What about us?

ANALYSIS by SHIVA GAUNLE

King Gyanendra may have isolated himself internationally but within the country there hasn’t been much concerted opposition to his move. The people in the country’s 4,000 VDCs have suffered nine years of violence and they were told to choose between Maoism and monarchy. The microcosm of this despair of rural Nepal is now at Tundikhel for the rulers in the capital to see.

Partly, the lack of dissent is due to the emergency. The royal commission has politicians in its crosshairs: Prakash Man Singh was forcibly arrested from his home on Thursday. Sher Bahadur Deuba has also defied summonses, and commission sources told us he may be arrested soon.

Ninety days after 1 February, it is clear which way the king wants to go. But the parties seem to be waffling. They could chart a ‘third way’ but are stuck where they were four years ago. Leaders of the four parties that stand for reinstatement of parliament finally met at Girija Prasad Koirala’s house on Thursday and decided to invite NC-D and the UML to join in.

But if it’s not enough for the parties to say they want democracy restored, they have to show a pragmatic way forward. Koirala spent two months in house arrest and Jhalanath Khanal was in hiding but neither seems to have come up with any new ideas during that time.

This week, zonal and regional administrators assumed their posts to take royal rule to the countryside, asserting their determination to “fulfill His Majesty’s wishes”. Their first job is to monitor and coordinate security activities and start preparing for municipal elections.

Most UML leaders are still in jail, there are no indications of either civil liberties being restored or the emergency being lifted by next week. The ban on mobile phones, news on FM and cable TV news channels stays. Phone lines of politicians and journalists are still selectively cut. Officials seem to believe that agreeing to international human rights monitors should placate donors for now. But a UN resolution in Geneva on Wednesday called for the immediate restoration of political and civil rights.

In the rest of the country, the 11-day nationwide strike ended but the Maoists are enforcing regional bandas and blockades. Most schools haven’t reopened after new year’s day and those that did were bombed. Instead of targeting the Maoists who are creating this mayhem, state security seems preoccupied (except for actions in Khara and Bardia) with harassing politicians, activists and the press.

Four years later, political parties are still asking: what next?
When revolutionaries start to bomb classrooms, it turns Mao Zedong’s dictum ‘to rebel is a rebel’ into a face. Such an awesome display of bravery: to treat the most vulnerable section of society as the enemy! And the only reason the comrades are able to get away with it is the equally shameless absence of the state and its failure to provide quality education for the masses. Even the victims of Maoism have given up on relief and are camped out in Tundikhel for the past week from sheer desperation. How can a government that can’t even win the hearts and minds of people who have been brutalised by Maoists expect to get the rest of the public on its side?

The outside world is getting concerned about our lack of concern. When the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights who has been involved in high-profile war crimes trials comes calling it must mean things are seriously wrong here. The UN has set up a bureau of its Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Kathmandu. This week, the UN’s special envoy to Jan Egeland, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, was in the country to assess the situation of the internally displaced. Even those said to be acutely concerned about deteriorating conditions in Nepal. The fact that his advisers are here during the Darfur crisis shows just how serious Nepal is viewed.

On Friday, Prof Walter Kaolin, the UN Secretary General’s Special Envoy on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced People completes his fact-finding mission to Nepal during which he visited King Gyanendra to reinstate all political and civil rights. All this adds up to rising international concern that the conflict in Nepal is spiralling out of control and the consequences will be untold human misery. Yet, in official circles we detect a sense of denial. Instead of slinking into our xenophobic, sensive and wounded pride. Instead of sliding into our xenophobic shell, it will be better to launch pre-emptive intervention to save us from ourselves.

Both the government and the Maoists have said they respect international humanitarian law. The test for the government is how it is going to help the million or so Nepalis displaced by the conflict. The Maoists have to realise that they can’t have the UN’s human rights monitoring mission, call for UN mediation to the conflict. BOAO—Sitting in Nepal, it is hard to gauge China’s phenomenal growth. But here in China’s western seaside, the changes are visible everywhere. The booming cities, huge investments in infrastructure, industrial parks that export to the world: the country is being transformed as no other in history.

One way China is focusing world attention on itself is through events like the Boao Forum for Asia, its own ‘Davos’. The annual meeting in this scenic resort on Hainan island is attended by movers and shakers from across Asia and the world. It is an opportunity for China to exercise its economic and political diplomacy. Boao has a distinctly unique, Asian style and tries to counterbalance the strategic predominance of America on the world stage.

China’s strong stand on non-interference in the affairs of other countries is appealing to many. There is a different focus every year at Boao. In 2002 it was the world-economic downturn after 9/11. In 2003 it was financial cooperation and security. Last year the forum discussed economic regionalisation in Asia and this weekend it will look at enhancing dialogue among Asian entrepreneurs for intra-Asian trade and investment.

The sessions will zero in on two main topics—international cooperation in energy development and monetary policy. CEOs of multinationals and Asian corporate leaders will look into the internationalisation of Asian enterprises, the governance and competitiveness of Asian corporations in the world market, economy markets and companies’ social accountability amid economic growth. The forum will also see a symposium on property development and motor vehicle manufacturing.

The program from 22-24
Winning friends
Poor and undemocratic states can't expect respect at international fora

Shunned by benefactors, sponsored by well-wishers and hardly acknowledged by big neighbours, Nepal is isolated as never before.

King Gyanendra expressed his disappointment at this in his Times magazine interview. But there is equal and quite dissatisfaction from the outside world. Even Nepal's longstanding friends have publicly rebuked our rulers. The fact is that in today's world no one likes to be associated with an undemocratic, despot regime. Despite insistent references to 'the alternative to democracy being more than a few myths and lies' Nepal is on a serious image problem.

Not that the reality is too far removed from the image. Nepal is a constitutional monarchy but our king has chosen to be chief executive. We are supposed to have parliamentary democracy but there has been no parliament for three years. The prime minister's prerogative is paramount in a parliamentary system, but we don't even have a premier. With the Chief Justice speaking out in public forum, the separation of powers is in jeopardy. Checks and balances are becoming dysfunctional as newly created posts and offices begin to interfere in the functioning of statutory bodies. Nepal's head of state isn't just the head of government, he is being portrayed by hardcore monarchists as the very state itself.

The spectre of unconstitutional appointments mocking the constitution in public is unlikely to make the government's flat-hatted diplomats change their views. Unfortunately, whoever makes our foreign policy these days doesn't think he has realised the gravity of the situation. King Gyanendra will be among mostly like-minded leaders in Jakarta, Hanoi and Singapore this week. But with the events dominated by formal speeches and the media distracted by Sino-Japanese tensions, it is difficult to imagine the Nepali diplomatic team snatching up major diplomatic breakthroughs.

The royal trip to the Boao Forum for Asia should be more substantive. The theme of the fourth conference this year is 'Asia rising for the Win-Win New Role for Asia'. Executives of Fortune 500 companies eyeing substantive, not symbolic, gains for their companies. It is a rare opportunity for Nepal to showcase itself in a meaningful context. The free market is a reality in today's world, in Nepal's days doesn't seem to have been a public interest litigation suit (Reminiscences) published seven years ago. Soch Sansmaran, which is obtained.

The Future of Freedom

In medicine we now talk about 'inconvenienced in any way whatsoever?'

