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What people say



KIRAN PANDAY

- Three-quarters of Nepalis believe in democracy
- More than half of them want a constitutional monarchy
- Only five percent are for an absolute monarchy
- Only five percent don't believe in a monarchy

A nationwide public opinion poll has shown that the Nepali people overwhelmingly want a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy—two provisions to which King Gyanendra reiterated his commitment during his royal proclamation two months ago.

The poll, conducted by Interdisciplinary Analysts with AC Nielsen in 35 sample

districts, was taken before February First and reflects the national mood just before the king sacked the government and imposed emergency rule.

Most of the 3,059 respondents felt that although a system in which political parties answerable to parliament is the most legitimate form of government they faulted the parties and their leadership.

Interestingly, only five percent wanted the king to have absolute powers and the same proportion were for a republic. Most felt that the Maoist insurgency should be settled through negotiations, but they distrusted both the Deuba government (which was in power in December) and the Maoist leadership, preferring third party mediation by human rights groups or the UN.

The most interesting revelation in the poll was that a very small proportion of people knew or understood what the constituent assembly demand of the Maoists entailed and only ten percent actually wanted it (see box, p4). Restoring parlia-

ment also received low priority, with only ten percent favouring it.

Even though some of the results may appear contradictory especially regarding the ways to overcome the present stalemate, the Nepali people seem to want an overall political framework in which the constitutional monarchy, parliamentary democracy and the Maoists all fit in.

By disagreeing with the demand of the political parties for restoration of the house, the Maoist demand for constituent assembly and their preference for a constitutional monarchy, the people are sending a message that they want all three forces to come together and resolve differences.

MEDIAWATCH

• Khagendra Shrestha, editor of *Dharan Today* daily was shot twice in the head on 15 March by gunmen that the army said were Maoists. He was rushed to hospital where he is in critical condition.

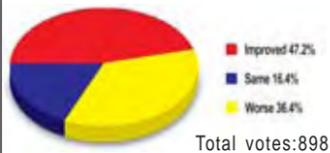
• Narayan Wagle, editor of the largest-circulation Nepali daily, *Kantipur*, was grilled at Hanuman Dhoka police post Thursday for an hour about a story on pro-democracy protests nationwide. He was told the content of his paper on 15 March violated the "spirit" of the royal move.

• In Simkot the army has seized all recent copies of *Himal Khabarpatrika*. Daily papers from Kathmandu have to pass military censors before distribution in Humla.



Times nepalnews.com Weekly Internet Poll # 239

Q. How would you characterise everyday situation in Nepal in the past month?



Weekly Internet Poll # 240. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Has there been an improvement in urban services in the past two months?

Continued p4

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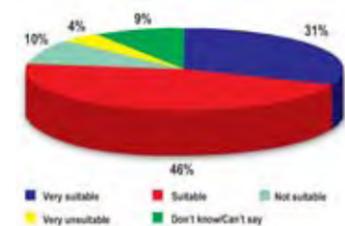
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How suitable is democracy for Nepal?



What kind of monarchy?



Editorial p2
Party Nepal

middle east and north africa

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DID YOU KNOW? In the Arab world, they wish you 'Rafakatukum Al Salama' (the words featured on the pendant) every time one embarks on a journey. It means, 'Bon Voyage' to the French, 'Shubh Yatra' to the Indians, 'Safari Njema' to the Kenyans and 'Have a safe journey' to most of us.

The middle ground

A rally on Lafayette Park struck chords of tolerance and democracy

For three hours on 13 March, a group of Nepalis in America gathered in solidarity to voice their concerns on the plight of their homeland and make a united declaration in support of peace, democracy and national pride.

GUEST COLUMN
Dipta Shah



There were several striking features of the gathering in Lafayette Park in Washington DC. The ethnic, economic and cultural diversity was evident, there was no single dominant ideology or group and therefore no ulterior motives exclusively upheld.

Various groups respectfully acknowledged differing opinions of their compatriots. There were some with unconditional support for the monarch, others voiced cautious optimism regarding the royal move and still others expressed outright disapproval of the suspension of the democratic process in Nepal. For once, it seemed, the existence of

such varied opinions served to galvanise (instead of weaken) the Nepali community's collective resolve.

Despite differences, there was complete and unconditional rejection of Maoist tyranny in Nepal. Many also expressed disgust at the degradation of Nepal's political leadership while hoping for a much needed reform within Nepal's democratic parties. A petition with over 1,300 Nepali signatories was submitted to US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice who was on a visit to the South Asian region this week.

The much sought after 'middle ground' appeared in Lafayette Park that sunny afternoon with the emergence of unanimity by every democratic measure—majority representation, a varied range of opinions and inclusive, tolerant and peaceful expression.

All participants hoped in their hearts that similar freedoms would exist in their motherland so all Nepalis could exercise their democratic rights in an atmosphere of peaceful co-existence. The Washington demonstration followed meetings held by a group of prominent Nepali intellectuals at the offices of American senators.

The combined effect of these separate initiatives resulted in precisely what Nepalis here have sought since February First: the galvanisation of a non-partisan 'middle ground' which serves as a forum for the majority of Nepalis living in the US to voice their aspiration for a peaceful and democratically vibrant

Nepal.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of this exercise was the further marginalisation of a divisive and destructive force spreading extremist propaganda within the Nepali community in the US. The frustration experienced by these radical elements was apparent in attempts at character assassination of members of the coordination committee of the demonstration in Lafayette Park.

Following the demonstration, they engaged in what they do best—lie, deceive, fabricate and divide. The natural targets were a handful of organisers who volunteered time and effort to mobilise the community in support of peace and democracy in Nepal.

The same radicals may believe that the tactics of their contemporaries in Nepal (which contributed significantly to the demise of democracy) may help boost their egos in America but this is hardly the case. By stooping to such levels, they have irreparably undermined their own agenda and exposed themselves by displaying intolerance and jealousy.

It is hoped that a similar exercise can be replicated in Nepal so a peaceful and sustainable democratic polity may grace the homeland at the earliest. The sooner the myth that opposition towards failed political leaders (and the Maoists) translates into unconditional support for the king is dispensed with, the sooner we are likely to experience concrete results on the ground in Nepal. ●

PARTY NEPAL

However bleak things may look, every crisis throws up opportunities for dramatic change. February First has presented Nepal's political parties with the chance to moul.

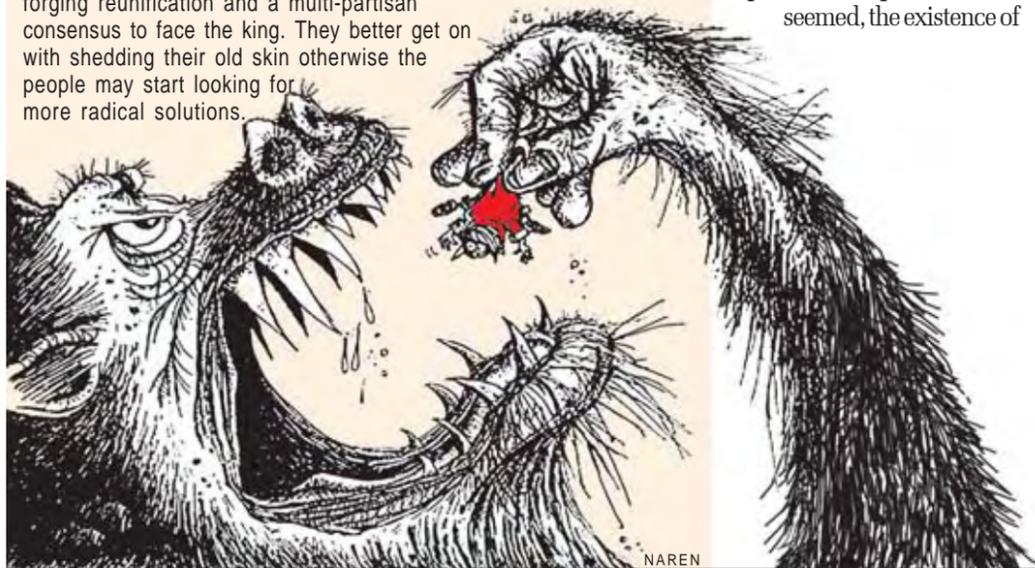
It is no great secret that the political leadership had stagnated, they lacked internal democracy, exhibited a shameless inability to work together not just among parties but also within their own hierarchies. Too preoccupied with power struggles, they didn't see how far astray they had gone. This allowed outsiders, especially after October 2002, to play politics off against each other and manipulate them.

Their fecklessness undermined democracy, took the country to the brink and made February First desirable in the eyes of many. One just needs to remember the headlines from the past 10 years to realise how deeply the rot had set in: horse-trading and floor-crossing, boycotts of parliament, politicisation of the police and bureaucracy, the cynical undermining of the democratic process for short-term partisan gain. And all along, in the offing, was the ominous thunder of an approaching insurgency.

Everytime this country's politics has come to a crossroad, the party leadership had the chance to look beyond petty concerns to the larger and enduring national interest. Sadly, they repeatedly mistook the cause for deeds, the process for outcome. It was as if, once elected, the mandate was everything and they didn't have to show accountability. Adolescent democracies everywhere are rambunctious and noisy. The difference in Nepal was that politicians were not even fighting for seats at the dinner table, they were scrambling on the floor for crumbs. There was just no way this could go on.

We're not playing the devil's advocate here. Our political class may not like to admit it but they handed it to the palace on a platter. But what now? February First actually throws the ball back in the parties' court. In the public's eye, the parties are not held in very high esteem but the people still believe in democracy and reject extremism of both the left and right (p 1, 4).

What we have seen this week doesn't give us much hope. A rump broke off the RPP, the ex-PM is frothing against the media instead of forging reunification and a multi-partisan consensus to face the king. They better get on with shedding their old skin otherwise the people may start looking for more radical solutions.



Deuba's democratic delusions

Let's not be too hard on the man

Forty-five days later, the process of releasing some of the detainees taken in on February First seems to be finally under way. Sher Bahadur Deuba, the twice dismissed, used a post-release press meet to lash out at the media. His message—the messengers did me in. And it wasn't the message so much as the method of delivery: he was frothing and fuming and had to be restrained by colleagues.

Clearly, Deuba has begun to show symptoms of cognitive dissonance—a distressing mental state in which people

STATE OF THE STATE
CK Lal



feel they are doing things that don't coincide with what they know, or having opinions that don't match their other opinions. It is an extreme condition of conflict or anxiety resulting from inconsistency between one's beliefs and one's actions such as opposing authoritarianism but assisting in its entrenchment.

After the spending best years of his life struggling for democracy, Deuba became the tool that dismantled the edifice of

democratic governance. He wilfully let the tenure of local units lapse, he dissolved parliament, declared the first emergency, censored the press and mobilised the army to fight the insurgency. We can't be too hard on the man, the agony of discovering that your actions have gone counter to your beliefs is a sad fate. Psychologists say that in extreme cases, cognitive dissonance can make the cringing sufferer do anything to get away from the persistent weight of guilt.

Deuba may be its most visible victim but there is a pandemic of cognitive dissonance in an entire generation of Nepalis. Born in the confusion of the post-Rana 1950s, brought up during the Panchayat's roaring 60s, people in the 50-plus age group suddenly found after 1990 that they had unfettered freedom to make mistakes. Many leaders, bureaucrats, professionals, merchants, and, yes, even the media, became serial offenders. They made errors of judgement but no effort to learn from them. Unsurprisingly, most are now writhing in agony recalling missed chances.

While the psychological bent of the

Panchayat generation was no doubt the main factor making Messers Madhab Kumar, Sher Bahadur, Pashupati Shamsheer and Badri Prasad do what they did, the post-1990 wave of free market fundamentalism created an intellectual atmosphere conducive to the rise of self-centred individuals.

