

NEPALI Times

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Media bashing

The foolhardy move to gag radio has silenced the people's voice

MANISHA ARYAL

It was a unique form of protest. Among the marigolds, vermillion and incense sticks that devotees presented in a bamboo tray to Pashupatinath on Monday was a small FM radio set.

More than 50 members of various Nepali non-government radio stations that have been restricted to broadcasting only music since February First decided to appeal to Nepal's patron deity for help. "Harahara Mahadeb," they chanted in prayer, "give our rulers some wisdom."

Nepal's remarkable strides in community radio has been praised as a model the world over. Since Radio Sagarmatha first went on air in 1997 in Kathmandu Valley, 45 other FM stations have gone on air. Listenership had surpassed that of state-owned Radio Nepal. Commercial and non-profit FMs were equally popular and complemented each other to give Nepal's pluralism and diversity a voice.

All this came to a crashing halt on 4 February with the government circular prohibiting FM stations from broadcasting news and limiting them to 'pure entertainment'. The military and local administrations have been increasingly heavy handed with station management, issuing notices and demanding clarification if stations deviate even slightly from the directive.

The result is hundreds of journalists are out of jobs, the public has lost a vital and credible source of information, listenership of clandestine rebel broadcasts have gone up and stations that never broadcast Hindi music have turned to Bollywood to fill airtime. As a result, advertising revenues have tumbled and investors are worried.

For the last four months, broadcasters tried quiet diplomacy with informal one-on-ones with members of the cabinet, top army brass and the Minister for Information and Communication. They tried to convince them that, contrary to the minister's belief, FM stations worldwide do carry news, that local FM stations can be partners in the country's development and if the government censored independent news, information hungry Nepalis would just tune to Maoist frequencies. Nothing swayed them.

"When we met the Minister of Information Tanka Dhakal on 7 April, he assured us that the government would soon allow FM stations to broadcast non-political news," says Raghu Mainali, coordinator of Save Independent-Radio Movement. "No announcement ever came."

Now, the Community Radio Broadcasters' Association, the Broadcasting Association of Nepal (an organisation of commercial broadcasters) and Kathmandu Valley FM Broadcasters Forum have come together to launch the radio campaign.

Continued p4

Editorial
A whole new ball game



SUBHAS RAI

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Weekly Internet Poll # 250

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

Yes 59.7%
No 34.8%
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Weekly Internet Poll # 251. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Do you believe the parliament should be restored?

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A WHOLE NEW BALL GAME

Two weeks ago, after the seven political parties announced their alliance, we said the ball was in His Majesty's court. Last Friday, the king whacked the ball back, rejecting the call for a restoration of parliament and saying he was prepared to talk if the parties came to him. Predictably, the parties rejected it outright.

We are going round and round in circles. If a relatively simple difference of opinion such as this is approached with such implacable stubbornness how are we ever going to find a solution to the much more knotty problem of the Maoist insurgency?

In essence, February First was an attempt by the royalists to turn the country's triangular tug-o-war for power into a two-pronged fight. It was to obliterate or at least make irrelevant, the parties who were holding on to middle ground. Even some supporters of the royal move now admit that in the last four months the insurgency has been used to systematically dismantle what remained of our tottering democratic institutions.

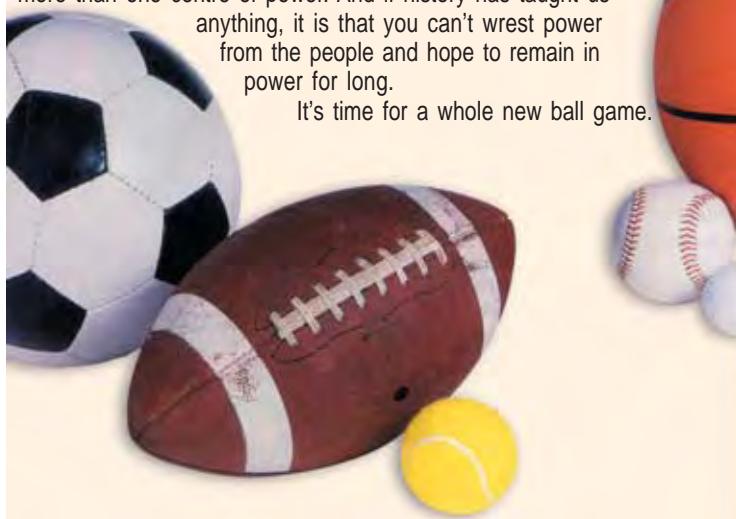
The free media, one of the few legacies of the 1990 People's Movement that was still intact, has been deliberately and methodically torn down. The most recent ban on Communication Corner represents a cynical attempt to choke an FM radio network that was acclaimed the world over for giving a voice to Nepal's voiceless (p4). These are not the actions of people who have a vision for the future, they betray deep-seated insecurity about public opinion and the mindset of a clique that knows its time is up.

It has also been a fortnight of fast-paced developments on the Maoist front. It is now clear that despite denials, a section of the Indian left has been trying to repair the leadership rift and convince the rebels to join the mainstream. Our rulers in Kathmandu must have got the hint—this is the last chance for the palace and the parties to patch up, otherwise the parties and the Maoists are going to patch up. That would also turn this from a tri-polar to bi-polar struggle but not quite the way the king intended.

King Gyanendra has repeatedly said his ultimate goal is parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy. So, the disagreement between him and the parties is only about the sequence of the steps to be taken to get there, not about the destination itself.

Democracy demands pluralism, an abhorrence of secrecy and a rejection of violence. We must accept that there must be more than one centre of power. And if history has taught us anything, it is that you can't wrest power from the people and hope to remain in power for long.

It's time for a whole new ball game.



It is not a coincidence that the frantic chopping down of trees in Kathmandu Valley first started after October 2002. This appalling wholesale slaughter of greenery which began on the Bhaktapur road and then spread to Battisputali, Baluwatar and now to Pulchok is being justified on security grounds.

It's not just us who see the tree as a metaphor for democracy. It looks like the

STATE OF THE STATE
CK Lal



royal regime just can't tolerate a single standing tree because the logging that started in 2002 has suddenly intensified since February. Simultaneous with a ban on protests, stately trees lining the city's streets are being indiscriminately chopped and quartered.

Authoritarian regimes are never green. The old Soviet Union had an atrocious environmental record. According to the World Resources Institute, there is a direct correlation between democracy and conservation.

Like autocrats everywhere our rulers after 1960 were cavalier about natural resources. Massive deforestation during Panchayat provided cleared land and slush funds to reward loyalists and buy out opposition. The deterioration of the

Bring back the trees

On 5 June, let's ponder the link between democracy and the environment

Bagmati into an open sewer and a sand mining site is the direct result of land-grab in the 1980s. Avarice of influence peddlers resulted in the scarring of hillsides in Godavari, Chandragiri, Halchok and Chobar.

In its intolerance of all activities of the political opposition, state authorities routinely uprooted seedlings planted by Nepali Congress activists throughout the 80s. Environmentalism as mainstream activism in Nepal is a post-1990 phenomenon.

Barring the deforestation of the tarai during the interim government, democratic regimes post-1990 have been more effective in protecting the environment. Himal Cement was forced to acquire dust filters for its stack and ultimately closed down. Greening of Godavari was a result of public interest litigation to keep quarrying environment-friendly. A safe landfill site was identified and developed to take care of solid waste.

A scheme to replace old-style brick-kilns with a less polluting version was

introduced in the Valley. Not much happened for cleaning of watercourses as such but even here effluent treatment cleaned up the disgrace that was Bagmati at Pashupati. A vibrant press fulfilled a watchdog role in highlighting polluters and loggers. The spread of rural electrification and biogas on soft credit reduced the pressure on forests.

To their credit, the Maoists initially didn't interfere in forestry—perhaps because they had more places to hide. But every official became suspect after 4 October 2002. And now, the suspension of donor support to forestry and environment programs in the wake of February First has jeopardised the success of community forestry. Increase in poaching and the sharp decline in the rhino population in Chitwan may not be directly attributable to non-democratic governance but the absence of parliament is definitely the reason it hasn't been hotly debated in public.

Democracy is a necessity, though admittedly not a sufficient condition for

environmental protection. Civil liberties, a free press, rule of law and economic growth are other factors that help conservation efforts. It's easy to spot a fully democratic country. There is a spring in the steps of free people. Authoritarian and totalitarian regimes share fundamental characteristics—an extremely powerful chief executive, suppressed or restricted political parties, a state-controlled press and a cowed judiciary perpetually under the shadow of the security.

In such repressive regimes the docile masses walk with their heads down, wear blank expressions and grow accustomed to a sense of studied indifference and helplessness. Environmentalism has little resonance in societies that lack pluralism and liberty. This year's theme for World Environment Day, being celebrated all over the world on 5 June is Green Cities with the slogan 'Plan for the Planet'. Environmentalism in Nepal must begin with activism for restoration of constitutional rule. ●

Stealing their thunder

You can't turn the tides of democracy, you can only shape it

Many column inches have been devoted to the imminent fall of the Shah dynasty. Some, in this page, have gone as far as to call for a 'rhododendron revolution'.

GUEST COLUMN
Rabindra Nakarmi

The 'progressives' in the Nepali news media are unable to bear the 'tyranny' unleashed after February First. If only a jolt of pragmatism got through their thick-skinned idealism they would understand that a couple of years of 'tyranny' is better than even a moment of anarchy.

Every passing week brings another piece of news of brave Nepali soldiers thwarting attempts by pusillanimous zealots from spreading their diseased revolution. The widely accepted view (especially in the international media) that there is no military solution to this conflict does not hold anymore. Even King Gyanendra's critic, Kanak Mani Dixit, has conceded

that 'the rebels' spectacular attacks on army/police garrisons seem now to be a thing of the past'.

