ne fallout of February First is that international policy towards Nepal is now being formulated by the powers in New Delhi.

In what has of late become a tradition for British and American officials, US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, Christina Rocca, had meetings here before flying on to Kathmandu.

In the previous week, Indian ambassador to Nepal Shiv Shanker Mukherjee, British Ambassador Keith Bloomfield and Britain’s special envoy to Nepal Jeffrey James also held joint talks with senior Indian officials. Since this was immediately followed by the Indian decision to resume military assistance, the three powers seem satisfied by the king’s post-Jakarta lifting of the state of emergency and release of some political detainees.

A senior official told us that India may have overestimated its own leverage. “We expected that a strong reaction would make the king back off, the other assumption was that political parties would emerge as a strong alternative,” he said. A policy review became inevitable when neither happened. The possibility of the Americans stepping in with arms if India didn’t may have been a worry here.

India is in a dilemma: it doesn’t want the king to get away with dismantling democracy but also wishes to see the Maoists defeated. “Do we support order and stability, or fairness and justice? As a neighbour it becomes difficult to take a pure stand,” says C Raja Mohan, a strategic analyst here.

This ambivalence has drawn fire from the Congress’ leftist coalition partners which have also been critical of the arms decision. MP Nilotpal Basu of the CPI-M says, “We shouldn’t put all our diplomatic eggs in the basket of the present regime.”

The possibility of rethinking India’s ‘two pillar’ policy of supporting constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy seems remote. “There is no room for reviewing this policy,” former Indian ambassador to Nepal, KV Rajan told us.

Some advisers have urged India to open back channel links to the Maoists but this has been opposed by others. “The terms of engagement is important,” says analyst Raja Mohan, “nothing must be done to legitimise them and back their approach.”

There is consensus here that a sustainable solution would have to be found within Nepal, and that will depend on the knack of Nepal’s political class to work together.
two weeks after the lifting of the emergency there isn’t a sense that conditions have changed in any meaningful way. In large parts of the country just as there wasn’t the expected qualitative difference in the security situation after 1 February, things are similarly unchanged post-1 May. There is an urgent need for a rethink, but the rumoured cabinet reshuffle is unlikely to change the ground reality. The emergency has been lifted, but it’s still an emergency. The media is under a straitjacket and the sword of the managing 6 directive is still hanging over its head. Politicians, lawyers, activists and journalists are under valley arrest, and the only way to find out whether one is on the list is to test it by trying to fly out and see what happens. One fails to see how such bullying tactics helps the government in any way. The foolshearted counter-productive ban on news on radio actually exposes a deep sense of insecurity. Arbitrary detention, beatings and torture of innocent citizens by security forces on the flimsy suspicion of some imaginary intelligence was rife during the rama. Just when we were getting used to it, they are back again and in even worse form.

Because of restrictions on information it is difficult to gauge detailed battle of battles like the one in Sinarha on Tuesday night. There have been commando operations and the like, in the recent time. story of Thawang last month, but the Maoists and villagers had all fled by the time the army got there. However, there is now a more visible strain of the murderous level which is spinning out of control. The targeting by Naxalbaisi vigilantes last month of anyone wearing a dhaka top has ominous ethnic and communal overtones. The execution of six villagers in Pipal Danda of Sindhupalchok earlier this month was carried out by 13-14 year olds. What are those children going to grow up to be? Who is going to hold the perpetrators responsible? How much longer do we have to wait for a peaceful roadmap? Who benefits from this escalation? Unless we nip in the bud this drift from a class war into a caste war, the last nine years are going to look like a picnic.

The Indian government is hurting badly at the economic front. The national economy is hurting badly, in the balance of payments the increasing Gold purchases are a major worry. In the domain of the macro, the national economy is hurting badly, in the balance of payments the increasing Gold purchases are a major worry. In the domain of the macro, the national economy is hurting badly, in the balance of payments the increasing Gold purchases are a major worry.

For the Indian defence minister, it is the “time for an urgent re think, but the rumoured cabinet reshuffle is unlikely to change the ground reality. The emergency has been lifted, but it’s still an emergency. The media is under a straitjacket and the sword of the managing 6 directive is still hanging over its head. Politicians, lawyers, activists and journalists are under valley arrest, and the only way to find out whether one is on the list is to test it by trying to fly out and see what happens. One fails to see how such bullying tactics helps the government in any way. The foolshearted counter-productive ban on news on radio actually exposes a deep sense of insecurity. Arbitrary detention, beatings and torture of innocent citizens by security forces on the flimsy suspicion of some imaginary intelligence was rife during the rama. Just when we were getting used to it, they are back again and in even worse form.

Because of restrictions on information it is difficult to gauge detailed battle of battles like the one in Sinarha on Tuesday night. There have been commando operations and the like, in the recent time. story of Thawang last month, but the Maoists and villagers had all fled by the time the army got there. However, there is now a more visible strain of the murderous level which is spinning out of control. The targeting by Naxalbaisi vigilantes last month of anyone wearing a dhaka top has ominous ethnic and communal overtones. The execution of six villagers in Pipal Danda of Sindhupalchok earlier this month was carried out by 13-14 year olds. What are those children going to grow up to be? Who is going to hold the perpetrators responsible? How much longer do we have to wait for a peaceful roadmap? Who benefits from this escalation? Unless we nip in the bud this drift from a class war into a caste war, the last nine years are going to look like a picnic.

The Indian government is hurting badly at the economic front. The national economy is hurting badly, in the balance of payments the increasing Gold purchases are a major worry. In the domain of the macro, the national economy is hurting badly, in the balance of payments the increasing Gold purchases are a major worry. In the domain of the macro, the national economy is hurting badly, in the balance of payments the increasing Gold purchases are a major worry.

For the Indian defence minister, it is the “time for an urgent re think, but the rumoured cabinet reshuffle is unlikely to change the ground reality. The emergency has been lifted, but it’s still an emergency. The media is under a straitjacket and the sword of the managing 6 directive is still hanging over its head. Politicians, lawyers, activists and journalists are under valley arrest, and the only way to find out whether one is on the list is to test it by trying to fly out and see what happens. One fails to see how such bullying tactics helps the government in any way. The foolshearted counter-productive ban on news on radio actually exposes a deep sense of insecurity. Arbitrary detention, beatings and torture of innocent citizens by security forces on the flimsy suspicion of some imaginary intelligence was rife during the rama. Just when we were getting used to it, they are back again and in even worse form.

Because of restrictions on information it is difficult to gauge detailed battle of battles like the one in Sinarha on Tuesday night. There have been commando operations and the like, in the recent time. story of Thawang last month, but the Maoists and villagers had all fled by the time the army got there. However, there is now a more visible strain of the murderous level which is spinning out of control. The targeting by Naxalbaisi vigilantes last month of anyone wearing a dhaka top has ominous ethnic and communal overtones. The execution of six villagers in Pipal Danda of Sindhupalchok earlier this month was carried out by 13-14 year olds. What are those children going to grow up to be? Who is going to hold the perpetrators responsible? How much longer do we have to wait for a peaceful roadmap? Who benefits from this escalation? Unless we nip in the bud this drift from a class war into a caste war, the last nine years are going to look like a picnic.

The Indian government is hurting badly at the economic front. The national economy is hurting badly, in the balance of payments the increasing Gold purchases are a major worry. In the domain of the macro, the national economy is hurting badly, in the balance of payments the increasing Gold purchases are a major worry. In the domain of the macro, the national economy is hurting badly, in the balance of payments the increasing Gold purchases are a major worry.

For the Indian defence minister, it is the “time for an urgent re think, but the rumoured cabinet reshuffle is unlikely to change the ground reality. The emergency has been lifted, but it’s still an emergency. The media is under a straitjacket and the sword of the managing 6 directive is still hanging over its head. Politicians, lawyers, activists and journalists are under valley arrest, and the only way to find out whether one is on the list is to test it by trying to fly out and see what happens. One fails to see how such bullying tactics helps the government in any way. The foolshearted counter-productive ban on news on radio actually exposes a deep sense of insecurity. Arbitrary detention, beatings and torture of innocent citizens by security forces on the flimsy suspicion of some imaginary intelligence was rife during the rama. Just when we were getting used to it, they are back again and in even worse form.

Because of restrictions on information it is difficult to gauge detailed battle of battles like the one in Sinarha on Tuesday night. There have been commando operations and the like, in the recent time. story of Thawang last month, but the Maoists and villagers had all fled by the time the army got there. However, there is now a more visible strain of the murderous level which is spinning out of control. The targeting by Naxalbaisi vigilantes last month of anyone wearing a dhaka top has ominous ethnic and communal overtones. The execution of six villagers in Pipal Danda of Sindhupalchok earlier this month was carried out by 13-14 year olds. What are those children going to grow up to be? Who is going to hold the perpetrators responsible? How much longer do we have to wait for a peaceful roadmap? Who benefits from this escalation? Unless we nip in the bud this drift from a class war into a caste war, the last nine years are going to look like a picnic.

The Indian government is hurting badly at the economic front. The national economy is hurting badly, in the balance of payments the increasing Gold purchases are a major worry. In the domain of the macro, the national economy is hurting badly, in the balance of payments the increasing Gold purchases are a major worry. In the domain of the macro, the national economy is hurting badly, in the balance of payments the increasing Gold purchases are a major worry.

