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Who's the roadblock?



MIN BAJRACHARYA

US Ambassador James Moriarty spoke to *Nepali Times* on Wednesday on a wide range of issues, including his wish that the king and the parties get over their differences in order to face the bigger threat of Maoism.

***Nepali Times:* Has the US position changed since 1 February when State Department spokesman Richard Boucher stated that the royal action was a setback in the fight against Maoism?**

Ambassador James Moriarty: Actually I think what Mr Boucher was referring to was the fact that we thought ultimately if the palace and the parties are not cooperating then you are going to have a tough time getting to a final settlement of the Maoist question. It was against that broad perspective that he was speaking and that still has not changed... We were not saying that we thought the army would be less effective. We were saying that the conditions for negotiating a settlement with the Maoists would not be there. If you do not have

reconciliation, I cannot figure out how you can deal with the Maoists problem.

Our reading was that the State Department statement was premised on the royal action, and that it would affect the fight against the Maoists.

No, it was not. Trust me, I wrote it! *(Laughs)* To address the Maoists you need three conditions in place: unity among the legitimate political actors, unity among the international community pushing the Maoists towards the table, and the question of whether the Maoists recognise that they are not going to win militarily. So, sure the army can be more aggressive for a while and that can cause the Maoists some pain, but if the Maoists believe that they have a chance to wedge the parties and

the palace apart, they are not going to come to the table in any serious fashion because they are going to think that we do not have to. If the international community is saying that the problem here is the government and not the Maoists, then again the Maoists are going to just hang on without having to worry about international public opinion.

In the call for reconciliation, is it not palace that has to take the initiative rather than the parties?

We have been noting all along that there has to be a proper atmosphere for reconciliation and that does involve the release of most of the political detainees, and a little bit more clarity on the status of civil liberties. We welcome the lifting of the state of emergency but obviously things have happened since then to cause people to doubt the seriousness of that action. So, I am not going to say that the

initiative lies with one side but there does have to be created first of all the atmosphere for reconciliation. Once that is created it has to be a two-way road. I do say that the government has to create the atmosphere, but if the finger-pointing continues thereafter you will not get anywhere.

Is this an attempt to place equivalence in the responsibility?

I take your point, but on the other hand the king is not talking about doing away with the parties. The king is talking about the need to get back multiparty democracy. I am not trying to defend the king's actions, we have already said that we are concerned by them. Ultimately, the two sides have to cooperate, against the much bigger threat... The parties say some reasonable things to me in private but if you look at what they say in public, well its pretty tough.

The international community and the king himself have always called for the parties to unite, and now they have. Shouldn't the US be more welcoming of this effort by the parties?

Well, actually when she was here Christina Rocca said something pretty close to that. She went on to qualify it, basically said that this should be the beginning point for talks rather than a bottom line ultimatum. Because let's face it, you know I know that the king has flat out said publicly that he believes that restoration of parliament would be unconstitutional. So, it is going to take convincing for him to buy that. And that's why we are not specifically saying, 'Gee whiz, we agree with all of this...' What is key to me is that there has to be agreement between the palace and the parties, and anything that they can agree on is great by me. I trust the wisdom of the parties not to do anything suicidal.

Continued p4

Times nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll # 249

Q. Will the new seven party alliance help in resolving the political deadlock?

Total votes: 718

Weekly Internet Poll # 250. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Do you believe there is a real rift in the Maoist leadership?

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ORDNANCE AGAINST MEDIA

If it had to be done, the intelligent way to do February First would have been to build domestic consensus, bring political parties in as a block, build bridges, assuage the international community, and work with a free media as an ally. That is the way to fight fascism. But by pattering their repression on Maoist tactics, our rulers have shown the same sloppy desperation as the enemy they are supposedly fighting.

Even people who went along with February First were dismayed by the choice of cabinet, district and zonal commissioners. It didn't take long to realise that the positions were a façade and real power was with a clique belonging to an old guard hardline fringe of the royal right from the Panchayat days.

With friends like these, the monarchy doesn't need enemies. By taking the crude retrogressive steps that they have (the latest is the medieval media edict that they have sent to King Gyanendra) they have turned themselves into the kingdom's most steadfast republicans.

What could be more symbolic of the pincer movement against the media than the looting last week of Ghodaghodi FM in western Nepal by Maoists at a time when the rural community radio station, like all others in the country, have been gagged by the state.

Elsewhere, we see the same petty-minded, counter-productive techniques to intimidate the media. The ministry's threats to close down Rishi Dhamala's Reporter's Club, an important forum for independent public debate, is just one example of this ham-handedness. It doesn't work in this day and age, this belief that you can shackle journalists. Power must come from popular legitimacy, not by cloaking yourself in sycophantic propaganda of pseudo-events on state media. It is not true that Nepal Television, Radio Nepal and the government dailies are as bad as the pre-1990s. They are worse.

When lies fly, telling the truth is the media's minimum responsibility. Better to keep quiet than tell a lie. Protecting the credibility and independence of media is one of the ways to protect legitimacy. But they never learn, do they? The draft media ordinance seeks to give the royal seal of approval and permanence to the harsh restrictions already in place, making it more difficult to tell the truth.

In his acceptance speech on receiving this year's UNESCO Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize, Chinese journalist Cheng Yizhong thanked the state for its stupidity in jailing him and turning him into a hero. He added mockingly: "Thank you for giving us the bell, and then taking it away."

Arm-twisting Nepal

You can't democratise a country by force

After enjoying power for some months, it is time again for UML to resurrect its 'alliance' with the NC and other straggler parties to clog the streets of Kathmandu, this time for 'total democracy'.

GUEST COLUMN
Bihari K Shrestha



Like the NC, the UML also launched the street undertaking with a confession of past mistakes, obviously believing that this mea culpa would win back public support.

The parties together have the means to land a few thousand banner-waving cadres at Asan Chok, but they know the public mood is still skeptical. The party jstras are a joke for most people, others just fume at the government's incompetence to keep the traffic moving.

A decade-and-a-half of mistakes and not learning from them are hard to erase. The parties have never atoned for their indulgence in unbounded corruption, cheap promises they never meant and never kept, and an utter lack of concern for the country's progress. If the parties want to rid themselves of their corrupt leaders which would, of course, wipe out most of the top leadership.

Despite all this, the EU and India recently backed the seven party alliance hoping it would lay the foundation for dialogue between the constitutional forces and the king. A similar argument was echoed in the editorial of this paper ('United we stand', #248).

This view is both naive and callous. The EU *sahibs* have to answer this: would your voters tolerate such corruptible leaders in your own union? This dabbling in Nepal's internal affairs is a diplomatic no-no, but if interfere it must why doesn't the EU's advocacy of democracy begin by getting the parties to purge themselves of their rotten cores? Nepal could benefit from such housekeeping: at least it should make the EU's own aid programs responsive to host country needs and if it had been adhered to in the past may have prevented Nepal from sliding down into the present morass.

Nepal's foreign friends must know how condescending they sound lecturing to us on democracy. We know and value democracy, and at present the public opinion is to let the political party leaders that squandered democratic gains to wilt in the wilderness where they can do no more harm. We know what genuine democracy is, and

why it should have transparency of management and accountability of leaders.

The forest legislation of 1988, founded on just such governance conditions at the level of local communities, helped us rescue our country from the brink of desertification, restore our forests and turn them into a major resource for local development. This was a unique and demonstrable exercise in grassroots democracy, and it was completely home grown.

India's lecturing on democracy is a different ball game altogether. It has always fished in troubled waters here: since the 'Bhutanisation' proposal as far back as 1949 to the Ranas. Then it imposed an unequal treaty of 'peace and friendship' in 1950, foisted its verdict as 'tripartite agreement' ending Rana rule in 1951, struck a secret 1965 treaty with King Mahendra exacting extraordinary concessions, arm-twisted the Marich Man Singh government in 1989 that led to the demise of the Panchayat system in 1990, and continued refusing to help repatriate Bhutani refugees. Media reports last week of Indian officials secretly meeting Maoist leaders in India is just the latest on this list of Indian meddling.

But it also proves the penchant of Nepali political leaders to run crying to New Delhi every time they suffer a setback at home. Sadly, Nepal's political parties, mainly the NC, have acted as Indian surrogates for regime change in Nepal. One of its leaders even issued a call on India recently to stay the course in persecuting her own motherland.

Here is where geology becomes a metaphor for geopolitics. If Nepal is seen as drifting increasingly northward, it is only because of the tectonic push from south of the border. ●



KIRAN PANDAY

Arrest this drift into obscurantism

Statecraft can't be divinely pre-ordained in this day and age

Last week, an honorary ADC to the king made a very startling statement. Brigadier General Bharat Keshar Simha asserted from a public forum that a Hindu king had no need to follow a constitution as he was bound by higher norms of his religion.

Gen Simha has a reputation of being somewhat of a gadfly, hence the usually vociferous civil society of Kathmandu chose to ignore his remark. But in an age

when even the gods have to conform to the laws of the land, there seems to be method in the madness of those bent on transforming a nominal Hindu kingdom into an obscurantist regime.

STATE OF THE STATE
CK Lal



Since King Gyanendra was declared 'the emperor of the world's Hindus' in September 2002 all kinds of Indian godmen have given their stamp of approval to his political moves. Despite extreme sensitivity to interference in our internal affairs whenever the subject is human rights and democracy, the royal regime extolled this endorsement by communal Indian politicians like Yogi Adityanath and Ashok Singhal. These are views that even the BJP finds too radical. The president of the World Hindu Federation in Nepal accepting sermons of sundry holy men from across the southern border on divinely ordained statecraft is extremely worrisome.

We need to be worried about the RSS-brand of Hindutva that resulted in the destruction of the Babri Mosque and the

Gujarat pogroms. Despite an overwhelming proportion of our population being Hindus, Nepal is a country of tremendous racial, religious, linguistic, cultural, and ethnic diversity. Religious fundamentalism, political authoritarianism and social racism are interrelated. People with democratic aspirations have to begin by separating their private beliefs, which can be religious, and public behaviour that has to be secular.

Intolerance is a by-product of politicised religion, the hallmark of Hindutva fundamentalism. For Nepal, further deepening of existing fissures is sure to be catastrophic. If accident of birth or adoption of faith be the arbitrator of fate, nothing can stop a 'low-born' or a non-believer

from rebellion.

We lay grandiose claims to over 700 years of religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence. But as the September riots last year in the wake of killing of innocent Nepalis in Iraq showed, our veil of urbanity is thin. There is great risk of inflaming the passions of a seething urban population. Already in the grips of a senseless class-war, we can't afford to open the far more dangerous front of a communal flare up.

Once let loose, it is a genie that won't easily go back into the bottle. And religious fundamentalism in any form anywhere is inimical to peace everywhere. The only way to fight fascism is to prevent it from raising any of its three heads: fundamentalism, authoritarianism and racism. ●

LETTERS

NEPAL

I am really shocked at China's new position on Nepal in the piece you translated from *Nepal* magazine ('India and China sacrifice Nepal', #247) and its approval of India's control of our Kalapani area. China is Nepal's most reliable friend and has denied making such an agreement. Another jolt was reading that China had accepted Nepal as being included in India's sphere of influence. We respect India and the Indian people but its position regarding Nepal is dubious.

China and India are our big brothers. They should not try to solve their border problems at our cost.

