Free Pun

JB Pun Magar, staff reporter of Himal News and commentator to Nepal Times was abducted Wednesday by Maoists while covering the anti-rebel uprising in Kapilbastu. The investigative journalist had covered the recruitment of child soldiers by the Maoists (see ‘Giving children a fighting chance’, #227) but was also harrassed by the army in November.

“He is a very professional journalist who is objective and fair even in the most challenging assignment, we demand his immediate release,” said Himal editor, Rajendra Dahal. “It is unfortunate that the Maoists have detained him at a time when the state has also been harrasing the media.”

RAMESWOR BOHARA in NEPALGANJ

Even by the insane standards of Nepal’s conflict, Nepalganj had not seen anything like it: the bombing of six schools last month to force them to close.

With the SLC exams due on 27 March, more than 2,000 schools in the far west have begun to reopen after nearly a month. More than 500,000 students had been affected by the Maoist threats, which seemed to be aimed at maximum disruption of normal life.

“After the bombings, children are still terrified and distracted. They cannot concentrate on their studies,” says a teacher from Mahendra High School here. A high school student who doesn’t want to be named says: “I am afraid, what if they bomb us again?”

Although the schools have reopened, they have done so on the defiance of the Maoist call for a strike and school authorities throughout the region fear retaliation by the rebels.

Meanwhile, Nepal’s donors who have been involved in supporting education have reacted with outrage at sustained and deliberate attacks on the school system. “It is unacceptable for conflict to enter the classroom,” UNICEF’s Nepal representative, Suomi Sakai, told us, “children, their families and teachers need to feel confident that schools are a safe haven, free from violence and threats.”

But if this is the situation in Nepalganj, things are much worse in the villages. Teachers from districts across Nepal say hundreds of thousands of students haven’t been able to prepare for their exams and it looks like exams can only be held in district headquarters for security reasons.

“We have not yet been able to finalise the exam centres due to this situation,” explains Bishnu Prasad Thaiba, Banke DEO.

Editorial

Something to hide?

Home Furnishers

Tripathi House in Tripatikuti, Kathmandu Ph: 434801- 436206.

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Nepal's 'other' half

Pluralism is a prerequisite for peace and justice

I was shocked to read of the brief detention of Himal Khabarpani's Kanak Man Dixit. I wonder what advantage Nepal comes from the detention of editors and social workers who are loyally and seriously working to find better ways to help Nepal towards peace. How has Nepal reached this state? It would seem that years, if not centuries, of rule and development, and efforts to clear conceptual confusion and lay the ground-work for more substantive tani studies in future. It is a time to end persistent externalisation of nearly half of the country's population.

Kush Mainali, Kathmandu

geme change. Alternatively, the empire could allow the kingdom to solve the crisis and arrive at a sustainable internal equilibrium. These are stark but the only pragmatic options for a speedy end to the current suffering. What the majority of the Nepali people desire is a quick liberation from violence and fear, but it does not matter at this stage who is the hero inside the shining armor is. Diplomatic thumb-twiddling or the fancy to play the morally blind killing-field umpire whose sole goal is to keep the massacre game going will only prolong the borders for real people in the name of abstract, discretionary ideals.

As currently deployed, the Western human rights discourse — a product of the Cold War — is aimed at undermining the states of the erstwhile Soviet and other disafflicted states to regulate the lives of their citizens living in conditions of relative order.

In the context of Nepal's total breakdown of law and order, what is needed at this point is a genuine concern for human life in its physical sense—universalised human rights will have meaning only when the state ensures the basic-condition for the material and biological integrity of the human subject. Even though these states are often portrayed as antithetical to human rights, the irony is that only stable, well-functioning states can ensure the rights whether they be civil, human, or economic—of their citizens.

With the state in any other way, the stateless societies in Somalia and Congo would have been considered utopian by now.

The Kingdom in shining armour is on a study is still a virgin tract to Mr. Gaton that I'm willing to match his officials. Having said that please convey possibly used synonymously. Actually the tani is a

**STATE OF THE STATE**

**CK Lal**

The Nepal tani as an arena of study is still a virgin territory. Even though it is home to over half of all Nepal's region is little studied and even less understood.

The tani and madhes are mistakenly used synonymously. Actually the tani is a

geographical area with different communities as its residents, while madhesh is a cultural space with madhesh as its inhabitants. Ignorance alone, however, doesn't fully explain the apathy towards the tani in general and madhes in particular. Partly, it is because of the way the tani identity has evolved over the centuries.

King Prithibi Nayan Shah built modern Nepal upon the strength of his determination and that of his Gorkhali army. He later imagined his kingdom as a garden of four castes and 36 races 'that populated the hills and valleys of Mahabharat range. Readings of his Dhíya Jepadashreedved in that formulation primarily as the 'other', the group to be feared. After the transformation of Kunwars into Ranas, Nepal's hereditary premiers ran the country as a family firm. They needed madhesh to exploit the forest and agricultural resources of the tani. Hence, concept of one language, one religion and one people. The Nepali language, Hinduism, a traditional, martial tradition, an anti-Indian self-description, and kingship are five symbols of this new Nepalipan. When the Shah Restoration accepted this formulation, even madhesh who were beneficiaries of the feudal state were pushed away.

After 1960, the promotion of a unified mainstream culture became the kingpin of Punyachath nationalism. Patronises during the first decade of the Punyachath regime consisted of uncoordinated loyalty to 'one language, one dress, one religion, and one people under the all-powerful monarchy'. But even when politics became a little more open after the 1960 referendum, there was no let-up in the attempts of 'Nepalising' madhesh. Those who couldn't or refused to be assimilated in the mainstream were vilified as anti-national or worse. Right up to the 1990s madhesh remained a derogatory term in elite circles.

The 1950s People's Movement raised hopes of an inclusive identity, but couldn't fill the aspirations of the main externalised population group of Nepal. The new constitution cites the upliftment of the marginalised through legal guarantees and remedies, but it refuses to even recognise that madhesh have been systematically excluded for centuries and gives continuity to the assimilation model of constructing a homogeneous Nepal identity without the acceptance of multiple identities. Pluralism is a prerequisite to peace and justice.

The two-day internationa conference on 'Nepal Tani: Context and Possibilities' that began Thursday is a pioneering effort to clear conceptual confusions and lay the groundwork for more substantive tani studies in future. It is a time to end persistent externalisation of nearly half of the country's population.

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The Kingdom in shining armour is


crossed out.
Something to hide?

It is difficult for us in the media to look for a light at the end of the tunnel at the moment when we are fighting a war on two fronts. There are many things that puzzle us about the past month, but none more so than the rude way that the media has been bludgeoned. A counter-insurgency war is no picnic, we grant that, and it would be foolish to seek to dilute or sophistication in these times. But such a broad swatch of civil liberties endangering the very institutions we are trying to preserve. The treatment is more damaging than the disease.

After all, what are we up against here? An underground group that deplores the policies of globalization, pluralism, a reign of non-violence. How does it help to fight by undermining the institutions which believe in those very same values? Political parties or in the lines of Maoists or believe in non-violence are supposed to be on your side. Civil society is a bulwark against extremism, a free press, besides a being a fundamental right, allows on to vent off steam so don't build up.

How then does it help to weaken those who are on your side? Improving parliamentary leaders helps only those who have no use for parliament. Harassing civil society strengthens only those who believe in poverty, the barrel of a gun. Gagging the press emboldens those who believe in violence.

These are not western concepts being dragged down by our threats. The Nepalis have by now been accustomed to political choice, to think and speak freely. They have come to rely on a vibrant and independent media to inform them of events, and interpreted them from a wide range of perspectives and opinion. Turning the clock back may buy time, but the people won't take it for long.