Surely, a major victory will not come in the weeks ahead. The rebels may even pull off a couple of successful attacks. The military challenge is not what troubles me, it is the road ahead. How do we get our dysfunctional political system to work for everyone? Is the constituent assembly the miracle that will solve all the ills inherent in the 1990 constitution? The Maoists have for long intended to use this tool as a pretext to reprogram our democratic institutions to suit their goals. Even the political parties have now clung to this idea as they too see it as a mechanism to increase their power and influence. We cannot let the political leaders ruin it again for us.

Sadly, it is clear that the current ministerial team does not have all the answers either. It may have mastered the art of crisis-management but it does not have the vision to implement the necessary political framework that will last long into the future. The diplomatic blunders and bureaucratic intransigence of the king's advisers have only made matters worse. Who in his right mind thinks that sending armed officers to public offices will stem corruption and increase efficiency?

And why is Deuba dragged to the Royal Corruption Control Commission just days before India publicly shows its willingness to supply arms to Nepal? The RCCC is by far the greatest blunder. It may appear to some that it is a powerful instrument to check the political forces who have now been

allowed to come out in the open. Instead, it only terrorises the general public and gives you a bad rap in the international media. It is also a glaring reminder to all Nepalis of how easily absolute power can be used against them. There is a way out of all this but the king must proceed with haste. He shouldn't forget he is living on borrowed time.

The king will need a transparent advisory committee to guide the kingdom back to a successful democracy comprised of technocrats with no political history. This will steal the thunder from the Maoists and political parties. The Maoists should be given a timetable to lay down arms in exchange for a new constitution. This should placate segments of the international community who are afraid that the king wants to pull a Musharraf.

The palace should stop using the state-owned media to fight its battles. No one believes a single word printed or broadcast there. The king should also delay the signing of any peace deal with the malicious cowards who call themselves revolutionary. They dug their own graves when they embarked on their barbarous mission.

A great leader is one who breaks the mould only to establish something more lasting. The mark of such leadership, however, is in understanding one's limits. You can't turn the tides of democracy. You can only shape it. The king showed the courage to stand up when dust was flying, may he find the courage to stand down when it settles! ●

Rabindra Nakarmi is the pen name of a political analyst.

LETTERS

MORIARTY INTERVIEW

I was all set to dislike Ambassador James Moriarty, one Irish poet to one Irish career diplomat. But since reading your interview with him ('Who's the roadblock?', #249), I'm slightly impressed. He was both articulate and consistent, two good traits for a diplomat.

F A Hutchison, www.cyclingpeace.org

- For unknown reasons, Nepali Times' questions to US Ambassador James Moriarty were inspired by palace bashing and sympathies for the parties, despite the latter being singularly responsible for pushing the country to its present sorry



state. Although squarely alienated from the common masses, the parties seem to have the ears of foreign dignitaries, the US ambassador in particular. The ambassador could render invaluable service to Nepal by helping the parties reincarnate themselves as instruments of clean democracy. To that end, he should persuade them to democratise themselves internally, make their finances transparent and purge themselves of their corrupt leaders at the top. Otherwise, it is the Nepali people who pay for their indiscretions and not the foreign preachers who have no stake in what happens in Nepal. The interview conspicuously lacks any concern for the people's interest.

Regarding negotiation with the Maoists, recent media revelations show

that India has close contacts with them, and, therefore, can play a significant role in making that happen. The rebels will never come to the negotiating table as long as they feel assured of external support and possible victory in a protracted war. Since the US has an excellent relationship with India whose aspiration for a veto-wielding permanent seat in the UN Security Council can hardly advance without her support, USA should persuade India to help Nepal resolve the Maoist problem and repatriate the Bhutani refugees.

Bihari Krishna Shrestha, Chakupat

- The US ambassador is free to think whatever he likes and do whatever he likes. That stands only in his personal life. As a diplomat, his views on Nepal are not for public display. Selling his interview maybe good money for you but it tarnishes the country's image. It's pathetic in the first place that foreigners get to speak on internal matters. His interview is way off limits. The ambassador should stay within diplomatic norms. He should not look down upon Nepalis because we don't need his ideals. What he and the US are doing is only pushing the situation of our country into oblivion.

Rishav Shrestha, Lalitpur

- I applaud you for printing the interview with American Ambassador James Moriarty and for the rest of the issue. Encouraging the seven parties and His Majesty the king to concur in a joint effort to stand up for the government is coming through in your publication. I agree with this hope that all those who welcome putting the country's future and peace in the various parts of the country will be the way the country eventually comes forth from the terrible conflict we are in. It will take honesty and humility on the part of the seven parties' leaders to subordinate their own egos and past selfish patterns to that

of the head of the present government, to support His Majesty in his efforts to get the country completely back on track.

Fr James J Donnelly, Kathmandu

INDO-NEPAL

Mr Kanak Mani Dixit's understanding of India's recent flip-flop cannot be completely dismissed but surely reasons run much deeper than that meets the eye. ('Flip-flop', #248) Without trying to list categories from South Block up to Indian royalty, there are certain fundamentals. India feels strongly that the king understands this very well and does not wish to risk his power. Military hardware is not what it is all about. In real terms the state of the RNA is adequate and will continue to improve irrespective of any assistance from India. While no one can deny the argument that the prosperity of Nepal is in the interest of India, the level of prosperity is another matter altogether. It is in the greater interest of India that Nepal's prosperity levels do not surpass or equal India's. India has for long kept Nepal's economic capacity in check by playing up dependence. For Nepal these are trying times and only improvements in all spheres of governance can save us.

Paras Dewan, Kathmandu

TB OR NOT TB

It is to be commended that the profile of the disease TB is being highlighted in your paper as a major problem in Nepal and that sadly awareness of this public health problem outside of World TB days tends to be minimal ('TB or not TB', #248). There is, however, one stark contradiction in the article. How, on the one hand, can concerns about 'constant Maoist blockades' interrupting treatment, be reconciled with the statement that the DOTS strategy has faced minimum difficulties in the conflict situation? More empirical evidence needs to be provided to support such claims. In rural areas too,

many health posts are closed, or are under-staffed as a consequence of the current conflict. As a program that is run through the state's primary health care delivery network, the extent this has been affected by the conflict is a question that needs to be urgently addressed and further researched. Despite the DOTS program in Nepal being continually held up as an exemplar of good practice for other developing countries, there remain a number of questions that need to be posed to the program. While DOTS remains linked to state sector provision, how many TB patients never come under the NTP surveillance and receive treatment from the private sector? The truly prolific growth of TB treatment in the private sector (particularly in urban areas but also in the rural) and the consequent wider availability of TB drugs from this unregulated market, for the most part lies outside of any state control. How many sufferers of tuberculosis never get into the DOTS program and what are the implications of this for both control of TB and the way that the strengths or weaknesses of the TB program are portrayed? It is surely not sufficient to just state that 75 percent of the population has access to treatment. It is also likely that the 'directly observed' component of treatment is not in the interests of ALL patients and that greater flexibility may be necessary to support them in taking treatment. Rather than propagating the unsubstantiated statement that the Nepal TB program is one of the best in the world—and I don't deny that it has achieved a great deal given the limitations of the government health services in Nepal—it would help those of us who wish to understand these claims and see a stronger TB program, to be provided further evidence.

Ian Harper, University of Edinburgh



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Unplugged



MIN BAJRACHARYA

An FM radio set was among offerings made to Pashupatinath on Monday by radio staffers in protest of government action against Communication Corner.

from p1

"Desperate times call for creative measures," says Ghamaraj Luintel of Kathmandu Valley FM Broadcasters' Forum. Indeed, the week-long protests include half-a-minute of simultaneous conch blowing by all stations, beseeching Pashupatinath, reciting the clause from the constitution on freedom of expression and mailing the government a copy of the constitution with a broken radio. Simultaneous silence on all stations for two minutes and lighting candles at the Maitighar Mandala are also scheduled.

The three broadcasting associations and the radio stations they represent know this is a last-ditch attempt to revive radio in Nepal. "Station managers don't just have to worry about censorship, they also have to deal with salaries of employees and paying license renewal fees due on 15 July," says Broadcasting Association of Nepal's Bishnu Hari Dhakal. The license fees will double if not cleared within six months and expire with no possibility of renewal if not paid within a year. Nepali radio is in big trouble.

Ghodaghodi FM

Nepal's rural FM stations are not under attack just from the state. On the night of 19 May, 35 armed Maoists raided Ghodaghodi FM in Attari in Kailali and looted most of the station's studio equipment. Among the station's listenership were kamaiyas and other underprivileged groups in Kailali, Kanchanpur and Bardiya and its programs tackled social reform issues. "They often asked us to send our technicians to repair their transmitters or other equipment," says station manager Biswo Pachhaldangia. He had refused. "Our technicians can operate mixers and tape decks but cannot repair them." The rebels reportedly operate nine clandestine mobile FM transmitters in the country and accused Ghodaghodi of operating with American money. It is actually supported by a Danish government grant.

Cornered

The Ministry of Information and Communication sent a 'secret' and 'urgent' letter to Communication Corner, a radio content provider on 27 May. 'Since we have received in writing that the (Communication) Corner is being run illegally, we are, as per orders, requesting you to shut down,' the cryptic note read. Communication Corner is a legally registered, commercially run, radio production syndicate exchanging programs between 14 partner stations all over the country since 1998. On 1 February, armed soldiers entered the studio and stopped dissemination of radio and shut off its V-Sat system.

Even so, the company was distributing *Shuba Bachan*, a program promoting people's physical and emotional well-being. Managing Director Gopal Guragain told us, "We have no idea why they did this." On 30 June, Guragain moved the Supreme Court to issue a stay order and filed a case against the Ministry of Information and Communication, Ministry of Defence and Lalitpur District Administrator's Office which were cc-ed the letter. The court has asked the three authorities to present their case today.