Dr Tahkur Subba Thebehang,
email

● The arguments by 'Name withheld on request' (Flop-flip, #248) could be genuine if the writer clarified what 'kleptocratic theory' is motivating donors also towards a

● When CK Lal overtly advised us to overlook Girija Babu's past and concentrate on the parties' united stand (for how long one wonders!) it's not difficult to gauge Lal's predilection for *Kangresis* (State of the State, #248). Lest we forget Bijen Jonchhe's invaluable sermon on bickering parties in the same issue ('Lest we forget'). It will be better for your paper to sport another gauge in the mast head for impartiality. We all know that the critical situation prevailing in the country compelled the government to rein in the otherwise free press but the resulting hue and cry of the media has been so much out of proportion that it reeks of malicious and dubious motives. Recent history of the Nepali private press pertaining to the issue of foreign investment, Lauda scam amply vindicates the truth about how the media have been systematically and intermittently used as a pawn by some sponsors. For a private media sustaining itself on scoops of macabre, relentless and gruesome slaying of the populace,

of the increasingly heavy traffic of the Valley. However, I am not sure that this is the case and even in the last case it should be possible to retain and incorporate the mature trees in the plans. Again, surely the road along Pulchok does not need to be widened at the expense of such beautiful trees? Such carnage would invoke wrath and immediate action from enraged citizens elsewhere in the world but here all we seem to be capable of is shaking our heads and wondering who got the contract for this wholesale slaughter and what was the price for receiving this contract? Most reputed schools in the Valley have environment clubs and I hope that the young members will take up the cause. The remaining trees need to be protected and new ones planted in the place of the ones slaughtered. There is no justification in destroying our green heritage to line pockets of fat contractors.

J Thapa,
Environment Committee (UNWO)

WHY NOT NEPALI?

Your translation of Rituraj's column from *Himal Khabarpatrika* ('Why English?', #246) is right on. A similar thing happened on 20 May, at the UNESCO Nepal office in Jawalakhel. A publication entitled *Cultural and Religious Diversity: Dialogue and Development* was launched to mark the world day for cultural diversity for dialogue and development. The audience was an eclectic mix of academics, local dignitaries and school children. All in all, an authentic UNESCO event: colourful, gentle and rather lacking in punch. The keynote address was delivered by Satya Mohan Joshi, life member of the Royal Nepal Academy, intellectual heavyweight and a great storyteller. He started by announcing (in Nepali) that he had been asked by UNESCO staff to speak in English on account of a few foreign guests. Why, I wondered? The audience was overwhelmingly Nepali. Would it not have been possible for Mr Joshi to deliver the talk in his beautiful Nepali and at the same time circulate an English translation for the few non-Nepali speaking expatriates present? The next UNESCO monograph in the pipeline is on the diversity and endangerment of languages spoken in Nepal, presently being prepared by a three-person team of professional linguists, including one senior Nepali scholar. It would be a move in the right direction for the opening ceremony to be in Nepali or one (or more) of Nepal's many languages and a Nepali edition of this monograph should certainly be published. Can an organisation have a compelling vision of implementing its mandate in Nepal, particularly when the dissemination of its own message remains restricted by its narrow frame of linguistic reference?

Mark Turin,
Digital Himalaya Project



'kleptocratic culture'. The points raised are reflective rather than explicit. Kleptocracy is rampant in almost every institution in contemporary Nepal—it's only a matter of degree, norm and definition. The 'kleptocratic culture' is not an offshoot of just the 1990s but an accumulation of practices from the Rana regime to the Panchayat polity under the active leadership of the monarchy. Why hasn't the letter writer delved into these problems? Indeed, post-1990 experience did not fulfil the minimum expectations of the people and political leaders abused the people's mandate. But there are many aspects of multiparty democracy that are worth appreciating. The writer seems to have very little faith in multiparty democracy and is uneasy to even sign his letter for no obvious reasons while giving his debatable monolithic comments. We can debate fruitfully—both subjectively and objectively—while not being biased, that is what the true Nepali intelligentsia needs to practice now.

Badri P Bastakoti, email

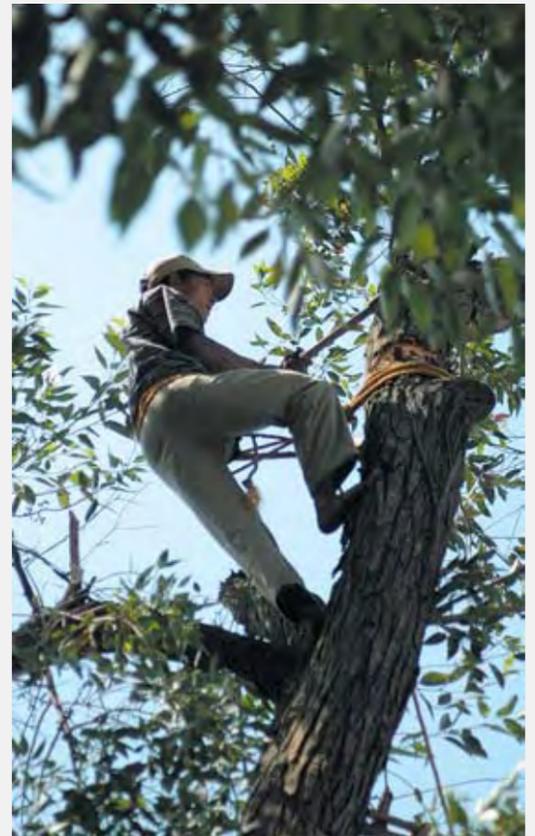
February First threatened it with extinction. What other information could the media have found to cash in on other than atrocities of Maoists? When FM popped out the news of death toll, indefinite blockades, chakka jams each passing hour it became unbearable for most people. The least the government could do and has done was to rein in the misguided fourth estate. The press needs to restrain the obsession of over-exercising its freedom and follow well-charted journalistic ethics in these troubled times.

Binod Keshari Poudel, Lalitpur

TREE SLAUGHTER

Why are trees being decimated so ruthlessly and systematically all along the major thoroughfares of Kathmandu and why is there no protest at this wholesale massacre? I have seen a few letters to the editor but is this all we can do?

In my opinion, trees are felled if they are diseased, if they obstruct pedestrians and traffic, if they shed leaves and branches that can be a health hazard or if the roads needed to be widened to provide for smooth movement



KIRAN PANDAY

LOVE SONG TO A JACARANDA

Nothing pleases like a jacaranda in spring
Don't think I can't see what joy you bring
While my *budhi's* bloom diminishes with time
Your beauty, tree, grows more and more sublime.

Yet a complaint just crossed our committee desks
"In case of rain, jacarandas leave a mess."
We then observed your blossoms in the street
We had to act, to protect Nepali feet.

I am a man of duty, with only good intent
I can show you records of each accident
Your species caused since 1934
(There were only three but we expect some more.)

Of the concussions caused by falling boughs
Two sufferers were poor blind and aged cows.
The third was a harmless crow, Need I say more?
Do we sit and wait for victim number four?

Dear tree, I've measured your lovely height and girth
I've calculated exactly what you're worth
Now our commissioner must consider
His benefits from the winning bidder.

NURSERY RHYMES

Who created this nursery, I think I know
HMG has ten thousand new trees to grow.
It's a joint project of the Ministry of Greed,
With the Commission to Amend Misdeed.

Here speaks a seedling, quaking in its roots
"We know those city folks are brutes.
They hacked our uncles in broad daylight—
Don't you see we'll face the same plight?"

None are more blue than the young jacarandas:
"Today they plant us, next they'll end us.
Just because nurseries are a national obsession
Do you think the government has learned a lesson?"

Still hopeful are the cries of a little pine:
"I'll form a new party and carry a sign."
Poor tree, he is too fresh to comprehend
How the suffering of trees will never end.

Jack A Randa, Pulchok

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MIN BAJRACHARYA

from p1

The perception is that the US is lukewarm towards the democratic process, and exclusively focused on battling the Maoists insurgency.

In response, all I want to do is scream. What we have said is in the public record: the very fact of the Maoist insurgency makes it that much more necessary for the parties and the palace to work together to figure out the road back to functioning democracy. Let us face it, all of your questions so far have implied that the king is the roadblock to a functioning democracy. Well maybe he is, but I will give you the bigger one that has been proven, which is the Maoist insurgency and its aversion to elections.

The role of the political parties in engaging the Maoists seems to be the central factor that is missing in the king's plan.

From the government and other people, and I will not say who, I do hear exactly that point. They recognise the necessity, and the question is how they go about implementing it.

There are moderate politicians who have been languishing in jail for months, in bad health.

Every time I see someone from the government I tell them you have to release these guys. The published record of what I say and the private record of what I do all is a recognition that the arrests are unacceptable, that the detainees have got to be released, and then a way has to be found for reconciliation between the parties and the palace. Everything I do here is about that. There is no way that you are going to get the Maoists to come to a reasonable peace as long as the parties and the palace are not together.

Have things changed since the lifting of the emergency?

Obviously the government has to be a lot clearer where it stands on civil liberties and what is the meaning of the lifting of the state of emergency. I have been pretty outspoken since February 1st on the matter of curbs on civil liberties. It is just plain dumb. Frankly, they put in the state of emergency much more effectively than they lifted it.

How about the use of the military to enforce the royal takeover?

The military was used specifically, as far as I can tell, in

“The glass may be quarter full”

enforcing press censorship. There was very limited role otherwise. Let us face it, most of what has been done, including the continuing detentions and arrest of demonstrators is done by the police. I am not trying to whitewash the army, but this is the situation.

But all over the country the army has become the entity of last authority, whether it is vis-à-vis local administrators or the media.

You do raise a question, but what can I say. The nation has been militarised by the insurgents. In times of war, and you are in effect in an internal war here, the military gets much more power than makes us comfortable. The question is what kind of checks and balances you have. There have to be checks and balances.

The centralisation of state since 1 February would seem to go against the tenets of democratic development.

The king and the government talk constantly about decentralisation. But I am not naive, I understand that whenever you have someone who is clearly at the top, people tend to defer to that person.

Do you believe that the dozen years of parliamentary democracy till October 2002 to have been a success or failure?

If you had not had an insurgency, people would be looking at Nepal today as a country was making progress in most of the key areas. Between 1990 and 2002, life expectancy increased 50 percent, education increased more than that, the network of paved roads trebled, income went up significantly. Frankly, if you had not had this ideological insurgency, you would have seen conditions for an economic takeoff, with the economy growing at seven or eight percents a year right now.

A Polar Air Boeing 747 freighter landed this morning (Wednesday) at 10:10 am in Kathmandu. Where are we on military assistance?

We have been saying all along that we will be continuing non-lethal security assistance, while lethal military assistance is under review. We have not made any decision because we have not had anything specific to force our hand on the latter question. Decision has not been taken on lethal assistance. As for the plane that landed today, there should be a shipment coming in. I will not comment other than to say that it is non-lethal.

Do you think that the present royal government benefits politically when the military assistance is resumed?

I will tell you that if the king had not taken over, we would not have kept our lethal military assistance under review. Obviously, the government would have got a lot more Indian weapons by now as well. So I do not agree with that suggestion at all.

Is it possible for the Maoists to win in a conventional war and to take over the state?

If the army has the weapons and ammunition, it will not be

possible for the Maoists to win. What happens if your military runs out of bullets, is the number one question facing your country today. Figure it out, that's where lethal security assistance comes in.