Hitting the mout button has not just hit the media, but the people as well. It's not just journalists who are leaving for pastures better.

Some won't like us saying it, but we'll say it anyway: the people don't trust the official version of events. They don't trust the truth.

Anti-Violence

The moral majority led by Denmark, Switzerland and other donors have already cut off aid to force a return back to the 31 January status quo. The king shows no signs of standing down, there are strong inducements that the Europeans will start talking the way they see a logical step of shutting their missions in masse. Besides serious psychological traumatisations, the flight on such a scale is bound to further blight this country, or what remains of it. Then the whole charade: the telling revelation: the projects of development and democracy are less about helping the people and more about shaping the ideological and strategic agenda of recipient states.

Meanwhile, on the right flank, India, America, and Britain have admitted to being a coalition of the willing with India as the lead agent to challenge the monarch. The tripartite league bring only the portent of future, but also sheds critical light on South's constitutional limits. It is a good reason why the hyper empire and its powerful strategic instruments, the BBC, the UN and the various Human Rights organisations continue to insist, but the Right now they maintained a complicit silence over much more egregious manifestations and human abuses in Kashmir, Sikkim and Bhutan.

Without or fear of four, moral ambiguity characterised political actors, both internal and external, during the most vicious atrocities of the last decade. While the hyper empire (particularly structured around US arms, Anglo-Saxon body, Judeo-Christian soul, and a complex collection of states) and its ideological tools sought to make cause out of a few events such as the Durbach massacre, there has not been a studied silence on the general process of forced displacements, massacres, abductions, torture, cultural cleansing, massacring, killings and the wanton degradation of human life and property of the peasantry and rural folk. The empire expressed its righteous ire only when the conflict adversely impacted the fortunes of a special class that echoes and reaffirms the wanton degradation of human life and property of the peasantry and rural folk. The empire expressed its righteous ire only when the conflict adversely impacted the fortunes of a special class that echoes and reaffirms.

The empire's righteous noises on Tibet even as it maintained a complicit silence over the wanton degradation of human life and property of the peasantry and rural folk. The empire expressed its righteous ire only when the conflict adversely impacted the fortunes of a special class that echoes and reaffirms the wanton degradation of human life and property of the peasantry and rural folk.

The reader is left to draw her own conclusions. It might be adventitious to see this as a rogue state in league with theaxis of evil and the marines will do a quick job of

against the very same principles and values of democracy that is endorsed by an inherent power to heal itself and does not need a violent external force to solve its problems, and on the other hand the sorry state of our 'democratic' culture and realistic perception of the Rule of Law. Through these years we have witnessed destruction and death on a daily basis yet the very same mainstream newspapers that published the new and photos of wiped out villages police have published articles hailing the Maoists as heroes and publicized writings of their ideologues calling for class and ethnic hatred. Unfortunately, ten years of mayhem have done nothing to change this attitude and there are still some who are ready to give the Maoists a blank cheque. In the weekly Times of Nepal, Nepalnews.com international section there is an article by a Samaya editor Yubaraj Ghimire, (From the Nepal Press, #236) that again violates this contradiction: exhorting the Maoists to give up violence on the one hand while asking them to 'stand firm in their statement' on the other. Such pathetic journalism and ambiguity gives reason to the Maoists to go on fighting as they see it as a form of support.

Unless and until a full and unmediated examination of violence in politics prevails our country will know no peace.

SK Aryal, Northampton, UK

After reading Under My Hat (Learning to live with sensors), #236 I wanted to write to Mr Scissorhands to applaud his dedication to the thankless job that he is performing for king and country. Censors have been given a bad name in some quarters by the ham-handedness of a few, but a really good censor can serve as a good to creativity and even a sort of poet who encourages concision and eloquence—witness the output of Antonio Gramsci from Mussolini's prisons. Since you have been on the job, I must say I have noticed a marked uplift in the accessibility and suppleness of the prose of the publication in your care. You have the rare opportunity of working in the office of a very fine writer and editor and on the premises of the New Testament book of the word of God in Nepal. What chance to improve your skills. But will it really light the afterburners of your career? You need a match perhaps. While the fall of the Soviet bloc and the Latin American military junta, the job market for political specialists in the Far East is about to open. The Open University and Sikkim. Only wimps who know that they can't win political debates silence their opposition. The clash of opinions is the internal-combustion engine of democracy. This is a discussion of speech is precise. And, dear censor, it's in your hands.

Peter Constantini, Seattle

In my very disagrees with the review of Manipur Thapa's excellent new book Forgetting Kathmandu: An Essay for Democactus. The review is full of impenetrable academic terms such as 'deconstruction', 'postmodernism', 'historicism', 'subjectivism', 'anti-scepticism' and such other locations of knowledge. That much is clear from the book. But why inflict her psychiatric experience on the reader? The style of the reviewer is in stark contrast to Ms Thapa's beautifully clear prose style and the way she deals with her subject matter in such an intelligent, illuminating and humane way.

Stephen Keeling, Dholahiti, Lalitpur

The only piece of writing that is worse than Manjushri Thapa's self-indulgent, prescriptive and exhibitionist new book is the review of it in your online edition of the weekly Nepal Times (#238). The reader of this is not a person who can engage in a civil discussion. She is the epitome of what the right wing's barometer. What's more, when she talks about your book the thing that it's a very strange experience. This sort of high-sounding academic analysis has hardly any penetrative power in the realm of Nepal Times readers. The style of the reviewer is in stark contrast to Ms Thapa's beautifully clear prose style and the way she deals with her subject matter in such an intelligent, illuminating and humane way.

Parbat Giri, New Delhi

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

Atish Sakha’s review of Manjushri Thapa’s new book made me laugh out loud. This is the same Manuscript that was written in the
When you’re a poor country

You don’t get to have a Patriot Act, you have a Vitamin A Act

S

a the World Bank has decided to suspend aid to oppose the February First move and bring the ‘bad guys’ to their knees. International human rights groups, in a joint draft report, suggest suspending all aid to Nepal. Items include toothbrushes, soap, Vitamin A, Pan Parag, pani puris, along with all military supplies. The Pan Parag ban is really going to hurt. For some odd reason, the report doesn’t suggest banning Belgian chocolates, truffles, foie gras, beer or any kind of fricassee. Hey, when you’re one of the poorest countries, you get to be the guinea pig.

When you’re a poor country you get to have countries like the United States tell India “Hey felia, here’s a good opportunity for you to take the lead. I know you’re trying to get into the Security Council so why not use this as a tune-up opportunity.” (Based on a secret poll by Wolfensohn and Associates, 50 percent of the World Bank staff thought poverty meant being poor but lets not get caught up in details here.) It’s a simplistic paradigm but people can get very creative when there are limited options.

When you’re a poor country, all terrorists are called ‘Maoists’, ‘Insurgents’, ‘Revolutionaries’ or ‘JNU Gold Medalists’.

Hey, I kid because I love.

But seriously, this might be a great opportunity for Nepal to begin shaking that foreign aid syndrome. My grades in school started improving only after my Dad said he was going to stop paying tuition. (Ok, they went from failing to just barely passing but lets not get caught up in details here.) It’s a simplistic paradigm but people can get very creative when there are limited options.

Take the great Benjamin Franklin, one of the founding Fathers of the United States. He started out as a printer but he was also an athlete, inventor, writer, statesman, diplomat and a ladies’ man (our politicians have that one covered) yet always humble. He started improving only after my Dad said he was going to stop paying tuition. (Ok, they went from failing to just barely passing but lets not get caught up in details here.) It’s a simplistic paradigm but people can get very creative when there are limited options.

