and the post office there is no sign of the government anywhere. The political parties have all been hounded out, or shut shop. Pitamber Sharma, district president of Nepali Congress, tells us his party has no base left. "The Maoists killed four of our leaders, the rest have fled to the cities or gone to India. If they had stayed, they would have been killed either by the Maoists or the army, both sides accusing them of being informers," he says.

The UML and the Janamorchha are still active in some villages, and both parties organised a peace

campaign in the district. Prem Narayan Adhikari, a human rights activist, is worried about extra-judicial killings and disappearances. And, as elsewhere in Nepal, the problem of internally displaced people is reaching crisis proportions.

The town and its scenic surroundings look deceptively calm. "Things look all right here," Adhikari tells us, "but just walk out into the hills and you will get the real picture. There are only old people left in Argakhanchi."

Bijaya Lal Kayastha is in charge of the district police and confirms outmigration has become a serious problem. "There are many villages where there are no young people at all," he says.

With 70 percent literacy, Argakhanchi always placed a strong emphasis on education. But the insurgency has hit schools hard. Dipak Tandon, a local teacher, says schools were closed for 64 extra days last year besides regular holidays. Now, private schools are being forced to close. For the new academic

Forced to go voluntarily

More than 4,000 people—most of them school and college children—have been taken away for varying durations in midwestern and eastern Nepal in the past month. Human rights activists say abduction may be too strong a word, since most are released unharmed.

"Abduction connotes terror and unless we witness something of that sort, we can't just casually use the word," says Tarak Dhital from the child welfare group, CWIN. But Dhital does not dispute the fact that forced recruitment of children and adults in military training still continues. The Maoists are forcing large groups of people to attend their cultural programs, communist events and training in 'revolutionary education'.

About 30 teachers from Sindhuli returned home after they were taken by the Maoists to attend a lecture on

teaching guidelines according to Maoist ideology.

A delegation of activists is now planning to visit Maoist areas to investigate what the students and teachers are forced to do. "As of now, we don't know their methods and to what extent they are forced," says Dhital. The Maoists maintain that the people attend their mass meetings out of their own free will, and have blamed the media for distorting facts.

Whether it is forced or voluntary, the people, especially children, are vulnerable and could be caught in the crossfire especially when the security forces use helicopters to strafe Maoist positions. And whether one calls it 'abduction' or something else, many have raised their voices against compulsory mass attendance. News reports from villages indicate that locals including children are constantly under pressure to attend Maoist activities.

The presence of civilians affords some degree of protection to Maoist leaders attending these programs in case of a government attack.

Children's rights groups have repeatedly called on Maoists to observe the Geneva Convention and leave civilians out of the conflict. The Maoists have carried out high-profile release of captured security personnel, but continue to force villagers to march with them.

This practice has already ended in tragedy, including the death of four children at the Sharada High School in Mudbara on 13 October 2003 when teachers were forced to allow a Maoist cultural program in the school compound. When the army opened fire on the crowd, four school children were killed and a dozen others injured.

Following the Mudbara incident, activists met with local Maoist leaders not to use school children as shields. But the practice goes on. "In fact, the frequency of such activities have increased," says Subodh Pyakhurel from human rights organisation INSEC. "You can't force political education on anyone. We strongly condemn such acts, it is a crime." ● (Nareesh Newar)

and desperation

year, the Maoists have forced everyone to adhere to their new academic calendar, replacing the government's list of holidays.

The Maoists' revolutionary education replaces national holidays with their own martyr's days, celebrates the anniversary of the start of the 'people's war' and the birthdays of Mao and Lenin. A new course in Marxism-Leninism has been added. "To tell you the truth, we follow the new calendar, we don't want to be killed," admits a teacher from an outlying village.

The telecom tower that was destroyed in the attack two years ago was rebuilt, but the Maoists destroyed it again after six months. There is no communication with the outside world. "We used to be a thriving business, now we are ruined," says hotelier Bhaweshwar

Shrestha. His two jeeps used to run a profitable business plying the road between Sandhikharka to Delhi. Now, it is a one-way trip: everyone is leaving to Delhi and no one is coming back.

Argakhanchi is the home of two senior Maoists: Top Bahadur Rayamajhi and Pampha Bhusal, who are reported to have taken part in the September 2002 attack. The main motive seems to have been to loot the bank, as the Maoists took away Rs 70 million and several kgs of gold. Since then, 150 people have been killed fighting in the district, 30 so far this year.

Ramhari Bhusal, a trader at the main bazar tells us with moist eyes: "This used to be a peaceful place, we were raising children, hoping they would have a better future than us. Now, we fear for the worst." ●

Grief in Ghandruk

SRADDHA BASNYAT in POKHARA

Ghandruk's villagers relied on Dil Man Gurung for everything. His balanced judgement, his worldly-wise ways and as a respected elder, it was an honour he earned with years of service to his community. By all accounts, he was a simple man, even-tempered, fair and frank. And he had a vision of making this spectacularly beautiful village at the lap of the Annapurnas a tourism attraction locals could benefit from.

On Monday, 10 May, Dil Man was among five Ghandruk hotel owners abducted by the Maoists. The body of 65-year-old Dil Man Gurung and 31-year-old Iswor Gurung were found the next morning near the village. Ghandruk is still gripped by shock, grief and fear. Telephone lines are down, no one dares leave the village or return there because of a Maoist blockade.

"Ghandruk has lost its leader," laments Prakash Gurung, former assistant minister and Iswor's cousin. Prakash's father was the uncontested pradhan pancha for 17 years during the Panchayat era, until Dil Man ran for the same post in 1985 and won. "It was no small feat to beat my father at that time. We held the majority for years and were sure we'd win again," recalls Prakash. "Dil Man Gurung worked hard and won the people's trust."



This was a leader that Ghandruk could identify with. He was born in 1939, and although he was fluent in both Nepali and English, he had no formal education. Following what had virtually become a Gurung tradition, in his early 20s Dil Man joined the British Gurkhas. Home on holiday, he married Mim Kumari Gurung and the two travelled together to Dil Man's various postings. His 15-year career took him to Hong Kong, Malaysia, the UK, Brunei and Singapore. It was time spent in tight-knit Gurung communities in barracks abroad that probably nurtured his vision to develop something similar in Ghandruk. So, after he retired, he came home to Nepal with his wife and three children.

Dil Man enjoyed retirement, raised his family and tilled his fields. After a short stint in politics, he focused all his energy on community development. He recognised Ghandruk's tourist potential and established the Snow Land Lodge. For 13 years after the 1990 Movement, Dil Man worked with the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) and campaigned for Ghandruk to get drinking water, electricity, roads and bridges. His greatest ambition was to have a cable car service up to Ghandruk and a road till Phedi. He worked best outside the bureaucracy and refused to join the VDC.

Dil Man was a born leader, one who believed in working with the people. "He got along with everybody," recalls Chandra Man Gurung, his younger brother. "But he had no desire to hold office." Although Dil Man aligned himself with the RPP after 1990, he was unconcerned by recent party politics and infighting. But there was no doubt he felt democracy was the only way forward. "He believed one man or one party could not solve problems and that all individuals and parties must work together," says Prakash.

In the past few years, Prakash advised him not to return to Ghandruk. But he used to go back to check on his hotel and his friends. Dil Man was a contented man. Both his daughters and his son were married. His 55-year-old wife, although ailing, was still his loving companion.

Dil Man was not a hardliner about anything. He certainly wasn't an informant for the army, as rumours have it. "One thing my brother spoke out against was the army coming to Ghandruk," says his brother Chandra Man. "He believed the military presence would suck us into the fighting." In a tragic way, those words became a prophecy for his own death. Dil Man Gurung was the victim of a war he wanted no part of. Like thousands of other Nepalis who have been killed, and no one knows why. ●

People forced on long marches

UMID BAGCHAND in MAHENDRANAGAR

There are no official figures, but an estimated 30,000 people in the western region have been forced to join Maoist programs in the past year. The regional education directorate in Dipayal says the rebels took away 7,300 people from Doti alone. The majority were students, the rest teachers, all of whom were kept for an average of 15 days and forced to watch cultural programs, listen to speeches and learn 'revolutionary education' methods.

Bajura and Baitadi top the list of districts where Maoist rebels have taken people forcibly. More than 2,000 students in Accham were forced to join Maoist marches. Upon return, locals say they were made to listen to political speeches about the revolution and were released on condition that they pledged to help the Maoist party "whenever necessary".

Villagers are forced to join Maoist mass meetings like the one when the 'people's government' of Achham was declared three months ago. More than 7,000 people were present: teachers, students and villagers from surrounding areas. The involvement of locals seems to be as much to ensure protection from army attacks as to show that there is popular support. At a program attended by 4,000 people in Binayak recently, security forces launched an attack from helicopters.

Earlier this month, the rebels announced that every family in Kanchanpur's southern areas had to send at least one member and the rebel strength swelled by more than 2,000 young men and women.

But 4,000 others—women, children and elderly citizens—fled to Basahi on the Indian border. When they came back home a few days later, they formed a citizen security committee. When the Maoists came back, they killed seven of them. After the incident, some rebels tried to negotiate with the locals but clashes broke out again and another Maoist was killed. Now the rebels have issued death threats against 11 members of the citizen security committee. As we go to press, 55-year-old Durga Ranamagar has been kidnapped and Sher Bahadur Tamang seriously injured.



Recently, 250 students between grades four and nine were forced to follow the Maoists' march from villages in Darchula. Two weeks ago, the rebels arrived at Sanatan Dharma Higher Secondary School in Baitadi to find recruits. Most students managed to escape, but 24 were taken. Their parents petitioned human rights activists and after the media picked up the story, the Maoists returned the students after a few days. Terrified parents across the west aren't sending their children to school anymore. More than 15 schools in 20 villages in Baitadi have closed down.

Comrade Prabhakar heads the Maoists' Seti-Mahakali regional bureau, and told us the party had mustered 10,000 people for the 'people's marches' and their participation is entirely voluntarily. "When other political parties gather people in their programs, that is taken as a voluntary participation but when we do the same it is called abduction and kidnapping," he said. "Even the media does this and we feel very sad about it."

Asked about Prabhakar's argument, one angry parent in Darchula said her children were taken away at gunpoint. She asks: "If that is not kidnapping, tell me what is?" ●

Share Moments. Share Life.™

Creating Reasons to Smile.

For the best photos in town

The Melamchi mirage

This project is going nowhere



MIN BAJRACHARYA



Clockwise from bottom l: Melamchi River, JICA funded water tank, a view of the river from a nearby ridge

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

As Kathmandu Valley reels under an unprecedented water shortage this dry season, there is more bad news: the project that was supposed to solve this problem once and for all is going nowhere. The Melamchi Water Supply Project (MWSP) is supposed to bring glacier-melt through a 28km tunnel to Kathmandu, but delays are threatening the scheme. The government and some donors who were backing the design appear to be shifting their priority to smaller-scale projects.

