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Slippers lie abandoned by the skeleton of the bombed bus the morning after the worst-ever attack on civilians in this 10-year Maoist war. The body of an unclaimed boy of about eight lies buried under a straw mat. It is said that military-minded hardliners have the upper hand among the rebels but killing innocent civilians is not a military act—it is terrorism.

Full story p4

"Sorry."



KANAK MANI DIXIT

Times nepalnews.com Weekly Internet Poll # 251

Q. Do you believe the parliament should be restored?



Total votes:845

Weekly Internet Poll # 252. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. Is the continued crackdown on the media by the state justified?

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Outside, looking in

Regional security and democracy? Both.

Aside from the apparent divide within the Maoist leadership, the most important post-February First development within Nepal has been the formulation of the seven-party alliance. This is a feat we haven't witnessed since 1990.

GUEST COLUMN
Dipta Shah



Externally, US policy vis-à-vis Nepal is constrained by the same dilemma faced by other members of the international community—endanger regional security or shore up democracy.

American policy-makers appear to have selected the only viable path to achieving both security and democracy simultaneously by refusing to fall prey to the prevailing polarisation.

Other international actors have displayed far less wisdom in navigating the same pitfalls. Given the legacy of deteriorating human rights in Nepal and the ambiguous achievements and failures (depending on interpretation) of the post-February One environment, the EU has opted in favour of full democratic restoration first as a prerequisite to peace and security.

While the Indian government's official stance appears firm (and in line with the EU's), its unofficial position remains ambiguous. The Indian government's reluctance to listen to the security concerns of its own

military is rather alarming because it is India's security wing that will bear the brunt of a failed policy vis-à-vis Nepal. Owing to its distance, the EU enjoys the luxury of maintaining a policy that ignores South Asian security concerns. India does not.

Baburam Bhattarai's recent tour of New Delhi has raised eyebrows. It is unprecedented for a political figure from any nation to hold talks with an organisation it has labelled terrorist but Bhattarai's alleged engagements with CPI-Marxist leader Prakash Karat could be a positive development. As a politician in the world's largest democracy and an individual who answers first and foremost for the interests of the Indian people, it is inconceivable that Karat would have advised the Maoist leader to do anything but join the political mainstream.

Meanwhile, Washington has remained resolute in its policy that long-term peace and stability can only be achieved through concerted action by all major power brokers in Nepal. Despite constant lobbying by various groups, the US has maintained its commitment for a peaceful and democratic discourse—one that retains the perspicuity of discerning partisan lobbies from those that serve Nepal's long-term interests.

The US policy actually includes the views of all legitimate parties with concerns on Nepal. This does not imply that every concern results in policy shifts, merely that all parties are granted the satisfaction of being heard and

the assurance that their interests will somehow factor in overall decision-making.

Granted, major decisions on Nepal are deferred to India now but the knowledge that India's status as a regional power is inextricably tied to her performance as a regional stabiliser is a reassuring realisation—especially for Nepal where Indian moves are constantly misconstrued as evidence of imminent invasion.

There is still potential for mutually agreeable progress if certain bottomline issues are addressed:

- the Maoist insurgency remains the primary driver of instability
- non-democratic discourse cannot be sustained indefinitely
- neither can democracy with its past malgovernance
- measured reforms across the political spectrum combined with continued harmony between Nepal's legitimate political forces is the only way out.

A failure to recognise the significance of these broad principles could cost Nepal dearly. Admission of guilt is insufficient if the only alternative is indefinite agitation. Rigid positions are untenable if room for inclusive politics is decimated. Propagation of petty gossip and name-calling is counterproductive when the ability to absorb and interpret is lacking. Using threats as political leverage when their ramifications are not fully understood is risky and there is a danger that such threats may become self-fulfilling prophecies. ●

THE ECONOMICS OF POLITICS

Even at the best of times, balancing the Nepali budget is a thankless and exasperating job. But budget-making in the midst of an unprecedented national crisis is an even bigger challenge. Madhukar Rana and Shankar Sharma have our deepest sympathies.

There isn't much that number-crunchers can do when everything adds up to minus. Revenue from trade has plummeted because trade is down, export receipts have crashed, tourism is at an all-time low and even remittances are sluggish. On the other hand there are huge new demands on expenditure from the military.

The finance wallas are tantalised by the prospect of expanding the tax-base. This may sound good in theory but with the economy withering, shops shutting, industries closing, there just isn't enough wealth being created to be taxed. Even Maoist extortionists have realised this.

Upon assumption of office, Madhukar Rana promised to take VAT back to 10 percent but now he has floated a trial balloon of taking it up to 15 percent. Traditionally, shortfalls in revenue are met through internal borrowing but inflation now rules that out. It leaves only one option: beg.

But February First has put a freeze on many grants and even multilateral budgetary support has been suspended because of the slow pace of reforms. With current expenditures spiraling out of control, it doesn't take a genius to figure out that the national exchequer is in very deep crisis. The salaries of teachers, civil servants and other recurrent expenditure is not going down. Money has to be set aside for debt servicing. The Home Ministry this week issued a public tender notice in the state media for weapons from international suppliers. Where is the money going to come from? Development.