What about Maoist capabilities?

Frankly if the army runs out of bullets, they can come in with khukuri knives.

The army seems more than capable of defending the 75 district headquarters, the Maoists do not have any base area in their command, and they seem to have fractured at the top.

From the study of totalitarian parties, you may actually see the Maoists come out more unified and tougher, leaner and meaner. Baburam may patch up and come out singing praises of Prachanda. In terms of capabilities, two and half years ago Maoists were active in 14 out of 75 districts. Today, it is 70 out of 75. Basically, there is a question of the army maintaining its capability, and they do need weapons and bullets before long or they will get into serious trouble.

What is your sense of human security outside Kathmandu Valley after 1 February?

I do not have a good feel for what happens in the 4,000 villages, and I would guess that the conditions vary considerably. Elsewhere, I get a mixed picture. Obviously the Valley has been getting pretty safe since even before February First, and the bandas are not being respected here. There is news that Nepalganj has got better over the last few weeks, which I find very interesting because it had been an area of complete failure.

Is there a distance between the State Department and the senators and congressmen on the Hill, in terms of how they see February One, the palace and military assistance?

I think that basically everybody shares the same two goals of return to democracy and effective handling of the insurgency. There is some debate about how exactly you do it but I do not get the feeling that we are constantly under siege from parts of the Hill. We have a pretty good dialogue going.

It has been said that in Washington DC recently you painted a rather rosy picture of the current situation in Nepal, particularly having to do with the Kapilbastu vigilante action, the NHRC and on habeas corpus.

On Kapilbastu, frankly there is a range of opinion on what happened and that is what I reported. On NHRC, they have undeniably gone to more places since about a month after the first of February. It is a statistical fact that they are getting better access. The Supreme Court tells me that there are no writs of habeas corpus outstanding, these are facts and I am sorry if they do not jive with people's perceptions of the way things must be here after February 1. You've got a glass here, obviously it is mostly empty, maybe only a quarter full, but there is some fullness here and it is not that everything has gone to the extent of your worst nightmare.

The edge of a khukuri

BIBI FUNYAL in SHIVALAYA

It's not yet dawn here in Ramechhap district but we are awakened by a 'tung tung' sound from down the road.

The village of Shivalaya is on the east bank of the Khimti Khola and it is still dark outside. Gradually, we can make out the inky silhouette of the mountains as the eastern sky slowly lightens up.

We follow the sound and come up to Ram Lal Biswokarma's workshop. Three members of his family have been up since four in the morning to fire up the furnace and pump the bellows. Ram Lal pulls out a red hot slice of steel from the roaring fire with his tongs and places it on the anvil. (See picture) His wife, Chameli, strikes it with her hammer block with all her might. Sparks fly. Once, twice, thrice until the red glow turns to ash pink.

Kanchha, their eight-year-old son, is also awake and watches his parents forge another khukuri. In the grip of conflict, it is rare to see anyone working at night anymore in the village. But Ram Lal needs to finish six khukuris in time to take it to the market in Those or in Jiri and with the money buy a school uniform and stationery for Kanchha who is starting primary school in the new year.

Despite the noise from his workshop, no one in Shivalaya complains about it. Everyone knows how much the Biswokarmas have to struggle to make ends meet in these difficult times.

The family is not from Shivalaya. A month ago they finally fled their home village of Alung. Ram Lal still has a home and fields there. But the security forces broke into his house one night two months ago and accused him of supplying

khukuris to the Maoists. They destroyed his furnace and scattered his tools and went away.

"I don't even know what a Maoist looks like, if I saw them I wouldn't be able to tell them apart from the soldiers," says Ram Lal, "but they wouldn't listen. We decided to leave our home."

It's now eight, the sun has crested the hill, porters are making their way past Ram Lal's shop across the bridge and up the steep trail with their mules and yaks.

But the Biswokarma family is still busy trying to finish the khukuris. Ram Lal says it will take another hour to sharpen the edges of the new khukuris. He has no time to engage in small talk with reporters.

Kanchha says shyly that he misses his home in Alung, "I have no friends to play with here." We go outside to the next door teashop where some customers are sitting talking in murmurs in the smoky kitchen. At the sight of an



BIBI FUNYAL

outsider, everyone stops talking. This is the big change in Nepal: garrulous teashop banter replaced by this unnatural silence.

Rasmila Shrestha, 15, runs the family teashop but won't be doing so for much longer. She is finding it more and more difficult to live in Shivalaya. She stopped going to high school last year after news spread that the Maoists were forcing children to join their 'people's war'. "I am saving for the bus fare," Rasmila tell us quietly, "I'll go and get enrolled in Kathmandu, there is nothing for me here any longer."

From Ram Lal's house, the whining sound of sharpening knives suddenly stops. The khukuris are ready. Kanchha is so excited about accompanying his father to the Jiri market that he has already eaten. Chameli serves her husband dal bhat and he eats quickly. The little boy can't contain his happiness. As he walks up the mountain ahead of his father, Kanchha shouts back at us, "I'm getting a new uniform today." ●

Some names have been changed to protect the family's identity.

Eurocopter on Everest



An Ecureuil/AStar AS 350B3 helicopter (pictured) landed last weekend on the top of Chomolungma, setting a new world record, company sources said in Paris. It is not clear why news of the landings which took place on 14 May was

only released on Tuesday through its website and not from Nepal. Eurocopter, the European helicopter maker, said its specially-upgraded chopper had landed on the 8,850 m summit twice, setting a new world record for high-altitude landings and takeoffs.

The aircraft, flown by test pilot Didier Delsalle, took off from Lukla and remained atop the peak for more than two minutes. Another second successful landing and takeoff took place later. Eurocopter said it had submitted the feat to the International Federation of Aviation for approval as a world record. The company is a division of the aviation giant European Aeronautic Defence.

West Seti on again

China and Australia will invest in the \$1.2 billion and 750 megawatt West Seti project in western Nepal, a Chinese embassy official in Kathmandu was quoted by Xinhua as saying last week. "The construction of the project, is likely to begin in the coming dry season," Ma Dongsheng, second secretary of the embassy's economic and commercial counsellor's office, told Xinhua. The government awarded the contract to the Snowy Mountain Engineering Corporation (SMEC) of Australia in 1994 but was stuck because of delays in negotiations with sale of power to India. The project is expected to be completed by 2010 if it starts this year.

Now, Ma said, the China National Machinery and Equipment Import Export Corporation and the SMEC will invest 70 percent and 30 percent respectively for the project. The Chinese and Australian investors have already signed an agreement, and they have to get a production license from the Nepali government to start the project. West Seti is Nepal's first export-only project and the Power Trade Corporation of India will buy the electricity at 4.95 cents per unit.

No more landlocked

Star Cruises is poised to market its ocean cruises in the Nepal market this year after encouraging response in India. Star Cruises has appointed two Preferred Sales Agents in Nepal but marketing and sales will continue to be driven out of its New Delhi office. "We intend to tap into the substantial base of travellers in Nepal and present them with the option of a world-class cruising experience in addition to destination-oriented travel," says Smit Banerjee of Star Cruises who was here to showcase cruise vacations at the NATTA travel fair earlier this month.

Welcome wins

Welcome Advertising and Marketing has won the Certificate of Merit in the 38th Abby Awards ceremony. It won the award in the Best of Nepal Advertising-TV/Cinema (Single ads) category for its Wild Candy commercial made for Bhagwati Confectionery. Various ad agencies from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan had also participated in the event organised by Bombay Club of Advertising.

Yamaha workshop

Morang Auto Works, the authorised dealer of Yamaha motorcycles in Nepal, has set up a workshop, Yamaha Care Centre, in Tripureswor. Y Morita, chief general manager of Yamaha Motor India inaugurated it on 19 May. This is also the 50th anniversary of Yamaha Motor Company, Japan. Users of Yamaha motorcycles can avail the free check-up facility at the Centre for two weeks. Morang Auto Works plans to open similar centres in other parts of Nepal.



NEW PRODUCTS

SHOE FITS: Birat Shoe Co Ltd has added sport shoes to its Fit Rite outlets. It recently held a 'Guess and Win' contest coinciding with the AFC President's Cup.



MORE WAI WAI: Fast Foods Nepal has introduced the new Mutton flavour Wai Wai for Rs 10. It also has the coupon scheme where a consumer can win upto Rs 1 lakh.

SUNFRU: Sujal Foods has launched Sunfru, its latest product. It is a ready to mix soft drink concentrate.



VIP BAGGAGE: VIP Industries Limited in association with Sagtani Exim, its exclusive distributor for Nepal, has launched a range of VIP and Carlton luggage in Kathmandu.



Best-selling business

The success of Samrat's book could teach our gurus too

Last week, sitting for almost three hours at the Educational Book House stall on the first day of the Ninth Nepal Education and Book Fair 2005 at Bhrikuti Mandap, writer Samrat

STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari



Upadhyay sold 200 copies of his two fiction books. That was more than a book a minute. When his books were all gone, fans started bringing other writers' novels for Samrat to sign anyway (pic, right).

Anjan Shrestha, a bookseller who was the force behind Samrat's impromptu book-signing ceremony, later said that he was overwhelmed by the Book Fair visitors' spontaneously positive response toward Samrat's works. He should not have been. What is truly overwhelming is that at a time when many well-regarded (at least by newspapers) Nepali-language books struggle to find readers, let alone buyers, two works of fiction—that too written in English—by an expatriate Nepali have since 2003 sold a total of 8,000 copies in Nepal alone. How can we interpret this fact to understand the opportunities and threats facing Nepal's book industry?

In recent years, the publishing industry, in tandem with the then vibrantly competitive Nepali press, has made much progress. True, much of that progress has meant that publishing houses in the private sector have made sizeable investments to upgrade the hardware. As a result, it is possible now to publish well-designed, colourful books and magazines in both hard and soft covers by using the latest technology on varieties of paper available in Nepal—something that was unthinkable even five years ago.

But these production-focussed hardware upgrades have not been matched by a market-oriented appreciation for software issues. These would be issues such as networking with agents to find new writers, hiring editors to



ASHUTOSH TIWARI

revise the content, training marketers and promoters, making arrangements for authors to appear in public to sign books, using the media and readers' groups to create a buzz about the books and their authors and even doing tie-ins with other relevant products to sell books.

One reason for this mismatch is that it takes time to develop such software capabilities. During the Panchayat era, independent book publishing was not a state-approved business. As a result, most businessmen could never dream to be anything more than traders of books, each of which had to clear the censors. It was only in the pluralistic times of the 1990s that some entrepreneurial booksellers were able to take advantage of the openness and competition to transform themselves from traders to independent producers and marketers of books. And the first thing they did was take loans to invest on hardware so quality printing could be done in Nepal and not outsourced to Thailand or India.

Besides, they developed

relations with foreign publishers and brought choices, including Samrat's books, at affordable prices to book-buying Nepalis. In light of this development, it is distressing to see how the recent rollback in press freedom has already started strangling this industry by driving up its cost of doing business. After all, when forward-looking entrepreneurs are forced to adopt a back-to-Panchayat practice of pleasing not their customers but the bureaucrats at the Ministry of Information over every book they publish or import, they are not only likely to lose the business advantages collected over the last 14 years but also unlikely to see any incentive in addressing the software issues that are so necessary to increase sales and outreach.

