Nepal’s donors who have taken a strong line against King Gyanendra’s February First move will meet soon to decide on future aid to Nepal. Despite the sharp rhetoric, they appear torn between using the aid leverage to push the king to roll back February First while maintaining humanitarian and development assistance to Nepal’s poorest and the army’s counter-insurgency capability.

The government is putting on a brave face. First deputy chairman of the council of ministers, Tulsi Girl, told us: “If they don’t understand, we’re not going to go down on our hands and knees to grovel.”

King Gyanendra hasn’t yet met key ambassadors who returned after consultations in their capitals last week. But he did summon editors on 25 February to signal donors they should choose between “terrorism and democracy”. The king added: “We need our friends to help us in word and deed, if fighting terrorism is not their agenda, they have to tell us what it is.”

British ambassador Keith Bloomfield flew back to Brussels to attend a high-level European Union meeting on Thursday that is charting a common line on the crisis. Nepal’s main donors are meeting again in London on 15 March to harmonise their positions. Nepal’s human rights record will also come under international spotlight later this month at the UN in Geneva.

China, Pakistan, Russia and other Asian governments have said it is an internal matter, but Nepal’s main donors say the king’s move will make it more difficult to resolve the insurgency. The question is what to do about it. Britain signaled its displeasure by suspending military aid but army sources pooh-poohed it saying hardware in the pipeline was not substantial.

Bilateral donors want to link future aid to release of political detainees, lifting the emergency and restoration of civil liberties. But they add taking hasty decisions may hurt those in need.

“There are lots of poor and excluded people...and nobody wants to put them under greater pressure or reduce the impact on poverty,” Robert Smith of the British aid group, DfID, told us.

Other donors have suspended some projects and say they will channel money through civil society.

“We will not be signing any new project or program agreement with the government until further notice, but our support for the work NGOs and civil society has not been directly impacted,” said Martin Hermann of the Danish Embassy.

However, the government says it wants INGOs to re-register and work only with vetted groups, saying funds need to be monitored so it doesn’t get into the wrong hands. Donors find this unacceptable saying they may pull out if the rule is enforced.

Not all donors have been as tough, and multilaterals have taken a softer line. The Japanese are expected to announce two agriculture projects next week. The World Bank said it was “postponing” a $70 million tranche of its anti-poverty budgetary support, but this had already been decided in December because of previous governments’ failure to meet reform targets. The ADB clarified this week it wasn’t stopping its projects, but field activities would be determined by the security situation.

Reporting also by Naresh Newar
Happily ever after

CHIANG MAI—Fifty-five newly-married couples from all over the world came together in a northern Thai town this week to tie the knot or renew their vows in mass nuptials. Our own Vivek and Ayushma (circled, below) were also there, riding elephants, dressing up in traditional Thai wedding gowns and re-marrying in the traditional Lanna style. “It was everything we expected and more,” gushed an ecstatic Ayushma, 25, as she was whisked from one venue to another on hubby Vivek’s arms. Vivek is the sales manager of Yeti Travels looking after Royal Orchid Holidays, so it was fitting that Thai International should invite him for this legendary Chiang Mai Wedding extravaganza. “That called and asked if we wanted to be one of the 55 couples. We had just got married so we jumped at the chance,” says Vivek. There were 55 couples because this year is also the 55th wedding anniversary of Thailand’s king and queen.

The wedding was elaborate: it spanned three days starting with traditional dancing on the tarmac as they stepped off the plane in Chiang Mai. There were ceremonial fireworks, elephant rides, special silk costumes and sight-seeing. Ayushma is an intern at ICIMOD and asked what the most special thing about the wedding was, she thinks for a moment and replies: “It was all so grand. I guess the fireworks display on the last night was the most overwhelming.”

Aarti Basnyat

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Could this be the end of Laloodom?

Uniting all sections of people safeguards democratic freedoms

J SRI RAMAN

T

ically, of course, Laloo Prasad Yadav has not yet lost. He is still trying to form a government in Bihar with wife Rabri Devi as the chief minister. There is little doubt, however, that the voters’ verdict in the recent elections to the state assembly has gone against the leaders who held unchallenged sway for the past 15 years. What needs to be debated is the nature of this political metamorphosis in a region that has riveted media attention ever since his advent upon the scene.

A fake and futile debate has followed the verdict. Some, in effect, say Laloo Prasad has been defeated but not disgraced. Others argue that he has been disgraced but not defeated. It is a defective debate on two counts. It makes personality politics an afterthought, and it interprets the election outcome in immediate terms alone.

The elections have produced a hung assembly in a house of 243. This is bad enough for a politician who has enjoyed electoral support, spelling an easy majority, can be wished away. The fact is of more far-reaching significance than many a media analysis of the results may suggest.

Laloo is a larger-than-state personality. The decline of his political strength, therefore, has a larger-than-state significance. Nothing reveals this better than the glee of the BJP-led camp, even if the party itself may seem to have slender chance of capturing power in Bihar. Laloo has been a thorn in the BJP’s and parivar-side for over a decade. The anti-fascist capacity of this constituency was inherently limited as demonstrated by the election results in popular Indian political parlance of ‘Mandal’ against ‘kamandal’. Mandal is the platform of social justice to be achieved through caste-based reservations in employment and education. Kamandal is the symbol for the communal-fascist camp. The elections produced an inadequate victory of Kamandal for various reasons. Though it consolidates the beneficiary castes, the Mandal process inevitably leads to cracks in the constituency. The Bihar results lend credence to the belief that such cracks have developed in the Laloo constituency as well. Fascism can be fought only by uniting all sections of the people against it as a threat to all democratic freedoms.

This is the broader lesson of the Bihar results.

The writer is a journalist and peace activist based in Ghazipur.

Line of passport control

Now the buses are running, why not make visas easier for Indians and Pakistanis?

“Pakistanis, this way! Make a line here!” A straggling line duly forms at Mumbai’s airport counter where Pakistani citizens need to register themselves. With passports, disembarkation forms and duplicate copies of the registry form to be stamped here, the travellers resign themselves to a long wait.

The end of the line is formed by a large, high-spirited group of musicians and their guitars: Fuzon and the Mekal Hasan Band headed for Kolkata to play at a fund-raising concert for tsunami victims. They are accompanied by their managers, law student Erum Sattar and actress Samia Saeed, possibly the first female managers of any music band in South Asia.

Several people recognise Samia, including a Bangalore-bound tourist. There is camaraderie and good humour, a bond shared by being in this tedious, unnecessary, and somewhat tiresome line. “At least this time they’re being polite,” says Naushad Wani, a young lecturer from Jodhpur who’s been waiting for over an hour. Wani’s manager, young, tall and lean guitarist Shallum, wandering up and down the line, stops to ask if he could be fitted in a bag and taken to Goa. This is his second time in India. Last June, Fuzon participated in an event called ‘Surbaon ki Jugnalabon’ at Pratap Maidan in Delhi, where they jammed with Indian Ocean. It was a memorable concert, also featuring Kailash Kher and Rahat Fateh Ali Khan.

The Mekal Hasan Band (MHB) made its debut in India recently, at a show called ‘Soûf on the Rocks’, organised by Etc, a TV network partially owned by Zee. Apparently, it was Aaruk Patel, the influential Editor of Mdbz who prevailed upon Etc to launch the MHB in India, after having heard them rehearsing at their studio in Lahore, where he had come for a lecture at Kinnaird College. At their concert before the Mumbai press on Thursday, 7 January, MHB played to what was by all accounts an amazing reception. At one point, as the band members stood aside during a break, Kailash Kher approached them and said how much he was enjoying the music.

“He asked if we could join us, and we said sure, so after the break, he played with us. It was great,” says Mekal.

The event was hugely hyped in Mumbai, complete with billboards at Juhu Beach, though one doesn’t hear too much about it in Pakistan—another indication of the Great Divide. A personal email from a senior journalist at the time mentioned how popular the event had been and how much people had enjoyed it.

