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# Getting down to business

Singha Darbar is uncharacteristically defiant towards donors

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

S

tung by mounting international criticism, the royal government has lashed back at critics, accusing them of double standards.

In one of his first statements after being sworn in, the king's point man in the government, Tulsi Giri, told media not to call the rebels 'Maoists' and said American and Indian criticism was "unfortunate". He added: "Every country has its own problems, it's not fair to make comments on how Nepal is dealing with it."

As Nepal-based ambassadors were recalled en masse this week, there seemed to be a sense of uncharacteristic defiance in Singha Darbar.

Editorial

Been there, done that

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The government derives 80 percent of its development budget from donors and even uses aid to cover some regular expenditure. "This is new," admitted one government official, "there is a backlash against foreign critics that I have never seen before."


To be sure, the government is playing good cop-bad cop. Some, like Finance

Minister Madhukar Rana, have taken a softer line assuring that curbs on media and other freedoms will be relaxed. This came as International Federation of Journalists and Amnesty International reps were in Kathmandu. Both issued strong statements Thursday denouncing curbs on freedom.

The government is also exploiting disagreement within the donor community about a possible aid moratorium. Among donors taking the more radical approach have been the Danes, Swiss and Norwegians. For instnace, they have been openly critical of the Asian Development Bank for signing a \$20 million loan the day after the royal takeover. Even the Americans say they are under pressure to reexamine assistance.

On Monday, DANIDA became the first aid agency to announce a suspension of development aid to the government, but said it would continue help civil society. "Donors want to work without being monitored or audited, we can't let that happen," one finance ministry official told us. Some donors at a meeting on Thursday were peeved the Danes announced the aid cut unilaterally. Others are taking a wait-and-see approach (*see p 5*) but all donors

First Deputy Chairman Tulsi Giri at Singha Darbar on Tuesday with IT adviser, Sharad Shah.



share concerns about working conditions in the field. "We will continue as far as possible," said Mark Mallalieu of DfID. "But the two key criteria will be safety of our staff and whether our programs can

continue to be effective."

Finance Minister Madhukar Rana told us he is in touch with donors: "They asked us if the government accepts their operating guidelines, and we said we support it." ●



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## “Hang in there”

Nepali Times: Your reactions on the developments after the royal takeover?

**James Moriarty:** We have said we are extremely worried and we want to see the detainees released immediately. We want to see constitutional freedoms restored. We also want to see the government reaching out to the political parties.

**What do you think will happen now?**

The king has said that he has two desires, one is to move back to multiparty democracy and the other to address effectively the insurgency. We totally support both those goals and the question is how this is going to be done.

**What has been your role in all this?**

We are talking to the government. We are telling them what we think needs to be done. We have had to unfortunately remind the government that our assistance is under constant review and that these events are putting pressure on our provision of the assistance for the government of Nepal.

**You met the king before February First, did you know what was coming?**

I want to state this as categorically as I can, I had no idea that this was happening. We had made it clear we thought multiparty democracy was the way to go. We were worried any sort of unilateral move by the king would end up walking the country back away from democracy.

There are allegations that was for public consumption but you covertly backed the royal move.

I say that is absolutely false. I know that is absolutely false. I am in a position to know and that is absolutely not the case.

**How optimistic are you that multiparty democracy will be restored?**

I think democracy here has deeper roots. I realise that Nepal is facing huge problems and the king says that is why he had to act. So be it. But again, he has stated that his goals are to return to multiparty democracy and address the Maoist insurgency effectively. We look forward to his doing so.

**How much coordination is there among India, Britain and you?**

We work very closely because all three share the same goals, which curiously enough are the goals stated by the king. I am in constant contact with my colleagues here. Our capitals are talking about Nepal very regularly. There is a lot of coordination going on.

**Any message for the Nepali people?**

I would urge the people of Nepal to hang in there, to unite, to face the insurgency and also to rebuild democratic institutions.



KIRAN PANDAY

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struggle against each other. NC's weakness began when the parliament was first dissolved. Political instability began as soon as NC tried everything to dissolve the UML government led by late Manmohan Adhikari. The Mallik Commission did not take any action against those involved in atrocities during the People's Movement of 1990 and the parties aligned with those individuals. Consequently, the Nepali Congress split. UML was also divided into two factions. The party leaders were intent on going to any extreme to grab power and seat in the government. As for now, a united movement for democracy is not possible unless the parties rid themselves of their bad reputation and bring a complete change in themselves. Instead of announcing a new movement in a hurry, the parties should find a new direction in order to lead the people with a completely new political vision and concern.

### Hungry refugees

*Nepal Samacharpatra*, 14 February

BANKE—People seeking refuge at a camp in Rajena, Banke are facing serious food crisis. They ran away from their villages in the Karnali zone and other mid-western districts to escape the Maoists. Living on their daily wages, the relief aid provided by some social organisations has stopped. After the recent political changes in the country, they say they are facing problems finding employment. The Maoists forced Hasta Ale Magar of Danda Parajul VDC, Dailekh to leave the village with her four children and husband. Two hundred other displaced families from Dailekh, Humla, Mugu, Jumla, Kalikot, Achham and Jajarkot live here. “We left our villages to the rebels hoping that the government would come to our rescue,” said Dil Bahadur Shahi of Badabhairab VDC, Dailekh. He was forced to leave the village two years ago for supporting the Nepali Congress. He says the families are on the verge of starvation. Some charities have donated 5,260 kg of rice, dal, oil and salt for the last three months, says Chandra Buda head of the refugee camp. The Red Cross has provided tents and utensils and the Sahara Samuha has given 50 blankets. INF in association with Rudec Nepal have promised to build 85 huts but was able to complete only 57. “What we want is employment, not dal and rice,” says Lok Bahadur Shahi of Achham. The number of refugees is increasing.



British Embassy  
Kathmandu

## NOTICE TO ALL BRITISH NATIONALS

*Don't lose your right to vote*

The Electoral Commission ( UK ) has launched a campaign reminding British citizens living abroad that they need to be on the electoral register to vote in UK elections and referendums. If a UK Parliamentary general election were to be called for 5 May, electors would need to register by 11 March to be able to vote.

British citizens living abroad but who have been registered to vote in the UK within the last 15 years can apply to be overseas voters. If they were too young to register when leaving the UK, their parent or guardian must have been registered.

An electoral registration form can be found on The Electoral Commission's voter information site, [www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk), which also contains clear details of how to register as an overseas voter. The completed registration form should be returned to the electoral registration office for the address where they were last registered to vote in the UK.

When overseas voters register, they can also apply to vote by post if they want a ballot paper sent to them, or by proxy if they want someone else to vote on their behalf. Overseas voters are eligible to vote in elections for the UK Parliament and the European Parliament.

Angela Salt, Communication Director at The Electoral Commission, says: "It's important that people realise that they need to be on the electoral register to be able to vote. If there were to be an election in May, the cut-off date to make sure you are on the electoral register is 11 March. We are urging eligible British citizens living abroad to act now so they don't lose their right to vote."



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## BEEN THERE, DONE THAT

The diplomatic grapevine and the Internet discussions are humming with a sanctimonious cry for sanctions. There is loose talk of a trade and investment embargo, a tourist boycott and one donor has already opted for an aid moratorium.

A section of our diaspora democrats have joined in the frenzy through group emails to register their transcontinental outrage at February First. A word of caution here to these long-range well-wishers of our freedom.

Kathmandu based ambassadors who have been called back to their capitals for consultations this week and the governments they represent must be advised against taking any knee-jerk and precipitous display of pique. For any retaliation, you have to ask yourself: who are you trying to punish? As Nepalis in Nepal it is our sincere suggestion that lobbying for sanctions, embargos, boycotts or moratoria will end up hurting the very people who have borne the brunt of the conflict in the past nine years and decades of misgovernance.

The challenge of service delivery and the need for aid is even greater now that the conflict is more entrenched. Both sides are hunkering down for the long haul. In the present information vacuum when society's feedback mechanism is thrown into low gear, response time for emergencies will also be delayed. That is why it is dangerous to talk about cutting aid at a time when the Nepali people need it more.

How have sanctions fared elsewhere? Take Burma. The country is vilified the world over, it is a pariah state but all that sanctions have done is pushed the Burmese people deeper into wretchedness while the junta thumbs its nose at the world and continues to keep freedom fighters in cruel detention. Burma's neighbours dance with the generals and have made a packet. Sanctions only harden the defiance of regimes and force them to retreat into their shells.

And New Delhi must desist from any temptation of re-enacting its petty-minded 1989-90 economic blockade of this country. It will have to go back in history to evaluate how shutting out Nepal failed to make a major economic impact and only convinced most Nepalis that their worst supicions of Big Brother were true. A repeat would allow those at the helm this time to rally domestic public opinion against what they will label foreign bullying and then retreat into xenophobia to garner legitimacy.

As must be apparent to a lot of you, we are no great fans of what has happened here. We have spoken out against absolutism, even though at the present time we may be forced by circumstance to express these beliefs in somewhat intricate sentence structures. The sense of time-warp has been intense, especially in the past week of resurrections. We've been there and done that all before.

All this is not to say that pressure should not be brought to bear. But use a scalpel, not an axe. Be precision-guided to avoid collateral misery.



KIRAN PANDAY

# At the helm

## Ethics of anguish and the solace of history

The king has sliced the Gordian knot and ended the triangular stalemate between the Maoists, the Nepali state and agitating political parties that had been snuffing the life out of the country.

At the very least the dramatic February First declaration will have the salutary effect of forcing both internal and external forces to show their hands. The festering political stalemate and moral ambiguity had been prolonging the crisis by inhibiting major actors from pursuing their position to their logical conclusions. The royal initiative will bring about a final polarisation in Nepali politics.

### GUEST COLUMN Saubhagya Shah



Denial of personal responsibility by invoking vacuous platitudes or retroactive abdication of agency has been a part and parcel of Nepali public culture. In order to stop the country from spinning further into chaos and mayhem, someone, somewhere had to take charge of the situation and say that the buck stops here. Only when there is clear acknowledgment of responsibility can there be accountability. The crown has now mandated for itself the specific task of ending the insurgency and creating an effective environment for the substantive exercise of multiparty system within three years.

Circumstances have forced the king to act. And he can only be vindicated by how well he delivers on these two specific objectives. The notion of *karma* in the *Gita* has a lesson here: it is the nature of crises on a *Mahabarat* scale that not all variables will be known beforehand but those at the helm must act to restore order using their best judgment, sincere intention and face history as honourable beings without excuses.

Everyone appreciates that this is a potentially risky course of action but the peril of not doing

anything was graver. It is not only selfish but also irresponsible for people on the top floor to pretend that it is all normal when those living in the basement have already been incinerated. Somebody has to call for an evacuation and douse the blaze before it consumes the whole building. Extraordinary situations call for extraordinary measures and the lived experience tells most Nepalis that this is the most extreme phase in their nation's 236 year history.

A number of foreign governments, the EU, the UN and others have criticised the monarch's attempt at resolving the present crisis. While their concern are entirely welcome, there is also a need here to liberate the Occident of its heavy civilisational burden by disabusing it of the cosy misconception that only the west has the good of the Third World people at heart and if allowed to act alone, local governments will go berserk and ruin themselves and the planet.

