

One on one

Fallout of Deuba arrest tarnishes successful trip

KUNDA DIXIT

King Gyanendra's return on Friday from a week of intense diplomacy at the Afro-Asian Summit in Jakarta and the Boao Asian Forum in China could have been triumphant.

His numerous photo opportunities with world leaders went some way in providing his takeover a certain international legitimacy.

The most dramatic breakthrough was his meeting with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on 24 April after which the king announced that India was resuming arms supplies.

Singh didn't deny it, saying the request would be considered in "proper perspective". Then came a leak from an unnamed Indian official that the prime minister had

indeed agreed to "unconditionally" resume military aid to Nepal.

When this news hit headlines in New Delhi papers on Monday morning, all hell broke loose. The CPM, a key ally of Singh's Congress-led government, lashed out saying there was no question of resuming arms supplies without restoration of democracy in Nepal. The issue became a political hot potato and less about Nepal than internal tensions within India's left-centre coalition.

The episode also exposed rifts between the Indian military establishment and the Ministry of External Affairs with the generals far more keen to resume hardware supplies to the RNA to help fight the Maoists. Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran, who has reportedly taken charge of Nepal policy, was on a weekend trip to Bhutan and is supposed to have been miffed by Jakarta's fallout.

As the defence and foreign policy establishments in New Delhi locked horns there was confusion about who was really directing policy towards Nepal. King Gyanendra came out of this looking like he had run circles around the Indians and exposed their rift. In addition, the Indian about turn on arms blew sizeable hole on the US-UK-India alliance on Nepal.

And that is how his visit would have been seen had it not been for the ham-handed arrest of Sher Bahadur Deuba early Wednesday morning and of five more prominent party leaders that afternoon. Suddenly, it looked like Kathmandu had no intention of keeping its end of the bargain to allow the political process to resume with a progressive lifting of the emergency.

Deuba's arrest was a godsend to the foreign policy wallas in India who could now say "we told you so" to the defence wallas. In a pointed statement South Bloc said Deuba's arrest was "contrary to assurances" the king gave to Singh in Jakarta and even hinted that these matters were no longer viewed as Nepal's internal affairs. For Nepal Deuba's arrest has been a case of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.

All eyes are now on King Gyanendra's handling of the emergency which lapses on Sunday, and the "100 days" he pledged on a democracy roadmap to American ambassador James Moriarty which runs out on 11 May.

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King Gyanendra with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh...



...Chinese premier Hu Jintao



...and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

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Charting our own path

How to help re-engineer democracy by devolution

After February First, many bilateral and multi-lateral donors were convinced that suspending aid would force the country back to *status quo ante*. This meant having the country ruled once again by unelected politicians—the possibility of election having been wrecked during their own stewardship.

GUEST COLUMN
Bihari K Shrestha



Almost three months later, the aid suspension has barely created a ripple. This calls for some serious introspection by donors themselves. Has their tax payers' money been only of peripheral consequence for Nepal? Conversely and more seriously, how come the aid, much of it spanning over five decades, failed to prevent Nepal from sinking into the present morass, and more precipitously so, after 1990?

This failure is most telling in the case of the United States, whose 11 Congressmen wrote to King Gyanendra recently calling for 'peaceful reversion to democratic reforms in Nepal'. In the 1970s-90s period, USAID presided over the 'integrated development' of Rapti Zone, the region which emerged as the epicentre of the Maoist insurgency.

Meanwhile, the 'five party alliance', otherwise a loose ensemble of opportunistic politicians, came together again recently recovering from its disarray since last July when the UML deserted them to join the Deuba government. However, when its cadres went back to street protests recently there were scores of spectators watching in amusement and only a few courting arrest. This was a very embarrassing display of lack of public support for the agitation.

Junior politicians sent to the street frontlines are aware that the image of their parties is tarnished. So, in the NC at least, pressures have mounted for 'reorganising along democratic lines' and 'getting rid of the corrupt' from the party. These calls were, as usual, brushed aside by party president, Girija Koirala.

Tarnished by the *Dhamija* and *Lauda* scandals, Girijababu would never commit political suicide by agreeing. His corrupt cohorts, too, wouldn't like to be sidelined even as he continues to grace the party throne. The wily politician has wriggled out of the predicament once again under the alibi that it is no time to cause conflict in the party.

The paradox is that at a time of such crisis, America, Britain and India lead the donor pack to make common cause with such politicians at a time when common citizens are actually

breathing a sigh of relief to have got rid of them. The double-standards are breathtaking: these same countries have tolerated dictatorships and emergency rule everywhere else in the world.

The more-Catholic-than-the-Pope diehards in the donor community should know by now that widespread poverty and illiteracy force politicians to buy votes in elections. They then use this as an open license to plunder while in office, wrecking governance in the process.

This has been the crux of the problem in our practice of Westminster style democracy. In contrast, where authority is devolved to the users themselves, transparency of management and accountability of leaders, have prevailed. Such devolution has made Nepal the world leader in community forestry. At this level, illiteracy is no hindrance for people to define their problems nor is poverty a deterrence in participation in solving them.

Devolution is the key not only to promote genuine democracy and development but also to end the insurgency once and for all. So, Nepal's foremost need today is to re-engineer its democracy so that the disadvantaged majority get to effectively participate in decisions that concern them. Restoring the corrupt man's democracy will amount to letting down the people once again.

Finally, there is India. It made peace with Pakistan 'irreversible' last week, now it should prevent Nepali Maoists from operating from its soil and help repatriate Bhutani refugees who, having been shoved into Nepal over its territory more than a decade ago, have since been denied return. ●

Bihari Krishna Shrestha is a freelance writer on development issues and politics.



EMERGENCY EXIT

The state of emergency imposed on 1 February will expire in the next few days. Without a parliament, it will need constitutional contortions to extend it by another three-months. But why bother? After all, it was a stick where a carrot would have sufficed.

We think this emergency has outlived its usefulness, been counterproductive to state security and should be lifted as a genuine gesture to steer this country towards national reconciliation and to break our current international isolation.

Few would dispute that the country is in deep crisis, and drastic action is needed to set things right. Despite serious concern about human rights violations by the security forces, no one should have any illusions anymore that it is the Maoists who as a matter of policy use terror as a tactic of war. They resort to extreme brutality to spread fear, bomb schools, destroy temples and have no qualms in treating children as cannon fodder.

The people who have suffered the most at the hands of the Maoists in the past ten years have been ordinary Nepalis, grassroots political cadre and social activists—yet it is these very people who are affected by the curtailment of civil liberties post-1/2. Why are we punishing people who are on our side?

The *raison d'être* for February First, as laid out in the royal proclamation, was that the political process had gone astray and it was undermining the counterinsurgency campaign. Fair enough. But although a state of emergency was declared in a separate notice, there was nothing in the royal proclamation that said anything about such a harsh crackdown on the press and politicians.

It is our concern that the state of emergency has deeply polarised Nepalis. The middle ground has been removed. The Maoists seemed to be headed towards ultimate self-destruction anyway, now they have new reason to rally against the monarchy and focus their fight. Intimidation of media has tarnished the credibility of the very institution the state needs to put its views to the people. Wild rumours and panic have replaced facts, and this only benefits those who rule by terror. The role of the bureaucracy and constitutional organs have been emasculated by newly-formed authorities with overlapping functions, and the rule of law has taken a hard knock.

Prolonging the emergency will just bolster the argument of those who believe that it was not really designed to curb Maoism, but to put out pluralism.

May Day, May Day!

On May Day it will be exactly three months. Just as well there is no parliament to extend the emergency because that will help the regime retain its mask of constitutionalism.

Perhaps lifting the emergency "in due course" is a part of the informal deal over resumption of Indian arms supply negotiated in Jakarta last week. There can be no better way to comply than allowing the emergency to lapse.

Meanwhile, there are encouraging signs of positive polarisation. Pro-people and pro-palace political forces are regrouping. Extra-constitutional (some would say anti-constitutional) agencies have begun to

STATE OF THE STATE

CK Lal



alienate even the capital's meek middle class. The muddled media has begun to realise the folly of glamourising violent insurgency, valourising authoritarianism and scorning democracy. Hardline monarchists are more abrasive in their criticism of parliamentary parties and their leaders.

Professionals are re-learning the value of freedom as academics and lawyers are offloaded from planes. This is exactly how

pressure builds up for change. Much as our political leaders would like us to believe, mass movements seldom succeed because they will it. The people just rise up when they can't take it anymore. All that the leaders can do is prepare.

If this trend of political polarisation continues, and given the rigidity of those at the helm it may even intensify, the Maoists will be forced to rethink their strategy of violence. By now Chairman Prachanda must have realised that the stronger the new regime gets, the more powerful the *ancien regime* becomes. The RNA's recent successes in Rolpa and Rukum show what it can do if it gets down to doing it.

It will undoubtedly hurt their oversized egos, but the Maoist leadership must accept that despite their armed strength, it is the mainstream parties that have legitimate claims of being the real pro-people forces. The lessons of every legitimate recent revolution in the world has been: never use violence. This is the feature that distinguishes the current wave of people power revolutions since the 1980s from earlier Jacobin and Bolshevik models of 1789 and 1917, the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and the Khmer

A Rhododendron Revolution could blossom in Nepal too

Rouge terror of the 1970s.

The Philippines got going first with its People Power Revolution that overthrew Ferdinand Marcos in 1986. The Velvet Revolutions of 1989 in Central Europe, the Rose Revolution of Georgia in 2003 and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine this year were all major regime changes led by ideas, not arms. Looking at the unfolding Cedar Revolution in Lebanon, one can't see why a Rhododendron Revolution can't blossom in Nepal too.

The Maoists claim they are ready to compromise on 'genuine' democracy. Parliamentary parties declare that the establishment of 'complete' democracy is their ultimate goal. Even the king has proclaimed that he wants a 'meaningful' democracy. These adjectives are all synonyms. There seems to be a consensus that the locus of power needs to shift back to Singha Darbar and that operational authority has to devolve to regional governance structures.

Given the ground reality and the preference of the international community, isolating those of little faith in democracy shouldn't be all that difficult. All it needs is an honest effort to bring anti-palace and pro-people forces together under a single

common minimum program of broadening participation and deepening democracy. A destabilising face-off between the palace and the people can still be avoided if the course of February First is corrected forthwith.

In the past three months the inherent weaknesses underlying October Fourth and its February First apogee have been laid bare. Compared to the revolving-door governments that bickered incessantly for the spoils, the volatile ways of democratic rule were remarkably stable. Since February First, regime stability itself stands challenged, hence the alarm of the international community.

A course correction is needed in the February First roadmap. Otherwise the unintended consequences of a future upheaval will change the very fundamentals of Nepali society. Revolutions when they happen sweep away the best-laid plans, enduring institutions are often cast into the dustbin of history.

It's time once again for Nepal's political players to end their endgame, and get on with peaceful politics and constitutional reconciliation. That alone will make a Rhododendron Revolution unnecessary. ●

LETTERS

MONITORING

CK Lal has finally written something concrete ('Mixed messages', #243). With the help of civil Maoists disguised as human rights advocates, militant Maoists have finally got themselves successfully recognised internationally as an established party to the internal conflict. The international community has also rendered a great service to the Maoists in their efforts to get recognised of having certain areas of Nepal under their control. Bravo! Look at the fate of poor Nepalis: the political parties which they believe represents them are also welcoming the UN monitoring of human rights because they think it will help the restoration of democracy even though they were in power when the abuses took place. The king has benevolently taken up the challenge. Why is it that the parties can only unite for destructive purposes? Why can't they unite with the king to resolve the Maoist problem? Human rights will probably benefit most from sharpening the claws of the National Human Rights Commission and allowing it to work in accordance with the laws of the land. Lal must be appreciated for pointing out: 'It is quite unlikely that an international agency empowered merely to observe and authenticate will affect ground realities in any meaningful way.' The UN's precious resources should be spent for resettlement of victims than to bring more ignorant foreigners to work with equally ignorant human rights organisations. Easy money has created many parasites who don't care about human rights but are more interested in private projects for their corporate dynasties.