The zeitgeist of the 1990s was *Homo economicus*—a figure motivated solely by rational self-interest. The lifespan of such a self-centred species is naturally short. Deuba was asked to establish peace, deliver good governance and begin elections within six months. He not only agreed but managed to get the sceptical UML, cynical RPP and suicidal Sadhabana all on board.

After February First, none of the players that made all the wrong assessments (the most ingenious being the UML's 'half-corrected regression') have found the courage to apologise to the public. If anything, most leaders of these opportunistic parties have been bending over backwards to justify the unjustifiable.

It's not just Deuba, every public figure who failed to read the political message of his hasty dissolution of parliament in May 2002 need to re-examine their beliefs and attitudes. Cognitive dissonance is more

pervasive in Nepali society than many of us realise.

To assuage their guilt, Deuba's ousted cabinet colleagues may be hoping they will be exonerated by events of even greater magnitude in the future. But history doesn't differentiate between the winners and losers—all have to ultimately stand trial in the court of time and own up to their past. Deuba may tell himself he did everything for the betterment of the country but whether victim or victor, his 'call of duty' argument will never absolve him for playing his part in a national tragedy.

Deuba's closest parallel in this affliction is Haiti's Baby Doc Duvalier. At the height of his delusion, Baby Doc put up posters in Port au Prince that read: 'I should like to stand before the tribunal of history as the person who irreversibly founded democracy in Haiti (signed) Jean-Claude Duvalier, president-for-life.'

In each of his three appointments as premier of the country, Deuba has sunk lower in his own eyes. The only thing that will restore his own self-esteem is to now work for the reunification of the Nepali Congress. ●

LETTERS

NOTHING TO HIDE

Apropos your editorial ('Something to hide?', #238) in which you advocate a return to parliamentary democracy. The political parties have always failed, and are still failing, to demonstrate to the Nepali people that they have a roadmap for the way ahead. They have missed goals and objectives the whole time. As much I hate to say this, dear politicians, you have failed yourselves and failed the Nepali people. Before you ask the people to join you once more to protest the king's move, perhaps some introspection is in order? Do you have answers? I am a Nepali currently residing outside the country and here to attend an academic program. I follow political developments in Nepal daily, hoping that someday a leader will emerge to steer the country to a peaceful solution. Hope is a big word, and for now that's all we can do. If you lead a street protest, meeting your demand is an end unto itself...a goal. On the other hand to the people your protest is just one of many on the way to attain the final goal. Do the politicians know what the goal is?

Sirish Bhatta, email

● Thanks for your polite yet clear editorial opinion. While freedom of speech is the rule, it is not absolute and at certain periods (especially in wartime) speech may be restricted for the public good. I think it is true of all societies. It is apparent that the censorship being imposed in our country comes from anxiety, cautiousness and fear on the part of the new dispensation, which wants to end the chapter of terrorism with a sort of seriousness never seen before. I understand the urgency because the Maoists killed three of my innocent cousins in the past three years on different pretexts. The terrorists widely used the media to sow fear and anarchy in the society and press freedom served the enemies of the state more than ordinary people. A legitimate force like the Royal Nepali Army was even compared with Maoist terrorists and the media treated them at par. The authority of the state was seriously undermined as even established papers became the mouthpieces of terror. I think there are enough reasons for censorship for a specific period of time. We have to accept that the media still needs to learn from the anti-national elements. You can criticise the present establishment for many obvious reasons (and they should be criticised) but we will fail our commitment to the nation if we insist on freedoms which have more meaning to the terrorists than to the common citizens.

Sriram Chaudhary, email

● Amidst all the discussion and debate over solutions to the Nepal quagmire, I wonder why no one ever took up parliamentary elections as a serious option. Even the Nepali media, which pre-February First was among the most politically vocal in the world, did not cover this specific issue in any detail. Why has the demand for elections and it's preparation been so unenthusiastic? If the Maoists the main reason, why since 2002 has there been no effort to change their stance on this? After two years of aimless protesting against the king, the parties still continue with their vague demands of a 'restoration of democracy' but still make no mention of elections. The vociferous international community spares no effort in preaching to the king, but is deafen-

ingly quiet when it comes to asking the Maoists to allow elections to take place. Only elections can install a legitimately democratic government in Nepal. So-called democrats—both inside and outside Nepal—have never brought the only group that stands against a truly democratic process to task on this. The way everyone is turning solely on the king to correct his 'mistakes' you wonder why the other extreme force in the country isn't getting any pressure. While we are all engaged in demonising or deifying the king, it seems we have absolved the Maoists of all responsibility. Their activities are taken as a given and the other forces in the country are expected to change their behaviour in response.

Abhishek Basnyat, email

● Your editorial on censorship is super. You have mastered the art of expressing yourself without offending anybody. The ability to speak one's mind, to challenge the political orthodoxies of the times, to criticise the policies of the government without fear of recrimination by the state is the essential distinction between life in a free country and in a dictatorship. But the right against censorship is not the privilege of just people like you, it is also the entitlement of common citizens like me and thousands of others who are worried about their motherland. I also had the right to express myself without being censored by you when you dropped the following lines from my letter to the editor ('Raw deal', #238) in your last issue: 'Does India want democracy in Nepal? The multiparty system and various political institutions in Nepal failed not because the king was bad or the parties were worse, or Nepalis were so uneducated to live with democracy but because India massively used democracy and its tool to break the fabrics of our society, economy and nationalism. Have you ever noted the issues that democracy in Nepal had to confront in its 14 years of democratic experiment from the case of Tanakpur to the latest extradition treaty forced on Nepal? This is what India is doing, this time unfortunately with the US and the United Kingdom'.

Can you explain your hypocrisy about the freedom of speech?

Dibya Gurung, New York

DOUBLE STANDARDS

Thanks for the interview of the Indian ambassador ('There was another road map', #236). His opinions are clear and he must be appreciated for being so straightforward. But how can we believe that India stands for democracy and freedom in Nepal when it has a history of intervention: in Sikkim, East Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Bhutan is the most vivid example of Indian intervention in turning the crisis to New Delhi's advantage. All this talk of supporting democracy in Nepal rings a bit hollow. While recent events in Nepal have indeed been tragic, they are certainly not spontaneous.

Sita Dahal, Melbourne, Australia

● Amused to read about India's puritan love for democracy, multiparty system and political freedoms. Be that as it may, can you conceive of a Nepali, Sri Lankan, Bangladeshi or a Bhutani ambassador in New Delhi talking about the relevance of these values to the state of Kashmir, Assam, Mizoram, Nagaland, Khalistan and so on in an interview with the *Times of India*? Will India like it if these ambassadors

started talking about approximately 90,000 men and women killed in Kashmir over the last 17 years and the widespread human rights violations being committed by the Indian army on these communities? Why the double standard? India should come clean and tell us exactly what it wants. Hypocrisy isn't helpful.

Saroj Lamichhane Magar, Hong Kong

TWO SIDES

Kanak Mani Dixit's Southasia Beat column 'Bhutan's Lhotshampa chargesheet' (#238) is one-sided and does not give a balanced view. You read any of the articles on Bhutan and many of the international organisations have high regard for its governance and incorruptible government. Sadly, Nepal is a very corrupt country and your mindset too has been greatly influenced by its environment.

Dixit should take a holiday for about a month in Bhutan, perhaps your impure mind will be purified and you will be able to give just and fair inputs in your articles so readers can appreciate them.

Ugyen Tshewang, email

● Thanks to Kanak Mani Dixit for once more drawing the world's attention to the plight of us Bhutanis. My forefathers came from Purba Dui Number. I can read and write Nepali but the young generation in Bhutan do not read or write Nepali at all since the government has wiped out the syllabus from all primary and secondary education. I like Nepal very much but don't like the strong influence of Indians. Bhutan is directly controlled by India with its double standards on democracy. We have the Indian army in the heart of the capital city in Thimphu and all along the Chinese border.

Name withheld, email

HYPER EMPIRE

I appreciate the cynicism with which Saubhagya Shah writes in his Guest Column ('Hyper Empire and Hindu Kingdom', #238) about the hegemony of powerful states and global institutions and the strategic rather than purely principled games they play with 'developing' states (such a polite euphemism). However, I'm still rather baffled by the implication of his claim that it doesn't matter which political agent comes to Nepal's rescue, so long as they can liberate the Nepali people from violence and fear. This is clearly intended to suggest that the king's assumption of power can do just this. I wonder if such a hopeful analysis can be sustained. One has to ask how dismantling the institution of democracy and its associated freedoms will assist in the conflict with an anti-democratic, totalitarian Maoist insurgency. There is a grave risk of giving advantage to the Maoists, both ideologically since all their claims about the nature of the 'regressive state' seem to have been realised, and practically, since so much of the RNA's human resources have been diverted away from its duties engaging with the Maoists? Unless the king knows something significant he's not telling us I'm at a loss to see a reasoned strategy behind what he claims to be doing.

P Lockwood, email

READING

I defend my writing on the Nepali diaspora in the UK and Reading ('Nepalis go underground in Britain', #230) and on the division of the Nepali community along ethnic lines. But it was due to editorial alterations in Kathmandu that the article

cast aspersions on PhD scholar Badri Bastakoti. If I could turn back the clock, I would undoubtedly write in a way that would more accurately reflect the nuances of such an intricate subject. I have been following the developments in Reading since my article came out and there is an effective status quo in place. Our community continues to attend Reading hospital's facilities and super-market floors. But over the months, I have learned that there are also a considerable number of intellectually invigorating Nepalis like Badri Bastakoti and numerous others who lead and inspire our community. I now know better than I did two months ago because of the Reading Nepali community's efforts to educate me. In the days to come, I hope to continue learning more and engaging in genuine debate about the role of the Nepali diaspora.

Pranav Budhathoki, London



ELECTRIC VEHICLES

After the huge increment in prices of petroleum products, numerous articles have appeared in your paper exhorting the promotion of electric vehicles (EV). I agree but is this technology necessarily going to make things better? There is no doubt that at a time when fuel prices are rising, EV technology is more beneficial from the economic and environmental standpoint. There are more than 150,000 fossil-fuel driven vehicles on Kathmandu Valley's limited and congested road network. And that doesn't even include motorcycles. There are only 600 Safa three-wheelers and a few trolley buses. The maximum speeds of EVs on Kathmandu roads rarely travel faster than 30-45 kmph and thereby they compel other vehicles from running at their own optimum speeds, thus increasing their fuel consumption and raising emissions levels. Ultimately, EVs are the way to go but for the interim, we have to think things through before raising the number of electric vehicles to 6,000.

Indra Maharjan, Kathmandu

TARAI

CK Lal writes in his State of the State column ('Nepal's other half', #238) that madhesis needed visas to travel to their own capital. I would like to point out that, in those days, the inhabitants of the capital also needed visas to travel to the tarai.

N A Pityata, Kathmandu

CORRECTION

The picture of Kevin Bubriski in 'Kevin's eye' (#236) was by Charles Gay.

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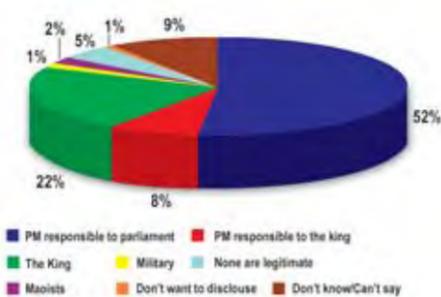
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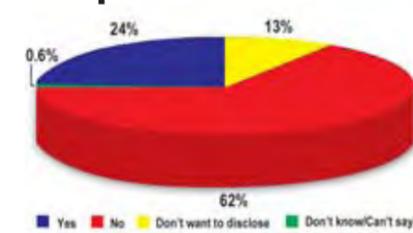
from p1

Hear, hear

What kind of rule is legitimate?