While foreign players intervene because of their contingent ideological position and strategic interest, the local states must act for a longer term stake and also because it is a good thing to do. It is hard to believe in this age of global moral asymmetry that there can be goodness that is of entirely indigenous origin. Besides a general shared concern for citizens' welfare, progress and human rights, there is one consideration that distinguishes the local state from all other actors: while foreigners cannot be bothered with the territorial and ideological continuity of the Nepali nation-state (westerners generally tend to scoff at nationalism as an infantile infatuation, except when it concerns their own nation) the crown must be cognisant of this imperative as well.

The fate of Kashmir, Tibet and Sikkim are sobering reminders that notwithstanding their beauties, the Himalaya remains

treacherous terrain for the survival of small independent nations. None of these countries have been allowed to exist beyond their monarchic lines, this should be pause for thought to all those who seek to mould Nepal into their own image.

When the Indian government issued a statement describing King Gyanendra's move as a 'setback' for democracy and the need to ensure the 'safety and welfare' of the political leaders and parties in Nepal, one suspects that the babu in South Block must have been doing so tongue-in-cheek. Was the decade-long anarchy and killings a blessing for our democracy? And why this protective instinct only for the political leaders...what about Nepal and Nepalis in general?

What a pity that New Delhi has not extended this enthusiasm for democracy and political parties elsewhere, say, to Bhutan. On the contrary, the Indian government has summarily imprisoned Bhutani leaders who were peacefully asking for a more equitable and democratic set-up in Bhutan and persecuted Bhutani political parties in exile.

Given this glaring doublespeak, the patronising gesture thrown towards the Nepali political class ought to be taken with caution. As BP Koirala discerned, the Indian establishment has always sought to exacerbate the differences between the political parties and the monarch and set them up in irreconcilable antagonism for its own designs. Rather than locking themselves into the alien embrace in a moment of crisis, the various political formations in Nepal will do well to let go of their egos, sort out their differences internally, forge a lasting national accord and collectively work to hasten the transition back to normalcy.

However seductive, the bad taste left behind by Gandaki, Mahakali, Laxmanpur and Kalapani grabs should remind all that neighbourly solace does not come free or even cheap. Internal compromises and consolidations have always been historically vindicated and and morally dignified than secret foreign concessions. ●

Saubhagya Shah received his PhD in social anthropology from Harvard University and currently teaches at Tribhuban University.

# First the good news

## Everything will turn out all right in the end, it always does

In keeping with the spirit of the times, the Fourth Estate has become phenomenally responsible. In the changed circumstances, this is as it should be. Even though the press, unlike the other

three estates of the state, does not

draw upon the public exchequer, it has a responsibility towards the society it serves. Services of desired nature can't be assured if journalists insist on the freedom to be irresponsible. Since national interest, as outlined by the appropriate authority, supersedes all other interests, it is the duty

of the media to be dependable, to protect it at all costs.

For far too long, we in the media have been revelling in reporting calamities, disasters and scandals. Now we must desist from commenting upon the appointment of stalwarts Tulsi Giri and Kirtinidhi Bista to the king's council of ministers. Instead, the time has come to go back to our roots and discover the ways we exchanged news and views in the past. We need to re-invent traditions to suit present realities. Unlike the contemporary media, which devotes prime time to sensationalising, in the past we wrote with emphatic reassurances. We strove to ensure that others did not get too worried about the state of the state.

Traditionally, when a Nepali writes home the salutation often begins with the invocations of blessings from the local deity. This 'first, the good news' has served to keep our hopes alive. We seldom get to the 'now the bad news' part. We are used to enduring hard times in silence and telling folks back home not to worry. 'Everything will turn out fine,' we keep saying. Surprisingly, in the end, the world does go through the karmic cycle and bring redress to the righteous.

Telephones destroyed this quaint custom of writing long letters to indicate nothing more than the fact that the writer was still alive. With the phone in your face, carping comes naturally: bad weather, unfriendly neighbour, dull newspapers, whatever. There is never a shortage of things to grumble about.

The jump from snail mail to Internet was so sudden that it took many of us months to get used to writing concise letters that immediately got to the point.

No longer could we meander about the fallow fields, the treeless streets, the cowering street fauna, the doves that flew away and the crows that looked lost.

Still, there are people who write e-mails that take longer than half-an-hour to read and beat around the bush. Like the telephone, emails just increase our worries.

When it comes to encouraging mindless gossip and tasteless jokes, there is nothing to beat SMS. That is one good thing you can say about the communication curtailment: no unsolicited beep-beep heralding the arrival of yet another recycled joke. Babies cry to express pain and draw the attention of their mothers. But when there is danger, even a concerned mother sometimes stops her child from crying. She cries later to compensate for her own cruelty.

This is the message on the 54<sup>th</sup> democracy day Phalgun Sat: everything will turn out fine as it always does in this kingdom of Gods. ●

### STATE OF THE STATE CK Lal





## LETTERS

## PRUNING TREES

Not certain if losing some trees is a complete disaster, as your editorial states ('Hariyo ban Nepalko dhan', #233). Some pruning was clearly needed to get rid of the parasites living off them: they were beginning to stifle and choke the trees, endangering the very forest.

**K Limbu, Canada**

● Although I don't agree with them, I've heard a large number of people in Kathmandu supporting the king's action because the democratic government failed to bring peace. You reflect this argument in your editorial ('Between the lines', #234). It is somewhat understandable but, as they say, it's a bit more complicated than that. Depends on the price of peace, I suppose. That is if the move isn't absolutely counterproductive for the cause of peace to begin with.

**Janardan Riddhi, email**

● In his words of wisdom to the international community, Dipta Shah in your guest column ('Reason over reaction', #234) has advised them not to formulate their course of action based on the assumption that a minority two percentage accounts for the collective views of a nation of 24 million. Well, in the present situation, can he provide a suggestion to the international community (or anyone interested to know) how they can really take account of collective views of a nation of 24 million? I agree with Shah that we should take pride in being Nepali. But to be able to do so, CK Lal should be able to continue with his column before the nuaran of Ashwini Nepal's baby daughter.

Shah is definitely one of the privileged few who can speak his heart out under the present circumstances. This is the reason that his argument lacks credibility to be given any serious consideration by the international community (or anyone else). If you continue to give space to the likes of Shah and Ranjit Rauniyar ('Give the king a chance', #233) the difference between your paper and Channel Nepal may no longer be relevant.

**A Upreti, Kathmandu**

● I agree with Dipta Shah that there has been a serious lack of perspectives on the issue from Nepali citizens who are affected most by the recent political development. But how can they express this when they can't speak out? Although he starts his article with emphasis for the need for a range perspectives, by the end of the article he hardly leaves any space for other views out there. His conclusion that 'there is no honour, no pride in calling ourselves Nepalis' implies it is true only if we agree with his prescription. How honourable is it to support a conflict in which Nepalis are killed at the hands of other Nepalis? Group thinking in a decision-making process by like-minded individuals is far more dangerous than the threat of an adversary.

**Sujan Kayastha, Webster University, USA**

● Throughout its 250-year history, the Nepali monarchy has never stood in the way of political reform, indeed it has supported it. It could even be argued that, if the king had been allowed to play a greater role in government over the last 14 years of multi-party democracy, the outcome might have been very different. The mismanagement and corruption espoused by the political parties gave those seeking reform little option other than to resort to violence. The violent response of the government served merely to add fuel to the fire. The last 14 years of misrule in Nepal have led to a political vacuum in which leadership has been sadly lacking. The imposition of royal rule has been welcomed by a population desperate for peace and stability. It is still open to question whether the king will be able to deliver this but at the very least he deserves a chance. Rather than condemn King Gyanendra's takeover on February First, those who claim to be friends of Nepal should provide him with the resources he needs to bring about a peaceful resolution to the conflict and rebuild his war-ravaged nation. Above all else, the people of Nepal most desperately want to be able to go about their daily lives without fear, confident in the rule of law and under a leader who can rightly claim to represent their true interests. At Losar, let's pray that the Gods will grant our leaders, whether elected or hereditary, the wisdom to reject violence and seek to resolve differences through wisdom and compassion. At last, in Nepal, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Let us give that light an opportunity to shine brightly, healing the wounds inflicted by nine years of war.

**Ishwor Gurung, Pokhara**

● The situation in Nepal demands a deep introspection by both the political leadership and the people. What we are facing now is the result of years of neglect on both sides. There is no point in blaming just the political parties for this mess. We the people are as responsible for allowing them to do whatever they wanted without holding them accountable. The leaders are responsible for treating the country like an animal carcass. Now we stare at each other wondering what we should do next. Why not clear the mess and start afresh? Let us begin peace talks with the Maoists then move on to fair elections inculcating a culture of accountability and responsibility.

**Bhumika Ghimire, Dunedin, Florida, USA**

● Loved your Page Three Girl ('Ten days old', #235) What a great way to fill the gap left by CK Lal.

**T K Singh, Kathmandu**

● Congratulations on your ability to make expunged paragraphs magically reappear on your home page. These past weeks have brought out the creative genius of Nepali journalists.

**Marco Gianoli, email**

● Hearty congratulations to you and your dedicated readers on the concern you have all shown for the Valley's greenery. Finally

we are beginning to see some concerned commentary on this topic of great environmental importance. But while I am on a congratulatory frame of mind, let me bring to your attention the valiant conservation and recycling efforts being made to reintroduce leopards who have not changed their spots back into the wild. These species have now been rescued from the brink of extinction, a laudable conservation achievement and no mean feat.

**Name withheld, email**

## DUNG HEAP

I was really happy to read 'Hurrah, Nepal's future is in the dung heap' by Naresh Newar (#234). I wish to congratulate him for crediting the pioneering work of John Finlay who made the foundation of the GGC biogas model that has become popular in Nepal. Its present operation rate by BSP-Nepal alone is more than 97 percent, which is a lot higher than India, China and elsewhere. The article also rightly cites the contribution of Fr BR Saubolle, who built the first biogas plant in Nepal in 1955 at St Xavier's, Godavari. In fact my recent publication *Biomethanation and Energy Application in Nepal* is dedicated to Saubolle. Let us give due credit and recognition to all Nepalis and expatriates who have worked hard to promote biogas technology in Nepal.

**Amrit B Karki, Jhamsikhel**

● Thanks Naresh Newar for the article on gobar gas. Believe it or not, it is the most uplifting article I have read from or about Nepal in a long time. Seems like this press censorship is at least doing something good: we are talking about something other than those never-ending depressing stories about politicians and politics. Maybe the time has come for journalists to discuss more of the social and economic issues which have been ignored for a long time.

**Name withheld, email**

## NEW NEWS

My compliments to Shrinkala Sharma for her thought provoking article ('23 weeks to go', #234) on the opportunities now present to journalists and newspapers to review and improve their reporting style. She has hit the nail on the head. I hope her words are acted upon and that we see more thought provoking journalist styles in the future with articles that go beyond the surface of events. For example, rather than an endless list of bland reports of meeting agendas, let's have some background and results achieved. Instead of statistical repetitions regarding accidents or conflicts, let's hear about effects on the people involved and their families and what should be done to prevent similar happenings in the future. Tell us about results and resolutions. Make our minds work. In my opinion, real news is about people and research into how current events affect their lives.

There are some very good journalists in Nepal. Although the security measure puts some limits on what can be written, there is a wealth of material out there that

will not cross any censorship guideline. I compliment the *Nepali Times* for its excellent and insightful articles. You have some very intelligent writers. I wish their skills were emulated by more of the daily papers in Nepal and the reporters producing scripts for tv newscasters.