For the Indian defence minister, it is the “time for an urgent re think, but the rumoured cabinet reshuffle is unlikely to change the ground reality. The emergency has been lifted, but it’s still an emergency. The media is under a straitjacket and the sword of the managing 6 directive is still hanging over its head. Politicians, lawyers, activists and journalists are under valley arrest, and the only way to find out whether one is on the list is to test it by trying to fly out and see what happens. One fails to see how such bullying tactics helps the government in any way. The foolshearted counter-productive ban on news on radio actually exposes a deep sense of insecurity. Arbitrary detention, beatings and torture of innocent citizens by security forces on the flimsy suspicion of some imaginary intelligence was rife during the rama. Just when we were getting used to it, they are back again and in even worse form.

Because of restrictions on information it is difficult to gauge detailed battle of battles like the one in Sinarha on Tuesday night. There have been commando operations and the like, in the recent time. story of Thawang last month, but the Maoists and villagers had all fled by the time the army got there. However, there is now a more visible strain of the murderous level which is spinning out of control. The targeting by Naxalbaisi vigilantes last month of anyone wearing a dhaka top has ominous ethnic and communal overtones. The execution of six villagers in Pipal Danda of Sindhupalchok earlier this month was carried out by 13-14 year olds. What are those children going to grow up to be? Who is going to hold the perpetrators responsible? How much longer do we have to wait for a peaceful roadmap? Who benefits from this escalation? Unless we nip in the bud this drift from a class war into a caste war, the last nine years are going to look like a picnic.

The Indian government is hurting badly at the economic front. The national economy is hurting badly, in the balance of payments the increasing Gold purchases are a major worry. In the domain of the macro, the national economy is hurting badly, in the balance of payments the increasing Gold purchases are a major worry. In the domain of the macro, the national economy is hurting badly, in the balance of payments the increasing Gold purchases are a major worry.

For the Indian defence minister, it is the “time for an urgent re think, but the rumoured cabinet reshuffle is unlikely to change the ground reality. The emergency has been lifted, but it’s still an emergency. The media is under a straitjacket and the sword of the managing 6 directive is still hanging over its head. Politicians, lawyers, activists and journalists are under valley arrest, and the only way to find out whether one is on the list is to test it by trying to fly out and see what happens. One fails to see how such bullying tactics helps the government in any way. The foolshearted counter-productive ban on news on radio actually exposes a deep sense of insecurity. Arbitrary detention, beatings and torture of innocent citizens by security forces on the flimsy suspicion of some imaginary intelligence was rife during the rama. Just when we were getting used to it, they are back again and in even worse form.
under the pretext of promoting democracy instigating false feelings of satisfaction to see a prominent journalist of his generation is understandable, it is disheartening to take a backseat to satisfy the principalities. Consequently, political pluralism clearly has to continue to be appalled by the populist tactics of the public. Nepal has become a country where students who vandalise public property are punished by its own credibility. Unsurprisingly, February First swept away our illusion and vigilantes have started to speak like the politicians. This should not merely seem content with the current status quo. The monarchy has played its role in breaking the silence. Nepal has become a country where the right to freedom of expression has been a constitutional norm. It was an antecedent consequence as security personnel acted like the king's army. The international damage to Nepal's image has been unprecedented international exposure and legitimacy. At the same time, the monarchy had its international image tarnished. The royalists simply missed the point that had happened to the Maoists. Even though the hexa- and octogenarian leaders of major political parties were foolishly distributing weapons to the vigilantes, they were not this one. Violence only breeds violence. We don't have to suffer again. Find another alternative to pacify, not this one. Violence only breeds violence.

Milan Gurung

TANKER TRUCKS

Nepali fuel tankers were recently held up in Bihar allegedly for not having paid their road tax to the state government. Apparently these fuel tankers were on a routine trip from east Nepal to pick up fuel from Bariاري, as per the agreement between the two countries, with due written permission from the Indian Embassy in Nepal. Even after repeated negotiations by Nepal Oil Corporation with the government of Bihar and after payment of the newly stipulated heavy road tax, some tankers were still withheld. What frustrates me is under what authority the NDC negotiated with the Indian state government for the release of the tankers. This matter should have gone through proper protocol channels: through the HMong Foreign Ministry and the Indian Embassy. It is true that the oil tankers had prior authorisation from the Indian Embassy then the sole responsibility for the facilitation of the release of the tanker fell as the clearing up of the misunderstanding rested on the Indian Embassy. This would have been an excellent opportunity for the embassy to extend help towards the government and the people of Nepal. Yet the matter was allowed to drag on. It may be admissible that a state government may have different rules than the central government but at that time, Bihar was under direct president rule.

Andy Joshi, email

JASMINO

It was heart-warming to read 'Jasmin' (Nepali Pan, #246) by Trishna Gurung on the occasion of Mother's Day. I left with a tremendous feeling of gratitude and admiration for my mum. Every time I call her she asks, "Chhoni, when are you coming to visit?" With her three daughters away from home and country, there's no void in her heart that is transparent. I wanted to thank Gurung for that beautiful piece on the most significant person in everyone's life—Aama.

Kushal Dhakwa, Sydney

CORRECTION

Due to an editing error, the name of a letter writer in ('Statement', #246) was spelled wrong. It should have been Hemant Aryal.

Times

VISIT THE 1ST NATTA TRAVEL MART 2005

"Shaping a brighter future for travel trade in Nepal"

Organised by

Royal Nepal Airlines

Supported by

Nepal Tourism Board

VENUE

BIRENTRA INTL CONVENTION CENTRE
NEW BANESHWOR, KATHMANDU

DATE: 14 MAY, 2005
(10 A.M. - 6 P.M.)

General Public

Discounted Packages for China, Thailand and Malaysia
Special Offer for Star Cruises
Special Discounted Package for Sri Lanka

BIRENTRA INTL CONVENTION CENTRE
NEW BANESHWOR, KATHMANDU

TANKER TRUCKS Nepali fuel tankers were recently held up in Bihar allegedly for not having paid their road tax to the state government. Apparently these fuel tankers were on a routine trip from east Nepal to pick up fuel from Barauni, as per the agreement between the two countries, with due written permission from the Indian Embassy in Nepal. Even after repeated negotiations by Nepal Oil Corporation with the government of Bihar and after payment of the newly stipulated heavy road tax, some tankers were still withheld. But this is Nepal so the royalists simply missed the point that had happened to the Maoists. Even though the hexa- and octogenarian leaders of major political parties were foolishly distributing weapons to the vigilantes, they were not this one. Violence only breeds violence. We don't have to suffer again. Find another alternative to pacify, not this one. Violence only breeds violence.

Milan Gurung

TANKER TRUCKS Nepali fuel tankers were recently held up in Bihar allegedly for not having paid their road tax to the state government. Apparently these fuel tankers were on a routine trip from east Nepal to pick up fuel from Barauni, as per the agreement between the two countries, with due written permission from the Indian Embassy in Nepal. Even after repeated negotiations by Nepal Oil Corporation with the government of Bihar and after payment of the newly stipulated heavy road tax, some tankers were still withheld. What frustrates me is under what authority the NDC negotiated with the Indian state government for the release of the tankers. This matter should have gone through proper protocol channels: through the HMong Foreign Ministry and the Indian Embassy. It is true that the oil tankers had prior authorisation from the Indian Embassy then the sole responsibility for the facilitation of the release of the tanker fell as the clearing up of the misunderstanding rested on the Indian Embassy. This would have been an excellent opportunity for the embassy to extend help towards the government and the people of Nepal. Yet the matter was allowed to drag on. It may be admissible that a state government may have different rules than the central government but at that time, Bihar was under direct president rule.

Andy Joshi, email

JASMINO It was heart-warming to read 'Jasmin' (Nepali Pan, #246) by Trishna Gurung on the occasion of Mother’s Day. I left with a tremendous feeling of gratitude and admiration for my mum. Every time I call her she asks, “Chhoni, when are you coming to visit?” With her three daughters away from home and country, there’s no void in her heart that is transparent. I wanted to thank Gurung for that beautiful piece on the most significant person in everyone’s life—Aama.

Kushal Dhakwa, Sydney

CORRECTION Due to an editing error, the name of a letter writer in (“Statement”, #246) was spelled wrong. It should have been Hemant Aryal.

Times

VISIT THE 1ST NATTA TRAVEL MART 2005 “Shaping a brighter future for travel trade in Nepal”

Organised by

Royal Nepal Airlines

Supported by

Nepal Tourism Board

VENUE BIRENTRA INTL CONVENTION CENTRE NEW BANESHWOR, KATHMANDU

DATE: 14 MAY, 2005 (10 A.M. - 6 P.M.)

General Public

Discounted Packages for China, Thailand and Malaysia Special Offer for Star Cruises Special Discounted Package for Sri Lanka

BIRENTRA INTL CONVENTION CENTRE NEW BANESHWOR, KATHMANDU

TANKER TRUCKS Nepali fuel tankers were recently held up in Bihar allegedly for not having paid their road tax to the state government. Apparently these fuel tankers were on a routine trip from east Nepal to pick up fuel from Barauni, as per the agreement between the two countries, with due written permission from the Indian Embassy in Nepal. Even after repeated negotiations by Nepal Oil Corporation with the government of Bihar and after payment of the newly stipulated heavy road tax, some tankers were still withheld. But this is Nepal so the royalists simply missed the point that had happened to the Maoists. Even though the hexa- and octogenarian leaders of major political parties were foolishly distributing weapons to the vigilantes, they were not this one. Violence only breeds violence. We don't have to suffer again. Find another alternative to pacify, not this one. Violence only breeds violence.