Two decades after it was first proposed, Melamchi continues to be a mirage. Meanwhile, the Nepal Water Supply Corporation (NWSC) recently augmented its supply by 35 million litres of water per day through a network of wells, by tapping sources and modifying water treatment systems in

Kathmandu. As a result, the city gets 95 million litres a day for the dry season. It is not enough to meet the huge rise in demand, but at least it has made the situation less dire.

Two huge tanks have been built—one of them, the biggest in the country, with a storage capacity of three million litres—with the assistance from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The NWSC is also building the Manahara and Sainbhu projects from which Kathmandu should get another 30 million litres of water per day. “We are testing them now and soon they will be linked with the supply system,” says the corporation’s general manager Kaushal Nath Bhattarai.

Were these smaller schemes delayed because of Melamchi? “Yes, it was a big mistake on our part,” admits Bhattarai. “If only we had implemented these augmentation plans earlier, we could have used them as stop gap

measures.” But even with such additions, almost half of Kathmandu’s daily demand for more than 200 million litres of water will remain unmet. Add to that the over seven percent annual increase in demand due to the Valley’s booming population, and it is clear there is a serious shortfall.

Melamchi could make a significant difference because it is estimated to supply 170 million litres of water per day. Work on the 28km tunnel has not even started, the access roads have not been completed and the project is in deep trouble due to Maoist threats. The Korean civil contractor left after the government refused to pay out the compensation it demanded. That is not the only hitch in the project.

Water and Energy Users’ Federation Nepal (WAFED), an NGO, has challenged the justification for Melamchi. Along with other local groups, it lodged a complaint at the Asian Development Bank (ADB) headquarters in Manila that questions the relevance of the scheme. “We are sure our complaint will reach the review panel,” said WAFED’s coordinator Gopal Sivakoti Chintan. “We argued that Kathmandu’s water demand can be met with the supply from within the Valley. Melamchi was brought in without considering other viable options.”

A ‘special project facilitator’ from the bank will be here next month to try to resolve issues. If the complainant is still not satisfied, the matter will reach the Complaint Review Panel at the bank. Once the Melamchi file reaches this panel, even snail-pace work will come to a halt

because the ADB does not allow work to continue during reviews. The bank is the major donor and has committed \$120 million for the project. Other donors are Norway, Japan Bank of International Cooperation, Nordic Development Fund, OPEC and the Swedish International Development Agency.

A report prepared by Japan Bank of International Cooperation last year noted that resources in Kathmandu could be utilised optimally. It also mentioned improving distribution network and harvesting rain and groundwater. At present, Kathmandu’s distribution network has leakage of around 40 percent. Another ADB report, ‘Water optimisation in Kathmandu Valley’ also adopted similar lines. But neither report dismissed the need for MWSP, especially considering the rapid growth of Kathmandu’s population. Even while talking about optimising Kathmandu’s water supply as a fall-back option for Melamchi, experts point out that there is no proper data of water resources in the capital. “There are so many catchment areas, but their flow is something we don’t know yet,” says water expert IR Onta.

NWSC’s study found some feasible water sources in the foothills around the Valley but they are yet to be tapped. “In places like Mata Tritha and Gwarna Daha, local politicians have not allowed us to work,” says Bhattarai of the NWSC. That may be a short-term problem. In the future, these sources must be used and that is exactly what the government has finally begun to do. More so, now that the fate of Melamchi remains undecided. ●



www.closeupzone.com

Want to dedicate a song to your Juliet?

Timi Closeupzone kina jadainau?

Go to www.closeupzone.com to dedicate a song on Close Up Music Jam, Kantipur FM, every Wednesday and Thursday.

The one-stop shop for all your romantic needs.

Find a friend Send love letter Fool a friend Compatibility tests Many more

BIZ NEWS

Banking on expansion

Having limited itself to commercial investment in the past, the Himalayan Bank recently began lending in non-commercial areas including four hydropower projects and home loans. The bank introduced ATM services and has plans to expand into school and fuel investments. The new chairman, Manoj Bahadur Shrestha, is positive about the changes: "The bank should make longterm investments on service-oriented programs and productions."

Despite the downturn in economics because of the political environment, Himalayan Bank claims it is the top bank in the country in terms of deposits and lending portfolios.

Lux sensation

Nepal Lever is finalising preparations for its 'Lux Beauty & Style Sensation' and reaching the climax of its Lux Beauty Star 2004 pageant on 21 May at the Hyatt Ball Room. The pageant will present 20 of Nepal's most glamorous girls who have reached the finals after gruelling elimination rounds over the past week and choose the winner who will model Nepal Lever's products. "We are hoping to make it an evening of glamour, beauty, fasion and style," says managing director of Nepal Lever, Rakesh Mohan.



Bussing it

The mentally-challenged children of Nirmal Bal Bikash Bidyalaya got a brand new school bus last month courtesy of the Khetan Group's Himalayan Snacks and Noodles company. Rajendra Khetan, chairman of the group, said that he was happy to contribute in any small way to the well-being of the children and encouraged private sector businesses to help the less fortunate.



Beemer style

Fashion website eCityofStyle.com selected the BMW 530i as one of the most stylish 2004 Model Year cars out of a field of 100 luxury models. The 530i was chosen as one of five winners for its 'impeccable looks, innovative details, fun-to-drive factor, product exclusivity and the car's overall envy quotient'.

Harvest the wind

The cool winds in Nagarkot not only make it an excellent getaway from the muggy Valley but also an ideal spot for wind harvesting. Club Himalaya Nagarkot does just this, turning wind power into electricity to light up their walkways. It's a novel, environment-friendly concept that should sit well with city dwellers who are welcome to sample the breeze with the resort's Chiso Chiso Hawama Package.

Beyond Kathmandu

An eye-opening road trip across Nepal

It's bad enough being handicapped with a Nepali passport while travelling abroad, but we could all do without being dogged by fear

ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed



and insecurity within our own country. In the east, charred hulks of torched busses line the road, vehicles try to move in convoys, vegetables dumped by farmers angry at bandas and blockades obstruct the highways. Nepal's fabled GDP increase is fuelled by what is left of the economic activity in Kathmandu and remittances from abroad. What happens outside the capital has less impact on the overall national numbers, which is why the Maoist movement was able to gather steam.

While the bandas grind on, everything comes to a standstill, and people protest by remaining mobile. The popular Nepali band *Nepathya* is on a 15-city tour across the nation. On the same day they performed in Damak, Jems Pradhan, Dipesh Bhattarai and others had their concert in

Biratnagar. Fun in the time of fear. It is also interesting to note the boom in the construction industry at urban centres. With more people moving to towns and cities from the mid-hills, land prices are soaring, rents are exorbitant, jobs scarce and there's more demand than supply. People, it seems, always find ways to profit. There are also more private boarding

the transportation business these days, Nepalis still have to get places so entrepreneurs are venturing into new territory, even if it means airlifting vehicles and spare parts. The private airline, Yeti, has expanded, buying bigger planes. Kathmandu is not Nepal. Never has that been truer. Outside Thankot, it is a completely different world. There is lot to learn and to do. The most important first step is to move out of the current political impasse.

Across the border in India, there is a different insecurity. The people are not sure about India Shining, and from the recent Indian poll results, that indecision has cost the Vajpayee government dearly. The Indian elections were fought on the economic agenda by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), but they've found that if the benefits are not equitably distributed it doesn't mater to most people. Perhaps that could influence future political trends in Nepal, if we ever get to holding elections. ●



schools and private clinics, proving that social service delivery is moving towards private hands because the government is non-functional. While there are risks in

Check out for Summer Collection

MESUCA Fashion Sports

SINGI PLAZA

Royal Singi Hotel Arcade, Kamaladi, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: 4424191 ext. 8501, Fax: 4425802, 4424189 Email: hotel@singil.wink.com.np
Mesuca Sports, Open House Complex, Chiple Dhunga, Mahendra Pul, Pokhara.
Tel: 981-5-38896

BUMRUNGRAD HOSPITAL

World Class Medicine...

- ONE-STOP MEDICAL CENTER
Emergency, outpatient, diagnostics, therapeutics, inpatient
- INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED DOCTORS
Over 600 physicians in all medical specialties
- REGIONAL REFERRAL CENTER FOR ADVANCED CARE
Heart, Cancer, Neurosurgery...
- ASIA'S FIRST INTERNATIONALLY ACCREDITED HOSPITAL

World Class Service...

- INTERNATIONAL PATIENT CENTER
Interpreters, visa assistance, medical coordination
- INTERACTIVE WEBSITE
- EMAIL APPOINTMENTS
- ON-SITE HOUSING
74 serviced apartments

BUMRUNGRAD HOSPITAL
BANGKOK, THAILAND

World Class Medicine... World Class Service

For more information, appointments and related services, please contact:
Mr. Amod Pyskuryal, Authorized Representative in Nepal, Bhatbhateni (Near Claycrafts & more) Kathmandu
Tel: 4441653, Mobile 9810 22 767 e-mail: info@bumrungrad.wink.com.np

33 Sukhumvit Soi 3 (Sai Nana Road), Bangkok 10110, Thailand
Tel: +66 21 667 1234 Fax: +66 21 667 1214
E-mail: info@bumrungrad.com
www.bumrungrad.com



UMN

Mission Nepal

United Mission to Nepal is celebrating the 50 years of work dedicated to the health, education and wellbeing of Nepalis

JEMIMA SHERPA

It was 1949 when Robert Fleming, Carl Taylor, Robert Bergsaker and Harold Bergsma first came to Nepal. It wasn't missionary zeal that brought them here, but Fleming's love for birds. A noted ornithologist, he arrived in Nepal during a period of great political unrest and discovered a new focus: the obvious development needs of the Nepali people.

When the group returned to India, where they were affiliated with Woodstock School at Mussoorie, they shared their experiences. Nepal was still closed to foreigners then,

but Ernest Oliver and Trevor Strong received permission to come to Kathmandu for two days. They hoped it would be enough time to get consent for working in Nepal.

By December 1951, there was a second expedition to Nepal, ostensibly to watch birds again but this time the group was prepared for more than just their feathered friends. The trip was a family affair, as Fleming was accompanied by his physician wife, Bethel, and their son and daughter. With them were Carl, also a doctor, and Betty Ann Friedericks, and their three children

—the youngest who was only two months old.

Over six weeks, more than 1,500 people flocked to Tansen where the group held medical camps. Back in India, it became clear that this was the beginning of something big, and so Bob Fleming sent a letter to the Nepal government requesting permission to start a hospital in Tansen. Fifteen months later, a reply arrived. They would be allowed to establish a hospital and women's welfare clinics on the conditions that all treatment be free and that the Nepali staff be trained to take over

the hospital and clinics in five years.