Dibyab B Gurung, New York

● Many of us were puzzled with Anne Cooper's interview ('One of the biggest press freedom crises in the world', #243). I agree with Sushil Bogati (Letters, #244) that if this was indeed so then her comments would not have been published in the first place. Neither would the article by CK Lal in the same issue ('Winning back friends'). It is a sorry state of affairs when the continuous bashing of Nepal by the international community is being hailed directly and indirectly by our political leaders and many in the media. Sorrier still is the way in which the RNA is systematically under attack from the same people while terrorists are called 'rebels'. No wonder there is no strong opposition to some undemocratic happenings in the country. All I can say is that we do not need 'the freest press in the world' but we certainly need peace and stability.

Jana Thapa, email

● At present, Nepal is moving forward bravely on a thorny and difficult path but alone. We are working for a peaceful, progressive and democratic Nepal. But where are those hands of friendship and strength that would help guide us in this difficult task? Do Nepal's friends seriously believe that the so-called political parties really represent the interest of the general population? Time and again they have proven to be incompetent, self and party indulgent,

corrupt and power hungry. They are the ones who have created the Maoists during their terms of office and could not even come together as a cohesive force against the Maoist even after repeated requests by His Majesty asking them to unite. What more do you expect from them or the democracy they represented? Nepal's foreign friends have not given Nepal the benefit of doubt. Stopping foreign aid will only strengthen the Maoists who the international community itself categorises as terrorists. So why are you weakening the government by backing terrorists and a pack of corrupt and incompetent political parties who you support under the name of democracy? The present government has been forced to take the present steps to safeguard the sovereignty, integrity and the identity of the country. We need the help of the outside world to attain peace, provide food, education and healthcare to citizens—that is true democracy. Otherwise it is just an excuse for the political parties to keep plundering the country. The friends of Nepal should re-think and reconsider their policy towards Nepal and extend a big helping hand.

Andy Joshi, Kathmandu

THALARA

Aarti Basnyat's profile of Devendra SJB Rana's exhibition of photos ('Thalara's black and white world', #243) raises quite a few concerns. Exhibiting the pictures is indeed innovative but it needs to be analysed historically and analogically. Firstly, it seems the photographer was exaggerating Thalara's neglect and deprivation. There are numerous Thalaras throughout Nepal. But this Thalara is different because it represents the house of Nepal's feudal lords, the babusahib Singhs of western Nepal who dominate the area. The attitudes they bear have been handed down to commoners which largely impacts the lives of the women and poor.

Secondly, trying to explain the poverty of Thalara through the optic of *ke game* and fatalism obscures the exploitative and entrenched social and economic power relations. The *ke game* mindset is not only rife among the Thalaris but is pervasive in all human beings. This subjugated mentality cannot be seen in isolation and is not restricted to the life attitude of the poor. Indeed, in a class-based society, the sociology of fatalism is also hierarchic. The poor man's fatalism can be ascribed to his inability to comprehend the development model from outside, whereas, a city dweller nobleman's fatalism can be of his inability to secure a ministerial portfolio, a foreign trip, a discotheque in a luxury hotel or a casino. I remember one of the prime ministers of Nepal taking advice of a tantrik-jyotish and not removing a swallow's nest at Baluwatar in the belief that if he did something ominous may happen.

The identity of Thalara poverty must not be confined to *ke game* and fatalism. Thalaris are surely hard working people, the lop-sided discourse as presented in the article trivialises the inner-agency of the people striving to come out of poverty. It may be more pertinent to look at how their fatalistic attitude developed over time that has a link to poverty.

Badri P Bastakoti, Reading, UK

MUKTINATH

The interview with Vinaya Singh ('Get on the next flight to Jomsom', #244) prompts me to propose building a world class pilgrimage site of Bhagwan Swaminarayan at the Muktinath shrine. The Swaminarayan faith has millions of followers all around the world, many of them are affluent Gujaratis, and there are 600 temples and 9,090 centres in 45 countries. The Swaminarayan temple built in London in 1995 is regarded as one of the architectural wonders of the world and is visited by Hindus of all denominations. Muktinath has a special meaning and attraction in this community because this is where Swaminarayan himself performed austerities standing on one leg in meditation for two- and-a-half months without food or drink in 1792. He also visited Butwal where he was received by King Mahadutt Sen of Palpa and his sister, Mayadebi. He travelled onto Kathmandu in 1795 and met King Rana Bahadur Shah who was suffering from a terminal stomach ailment. Swaminarayan cured the king. To this day, many affluent industrialists and celebrities who are devotees of Swaminarayan travel to Muktinath. Turning Muktinath into a pilgrimage destination for the worldwide Swaminarayan community will not just earn us spiritual merit, it will also be a tremendous temporal boost to the local economy. A befitting Akshardham temple in the Muktinath area to honour the sage would serve as a monument to peace and humanity that Swaminarayan himself preached more than 200 years ago. The new temple would complement the existing ones as well as the festivals and pilgrimage.

Gauri Nath Rimal, Kathmandu

WRONG TIME

I don't understand the hullabaloo here about Alex Perry's coverage of the insurgency in Nepal in *Time* magazine which has so many glaring errors that it undermines the overall credibility of the article. Freak Street is no more the 'tourist drag', *Space Time Today* closed down long ago, etc, etc. It is gratifying that *Time* has finally 'discovered' the conflict in Nepal after nearly a decade but we wish it would at least get its facts right.

Dubby Bhagat, Lalitpur

ORDINANCE

This is in reference to the report titled 'Royal rejection' (From the Nepali Press, #244) translated from the weekly *Drishti* which contains factually incorrect information stating that the royal palace had rejected the Asian Development Bank's proposal to bring a law through ordinance for the transfer of the management of the Nepal Water Supply Corporation. We would like to point out that Nepal Water Supply Corporation Ordinance-3rd Amendment, 2005, Water Supply Management Board Ordinance, 2005 and Water Supply Tariff Fixation Commission Ordinance, 2005 were

approved on 18 April 2005. This was published in all the major newspapers on 19 April 2005. With the initiation of these Ordinances, the work of the Kathmandu Valley Water Services Sector Development Program (KVVSSDP) is moving ahead steadily, with the management contractors expected to be on board by September 2005.

Seema Rajouria, KVVSSDP

MISLEADING

Shiva Gaunle's story, 'What about us', (#244) is misleading. He has tried to explain that Nepal's political parties are stuck at the same point they were four years ago and goes on to point out that there hasn't been much concerted opposition within the country to the king's move. How can there be if the state of emergency doesn't allow anyone to express any opposition? Besides, there have been rallies where activists have bravely defied the emergency. It may



be true that many Nepalis dislike their political leaders but then most will back them if given a chance so that the country can return to a more open and democratic system. I can understand there is press censorship in Nepal and its hard to print the things the way you wish to. But that doesn't mean that you fuel your stories with wrong inputs and praise those in power.

Sameer Ghimire, Sydney

GOOD JOB

Generally speaking, *Nepali Times* is different from other media. But I am not going to thank you because that is your job – to be true to your profession. A journalist must stick to facts and must reflect public opinion and the debates within society, not the views of the state or a particular group only. You are practicing true journalism. Keep it up.

Bharat Raj, email

CORRECTION

Due to a mix-up in translation in 'Mission statement' (From the Nepali Press, #244) Nicholas Howen was mis-identified. He is the Secretary General of the International Commission of Jurists.





NARESH NEWAR

“I will not have measles now,” says nine-year-old Sabina Bohara (r), cheerfully showing us where she received a shot of the anti-measles vaccine. “Let me show mine too,” adds her equally excited friend Lila Bohara.

Shot in the arm

There used to be a time when young girls like Sabina and Lila would whimper and cry after getting their shots. It is a gauge of the success of the awareness drive that precedes vaccination campaigns that children today eagerly come to the health posts and leave smiling.

Measles is a major killer of Nepali children and here in remote district of Humla it is third only to acute respiratory infections and diarrhoeal dehydration. During the last phase of national measles campaign last week, Humla was one of the seven mountain districts targeted by the government to immunise all children between nine months to 15 years. More than 17,000 children in all of Humla's 27 VDCs were reached.

It wasn't easy, there are no roads in Humla and only Simikot has an airport. Even then, everyone knew the campaign was on and families with children were eagerly waiting for 21 April so they could go to the health posts. Last week, mothers were pushing each other to get their children ahead in the unruly queue at the village of Daraphai. Said one anxious mother: “I hope they don't run out of injections.”

With this last phase of the measles campaign that started in September 2004, 9.5 million children all over Nepal will have been immunised against measles. “Every mother came with her children, the campaign went really well,” says 62-year-old Female Health Care Volunteer Kalu Raut in Simikot. Indeed, most of the credit for getting the mothers to come goes to women volunteers like Kalu who are at the forefront of Nepal's rural health and child survival success story.

Another volunteer, Luaro Shahi, says: “Even young children have understood the importance of getting their shots which is why almost everyone is here.” Back in Kathmandu, Parsuram Shrestha of the government's Child Health Division is ecstatic: “This is just an example to prove that despite everything there are no obstacles to immunising children.” Down in the plains of Dang, the vaccination recieved a huge response despite the conflict and travel hassles. In Hapur VDC alone 276 children were immunised in two days.

Many children suffer due to complications of measles for which there is no treatment. “Prevention is the best option and the only way is to get vaccinated against it,” says YV Pradhan of the Ministry of Health. Every year, about 150,000 children get measles in Nepal and the campaign aims to cut in half the annual death toll of 5,000 children from measles and reduce the number of children who suffer complications such as blindness, deafness and mental disability.

The Ministry of Health's measles campaign is supported by the Nepal Family Health Program, WHO and UNICEF.

The national Vitamin A program held simultaneously also proved to be a hit. Nepal's success with its Vitamin A campaign is regarded as one of the most effective in the developing world. Vitamin A supplementation can reduce under-five mortality rate by 30 percent and the program is averting the deaths of an estimated 12,000 Nepali children each year.

Every second Nepali child is stunted and malnourished. Intestinal worm infections are also a chronic problem that further reduces the amount of iron they absorb, making them weak and anaemic. The vitamin program aimed to reach 3.3 million children around the country in April and is supported by AusAID, USAID, the Nepali Technical Assistance Group and UNICEF. ●

(Naresh Newar in Humla and Dang)

Humla's class struggle

Maoists are of least concern in neglected Humla

NARESH NEWAR
in SIMIKOT

For the people of this far-flung and neglected region of northwestern Nepal, life has always been a battle against cold, hunger and disease. For the past six years they have battled another foe—the Maoist insurgency.

Indeed, the conflict is just another hurdle in the hardscrabble lives of the Humlis.

Time has stood still for the people of Daraphai, a village several hours walk away from the headquarters, Simikot. There is no government presence in Daraphai, and it is so impoverished and out of the way that even the Maoists don't bother. Child mortality here is three times the national average, literacy is three times less. Children are undernourished, gender discrimination is rife, and there is nowhere to go when a person is sick.

“The way I see it, it will take many generations to improve their lives,” says school principal Buddhi Sagar Neupane from Chitwan who has worked in Humla since 1988, “so many leaders have made so many promises that the people here have lost all hope of things ever getting better.” It is so difficult to just stay alive in Humla, that for many villagers, the Maoists are the least of their concern.

It's the same story in most of Humla's 27 VDCs stretched across this arid and rugged trans-Himalayan district. While the attention is on those displaced by conflict in Nepalganj and Kathmandu, the condition of villagers in Daraphai is actually

much worse. And they are not even displaced.

Humlis traditionally migrate to the higher mountain pastures with their livestock as spring sets in. There, they find a fertile patch of land, sow seeds and raise animals. Come October, they're back in their villages. Daraphai's 160 households are all getting ready to move up to high valleys like Gwale, Khor, Thaya and Naula. They say they don't need and expect anything from anybody anymore.

“Humla has always been the last place that Kathmandu will think of,” says Jeevan Shahi, a pilot who decided to quit so he could raise the living standard of his home district by getting himself elected DDC chairman.

As elsewhere, children are most vulnerable. Raised in the sooty interior of windowless homes for four snow-bound months in a year, four out of 10 never live to be five because of acute respiratory infections. Most of those who survive never go to school. Of those who do, most drop out after six months to help the family at home.