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World Bank warning

WASHINGTON—The World Bank said Wednesday it is considering stopping its projects and programs in the country if the current political tension continued and constitutional freedoms are not restored in a timely fashion. The Bank said it was monitoring events in Nepal closely and could take further action in two months. Bank staff from Kathmandu had reportedly written to its Board saying that more time would be needed to make a ‘ground-level assessment’ of whether ongoing projects can be implemented. The Board expressed concern about the situation in Nepal and whether projects could actually be carried out. The Board also raised questions about the government’s ability to continue implementing difficult economic reforms ‘in the absence of representative mechanisms to build broad-based consensus’. The Bank, however, still broadly supported the cautious approach proposed by management to consult closely with other development partners in assessing the progress that the government makes in reform implementation as well as issues related to the broader governance environment of the country, including the rule of law and protection of human rights. Sources said World Bank Country Director Ken Ohashi gave the government a window of one to two months to show renewed commitment to reform and governance issues. (IPS)

Rocking stocks

When the chips are down, the stock market soars

While Kathmandu’s glitterati, literati and glitterati were focused on proophesying doomsday, cash-rich investors just made it to the stock exchange and rode a bull-run that has not been seen for quite a while.

Even though the NEPSE index rose 20 percent post-February First, we are yet to hear from our self-proclaimed economist intelligentsia or advice-bag donors. This bull-run is not pushed by insider traders who like to see their shares soar at financial year ends to make their annual reports look good. It isn’t the result of a few diaspora Nepalis investing in the bourse either. Why is there significant volume changing hands now?

Firstly, the insulated inhabitants of the Valley are experiencing a feel-good factor and investment in stocks is a definite indication of this security. Second, there is a lot of money in the market. Real estate transactions tumbled as regulations became strict so the returns-hungry punters put their money in stock. Sure, this bull-run is not good money chasing bad stocks as the only place the money is going is into commercial bank shares. The Nepali investor knows that banks are professionally managed companies better regulated than other industries. They have also been cautious of growing banks promoted by people of dubious distinction at bay. So here’s an opportunity for people to ponder upon why more companies should be professionally managed and share thebooty with the public.

Many would be forgiven for wondering if even we had a stock exchange but as the bull run advances the regulators have come into focus. This Beed has been harping on about reforming this sector for a while now. The stock exchange should be in the private domain and the government remain a regulator. Thereafter, we need to stop comparing socialist concepts like the stock exchange (see ‘Shareholder Scare’, #74 or www.arthabeed.com). More instruments have to be allowed as such non-voting shares, debentures, linked variants and mutual funds owned by banks. Finally, trading of stocks on paper now belong to museum showcases. We need to get into de-mat or paperless trading through the process of digitization. If multiple banks can share one institution such as the SCT, depositories can surely facilitate multiple companies’ registry function.

This would bring transparency, ensuring that the stock market grows sustainable. At the end of the day, you provide comfort to your investor and the investor will provide you with money. There could be a lesson from India, where investors large and small are lining up to get a biometric through the Panama Canal mandatory by the regulators to invest. Interestingly, private companies that are designated by the regulator are provided this identity.

The starting point could be making the Nepal Stock Exchange operations transparent. If they ask everyone to submit audited accounts of the investing public for the same, can we see the NSE financials published?

www.arthabeed.com

Pakistan ambassador Zamir Akram served two terms in Washington DC before being sent to Nepal and does now admit that Kathmandu is R&R posting.

Pakistan is an important country for Pakistan, the SAARC Secretariat is located in Kathmandu and the two countries share significant challenges like housing the large number of people who have had to flee the conflict to Nepal says. It has been all work for Akram since he arrived here in early 2002. He is an outdoor person and has done the Chomrongba Base Camp as well as the Lo Manthang and the scenery in Mustang is similar to Sirdar in northern Pakistan but, Akram is impressed with the facilities for organised trekking in Nepal. His wife, Sadia, has been involved in fundraising for army widows and charities like Make Nepal.

Workwise, it has never been a dull moment. He feels there is no way out but for the monarchy and the political parties to cooperate to address the larger problem of the insurgency. But he has misgivings about the new post-King regime in Pakistan.

‘Pakistan’s view is that this is Nepal’s internal affair’

Akram adds this doesn’t mean Pakistan is indifferent to Nepal’s problem. ‘This issue is not so much democracy as one of security versus terrorism and His Majesty has himself reiterated his commitment to democracy’.

This debate has a familiar ring to Pakistani ears, especially since the justification used for King Gyanaendra’s February First move is similar to those used by General Musharraf when he seized power in 1999: that the political parties had made a mess of things and someone had to step in to set things right. But Akram doesn’t think that comparison can be taken too far because in Nepal’s case, there is a lot of “wiggle room” within the constitution for the king to act even though some political leaders don’t agree with that role.

‘What helped us in Pakistan was that people were fed up with corruption and mismanagement and lack of governance and when President Musharraf took over the reins of power there was an expectation that things would improve which fortunately they have,” he says.

Akram has pushed hard to foster bilateral trade, culture and tourism with frequent exchanges of delegations. FIA restarted its flights to Karachi during his tenure and the airline wants to begin a third flight to Islamabad.

Asked about the thaw in India-Pakistan relations, Akram admits there has been an improvement in atmospherics but there is still a long way to go on issues like Kashmir. On SAARC, he says: “Everyone must give up something for the common good but if the attitude is going to remain that of a big brother then the chances of regional cooperation are non-existent.”

Post 9/11 there is a new strategic dimension to US-Pakistan relations which is reminiscent of the 1980s when the Americans saw Pakistan as an ally against the Soviets in Afghanistan. But Akram would like to see US-Pakistan relations moving beyond just a “fair-weather friend”

“The Americans now accept that there is more to be investment in bilateral relations and not cooperating only when Washington needs it,” adds Akram, who will be heading the foreign policy desk at the prime minister’s office in Islamabad.

We asked Akram what he regrets the most about his stay in Nepal. “Not being able to trek to Langtang,” he says, “but that always gives me an excuse to come back.”


Who invited this situation in the country? Until now, the king, NC and UML have been the main rulers. Lack of vision and action on their part led to this situation. The king is also a Nepali and we must acknowledge his good work and criticise bad ones. We can’t say that right is wrong and wrong is right. The palace is as much to blame as the political parties and so-called intellectuals for this mess.

So what’s the way out? Though the past led to this accident, the climax was the king’s February First proclamation. The parties must recognise their weaknesses. Until they acknowledge it, there can be no improvement. That’s why what the king said was based on truth.

If that’s so, why did the parties protest? Each party has factions. The UML and the NC know they do have honest, patriotic, intelligent party workers but they are duped time and again. Those who were in power destroyed the country. We need a new leadership. For the palace to weaken parties and divide and rule is to work against the good of the nation.

How are the people to perceive the royal step? We need to leave behind the lust for power within the parties. Some politicians and so-called intellectuals have a big hand in pushing democracy into the palace gates. If it hadn’t been for their weaknesses, democracy wouldn’t be crippled today. But just because they were to blame doesn’t mean the palace can label democracy defective. There is something seriously amiss. The king’s speech doesn’t match his actions. One gets the sense he is moving towards active monarchy instead of multiparty democracy.

But the king has time and again expressed his commitment to constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy. The country cannot develop without democracy and democracy can’t survive without political parties. If a leader leads the people with honest vision towards development, freedom and prosperity, nobody needs to be imprisoned or arrested. It is wrong to imprison or punish someone for anything other than a crime. The country is in a state of emergency and laws have been made accordingly. Some people have not been allowed to leave the Valley although they are not Maoists. If the emergency is to bring the Maoists under control, why are others being punished? This is just an excuse to weaken the democratic forces.