Are the Maoist leaders serious about peace?



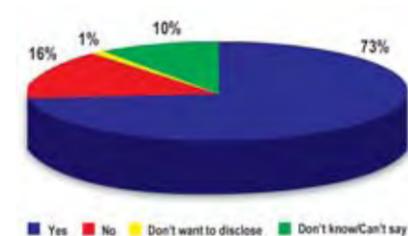
Conclusions of past public opinion surveys in this country (*Nepali Times*, #38, #115, #140, #218) have proven time and again that the people have a great deal more wisdom than they are given credit for. They are pragmatic, not swayed by slogans and extremism, they have their priorities well figured out, and they know who the crooks are.

An overwhelming majority of Nepalis still favour a democratic government. In spite of everything that has gone wrong in the past 15 years, they don't blame the system. They do identify specific disadvantages of democracy, and in order of priority, they are: misuse of power by those who wield it, corruption, politicians forgetting constituencies after being elected, politicisation of the administration and continuous protests by opposition parties.

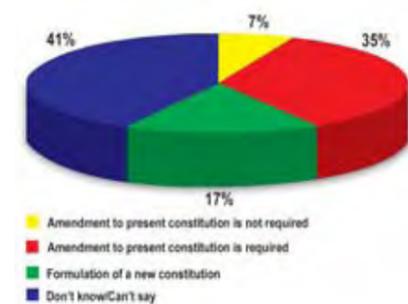
Despite these drawbacks, they say the two most important advantages of democracy are: freedom of expression and the right to elect rulers.

The people overwhelmingly reject

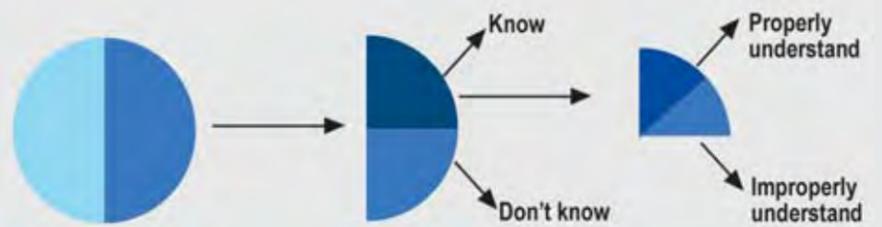
Can the conflict be resolved through talks?



What kind of constitution?



Public's understanding of constituent assembly



Constituent what?

Despite the debate in the media about the Maoist demand for elections to a constituent assembly, only half the Nepalis may have heard of the term. Among those who have heard of it, half claim that they understand what it means. But in reality only half of those who claim to know what it is actually understand the concept correctly. All in all, less than 15 percent of Nepalis understand what a constituent assembly is all about.

Predictably, there seems to be a correlation between education level and position on constituent assembly with university students showing the most support for it. Also, those younger than 45 were much more open to the idea than older age groups.

republicanism and an absolute monarchy, and if the proportion of those undecided on the role of the monarchy (14 percent) is excluded, support for constitutional monarchy becomes 63 percent. However, there is an age and education factor in responses. People above 56 and the less educated seem to be the one ones most in favour of a more active monarchy. Most with college education or higher favour a fully constitutional monarchy, although it is in this age group that republicanism has the most adherents.

On the Maoist insurgency, most respondents felt the priority should be for negotiations. They reject options like suppressing the Maoists militarily and strongly believe that the ongoing conflict can't be resolved by military means. They blame the failure of past

negotiations on the lack of flexibility on the part of the government and the Maoists. Three-fourths of the respondents believe the conflict can be settled through negotiations. A significant number favoured third party mediation by the UN (20 percent) human rights organizations (25 percent).

Sudhindra Sharma
and Pawan Kumar Sen

The nationwide Contemporary Political Situation in Nepal opinion poll was conducted by Interdisciplinary Analysts and ACNielsen and funded by The Asia Foundation. A closed-ended questionnaire was administered on 3,059 respondents in 35 sample districts in November and December 2004. Eleven field supervisors and 48 enumerators took part.

Full report will be available after 30 March
ida@wlink.com.np

Nepali Times: It's been half a century since Nepal and China established diplomatic relations, how would you describe the present state of relations?

Sun Heping: China and Nepal are traditionally amicable neighbours and the present bilateral relations are excellent. There is no outstanding problem but friendship between our two countries. Both can take pride in the peaceful trustworthy conduct of bilateral relations on the basis of equality. In recent years, the exchange of high-level visits has been frequent and cooperation in various fields has expanded. Crown Prince Paras' visit to China last year further strengthened China-Nepal friendship and neighbourly partnership. This year marks the golden jubilee of the establishment of diplomatic relations between us.

Do you also see a role for the proposed Kosi-Lhasa Highway to facilitate China-India trade?

Economic globalisation and regional cooperation are international business trends and countries are heavily interdependent in international trade. Both India and Nepal are China's close neighbours. If there is a certain form of economic cooperation that all three can benefit from, we should sit down and explore its feasibility. As far as the specific



"It is Nepal's internal affair"
Chinese Ambassador Sun Heping

MIN BAJRACHARYA

One country,

issue in your question, we should listen to Nepal government's view first.

What is your government's position on the February First changes here?

It is essentially Nepal's internal affair. As a friendly neighbour, we sincerely hope that Nepal can realise social stability, economic development and national reconciliation. Meanwhile, we respect the choice of the Nepali people for their social system and development in line with Nepal's national realities.

How seriously does the Chinese government regard the anti-government insurgency in Nepal?

As Nepal's close neighbour, China is concerned about the issue of anti-government insurgency in Nepal. We strongly condemn any violent activities against civilians and civil infrastructures. Peace and stability in Nepal is not only in the interests of Nepal and its people, but is also conducive to regional peace and stability. We hope that the peace process here can be restarted as soon as possible so lasting peace can be realised at an earlier date.

What would you say are China's main foreign policy and economic concerns vis-à-vis Nepal?

China always maintains an independent foreign policy of peace and its policy towards its neighbours can be summarised as being a friend and partner, living in harmony and sharing security to help them prosper. I should say that to promote friendly relations and cooperation with Nepal in all fields is the priority of China's foreign policy towards Nepal.

Is there any geopolitical sensitivity about Nepal's location as far as China is concerned?

You can change a neighbour but you can't change a neighbouring country. Bordering the Tibet Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China, Nepal is very important to the stability and prosperity of Tibet. We feel very lucky and happy to have a friendly neighbour like Nepal. We appreciate the friendly policy towards China that the king of Nepal and the Nepali government have always adopted, and that they do not allow any anti-China activities on Nepali soil.

Nepali Times: The king has said he is rescuing democracy and wants to defeat terrorism, what's wrong with that?

Keith Bloomfield: We regard it as a backward step in terms of democracy and restoring peace, it has made the prospect of negotiations a lot more difficult. The Maoists are now united as never before and the constitutional forces are more divided than they've ever been.

Isn't suspension of military aid going to hurt the fight against terrorism?

The biggest single help to the Maoists was February First and not any suspension of military aid. In a functioning democracy like the UK, it is very difficult to explain to elected representatives that we regard the king's move as a backward step while at the same time arguing in favour of continuing to support a military structure.

But we would certainly expect the king to deliver on what he's quite clearly promised in his proclamation and in various other contact we've had with him, which is an early lifting of the state of emergency, release of all political prisoners, some opening of meaningful dialogue with the political parties, and some serious move on human rights including renewing the mandate of the NHRC, full access without prior notice and restrictions to places of detention through bodies like the NHRC and the ICRC.

Isn't the choice between democracy and terrorism?

We believe that the best solution to the conflict in Nepal is a negotiated solution. We believe that the political parties and democracy have to be part of a successful negotiation, therefore we see the biggest single thing that we can do to help to beat the Maoists and help the people of this country is to support the political sectors, the democratic space against attempts by both sides to polarise opinion in this country. We will refuse to be polarised and be given the only option between one violent solution and another violent solution.

There seems to be unprecedented convergence between the UK, US and India on policy towards Nepal.

There is almost total convergence between the three countries you mention, we are in very close consultation.

'Wrongly killed'

The Royal Nepal Army has admitted that Maina Sunwar of Kharelthok, Kabhre, was wrongly killed in detention. Last year, 15-year-old Maina Sunwar (see 'Maina's story', #222) disappeared after security forces took her away from her house accusing her of being a Maoist. Suspecting extrajudicial killing, human rights activists started a campaign demanding her whereabouts. Eight months later, her parents found out that she had been killed. With Nepal being spotlighted at the UN human rights conference in Geneva this month, the army finally issued a statement on Monday saying: "The Court of Inquiry has begun investigating Maina's death. The incident was found to be a mistake." It added the security personnel involved in the incident would be court martialled and strict action taken against them.

Donors meet

A group of Nepal's development partners met in London on 11 March to discuss development issues in the light of the changed political context in Nepal. Reps from Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, The Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, UK and EU discussed current steps to review projects in Nepal, including immediate measures and planned action. Implications for development co-operation posed by the human rights situation in Nepal, restrictions on civil liberties and the scope for international co-ordination at the 61st session of the UNCHR in Geneva were discussed. It was agreed that donors should be allowed to work according to the Basic Operating Guidelines to ensure development access to the poor. The donors agreed to share strategies and plan for the continuation of support to Nepal's NHRC, and to continue 'constructive interaction' with the WB and the ADB on the development effectiveness of their portfolio of support for Nepal.

Building anew

Dr Prabha Basnet, member secretary of the Social Welfare Council and Tewa's guarantee group's representative Prisma Singh Tharu jointly inaugurated Tewa's office building at Dhapakhel on 9 March. The construction work in being done in phases.

NEW PRODUCTS

BENETTON BUZZ: Benetton showroom in Darbar Marg has introduced their new Spring Summer collection 2005. It includes a complete collection of casual wear for women, men and children.



Not too late

It is time for all to do some serious soul-searching

Pro Bronson, the author of a recent bestseller *What should I do with my life?* writes that in good times, people only talk about changing themselves. In bad times, they have no option but to change. Today in Nepal what changes must we expect our political parties, press and human rights organisations to make to continue serving the public interest?

STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari



Pundits tell us how Nepali political parties represented the public's concerns on the national stage. They repeat this so often that their claim has a tofu-is-good-for-you-because-it's-good-for-you logic. In reality, Nepalis rarely had the luxury of freely choosing their representatives. They always had to choose from candidates fielded on their behalf by Kathmandu-based politburo-like central committees of various parties.

In such a system, those who won elections saw that to win again in future, all they needed to do was keep party leaders in Kathmandu happy, even if that meant neglecting voters' grievances. Such perverse

incentives meant that voters could do little to punish bad representatives by electing new ones, and the same old certifiable crooks kept getting re-elected on account of their loyalty to party leaders and not to the voters. Over time, ordinary people failed to see just how representative multiparty democracy concretely served their interests.

In theory, a free press is indeed a cornerstone of democracy. But in the last 10 years, vast changes have come about in the Nepali media industry to make anyone ask how free it really is. The partisan press, for instance, has long been ideological and shrill, propped up by parties' un-audited money. The higher-end players have grown to be merely corporate entities whose business model calls for proximity to those in power while squeezing employees with bad pay.

Some Kathmandu-centric media leaders saw that donors were willing to throw untold sums of money at proposals peppered with 'conflict', 'governance' and 'empowerment', there was an explosion of 'media-and-society' type workshops and seminars. Of course, it is rude to ask just what the verifiable impact all that work had. Still,

media leaders sank low when they accepted the government's largesse last October, even when the accompanying 11-point media policy was aimed at making journalists lick the hand that fed them. That's why it is difficult to take the media's present chest thumping seriously.