Milan Gurung

TANKER TRUCKS Nepali fuel tankers were recently held up in Bihar allegedly for not having paid their road tax to the state government. Apparently these fuel tankers were on a routine trip from east Nepal to pick up fuel from Barauni, as per the agreement between the two countries, with due written permission from the Indian Embassy in Nepal. Even after repeated negotiations by Nepal Oil Corporation with the government of Bihar and after payment of the newly stipulated heavy road tax, some tankers were still withheld. What frustrates me is under what authority the NDC negotiated with the Indian state government for the release of the tankers. This matter should have gone through proper protocol channels: through the HMong Foreign Ministry and the Indian Embassy. It is true that the oil tankers had prior authorisation from the Indian Embassy then the sole responsibility for the facilitation of the release of the tanker fell as the clearing up of the misunderstanding rested on the Indian Embassy. This would have been an excellent opportunity for the embassy to extend help towards the government and the people of Nepal. Yet the matter was allowed to drag on. It may be admissible that a state government may have different rules than the central government but at that time, Bihar was under direct president rule.

Andy Joshi, email

JASMINO It was heart-warming to read ‘Jasmin’ (Nepali Pan, #246) by Trishna Gurung on the occasion of Mother’s Day. I left with a tremendous feeling of gratitude and admiration for my mum. Every time I call her she asks, “Chhoni, when are you coming to visit?” With her three daughters away from home and country, there’s no void in her heart that is transparent. I wanted to thank Gurung for that beautiful piece on the most significant person in everyone’s life—Aama.

Kushal Dhakwa, Sydney

CORRECTION Due to an editing error, the name of a letter writer in (“Statement”, #246) was spelled wrong. It should have been Hemant Aryal.
Ian Martin is the head of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ (OHCHR) new monitoring mission in Nepal. He has 30 years of experience leading missions in Rwanda, Bosnia Herzegovina, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Darfur. In an exclusive interview with Nepali Times, Martin talked about the mandates and challenges of the monitoring mission.

**What will be your first order of business?**

Our immediate priority is to open the channels of communication which I have already begun doing in discussion with the government and to begin assembling the team that we need, orient and train the first of the human rights officers to join this operation. People have to understand that it takes time. We are a functioning team. Once we can open offices in other parts of the country we understand that it takes time. We are a functioning team.

**What role will you have in investigating human rights violations?**

We can’t do independent monitoring of the human rights situation in a conflict situation. But we need the assistance of interpreters. Some basic training in Nepali to those who have arrived. Nepali speakers as human rights officers and are also giving experiences in human rights investigation/monitoring and law. But our responsibility is not just to depend upon reports from others but to assess those ourselves. Access is difficult in these terrains to get to places where incidents have occurred. So it’s not going to be easy to carry out the investigations first hand always. I certainly see that as a challenge. In an armed conflict and highly politicised environment, it is not easy to ensure that we approach things with the standards of testing the credibility of information that the UN must apply.

**What challenges do you foresee?**

One of the challenges is going to be carrying out independent, objective investigations because of many reports of violations of human rights and humanitarian law. But our responsibility is not just to depend upon reports from others but to assess those ourselves. Access is difficult in these terrains to get to places where incidents have occurred. So it’s not going to be easy to carry out the investigations first hand always. I certainly see that as a challenge. In an armed conflict and highly politicised environment, it is not easy to ensure that we approach things with the standards of testing the credibility of information that the UN must apply.

**What would be the profile of independent monitors?**

We won’t be able to find people who have both previous experiences in human rights investigation/monitoring and fluency in Nepali language. We would like to recruit some Nepali speakers as human rights officers and are also giving some basic training in Nepal to those who have arrived. But we need the assistance of interpreters.

**When will the deployment start?**

Our initial team of about 12 monitors is already here and as soon as they complete their training, we will begin to operate. The UN has already begun to operate and has a human rights presence through the human rights adviser and the human rights information unit that is being established. We will be operating at the initial level from next week.

**How will the monitors operate in Maoist controlled areas?**

We will address impunity. What will be your first order of business? Our immediate priority is to open the channels of communication which I have already begun doing in discussion with the government and to begin assembling the team that we need, orient and train the first of the human rights officers to join this operation. People have to understand that it takes time. We are a functioning team. Once we can open offices in other parts of the country we understand that it takes time. We are a functioning team.

**What will exactly be your mandate?**

We will be assisting the National Human Rights Commission and of course, civil society organisations. Ultimately, that is where the protection of human rights depends. But in the meantime, we also have a mandate to do independent monitoring of the human rights situation and have very strong commitments in the agreement to having complete freedom of movement and access to places of detention, high-level channels of communication with the authorities including the army. That puts us in a position where we ought to be able to be effective.

**What would your role be in addressing impunity?**

We will address impunity. We won’t be able to find people who have both previous experiences in human rights investigation/monitoring and fluency in Nepali language. We would like to recruit some Nepali speakers as human rights officers and are also giving some basic training in Nepal to those who have arrived. But we need the assistance of interpreters.

**Where will the monitors be reporting?**

Our report will go to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour and she has asked in the agreement to report to the general assembly and of course the secretary general.

**Will you be opening up previous investigations?**

I wouldn't separate monitoring from investigation. I think we have quite enough to do addressing the current situation and fresh reports of incidents rather than open up retrospective investigations. But of course, one of the objectives is to address impunity and therefore, the extent to which there is proper follow through on investigations into past incidents is very important.

**How long do you expect the mission to remain in Nepal?**

The agreement is initially for a period of two years but it is renewable, so it becomes a matter for discussion between the high commissioner and the government of Nepal. As we come towards the end of that two-year period, let’s see what the situation is like then.
Kingfishers flying

New Indian private airlines are poaching each other’s pilots, leading to a high rate of crew turnover. This week, a new budget airline, Kingfisher Airlines began services with Airbus 320s stealing some pilots from state-run Indian Airlines. Domestic traffic is increasing at a blistering 20 percent per year and is expected to cross 50 million in five years. Kingfisher is competing with Air Deccan and Spice Air. Go Air, Indigo. Indusline and Air One are starting soon. Jet Airways is seeking permission to import pilots to add to 14 foreigners already flying. Air Deccan has 31 foreign pilots, including three Nepali captains who fly its ATR-72s. Salaries for pilots are now up to Rs 500,000 per month with senior pilots getting as much as Rs 600,000.

BCC protests

The British Broadcasting Corporation has written a strongly-worded letter to Radio Nepal complaining about a breach of contract in blocking out its World Service English news over BBC 103 FM in Kathmandu. Under an agreement signed in December, the Radio Nepal was required to relay the BBC news feed 23 hours a day over its 103 FM station. But since the end of February, Radio Nepal has been playing music for the first 15 minutes of the news at the top of every hour. A meeting attended by the Minister of Information and Communications last week after the BBC letter came in reportedly decided that the news block served no useful purpose and should be lifted. But the army still has not given the green light.

A new point

A new confectionary outlet, Baker’s Point, has opened in Kupendole opposite Hotel Himalaya. With emphasis on hygiene, it has a range of bakery products available.

Weekend grind

Surya Lights is organizing its annual Grind at Hyatt Regency on 14 May. DJ Jimmy T angree will also be performing at the event.

Growing profits

Based on the first nine month’s unaudited accounts, Everest Bank’s operating profit showed an increase of 23 percent over the last year. The Bank’s credit has grown by 22 percent.

STRICTLY BUSINESS

Ashutosh Tiwari

Policy pundits have long heralded the usual “poor countries save less, invest less on education and do not use technology explanations. Others attribute it to variations in geography and culture. Still others, citing North and South Korea as examples, say that what matters is market-friendliness of a country’s institutions. Working with other academics, Acemoglu has treated this last observation with rigour to answer: how is it that countries end up with the institutions that they have now and how big is the effect of such institutions on those countries’ wealth? In doing so, he has put the study in the middle of economics and understood the importance of history, politics and legal systems in interpreting nations’ economic lives.

Acemoglu defines institutions as “the rules of the game in economic, political and social interactions”. These rules refer to property rights, contract enforcement mechanisms, limits on politicians’ excesses, distribution of political power and the like. What he shows is that in many countries, these institutions have been set in place by historical happenstances that responded to the then prevailing incentives. For instance, even when the Spanish were in San Francisco and Los Angeles well before the English traders, they could not be there for long. Because they had to share the profits with monarchs in Europe who controlled how much of the traders could keep for themselves, they saw little incentive to hold on to their new land. Meanwhile, the English pushed for property rights to stake claims on the New World that the Spanish had first discovered.

Likewise, in Africa, death rates of their “bishops, soldiers and sailors” affected the settlement patterns of Europeans. That, in turn, affected the eventual arrangement of institutions in African countries. The logic is that in most places, high death rates discouraged Europeans from settling down. As such, they set up institutions to safeguard the riches from those places to their home countries. As a result, at times of independence in the ‘60s and the ‘70s, most African countries such as Zaire, inherited those entrenched extractive institutions, which the local elites kept in place to transfer resources into their own pockets. But in places (such as the US and Australia) where their death rates were lower, the Europeans settled down, cleared land for farming and started demanding that their properties be protected by laws similar to those of their home countries. Over time, these demands coalesced into market-friendly “rules of the game”, positively affecting those new countries’ economic growth.