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So what’s the way out? Though the past led to this accident, the climax was the king’s February First proclamation. The parties must recognise their weaknesses. Until they acknowledge it, there can be no improvement. That’s why what the king said was based on truth.

If that’s so, why did the parties protest? Each party has factions. The UML and the NC know they do have honest, patriotic, intelligent party workers but they are duped time and again. Those who were in power destroyed the country. We need a new leadership. For the palace to weaken parties and divide and rule is to work against the good of the nation.

How are the people to perceive the royal step? We need to leave behind the lust for power within the parties. Some politicians and so-called intellectuals have a big hand in pushing democracy into the palace gates. If it hadn’t been for their weaknesses, democracy wouldn’t be crippled today. But just because they were to blame doesn’t mean the palace can label democracy defective. There is something seriously amiss. The king’s speech doesn’t match his actions. One gets the sense he is moving towards active monarchy instead of multiparty democracy.

But the king has time and again expressed his commitment to constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy. The country cannot develop without democracy and democracy can’t survive without political parties. If a leader leads the people with honest vision towards development, freedom and prosperity, nobody needs to be imprisoned or arrested. It is wrong to imprison or punish someone for anything other than a crime. The country is in a state of emergency and laws have been made accordingly. Some people have not been allowed to leave the Valley although they are not Maoists. If the emergency is to bring the Maoists under control, why are others being punished? This is just an excuse to weaken the democratic forces.

How should the political parties move ahead in future? We have lost our democratic rights and freedom to the selfishness of a few corrupt people. Still, any country needs political parties. They must now strive to earn back the people’s respect and start again.

Should the emergency have been imposed? The government says that this was done to quell the Maoists. But it needn’t be imposed on the innocent and those protesting peacefully. To do so is authoritarian. 
Defining democracy

Nepal Press, 1 March

Parliaments are not necessarily the best medium for democracy. They are merely a small group of citizens enjoying freedom in countries that have not adopted accepted democratic norms. Though, it might look like democracy is in jeopardy at the moment, it is not so.

Democracy is defined differently in different countries and in different conditions. Communist and military regimes define democracy differently from developed and developing nations. If the USA, UK, and EU consider themselves guardians of democracy, they should create a better pattern for people living in developing nations. They can't pressure Nepal just because she is a small, poor nation.

Democracy is not practiced in many powerful developed countries. It has been misused in others, running nations. To allow powerful countries to act according to their will pressuring small countries with issues of human rights and democracy is unfair. Truth is, no nation today can deceive its citizens. Nepalis have understood the meaning of real democracy. Our friends must realise that political leaders and members of main parties aren’t the only Nepalis. There are millions of ordinary Nepali people who have raised the human rights issue after the king’s move on February First. Nepal welcomes support from the international community but will not tolerate unnecessary foreign interference. We must be allowed to make independent decisions for national security and development. These same countries have said the Bhutani refugee problem is an internal affair. Why don't they say the same now?

There were gross violations of human rights during the street demonstrations. Police leaders were openly involved in unconstitutional activities. Why didn’t the international community speak up then? Foreign aid was abused and subject to corruption. Now the country is heading towards peace and development, these same countries threaten to stop aid in democracy’s name.

These same nations have said the Bhutani refugee problem is an unconstitutional activities. Why didn’t the international community react then? We must be allowed to tolerate unnecessary foreign interference. We must be allowed to be guardians of democracy, they must inculcate their pattern of democracy in themselves.

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Village schools

Nepal Samacharpatra, 7 March

Villagers of Byamrukot, Kuhl and Taham VDCs are running Radha Krishna Primary School with money collected by selling fodder grass.

Instead of relying on the government, they will hold the cover of the cost of running the school. Of five teachers employed, three are paid government allowances and the two are paid by local donations. The trend is spreading to surrounding villages.

Jailhouse rock

Jana Ashtali, 2 March

The prisoners of Lalitpur’s Nakuha jail have presented a list of demands to the Home Ministry. If fulfilled, these demands will make living in prison much easier so much as the unemployed might actually prefer it. The 29 prisoners have requested a high school, hospital, gym, library, computer training and facilities, better food and visiting hours. They have also asked that the guards and other staff in the jail be paid as much as the prison guards and special allowances given to prisoners on holidays.

The jail must be better maintained and the prisoners be taught technical skills said the list signed Prisoner Yogeshwar. It also included some strong political demands. The prisoners have threatened to schedule protest marches, meetings and sit-ins in jail if the demands are not fulfilled.

Home coming

Annapurna Post, 8 March

NEPALGanj—The fact that many Nepalis who had fled the conflict to India are starting to return may be indication that the huge immigration of the recent years is on the decline.

Nepalis who have returned from India were reversed and about 500 people from Terai and Khotang left for India everyday. Last month the numbers were down to 200 people from Bheri, Rapti and Karnali left for India everyday.

The people leaving are seasonal migrants who go to pick grapes or apples in Himachal Pradesh.

Switching sides

Nepal Samacharpatra, 9 March

More than two-dozen Maoists from Rautahat have deserted the Maoist party to join the people’s freedom movement. The Maoists are in-charge of Arjun Yadav, Rautahat district people’s government minister Nebulad Rai Yadav, area members Bimal Tiwari, Laxmin Yadav and 30 others issued a joint statement last month. The statement also mentions cultural discord and differential treatments among their followers, forcing the Maoists to join the movement in large.

How can I give you a property description? I have just been minister for a month.

Rajasthan, 3 March

Earl Post-Graduate Diploma in Education

BankStreet College of Education in New York and Kathmandu University

Earn a Post-Graduate Diploma in Education

A teacher training course run jointly by Bank Street College of Education in New York and Kathmandu University

Under the aegis of the three institutions named above, an intensive training is conducted annually on Rato Bangala School premises. The course, a children’s centre, training for primary school teachers, teaches together with theory and practice, how individuals who have completed their high school or B.A. in any field are eligible to participate.

This one-year training is accredited by the Nepal Inservice Education Development (NCEED) in Kathmandu. All participants will receive certification on primary teacher training, and those with a B.A. have the option of continuing for another four months at Kathmandu University, at the end of which they will be accredited a Post-Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE).

Through conducting training sessions for other teachers, teachers who are working toward earning a PGDE, learn to be both skilled teachers of their own classes and effective teach leaders.

The training is of 14-month, so both English- and Nepali-speaking students can participate.

Forms for the upcoming academic year (2005/2006) are being distributed at Rato Bangala School. This year the deadline is 9:00 a.m. on Monday, 13 April, 2005.

Celebrating 20 YEARS OF ENABLING ABILITIES!

The Swiss NGO Terre des hommes is proud to announce the 20th anniversary of bringing direct aid to poor children in Nepal and 20 years of partnering with the Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre for Disabled Children, Banega, the leading referral centre for reconstructive surgery and rehabilitation in Nepal and beyond.

Milestones:

- 1985 - Program started in Nepal with a view to provide treatment and rehabilitation services to disabled children of the poorer and disadvantaged section of society.
- 1992 - The program was handed over to the Nepal NGO ‘Friends of the Disabled’ in order to empower local expertise and ownership.
- Over 1% of all children with disabilities in Nepal have been treated so far - 20,908 disabled children from mainly poor families from 74 districts, except NaPanch: 6,680 children.
- 111,890 children throughout Nepal have been screened for possible disabilities.
- 21,392 successful surgeries have been carried out.
- 23,163 orthopedic devices fabricated and distributed.
- Community Based Rehabilitation programs provide follow-up care to the patients in 20 districts.
- Treatment cost per child - Rs. 30,000 - presently covered through donations, both institutional and private.
- Program coverage: 40 districts in Nepal, half of them with the assistance of local partner NGOs and HRC is in the process of decentralizing its services by setting up satellite centres in Nepalgunj and Biratnagar.
- Capacity building for local partners in the districts through: training and education; disability awareness, primary rehabilitation therapy training; sharing information; organizing mobile health camps, etc.
- Integration into society starts from the first day of intervention through active involvement of parents and their parents in the decision making process regarding the treatment and rehabilitation.