Samrat's books sell in Kathmandu as legal Indian reprints. How much nicer would it be if our book industry was allowed to live up to its potential to be a direct part of the global publishing industry so Nepali writers' books could be sold in other countries while others' books could be sold in ours. ●

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New NHRC

Krishnaman Pradhan in *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 24 May

Five years have elapsed since the National Human Rights Commission was formed and it is time to assess the role it has played in protecting the human rights of citizens. But one can easily gauge from the activities of NHRC members that they did everything to turn this national body of immense significance into a trivial private company.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

NHRC members meeting the press for the last time on Thursday prior to its expiry.

The commission was constantly struggling with personal feuds between five of its key members who, if they were not arguing with each other, were travelling abroad every two months on junkets. It was clear that the commission was nothing more than an NGO involved merely in organising workshops, interaction, training and stereotyped research. Its main role should have been to lead civil society, mediate between the state and rebels, monitor human rights abuses, make field trips to those areas where violation of rights occurred, pressure the state to adhere to humanitarian law and closely coordinate with donors. Unfortunately, nothing of this sort happened but the commission alone cannot be blamed.

NGOs failed to pressure and alert the commission about its responsibilities. Instead, they were too busy attending its receptions and seminars which resulted in making the latter indulge in fruitless actions. As of now, in a bid to reshuffle the membership in the commission, the government is on its way to nominate the chief justice as chairperson and the foreign minister as member. What we must remember from our past mistakes is that the chairperson must not be appointed because he is a senior and beholden to the state but on merit and proven experience in the field of human rights work and advocacy. What we should try to avoid is the quota system where it is obligatory to have a female representative or equal representation of people from both the hills and tarai. If a woman is appointed, she should not be someone who shouts slogans on the streets but someone with real experience in human rights work at both national and international levels.

The citizens are asking the commission to become what it intended when it was first established: a strong, powerful and independent human rights protector. We need a commission that works as a mediator between conflict parties and advises donor agencies, without kowtowing unnecessarily to them.

Voltage shortage

Kantipur, 22 May

क्रान्तिपुर

BIRGANJ—Low voltage in electric supply has affected industries here. Many are on the verge of closing down because of the low current. According to the Nepal Electricity Association, this has happened since the production of electricity in Kulekhani declined because of the dry season and the load in Pathlaiya-Parbanipur grid's 66 KVA transmission line increased. At present, only around five to 10 megawatts of electricity is produced at Kulekhani at night. Birganj Distribution Centre's Chief, Deepak Acharya, says that the problem can only be solved after a 132 KVA wire is fitted from Kulekhani's electricity production to Patlaiya-Parbanipur grid.

Royal flight

Dristi, 24 May

दृष्टि

Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation, which is already in a financial mess, suffered further loss when its Boeing chauffeured the king to Jakarta on his royal visit. The king's trip to Jakarta and Singapore affected international flights for a full week. Since the other Boeing 757 was grounded, the airline couldn't operate any of its flights to 10 international destinations. The 757 flew with royal visitors on 20 April. On 21 April, it flew back empty to Kathmandu for six hours 35 minutes. On 22 April, it flew empty to Jakarta for five hours and 50 minutes and headed for Hainan, China, with the royal entourage before flying back empty to Kathmandu for five hours. On 25 April, it flew to China without passengers for four hours 35 minutes. On 26 April, it

headed out to Singapore from Hainan with the king. On 27 April, it returned empty to Kathmandu in five hours five minutes. On 28 April, it reached Singapore empty in five hours five minutes and returned to Kathmandu with the royal family on 29 April. Before the king's visit, the RNAC had conducted test flights for one hour 25 minutes. Total number of useless hours flown: 53 hours 40 minutes and that's not counting the many hours it spent at various airports waiting on the tarmac.

Tantrum

Jana Astha, 25 May

आस्था

"I will finish them! Do you understand? Bloody Americans, the British and Indians are trying to control our country! We don't need their money, we will show them!" The elderly stocky man in *claura suruwal* and topi was jumping up and down at the Soaltee Hotel at an anniversary party. Who was this man in powerful glasses with greying moustache and beard? None other than honorary royal ADC and former ambassador to Britain, retired Major General Bharat Keshar Simha. He is also the chairman of the World Hindu Federation, whose Pandit Narayan Prasad Pokhrel was recently assassinated mysteriously. This was the 50th wedding anniversary of 93-year-old Nara Shumshere Rana, the nephew of King Tribhuban who executed pro-democracy martyrs Gangalal and Dasarath Chand. The function was boycotted by Nara Shumshere's own son Prabhakar Rana and his son Siddhartha. Simha was getting worked up about the envoys of America, Britain and India, saying they should be thrown out of the country. "We don't want outside interference," he thundered, "just because they

Melamchi contract

Kantipur, 24 May

क्रान्तिपुर

The access road construction contract for the Melamchi Water Supply Project (MWSP) is in line with the international standards and the country's fiscal rules. So goes the claim of the contractor of Nepal's biggest project. The contractor, CCECC, Sharma and Lama Company held a press meet to claim that the contract was awarded to them after they won the international bidding and that no one had influenced the bidding process. This comes as the RCCC conducts investigations against Former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, Former Minister Prakash Man Singh and four other MWSP staff. The commission has charged them of



being involved in corruption in the access road construction of the drinking water project. The contractor company's representative Ramesh Sharma said his company's bidding was accepted only after an agreement with the Asian Development Bank saying it was in line with the multilateral agency's guidelines. "That is why it is not possible to influence the contract awarding process," said Sharma. The bidding contractors are evaluated by Norplan, the project's consultant appointed by the donors of the scheme, he said. He, however, accepted that there was an escalation in price and the reasons were changes in design, estimates and overall inflation in the price of goods. MWSP had to terminate the contract with the previous contractor Hanil Koneko after the Korean builder allegedly demanded an unreasonable amount of money as cost overruns.

Free me!

Letter to the editor in *Jana Astha*, 25 May

आस्था



KIRAN PANDAY

give us aid we won't kneel in front of them." He added: "The Indians are giving refuge to two Maoist leaders, as long as we have one soldier left we will keep fighting the Maoists and their foreign buddies." His Majesty arrived at 8.05 PM at the function that was populated mostly by Ranas and Shahs, including Pashupati Shumshere Rana who had a 20-minute private chat with His Majesty. An ebullient Pashupati Shumshere was listening most of the time and looked considerably crestfallen at the end of the royal conversation.

My name is Pradip Dewan and I live in New Baneswor and have been in the education profession for many years. On the evening of 12 December 2004, I was riding my bike towards New Road when I recognised Ganesh Regmi, an acquaintance. I gave him a lift to the optical clinic to New Road but when we got there, the police nabbed Regmi and they bundled me off even though I protested, stating my innocence. I didn't know Regmi very well and wasn't aware of what exactly he did. On 4 January 2005 they produced me in court but since I had been threatened, I couldn't make any statements in my defence for fear that I may be disappeared. My whole being was focussed on



Nation. "Wait! It looks like they're trying out another treatment!"

समय Samaya, 26 May

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Something like this happens and certainly you check to see if your assumptions are correct about the safety of the people. Did it cause us to go into panic mode? No."

Robert Hamilton, chief of Canadian International Development Agency in Ottawa-based weekly *Embassy Diplomacy*, 25 May, in response to the aid suspension of the food project in Kalikot

trying not to get myself killed. Before taking me to court the police had tortured me to sign a confession saying that I was a Maoist, if I didn't they said they would disappear me. Back in Nakkhu Jail, I found out I was being detained on suspicion of extorting money from a certain Punya Lal Pradhan and Bharat Khadgi on behalf of the Maoists. I don't know either of these gentlemen and there is no question of me extorting money from anyone, I have been taking care of my family through hard work, I don't need to go around demanding ransom money from people. I'm not a terrorist and I'll never be one. The accusations against me are false and anything I have signed I have only done so under duress. There is no justice in this country, an innocent person's life is being obliterated and there is no help from the court system. If this is what they do to me, imagine what they do to those who are real criminals. I appeal to human rights bodies and the legal fraternity for help to rescue me.

Pradip Dewan,
Nakkhu Jail, Lalitpur

PMO

Nepal, 22 May

नेपाल

Ten years ago, when Sher Bahadur Deuba took the prime minister's seat in Singha Darbar for the first time, he said: "I am sitting in the highest position that a son of a common Nepali can be in, so I am



certainly happy." Today, the office appears non-existent even though its physical facilities are still intact. The prime minister's brass nameplate is wrapped in paper. The door is locked. A security guard stands outside not knowing what he is guarding. According to the Spokesman of the Cabinet Secretariat, Yubaraj Bhusal, the prime minister's office is opened only for cleaning purposes. He said the staff does make it a point to check if faxes have come in.

In the hall where the Cabinet meeting used to take place, different committees hold meetings these days. In the prime minister's chamber, there are pictures of the king and queen. Facing the prime ministers' chair is BP Koirala's picture. There are phones on the table and the prime minister's chair has been kept in a

way as if expecting someone to take the seat. Around 40 soldiers have been deployed in gate number one. Gate number three is guarded by the police. There are 16 civil staff under the Ministry for Housing and Physical Planning.

Gorkhaland

Nepal Samacharpatra, 25 May

नेपाल समाचारपत्र

There are reports in West Bengal about a partnership between Nepal's Maoist rebels and the political parties of Darjeeling that have been fighting for Gorkhaland. The godfather of the Gorkhaland movement and Chairman of the Darjeeling Gorkha National Liberation Front, Subash Ghising, said recently that a struggle like that of Nepal's Maoists was necessary to establish Darjeeling as Gorkhaland. Fanning the debate further, West Bengal's Nepali papers have reported that communist parties are preparing to form an alliance with Nepal's Maoist rebels to fight for Gorkhaland. A splinter group of the DGNLF has even said it is already forming an alliance with the Maoists to fight for a free Gorkhaland. Nepalis residing in Darjeeling and its surrounding areas since 1950 have been demanding a separate state. But the Marxist Communist Party leader and Chief Minister of West Bengal, Buddha Deb Bhattacharya, has rejected this.



KIRAN PANDAY

Isolating Nepal

Dristi, 24 May

दृष्टि

The government is summoning ambassadors who issued statements advising the king and political parties to work together to restore democracy and solve the Maoist problem. On Friday, the government accused British Ambassador Keith Bloomfield and Indian Ambassador Shiv Shankar Mukherjee of crossing the line when they openly welcomed the solidarity shown by the parties in demanding restoration of parliament. Even the United States, which had believed that the democratic process would be restored within 100 days is dissatisfied. What course of action the US will adopt is hard to say but to support a non-democratic nation is not a part of its doctrine. There is still a possibility that America will not resume military and financial support to Nepal. While the government is drawing up its budget, donor countries are busy cutting theirs. This will certainly cause more problems for the state. India, which has from the very beginning clearly opposed the royal move and supported democracy, might take the warning issued to its ambassador lightly. Nepal's relationship with these two countries may go cold because they have supported the political agenda for peace and democracy put forward by the parties.

If the palace does not listen to the international community's advice it will antagonise them further. The strict restrictions put on the media and publication houses, the undemocratic changes in process for the Civil Servants Act and the suppression imposed on democratic activists indicate that the king is in no mood to look back. Even if the government's relationship with India, Britain and the US grows cold, it is hopeful that its northern neighbour China will extend military aid. A special envoy from China will be in Kathmandu this week to discuss arms trade. All this only points towards the government's inclination to tighten its control, maintain its dictatorial stand and isolate Nepal from the rest of the world. This government is clearly more focused on intensifying the conflict than in solving the country's problems.