"We won't run programs

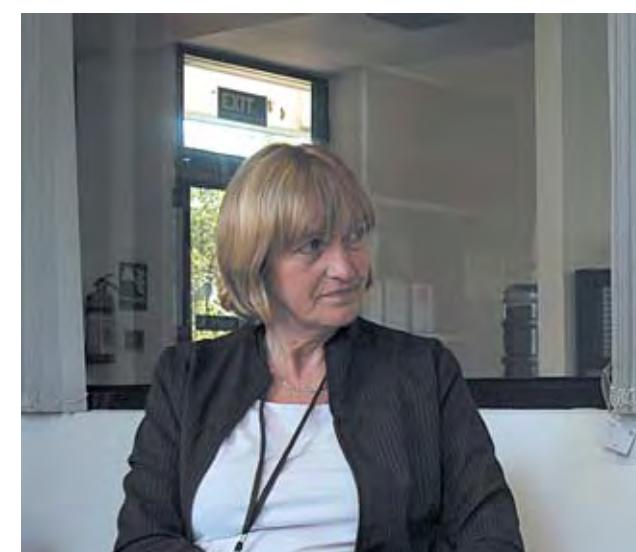
Donors suspended the Rural Community Infrastructure Works (RCIW) project, one of Nepal's most effective pro-poor initiative, in Kalikot last month because of Maoist brutality against staff. Mark Mallalieu of the British aid group, DfID and the UN's World Food Program Erika Joergensen spoke to *Nepali Times* justifying the decision.

Nepali Times: What exactly happened in Kalikot?

Mark Mallalieu: Two aid workers employed by a local NGO were abducted and repeatedly tortured for a number of days by Maoists in early April. Two brothers of the woman involved were also beaten up, severely intimidated and asked to give money to the Maoists which they did in the end. They were released eventually but it was clearly a horrific incident. The woman was severely tortured and asked to dig her own grave. So we were all deeply shocked by what had happened.

Erika Joergensen: We saw this clearly as a violation of the principles of the Basic Operating Guidelines adopted by 10 bilateral agencies and by the UN. But we really regret that we have to suspend it. This suspension will continue until we have a firm commitment that such incidents will not repeat and the guidelines will be respected.

A number of NGOs we talked to were quite miffed that the decision was taken unilaterally. How do you respond?



MM: First of all there was detailed consultation within the Basic Operating Guidelines group and we were in contact with major organisations we were funding in Kalikot. We also told the government both locally and centrally. I think the key issue here is that there was a limit to the amount of dialogue we could have because we weren't able to continue our programs in the light of what had happened. We have always made it clear that we will not attempt to run development programs in situations where staff are being subject to violence or risk death. So we really didn't have much choice in the matter.

What are the main points of the basic Operating Guidelines?

MM: The purpose is to enable us to fund programs in the conflict affected areas safely and effectively. These set out the principles that need to be adhered from all sides to enable us to do that. We can't allow our projects and staff to be co-opted or used by either side of the conflict. For instance, we don't allow our vehicles to be used by warring

Airlines fly away

Two airlines have suspended flights to Kathmandu for the monsoon season. Jet Airways has suspended its daily New Delhi flight till 1 July, following Air Sahara which has also suspended its on-again-off-again flights. Both airlines have cited 'operational reasons' and airline sources say it was because their pilots had been poached en masse by new budget airlines in India. Qatar Airways has stopped flying Kathmandu-Kuala Lumpur due to low passenger demand and Austrian Airlines has suspended direct flights to Vienna for the monsoon season.

Fourth Fokker

Cosmic Air's fourth Fokker 100 joined its fleet on 27 May. With the new Fokker, Cosmic Air plans to expand its routes to Kolkata and Varanasi by the end of June and later, fly to Rangoon.

Banking business

Nepal Investment Bank and Kumari Bank have signed an agreement to share ATM/POS networks for their card businesses. This is the first time that two commercial banks have come together to share ATM/POS networks in Nepal.

ATM at TIA

Everest Bank Ltd has installed the first ATM at Tribhuvan International Airport. It accepts SCT Card, Master Card, Visa and others. Rajesh Raj Dali, director general of the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal inaugurated it.



FedEx in Patan

Everest De Cargo Pvt Ltd, licensee of FedEx Express has opened a new service centre in Patan. Located just opposite Lalitpur Municipality office building, the centre will make market exporting handicrafts and carpets convenient.

Hangama homes

The first round of Hama Hangama campaign started by Hama Iron and Steel Industries has ended. The names of the winners were announced on 28 May.



NEW PRODUCT



SAFFRON SOAP: Dabur Nepal has launched Vatika Honey and Saffron Soap. The soap costs Rs 20 per 100 g unit.



CERATO: Continental Trading Enterprises, the sole authorised distributor of Kia Motors in Nepal, has launched Cerato. The family utility car is priced affordably.

when staff are subject to violence"



MIN BAJRACHARYA

parties. We always make it clear that all development partners are only interested in reducing poverty, social exclusion and discrimination that exists. We want to operate in a way that is transparent to everybody so that the beneficiary communities and anybody involved in the conflict knows exactly what and why we are doing it. We make it clear that we won't tolerate any corruption on anyone's part including our own staff and we encourage everybody in the areas that we are operating in to adhere to international human rights and norms. And it has proved remarkably effective as we have been able to continue working and supporting people throughout the country since these guidelines were agreed. What we really like is formal and explicit endorsement of the guidelines to be issued by the government of Nepal. And we would also like the Maoist leadership to publicly endorse them and say that they abide by them. That will make it much easier for project managers to operate at the district level.

And that they haven't done that yet?
MM: No.

What is the policy on working in Maoist areas?

MM: People and organisations delivering services in rural areas try to take a very pragmatic approach where it is necessary to consult with the Maoists. That consultation does take place. Of course, it's not just the project funded by donors doing this. The government also operates very often in an extremely pragmatic way like for example in delivering health and education programs for which dialogue does take place very often through both parties. People are very committed to delivering services for the poor communities whether they work for the government or donors.

EJ: But it also means that we do not register with or pay to the Maoists. RCIW continues to be a very successful program because it is acceptable to the Maoists, and the level of transparency is high in our program.

What are field conditions like post-February First?

MM: Immediately after 1 February, everyone conceived that the environment for development would become a lot more difficult and to some extent that became a self-fulfilling prophecy. People were reluctant to go out in the field. But over the past few weeks, the projects have started to operate the way they were before 1 February. In many cases, they have been successful. The other factor is that the Maoists have realised how alienated they are from ordinary people. And of course, at the district level the officers are under immense pressure from Kathmandu to deliver.

EJ: This is not the first time the project has been suspended. WFP has initiated suspension in at least five cases where rice was looted. In each case, we have set our criteria based on the Basic Operating Guidelines and the recipients of our assistance got involved and we could lift the suspensions. There was better understanding on

why we are setting these benchmarks.

Do you think the suspension in Kalikot has worked?

MM: It certainly demonstrated that we are serious. One can only go back and say in a year or two to see whether it was a key point in ensuring that development work was able to continue and subjected to threat and violence.

EJ: It has in fact worked in previous cases.

How has the government responded to the suspension?

MM: Well the government were centrally informed and understood the decision and there was no difficulty at the time when we were talking with the government. It hasn't become a major issue.

But they didn't seem happy when we talked to them.

MM: There are two issues here. First, where an aid worker has been subject to violence we have no choice but to suspend activities so we didn't have a dialogue with the government about whether we should suspend because we had to make that decision but we did inform them and the government did understand why we were making the decision.

So, you will restart once apology is in place from the Maoists?

MM: There needs to be a statement from the Maoists and we hope an apology that will give us reassurances so we can restart.

What could be the worst consequences if the statement doesn't come?

EJ: During a visit last September, my WFP deputy director Sheila Sisulu asked me if WFP closes, is anybody going to die? I said I don't think so. People are going to have more hardship and the children in particular, the girls won't be able to go to school as there won't be incentives and there will be consequences. Then she asked me if we don't close will any of our colleagues die and I said that I can't guarantee that. It is clear that staff safety gets priority.

Registrar's office

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ECONOMIC SENSE
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liabilities. The monitoring of document filing in this authority is so poor that shareholding changes even after decades remain a mystery.

Trying to locate records is a nightmare because the functioning and record keeping is still manual. The people sitting in this office surely require more training and exposure, they have to get away from the controlling-rent seeking function. At this moment, they should thank their stars that all they require to know is the Nepali legal environment. Pashupatinath only knows what



will happen if Nepali corporate houses are allowed to invest in foreign corporate and a maze of inter-corporate holdings and transnational holdings become the rules of the game.

This attitude has also closed doors for Nepali companies going to global markets for funds, be it the Global Depository Receipts or placement to global private equity firms.

The world will not change its documentation method for Nepal or stop using English as its prime language. The objective of keeping work minimal for minimally trained and exposed employees of

the ROC will not get us anywhere. While many discussions have been carried out on the Companies Act, no specific analysis has been done on the functioning of this entity.

One of the key prerequisites to reforms and encouragement of investment, both direct and foreign, is a user-friendly registrar's office. In most countries, one can now open companies at the click of a button through the Internet. These companies, once opened, are properly regulated. While companies are growing

transnational post 9/11, regulatory requirements have also grown more stringent. The challenge has been to provide quick services and at the same time, be a strong regulator.

Some countries have made their company formation laws and the ROC so user-friendly that they are using it as a USP to sell investments in their countries. In Nepal, the ROC along with an antiquated stock exchange has been an impediment for companies going public, keeping the Nepali people from benefiting from investments.