No more authority in the Hindu religion, so it will be very difficult for the public to accept changes made by unauthorised astrologers.

Fellow Newar businessman called Gyan Man being subjected to the harsh physical reaction of some Rana Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher because the jealous ruler happened to see him riding a polished and spacious Victoria in Calcutta. Gyan Man died shortly after the debilitating experience. The government's attitude and practices, as well as Nepal's standing compared by reading Sansmaran, which is finely produced and printed with no glaring types and bad copy-editing, is astounding.

Amej is said to be read out and reviewed by Prakash Sayali on Sagarmatha FM when the book was finally out. Perhaps Soch can also be disseminated in like manner, provided the present dispensation in the country is not incomprehensible in any way whatsoever. After all, we need 'moral science' lessons once in a while, especially when Nepal is hurt in every way for hundreds of years already.

Peter J Karkath, The Kathmandu Post

CORRECTION
In 'Tiger at the Top' (#243), the last paragraph should have said Tiger Woods suffered a majors drought after having won the US Open 2002.
Flying on empty

When the tourism industry hits rock bottom, there is nowhere to go but up

AARTI BASNYAT
in JOMSOM

This time of year, Jomsom should be bustling with trekkers headed down from Thorung La and waiting for flights to Pokhara and pilgrims walking up to Muktinath. This year, all you have are tumbleweeds blown up the dusty banks of the Kali Gandaki by the fierce afternoon wind.

Lodge owners here don’t remember things being as bad as this, even in the autumn of 2001. There used to be up to 800 trekkers moving up and down through Jomsom during peak season. These days, there are barely 400 tourists.

If it is any consolation, Pokhara is even more deserted. In fact, the big difference with previous years is that the tourists who are here seem to have skipped Pokhara completely or just overnighted there. The lodge owners are competing against each other for the stragglers. Undercutting is rife and trekkers have learnt to bargain hard and bring prices down.

Jomsom is the air head for trekkers going to Mustang or pilgrims visiting Muktinath and one wonders why there has been a drop. This is not a Maoist hotspot, it is a tourism hotspot. The stupendous north face of Nilgiri looms over the town, the new airport is clean and efficient, the people are friendly and the food is wholesome. But tourism has hit rock bottom, and so have the prices.

Every trekking guidebook about Nepal recommends that tourists bargain because prices tend to be hiked. But this does not refer to the food and lodging rates. “Everyone wants to bargain nowadays,” says Pramila Gauchan of Xanadu Hotel in Jomsom, “earlier it used to be only Israeli tourists but now it’s the Americans and the Europeans as well. The other day I was shocked when tourists came to my hotel and said they would pay for food and drinks but wanted the rooms for free.”

Muya Thakali, a member of the Upper House, tells us, “This lack of tourism has affected Jomsom drastically and not only has tourism gone down but due to the lack of tourists even agriculture is suffering. People are not able to cope and so look away when underhanded tactics are used to incite tourists to their lodge.”

At a time when many hotel owners can barely meet running costs, this is suicide. Gauchan remembers that 15 years ago, she could run a small restaurant easily without having to bother about bargaining or making ends meet, a time when she would barely have time to sit down and eat, much less worry about having tourists come and eat. And along the Annapurna trail, hoteliers had agreed not to let prices slide.

“The competition is killing,” says Gauchan, “everyone is trying to steal guests from each other.” They line up outside the airport waiting to pounce on the first possible guest, offering rooms at impossible prices to try and make up their costs. “It’s bad for business and they won’t be able to keep it up in the long run,”

Technically, the Annapurna Conservation Area Project fixes all lodge and food prices and this system worked well from Manang to Jomsom. Now, with the numbers falling, it is a cut-throat business.

To resuscitate the ailing tourism business, Jomsom Mountain Resort is now trying to promote local tourism, targeting Nepalis and Indians. “Domestic tourism is picking up and they even tip better,” says Vinaya K Singh of Jomsom Mountain Resort, “and we are promoting packages to incite local tourists to come to Jomsom.” (see below)

Because of the army’s mountain warfare training camp nearby, security in Jomsom is tight and an unofficial curfew begins at eight each night. But it is the strikes and blockades on the Pokhara trail that affect tourism more than what happens here. Gauchan adds: “Most of us have managed to stay afloat.”

“Get on the next flight to Jomsom”


Vinaya K Singh: When we set up Jomsom Mountain Resort here in 2000, the flow of tourists was very good. The place sold itself. Now, it’s slowed down for reasons obvious to everyone. We have been looking at how to increase visitors to Jomsom again. Cosmic Air helped us with daily flights and other agencies are also promoting Jomsom. The profit numbers to be able to generate revenue.

What would help turn things around?

We are running on five or six percent but we want to at least double that with special promotions and packages in tie-ups with airlines. The new year Jomsom Jamting was an example of fun events to bring people up here to sample the grand scenery and we hope that once they come, they will keep coming. We have also launched campaigns in Germany, Singapore and India.

Do you at least break even?

I don’t think it is a big secret that everyone here is running at a loss. We are barely able to stay afloat. The packages are priced at minimum profit, so you need the numbers to be able to generate revenue.

What kind of occupancy rate do you have these days?

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What would help turn things around?

Well, first we need flights that are regular and the frequency of flights have to be increased. Once the road to Jomsom is finished traffic will automatically rise. The potential of Jomsom being the next destination after Pokhara is real. Also, we need to spread the word about a great destination Jomsom is, there is great accommodation and you don’t really have to rough it. Get on the next flight to Jomsom!”

Vinaya Singh has been senior manager at Jomsom Mountain Resort since it started in 2000. He spoke to Nepali Times about falling arrivals and what can be done about it.

Nepal Rastra Bank

The week of New Year 2062 Underlines a Safer Pledge on the Happy Occasion of its 50th Anniversary to make every effort towards the achievement of development objectives envisaged by the country, in addition to maintain monetary stability and Banking Discipline.

The AAMs on the NEXT FLIGHT TO JOMSOM

WANNA FLY?
**Liberal democrats without borders**

Members of the North American diaspora have launched Liberal Democracy Nepal (www.liberdemocracynepal.org) a web-based forum, to host discussions on the future of liberal democracy in Nepal. A collaborative project with the Nepal Study Centre of the University of New Mexico, LDN is committed to establish a forum to air and exchange ideas among a wide range of actors and participants.

**Fewer rhinos**

The population of the endangered great Asian one-horned rhinoceros in Nepal’s biggest wildlife reserve has fallen to 372 from 544 five years ago, mainly due to poaching say officials. In a census the Royal Chitwan National Park, home to the second largest number of single-horned rhinos in the world after India, showed their numbers had fallen to the lowest level in more than a decade. Environmentalists and officials say poaching became easier after small security posts in the reserve were merged with bigger ones because of Maoist threats.

**Zero percent**

Syakar Company Limited has introduced a zero percent interest offer for the first time in Nepal. This scheme is available for Philips products Rs 6,000 and above, payable in 11 equal installments with a 20 percent initial down payment.

**Shangri-la’s world travel award**

Kathmandu’s Shangri-la Hotel has received the reputed World Travel Award for 2005 announced in Barbados recently. “We have won many awards before but this is the most prestigious,” says Daman Pradhan, CEO of Shangri-la Group.