Back in Simikot, the airport is now open after the snowbound runway stopped flights for most of winter. Government employees here depend on the flight for food supplies and sometimes have to live on one meal a day to conserve supplies.

Says one civil servant: “The conflict has been an excuse for the government not to undertake any development projects in the villages. So the little that gets done is confined to Simikot.”

Food has always been the overriding concern for generations of Humlis. “From the

moment they wake up in the morning, people have to worry about how to find food,” says school teacher Bal Bahadur Shahi. But some, like ex-DDC chairman Jeevan Shahi, think the government's food dole has increased dependency. The strategy should have been to make Humla self-sufficient, something he says he has tried to do as the district's elected leader.

“There are many opportunities to develop food security in the district,” says Shahi.

The government's neglect of Humla grew worse after Maoist violence escalated in Karnali. No employees ever venture out of the district headquarters anymore. Many teachers have fled to Simikot or Nepalganj, even if there is no Maoist threat in the villages.

“A lot of teachers are making Maoists an excuse,” says a local teacher on his way to Thehe village to resume his work in a primary school. Political strikes and blockades don't really affect this remote region and schools are more likely to close down due to the absence of teachers.

“Teachers are becoming irresponsible,” agrees Madhu Bilas Khanal of the Mansarobar High School in Simikot, “if they go on leave for 15 days, they disappear for months.” The government has a budget for Rs 70 million in education in Humla, more than half of that pays the salaries and allowances of the 420 teachers here. Most of that money is wasted because only one of the 134 Humla students who appeared in SLC passed this year. The DEO in Simikot says only 32 days of classes were held in most schools last year.

The government's nationwide ‘Welcome to School’ campaign to get underprivileged children enrolled in school from 15-23 April was, unsurprisingly, a failure here. In only 12 VDCs, the government was able to admit children to school. “Enrolment is not as important as retaining children, most of the children dropout by the end of year,” says headmaster Neupane.

Of the 235 children enrolled during last year's enrollment campaign in Bargaum village four hours from Simikot, only 35 are still in class.

Says teacher Ram Raja Shahi: “We have to start seriously thinking if it is indeed any use trying to teach children who are chronically hungry.” ●



NARESH NEWAR

Kasilal's uphill climb

Walking from Daraphai village, eight-year-old Kasilal BK (above) has to climb up the steep hill for three hours on an empty stomach to reach Simikot to fetch a sack of rice for his family. After waiting for nearly five hours in a queue of more than 500 hungry villagers, he manages to buy 15 kg of subsidised rice at the government food depot. The rice is rationed and each person is allowed three kg monthly. “This hardly lasts a week, we have to be careful not to waste anything,” says Kasilal. He is lucky, a group of women from Chehe further up the trail are returning to their village after the rice ran out in the depot in Simikot. They had woken up before dawn to get to the queue and waited till 4PM. The hard reality of Humla's grinding poverty is that if children like Kasilal go to school, the family starves.

Cambridge awards
.....
The University of Cambridge International Examinations in association with the British Council awarded scholarship prizes of 500 pounds each to Elina Pradhan of A levels and Yashas Vaidya of AS levels. Both students are from Budhanilkantha School.

Not hungry anymore
.....
Asian Thai Foods has started a new thematic brand launch for its product, 2PM noodles. The tagline for the campaign is 'So smooth, so delicious'.

Non-stop to NY
.....
From 1 May, Thai will fly its Airbus A340-500 non-stop from Bangkok to JFK Airport in New York. The total flight time will be only 17 hours.

NEW PRODUCT
.....
UNICORN: Syakar Company has introduced the Honda Unicorn in Kathmandu. It is powered by Honda 4-stroke.
MCBORG: McBorg Nepal has launched McBorg premium lager beer for Rs 85 per bottle.

The landlord syndrome

A rule-bound competitive market can keep excesses in check

There are many ways to interpret why things are the way they are in this country. But in business terms, it helps to see Nepal struggling between two models of governance: the ease of a 'landlord model' and the competitiveness of a market-driven 'share-holder model'. Historian Mahesh Chandra Regmi has shown that throughout much of its history, the Nepali state has acted as a landlord. To

STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari

finance wars and to pay for its indulgences, it collected rents from those who lived within its borders. It rewarded officers by giving them *jagir* in the form of land. Those who were not absolutely loyal had their properties confiscated and were even exiled. Activities of the so-called disloyal sections were banned until 1990. Since the state exercised all-consuming power over their daily lives, Nepalis saw themselves not as citizens but as

tenants whose self-interest was to be on the right side of the landlord lest they got punished or thrown out. In theory, the *Jana Andolan* of 1990 gave the tenants a stab at becoming citizens to finally press for the 'share-holder model' through freely elected political representatives. There were fragments of hope in, say, the achievements of community forestry, diversity of FM radio news broadcasts and bits of economic reforms. But over time, it became clear that the representatives too had disappointingly degenerated into neo-landlords, accountable only to the myopic interests of party leaders. As they fought with one another for money and power in a continual haze of finger-pointing suspicions, they collected disgust, lost public support and eventually ceded their landlord status. Looking back, their greatest failure lay in not pushing for more competition-oriented market reforms, which would have quietly made the emergence of

any other landlord difficult in the future. Take something abstract like press freedom, for instance. They are gone because the new landlord has decided that the tenants don't need them. And activists are now reduced to either chanting the ideals of press freedom or going on a global road trip to take grievances to audiences abroad. But consider an alternative. Had there been a more direct and diverse foreign investment in the businesses of radio, television and print media, chances are that no landlord would have been able to squash the press. After all, it's easy to make arbitrary rules to inflict harm on purely Nepali-owned businesses. But the more such businesses are bound by globally accepted business practices through a horde of foreign investors and domestic shareholders, the more difficult it becomes for any landlord to act in ways which could harm that majority's interest. If that should happen, the investors would signal their

anger by pulling money out of the country in no time. Take telecom as another example. At a time when even vegetable farmers in Bangladesh have the luxury of choosing from eight competing phone service providers, Nepali businesspeople have none. But again, consider the alternative. Had the elected governments thought of their constituencies, let go of their greed to keep on milking the state-run telecom provider and promoted private and joint-venture telecom competitors to come on board faster, not only would millions of Nepalis be connected to one another at cheaper rates today but future landlords would have found it very costly—monetarily and coordination-wise—to seize the control of all phone lines in one day. Some Nepali democrats argue for decentralisation of power while professing a knee-jerk distrust of markets. It's time they started appreciating how a rule-bound competitive market acts as an instrument that decentralises power, checks against the excesses of a capricious landlord and makes citizens' voices count through the shareholder model of governance. ●

Sun light in Humla

“It is better to light one lamp than curse the darkness”

BHAIRAB RISAL
.....
The Light Up Humla Campaign to spread the use of solar-powered electric lights in homes in remote Humla district aims to illuminate nearly 7,000 households by next year. Trees take a long time to grow in Humla's arid climate and high altitude topography. Yet, over centuries, forests have been cleared for firewood and for pine resin used for feeble lamps that are used for domestic lighting. The resulting indoor smoke causes acute respiratory ailments, a major killer of children in the district which has the highest child mortality rate in the country. The soot also cause eye infections and other ailments. The Campaign believes that solar-powered light can be a means to liberate the people of Humla from these problems, protect the environment and create new opportunities for education and employment. When we launched the Light Up Humla Campaign in 2004 it started off as a 'crazy idea' between some of our Humli friends

over tea. The plan was simple: provide light to all residents of Nepal's remotest and least-developed district through solar power. How to do it? We felt it would be easy to find 7,000 good souls in the country. The Campaign's strategy was to exhort one Nepali who enjoys the benefits of modern electricity to support another who is living in darkness. Sure enough, support poured in, first from a network of friends, then as word spread from Nepalis in Nepal and all over the world. By the first few months of 2004, 50 households already had light—46 of them belonged to Dalit families and the rest were underprivileged households. By the end of 2005 an additional 500 households will get electric lamps and by 2006, another 5,000 households will be added. “The light from the sun has made life much easier,” says Karna Damai of Simikot, one of the first beneficiaries of the light system, “I used to go to Bista's house to sew clothes all day, now I can work late into the night and earn wages during the day. It's much easier to feed my family.”



NARESH NEWAR

Indeed, it does look like a simple nine watt neon lamp in the house is all that's needed to reduce poverty in some cases. In others, children can do their homework without hurting their eyes and mothers find it easier to do household chores. Some parts of Humla have electricity from micro-hydro projects but the power is erratic. And although the Heldung hydropower plant is scheduled to be completed by July 2005, it will take time for the power to reach outlying villages. In the meantime, the Light Up Humla Campaign is gaining popularity. Even in the district headquarters of Simikot, most people have

now come to rely on solar electricity. It costs Rs 4,000 to provide a set of solar cells, battery and neon lights for each household and this is donated by Nepalis through the campaign. It is estimated that in 1,000 Humla households, 12 percent of the total can afford the Rs 4,000 and another 900 households already benefit from micro-hydro projects. The campaign thus targeted 50 priority households in 2004, 500 in 2005 and 5,000 in 2006. ● Journalist Bhairab Risal is the co-founder of the Light Up Humla Campaign. 01-4232052, 01-4280317

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Baburam's salvo to Prachanda

Letter from Baburam Bhattarai to Prachanda
Nepal, 29 April

नेपाल

Respected Chairman Comrade Prachanda
CPN (Maoist), Central Office
Expecting necessary cooperation from the central office, I am going to inform you and register my opinion on some issues.

During our last central committee meeting, I and some other comrades had opposed the concept of a two-line struggle within our party, which is against our great people's war and Ma-Le-Ma-ism and Prachandapath. The two-line struggle has been conducted in a very unhealthy way, promoting groupism. But considering the complexities of class struggles in the past, we thought the internal struggle in the party should be managed in less complicated ways. That is why the agreement was: we should set aside issues that are potentially so divisive and serious.

Despite this, in certain circles, an internal struggle has been carried out in an unhealthy way, there have been violations of accepted norms, responsible comrades are spreading illusions and there have been activities that are against the well-being of the revolution. Raising serious concerns about all these, I demand that the central office control such activities.

The discussions and presentations on Prachandapath during the central committee meeting were against its (Prachandapath's) main spirit. All honest comrades present at the meeting had the feeling that such

deliberations would take the party backwards, prior to the second national convention and that it would cause serious damage to the movement.

I had forwarded my solid opinion during the central committee meeting. Since there were serious differences and doubts in the leadership and mainly after my resignation episode, I had an informal talk with comrade chairman outside the meeting hall. During the meeting, we had an agreement that for now there would be an understanding on a simple principle that the party, army, and the front will have integrated and centralised leadership of the proletariat. In line with that understanding, both of us made presentations during the meeting.

But contrary to this, the minutes of the meeting contained sentences that have double meanings implying that the party, army and the front has a single leadership. And such information has been forwarded down into the party's rank and files in different ways. These are things I have come to know very recently. If that is the case, I do criticise myself for not hearing, looking and reading the minutes carefully after the meeting. I state my differences with such a decision and would like to register a note of dissent through the central office. I am taking these decisions because the idea of having a single leadership in



the party, army and the front is against the consensus of our party's second national convention and the development of the republican system of the 21st century.

Some circles in the party have forwarded the argument that without such single leadership, the enemy will get room to play and that such leadership will make the plan of strategic counter attack successful. Such an argument has no weight and is not based on any principle. If such a concept is spread further, we will have to bid farewell to the sovereign committee system of the party of the proletariat and the system of collective leadership. If we choose that option, it is clear that it will be very dangerous and

counterproductive.

Viewing the arrests that took place in New Delhi, Siliguri and Patna as part of a series and with all bad intentions implicating a layer of the party as being behind them will not only make the internal struggle healthier, it will intensify factionalism. There are sinister indications that this is happening.

That is why I request for the necessary initiative of the central office to stop the efforts of linking the arrests in India with the internal struggles in the party.

With revolutionary regards,
Laldhoj



Unnecessary

Editorial in *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 27 April

नेपाल समाचारपत्र

The police infiltration at the UML office has created havoc in Nepal's political circles. This will only widen the ever-growing gap between the government and democratic political parties. Such an incident will intensify the existing negative image of the government. There was really no need to view the gathering of UML leaders and workers as negative because they were all assembled only to mourn the death of their late leader Man Mohan Adhikari's widow.