Although permission was originally given to Bob Fleming's Methodist mission, the invitation was passed on to other Christian missions working along the Nepal border. As a result, members of various churches came together and, along with many Nepali Christians living in Darjeeling, entered Nepal.

Following the establishment of maternity clinics in Bhaktapur, Gokarna, Kirtipur, Banepa, Thimi, Sangu, Bungmati and the maternity hospital in Kathmandu, United Mission to Nepal (UMN) was

officially founded on 5 March 1954. Initially, the focus was on health services, as the slowly-growing team worked to train local Tansen staff as lab assistants and health workers. During this time, Ernest Oliver handled administration as executive secretary, working from India until the Kathmandu headquarters were set up in 1959.

UMN spread out a few years after it first started working: in 1957, work started on Jonathan Lindell's Community Service Project in Gorkha, which most notably included the Amp Pipal School where selected students were trained as teachers. However, the project also included a dispensary and agriculture and animal health work. At about the same time, Elizabeth Franklin moved to Kathmandu to start a school for girls. In 1958, the first full academic year was underway at Mahendra Bhawan Girls School, with 120 students, six classes and seven teachers.

Other projects followed, including Odd Hoftun's efforts with Butwal Power Company, Gandaki Boarding School, Shanta Bhawan Hospital (now Patan Hospital) and many more. Over the years, some of these projects have been handed over to local governments completely, while UMN's association with others continues.

Looking back, UMN's impact is evident in so many of the little developments we take for granted: basic health, education and infrastructure. Celebrations and fanfare are in order to honour a group that has dedicated itself more single-mindedly than anyone else (some would argue, even more than successive governments in Kathmandu) to the health, education and wellbeing of Nepalis. ●

“It was my calling”

Odd Hoftun came to Nepal in 1958 at the age of 30 to help build the Tansen Hospital and later set up the Butwal Technical Institute. As a hydropower engineer, Hoftun could have had many other jobs or a lucrative career in the power industry in his native Norway. Yet he chose to travel to a little-known landlocked kingdom in the Himalaya, which at that time, had just thrown its doors open to the outside world. Why?

“I guess I was different,” admits Hoftun, now 76, “it was my calling.” Today, the legacy of UMN and engineers like Hoftun is a generation of Nepali engineers and technicians capable of designing and implementing hydropower projects that are appropriate for Nepali conditions.



“Our philosophy was always to start small, get trained on the job, and try bigger and bigger things,” says Hoftun. And that was thinking behind the UMN-initiated Butwal Power Company and its Andhikhola and Jhimruk projects in central Nepal which have now been passed on to the private sector.

This kind of foreign aid was much more cost-effective than the bilateral projects and mammoth multilateral schemes. It built local capacity, making it less likely for Nepalis to be dependent on foreign aid for outsized projects that we could not build and maintain sustainably ourselves. “Aid had to be on a

scale that could be copied and replicated locally by locals,” says Hoftun.

The Hoftuns had two sons, both born in Nepal who went to local schools and spoke fluent Nepali. One of them, Martin, was working on his PhD thesis on the 1990 Peoples' Movement when he was killed in a plane crash near Kathmandu in 1992. The family was devastated, and they decided to honour their son's affection for Nepal by setting up the Martin Chautari Trust.

“The idea was to have an independent forum that could hold multi-disciplinary discussions on issues of national importance so as to strengthen the public sphere and the country's young democracy,” says Odd Hoftun.

Martin Hoftun's book on the 1990 movement, *Spring Awakening* has become a classic work on the pro-democracy uprising and has lessons for the current street agitation as well. The elder Hoftun is sad about how things are going downhill in Nepal, but he sees a silver lining: “It seems the press is still free to discuss issues, there is no visible clampdown, and as long as there is freedom, there is hope.” ● (Kunda Dixit)



MILAN WAGLE

Up to speed – UMN Highlights

1949	– Robert Fleming, Carl Taylor, Robert Bergsaker and Harold Bergsma take a three month trek though Nepal to watch birds
1951	– Second expedition to Nepal includes medical clinics in Tansen
1953	– Nepali government grants permission for a hospital in Tansen
1954	– Local maternity clinics and the maternity hospital in Kathmandu open
1954	– United Mission to Nepal formally established in March
1954	– United Mission Hospital, Tansen starts providing services
1956	– Mahendra Bhawan Girls School established
1959	– Lalitpur Nursing Campus established
1960	– Palpa Community Health Project established
1963	– Butwal Technical School established
1966	– Gandaki Boarding School established
1969	– Amp Pipal School established in Gorkha
1973	– The Butwal Plywood Factory (BPF) established
1978	– Himal Hydro & General Construction company formed
1980	– Kamali Technical School established
1981	– Rural Development Centre established in Pokhara for training related to agriculture, animal health and water supplies
1982	– Patan Hospital established
1983	– Surkhet Project for marginalised communities begins
1984	– Yala Urban Health Program starts in Patan
1984	– Mental Health Program and Oral Health Program begin
1986	– The BPF forestry program starts
1991	– Work in the field of non-formal education begins in Jajarkot
1991	– UMN supports the establishment of the Schools of Engineering and Education at Kathmandu University
1992	– Nutrition programs begin in Jajarkot, Salyan, Rukhum and Dailekh
1994	– Okhaldhunga Rural Development Project starts
1995	– School Partnership project begins in Dullu, Dailekh
1996	– Himal Power started building Khimti Hydropower in Ramechhap
1997	– Started work for the rehabilitation of the disabled
1997	– Established the Sakriya Unit, to respond to the HIV/AIDS crisis
1999	– Jhimruk Industrial Development Centre established to help families affected by the hydropower project in Pyuthan
1999	– Expanded education work in Mugu district
2001	– Lamjung Community Health Program started

Principles and practicalities'



KIRAN PANDAY

Narayan Man Bijukchhe in *Deshantar*, 16 May

वैश्वकर्मा सम्वत् २०६१

The leaders of the political parties are responsible for the mess that we are in. Had they been prudent, Nepal would not be in such shambles. I always said we needed to be balanced and patient, but they were unnecessarily obstinate time and again.

For instance, the parties put a condition on meeting the king. They said they would not meet him if he refused to discuss their 18-point agenda. When we sat for the five-party meeting, I said this would only complicate our future. My argument was that principle and practicalities are two different things. Many may not have understood what I wanted to say. Now what I feared has come to pass.

Of course, I am one of the signatories, although I cited reservations. I am not pro-palace. As a communist, I am a republican. Our party supported the idea of a republic even 40 years ago. We realised not everything we want can be achieved. There are practical aspects to be considered. However, I am not surprised at the way students are chanting slogans for a republic. I told the king, "These are students who study political science at university, it is natural for them to be pro-republic." These are matters related to principle.

The leaders of the other four parties have said they will implement the 18 points once they have state power. This will be very difficult to do, but the bottom line is that it must be done. If we abandon those demands, the people will not spare us. Since we put everything down in black and white, we cannot back down. If we do, our credibility is lost.

We are stagnant because of the 18-point agenda. By all accounts, this is the main obstacle between the king and us. In principle, the issues we raised are absolutely correct. But we could have talked tactfully only about the supremacy of the parliament and transparency of a constitutional monarchy. The practical aspects are different. Take Cambodia, for instance. King Sihanouk fought the Japanese, the French and the US. He stood with the people and so he endured the revolution. It is clear: as long the people are served, monarchy will remain.

It took 50 years and three kings before Britain's parliament was truly established. We cannot expect things to be resolved easily here in Nepal. This is why I say we must not raise our 18-point issue with the palace at present. Naturally, it will put the palace in a spot. In other words, discussing the demands will be tantamount to the palace committing suicide. But if there is no agreement between the palace and the parties, the movement will continue. Don't worry about the lifespan of the movement, other nations have had them for more than 50 years.

Closed minds

Editorial in *Kantipur*, 17 May

कान्तिपुर

While the parties carry on their pro-democracy movement, efforts to find a replacement for Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa have been unsuccessful for two weeks. At fault is a prime minister who resigned without lining up an alternative, a palace that accepted that resignation without doing any homework about its next move and political parties which can't seem to find a way out and offer solutions to the current impasse.

All this has given the Maoists ample opportunity to carry on with their campaign of mayhem and violence nationwide. With their blockades and three-day banda this week, instead of winning friends among the other political forces, the Maoists have further distanced themselves from the people.

Aside from making basic necessities more expensive, these disruptive activities do not really achieve much. The rich do not feel any effect. The only ones who really suffer are those who were already suffering. What the Nepali people need are not more blockades and bandas, but open highways, open markets and an open political environment. Bandas are a poison for ordinary people. If the intention of the Maoists is to put pressure on the government, bandas are not going to achieve that—they have to win the people's trust. They should stop punishing the people and start extending the hand for negotiations and ending this war.

Able climber

Samacharpatra, 17 May

समाचारपत्र

When Nawang Sherpa stood atop Mount Everest on the morning of 16 May, he almost forgot that he was physically disabled. He was on the highest point on earth and became the first Nepali with an

artificial leg to climb the world's highest peak. An American climber, also with an artificial leg, beat him to a world record, but Sherpa was elated by his achievement. "I feel so blessed to see the world from here. Above all, I feel that I am not physically disabled because I made it here," said Sherpa via satellite phone from the top of the world.

School's out

Annapurna Post, 17 May

अन्नपूर्ण पोस्ट

In the course of a campaign that initially targeted private schools, the Maoist rebels have locked up 10 government schools in Baglung on the charge of commercialising education and imparting substandard knowledge.

The rebels have also locked more than two dozen private schools in the district. Some of them tried to defy the Maoists, continuing classes for a few days, but they stopped after one high school was bombed and a principal kidnapped from another. The rebels confirmed that Bhumi Raj Acharya, headmaster of Prabha High School at Bohara, was with them.

The Maoists' student wing, All Nepal National Free Students Union (Revolutionary), issued a statement saying that the schools would be allowed to reopen only if they agreed to slash tuition fees and gradually replace the current curriculum with a 'people's educational system'. Sharad Oli, district chairman of the Maoists' student wing, said the schools were locked because the agreement between the Education Ministry and his organisation on education policy was not implemented. He issued a statement banning all private schools from running in Baglung, also demanding a people's education system in all government schools.

The academic year has just started and parents are worried as their children are forced to stay

home. "The government must do something about it," said a parent in Burtibang village. "Either the government resumes classes or the Maoists should begin their system."

Kamaiyas in peril

Annapurna Post, 15 May

अन्नपूर्ण पोस्ट

DHANGADI – Nearly 30,000 freed kamaiyas face major problems after two foreign development partners halted their programs recently in the far-western development region because of constant Maoist threats. This suspension has left 187 unemployed and the kamaiyas, who relied on GTZ's food security program, badly affected.