The Swiss Foundation Terre des hommes (TdH) with headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland, is the largest Swiss children’s aid organisation operating outside Switzerland. Since 1960, the movement has been active wherever children are in need. The movement is aimed at providing indispensable support to children in the world, wherever they may be. Through resolve commitment and long-term experience, Terre des hommes today plays a leading role in the field of humanitarian aid on an international level. With emergency action and long-term projects, Terre des hommes is fighting to improve the lives of 30 countries, practicing a strict policy of political, religious and national neutrality.

Their program includes projects in the field of education, anti-trafficking and humanitarian assistance.

HOSPITAL & REHABILITATION CENTRE FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

Banega, Nepal, District Keura, Nepal: PO. Box 6737, Kathmandu, Nepal

Telephone: 00977-1-4161666, 661888, Facsimile: 00977-1-4161777

Email: info@hrcdnepal.com

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The sounds of silence

Across Nepal, there is an information vacuum as radio stations are gagged

Within a decade there were more than 50 FM stations across the country. And contrary to the government’s worst fears, the stations didn’t spread anarchy and chaos. In fact, radio became a vital source of information and expanded the public space for debate and consensus. They didn’t undermine our culture with Hindi pop, in fact Nepali folk and dohori got a big boost.

Nepal became recognised the world over as a pioneer in public service broadcasting in developing societies and young democracies. Nepalis could hold their heads high at international media seminars and show others how to do it. Indeed, even Sri Lanka which has a long tradition of broadcasting, sent journalists to Nepal to learn how to operate community stations.

Ten years of effort, training and investment has now been dismantled in one fell swoop by the government’s ban on news and current affairs on FM for security reasons. Even educational and farming programs can’t be aired. Some FMs have closed, others are broadcasting music all day long. Thousands of journalists have been laid off. Ironically, people addicted to news on FM are turning to underground rebel broadcasts which have filled the gap.

Shortwave radios that were extinct are suddenly in great demand and even second-hand ones are selling at a premium as people switch to the BBC Nepali Service which has increased its program duration to fill demand (see interview).

“It’s a very sad situation. Independent radio broadcasters were serving the nation so well and better than any form of media. How can they be accused of boosting the morale of Maoists and undermining the state?” says Bharat Koirala, the architect of Nepal’s public broadcasting success story. It was largely in recognition for his tireless lobbying for Radio Sagarmatha that Koirala was conferred the Magsaysay Award for media in 2002.

Radio Sagarmatha’s license paved the way for Nepal’s FM boom: community radios, public broadcasters and commercial stations. The FM wave unleashed a music revolution in Pokhara and spurred the growth of folk music. But for the most part, radio fulfilled the Nepali thirst for freedom. Rural stations like Radio Madanpokhara in Palpa started with a studio in a cowshed, Radio Swargadwari in Dang used to broadcast vital information for farmers and traders.

A new design of dokos with a small wicker pocket where women gathering fodder could put their radios became the rage across Nepal. In Jumla, shepherds on pastures listened to studio discussions on Radio Karnali and felt empowered. Bus drivers along the highways in Chitwan got important information live on the status of the roads through their radios.

Maithili and Bhojpuri broadcasts from Nepal became instant hits across the border in...
Nepali Times: What kind of response are you getting from listeners?

Rabindra Mishra: The response has been extremely positive. People are snapping up shortwave radios: from villagers to high level officials within Nepal and in the surrounding countries, the Nepali Service from the BBC World Service is currently one of the few sources of accurate and independent news about Nepal. In addition to our daily 30-minute Nepali language program on shortwave, the English programs are on 103 FM 23 hours a day in Kathmandu.

BBC Nepali Service has its own studio in Kathmandu. Will we see an expansion in services?

As a result of the recent developments in Nepal, we have started an additional 15-minute transmission from 1 March 2005 at 0100 GMT (6.45 AM local time).

What do you attribute the people’s trust in the BBC’s content to?

The BBC has always been a trusted source of impartial and factual reporting in Nepal. We believe it is important for consumers to have choices and a plurality of views on offer but at this time we are the only Nepali language station offering independent news and analysis on Nepal and as such we are striving to report the news as quickly, accurately and impartially as possible.

Radio journalists say this is the time radio can play an effective role in supporting the government’s development efforts. With the ban on news, there is already a backlash. In the absence of news there are wild rumours and even news of Maoist atrocities and brutality are not getting to the public.

In an interview with Nepali Times, the BBC’s Rabindra Mishra spoke from London about the role BBC Nepali is playing in the current situation.

Nepali Times: What kind of response are you getting from listeners?
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China’s beanstalk

BEIJING—If per capita income in China grows at eight percent per year—a reduction from the red-hot pace of 9.5 percent it has grown since 1978—it will overtake the current per capita US income in just over 25 years, according to the latest analysis by the Earth Policy Institute (EPI).

And if those increased incomes translate into the kind of lifestyle currently enjoyed by most US citizens, Chinese demands will overwhelm what the planet can offer, according to the analysis Learning from China: Why the Western Economic Model Will Not Work for the World. White geo-politicians worry whether China will integrate itself into the current western-dominated international system, Lester Brown, EPI’s founder, is far more worried about the impact of a wealthy China on the earth’s diminishing resource base.

“If it does not work for China,” he notes, “it will not work for India, which has an economy growing at seven percent per year and a population projected to surpass China’s by 2030.” China’s demands on the basic raw materials to feed its galloping economy have become increasingly clear here in just the past few months as successive trade delegations, including one headed by President Hu Jintao himself, have made their way to Latin America to sign long-term supply contracts for the production of commodities from agriculture to mining.

In a 12-day, four-country trip in November, Hu announced more than $30 billion in new Chinese investments in Latin America in basic industries and infrastructure designed to facilitate the export of raw materials from the region across the Pacific over the next generation. China’s economic boom is the biggest single factor in the steady rise of commodity prices worldwide over the past years, a factor that, coupled with its investments and shrewd diplomacy, is buying it considerable goodwill in much of the developing world but especially in South and Southeast Asia, as well as Latin America.

Indeed, a survey of 22 countries commissioned by the BBC and released earlier this week found that China is now viewed as a factor that, coupled with its investments and shrewd diplomacy, is buying it considerable goodwill in much of the developing world but especially in South and Southeast Asia, as well as Latin America.

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Kiss and tell

In trying to build bridges, could Lollywood's Meera have burned them instead?

ZOFIYET EBR AHIM in KARACHI

It really is just ‘a storm in a teacup’ and a ‘non-issue’ that some people seem so ready to dismiss? Why such a hue and cry, after Meera—known as the queen of Pakistani cinema—locked lips with her Indian co-star?

Does it really boil down to religion or something put up as a ‘cultural baggage’ that Pakistanis are so inordinately sensitive about? Ironically, Pakistani watch foreign movies with bated breaths, while at the same time bathe their eyes with audacity.

Will Meera, Pakistani filmstar turned woman’s rights advocate, who succeeded in bringing the brouhaha by kissing, her co-star Ashmit Patel, in an Indian film nazara pay a heavy fine on the actress because of her ‘bold scenes’? Stumped by the reaction, Meera—who is still in India with rumours that she plans to tour the circuit—has reported to have said that all she wanted was to “bring the two countries together.”

“If I have kissed Ashmit, it’s like Pakistan kissing India. If I have not kissed him, it’s as if every Pakistani has hugged every Indian. I don’t understand why there’s so much crying in India, I am an ambassador of peace and whatever I am doing is part of the process of building bridges,” she says.