**Elsie James, Canada**

## UKRAINIAN ELECTIONS

I am shocked by Moscow-based Jugal Bhurtel's highly polemic and illogical article 'The next great game' (#233). The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe that watched the elections in Ukraine and obviously registered the election fraud is an organisation of 55 states worldwide, including practically all of Europe and even the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and other members of the old Soviet Union. Due to this, the Moscow-supported Victor Yanukovich won and for that reason the Russians with President Putin of course, did not want the outcome to be questioned. Fortunately, the Ukrainian people dared to protest. Maybe they dared because they knew the world was watching. What would have been more natural than to demand new elections?

Had Yanukovich's supporters been in the majority, they could have shown it even more clearly in the new elections. But this was not the case. So to claim that the OSCE has caused this outcome is ridiculous. Concerning the assertion that the supreme court was forced to order an unprecedented and utterly unconstitutional third round: do you think that the Ukrainian Supreme Court ordered new elections because it doubted the outcome of the first or that the 55 member states of the OSCE agreed to force it to take illegal action?

I think Russia is very irritated that the world is closely watching its authoritarian political practices of intimidation. Next it seems to fear for the regimes in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. To belittle the protesting organisations there Bhurtel ridicules them for choosing a colour for their movement. Some old Soviet states seem to be afraid of a new world order that asks for more transparency and more influence of their own citizens. What is easier in that case than to claim negative influences of outside forces? The author obviously tries to find supporters of his distorted ideas in Nepal. But where do you think you would find greater personal freedom and justice? Where would you rather choose to live? In the states of the old Soviet Union or in Europe? Please consider clearly the influences you open yourself up to.

**Elisabeth Pitzenbauer, Germany**

## UNDER MY HAT

Inspite of the sad mood and heavy heart, Kunda Dixit's latest Under My hat ('All the news that is fit to print', #234) brought a smile to my face.

**Arun Upadhyay, email**



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# Radio activity

Nepal set an example in South Asia with community empowerment through radio, now it's all on hold

MANISHA ARYAL in PALUNG

When Hari Bahadur Karki, 72, learnt last May that his grandson, Arjun, was diagnosed with blood cancer, he was devastated. He had heard about a local radio starting up in Katuwal Danda in Palung VDC. He walked up to the hilltop where station manager Bishnu Hari Dhakal and his staff were preparing for test transmissions and got straight to the point.

"My grandson has blood cancer," Karki said, "The doctors say he will not survive unless he has chemotherapy." Karki had no idea what he would accomplish by rushing up to the station. The radio producers ushered Karki into their newly constructed studio, turned on the microphone and asked him to tell his story. The result was a 30-second radio spot:

*My name is Hari Bahadur Karki. I live here in Palung I have been a road labourer all my life. I have 11 daughters and four sons. My 17-year-old grandson, who goes to Janakalyan High School and is in the school's volleyball team, has been diagnosed with blood cancer. I am poor and have no savings. Please help save his life.*

Over the next weeks, Palung FM played the spot many times. "The response was overwhelming," recalls Karki. "People I barely knew stopped to inquire about Arjun." They would reach into their pockets and pull out 100, 500 or even 1,000 rupee notes. "Six-year-old students handed over lunch money for Arjun's treatment."

Others who did not know where the family lived came up to the studio to leave their envelopes. It became difficult for the station to keep track of people's contributions, so the

station asked Palung Multipurpose Cooperative Bank to open an account for Arjun Karki. In the two months following the first broadcast, Rs 150,000 had been raised.

Proponents of community radio believe this to be the spirit of local FM radios: they are sensitive to have the tools to serve the needs of communities they operate in. In countries as ethnically, geographically and linguistically diverse as Nepal, they says hundreds of local FMs should be allowed to bloom. One national broadcaster may hold the country together with nationally relevant content but it will never address the needs of local communities.

When it started in 1996, Radio Sagarmatha in Kathmandu became a pioneer of public service broadcasting and a symbol of free airwaves not just in Nepal but in South Asia. Since then, a rainbow of 57 FM stations have been launched with a listenership of eight million and providing employment to over 2,500 people. The ownership pattern is diverse but even the most commercial stations have one thing in common with community stations: local content and local programming. Local FMs are more relevant to local needs. Radio Nepal may aim to reach all 25 million Nepalis but community radio has catered to villages all over the country.

While state broadcasters in the region serve as propaganda arms of the government of the day, local FM use airtime covering local issues—politics, governance, development, culture and society.

Until 31 January, Nepal was the only country in South Asia to have opened up the airwaves to independent community and

commercial FM stations. We were unique in that our broadcasting rights which included our right to independent news and analysis. While governments of other South Asian countries were hesitant to let go of the airwaves Nepal became a beacon of hope to people who believed in the power and potential of independent FMs in empowering local communities.



Hari Bahadur Karki and the mast of the FM radio in Palung (below)

Now with the 4 February circular from the Ministry of Information and Communications that FM stations limit themselves to broadcasting 'pure entertainment-based programs' and not broadcast 'news, information, articles, thoughts/ideas and expression' the space for educational and information content on radio will shrink.

Thousands of Arjun Karkis in Palung, Baglung, Ilam, Chitwan, Nepalganj, Jumla and across Nepal, who had come to depend on their local FM are now deprived of credible and relevant information and can't use the medium to communicate with their communities. ●



MANISHA ARYAL



## Further from home, closer we are

During the riots that wracked Kathmandu in September following the deaths of 12 Nepalis in Iraq, I whiled away time spent stranded by the curfews online, reassuring Nepali friends all over the world: yes, things are OK, serious but OK, and yes if you insist, I can try calling your mother and make sure she's OK too. I remember being slightly irritated at their apparent agitation: riots, unrest, tear gas. So what else is new in Kathmandu?

Five months later, on the opposite side of the globe, I'm finally getting it. Logging on to MSN Messenger on Tuesday evening, a message flashed up almost instantly from a friend studying in New York. Something has happened in Nepal...

NEPALI PAN  
Jemima Sherpa



And so it began. Five hours later, I was still online, trawling the Internet for new developments, keeping one eye on the tv for sketchy reports from

BBC and CNN. I wasn't alone, slowly my online contact list filled up with young expatriate Nepalis, living everywhere from Australia to India, China to the UK. Links to news sites were exchanged, reports on the latest attempt to call home and of course the inevitable (after all, we are Nepalis) unfounded speculation and beginnings of conspiracy theories.

The real kicker is this: these young Nepalis I knew when we were 'back home' never had an interest in politics. The last time the state of emergency was declared in 2003, I doubt many of them even noticed except perhaps to moan about the heavy police checking on the way home from an evening in Thamel. Politics and the state of the nation are generally vague concepts for my generation of young, educated Nepalis. We live in a war zone and yet can be blissfully unaffected by it all, at least, until that holy grail of a scholarship and visa have been attained.

And then, as soon as that plane has taken off, the borders crossed and the entry stamps stamped, we begin to care. Suddenly logging on to nepalnews.com becomes a daily ritual, ears perk up at the mention of Nepal and the word Kathmandu always seems to jump out of the news bar.

Ironically, news about Nepal travels far faster around the world than it ever does in the eye of the storm in the home country. Distance somehow transforms us into a concerned and vocal community, and not just the younger crowd. Opinion pages and letters to many Nepali papers and magazines, including *Nepali Times*, are filled with non-resident Nepalis commenting from outside the country, passionate tirades on political and social detail from expats who haven't been home in over a decade. Forums, message boards and chatrooms on Nepali websites are also full of Nepalis posting from abroad. Meanwhile, there is an awesome silence on the home front.

Stockholm Syndrome? A perverse impulse to watch a disaster narrowly escaped? A desperate attempt to retain some identity? Just homesickness and worry for those left behind? The psychology of exactly how absence makes the heart grow fonder is beyond me but no matter what happens in Nepal, we can be assured that the diaspora will be watching, passive perhaps but definitely present. Here's a choice phrase from Nepalis online on 1 February: *Ke garne? Jai Nepal.*

## The Nepali diaspora is watching and worrying



### Danish aid

The Danish government has suspended new aid agreements and projects in the pipeline for Nepal. “There will be no new aid agreement and the preparations for new projects have been put on hold for now,” said Danish Charge d’Affaires Gert Meinecke on Tuesday before leaving for Copenhagen. His government has called him for consultations over the recent developments in Nepal. Meinecke is one of the western diplomats called by their government for consultations. The German ambassador Franz Erwin Ring and the Norwegian ambassador Tore Toreng have also left. The French ambassador Michel Jolivet is already in Paris. British ambassador Keith Bloomfield left for London on Monday while Indian ambassador Shiv Shankar Mukherjee flew to New Delhi on Monday afternoon. As major foreign missions in Kathmandu await their capital’s instructions on how to go about things, Denmark has become the first country to suspend aid. “In response to the developments after February First, our government has instructed us not to sign any new agreement with the Nepali government for now,” said Martin Hermann, deputy chief of mission at the Danish Embassy. “Those projects which are currently underway will also be reviewed.” The Danish government, however, will continue providing assistance to civil society, he added.

### Dailekh defiance

The residents of Dailekh have boycotted the bandas and blockades called by the Maoists. They said they have had enough of Maoist activities ranging from extortion to abductions. These were the same people who rebelled against the Maoists a few months ago and their spirit has not died. “They always gave us trouble so we protested against them. Now the Maoists don’t come to our village,” says Pabitra Khadka of Gamaudi. Because the Maoists aren’t allowed into the Dailekh villages, they are unable to inform the villagers about bandas, chakka jams or blockades. Hence, it doesn’t affect the village even when they call these protest demonstrations. The people still go to work or to shop in Dailekh Bajar. “Earlier as soon as we heard rumours of a banda we would be scared to walk the streets but now seeing that the Maoists don’t have any influence, we are no longer scared,” says Basanti Khadka from Cheudipusa.

### Through fares to India

Indian Airlines has announced its ‘Through Fare’ scheme between points to and from India to Kathmandu from 16 February to 30 September. The fares are applicable for travel between Kathmandu and 20 cities in India. The flights can be taken either via Delhi or Calcutta. Indian Airlines says the fares are “substantially cheaper” than sector fares and are available for Indians, Nepalis and Bhutanis. “We hope that Nepalis will take maximum advantage of this scheme,” says Indian Airlines country manager for Nepal, Nirbhik Rai Narang.

### Bank accounts

Based on the first six month’s unaudited accounts, Everest Bank’s operating profit showed an increase of 21 percent over last year reaching a figure of about Rs 186.92 million for the first six months of this fiscal year. The bank’s credit has grown by 25 percent and total deposits of the bank have increased by 18 percent. The bank continues to maintain strict control over its Non Performing Assets (NPA) which remains at 1.7 percent in gross value.



# ‘Chicago Boys’

Chile’s lesson: curtailing criticism means policy errors go uncorrected

The Latin American country Chile, stretching from Peru to Argentina, provides an intriguing link between a nation’s political life and its economic vibrancy or lack thereof. From 1933 to 1973, Chile had many political parties which contested in elections that threw up eight consecutive presidents of six

STRICTLY BUSINESS

Ashutosh Tiwari

different ideological persuasions. These presidents attempted various economic reforms, none of which lasted for long. Indeed, the pendulum swung from one side to the other, finally leading Marxist Salvador Allende to be elected president in 1970. Allende increased his government’s control over all aspects of the economy, starting by printing money to pave the way for the ‘Chilean road to socialism’.