This situation should be an opportunity for the government to really crack for reforms in the ROC and make it more efficient. It would send a positive signal to the investing community, both at home and abroad. ●

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The king and the parties

Himal Khabarpatrika, 30 May-14 June

हिमाल
क्षेत्रीय

All Nepalis and Nepal's friends have only one wish—the king and the political parties cooperate and together endeavour to solve the Maoist problem. But the situation is heading in the opposite direction. The king's continual indifference has resulted in the parties taking to the streets in escalating protests. This had made it easier for the Maoists to appeal to parliamentary parties. While the seven parties' agitation takes shape, criticism and anger against the king's advisers is growing. The Maoists have started sending positive signals about the parties and in the past week it was evident that while the rift between the king and the parties widened, the Maoists and the parties were coming closer. For Nepalis who believe in multiparty democracy and constitutional monarchy, this turn of events is unpalatable. But no one has an answer. The leaders of the seven parties themselves seem opportunistic. They do not really want to grow alienated from the king but circumstances have reached a turning point and maybe beyond their control.



KIRAN PANDAY

A few weeks ago, all external powers supported cooperation between the king and the parties. They emphasised unity among the parties before they could work together with the king. India, Britain and the EU openly welcomed the solidarity. This really angered the government who summoned the British and Indian ambassadors and gave them letters of warning. This was a new and deplorable incident in Nepal's diplomatic history. On the other hand, American Ambassador James Moriarty has used fear of the Maoists to pressure the parties to unite and has been supporting the royal move, substantiating the rumour of the royal move being decided upon with American support. Amidst all this, the Royal Nepali Army made public Pranchanda's audiotape to prove that India had an unholy alliance with the Maoists.

This was no small matter for New Delhi. Then unfolded a series of reports that Maoist leaders Baburam Bhattarai and Krishna Bahadur Mahara had met Indian Communist Party General Secretary Prakash Karat with the help of the Indian security. After the Delhi meeting, it looks like the Indian intent was to bring the parties and the Maoists closer. Even members of Kathmandu's professional 'civil society' who make their opinions on the basis of which way the wind blows in Delhi have now started echoing the Indian line. They see the king as more to blame for the failure of unity between the king and the parties. This view has gained momentum for a while and if some sudden event does not affect it, the attitude in Kathmandu might be like that of Delhi—if it is a choice between the king and the Maoists, either will do.

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FOR THOSE WHO DARE



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"Try to be in my shoes"



MIN BAJRACHARYA

His Majesty King Gyanendra speaking to select editors last week at the royal palace and quoted in *Nispakshya*, 31 May

"One needs to be clear about the work being done. One needs to be clear about goal. First of all, one's mind needs to be in peace. I once again would like to request the parties—i.e. it mobocracy the people want? If the fruit is already rotten, what will you pick? I can reinstate parliament but that would violate the constitution. Would that be right? I am the patron of the constitution, it is the people who have to say what needs to be done. The constitution does not apply just for the king. Destruction, vandalism, arson, these are not what Nepalis are known for. Where did all this come from? The parties need to be clear about whether or not to hold talks with the Maoists. They should also make their position clear about terrorism, corruption, good governance and fiscal discipline. Only then can we reach a conclusion on how to go about things."

The 1 February move was for the good of the country and the people. I have heard that the country has been able to witness some peace. But peace is yet to be restored across the country. There has been progress in the last three months. Our responsibility is to establish the progress made in the Valley and urban areas and to spread the normalcy throughout the country. These things take time. No one has a magic wand. This is the age of democracy. The country has to be navigated with a democratic culture. The priority of 'me, party and then the country' needs to be reversed. Without peace neither will there be development nor democracy. Try to be in my shoes. It is difficult to do everything at once. Running the country through ordinance is not a good trend but it can't be run by the laws of the jungle either. We need to move ahead abiding by the law and we need to understand the situation and compulsions. The monarchy wishes to see democracy flourish in a way that accommodates everyone. The role of the king of Nepal is for the Nepali people to decide, not for foreigners."

Diplomacy?

Yubaraj Ghimire in *Samaya*, 2 June

समय

Last week, the Royal Nepali Army played tapes captured from the Maoists to the press. The growing distance between Prachanda and Baburam, Prachanda accusing Baburam of moving towards India and again, Prachanda refuting his accusations, show the internal conflict within the rebel party. After February First, the RNA appears to have grown stronger. Military aid has also resumed. The captured tapes showed India was pursuing another roadmap for the Maoists. In the audiotape, Prachanda talked of Baburam being clearly motivated and that the Indian government would release CP Gajurel and Mohan Baidya if Baburam was reinstated in the party position. The Indian Embassy in Kathmandu immediately questioned the authenticity of the tape. Later, Chief of Army Staff Pyar Jang Thapa said it hadn't been their

intention to 'expose' India. So why then did the RNA organise a press meet that would affect diplomatic relations? Why weren't the questions raised discretely with India first? And which rank in Nepal's government has the Indian government taken into confidence? Or was this responsibility given to India after an understanding was formed between Prachanda's group and a rank in the Nepali government?

Top army and government officials seeing the international pressure put on the king to return to democracy have lashed out at India, Britain and the US. To mobilise the army to make such exposes will bring huge damage to the king, people and the state. In fact, this way, the king will be blamed for everything that has gone wrong. Three days after the press meet, Prachanda released a statement testifying the authenticity of the tape.

In the same way, the Indian government should also clarify its role. Is it preparing the ground for another Delhi Treaty?

Angry Manisha

Rajdhani, 31 May

राजधानी

Manisha Koirala has said that by taking a step that could put the throne itself at risk to save the country and people from the decay of the past, the king has become a symbol of magnanimity for the whole country. Expressing dissatisfaction over the NC's expulsion of her father Prakash Koirala, she stated that to not be able to have a different opinion within the party was a serious setback for democracy itself.

NGOs pullout

Ghatana Ra Bichar, 25 May

घटना बिचार

Many NGOs whose work is affected by February First are on the verge of closing down. Maoist demands that NGOs be registered in their local government branch and permission taken from them had already created hassles. There are hundreds of organisations working in health, education and income generation in the rural

regions of the country. These days any NGO taking its work to the villages are asked to mention its support source. If they are supported by USAID or other American agencies, the Maoists bar them. Now, the state is also trying to put the squeeze on NGOs. Thousands will be out of jobs if the NGOs shut down.

from India and made in the village itself. "We put together the detonator, metals and wood chips to build the landmines," said Kusbaha. Chief Village Administrator Niranjan Baral said he did not have any information regarding the landmines.

Mahara, Baburam

Nepal Samacharpatra, 30 May

नेपाल समाचारपत्र

NEPALGANJ—Maoist leader Krishna Bahadur Mahara has been appointed the head of the United Revolutionary People's Council in place of Baburam Bhattarai who held that position. Spokesman of the party, Mahara had been working as the joint-coordinator of the council. The Western Central Command's Organisation Mobilisation Committee in-charge Purna Subedi confirmed this saying Bhattarai had not been reinstated in the politburo. "But he is working with the party headquarters," she said, adding that the central leadership dispute just when the party had gained momentum in its struggle had frustrated party ranks. "There are attempts to create confusion by highlighting the intra-party struggle but nobody has seen the action taken against Bhattarai as a wise move."

"Political outlet"

Interview with Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai in *BBC Nepali service*, 30 May

BBC नेपाली

BBC: There have been so many charges against you of late. What hurts you the most?

Baburam Bhattarai: I feel bad because some quarters have questioned my patriotism while I have been striving to take nationalism and democracy together for the last 30 years and I believe that the two are inseparable.

The charges seem to be based on contradictions between your party's official line toward India and what you have been doing there?

That is not the case. We don't look at India only as a country, we look at the people there after categorising them into different classes.

Your own chairman (Prachanda) says you have been meeting the Indian officialdom.

It's not just India. In the absence of an understanding between India, China, the United States and the European Union, there will be no sustainable outlet and peace in Nepal. Based on that concept, we are making diplomatic moves contacting these powers. Comrade Krishna Bahadur Mahara and I have been sent here (India) to do international work.

India has declared your group terrorists. Yet you were not arrested?

Even the United States of America has said that the Maoist power can't be quelled through military might. Everyone agrees this needs political outlet.

But India has not withdrawn the terrorist tag on you.

You see similar development in all movements—Palestine and South Africa. Diplomatic contacts are held through back channels and terrorist tags are finally withdrawn.

How come the Indian intelligence had no idea about your presence in New Delhi?

One must forget that India has a billion people.

What did you talk about with Indian and Nepali leaders?

History after the 1950 movement has shown that the monarchy and the army under it are the main obstacles of democracy. That is why, we have been proposing that we, the revolutionaries who believe in a new people's republic and those forces who believe in simple parliamentary democracy need to work for a common goal of the people's republic and to provide a forward-looking outlet to Nepal by ending the monarchy. Some progress has been made. We have been demanding the election of a constituent assembly under international monitoring. We believe that the new constitution made through the constituent assembly will pave way for an election that will ultimately bring about the real representatives of the people.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

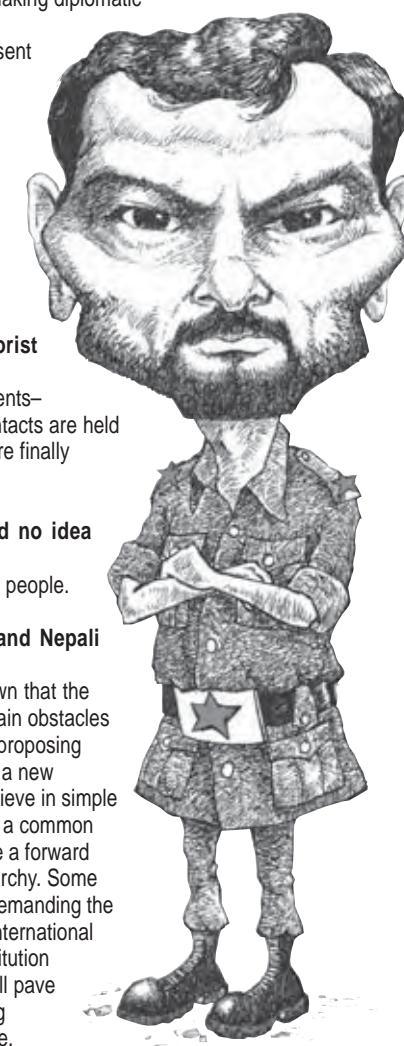
If the political parties believe in multiparty democracy then they should show their cooperation and commitment to restore peace in the country.