Few doubt the energy of our human rights organisations. But their *tamasha* tactics have robbed them of opportunities to build systems to safeguard rights. Almost a decade after civilians started disappearing in Nepal, we still don't have a basic legal architecture to start accounting for them. Likewise, those who have lost loved ones to atrocities committed by both parties have yet to find legal and humanitarian recourse for sustained assistance. With so many rights organisations around, one would think that each would specialise on an aspect of the problem. But all that they appear to agree on is the lowest common denominator: repeated street rallies, trite calls for peace and dramatic arrest scenes played to the gallery of donors. All these have left them with little time for unglamorous and dirty-your-fingernails perseverance to help make our imperfect legal system start taking the rights of victims seriously. ●

two viewpoints

What is your current policy on development and humanitarian aid?

They are under review. There are parts of it which were dependent on the continuation of the IMF/World Bank program and since these are not going to be submitted to the IMF/WB boards for the moment, it follows that our programs can't proceed. There are some projects which no longer make sense and are no longer justifiable in parliamentary terms. But of course we continue to want to deliver real assistance to the poor including those in the remote areas of the country. We will be assessing those programs under a number of criteria including the safety of our staff and practical realities. The development space is getting restricted by both sides in the conflict.

Do you think your pressure tactics are working?

The king has said to us that he needs a bit of time in order to work out a plan about what he is going to do during the next three years. While we would like to see some hint of action on many of the demands that I put forward, we would wait and see what he comes up with before taking our thinking process further. The same is true for the political parties if they come up with a plan in order to produce a coherent and structured platform, which we can then support.

Some senior politicians have been released.

We would see those measures as being very limited steps in the right direction. And in some cases they have been countered by further arrests, they release some with one hand and arrest others with the other hand. We would be looking at actions and not words, we have heard again and again what different governments are intending to do and we have learnt only to respect what is actually done. Some of the people the king has surrounded himself with do not encourage us to believe him when he says he's interested in returning to democracy.

Are you satisfied with the moves here to fulfill human rights commitments ahead of the Geneva conference this month?

The king said in his proclamation the government is keen to respect human rights yet at the same time there has been

intimidation of human rights activists many of them not allowed to leave the Valley.

There is no effective monitoring allowed, access to detainees is restricted, UN observers who've come here have found a record number of disappearances, there are question marks about the future of an independent human rights commission, these are all issues that will be raised in Geneva.

But I don't want you to get the impression we are not just as worried about Maoist violations, they have been behaving pretty appallingly themselves, extorting money, recruiting child soldiers and so on. We believe the democratic space, and I include in that the civil liberties and respect of human rights, has to be an essential part of the solution to the conflict.

Democracy goes much much wider than the political party leaders but you don't encourage the emergence of a mature democracy by locking up party leaders. Civil liberties and

human rights go hand-in-hand with democracy and so do grassroots organisations and participation. Press freedom is essential as apart of the democratic space. Full press freedom should be restored, not just taking out the security forces from the offices but withdrawing some of the instructions that have gone out shortly after the king's takeover. All these elements are a part of a future prosperous and peace-loving Nepal and that's why we are so put out by the political developments in this country.

What should happen, then?

There is a huge gap in confidence between the king and the political parties and it is mutual. What needs to happen is for both the king and the parties to forget mutual recrimination, develop a common platform for getting back to peace negotiations through restoration of democratic processes. We need to strengthen democracy not undermine it. Only democracy in the end can combat the political aims of the Maoists.

Doesn't everything you've said in this interview amount to interference in Nepal's internal affairs?

I have been here nearly three years. Whenever I or any of my diplomatic colleagues say anything that people don't like they accuse us of unwarranted interference in internal affairs, whenever I say something they do like they come up to me and congratulate me for speaking out and saying things which people inside the country don't dare to say.



"We refuse to be polarised..."

British Ambassador Keith Bloomfield

Tulsi Giri speaks out

Interview with First Vice-chairman Tulsi Giri
BBC Nepali Service



BBC: What is the reason made you come back?
Tulsi Giri: (Laughs) It's not about what I want. It's the king who wants certain things achieved and I'm here to help him to the best of my ability for the country's sake.

But you've been away a long time. How familiar are you still with Nepal's ground reality?
Even if I was away I used to keep in touch.

People are surprised that you came back.
How can I answer that? It's not for me to say why they are surprised.

Were you aware that the February First move was being planned?
No.

You are now a senior official, what is your priority?
It is not my priority. The king has laid out his priorities in his proclamation. He said that the country is in a big crisis because of terrorism and everyone has to work together. Since then, the king has repeatedly expressed his commitment towards a constitutional monarchy and functioning democracy. He doesn't want a democracy in name only, he wants it to function. But for that the first priority is peace and order. Whoever disturbs the peace and order has to be dealt with and an atmosphere created to allow political process to move ahead.

So how can you deal with those who are endangering peace?
That is a government policy question and I can't give you the details. What I can say is that, as the king said in his proclamation, everyone should pull in one direction and those who are on the path of terrorism should abandon it and join the mainstream. Whoever helps will be welcomed.

But the rebels have said they won't listen?
That's up to them, whether they want to listen or not. But we shouldn't be blamed for that. They can't accuse the king of not giving them a chance. Nowhere in the world has the road they have taken led to progress.

That's what you say but the Maoists say that their aim is to topple the monarchy. They are convinced that they are carrying out a successful revolution. How can you reconcile this?

They are entitled to believe whatever they want but what I am trying to say is that the road they have taken has never led to peace anywhere in the world. Terrorism has only terrorised the people, it hasn't resulted in social reform. Terrorist tactics work best when governments are weak and in Nepal the past 15 years is proof. They (the rebels) are free to believe what they want but the Nepali people don't believe in them.

Are there any moves towards negotiations?
Not by me. But if they're ready, we are ready.

There has been a lot of criticism from outside the country and talk of aid cuts.

That is a natural reaction based on their political ideology. But in state-to-state relations there are other issues. They haven't cut off aid, some countries have suspended it and this can be lifted through negotiations. In the age of globalisation there is interdependence but you can't force any country to do anything. It just doesn't work.

The people have misgiving that pillars of the Panchayat like you and Mr Bista have been brought back.

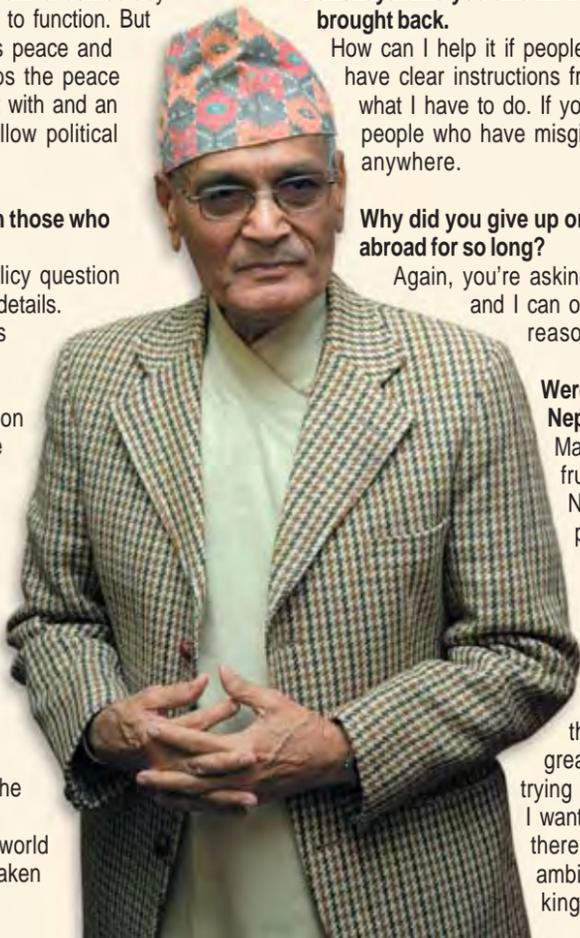
How can I help it if people have misgivings? I have clear instructions from the king about what I have to do. If you start listening to people who have misgivings you don't get anywhere.

Why did you give up on Nepal and live abroad for so long?

Again, you're asking a personal question and I can only say I had personal reasons.

Were you frustrated with Nepali politics?

Maybe at that time I was frustrated, not just with Nepali politics but with politics in general. I would like to draw your attention to the extremely serious security situation here, in homes and in villages across the country there is great misery. The king is trying to rescue the country. I want to assure you that there are no political ambitions behind the king's move.



KIRAN PANDAY



हिमाल Robin Sayami in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 14-28 March

QUOTES OF THE WEEK



"By now it should be clear that authoritarianism is not the way of the future: it is the last gasp of a discredited past"

President George W Bush on 9 March in a speech at the National Defence University in Washington DC.

'Even small

Interview with the last Panchayat Prime Minister, Marich Man Singh on
BBC Nepali, 6 March



BBC: One-and-a-half months have elapsed, you have kept quiet.

Marich Man Singh: Not really. I have been quite busy monitoring the people's reaction. I sense that the king judged the people's sentiments well. The people want peace to be given first priority.

What kind of role should the parties play? Should they just agree with everything the king says?

The parties should be independent but that should not be misused to create rifts. And now they have the opportunity to realise their past follies and start practicing a healthy and clean democracy.

But if parties have made mistakes, should they not be punished by the people instead of the king?

Elections are the only medium through which the people can do so. If the people's representatives are unable to hold elections, how can the citizens identify with them? Without peace there can be no elections.

Will that happen through talks or by force?

A political solution is so far the best option. My advice is peace is possible only through talks.

The Maoists want a republic and the king favours a multiparty democracy. How can the two agree?

There could be a realisation that they (the Maoists) are walking on the wrong path. Establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat is not the solution.

Which Congress

Deshantar, 11 March

देशान्तर

Which camp does the only living founder leader of NC, KP

Bhattarai, belong to—Nepali Congress or its breakaway NC-D?

The question has puzzled many, but Bhattarai is all set to answer.

He will become a NC member of Lalitpur district's constituency number one convention, which takes place this week. Bhattarai himself decided to be the member of the Mahasamiti after a delegation of the NC-D met the octogenarian leader.

Info vacuum

Nepal Samacharpatra, 13 March

नेपाल समाचारपत्र

FM stations are bewildered with the latest directives from the government prohibiting them from broadcasting news, notices, articles or opinions that are not pure entertainment. According to national transmission rules and regulations 1995, if the directives sent by the government are ignored, punitive action will be taken against the violators as stated in the Civil Code. Attached with the new directive, the Ministry of Information and Communication had sent another notice containing anti-Maoist information with a CD prepared by the Defence Ministry for broadcast.

Still the same

Nepal, 20 March

नेपाल

Since the Panchayat era, civil servants have been used politically. They are kicked around like footballs from one goal post to another. Instead of strengthening the bureaucratic institution or making it efficient, it has been weakened due to political dictates thus affecting the work and position of the bureaucrats. The recent transfer of secretaries is just another proof that things haven't changed. There is no difference between

multiparty government and Panchayat regime when it comes to politicising the bureaucracy in which civil servants are forced to act according to political dictates.

Displaced

Rajdhani, 12 March

राजधानी

DAILEKH—The villagers of Salleri and Naumule have fled to the district headquarters after the Maoists threatened to kill those who rose against the rebels last December. Out of 416 families, 218 have been forced to flee the region. Though 133 families have returned, 65 families still live in the camp for displaced people in the town. According to the Dalit Welfare Association, though the Maoists have asked the villagers to return home, many still fear for their safety.

Forewarned

Jhala Nath Khanal, acting general secretary, UML, in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 14-31 March

हिमाल

- The eighth meeting of the party is taking place in secret. We have formed a team, of which I am the coordinator, to evaluate the last 14 years within the next three months.
- The committee was formed to understand why democracy was lost though the political parties had networks throughout the country.
- In these 14 years, we did some good work and made some grave mistakes. We are looking into our own weaknesses to put them before the Nepali people.