Allende’s attempts to redesign the economy soon ran into trouble. By 1973, Chile’s per capita annual GDP growth rate nosedived to minus 4.3 percent, inflation was at a whopping 600 percent and negative growth in the wage levels made even housewives join protest rallies. All these led not to civil war but mass disenchantment, which made it easy for General Augusto Pinochet to assume power in September 1973.

With a cabal of advisers who clamped down on all political rights, Pinochet went on to rule Chile until 1990. Initially, Pinochet was at a loss as to what to do with the economy. He tried to run it through a central command. But when his attempts failed, he filled the Ministry of Finance with so-called ‘Chicago

Boys’. These were Chilean economists who had studied macroeconomics at that bastion of free-market capitalism, the University of Chicago. Many Chilean intellectuals ridiculed these economists for their belief in market-based solutions and for their lack of hesitation to work for Pinochet. But their task was to create and make Chile’s macroeconomic architecture work.

The ‘Chicago Boys’ quickly set out to lower tariffs, slash subsidies, loosen up the labour market, privatise the pension system, increase exports, allow competition to flourish in the marketplace and open up the economy. They accomplished all these while scaling back the government’s role. True, they were able to push for reforms because

economic reforms become in generating wealth that the elected governments decided to maintain and continue on with the Chicago boys’ policies. Envyng Chile’s growth rates, neighbouring countries such as Argentina, Peru and Bolivia too started getting their own US-trained economists to devise policies to resuscitate their regions. All these reform measures have yet to solve a myriad of Latin American ills but by most indicators, they have delivered more than the alternatives.

Still, academics say the lesson from Chile is not that a regime such as Pinochet’s is more likely to adopt free-market reforms. It is not. But when it does, the benefits come at a very high cost to society. A lack of opposition, though



there was no resistance to what they did. They did not have to deal with the messiness of satisfying competing and contradictory political interests. Still, after a series of false starts, Chile’s annual growth finally started averaging at five percent from 1985 till 1996.

In 1990, through a referendum, Chilean voters decided to freely elect their post-Pinochet government. Meantime, so successful had Chile’s

initially celebrated, allows no one to correct policy errors or subject the dominant views to scrutiny. Over time, such one-sidedness leads to resources, time and international reputation being squandered. Pinochet’s regime was unique because of its longevity that made it possible to stick to free-market prescriptions. But given how the world has changed since, there is reason to believe that such a regime might have been the last of its kind. ●

# “Most donors are in wait-and-see mode”



Jan de Witte headed the Dutch aid group SNV in Nepal for five years and has just been reassigned to East Africa. Nepali Times caught up with him literally moments before he rushed off to catch his plane on Monday to ask about his impressions.

**Nepali Times:** What kind of memories of Nepal do you take back with you?  
**Jan de Witte:** When I arrived here in 2000, the insurgency was not so visible. There was an elected parliament and local bodies. All that has disappeared. In a short period of time the entire architecture of the state has crumbled, we now have to rebuild it. If you look at the 15 years of democracy, the Maoists moved out because they were unhappy with the way the parliamentary parties were working and now the monarchy has made its move citing the same reason. A democratic system is not possible without active and strong political parties. There is lots to improve within the parties like the dynasty mindset so that fresh people get the chance to prove they are accountable to the people.

**What do you consider SNV’s most successful areas?**  
The most successful has been the renewable energy program which has built 120,000 biogas reactors benefiting many families and the environment. Ultimately, the country benefits from the Clean Development Mechanism and Nepal can trade its carbon and re-invest it in more biogas.

**What has been your reaction to recent developments in Nepal?**  
We need to realise that things are not just changing in Kathmandu but also in the districts. We will need to assess how the power relations will look henceforth. We will need to see if it is still possible to work with people outside district headquarters. We will have to see if the power will move from the CDO and LDO to the security forces. Our head office has doubts if we can operate as we did in the past.

**Why should your headquarters have doubts?**  
Most donor agencies who have been working under the operating guidelines are very clear about what they do: they do not side with one or the other party. They have been working for the poor people of Nepal and all of their programs have been approved by the central government. There has been a shift in the policy of ministries and they have asked us to work with the community based organisations. We

understand that situation because there are no local bodies working at present.

**Has the idea of working with community based organisations been successful?**  
There was an understanding with the previous government that projects should be implemented through non-state actors. But the problem is that the money for such projects has to be paid through the government channels. That is how the local bodies come into the scene. There have been quite a number of good initiatives about the local development funds. Donor agencies have been holding a series of meetings to discuss the current situation.

**What has been the outcome?**  
Many are in a shocked state. Most are in a wait and see mode. Some may have expected a change in the government as they thought things were not moving the way they should. But this is quite a change in a constitutional monarchical system. Let’s give time to the present government and see what it does.

**What has your head office said?**  
They are curious about what will happen and they also want us to be flexible so we can continue to reach the people without getting into any political problem. For the time being, we have slowed down our works and are waiting to see how the work environment develops. As long as the safety of our staff and our objective to reach the people are guaranteed, I think we will continue to work.

**How important are factors like human rights and democracy for the continuity of your activities?**  
They are very important. They are the bases of systems in Nepal and also of many national laws and international conventions. That is definitely a condition to be able to work in a country. Safety of the staff is very much connected with it. People’s access to information is equally important. But right now, the most disturbing element is the state of emergency and the curtailment of civil liberties.



# Demystifying Himalayan degradation

## Mountain myths, muddled policies and new threats

Professor Jack Ives is one of the original montologists who gathered in Munich in December 1974 to highlight the problems that the world's mountains faced, in particular the Himalayas. That conference spawned three major 'movements' whose impact we see today.

BOOK

Dipak Gyawali



The first was an alarmist report by the *New York Times* science editor, Eric Eckholm, whose book *Losing Ground* (1976), for all its discredited science, still functions as the policy bible for Himalayan resource managers. The second achievement was in eventually seeing the publication of the journal *Mountain Research and Development* in 1981 that continues to serve as an important forum for physical and social scientists despite its migration from Colorado to California to Oxford. The third was the establishment of ICIMOD in Kathmandu in 1982.

*Mountain Research and Development* has since 1983 challenged the Eckholm paradigm that Ives and his Swiss colleague Bruno Messerli have termed 'Myth of Himalayan Degradation'. Ives lists eight features of this supposed downward spiral

that can be caricatured as an imminent Himalayan environmental collapse due to population pressure and increasing conversion of fragile hillslopes to agriculture. This then supposedly leads to vicious epicycles of environmental degradation, increasing poverty and even flooding in Bangladesh.

Challenging this alluringly simplistic non-science was the now-famous Mohonk Mountain Conference on the Himalaya-Ganges Problem in May 1986. The book that came out of it by Ives and Messerli called *Himalayan Dilemma* in 1989 showed how the myth of Himalayan degradation was just that: a scientific myth. The purpose of Ives' new *Himalayan Perceptions* is to examine all the mountain research since 1989 and to see if they validate the debunking of the myth, as well as to look at new (and unexamined by scholars hitherto) threats to mountains and the people living there.

After describing the myth and the mountain context in the first two chapters, Ives goes on to examine various geophysical and economic concerns in the next four and concludes that new evidence certainly validates the overthrowing of the false Himalayan degradation paradigm. However, this academic success is still a failure in policy terms because the movers and shakers of mountain lives continue to live

by the old creed. New research has shown that forests today are overall better because of the ingenuity and dedication of villagers. Although pockets of degradation exist, they have only local impacts that pale into insignificance when compared with the geomorphological processes that are going on in the Himalayas. They certainly contribute next to nothing to flooding in Bangladesh, which is caused primarily by heavy precipitation in the Meghalaya and Bangladesh itself.

Heavy rainfall on seismically and geologically unstable land forms are the primary cause of unexpected landslides. Ives mentions that the world's largest recorded rockfall occurred in Langtang probably 25,000 years ago bringing down some 10 cubic km of rocks. Another recently understood threat is that of glacial lake outbursts, which result from causes such as global warming and the failure of a lake's ice moraine dam. Such events, frequently hard to detect and almost impossible to predict, are characteristic of these mountains. Policy making for mountain development, however, ignores these more fundamental risks and continues to be guided by the unscientific myth of poor mountain farmers causing floods in Bangladesh.

Ives links mountain hazards to the huge risks of human

interventions, as developments planned or unplanned, with intentions benign or malign, through globalisation or wars. This is where geophysical sciences come face-to-face with mountain social sciences. The result is more uncertainty on a Himalayan scale and this is what makes the book fascinating and challenging.

Ives recounts how tourism certainly has been a major factor inducing social change in all mountains. However, the blessings are mixed: despite negative impact the opportunity for marginalised farmers to earn extra money is certainly welcome. But it can become an ephemeral resource because, once a group of people has attained considerable material benefits and become dependent on them rather than on their traditional occupation, international wars or local insurgencies can destroy it all.

The same conundrum applies to development activities because, in its name, nationally dominant groups have oppressed ethnic minorities. Ives dedicates an entire chapter to conflict situations: Chittagong Hill Tracts, Nagaland, Bhutan, Nepal's

Maoist insurgency and Siachen. What is happening in many of these places proves that shangri-la is a fleeting experience and those therein are rarely beneficiaries. Despite the fact that mountain people are resilient, hospitable, gracious and all that, it is failed development, often through insensitive central government agencies, that has provoked the violent reaction and they can be undone only through sensitivity that has political backing.

On these issues linking mountain societies with potential risks, the book certainly raises more questions than it answers and hence becomes invaluable for researchers trying to understand mountains and the travails of the people living there. *Himalayan Perceptions* must be read by everyone involved with mountain resource management from Afghanistan to Thailand and every place in between. Unfortunately, with a price tag of £79, it will remain inaccessible to students, scholars and policy makers in the broader Himalayan region where it's most needed. ●



*Himalayan Perceptions: Environmental change and the well-being of mountain peoples* by Jack D. Ives  
Routledge, London and New York, 2004  
xxi + 271 pages  
£79

Excerpts

‘There is a general consensus, at least within the academia, that there is little support for the notion that uncontrollable environmental degradation, from the mountains to the Bay of Bengal, poses an imminent super-crisis. The World Bank’s (1979) year of reckoning [that by AD 2000 no accessible forests will remain in Nepal] has passed and Nepal’s mountains and forests are relatively intact.’  
(p 23)

‘On a per capita basis, Bhutan is the greatest source of refugees in the world.’  
(p 180)





Landslide in Kakani just below the Trisuli Road taken in 1978 (left) and the same site re-photographed in October 1997. There are more trees and the landslide has not only healed but is, according to the farmers, the most productive of the hillsides.



Erwin Schneider's 1961 photograph of Khumbu's Namche Bajar and Khunde/Khumjung (left) and Alton Byers' 1995 photograph of the same place. Overall condition of the forest cover has not changed in 34 years nor has the gully scar above Khunde despite many reports in the 1970s that this feature was rapidly expanding due to 'deforestation' in the slopes above the village.



# Course conduct

## Etiquette on the golfing green keeps the game going

**I** sometimes wonder: if there was no such thing as golf etiquette, would golf be as much fun as it is? I certainly don't think so.

Yes, golf has a deep tradition of expected behaviour. We should thank those that created and implemented these strict norms that have become so much a part of the game. No doubt, they are one of the biggest reasons why the spirit of the game is still so alive.