Pakistanis bands playing in India invariably get a great reception and particularly appreciate the music—knowledgeable audiences they find there. Obviously, there are spoilers everywhere. They are encouraged in their causticness by the needless restrictions that the Indian and Pakistan governments place on each other’s citizens, whom they treat quite differently from visitors of other countries. At this point, officially there are few ways to visit each other’s countries. The governments sometimes allow visiting Indian and Pakistani musicians and artists to perform on the other side and sometimes not.

Last May, the Pakistan High Commissioner in New Delhi denied the Indian dancer Sharmista Mukherjee a visa at the last minute, even though she had obtained the necessary clearance from the Interior Ministry. But when embassy officials in Delhi learnt that she planned to participate in a classical dance performance, they said she needed special permission. The event in Karachi and Lahore, organised by wardrobe assistant Bibi Kermani, had to take place without her.

Breakthroughs like the recent Mumbaikar bus service are important. But what’s needed is to really normalise relations in order to make cross-border visits easier. There is no reason why Pakistanis who are granted exemptions based on connections and visa-versa. There is no reason why visas should be valid only for cities rather than the country, and or the stipulated points of entry and departure shouldn’t be changed if the traveller wants. These basic humanitarian hurdles can and must be removed.

Fuzon and the MHB performed at the Grand Hyatt in Mumbai on Sunday at another fund raiser for the tsunami victims. They could have made a spontaneous detour and performed at the Pakistan India Peoples Forum for Peace and Democracy Convention but their visa was not valid for New Delhi.

The writer is a journalist and peace activist based in Ghazipur.

MHB’s Mekal Hasan performing at a concert in India in January.

Beena Sarwar is the contributing editor of The News, in Karachi.

J SRI RAMAN

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MHB’s Mekal Hasan performing at a concert in India in January.

Beena Sarwar is the contributing editor of The News, in Karachi.
Some unsolicited advice in hindsight, everyone should have done everything differently

When Nepal is great at dispense advice as long as we have not to follow it ourselves. Following this grand tradition, here is my own two-cent’s worth:

**GUEST COLUMN**

**Alok Bohara**

1. Don’t anger a Tibet-loving US senator by arresting a few meditating Tibetans, especially when there is a trade bill or a garment bill sponsored by the senator on the Floor of the US Congress. (And don’t try to use the garment quota bill to get the NEA over the head on Bhuile Ko).

2. Don’t get into a personality clash and break up a party when the Maoists are at the gates. The public will consider this a very selfish act and may not re-elect you. If there is ever an election, that is.

3. Try to remain united and sensible when the king is twisting his dom advocating an active monarch. To learn the hint. Have you forgotten a simple childhood story: it is easier to break one stick than a bundle of seven?

4. Once in a while it does not hurt for the political leadership to oppose the Maoists and their atrocities at Ratka Park. The public may actually be convinced that it is all about something bigger than just ministerial deprecation.

5. Let’s not pull off India to please Pakistan, of all countries, for god’s sake. Haven’t we learned the lesson being squarred in 1989-88?

6. Whatever happens, don’t bring a parliament of octogenarians to save the country. Push comes to shove, there are still plenty of 70-year-old Young Turks around.

7. Choose your enemy carefully. Opening yourself up on three fronts may not be such a good idea. Better know who holds the cause. The advisors must have said, “no pain, no gain” but it comes with too high a risk.

8. Political daughters should have realised that taking a rickshaw to Jogbani then a train to New Delhi would have been much safer than risking an Enfield Bullet across the tarai for five days irating tigers.

9. “A can’t we all slig along” speech may be imprudent when a bunch of old friends of your daddy are in detention, including your uncle.

10. If we practised what we preached we could have embarked on a path to liberal democracy a long time ago.

11. Nature abhors a vacuum, so does politics. Something or someone will quickly move in to fill the gap. Dissolving local councils was the single most awful idea. Stopping FM news is the second most awful.

12. C’s, i.e., 70-year-old professor is just plain silly. Fight an armed Maoist, not an old man with a pen.

13. Holding the Royal Nepali Army to a higher level of accountability on human rights is all very well. But let’s not overlook what the Maoists have been doing.

14. You can’t keep things hidden for long in this day and age. It’s counterproductive to stop phones, radio and internet in the 21st century.

Alok K. Bohara, PhD, is professor of economics, University of New Mexico, USA
For weeks now Nepalis have had no option but to submit to the international community’s infeasible interpretation of the developments in Nepal. But thanks to Saubhagyavati Shah (‘At the helm’, #235) we are reminded of the shortcomings of the international community. Thanks to Shah for making his point with such finesse and eloquence. One hopes, though, that such eloquence will be put to good use in reminding all those at the helm, particularly the leaders who have not changed their spots (Letters, #236) that the infamous 30-year war has definitely come to an end. While global climate changes there can be no return to such harsh winters again, and therefore Gyanendra would be well advised to change their spots. Conservation efforts in Nepal can only be successful if the local leader truly improves the habitats of all flora and fauna and not only that of those at the top of the food chain. Shah’s metaphor of a ‘show of hands’ would be complete when all parties reveal their stance, in words and in action, not only vicissitudes of terrorism but also democracy.

Abhishne Basnyat, Washington DC

Since February First I have read Nepal Times with great interest and must put in place the institutional reforms and unique opportunity to break the logjam and restructuring that supported these capital, education and political economic reform to allow the free flow of human capital development through their different approaches, what the three different a place than King Gyanendra guide it to prosperity and then greater succeeded with more autocratic hand to examine the past 50 years in Israel, problems of poverty and economic Path by a crushing military defeat, the successfully to follow the path of Alberto at hand. Even if His Majesty managed His Majesty has grabbed the game board, before something snapped and snap it did. control outside the capital, bandas and rougher. Carnage in the countryside, little Maoist situation simply made it that much average Nepali and effectively defuse the inability to improve the lives of the average Nepal and effectively defuse the Maoist situation simply made it that much rougher. Carnage in the countryside, title control outside the capital, bandas and blockades. It was only a matter of time before something snapped and snap it did. His Majesty produced the game board, knocked off all the pieces and changed the rules. But how to proceed? A military solution is a brutal potentiality likely at hand. Even if His Majesty managed successfully to follow the path of Alberto Fujimori, who freed Peru of the Shining Path by a crushing military defeat, the problems of poverty and economic stagnation he faced were on a smaller scale than ours. From Excom snap, examine the past 50 years in Israel, Singapore and Thailand. While Israel chose a socialist parliamentary democracy, the finest of European traditions to guide its path, Singapore succeeded in maintaining its control over and guide it to prosperity and then greater democracy, Thailand, with a cultural heritage and vast territorial space to proceed reasonably constitutionally monarchied guided by a king in all that different a place than King Gyanendra finds himself in at the present. Despite their different approaches, what the three countries all have in common is a focus on human capital development through economic reform to allow the free flow of capital, education and political restructuring that supported these changes. Nepali, too, can make the transformation. King Gyanendra has the unique opportunity to break the logjam and put in place the institutional reforms and mechanisms needed for Nepal to make a breakthrough.

Joshua Gillett, New York

The Nepalese people are suffering because the authorities running the government lack proper education. They couldn’t care less whether anyone is affected by the current situation because they are busy amassing wealth. Why not get rid of these parasites and bring in new blood honest, disciplined and well-educated ex-Gurkhas? Just look at how they transformed Dhanar. They could replicate that in the rest of Nepal. Good education, a culture of accountability and commitment to nation-building are all that’s needed.

G Saran, email

Let me first tell you how much I appreciate your paper, even if I get it about one week late. The content compensates (Editorial ‘Been there, done that’, #235). Nepal’s donors are trying to decide what to do about their aid. I understand that the projects they execute are meant generally for the poor, handicapped and needy. Why then do they want to stop it? If they decide to stop, then the aid is political and not humanitarian.

Annemarie Spahn, Turbenthal, Switzerland

As a traveller who considers herself a dear friend of Nepal, I have been upset about the February First royal move. This is a tremendous step backwards for the people of Nepal. The frustration is great because of the lack of information even though it is good to see the online edition of Nepal Times. But the story of the blockade (‘Road closed’, #236) is sad and made me angry. How can the Maoists think they can maintain this level of blockade and the monarchists think they can suspend civil liberties? In this day and age, it is virtually impossible for activities in Nepal to be hidden.