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Rukum just want

The villagers of Rukum don't want to have any



DHRUBA SIMKHADA in RUKUM

Nothing matters anymore, not even the Maoist insurgency, and the people of Rukum are resigned to their fate. "Yes, there are Maoists all around but we have to make a living, right?" says a young farmer as he joins his father in ploughing the family farm.

Nearly 10 years after the 'people's war' began here in remote Rukum the people don't seem the least bit interested in being liberated. The conflict has brought so much misery and there is no end in sight. This has hardened the people, made them more resilient and they say they are prepared for anything the future has in store.

Rukum has suffered more than its fair share. Atrocities by the police against innocent civilians during the 1998 Operation Kilo Sierra Two are still fresh in people's minds. And in recent years

support for the Maoists has faded with the forced recruitment of school children for their militia or to take part in *abhiyans* being the final straw.

On the trail to the village of Pipal, we caught up with 10 children between 13-18 years returning from a Maoist cultural program in Rolpa. The boys and girls had been walking for four days had little to eat and looked frail and weak. The rebels had come to their village and taken away 54 students from the school. "My mother must be crying but she had to let me go," explains Sushila Shah, one of the 18 girls who were taken.

The Maoists had also force-marched 4,000 children from Dang all the way to the same cultural program. They had to march for a week, many had fallen sick and weak with hunger and had to stay behind.

Further up the valley we run into villagers who were waiting for their



RUKUM'S CHILDREN: (l-r) Children at a Maoist public meeting in Magma earlier this week. Despite are happy to be home, young boy who was injured in a landmine explosion on 23 April at Dalsinghe

"Does Kathmandu ca

A bus trip along the East-West Highway shows just how mu

KIRAN NEPAL

The clock in our hotel in Chandranigapur has just struck 8PM and suddenly the highway is engulfed in silence.

This used to be a town that never slept. Buses plied every 20 minutes and eight o'clock onwards was rush hour for bus passengers stopping off for food. These days, there is just the sound of shutters being rolled down, the vendors and *jhalmuri wallas* wheeling away their carts to reach home before curfew. Only the street dogs are still out and their barking punctuates the still night.

All it takes is one trip along Nepal's highways to see how much the country has deteriorated. Four months after the royal takeover people here live in constant fear, intimidation, mental stress, injustice and harassment. And they are asking, "Weren't things supposed to get better?"

We travelled in buses from Kakarbhitta on our eastern border to Kawasoti in central Nepal along

the East-West Highway, Nepal's artery. Jhapa used to be known as a district of educated, hospitable and talkative people. It is now unrecognisable. No one speaks to strangers anymore and if they do it is a perfunctory word or two at a shop. There is no eye contact, no smile.

The east had escaped most of the ravages of the conflict till two years ago, not anymore. As police stations were pulled back for fear of Maoist attacks, maobadis, khaobadis and dacoits of every hue have filled the vacuum. The jatras and festivals that used to be a significant part of tarai life have

gradually diminished. People don't travel home anymore for fear of harassment by security forces who think they are Maoists, Maoists who think they are spies or highway robbers who just want to steal everything you have.

If the movement of people is restricted, the movement of farm produce, consumer goods have come to a virtual standstill. No one knows when there is a blockade and no one wants to risk travel. Many dairy farmers don't take the risk of producing milk anymore. Vegetables, ghiu, honey, mushrooms and sugarcane



PICS: MIN BAJRACHARYA



s to be left alone

thing to do with the government or the Maoists



PICS: THOMAS BELL

walking for four days after being forced to attend a Maoist *abhiyan* in Rolpa, these school children Bajar on the Rukum-Rolpa border in which five other children were killed.

children to return. "What do the Maoists know about the pain of a mother for her child?" asked a woman whose 14-year-old daughter, Babita, has been away for eight days.

While the Maoists are forcing children to join their *abhiyan* or dig trenches in their school playgrounds, the army has also been using some schools like the Tribhuban High School in Khalanga, turning two classrooms into barracks. "There are guns and terror all over Rukum," says UML district secretary Sher Bahadur KC, one of the few local politicians who have remained behind. After February First, the politicians now have to contend with threats not just from the Maoists but also the state apparatus. "We politicians who believe in democracy have nowhere to go," says NC leader Man Bahadur Nepali.

The impact of the rift in the Maoist leadership has percolated down to the remotest villages. During a Maoist public meeting in Magma VDC to announce newly elected district commissars only about 200 people turned up and many of those who stayed away were said to be Baburam loyalists.

"There used to be many more people at these meetings, now the Baburamwallas don't come," said a local teacher. A security source in Khalanga told us that there has also been a serious split in the district cadre after the rebels suffered heavy losses in the battle of Khara in March.

Many of Rukum's villagers couldn't care less who is in power in Kathmandu or whether the Maoists have split. All they want is for the conflict to end and they are too busy preparing the fields for the



CWIN RUKUM

monsoon. Since life is so difficult, many are supplementing their income working as labourers in the GTZ-supported food for work program on the Khalanga-Musikot road.

"The project is the only reason we have food to eat," says one farmer, pausing over his pick. Every worker gets up to eight kg of rice everyday for working from 10 to five. The Maoists know how much the villagers rely on the food, so they haven't stopped the project.

While the government's presence has withered away, community groups have stepped into the gap working on health and education in remote areas with the tacit support of the rebels. The government's development budget of Rs120 million for Rukum this year hasn't been touched.

Ghetma is the only VDC of 42 in Rukum that hasn't suffered a single fatality or disappearance in the conflict so far. Located near the Rukum-Jajarkot border, the rebels could never strike roots here because of the strong presence of the UML. Says local journalist, Kamal Thapa, "It's much better and peaceful without the government."

Recently, the government tried to reestablish a police post in Ghetma. The people chased them away. ●

are about us?"

uch Nepal has changed—for the worse

from rural areas have no market.

Services like telephones, electricity, roads, health posts that had taken decades to be built have been either destroyed or abandoned. Development has come to a grinding halt. If the Maoists haven't bombed telephone relay towers, the state has removed existing VHF phones on security grounds. The NEA has long given up trying to collect money from its customers.

Itahari is on the junction of the East-West Highway with the Dharan road. The bustling market here has become nearly a ghost town. Even till last year,

shopkeepers here slept barely three hours a day such was the rush of customers. Today, Itahari goes to sleep at 7PM. "Itahari is finished," says the town's former mayor, Sarbadhoj Sawa.

But as we travel westwards, things get progressively worse. Siraha and Saptari have seen recent fighting, bus passengers have been literally caught in the crossfire between Maoists and the RNA. Then there are armed anti-Maoist groups like the Tarai Jantantrik Morcha which are fanning communal flames by trying to rid Nepali-speakers from the tarai villages that it

controls. Nepali-speaking health workers and teachers are under pressure to leave.

In Nawalparasi the scars of recent vigilante violence haven't healed. Thirty-six people, most of them innocent villagers were killed in vigilante attacks and Maoist retaliation in the past two months. The vigilantes are local criminals who have been used in the past as guns for hire by *anchaladishes* during the Panchayat, by political parties during elections in the 1990s and by the Maoists. But now they are being encouraged by the state to wipe out the Maoists.

By the time we reach Kawasoti, it is clear that what remains of Nepal's economy is now on the verge of collapse. The state is losing its revenue because of the drop in trade across the Indian border, the farmers are losing their income because they can't sell their produce, ordinary villagers are terrorised by Maoists, khaobadis, vigilantes or state security. No one can tell who is who anymore because no one wears uniforms.

Kawasoti was rich in fruits and vegetables but with the uncertainty on the highways no one is growing them anymore. Everyone we met along the highway had one question, "Does Kathmandu care about us?" We had no answer. ●



EAST TO WEST:
Unified Command in civvies patrol the bazar at Chandranigapur
The restaurants and lodges along Chandranigapur are deserted at nightfall
Bombed out police station in Kawasoti.
From Kawasoti, looking back at the way we came on the East-West Highway.





KIRAN PANDAY

Casting years in earth

At first sight it does not look like a vase or an incense holder. Its texture makes you think it is another one of those unusual pebbles you come across on a river bed. But the careful shape, colour, cracks and pores in this one are designed and serve an aesthetic purpose.

"Rather pretty isn't it, one of my favourite works," says Carole Irwin, the potter who created it. She has lived in Nepal with her husband, David, for 14 years and for six of those, worked with clay. Now, the couple is leaving Nepal and this is her last exhibition at Indigo Gallery where she showcased her ceramics every year. This one is a retrospective of her years in Nepal and their creative influence on her.

Carole worked with local potters in Bhaktapur with GTZ's Ceramics Promotion Project which trained them on glazing and using the kerosene kiln. "The clay here is not very good for pottery, it melts at very low temperature and does not seal properly. It's quite unfair because there are really good potters here," says Carole. She also assisted Maithili women adapt their designs onto ceramics and encouraged potters to produce designs other than the traditional flowerpots and vases.

Carole's own works are a variety of unusual shapes, colours and textures, five of them adorn

the presidential suite at the Hyatt Regency in Kathmandu. "I'm influenced by rocks, stones on the riverbeds, waves and shells," she says, "and working with clay has something to it. It's a common substance and you don't have to go to much trouble for material."

Having moulded earth for more than 20 years, Carole says she can now usually shape things according to the image she has in mind. "But still," she adds, "every time you open the kiln it's a surprise. You only have control over part of the process." Leaving it to chance is what she really likes.

"The earth you shape keeps surprising you, like this one here," she says pointing to a vase that looks like molten lava. She ran her fingers down the vase and not liking the effect, nearly discarded it. But now, it's among those she's kept for her own collection.

Carole has worked with earth in Trinidad, Bangladesh and her home, England. She is also a painter and when she's back in London hopes to set up a studio and work on intricate ceramic tabletops that she began doing here. ●

(Abha Eli Phoboo)

Artist's Choice at Indigo Gallery, Naxal, 28 May-5 June 4413580

Every place,

Remembrance and memories in Karthak's new novel about Darjeeling's decay

At the Book Fair 2005 this week, Samrat Upadhyay was the centre of attraction. Even those who have neither read his books nor are likely to do so anytime soon queued up to get their autographed copies.

Despite the charge that they write either for a foreign audience or to impress each other, Nepalis writing fiction in English enjoy a measure of prestige and privilege unavailable to the authors of the vernacular (the word itself comes from the Latin for 'slave').

No wonder, Peter J Karthak, an award-winning writer in Nepali, a recognised name in newspapers and a regular of the social circuit in Kathmandu, wanted to be known as a novelist in English as well. In his anxiety to please his readers, the author has smothered his debut novel with concern, care and love.

It's difficult to capture the complexity of this book but in essence it is what its name says—a narrative of people and places. Universality of human emotions and the role of language in their expression are quite well-known but the place of a place in giving distinctiveness to the style of a writer is often ignored.

Without the props of a Valley of Gods, Samrat wouldn't have been able to do *Arresting God in Kathmandu*, Arundhati Roy's *God of Small Things* is difficult to imagine anywhere else except in God's own country and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* were feted to be born in Bombay, a magically real post-colonial

metropolis. Stories of every place and every person need to be rooted in a particular place and played out in the lives of specific persons.