King Gyanendra in *Kantipur*, 28 May

समय Samaya, 2 June



समय Samaya, 2 June



SUBHAS RAI

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PICS: ANTOINE CADI

They may not be as fierce-looking as their larger reptile cousins but when you get up, close and personal, the fish-eating gharial of Chitwan is impressive nonetheless.

Instead of huge ominous maws, you have a foot-long slender snout that has more than 100 razor sharp teeth. The gharial prefers to eat fish and that is why people have taken advantage of their meekness and brought them to the brink of extinction.

In Nepal, their dwindling numbers went unnoticed until 1976 when some Indian conservationists came to ask for gharial eggs. They had less than 100 gharials left in the Ganges but here in Nepal we hadn't yet bothered to count ours. "We were quite ignorant of the danger our gharials were facing and we were selling gharial eggs for Rs 100 each to India," recalls Tirtha Man Maskey, director general of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC).

In 1977, the Indians came back but Nepalis had grown smarter. "We agreed to give them the eggs free-of-charge on the condition that they give us 50 percent of the hatchlings," says Maskey. The Indians agreed, the eggs were hatched in Chitwan and taken to India. "When we called to enquire about our share of hatchlings, they told us they were all dead," adds Maskey. Not so smart, after all.

Learning its lesson, Nepal started its Gharial Conservation Project with Frankfurt Zoological Society's help in Kasara, Chitwan. Fishermen who formerly poached eggs from gharial nests were hired in the conservation work. An average gharial egg weighs 160 g and makes one whole meal, making it an easy substitute for the river-dwelling Botes of Chitwan who believe that the eggs cured headache, TB and other diseases.

A maximum of 60 eggs in one gharial nest and a minimum of 20 eggs have been recorded in Nepal. The eggs are collected, hatched in artificial conditions and the young gharials reared in ponds until they reach two metres in length. They are then released into Rapti and Narayani rivers.

In 1981, the first batch was released with transmitters to monitor their movement. Since then,

ABHA ELI PHOBBO

No more crocodile tears for gharials

Bringing gharials back from the brink of extinction

more than 500 gharials have been set free every year.

The gharial population has increased but has not been stable. They are distributed in the Karnali, Babai, Narayani and Sapta Kosi rivers. Though the captive rearing program is a success, the pollution of the rivers, construction of dams, use of seines and gill net for fishing have affected the gharials. Fewer fishes mean less food for them because they have to compete with the fishermen in the area, who also steal their eggs.

According to an IUCN study, only seven percent of the released gharials survive. To check this, DNPWC in collaboration with Conservation des Espèces et des Populations Animales and Ferme aux Crocodiles Pierrelatté of France began a radio-telemetry system to monitor gharials. They started out to investigate the reasons for the disappearance of the last gharials.

In March 2002, two male and eight female gharials from the program were measured, marked with notches and released implanted with Indexel radio-transmitters equipped with electronic chips for individual frequencies. By the end of the month, most of them had travelled downstream and finally moved to Indian rivers.

Last November, 10 more gharials were released with another 10 this February. They were marked with the same code. Nearly 70 gharials are now living in the rivers of Nepal.

It is clear that for the survival of gharials, bilateral coordination is needed between the two countries. As for other endangered species that have transboundary ranges, a long-term conservation and management strategy between India and Nepal is critical otherwise both countries will lose their rare wildlife.

"We need to educate the people about gharials and their importance in biodiversity, gharials could also become an important part of ecotourism in the tarai," says Antoine Cadi of Noé Conservation who has worked for five years with the Gharial Conservation Program. The buffer zone concept of crocodile farming that was a hit in Papua New Guinea may need to be replicated in Nepal. ●



A male gharial basking on a sandbar in the middle of the Rapti.



A rare gharial eating fish.

OLIVIER BORN

Pride of Southasian democracy

The people shouldn't be pushed to rediscover democracy all over again

There is only one country in Southasia today where mainstream national-level politicians who believe in constitutional government and rule of law—a former prime minister, parliamentarians, politicians and activists—are in jail. The 1990 constitution is in tatters and every whim and fancy is being implemented by decree.

SOUTHASIA BEAT Kanak Mani Dixit

The ongoing mockery of constitutional principles would have the jurists and constitutional lawyers in Colombo, Karachi or Dhaka aghast. While each country will have its own challenges, in Nepal there is breathtaking disregard for norms and decorum, and the willingness to run roughshod over values in the belief that no one is watching or that it does not matter if they are.

Amidst this massive unravelling, Kathmandu's educated classes are busy (and happy) running down the political parties even while the democratic rug is being pulled from underneath the public. This is a process of urban elitism that will be understood well by the students of political science and

sociology from Lahore to Patna to Guwahati.

Generals are being appointed ambassadors with abandon, traffic is blocked and sidewalks emptied to allow royal motorcades to pass, a kangaroo commission has been set up for corruption control but more to cow down politicians who protest too loudly. A municipal election has been announced at some future date, as a sop to those who ask for just that morsel to prove democratic leaning. The National Human Rights Commission has just been filled with individuals of unproven commitment. Meanwhile, the one real human rights activist who openly rejects Maoists violence as well as the state's snowballing excesses, languishes in custody. Krishna Pahadi is a Southasian prisoner of conscience.

Other Southasian societies have had their days of reckoning, against raging and brutal militancies, and against a rapacious state bent demolishing democracy under the umbrella of chauvinist nationalism. Today, Nepalis are asked to stand up and be counted but their fight is probably harder than for most because there are two adversaries in the fight to save the democratic middle. There are the violence-



PICS: MIN BAJRACHARYA

Krishna Pahadi

prone Maoists and there is the royal palace which has used the excuse of the Maoist threat for takeover, stoking a smoking heap of xenophobia along the way.

The clearest writing against the 1 February takeover, smuggled out from jail in Tanahu, has been printed in Monday's *Kantipur*. Ram Chandra Poudel, former speaker of the house and deputy prime minister, is not an extremist who should be behind bars. In poor health and kept incommunicado for four months now, he has plumbed the depths of his political experience and written a defence of Nepal's democratic exercise that should

be read in translation by all without access to the Nepali language.

This classic testimonial by prisoner Ram Chandra is bracing in its defiance of autocratic methods, reassuring in its faith in the self-correcting democracy, illuminating in its defence of 12 years of democracy before the royal half-takeover of October 2002. In sum, the former speaker does not want the people pushed back to an era where they will need to rediscover democracy all over again.

There was a time when everyone, including King Gyanendra and the all-powerful donors and diplomats of Kathmandu challenged the political parties to get over their petty differences and to unite for the greater good of the country. A month ago, they did just that, presenting one common, principled, non-violent agenda to bring back the 1990 Constitution and move thereafter, under the constitution, towards the creation of a more inclusive state. For this, they have identified restoration of parliament a necessary, logical, people-friendly requirement, under whose aegis all problems can be addressed, starting with the resolution of the Maoist problem. Nothing that anyone can



Ram Chandra Poudel

propose, including the completely palace-centric American ambassador, can be a better alternative to the revival of the parliament. It is incongruous even to have to defend the political parties of Nepal and demand an immediate return to parliamentary process and civilised state but such is the case. And the defence and agenda is all there in the article by Ram Chandra Poudel in *Kantipur* (for translation see www.kantipuronline.com).

Nepal may yet evolve as the pride of Southasian democracy. We were well on our way and we may yet get there. ●

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MIN BAJRACHARYA

Monitoring the monitors

Even before it starts work, the new NHRC is drawing flak

NARESH NEWAR

Monitoring human rights violations seems to have taken a back seat as activists are embroiled in a controversy over the appointment of new members of the National Human Rights Commission.

A coalition of 25 human rights organisations have vowed never to work with the NHRC unless it changes new members inducted last week who they say are "too old, incompetent and pro-government".

One of the new members, Sudeep Pathak of the rights group HURON, rejected the allegations. "If there's any sign of the authorities interfering in our work, then I'll quit on the spot," Commissioner Sudeep Pathak told us, "The question is do we need the commission or not? I respect the issues raised by my colleagues but they have to

understand that the members will work as mandated."

The international donors who support the NHRC have expressed misgivings about the new appointment procedures. But Pathak said the Commission's work would be monitored closely by the UN. "There are thus understandable concerns about the independence of the new Commission and the extent to which it will be able to develop the essential confidence of NGOs and victims," Ian Martin, chief of UN human rights monitoring mission in Nepal, told us. Lack of support from donors could hobble the work of the NHRC which depends mostly on their money.

The government appointed the foreign minister, chief justice and speaker of the dissolved house as members of the selection committee. Nayan Bahadur Khatri was re-appointed chairman and

other members include former Supreme Court Justice Sushila Singh, former election official Ram Dayal Rakesh, journalist Gokul Pokhrel and Sudeep Pathak (*being sworn in, above*).

One of the first initiatives NHRC took during its establishment in 2000 was to call on both the government and Maoists to declare a truce. It also played a key role in pressuring the government to allow UN human rights monitoring in the country. It investigated the army's massacre of 19 people in Doramba in 2003.

But the NHRC's clout and morale weakened considerably after the dissolution of the House in 2002 and the commission was also ridden with factionalism. After February First, NHRC members have been barred from travelling to different parts of the country.

"Our members were strong enough to hold off state control,"

ICRC suspends visits

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) which specialises in monitoring the conditions of prisoners of war has put on hold visits to detainees at army barracks in Nepal.