GTZ was forced to take this step after recent rebel attacks on their Dhangadi offices. Similarly, after warnings from the Maoists, Britain's Department for International Development (DfID) also postponed its development programs in the area. Citing security reasons, donor agencies, including GTZ and DfID, issued a public notice on the halting of their development programs in five western districts.

According to the statistics provided by the federation of NGOs in Kailali, donors provided financial assistance worth more than Rs 1 billion by conducting various programs for freed kamaiyas and rural infrastructure development in the region. It also said that GTZ had allocated Rs 33.8 million for development programs for the current fiscal year. Dinesh Bhandari, coordinator of programs for the kamaiyas, said that the Maoists activities hindered development and had a negative impact on financial assistance derived from foreign aid.

Meanwhile, the Maoists reiterated that they would not allow any NGOs to work in the area without their permission. Donor agencies from the US and the UK are barred from running any programs. (Nepalnews.com)

Palace

हिमाल

Robin Sayami in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 14-28 May

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"The king thinks the agitating parties are like mosquitoes outside the net, he mistakenly believes they will never be able to bother him."

Sher Bahadur Deuba at the roundtable meeting organised by the Civil Society for Peace and Development group on 16 May.

“Meeting the needs of Nepalis”

Jennie Collins has been executive director of United Mission to Nepal (UMN) for the past four years. She talked to *Nepali Times* about her faith in UMN's work over the last half century and the future for this remarkable organisation.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Nepali Times: How has UMN evolved over the last 50 years?

Jennie Collins: Nepal has changed and the needs of the country and the Nepali people have changed. UMN is here to serve and over these 50 years, this was done in very different ways because the needs were different. We've always tried to work in difficult places where other organisations have not wanted to work or communications were difficult. As the infrastructure of Nepal developed, the places where UMN worked also changed. Fifty years ago, Tansen was a long way from anywhere, now you can get there by road. Now we're working in places like Mugu.

What do you see as some of the biggest, most successful contributions UMN has made to Nepal?

That's a really difficult

question because I think UMN made contributions on all sorts of different levels: individuals, families, communities, to whole areas of Nepal and even at the national level. There are people who went to school because of UMN, others whose lives were saved—very individual things. In the communities we've worked in, there are enormous changes in access to water, changes brought by rural electrification, the way they work the land and how they organise themselves to get things done. I also think we've made contributions at a national level. Some policies have changed with HMG. There are other national level changes, for example, like fluoride is now in toothpaste, that have the potential to affect the whole nation. So there are people who know the sort of work the UMN has done, but also know what UMN stands for in terms of our Christian values.

What is UMN doing at present?

Most of the things we're dealing with we've now been involved with for many years. But our main thrust at this time is to build the capacity of projects, institutions and organisations we're working with so we can hand them over to Nepali ownership. We see ourselves not in an implementing role, but much more in supporting and capacity building.

And challenges?

UMN has always faced a number of challenges, mainly with what it is as an organisation and the infrastructure of Nepal. Now the insecure situation of the country and the political instability are major challenges at every level of our work.

In hindsight, what perhaps should UMN have done differently?

We've talked a lot about handing over our work to Nepali organisations, and we've done a lot of that. But in some of our institutions we've never really followed through. Maybe some of the difficulties we're facing at this time might not be here if we followed through on some of those right and good intentions.

There are allegations of your missionary agenda as a Christian organisation.

We are here at the invitation of the government, and we have an agreement that says we will not be involved in proselytisation. We could define that by saying that we would not give inducements to people to become Christians, we will not give them jobs, education and other such things. I believe, as an organisation, we have kept to that. But we are here as a Christian organisation, and when asked why we're here, and why we do the things that we do, we want to give account of our reasons. We need to be sure of what is meant by proselytisation because it is very easy for people to make assumptions that are not really correct. Although we are an international Christian organisation, we serve regardless of any of those affiliations.

Where do you see UMN in the next 50 years?

We believe that as we go into the next 10, 25 or even 50 years, there will be amazing opportunities. We are looking into the future and saying: with all of the opportunities, public relations and goodwill we earned from our work in the past, we want to use them to meet the real needs of the Nepali people, now and in the years to come. (JS)

Who will shine the brightest?



Babina Sharma



Madhu Bhattarai



Areena Tuladhar



Arathis Gurung



Shagun Gurung



Pallavi Dhakal



Youtan Lama



Namoon Lepcha



Aditi Thapa



Anita Subba



Ayushma Pokharel



Monalisa Adhikari



Ayusha Basnet



Priyanka Basnet



Sujana Limbu



Radha Gurung



Suchitra Acharya



Usha Rajak



Sakuntala Pun



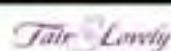
Cecilia Gurung



Find out at The Grand Finale
of Lux Beauty Star 2004,
7:00 pm, 22nd May
at the Hyatt Regency.



WATCH IT ON CHANNEL NEPAL ON 21, 22, & 23 MAY AT 7:00 PM





Europeans are constantly reminded of all that is wrong with America. But perhaps Europeans should reverse the process: what do Americans think is wrong with Europe? Above all, Americans see

ANALYSIS

Hans Bergström



Europe as a continent of self-

inflicted stagnation—and with good reason. Economic growth in the EU was near zero in 2003.

Several countries, most notably Germany and France, seem hobbled by inflexible labor markets and regulations that inhibit dynamism. The European Union's highly touted "Lisbon Declaration" of a few years ago, which proclaimed that Europe would become the world's most competitive region by 2010, appears laughable to Americans, whose productivity gains seem to constantly scale new heights.

America also sees Europe as excessively inward looking, sometimes dangerously so. Worse, informed Americans see anti-Semitism running rampant in Europe and xenophobic political parties on the march in country after country. Not even pacific Scandinavia is exempt from this.

Americans see a total inability in Europe

to handle immigration in ways that encourage dynamism and diversity instead of antagonism and higher state spending. This seems all the more puzzling because Americans realise how badly Europe needs new immigrants, given its extremely low fertility rates.

Europe's perceived attitude towards rogue states and global terrorism only enhances this perception of self-satisfied inwardness. Americans may differ about what policy should have been pursued in Iraq, but they know that their country cannot run from its role as a world leader responsible for developments in North Korea, the Middle East, Pakistan/India, Taiwan and elsewhere. It is a jungle out there, as Americans say; not every problem and conflict can be handled through the sort of peaceful, drawn-out negotiations that the EU prefers.

Germany and France were against meeting Saddam Hussein with military force, but had no alternative for getting rid of the butcher of Baghdad. "What was the European answer to the problem of Saddam Hussein?" asked Senator Joe Biden in a panel discussion at the recent Davos forum. Biden is a Democrat and strong critic of President Bush. "I asked French and German leaders,

but never received any credible answer."

"We are not even ready to forcefully meet conflicts on our own continent," Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski sighed. Bosnia's Muslims thank America, not the EU, for their deliverance from slaughter. Europe devotes half as much in financial resources to the military as the US, resulting in one-tenth of America's military strength, observed Pat Cox, Speaker of the European Parliament.

Americans now see Europe as compounding its military weakness by losing its leading position in science. Two thirds of Nobel Laureates in the sciences during the last quarter century were Americans. Many of the others do or did research at American universities. According to Time magazine, 400,000 European researchers now work in the US. Lack of funding, bureaucracies so complicated that even purchasing a used computer is problematic, hierarchies that hamper the joy of curiosity and creativity: all of these barriers confront European scientists and are responsible for inciting today's "brain drain" to America.

Add economics to this recipe as well. Price regulations and other ill-considered features of European policy contribute to the fact that 60 percent of the world's new drugs

are developed in the US, compared to 40 percent only 10 years ago. This sterility and inertia make Europe less and less interesting for Americans. So American eyes are turning elsewhere: to China with its 1.3 billion people and an economy growing at 8-10 percent, year in and year out, and to India, with its 1.1 billion people and 6 percent annual growth.

Indeed, India now has some of the world's best engineers, IT technicians and medical professionals. India probably encompasses the world's largest middle class. With new patent laws coming into place, India will have the same attraction for the pharmaceutical industry as it has for IT, providing clinical trials for new drugs at a quarter of the cost of Europe or the US.

While America increases its population somewhat, due to normal reproductive rates and large immigration flows, Europe's share of the world's population is approaching a mere 4 percent and seems doomed to growing older as it shrinks even more.

Demographic change in the US is also working to shift America's global orientation. With American immigration dominated by Latin Americans and Asians, the US feels its European heritage less. Similarly, domestic US politics is gravitating to the country's south and west, regions that look towards Latin America and Asia, not Europe. The fall of the Soviet empire, naturally, reduced Americans' security interest in Europe.

Is this American-eye view of Europe unfair? Perhaps. It is, however, no more unfair than how America is regularly portrayed in Europe's media these days. But if Americans are critical of Europe, they are also self-critical, far more so than most Europeans.

As a European editor wrote apropos the flow of scientists from Europe to America: "What's most sad is that Europeans still believe that their society represents the epitome of civilisation, while the US is on its way to downfall. What if the reality is the reverse?" Every European should contemplate that possibility, at least for a moment, before resuming their current aversion to all things American. ●

(© Project Syndicate)

Hans Bergström, Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg, was formerly Editor-in-Chief of *Dagens Nyheter*, Sweden's leading newspaper.

The 'Good Doctor' is in

Manmohan Singh is India's new designated driver

RANJIT DEVRAJ in NEW DELHI

The image that most residents of New Delhi have of Manmohan Singh is that of a diminutive, turbaned man patiently steering his small car through a chaotic sea of sleek limousines, hulking buses and slow-moving pedicabs. That image probably portrays best the soft-spoken economist who, as finance minister between 1991 and 1996, is credited with steering India's overprotected economy—dominated by monopolistic business families and an inefficient public sector—through a difficult first phase of reforms.

'Manmohanomics' was blamed for the 1996 electoral defeat of the venerable Congress party. But both the left-dominated United Front government which took over in 1996 and the right-wing, ultra-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which followed in 1998, only deepened and widened the reforms initiated by Singh. Now, the 'Good Doctor,' as the newspaper headlines often describe Singh, partly in deference to his impressive academic credentials, is back in the driver's seat, this time as prime minister after Congress party leader Sonia Gandhi declined the nomination.

Curiously enough, Singh's installation in the top job has been made possible by a public angered by a pro-rich reforms regime run by the outgoing BJP. Those uncharitable to the Congress party would say that its rather unexpected electoral victory in the April/May elections was in fact the result of a negative vote against the BJP—rather than any endorsement of its own pro-reform, economic policies of the past.

But clearly, both Singh and the Congress party itself are creatures that now have the wisdom and hindsight of 13 years of reforms at which governments at either end of the political spectrum have had a turn at running. Moreover, the Congress party that Singh will be heading is a minority one that is heavily dependent for survival on support from the communist parties of the Left Front, which have emerged with more seats in parliament than ever before.