Peterson Cazadero, California, USA

Indian ambassador Shiv Shankar Mukherjee’s interview (‘There was another road map’, #236) was a clear reflection of the current Nepali political scenario. However, in very cold words, Mukherjee seems to undermine the idea that he has always been a monarchist. The other road map as guided by the ambassador, has led to no destination in the past political journeys. His remark on ceasing military aid to Nepal is vague compared to reports in the Indian media, which makes derogatory and patronising remarks quoting Indian ‘experts’ about Nepal. India should come clean with its public and unanted stance towards Nepal. New Delhi may be in touch with Beijing on Nepal as the ambassador points out but at least China doesn’t poke its nose into Nepal’s affairs.

Anup Kafle, email

A majority of foreign journalists and international crisis think tanks have portrayed a very bleak future for Nepal under the current administration. These very institutions predicted there was no hope for Nepal in the early 1990s. When President Alberto Fujimori took office in Peru, the country was fighting against the Shining Path (aka Maoist guerrillas). Internal bickering within Peru’s Shining Path has grown into a powerful militant group and control most of Peru’s hinterland. On 5 April 1992, Fujimori introduced a new constitution against his own government. One of his key goals was the total annihilation of rebels which he accomplished within three years. Although some have recently criticized Fujimori’s methods, a majority of Peruvians are grateful to him for his leadership. Similar to Nepal, the international reaction to the coup in Peru was initially very negative. International financial organisations delayed planned or projected loans, the US suspended all aid except humanitarian, current EU members Spain and Germany cut all ties with Peru. Unlike Peru, Nepal does not have a very well equipped military and needs more than just humanitarian aid to help the have men and women in the army fight the rebels. It is time the US and the EU learnt from their mistakes and used Peru as a model and helped Nepal.

Manish Prijadarshi, Maharajganj

Thank you Kishore Nepal for such a tragic travelogue of a blockaded Nepal (‘Road closed’, #236). As a frequent traveller between Kathmandu and Dharan, your article brought tears to my eyes and I was overcome by sorrow for what we have lost as a nation. But what have the Maoists achieved by destroying our motherland? What kind of liberation are they fighting for? Who are they fighting for if it is the ordinary people who are being punished? Sri Rats Jawahari

Kishore Nepal paints a depressing picture of a country that has gone to hell a tale. Three weeks after February First, the people are still waiting to see what price we have to pay for the curtailment of our freedoms. But are the terrorists going to heed the advice you give them in your editorial (‘Right here, right now’)? Doesn’t look like it. If anything, not only have we lost our civil liberties but it also looks like the war is going to intensify.

Name withheld, email

Let me in your last issue with the front page article ‘Road closed’ you had three advertisements for cars. Was that a spoof or what?

Ravi Maharjan, email

It is sad that Kanak Mani Dixit in his Southasia Beat column (‘An aloof valley’, #236) tries to alienate the Kathmandu Valley from the rest of the country based on the economic standard of the people. It seems that the writer wants to see panic on the faces of the people of Kathmandu. He tries to indicate that the people of Kathmandu should succumb to the military, but the people of Kathmandu are from all over the country and will defy any forceful blockade. Yes, there is a gap between Kathmandu and the hinterland but that doesn’t mean the people of Kathmandu should go around panicking like the whole country. In fact the people of Kathmandu have sent a clear message to the Maoists that the rule of gun will not last long. Vehicles not plying on the highways don’t indicate support for the Maoists but a fear reflex, Kathmandu has shown unity and solidarity, the whole country should follow suit.

Lily Thapa, Kathmandu

It is interesting how Nepalis outside of Nepal get all politically aware and socially sensitive, despising even the little safe hole, Nepal Pan contribution by Jemima Sherpa (‘Further from home, closer we are’, #236). Having experienced these feelings myself after leaving Nepal five years ago, I cannot help but wonder why we (especially the youth) are so oblivious to social issues. Residing in countries that preach freedom and equality, we realise the lack thereof in our own. But why do we have to leave Nepal to understand its class structures and ethnic boundaries?

Nisha Onta, email

On behalf of Fulbari Resort & Spa and our executive chairman, Piyush B Amaty, allow me to correct the article ‘Pokhara takes a direct hit’ (#236) by Ramesh Poudel. The reporter has totally misquoted Mr Amaty and also falsely reported that the resort’s telephone lines and electricity have been cut off. There is no such problem at the resort. In fact, we have been fully operational despite the adverse situation in the country. What has been reported is totally baseless and a figment of the reporter’s imagination. Such reports are highly damaging to our earnings effort and our hard-earned reputation.

Rupak Shrestha, The Fulbari Resort & Spa, Pokhara

CORRECTION

In ‘Letters’ (#234), the cost of treatment for aplastic anaemia and leukaemia in India was inadvertently put at Rs 700. The treatment costs Rs 700,000.

Nisha Onta, email
**Moving on to Peru**

We looked at Chile, now let’s turn to Peru.

In doing so, he aimed to differentiate the purity of his ideological “product” from that of other strains of reform-oriented leftists. Instead of acting as a deterrent against violence, an open political environment ironically created conditions for the Senderistas to play up their violence-prone radicalism to show how different it was from others.

But sticking to violent radicalism came at a cost. Sendero Luminoso had to continuously attract recruits to replenish its depleted ranks. And that led to direct competition with other left parties who drew resources “from the same pool”. Because it didn’t violate what it stood for, Sendero’s actions and strategy proved to be profitable to deal with competition by unleashing violence against its ideological cousins, even if that meant killing their leaders and activists. In the long run though, the brutal tactics meant that the Senderos never generated any international sympathy, much less support.

Still, Ro’s conclusion is that the Peruvian sample is not meant to be an argument against democracy. It is to suggest that at times despite political openness, “democratization can have adverse outcomes”. But as subsequent events in Peru show, those adverse outcomes do not necessarily get corrected when the country resorts to military rule to defang the radicals.

Eight years after the suspension of political openness, Peru’s military rulers fled the country, and not surprisingly, allowing the Senderos, this time in tandem with another radical group, the MRTA, to become active and notch wins. But their fortunes were reversed when, in 1995, the country down the path of a formerly non-democratic nation.

### Strictly Business

**Ashutosh Tiwari**

In Turkey, the Kurdish insurgency emerged not long after a civilian government came to power in 1981. In Europe, no sooner had the states of the former Yugoslavia held elections, wars broke out along ethnic lines. In Rwanda, the move of the government accepted the principle of multiparty democracy, the Hutus carried out genocidal attacks against Tutsi and the minority, the Tutsi minority. Insurgencies have been rampant in the new democratic democracies of Iraq and Afghanistan. And in Peru, the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) asserted its murderous viciousness right around the time the country’s military rule of 12 years gave away to a freely elected civilian government in 1980.

To interpret this juxtaposition that some new democracies share with internal wars, conflict scholars are increasingly using the kind of economic reasoning that is familiar to business theorists.

In a paper on Peru (Journal of Peace Research, vol 38, no 5-6, 2001, sociologist James Ron of Canada’s McGill University attempts to answer two questions: How did political openness in Peru add to the rise of the Senderistas? And why did Sendero kill 300 odd union leaders, community organizers, politicians and municipal authorities instead of pursuing a broader intra-left alliance?

The military rule in Peru provided various leftist groups with a customary cause to fight against. But after its end, most of these groups sought to advance concerns related to social justice as legal participants in multi-party democracy. As such, during times of openness, they had fewer things to protest against. As legitimate leftists moved to the public stage to fulfill electoral promises, their marginal cousin Sendero ended up being pushed further into the background, where it had to either find a niche to survive or perish altogether.

But loyalty to its inherently violent nationalism made Senderistas fight back. Protesting the actions of its leftist brethren as a sell-out to bourgeois democracy, Comrade Abimael Guzman (see pic.) used the open political situation to announce an armed struggle against the state.