It says the Royal Nepali Army (RNA) is not complying fully with an agreement on the conditions for the visits. "We have visited persons detained by the RNA since December 2002 and we had some problems as far as the respect of the ICRC's worldwide working modalities for and with detainees are concerned," Friedrun Medert, ICRC's Delegation Head in Nepal, confirmed. "We have discussed these problems with the RNA and we felt that the steps it took were not sufficient to redress the situation."

Under its rules, the ICRC is allowed to inspect all the premises of a detention place, meet every detainee, register their names and talk to them in private. The Geneva-based group is also allowed to offer detainees a message exchange service with families and make repeated visits to check if the detainees have been put under pressure after previous ICRC visit. Medert described these working modalities as a "package deal" but refused to go into detail as to which one of the provisions were not respected by the RNA.

ICRC deals directly with the highest army authorities to present its findings with the aim of improving the situation of the detainees and making sure they are protected from disappearance, abuse, torture and psychological anxiety. It does not question the right of the authorities to detain someone but underlines that, while in custody, they must be treated humanely and according to the spirit and the letter of the Geneva Conventions.

"The RNA knows that we work in a confidential way which means that our findings are shared with the detaining authorities only. We do not know the reasons why our cooperation was at times hampered," explained Medert.

Even now, ICRC continues to visit detainees in the district and central jails, police stations and rehabilitation centres of former Maoists who have surrendered to the army. But the suspension of its visits to army barracks is causing serious concern among human rights activists and family members of prisoners. Although ICRC has experienced problems in the past with the army, this is the first time that it decided to temporarily halt its visit to army barracks. ●

Naresh Newar

asserts former member Kapil Shrestha, who thinks the commission's main problem was one of leadership and disunity. The NHRC's first priority will be to restore trust with activists in the field since it depended on their grassroots network for monitoring work.

"We have already decided to stop sharing our information with the commission. This amply proves our dissociation with it," said Gopal Siwakoti from the group, Himrights.

The NHRC also seems to be at

risk of being ostracised by international and regional human rights bodies. "The whole process of reappointment has isolated the NHRC," says Subodh Pyakurel from INSEC who is lobbying with foreign groups to send a fact-finding mission to Nepal to look into the new commission.

However, such international lobbying has been criticised as washing Nepal's linen in public. Said one activist who declined to be named: "Let the NHRC prove itself, why criticise them before they even start their work?" ●

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Shot in shape

Drawing and fading on creative shot making

On the driving range, one often sees advanced golfers meticulously practicing a particular shape of shot. Their aim is to build an armoury that enables creative shot making. After wayward drives, bad lies, bad weather or sometimes just bad luck, it allows a recovery shot that leads to more greens hit and ultimately lower scores.

Shot shaping includes intentionally moving the ball right to left, left to right, keeping it low and hitting it very high with a lot of spin. Lately, I have been trying to re-groove my ability to shape my shots more precisely. I thought it would be interesting to share the techniques I am using.

TEE BREAK

Deepak Acharya



clubface slightly closed (aiming to the point you wish the ball to finish) and the body aligned towards where you wish the ball to start (right of the target).

For the fade, the set up is opposite: the clubface slightly open and the body aligned left of the target. I keep in mind that the draw shot would fly a little further with a lower trajectory and the fade a little shorter with a higher trajectory.

Some situations though call for a more complex approach. Take for example the high draw needed for curving around some trees on a narrow right to left dogleg or to a back left pin. Or perhaps a low fade keeping it under the branches or carving a path to a tight back right pin with a head-on wind.

Knowing the techniques needed for these shots is the first step to executing them. Practicing them till they become second nature is the key to successfully using them. This is what I have been working on.



When I want to play a high draw, I position the ball closer to the leading foot, exaggerate the tilting down of my right shoulder and start with the clubface slightly open. As I hit the ball, I feel I am rotating the clubface closed through impact. I finish my swing high, which means my swing path was slightly steeper. This causes the ball to climb higher as it draws. I also require a bigger swing in terms of pace and length.

For the low fade, I put the ball closer to the back foot. My shoulders are more flat (unlike the usual leading shoulder being higher) and I have more weight on the front foot. The swing here is almost an opposite of the high draw, the clubface is closed at address and rotates open through impact. My follow through will feel flat and low. I play the low fade like a knockdown shot on a windy day, a three-quarter swing in both pace and length.

Once you have a decent golf swing, remember to add such types of new shots to your arsenal. All golfers get into trouble during a round. Usually the ones that have the ability to effectively get back into play not only end up with the lowest scores but also demoralise their opponents. The end result will hopefully be a win. ●

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

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Running in the mountains

Marathon in the highest and one of the most dangerous routes

CHARLES HAVILAND
in NAMCHE BAJAR

"Mother Nature will fix it," said Bikrum Pandey, president of the Tenzing-Hillary Everest Marathon. "If you're fit, she'll get you up to Everest Base Camp and then if you're in good health, you'll join the marathon."

I wasn't so sure. I could just imagine Mother Nature getting me slowly up to Base Camp but not in a million years could I see her getting me to run the marathon back down again. One-hundred-and-six men and women, however, 20 of them foreigners, are clearly made of sterner stuff. And on Sunday, they triumphantly completed the world's highest marathon.

When you know the runners have set off more than four hours earlier, from the foot of the deadly Khumbu Icefall and you are waiting in a village as noisy and animated as Namche, the prospect of seeing the first runners appear is somehow thrilling. Tiny schoolchildren waiting in the big crowd on the finishing line pointed upwards at three or four figures that had just appeared on the side of the cleft in which Namche sits. They were walking, clearly breathless, uphill, still to tackle a final loop through Phurte before returning.

Meanwhile the Namche cheerleaders raised a deafening cacophony of welcome: cymbals, drums, horns sounding like conch-shells, funny megaphone noises and vocals whose main quality was enthusiasm. Waiting for the athletes to reappear, race director and coach Khadga Ranabhat spelt out for me the terrain the marathon crosses. Ice. Icefalls. Lots of up as well as down. Rivers, forests, rocks, all of them very "interesting". As for the altitude, despite taking medicine, Ranabhat cheerfully admitted to having returned from Base Camp "like an old man".

But Nepalis do cope with the altitude better than foreigners. The runners reappeared, running this time. The waiting crowds turned delirious. And 26-year-old Dangnima Sherpa repeated his 2004 feat and came in first, although at four hours 19 minutes considerably slower than last year. Bhim Rai, 20, was just 10 seconds behind.

Dangnima, grimacing, bent



PICS: EVEREST MARATHON

MARATHON MEN: As the Men's third marathoner, Dipak Raj Rai, arrives in Namche. French Ambassador Michel Jolivet and Bikrum Pandey were on hand to applaud.

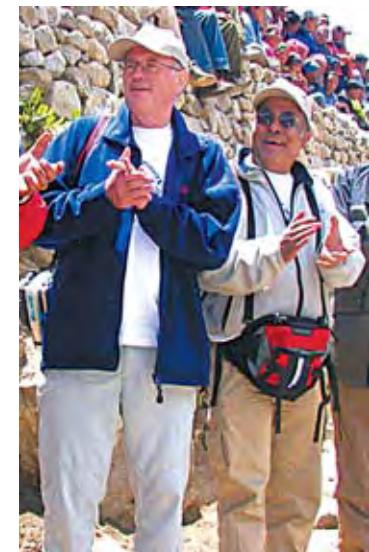
double, clenched the arms of a chair and soaked up the glory. One of the uphill bits was really tough, he said. "But," he grinned, "I was really happy with the encouragement and cheers I got from villagers along the way."

One-and-a-quarter hours and a stream of Nepalis later, in came the first-placed foreigner. Robert Celinski of Poland, 32, slightly built and pallid, sank to his knees, made the Catholic sign of the cross and kissed the ground in the manner of late Pope John Paul. Pronouncing Nepal a beautiful country, he admitted that running this marathon was a little mad. "My dream was to win this marathon and get the Nepali government to give me a passport," he said, straight-faced, "then I could represent Nepal at the Olympics."

Yangdi Sherpa was the first woman across the line. Erika Kugel of Germany won a special "fair play" prize for going back round the loop after mistakenly coming early to the finish.

As the day wore on, later finishers were awaited by thinning crowds and dependable doctors. Meanwhile, the Namche afternoon was broken by the ceaseless clinking of builders' tools making new lodges and by re-echoing rehearsals for a rock concert promoted by the Namche Youth Club in aid of peace.

Even with the downturn in general tourism, adventure tourism was holding steady, Bikrum Pandey said. The



marathon's organisers wanted to send the world a message: that for those seeking adventure, "Nepal is a safe place, a fun place, an enjoyable place. People are equally friendly, nothing has changed in the mountains."

Those sentiments were echoed that night at the marathon awards ceremony. Tourists need to come, said the French and German ambassadors, both present as special guests. "This is a country people always want to revisit," said French Ambassador Michel Jolivet.

Later, the medals all distributed, you could see one of the reasons why. Mongolian Band (Nepali, actually) were on stage at the concert. They were singing and yelling their way through a litany of favourite numbers. Marathon returnees gyrated and cheered. Middle-aged Sherpa lodge ladies swayed. A clutch of Buddhist monks stood, stock-still, in the middle of it all. If anything, the sprinkling of foreigners—Poles, Germans, Spaniards—cheered even louder than the locals. ●



MIN BAJRACHARYA

ELECTRIC: Lightning and thunder lit up Kathmandu Valley on Friday after a hot and muggy day.