**Special fares**

Air Sahara has introduced Advance Purchase Excursion fares for Ktm-Del-Ktm. It applies to all classes with terms varying accordingly.

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**T**he last two weeks have seen a frenzy of activity in the regions—India-Pakistan cricket diplomacy, India-China trade, US and India opening up skies for unlimited flights, Burma’s emergence as a potential hydropower source and Bhutan readying for a new constitution to embrace the market economy. Where.

**ECONOMIC SENSE**

Artha Beeed

Nepal is sandwiched between India and China which seems ready to set aside their political rivalry to become the world’s largest trading partners over the next two decades. The idea is to beat Sino-US trade volumes and the way these two economies are growing, there’s little doubt that’s where they are headed. These two territorially minded powers will even sacrifice their border disputes at the altar of economic growth.

In the midst of all this is Nepal. We can either hitch our wagons to these two locomotives or shunt ourselves to a siding. Surely, we have the advantage of geography. There must be some goods and services we can sell to both. The growing economies of our neighbouring giants create wealthier people. This could be an opportunity for us to become an offshore financial centre, a haven to manage money, like Luxembourg.

Things are more complicated between India and Pakistan. But even here, there is tremendous bilateral business potential. Pakistan will soon have to find some other way to keep its army engaged if Kashmir is resolved. India and Pakistan need to conduct direct businesses because the costs of re-routing products into markets has skyrocketed. Oil prices and projections provided by international consultants suggest that we need to work on alternative energy resources. This will mean that Bangladesh gas and Burma hydro could become potential sources. With India running to don the mantle of the regional energy player, there is a lot of visible activity. Discussions on Nepali hydro will of course remain an issue but we have missed opportunities before and will continue to miss them because the perception of loss of sovereignty carries more weight than the actual amount hydropower stations can earn.

India opening up its skies to US airlines adds a new dimension to travel, tourism and therefore economics in the region. It is one of those steps that will spur new avenues of growth. We can limit these discussions to seminars or take pro-active steps to cash in on this development. America is now going to be a one-hop flight from Nepal, how are we going to cash in on this?

The growing middle-class in both India and China is pushing their governments to think beyond politics. They realise that as the composition of vote banks change, market economy will be the focus, not subsidies or free meals. For us, it’s never too late to start all over again.

See www.arthabeed.com

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**THERE IS NO FORMULA FOR SUCCESS, BUT THERE ARE METHODS.**

Every successful corporate follows a path that is distinctly theirs. Most will, however, admit to deriving spontaneous inspiration from what they read. With leading writers, professionals, gurus and journalists contributing, Perspectives offers a fresh take on issues that matter most to the corporate world.
**Mission statement**

Interview with UN OHCHR Secretary General, Nicholas Howen by Yubabari Ghimire in Samaya, 21 April

What is your view on the MoU between the government and the OHCHR?

We look at it positively. This was a response to the pressure that was building up about the human rights situation in Nepal. In that respect this is a step forward. Now the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees will have to be the guarantor of the agreement.

What will be the mission’s main activities?

The main goal is to improve the human rights situation. We have made it clear that this entails the immediate release of political prisoners and we expect the immediate decision of detention of prisoners in barracks. The mission will consist of international personnel and experts and will begin its monitoring work right away.

Will the mission also look at the human rights violations that have taken place post February First?

The mission will be looking at human rights violations related to the conflict. But its mandate covers the overall human rights situation. Certainly, we believe that the preservation of human rights will be the key to the conflict. But its mandate plays a laudable role in Geneva and they are in the process of returning to Nepal. We will be monitoring their security very carefully. Their safety must be assured.

Do you think the Maoists will take an agreement between you and the government seriously?

This is a big challenge and a test for them. After all, they have been calling for UN mediation. If the Maoists don’t cooperate, it will cast doubt on their credibility. We hope that the Maoists will help in the investigation of human rights violations just as the army and the security forces who are bound by this agreement.

How sure were you that the MoU would be signed?

We look at it positively. This was a response to the pressure that was building up about the human rights situation in Nepal. In that respect this is a step forward. Now the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees will have to be the guarantor of the agreement.

**QUOTE OF THE WEEK**

"(Nepal) is a very serious humanitarian issue for the UN. It is very serious protection issue."—Nicholas Howen

"I won’t return"  Kantipur, 16 April

He was drawn to Nepal by its mountains and valleys and it brought him back for the second time. But now, this lover of Nepal says he will never return to Nepal.

"This is my last visit to your country," said the Russian trekker, Sergey Kyamikali with moist eyes from his hospital bed, "I will never return." Kyamikali is a radio engineer in Moscow and had come with a friend to Nepal for a trekking trip and was on his way to Kodari in a taxi last week. The taxi ran over a Maoist landmine at Chehere.

"I will tell the world about how the Maoists did to us," he told Kantipur, "and I will tell them not to go to Nepal." The explosion wounded the 43-year-old tourist gravely on both feet, although his friend and the driver weren’t. He was immediately airlifted to the army hospital in Chitwan where he is still recovering. "If the army hadn’t airlifted me, I’d not be speaking to you now," he said.

Kyamikali’s wife and two children are waiting for him to get well enough to fly back to Moscow and the Russian Embassy is taking care of arrangements. "My wounded body is in Nepal but my heart is in Moscow," said Kyamikali, who says he can’t wait to get back.

Kyamikali reserves his strongest words for the Maoists. "What had we done to them that we deserved to be bombed?" he asked. The tourism industry, reeling under a serious drop in arrivals, is worried that news of this unprecedented attack on tourists will make things worse.

**Terrorising schools**

Editorial in Nepal Samacharpatra, 19 April

Schools across Nepal were already affected by the conflict. Far from being ‘zones of peace’ they had been turned into war zones for forced recruitment of children, digging bunkers and trenches in school grounds or turned into barracks. Repeated threats and intimidation had already affected school semesters and one-fourth of the classes haven’t been held.

Now the Maoist’s student wing has ordered all private schools to close with the demand that they all be nationalised or turned into cooperatives. It is true that there are complaints about high fees in private schools but that is no reason to close them all down. At a time when the quality of government schools have been declining, the Maoists have been offering a quality alternative. Nepal’s schools are now war zones, children are being terrorised, forcibly recruited and their classrooms turned into barracks. The latest threats have increased the number of Nepali children in India. Aside from the economic cost, this will affect their sense of belonging and narrow their sense of nationalism. The Maoists must seriously re-evaluate their own actions and let the state reclaim its moral and ethical mandate.

**Royal rejection**

Dhriti, 19 April

The royal palace has rejected the Asian Development Bank’s proposal to bring a law through ordinance for the transfer of management of the Nepal Water Supply Corporation. The rejection comes as a big blow to the donors’ desire to enter the drinking water supply business in Kathmandu. For its assistance in the Malachit water supply project aimed at supplying water to Kathmandu Valley, the ADB had stipulated that the management of the NWSC be privatised. The government had planned to bring an ordinance for the privatisation of the management in a bid to avoid legal hassles. The bank and the government had sent the ordinance to the palace but it was returned because it didn’t clearly state details like the fee for drinking water. A revised proposal is being evaluated.