### A united development approach

**Matthew Kahane** is the United Nations resident coordinator in Kathmandu. He spoke to Nepali Times last week about the February First changes and what it means for development.

Nepali Times: What is the UN’s response to the royal action of February First?

Matthew Kahane: Secretary General Kofi Annan has made it clear that he considers the dismissal of the government and suspension of basic civil rights as a step backwards for the nation. We believe that a unified approach between political parties, the structures of government as well as for the nation. We believe that a unified approach between political parties, the structures of government as well as for the nation. We believe that a unified approach between political parties, the structures of government as well as for the nation. We believe that a unified approach between political parties, the structures of government as well as for the nation. We believe that a unified approach between political parties, the structures of government as well as for the nation.

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**UNDP**

has been the one issued by the secretary general’s spokesperson on 1 February itself. The statements issued by the spokesperson in New York are the only official communications made on behalf of the secretary general.

**What is your understanding of the status of the country?**

Given the great difficulty in traveling in most parts of the country, development activities are of necessity halted. This is also because the project staff do not have reliable information on how, where and when it is safe to travel. Furthermore, the imposition of the state of emergency has affected, and in some cases, interrupted the normal flow of information required for planning, directing and monitoring our activities on the ground. This is definitely a crisis period for development delivery. We will have to wait and see where we go from here but essential steps would include restoration of the freedom of movement, the normal flow of information and lifting of all direct and indirect censorship of the media.

### Has your relationship with the government as a development partner changed?

The absence of local elected bodies for two-and-a-half years has made it more difficult to absorb the capacity of public officials of the local level to plan and monitor development services. At the local level, we have been adapting to the situation by working with local groups, non-governmental organisations and at times delivering services directly. At this

In doing so, he aimed to differentiate the purity of his ideological “product” from that of other strains of reform-oriented leftists. Instead of acting as a deterrent against violence, an open political environment ironically created conditions for the Senderistas to play up their violence-prone radicalism to show how different it was from others.

But sticking to violent radicalism came at a cost. Sendero Luminoso had to continuously attract recruits to replenish its depleted ranks. And that led to direct competition with other left parties who drew resources “from the same pool”. Because it didn’t violate what it stood for, Sendero’s actions and strategy proved to be profitable to deal with competition by unleashing violence against its ideological cousins, even if that meant killing their leaders and activists. In the long run though, the brutal tactics meant that the Senderos never generated any international sympathy, much less support.

Still, Ro’s conclusion is that the Peruvian sample is not meant to be an argument against democracy. It is to suggest that at times despite political openness, “democratization can have adverse outcomes”. But as subsequent events in Peru show, those adverse outcomes do not necessarily get corrected when the country resorts to military rule to defang the radicals.

Eight years after the suspension of political openness, Peru’s military rulers fled the country, and not surprisingly, allowing the Senderos, this time in tandem with another radical group, the MRTA, to become active and notch wins. But their fortunes were reversed when, in 1995, the country down the path of a formerly non-democratic nation.

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I

behind my back and noticed that my weekend bag had vanished. I

arrived at our arranged rendezvous all amorous-like, until I looked

rackets and even the bag was new– a Rs 1,000 Nike knockoff from

romantic weekend, packing my new digital camera, two new tennis

a Rs 500 note. His refusal was simple and with a

turned in by an off-duty cop from Chabahil who had picked it up

in Gausala Circle if he had seen a stray bag bouncing around the

streets of KTM in the middle of morning rush hour.

in Chabahil selling cheap socks and tin cutlery.

child playing in the trash next to the curbside street vendors of

Now, Western Union and 25

other recognised remittance

companies help with transfers from

to all over the world to all over Nepal. “It is always

outstandingly favorable about sending money home for a

nominal service charge,” says

Kathmandu’s
callest sell cheap socks and tin cutlery. The slow depressing ride back home was contemplative. As a

Buddhist, I daydreamed about karma, the need to let go of worldly attachments and the circle of samsara. But my little worldly circle was besieced by cows eating garbage from the gutter next to the child playing in the trash next to the curbside street vendors of Chabahil selling cheap socks and tin cutlery.

And I felt the eyes of

my girl burning into the back of my helmet: what a dunce! But she came up with the idea: why not those traffic cops over there if anyone has seen a lost bag?

Well, remembering my experiences with police back in the west, where a cop is a cop is a cop to attend to all dead than help you when you are hysterically in need and also remembering the last time I had asked a traffic cop anything in Asia when I was totally lost in the Bihar, looking for a temple remembering the last time I had asked a traffic cop anything in Asia when I was totally lost in the Bihar, looking for a temple

the living standard survey conducted in 2003-04

the most vital indicator: poverty incidence.

the numbers since people
during a three-month freeze on

seems to have recovered from the

on 1 September riots last year

Prajuman Pokhrel of Nabil Bank, joined us in our lament.

service charge,” says Director General

Poverty reduction has been the mantra of all
governments in the past decade and the sole

figure,” said a World Bank official.

The survey does seem to show that overall

poverty incidence has dropped, but no one is sure by how much. At the

Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) and the National Planning Commission (NPC), officials confirm poverty incidence has dropped but can’t say by how much.

The World Bank expert team that conducted the survey is in Washington putting the average
calorie intake of Nepalis through their computers

before they come out with a definitive figure. The

World Bank had supported the CBS in conducting the

surveys of 4,000 households all over the
country last year. Indicators like access to

services, literacy and education, health services reportedly show positive trends.

We are waiting for the calorie consumption

figure, only then can we come out with the

definitive poverty figure,” says Director General

Tunga Shimroni Bansal of the CBS. World

and all exports combined. “It’s remarkable, the

contribution Nepal’s overseas labour force is making to prop up the national economy,” says

Pejumon Pokhrel of Nepal Bank, which is the main agent here for

Western Union. There are now an estimated 1.2 million Nepalis

working in 40 countries, not counting Libya.

Three-quarters of all

recruitment agencies were damaged in arson attacks during the 1

September riots last year after 12 Nepalis were killed by

terrorists in Iraq. The industry

way to send money home,” says Sanjay Thapa from Money Gram, one of the few foreign remittance

companies with 54 branches inside Nepal.

There is still a lot that needs to be done to get the government to regulate many agencies, prevent exploitation and cheating, and provide skills training so Nepalis have a chance to earn a living. “The government has not been able to support the manpower business: people pay so much to go abroad, there must be a way to promote high value foreign employment,” says Chandu Tamak of International Money Exchange (IME). 

Now that some destinations like Malaysia and Qatar are much more set on providing unskilled labour, Nepal has to upgrade the skills of its overseas workers, says Hemanta Singh Coomar of Frontier Nepal who has sent 20,000 Nepalis to Malaysia in the last six years.

“There is less certainty now, the demand from foreign countries is not the same anymore,”

whether or not my girl’s bag was found. If she hadn’t already

sent her bags very securely to his motorbike and pays close attention to all
guides by KTM Traffic Cops (well, he tries anyway).
Employment Act 2000 and it will only allow Nepalis to work for more than $500 a month overseas, representing a 25% increase in the previous requirement. Malaysia will be the first destination to see a drastic decrease in the number of Nepali workers. Most Nepalis working in Malaysia get little more than $9,000 a month. The amendment will also require recruitment agencies to provide an insurance of Rs 500,000 to workers. Till date, labourers have been insured for Rs 100,000 only. New provisions include: Operation prohibition of companies whose licenses have been annulled, mandatory graduation level qualification for recruitment offices and revision of license fees. Agencies will also be required to send workers overseas within one year of their selection. According to Labour Ministry’s secretary, Narayan Prasad Silwal, “Amendments are being made to institutionalise developments in foreign employment.”

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Incident at Charaundhi

Letter to the Editor in Kantipur, 22 February

Imagine a speeding bus on the highway. Now imagine someone opening fire on it. You only see it in the movies. And when it happens, in real life, right in front of your eyes many are too shocked to read. In case the conflict is resolved, future generations will look back at incidents like these. But if it doesn’t there will surely be many more incidents like what happened to us on 20 February at Charaundhi. Around 45 to 50 of us were in the Machhapuchhre Yatayat bus bound for Pokhara from Kathmandu. The bus was in a long line of vehicles and along the way it felt like we were traversing a war zone. Army patrols everywhere, vehicles on fire by the roadside.