Singh will find himself constrained by a Common Minimum Programme, which the Left Front has insisted on as a condition for its crucial support. This is expected to seriously influence economic decisions in favour of farmers and the working classes. Not that either the Congress party or Singh need prompting on the plight of small farmers who form the backbone of India's agricultural economy, but have borne the brunt of the reform process.

Singh has himself repeatedly acknowledged the need to bring a 'human face' to the reform process, which has been particularly traumatic for India because of a sudden shift from long years of protectionism and policies favouring self-reliance. Singh, who was born in 1932 in a rural village (Gah in what is now Pakistan), needs no lessons on the importance to the economy of taking the interests of farmers seriously.

The man acknowledged as the 'father of Indian reforms' criticised the last budget presented by the business-friendly BJP as "a bunch of tokenisms that refuse to address real problems like the eradication of poverty and agricultural development". On the other hand, Singh has not hesitated to



Manmohan Singh (left) with Congress President Sonia Gandhi (right) speak before the media after an invitation from President APJ Abdul Kalam, who instructed Singh to form the new government Wednesday.

oppose a policy of providing free power to farmers, announced last week by the new Congress party provincial government in Andhra Pradesh. The announcement was made after the defeat of the aggressively pro-reform Telugu Desam Party (BJP), a regional ally of the BJP.

In his own words, Singh said what he really wanted to do was to "release the innovative, entrepreneurial spirit which always existed in India through a credible structural adjustment program". After receiving the formal letter of invitation to form the new government from Indian President Abdul Kalam Wednesday evening, Singh pledged to build "new opportunities for the poor and downtrodden to participate in the economic process". ● (IPS)



Nightmare begins

.....
Samacharpatra, 16 May

PARBAT – The people of Dhaulagiri face long hikes in the scorching summer heat after the Maoists blockaded the Baglung-Pokhara highway for eight days. Fifteen years after this artery opened, locals are once again forced to walk more than 40km to get to Pokhara. “It’s the same nightmare I experienced years ago, travelling on foot to Kusma,” says Dhan Kumar Thapa, a Baglung native who works in India’s Gujarat. Thapa had to hire a taxi to Lumle and then walk seven hours to reach his destination. Buses ply up to Lumle. From

this point people can be seen trudging along, burdened with heavy luggage. Children fare much worse in the heat. The Maoists threaten taxi and bus drivers who dare to bring the people this far. Some even have their keys taken. Each step is misery. Those who are unable to walk beyond Kusma, the district headquarters, have to stay in a lodge, biding their time untill they can get through safely between the battling rebels and the security forces. Worst of all, shops are closed and food supplies are dipping low. The schools have been shut for the past six days because the students are afraid to attend classes.

Trekker tax

Kantipur, 16 May

SOLUKHUMBHU—Maoists have been collecting their ‘people’s government tax’ from tourists visiting the Solukmbhu region more strictly. They are charging Rs 1,000 from each tourist, and more from American trekkers. “We are charging the Americans more,” said Rajendra, district chief of the Maoists in Solukhmubu. He added the amount charged from Americans would depend on whatever demands the Maoists feel like making. There are no taxes for Nepalis, although trekking groups have to pay Rs 250 per porter they employ. The tourists get receipts so they are not taxed twice along the trails by other Maoists. Any national or international non-government organisation has to keep up with the Maoists’ terms and conditions to conduct development programs in the region, which has been declared a ‘people’s government zone’. They said that Maoist approval is a must for working in these regions and the organisations would be allowed to work only if they agree to pay royalties to the Maoists. Though the Maoists do not have any problems with United Nations mediation in the peace process, Maoist activists in Solukhumbu do not view the UN positively. “We have demanded a royalty of 15 percent for every Rs 100,000 and will spend the money on development activities for the villages,” said Rajendra. A team that had gone to the region this week for tourism promotion was challenged by Maoists, who said: “Give us Rs 5,000 out of every Rs 200,000. You spend the rest and compete with us in the promotional activities.” Rajendra said that details on amount collected from tourists and NGOs would be made public. He said that money is being collected from the NGOs because they have high overheads. For the moment, the decree is valid in the lower regions of Solukhumbu in Jubing, Beni, Garma, Kaku, Wasa, Kagel, Tingla, Kerung, Taping, Patale, Junbesi and Sunkhani. One of the projects affected is UNDP’s Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Program (TRPAP) in 12 VDCs. TRPAP’s five-year plan of developing physical infrastructure in the region has been affected. More than 10,000 people were to benefit from the program. “Since we will not be able to provide 15 percent tax as demanded by the Maoists, it seems that we will have to close down the program,” said a TRPAP official. Dron Pokhrel, the CDO said development will lag behind due to Maoist activities. (Nepalnews.com)



KONICA MINOLTA
Digital Photo Express

Full Digital Photo Studio & Color Lab

Photo Session

and many more...

STUDIO SEVEN, Triveni Complex, Putalisadak, Tel: 977-1-4253852, 4340886, E-mail: sseven@mos.com.np

Product Photo

Family Photo

Wedding Photo

Large Format Print upto 44"x72"

Group Photo

ID Photo

Prints from Zip/MD/Floppy

Prints from Digital Cameras

Prints from Media CD-ROM

Prints from Film

Prints/Scan from Large Film/ Slides

Parking Available in Complex
Open on Saturday also

THE NETWORK BACKBONE

MANAGED SWITCHES FROM D-LINK

DES-6000	DES-3326	DES-3226	DES-3624 Series
Chassis type: modular managed switch	24-port 10/100Mbps managed Layer 3 switch	24-port 10/100Mbps managed switch with 2 optional Fast Ethernet Gigabit ports	Stackable master and slave managed switches
Layer 2	Layer 3	Layer 2	Layer 2
Port density upto 128 10/100Mbps UTP ports or 96 100 Mbps Fiber ports or 16 1000Mbps Gigabit ports	24 10/100Mbps ports	24 10/100 Mbps ports with Fiber / Gigabit expansion slot	Port density upto 96 UTP ports and Up to 2 Gigabit links with UTP and Fiber expansion slots
SNMP, RMON, Telnet and Web Management	SNMP, RMON, VLAN, Port Trunking, Flow Control	Port Trunking, VLAN, Priority Queuing, IP Multicasting, Port Mirroring, SNMP, RMON	SNMP, RMON, Telnet, Port Mirroring and Web Management
Hot-swappable, fully redundant dual power supply	Redundant Backup Power Supplies	8.8Gbps backbone bandwidth	Stackable, Backbone speeds of 10.8Gbps (slave) to 21.32Gbps (master)

MERCANTILE OFFICE SYSTEMS

D-Link
Building Networks for People

Mercantile Building, Durbar Marg, Kathmandu Tel: 4220773, 4243566 Fax: 977-1-4225407 Email: market@mos.com.np



‘No room for fear’

This is a condensed version of Ganju Lama’s testimony, based on the Sikkimese winner of the Victoria Cross’ interview with Radio Sagarmatha in 1999. His story appears with those of other Gurkha soldiers in *Lahurey ka Katha*, translated by Dev Bahadur Thapa for *Nepali Times*.



I enlisted in the British Army in 1942 at Ghoom, Darjeeling. In March 1943 we were sent to Burma. We joined our regiment in village called Badrokuna where we were divided into companies. Mine had 180 men and we were sent to the frontline every day. We fought for a year in Burma. Once we plunged into war, there was no room for fear. The only thought that haunted us was whether we would be able to return home. Occasional misadventures took place. Sometimes the enemy

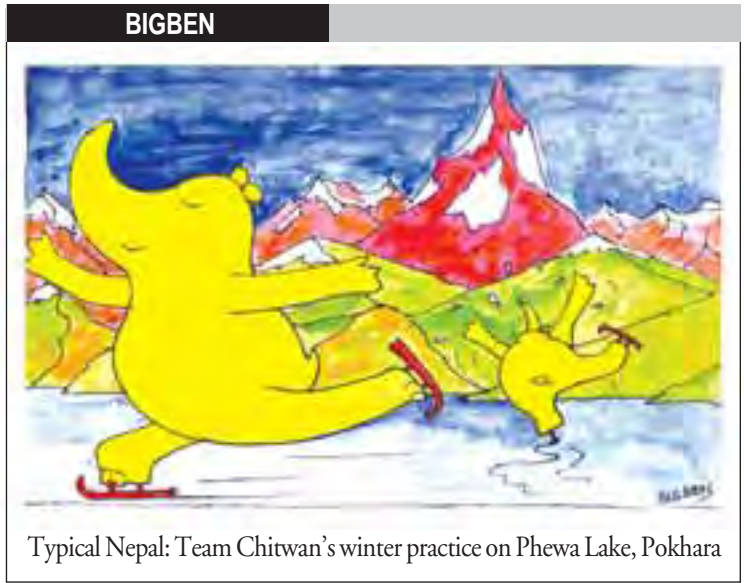
surrounded us and we had to fight our way out. At a place 33 miles from Imphal, the capital of India’s state of Manipur, our forces cut the Japanese off and many enemy soldiers were killed. Their tanks attacked us during the day and the troops came out at night. On 17 May 1944 I blew up two tanks. That same night, we massacred a 17 truck convoy of 330 enemy soldiers and took their ration and ammunitions. As fresh reinforcements came, the Japanese became stronger and

we were forced to retreat. We rested at Bishnupur village inside Manipur for a week, after which, we were assigned to defend the brigade. Another regiment was stationed six miles ahead of us. Their orders were to check enemy advancements. One day, six Japanese tanks wiped out a company of Agam Singh Rai’s regiment. We were told the second fifth regiment was in trouble, and had to attack and reverse the situation. This was not easy. We walked in the scorching sun and planes bombed us. There was artillery fire and tanks too. All we could do was hide in the hills and attack because we had no tanks.