My abduction

JB Pun Magar in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 14-28 March

हिमाल

I was on my way to meet displaced Nepali families in Aligara of India as part of my assignment to cover the anti-rebel uprising near the border areas of Kapilbastu and Rupandehi. As I

countries have pride'

But neither perhaps is the king's direct rule.

There are many opinions but my only concern is what the public has to say. And all the people desire is for someone to deliver them peace. As the head of state the king can't keep quiet and do nothing for the people.

But there are risks involved for the king in such direct rule. There are dangers of international interference. Should such risks be taken?

Just because we are a small nation, we should not be afraid of taking risks. Outside forces have to understand that even a small country has its pride.

If the Panchayat system were still in place, would we be seeing this crisis?

Yes but the level of violence would not be as intense. Nobody would have gone to such extremes. What we need is genuine and continued political reforms.

What do you think of the international pressure for the release of politicians?

The state of emergency is temporary. Instead of pushing for freedom of individuals we should think of national security. Fundamental rights are important. But these unlawful groups are misusing such rights.

Have you been offered any position in the government by the king?

Not so far. (laughs)

If you received an offer would you accept it?

I will not back down if the nation feels my need.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Deuba blames messengers

Kantipur, 13 March

कान्तिपुर

Former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba lashed out at reporters during a press conference at his Budanilkantha residence on Saturday, the day after his release. "I warned you that a time would come when there would be censorship but you didn't listen did you?" said the visibly angry Deuba. "Today I am deliberately toning down my words so it will be possible for you to publish them."

Asked to compare the current state of emergency with that during his tenure (in 2003) Deuba replied, "In my time, you criticised me, wrote nonsense against me, blasted me, can you do that now? All you can report is jindabad this and jindabad that." Adding, "I am a person who wants the best for monarchy. I want democracy to work with monarchy. But you always called me a palace puppet, didn't you say such nonsensical things?" As Deuba got more and more worked up, his wife Arzu, Prakash Sharan Mahat and Minendra Rijal had to calm him down. But Deuba went on to accuse the press of politically motivated criticism against him. He said he told the king: "I am not the problem, why should I resign?"



Deuba said he had given the Royal Nepali Army everything it wanted. "What the army said, I did, I increased the defence budget, bought four helicopters, recruited 11,000 soldiers. And the king does this after the army had been strengthened and if it hadn't been strengthened, Maoist violence would have escalated," he said. As the journalists were leaving Deuba said: "Publish what I've said and I'll consider you all bahadurs."

was about to climb into a jeep to cross the border, four men on motorbikes who said they were Maoists took me away.

Only a month ago, the Maoist leader of Nawalparasi and Kapilbastu had called me on the phone and asked me to meet him to discuss my reports on child soldiers and anti-Maoist vigilante groups ('Giving children a fighting chance', #227). He even sent two of his cadres to fetch me. But I told them I had urgent work and fled to Kathmandu.

The day before my abduction, I met two members of the Maoist special task force near the Rupandehi and Kapilbastu border and I knew the rebels had me under surveillance. I did not panic, I was used to these situations while reporting on conflict. Only a few months back, the lieutenant of Taulihawa barrack had threatened to shoot me.

My kidnapers blindfolded me and locked me up at the Indian border village of Sidharthanagar and told me to wait until their leaders arrived. The next day, I demanded to be allowed to make a phone call. At around 8PM that night, they asked questions with a Bhojpuri Hindi accent and referred to themselves as Maoists. An hour later, six to seven people made me walk blindfolded for two hours after which I heard the voice of Pritam Pande, leader of an anti-Maoist vigilante group whom I had covered in November. "Welcome, journalist," I heard him say. Only then did I realise that my abductors weren't Maoists at all. They interrogated me and accused me of writing against other anti-Maoist groups in Kapilbastu, Rupandehi and Nawalparasi.

What I found strange was that some of them were asking questions on a highly intellectual plane in fluent Nepali and Hindi. After three days my abductors released me but not without a final warning: "Be careful about what you write, next time you won't be spared."

Statement by bilateral donors and the United Nations in Nepal — 18 March 2005

The United Nations and bilateral donors are reminding the Security Forces and Communist Party of Nepal / Maoist (CPN/M) that they have a duty to protect civilians caught up in the conflict, that every effort should be made to ensure that civilians have access to essential humanitarian supplies, and that medical emergencies are given free passage at all times.

The United Nations and bilateral donor agencies in Nepal urge all parties to ensure that movement of supplies and vehicles intended to alleviate the suffering of civilian populations are not restricted.

Common Article III of the Geneva Conventions says that civilians shall in all circumstances be treated humanely and not be subject to violence towards life and person or other cruel treatment.

Within the past few weeks there have been credible reports of women dying in childbirth because they could not reach medical treatment. In addition there have been incidents throughout Nepal of humanitarian and development activities being restricted, stopped or threatened by parties to the conflict.

The conflict in Nepal has impacted significantly on some of the poorest and most marginalized people in the country. It is the duty of those who are in a position to control civilians to ensure their safety and their rights. There is particular concern for 100,000 Bhutanese refugees in the east of Nepal who are entirely dependent on the regular arrival of relief supplies.

Insecurity, armed activity and CPN/M blockades are pushing Nepal toward the abyss of a humanitarian crisis. Children are especially threatened; supplies of vaccines, Vitamin A capsules, de-worming tablets and essential drugs must reach rural areas over the coming months to prevent wholly avoidable deaths.

The United Nations and bilateral donors call on all parties to allow free, safe and unhindered access for all groups providing emergency, humanitarian and development assistance to people at risk, and to provide the necessary protection for aid workers.



KUNDA DIXIT
in PHNOM PENH

After 30 years, even genocide turns into a tourist attraction.

The Tuol Sleng prison in Phnom Penh has become just another stop on Cambodia's tourist itinerary. After walking past exhibits reminding them of the Khmer Rouge holocaust and brutality too horrible to imagine, visitors come out into the blinding sun to be greeted by a gift shop.

There are DVDs of the *The Killing Fields*, books on the Khmer Rouge period, Vishnu replicas from Angkor Wat and other tourist trinkets. You wonder what is more troubling: evil or its banality.

Tuol Sleng is like no other museum, it is a memorial to inhumanity, preserved to remind us of the cruelty that mankind is capable of. If such things could happen here, they can happen again anywhere. One in seven Cambodians died during the Khmer Rouge reign of terror between 1975-1979, and nearly 12,000 of them were systematically slaughtered here in Tuol Sleng. Among them, two thousand were children.

This used to be a three-storey school on a sleepy coconut-lined side street in Phnom Penh. The classrooms have cheerful, chequered yellow-and-white tiled floors and the playground had slides and swings. You can almost hear the sound of happy children shouting, running along the corridors. Today, there are only thousands of pictures of those executed and their ghosts roam the classrooms that were turned into torture chambers.

Exactly 30 years ago this month, the Khmer Rouge overran Phnom Penh, its victory hastened by the senseless carpet bombing of the Cambodian countryside by American B-52s in a desperate last-ditch effort to plug the Viet Cong's supply routes into South Vietnam. By the end of March 1975, the Americans had been defeated in Vietnam and the Khmer Rouge was poised at the gates of Phnom Penh. The US-backed regime of Gen Lon Nol collapsed and the rebels overran the city soon after. Prince Norodom Sihanouk returned from exile in China – and Cambodia became the world's first and only Maoist monarchy.

In the 1930s, Khmer Rouge leaders Pol Pot, Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary and Son Sen had graduated from Cambodia's elite schools and were hand-picked to go to France for higher studies. In Paris, they were influenced by Vietnamese communists and soon came to believe in the inevitability of an armed struggle. But, being extreme nationalists, they fell out with the Vietnamese, and went on to propound a "clean revolution...an improvement on Lenin and 10 years ahead of Mao". Pol Pot boasted that his revolution was "not just a class struggle but a revolution against history itself".

By mid-1975 it was becoming chillingly clear what he meant. Cities were evacuated, money was

abolished, everyone ate in group kitchens, communes were set up, religion was banned, children separated from parents, everyone dug irrigation trenches or planted paddy 14 hours a day. As food got scarce, the elderly and infirm were led off at night to be executed usually by blows to the head. Intellectuals, academics, traders, writers, artists were singled out to be killed. Estimates vary, but by the time Vietnamese forces liberated Phnom Penh in 1979, between 1-1.5 million Cambodians out of a population of 7 million had been killed or had died of hunger or disease. Among the dead were five out of Prince Sihanouk's 12 children.

Although the Khmer Rouge had sealed off the country from the outside world, word immediately started filtering out of the atrocities. The United States, still smarting from its defeat in Vietnam, considered the enemy of its enemy a friend. China and Thailand looked away, too. And even though millions were forcibly displaced and hundreds of thousands were being killed, the international community rewarded 'Democratic Kampuchea' with a seat at the United Nations. The year that Mao Zedong died in Beijing, his incarnates in Cambodia began to improve on Mao's vision of a peasant utopia.

The Khmer Rouge was paranoid about infiltration. When the purges began, they were brutal and widespread. Tuol Sleng was where those accused of being spies and their families were interrogated, tortured and executed. Not even Pol Pot's closest friends from his Paris days, Hou Nim and Hou Yubon were spared. Both were killed in Tuol Sleng in 1977. Pol Pot couldn't have not known what happened to his comrades, but took it as a sign of ideological purity that not even those close to himself were spared.

The head of Tuol Sleng S-21 was Kiang Khek Iev (alias 'Duch') and he took meticulous care to photograph all inmates and document their interrogation. In 1979, when Vietnamese forces arrived, besides mass graves they also found piles of photographic records which later became exhibits at the genocide museum. The skulls and bones are preserved in a staff room converted into a shrine, in classroom after classroom thousands of photographs of men, women and children stare at visitors. On a recent trip, we watched as an Australian tourist came upon a blown-up black and white portrait of a mother with her baby who were executed. She couldn't take it any more and ran out of the room, sobbing. Her companions were all moist-eyed.

The classrooms are all preserved as they were found: divided into hundreds of tiny cubicles two metres by one with chain and shackles, a bowl and toilet tin. Other classrooms were interrogation chambers with the torture implements on exhibit.

There have been many PhD theses and books written about Khmer Rouge atrocities, yet the question that still haunts us is why? How can anyone ever

after 30 years, the khmer rouge's reign of



memories of a

justify such barbarity? Why did the world look away: was it shame of defeat in Vietnam or guilt over the B-52 bombings? Has the world learnt its lesson? Can it happen again?

Sadly, there have been genocides in other parts of the world since 1975. Yet, there are lessons from Cambodia: that geo-strategic importance can be a small nation's curse, that violence ultimately devours the very people who unleash it, rulers need to implement genuine and timely reforms so grievances don't pile up, violence thrives when there is no democracy and accountability, conflict has the tendency to spiral out of control and threaten the very existence of nations. And the bitter-sweet proof in today's Cambodia that even though darkness and evil may befall a country, its civilisation will at some point emerge with its humanity, dignity and integrity intact. It may take three decades but its people will learn to smile again.

Recently, at a Phnom Penh temple a group of people lit incense and prayed for the long life of one man: Comrade Duch, the director of Tuol Sleng. They were the few survivors of his infamous prison and didn't want the ailing Khmer Rouge executioner to die before he stood trial for crimes against humanity. ●

A longer version of this article appeared in *Himal Khabarpatrika*

FROM SCHOOL TO CONCENTRATION CAMP TO MUSEUM:
A visitor peers at photographs of inmates executed at the Tuol Sleng prison in Phnom Penh (above). Classrooms were divided into hundreds of cells or torture chambers (below).