Could an application of this “rules of the game” theory help us understand what is holding Nepali businesses back? Two hypotheses: first, the Nepali state, though never a colony, has long acted as a landlord—extracting surplus from villagers to pay for the elites’ indulgences. Reforms notwithstanding, that landlordism is still with us—dulling Nepalis’ entrepreneurial zeal to innovate, produce and sell anything anywhere with ease. And second, given that Nepal’s legal system is a mishmash of Hindu jurisprudence, traditional rules, ad hoc and western common-law statutes, Nepali businesses continue to find it difficult to fit in with the global supply chain of goods and services—credibly, competitively and for a long haul.
“How dare we let it happen”

Former Speaker Daman Nath Dhungana in Deshtar, 8 May

We won democracy in 1990. Fifty-five years later, we are still demanding democracy. Then we were stressing a national consensus and today we are doing the same. In 1990, we had a constitutional assembly but it could not accomplish its task. Perhaps that is why Nepalis have had to keep fighting for freedom again and again. One wonders when this saga of u-turning in and hijacking of democracy will end. Who is the hijacker? Why is it hijacked? Until and unless we find the answer, Nepalis will have to continue fighting for democracy. Why is the country once again under the direct rule of the king? The constitution of 1991 had ended any provision for the king’s direct rule. It had only provided a space in which the king had to remain a constitutional monarch. It was the same constitution that had guaranteed the supremacy of the people’s sovereignty and press freedom. Under the provision of press freedom, there are guarantees for the right to information, no closure of any publication house and no imposition of censorship. But now we see there is censorship. A state of emergency can’t be imposed without the ratification of the parliament and in absence of the recommendation of democratic forces. There is no way the king can be the chairman of the ministers’ council. Only the representatives of the people can remain in government. These are the fundamental aspects of the constitution.

Who are these people who threaten journalists, amnest and even torture them? Why are they doing it? These are issues we must raise.

I agree with Sher Bahadur Deuba on one thing—wherever we go, we will be governed according to law. The king, judiciary and each constitutional party must act according to the law and constitution, say experts.

Since the present government is unconstitutional, interpreting constitutional monarchy with the king carrying out his duties according to the constitution and other parties doing the same is not to be considered an improvement, according to Senior Advocate Sri Hari Aryal. The situation has grown worse after February First. The king and the political parties must sit down now to find a common ground to serve the good of the nation,” adds he.

Our constitution never envisioned a country without a parliament and according to principle, the situation cannot be analysed from the point of view of laws formed under parliament. The experts underline that it was against the law to arrest people even after the Supreme Court had ordered their release.

In Tundikhel

Rajshahi, 8 May

Maoist victims who have been lid hidden money in my bank in Tundikhel are falling ill because of the rain and fall in temperature. The children and the elderly are suffering from cold and other diseases, some have swollen bodies. More than 300 people have been living in various NGOs, they have绚丽edia. Chairman of the Maoist Victims’ Organisation Dhumaraj Neupane says, “We have not crossed over our heads, nothing to protect us from the damp.” He adds that they had asked various NGOs for help, their requests had fallen on deaf ears. The Maoist victims had asked to be given status of refugees but the government has remained unresponsive.

Money in the tank

Former Deputy Prime Minister Bhutan Mohan Adhikary in Jana Atra, 4 May

If the news that I had hidden money in my water tank was true, do you think this regime would have spared me? I would have been behind bars. After February First, my hands are as good as tied and my mouth as good as plastered because they’ve kept me under house arrest. Even my household help was not allowed to go out. While I was being kept captive, they launched a propaganda against me through print media and television. They comported against me and said I had hidden money in my water tank. They filmed a scene recovering money from someone else’s water tank and labelled my name in the entire episode before airing it on tv. And here I was under house arrest, helpless and unable to defend myself. Does this not expose the political culture of the present regime?

Can anyone prove that I illegally embezzled a paisa while I was finance minister? I am chief of the financial department of the party. Even there, I maintained the accounts up-to-date. I still don’t have my own house and live in rented premises. I don’t even own a car and am not ashamed to walk. I am a poor country’s politician. When so many people live in poverty, why should I lead a luxurious life? When I was the finance minister, the revenue increased by 33 percent. Now the finance minister has failed to increase the revenue has dropped. How come?

I did not agree to misappropriate royal palace expenses. Compared to the previous year, I brought in the army’s budget by Rs 430 million in order to persuade the Maoists to come for peace talks. At the same time, the army has been blaming me. But the Maoists called us servants of the king and insisted on talking only to him.

VDC secretaries

Kish, 5 May

The conflict may have ended in Nepal but it has been a boon for VDCs. It’s been four years since they stopped visiting the villages but VDC secretaries still receive their monthly allowances for going to the villages and returning to the headquarters. With the lack of people’s representation in the residential administration and the Maoist control over the villages, the VDCs have been misusing money. Of the 30 VDCs in Jajarkot, in all VDCs besides Khairahar, the VDC members are following transparency in work procedures including documentation and paper work of the people. These officers register their appearance in the headquarters for their salaries and duties and also make fake bills for the same.

100 days later

Editorial in Sanghu, 9 May

It will be a hundred days since the council of ministers was formed under the chairmanship of the king. Now that the honeymoon period is over, this is a good time to evaluate its performance. Now that the constitutionally aligned council was formed after the multi-party government was accused of bad governance, incapability of good governance, lack of transparency and accountability. This wasn’t the first ministerial council of a non-political character. The council appointed under Lekendra Bahadur Chand’s prime ministership after Sher Bahadur Deuba’s was kicked out of the “incompetent” label was similar. Some say, the council under Surya Bahadur Thapa also formed but Sher Bahadur Deuba had a multi-party cabinet. Accused of not being able to govern, in accordance to the norms of democracy, this too was thrown out and a new one formed with the king as chairman. That is why, this council of ministers, too must be evaluated according to their ability to ensure good governance, transparency and accountability.

Kathmandu’s dutes have been living in a false sense of good governance, transparency and accountability.

Aadhrundu has been living in a false sense of good governance, transparency and accountability.

Beyond Kathmandu, there has been no actual improvement in the situation. After February First has remained the same. That is why experts have said time and again that it is not right to evaluate Nepal from Kathmandu. Yes, citizenships and passports were issued in one

“Today from the Caucasus to Central Asia, people demand freedom and they will get it.”

US President George W Bush’s speech in Georgia on 10 May.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

#247

6 FROM THE NEPALI PRESS

SELECTED MATERIAL TRANSLATED EVERY WEEK FROM THE NEPALI PRESS
The political parties black and assassinating the characters of political leaders. They cannot gain the upper hand by only pointing out the bad things the multi-party government did. If someone is really keen on serving the nation and the people, they need not point out somebody else’s mistakes. The people will see their work as proof. Though this ministerial council has been critical of the multi-party government, their work has not been very different either. At least back then, the people could raise their voice against them and be critical. They could have talked to the people in the government. Now, even this right has been taken away from the people.
Across the hump

Tracing Princess Bhrikuti’s journey from Kathmandu to Lhasa in an air-conditioned Sajha Yatayat bus

MARK TURIN in LHASA

On Friday, 29 April, a group of local Chinese officials, Tibetan businessmen and a contingent from the Royal Nepali Consulate to the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) gathered at the bus station on the western side of Lhasa. Quite a crowd had assembled on this bright morning, including a fair number of passengers whose departure on local transport had been delayed by the inaugural ceremony for the direct bus service between Kathmandu and Lhasa. The local press were there in droves: tv cameramen, reporters and photographers, making the most of the splendid weather and colourful balloons which had been hung up to herald the occasion.

After a traditional Tibetan welcome involving costumed and masked dancers, the official introductions started, including that of Leela Mani Paudel, the Royal Nepali Consul General to Lhasa. Paudel read out a thoughtful three-page speech, delivered in excellent English and simultaneously translated into Chinese by an interpreter at his side. It was a matter of rejoicing, he said, that 11 years after the signing of a Transport Agreement between Nepal and China, this direct bus service between the capitals of the kingdom of Nepal and the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China should be ready to depart. Nepal is the only foreign country which has a direct air link with Lhasa, courtesy of Air China’s biweekly flights and this direct transnational road service will help provide increased mobility to the citizens of these neighbouring regions, the Consul General stated.

The commencement of the bus service was widely reported in the local media in Lhasa and is generally seen by both ethnic Tibetans and by migrant Chinese residents of Lhasa to be a positive move leading to increased connections between the cities. On the other hand, the railway linking Lhasa with ‘mainland’ China, which is under construction, is far more contentious and many Tibetans are concerned about a massive influx of Chinese labourers and settlers to the region.

As for Lhasa’s resident Nepalis, some expressed doubts about the utility of the Kathmandu-Lhasa bus service, suggesting that the practical benefits may be limited simply because the vehicles will ferry only around 100 people up and down every week. The flight, although expensive at $280 one-way, remains the option of choice for well-heeled travellers, while Nepalis involved in trade will continue to make use of the trucks and lorries that bring their supplies in and out en masse.

The direct bus service is truly a passenger service for short-stay tourists.