Then we had the chance to lead an offensive against six Japanese tanks. It was dangerous because they were advancing in an open field and could crush anything. Then they came to a strait. On one side was a river and a bog on the other—if a tank sinks in the bog, it is impossible to get out. I crawled along the path, barely bigger than a mule track, and blew up the first tank with a six-pounder ball. The second met

the same fate. I attempted to destroy a third but it took cover. It was then that I realised that I was a sitting duck out in the open too. The Japanese opened fire from machine guns and I was hit on my left leg, left and right hands. I was forced to drop my gun. I needed to take cover. Since my leg was broken, I dragged myself to safety in a shallow ditch. Six enemy soldiers came towards me, their bayonets shining in the sunlight. I thought it was going to be my last fight. Then I remembered I had hand grenades. With one finger almost severed and my hand slippery with blood, I removed the pins with my teeth and threw the grenades in the direction of the enemy. It kept them at bay and luckily, the debris from the continuous blasts covered me. The tank’s crew passed me by without seeing me. Shortly afterwards, my platoon arrived and I was taken to the regimental first aid post on a stretcher. From there it was the brigade hospital and then an overnight journey to the military hospital at Manipur where I was operated. I slept for four days and

woke up in bed surrounded by a white mosquito net. I was forced to stay in the hospital for nearly two weeks. After the recuperation period, I was taken to Dhaka by plane where I heard that I was awarded the Victoria Cross. I didn’t know quite what to think because I did not know how important it was. When I enlisted, I was called Ganju instead of my proper name of Gyamchho, and it stuck. The government in Delhi informed my village that Ganju Lama received an award and inquired about my family so they could be there at the investiture. My father flatly denied having a son with the name Ganju. They made enquiries in Nepal and the Nepalis suggested they try in Sikkim again. The king of Sikkim too was confused till he figured it out and my father was informed. Sikkim’s prestige was at stake so they coached my father and brother on how to behave at the Delhi durbar. The king made them bakkhus of Chinese silk and traditional caps for the ceremony. After I was awarded, my father returned to Sikkim. I went back to my regiment. (Concluded)



Typical Nepal: Team Chitwan’s winter practice on Phewa Lake, Pokhara

Skiing down Cho Oyu

Climbing the 8,000m Cho Oyu is hard enough, but for some people getting to the top is not enough. They insist on skiing down. Like 23-year-old Dutch climber, Greg Nieuwenhuys, who climbed and then skied down the world’s sixth highest mountain on 28 April. This year is the 50th anniversary of the first ascent of Cho Oyu by a Swiss expedition, but it is not getting as much worldwide media attention as the Everest anniversary did last year. Only 15km away from Everest, Cho Oyu is overshadowed by the world’s highest mountain in more ways than one. Nieuwenhuys was out to change all that. He wanted to prove that Cho Oyu is a strong mountain with its own personality and wanted to test his own limit. Two weeks later, he still looks completely washed out. Having climbed without oxygen, and racked by a cough on the mountain, he injured a rib. Together with his climbing partner Joost Schreve, 29, and doctor Herman Frima, 29, the trio spent seven months preparing for the expedition. Starting with getting \$100,000 in sponsorships, they went to the Alps for a ski and climb training session and spent a month acclimatising and skiing in Langtang down some 46 degree couloirs. Back in the Netherlands there isn’t anywhere to practice since the highest



mountain there is 321m high.

“It is difficult to define a successful ski descent,” says mountaineering chronicler Elizabeth Hawley. “It’s a very rare person who is crazy enough to try.” The team set out to base camp from the Tibet side on 23 March. It took a herd of yaks to carry up the 1,500kg of gear and food, including 1,000m of rope, 130kg of rice and communications equipment. The team was overcome with stomach ailments and effects of altitude, and had to descend to base

camp. They set off again on 26 April and reached the earlier highpoint of 8,020m two days later. This time Nieuwenhuys was able to carry on. Everest came in view. He had reached the summit. “To be honest, I did not really enjoy the moment,” Nieuwenhuys says. “I was so extremely tired. We took a couple of pictures and clicked into my skis and pointed them towards base camp. It was a descent I will never forget.” The real adventure had just begun.

Nieuwenhuys started to feel better and better as he raced down in his skis (see pic). “It’s difficult and you have to be very careful, a mistake can be fatal, but it is an amazing feeling to make your own tracks in such high altitude and to ski down difficult steep ridges, passing climbers who are on their way up.” Nieuwenhuys had to replace his skis with crampons twice. The first time was after 100 vertical meters of skiing, because the weather deteriorated quickly. After a night in camp 3, he continued the ski descent from 7,448m to an ice cliff at 6,800m. A short abseil, and he clicked into his skis again. Asked what he’ll do next, Nieuwenhuys says: “I imagine I’ll be back.” (Maarten Post)

Heavy traffic on Everest
A total of 33 climbers, 14 of them Sherpas, climbed the world’s highest peak this week during a break in the weather on 15 -16 May. All were climbing up the classic southeast ridge. The climbers belonged to four different expeditions. Among those on top was the legendary Apa Sherpa who got to the top for a record 14th time on Monday morning. The other climbers were from South Korea, New Zealand, Mexico, Scotland and the US.



The terrorism that we have come to associate with al-Qaeda is special in many ways. It is global, technologically sophisticated, but, above all, it is not about an achievable political objective.

It is aimed at what used to be called the West, that is, a liberal order of things, a free world.

COMMENT

Ralf Dahrendorf



Because the United States is the most visible and powerful representative of that free world, it is aimed against America and its closest allies in Europe and elsewhere.

This is a critical fact to remember. What we describe under the heading of al-Qaeda is an essentially negative, destructive movement. It does not offer an alternative view of the modern world other than the implicit claim that modernity is neither necessary nor desirable.

Violence born from such sources is difficult to fight. Signs of frustration with modernity are never hard to find. They are present in highly developed countries, but above all in entire regions of the world that are suspended between a yesterday that no longer exists and a tomorrow that has not yet come into being. How, then, do free countries deal with terrorist expressions of organised frustration?

Without doubt, the first

priority for any free country must be to protect its citizens and assets against acts of terrorist violence. Given a globalised movement of fury, this is not simple. It requires measures that do not come easily to citizens, groups and authorities steeped in a tradition of liberalism and tolerance.

We must accept that there are limits to tolerance. Non-aggressive demonstrations of difference—including Islamic headscarves worn by students or teachers in largely Christian countries—should be bearable. But violence should never be tolerated.

The monopoly on the use of violence exercised by democratic states must be preserved, which may involve expelling non-citizens who choose violence or advocate its use, and the detention of citizens who have practiced or threatened it. However, it is of critical importance that the treatment of terrorists and those suspected of terrorist acts remains strictly within the rule of law. The status of the prisoners held at Guantanamo Bay and the recent incidents of possibly systematic humiliation and torture of Iraqi prisoners cast doubt on the very values on which a liberal order is based.

Terrorism aimed at the destruction of the liberal order is a test of that order. This is particularly so if one accepts—as I do—intervention in the internal affairs of countries in order to prevent genocide or the

murderous suppression of minorities and opposition groups. But intervention must never borrow methods from those against whom it is undertaken.

This applies also to the intervening powers' objectives. Terrorism of the al-Qaeda type is basically destructive. Any response must be basically constructive. The frustration of many in the economically developed countries is, like the frustration of entire countries in developing regions, a challenge.

This challenge cannot really be met by simply promising unlimited opportunities, as they uniquely exist in America. It requires a sense of social responsibility that accompanies and cushions the painful process of modernisation. People who are suspended between a lost past and a future not yet gained need help. Such assistance will not yield immediate results, but awareness of the medium term—which means readiness to face it by delaying immediate gratification—is also a sign of a liberal order.

Thus, fighting al-Qaeda is not a war. It is partly self-defence, partly an assertion of the rule of law in difficult circumstances and partly a constructive effort to redress the causes of frustration. ● (© Project Syndicate)

Ralf Dahrendorf, author and a former European Commissioner from Germany, is a former Rector of the London School of Economics.

Corruption drain

The World Bank has lost about \$100 billion dollars slated for development in the world's poorest nations to corruption since 1946, nearly 20 percent of its total lending portfolio, according to a US Senate committee. Experts estimate that between five and 25 percent of the \$525 billion the Bank has lent since 1946 has been misused. This amounts to \$26-130 billion.

The estimates emerged at the first in a series of oversight hearings into the anti-corruption efforts of the World Bank and other multilateral development banks (MDBs), which include the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) the Asian Development Bank, the African Development Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Corruption has become a global issue as developing countries, watchdog groups and some economists complain that poor nations lose huge funds from MDBs like the World Bank because of misuse of money. Yet taxpayers in those borrowing countries still have to repay the banks. Corruption also undermines the development impact of the banks' projects, for example, if contractors use diluted cement in civil works like road-building, officials permit illegal timber harvesting in restricted forest areas or grant profitable public contracts go to well-connected cronies of government officials. (IPS)

Resurrection

GENEVA – The 11th sessions of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), to take place next month in Sao Paulo, will be a political event that could help get international trade talks back on track. The negotiations of the Doha Round, launched in November 2001 in the Qatari capital, are being promoted by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to liberalise world trade and encourage development. The organisation's ministers set a deadline of 1 January 2005 to wrap up the talks. But the course of the negotiations has come practically to a standstill because of the failure to meet the intermediate deadlines set by the WTO members and especially because of the debacle in September 2003 at the ministerial conference held in the Mexican resort of Cancún.

The tensions mostly revolve around the liberalisation of agricultural trade, and particularly the market access of farm products, which the industrialised countries limit with their high import tariffs—and developing countries aim to eliminate or at least cut drastically. The stagnation of the talks is one of the key elements of the economic context in which the UNCTAD sessions will take place 13-18 June. Representatives from all of the UN countries, including non-WTO members will take part in the Sao Paulo meeting, which will also be the UN's only economic conference this year. (IPS)

Vulnerable to AIDS

BRUSSELS – HIV/AIDS is the greatest threat to development in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, European interest groups are warning. More than 13.4 million children under the age of 15 have lost their mother, father or both parents to AIDS, according to CONCORD, an NGO umbrella network of more than 2,000 European development agencies. The human rights group says that 80 percent of these orphans live in sub-Saharan Africa. Civil society groups highlighted the need to tackle the HIV/AIDS pandemic in a presentation at the 29th session of the ACP-EU council of ministers meeting in Gaborone, Botswana last weekend.

The meeting identified children as the most vulnerable group. There is little appreciation of the magnitude of the problems related to orphans and children made vulnerable by the disease in many countries, CONCORD says, adding that “children's lack of political influence and an audible voice” is one of the major hurdles in protecting their interests. The European Union (EU) and ACP countries have signed up to a number of commitments to address the issue of HIV/AIDS and their wider impact on poverty. These measures include the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agreed in 2000 to halve world poverty and improve education and health by 2015. (IPS)



Flats for Rent



COMPLETELY FURNISHED

- * 24 hour Hot Water.
- * 24 hour Security Guard.
- * TV, Music system, Washing Machine and other Equipment offered
- * Telephone Service.
- * Parcel/ Post Box Service.
- * Laundry Service.
- * personal Doctor on call
- * Modern Bathroom with Tub & Shower
- * Roof Top garden.
- * Bed Room size 10' x 12' feet (Two Bed Room)
- * Kitchen Dining & living Room
- * Well furnished
- * House keeping

Located at - Lazimpat, Kharsanitar

No. of Flats - 4 (Four)

No. of room in a flat - 4 (Four)

Bed Room - 2 (Two)

Kitchen - 1 (One)

Dining Hall - 1 (one) Attached with Kitchen

Himalaya Dream House

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions regarding the flats.