**Jaleswor jail**

Kantipur, 20 April

Prisoners in Mahottari district have been refusing to eat and even demanded to reform their prison in Jaleswor. The prison now has twice the number of inmates it was designed for and has a serious lack of drinking water, sanitation and even beds. Since the jail administration has failed to act, the prisoners decide to do something on their own. A health program run by NGO run by human rights activist Ram Adhar Kapoor was then their source of inspiration. Kapoor is himself in jail now and initiated the program.
Nepali students fleeing to India

Mimal Khatiwadapati, 14-29 April

NEPALGANJ—By bombing and threatening schools with closure the Maoists and their fraternal student organisation have once more shown themselves to be an irrational anti-people force. This is not the first time they have threatened to close private schools but an everheightening public opposition had forced them to back down and this is probably what will happen this time too. In the past, these threats have been linked to extortion drives from schools. Schools that pay them off adequately are spared bombings, however poor their reputation in society.

This time, the threat of the threats is seen more outside the capital and in remote districts. And if the Maoists want to present themselves as a responsible force in front of the people they have to call off the closure because higher secondary schools are providing special services in remote areas where there are no colleges. There are now about 10,500 private schools all over the country and there are 1.7 million students enrolled in them and some 700,000 teachers and staff are employed. There are also 350,000 students in about 250 private higher secondary schools with 28,000 teachers and employees. The Maoist threat will affect 3,500,000 people directly.

There have been bomb attacks on schools that were planning to defy the Maoist threat of closure in Banke, Dang and Nepalganj. The private school association, PASBON, has decided to keep schools open. The reason for the present crisis is not the private education systems. Teachers, students, guardians and human rights organisations will use non-violent methods to keep schools open, says PASBON’s Hemu Shrestha.

This defiance would work if the state acted to protect the schools but it can’t delay all schools against attacks. A teacher in Nepalganj says he can’t open his school with such risks even though the government is forcing the schools to keep their doors open. Some schools have been threatened with the threat of the king himself saying that he would close private schools. “We are caught in the middle,” says Keshar Bahadur Ale of Gorkha United Public School.

Here in Banke, none of the schools have opened after new year’s day. Many haven’t even taken in new enrolments because of Maoist threats. “It’s just too risky,” says one teacher. The parents and guardians of the children are taking their children across the border to India for study. Parents are even pulling out children from schools in the capital and sending them to boarding schools in India. “There is a real danger that our schools will be empty at the end of the year,” says Biyaa Lama of PASBON in Nepalganj, whose school

Brightland was bombed this week by Maoists. Of the 2,500 students enrolled in Brightland and Radha Krishna Inter College in the border town of Rupaha in India, 70 percent of the children are now Nepali. Says the principal of Radha Krishna: “If the past two years there has been an unprecedented flood of Nepali children.”

The new Panchayat

Hari Roka in Nepal, 17 April

Back to the street after a brief stint in the government, the leadership of the political parties, who have been demanding the reinstatement of the Third House of Representatives and formation of an all party government, have now got to see the parade of the regional and zonal administrators. They are also getting to see how no other former government armed forces are getting appointed or ambassadors.

International pressure, the superpower countries’ two pillar policy of constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy, the ongoing UN meeting on human rights in Geneva, were the hopes for the political leaders that regression would be corrected. Instead, they have to bear with regional and zonal administrators.

If in the developments in the past any indication, very soon district administrators will also be appointed. News about such appointments are already making the rounds. Based on these appointments, a parliament will be formed. Possibly, the parliament will have representatives from all electoral constituencies. But all these parliamentarians will be absolutely nominated. These ‘representatives’ will form a government. Mainly, these people will remain loyal to the king and they will receive royal orders to remain loyal to the people.

All these new structures will have the tenure of 33 months and steps will be taken with the commitment on the constitution of 1981, meaning commitments will be impressed on constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy, just like the way it was done on 1 February.

If the speaker without parliament Tarannath Ranabhat becomes the speaker of the nominated parliamentarians, that will be no surprise. But it will be time to destroy a system that has already taken root. Even if they think they have destroyed it, schools will push up from the soil.

A species of ogre grows on another tree and can sometimes smother the host that it once depended on. In Nepali politics, such ogre trees were never destroyed. In power never thought of countering the Maoists politically. What they always thought was the historical fact that whoever struggles ends up winning the rights. They forgot who fought and won in 1990. They forgot history.

If we see now that those who were all out to save the central power in the past have now become ambassadors, regional and zonal administrators. After all the state power is central. The minute changes that have begun to appear in state policies may indicate such a change in state power. This can be called the new version of the Panchayat.
London-Kathmandu

Forthy years later, remembering an overland adventure to Nepal

LIONEL GREGORY

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cr, tall is palama. That

is how Nepali fairy tales start, opening up a vista of magic and mystery in the imagination of children. Despite the changes wrought by time and circumstance, the tradition of story-telling remains.

This is one such story. I had long nurtured the dream of travelling overland from the oldest democracy in the world to the largest. The opportunity to travel from Britain to India along ancient trade routes came in 1962 and I set off in a reliable old Vanguard Estate car 9555DU. The registration number and I set off in a reliable old Vanguard Estate car 9555DU.

The war had long since ended and as the curtain came down on the Iranian side of the Turkey-Iran border within sight of Mt Ararat, I was half way there. This was where the United Nations Asian Highway began, following the line of the old Silk Route between Venice and Haranow. Alexander the Great had come this way in the 4th century and Marco Polo in the 13th. And there was room for me in the 20th.

I often slept under a canopy of stars in the deserts of Iran, Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan and never dreamt that I might be harmed in any way or have my possessions stolen. It would not be quite that way today, such is progress. What made me persevere was not only the prospect of meeting many of my old friends in Nepal but also the inspiration I would imbibe from them to carry me on to my journey’s end.

These were the thoughts that encouraged me to compose a little verse that would lend itself to joyful treatment when the madals began to play in Pokhara.

"The Nepalese Polka"

When he sailed off to Europe in 1852, Jang Bahadur Rana became the first royalty from the subcontinent to visit Britain. He had just seized power by massacring nearly the entire Nepali nobility at the Kot. He was suspicious of the intentions of British India and was curious to see if the Angrej were as powerful as they made themselves out to be.

He was taken on conducted tours of cannon factories and naval dockyards and got his hosts to organise military parades. He was suitably impressed with British military might, but it wasn’t all business. Jang also savoured the delights of Bohemian London and Paris. He attended operas, lived lavishly and flamboyantly and showed a surprising adaptability in dealing with the London pampered of the day.

Watching a ballet one evening, Queen Victoria noticed Jang swaying with the music. She was surprised and asked him if he understood the music. Jang replied through his Hindi interpreter: Bulbul ke gan hum nahi samajte, agar achha to lagta...

Queen Victoria told everyone later she was impressed with the soldier poet. In

Bulbul ke gan hum nahi samajte, agar achha to lagta...

The registration number

Vanguard Estate car 9555DU. [image]

and as the curtain came down on

the British Empire there was an urgent need to keep alive the traditions of the Gurkhas. I had known and served with in the army, among them my orderly Purnaram Gurung.

We sang some of the old songs together and they were surprised I could still remember the words and the melodies. Why ever not? These are just a few of the threads that bind old friends and I had travelled 6,000 miles to prove it.