Clockwise, top: 
- The first Lhasa bus drives past fields of wheat near Bhaktapur on 29 April, it reached Lhasa on 4 May.
- Chinese passengers of the Lhasa bus walk through the Friendship Bridge.
- Hundred-year-old Bhekh Maya come to greet the passengers of the first Lhasa bus at Bhaktapur.
- Spectators gathered at the inaugural ceremony in Lhasa.
- Leela Mani Paudel, the Royal Consul General to Lhasa, standing in front of the Lhasa bus, flanked by Chinese and Tibetan officials.
- People waiting to welcome the passengers at Friendship Bridge.
- Driving off after a brief stop at Sangha to keep the engine from heating up too much.
punters? Are they Chinese, Tibetan, Nepali or foreign? As long as a structural inequality between China and Nepal remains unresolved, it appears that the number of Nepalis able to avail themselves of this service will remain limited: the Royal Nepali Consulate in Lhasa issues tourist visas to Chinese citizens at no charge within a few hours of application, while a reciprocal service has as yet not been extended to Nepalis applying for visas at the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu. It would be great to be able to secure a short-stay Chinese visa together with the bus ticket or have them both organised by a tour operator. Until this happens, once the flow of dignitaries making the trip has subsided, it is likely that the bulk of the passengers will be non-Asian tourists who can’t afford the flight but are interested in the novelty of the bus service. Even for this to happen, security between Kathmandu and Kodari must be assured and the vehicle will need a proven track record of comfort and reliability.

In short, then, the commencement of the service is an important step for cross-border mobility and a credit to the persistence of the authorities in both countries who have seen the idea through all of the possible obstacles. Now that the road is clear, we can only hope that more of Nepal’s citizens will be able to visit the city where their ancestors set up shop after weeks of gruelling hikes across Himalayan passes. What would the fabled seventh-century Princess Bhrikuti Debi, who married the then Tibetan ruler Trong Tsang Gampo, have thought of an air-conditioned Sajha Yatayat bus completing the journey in two days.

Mark Turin is a linguistic anthropologist and Director of the Digital Himalaya Project based at the University of Cambridge in UK. He is presently a Visiting Scientist at IGNOU. www.digitalhimalaya.com
Problems don’t disappear
They can only be solved as extraordinary times call for extraordinary courage

Kigali, 1994. Paul Rusesabagina, house manager of Hotel des Mille Collines, has just bought Cohibar cigars to entertain his guests with style. Outside his home and hotel is chaos and conflict. The streets are lined with men in green fatigues carrying guns and machetes. The Hutus are out to kill the Tutsi rebels and the violence in Rwanda can only grow worse. The radios crackle to life as they tune into the Hutu Power Radio. This media is their medium for brainwashing the Hutus by referring to the Tutsis as ‘cockroaches’ and ‘tall trees’ in their propaganda. “They must be cut down”. “They must be squashed”. The Hutu rebels believe that they can only win by wiping out the entire Tutsi tribe. In the midst of all this is Paul, a Hutu married to a Tutsi, assuming people of the other conflict until he flees to Belgium. His love for his family leads him to summon extraordinary courage and save 1,268 Rwandans. And they were extraordinary times. Just a decade ago, in the age of the Internet and hi-tech gadgets, the genocide that swept this country in sub-Saharan Africa was virtually ignored. The UN and world super powers hid their selfish interests behind the technicality of big words and bureaucracy. We are here as peacekeepers not as peacemakers,” says UN’s Colonel Oliver (Nick Nolte) in an interview during the course of the movie. And one journalist remarks in disgust to the world’s indifference, “They’ll say ‘Oh my God, that’s horrible!’ and go on eating your dinner. Tomorrow, you will have something more to talk about. One agreement has been signed and another is to follow. The west has not ignored us completely but as you rush from this reception to that party to that conference and that official gathering or workshop, you wonder who is really behind the technicality of big words. You can taste the fear when you watch Hotel Rwanda in the comfort of your home because the smell in the air around you is all too real.

The ‘them’ fast becomes ‘us’ as Paul and all the Tutsis taking refuge in Hotel des Milles Collines. And Colonel Oliver, despite himself, explains in his search for Paul Rusesabagina and Sophie Okonedo as his wife Tatiana are brilliant. Directed by Terry George, the screenplay is especially effective without the usual glamorous hero of Hollywood films. As a movie of social conscience, it moves you beyond indifference.

Hotel Rwanda is a true story of heroism in today’s world telling leaders their ego could cost too many precious lives. Don Cheadle as Paul Rusesabagina and Sophie Okonedo as his wife Tatiana are brilliant. Directed by Terry George, the screenplay is especially effective without the usual glamorous hero of Hollywood films. As a movie of social conscience, it moves you beyond indifference.

Hotel Rwanda is available for rent on Suwal Video, Rs 45. 4421522. DVD, Rs 556. 4451615. Utsho Video, Rs 45. 4422685. Akash Video, Rs 35. 4446688.

The religious X-file
Cracking the Da Vinci code from this side of the world

A least once every year, we in Nepal enjoy the season of the divine Durga. We examine our religion and our beliefs as an essential part of our self-inventory. Take stock, repent ways of living that do not honour us or our highest calling. So to take some time to sit with a book that makes us think about religion and what it means to each of us is probably an annual luxury we can afford. And if that book happens to be a grippingly well-played mystery like Sherlock Holmes, all the better.

The plot of the Da Vinci Code is that of the age-old quest for the Holy Grail but not the one most Christians consider fact: thechriseal advertised in the Last Supper was indeed a simple cup. In this book, the Grail ends up being the search for Mary Magdalene’s tomb in which there are two secret documents whose contents will wreck Christianity. These documents contain the ‘true’ gospel—one whose foundation is the feminine/divine known in goddess worship. If revealed to the world, these recovered ‘truths’ will pave the way for us to return to a more enlightened spirituality centered on the divine feminine.

For us here in Nepal, it comes as no surprise when the author, Dan Brown, points the plot towards uncovering the divine feminine (Maya, Debi, Kali) that has been hidden from Christianity by mere mortal men, specifically, the Vatican Church in Rome wanting to erase the role of females, have killed Mary as a prostitute, burned women at the stake, and in short, erased any role of women and the divine feminine from Christianity. The shocking part for the reader of The Da Vinci Code is that this struggle is perhaps still taking place today (how many women were considered for the position of Pope?). The Vatican has already made a formal statement saying that the book is rubbish, which for such a global power to comment on a New York Times Bestseller is almost unprecedented and for Church leaders across the globe there has not been as much consternation since the Hollywood movie The Last Temptation of Christ was released. That story by Nikos Kazantzakis taken to film by Martin Scorsese in 1988 had Christian leaders donning the ticket counters blocking the entrance for all theatre goers, just for implying that Jesus Christ had a physical relationship with Mary.

What is uncovered and documented along the way is that early Christian leaders wanting to erase the role of females, have killed Mary as a prostitute, burned women at the stake, and in short, erased any role of women and the divine feminine from Christianity. The shocking part for the reader of The Da Vinci Code is that this struggle is perhaps still taking place today (how many women were considered for the position of Pope?). The Vatican has already made a formal statement saying that the book is rubbish, which for such a global power to comment on a New York Times Bestseller is almost unprecedented and for Church leaders across the globe there has not been as much consternation since the Hollywood movie The Last Temptation of Christ was released. That story by Nikos Kazantzakis taken to film by Martin Scorsese in 1988 had Christian leaders donning the ticket counters blocking the entrance for all theatre goers, just for implying that Jesus Christ had a physical relationship with Mary.

What is uncovered and documented along the way is that early Christian leaders wanting to erase the role of females, have killed Mary as a prostitute, burned women at the stake, and in short, erased any role of women and the divine feminine from Christianity. The shocking part for the reader of The Da Vinci Code is that this struggle is perhaps still taking place today (how many women were considered for the position of Pope?). The Vatican has already made a formal statement saying that the book is rubbish, which for such a global power to comment on a New York Times Bestseller is almost unprecedented and for Church leaders across the globe there has not been as much consternation since the Hollywood movie The Last Temptation of Christ was released. That story by Nikos Kazantzakis taken to film by Martin Scorsese in 1988 had Christian leaders donning the ticket counters blocking the entrance for all theatre goers, just for implying that Jesus Christ had a physical relationship with Mary.

What is uncovered and documented along the way is that early Christian leaders wanting to erase the role of females, have killed Mary as a prostitute, burned women at the stake, and in short, erased any role of women and the divine feminine from Christianity. The shocking part for the reader of The Da Vinci Code is that this struggle is perhaps still taking place today (how many women were considered for the position of Pope?). The Vatican has already made a formal statement saying that the book is rubbish, which for such a global power to comment on a New York Times Bestseller is almost unprecedented and for Church leaders across the globe there has not been as much consternation since the Hollywood movie The Last Temptation of Christ was released. That story by Nikos Kazantzakis taken to film by Martin Scorsese in 1988 had Christian leaders donning the ticket counters blocking the entrance for all theatre goers, just for implying that Jesus Christ had a physical relationship with Mary.

What is uncovered and documented along the way is that early Christian leaders wanting to erase the role of females, have killed Mary as a prostitute, burned women at the stake, and in short, erased any role of women and the divine feminine from Christianity. The shocking part for the reader of The Da Vinci Code is that this struggle is perhaps still taking place today (how many women were considered for the position of Pope?). The Vatican has already made a formal statement saying that the book is rubbish, which for such a global power to comment on a New York Times Bestseller is almost unprecedented and for Church leaders across the globe there has not been as much consternation since the Hollywood movie The Last Temptation of Christ was released. That story by Nikos Kazantzakis taken to film by Martin Scorsese in 1988 had Christian leaders donning the ticket counters blocking the entrance for all theatre goers, just for implying that Jesus Christ had a physical relationship with Mary.