Less development spending means fewer jobs which in turn will fuel the insurgency. If winning hearts and minds is a part of the counterinsurgency strategy, axing development is going to alienate the people even more.

Singha Darbar faces an impossible task: finding an economic solution for a political problem. If aid is to be resumed, February First needs to be rolled back. To reduce security expenses, there has to be a genuine attempt to mainstream the Maoists. To increase economic activity, political contestation has to be amicably resolved. These are challenges worthy of a statesman.



KUMAR SHRESTHA

Crime against humanity

Terrorism, pure and simple

In the agony over innocent deaths in the carnage at Mudekhola on Monday morning, it is tempting to just denounce the violence and escape mulling its deeper implications.

The blowing up of a public bus signifies much more than an escalation of armed conflict. Apart from being the single largest attack on a soft civilian target by ruthless insurgents, the tragedy is a blood-soaked reminder that criminalisation ultimately creeps into every armed

STATE OF THE STATE
CK Lal



conflict. It was an act of pure terror and its perpetrators should never be allowed to get away with it. Prachanda has owned up and said he will investigate.

Despite disagreement over the semantics of terrorism, any wilful attack on a civilian target is terrorism. It ceases to be the weapon of the weak the moment it is used against weaker and defenceless people.

Counterterrorism doctrines agree that all acts of terror share five frightening

characteristics:

- The attack is premeditated—planned in advance rather than an impulsive act of rage
- It is political—not criminal, like the violence of mafia groups, but designed to change the existing political order
- It is aimed at civilians—not at military targets or combat-ready troops
- It is carried out by political groups—not by the army of a country
- It carries a message—groups responsible for the act own up the responsibility for propaganda purposes.

Bombing a crowded bus was thus a brazen act of terrorism on all counts. Terrorism's use as a weapon is sometimes justified on the grounds of primacy of ends over means. The logic, howsoever convoluted, is that the sacrifice of 100 is somehow acceptable if it is intended to save 200 lives later. In reality it seldom works that way. In the vortex of violence, the means become ends and terror and tyranny merge.

Nowhere is the senselessness of violence as apparent as in the uses of landmines, booby traps and improvised

explosive devices for military, let alone political, purposes. A police post may protect itself against surprise attacks at night by laying landmines along the perimeter of its boundary. Defusing such a system is relatively easy and chances of accidental victims are somewhat rare. But nothing can justify the mining of any public place, much less the roads and bridges used by the public.

It is tactically useless, as it does not benefit the aggressor in any way. The Maoists wouldn't get control over territory, resources, weapons or personnel by blowing up a local bus. Even strategically, it damages their political image at a point when they need it most. Any attack on public space is anti-politics and ultimately destroys the very organisation that perpetrated it.

The incident will claim another political casualty: the effort by parliamentary parties advocating a common front with the Maoists against monarchy. Ethically, any violent act turns its perpetrator into a victim of his own aggression. The spectre of warlordism now haunts the Maoist commissars

engaged in carving out competitive spheres of influence.

What ethics are to a person, morality is to a group. Use of any weapon beyond the control of its user is morally repugnant. Landmines do not differentiate between combatants and non-combatants, even legitimate forces risk losing their legitimacy once they begin to rely on booby traps.

In denouncing cowardly attacks on public buses, the risks of security personnel moving about in civilian clothes often escape public scrutiny. Armed escorts for public vehicles are necessities of the times but men-in-muft in public transport needlessly expose their co-passengers to attacks by insurgents. Security forces need to reassess the effectiveness of the movement of their personnel in public vehicles in conflict-prone zones.

Experts agree that anyone charged with crime against humanity anywhere in the world is liable for prosecution under international law. Mudhekhola bloodshed deserves to be investigated and its result made public. ●

LETTERS

QUOTE
Your 'Quote of the week' (#249) from one of my CIDA colleagues may be misinterpreted as criticism of the action taken by donors to suspend development activities in Kalikot. Nothing could be further from the truth. As a donor to WFP Rural Reconstruction Infrastructure Works Program and as a signatory to the Basic Operating Guidelines (BOGs), CIDA fully endorses the careful and appropriate course of action taken by GTZ, WFP and DfID in Kalikot. As the BOGs clearly state, we do not accept our staff and development partners being subjected to violence, abduction, harassment, intimidation or being threatened in any manner. An attack against one development worker is an attack against all. I sincerely hope that the government of Nepal and the insurgents will publicly commit themselves to respect the BOGs and, despite the violent conflict, allow development workers and resources to reach their intended beneficiaries without diversion for any other purpose and without intimidation. If faced with grave BOGs violations comparable with those committed in Kalikot, CIDA would adopt a very similar course of action for any project that we support in Nepal.

Jean-Marc Mangin, CIDA Representative to Nepal

ORDNANCE
That was a strikingly bold editorial ('Ordnance against media', #249) given the circumstances that the Nepali press now works under. Despite the lifting of the emergency and the release of political



detainees, the government is embarked on an insidious and sinister campaign to decapitate the media and it is taking a special focus on community radio. When will good sense ever dawn on the generals who are making this policy that they are shooting themselves in the foot? Things weren't this bad even during the Rana regime.