The way police took illegal action—entering the office without a warrant, kicking office doors, asking for keys to the accounts office—only shames the government, which has been making commitments in international forums towards respecting democracy, protection of human rights and restoring press freedom. Democracy will be jeopardised if people are not allowed to gather peacefully. This will only provoke more criticism towards the government at a time when international community has been condemning the political events following February First.

Vampires

Rajdhani, 24 April

राजधानी

Some drug addicts in the Boudha area are sucking human blood from child victims, according to street children who have been victimised. Nil Kantha Sedai (name changed) is one of them. He says, "When they are overdosed and have nothing to eat, they suck blood from our bodies." Showing his cheek that has been pierced with a blade, Sedai said the addicts sucked from his wound for 10 minutes.

Sedai named addict 'Naran' and others as the culprits. A narcotics control official thinks the addicts turn to being vampires to get a high when they can't find drugs. Addicts extort money from street children who earn from selling plastic and glass for recycling.

he can ride out this international criticism by ignoring it. But even they must be aware of the international ramifications of this isolation and that their advice is harmful for the long-term future of the country and for constitutional monarchy. But they are giving it anyway.

By using emergency provisions, the royal commission is pushing legal boundaries for politically-motivated character assassination. On the other hand, bringing in ex-panchays into the governance structure has introduced unaccountability and sycophancy back into the system. An end to this three-month political exercise will restore a program-based system that can take us towards resolution. Since the king has taken all power in his hands, it is up to him to take this step.

No emergency

Editorial in *Samaya*, 28 April

समय

The king said in his February First royal proclamation that he had to take over and declare a state of emergency to restore peace and strengthen democracy. Three months later, is the country closer to this goal? The answer doesn't look positive.

The gap between the king and the political parties has widened since February First. This is unfortunate for peace and democracy and was created by the king seizing power and declaring a state of emergency. A way out of this situation would be to lift the state of emergency, an agreement between the parties and the king over the choice of prime minister and the release of all political prisoners.

Internationally and especially in the eyes of democratic nations, the country has become a pariah state. It is clear that half a dozen advisers are telling the king that

Going alone

Shambu Shrestha in

Dristi, 26 April

दृष्टि

A king never makes mistakes. That is what they say but all that changed after February First. The king's move sparked protests from America, Britain and India and several European nations, resulting in aid cuts and suspension of military shipments. The events that followed made it easier for the king to assume the role of ruler.

Recently, at an international forum, the king justified his move to curb terrorism but the reality is that Nepal's image in the eyes of the international community will never be positive until democracy, freedom of press and civil liberties are restored. The international call for guaranteeing these values cannot be seen as interference in our internal affairs. Commitment towards democracy expressed whether in Jakarta or Boao will mean little unless they are put into practice for the good



Here, take the arms.
Now start the democratic process.

हिमाल

Himal Khabarpatrika, 30 April-14 May

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

The (Indian) suspension of regular supply of arms to Nepal has been removed without any condition.

India's External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh in *Rajdhani*, 26 April

of the citizens.

Nepal has backtracked to pre-1990 days with the reintroduction of the zonal commission system. Although it seems that political parties are not under restrictions, leaders are still under house arrest and the fourth estate is intimidated by the administration. Since the formation of the Royal Commission, the arrests and imprisonment of leaders have intensified. To make matters worse, the Maoists are jeopardising the future of millions of children by closing down schools. Civilians continue to be brutalised by Maoist atrocities and children are being killed by Maoist bombs left behind recklessly.

The international community is watching closely to see how the king will solve national problems by remaining isolated from democratic political parties. In a democracy, the parties are representatives of the people and it is only a matter of time before we see whether the political situation will be normalised without the people's representatives. No matter how much foreign aid and support we get, the internal conflict will remain unresolved unless there is active participation of the people and their representatives. The king can't do it alone.

Direct democracy

.....

Editorial in *Deshantar*, 24 April

Despite the constant international calls to restore democracy, the king's determination to go ahead with his roadmap is apparent from the following events: appointment of regional and zonal administrators, announcement of municipal elections, his speech at the Afro-Asian conference and his interview with *Time* magazine.

The king has been criticising the parties and their leaders in almost every public address he has made, blaming them for compelling him to make the February First move. It seems clear from the king's interviews and speeches that the parties are to be blamed for pushing the country into the current political crisis in the last 14 years of their governance. This is not true. If we look back into our history, it is

apparent that the real reasons of the conflict are age-old caste discrimination, social inequalities and feudalism prevalent since the Shah dynasty began more than 200 years back.

The Maoists exploited these inequities to popularise their armed struggle. The 104 years of autocratic Rana rule, 30 years of partyless Panchayat regime and multiparty democratic system were unable to solve these problems, consequently leading to the Maoist rebellion. It wasn't just caused by 14 years of multi-party democracy though it is true that the political parties were unable to seriously address these aforementioned causes.

This is where the parties proved themselves failures. But no politics can be considered democratic by sidelining political parties. The king himself believes that the only alternative to democracy is democracy. Nowhere in the world has peace been restored by suspending democratic processes to eliminate terrorism. After February First, we have experienced a 'directed democracy' that has deprived the nation of political rights, human rights, civil liberties and press freedom. So far, the king is moving alone with his roadmap without any consensus or dialogue. We don't know where this will lead Nepal.

Maoist disunity

.....

Budhabar, 27 April

Discord between Maoist leaders has created a rift among pro-Baburam and pro-Prachanda cadre. Sources say the Baburam camp is at a disadvantage and the Prachanda faction has already declared the areas in Gandaki controlled by Baburam as 'Zone of Traitor'. They are also holding the Baburam camp responsible for the arrest of 11 Maoist leaders in Patna last year. They have blamed politburo member Debendra Paudel and asked for his resignation. Meanwhile Baburam's supporters have accused Pratap Pant, president of the Maoist intellectual group who was appointed president after Bhattarai's supporter Ramesh Sharma was removed from the post. Bhattarai's group says that



KUMAR SHRESTHA / NEPALNEWS.COM

the arrest of leaders took place soon after Pant bid them farewell and left for Patna. Bhattarai is believed to have expressed disappointment over the action taken by the Maoists against his wife, adding to the disharmony in the leadership.

Manisha's wish

.....

Jana Bhabana, 25 April

Manisha Koirala, granddaughter of BP Koirala has reiterated her call to the political parties including her granduncle GP Koirala to support the king. She justifies that Nepal's state of affairs cannot run without the united forces of monarchy, democracy, army and the people. "First priority should be given to restoring peace followed by elections. After this, democracy will take its own course," says the Bollywood actress. "Nepali Congress created by my grandfather should now support the king." Manisha said this didn't mean she was against democracy, only that the NC should be working with the king to tackle the Maoists. There is already family pressure on her to return home and enter politics, get involved in social work. Manisha says that the king had no choice but to make the move due to the incapability of the leaders and Maoists who have completely destroyed the country. Says the actress: "There is no better option than the NC and UML joining hands with the king"

India's role

Jana Astha, 27 April

आस्था

Even after the Indian government announced it was reviewing its suspension of military support to Nepal following the king's February First move, it was quietly supporting the RNA. On the day of the announcement, three RNA aircraft engineers and a pilot were on their way to a training program as part of Indian military support. It is true that the guns and bullets were not supplied after the date but by then, RNA had already received enough ammunition. Prior to the king's move, the RNA had actually already made its stance not to buy India-made INSAS (Infantry Small Arms System) rifles (*pic*) unless they were provided free. Regardless of this, those who know India well were not surprised to hear the change in India's attitude in just three months about its Nepal policy. India definitely wants to modernise the RNA but for its own vested interest: Indian INSAS rifles are considered of such low quality that its own army doesn't want to use it in Kashmir. Even the Indian army assigned in UN peacekeeping tasks don't use the 5.56 calibre INSAS rifles and instead carry AK47s though it doesn't necessarily comply with NATO standards. Nepal has so far bought between 10-15,000 INSAS rifles.

Ultimately, India will lose by cutting off military relations with Nepal. This is why New Delhi, which had forcefully set rollback of February First as its condition, suddenly changed its mind to resume military support without conditions. This happened as a Nepali military team headed to China to discuss purchasing of helicopters, planes and other weapons. India needs to export military hardware and for this it has already established Nepal as a market. India's main intention of military support to Nepal is to ensure that it has the kingdom's support during times of India's need. Long ago, when Nepal asked India to remove its checkposts from the border, the Indian response was that Nepal would not be able to stop the Chinese if they crossed the border. According to a military expert, India is modernising Nepal's army to be a buffer against the Chinese. India has not changed its policy towards Nepal since 1947: as long as its interests are met it will support any regime as is evident from its support to the Panchayat government. In the last three months there have been protests against India by the so-called nationalists of Nepal. Now that India's support will resume and we will have to see whether these same people who often talk about nationalism will also change their position towards India.

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MANY MOUNTAINS: Makalu and Kanchenjunga on the far horizon as seen from the southeast ridge of Chomolungma (above). The awesome north face of Kanchenjunga from the site of the 1955 British expedition (right). Kanchenjunga first-timer George Band and Norman Hardie arriving in Kathmandu on Wednesday for the celebrations (below).

ED VISTEURS

ABHA ELI PHOBOO

Chomolungma has hogged all the headlines. The first ascent of Mt Everest was top news and so was its celebrity-packed golden jubilee celebration in Kathmandu in May 2003.

The ascents of Makalu and Kanchenjunga were no mean feat and some would argue those ascents in the spring of 1955 were even more difficult than the South Col route up to the top of Everest.

Lionel Terray and Jean Couzy of a French expedition led by Jean Franco were the first to summit Makalu on 15 May 1955 after they had to turn back a year earlier. Franco and the other members of the expedition conquered it the next day along the north ridge.

Ten days later, a British expedition led by Charles Evans reached the summit of Kanchenjunga. But having promised to respect the religious belief of the Sikkimese, they stopped a few metres short of the top. These mountains, the people who climbed them and their achievement has been overshadowed by the ascent of more glamorous mountains.

Not any more, there are a slew of events to mark the climbs and

the government has even slashed the climbing fee of \$10,000 to \$5,000 for expeditions trying to climb Makalu and Kangchenjunga during the anniversary year. Currently, there are two Spanish expeditions on Makalu and a Swiss team on Kanchenjunga.

Kanchenjunga (8,586 m) is the third highest mountain the world and the second highest in Nepal. Its name means ‘five treasures of snow’, referring to its five summits, all over 8,000 m. The Sikkimese believe that the deity of the mountain is throned at the peak and therefore, it is consecrated ground. The Sikkim government has banned expeditions to Kanchenjunga main peak and all climbs have to be carried out from the north face on the Nepal side of the border.

The fifth highest mountain is Makalu (8,463 m) a monolithic peak of pink granite with sheer unclimbed faces on all sides. Located on the Nepal-Tibet border, all ascents have been carried out through the easier southeast and north ridges. The two mountains are separated by the Arun gorge in eastern Nepal.