The stage for Peter's Himalayan tale is Darjeeling of the mid-60s, a 'hill station' in the process of decay and degradation. It's a story of longing and belonging in a town without a past or a future. Cut loose from their roots, its residents cling like vines to every tree and every hillock in often desperate attempts to draw their physical and moral sustenance. Some are émigrés from eastern Nepal, others trace their origins to the Ganga plains and a number of them are from surrounding mountainous regions. All are caught in the vortex of a place in the process of transformation from a tourism and teaching town to a postcolonial marketplace dependent upon the energy of distant metro poles.

Darjeeling of the mid-60s is a town mired in the pathos of losing its sense of purpose. The last of the colonials have already left, Sikkim is yet to be annexed, Subhas Ghising hasn't yet raised his Gorkhaland war cry. Shorn of claims to grandeur, the decaying town is trying to come to terms with its second-class status in independent India and being a third-rate priority for Calcutta. This is the time when everyone is either leaving the town or contemplating a departure.

In the stress of wilful inaction, the rape of a vibrant girl



Why you can't ignore

AARTI BASNYAT

Dear Diary, today my day was as depressing as a pup in the rain...hang on a minute, this is the 21st century where diary entries aren't made like this anymore. With everything else getting Net savvy, so are diary entries.

Blogging is the latest phenomenon that has taken the

World Wide Web by storm. When they started as web logs five years ago, no one took them seriously. Today there are over nine million blogs and 40,000 new ones are added everyday. Even the business community has taken notice and advertisers have started booking banners on the more popular sites.

The influence of chat rooms and discussion fora in the

evolution of blogs are apparent. The anonymity of the Internet has always appealed to the masses and there is something reassuring about pouring your heart out to a world of complete strangers. Most blogs still read like diary entries and give a psychological insight into the minds of their writers. But lately, they have expanded to encompass hobbies, political

Blogging for beginners



- Go to Create a blog/account and type in your desired username, password and email address
- Then create a blog name and also type a URL for your blog while verifying the fact that you are a human being and choose a template
- Start blogging and then click a little button that says save
- Voila! Millions of people can read what you've written, free of cost to both parties.

- Go to a host site such as www.blogspot.com or www.livejournal.com

Mind blogging

One of the legacies of February First in Nepal is blogging. Press censorship forced some Nepali journalists to start posting information on their own sites, propelling the blogging boom.

Dinesh Wagle of *Kantipur* already had his personal website but February First prompted him and Ujjwal Acharya to express their thoughts and feelings through blogging. 'United We Blog!' became a political slogan with 'For a free and democratic Nepal'. Other journalists such as Deepak Adhikari, Bishnu Basnet, Tilak Pathak, Tapas Thapa, Kiran Chapagain, Gunaraj Luitel and Dhruva Simkhada began writing for United We Blog! It became a place where readers could find uncensored analysis, news and could make their own postings. As in other dictatorships, in Nepal

too blogging changed from being just self-indulgent rantings to a vehicle for free speech. It has now jumped the language barrier from English to Nepali in Unicode.

Two other popular blog sites are Radio Free Nepal at blogspot.com and nepalnow.blogspot.com. Blogdai who writes for nepalnow.blogspot.com has become increasingly popular for his irreverent writings on current affairs. Wagle stresses the need for ethics while writing politically motivated blogs.

"Blogging has no editor, proof-reader or censor. You post it and it's there for everyone to read and comment on," he says.

Kathmandu's bloggers are not under the line of fire as radio and print journalists in the districts but they are using their freedom to expose the continued crackdowns on other media very effectively.

every novelist



MIN BAJRACHARUA

on a hillock by seven promising youngsters shakes all the tall trees in town to their roots. Vines begin to crumble. A few are blown away by the winds of change to faraway lands. Some survive with reduced stature by clinging to the earth. An existential tale with the complexity of simplicity unfolds through the days of a week—from Monday evening until the evening of another Monday. Life survives. It's not an uplifting book but it's not despondent either. Upon completion of the story, a reader is too drained out to have any compassion for its principle character—the town of

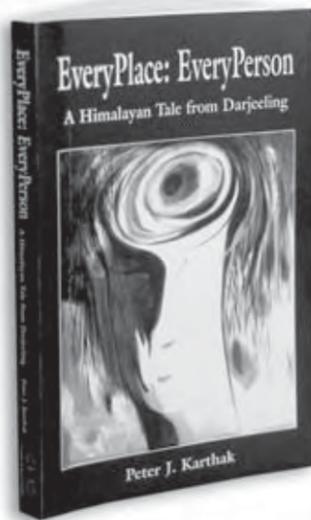
Darjeeling.

It's an article of faith among literary critics that basically there are only two themes in all works of fiction: someone goes on a journey or a stranger comes to town. The challenge of the novelist is to get a proper mix of these two plots. Karthak decides to linger in his fictional Darjeeling town and be a witness to its travails with mixed results. The rape, around which the story revolves, is perhaps merely a metaphor for a small town losing its innocence but even then the details tend towards tiresome rather than shocking.

Peter's prose shines through the decadence but his choice of certain simile and metaphors can leave a reader squirming: Christ 'skewered like a mongrel' and people 'swarming up and down like worms' are unsettling descriptions even for a town with a terminal illness.

Samrat has recently admitted that up to 40 percent of his book owe its polish to dedicated editors. Nepali writers could certainly do with such services but the tribe of professional book editors is conspicuous by its absence in this country. Manjushree Thapa, a noted author in her own right, has edited this book but she is too sensitive a writer to tamper too much with anyone's manuscript. A close reading reveals that several rough edges have escaped her cutting edge editing but that's not such a shortcoming after all. Peter's prose retains the peculiarities of a particular place—Darjeeling. And that is enough to make this book a rewarding read. ●

(CK Lal)



Every Place: Every Person
Peter J Karthak
Vajra Publications, Kathmandu, 2005

Some have become required reading blogs anymore

issues, rare diseases and even specific professional sectors.

Blog is one of the most searched words on Google but there are specific search engines such as Technorati and Pubsub that cater to individual interests and refer blogs accordingly. After 9/11, blogs gave families and friends space to express their grief and helped locate people during the 2004 Tsunami. It was also a powerful lobbying tool during the US elections.

On the flip side many people have lost their jobs due to blog entries that were considered unethical and harmful to company policy. Conversely, bloggers also routinely character assassinate since there are few controls. Bloggers revel in the fact that they don't have to deal with editors, censorship and commercial interests and are derogatory of mainstream media.

Should bloggers have an ethics code? Should they even be taken seriously? Have they done enough research? Bloggers

frown upon fake bloggers, called floggers who use blogs to experiment with creative writing. For example, a 30-year-old woman posing as a 13-year-old orphan, blogs created by marketing departments of companies to sell their product or even just someone who craves attention. But there are serious bloggers who bypass censorship to give genuine reports of ground realities such as Salam Pax who provided an in-depth view of Iraq while it was under attack.

Popular blog sites are now being bankrolled by advertisers. Internet giants are cashing in on the deal like Flickr, a photo sharing software that spread all over the web in its testing phase and was soon acquired by Yahoo.

Blogs can be updated from computers, cell phones and even ipods. The simplicity and accessibility of blogs is what has made blogs spread across the web, all it requires is a computer, an Internet connection and a blog account in sites such as blogspot.com or livejournal.com.

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Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre, Jorpati
Contact: Esha Thapa, Director. Tel: 4470874

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"Due to Nepal's unique history and geo-strategic location, there are implications for China and India of the ongoing Maoist conflict in the short and long term."

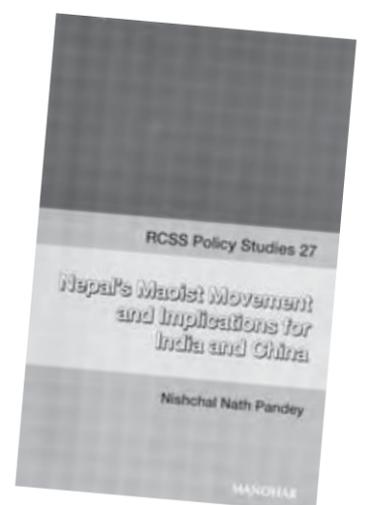
In his new book, Nischal Nath Pandey takes a regional geo-political perspective on Nepal's Maoist movement and what it means for Nepal's big neighbours. The book traces the history of the crisis, repercussions of 9/11 and the obstacles to finding a negotiated settlement and looks into what sustained instability in Nepal means for India and China. Nepal's Maoist Movement and Implications for India and China is by one of Nepal's foremost foreign policy analysts and is available at all leading book stores in Kathmandu.



Regional Centre for Strategic Studies,
Colombo



Manohar, New Delhi



Tiger Mountain NOTICE

As per normal, Tiger Mountain Tharu Lodge will remain open throughout the monsoon. The activities such as elephant safari, pony rides, tennis, swimming etc will be available as usual at modest price for the local residents.

Should you have an inquires, please call 4361500 and contact, Mr. Yadav Bantawa, Mr. Pragya Mani Lama, Mr. Kamal Poudel or Mr, Dipu Lama.

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Meningitis

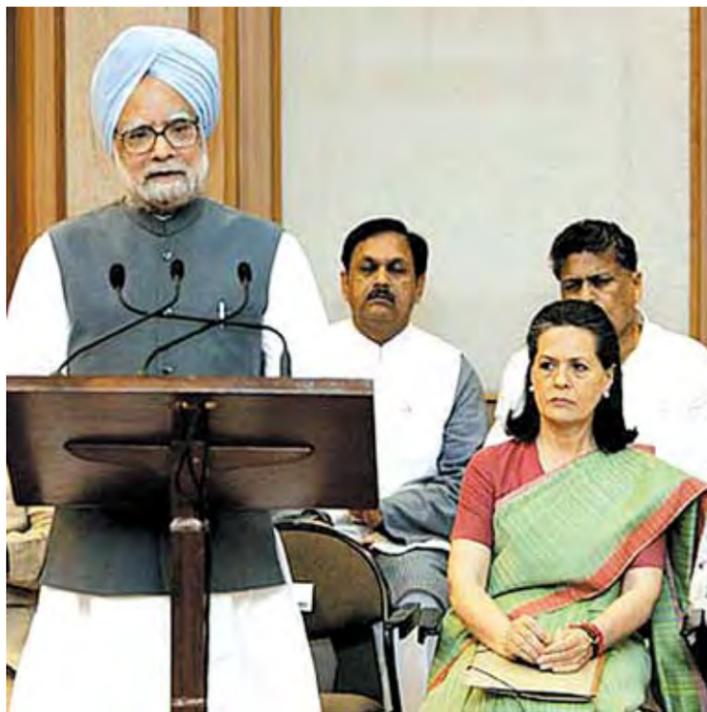
NEW DELHI—An outbreak of bacterial meningitis that has already killed 15 people and hospitalised 200 others could be the precursor of a full-blown epidemic that might strike India in the next six months, warns a leading public health expert. "What we have is a focal outbreak which could die down on its own but going by past experience with this cyclical disease it would be wise to gear up for a full-blown epidemic in December or even in May 2006," said Krishan Kumar Aggarwal, president of the Delhi Medical Association. Vaccines are also reported to be in short supply despite their high cost at around \$30 a dose and beyond the reach of most ordinary people. (IPS)

Fake drugs

BANGKOK—Despite the odds weighing heavily against it, the World Health Organisation (WHO) is placing its faith in the Internet to battle the alarming spread of counterfeit drugs in Southeast Asia's poorest countries. The UN health agency's initiative comes in the form of a web-based system to track the 'activities of drug cheats'. The Rapid Alert System which was unveiled in Manila, is the first of its kind in the world. This system will alert health authorities and the public in the region almost immediately after a fake drug is identified. WHO invites health experts and the public to report cases of counterfeit medicine they encounter. (IPS)

Left right, left right

The Congress fears its leftist coalition partner more than it fears the BJP



RANJIT DEVRAJ in NEW DELHI

A year after defeating the BJP at the national polls, the Congress party of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has more to fear from friends than enemies.