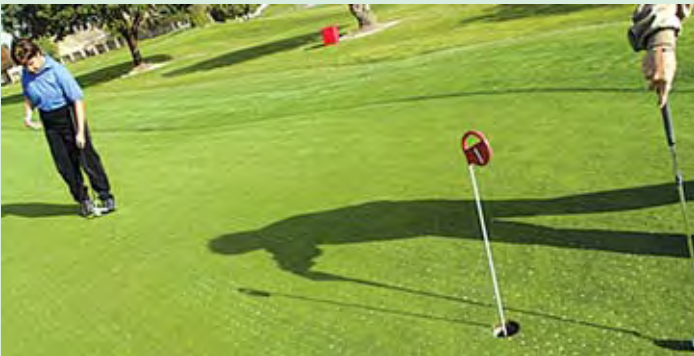
Seasoned golfers out there know what I am talking about. For new comers to the sport, golfing etiquette is the convention of social behaviour followed on the golf course. You aren't penalised for violating etiquette, however it is considered very impolite to breach it. Try to circumvent following the norms and the golfing community will quickly shun you.

**TEE BREAK**  
**Deepak Acharya**



Moving or whispering even (let alone talking), while another player makes a stroke, stepping on the line of an opponent's putt and even leaving one's shadow across that line while he putts are some simple examples of bad golfing etiquette. Some golfers knowingly breach good golfing behaviour, often trying to make their opponent hit a bad shot or to get psychological advantage. Others can be just careless and inconsiderate. However in most cases, 'bad behaviour' is due to ignorance. It ends up disturbing fellow golfers and unnecessarily causes embarrassment to everyone involved. Basic etiquette is part of what golf professionals teach during the initial lessons on the golf course.

It would take pages to explain the many subtle rules of proper conduct around a golf course that one is expected to know, so I'll limit myself to a few of the major and important aspects. Let this be a refresher for those who are already aware and an eye-opener for those new to game:



- Right from the start, while a fellow competitor makes a stroke, you should not move, talk or stand right behind or in front of him.
- Always try to keep the pace of play, meaning don't play too slow. Slow play results in delaying everyone across for the whole course and disrupts not only a golfer's rhythm but the whole fun of the game.
- Never play a shot if players ahead are within reach of where the ball may stop. If your ball heads towards where other golfers might be, shout "fore" loudly to warn them of the danger. This is the only time shouting is acceptable (and in fact expected).
- Don't talk or laugh loudly, shout and never make big displays of extreme emotions that will inevitably disturb other players on the course.
- Take extreme care not to damage the putting green while walking and avoid taking divots on your practice swings. This helps keep the course in good condition for everyone to enjoy.

Good conduct includes replacing divots, repairing ball marks on greens and restoring disturbed bunkers after playing a shot out of the sand. Where caddies are used, players usually ask their caddie to do some of these tasks. However, it is still totally a player's responsibility to ensure they are done.

Remember, even as a spectator, once you are on the course golfers expect you to know and follow golf etiquette. As a golfer, take a refresher read through the etiquette section of the Rules of Golf or bring it up in a discussion with your golf professional. Adhering to proper golfing norms will help avoid unpleasantness and embarrassment, and will add to everyone's enjoyment of the game. It shows you respect the game, keeping its beauty and tradition intact while making it enjoyable not only for yourself but also for others. ●

Deepak Acharya is a golf instructor and Golf Director at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, Kathmandu. [prodeepak@hotmail.com](mailto:prodeepak@hotmail.com)



Rugby players practicing at Baluwatar for their first demonstration match on Saturday

KIRAN PANDAY

# Scrum run

It's been nine years but the games have finally begun

**ABHA ELI PHOBOO**

**E**very Saturday morning, they gather at Lajimpat. Forty people from the City Gym and their friends have been doing this for the last six weeks, heading for three-hour practice rugby games at Baluwatar. Similar to its American version, rugby is beginning to gather some interest in Kathmandu.

It's not just Nepal, rugby hasn't caught on in South Asia the home of other contact sports like kabaddi and wrestling. The 'Rugby Academy' as City Gym also calls itself, is focusing on its first demonstration match. It was offered the Dasrat Stadium but due to construction work and ground maintenance in preparation for an international football tournament, the area allowed wasn't enough.

It took quite a bit of searching before they found a piece of playground for practice sessions behind the prime minister's quarters. Tundikhel would have been ideal but the bits of glass and garbage would have made it difficult to make touchdowns.

Lainchor's grassy knoll wasn't big enough. "We do a lot of warm-ups, run around in circles, exercises designed for rugby," says Craig Young, a Scotsman who teaches English in a Maitidebi school. Back in Edinburgh, he played rugby and during the eight months he's been in Kathmandu, he's been trying to get enthusiasts together. Some had played rugby before, others were just curious.

Few know that Nepal had a Rugby Association under the chairmanship of Siddhi Shamsheer Rana. Besides a few random games there hasn't been much going on in the rugby department. Says Ramesh Khanal, chief of the Sports Development Division at the Sports Council: "Rugby was not a priority game and so not much has been going on."

Since there aren't too many players and a game needs 15 players on each side, the match will be held between the members of the new club. Made up of expatriates, some British Gurkhas and young Nepalis, they hope to develop it as a

serious sport and introduce it to schools also. "It's interesting and enjoyable," says Mahesh Manandhar, an 18-year-old who has been practicing every weekend. "You do get a few scrapes and bruises but its not so bad. I usually take the ball and run."

Trying to teach the game the first time was confusing says Craig Young, because in rugby you pass the ball backwards not forwards. "But even those who had never played before are pretty good now, they picked it up surprisingly quick," he says. Unlike popular opinion, rugby has fewer injuries and because the players expect contact and to get hit, its not so bad.

Through word-of-mouth, the Rugby Academy has had a lot of people turn up but only some have become regulars. Their idea is to take amateur rugby forward and keep it going in Nepal. Those interested can watch their demonstration match this Saturday afternoon. ●

CONTACT: [citygymktm@hotmail.com](mailto:citygymktm@hotmail.com), Gopal Chhetri at 4411259

# Marathon is good for health

**M**ore than 1,000 people from 20 countries including Nepal are participating in an international marathon in Kathmandu Valley on 18 February.

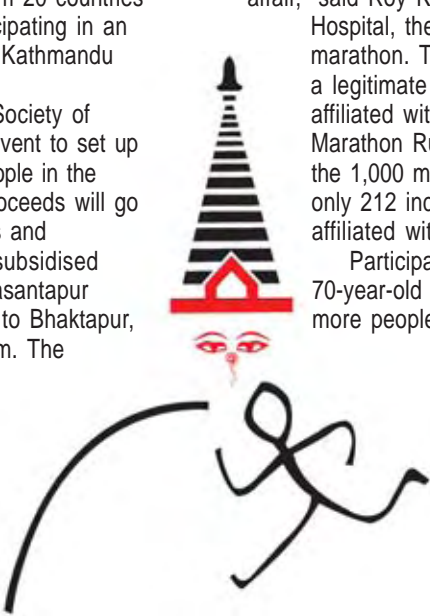
Organised by the Marathon Society of Nepal, the race is a fundraising event to set up a health fund to help the poor people in the Valley get free treatment. The proceeds will go to a hospital that treats homeless and impoverished Nepalis at highly subsidised rates. The race will start from Basantapur Darbar Square and will continue to Bhaktapur, Patan, finishing at Dasrat Stadium. The participation fee is \$90 for international contestants and Rs 1,000 for Nepalis. With Toyota as the title sponsor, the winners can win a range of prizes.

"This is an exciting event for a noble cause and we hope it will become an annual

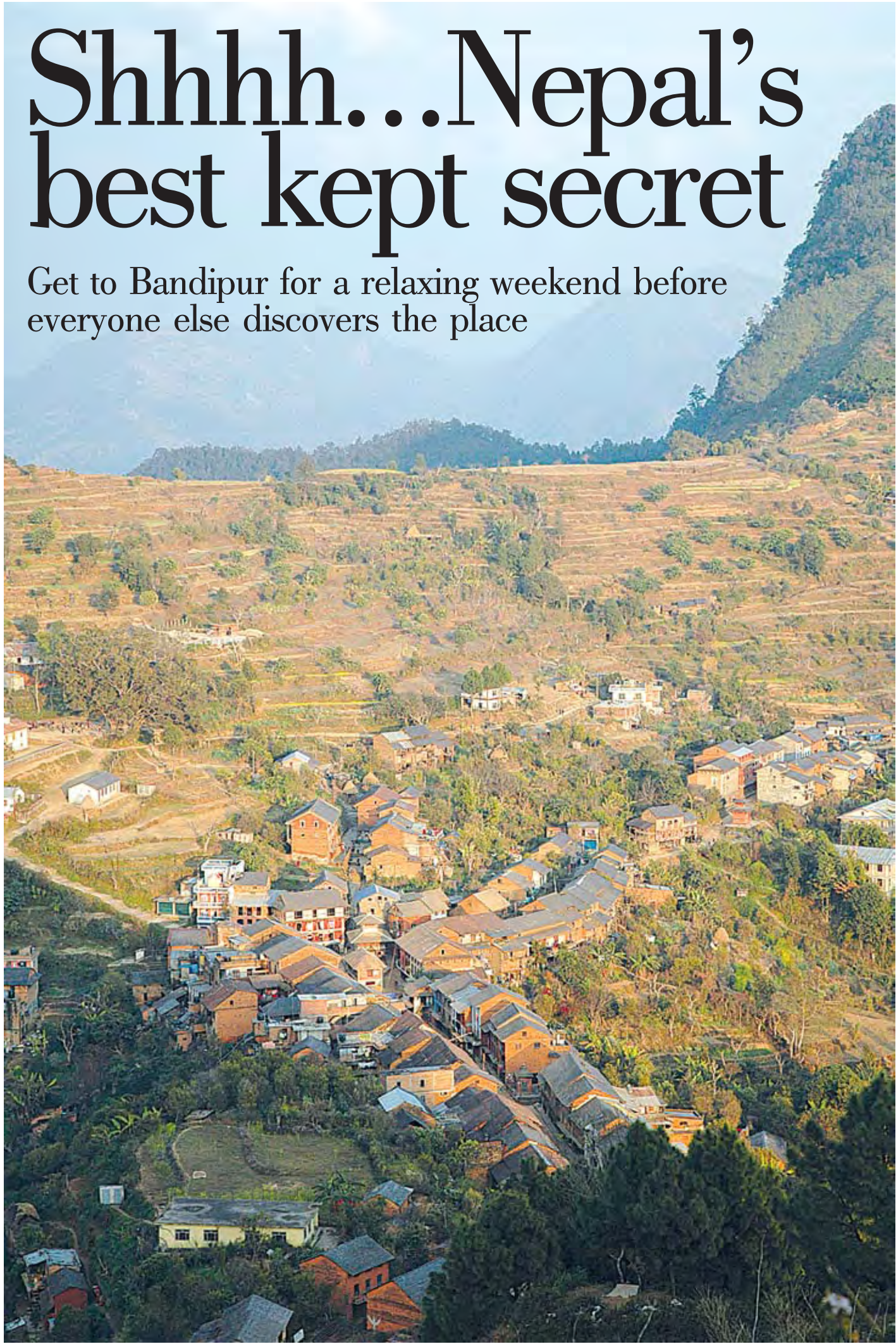
affair," said Roy K Kline of Scheer Memorial Hospital, the moving force behind the marathon. The Marathon Society, registered as a legitimate sport organisation, is also affiliated with the Association of International Marathon Runners and Races (AIMS). Out of the 1,000 marathon groups around the world, only 212 including one from Nepal are affiliated with AIMS.