What is uncovered and documented along the way is that early Christian leaders wanting to erase the role of females, have killed Mary as a prostitute, burned women at the stake, and in short, erased any role of women and the divine feminine from Christianity. The shocking part for the reader of The Da Vinci Code is that this struggle is perhaps still taking place today (how many women were considered for the position of Pope?). The Vatican has already made a formal statement saying that the book is rubbish, which for such a global power to comment on a New York Times Bestseller is almost unprecedented and for Church leaders across the globe there has not been as much consternation since the Hollywood movie The Last Temptation of Christ was released. That story by Nikos Kazantzakis taken to film by Martin Scorsese in 1988 had Christian leaders donning the ticket counters blocking the entrance for all theatre goers, just for implying that Jesus Christ had a physical relationship with Mary.

What is uncovered and documented along the way is that early Christian leaders wanting to erase the role of females, have killed Mary as a prostitute, burned women at the stake, and in short, erased any role of women and the divine feminine from Christianity. The shocking part for the reader of The Da Vinci Code is that this struggle is perhaps still taking place today (how many women were considered for the position of Pope?). The Vatican has already made a formal statement saying that the book is rubbish, which for such a global power to comment on a New York Times Bestseller is almost unprecedented and for Church leaders across the globe there has not been as much consternation since the Hollywood movie The Last Temptation of Christ was released. That story by Nikos Kazantzakis taken to film by Martin Scorsese in 1988 had Christian leaders donning the ticket counters blocking the entrance for all theatre goers, just for implying that Jesus Christ had a physical relationship with Mary.

What is uncovered and documented along the way is that early Christian leaders wanting to erase the role of females, have killed Mary as a prostitute, burned women at the stake, and in short, erased any role of women and the divine feminine from Christianity. The shocking part for the reader of The Da Vinci Code is that this struggle is perhaps still taking place today (how many women were considered for the position of Pope?). The Vatican has already made a formal statement saying that the book is rubbish, which for such a global power to comment on a New York Times Bestseller is almost unprecedented and for Church leaders across the globe there has not been as much consternation since the Hollywood movie The Last Temptation of Christ was released. That story by Nikos Kazantzakis taken to film by Martin Scorsese in 1988 had Christian leaders donning the ticket counters blocking the entrance for all theatre goers, just for implying that Jesus Christ had a physical relationship with Mary.
Hungry season in the hills...but there is no food crisis yet, says the UN

NARESH NEWAR
in NEPALGANJ

This is the time of the year when a large number of Nepali migrant workers traditionally return to their remote homes in western Nepal to harvest winter crops and prepare for the monsoon cropping.

It is the notorious ‘hungry season’, the weeks between mid-March to mid-April when food stocks are down and farmers need to dig into their savings to survive.

For centuries, food supply has always been precarious in Nepal’s remote districts especially during pre-harvest season. And when shortages are acute, villagers migrate temporarily to neighbouring districts or down to the plains in search of work. But the national media has confused these shortages with famine conditions and has shown the false conclusion that it is due to the conflict.

“If there is food crisis according to what is reported in the media, then it should be based on facts and not speculation,” says Erika Jongensens, representative of the UN’s World Food Program (WFP) in Nepal, “rumors should not set the agenda. Our monitoring shows no sign of a large food crisis.

Since October 2002, WFP has surveyed food security situation in 32 districts of Nepal where 30 field monitors collect household and community data to provide information about the food situation in the country.

The conclusion is that Nepal has not yet reached a situation where lack of food is leading to a severe humanitarian crisis. The UN is concerned that exaggerated media reports will delay response when there is a real crisis in the future.

“The problem is that most of the news about the situation of the remote areas is taken from the district headquarters. It is very important to visit remote parts of the country by which we can assess the actual situation,” says WFP’s Shabah B Singh who has travelled extensively across the midwest.

In the last few months, the news of a food crisis was highlighted after the government of Nepal’s New Food Corporation (NFC) was unable to airlift rice into some remote districts due to the Maoist blockade. This temporary shortage of subsidized rice in the district headquarters was described as an ‘impending famine’ in alarmist media reports.

Relief groups working in western Nepal say rice unloaded from choppers mostly fed civil servants stationed at district headquarters, it doesn’t really get down to the poorest of the poor farmers away from the town. Pumolokishly, some of the subsidized rice is turned into rice in many district headquarters to meet the local demand for alcohol.

“The most affected are government officials, the airlifted rice makes no difference to the villagers,” said Eswar Shaha, the ex-3DC chairman of Humla. In the outlying villages, farmers eat wheat, millet, beans and maize as they always have. Rice is a luxury anyway.

In Simikot, the local food depot provides 15 kg of rice per person every month at subsidised rates. Villagers from more than a day’s walk away can’t travel all the way to the Humla district headquarters to buy rice and even if they could, they can’t afford it.

In Bajhang, the district headquarters of Bajang, Bijaya and Muza is helping the farmers develop millet trails, bridges and off-season vegetable and orchard cultivation.

“As long as the programs are pro-poor there is no obstacle from the Maoists,” says economist Narendra KC of another relief group, SAPPROS-Nepal.

Agronomist PB Singh also doesn’t believe that the conflict has reduced food production.

“Low production or barren fields in Bajhang or Bajura are not a direct result of conflict, they were there even before the conflict,” he explains, “the media has got it all wrong.”

Lack of planning, management, poor distribution and storage and lack of efficient response have always contributed to food shortages in western Nepal, and today it is no different.

“Millions of small farmers, landless rural families and unskilled urban workers are food insecure but it is less clear whether there has been a real decline in food security over the past five years, and whether any decline can be attributed to the conflict specifically,” writes David Seldon and Jagmuthl Abhikar in their report Conflict and Food Security in Nepal.

Agencies like WFP, however, continue to monitor the food situation closely and say they want to be prepared in case things really take a turn for the worse.

With human rights groups and activists screaming for a stop to military aid, the RNA needs to come up with a self-sufficient military strategy for this insurgency. Being an aficionado of movies, may I suggest that they borrow from Akira Kurosawa’s Japanese sword-fighting classic, The Seven Samurai. Instead of Samurai, send seven gregarious, backslapping, butt-scratching Gurkhas to each Maoist village. Replace mauling Samurai’s two finely made swords (known as katana and wakizashi for you Samurai literati) with two roughly made but highly effective khukuris. And, in practical terms, this means that we were so out of it that Chang Shumsher’s eighth cousin twice removed living in Doli was ahead of my grandfather to become prime minister. Why do you think I work for a living?

Remember those tari colonial hunts we read about in history books? The ones where Juddha Shumsher and King George along with the help of 800 drunkeys, bartenders and relatives bagged 38 tigers, 49 wild boar, 36 tigers and 25 species of game birds in a single day—all from the comfortable perch of an elephant!

It is not making sure we look up as deprived by my grandson devised my own low-cost version of the colonial hunt. Basicadly, we’d go out with home-made slingshots and hop from Nepal to Laos with pistol, doing serious damage to the sparrow, temple pigeon and monkey populations along the way. But unlike the environmentally insensitive colonial hunts of those other Romans, we are still alive. Ok, we were killed. Oh well, we deserve it. But when they die, they deserve a break and also, I don’t want to go back home and find that we’ve been re-classified again as Z Class. That would ruin my grandmother’s day.

Colonial hunts A poor Rana’s guide to hunting

There is this stereotype that has been around since I was a kid: that all Ranis are rich, have concubines, engage in prolific tiger-hunting, and generally indulge in extreme decadence. One part about the decadence is true. Indeed, Ranis are now referred to as diverse as any group in Nepal (perhaps with the exception of the Koirala clan).

Take my family. According to my grandfather, after Jag Bahadur took over, he spread the wealth around amongst family and friends. But my great, great, great grandmother, who never met a card game she didn’t like, wipped out her family fortune in a couple of Daasain card parties.

By the time the baton was passed to my grandfather, he said we were so down and out that we didn’t even fit into Chandra Shumsher’s A, B, C classification system for Ranis. My grandmother tells me that Chandra Shumsher was forced to extend the classification on a one-time basis just for our family. I believe we fall somewhere between U and Z.

In local terms, this means that we were so out of it that Chandra Shumsher’s eighth cousin twice removed living in Doli was ahead of my grandfather to become prime minister. Why do you think I work for a living?

Remember those tari colonial hunts we read about in history books? The ones where Juddha Shumsher and King George along with the help of 800 drunkeys, bartenders and relatives bagged 38 tigers, 49 wild boar, 36 tigers and 25 species of game birds in a single day—all from the comfortable perch of an elephant!

It is not making sure we look up as deprived by my grandson devised my own low-cost version of the colonial hunt. Basicadly, we’d go out with home-made slingshots and hop from Nepal to Laos with pistol, doing serious damage to the sparrow, temple pigeon and monkey populations along the way. But unlike the environmentally insensitive colonial hunts of those other Romans, we are still alive. Ok, we were killed. Oh well, we deserve it. But when they die, they deserve a break and also, I don’t want to go back home and find that we’ve been re-classified again as Z Class. That would ruin my grandmother’s day.

With human rights groups and activists screaming for a stop to military aid, the RNA needs to come up with a self-sufficient military strategy for this insurgency. Being an aficionado of movies, may I suggest that they borrow from Akira Kurosawa’s Japanese sword-fighting classic, The Seven Samurai. Instead of Samurai, send seven gregarious, backslapping, butt-scratching Gurkhas to each Maoist village. Replace mauling Samurai’s two finely made swords (known as katana and wakizashi for you Samurai literati) with two roughly made but highly effective khukuris. And, in practical terms, this means that we were so out of it that Chang Shumsher’s eighth cousin twice removed living in Doli was ahead of my grandfather to become prime minister. Why do you think I work for a living?