Contact: Mr Adhikari Tel: 4420 853, 4410 239, Mobile 98510 39290



ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Utopian introspection** Multimedia exhibition by Sujan Chitrakar till 28 May at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited. 4218048
- ❖ **Finland in Nepal** Art exhibition till 29 May at Gallery Moksh, Pulchok. 2113339

EVENTS

- ❖ **8th Nepal Education & Book Fair 2004** 22-30 May at Bhrikuti Mandap.
- ❖ **Mega Live Concert** with Sabin Rai, Deepesh Bhattarai and Jems Pradhan 2PM on 22 May at BICC. Tickets Rs 100
- ❖ **Fun and Food Carnival** 22 May at Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 4491234
- ❖ **Lux Star Beauty 2004 Final** 7PM on 22 May at Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. 4491234
- ❖ **Ani Choying's Concert** for the Nuns' Welfare Foundation and Arya Tara School. 6PM on 5 June at Bluestar Hotel, Tripureswor. 4484959



MUSIC

- ❖ **Full Circle** 7PM Fridays at Bakery Café, Jawalakhel. 4434554
- ❖ **Deo** at Not Just The Jazz Bar Fridays at Hotel Shangri-la, Lazimpat.
- ❖ **JCS Trio** at Fusion every Friday, Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488

FOOD

- ❖ **Wraps and dips** till 23 May at the Coffee Shop, Hotel de l'Annapurna. 4259596
- ❖ **Summit's Barbecue Dinner** with vegetarian specials. Summit Hotel. 5521810
- ❖ **Vegetarian Creations** at Stupa View Restaurant. 4480262
- ❖ **Splash Spring BBQ** Wednesday and Friday evenings. Radisson Hotel Kathmandu.
- ❖ **Executive Lunch** at Toran Restaurant, Dwarika's. 4479488
- ❖ **Sunny Side Up Weekend BBQ** at Soaltee Crowne Plaza Kathmandu. 4273999
- ❖ **The Beer Garden** at Vaijayantha, Godavari Village Resort. 5560675

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Wet & Wild Summer Splash** at the Godavari Village Resort.
- ❖ **Pure relaxation** at Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge. 01 4361500
- ❖ **Bardia** with Jungle Base Camp Lodge. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com
- ❖ **Golf** at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa. 4451212
- ❖ **Weekend Special** at Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha. 4375280
- ❖ **Early Bird discounts** at Shangri-La Hotel & Resort. 4412999
- ❖ **Summer at Shivapuri Heights.** steve@escape2nepal.com

Dexo House
THE SUPERMARKET

- Speciality wines
- Grocery
- CDs & many more

Thamel, Tel: 4423526, 4411800

NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



Early this week, dry and hot days changed to wet and cool. The rains, however, were just pre-monsoon showers, a dress rehearsal for the wet season. This year, the real monsoon is expected to begin a week earlier than the usual 10 June date. This satellite picture shows a cloud mass over the Himalaya, extending all the way to the southern tarai. With a steady source in the Bay of Bengal, it will bring light to heavy rains over the weekend and into early next week. Keep an umbrella handy because surprise showers will interrupt our bright sunny days.

KATHMANDU VALLEY



McQuay AIR CONDITIONER

Your Climate. We're There.

12 months warranty

Heating & Cooling

Authorized Distributor
AIRTECH Industries Pvt. Ltd.
Thapathali, Kathmandu, Tel: 4-219999, 4-243887
Fax: 4-228822, E-mail: airtech@mos.com.np

ISO 9001:2000 CE

BOOKWORM

A Time of Coalitions: Divided We Stand
Paranjy Guha Thakurta, Shankar Raghuraman
Sage, 2004
Rs 560

This topical and absorbing book, written by two eminent journalists, convincingly argues against commonly held beliefs concerning Indian politics. The authors say coalitions are here to stay and the polity is not essentially bipolar. They advance that coalition governments are better equipped to deal with the tensions of a divided society.

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



JAI NEPAL CINEMA



Yuva

From 22 May.
Bookings open 21 May.

Call 4442220 for show timings.
www.jainepal.com

Thank you Himal Khabarpatrika subscribers!

The Himal Kodak Koseli scheme was a success thanks to new subscribers of Himal Khabarpatrika who responded with enthusiasm and support. The offer is open till 14 June 2004 so if you would like to either renew or begin subscribing to Himal Khabarpatrika, it is as simple as dialling 5543333.

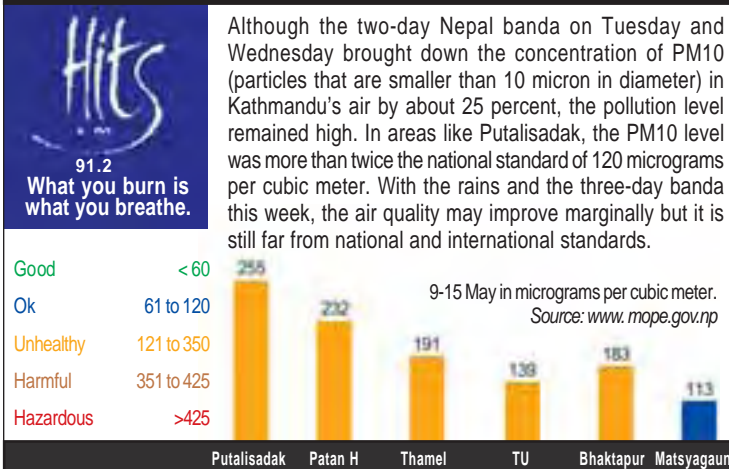
We request you to follow the instructions below so that we can improve our services:

- Always check the validity of the sales officer's ID card.
- Please do not make a payment against the Invoice. Ask for a Cash Receipt after you pay. The receipt should bear a watermark of the company logo of a lion.

For further confirmation, contact

Raj Bhai Dangol at 5543333.
Himalmedia Pvt. Ltd. GPO Box 7251,
Sanchaya Kosh Bhawan, Lalitpur, Nepal.

KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY



Every Friday



It's never been easier to subscribe to Himalmedia.
just call (01) 5543 333-6
or write to subscription@himalmedia.com

Himalmedia: GPO Box 7251
Herbar Bhawan, Lalitpur, Nepal
Fax: 877-1-5529 013
subscription@himalmedia.com
www.himalmedia.com

Newsbulletin of Radio Sagarmatha

"Haal-Chaal"

Nepali Radio Nepali Aawaj

Morning : 6:45, 7:45, 8:45, 11:45
Afternoon : 2:45, 4:45
Evening : 5:45, 6:45, 9:45

Radio Sagarmatha is at your service for 18 hours a day with a complete package
P.O. Box: 6958, Phone: 977-1-5528091, Fax: 977-1-5530227, Email: info@radiosagarmatha.org
Website: www.radiosagarmatha.org

Golf at 70+

Still going strong after half century of golf

If I was to tell golfers in Nepal that the most regular player in the country was probably Devinder Chand, they would be excused for being a bit confused. However, if I said that, religiously, in the cold of winter, whether rain or shine, early every morning DC Khanna can be found at Gokarna Golf Club, they may well smile with fascination, just as I do. I must admit I am quite taken and inspired by his dedication, knowledge and love for the game.

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



At the age of 74, Khanna plays from the championship tees, has a handicap of 18 and still takes lessons from us pros, striving to ever improve. He believes “if a thing is worth doing, it must be done well”. He is so knowledgeable about the game that most golfers, including myself, are reverentially impressed. Always seen helping golfers with insightful tips, he has inducted a fair number in Nepal into the game.

I stole some time from the busy schedule of the CEO of Siddhartha Bank and gleaned some reflections from his half century of golfing experience.



How long you have been playing and what drove you to start the game?
I’ve been playing since 1952. It all started in Kolkatta. At that time I was working with Lloyds Bank and most officers had to join ‘a club’. I joined Royal Kolkatta Golf Club in 1953.

I’ve known you now for a decade. You practice almost daily, and try to achieve something new all the time. Why?
Golf poses a serious challenge to all who play it. It demands commitment, and it is fascinating to try and find out the many secrets of the game.

Do you take golf as a hobby or something more?
To me, golf is much more than a hobby. It’s a way of life. The game imparts discipline and much needed exercise, both of mind and body.

All this time in Nepal you’ve been holding the CEO’s position in leading banks. How difficult it is to manage time for golf?
This has been going on for more than 50 years. It requires a bit of discipline, planning and management of time. The optimum utilisation of time is an attribute and most rewarding. It is like setting targets and meeting those deadlines. Quite frankly, any meaningful exercise must improve performance. I get a great feeling of well being after playing golf each morning, and itch to face the coming day.

What advice would you like to give to your corporate colleagues about golf?
I would say, “Don’t hesitate and waste time.” Start playing this game and keep it up. Golf will keep you away from trouble and mischief. There is no doubt that you can win over business by interacting with people you meet through golf.

What golfing positions have you held and what has been your best score in a competition?
I served as Captain of Tollygunge Club, Kolkatta in 1981 / 82. I was the treasurer of the Indian Golf Union around the same time. My best performance was 44 points playing in the Ducan Cup, Kolkatta in 1973. Back then I was a 13 handicap and played 4 over for the day.

Who is your favorite golfer?
I am very fond of Ben Hogan.

Deepak Acharya is a Golf Instructor and Golf Director at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, Kathmandu. prodeepak@hotmail.com

Golf in Bhutan

RICK LIPSEY in THIMPHU

It is tee-time at Royal Thimphu, a nine-hole layout in Bhutan’s capital, that is the country’s only bona fide course. We didn’t plan to make history, but we did. Carrie was the first left-handed woman to hit a shot on Bhutani soil (a shanked 7 iron!), and I became Bhutan’s first golf pro.

While playing with members at Royal Thimphu, I gave my hosts swing tips and they told me the club’s dream was to replace Jack Nicklaus videos with a professional teacher. I jokingly said that although not a pro, I’d played college golf, given lessons to friends and was a golf writer for *Sports Illustrated*.

Apparently, the Bhutani hackers were desperate. “When could you come?” the club secretary asked deadpan.

I was shocked. Carrie was nearly hyperventilating. I glanced at the spectacular mountains, the monasteries, rivers, farms, bright prayer flags and soaring eagles, and said, “Ummm, well, yes, I’ll be your pro.”

Back in New York, thinking about the adventure was intoxicating. Golf and exploring the Himalaya are my favorite hobbies, and now I’d be a pro in my Xanadu. Some golf instructor friends gave me tutorials that would help me teach

the club’s 100 members (99 of them male, including the king, a 13-handicapper) and start a junior program. Carrie, a civil rights lawyer, was also gung-ho, because she had lined up work with Bhutan’s chief justice to help draft the country’s Penal Code and Evidence Act.