The thought pleased them. And if it could be done on a personal level then why not on a national level, sweeping aside barriers and the polonina that feed on them.

From Kathmandu I flew to Pokhara (the road hadn’t been built yet) and managed to take a photograph of King Mahendra being garlanded at the airport under the wing of his plane, a Russian Il-14. I had met His Majesty when he was Crown Prince at a reception given by the British Ambassador, during a visit that my brother of the 10th PMO Gurkhas and I made to Nepal in 1951.

I flew back to Kathmandu, up to Sim Bahinayang and back to Kathmandu. This would appear as the cover story of the Illustrated London News on the 10,000 km journey from London to Kathmandu 43 years ago.

‘The Nepalese Polka’

The ‘Nepalese Polka’ played by Michael Kuhn is a lively and happy tune that can be downloaded on mp3 for listening from the website of German musician Johannes Bornmann.

http://www.bilder-aus-nepal.de/Pages/Geschichtsseiten/Strauss-Polka.html

OVERLAND TO NEPAL: (clockwise from top left)

9555 DU approaches the Afghan border from Iran on its 10,000 km journey from London to Kathmandu 43 years ago. Refuelling at Amlehganj in Nepal. The formidable hairpin turns on the newly-built Tribhuban Highway on the road to Kathmandu. The author photographed King Mahendra being felicitated at Pokhara airport in 1962.

From Kathmandu, I flew to Pokhara (the road hadn’t been built yet), and managed to take a photograph of King Mahendra being garlanded at the airport. [image]

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London-Kathmandu

Forthy years later, remembering an overland adventure to Nepal

LIONEL GREGORY

U

cr, tall is palama. That

is how Nepali fairy tales start, opening up a vista of magic and mystery in the imagination of children. Despite the changes wrought by time and circumstance, the tradition of story-telling remains.

This is one such story. I had long nurtured the dream of travelling overland from the oldest democracy in the world to the largest. The opportunity to travel from Britain to India along ancient trade routes came in 1962 and I set off in a reliable old Vanguard Estate car 9555DU. The registration number and I set off in a reliable old Vanguard Estate car 9555DU.

The war had long since ended and as the curtain came down on the British Empire there was an urgent need to keep alive the traditions of the Gurkhas. I had known and served with in the army, among them my orderly Purnaram Gurung.

We sang some of the old songs together and they were surprised I could still remember the words and the melodies. Why ever not? These are just a few of the threads that bind old friends and I had travelled 6,000 miles to prove it.

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the Indian plains to keep an
appointment with Jawaharlal
Nehru. That happy event led to
the setting up of a committee to
host a Commonwealth Youth
Festival in order to organise a
new consciousness in the
Commonwealth. It was an
inspired initiative. But after
Nehru died, enthusiasm began
to wane (a not uncommon
phenomenon) and the idea of
the festival was dropped.

But in its place a
Commonwealth Expedition,
known as Comex, was launched
under the patronage of HRH The
Duke of Edinburgh. Made up of
five contingents of 42 each,
from the universities of
Cambridge, Cardiff, Edinburgh,
London and Oxford, Comex I
set off from London on 31 July
1965. There were 14
expeditions in all, the largest of
500 dubbed ‘the
Commonwealth on wheels’ by
the Kabul Times as it passed
through Afghanistan. They
were distinguished by the
symbol of a little green pennant
bearing Prince Philip’s cipher and
the Asoka wheel in gold.

Those green pennants were to
become the Green Pennant
Awards ‘Identifying the spirit of
adventure with crossing the
barriers that divide people’
inaugurated by Prince Philip in
London on 10 December 1960,
endorsed at the 1995
Commonwealth Heads of
Government Meeting in New
Zealand and most recently
presented at the Edinburgh
summit of 1997.

It is a matter of special
significance and not only to me,
that my journey to Kathmandu
in 1962 should have reached
its own summit in this
remarkable way.

The 40th anniversary of Comex I
will be celebrated on the Internet
on 10 May.
Comex40.org.uk

Lionel Gregory OBE is the
founding Commanding Officer of
the Queen’s Gurkha Signals.

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Managing Director

Ashish K. Sengupta
Executive Director

Ramesh Shrestha
C.O.O.
Witness to history

S

tenor advocate Mukunda Regmi was one of the members of the 1990 Constitution drafting committee from the Nepal Congress quota. Others came from the palace and the left quota (including today’s Maoists in the persona of the late Nirmal Lama).

Regmi has taken eight years to collect all necessary documents as well as archival tapes and transcripts to produce this massive two-volume work which will stand as the seminal reference long into the future not only for scholars but also politicians and others debating Nepal’s governance. The first volume begins with the rare 1948 ‘constitutional arrangement’ promulgated by Rana Prime Minister Padma Shumsher and discussions and statements related to it. It is followed by an account of the events and declarations related to the collapse of Rana rule and promulgation of the interim constitution of 1951. The author traces the origins of the ‘constituent assembly’ concept to Nehru’s proposal and not of King Tribhuvan, the Rana prime minister or the NC.

Much of both volumes consist of accounts of the 40 meetings held by the 1990 Constitution drafting commission transcribed from tapes preserved at the National Archives. They are supplemented with the author’s commentary essays on the matters missed and discussion of previous constitutions. Since many of the other members of the commission and the interim cabinet of Krishna Prasad Bhattantra that ultimately finalised the draft are still alive and active in public affairs, Regmi’s opinions can hopefully be challenged by these eminences if he has digressed from the truth.

The second volume contains the 1958 and 1962 constitutions but commentaries associated with them, except for bringing to public domain the otherwise unavailable comments of Sir Bovre’s, disappointment. If 1990 was a ‘restoration’ of the multi-party democracy of 1958, there is little explanation of its positive and dysfunctional features that needed retaining in the 1990 version. Also, if the aim of the new constitution in 1990 was to do away with it public are included. What exactly transpired between the palace and the interim Bhattantra government will probably be known as more of the actors involved in the high drama publish memoirs. But Regmi clearly outlines differences in the final constitution and the commission’s draft. While it is wholly understandable that the palace would do everything it could to maximise its prerogatives, what is inexplicable are some of the changes introduced by the interim NC-left cabinet that so militate against a decent democracy.

For instance, the commission’s draft had a provision (Article 120(2)) that required political parties to submit annual audited accounts to the Election Commission: it was removed in the promulgated version’s Article 113. The draft also envisaged an upper house that would not only have a significant voice in framing legislation but also required that it have quotas reserved for three women, three dalits and nine janajatis not represented in the lower house. In the final constitution, the powers of the upper house were massively curtailed and only the quota for three women was retained.

Similarly, given the controversy surrounding Article 126 and the subsequent Tamakpur/Mukhakali treaty, it is a surprise to learn that the original draft was more stringent: it required all such resource sharing treaties be ratified by a two-third majority. The promulgated version excuses matters, allowing any government to do so with a simple majority if matters were not of ‘a serious, grave or urgent nature’. Sadly, in the 12 years that the parties concerned were in parliament, no attempt was made to define this provision, thus leaving water resources development cooperation with the lower riparian in a limbo.