Participants range from a schoolboy to a 70-year-old woman. "Once the word gets out, more people will participate in the coming years," hopes Kline. The international participants from Europe, Mexico, USA, Africa and South East Asia have arrived in Nepal days before the event to acclimatise themselves to the weather.

Visit [www.kathmandumarathon.org](http://www.kathmandumarathon.org)







# Shhhh...Nepal's best kept secret

Get to Bandipur for a relaxing weekend before everyone else discovers the place



**AROUND BANDIPUR:**  
(Counter-clockwise from left) Bandipur Bajar from Chimkeswari. Tourists at the Old Inn. Krishna Kumar Pradhan recounts Bandipur history. Tourists join in the celebrations of a Newari festival. Businessman Mani Kumar Pradhan recounts Bandipur's glory days. Bandipur's legendary sunset. A woman enjoys the winter sun in the bajar.

**NARESH NEWAR** in BANDIPUR

As the pale winter sun goes down, the 400 km of horizon to the north turns golden, then pink, then a grayish shade of mauve.

You heard it here first: your life is not complete without experiencing a sunset from Bandipur's Chimkeswari hill. From high up on this ancient hilltop kingdom,

the Gorkha valley below is enveloped in a gathering darkness below the icy knife-edge of Himalchuli. Then, dazzlingly, a huge coin of a full moon comes up from behind Ganesh Himal in the east.

Bandipur is Nepal's best kept secret: situated half-way between Kathmandu and Pokhara, it is one of the most scenic spots in Nepal. It is very accessible with only a 20-minute climb up a new asphalt road

from Dumre but hardly anyone goes there.

Bandipur used to be a Magar kingdom long before Prithbi Narayan Shah embarked on his conquest to unify Nepal. Being close to Gorkha, Bandipur fell fairly quickly and in later centuries was settled by Newari traders from Kathmandu Valley who brought art, culture and architecture that have remained intact in the bajar.

Time stands still in Bandipur. Except

for the road, electricity and the dress of the people, nothing has really changed here since the days Nepal became Nepal. In 1959 when King Mahendra visited Bandipur he became so enamoured that he extolled its beauty and serenity in the lyrics of the famous song, "*Bandipurey Ukalo Lamo, Marsyangdi Dunga Le Tarera*".

Bandipureys still talk about its glory days as a Magar kingdom ruled by King





Mukunda Sen. They brought in Brahmin advisers from Lamjung and after the Shah conquest, Newars from Bhaktapur migrated here to establish the garment cottage industry.

Bandipur became so popular as business flourished that it soon became a trading centre for Gorkha, Kaski, Tanahu, Lamjung and Manang districts. When Indian mills started producing cheaper cloth, it affected Bandipur to such an extent that in the early 1900s, the industry closed down.

Bandipur returned to its early seclusion when the district headquarters of Tanahun was shifted back to Damauli. And the town became even more of a boondock when the Prithvi Highway bypassed it. Many of Bandipur's Newar traders have now moved down to Narayanghat or Kathmandu. Still, Bandipur retains its cosmopolitan heritage and is a harmonious mixture of Magars, Bahuns, Newars and recent Gurung settlers.

"Suddenly, it felt like the place was

dying," Mani Kumar Pradhan recalls his grandfather telling him. Pradhan belongs to the sixth generation of Newar migrants to Bandipur and is glad that with the road, Bandipur will be vibrant again. Bandipur's elders want to turn the town into a tourism and education centre like Darjeeling. But any visitor will tell you Bandipur has an edge: it is much prettier than Darjeeling.

Tourism is already picking up. A band of sophisticated tourists have discovered the place and keep coming back after their trek to relax. Pradhan's house used to be empty, now he is booked. "I used to pay people to stay and look after my house," says Pradhan, "Today, tenants are willing to pay Rs 1,000 for one room."

The establishment of the Notre Dame School by a handful of Japanese missionaries (see 'Bandipur sisters', #230) has helped establish Bandipur as an educational centre with students from all over the surrounding districts. Locals

opened several private hostels for the boarding students. Says Krishna Kumar Pradhan, teacher: "Notre Dame brought education and jobs, we owe them a lot." The school reopened after townspeople put pressure on the Maoists who had closed it down. The Maoist presence here is virtually nil and since the security forces moved out it has been peaceful.

American Peace Corps volunteers who worked here since the early 60s were among the first to promote Bandipur as a tourist destination. "The main attraction is that tourists get the taste of an old Nepali town amidst grand scenery," explains Ram Charan Shrestha of the Old Inn, one of Bandipur's best hotels.

The peaceful ambience of Bandipur is evident in the fact that there is no curfew, the shops are open till late and the festivals are celebrated with passion. "Nobody is afraid in Bandipur," says Kala, a student going off to school, "There is no one with guns here." ●



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# February First was inevitable

Himal Khabarpatrika, 12-26 February

There were enough indications since June 2002 that the country was headed towards this as the covers of Himal Khabarpatrika point to in the past three years. There is no point just looking at the past we now need to think about reviving parliamentary democracy which is in a coma. That is our wish on the 55<sup>th</sup> Democracy Day. Long live democracy.



**Will democracy survive?**  
June 2002  
Dispute intensifies inside the Nepal Congress (NC) party about whether to continue or end the state of emergency. Parliament is dissolved at a time when general elections seem virtually impossible. Democracy is at risk.



**Decisive**  
July 2002  
The two factions of NC led by Girija against Deuba argue over who has the right to the tree symbol. Election Commission takes its time to decide making it difficult to create an environment for elections.



**Whose call?**  
September 2002  
Police Chief Pradip Shamsher Rana creates an obstacle to the elections as he asks for postponement justifying that his force is not ready to provide security.



**Going it alone**  
October 2002  
Prime Minister Deuba decides to postpone elections, King Gyanendra dismisses Deuba calling him "incompetent", takes control over state affairs and starts the process of finding a new prime minister.



**Handover**  
December 2002  
As soon as Lokendra Bahadur Chand is appointed as premier, he hands over most ministerial authorities and responsibilities to the king.



**Political cardgame**  
February 2003  
Like mainstream political parties, the constitutional king also establishes himself as a key player in the government.



**Cornered**  
October 2003  
The street protests by main political parties demanding multiparty government and restoration of parliament isolates the king even more.



**Parties show disunity**  
November 2003  
Political parties are disunited, lack trust and are unable to counter the drift towards erosion of democracy.



**Destination unknown**  
April 2004  
Chaos and uncertainty is heightened with the lack of unity between the king and the parties in working towards solving the national problem. The movement by the parties continues incessantly without a clue as to where it is leading.



**Another 'Bahadur'**  
May 2004  
The king looks for an alternative to Surya Bahadur Thapa. Political leaders meet the king but the king decided to bring back Deuba, the same prime minister he sacked.



**The only way out**  
January 2005  
The king and the parties should have made a united effort to end the nine years of conflict and political instability inflicting the country.



**February First**  
February 2005  
The Royal Proclamation is made, government is dismissed, emergency declared and the king takes control.

## In the gulf

Sandhyakalin, 13 February

The number of Nepali youths going abroad for employment is increasing. Many of them have landed good jobs in reputed companies but at the same time, some are working for questionable companies. Nepalis are preferred in the Gulf countries because they never shirk work and will do anything assigned if capable. But they have also been the victims of accidents in Saudi Arabia. Some have lost their lives while others have been forced to return home maimed or handicapped. The companies they worked for haven't paid their medical insurance or helped them. A year ago, Debi Gurung paid Imansh Manpower Rs 75,000 to go to work in Saudi Arabia. Shortly after arriving, Debi lost his right leg in a road accident. "No one came to help me," says Debi.

He wasn't able to work to pay off his debts. When his wife and family calls, he lies and says he is well and will be sending money in a few months. "It's been a year since but I can't tell them, they'd get worried," he says. He hasn't even told his brother who is also in Saudia Arabia. The company he works for took care of the medical bills incurred during the nine months he was in hospital. "I don't know how to return home like this," he says. He's been in the gulf for two years but has only worked for one, spending the rest in hospital. "I'm ashamed," he says, "How can I go?" According to Om Ghale of the Tamu Dhi in Damam, Debi is still a part of the company he was working for and talks are being held in the embassy about him and the insurance he is supposed to receive. Other Nepalis have helped raise funds for him and given it to the committee.

## Rumours

Samaya, 11-17 February

An innocent student in Pokhara became the victim of a clash between the students and security when on February First, a protest rally was staged in front of Prithbi Narayan Campus. The protest turned violent when students shouted slogans inside the campus and then led the procession towards a taxi stand where they burnt a motorcycle. This led the security forces to intervene. Gita KC was sitting in front of Kala Bhaban chatting with her friends. "It was around 4PM when all the students started running towards the campus and I joined them also when I was shot suddenly," says 19-year old Gita who was hit on her right leg and is in hospital. To control the angry mob, the security force arrested about five-dozen students. They were all released after three days. Brigadier General Prakash Bahadur Basnet of the Royal Nepali Army (RNA), western division, said the security force would control any kind of anarchy. "It is the responsibility of the security forces to stop any activity causing terror and infringement of the rights of others," he said.

Although the students were released in a few days, the news was blown out of proportion by the time it reached the capital. The communication blackout meant that there was no way of stopping the rumours that spread like wildfire across the country, getting exaggerated along the way and was completely sensationalised in the Indian media.

## Medical attention

Kantipur, 14 February

The good news is that Shahid Sukraraj Tropical Hospital in Teku has begun treating HIV/AIDS patients. The bad news is that ever since they began, the number of other patients have declined. "Many patients are afraid that they might be infected with HIV so they've chosen to go elsewhere," say the nursing staff. The hospital sees around 15 patients a day now, the number was more than double a few months ago. "We disinfect the equipments and other materials used for the treatment of HIV patients," says a doctor, "But the other patients don't understand this." According to Laxmi Bikram Thapa, most hospitals in Kathmandu Valley redirect HIV patients to Shahid Sukraraj Tropical Disease Hospital. "If the other hospitals also started treating HIV patients, society would get the right message."

## Will they learn?

Dristi, 15 February

Each representative of the international community, political parties and various bodies of citizens' society have reacted differently to the royal proclamation of February First. The NC, UML, Unity Centre-Masal and NC-D have called on unity for the restoration of democracy. So far, RPP and NWPP have not made any statement. The Mandal faction of NSP has supported the king's move. The Maoists who have often been fickle-minded in their opinions made a statement to signify that the possibility for peace talks was over. They always wanted to hold direct talks with the king but even when given the chance the Maoists have not responded. The UN, India, USA, UK and the European Union, while expressing their deep concern about the new situation, have stressed the restoration of democracy in the country. The Americans have implied they may pull out bilateral aid if the new government fails to restore the democratic system, cooperate with major political parties and remove press censorship within 100 days. The political parties that have gone underground are preparing for a united movement. The public seems to think that the political leaders haven't learnt their lesson. The royal proclamation is not just a challenge to the parties but also an opportunity for the leaders to rectify their errors. They should realise that in the last 14 years of democracy, the parties have committed grave mistakes. They concentrated on their power



Wow, this is what I call peace. You don't even hear the cellphone ringing

Samaya, 17 February

### QUOTES OF THE WEEK



The criticisms made by America and India towards the king's efforts is really unfortunate.  
Tulsi Giri, vice chairman of the Council of Ministers in *Rajdhani*, 16 February



# Leaving wives and kids

## International forced marriages and abandoned children



In April 2003, a young woman with a little boy approached me near the British High Commission in Karachi. Something about her compelled me to listen. Nasima (not her real name) said she was married to a UK citizen of Pakistani origin. They had one boy and moved to Denmark. While she was pregnant with the second child, her husband brought her back to Pakistan "to visit family".