The journey was depressing and we were afraid for our lives. We were taken to Charaundhi by the army and along the highway at 50 kmph. There were people along the side of the road and ahead of us was a stream, river and a bridge. We all got down under our seats and prayed, convinced this was the last day of our lives. Four days earlier I had travelled this same road and my bus had met with an accident between Dume and Damauli. I had been physically and psychologically scarred by the accident and was desperate to get home to Pokhara and be reunited with my parents, wife and children. But here I was in a bus whose driver had been shot and was speeding along the highway at 50 kmph. There were people along the side of the road and ahead of us was a stream, river and a bridge. We all got down under our seats and prayed, convinced this was the last day of our lives. However agnostic you may be, when death stares at you, you remember God. But the bus did not collide with anything, it sped on along the highway. Slowly, we peeked at the driver’s seat and saw someone driving the bus. There was someone listening to our prayers after all. God had sent a messenger to rescue us.

He was Shyam Thapa of Pokhara’s Raina Chok returning home after a holiday in Kathmandu. He replaced the wounded driver, took control and drove us safely to Pokhara. In return, we could offer him little more than thanks for having given us a new life. Two other elderly passengers in the bus had also suffered bullet wounds and their blood filled the bus till we reached Mugling. From there, the army took the three of us to Kathmandu in a helicopter. We joined six other buses to be escorted into Pokhara which we reached by helicopter. We joined six other buses to be escorted into Pokhara which we reached by helicopter. We joined six other buses to be escorted into Pokhara which we reached by helicopter. We joined six other buses to be escorted into Pokhara which we reached by helicopter. We joined six other buses to be escorted into Pokhara which we reached by helicopter.

Thanks also to Bhujel for writing to tell us about this event that is the country’s conflict in a microcosm. Those who were responsible for opening fire on the bus should read the letter and think about what they have done by targeting unarmed innocent bus passengers. The true hero is Shyam Thapa who saved the lives of dozens of frightened passengers. A hero is someone who gives the gift of life to others, who shows uncommon valour in times of crisis and demands nothing in return. Shyam Thapa is one such hero. Thanks also to Bhujel for writing to tell us what happened since details of the event didn’t make it to the news. Let’s hope the perpetrators realise that this conflict can only be won by discretion and rationality. Just like Shyam Thapa saved everyone with his bravery, the warring sides must also give up violence and strive for morality, ethics and idealism to win the hearts and minds of the people.

Binita Aryal, Lajimpat

National Panasonic

Purneshth Dahal in Nepal Samacharpatrika, 1 March

My old National Panasonic shortwave radio had been gathering dust for many years. I didn’t need it anymore because a small FM set costing Rs 150 was bringing me all the news I needed. In the last 15 years, you didn’t need to rely on outside papers, magazines and radio, there was enough credible and relevant information from Nepali sources. Now, because of the cuts in domestic media, international media has received a new lease on life. That is why I cleaned up my old radio and am using it again. Those of us who took our freedom for granted have realized what it feels like to have it taken away. Our freedom had become an integral part of our culture and civilization. In the past 15 years, our media broadened the scope of press freedom by maximum application. In the week during which email, internet and mobiles were restricted, we were pushed back to medieval times. So today, we have to try to tune our shortwave radios to BBC Nepal, VOA or All India Radio and through the roar of static try to find out what is happening in our own country. The new regime stopped news and current affairs on FM radio with just one edit but it lost 2,000 journalists out of work. All over Nepal, the information gap is being filled by the underground radio People’s Republic. Will someone explain to me whether this replacement of licensed broadcast channels with illegal underground broadcasts is part of the plan? My pen is non-violent, it is for democracy and for a free press. It needs unrestricted information from Nepali sources, not from foreign radio stations. It needs information from our own vibrant FM stations, not from underground stations that propagate violence. In the 21st century my pen should stand against violence, totalitarianism and senselessness. And it can only do that if it is free.

Indra Bahadur Bhujel, Lamjung

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Indra Bahadur Bhujel, Lamjung
“Reign, not rule”

Samaya, 3 March

Interview with Bishwa Bandhu Thapa, president of the RPP parliamentary committee.

What is your take on the recent political changes?

The process of change started with the dissolution of the House of Representatives three years ago. Who was the main instigator is not certain but it was Sher Bahadur Deuba or someone higher. Soon afterwards, the prime minister was advised to postpone elections and Girija Prasad Koirala, Madhav Kumar Nepal and Surya Bahadur Thapa unanimously agreed. These leaders should have realised that the PM does not have the authority to change the election date. The king should have told Deuba that constitutional provisions did not grant him such authority. When the king used Article 127 to dismiss the PM, the people’s representatives should have said the move was wrong. They should have proposed restoration of parliament even when the PM failed to do so. And in the absence of parliament, Article 128 could have been used to discuss forming of a government with the leaders.

What about the royal-appointed governments?

Lokendra Bahadur Chand couldn’t bring in anyone from any party, not even from the RPP. Later, with Surya Bahadur Thapa there was hope that he would convince the UML and NC to join. But he couldn’t. Deuba managed to get the UML on board. The RPP has accepted all governments and has not called them ‘regressive’. But now, the RPP is in a difficult position since this government is formed under the chairmanship of the king who asked for three years to do the job. The king’s order is like an elephant’s tusk. It is tough but when the tusk falls off, it never grows back. Chand, Thapa and Deuba, each got a year to hold elections and were sacked when they couldn’t. Yet the king has given himself three years for the same job. Does this mean the tusk is falling off? The RPP wants to see the government of the people but we also want to ensure that monarchy is not in danger. The king is the symbol of nationalism. Whenever Nepal is weak, India steps in. The king is the institution that keeps our country strong, for which monarchy must be constitutional. The citizenry wants an elected government. The king is the constitution’s guarantor but there needs to be harmony between parties for healthy politics. Foreign countries, including India gives more importance to elections than to peace.

So, what now?

We are still called the king’s party though we were never consulted when Chand or Thapa were appointed prime ministers. Still we supported the king. That has changed now. UML and NC leaders should realise this. They should prove their statesmanship. There is no leader like BP Koirala. He did not talk about changing the constitution but his statesmanship led to the fall of the Panchayat. Girija’s daughter Sujata is in Delhi crying herself hoarse about a republic while NC spokesman Arjun Narsingh is saying something else in Kathmandu. I’m not sure about Girija’s expectations. We need to push for elections.

What will the RPP’s policy be now?

The king cannot afford to make everyone rebel against him. Haven’t the parties always said he is the keeper of the constitution? The constitution says the king must walk with the parties. But we say elections are necessary. Peace is not the only pre-condition to holding elections. The army can be mobilized to control the Maoists if they create trouble.

Was the international response towards the February First move expected?

Tutu Gir has called attention to international double standards: how the Americans had to act post 9/11 and India had to act in Kashmir, so Nepal must also act as it sees fit. But they never stopped their democratic process. Instead, they held elections to ensure mass support. Here, constitutional and democratic processes have been stalled. The king has the authority to reign, not rule.

Solid support

Nepal Samacharpatra, 27 February

To counter accusations of Nepal alienating itself from the international community owing to the royal move of February First, the Foreign Ministry furnished the names of six countries that have announced their support. Foreign Minister Ramesh Nath Pandey said they were Canada, France, Laos, Qatar, China, Pakistan and Syria. North Korea and Bangladesh have also expressed solidarity through embassies here. Acknowledging their support, Minister Pandey has sent them thank you notes.