Remember those tari colonial hunts we read about in history books? The ones where Juddha Shumsher and King George along with the help of 800 drunkeys, bartenders and relatives bagged 38 tigers, 49 wild boar, 36 tigers and 25 species of game birds in a single day—all from the comfortable perch of an elephant!

It is not making sure we look up as deprived by my grandson devised my own low-cost version of the colonial hunt. Basicadly, we’d go out with home-made slingshots and hop from Nepal to Laos with pistol, doing serious damage to the sparrow, temple pigeon and monkey populations along the way. But unlike the environmentally insensitive colonial hunts of those other Romans, we are still alive. Ok, we were killed. Oh well, we deserve it. But when they die, they deserve a break and also, I don’t want to go back home and find that we’ve been re-classified again as Z Class. That would ruin my grandmother’s day.

With human rights groups and activists screaming for a stop to military aid, the RNA needs to come up with a self-sufficient military strategy for this insurgency. Being an aficionado of movies, may I suggest that they borrow from Akira Kurosawa’s Japanese sword-fighting classic, The Seven Samurai. Instead of Samurai, send seven gregarious, backslapping, butt-scratching Gurkhas to each Maoist village. Replace mauling Samurai’s two finely made swords (known as katana and wakizashi for you Samurai literati) with two roughly made but highly effective khukuris. And, in practical terms, this means that we were so out of it that Chang Shumsher’s eighth cousin twice removed living in Doli was ahead of my grandfather to become prime minister. Why do you think I work for a living?
I would be instructive to look upon India from the vantage point of Kathmandu, the capital of a Nepal that was gratuitously described by The Economist as a ‘failed state’. For the past fortnight, there has been both consternation and confusion in Nepal over Big Brother India’s stand on developments in the Himalayan kingdom. After King Gyanendra imposed his emergency on 1 February, it was understood that India, not only supplied weapons to the Royal Nepali Army for the war against Comrade Prachanda’s People’s Liberation Army, but in fact, that was where things stood until the prime minister and external affairs minister met King Gyanendra on the sidelines of the Bandung jamboree last month.

The king assured Indian leaders that the emergency would be lifted by 1 May and steps would be taken to ensure a phased return of normal political activity, including the release of political prisoners. Unfortunately, the apparent U-turn of the political leadership did not please the mandarins in South Block—the covenanted custodians of national interest. Seizing on the arrest of the former prime minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, on corruption-related charges, India did another flip-flop. Even after the emergency was withdrawn on 1 May, India responded with the bland assertion that it was not enough. The message from South Block was clear: never mind the royal holding operation, on the contrary, so intense is the willingness to give the king a bloody nose. India’s Nepal policy is tied to a U-turn of the political leadership. This could even involve direct intervention to keep the Maoists at bay. A royal holding operation, on the other hand, will expose the glaring mismatch between India’s policy objectives and its capabilities. Apart from exposing India as a vengeful but thoughtless bully, unworthy of assuming global responsibilities, King Gyanendra would have also taught New Delhi that diplomacy is far too important to be left to diplomats.

The implications of this subterfuge are profound. If the monarchy is crippled, India will have to end up holding the can for a fractions and unreliable ‘democratic’ regime. This could even involve direct intervention to keep the Maoists at bay. A royal holding operation, on the other hand, will expose the glaring mismatch between India’s policy objectives and its capabilities. Apart from exposing India as a vengeful but thoughtless bully, unworthy of assuming global responsibilities, King Gyanendra would have also taught New Delhi that diplomacy is far too important to be left to diplomats.

Swapan Dasgupta is an Indian political commentator and this column was excerpted from The Telegraph.
In these many years as a teaching professional, I have constantly come across regular golfers who get on the practice range and whack hundreds of balls with what I call a ‘hit and hope’ attitude. I feel they believe that after hitting enough balls, the Golfing Gods will magically bestow upon them the ability to hit straight and long. There seems to be no end to the supply of this breed of aspiring players.

Jack Nicklaus, one of golf’s greatest players, said, “I NEVER practiced without a firm plan and ALWAYS practiced with a certain goal in mind for each practice session.” Most weekend golfers manage to sneak in time to visit a practice range during the week to improve their game. They put in quite a few hours to get the ball airborne in a straight line and often manage to achieve reasonable success. Come weekend and back on the course, they just can’t seem to repeat what they were doing in practice. Confused and aggravated, they wonder why. My answer is simply that their practice sessions are often executed without a goal or target.

Here are some guidelines for your forthcoming practice sessions:

1. When working on your technique, do it without a ball and do it slowly so you can feel and see (better if used with a mirror or camera) the exactness of the motion.
2. Always aim at something and practice.
3. Periodically check your alignment to ensure you are correctly lined up all the time. Also recheck your posture after each 20 shots or so.
4. Take a few seconds between each swing; hitting balls continuously one after the other usually results in more fundamental errors creeping into the swing and getting ingrained.
5. While working on your shots, if possible hit your fades and draws around a target object like a tree or a flag. It really helps you to get the feel for the shots. If there are no target objects to use, try to hit your fades from the right side of the practice tee and your draws from the left side. This will help you see the actual amount of movement you are getting.
6. Always watch the ball flight. See how it starts and how it finishes. You can actually identify faults on your swing plane, if any, from the ball flight. If your ball starts left and finishes right that means you are hitting the ball with an ‘out to in’ swing path with an open club face. Conversely, if the ball starts on the right of the target line and finishes left, you are hitting the ball with an ‘in to out’ swing path and a closed club face.
7. Rhythm is very important for consistent shot making. When practicing be conscious of the speed of the swing. Be aware that after hitting about 100 balls, the swing speed accelerates automatically.

In 2002, I had the opportunity to watch top golfers from around the globe at a European Tour event. Believe me, when practicing they were taking approximately 30 seconds to hit a single ball. So it is really not how many you hit, it is how you hit.

Next time you practice, keep the above points in mind. Practice is both about training the mind and the body. It creates a more stable base to play from. You can be assured that this will soon lead to an improvement in your game.

Deepak Acharya is a golf instructor and Golf Director at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, Kathmandu. prodeepak@hotmail.com
THERE ARE MYSTERIOUS DEATHS CAUSED BY MAN-EATING TIGERS IN JIM CORBETT PARK. THE INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE WILDERNESS APPOINTS AN ADVOCATE 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.

Nepal Weather

Kathmandu Valley

The rains cleared up the air last week with the average concentration of PM10 particles in Kathmandu Valley going down by 37 percent. Although areas with heavy traffic had PM10 levels that were twice as high as the national average, the air quality in residential areas and outskirts of the main city were within national standards. With the rains coming down, the pollutants in the air will hopefully remain fairly low this week too. So, breathe easy and take a walk after the rain.

NEPALI WEATHER

KATHMANDU VALLEY

by MAUSAM BEED

After the weeklong cloudy weather and rains in the first week of this month, weather parameters have finally changed from cool to hot. Valley temperatures hit the 30s for the first time this season and due to northwesterlies, humidity levels have dropped this week. This satellite image taken on Thursday morning shows a high pressure region over northern India that has sent temperatures soaring into the 40s in the Gangetic plains. The high pressure has deflected moisture-laden clouds into Central Asia. But there is a possibility of the clouds spilling over the pressure barrier on us. Mercury is going to climb into the low 30s this brilliantly sunny weekend, so plan to go swimming.

Nepali Cinema

There are mysterious deaths caused by man-eating tigers in Jim Corbett Park. The International Wildlife Wilderness 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.

The rains cleared up the air last week with the average concentration of PM10 particles in Kathmandu Valley going down by 37 percent. Although areas with heavy traffic had PM10 levels that were twice as high as the national average, the air quality in residential areas and outskirts of the main city were within national standards. With the rains coming down, the pollutants in the air will hopefully remain fairly low this week too. So, breathe easy and take a walk after the rain.

**KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY**

The rains cleared up the air last week with the average concentration of PM10 particles in Kathmandu Valley going down by 37 percent. Although areas with heavy traffic had PM10 levels that were twice as high as the national average, the air quality in residential areas and outskirts of the main city were within national standards. With the rains coming down, the pollutants in the air will hopefully remain fairly low this week too. So, breathe easy and take a walk after the rain.

**KATHMANDU VALLEY**

**by MAUSAM BEED**

After the weeklong cloudy weather and rains in the first week of this month, weather parameters have finally changed from cool to hot. Valley temperatures hit the 30s for the first time this season and due to northwesterlies, humidity levels have dropped this week. This satellite image taken on Thursday morning shows a high pressure region over northern India that has sent temperatures soaring into the 40s in the Gangetic plains. The high pressure has deflected moisture-laden clouds into Central Asia. But there is a possibility of the clouds spilling over the pressure barrier on us. Mercury is going to climb into the low 30s this brilliantly sunny weekend, so plan to go swimming.

NEPALI WEATHER

KATHMANDU VALLEY

by MAUSAM BEED

After the weeklong cloudy weather and rains in the first week of this month, weather parameters have finally changed from cool to hot. Valley temperatures hit the 30s for the first time this season and due to northwesterlies, humidity levels have dropped this week. This satellite image taken on Thursday morning shows a high pressure region over northern India that has sent temperatures soaring into the 40s in the Gangetic plains. The high pressure has deflected moisture-laden clouds into Central Asia. But there is a possibility of the clouds spilling over the pressure barrier on us. Mercury is going to climb into the low 30s this brilliantly sunny weekend, so plan to go swimming.

KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

The rains cleared up the air last week with the average concentration of PM10 particles in Kathmandu Valley going down by 37 percent. Although areas with heavy traffic had PM10 levels that were twice as high as the national average, the air quality in residential areas and outskirts of the main city were within national standards. With the rains coming down, the pollutants in the air will hopefully remain fairly low this week too. So, breathe easy and take a walk after the rain.

**KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY**

The rains cleared up the air last week with the average concentration of PM10 particles in Kathmandu Valley going down by 37 percent. Although areas with heavy traffic had PM10 levels that were twice as high as the national average, the air quality in residential areas and outskirts of the main city were within national standards. With the rains coming down, the pollutants in the air will hopefully remain fairly low this week too. So, breathe easy and take a walk after the rain.

NEPALI WEATHER

KATHMANDU VALLEY

by MAUSAM BEED

After the weeklong cloudy weather and rains in the first week of this month, weather parameters have finally changed from cool to hot. Valley temperatures hit the 30s for the first time this season and due to northwesterlies, humidity levels have dropped this week. This satellite image taken on Thursday morning shows a high pressure region over northern India that has sent temperatures soaring into the 40s in the Gangetic plains. The high pressure has deflected moisture-laden clouds into Central Asia. But there is a possibility of the clouds spilling over the pressure barrier on us. Mercury is going to climb into the low 30s this brilliantly sunny weekend, so plan to go swimming.

NEPALI WEATHER

KATHMANDU VALLEY

by MAUSAM BEED

After the weeklong cloudy weather and rains in the first week of this month, weather parameters have finally changed from cool to hot. Valley temperatures hit the 30s for the first time this season and due to northwesterlies, humidity levels have dropped this week. This satellite image taken on Thursday morning shows a high pressure region over northern India that has sent temperatures soaring into the 40s in the Gangetic plains. The high pressure has deflected moisture-laden clouds into Central Asia. But there is a possibility of the clouds spilling over the pressure barrier on us. Mercury is going to climb into the low 30s this brilliantly sunny weekend, so plan to go swimming.

KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

The rains cleared up the air last week with the average concentration of PM10 particles in Kathmandu Valley going down by 37 percent. Although areas with heavy traffic had PM10 levels that were twice as high as the national average, the air quality in residential areas and outskirts of the main city were within national standards. With the rains coming down, the pollutants in the air will hopefully remain fairly low this week too. So, breathe easy and take a walk after the rain.

**KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY**

The rains cleared up the air last week with the average concentration of PM10 particles in Kathmandu Valley going down by 37 percent. Although areas with heavy traffic had PM10 levels that were twice as high as the national average, the air quality in residential areas and outskirts of the main city were within national standards. With the rains coming down, the pollutants in the air will hopefully remain fairly low this week too. So, breathe easy and take a walk after the rain.

NEPALI WEATHER

KATHMANDU VALLEY

by MAUSAM BEED

After the weeklong cloudy weather and rains in the first week of this month, weather parameters have finally changed from cool to hot. Valley temperatures hit the 30s for the first time this season and due to northwesterlies, humidity levels have dropped this week. This satellite image taken on Thursday morning shows a high pressure region over northern India that has sent temperatures soaring into the 40s in the Gangetic plains. The high pressure has deflected moisture-laden clouds into Central Asia. But there is a possibility of the clouds spilling over the pressure barrier on us. Mercury is going to climb into the low 30s this brilliantly sunny weekend, so plan to go swimming.

NEPALI WEATHER

KATHMANDU VALLEY

by MAUSAM BEED

After the weeklong cloudy weather and rains in the first week of this month, weather parameters have finally changed from cool to hot. Valley temperatures hit the 30s for the first time this season and due to northwesterlies, humidity levels have dropped this week. This satellite image taken on Thursday morning shows a high pressure region over northern India that has sent temperatures soaring into the 40s in the Gangetic plains. The high pressure has deflected moisture-laden clouds into Central Asia. But there is a possibility of the clouds spilling over the pressure barrier on us. Mercury is going to climb into the low 30s this brilliantly sunny weekend, so plan to go swimming.

KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

The rains cleared up the air last week with the average concentration of PM10 particles in Kathmandu Valley going down by 37 percent. Although areas with heavy traffic had PM10 levels that were twice as high as the national average, the air quality in residential areas and outskirts of the main city were within national standards. With the rains coming down, the pollutants in the air will hopefully remain fairly low this week too. So, breathe easy and take a walk after the rain.

**KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY**

The rains cleared up the air last week with the average concentration of PM10 particles in Kathmandu Valley going down by 37 percent. Although areas with heavy traffic had PM10 levels that were twice as high as the national average, the air quality in residential areas and outskirts of the main city were within national standards. With the rains coming down, the pollutants in the air will hopefully remain fairly low this week too. So, breathe easy and take a walk after the rain.

NEPALI WEATHER

KATHMANDU VALLEY

by MAUSAM BEED

After the weeklong cloudy weather and rains in the first week of this month, weather parameters have finally changed from cool to hot. Valley temperatures hit the 30s for the first time this season and due to northwesterlies, humidity levels have dropped this week. This satellite image taken on Thursday morning shows a high pressure region over northern India that has sent temperatures soaring into the 40s in the Gangetic plains. The high pressure has deflected moisture-laden clouds into Central Asia. But there is a possibility of the clouds spilling over the pressure barrier on us. Mercury is going to climb into the low 30s this brilliantly sunny weekend, so plan to go swimming.
Kamala Lama was six when she came to Kathmandu with her family and started working in a carpet factory. She used to wake up before dawn every day with her mother and sister and spin wool and weave all day till eight at night.

One day in 1997 when Kamala was nine, she was rescued by child rights activists and taken to a rehabilitation centre where she went to school for the first time. Kamala’s mother wasn’t very happy with losing her and her income but Kamala discovered her lost childhood—laughing, playing and learning with her classmates. She excelled in class and now, at 17, she is in college in Kathmandu majoring in mass communications and sociology.

We caught up with Kamala on a recent flight from Vienna to Kathmandu. She was returning from ceremonies to mark the 10th anniversary of RUGMARK, the foundation that rescued her and hundreds like her in Nepal, India and Pakistan. Nepal’s success with rescuing and rehabilitating child carpet workers has been recognised worldwide and Kamala gave talks to students (see pic) and three press conferences, and her story was widely covered in the German media.

Today, most Nepali carpets exported to UK, America and Germany have RUGMARK certification ensuring that they are child labour-free and the proportion of children in the industry is now down to less than 10 percent. Returning from her visit abroad, Kamala looks out at the horizon over the Caspian Sea from her plane window and says with determination: “I know it’s a long way off but I want to be a lawyer and give other children like me a chance so they don’t have to work and can go to school.”

Kunda Dixit
The good old bad days

One hundred days later, it is clear the good old bad days are here again. But we see a certain complacency setting in. There are signs of smugness and hints of laxity in the crackdowns. It’s almost as if the hardliners have become half-hearted in their resolve. After coming this far and burning all our bridges, we can’t let this happen.

There are worrying signs that we are not being draconian enough in protecting our hard-won curbs on freedom.

High-level government officials themselves admitted recently that they have a long way to go before they can be compared to the Burmese junta. So, what are they waiting for? This is no time for shirking, they should roll up their sleeves and get to work since time and tidal wave waits for no man.

More vigilance, that is what we need. And more vigilantes.

I wouldn’t go as far as to say that our crackdowns have to be beefed up since that would ruffle religious sensibilities in this country, but there is no doubt that they need to be buffed up. So, in the national interest and for public service, we carried out a spot check of security operations to see for ourselves where things need to be tightened and where repression needs to be fine-tuned. We can’t afford to leave even one stone turned upside down in our effort to weed out freedom. And we detected the following lacunae that should be urgently set right:

1. There are still some trees along the Kantipath-Lajimpat road that have not yet been chopped down. What are they waiting for? And why the delay in axing the majestic line of eucalyptus along Pulchok Road? We gave strict orders that the tree felling strategic counteroffensive be successfully completed by the end of the emergency, and here we are in mid-May with the work only half done. And there is a whole boulevard of jacarandas along the Ring Road that are in full bloom in open defiance of prohibitory orders. It’s time for individual citizens to take the law into their own hands and work towards making the capital treeless by World Environment Day on 6 June.

2. Cable operators have successfully blocked nearly all 24-hour news channels for three months now. This is unprecedented in modern media history and must be applauded. However, we notice that Myanmar Television and Singapore’s Channel News Asia are still being carried on SpaceTime Network. These should be taken out forthwith before they spread notions of democracy among the gullible Nepali public.

3. Speaking of news, despite repeated orders from the high command to jam the BBC’s anti-nationalistic World Service on FM, Radio Nepal is only blocking the first 15 minutes of English news. What wrong with those lazy fellows, can’t they follow a simple order?

4. Allowing mobiles was a huge mistake, since people are now making pro-democracy phone calls. But what’s done can’t be undone, and I’m glad to note that the authoritarians are now on damage control mode to ensure chronic network congestion.

5. It has come to my notice that many people are still not being turned back from the airport. Yesterday, for instance, we have reliable intelligence reports that 1,950 Nepali citizens left Nepal on various international flights to possibly spread negative information abroad about the royal overtake. Will the concerned higher-up authorities please look into this? Hello. Is anyone listening?

KIRAN PANDAY