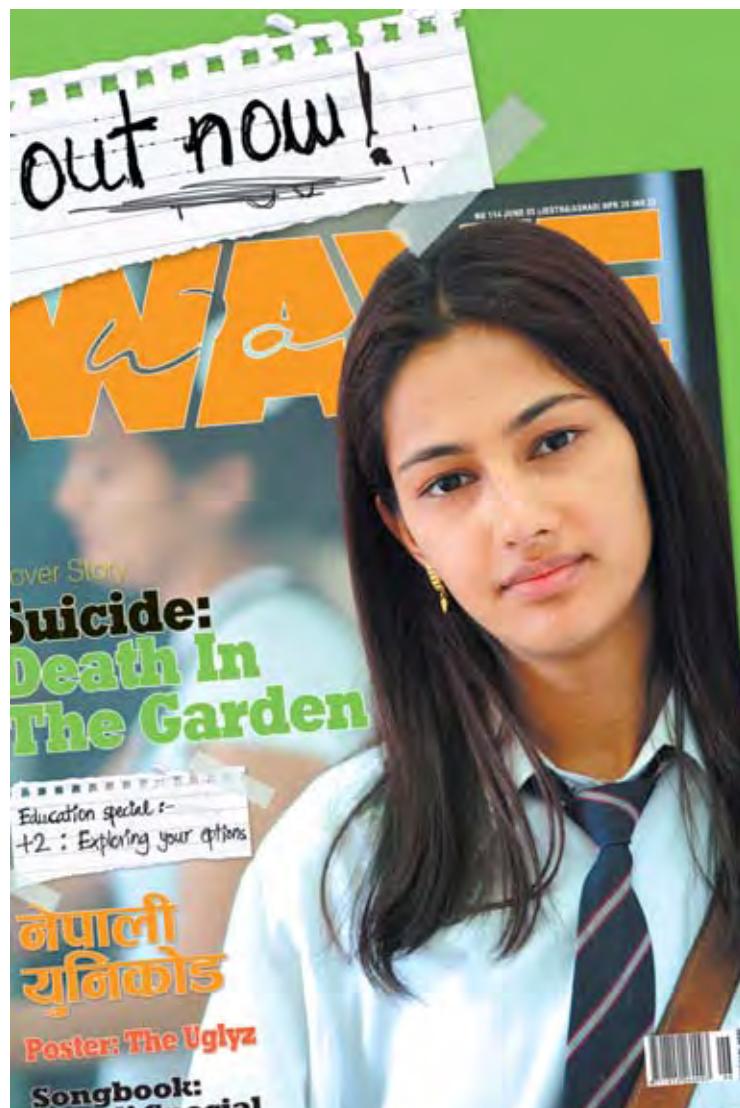
KIRAN PANDAY

ALL TOGETHER NOW: Leaders of seven political parties wave at the crowd after announcing an alliance to protest the royal move of February First at New Baneshwor on Friday.



KIRAN PANDAY

COOLING OFF: The smelly water is no deterrent for children swimming in the Bagmati to escape the heat on Thursday when temperature in the Valley soared to a record 35 degrees.



Binod and his wife Kamal Keshari Tuladhar make a great team at home and in business. They are pioneers of Nepal's department store phenomenon and the first European style self-service supermarket, Bluebird. Married for 26 years, the couple hit upon the shopping centre idea after returning from Austria where Binod studied hotel management. "We shopped at such centres there and thought wouldn't it be great to do it in Nepal," says Binod.

It didn't take long for Bluebird after it opened in Tripureswor in 1985 for it to become a hit. People liked the competitive prices, the convenience of shopping under one roof at a time when one had to go all over town looking for household items. "I think the reason for Bluebird's success was that it made shopping fun," recalls Kamal Keshari.

The dynamic duo love their jobs but they also love to travel. "We usually get out of the country to relax because if we stay here, the socialising can become hectic," says Kamal Keshari. They also love books, food and music. In fact, music is also an important part of Binod's business life—he is the director of Hits FM. Besides business, Kamal Keshari is an active social worker and is the second vice president of the Association of St Mary's Alumnae Nepal and a member of the charities Bal Bhojan and Tewa. What gives her a real sense of achievement is being able to find sponsors for the 250 children who go to the Mary Ward schools.

On Bluebird's 20th anniversary this week, we asked the Tuladhars whether it works, having your spouse as a business partner. They laughed. "People say married couples shouldn't work together, but for us it has worked perfectly," says Binod. Adds Kamal Keshari, "We completely depend on each other, we discuss things before we make a decision. We share similar mindsets and are careful not to tread on each other's toes."

Aarti Basnyat

Dynamic duo



MIN BAJRACHARYA

SNV/Nepal Vacancy Announcement

SNV/Nepal, a Dutch non-government development organisation, has been working in Nepal since 1980. SNV/Nepal focuses on capacitating key institutions at the district, regional and national level with the ability to serve the interests of marginal areas. SNV's sectoral niches are in governance, private sector development and natural resource management.



SNV/Nepal invites qualified Nepali citizens to apply for the position of

MONITORING AND EVALUATION ADVISOR

The Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor (M&E Advisor) will have an overall responsibility of providing input and feedback on the development and/or revision of M&E strategies and guidelines of BISEP-ST (Biodiversity Sector Programme for Siwalik and Terai) and MFSC (Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation). The M&E Advisor will report together with Regional Directorate of Forest (RDF) on a trimester basis to BISEP-ST CSU, RSU FOs (Central and Regional Support Unit Programme Officers) and SNV/Nepal NRM Practice Leader.

Duty station: The M&E Advisor will be stationed in BISEP-ST, RSU (Regional Support Unit) Hetauda with the requirement to make frequent travel to BISEP-ST Districts.

Specific responsibilities include:

- Implement Joint Monitoring (JM) of programme activities, together with the Regional Directorate of Forests, financial and other experts at regional and district level.
- Assist the M&E division of MFSC with joint monitoring of regional and central level BISEP-ST activities.
- Strengthen the M&E capacity of the existing MFSC M&E structures, DFCCs (District Forest Coordination Committee), PSUs (Programme Support Unit), district line agencies, NGSP (Non Governmental Service Providers) and FUGs (Forest User's Group) which includes testing and refining public auditing guidelines for the forestry sector.
- Contribute to further improvement of internal reporting and planning through better integration of M&E and planning in the existing Management and Information System (MIS).

Required Knowledge: A minimum of Masters Degree in Social Sciences or Forestry; Seven years of working experience on using logical frameworks and in developing integrated NRM programme monitoring and evaluation systems. M&E Advisor should have proven ability to plan strategically and operationally and demonstrate understanding of rural livelihood issues.

Required Skills: Excellent communication and reporting skills (in Nepali and English); ability to communicate with different stakeholders from HMG/N to communities; planning, organising and coordinating skills; analytical skills; excellent computer skills; ability to work in team; conflict sensitive and willingness to travel extensively in the programme districts.

Applications are to be sent to the below address along with a cover letter with the latest curriculum vitae, daytime contact number, a recent photograph and the names of two referees along with their contact addresses/telephone numbers. Only shortlisted candidates will be notified; written assessment and final interviews will take place in the week of July 4, 2005.

Deadline for submitting applications: 5:00 pm Friday June 17, 2005

Job description is available for pick up from Organisation Development Centre (ODC) from June 6, 2005 onwards or it could be accessed through our website www.odcincorp.com under the category "Recruitment". Candidates unable to pick up the above or access the website may request for it through e-mail.

Organisation Development Centre (ODC)

Jhamsikhel, Lalitpur, GPO 8975 EPC 443,

Kathmandu, Nepal

Phone: (977-01) - 5551979, 5524540

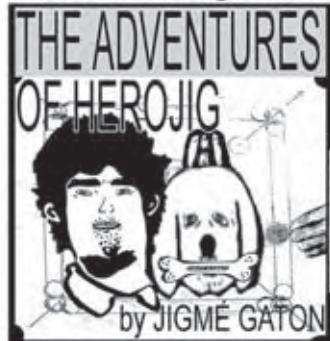
E-mail: hrd@odcincorp.com

URL: www.odcincorp.com

SNV/Nepal gives special consideration to female candidates and candidates from marginalised and disadvantaged groups



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

....and then considers just how the internet is helping alleviate world poverty.

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Robert Wilensky (Professor of Computer Science, Berkeley CA)

Next change: Our Heroji Meets Britney Spears shopping in Bhat Bhateni - no lie!

#71 2062 by jigme gaton - read. love. write.

ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Artist Choice Ceramics** by Carole Irwin at Indigo Gallery, Naxal, until 5 June. 4413580
- ❖ **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 Upadhyaya-Grela, until 8 June at Siddhartha Art Gallery. 4218048
- ❖ **Floral paintings** in aquarelle by Neera Joshi Pradhan at Park Gallery, Lajimpal, until 30 June. 4419353

EVENTS

- ❖ **Paleti Number Panch** on 3 June, 6PM onwards at R-sala, Manbhawan, Rs 500. 5552839, 5542646
- ❖ **International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression** on 4 June.
- ❖ **World Environment Day** on 5 June.
- ❖ **Nepal against Netherlands** First round of World Cup Football at Sportpark Middenmeer, Amsterdam, 5 June at 10AM. info@nepal-academy.nl
- ❖ **On Thagmi language** Lecture by Mark Turin on 5 June, 5PM at Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka. 4431232
- ❖ **Selection from KIMFF** Screening at Lajimpal Gallery Café this every week June, 7PM, Rs 50. 4428590
- ❖ **Intercultural Exchange Program** Every Wednesday at Goethe Zentrum, Thapathali, 4.15 PM. 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, [cigymktm@hotmail.com](mailto:citgymktm@hotmail.com)
- ❖ **Sanibar Mela** at Bakery Café, Dharara, 2PM and Chuchepati, Boudha, 3PM.

MUSIC

- ❖ **Robin and the New Revolution** Live on 3 June, 7PM at Moksh. 5526212
- ❖ **The Good Time Blues Band** at Rum Doodle, Thamel, 7PM. 4701208
- ❖ **Ladies Nights** Wednesdays at Jatra, Thamel, with live acoustic music and one free drink. 4256622
- ❖ **Fusion Time** Mondays at Jalan Jalan Restaurant, Lajimpal, 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, Lajimpal, Wednesdays and Saturdays, 7.45 PM.