“People who know anyone in their lives?’ asks an equally nonplussed Patel, who shared the kiss with Meera, in what he believes is “a peck on the cheek’ and ‘not even a proper kiss’. "Mehshie Bhatt, the writer and co-producer of Nazar, the whole thing is a skeleton in the Bhutani closet. It was the monsoon of 1992 that I went down to Jhapa to meet Meera have burnt them instead. Noorani, an avid cinemagoer and a leading Hindu, has yet to comment on it.”

But nothing could justify the policy concern, not any more. But the fact is that when the Bhutanese king played in the Himalayan purity. More shocking in Thimphu exaggerated an incident of stone-throwing two years ago to attract international pressure forced a verification exercise in one of the Subcontinent’s sea of humanity. Stalling tactics have been used by the authorities. These were Nepali-speakers from a different era, whose ancestors had entered Bhutan a century earlier as part of the great migration eastward. The rulers of Bhutan were happy to welcome the hardworking migrants of different castes and ethnicities to their unproductive southern hills, for there was revenue to be generated.

Cut off from the developments of the rest of the Subcontinent, including the great changes that overtook Nepal after the fall of the Ranas in 1960, the Nepali-speakers of Bhutan retained much of their old habits, customs and diets which had disappeared from their country of origin. I found this, for example, in the extreme humility displayed by the refugee villagers in front of figures of authority. These were hardly the politicized militants that the Thimphu antinomy claire was out to destroy the Bhutani idyl. I saw what at Kakkabiti 13 years ago was happenings, peaceful, villagers who had been uprooted from their homes and property only days earlier by disgruntled administrators from districts like Chirang, Sarbang and Samdrup Jongsar. They were the uprooted refugees who had been violently uprooted, wouded, wooden trunks, stools, cloth bundles, broken utensils and wickerwork doekos.

This was depopulation. The fears of cultural inundation felt by the upcountry Ngamo community was of course real, for the Nepali-speaking Bhutans represented the dominant and expanding culture of the central Himalaya. But nothing could justify the policy concern, not any more.
**Real life drama**

**Reaching out from a space where theatre is lived**

A scene from Jat Sodhnu Jogi Ko on opening night.

Their world’s a stage. Nepal’s first theatre school has started teaching students acting, directing, writing, improving and creating on stage. They are taught that life is theatre and to act is not to play a part but to live.

Sunil Pokharel got a few enthusiasts together in 1982 and started out at the Alliance Francaise teaching young Nepalis drama. But the group soon expanded and in 2002 set up Gurukul, a residential drama centre.

In the three years Gurukul has produced brilliant actors and technicians, and its productions are already recognised as the best in Nepali theatre. “It is intense. We learn the basics, techniques and things we never knew,” says student Ghanashyam Mishra of Janakpur. The course goes beyond just drama, students learn yoga, martial arts, dance, painting and personal growth skills. Plans to affiliate with Kathmandu University for an academic degree in the next two years is underway.

Experimenting new techniques and adapting plays for the Nepali audience is a Gurukul specialty. Putali Ko Ghar, the Nepali adapted version of Henrik Ibsen’s A Doll’s House was a hit even in Norway’s Ibsen Festival last year. “The number of people that turned up was amazing,” recalls Pokharel of the Norway tour. “Even here, high school students came in droves because it was in their course of study.”

Because it relies mostly on word-of-mouth, Gurukul is leading a hand-to-mouth existence. There are plays where hardly anyone turns up, even though that is becoming rarer these days as word of the quality of its productions spreads. “We’ll perform even if only two people show up,” says Pokharel.

Gurukul members seem too busy trying to stage the productions to spread the word.

Students and teachers of Tribhuvan University have taken it upon themselves to form a Friends of Gurukul fraternity of theatre aficionados. Popular demand has time and again resurrected Agni Ko Katha, a poignant play written by Abhi Subedi condemning the destruction of places of learning. Kachahari Natak or Theatre of the Oppressed has gained a platform here. Like street plays, Gurukul Natak can be performed anywhere but unlike street plays, it does not advocate a solution and asks the audience to offer theirs instead. Gurukul teaches Kachahari to community theatre groups. “The people know the issues they face better than we do, we can never tell for sure what the solution is. Through interaction and improvisation, we help the audience explore and find it,” says Pokharel. Gurukul is using this technique to help school students deal with their problems.

This year, Gurukul has also invited a Norwegian director to direct a Nepali play through its exchange program, members will participate in the lights and sets workshop at Delhi’s National School of Drama this summer and there is Satya Mohan Joshi’s Bagh Bhairab to be rehearsed for the coming season. But for now, Gurukul is busy staging Jat Sodhnu Jogi Ko at the Sama Theatre every evening (see box).

“It’s going to be a busy year,” says Pokharel, “a lot of work but that is just the way we want it.” •

**THEATRE**

Abha Eli Phoboo

Francoise teaching young Nepalis drama. But the group soon expanded and in 2002 set up Gurukul, a residential drama centre.

In the three years Gurukul has produced brilliant actors and technicians, and its productions are already recognised as the best in Nepali theatre. “It is intense. We learn the basics, techniques and things we never knew,” says student Ghanashyam Mishra of Janakpur. The course goes beyond just drama, students learn yoga, martial arts, dance, painting and personal growth skills. Plans to affiliate with Kathmandu University for an academic degree in the next two years is underway.

Experimenting new techniques and adapting plays for the Nepali audience is a Gurukul specialty. Putali Ko Ghar, the Nepali adapted version of Henrik Ibsen’s A Doll’s House was a hit even in Norway’s Ibsen Festival last year. “The number of people that turned up was amazing,” recalls Pokharel of the Norway tour. “Even here, high school students came in droves because it was in their course of study.”

Because it relies mostly on word-of-mouth, Gurukul is leading a hand-to-mouth existence. There are plays where hardly anyone turns up, even though that is becoming rarer these days as word of the quality of its productions spreads. “We’ll perform even if only two people show up,” says Pokharel.

Gurukul members seem too busy trying to stage the productions to spread the word.

Students and teachers of Tribhuvan University have taken it upon themselves to form a Friends of Gurukul fraternity of theatre aficionados. Popular demand has time and again resurrected Agni Ko Katha, a poignant play written by Abhi Subedi condemning the destruction of places of learning. Kachahari Natak or Theatre of the Oppressed has gained a platform here. Like street plays, Gurukul Natak can be performed anywhere but unlike street plays, it does not advocate a solution and asks the audience to offer theirs instead. Gurukul teaches Kachahari to community theatre groups. “The people know the issues they face better than we do, we can never tell for sure what the solution is. Through interaction and improvisation, we help the audience explore and find it,” says Pokharel. Gurukul is using this technique to help school students deal with their problems.

This year, Gurukul has also invited a Norwegian director to direct a Nepali play through its exchange program, members will participate in the lights and sets workshop at Delhi’s National School of Drama this summer and there is Satya Mohan Joshi’s Bagh Bhairab to be rehearsed for the coming season. But for now, Gurukul is busy staging Jat Sodhnu Jogi Ko at the Sama Theatre every evening (see box).

“It’s going to be a busy year,” says Pokharel, “a lot of work but that is just the way we want it.” •

Amazing grace

With easy grace, he stretches lankily on the step centre stage as the play Jat Sodhnu Jogi Ko opens. The flow of his speech, body language and the sets comfortably adapt Indian playwright Vijay Tendulkar’s Marathi drama into Nepali. Sunil Pokharel is Mahinarayan Gharti whose lifelong ambition for an MA degree has taken him from his village to the city. What he does not expect is to lose his job in a newspaper for being overqualified. Then begins his search for professorship, landing in a remote village college whose building houses the chairman’s cow. Funny and relaxed, the audience warms up to the story and Anup Baral’s direction enlivens the act with steady rhythm. A satire on the educational system, the theme is relevant and strikes a chord in the audience. It is the serious bits that seem to be a bit incongruous in places, trying to slip in the message in between the quips and social satire. You just have to see this play.