Regmi is strongest in the last chapter where he argues against a constituent assembly. First, everywhere in the world constitutions were made, not by representatives elected to draft them but by representatives elected to legislate as happened in India under its 1935 Act. Second, the Nepali people have already given approval to this constitution by participating in three general elections under it, thus requiring no further popular endorsement. Finally, in all these three elections, no political party ever went to the people requesting a mandate to amend this constitution or any of its provisions. One only wishes Nepal’s political movers and shakers would listen to these arguments so that the rest of her citizens could move on with the country’s development.

Dipak Gyawali is an academician with the Royal Nepal Academy of Science and Technology.

A revealing blow-by-blow account of how the 1990 constitution was crafted

Bubbles of History

Regmi’s account of the Panchayat system is informative and retold materials have been added. He demonstrates that some of the positive features of the Panchayat that lasted all of three decades should have been better analysed and retained with improvements. Especially inexplicable is why the decentralised village and district units of governance of the Panchayat constitution were done away with in 1990 and not replaced by anything legitimising local self-governance.

The two volumes also contain documented response from political parties, civil society groups as well as the Royal Nepali Army to the request from the commission for suggestions regarding the future constitution. They contain views and arguments on many issues still debated today, from the word ‘Hindu’ (which Regmi says refers to the king but not the nation which is de facto secular) to the question of provisions for a referendum (which those who today clamour for a new constitution seem to be against them). The volumes containing the commission’s discussions regarding the army (its 44th session) are currently missing from the archives but he has provided invaluable service to future scholars by bringing transcripts made then into the public domain.

Two controversial ‘palace drafts’ of the constitution that were at variance with what the commission produced, including the critical article in. Godkapattas that made
Rugs for walls
Now that Nepali carpets have floored most homes, let's decorate walls

When John Allen was flying over Nepal, the texture and colours of the landscape stayed in his mind. He could see the rivers and rolling uneven hills woven in inspiring colours being translated on to a carpet. These moments of inspiration fed into his artistry, becoming the inspiration behind his tapestry designs. The rich, finely detailed works are a work of art with ancient silver and stones.

John plans to showcase his carpet designs based on his Nepal experience in 2009 in London. Raju exports his tapestries through friends in Canada and elsewhere.

Keeping the spirit alive
Susan’s Collection is a gallery in the balcony of the historic Rana palace that is Kathmandu Guest House, Thamel. It has a rare collection of antiques, arts and crafts of Nepal, masterpieces such as the Blue Tara carved in turquoise and the crystal swasthika with fine engravings of silver and stones. The gallery itself is a work of art with ancient candlelight chandeliers the Ranas brought over from Belgium.

Amrit Medhasi
The soul of a Nepali soldier

Since Homer, stories have been written about the life, loves and courage of soldiers like Captain Amrit Medhasi. The red families in the United States, tough critics of the war, nevertheless publish stories that give a human face to the soldiers that have served and fallen in combat.

Our media and some human rights group’s coverage of a soldier’s bravery comes with caveats like “if only the rest of the RNA were like this man” or the obliterating vision of Maoist atrocities. “If both sides are massively violating human rights” as if hundreds of summary executions, systematic political killings, drizzling holes in pregnant women, and their cruel cripplism vision of a communal dance are equivalent to the army’s mission whose aim is to restore conditions for a return to democracy.

The Army has had its share of troubling human rights violations but has never embraced a policy encouraging torture and indiscriminate killings. The work of fine soldiers during a war not only their making have been obliterated by relentless anti-killing and the self-raging avarice of civil activists and, even worse, the own confused political leadership who star these soldiers even as they create havoc to command them.

Amrit Medhasi was a soldier’s soldier. In World War II, he might have been an unoutwitted Gurkha beating back a Japanese onslaught but perhaps more appropriately he might have been the true carpet leader fighting the capital house-house-courage him, only to be portrayed by activists and the media in his own country as a drug-crazed hooligan. He probably had the same reasons for joining the army as most young men: the attraction of genuine camaraderie, an opportunity to tour the world, to challenge one’s physical limits and pursue a relatively decent career track.

Born in Patan district in 1980, Amrit Medhasi came from a military family. I never had the pleasure of meeting him personally but from a brief encounter with his father, one can extrapolate that he must have been similar in character. The characteristic military bearing, the frugality of words and the steady confidence about his identity.

He excelled in academics and was a natural leader, nonetheless an outstanding student and also a school captain. Blessed with a wiry frame and rarely a word, he was an excellent athlete. With these attributes, a comfortable career probably lay ahead in a civilian life but he joined the army despite objections from his family.

After receiving his commission, he was assigned to an infantry battalion in the east followed by duty in the west. Unlike most soldiers in other countries that have the luxury of being rotated back home after a year or so of duty, most Nepali soldiers move in another lonely mountain pass, a windy desert or jungle as they continue to clear the path.

Several successful missions followed where he earned the respect of his men by using the only credible method in combat, by directly engaging the enemy and demonstrating results. On 9 August 2004, Amrit Medhasi was killed in action along a mountain pass at Mathura Danda in Argakhanchi. He was directly engaging the enemy and demonstrating results. On 9 August 2004, Amrit Medhasi was killed in action along a mountain pass at Mathura Danda in Argakhanchi.

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The return of romance

The general sahab met the doctor sardarji, setting off positive vibes in New Delhi and Karachi

With Gen Musharraf playing by the rules and Indian officials clear about what they wanted, everything went just right. In fact, the bhar-dahl vires are so too-good-to-be-true that it had one worried about how to make this trend stick. The people-to-people contact so heroically promoted by the members of the Pakistan-India People’s Forum for Peace and Democracy over years non-stop cynics have finally borne a little fruit. It must now be allowed to ripen, to the fullest extent that the visa regime is flung open for all Indians and Pakistanis, with restrictions only to prevent mass migration from one side to the other.

The possibilities of a Southasian peace opened by human contact can’t be sustained unless there is rapid movement to spark trade, commerce and economic integration. While New Delhi was still staging host to the president general, this columnist flew over the desert to Karachi. Dyes his hair just right (‘New Delhi’) and dry his hair just right (‘New Delhi’).

The return of romance.

BBC World Service has stemmed its weekly listenership to the BBC confirms the BBC as India’s number one international radio provider. The BBC captures 40 percent of all those listening to the radio in Bihar and a third of radio listeners in Jharkhand. In the remaining three states, just under one in five of radio listeners turn to the BBC Hindi Service every week.

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Surya Nepal Golf

All the President’s men
Kathmandu prepares to host the first international football tournament of the year

As temperatures rise, for football scene in Nepal Kathmandu is also heating up again with the first President Cup international tournament to be held here next month.

The 10-day event, which begins on 4 May, will see Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Tajikistan, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan pitting their league champions against each other. Organised by the Asian Football Confederation, the President Cup will be an annual event hosted in various member countries.

“To have the first match hosted in Nepal is a very good opportunity for us,” says Ganesh Thapa, chairman of the AFC President Cup organising committee. There are only eight countries participating this year because the criteria says league champions of each country can participate. Not all interested countries had their league matches, Thapa explains.

Nepal had its league tournament in June last year when a draw between Mahendra Police Club and Patan’s Three Star Club decided the latter as the winner on overall points. “It was a crucial match,” says Upenchu Mun Singh, captain and goalkeeper of the Three Star team.