Cuba libre

Rajdhani, 2 March

Cuba has formed the recent political developments in Nepal as the country’s internal matter. Cuba’s Deputy Foreign Minister Avelardo Moreno, during his two-day visit to Nepal on 1 March, said Nepalis were free to select the kind of system they want in their country. “Nepalis have that freedom,” Moreno said after meeting Foreign Minister Ramesh Nath Pandey. Moreno said the foreign country should interfere in its internal matter. Meanwhile, the US discussed the upcoming UN Human Rights High Commission meeting with Minister Pandey saying Cuba would support Nepal. “The High Commission has no double standards and has not been effective,” he said. “All developing countries need to work together to make the High Commission just, impartial and effective.”

Villages in ashes

Himal Khabarpatra, 17 February-13 March

KAPILBASTU—The fires of anti-Maoist rebellion that began on 17 February has swallowed village after village in Kapilbastu. In one week, 3,000 houses in 26 villages have been razed, displacing 2,500 families of hundreds of cattle and poultry. Properties worth more than Rs 5 million has been destroyed and 22 people have died. Anti-Maoist vigilantes have beaten up villagers and burnt down their houses. On 27 February the mob was seen hanging a headless body in Lawani. Since these people have come out to protest Maoist atrocities, they have stopped them for four the situation might grow worse, said one official.

Kapilbastu’s CDO Mad Raj Daval said: “If we are harming the innocent in the name of resistance will be brought to justice. In a Butwal daily, he stated, The state of actions without consequences will not remain. Criminals will be arrested.” But for CDO Daval this will be easier said than done. The anti-Maoist vigilantes went on warpath after Maoists abducted two villagers from Ganeshapur on 16 February. They have killed Krishnanand’s Maoist area in charge Mrudul Akhtar Ali and burnt to death a man named Naron of Lawani. Prem Bahadur Rajkoti of Hallanpur’s Sukheshwar’s body was raised to fire in the town. Kapilbastu policemen who reached the scene of attacks say things are spilling out of control. Nothing could be saved from the burning ashes. The leader of the vigilantes, Ganeshwar’s ex-VDC chairman Asnil Kalikhasan, said: “We will go after who don’t help us.”

Travel restriction

Himal Khabarpatra, 27 February-13 March

If you are planning to leave the Valley you better think twice. Your name might be on the blacklist. After February First, security personnel at the airport have turned back passengers waiting to board their planes saying: “You name is on the list.” On Gurung was among 25 people heading for Siliguri to attend an Indian Muslims’ Conference, former justice of the Supreme Court Leonard Pratap Pandey was flying to Mumbai to attend a conference on drug trafficking, Hemanta Bahadur BC of NCP (United) was going being arrested, list of what it will be. Dawa Gyaltsen of Kanchenjunga Yatra, member of the Human Rights Commission Kapil Sharma and many others have been turned back from the airport because their names were on the list. It is said that Padma Raut Tuladhur, Damak Nidhi Dhungana, Melamuna Prasad Shrestha, Krishna Pathadi, Sashil Puskar, Nilambar Acharya, Krishna Khurana, Gauti Pradhan are also on the list of 200. No one wants to confirm the list, or who is on it. They wave it off as an order from ‘higher up’. While some listed have been kept in custody, others are not even given prior notice. Public Security Act, 2046 provides the government with the authority to stop anyone who might harm the state or the people from staying in Nepal, entering or leaving it. But only one vested with the authority can issue this order. The Authority to authorise tricking somebody or stopping him without giving prior knowledge. Even when ordered, the order expires after 30 days. According to the law, if extension is required, the local authority must seek permission from the Home Ministry.

$150 minimum

Neupane will not be permitted to go overseas for employment if their salaries amount to less than Rs 10,000 a month. The government is introducing this provision through an amendment in the Foreign

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

Neurosurgeon and former minister, Upendra Devkota quoted by Associated Press.

“When you don’t give oxygen to somebody, he dies within minutes. When you are looked to a life support system, you can’t complain that the doctor is not giving you the liberty to go to a pub or discos. We are neither surviving. What we are is oxygen. When we are well, we will go to the pub and the discos. We will enjoy freedom, democracy and all the good things in life.”

Neurosurgeon and former minister, Upreti Devkota quoted by Associated Press.

“People are living together in a single family. They are looking to the king to be the ultimate authority.”

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Some are paralysed by the cell phone ban, others don’t miss it at all

You can use it as an alarm clock, take pictures, play games, write notes, use it as a digital phone directory, as paperweight or even throw it at someone. Mobiles may not ring anymore but they still have multiple uses.

The cynical among you will argue that even when mobiles were working way back in the heydays before February First, they didn’t work half the time. “Network Busy”, calls that got cut off halfway and people shouting “Hello! Hello!” into their phones inside restaurants was common. “Actually I don’t miss it at all,” says an office colleague. “It never worked anyway, I save money, I don’t get crank calls and I don’t get silly jokes on SMS.”

Still, people who had grown used to the mobility of mobiles are, one month later, still suffering from withdrawal symptoms. We went over to the Nepal Telecom (NT) but couldn’t find anyone who could tell us when the service would be restored. “We are waiting for the government’s direction to relaunch the service,” is all NT’s General Manager Sagad Ratna Kansakar could tell us.

This means nearly 250,000 mobile users across Nepal will have an indefinite wait. Its phone network already covered 50 districts and NT was planning to spread out to all 75 districts, adding one million lines in the next four years.

“We are being very patient hoping the service will restart soon,” says Bhupal Chettri of Nepal Overseas Marketing, the official distributor for Nokia in Nepal. Hundreds of wholesalers...
and retailers of mobile phones are worried about the loss of business. "If the service doesn't resume soon I'll just have to close down," says Hari Thapa who invested Rs 500,000 to start a phone shop in New Road. "I don't want to close down, there are rumours the service will start soon," says an optimistic Uttam Maharjan at an electronic shop in Lagankhel, who is diversifying into tv repairs to make up.

The suspension of services is also a huge loss for NTC, which loses up to Rs 6 million a day in revenue. The annual turnover of mobile telephony was estimated at Rs 1.3 billion. Also badly hit has been the Indian joint venture UTL, which uses local wireless loop technology. It was required to re-register all users so security could check subscribers. "Mobile phones have become a basic requirement in this age. The government should consider reopening both mobile and UTL services," says businessman Rajendra Khetan who recently sold his shares in Spice Nepal to diaspora Nepalis.

Spice Nepal has influential Nepali shareholders along with Russian and Indian investors and is said to be pressing for an early resumption of service because its deadline for launch expires in April.

"We are ready to start, a lot of money is at stake here," explains Spice's Indra Subedi. The company has deposited Rs 250 million which could be forfeited. Spice had planned to distribute 300,000 mobiles at its launch on the Nepali new year next month and reach a target of one million subscribers in two years. Subedi claims Spice's technology is much more advanced than NT's and will be more reliable and ease congestion. "We welcome the competition, the choice is up to the consumers," NT's Kansakar told us. The main concern is not the quality of service or numbers of users but who will qualify as subscribers since the government will now be vetting all pre-paid subscribers. Many subscribers are giving up hope and want their refunds from NT and UTL. Says Kansakar: "We will ensure that everyone gets refunded with the money not yet used for their calls."
Malaysia return

Migrant workers push for minimum wage

For K George, an 85-year-old former vice-president of the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC)—the umbrella body for trade unions in the country—the solution is simple. “Foreign workers must be allowed to join (Malaysian) unions,” he said. Had they been allowed, “We would have been able to minimise problems with illegal workers and unpaid wages,” George explained that the immigration status of migrant workers would have come to light much earlier when workers’ applications to join trade unions were processed. “The unions could have taken over the job of ensuring that migrant workers had proper work permits and immigration documents.”

The MTUC will have to tackle these and other issues after its stunning elections recently swept in new leaders, raising fresh hopes for workers. On 30 December, the team aligned to incumbent MTUC Secretary General G Rajasekaran made a clean sweep of all contested union leadership positions. Over the 22 years of Mahathir’s tenure, workers’ rights were gradually whittled away. Out of the more than 10 million workers in Malaysia, fewer than 10 percent are trade union members. This leaves the vast majority of workers—including migrant workers—vulnerable to exploitation. It is situation that employers relish. In the past, MTUC has adopted an ambivalent position towards migrant workers. Some unionsists saw the influx of these workers as depressing wages levels in the country and thwarting attempts to lobby for a minimum wage. “We are looking at (the situation of) workers, whether they are local or foreign,” he said. “Of course, the MTUC is focused on local workers as we cannot ignore the exploitation of any workers.”