PICS: KUNDA DIXIT

of terror still haunts cambodia



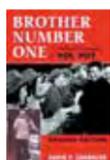
books on cambodian history



Getting Away With Genocide : Cambodia's Long Struggle Against the Khmer Rouge
Tom Fawthrop, Helen Jarvis



When the War Was over: Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Revolution
Elizabeth Becker



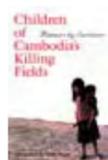
Brother Number One: A Political Biography David P. Chandler



Voices from S-21: Terror and History in Pol Pot's Secret Prison David Chandler



A History of Cambodia
David Chandler



Children of Cambodia's Killing Fields: Memoirs by Survivors Dith Pran



How Pol Pot Came to Power : Colonialism, Nationalism, and Communism in Cambodia, 1930-1975
Ben Kiernan



Dancing in Cambodia, at large in Burma
Amitav Ghosh

holocaust



DIGITAL IMAGING A REALITY FOR EVERYONE

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Nepal figures in Condi's trip

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice may not have included Nepal in her Asian tour this week but the kingdom loomed large in her discussions in New Delhi and Beijing.

At a joint press conference with Indian Foreign Minister Natwar Singh in New Delhi on Wednesday, she spoke of the need for King Gyanendra to restore the democratic process in Nepal. "There needs to be a return to democracy in Nepal and that must happen very, very soon. As a great democracy, India along with the United States, really must stand for exactly that," she said adding that the United States and India have had excellent cooperation in addressing the Nepal situation.

"I do not expect democracy, whether in South Asia or the Middle East, to be 'American style'. The important thing is that there be systems that respect human dignity, that respect the rule of law, that respect the right to say what you wish and worship as you please. And that can take many different forms," she said. Indian envoy to Nepal Shiv Shankar Mukherjee was in India then for consultations.



Rice also discussed issues such as Indo-Pak ties, Afghanistan, Iraq, west Asia and other issues of mutual interest with India's Foreign Minister Natwar Singh. Marking

her tenure early with suitcase diplomacy, Rice is in Asia this week with stops in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, before turning to China, South Korea and Japan to take up the thorny issues of North Korea and China-Taiwan relations. She praised the progress that India and Pakistan have made toward peace. Improved relations between the two countries have resulted in a bus service across the disputed territory of Kashmir, which is to begin this April.

Rice also said that India and the United States would enhance their defence cooperation. Both she and Singh said no announcements would be made on arms sales however. Singh added that the two had discussed defence issues and supplies, including the sale of F16 jet fighters to Pakistan. Pakistan has been requesting the United States to sell F16s to its military but India is opposed to the move and says the planes could be used against India in a conflict. Rice also made it clear to India that the United States had some reservations on India's permanent membership in the UN Security Council.

In Pakistan, later on the same day, Rice met with President Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz. She said that Pakistan was a key ally in US-led war on terrorism and a pivotal country in South Asia, a model for the Islamic world.

You have to be a Wolf to

EMAD MEKAY
in WASHINGTON

Bush nominee: Paul Wolfowitz

US Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, chief architect of one of the most unpopular wars in US history, is President George W Bush's choice to head the World Bank, the world's largest development agency.

His nomination has sparked a wave of outrage among development groups, who blame him for promoting unilateralism and militarism in US foreign policy and for lack of transparency in bidding for reconstruction contracts in Iraq.

"He's a man of good experiences. He helped manage a large organisation. The World Bank is a large organisation; the Pentagon is a large organisation—he's been involved in the management of that organisation," Bush told a press conference on Wednesday. He described Wolfowitz, 62, as a skilled diplomat, referring to his positions at the State Department and his tenure as US ambassador to Indonesia in 1980s. Bush also said Wolfowitz is "committed to development". The nomination was quickly welcomed by James Wolfensohn, the outgoing World Bank president, and by Rodrigo Rato, the managing director of the



Bank's sister institution, the IMF. Wolfowitz's nomination would be subject to a routine vote of the World Bank's executive directors.

Many activists were shocked at the choice predicting a new phase of confrontation between the global social justice movement and the World Bank. "In his career, Wolfowitz has so far not shown any interest in poverty reduction, environmental protection and human rights," said Peter Bosshard, of the International Rivers Network.

Wolfowitz was behind the

2003 US decision to exclude non-US companies from competing for billions of dollars in Iraqi reconstruction contracts, a move that fueled international fury and accusations that the United States was partly motivated by oil in its invasion of the oil-rich Arab country.

"Wolfowitz's role in promoting economic changes in Iraq and elsewhere suggest he would work to push the Bank to focus even more on imposing so-called 'structural adjustment' policies like forced privatisation and indiscriminate trade liberalisation, policies which

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lead the World Bank

have failed to create growth and have exacerbated poverty across the globe," said Neil Watkins, national coordinator for the anti-debt campaigning group Jubilee USA Network.

"Paul Wolfowitz is the most controversial choice Bush could have made," said Njoki Njoroge Njehu, director of the 50 Years Is Enough Network.

"Wolfowitz brings no apparent development experience to the job but offers a record of unabashed militarism and unilateralism that represents exactly the wrong direction for the World Bank," said Robert Weissman, director of Essential Action.

Others disagree. "His term as an ambassador to Indonesia taught him a lot about development," said Peter Timmer, senior fellow at the Centre for Global Development in Washington, who compares Wolfowitz's anticipated leadership of the World Bank to that of Robert McNamara, a former secretary of defence during the Vietnam War. McNamara later became the longest-serving president of the World Bank, instituting sweeping changes.

Those against Wolfowitz are placing their hopes on a strong European opposition. Europeans together form a substantial enough bloc that they could reject the US action. The US president, by custom, selects the president of the World Bank. The managing director of the IMF has traditionally been a European, handpicked by European governments. ● (IPS)

On 1 June 1995, James Wolfensohn became the ninth president of the World Bank. Four years later, he became the third president in World Bank history to be reappointed to a second, five-year term.

A naturalised American citizen, he announced in December that he would step down when his term expired. On 1 June 2005, a new president will takeover.

Wolfensohn's record is not all positive. Like most newcomers, he believed that a management shake-up could make the bank as efficient as a private company. As a public institution, the bank is answerable to a board of directors and representing shareholding governments, that meets twice a week to pose nitpicking questions about projects, forcing managers to spend days chasing answers. Then they complain that the bank is slow and bureaucratic.

At the same time, the bank's rich-country shareholders feel free to pile more mandates—do something about AIDS, promote primary education, foster entrepreneurs and so on—and then feel equally free to excoriate the bank for lacking focus. Perhaps because his early tenure coincided with the stock market bubble, which was accompanied by a bubble in the reputation of management gurus, Wolfensohn overestimated the magic that private sector practices could work: he convened a buddy group of private sector CEOs to launch a management shake-up that alienated his staff and burned up \$250 million. This cost and



Retiring: James Wolfensohn

disruption, together with Wolfensohn's tendency to drive the bank into new areas such as cultural preservation, explain the damning press commentary around the midpoint of his tenure.

Wolfensohn overestimated what his outreach to NGO critics was likely to accomplish. But none of it insulated the bank from the anti-globalisation protests of 2000 or from some ferocious campaigns to block particular bank projects. The intimidating effect on the bank's lending was profound. For much of Wolfensohn's tenure, the bank shied away from controversial infrastructure projects that might incur the wrath of environmental activists. In 2002, the bank's

stunned managers were treated to a presentation on how far this trend had gone. In each of the three previous years, project lending by the bank's unsubsidised arm had been lower than in any of the previous 20.

This retreat might have been defensible if it had won the bank peace with its activist critics but critics are as vociferous as ever. It might have been defensible if infrastructure were somehow unimportant to development. But without power projects, there can be no industry and little growth, without water projects there can be few gains in public health, without roads, commerce will be rudimentary.

As Wolfensohn's decade at the bank draws to a close, the

institution finds itself in a position depressingly like that of 1995. It remains indispensable: no other institution can rival its sophistication in dealing with development and development seems even more important to the rich world after 9/11. But the bank remains vulnerable. To the old attacks from left and right, the bank must add two new challenges.

The first comes from debt relief. If the World Bank is to forgive 100 per cent of some borrowers' debts, what happens to the resulting hole in its balance sheet?

The second challenge stems from the uncertain state of the bank's theory of development. The biggest development successes of recent times—China, Vietnam and to a certain extent, India—have taken the World Bank's advice only selectively. The bank has reacted by acknowledging that a competent state which can implement policies consistently may matter more than the policy chosen—meaning that its own role as policy adviser is of secondary importance. This new humility is admirable but it involves a risk. Can the bank continue to solicit money for its soft-loan window while acknowledging that it cannot determine development outcomes?

The bank's future cannot be taken for granted and the character of the institution's next leader may have a big impact on its stability. Some of the names circulating in Washington, like Paul Wolfowitz, are alarming. At a time when the salience of transnational threats has become conventional wisdom, we may be about to squander the best tool we have to manage them. ● (Prospect)

Umair and Khurram

Two disabled people—one Indian, one Pakistani, devote their lives to peace

Two stories, one from the shores of the Arabian Sea and the other from the Kashmir Valley. A diving accident, a land mine, two lives from Pakistan and India transformed.

Umair, the engineering student from Karachi in his wheelchair and Khurram, the peace activist from Srinagar with his plastic leg, are driven by far more than the urge to overcome their respective disabilities. For both, transcending their physical limitations

is tied up with their work for peace.

Both were at the Seventh Convention of the Pakistan-India Peoples Forum for Peace and Democracy in New Delhi last weekend.

Shallow diving in Malir, Karachi, six years ago cost Umair the use of both legs. Pulling the pieces of his life together while adjusting to life in a wheelchair, he wanted to do something for others but not just in Pakistan. He undertook a peace march on his wheelchair from Wagah to Delhi and distributed medicines and wheelchairs along the way.

"I wanted to take my hand-controlled car along in case I needed it. The Indian government said they would agree if Pakistan gave permission but they didn't," says Umair. Last year while searching the

web for an organisation to use as a platform ("I knew I couldn't do it on my own"), he stumbled upon the website of the Pakistan India Peoples Forum for Peace and Democracy, now in its 10th year. He became a member and the organisation sponsored his visa application but the Indian government kept his passport for six months before returning it with regrets citing 'security reasons'.

"He should make a symbolic crossing at Wagah on his wheelchair and then take the bus to Delhi," commented a senior Indian foreign ministry official at Foreign Minister Natwar Singh's reception in Delhi for the forum delegates. That is what Umair did, on this first visit to India along with his parents and 300 other Pakistani delegates, to attend the convention.

The authorities are still not willing to allow him to travel to Delhi on his own but his brief meeting with Foreign Minister Natwar Singh at the reception yielded a ray of hope. Singh directed officials to arrange an appointment for Umair at the Indian Spinal Injuries Centre, in New Delhi. His visa has been extended and he has undergone a preliminary examination at the centre.

Khurram was an activist coordinator of the Jammu & Kashmir Coalition of



Civil Society (www.jkccs.org), an independent organisation devoted to covering human rights abuses, with particular focus on youth, students and women. Last January, their volunteers acted as bodyguards for the Kashmiri leader Yasin Malik, who was wandering at the World Social Forum in Mumbai as though he hadn't an enemy in the world. Although not affiliated with any political party, activists were only too aware of the possible repercussions of any attack on Malik. Among them was Khurram, who also found time to liaise with media, providing independent insights into the human rights situation in Indian-controlled Kashmir.

In April, Khurram was among those injured in a landmine blast at Kupwara in north Kashmir during an election monitoring round. Fellow activist, Aasiya Jeelani, 29 and the 34-year old driver of the vehicle, Ghulam Nabi Sheikh, died in the blast.

The mine was planted by a non-local militant organisation. "They called up later to say sorry, and that they had not meant to target us." Khurram wants peace in the region—not the "peace of a graveyard but a just and lasting peace". This would mean the world to both young men. ●

Beena Sarwar is the op-ed editor of *The News* in Karachi.