Golf came to Bhutan 35 years ago. Then, the Tashichhodzong, a sprawling fortlike structure with offices for the country’s key government and religious officials, was surrounded by putrid rice paddies. An Indian army officer told King Jigme Singye Wangchuck that he could turn the glop into a manicured lawn by building a golf course. The king was unfamiliar with golf, but he liked the idea. In Thimphu (7,500 ft), the ball flies 20 percent farther than at sea level, and yet the course is fairly short at about 5,500 yards and par 66 from the two sets of tees used for an 18-hole round. The course would resemble an average municipal layout in the US, except for the large white brick chorten by the third tee.

One of our most interesting friends was named Iron Bridge. A lama, he is reputedly the 13th reincarnation of a Tibetan saint who built 108 iron bridges in Tibet and Bhutan in the 15th century. We met him at the wedding of a daughter of



Pem L Dorji, one of my golf charges who was the governor of Wangdi, the largest of Bhutan’s 20 districts. I introduced myself, and Iron Bridge replied: “Glad to meet you. You do good works for our country.”

I was stunned. How did a renowned lama know me? Turns out, Iron Bridge’s father-in-law was Mr Dorji.

I peppered him with questions. He was 30 and had an 18-month-old daughter, he lived at his private monastery, and he had just finished five years of solitary meditation. He also had a business card, a fax number, an e-mail address and followers from Taipei to Los Angeles.

“Did you ever play golf?” I said. “No. I only have time to meditate,” Iron Bridge replied. “Maybe in your next life?” I said. Iron Bridge smiled. “Only if you teach me.”

Rick Lipsey covers golf for *Sports Illustrated* www.golfbhutan.com

IFB WORLD'S BEST WASHING MACHINE#

WASHING MACHINE

- Load 10kg Capacity
- Super 2000 Wash
- Steam 2000 Wash
- Hot Wash
- Tumble Dry

100% COTTON DRYER

- Programmable Drying
- Solar Heat System
- Windup New Clothes
- Easy to Use Control
- Real Ironing Facility

MICROWAVE OVEN

- Cook, Get Ready to Eat
- Reheat, Defrost, Cook
- Preheat, Grill, Microwave
- Frost Delay Start
- Auto Cook System

DISH WASHER

- Fully Automatic
- Detergent Dispenser
- 100 Washes without G.P.C. (P.C.)
- Steam Drying
- Three Spray Arms for better washing

IFB www.ifb.com

Fully Automatic * In test condition against Top Level Washing Machine

Business Associate:

Sagtani Exim (P) Ltd.

Khichia Pokhari, Kathmandu, Nepal

Tel: 4240244 Fax: 4225229

Email: sagtani@mos.com.np

Authorised Dealers:

A-One Sales & Service

New Baneshwor 4780412

Ashoka Electronics

AT Complex, New Plaza 4441874

Bhatbhateni Supermarket

Bhatbhateni Chyok 4422460

Bluebird Department Store

Triguneshwar 4245725

C.T. Electronics

Shop No. 12, Bimal Bazar

New Road 4225588

Club Himalaya

Windy Hills

"Chiso Chiso Hawama"

(Nepaliese and Expatriates Package)

Ktm/Nagarkot/Ktm+Room+Dinner+ Breakfast: Rs. 2800 For Single
Rs. 3400 For Double

चिसो चिसो हावामा, हिमालको काखमा, नगरकोटको डाडामा

ACE HOTELS & RESORTS

CLUB HIMALAYA

Nagarkot

HAPPENINGS



PARADE: Norwegians in Nepal celebrate Norway's Constitution Day with a public parade in Lalitpur on Monday.



MILAN WAGLE

HANGING ON: Sajha buses were the only available mode of public transportation on Tuesday, the first of the three-day Maoist banda.



WATERBORNE: Avia Club Nepal demonstrated its Ultralight fitted with pontoons on Phewa Lake, Pokhara on Saturday.



KIRAN PANDAY

FIRST HOP: Jet Airways' maiden flight to Kathmandu gets a traditional welcome with Laakhe dancers and Panche baja last Friday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

BOWLED OVER: Contestants of the Lux Beauty Star 2004 turned on the smiles even if they struck out for the Sassy Smile Competition at Bowling Boulevard, Kantipath on Sunday.

Soldier poet

It could almost be a trick question: what do soldiers and poets have in common? "Their sensitivities are equally strong," says Brig Gen Rajendra Thapa, the newly-appointed spokesperson of the Royal Nepali Army. His unique experience in both fields gives him firsthand experience. "I am a strong soldier, therefore I am a strong poet, and vice versa."

The 'sensitivities' Rajendra talks about include the way he fell in love with nature when he was 10. It also includes the sight of soldiers willing to sacrifice their lives for their country. That, he says, is how the poet in him adjusted to the rigours of military life. The son of a policeman, he feels he knows his fellow Nepalis because he grew up living wherever his father's job took him. "All Nepalis have the same way of living, it is just the styles that are different and that is what I use in my work," he says.

Rajendra's most famous lines are the lyrics put to music by Aruna Lama: '*Pohor sala maya phatyo*'. As a self-made soldier he climbed his way up the hierarchy with hard work. As a poet, Rajendra knew better than to ignore his inner voice. A prolific writer, he is choosy about sharing his work or allowing it to be put to music. His lyrics '*Mero khukuri ko naulo katha*' is already a musical hit and is quite timely considering that Nepalis aren't using their khukuris against outside enemies anymore, but against each other. 'We already

have Nepali blood and a Nepali mind, what we need now is Nepali sight,' go the words of the song.

Rajendra's new job doesn't allow him much time to write. But sometimes the goddess of knowledge inspires him, "When Saraswati comes to me, I become most creative no matter how occupied I am with other work." He has written several gazals in Hindi that even singer Ghulam Ali has complimented. Rajendra is waiting for the right channel to distribute them to the Indian market. So, what inspires this man in combat fatigue to wax lyrical? It is the simple things: words of wisdom from an old woman working her land in a remote part of Nepal, or the dove cooing from a tree branch on a clear morning. "Philosophy is not what you get from books," he says. "It is what the average person says and thinks."

Rajendra thought dealing with the media would be messy and a potential minefield. Then the poet stepped in. He quips with feigned surprise: "I began to discover that press people too are like other human beings." ● (Navin Singh Khadka)



MIN BAJRACHARYA



Nitpicking in Nepal

Every time human beings find themselves in a different cultural milieu than the one they are familiar with, they suffer from a phenomenon known as culture shock and need expert guidance in local customs and etiquette. This is especially true of countries like Nepal where the habits of easy-going natives may not be familiar to first-time visitors: like the tradition of taking a forced three-day nationwide holiday twice a month. The rules of the road are fairly simple: Two Legs Good, Four Wheels Bad, Three Legs Bad Unless It Is Three Wheels And Has Wings. Rollerblades Are OK, Cablecars Are Not. Rickshaws Are Fine, Autorickshaws Are Not. See, if you didn't know these quaint local customs you would be completely lost in Nepal. That is why we have taken the liberty of presenting a list of simple do's and don'ts and the general rule of thumb which is: while in Nepal, be as

disgusting as us.

Public Grooming
Nepalis love to nitpick and can be seen doing this in public on the sidewalks, on terraces and balconies at all times of day and night. Usually anyone can nitpick anyone else, but since looking for lice on someone else's hair is an indication of some degree of mutual intimacy it is frowned upon if it involves two or more individuals of the same sex. It is perfectly acceptable, however, to approach a stranger sitting next to you in a long-distance bus and after necessary introductions start looking for nits in each others' hair. Besides being a great way to pass the time, it is also mutually hygienic.

Toothpicking is another favourite past-time and, luckily in Nepal, there are no rules governing how people with advanced halitosis should pick their teeth in polite company. This is why many foreigners opt to make Nepal their home because they don't have to worry about exhuming items of food from their molars within earshot of guests sitting around the table. We are

proud to say that there is complete freedom within Nepal's territorial waters as far as self-exploration of the oral cavity is concerned.

The nose is another orifice that we Nepalis are proud to call our own. Thanks to our ancestors who risked life and limb to explore its uncharted upper reaches, the terrain map has been handed from generation to generation through word of mouth so that today we modern Nepalis are quite familiar with our nooks and crannies. The probe of choice for nasal expeditions is the pinkie with a nail that is designed to grow into the shape of a tiny shovel that can efficiently mine nuggets of precious booty deep inside our snouts.

Because of space constraints we can't go into the conventions of etiquette governing the grooming of other body parts. Suffice to say that Nepal also has a laissez faire attitude about expelling body fluids. A visitor to Nepal need not be unduly concerned about clearing the throat in public. It is done with a quick intake of breath to dislodge the primary target area in the oesophagus, pneumatically roll it into an aerodynamically stable glob, and then with the same technology used in shoulder-fired heatseeking missiles expectorate this biological warhead at an innocent bystander.

Next week we will be looking at the endearing Nepali passion of rummaging through the toolbox in public.



UNDER MY HAT
Kunda Dixit

DEEPESH BHATTARAI

SABIN RAI

JEMS PRADHAN

EVENT MANAGEMENT BY

TAAL MUSIC

SAV NO TO DRUGS

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE

WAVE

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

नेपाल

सधै अगाडि

TAAL MUSIC presents

MEGA LIVE

CONCERT

visit us at www.taalmusic.com

SUPPORTED BY

2pm NOODLES

BIRATNAGAR

2nd Jestha, 2pm

Sahid Rangasala

DHARAN

4th Jestha, 2pm

Public School

KATHMANDU

9th Jestha, 2pm

BICC Ground

Sarayu Truly International

Rs. 100/- ONLY

Peace

Nepathya

Tour

2004

Final programme out of Kathmandu

tommorrow in **Narayanghat**

next weekend in **Kathmandu**

Narayanghat

Date : 22nd May, Saturday

Time : 3:00 PM

Venue: Indradev Chalcitra Mandir

Local Partner: Balkumari H. Sec. School

Narayani Kala Mandir

Ticket Contact: Narayani Kala Mandir

Broadcast Partner: Synergy FM

Kathmandu

Date : 28th and 29th May

Time : 3:00 PM

Venue: BICC-Sagarmatha Hall, Naya Bannahwor

Local Partner: Vijaya Memorial H. Sec. School,

Dillibazar, Madan Memorial School, Lalitpur

Ticket Contact: Local Partner &

repa - nya 5542640, 5552838

Broadcast Partner: Kantipur FM

Kantipur TV

Tulsipur-Dang

Dhangadi

Butwal

Bhairahawa

Pokhara

Tansen, Palpa

Birgunj

Dharan

Dhulabari-Jhapa

Damak

Janakpur

Hetauda

Narayanghat

Kathmandu

Organised By: **repa-nya**

CDO Regd No. 194/056/57 Lalitpur, Central Region Postal Regd. No. 04/058/59