(IPS)

ANIL NETTO in PENANG

More than half a million enforcement personnel and volunteer vigilantes pursued undocumented workers last week as the deadline for illegal migrant workers passed.

Those arrested will be bailed, whipped or deported. When it was discovered that some Malaysian employers appeared to have taken advantage of the impending crackdown and withheld wages due to these targeted migrant workers, it threatened to sour diplomatic ties with Indonesia.

The problem of illegal workers in Malaysia must be tackled at source, said some analysts, pointing to the syndicates and agents that lure these workers and rip them with false promises. Once here, migrant workers are left in a vulnerable position as, in many cases, their employers hold on to their passports and their work permits bar them from switching jobs.

Often, for the workers, it’s a case of either grin and bear it or run away and lose their passports, thus rendering themselves ‘illegal’.

The communist parties, in pre-budget meetings with the finance minister and at public rallies had demanded that the government, to which it provides critical outside support, take steps to recover tax arrears from the well-off and also the vast amounts of money they owe public sector banks.

Indeed the communist parties, which had joined hands with the ideologically dissimilar Congress party with the single purpose of defeating the BJP, have been giving fierce warnings that their support for the UPA coalition should not be taken for granted.

Defeating the BJP, have been giving fierce warnings that their ideologically dissimilar Congress party with the single purpose of...
Squaring the clubface

Being consistently square will land you in the round hole more often

There's a magical feeling in hitting it perfectly off the sweet spot. No jerks and vibrations, just that buttery smooth feeling as the ball soars effortlessly towards the target. Yes, one more enticing fascination of this sport that draws participants again and again. Once the sensation has been felt, you are as good as hooked. The reality is nobody hits the ball off the sweet spot with a square clubface on every shot. Even hitting half of your shots this way is an unreaked dream for most.

Squaring the clubface at impact and hitting the ball straighter is arguably the hardest aspect of the game. When you look at the mechanics of a golf swing, it appears almost impossible to achieve. That's especially true with the lower looted (longer) clubs. Most professional golfers compensate for a wrong swing path and non-square clubface. That's why many club golfers hit their short irons to reasonably good standards but fail miserably to do the same with longer irons and the woods.

How is it possible to accomplish this with all those unnatural twists and turns the body takes when swinging the club? An essential part of the sport and a hard one to master. This idea to start with, is to find a way to do it often enough to make a marked impact on your game. For this, you need to be aware of the fundamentals that will lead to such a scenario.

Unlocking the wrists is the final step. It is a natural reaction to the uncoiling of the body and the momentum of the swing, provided that a reasonably good down swing path has been attained. If the swing path is too far inside or outside the target line, the wrists won't uncock correctly. If the body turns through the impact area, the hands have a natural chance to remain square. If the body is not turning, it leads to an inconsistent swing path and a conscious manipulation of the hands in trying to square the clubface.

To get the feeling of a proper turn through the hitting area, get on the green and try small swings by rotating your body. If you do this often, it will become a habit leading to consistent shot making. Allow your professional instructor to get you started and you can be sure your ball is going to be flying towards the target more often.

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

Pokhara’s young champs

Abandoned boys aim high on the football field

RAMESH POUDEL in POKHARA

Shushil Bikas is 12 years old. He fled from home scavenged for plastic in Pokhara’s garbage dumps to earn enough to buy food.

Today, he is training to be a football star and asked who he wants to be when he grows up, he says without hesitation: “Ronaldo!”

Like the boys of Brazil’s favelas who rose up to become national champions and then international football stars, the boys of Pokhara’s streets are aiming high. The Sahara Club based here has, for the past five years, been rescuing street children and providing them with a home and education. But six months ago, a decision was to start a football academy for former street children and took in 20 boys aged 10-14.

They are from underprivileged families, indigenous groups and dalits. They go through four hours of intensive football training every morning and evening with a professional coach. The rest of the day they attend classes at the Naba Prabhat Secondary School. Many of the boys are not just good in sports but top the class in studies as well. Sahara takes care of their food and hosts with money raised from donors. “It’s amazing how quickly the boys have been transformed,” says Basanta Thakali of Sahara, “Last year they were picking garbage, look at them now.”

Indeed, they brim with confidence and are proud of how far they have come.

Bikram Basnet, 14, remembers, “It all seems like a dream.” Bikram tells us tying his boots. “Now, all I want is to do well in studies and be a great football player some day.”

Coach Dambar Gurung is full of praise for his boys. “They are learning very fast,” he says during a training session at the stadium under a spectacular backdrop of the Machhapuchhre. “At this rate, they’ll all be champions.”

Basanta Thakali says Sahara Club’s real intention is to rescue street children and give them an opportunity to do well and contribute to society. Football was just an idea and it took off immediately. “It’s not been easy: it costs Rs 1.6 million a year to take care of the children, pay for their studies, food, lodging and coaching. Luckily, the Asia Gold Cup Tournament earnings have been helpful and the shortfall has been met through donations from Pokhara’s themselves. “We have taken responsibility for the boys for five years,” says Thakali, “and we’ll keep on taking new children.”

Performers Nabin Gurung and Mahesh Gurung have organised charity shows in the UK to raise money for Pokhara’s football academy and Thakali hopes money won’t be a problem in future.

The boys of Sahara Club line up for a football practice session.

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SUSHIL BIKAS

Bishal Lama, 12, practices dribbling the ball with the other boys.
Post-February First postmodern democracy

Democracy is a literary protagonist in Manjushree Thapa's latest book

A skilful mix of history, reportage, memoir and travelogue, Manjushree Thapa's 'Forget Kathmandu: An Elegy for Democracy' reconstructs three centuries of Nepali history as an elongated journey towards individualism and freedom. What distinguishes this book from mainstream history books is its stance: the Elegy revisits Nepali history from the point of view of a history-dweller rather than a history-broker.

**BOOK**
**Asthik Sakwa**

It is at once a celebration of the power of the literary monologue and a cry of outrage at the reality in which the present Nepali state and society are trapped. Elegy is woven around the theme that Nepal is heading towards what she calls a 'postmodern democracy'. Starting with an account of the Narayanhiti massacre and its aftermath, she goes back to trace the medieval history of chaos and intrigue in search for evidence to either validate or falsify conspiracy theories.

The author's inclination towards the postmodern is reflected in her willingness to bend, twist and challenge every perceived rule and statement: an approach that also leads the reader to ponder whether postmodernism is not the very essence of that increasingly elusive democracy, which every interest group in Nepal today is frantically trying to bait and define.

The key feature of postmodernism is deconstruction. It is the rejection of the sovereign autonomous individual with an emphasis on diversification, collectivity and anonymity. Postmodernism in Nepal undergoes two distinct transformations: First, from a medieval mountain kingdom, where the solitary Shahs or Ranas with the help of their Pandey or Thapa ministers, to a modern country caught in a continual power struggle between the royals and party leaders. The second transformation (the visibility-constraining 'haze', as Manjushree puts it) that had enveloped the country over the past century is that it worshipped one distinct figure, is blown away to welcome the global wave of democracy into Kathmandu. Thapa's creed of worship finally disappears, only to be replaced by endless squabbles among the various interest groups including the Maoists.

This also sets the stage for Manjushree's post-February First writings, where her cry is for 'the right to talk about everything and anything' and not to reinstate any of the ruling figures. Not least because democracy is the breathing protagonist in almost all of Manjushree's writings, one cannot help but notice that her post-February First writings come as a natural extension of her concluding chapter in 'Forget Kathmandu', 'The Unfinished Revolution'. Postmodern democracy can now no longer be associated solely to the lawless and objectiveless postmodernism. The authors' inclination towards the postmodern is reflected in her willingness to bend, twist and challenge every perceived rule and statement: an approach that also leads the reader to ponder whether postmodernism is not the very essence of that increasingly elusive democracy, which every interest group in Nepal today is frantically trying to bait and define.