**PERSONAL
POLITICAL**

Beena Sarwar



The magic move

Just some simple steps could make you king of the green

The smile on the faces of your students when you are trying to teach them golf is the most satisfying moment. Their faces just light up when after a few lessons, they start hitting the ball solidly and score well. Every now and then, some of the beginners that I coach give me the opportunity that makes everything worthwhile.

Most recreational golfers work hard on improvising long games rather than honing short ones. Almost every one of them tries to whack the ball a few yards long and straight. I have looked into the importance of the mind to produce better results. Every sport needs a combination of various things to achieve the best results. Let us look into the other more important aspect that contributes to better performance on the golf course—the sound technique. It is the best way to swing the club to hit the ball straight and long or just perform better in general.

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



Recently, I've been working with many golfers and found that most had common problems: no shoulder turn on the back swing, not dropping the right shoulder on the start of the downswing and not rotating the hips through the shot. Golf professionals can usually hit the ball up to 100 yards longer than most club golfers without much effort. They use their shoulders and hips to help hit the ball whereas the club golfers just use their hands.



For consistent results, one must turn the shoulders at least 90 degrees especially after reaching the top of the back swing. This magic move is dropping the right shoulder, then turning the hip to allow the club to come from the inside path increasing the chances of hitting the ball more solidly.

There are a few checkpoints to ensure the magic move: on the back swing, turn your shoulder until your left shoulder touches the chin. At this point your hands should not be higher than your shoulders.

On the down swing, right hand golfers should drop their right shoulder. To create a solid angle of attack in order to hit the ball, the shaft of the club needs to be parallel to the target at this point. Then turn the hip to bring the club head back to square position at impact. The hip turn can be crucial in hitting the target and remember to keep both hands straight before taking the swing up to the finishing position. This is the magic move that can help you generate more power and swing speed. ●

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



Girls of Mangal Prasad High school with their trophy.

Bowled over by girls

RAMESWOR BOHARA
in NEPALGANJ

Who says cricket is only for boys?

Last month, when the Regional Cricket Development Committee of Nepal Cricket Association planned to launch a female cricket tournament, they were laughed at and ridiculed.

Not anymore. In a short time, the committee was able to find a large number of girls interested in playing the game. Committee members went school-to-school and handpicked aspiring players. They were given a crash course on the game and what has surprised everyone is the extent of this hidden talent of female cricketers in our schools.

In March, scores of high school girls with virtually no game experience participated in an inter-school tournament. And, beat this, they played pretty well, too. The number of participants exceeded the expectation of the organisers. "The enthusiasm for the game and their participation has thrilled cricket lovers," says Lekh Bahadur Chettri, chairman of the committee.

Mangal Prasad High School (pictured) beat Suryodaya High School with eight wickets during the finals on 5 March. The team captain Nairi Thapa alone scored 37 runs for two wickets.



RAMESWOR BOHARA

Suryodaya lost all wickets during the first batting in 18.5 overs and managed to score 74 runs.

Mostly beginners, the girls had to be taught how to hold the bat for the first time only a month ago. But they learned quickly and pretty soon were scoring runs and shattering wickets. The spectators were encouraging and no one booed or teased them. Binu Budamagar of Angels High School was declared the Best Player while Mangal's captain Nairi won the Man of the Match award.

Encouraged and ready-to-go, the girls are now bubbling with enthusiasm. They are even

demanding a national level female-only cricket tournament. "We are eager to make this happen," says Binu who is now thinking of turning to cricket for a career. "Until a month ago, I had no clue about cricket. Now I'm obsessed with it," she adds. "I want to participate in the national championship."

Jay Kumar Nath Shah, president of Nepal Cricket Association can hardly believe his eyes. "This is amazing. We should be working towards making this national," says Shah.

And why not let them play the boys and perhaps even beat them at their own game. ●

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SURYA NEPAL

GOLF

Outlines

These drawings trace not just the advancement of art but also Nepal's changing times



Durga Baral's pen-and-ink *Composition III*.

KIRAN PANDAY

If cartoonist Durga Baral's paintings disturbed you last October, wait till you see his latest pen-and-ink drawings.

The dark silence of their mutilated subjects is beyond the satire sketches that his alias Batsayan might have been associated with. On display with other works by celebrated artists at the Siddhartha Art Gallery's Celebrating Line, it completes the exhibition's outline of art history and artistry in Nepal. But with art,

these drawings reflect the changing state of the state.

The collection begins with Tej Bahadur Chitrakar's *Head Study of an Old Man* based on his academic background in western art. Chitrakar was one of the first Nepalis to receive formal education in fine arts. His rough full-length sketch of a man and a woman done in 1924 is among the earliest known Nepali pen-and-ink works. The holes that time has burned on these works tell of the need for preservation of these sketches of history.

"We need art management in Nepal,"

says Ratan Kumar Rai, president of the Nepal Water Colour Society and one of the exhibiting artists. "Nepali artists have never really sat down to discuss preservation of artworks."

Drawings and sketches retain the artist's ideas in the raw form with mistakes, experiments and corrections. These drawings also record the changing perspectives of the Nepali people in the last 81 years. Uttam Nepali's drawings from the 1950s have character-driven subjects whether it is a picture of a hermit or a streetscape. This was his pre-abstract era.

Drawings from the 1980s and around the time King Birendra proposed to call Nepal a 'zone of peace' revel in the wonder and beauty of the country and its people: Jan Salter's portraits of bright-eyed ethnic people, Shankar Raj Suwal's stylistic depictions of the *Glory of Nepal and Peace and Compassion*, Sharada Chitrakar's fine-lined temples before her Bungadeo series. They are a celebration of peace, nature and the joy of being.

Sashi Bikram Shah's *Composition I*, a beautifully detailed piece of work with butterflies begins the 1990s segment. Ujjwol Kundan Jyapoo's works picks up the thread with his 1991's *The Gift*, a man bestowing a child to an imperial figure. His houses and streetscapes have dizzying optical illusion-like outlines saying what you see is not what you get. The 1990s were an experimental stage for most artists, some drawing nature and others their emotions.

In the later years, Sashi Bikram Shah's terror-stricken horses and people gallop in. Manuj Babu Mishra, the artist who has confined himself to his residence for more than a decade now, marks them with his disillusioned surrealistic self-portraits. Ragini's *Arrested Time* series chains these together with the landmarks of Kathmandu. And Durga Baral's dark compositions of 2005 characterise the mood with sealed countenances and mutilated limbs. ●

Celebrating Line at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, until 13 April.

Tapoban retreat

Thirty young artists have returned to the serenity of the jungle at Osho Tapoban, Nagarjun. They retreated for a weeklong intensive workshop called Uttishta—A New Beginning. Organised by Sutra, the artists were required to work with site-specific artworks and installations. The completed exhibition will be open to visitors on 19 March, 10AM onwards at Osho Tapoban.

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Fox hunt

George Orwell is alive and kicking in the doublespeak world of an unfair and unbalanced news channel

Given the subject matter it is perhaps understandable why *Outfoxed* is one documentary going straight to DVD rather than to the cinemas. After all, it is one thing to upset George Bush and McDonalds but a whole more dangerous business risk to court Rupert Murdoch's displeasure.

Directed by Robert Greenwald, it is a shamelessly partisan expose of the way in which Murdoch's Fox News Channel has become little more than a Republican mouthpiece, brow-beating interviewees who don't subscribe to the party line, firing staff of the wrong political persuasion and, more scarily, distorting the news to present its version of the 'truth' to the American public.

Newspapers have, of course, always shown political bias but imagine if a British news presenter started badmouthing and ridiculing Blair or Howard during a supposedly objective news report. That's pretty much the situation with Fox where daily editorial content memos are issued to the staff outlining the political agenda for the day.

Basically, George Bush is great, Democrats suck, foreigners and liberals are the enemy. During the run-up to the elections, there was even a concerted effort to suggest John Kerry was French. Using interviews with media pundits and former employees who either jumped or were pushed, Greenwald unfolds stories that

would be too implausible in a work of fiction.

A former presenter recalls being reprimanded for not making Reagan's birthday into a bigger story. News becomes misinformation spun to reinforce a climate of fear and therefore dependency on the president. Speculation and hearsay becomes fact by repetition. The son of a man killed in 9/11 is demonised during an interview for daring to question the war on Iraq.

All that plus a montage of sound bites that effectively lets Fox News bury itself while constantly chanting its hysterical official catchphrase—"Fair and balanced".

Given there are no examples of practice from other networks to afford comparison and despite Murdoch's vast empire of print and TV media Greenwald focuses solely on Fox News. Balanced probably isn't exactly a term you'd apply to the documentary either.

But, then you wouldn't expect a documentary on Goebbels to be particularly even-handed either. It may have made and illustrated its point long before the end credits roll but it's a fascinating, and at times, a grimly funny piece of work which, if nothing else, goes a long way to explain why 67 percent of Fox viewers believed Saddam Hussain and al Qaeda to be connected.

Screening:
Outfoxed, The Film Club
20 March, 5PM at
Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka.
Tickets Rs 50. 5542554





KUMAR SHRESTHA/NEPALNEWS.COM

KING AND COUNTRY: A rally organised by various schools and religious organisations in support of King Gyanendra's February First move in Kathmandu on Saturday.



KIRAN PANDAY

DOG DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN: Former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba with his son, Jayabir, and the family boxer, Alex, the day after his release from house arrest.



KIRAN PANDAY

PLAIN SPEAKING: Social Science Baha organised an evening of Bhojpuri and Maithili on 12 March at the Yala Maya Kendra on the occasion of a conference on the Nepal Tarai.



KIRAN PANDAY

ALL SMILES: Winners of the FNCCI-NYEF award, Dileep Agrawal of World Link and Srijana Thapa of Photo Concern, with their trophies at the boss Top 10 Business Excellence Award ceremony on 11 March.



RAM HUMAGAIN/NEPALNEWS.COM

LET THERE BE LIGHTS: Remembering all Nepalis who died during the month of Phalgun in the conflict at the monthly Himsa Birodh vigil at Maitighar Mandala on Monday.

A Nepali first

At a time when the country and its armed forces are under the human rights spotlight, there sometimes emerge stories of bravery, humanity and sensitivity to suffering. It is a messy war, Nepalis and killing Nepalis, and firefights like Bardiya on 6 March shouldn't be seen as a victory or defeat.

That is the message from Maj Gen Deepak Bikram Rana (pictured) who took media and human rights activists to the site. There were dozens of bodies of Maoists along the sides of the road, captured weapons were lined up. But Maj Gen Rana wore a pained look on his face as he showed the visitors the bodies. "I can't say I feel happy about this,

in fact I am filled with sorrow, after all they are all Nepalis," he said, "in war time you either kill or get killed, but I wish it wasn't like that."

The Maoists ambushed an army convoy on the Nepalganj-Guleria road near the Indian border and killed four security personnel. The soldiers radioed for reinforcements and the Rangers soon arrived. Some 48 Maoists were killed, and there were dozens of wounded Maoists who had been evacuated to the surrounding villages. Maj Gen Rana's instructions to his troops were clear: "Our wounded Maoist brothers should be given proper care, we don't kill anyone who is unarmed. We are all Nepalis first."

If only there were more like Maj Gen Rana on both sides, the war perhaps would be fought by the rules and it would be easier to find a resolution. ●

Rameswor Bohara



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सूचना विभाग

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

THE ADVENTURES OF HEROJIG



by JIGME GATON

Famous Cartoon Kats of the EAST / WEST



...and Bill the Cat now living in Wisconsin, where shooting stray cats is legal.



KE GARNE? WHATEVER.

But be a Heroji, be kind to animals.

"He who is cruel to animals becomes hard also in dealings with men. We can judge the heart of a man by his treatment of animals."