George Band and Norman Hardie of Charles Evans’ and members of Jean Franco’s expedition team are in

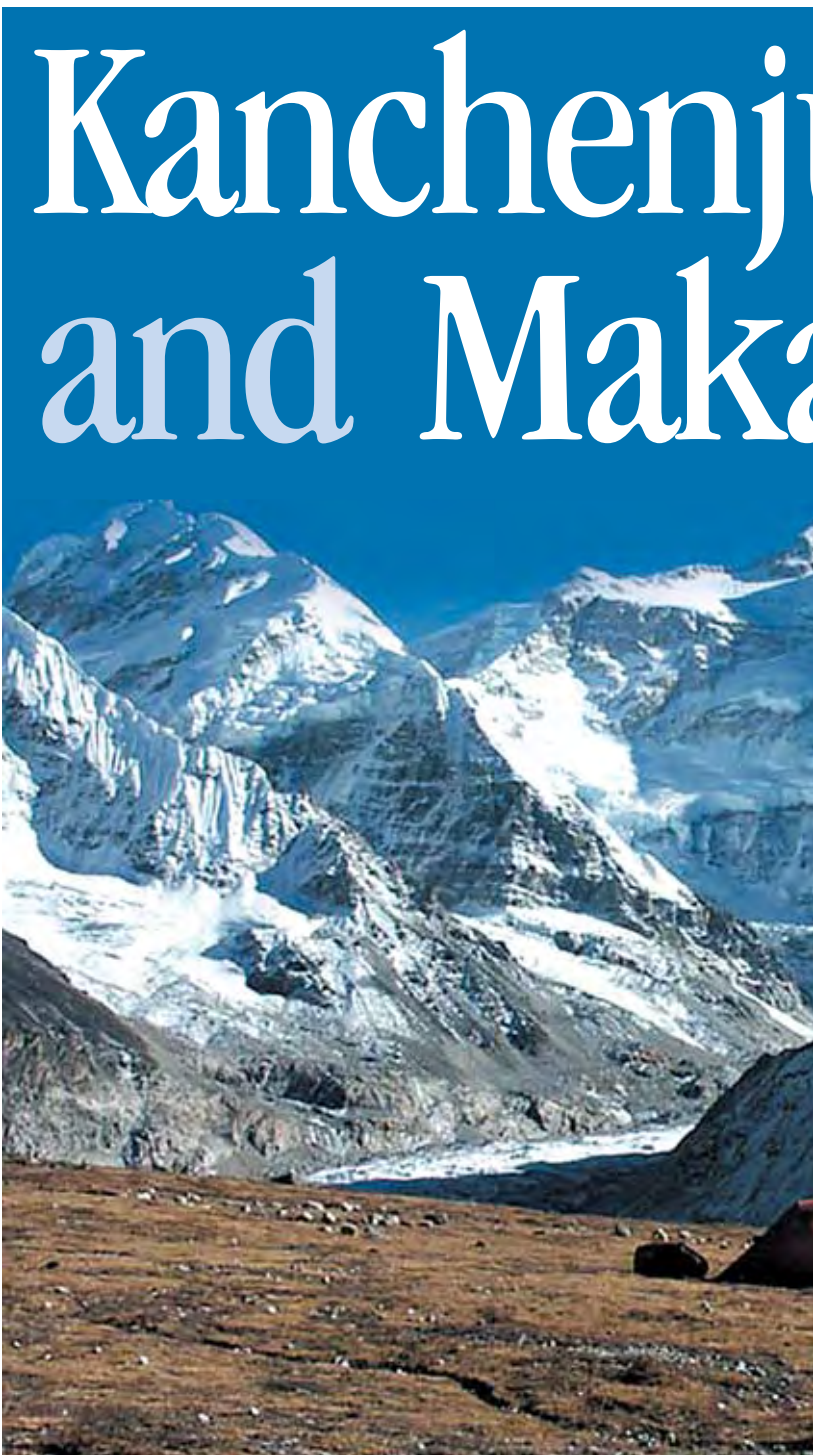
Kathmandu to take part in the golden jubilee celebrations. Other famous climbers and mountain experts will also be in town as the city comes alive next week.

On 15 May and 25 May, Kathmandu will host a civic felicitation at Tundikhel for the summitteers. All gathered people will then proceed to Darbar Square for the chariot procession.

The famous chariot procession at Hanuman Dhoka during the Chomolungma celebration in 2003 was such a hit that an encore was planned. “We did it for Everest, Cho Oyu and since it has become a norm we’ll also do it for Makalu and Kanchenjunga,” says Janita Gurung of Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA). All this will be followed by a seminar, formal felicitation of summitteers by the government and a dinner reception.

The NMA’s President, Ang Tsering Sherpa says: “Makalu and Kanchenjunga are special mountains plus right now we need to promote Nepal and tell people that expedition teams don’t face problems.”

Nepal Tourism Board is also all geared up to use the anniversary to highlight Nepal. “We will do all we can to promote Makalu and Kanchenjunga,” says



Aditya Baral of NTB, “these mountains are, after all, two of Nepal’s biggest icons.”

Purna Tandukar of the Mountaineering Section at the Ministry of Tourism believes slashing fees by half for the two mountains will help boost tourism. “It’s part of our effort to make climbing in Nepal more attractive,” he says, “we regard mountaineering and trekking as important elements in injecting income to remote areas.”

Since 1955, the areas surrounding both mountains have prospered although not as much as Khumbu. “The impact is obvious, the villages have developed because of the tourism multiplier effect,” says Ang Rita Sherpa who worked for the Makalu Barun National Park. Lakpa Sherpa from the foothills of Makalu used to be a goatherd

but went on to become the second Nepali woman to have climbed Mt Everest after Pasang Lhamu Sherpa.

If only the conflict could be resolved, the Makalu Barun National Park and the Kanchenjanga Conservation Area would be major draws for trekkers since they are relatively unspoilt and more isolated. But even with the conflict, there are plenty of mountaineers and trekkers visiting these areas. The Maoists leave climbers alone as long as they pay a Rs 5,000 tax.

“The base camp areas are perfectly safe,” says Ang Tsering Sherpa, “and the increased frequency of domestic flights have made things better for tourists.” The garbage problem of the Himalayas is now a thing of the past as expeditions are required to bring back their trash. ●



Hinkes’ last eight thousander

Alan Hinkes began his Challenge 8,000 mission of the Big 14 mountains in 1989. One by one, he has conquered 13 of the mountains: Chomolungma, K2, Lhotse, Makalu, Cho Oyu, Dhaulagiri, Manaslu, Nanga Parabat, Annapurna, Gasherbrum, Broad Peak, Shisha Pangma and Gasherbrum II. Though he attempted Kanchenjunga last year, health problems made him turn back from the summit.

Last week he set out again to conquer the peak and spoke to us before departure from Kathmandu. “Kanchenjunga is a tough one but I hope to succeed this time,” he said. Hinkes climbed Makalu in 1999 and saw a lot of oxygen cylinders with 1955 printed on them in tiny letters along the way. They were leftovers of the first French expedition 50 years ago. Says Hinkes: “I wanted to take one as a souvenir but they were too heavy. They are not garbage just landmarks of time on the mountain.”

MIN BAJRACHARYA

unga alu

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BOOK
Mukunda Acharya



travels which are turned into travelogues: with *Around the World in 80 Days* and *Pole to Pole*. This time he has travelled across the Himlayan arc from the Pakistan-Afghan border right across India, Nepal, Tibet and Yunnan to backtrack into Assam, Bhutan and then into Bangladesh. Along the way, he milked a yak and bathed an elephant, flew an ultralight past the Annapurnas, his team got briefly kidnapped by Maoists near Pokhara and he huffed and puffed his way up the Rongbuk Glacier to Chomolungma Base Camp.

But even in the most gruelling stretches, like when he is wheezing through altitude sickness at Annapurna Base Camp, Palin seems to be having fun and shares it with his viewers and now his readers. In Nepal, his guides are the multi-sumiteering Wongchu Sherpa who shows him around the mountains, Pratima Pande who takes him to get dasain tika from King Gyanendra and Kunda Dixit who is quoted as telling Palin in probably the most-notable instances of famous last words: "Nepal's press has never been freer." Palin's irreverence to royalty comes clearly and some of his rude remarks about the Narayanhiti tika ceremony are unprintable in this review because Nepal's press is no longer as free as Dixit

describes.

Palin does the usual touristic stuff in Kathmandu: the burning ghats, sadhus, Swayambhu and Boudhanath which will perhaps be interesting only to those who have never been to Nepal. Elsewhere in *Himalaya*, Palin is hosted by Imran Khan in Pakistan and in Bhutan by the indomitable former Bhutani Chief Justice, Dasho Benji. To be fair, Palin doesn't quite buy Bhutan's self-conscious peddling of exotica and has a slightly raised eye brow about goings on in Drukland.

On second thought, if you have seen the series forget about the book.

When Deb Mukharji served briefly as Indian ambassador here in 2001, the joke in New Delhi was that whenever the outdoor-loving plenipotentiary went off on a trek all hell would break lose in Kathmandu. Indeed, Mukharji was either in Langtang, Khumbu or Rara during some of the most serious riots, massacres or government collapses in Kathmandu.

Now we know why Mukharji was so eager to get out. The former ambassador is a keen photographer and some of the pictures he has reproduced in *The Magic of Nepal* are works of art. The book itself is a labour of love, and this was one Indian ambassador who had fallen in love with the serenity and grandeur of Nepal the other was his successor, Shyam Saran. "There is no other place in the world where a room with a bed and warm dining room awaits the visitor at over 15,000 ft," Mukharji writes. Since the preface to the book is written by Stan (*Lonely Planet*) Armington, Mukharji can be forgiven for sometimes sounding like a trekking guidebook. And you wish he had written less and blown up his pictures more.

Pictures like the one of the



Michael Palin (top) and Deb Mukharji. Picture of Kangtega floating on clouds.



DEB MUKHARJI

arid desolation of the Kali Gandaki looking north from Kagbeni accentuated by the black and white print and on the next page is a striking colour picture from the same spot of a rainbow and a suspension bridge spanning the river. Or pictures like Kangtega floating on a bank of clouds or a closeup of water tumbling over moss-covered boulders on the Langtang Khola.

Mukharji obviously has a soft spot for water (in the form of ice, liquid and vapour) and mountains, as well as the interplay between them. The photographer's eye is caught by 'uncommon beauty in common wayside scenes'.

The adventurer in Mukharji wanders up to a remote cul-de-sac in the Langtang Valley and remembers seeing these same

mountains from the north while in a speeding jeep on the Tibetan plateau and he muses: 'Besides being the source of life, giving water and being the abode of the Gods, the majesty and mystery of the Himalaya also have something

to do with their remoteness, the valleys and gorges to be traversed.' Sooner or later, the Nepal Himalaya will be crisscrossed by highways too and these mountains will never be the same again. ●



Himalaya
by Michael Palin
Weidenfeld & Nicolson
London 2004
pp 288



The Magic of Nepal
text and photographs by
Deb Mukharji
Rupa & Co, 2005 New Delhi
pp 164



MILAP DIXIT

SALIL SUBEDI

The *Good Person of Szechwan*, which Studio 7 premiered last Friday at Hotel Vajra, evokes questions about saving virtue in a cold dog-eat-dog world.

When three gods descend to earth looking for a 'good' person, they meet Shen-Te, a young female prostitute, played flamboyantly by Tsering Lama who has brilliantly coloured this Brechtian treat.

The water seller, Sambhu Lama, is the poetic link who bridges divinity and decadence through humility. As Shen Te shifts her "unethical" profession to a more "respectable" one by opening a tobacco

shop from the gift money that the gods gave her, she finds that her virtue collides with the vices of greedy relatives, neighbours and her lover, a pilot without a plane played by Eelum Dixit.

Shen Te decides to take refuge behind a mask and invents a shrewd business savvy male cousin, Shu Ta. With this mask as defence, Shen Te fights those who took advantage of her generosity. Shu Ta takes on the role of a capitalist and whips the parasites displaying a strong ability to deal with the likes of the rich Mrs Mitzu, slickly portrayed by Himali Dixit.

Director Sabine Lehmann who also plays the role of the barber tries not to overdo the

We want a happy ending

Knowing the value of freedom after it's gone

symbolism of all this to present day Nepal. (Although right at the end, she gives up trying to be subtle and shouts: "We want a happy ending.") When the powerful have sucked out much of the economic and social wealth of a nation, taken advantage of the generous and liberal functioning of democracy and an authoritarian figure steps in to whip them into shape there is an initial outbreak of discipline and diligence. But why do people need someone else to make them do things they ought to do anyway? Why couldn't they take pride in doing well what they had to do? Why can't they be accountable? Why can't people be inherently good? The metaphors are writ large on the weary faces of the people who gather in Shu Ta's tobacco factory.

As an actor who grew up in the performing space crafted 14 years ago at Studio 7 by Lehmann, I took a different role this year: to sit in the audience. Sabine always used to tell us, "Theatre has to reflect life. We have to reveal people their

truth." I wonder how much truth there was to grasp when a senior Nepali Congress member sitting beside me disagreed with Brecht's famous line: "Truth is born of the times, not of authority." I thought of his political role in recent Nepali history and agreed with Brecht.