U. Khesar

Deepak Acharya

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

Yes, it’s back again to that ideal ‘in to out’ downswing. It’s a big step forwards getting that perfect position on the follow through, starting at the beginning of the downswing.Quickly clearing the left shoulder while rotating the hips simultaneously promotes the club head staying well inside. Providing plenty of room to those it out later. This helps keep both arms straight at impact. Go through the swing if the right leg has been used properly you should end up with your right heel well raised and most of your weight on a solid left foot.

During your swing there are stages of transferring weight from one side to another. An example is, at the address position of a tee shot with a driver, your weight should be about 60 percent on the back foot. By the top of the back swing, 90 percent of your weight should be on that back foot. Back at impact, you will return to the address position weight distribution and then on the follow through it is shifted almost completely to the forward foot.

In any sport, balance is the key to better and consistent performance. Want to be a well-balanced golfer? Try following the tips above or better still, schedule a lesson with your favourite golf professional and get it perfected. With a good follow through and finish, not only will your game improve tremendously, you will even look great on those first tee memento photographs.

Deepak Acharya

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

ABHA ELI PHOBOO

A

As temperatures rise, the football scene in Nepal is also heating up again with the first President Cup international tournament to be held here next month.

The 10-day event, which begins on 4 May, will see Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan pitting their league champions against each other. Organised by the Asian Football Confederation, the President Cup will be an annual event hosted in various member countries.

“To have the first match hosted in Nepal is a very good opportunity for us,” says Ganesh Thapa, chairman of the AFC President Cup organising committee. There are only eight countries participating this year because the criteria says league champions of each country can participate. Not all interested countries had their league matches, Thapa explains.

Nepal had its league tournament in June last year when a draw between Mahendra Police Club and Patan’s Three Star Club decided the latter as the winner on overall points. “It was a crucial match,” says Upenchu Mun Singh, captain and goalkeeper of the Three Star team, “but we know that a draw would qualify us for the President Cup. Now, the responsibility of playing for the country in an international match is weighing on our shoulders. We are taking things very seriously and concentrating on our training.”

The Three Star team has played with some of the other teams before but as Upenchu says, “it won’t do to underestimate your opponent. We know there won’t be much difference because we are all in the Category.”

The teams have been divided into three categories according to their financial and playing standards. A is where the teams from developed countries have been grouped. “There’s a good chance we might win,” says Lalit Krishna Shrestha, chairman of Three Star Club, “we have had a lot of support from our community. People have raised funds for us to buy uniforms and food for training.”

The coach of the Three Star team is Dhurba KC but other senior coaches of Nepal such as Shyam Thapa and Bimal Thapa are also helping the boys overcome their weaknesses and focus on their strengths. The league tournament and initial training left some players injured. “We fear that the training might not be adequate for some of the players because they missed out on a lot,” says captain Singh.

Dasrath Stadium is seeing a major facelift to prepare for the matches. “We are doing all we can and the government has been very supportive,” says Narendra Shrestha, vice-chairman of All Nepal Football Association. “The President Cup is important to us not just because it is an international event but also because it could direct the future of football in Nepal and sports in general.”

As the opening date nears, the organisers are running over some last minute details to clear out hassles. “Security will be very tight. AFC officials themselves came over to check and they have approved of our system,” says Shrestha.

Singh says this is a great opportunity for his team to build experience, adding: “But we have our eyes on the prize because it could change the face of football in Nepal and the region.” The President Cup winner gets $50,000 and the runner-up gets $25,000. Each participating team takes home $15,000.

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

Surya Nepal Golf

To keep you from falling off balance
Starting something is a lot easier than finishing it well. And this applies to every golf swing. The smooth finish of a golf swing is reflected in a proper follow through. If you end well balanced and in the right position, chances are, you’ve made a reasonably good effort at hitting the ball.

Watch weekend golfers and you will see what I’m talking about. At the end of their swing, most of them finish in all kinds of strange and awkward positions. Some even topple over or wobble frantically after impact. Unfortunately, this is the exact opposite of what should really be happening.

Not being able to finish with the weight significantly on the leading foot is a sure sign of trouble. It affects distance and accuracy, almost always leaving you unable to hit in swing path. This style in itself promotes resistance to finishing on the forward foot.

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ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS
- This is Today Paintings by Naishek Malla at Gallery Nine, until 26 April.
- A Peaceful Nepal Photo exhibition at GAA, Thamel, 15-30 April.
- Sunday-Friday 10AM-4PM, proceeds go to habitat for Humanity.
- Thaliara Framed black and white photographs by Devendra Sub Rana at SiddhiArt Gallery, until 30 April.
- Magic Pencil Amnesia by Britain’s best children’s illustrators at the British Council, Lainchaur. Until 6 May. 4410798

EVENTS
- The Good Person of Szechuan Staged by Studio 7 at Hotel Vaira, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, 22-24 April 5-7PM. 4240129
- Toyota Women’s Motor Rally on 23 April. 4478301
- How can spirituality change your daily life Talk by Nuna Tenzin Namdrol on 23 April, 10AM-4PM, @ HYMBC, Thamel. 4418433
- Tempa Jatra at Boudha and Swayambhu, 23-24 April. 4135434
- Tea Art Workshop at The Boulder Hotel, 23-24 April. 4417837
- Balaju Bais Dhara Mela on 24 April at Balaju Bais Dhara.
- Gori Vatra Film by Pyn Zalika, Boatra at Nepali Tourism Board. Bhaktapur. 24 April, 7.30PM. 4435939, citygymktm@hotmail.com
- World Book Day Exhibition for children, 23-25 April, 8:30-5:45 PM. British Council, Lainchaur. 4410798
- Tibetan Education in Exile Lecture by Mad Bernabei on 20 April, 9:30 AM at Shankar Hotel, Lajimpat. Entrance Rs 100 for non-members.
- Tai Chi Free classes at Baber Mahal Revisited. 4256618, 4256693
- 1905 Sundays Fun in the Sun at Club Sundhara, Hotel Shangri-la. 4410799
- Rugby Practice Every Saturday. cityrugby@hotmail.com
- Sanibaar Mela Sundays at the Shankhara Bakery Café, 12AM-5PM.

MUSIC
- All Star Jam Session Micks re-opens on 22 April. 7PM, 5528121
- Full Circle Live at Indigo Gallery on 29 April. 8PM. Rs. 75. 4135980
- An Evening with Manose on 29 April. Cafe Bahal, 9PM. 450650
- Rock Thru’ The Ages Live at Indigo Gallery on 29 April, 8PM, Rs 750. 4413580
- Live Jazz to 420 and Peter McTwister, Thursdays at Full Moon Bar.
- Ladies Nights Wednesday at Jatra, Thamel, with live music.
- Fusion Time Montage on 27 April, 6PM, at Club Sundhara.
- Live Music Everyday at Hotel de l’Annapurna, Darbar Marg, 2417711
- The Heart Breakers at Rum Doodle, Fridays, 7PM onwards. 4701208
- Jukebox experience Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at Ros. 4487124
- Jazz at Uptown Jazz Bar, Lajimpat, Wednesdays and Saturdays. 7.45 PM.