As Singh's minority Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) observed its first anniversary it came under attack from Prakash Karat, the

intellectually formidable general secretary of the Marxist Communist Party of India (CPI-M), for its pro-liberal economic policies.

The CPI-M and its allies in the Left Front provide critical outside support to the UPA government. But that support base is only for keeping the BJP out of power. Many in India feel

that the BJP's political agenda is in complete variance with the secular republic envisaged by India's founding fathers.

Karat and AB Bardhan who leads the CPI stress that the government they support has strayed from the Common Minimum Program (CMP) that was supposed to help bridge problems stemming from 'differing class perspectives'. Both leaders have constantly reminded the Congress that it returned to power mainly as a result of the BJP's liberalisation policies, which were seen to benefit a narrow urban elite at the cost of hundreds of millions of people.

The communists are angry about the steps taken over the past year such as allowing foreign direct investment of up to 74 percent in private Indian banks and the telecom sector. The left is also furious over plans to open up the country's mining industry to foreigners and allow multinationals to enter India's retail trade, which has developed without the frills of global marketing and branding.

Singh is also accused of renegeing on promises to amend labour laws to protect

unorganised workers and those in the agricultural sector, while land reforms remain neglected. Though both Karat and Bardhan pledged continuing support for Singh's government, they warned that the coming days would see mass mobilisation and movements to ensure the implementation of 'pro-people' policies.

While complimenting the UPA government for moving to develop an axis of trilateral cooperation among India, Russia and China, the communists are wary of New Delhi developing close security and military ties with the US.

BJP President Lal Krishna Advani took it upon himself to provide Manmohan Singh and the Congress party with some unsolicited advice on how to deal with its communist allies. "Marginalise the ideological and political influence of the communists, for their policies will not double digit growth," he said. Advani even offered the support of the BJP and its allies in voting in "any reform vital for India's economic progress". For Manmohan Singh, this must have sounded like the right advice coming from the wrong place. ● (IPS)

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Yip, yip, hurray

Breaking away from bouts of uncertainty

The 'Yips' became a much-used term among golfers when Bernard Langher, Germany's top golfer at one time, went through a prolonged phase of suffering from them. Commentators worldwide loved to use the term repeatedly to describe his slump in rankings.

The yips was soon in vogue, used to describe any prolonged bout of errant putting. Not familiar with the term? It is used to describe a strange phenomenon of losing total confidence in your putting abilities to the point when you can't even sink putts of two to four feet! Soon you feel you can't sink anything at all.

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



In my many years as a golfer, I have found myself going through bouts of being unsure from inside

five feet on quite a few occasions. In fact, during my last professional tournament I missed about seven putts inside three feet. I can tell you I was lucky to make it through and win the championship by the slenderest of margins, just one stroke. If I had been confident with my putting stroke I would have had a nice cushion of a few strokes as I came into the closing holes. Instead, the 'putting yips' that week put me in the nerve racking position of knowing a single error would cost me the title.

How do the yips creep in? From my experience, once you start missing the short putts, your level of confidence decreases, which then makes you make more stroke and ball conscious than is healthy. Soon little involuntary muscle twitches and psychological interferences sneak in and in the end, you just can't pull it off anymore.

History has proven that putting yips will break down even the greatest ball strikers. You just can't make it to the top with such a problem. For example, in the early 90s, Raymond Floyd missed a two-footer to win and went on to lose the playoff to Nick Faldo. Faldo is still remembered for his triumphs and successes of those years.



It really seems very easy to sink two-foot putts but even for this simple stroke, you need the same amount of concentration and focus as any other shot. Don't ever forget that the one stroke you add for a one-foot putt counts just as much as the stroke added for a 320 yards drive. They are both important. Once you're afflicted by the yips, your confidence is destroyed and the game stops being fun.

There are ways to cure the yips. First, check your set-up, specifically your eye line. Align them with the target and the face of the putter square to the target. For some of you, this step alone will put you on your way to taking care of the problem.

For more serious cases try the following drill: While practicing putts, hit the ball only from the toe of the putter or try to hit just the top edge of the ball—intentionally top the putts. The idea here is to get you more focused and move you away from the same old putting stroke that is causing the yips. Try to stroke the putts with just your left hand or change the grip from conventional (left hand on top of the right) to cross-handed (just the opposite).

The cause of the problem is sometimes mechanical but in most cases it's just mental. If you feel you have the dreaded yips, get into a new groove by changing your practice style. ●

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

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Bowling for democracy

ORLANDO PATTERSON
and JASON KAUFMAN

Cricket, the quintessential English game, is one of the most international of sports. It is dominant in more countries than any other sport except soccer, in lands as varied as Australia, India, Pakistan, South Africa and the Commonwealth Caribbean. But a glance at the global map of cricket poses a cultural puzzle.

Why, on the one hand, does the game flourish in countries like Pakistan and India, where a hard-fought series can transfix two nations and even lead to improved diplomatic relations? And why, on the other hand, is cricket not played much in other former British colonies like Canada—or, for that matter, in the US, with its heritage and 'special relationship' with Britain?

The puzzle only deepens when one considers that the world's first international test match was played between Canada and the US in 1844. Why did they subsequently reject it then in the early 20th century?

Climate has nothing to do with it. Cricket emerged as a summer game and is easily played during mild weather. North American multiculturalism is hardly a factor, given the game's popularity in the multicultural societies of the Caribbean and South Africa. Ethnicity cannot be the answer—there is a far greater proportion of English in North America than in India or the Caribbean. Why then did hockey and baseball eventually trump cricket in Canada and the US?

Cricket lost ground in North America because of the egalitarian ethos of its societies. Rich Americans and Canadians had constant anxiety about their elite status, which prompted them to seek ways to differentiate themselves from the masses. One of the ways was cricket, cordoned off as an elites-only pastime. In the late 19th century Canada, it became associated more with the old-fashioned Anglo-Saxon elite."

This elite appropriation played into the hands of baseball entrepreneurs who actively worked to diminish cricket's popularity. Baseball, in contrast, was sold as a rugged, fast-paced, masculine game, befitting a rugged, fast-paced economic power. Americans of all classes



If this colonial game is accepted, so should western-style parliamentary systems

swallowed the chauvinistic line. It was also great business for AG Spalding. By inventing elaborate baseball gear, he created a market for his new sporting goods company.

In the remaining British colonies, however, the opposite happened. In these rigidly unequal societies the colonial elites and their native allies never had any anxieties about their status and the British actively promoted the game—first to native elites, then to the masses.

In India, the wealthy Parsis first took up the game in emulation of their British masters. Soon, royalty throughout the subcontinent adopted it. English-style grammar schools were an important source of exposure to upwardly mobile native men. In the Caribbean, grammar schools made the imperial game a core feature of their education and made competition possible between different classes and ethnic groups without disrupting the social fabric.

The game itself partly facilitated this process. Cricket requires no contact between players and its strict, complex

rules, dress code and officiating largely eliminate any risk of embarrassment in play with those of different ranks or castes. So did the careful allocation of positions—less glamorous roles like bowling and fielding were assigned to social inferiors while those of specialist batsman and team captain were reserved for the elite.

What broader lessons might the history of cricket have for the globalisation of western cultural practices? It shows that such practices can be promoted or discouraged from the top down; it is not necessarily a bottom-up process as is commonly believed. Nor does such downward dissemination require the point of a gun. The passion for cricket in places like Pakistan and India also shows that a complex western cultural practice can be adopted in its entirety by very different cultures even when highly identified with its country of origin. Might the same be true of other western cultural practices like democracy? ● NYT

Orlando Patterson is Professor of Sociology and Jason Kaufman is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Harvard.


SURYA NEPAL
GOLF

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

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ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Artist Choice Ceramics** by Carole Irwin at Indigo Gallery, Naxal, 28 May-5 June. 4413580
- ❖ **Bottle of Stories** Raku potteries by Gopal Kalapremi at Gallery Nine, Lajimpat, until 30 May. 4428694
- ❖ **Our Lives are Linked** Photos, posters and documentaries on biodiversity and humanity at Alliance Française, 10AM-4PM, until 3 June. 4241163
- ❖ **Symphony of Forms** by Aditi Chakraborty at The Art Shop, Darbar Marg, until 5 June. 4372675
- ❖ **Samay Chakra** by Ragini Upadhy-Grela, until 8 June at Siddhartha Art Gallery. 4218048
- ❖ **Floral paintings** in aquarelle by Neera Joshi Pradhan at Park Gallery, Lajimpat, until 30 June. 4419353

EVENTS

- ❖ **Friends of Bagmati** Program for school students at Teen Dewal, Teku at 11AM on 28 May. 4470770
- ❖ **Rock 'n Roll Night** at Baber Mahal Revisited on 28 May, Rs 750. 4417999
- ❖ **International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers** on 29 May.
- ❖ **World No Tobacco Day** on 31 May.
- ❖ **Hotel Rwanda** at Lajimpat Gallery Café on 31 May at 7PM, Rs 50. 4428549.
- ❖ **Nepal against Netherlands** First round of World Cup Football at Sportpark Middenmeer, Amsterdam on 5 June at 10AM. info@nepal-academy.nl
- ❖ **Intercultural Exchange** Wednesdays at Goethe Zentrum. 4250871
- ❖ **Tai Chi** Free classes at Baber Mahal Revisited. 4256618
- ❖ **1905 Sundays** Garage sale, pet practices and more. 4215068
- ❖ **Fun in the Sun** at Club Sundhara, Hotel Shangri-la. 4412999
- ❖ **Art workshop** for kids at Buddha Gallery. 4441689
- ❖ **Rugby Practice** Every Saturday. 4435939, citygygmtk@hotmail.com
- ❖ **Sanibaar Mela** Saturdays at the Dharahara Bakery Café, 12AM-5PM.



MUSIC

- ❖ **The Good Time Blues Band** at Rum Doodle, Thamel, 7PM. 4701208
- ❖ **McTwisters** Live jazz at Moks, Pulchok, 7PM onwards. 5526212
- ❖ **Ladies Nights** Wednesdays at Jatra, Thamel, one free drink. 4256622
- ❖ **Fusion Time** Mondays at Jalan Jalan Restaurant, Lajimpat, 7PM. 4410438
- ❖ **Live Music** Everyday at Hotel de l'Annapurna, Darbar Marg. 4221711
- ❖ **Jukebox experience** Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at Rox. 4491234
- ❖ **Jazz** at Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lajimpat, Wednesdays and Saturdays, 7.45 PM.