The fabulous stage design, imaginative props and costumes (only Mangal could think of using a *topi* for the divine headgear) and smooth transitions between scenes have always been Studio 7's hallmarks. But they lend well to Brecht's 'alienation' effect on stage. As intended, the audience retains critical detachment. Brecht evokes theatre to create a forum for social debate and Sabine has justified this essence, moulding together the global social, political and economic phenomenon to create her own scathing social commentary. ●

The Good Person of Szechwan at Hotel Vajra on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays until 8 May.
4271545

Cry, beloved country

Three weeks after the slaughter of its young men, Somani still grieves in silence

ARUNA UPRETI and RITA THAPA in NAWALPARASI



PICS: RITA THAPA

NAWALPARASI—It has been three weeks but the women of Somani in Parsa district are inconsolable. The terror is vivid, the pain of loss of loved ones still searing. They are unable to sleep, eat or speak.

It was two days after the Nepali new year on 16 April and the villagers of this hamlet 20 km southeast of Butwal were getting ready to go to bed. At about 10PM, the Maoists arrived in hundreds. They dragged everyone out of the houses, singled out the men aged 15-39 and executed them without mercy. After that they went on a rampage bombing four houses and burning another 10. They set fire to tractors, to this year's wheat harvest that was piled up for threshing, to cowsheds in which livestock were burnt alive.

Weeks later, there are only charred skeletons of houses, ashes strewn about, a singed cow lingers listlessly near what used to be its shed and the dread on the faces of the surviving women and children bear mute testimony to what happened here that night.



The Maoists accused the villagers of forming a *pratikar samiti* to resist them. Although there are hundreds of registered NGOs here, the CDO says only a few came to help. The only real response was from the local branch of the FNCCI which distributed relief supplies. The CDO agreed reluctantly to allow us to travel to Somani after we convinced him we were trying to help.

Once we got there, we ran into a grandmother who had lost three grandsons aged 15, 16, and 18. We met a mother whose two adult sons were killed, leaving her with a small daughter. An elderly father had lost his only son. As he broke down and wept, he told us how broad shouldered, handsome, strong he was and how well he worked the fields. Women stepping out of their ravaged homes, were still speechless with shock.

The neighbours said they had exhausted their tears and couldn't cry anymore. "We can't eat, we can't sleep, we can't cry," says one survivor, barely able to get his

words out. None of them have slept in the village since that night, preferring to go to adjoining hamlets. Many have fled to India or to the safety of towns. Few have come to offer comfort, let alone support and relief. And due to news restrictions, reporters have gone back printing the initial army press release. Even in Butwal, we met many who hadn't heard of what happened here. And after a while, it seems the news of slaughter all merge into one in a faraway, uncaring capital.

A security base was set up in a nearby school for the protection of Somani's survivors. Yet, as darkness fell the forces left and we were also told to leave for our own safety. By day, there is an effort to resume classes but we wondered what the children would learn in a school that was a military base.

We found out that an anti-Maoist resistance committee had indeed been set up in the village by two powerful men whose sons had been killed by the Maoists earlier. The committee had been supported by the state. But as far as we could tell the young men killed by the Maoists in Somani were all innocent unarmed villagers. The real vigilantes weren't even here that night.

Chance brought us to Somani. But many other villages like it in Nepal cry out to be heard.

The voice of one mother haunts us. She talked about this incident as if she was talking about somebody else: "I saw my boy lying in a pool of blood and was trying to touch him. His hands and feet were limp. I thought he would speak again but he was dead. Normally, I could not have lifted him but seeing his corpse, I just picked him up and carried him outside." ●

Halt, who goes there?

Former speaker of parliament, Daman Nath Dhungana was prevented from flying out of Kathmandu on 10 March to take part in a seminar in Berkeley.

There are reportedly more than 400 names on the list of people who are under 'Kathmandu arrest'. Before he was due to leave, Dhungana had tried to find out if he too was on that list through the Nepal Bar Association (NBA) which corresponded with the Home Ministry about the matter. But there was no response.

After his airport interdiction, Dhungana filed a writ petition at the Supreme Court asking for an interim order preventing the authorities from restricting his freedom of movement without due process. But even though the court issued an interim order to that effect, Dhungana was again prevented from flying out to Pokhara last week.

GUEST COLUMN
Radheshyam
Adhikari



Dhungana is not the only one. Since February First, academics like Professor Lok Raj Baral, Krishna Khanal, Krishna Hattechu, Krishna Bhattachan have all been stopped at the airport. Deputy speaker of parliament, Chitra Lekha Yadav, MP Shree Maya Thakali have also been apprehended. Politicians like Minendra Rijal and Bidur Mainali have also been stopped from flying. Former Supreme Court judge, Laxman Aryal, Member of National Human Right Commission Kapil Shrestha, have all been met similar fates.

Most recently, the president of the NBA Shambu Thapa and advocate Bhimarjun Acharaya were dragged out of the plane after they had already boarded for a flight to New Delhi to attend a seminar. Harihar Dahal, ex-president of the NBA wasn't even allowed to go to Pokhara to attend a gathering of mountaineers.

From the human rights perspective, this restriction on the freedom of movement is fundamentally unlawful. Section 3.2 of the Public Security Act says the authorities should issue an order in the name of the person citing reasons for travel restrictions. 'The authority may intern a person by issuing an order in the interest of the public or to preserve the harmonious relationships subsisting between different castes, tribes and communities, if the said authorities have reasonable and adequate evidence against that person.'

Section 4.1 of the Act states: 'While issuing any order under sub-sections 3.1 and 3.2 the local authority must state the reasons and evidence relied upon for issuing such an order and give such order to the person concerned. The local authority must also inform the Home Ministry with a copy of such an order.' Section 6.1 of the Act limits such an order to a maximum period of 30 days. The authorities have failed to respect any of these legal provisions.

In Geneva last week, the government agreed to abide by the resolution passed by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights which among other things calls on the government 'to urgently restore the multiparty democratic institutions enshrined in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal and to respect the rule of law without exception...calls upon HMG of Nepal to immediately reinstate all civil and political rights, to cease all state of emergency related and other arbitrary arrests, to lift far reaching censorship, to restore freedom of opinion, expression and the press as well as the freedom of association, to immediately release all detained political leaders and activists, human rights defenders, journalists and others, to allow all citizens to enter and exist in the country freely...'

The emergency is ostensibly meant to tackle the Maoist insurgency. Unfortunately, the draconian measures seemed to be aimed at law-abiding citizens. The fault of the eminent members of civil society whose movements are restricted is that they want to see constitutional provisions followed.

Why is the government so scared of unarmed lawyers, human rights activists and academics? Dissenting opinion should be treated as an alternative viewpoint. No one who thinks it is possible to attain a noble goal through peaceful means should be discouraged from expressing their opinion. Dissension, in fact, should be encouraged in the marketplace of ideas and treated like national property.

There is no parliament so the government of the day is not accountable to the people. The principles of check and balance enshrined in the constitution are not operative. The executive is arbitrary, intolerant, injudicious and authoritarian. It even ignores the Supreme Court. Severe restrictions on the people's freedom of movement without due process is the order of the day. T

The government is not listening to voices inside the country, shouldn't it at least abide by the UN resolution adopted and passed in Geneva? ●

Radheshyam Adhikari is a senior advocate and a member of parliament.

France's 'Non' ?

GENEVA—If public opinion polls are to be believed, on 29 May the French will reject the European Union's draft constitutional treaty. Because all EU member countries must ratify the constitution, a French 'Non' will, in effect, kill it. Amazing as this turn of events seems, it has been long in the making. France is not just a founding member of the European Community but has also been the driving force behind all major steps toward 'ever closer union'. But French opposition was also predictable because, for over a decade now, France has veered away from Europe and now finds itself increasingly isolated. Europe has also moved away from France through successive enlargements but the main roots of the estrangement lie in France itself.



The French regard with great sadness their declining status and prestige—not only in world politics but also in culture, science and, more importantly, language. Europe, in their view, was a way of reclaiming world influence. For three decades, this worked. France and Germany had forged an alliance that called the shots in Europe. Not interested in geopolitical power—a legacy of its Nazi past—Germany was content to back France's ambitions as long as the Common Market allowed it to be Europe's economic powerhouse. But that alliance is unravelling as Germany's own status declines. Moreover, Germany is increasingly interested in exercising political influence on its own.

Successive EU enlargements have brought in powerful contenders and France has lost control of Europe. The European Constitution has little to do with any of this but many French people see it as one more challenge, at a time when they want to be nursed and protected. ● (Project Syndicate)

The America-China-India triangle

India and China seek a strategic alliance to reshape the world order

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao went on a four-day visit to India during which 11 agreements were signed including a comprehensive five-year strategic cooperation pact. In addition, Wen announced that China would support India's bid for a permanent seat on an expanded UN Security Council and opposed the inclusion of Japan, which the United States supports for a Council seat.

With over a third of the world's population and two of the globe's highest economic growth rates, an alliance between China and India could be a serious factor in world politics. While both are developing countries—many of whose people remain impoverished—they also boast impressive capabilities in information age technologies both for civilian and military purposes. As Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh put it during Wen's visit, "India and China can together reshape the world order."

The two countries' recent rapprochement marks a huge change from the hostility that bedevilled their relations following their 1962 war over a disputed border in the Himalayas. In 1998, when India tested its nuclear weapons, the defence minister referred to China, and then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee spoke of its neighbouring country as India's number one enemy.

By contrast, India is now referring to the need to learn from China. Trade between the two giants has grown from \$100 million in 1994 to nearly \$14 billion last year and India's minister for commerce and industry has predicted that it will double by this decade's end. One agreement signed during Wen's visit was a new set of guiding principles on how to settle boundary disputes between the two countries.

While improved relations and diminished prospects for conflict are welcome, relations between

India and China are more complex than they appear at first. Not long before the visit of the Chinese premier, India hosted US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Ever since President Bill Clinton's visit to India, but especially under President George W Bush, the US has moved from relative indifference to India to the development of a strong strategic relationship. Secretary Rice made this plain during her March visit, including a willingness to consider trade in high

technology, nuclear energy and co-production of fighter aircraft such as F-16s and F-18s. Shortly after Rice's visit, the US announced that it would honour a long-standing promise to sell F-16s to Pakistan.

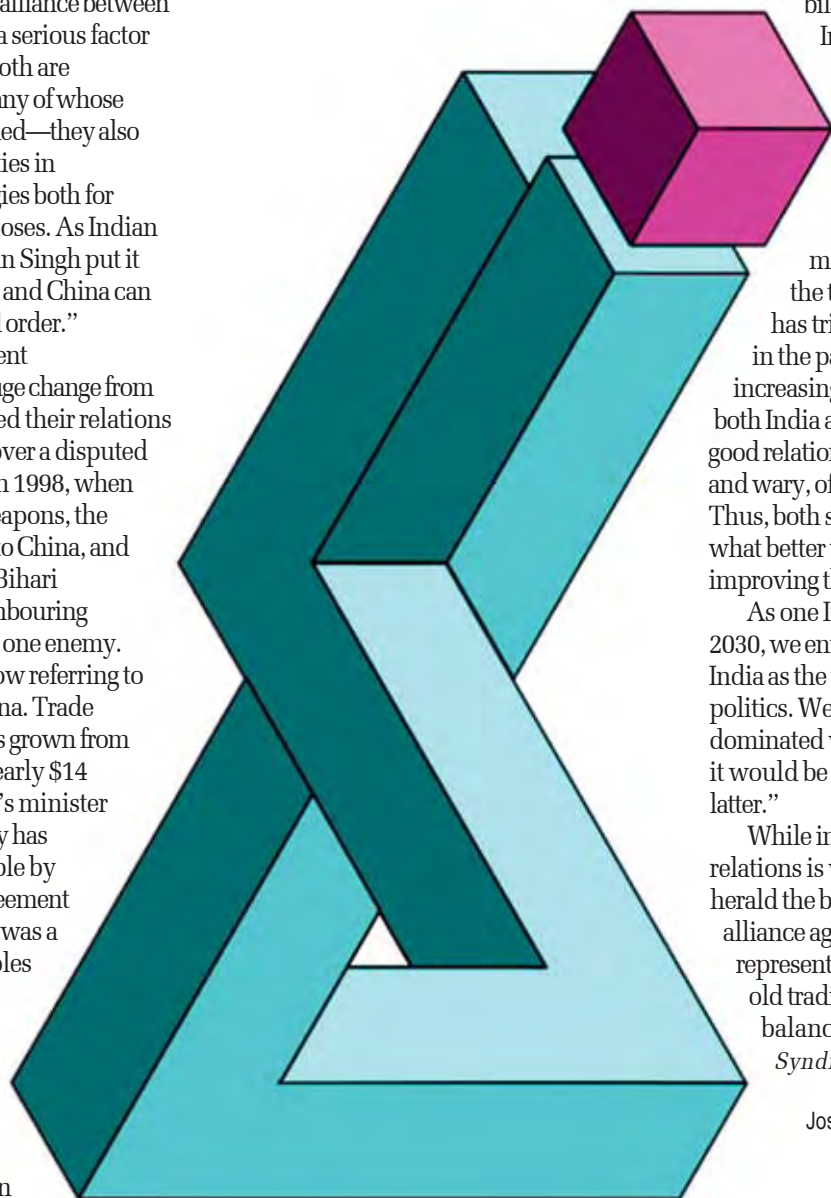
Rhetoric about 'the world's two largest democracies' is not new but it fits with the Bush administration's new emphasis on promoting democracy. The increasing role of the Indian diaspora in the US, particularly in the information industries, also had an influence, as has the rise in bilateral trade accompanying India's surging economic growth. Equally important are strategic concerns about transnational terrorism and the rise of Chinese power.