FOOD

- ❖ **Daily Delite** Lunch at Shambala Garden Café, Hotel Shangri-La, Lajimpal, Rs 399 on weekdays, Rs 499 on weekends. 4412999
- ❖ **Crosskitchen** European and Indian cuisine at Lajimpal. 9851083806
- ❖ **Boire and Manger** at Vineyard, Baber Mahal Revisited.
- ❖ **Bawarchi** The Restro Bar for Nawabi cuisine at Lajimpal. 4436673
- ❖ **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, Kantipat.
- ❖ **Momo Revolution** Saturdays at the Tea House Inn, Nagarkot. 6680048
- ❖ **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 Vajayantha, Godavari Village Resort. 5560675

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Faces** Beauty Clinic at Baber Mahal Revisited, 10AM-6PM. 9851023336
- ❖ **Malaysia Dream Holidays** Special offers for June. 2012345, malsiaholidays_marco@polo.com.np
- ❖ **Star Cruises** Available in Nepal from 1 June. 2012345, starcruises_marco@polo.com.np
- ❖ **Stay one night** get one Night free at Shangri-la Village, Pokhara. 4435742
- ❖ **Wet & Wild Summer Splash** at Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
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Quest Entertainment

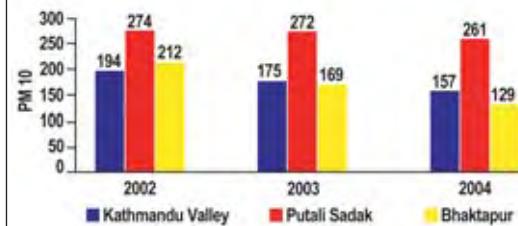
Bunty (Abhishek Bachchan) and Babli (Rani Mukherjee) are two avid dreamers. Two free souls born into caged small town realities. They grow weary of being just specks on the horizon and decide to pack their aspirations in worn out bags, whip up confidence and set out on a journey across the country, spinning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

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KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

Kathmandu's air quality data from the past three winters show that there has been a slight improvement in the Valley's air quality over the years, although overall particulate matter is still worse than WHO standards. The improvement is most significant in Bhaktapur where old polluting brick kilns have all been replaced with cleaner ones. The pollution level in Putali Sadak is however more or less constant. The difference is that the local people of Bhaktapur raised their voices against the pollution from the kilns and forced the government and the kiln owners to switch to better technology while the Kathmandu residents do not seem to care much about the air. On World Environment Day 2005, let's get together and raise our voices against the polluted air we breathe every day.



November–February in micrograms per cubic meter.
Source: www.mope.gov.np

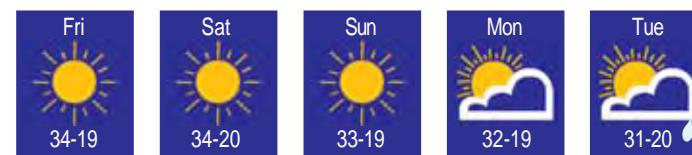
NEPALI WEATHER



by MAUSAM BEED

The mercury is setting record maximums, soaring to 34 degrees in Kathmandu Valley. We need to bear with atleast another two weeks of this before the monsoon breaks. Thankfully, we see in this satellite picture taken on Thursday morning hints of two monsoon fronts edging into south India and in the Bay of Bengal. Unfortunately from where they are now these fronts take at least three weeks to reach us. Despite the dry winds, the midhills and high mountain valleys will get localised thunder showers next week.

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Daft Media Decree

A copy of the controversial daft media edict has just been leaked to us by a highly-placed government source. A quick perusal of the said document reveals that under its provisions everything that ever happens in this country will heretofore only be divulged on a need to know basis, meaning that if there is a need to know anything then you'll be told there is no need

UNDER MY HAT
Kunda Dixit



to know it. In other words, as they say in legal parlance, the law is a

bitch. Having received this leaked manuscript and sworn to keep it secret, allow me in the national interest to go right ahead and reveal to all and sundry the contents of the said daft bill:

WHEREAS there exists a need to foster a culture of transparency and accountability in public authorities by giving effect to the right of freedom of information and thereby actively promote a society in which the people of Nepal have effective access to information to enable them to fully exercise and protect their right, the media is henceforth not to be referred to as a watchdog but a lapdog.

REAFFIRMING that such freedoms come with strings attached and even though the truth must be adhered to at all times, during extraordinary circumstances exceptions shall be made, such as when the truth is:

- (a) Uncomfortable
- (b) Embarrassing
- (c) Actually what happened, or
- (d) Affects the morals of uncivil servants

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT ALSO, that subject to provisions of Subsection (2) of Section 3 and Section 4 of the Constitution, every citizen shall have a right of access to official information from the state media, the aforementioned state media shall therefore cover all official functions in a

prominent manner and repeat the entire proceedings without expunging any visuals panning across the audiences even if they (the audiences) are in an advanced state of unconsciousness. The clip shall be broadcast during three segments of the morning news:

- (a) The Main Points of the News
- (b) The News in Detail, and
- (c) The Summary of the News

And the whole thing shall be repeated in its scintillating entirety in the evening news broadcast. Failure to do so will result in an immediate angry phone call from the official in question to the incumbent director of the state media, hereinafter referred to as 'The Mouth Organ'.

NOTWITHSTANDING the provisions of Subsection (2) the people's right to information shall not be curtailed on any of the grounds therein unless the disclosure is of the following categories:

- (i) Concern national security, which means everything about politics, economics, culture, history, geography, biology, maths, environment, energy, development, aviation, communications, speeding celebrities on motorcycles, foreign relations, traffic violations by DSPs and protests by Maoists' victims
- (ii) Jeopardise Nepal's friendly and fraternal relations with the world's fellow-pariah states
- (iii) Freedom of thought is hereby banned, and anyone thinking subversive thoughts will be liable to persecution
- (iv) The Reporter's Club shall henceforth be restricted to pure entertainment with Rishi Dhamala as the stand-up comedian
- (v) Weather reports that predict delays in the monsoon since they may adversely affect national morale
- (vi) Humour will be barely tolerated but satire is banned with immediate effect.

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HEALTHY LIVING

i-COOL™ BETTER COOLING

HOW SILVER NANO WORKS

A colloidal silver solution is dispersed as sub-microscopic particle (1~100nm) that can easily penetrate cells. Silver nano particles come into contact with bacteria, viruses and fungi and suppress their respiration. This, in turn, adversely affects their cellular metabolism and inhibits cell growth.



THE COOL CURTAIN SYSTEM



Instead of the conventional "Cooling System", SAMSUNG brings its unique COOL Curtain System that gives the ultimate 3-dimensional cooling action throughout. Feel the coolest amount the 'cools' only with SAMSUNG Refrigerators.

Tested by Kyoto Biseibutu Kenkyusyo, Japan (Oct. 2003)



Marketed by

**HH & Co. Pvt. Ltd.**

Kathmandu: Bishal Bazar: Electronics Home, Esquire TV Center, Hans Traders, Newroad: Voice & Vision, Pako: Digital Star Plus Electronics, Monami Electronics, Anamnagar: Ashoka Electronics, New Baneshwor: TV World, Esquire Wave Center, Symphonic Electronics, Old Baneshwor: Prasanti Emporium, DilliBazar: Hans TV Center, Bhatbhateni: Bhatbhateni Supermarket, Tamanna House, Chabahil: Kuldeep Home Appliances Center, Kalanki: Electronics TV House, Kirtipur: Man Electronics, Kumaripati: Paramount Himalayan Trade Links, Pulchowk: Namaste Supermarket, Gabahal: Tick-mark, Lalitpur: Pancheshwor Enterprises, Baudha: Gemini Supermarket, Thimi: Ganga Digital Electronics, Kamalbinayek: Shyam Electronics, Suryabinayek: L.G. Enterprises, Charikot: Rainbow Electronics, Dhading: Bairavi TV Center, Gorkha: Sakanya TV Pasal, Narayanghat: Trimurti Radio & Watch Service, Sushma Electronics, Hetauda: Shreetha Electricals & General Suppliers, Tadi: Shree Digital World, Parsa: Shree Electronics, Birgunj: R.K. Emporium, R.K. Electronics, Dharan: Digital World & Suppliers, Ilam: Govinda Electronics, Biratnagar: Bansal TV Center, Bansal TV World, Damak: Acharya Electronics, Inaruwa: Ranu Shopping Center, Pathari: Raju Kota, Itahari: New Pathivara Electronics, Biratnagar: Arun Electronics/Abhishek, Rajbiraj: Om Shanti Electronics, Lahan: Star Video, Janakpur: Preeti Enterprises, Baylbas: Jagadamba Enterprises, Malangwa: Malangbaba Traders, Damauli: National Radio Service, Pokhara: Gautam Electronics & Electronics Center, World Vision, The Nice, Shubham Sound & Vision, Kushum: Kaligandaki Cable Network, Baglung: Baglung Electronics Center, Beni: Hira Sound & Vision, Syangja: Television & Freeze House, Galyang Bazar: Nishu Gift House, Walling Bazar: K.N. Shopping Center, Palpa: Srinagar Suppliers, Butwal: Kuman Audio Video & Home Appliances, Hirati Electronics, Nirup Enterprises, Siddhi Binayak Electronics, Bhairahawa: Electronic World, Lamahi: Bhushal Electronics, Ghorahi: Vishnu Jyoti Electricals & General Order Suppliers, Tulshipur: Shree Ram TV Center, Nepalgunj: Delta Electronics, Surkhet: Luxman Radio Emporium, Dhangadi: Dinesh Electronics, Mahendranagar: Chataut Trading, Munal Electronics, Pyuthan: New Swargadwari Electronic, Battar Bazar: Samundra Radio TV.

* Scheme available in Kathmandu valley only.

* Conditions apply.



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