FOOD

- ❖ **Crosskitchen** European and Indian cuisine at Lajimpat. 9851083806
- ❖ **Bawarchi** The Resto Bar for Nawabi cuisine at Lajimpat. 4436673
- ❖ **Seven Sensations** at the Pub, Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
- ❖ **The Organic Café and Salad Bar** at Thamel. 4215726
- ❖ **BBQ Lunch** at Le Meridien, Gokarna Forest Golf Resort. 4445550
- ❖ **Barbeque lunch** Saturdays at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot. 6680080
- ❖ **Special Combo** Burmese and Thai Menu at 1905, Kantipath.
- ❖ **Sekuwa and Momo Revolution** at the Tea House Inn, Nagarkot. 6680048
- ❖ **Arniko Special Lunch** at Hotel de l'Annapurna, Darbar Marg. 4221711
- ❖ **Krishnarpan** Nepali specialty restaurant at Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488
- ❖ **Barbecue Dinner** Every Friday at the Summit Hotel. 5521810
- ❖ **Exotic Seafood** at Rox Restaurant, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Delicacies** Pastas and snacks at Roadhouse Café, Jawalakhel. 5521755
- ❖ **Earth Watch Restaurant** at Park Village, dine with nature. 4375280
- ❖ **Café Bahal** Newari cuisine at Kathmandu Guest House, Thamel. 4700632
- ❖ **The Beer Garden** at Vaijayantha, Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **The Tharu Kitchen** at Jungle Base Camp. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Faces** Hair and Beauty Clinic at Baber Mahal Revisited. 9851023336
- ❖ **Malaysia Dream Holidays** Special offers for June. 2012345, malaysiaholidays_marco@polo.com.np
- ❖ **Star Cruises** Available in Nepal from 1 June. 2012345, starcruises_marco@polo.com.np
- ❖ **Stay one night** get one Night at Shangri-la Village, Pokhara. 4435742
- ❖ **Wet & Wild Summer Splash** Weekend special package at Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge** Special offers to end season. 4361500
- ❖ **Chiso Chiso Hawama** at Nagarkot, special packages. 6680080
- ❖ **Jungle Base Camp Lodge**, Bardia, special package and prices. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com
- ❖ **Shivapuri Heights Cottage** Best time to be in Shivapuri. steve@escape2nepal.com

Quest Entertainment

Bunty (Abhishek Bachchan) and Babi (Rani Mukherjee) are two avid dreamers. Two free souls born into caged small town realities. They grow weary of being just specks on the horizon and decide to pack their aspirations in worn out bags, whip up confidence and set out on a journey across the country, spinning circles around the people they meet. *Bunty aur Babi* is a fun-filled musical romantic comedy.

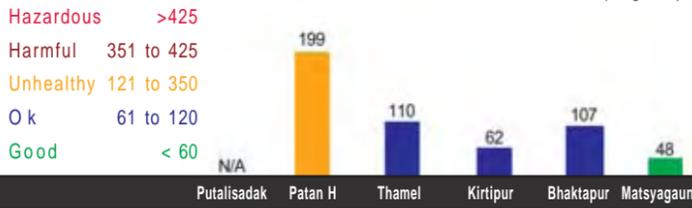


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KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

There was a slight improvement in Kathmandu's air quality last week due to a shift in prevailing winds that reduced wind-blown dust from India and the Valley's own pollution. The average concentration of particles below 10 microns along the busy streets of Patan dropped by 19 percent and in the residential area of Thamel by 10 percent. Although the pollution level in residential areas is just within national standards, things aren't going to really improve till the monsoon arrives next month. Hello, Putali Sadak monitoring station still out of action.

15-21 May 2005 in micrograms per cubic meter.
Source: www.mope.gov.np



NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



The prevailing southwesterly wind is bringing in lots of hot and dry air from the torrid Indian plains where the temperature this week touched 46 degrees. Maximum temperature in the western tarai has soared to 42 degrees, Kathmandu's got up to 33. Because of the lack of moisture, even convection systems over the mountains are not readily converting into storm cells though we may see some passing thundershowers this weekend over the midhills. But this heat is needed to create the massive low pressure to suck in the monsoons. This satellite image taken on Thursday morning shows interesting dynamics of pre-monsoon activity along both its Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal branches. Projections in India show the monsoon to be delayed by two weeks which means another month to go for Kathmandu to get into the wet season.

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MIN BAJRACHARYA

WORLD PEACE: Locals in Maha Boudha light oil lamps to celebrate Buddha Jayanti on Monday.



KIRAN PANDAY

BUGGY RIDE: Climbers Toni Streathers and Norman Hardie with British Ambassador Keith Bloomfield at Kathmandu Darbar Square participating in the Mt Kanchenjunga Golden Jubilee celebrations on Wednesday.



NEPALNEWS.COM

WOMEN POWER: Dalli Rokaya, Belmati KC and Laxmi Kathayat of the community group involved with building the Karnali Highway in Jumla answer reporter's questions in Kathmandu on Wednesday.



KIRAN PANDAY

FANCY FOOTWORK: Goalkeeper Upendra Man Singh struts his stuff at the Showbiz magazine fashion show at Hyatt on Saturday.



KIRAN PANDAY

MY ROAD TOO: Everyday four to eight calves can be seen running up and down the road disrupting traffic from Kupondole to Innar.



ANUP PRAKASH

Swadeshi soda

Suresh Suwal has been in the soda business for as long as he can remember but not just any ordinary soda. His father, Buddhiram Suwal, set up his soda shop outside Janasewa Cinema where the Bishal Bajar now stands. The unique bottle with the blue glass marble used to be a hit among cine-goers in the days before Coke and Pepsi. Though the shop has changed its location many times, it has been running for 67 years now. And the bottles are still that old-fashioned kind and the taste is still the same.

The legacy passed from father to son and Suresh, at the early age of 11, was hooked on to making sodas. "It's called the army machine," says Suresh proudly of his soda making gadget, "during World War II, it was used to make sodas for the

soldiers." When the equipment was hauled into Kathmandu back in the old days the Suwals delivered fizzy sodas for the Ranas who liked to dilute their champagne with it.

Contrary to popular belief that sodas are not hygienic, the Ranjana Galli Soda Pasal uses only mineral water in its products. Compared to multinational colas, Suwal says his product is not only a healthier option but also tastier. He claims to have up to 27 different flavours of soda though the most popular are plain soda and cola with a twist of lime and special masala for added zing. It is also the cheapest option at only Rs 7.

With summer here and the temperatures sliding into the 30s, soda offers a healthy alternative to soft drinks. The average soft

drink has about eight teaspoons of sugar and leads to tooth decay and caffeine dependence. But Nepali 'guchha soda' tastes much better, is a lot healthier and is supposed to cure ulcers, indigestion and even hangovers.

Suwal plans to expand. "We are trying to make sodas available everywhere. We want to supply not only to restaurants and parties but also make labelled bottles with manufacture and expiry dates and then market them in local shops as an alternative to other drinks," he says bubbling with enthusiasm.

If Suwal's small shop is any indication, the business is ripe for expansion. He gets as many as 1,300 customers a day during the summer. "The market is growing and we'll grow with it," says Suwal. This may be the next soda revolution. ● (Aarti Basnyat)

for the youth in you

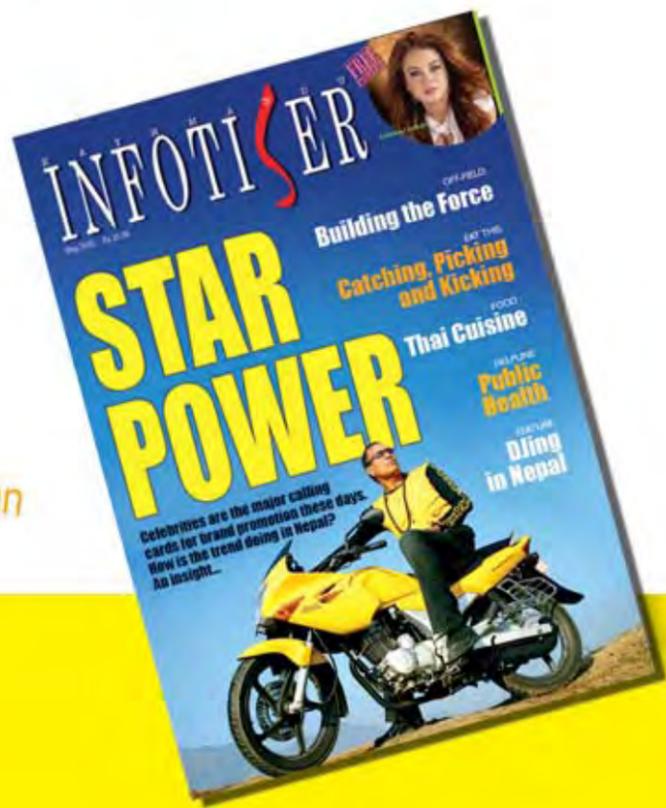
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Covering up our manhood

Now for something completely different. Many of us are reluctant to shed cosy illusions and want to go on pretending that everything is fine in this kingdom of ours. That is why we must use the window of opportunity before the new press ordinance becomes law to analyse important trends in male fashion and what that means for our democratic way of life.

Many of you must be wondering why, post-February First, kids think it is mandatory to wear trousers that look like they have been designed for people who don't have any buttocks. I haven't, just wondered if you had. Because preliminary inspection has shown what I suspected all along: it is because today's teenagers aren't endowed with the formidable backsides our generation was proud to call its own.

UNDER MY HAT Kunda Dixit



Ever since our Neanderthal ancestors started greeting each other with the phrase "How's it hanging, man?" human beings have been acutely aware of their

various accessories and the need to keep them undercover. In those early days, men used whatever was lying around the cave: woolly mammoth bladder, antelope skin, or sabre-toothed tiger fur. And that was how the world of men's fashion was born. (Women were required by law not to wear anything to cover up.)

But even back then it was already clear that men's fashion was ephemeral. Early wildebeest hide dungarees, for instance, were tied with rope belts at the chest. But trousers have been drifting downwards ever since and by the early Elizabethan Era had arrived at the vicinity of the midriff. Today, if the latest fashion trends I have spotted in Thamel is any indication, baggy draw-string trousers must be tied just below the buns in a gravity-defying feat of brinkmanship. At this rate, by the year 2015 we can safely predict that boys' trousers will be at the level of the ankles and mankind will have come a full circle to our early cave-dwelling underwearless forebears.

But how can the ordinary man on the street keep track of latest fashion trends, especially if he doesn't have Fashion tv on cable? As a public service we present below a table with can-wear and can't-wear tips. Fine print: Readers are advised to exercise maximum caution since fashion trends can change suddenly and without warning making you look like a dork, management bears no legal liability for the consequences.

What's in

- Thongs
- Standard issue Singapore Police T-shirt
- Extra-Lowrise half-mast pants
- Stone-washed jeans with faded patch in vicinity of crotch
- Baburam Bhattarai designer golf cap
- Nipple ring
- Rose-tinted glasses
- Black bands for scribes

What's out

- A-Front Underwears
- Boob tubes with Brooke Shields or Che
- Mini skirts (especially for men)
- Stone-washed jeans with faded patch in vicinity of knee caps
- Navin K Bhattarai baseball cap golf cap
- Nose ring
- Ray Ban shades during parades
- Red bandanas for pharisees

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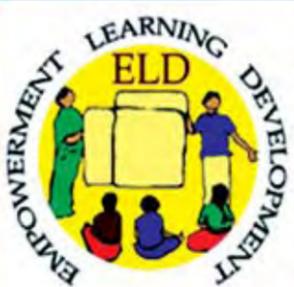
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