The rise of China is a major factor in the politics of the twenty-first century. China has tripled the size of its economy in the past two decades and has been increasing its military strength. While both India and the US seek trade and good relations with China, both are aware, and wary, of China's growing strength. Thus, both seek to hedge their bets and what better way to do so than by improving their strategic relationship?

As one Indian strategist put it, "By 2030, we envisage the US, China and India as the three largest powers in world politics. We don't want a China or a US dominated world but if we had to choose, it would be easier for us to live with the latter."

While improvement in India-China relations is welcome, it is unlikely to herald the beginning of an India-China alliance against the US. It more likely represents another move in India's age-old tradition of managing regional balances of power. ● Project Syndicate

Joseph S Nye is Distinguished Service Professor at Harvard and author of *The Power Game*.



FOR THOSE WHO DARE

Did you read April Issue?



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High on low

Managing minimum score is the way to go

When you start playing golf, you dream of getting the ball to fly. Once that is done and a little consistency maintained, you will find yourself on the golf course more and more. From there on, your focus becomes a never-ending journey of trying to score lower and lower.

I have been watching quite a few rounds of golf with weekend golfers. One common phenomenon among them and even intermediate players was that on most rounds they play, their score cards are usually spoilt by occasional 8s and 9s (triple and quadruple bogeys), ruining what may have been a decent scorecard.

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



How and why does this happen so often? In most cases, it is not lack of ability but a dreadful lack of course management. And what exactly is course management?

When running a business, good managers need to have both vision and skills to take their company ahead step-by-step. They must also have the ability to make the right decisions in a given situation by first analysing and then charting out possible consequences based more on facts than on emotions. Just as you would do this in business, you do it in golf too. You need to make the right non-emotional decision when planning your round and choosing the shot you wish to attempt.

For example, you are faced with a tee shot on a par five to a reasonably wide fairway where there is OB (Out of Bounds) on the right side and rough on the left. Emotionally, you feel like ripping it down the centre, even though you know you might not make it.



However, it is wiser to aim left of centre and accept the consequence of a slightly errant shot ending up in the rough. The alternate possibility of slicing out of bounds is too severe a consequence to entertain.

Another example: most short par fours have fairways that narrow down and are designed to discourage a long tee shot. Yet most amateurs take out their driver without thinking and end up in deep trouble. Often, they don't even consider using their much more accurate

five-wood or a long iron that would land them in the safest part of the fairway, keeping them 'alive' in the short grass with a greater attacking chance at the green.

Similarly when hitting towards the green, if the cup is cut on the right edge, instead of attacking the flag with a chance of missing the green on the right, it is better to take the centre part of the green or even miss the green on the left. A longer putt or a chip with plenty of green to play with is less daunting than a short chip with no place for the ball to stop rolling.

If there is trouble behind the green then play short of the hole. If there is a water hazard before the green, ensure you are not playing for the front edge. Ever watched Tiger Woods or other top players teeing off with an iron on a par four? What they are doing is simply avoiding certain risks and playing a better percentage shot.

Players need to be aware of their individual shot-making ability, plan and play accordingly. All these are a part of good course management. Sounds rational when you read it but it's amazing how often it is forgotten or ignored on the course.

Sensible course management always brings your scores down. Schedule a lesson with your favourite professional and ask him to explain each shot from the perspective of managing the course better. You will be surprised at how much you can learn. ●

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



SURYA NEPAL
GOLF



ASIAN CRICKET COUNCIL

Our boys bring home the cup

Determination, dedication and discipline: Coach Dias

ABHA ELI PHOBOO

At a time when there is so little to cheer about, every little victory helps. The resident Nepalis of Abu Dhabi who had packed the Sheikh Zayed Stadium for the finals of the Asian Cricket Council's U-15 Asia Cup on 22 April went wild. There were young Nepali boys thrashing Afghanistan by six wickets.

On the field, the boys had gone equally crazy taking laps around the stadium waving the Nepali double triangle proudly. They rolled on the ground, jumped and hugged each other. It was a dream come true and a promise kept for the young Nepali boys. They wanted to savour every moment of this victory and seemed reluctant to want to leave the stadium.

"You can only imagine the joy we felt," recalls captain Sashi Keshari, "an amazing feeling. The Afghans had lost to us earlier in the Group D league-round match and challenged us. They had arrived late that night and said they could do better. We weren't nervous really, just under a lot of pressure because many thought they would win the second time."

The pressure increased when the opposing team opened well and as Nepal's coach Roy Dias, who is from Sri Lanka, says, "After Afghanistan lost to our team the first time, they had been improving with each game. Our edge was that we had a good plan and luck on our side."

The night before the match, our boys had been planning a game strategy, working out their

opponent's strengths and weaknesses while identifying their own. If their game plan worked as they had hoped, they knew they would win. And they did.

"Our team was very strong and we had quite a few all-rounders. We had great batsmen, bowlers and fielders," says Pradeep Karki, assistant manager of the team and assistant secretary of Cricket Association of Nepal (CAN). "CAN has steadily been increasing the standard of Nepali cricket players. This U-15 team was chosen after nearly nine months of selection matches with players from various cricket development regions."

CAN has divided Nepal into six cricket development regions: Biratnagar, Birganj, Kathmandu, Bhairawa, Nepalganj and Baitadi. Each club in the various districts under these regions participated in the district level matches. The winners advanced to the regional level before being pitted against each other for the national team. Only 33 make it to this stage, out of which 18 are chosen from three triangular matches. The final 14 are then put in closed camp for training.

This U-15 team trained for 20 days, the first phase was conducted in Birganj and the last 10 days in Kathmandu. "Training in hot and humid Birganj helped," says Keshari, "Abu Dhabi wasn't that bad because we had grown used to playing in the heat. And the many matches we played before we were finally

selected boosted our confidence. Each selected player had a special talent and as a team, we were more balanced than the others."

The intensive training included upping the performance of each individual player. They learnt to focus and every time they entered the field, they were mentally and physically prepared. The U-15 team also played against the national team during practice sessions and the seniors, who had played in Abu Dhabi before, generously tipped their juniors on what worked and what did not.

"What really worked for them though, according to Dias is their 'determination, dedication and discipline'. Antim Thapa was named 'Man of the Match' and Anil Mandal was declared the 'Best Batsman'. Everybody is talking about Nepal's batting power now and our spinners really bowled over spectators. Says Dias: "I'm really proud of them not just because we won, but we won each match convincingly". ●

15 going on 17

Nepal will host the ACC U-17 Asia Cup this year in June or July. The U-15 boys are more excited than ever about participating. As the cricket scene in Nepal develops, they hope to add to the energy and enthusiasm. "We are already preparing for the U-17 national team," say the U-15 boys, "and we hope to win that coveted cup too."



World without Strangers
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"Lata ko desh ma gaando tanderi." (In a land of fools, even a man with a bad goatee can be a hero.) - as translated by UNACOOTs, the United Nation's Association of Cartoonists

THE ADVENTURES OF HEROJIG

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#66 2062 by jigme gaton - read. love. write.

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

ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Earth Day** Solid Waste Management Exhibition on 29, 30 April, 10AM onwards at Jawalakhel Chok, Lalitpur. 4242381
- ❖ **A Peaceful Nepal** Photo exhibition at GAA, Thamel, until 30 April, 10AM-4PM, proceeds go to Habitat for Humanity.
- ❖ **Thalara Framed** Photographs by Devendra SJB Rana at Siddhartha Art Gallery, until 30 April.
- ❖ **Press Photo Exhibition** at Nepal Art Council, Baber Mahal, until 2 May.
- ❖ **Mystical Song** Etchings by Seema Sharma Shah at Park Gallery, Lajimpat, until 14 May. 4419353
- ❖ **Aloha Nepal** Works by Wicki Van De Veer at Lajimpat Gallery Café, until 25 May. 4428549



EVENTS

- ❖ **Dutch Queen's Day** Flea market at Summit Hotel on 30 April. 5521810
- ❖ **Free workshop** for illustrators on 30 April-1 May at the British Council, Lainchor. 4410798
- ❖ **Vineyard** Opening on 1 May at Baber Mahal Revisited.
- ❖ **Raaga** Eastern classical music concert by Sunita Mishra at Everest Bookshop, Baber Mahal Revisited on 1 May, 6PM-7.30 PM. 4257250
- ❖ **Faiz Ahmed Faiz** on freedom of expression at Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka, 5.30 PM on 2 May. 5553767
- ❖ **Drama** for awareness at St Xavier's College, Maitighar on 2 May, 2.30 PM.
- ❖ **Classical Piano Recital** by Antony Peebles on 3 May, 6.30 PM at Hyatt Regency, tickets Rs 1,500. 4491234
- ❖ **Fifth Himalayan Beetle Rally** on 7 May. Raising funds for Single Women Group, Antenna Foundation and Maya Foundation. 4427623
- ❖ **Pilgrims Book Festival** at Pilgrims, Kupondole, until 8 May. 5521159
- ❖ **The Good Person of Szechwan** Staged by Studio 7 at Hotel Vajra, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, until 8 May. 4271545
- ❖ **Tai Chi** Free classes for a month at Baber Mahal Revisited. 4256618
- ❖ **1905 Sundays** Garage sale, pet practices and more.
- ❖ **Fun in the Sun** at Club Sundhara, Hotel Shangri-la. 4412999
- ❖ **Art workshop** for kids at Buddha Gallery. 4441689
- ❖ **Rugby Practice** Every Saturday. 4435939, citygymktm@hotmail.com
- ❖ **Sanibaar Mela** Saturdays at the Dharahara Bakery Café, 12AM-5PM.

MUSIC

- ❖ **An Evening with Manose** at Patan on 29 April, 7PM, tickets Rs 650.
- ❖ **Full Circle** Live at Indigo Gallery on 7 May, 8PM, tickets Rs 750. 4413580
- ❖ **Rock Thru' the Ages** Postponed until further notice. 4700736
- ❖ **Friends of Music** Open jam session at Moks. 552642
- ❖ **Live Jazz** by JCS trio and Peter McTwister, Thursdays at Full Moon Bar, Mondays at New Orleans Café, Thamel. 4700736
- ❖ **Ladies Nights** Wednesdays at Jatra, Thamel, with live acoustic music.
- ❖ **Fusion Time** Mondays at Jalan Jalan Restaurant, Lajimpat, 7PM. 4410438
- ❖ **Live Music** Everyday at Hotel de l'Annapurna, Darbar Marg. 4221711
- ❖ **The Heart Breakers** at Rum Doodle, Fridays, 7PM onwards. 4701208
- ❖ **Jukebox experience** Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at Rox. 4491234
- ❖ **Jazz** at Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lajimpat, Wednesdays and Saturdays, 7.45 PM.