FOOD
- Barbaha Mediterranean Cuisine at Hotel Shankar-las. 15-30 April.
- Sekuwa Sarh on 29 April at Deewan’s Hotel. 4479488
- Great Value Lunches at Soaste Crown Plaza for Rs 299. 4273999
- Sunrise Weekend Brunch Free swim at Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4349999
- Barbecue Dinner Every Friday at the Summit Hotel. 5521810
- Exotic Seafood at Rox Restaurant, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- Earth Watch Restaurant at Park Village, dine with nature. 4375280
- Tha Kai at Hotel de l’Annapurna, Darbar Marg. 4217711
- Pacific Sunsets Pastas and snacks at Roadhouse Café, Jwalamahal. 5021755
- Earth Watch Restaurant at Park Village, dine with nature. 4375280
- Cafe Bahal Newari cuisine at Kathmandu Guest House, Thamel. 4700832
- Pastas and snacks at Roadhouse Café, Jawalakhel. 5521755
- The Tha Kai at Jungeon Bagee. Jungeonbagesebaroom@yahoo.com

GETAWAYS
- Stay One Night get one night at Shankar la Village. Pokhara. 4430742
- Wet Wild Summer Splash at Godawari Village Resort. 5566575
- Tiger Mountain Pohkara Lodge World’s top room with a view. 4361006
- Shikshriya Cottage Nature, peace and bird watching at 6,000 ft. 4345431
- Ch&s Choco Hawkins at Nagatho, special packages. 6688080
- Jungle Base Camp Lodge, Bardia. Special packages and prices. junglebasecamp@yolop.com
- Malaysia Dream Holidays Special offers till the end of May. 4247215 extn 013-14, malaysiaholidays_marco@polo.com.np

KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

Just when we thought Kathmandu’s air was getting a little clearer, the pollution level suddenly shot up. Last week, the concentration of PM10 (particles less than 10 micron in size) in the Valley was 60 percent higher than the previous week. In places with heavy traffic, the pollution levels reached hazardous levels on 12 and 13 April. Even in rural areas like Matsyagaun, PM10 concentrations exceeded national standards in six of the seven days. The reduced visibility is affecting international flights.

10-16 April 2005 in micrograms per cubic meter. Source: www.mojpe.gov.np

Hazardous >425
Harmful 351 to 425
Unhealthy 121 to 350
Good 61 to 120

KATHMANDU VALLEY

A prominent feature of this week’s weather is the lowest ever record of humidity: 24 percent on Tuesday afternoon. The same humidity breaks that is bringing in desert dust from Rajasthan that has reduced visibility is also bringing in dry air. The result is that in the absence of moisture there is cloud buildup on thermals along the mountains. A reduction in the haze level due to a change in wind direction raised the maximum temperature in the haze level due to a change in wind direction raised the maximum temperature 30 degrees this week but the haze is back and we will see a.commensurate reduction due to filtering action. This satellite picture taken on Thursday morning indicates nothing of significance on the horizon. Just the chance of a passing low pressure area that may trigger localised storm systems along the midhills early next week.

NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAH BEED

NEPALI WEATHER

www.jainepal.com

Radio Sagarmatha

102.4 MHz
A
n unlikely amateur photography duo of teacher and student, Fr Greg Sharkey and Alok Tuladhar, have been taking pictures for over 20 years and a selection of their work is on display at A Peaceful Nepal photo exhibition at the Godavari Alumni Association (GAA) in Thamel.

Alok is an IT specialist who owns a medical transcription company that is outsourced work from hospitals abroad. Greg is the moderator of GAA and director of the Jesuit Research Centre besides being an anthropologist who specialises in Newari culture and Buddhism. Their portraits and landscapes, mainly from eastern Nepal, bear testimony to the fact that the two take their hobby very seriously indeed.

“Faces are my favourite though Nepal is so photogenic I enjoy taking pictures of landscapes too,” explains Alok. Greg is also inspired by Nepali faces: “Most of the people I photographed had their lives disrupted by the insurgency but it is Nepali resilience that keeps them smiling through such trying times.”

The photographs are priced at a moderate Rs 300 for reprints and Rs 500 including frames. Money from the sale of pictures will go to the Habitat for Humanity program which will build houses for the homeless at minimum costs. Alok and Greg hope to raise enough money from their exhibition to further subsidise building costs. Greg also wants the exhibition to promote the GAA complex as a cultural and artistic haven for ex-Xaverians and Marians.

Says Alok: “This exhibition is a chance for the Nepali people to communicate with fellow-Nepalis through their smiles. We are just the medium.”

(Aarti Basnyat)

A Peaceful Nepal at GAA Hall, Thamel, until 30 April, 10AM-4PM, Sunday to Friday, proceeds go to Habitat for Humanity. 4414785

POETIC LICENSE: Govinda Bartaman, Avinash Shrestha, Tirtha Shrestha, Bounil Rana, Bhuwanhari Sigdel, Symal and Bhuwan Dhungana at a year-end poetry reading organised by Himal Association at Yala Maya Kendra on 13 April.
What’s so funny?

It has come to the notice of us high-up authorities that despite the state of national urgency, there is still a lot of uncontrolled and spontaneous laughter going on in isolated parts of the kingdom. There is clear and present danger that such unrestrained mirth could spread and be detrimental to national security, and therefore should be nipped in the bud forthwith. This is no laughing matter.

Our founding fathers, in their wisdom, promulgated the Laughter and Satire Act 2017 which categorically states that in times of grave national crisis the state can for a limited and stipulated period temporarily suspend an individual’s perfectly natural urge to giggle, snigger, chuckle, snort, twitter, or all of the above.

Since such a crisis is now at hand and considering that wild guffawing could be infectious and spread by word-of-mouth thus lowering the morale of our civil and uncivil servants, the state is now invoking Article 27 of the Laughter and Satire Act and banning all unauthorised laughter until further notice.

Guards! Take that chap who has fallen off his chair to the dungeons and tickle his armpits until he laughs his head off.

Where were we? Oh yes, compared to Burma, we are a civilised and democratic society and therefore realise that there is a need to make exemptions. For example, those of unsound mind who need to laugh at regular intervals for medical reasons can do so in designated sound-proof Laughing Clinics. But they must bring their shrink’s prescription in triplicate duly notarised by the Anchaladish stating the psychosomatic and physiological reasons why the said patient needs to chuckle guiltily, and more importantly, whether there is actually still something to laugh about. These strict regulations are required to thwart abuse, and to prevent the entire country from pretending that it has gone insane.

Non-Nepali residents and diplomats are also exempt from the laughter ban since their conduct in the host country is governed by the Vienna Convention and its Annexe 13 (d) which states: “In cases where the recipient state has suspended its sense of humour, consular missions and their resident staff may on occasion enjoy diplomatic impunity and be allowed to vent off a little steam as long as they don’t indulge in boisterous jocularity in public.”

In case you hadn’t heard, Nepal Telecom has been given the go-ahead to resume its hitherto immobile phone service (oops, did I just say something funny?) after all subscribers were fingerprinted and had to sign written affidavits declaring that they will send only officially-sanctioned jokes to each other via SMS.

Despite such a draconian crackdown it is inexplicable that some miscreants insist on defying the regulations and staging laugh-ins at Ratna Park. In all seriousness, what is there to laugh about? Don’t they know that under the state of urgency, he who laughs last laughs best? •

What’s so funny?