Jat Sodhnu Jogi Ko is staged every evening at 5PM at Gurukul’s Sama Theatre in Baneswor till 10 April. Tickets: Rs100, Rs 50 and for students, Rs 25.

www.aarohantheatre.org  4466956
The whole 90 yards

There is a way out of these awkward spots, practice!

Once you start hitting the ball reasonably well, you begin to really enjoy the game. At any level though, golfers still dream of improving their game. For instance, if they shoot 90, their target will be to break that number the very next time they step on the golf course. The desire to keep playing better never ends. In most cases, they are more likely to fail when they have to control their swing. All these golfers usually hit great full swings yet when it comes to a quarter, half or ¾ shot, the results are way below average. Inconsistent shot making from this range affects their scoring.

Ever looked back after a round of golf knowing you could do better if the shots within 90 yards had been well executed? I’m sure you’ve done that plenty of times. Apart from the very best players, golfers rarely practice shots of this range and are unaware of good technique. They lack confidence and suffer the consequences. I bet that when you’re on the tee box, you just hit those full shots. Well, smarten up and get into the habit of trying out controlled shots as well. Feel free to use the tips given below as a guide.

Tee Break

Deepak Acharya

To sharpen your skills and get the feel from inside 90 yards, use a pitching or sand wedge, take a quarter back swing and see how far the ball flies with less than full swings. They are confident and accurate with their professionals don’t like it when they are inside this range and have to use full swings. Observe how far the ball flies with less than full swings. A five-footer might need just a four inch back swing but a 30-footer would need closer to a 10-inch back swing. The key point is to get the feel of how much back swing to take for a given distance. It’s very similar to how you practice putting. A five-footer would need just a four inch back swing but a 30-footer would need closer to a 10-inch back swing.

Vary the back swing during practice sessions until you are comfortable. Observe how far the ball flies with less than full swings. Though they are capable of producing good results, even top professionals don’t like it when they are inside this range and have to hit less than full swings. They are confident and accurate with their distances but still use good course management on par 4s and 5s to try and leave themselves full shots to the green at least 100 yards. Amateurs are not capable of hitting accurate distances off the tee or even from the fairway, often ending up in those awkward positions inside 90 yards. Practice makes perfect and can save you from these otherwise difficult positions. Once you gain confidence and feel comfortable inside 90 yards, your scores will improve dramatically.

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

N epal has no national game. The closest we come to an indigenous sport is dandi/biyo. But due to the popularity of football, cricket and even champu, dandi/biyo is in danger of going the way of the dodo. So in the larger interest we decided to find out more about Nepal’s unofficial official sport.

To make it easier to visualize, there are three different swing lengths. However remember, I am a professional so don’t expect the same distances yourself!

1. If the biyo is hit only once in the distance, the distance is measured according to the length of the biyo
2. If the biyo is hit twice, it is measured according to the distance between the biyo
3. If the biyo is hit thrice, it is measured according to the approximate distance biyo or hour biyo travelled. The second player tries to outdo this and the third tries to outdo the second and so on.

Sometimes, other players try to block the biyo with branches and bushes they might have picked, making the game more interesting. Other players try to block the one lifting the biyo out of the hole with his dandi. If they either catch the biyo or hit his dandi with it, the player is out.

From the looks of things, dandi/biyo needs some standardization and the rules seem a bit too improvised for the game to qualify for the Beijing Olympics. The good news is that for now you can make the rules as you go along.

Are all you need for Nepal’s unofficial national sport

Aarti Basnyat

Sticks and stones

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Deepak Acharya is a golf instructor and Golf Director at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, Kathmandu. prodeepak@hotmail.com
LENDING A HELPFUL HAND: Japanese Ambassador to Nepal, Tsutomu Hiraoka and founder chairman of Nepalganj Medical College, Mukunda Bhakta Shrestha, shaking hands after signing a Rs 6 million grant for conflict victims on Wednesday.

ARRESTING GALS IN KATHMANDU: Bhim Kumari Budha, former tourism minister, being interviewed by the international press at Asan during the Women’s Day protest rally on Tuesday. Budha and several others were arrested soon after.

MY NEW JET: Capt RP Pradhan, president of SCI group, poses with a poster showing the third Fokker 100 jet that joined the Cosmic Air’s fleet at a press conference on Monday.

SING-ALONG NOW: Girls practicing outside St Xavier’s College on Sunday for the ‘Father Watrin Memorial Music Tribute’.

Kevin’s eye

In the early 1980s when Nepal was still roadless and undiscovered, Kevin Bubriski (below) went off the beaten track to record the lives of people in Nepal’s remotest regions.

Twenty years later, Kevin is exhibiting his stunning black and white images at the Indigo Gallery and what immediately strikes viewers is that the more things change the more they remain the same. Boys framed by modular concrete pillars in a Patan bahal, pigeons taking flight in the morning fog at Mangal Bajar, Gurung school boys in Barpak who must now be in their 30s.

“I realise that Nepal will always be a part of me and the photographs I take,” says Bubriski who spent two years as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Karnali. Bubriski’s photographs reflect the traditional aspects of Nepal life with his use of black, white and shadows. Why this preference for black and white? “I like the expressive quality of black and white which allow the viewer to concentrate on the design and structure of the image. Each print is a handmade object.” Indeed, the black and white images of Nepal from the past 30 years reflect the strong enduring integrity of the Nepali people and our cultures.

Asked about his favourite print at the Indigo, Bubriski points without hesitation at the one of monks at Tsurphu Monastery in Tibet carrying food offerings.


Aarti Basnyat

Reflections from Tibet. Photographs by Kevin Bubriski till 31 March at Indigo Gallery, 4413580

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Congratulations to the winners of the 1st Nepali Times lucky draw (March 10, 2005)

 editor and Publisher, Khushi Grit, hands out the lucky draw on 20 March at the Himalnadi event. These are the winners of the lucky draw:

- 1st Prize: 2 Nos. of Travel Kit (Cash Value Rs. 300)
- 2nd Prize: 2 Nos. of Sleepwell Mattress (Cash Value Rs. 800)
- 3rd Prize: 2 Nos. of Sleepwell Pillow (Cash Value Rs. 500)

Editor and Publisher, Khushi Grit, hands out the lucky draw on 20 March at the Himalnadi event. These are the winners of the lucky draw:
14 CITY

The Adventures of Herodig can also be read at www.extreme-nepal.com.

ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS
- Fundraising for cyclist Pushkar Shah Artworks by Govinda Azad, Tems Thimi Sherpa and Pushkar Shah at Nepal Art Council, Baber Mahal. Until 13 March. 4064570
- Celebrating Line Exhibition of selected drawings at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisted, 15 March-13 April. 4411222
- Kathmandu & Kali Gandaki Exhibition of photographs by Anangika Sugata at GAA, Thamel, until 13 March. Proceeds go to the Charo Gumba Restoration Fund. 4411557 gaagaa.org.np
- Utshitha Art workshops at Oldi Tapovan, 11-20 March. 4425106
- Festive Images Paintings by Pradip K Bajracharya at Buddha Gallery, Thamel. 13-27 March. 4441689
- Reflections from Tibet Photos by Kevin Burhiski at Indigo Gallery, Navakala. Until 1 March. 4415380
- Magic Pencil Artworks by Britain’s best children’s illustrators at the British Council, Lancer. Until 6 May. 4411798

EVENTS
- World Water Day on 22 March.
  - Jat Sadhuji Jogi Ko Play directed by Anup Baral at Gurukul, Dhisikhola, Sipoton. 9PM. 10 April. 4469699
  - Art workshops for kids at Buddha Gallery, 4441689
- Rugby Practice Every Saturday for both experienced and beginners. Contact Nepal U-19 at 4435390, shreeريطshmur@hotmail.com
  - Sanibar Mela Every Saturday at the Dharahara Bailey Cafe. 12AM-5PM.
- The God of Kathmandu Valley Tours at Hotel Vaja.