FOOD

- ❖ **Marhaba Mediterranean Cuisine** at Hotel Shangri-la, until 30 April.
- ❖ **Great Value Lunches** at Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **BBQ Lunch** at Le Meridien, Gokarna Forest Golf Resort. 4445550
- ❖ **Sunshine Weekend Brunch** Free swim at Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
- ❖ **Barbeque lunch** Saturdays at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot. 6680080
- ❖ **Special Combo** Burmese and Thai Menu at 1905, Kantipath.
- ❖ **Sekuwa and Momo Revolution** Saturdays at Tea House Inn. 6680048
- ❖ **Arniko Special Lunch** at Hotel de l'Annapurna, Darbar Marg. 4221711
- ❖ **Krishnarpan** Nepali specialty restaurant at Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488
- ❖ **Barbecue Dinner** Every Friday at the Summit Hotel. 5521810
- ❖ **Exotic Seafood** at Rox Restaurant, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Delicacies** Pastas and snacks at Roadhouse Café, Jawalakhel. 5521755
- ❖ **Earth Watch Restaurant** at Park Village, dine with nature. 4375280
- ❖ **Café Bahal** Newari cuisine at Kathmandu Guest House, Thamel. 4700632
- ❖ **The Tharu Kitchen** at Jungle Base Camp. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Stay one night** Get one Night at Shangri-la Village, Pokhara. 4435742
- ❖ **Wet Wild Summer Splash** at Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge** World's top room with a view. 4361500
- ❖ **Shivapuri Cottage** Nature, peace and bird watching at 6,000ft. 4354331
- ❖ **Chiso Chiso Hawama** at Nagarkot, special packages. 6680080
- ❖ **Jungle Base Camp Lodge**, Bardia. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com
- ❖ **Malaysia Dream Holidays** Special offers till the end of May. 4247215 extn 01314, malaysiaholidays_marco@polo.com.np

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JAI NEPAL CINEMA

There are mysterious deaths caused by man-eating tigers in Jim Corbett Park. The International Wildlife Welfare appoints ace conservationist Krish Thapar and his wife Riya to investigate. Dev and his friends also set out for an adventure trip during that weekend. Destiny prevents them from going to the farmhouse as planned instead, they end up in India's biggest jungle. Both groups bond together but at night, the jungle comes alive. Then starts the journey of fear, panic and trauma. They are the hunted with death at their heels.

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KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

Although there was a 20 percent drop in the concentration of PM10 (particles that are less than 10 micron in size) in Kathmandu's air last week, the pollution levels are still high. The PM10 level is above national standards throughout the Valley except in rural areas like Matsyagaon. The only relief was the brief shower on Saturday which flushed down some of the pollutants.

17-23 April 2005 in micrograms per cubic meter.
Source: www.mope.gov.np


Hazardous	>425
Harmful	351 to 425
Unhealthy	121 to 350
O k	61 to 120
Good	< 60

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NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



The low pressure bypass has relieved us with hefty evening showers this week. The centre of this circulation will be over Bhutan by Friday but it has spawned baby troughs all along the Gangetic plains which will inject moisture into the midhills and bring us localised storm systems. This satellite picture taken on Thursday morning shows a frontal system moving into western Nepal which should bring us overcast skies and stormy conditions on Friday. We will observe more isolated storms into next week. Expect humidity to rise, making the heat stickier.

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Sun 30-11

Mon 29-12

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आ-आफ्नो बालबालिकाहरूलाई शङ्कास्पद वस्तु नछुन र नचलाउन सम्झाऔं । विगत केही वर्षदेखि मुलुकका विभिन्न स्थानमा वेवारिसे विस्फोटक पदार्थहरू विस्फाटन भएर सयौं अबोध बालबालिकालगायत नागरिकहरूको मृत्यु हुने तथा अपाङ्ग हुन गई गम्भीर क्षति पुग्ने गरेको छ । यसैले कुनै विस्फोटक पदार्थ वा विस्फोटक पदार्थजस्तो देखिने शङ्कास्पद वस्तु फेला परेमा वा कुनै वस्तु सामान्यतः नहुनुपर्ने स्थानमा भेटिएमा त्यसलाई नछोऔं, नचलाऔं वा त्यसबाट टाढै रही विस्फोटक पदार्थ निष्क्रिय पार्ने विशेषज्ञ टोलीसँग सम्पर्क राखौं ।


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KIRAN PANDAY

INTO THE DEEP END: Devotees pull a chariot floating on Gahana Pokhari at the annual Handigaun jatra on Monday.



NEPALNEWS.COM

FAREWELL: UML leader Sahana Pradhan paying last respects to Sadhana Adhikari, wife of former Prime Minister Man Mohan Adhikari whose fifth death anniversary also fell this week.



EKAL SILWAL

EXPLODING SCHOOLS: A bomb destroyed the Aadarsha Namuna Secondary School in Gaidakot, Nawalparasi, on 22 April. The Maoist student wing on Wednesday lifted its threat to indefinitely close down all private schools in the country.



ART START: Teenagers painting at the two-day teen art workshop Celebrating Colours on Saturday and Sunday at The Bluestar Hotel.



DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA

YIIIIIEEEAAAAAH: The Eastern Zone won the Seventh National Kyokushin Karate Championships in Dharan on 23 April. More than 80 martial arts athletes took part.

Nothing stops Ujeli

The men of Tallo Gaun in Simikot love to hate Ujeli Rokaya. They consider her a threat to their patriarchal society, which strongly believes that educating girls is a very bad idea.

Last year, 16-year-old Ujeli shocked her community of Rautes when she left her husband's house to attend school. UNICEF's village facilitators were going door-to-door to encourage girls and women to attend the Out of School Program (OSP) and Ujeli just could not resist the offer.

Her husband was in Kathmandu and Ujeli was left at the mercy of in-laws who

strongly refused to send her to the program. Her father-in-law is an educated person and the VDC secretary. "They said I would never be allowed to enter the house if I dared to enroll. I just walked off to attend the program," says Ujeli, recalling the day she left the house and joined the OSP.

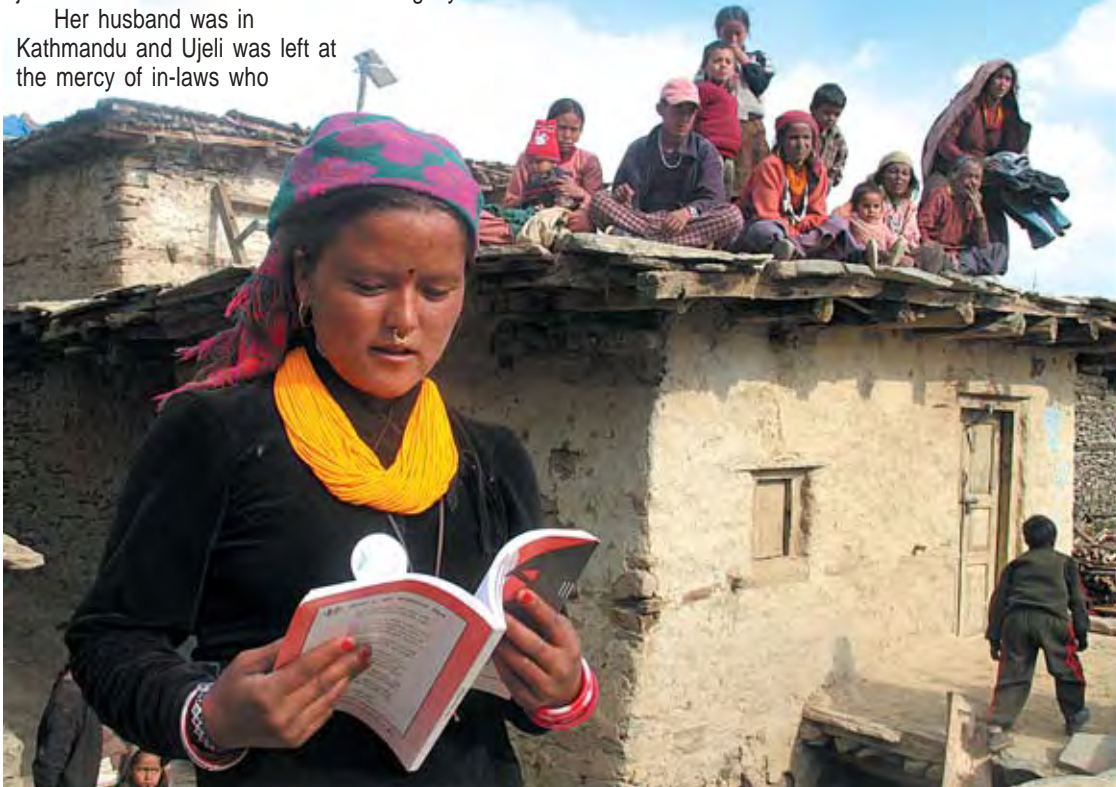
It's been 10 months since and Ujeli has completed her basic education and enrolled in grade five at a government school. "The day I pass my SLC, I will return to my husband's house," she says brightly. She is amazed at her

own transformation—from a shy, reluctant wife to a confident, outspoken and fearless girl.

"Now I can read and write like any educated man," says Ujeli and proves it to us by writing her name. "Many girls still have to live under the strict rules of our community but I will change that."

Once she finishes school, Ujeli wants to be a teacher and educate as many girls and women as possible. Every day as she passes through her village, she has to endure ridicule and insulting remarks from the men and boys. But this brave girl is unfazed. She says, "All I know is my parents are very happy and that is enough for me. Nothing can stop me now." ●

Naresh Newar



NARESH NEWAR



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Feel free to throw up on the Fourth Estate

We must mark World Press Freedom Day on 3 May this year in Nepal by dispelling the malicious rumour doing the rounds that we in the Fourth Estate aren't free to be sycophantic, hypocritical and unscrupulous liars anymore. As we can see for ourselves this is not the case, all of these aforementioned freedoms are intact.

Anyone with an over-fertile imagination will have noticed that there are no restrictions at all. We members of the media sector have never been freer to lick ass or be kicked in the ass. It's not for nothing that we are proud to call

ourselves members of the world's second-oldest profession. Nevertheless, we mustn't rest on our laurels, we shouldn't take the freedoms we enjoy for granted as we go out of our way to kowtow even though we were only asked to curtsy. May Third therefore is a perfect opportunity for us in the media to take stock of our good fortune to be where we are. (Message from the State Law and Order

Council on the Auspicious Occasion of World Press Freedom Day: The following content has been vetted for veracity and has been found to be fit for wide dissemination but the Council takes no legal responsibility if consumers don't have the intestinal fortitude to read it without throwing up. Signature and Chop.) So, without beating around the bushes let's proceed to count our blessings from one to 10:

- 1 There are absolutely no curbs on vowel movements in the state-controlled media which is free to report at great length on all official pronunciations.
- 2 No one is stopping anyone from singing hosannas at the top of their voices.
- 3 We can't help it if newspapermen insist on ignoring repeated warnings not to report that they have been repeatedly warned not to undermine the morality of those calling the shots.
- 4 We don't blame messengers anymore. We arrest them.

- 5 Good thing that more than 65 percent of Nepal's can't read or write otherwise the public may actually believe what we are saying.
- 6 The officials' media is adding supplementary pages to accommodate vast quantities of backlogged news on new arrests this week that couldn't be printed because of headline-grabbing events from the Afro-Asian Summit.
- 7 As a matter of public service, Radio Nepal says it will continue blocking the first 15 minutes of BBC World Service news on 103 FM because it wants to "spare listeners the boredom of having to listen to the same headlines on the hour every hour and replace it with a musical interlude".
- 8 It's not true that Nepal's media is the least free in Asia. That is a gross national insult to our friendly country, North Korea.
- 9 The government denies in strongest terms the canard that news is not allowed on FM. Underground stations are allowed to broadcast news unhindered.
- 10 Humour is now so rife in the media that it has thankfully thrown all insufferable satirists, including this one, out of business.





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