Immanuel Kant, German Philosopher, 1724-1804

If you think animal welfare in Nepal is pitiful, then go to www.dontshootthecat.com and see wuz up in the USA!

#60 2061 by jigme gaton - read. love. write.

The Adventures of HeroJig can also be seen at www.extreme-nepal.com

ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Uttishtha** Open Day at Osho Tapoban on 20 March, 10 AM onwards. 4242106
- ❖ **Hidden Devotions** Paintings by Robert Passing, until 22 March at Gallery Nine, Lajimpat. 4428694
- ❖ **Festive Images** Paintings by Pradip K Bajracharya at Buddha Gallery, Thamel. Until 27 March. 4441689
- ❖ **Reflections from Tibet** Photos by Kevin Bubriski at Indigo Gallery, Naxal. Until 31 March. 4413580
- ❖ **Tsunami Close up** Photos by TV Cakenberghe at Via Via Café, until 31 March. 4700184
- ❖ **Celebrating Line** Exhibition of drawings from Nepal at Siddhartha Art Gallery, until 13 April. 4218048
- ❖ **Magic Pencil** Artworks by Britain's best children's illustrators at the British Council, Lainchor. Until 6 May. 4410798
- ❖ **Interior Exterior Exhibition** at BICC, 16-20 March.

EVENTS

- ❖ **Just Divine** Jack Daniel's Chill Out Night at Latin Quarter, Baber Mahal Revisited on 18 March, 8PM onwards, Rs. 500.
- ❖ **Alumni Day** of St Xavier's School on 19 March at St Xavier's School, Jawalakhel, 9AM to 10PM. Contact 4414785, gaa@gaa.org.np
- ❖ **Gyanodaya Festival** Live with 1974 AD on 19 March, 12AM-5PM at Gyanodaya Residential School, Khokana, Lalitpur.
- ❖ **Outfoxed** Documentary by Robert Greenwald at The Film Club, Baggikhana, Patan Dhoka on 20 March, 5PM. Tickets Rs 50. 5542544
- ❖ **Francophonie Week** with French food at the Alliance Française, Tripureswor, 21-24 March. 4241163
- ❖ **Annual Peace Ride Nepal** on 24 March, Kathmandu-Chitwan/Pokhara, Rs 3,550, includes three-nights lodging and food. 4440462
- ❖ **French Speakers Evening** at the Alliance Française, Tripureswor on 24 March, 6PM onwards. 4241163
- ❖ **KICC Good Friday Service** on 25 March at The Norwegian School, Jawalakhel, 6.30 PM. 5525176
- ❖ **KICC Easter Sunday Service** on 27 March at The Church of the Assumption, Dhobighat, 11AM.
- ❖ **1905 Sundays** Garage sale, pet practices & more.
- ❖ **Jat Sodhnu Jogi Ko** Play directed by Anup Baral at Gurukul, Setopool, 5PM. Till 10 April. 4466956
- ❖ **Fun in the Sun** at Hotel Shangri-la, Lajimpat. Rs 499 for adults, Rs 299 for children. 4412999
- ❖ **Art workshop** for kids at Buddha Gallery. 4441689
- ❖ **Rugby Practice** Every Saturday. 4435939
- ❖ **Sanibaar Mela** Every Saturday at the Dharahara Bakery Café, 12AM-5PM.
- ❖ **The God Dance of Kathmandu Valley** Tuesdays at Hotel Vajra.



MUSIC

- ❖ **Night for Tsunami** Kishor Gurung live at Shankar Hotel, Lajimpat on 18 March, 6.30 PM. Tickets Rs 1000. 4261831, 4410151, 55221113
- ❖ **Live Jazz** by JCS trio and Peter McTwister, Thursdays at Full Moon Bar, Mondays at New Orleans Café, Thamel. 4700736
- ❖ **Live with Abhaya** and the Steam Injuns at Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488
- ❖ **Fusion Time** Mondays at Jalan Jalan Restaurant, Lajimpat, 7PM. 4410438
- ❖ **Live Music** at Juneli Bar, Hotel de l'Annapurna, Darbar Marg. 4221711
- ❖ **Good Time Blues Band** at Rum Doodle, Fridays, 7PM onwards. 4701208
- ❖ **Classical music** Fridays at Hotel Vajra, 7PM. 4271545
- ❖ **Jatra** Saturday nights with Looza, 6.30 PM onwards. 4256622
- ❖ **Jukebox experience** Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at Rox Bar.
- ❖ **Jazz** at Upstairs, Lajimpat. Wednesday and Saturday, 7.45 PM onwards.

FOOD

- ❖ **Persian BBQ** at Dwarika's Hotel, Battispatali, on 25 March, 7PM. 479488
- ❖ **LQ Cauldron** Six days a week except Friday at Latin Quarter Salsa Bar, Baber Mahal Revisited. Rs 1,500 per pot, order in advance. 4254260
- ❖ **Arniko Special Lunch** at Hotel de l'Annapurna, Darbar Marg. 4221711
- ❖ **Exotic Seafood** at Rox Restaurant, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Delicacies** Pastas and snacks at Roadhouse Café, Jawalakhel. 5521755
- ❖ **Farm House Café** Delicious meals at Park Village Hotel. 4375280
- ❖ **Café Bahal** Newari cuisine at Kathmandu Guest House, Thamel. 4700632
- ❖ **Dwarika's Thali** Lunch at the Heritage courtyard. 4479488
- ❖ **The Tharu Kitchen** at Jungle Base Camp. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Celebrate Spring** Holiday Packages with Tiger Mountain. 4361500
- ❖ **Shivapuri Cottage** Nature, peace and bird watching at 6,000ft. 4354331
- ❖ **Chiso Chiso Hawama** Special packages at Club Himalaya. 4411706
- ❖ **Jungle Base Camp Lodge**, Bardia, special package and prices. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com
- ❖ **Malaysia Dream Holidays** Packages starting from Rs 45,500 per person. 4247215 extn 013-14, malaysiaholidays_marco@polo.com.np
- ❖ **Temple Tiger** Special Easter Bonus for expats. 4263480

JAI NEPAL CINEMA

Karam is the story of one man's retribution dealt to him by life, retribution born out of his dark past. John (John Abraham) is an assassin who works for mob boss Captain (Bharat Dhabolkar). One fateful day, John ends up killing an entire family. As he stares into the eyes of the little girl whose life is slowly ebbing away from her, realisation hits John. He decides to quit and start a life without bloodshed with his wife Shalini (Priyanka Chopra). But as per the Karmic laws of life, John's plan and fate are in direct opposition. Captain is facing a major threat from a rival don Yunus (Vishwajeet Pradhan). When he is nearly killed by an assassin, Captain decides to teach the city a lesson. His plan is so big that it's never been dreamed of. *Karam* is the quest for one man's redemption set in a high-octane emotional thriller.

Call 4442220 for show timings www.jainepal.com

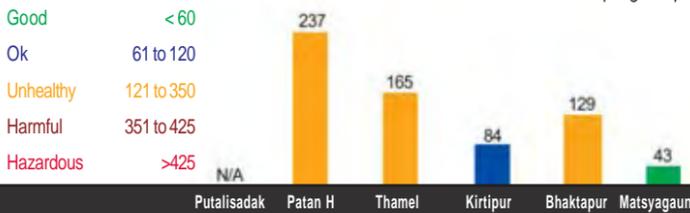
Now Showing: *Karam*



KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

The average concentration of fine dust less than 10 microns in diameter in Kathmandu was slightly lower than last week but that was because the monitoring station at Putali Sadak, one of the most polluted spots in the Valley, was unserviceable. Which doesn't mean the air wasn't bad, in fact the monitors may have conked out because they got choked with pollutants! The readings in the other stations were pretty much the same as the previous week. There will be more ambient dust as the dry season sets in, we'd take out the face masks if we were you.

6 - 12 March 2005 in micrograms per cubic meter. Source: www.mope.gov.np



NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



Two storm systems have moved through Nepal in the past week, bringing moisture that got regurgitated into local convections over the mountains. What it did was keep the maximum temperatures from going as high as we had predicted last week. We are now going into uncharted territory as the westerly fronts are superceded by local thunderstorms. Being a wet winter-spring expect more of these isolated storms along the midhills and mountains. This satellite picture taken on Thursday morning shows another fresh moisture front heading our way but its advance may be thwarted by a high pressure system over northern India. Conclusion: the mercury level of the Valley will fluctuate due to sunny intervals during the weekend but will rise thereafter. Afternoons will be breezy.

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Stop complaining, or else

Despite all the efforts emergency personnel have taken on a war-footing these days to ensure everyone sings hosannas, there are still some naysayers out there who are moaning and groaning. They should be ashamed of themselves.

Here we are, trying to liberate the public from having to listen to boring FM discussions that used to go on forever and forcing them to broadcast 24-hour music and the nabobs of negativism aren't satisfied with the song selection. We got rid of

those irritating mobile phones that always got cut off in mid-conversation, and the fusspots want their darling little vibrators back. Pampered brats! Let's spank them.

We started collecting garbage at 8PM and now the neighbourhood dingo pack is complaining that we have deprived them of their midnight snack. We patched the potholes along the main thoroughfares and shopkeepers are now whining about speeding motorcycles. We made Sunday a working day to make the workforce more productive and they want democracy reinstated. You give them an arm, and they want a leg.

Complain, complain, complain, that's all they ever did around here. That's why we had to threaten editors to make them shut up, and now they're complaining that they can't complain anymore. I'll tell you what was wrong with this country: there were just too many civilian liberties. How soothing it has been for the past two months not to have to listen to the media telling us how bad things are. Now we can pretend everything is hunkydory in the boondocks. What a relief we can't hear the grumbling, it was getting unbearable.

One thing us yesmen are definitely not complaining about these days is the ban on mobile phones. An average Nepali used to spend two hours on their cells every day, multiplied by the number

of users all over the country we have already saved 13.2 million manhours (which is equivalent to 5 million horsepower in the metric system) to be channeled into much more productive activities such as re-registering everything in sight.

Now that the UTL and mobile phone users have re-registered, why stop at that? As long as we are at it let's re-register the whole darn country. Let's re-apply for membership of the United Nations, the Non-maligned Movement and the group of Last-but-not-Least Developed Countries.

Every Nepali will henceforth have to re-register to prove that he or she is indeed of a woman born. This will require them to obtain new birth certificates that puts it all down in writing that they were reincarnated as Nepalis in their present life. That should prove beyond doubt that all of us are really here in time and space and not in a parallel universe.

The next step is to re-register all marriages. For national security reasons, all Nepalis of reproductive age and above are hereby required to get married all over again, renew their marriage vows and get new marriage certificates. (Those born out of wedlock must get their parents married first before they themselves tie the knot.) It has also come to our notice that many Nepali males are illegally cohabiting with members of other sexes without a proper license. Those with two or more spouses will have to remarry them all individually again and get re-certification in triplicate duly notarised by a first class gazetted officer.

Then there is the pesky issue of death. All those who have died in the past year, please go to the Ministry of Vital Statistics and get your death re-registered. Sunday is now a working day at the ministry.

I am sure that with these elaborate security safeguards in place we can all collectively look forward to a bright and secure future as a nation and people. ●

UNDER MY HAT
Kunda Dixit



ELD News
March 2005

professional development
for development professionals

Training in March - April

Presentation Skills

March 28 - April 1
Learn how to plan and deliver a presentation that gets the message across: led by ELD Director Neil Kendrick: 5 mornings

The Power to Persuade

March 28 - April 1
Former IBM and Microsoft manager Paul Reitman helps you unlock the real power of Powerpoint software: 5 afternoons
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April 12 - 14
A 3-day workshop that puts the full potential of the Microsoft Project planning and management software at your command: Led by Paul Reitman: 12 participants is the limit

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