FOOD
- Night for Tsunami Kohor Gunung live at Shankar Hotel, Lajumpat on 18 March. 6.30 PM. Tickets 100. 4261831, 4451105, 5252113
- Live Jazz Fri 10th and Peter McTwister, Thursdays at Full Moon Bar, Mondays at New Orleans Cafe, Thamel. 4705796
- Live with Abhaya and the Steam Inguns at Dwarka’s Hotel. 4479489
- Fusion Time Monday at Jalaj Jalan Restaurant, Lajumpat, 7PM. 4410438
- Live Music Everyday at Janul Bar, Hotel de l’Annapurna, Dukh Bhatta Marg.
- Good Time Blues Band at Rum Doodle, Fridays. 7PM. onwards. 4701077, rum_doodle@gsmsalinaya.com
- Classical music, 7PM onwards, Fridays at Hotel Vaja. 4271545
- Jatra Saturday nights with Looza, 6.30 PM onwards. 4256622
- Jukebox experience at Rox Bar. 4491294
- Jazz at Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lajumpat. Every Saturday and Wednesday.

MUSIC
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  - Live with Abhaya and the Steam Inguns at Dwarka’s Hotel. 4479489

FOOD
- Amiko Special Lunch at Hotel de l’Annapurna, Darbar Marg. 4217171
- Krishnagar Nepal specially restaurant at Dwarka’s Hotel. 4479489
- Barbacoa Dinner Everyday at Rox Bar. 4225133
- Exotic Seafood at Rox Restaurant, Hyatt Regency. 4492134
- Delicacies Pastas and snacks at Roadhouse Cafe, Jwababai. 5252175
- Outdoor activities at Garden Terrace. Sohali Crowna Cafe. 4279899
- Genuine Thai cuisine at Royal Lotus, Bahundanda. 5522311
- Farm House Cafe Delicious meals at Park Village Hotel. 4525820
- Cafe Bahal Nepali cuisine at Kathmandu Guest House. Thamel. 4706362
- Juice Bar & Beach Bar at Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- Juice Bar & Beach Bar at Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- Vegetarian Creations at Shree View Restaurant. 4480262
- The Beer Garden at Vajrayanta, Goddasi Village Restaurant. 5560675
- Dinska’s Thali Lunch at Dinska Heritage courtyard. 4479488
- The Tharu Kitchen at Jungle Base Camp. Juggaasbasecamp@yahoo.com

GETAWAYS
- Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge Celebrate spring. 4361500
- Shikhawat Cottage Nature, peace and bird watching at L.900. 4354321
- Chico Chico Hawama Package for Rs. 1,700 at Club Himalaya. 4417106
- Jungle Base Camp Lodge, Bandhavgarh, special package and prices. jungsbasecamp@yahoo.com
- Malaysia Dream Holidays Packages starting from Rs. 45,500 per person. 4225210 Ext 013. malaysiaholidays_marco@polo.com.np
- Getaway package Night’s stay at Goddasi Village. 5560675
- AAA Organic Farm Guest Houses Rs 950 with three meals. 6031734
- Temple Tiger One night stay Rs. 280. 4225133
- Machan Wildlife Jungle Resort special packages available. 4225001
- Weekday Special at Park Village Resort Bhudhanikranta. 4375280
- Jomsom Mountain Resort Two nights three days at Rs. 5,999 for Nepalis. 4199 for expats including airfare and food. 4486110, salesexp@jomsommail.com

KATHMANDU VALLEY

KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

by MAUSAM BEED

The mercury may be rising but the pollution levels do not show any signs of dropping. The concentration of particles that are small enough to enter the human body in Kathmandu’s air last week was about six percent higher than the previous week and in the urban areas of Kathmandu and Faisan, pollution levels were twice the national standards. These average levels would have even been higher had it not been for the fresh afternoon breeze that cleaned the air.

27 February - 4 March 2005 in micrograms per cubic meter.
Source: www.mpae.gov.np

Nepali Weather

Mausam Beed

by MAUSAM BEED

The mercury surged four degrees this week to the upper 20s, indicating that spring is finally here. The minimum temperatures also climbed firmly into the double digits, bringing down the daily temperature variation to 15 degrees from nearly 20 last month. This satellite picture taken on Thursday morning shows a fresh westerly front that will bring cloud cover across the eastern Himalaya over the weekend. The existing high pressure pattern over the Kathmandu Valley will keep system at bay, so even if things get overcast there won’t be much by way of rain.

NEPALI WEATHER

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Hint hint, wink wink

SURGEON GENERAL’S WARNING (READ THIS FIRST BEFORE SNEAKING OFF TO READ THE PUNCHLINE): This column has been pre-tested on lab rats and has been found to contain no inflam- mable material and is not a firehazard as far as we can tell from cursory inspection. Consumers are warned that if symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, dizziness and a loss of the sense of balance should, god forbid, persist they should immediately consult the nearest member of the intelligent agencies and lodge a complaint. For best results, it should be consumed with a slice of lemon and a pinch of salt within 100 days of manufacture. Management welcomes suggestions and complaints via email and they will be immediately deleted. Anyone found to be taking any of this stuff seriously should go and get his and/or her head examined free of charge by a member of the Head Hunting Department of the Ministry of Infotainment and Commotion, if you get my drift.

And after that word of caution, which is mandatory under current regulations to protect our asses from being hauled over the coals, we can plunge right into this morning’s main headlines to find out what is not really happening around the nation even as we speak.

Sundays on again

After thorough deliberation and much agonising indecision, the Bureau of Sloth and Lethargy has finally decided to restore the Sunday holiday inside the Outer Ring Road. The on-again-off-again decision came after the Bureau announced last week that Sunday would be a working day in Kathmandu Valley but irate civilian servants said this would deprive them of adequate rest to prepare for a new week of idle worship. “If we work Sundays, we will be forced to become our old inefficient and lazy selves,” said one bureaucrat who agreed to be interviewed only in silhouette while taking a post-prandial nap.

Outside the Outer Ring Road, however, it will be business as usual on Sundays, the Bureau said.

Test-tube tourists born

The test-tube baby boom showed no signs of abating this week as more and more experimental human beings entered the kingdom, boosting hopes that this would impact favourably on sagging domestic tourism figures for the season.

Among those born this week was a test-tube journalist who, unaware of prevailing laws of the land, hasn’t stopped howling ever since he was born four days ago. Now that Nepal is a signatory of the International Anti-Biopiracy Convention it retains the copyright for the new babies so they can’t be cloned by anyone else. Not that anybody would want to.

“I kid you not”: Minister

The Minister of Innuendo and Insinuation has urged the media to disseminate only news based on facts that are stranger than fiction. Addressing a gathering of journalists-turned-pan wallas in Biratnagar this week, he said: “It is not untrue to deny that there is hardly no censorship, but I can’t confirm that those days are not here to stay.”

He added that unlike in the old days of unbelievable freedom, the public can now trust every word in the papers since they have all been fact-checked by the concerned authoritarians. He added: “You can be sure that nothing is made up, unless it’s an emergency.”