Then he took her passport and two-year-old son and went back to Denmark. Some months later, the divorce papers arrived. Since her second son was born, she has been eking out a living by stitching clothes. But life is hard. She feels she is a burden on her widowed

**PERSONAL  
POLITICAL**  
Beena Sarwar



mother and longs for her older son. "I want to go to Denmark and fight for my son's custody," she said. Meanwhile, her husband has threatened to take away the other

boy when he turns four. The honorary consul of Denmark in Karachi (a Pakistani) turned out to be well versed with the case and thought the woman a nuisance, trying to worm her way into a cushy life abroad.

Sadly, this is not a unique case. What her husband did is now recognised as 'wrongful removal or retention (of a child) from one country to the other' (rather than criminal abduction), under the 'protocol' on Child Abduction signed in September 2003, by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and judges of Britain. The principle behind this seminal agreement is that the judge in the child's home country (where the child has recent history) is best equipped to adjudicate on the child's welfare. Thus a judge in the other country will send the child back to his or her home country to enable a judge there to take decision on matters like custody. A side benefit of the protocol is that it enables mothers like Nasima whose children have been forcibly taken away, to go to that country to fight the custody battle.

To facilitate such cases involving British citizens, the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in London formed a Child Abduction unit, along the lines of the already existing Community Liaison Unit set up in 1999. Last year, the unit dealt with 50 cases but like forced marriage, these are believed to be the tip of the iceberg.

The typical example of forced marriages involves a British male of Pakistani origin marrying a Pakistani girl (the man may have been forced into the marriage). The girl comes to the UK, lives with the man and has children. She has obtained her indefinite leave to remain (ILR). The husband then takes her to Pakistan 'for a holiday', with or without the children. He takes her passport and sometimes even the children's passports and returns to the UK leaving her behind. Sometimes he will bring the children back, sometimes not. Sometimes the children are in the UK. In order to return to the UK, the woman has to prove she had ILR, which can take months. If she stays out of the UK for more than two years, she loses her ILR.

Social workers report that when British men of Pakistani origin are forced into marrying women from Pakistan, these women are treated no better than servants once in the UK. The abandoned woman is often stigmatised back in Pakistan. She endures agony without her children but if they are with her, she may feel even more of a burden. Britain has taken a huge step by acknowledging this issue and protecting the rights of its affected citizens. However, such cases occur in other countries too, where similar protection and legal help is needed. ●

Beena Sarwar is the contributing editor of *The News*, Pakistan.

When the Kyoto treaty entered into force on 16 February, the global warming community congratulated itself: to do good they have secured the most expensive worldwide treaty ever. They have succeeded in making global warming a central moral test of our time. They were wrong to do so.

Global warming is real and is caused by emissions of carbon dioxide. But existing climate models show we can do little about it. Even if everyone (including the United States) applied the Kyoto rules and stuck to them throughout the century, the change would be almost immeasurable, postponing warming for a mere six years in 2100 while costing at least \$150 billion a year.

**AGAINST**  
Bjørn Lomborg



Global warming will mainly harm developing countries because they are poorer and therefore less able to handle climate changes. However, by 2100, even the most pessimistic forecasts from the UN expect the average person in the developing countries to be richer than now and thus better able to cope. So Kyoto is basically a costly way of doing little for much richer people far in the future. We need to ask ourselves if this should be our first priority.

Some of the world's top economists, including three Nobel laureates, answered this question at the Copenhagen Consensus last May. They found that dealing with HIV/AIDS, hunger, free trade and malaria were the world's top priorities, where we could do the most good for our money. Moreover, they put urgent responses to climate change at the bottom of the list. In fact, the panel called these ventures, including Kyoto, "bad projects" because they cost more than the good they do.

As the economics of climate change has become ever clearer, warnings from the global warming community have become shriller. For example, the head of the UN Climate Panel says, "We are risking the ability of the human race to survive."

Such statements make headlines, but they are nonsense. At a recent meeting at

# Kyoto:



## The end-of-civilisation argument is counterproductive to serious public debate

Exeter some participants warned of a 50-50 chance that the Gulf Stream winds could collapse within a century. Such a scenario looks great in the movie *The Day After Tomorrow*, but it is unsubstantiated.

We are told that sea levels will rise by roughly 50 cm by 2100. This is correct, and it will clearly cause problems in low-lying countries like Bangladesh. But the alarmists neglect to mention that sea levels rose through the 20<sup>th</sup> century by 10-25 cm. Did anyone notice?

The end-of-civilisation argument is counterproductive to serious public debate. It makes us believe that we only have one choice. Yet the reality is that we can choose to make climate change our first priority or we can choose to do a lot more good first.

To say this is not to suggest laissez faire. Far from it. Thousands died in Haiti during recent hurricanes but not in Florida because Haitians are

poor and cannot take preventive measures. Breaking the circle of poverty by addressing the most pressing issues of disease, hunger and polluted water will not only do obvious good; it will also make people less vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

With Kyoto, the world will spend \$150 billion a year on doing little good a century from now. In comparison, the UN estimates that half that amount could buy clean drinking water, sanitation, basic health care and education for every single person in the world. Which is better?

Global warming really is the moral test of our time but not in the way its proponents imagine. We need to stop our obsession with global warming and start dealing with more pressing and tractable problems first. ●

Project Syndicate

Bjørn Lomborg is the organiser of Copenhagen Consensus, editor of *Global Crises*, *Global Solutions* and author of *The Skeptical Environmentalist*.

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# Ke ho tyo?

## We must act knowing that climate change and its effects threatens global security for both the rich and the poor



**T**he Kyoto Protocol treaty has now entered into force for the 126 nations who have joined it so far. Now is the time to start thinking about how to engage all nations, including large emitters, in conversations about what to do after the treaty's expiration in 2012. This is exactly what the European Commission did recently by

providing its first strategy for a post-Kyoto era, which will be discussed by the European Council next March.

While the Kyoto Protocol represents only a modest reduction of carbon emissions in industrialised countries—5.2 percent between 2008-2012 relative to 1990 levels, with varying targets for individual

countries—real progress can be made in sustaining development efforts and preserving our planet. But first, all countries must integrate climate concerns into policy planning and improve their governance in key sectors such as energy, infrastructure and transport. In other words, we must act in accordance with the recognition that climate change and its effect on people in both rich and poor countries remains a threat to global security.

At the end of the day, the long-term approach is likely to include a rules-based system, an incentives system and investments in technology change. Increasingly, adaptation at the national level will be recognised as a major issue that will require appropriate funding. Dealing with the impacts of

**FOR**  
**Ian Johnson**



climate change and with emission reductions should not be mutually exclusive but complementary.

Looking ahead to the post-Kyoto world offers us the chance to start a new dialogue and to look at new options on climate change. Nations could set the more ambitious goal of limiting the long-term change in the earth's temperature and then assign emission rights among countries in such a way that will eventually limit temperature increases to an acceptable level. This would require increasing investments in energy research and development for new and improved

technologies—a process that needs to be supported by stronger public-private partnerships.

Up to now, with only 15 percent of the world's population, rich countries have been responsible for more than 75 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions and thus most of the environmental damage. However, it is the developing countries and the world's poor who are most vulnerable. It is unrealistic to ask poor countries, where more than 1.6 billion people do not have access to clean energy and technologies, to bear the costs associated with the much needed technological change.

Working with partners, the World Bank is supporting financial strategies to assist developing countries in meeting the costs caused by climate change. To date, over \$ 1 billion in Global Environment Facility (GEF) grants, together with about \$ 8 billion in co-financing, have been committed to programs related to climate change.

While the regulatory mechanisms of both Kyoto and the European Trading Scheme contributed to the establishment of an emerging market for carbon trading, interested parties are now concerned about the immediate future. Without a regulatory framework beyond 2012, the window of opportunity for initiating project-based transactions will close by 2006/2007. Given the long lead time between project preparation and the first benefits of emission reductions, project developers have only a few years to act before carbon payments cease to make a

meaningful contribution to project finance in the current context. Developing infrastructure projects is a long process that requires three to seven years from identification, through licensing, financing and construction and finally to the first certification of carbon emission reductions.

Therefore, projects need to be operational at the latest by 2007. The World Bank has been instrumental in advancing carbon finance as a viable development tool and in facilitating private sector participation. The Bank is focused on representing the interests of its borrowing countries, helping them develop assets for carbon trading according to their own priorities.

But without a commitment by governments to limit greenhouse gas emissions beyond 2012, the carbon market will remain uncertain and the private sector—vital to the market's success—is unlikely to expand its participation in a meaningful and sustained way. According to a recent World Bank supported survey of companies interested in carbon finance, only one in five respondents declared that they were interested in buying post-2012 emissions reductions.

Now is the chance to look forward and enlist the global community to commit in the pursuit of a more secure world, one that avoids the dire risks of environmental degradation and social conflict implied by inaction. ● *Project Syndicate*

Ian Johnson is the Vice President for Sustainable Development at the World Bank.

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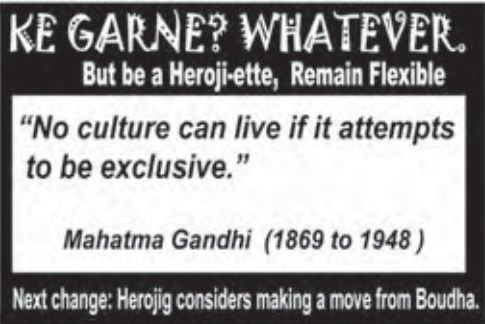


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"Lata ko desh ma gaando tanderi." (In a land of fools, even a man with a bad goatee can be a hero.) - as translated by UNACO, the United Nation's Assn. of Cartoonists



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ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Ceremony and Stillness** Photographs by Frances Klatzel at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited. Until 5 March. 4411122
- ❖ **A Connection with You** Paintings by Oath group at Gallery Nine, Lajimpat. Until 19 February. 4428694
- ❖ **Reflections from Tibet** Black and white photographs by Kevin Bubriski at Indigo Gallery, Naxal. 4413580
- ❖ **Re-Collection** Paintings by Sarita Dangol at Buddha Gallery on 21 February, 4.30 PM. 4441689
- ❖ **Nature and wildlife** Photography exhibition at WCN, Sanepa. Until 28 February. 5524202, www.wcn.org.np
- ❖ **Odds and Ends** Etchings by Beverley Thompson at Park Gallery, Lajimpat. Until 4 March. 4419353.
- ❖ **Sama Theatre Festival** at Gurukul, Maitidebi, 4.30 PM onwards. Till 13 March. 4466956
- ❖ **Kathmandu & Kali Gandaki** Exhibition of photographs by Anagarika Sugata at GAA, Thamel, till 18 March. Proceeds go to the Chairi Gumba Restoration Fund. 4414785, gaa@gaa.org.np
- ❖ **Magic Pencil** Artworks by Britain's best children's illustrators at the British Council, Lainchor, 21 February-6 May. 4410798