Real democracy, now, must not just look like a democracy, but act like one as well: whereas in earlier spells of democracy, Nepalis were asked to be content with a few freedoms (assembly, speech), we now want social and economic equality as well.

The conclusion of Forget Kathmandu somewhat outpaces the rest of the book and the 256 pages boil down to a two-page half page list. While the diagnosis feels sound, the prescription is less persuasive, which, ironically, might reflect the current state of Nepal. Still, there are a number of weaknesses in the diagnosis. For example, the book hardly ever mentions Newar history and culture, which is a significant part of Nepal's history.

The author is not alone in this perill. All Nepali today would confess to knowing less about their own selves than about the 'other'–the almighty God, the red revolution, the glamorous west, the oily sands. Every Nepali would also confess to not knowing a single name free from the pollutions of corruption and self-centredness. Is it not time now that we come to terms with our diversified pasts and presents within the boundaries of our common territories?

The Elegy is open-ended. This is the way to be read in conjunction with the rapidly unravelling of the post-February First events, which might very well turn out to be the earnest forlorn of the conclusion of that 'Unfinished Revolution'.

Asthik Sakwa is a doctoral student and lives in Washington DC.

**World wide Wave**
The young take on the world charging through the Internet

The third Wave Web Winner 2004 (www.com.np) awards organised by our sister publication, the monthly youth magazine, Wave, took place recently. Of the more than 150 websites submitted, 124 were shortlisted for the final contest sponsored by ITNTI with xtremenepal.com and DVD.com as co-sponsors. Here's our review of the six winning websites:

**Wave Web Winner 2004, Prajwal Shakya**
http://prassanna.150.com

This website not only has class, sophistication and style. It has comprehensibility to boot. Designed in orange and black, it might as well be the official website for the WWW contest. Using the main title package, Prajjwal has laid it out with panache. For those planning to participate next year, check this website out for not just its winning streak but also for the 02 WWW's interview. Add your own formula and who, you know, you might be the next Wave Web Winner!

**Best Site-Content, Indira Sharma**
www.nepalnari.com

The only female winner of WWW 2004, India's a great job. Designed for the ultimate women with beauty tips, fashion, cuisine and more, it also tackles serious issues that the Nepali nari deals with. While its bulletin Take It Easy shares ideas such as hair damage control, the Nepali Nari Special gives an in-depth insight into the situation of Nepali women and how far they've come. It also lists the girls' schools, women's colleges in Nepal and the first Nepali women to accomplish school, college and university. It also lists the girls' schools, women's colleges in Nepal and the first Nepali women to accomplish school, college and university. Every Nepali would also confess to not knowing a single name free from the pollutions of corruption and self-centredness. Is it not time now that we come to terms with our diversified pasts and presents within the boundaries of our common territories?

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Editor's Choice Award, Kailash Gyawali
www.klash-design.com
Young and peppy, this is a bilingual website with German and English. Kailash maintains a daily blog giving a firsthand account of a Nepali youth's life in today's Kathmandu. He also posts interesting photos to go with his blog entries. Take a look at the photos of the zoo animals and a photo made up of the letter k. This is more than just design, it is lifestyle.

**Best Site-Technicallity, Chandra Man Maharjan**
www.multimedia.com.np/cmanmans/ This website design is simple, elegant and as plain as the nose on your face. It is the perfect website for dummies, first-time and multiple users but it is not exactly boring either. All about how to redesign small businesses to conquer the market through the Internet, this website equips you with all the tools and tricks of the trade. As they say, keep it simple and you just might win!
KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

UNHEALTHY: 121 to 350 micrograms per cubic meter

HARMFUL: 351 to 425 micrograms per cubic meter

OK: 61 to 120 micrograms per cubic meter

GOOD: 6 to 60 micrograms per cubic meter


There was a slight improvement in the air quality of Kathmandu Valley last week, mainly because of a slightly clearer day on Wednesday when the rains flushed down pollutants and a fresh northwestly breeze blew away the dust. However, the concentration of particles smaller than 10 microns in urban Kathmandu is still way above national and international standards.

As we move from winter to spring, we can expect the air quality to improve slightly but not significantly.

Source: www.mope.gov.np

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Kathmandu and the surrounding areas are known for their serene atmosphere and natural beauty. The valley is surrounded by the Himalayas, which provide a stunning backdrop for the city's cultural and historical landmarks.

At the center of Kathmandu Valley is the ancient city of Kathmandu, which is home to the famous Durbar Square. This UNESCO World Heritage Site features three royal palaces, each with its own unique architectural style. The square is also home to several temples, including the sister of the Singha Durbar of Bhaktapur and the Narayan Mandir of Patan.

In the eastern part of the valley, Bhaktapur is known for its ancient temples and palaces. The Durbar Square here is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and it features several ancient temples and palaces.

To the south of Kathmandu, Lalitpur is known for its rich cultural heritage and ancient temples. The city is home to several UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including the Swayambhunath Stupa and the Boudhanath Stupa.

Kathmandu Valley is also home to several national parks and wildlife reserves, such as the Chitwan National Park and the Simikot National Park. These parks offer excellent opportunities for wildlife watching and bird watching.

In addition to its cultural and natural attractions, Kathmandu Valley is also home to several modern amenities, including shopping centers, restaurants, and hotels.

So if you are looking for a place to escape the hustle and bustle of city life, Kathmandu Valley is the perfect destination for you.
S

druch delivered by the Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Women, Labour and Home Affairs on the occasion of the International Day of Women. (Please check against delivery.)

Madam Chair, Respected Sofas, Distinguished Desks, Honorable Ministers, Your Excellency the Donors, Members of the Muzzled Media, Ladies and, last and also the least, you latecomers at the back who are an utter disgrace to the male sex.

Now that Nepal Television has finally arrived and member states of the Much-maligned Movement such as Cuba, North Korea, Syria, Laos and Togo have shown that they stand shoulder-to-shoulder with us in our hour of need, we can with the permission of the Chair all have a collective sigh of relief and move on quickly to the next item on the agenda which is the International Day of Women that we are about to mark today amidst much fanfare, tongue-lashing and lip-service. Since I don’t see anyone raising a hand in objection, it is so decided.

Right at the outset before proceeding any further let me state that as far as we are concerned, and if it was up to us, we’d declare all 365 days in the year as International Days of Women. Hic. I think I speak for a majority of my male colleagues when I say that we would not be doing justice to the admiration, devotion and affection we have traditionally reserved for members of the female species in general and their Nepali sub-species in particular if we celebrated Women’s Day only once a year. This is why we propose that henceforth every day be devoted to women except April First, which as a purely taken gesture will be set aside by the United Nations as the International Day for Men. Going by the tumultuous applause, I hereby declare that motion passed.

I don’t need to remind those of you present here that it is a scientifically proven fact that women hold up only half the sky. In fact, if it wasn’t for us members of the unfair sex holding up the other half the sky as we know it would fall. However, it must be said that in Nepal women have taken great strides. Admittedly, these strides have not been as great as the strides we menfolk have taken but, hey, we’re not here to gloat.

For example, as men we have developed a great deal of expertise in vitally important activities such as making hilarious sounds by cupping our palms under our armpits. To illustrate my point, let me demonstrate. Now, show me one woman who can do that. As you can see, the fairer sex has a lot of catching up to do to be at par with us men who are governed by the left hemispheres of our brain (unlike women who are governed by the western hemisphere). This evolutionary trait gives us males superior powers of deduction, analysis and an ambidextrous ability to scratch and sniff while simultaneously monopolising the TV remote. It is this capacity to multitask that makes men such great hunter gatherers to this day and this is why our country is in the state it is in today.

With that, I would like to end my two words so that I can get back home to watch myself on the evening news.

UNDER MY HAT

Kunda Dixit

Nepal Pashmina Industry

NPI

"Pashmina from NPI. I never leave without it"

Madam Chair and Respected Sofas

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