EVENTS

- ❖ **Democracy Day** Falgun Sat, Long live democracy.
- ❖ **Presentation on Hodgson's Ghost** By researcher Ramesh Dhungel at Baggikhana, Patan Dhoka on 18 February, 4PM. 5542544.
- ❖ **Kandahar** A film by Mohsen Makhmalbaf from Iran/Afghanistan at Nepal Tourism Board, Bhrikuti Mandap on 20 February, 5.30 PM.
- ❖ **Modern Times on Mount Everest** Film show at Lajimpat Gallery Café, 7PM on 22 February. 4428549
- ❖ **Carnival Parade** at Basantapur by French School of Kathmandu on 22 February, 10AM-11AM.
- ❖ **Shikchya Dibas** on 23 February.
- ❖ **End of the Month Quiz** What do you know about Nepal? Team entry Rs 300, 7PM on 25 February at Lajimpat Gallery Café. 4428549
- ❖ **Art workshop** for kids at Buddha Gallery. 4441689
- ❖ **Rugby Practice** Gather at Bluebird Department Store, Lajimpat on Saturdays at 8.30 PM. citygymktm@hotmail.com
- ❖ **Kathmandu Chorale Rehearsals**, 7.10 PM at The British School, Jhamsikhel. 5534737
- ❖ **Sanibaar Mela** Every Saturday at the Dharahara Bakery Café, 12AM-5PM.
- ❖ **The God Dance of Kathmandu Valley** Tuesdays at Hotel Vajra. 4271545

MUSIC

- ❖ **All that jazz** with Abhaya & The Steam Injuns at Fusion-The Bar, Dwarika's Hotel, every Friday, 7PM onwards, entrance Rs 675. 4479488
- ❖ **Good Time Blues Band** at Rum Doodle every Friday, 7PM onwards. 4701208, 4701107, rum\_doodle@gohimalaya.com
- ❖ **Classical music**, 7PM onwards, Fridays at Hotel Vajra. 4271545
- ❖ **Jatra** Saturday nights with Looza, 6.30 PM onwards. 4256622
- ❖ **Jukebox experience** with Pooja Gurung and The Cloud Walkers every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at Rox Bar. 4491234
- ❖ **Happening live jazz in town** at Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lajimpat. Every Wednesday and Saturday, 7.45 PM onwards.

FOOD

- ❖ **Krishnarpan** Nepali specialty restaurant at Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488
- ❖ **Barbecue Dinner** Every Friday at the Summit Hotel. 5521810
- ❖ **Thai Food** at Rox, Hyatt on Fridays and Saturdays, 12.30 AM-3PM. 4491234
- ❖ **Special lunch combo** for Rs 175 at 1905, Kantipath. 4225272
- ❖ **Seasons Special Luncheon** at Hotel Shangri-La for Rs 450. 4412999
- ❖ **Delicacies** Pastas and snacks at Roadhouse Café, Jawalakhel. 5521755
- ❖ **Genuine Thai** cuisine at Royal Lotus, Bakhundole. 5521231
- ❖ **Farm House Café** Delicious meals at Park Village Hotel. 4375280
- ❖ **Café Bahal** Newari cuisine at Kathmandu Guest House, Thamel. 4700632
- ❖ **Barbecue-Ban Bhoj** at Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **Splash Spring BBQ** weekends, 6PM onwards. Radisson Hotel, Kathmandu. 4411818, 4423888
- ❖ **The Tharu Kitchen** at Jungle Base Camp. Junglebasecamp@yahoo.com

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge** Celebrate spring. 4361500
- ❖ **Shivapuri Heights Cottage** on the edge of the Shivapuri National Park, don't miss the best time to be in Shivapuri. steve@escape2nepal.com
- ❖ **Chiso Chiso Hawama** Package at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot. 4411706
- ❖ **Jungle Base Camp Lodge**, Bardia. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com
- ❖ **Malaysia Dream Holidays** Packages starting from Rs 45,500 per person. 4247215 extn 013-14, malaysiaholidays\_marco@polo.com.np
- ❖ **AAA Organic Farm and Guesthouse** Rs 950 with three meals. 6631734
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JAI NEPAL CINEMA

Michelle McNally (Rani Mukherjee) is special in more ways than one. She cannot see, hear or speak. She inhabits a world of infinite black, of a seamless, endless void where nothing reaches her and she reaches nothing. On the sheer will of her ferocious rage against destiny, Michelle struggles to stay afloat in the impenetrable whirlpool her life has become. Into this devastating isolation enters a battle weary teacher, Debraj Sahai (Amitabh Bachchan). With a single-minded obsession, Debraj takes up the challenge to lead this wild, uncontrollable child into the light of knowledge. Thus begins a journey of two headstrong individuals.

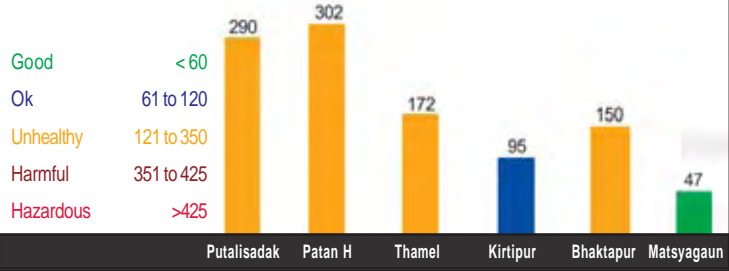
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KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

Kathmandu's pollution level was up by 15 percent last week as all monitoring stations located in urban areas recorded concentrations of dust particles below 10 microns were much higher than national standards. The increase was about 25 percent in heavy traffic areas such as Putali Sadak and Patan Hospital. So, keep your masks on, it doesn't look like the pollution will get any better.

6 - 21 February 2005 in micrograms per cubic meter.  
Source: www. mope.gov.np



NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



With Basanta Panchami, winter is supposed to be replaced by spring and sure enough the temperature has perked up. The westerly front that brought devastating blizzards and floods to Pakistan arrived and passed with some flurries and showers across the midhills. The jet stream is still active, pushing the disturbances rapidly from west to east. As the cloud cover associated with this system dissipates, we will see a further climb in afternoon temperatures. This satellite picture taken on Thursday morning shows traces of clouds in the low-pressure system which could bring a few light isolated showers and snow flurries in the higher valleys.

KATHMANDU VALLEY



Walkathon Postponed

We wish to inform that the walkathon scheduled to be organised on Feb 17, 2005 has been postponed for an indefinite period. We wish to thank all those friends, supporters and well-wishers for their goodwill gestures.

Radio Sagarmatha/Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ) Family







KUMAR SHRESTHA

**LONG AND WINDING ROAD:** A lone taxi defies Maoist threats against transportation on the Prithibi Highway on Tuesday.



KIRAN PANDAY

**PLANTING ROOTS:** Durga Shrestha, minister for Women, Children and Social Welfare plants a tree at Tundikhel on Wednesday to celebrate Queen Komal's birthday.



KIRAN PANDAY

**WRITING ON THE WALL:** A child writes on the wall of the Saraswati temple in Maitidebi during Saraswati Puja on Sunday.



KIRAN PANDAY

**QUACK QUACK:** Migratory ducks from Siberia swimming at Taudaha, near Chobar which is a stopover point for waterfowls before they fly home.



KIRAN PANDAY

**FLY TIME :** Phuket Air announces its Kathmandu-Bangkok-Dubai flights starting from March, in a press conference on Wednesday.

# Long journey home

She carries the news from Kabhre to the capital. She roams the town looking for scoops, writes news and helps in editing as well. And she is probably the journalist with the longest commute in Nepal.

By the time she drives home to Dhulikhel in her trusted Kawasaki Calibre, it is already 10 at night. Reporter Bhagwati Timilsina has grown used to the 100 km roundtrip everyday on her bike across two districts to reach her office Kamana Publications. And it is a matter of both interest and compulsion. "I have chosen journalism as my career but the challenge is to do that and manage my

household," says the 32-year-old reporter.

When she started with journalism almost a decade ago, Bhagwati commuted to and fro to Kathmandu in a bus. For two or three years in between, she tried living in Kathmandu but her love for home and her social involvement in Dhulikhel led her to shift base once more. The motorbike gives her more

mobility and also makes it hassle-free to commute back and forth.

Bhagwati and her motorcycle are well-recognised on the highway out of the eastern edge of the Valley. It is not just a sign of her determination but also her identity. As a female reporter, Bhagwati is the perfect role model for her peers. Her courage and determination can be seen in the progress she has made in the print media, rising from a hawker of the *Mahanagar Dainik* to assistant editor at *Nepal Samacharpatra*. Says editor Pushkar Lal Shrestha about Bhagwati: "She is an example of courage and more women should strive to be like her."

But Bhagwati shrugs off the praise. For her the commitment and determination are a normal part of her career. She says matter-of-factly: "If you put your mind to it, nothing is impossible".



KIRAN PANDAY

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# Can we have a word?

Since no one has bothered to bring out full page ads in national broadsheets to congratulate me on the extraordinary honour conferred on me recently when I was nominated a life-long card-carrying member of the American Biographical Institute, allow me in all modesty to toot my own trumpet.

Just how rare and momentous a recognition this is can be gleaned from the fact that only two other Nepalis in history have been thus honoured by the American Biographical Institute (Motto: 'Send us a cheque for \$100 plus \$12 for postage and your award plaque is in the mail').

One proud awardee is the Grade Nine child prodigy who designed Nepal's first Intercontinental Ballistic Missile and actually put this country on the US watchlist for rogue states that are automatically eligible for full membership of the Axis of Evil. The other one to bag the Crazy Scientist Annual Award is none other than the UML minister who, a few years ago, came up with the ingenious

(and deadly serious) proposal to export Nepal's abundant hydropower resources to China via satellite.

It makes me swell with pride to be in such illustrious company and to share this glory. Therefore, it is only natural that one's peers should seethe with jealousy and not call me up on my mobile to extend their congratulations heartily. It's a peculiarly Nepali trait that we don't like to see fellow-Nepalis recognised and getting ahead. But at the end of the day, comrades, the fact of the matter is that I was honoured by the American Biographical Institute and you guys weren't. Nyah-nyah-na-nyah-na. Ok, it set me back \$112 but imagine how good it's going to look on my cv. So stop being mean and make me a chief guest at your book launch so I can deliver a keynote address. Hey, where is my dosallah?

At the rate things are going, it looks like more congratulations are in order. Most people are just famous but a business transaction that I have recently entered into with my Nigerian partners is going to make me both rich and famous. What I am about to tell you is in the strictest confidence, so please keep this to yourself. A month or so ago, I got the following urgent email from Mrs Abacha:

Dear Sir,

I hope this mail finds you in the pink of health. Unfortunately I can't say that about myself. Ever since my husband, Mr Sonny Abacha died I have been running from pillar to post trying to extricate his vast fortune stashed away in his secret Swiss bank account. My family would like to access that money so we can donate a part of it to tsunami victims. Unfortunately my late husband's account has been frozen and all the \$890 million in it. I can only get it if I can name you Finance Manager of the Tsunami Relief Fund. Rest assured you will be adequately compensated, in fact you will get 30 percent of the total sum for your troubles. All you have to do at the present time is deposit \$100,000 in earnest money in the bank account below and please understand that this will be fully refunded to you.

Yours in deepest confidence,  
Mrs Miriam Abacha

It's not every day that one gets a proposal like this: to get rich quick while at the same time helping out in a humanitarian cause. I wired the earnest money two months ago and have been waiting patiently for further communication from Mrs Abacha who has promised to get back to me as soon as her lawyers complete the legal formalities. So, have you booked that space in the papers for your congratulatory ad?

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