Gyan Subba, Kumaripati

● All the major political players in Nepal: the king, the leaders of several political parties and now even the Maoists seem to be turning towards India for help and support. Some intellectuals, too, seem to be asking for Indian intervention. But let's not forget, we have seen time and again, India cares only about its own national interest. It doesn't matter to the

Indians who rules Nepal as long as they can call the shots. By trying to seek Indian blessings, all the above players are playing a dangerous game that could turn us into a Bhutan or, worse, Sikkim. And let's not think that China, the US or Europe will come to our rescue, they won't risk straining their relations with India for some underdeveloped country plagued by internal quarelling. Having just read Indira Gandhi's biography and her role in Sikkim's annexation, it is fortunate for us that the current leadership in India is not in Mrs Gandhi's mould. An ambitious leader like her would have never allowed a neighbouring nation to dwell long in a situation where it could eventually cause harm to India itself through the 'red corridor' link between Nepali and Indian Maoists.

Sagar Sharma, email

● I read with great interest the interview of American Ambassador James Moriarty ('Who's the roadblock?', #249). It is unfortunate that an experienced diplomat like Moriarty has not been able to understand the hidden goals of His Majesty the King. As a common semi-literate Nepali, I feel that the king has sent new district and zonal commissioners to strengthen his position and weaken the political parties. The only hope for lasting peace is to get the people's representatives to reestablish themselves. The ambassador should not be waylaid by the words but should also pay attention to the king's actions. He should see that the model here is General Musharraf of Pakistan: if elections are held in disturbed circumstances the role of civil society can be minimised and the security forces can be decisive. The question is: can elections be held unless the Maoists allow them to happen?

Srinivas Chalise, Chabahil

● King Gyanendra is better known as a businessman than a politician, and is often compared to his father, His Late Majesty King Mahendra, for wanting more control over ruling Nepal. There is no doubt we ultimately need democracy but not at the expense of accelerated violence, corruption, street protests, extreme inter/intra party rivalry and incompetence in the governance. King G took a bold step to assume absolute power and preserve the integrity of Nepal. A peaceful monarchy is a better choice than a ruthless democracy. He is right when he says in the piece you translated from *Nispakchya* (From the Nepali Press, #250) that political leaders should reverse their priorities from "me, party and country". Unfortunately, three years after the dissolution of parliament, the parties have not realised their mistakes and are still caught up in pointing fingers at everyone but themselves. Now they are about to cement an alliance to the very people who butchered their cadre since 1996. Everyone should support the prosecution of these corrupt leaders. Countries like the UN, Britain, EU and India should not pressure the king but denounce these short-sighted political

leaders for compelling him to take over to rescue the country. Long live the monarchy.

Pravesh Saria, Chicago, USA

● It was a bit surprising to find the interview with Baburam Bhattarai by BBC Nepali Service published in *Nepali Times*, as if there is not enough news in Nepal ('From the Nepali Press', #250). It is even more astonishing to read that Bhattarai like most politicians/intellectuals of Nepal did not feel shame in submitting to the Indian leaders whom he had been calling 'imperialists/expansionists'. Has he also become unscrupulous like the bosses of other political parties of Nepal? How could Bhattarai find his way to Delhi when the only thing he can see is the blood flood of thousands of poor Nepalis? Who would believe a man who has resurrected 'Pol Potism' in a peaceful country when he says he is struggling to bring nationalism and democracy? Mr Bhattarai, your schoolteachers have expressed sheer disbelief with your monsterism long ago and your university professors whom I met appeared quite shocked. Even if you are accepted by dodgy politicians and individuals, the utter destruction of mother Nepal and the bloodbath you have ignited will surely burn you in hell.

Name withheld on request

● With its leadership dispute it is only a question of time before the Maoist movement loses its political agenda. In fact the Chitwan bus bombing shows it has already happened. This dangerous shift, may be unintended by its top brass, has left the Maoists with group of people with guns in their hands but absolutely no idea how to change society. The revolution is now in danger of degenerating into a criminal activity for ransom and killing. In his interview with the BBC that you translated a bright intellectual like Baburam took questions on Maoist involvement on the killings of Narayan Pokharel and Ganesh Chilwal very lightly. If a promising ideologue like Baburam can't resist the temptation to be evasive and inconsistent there is little hope for the movement. The only way out of the present crisis is the restoration of democracy and the sooner the Maoists and monarchists understand that the better for evermore. The best alternative to democracy is more democracy.

Sameer Ghimire, Sydney

TB
I was impressed with Ian Harper's knowledge on Nepal's health care and delivery system (Letters, #250). But his concerns about the success of the DOTS program are baseless and not supported by any recent reports. As the original article by Naresh Newar states, in the 10 years of conflict, except for rare incidences, neither side has targeted health workers ('TB or not TB', #249). While other services have been hit, health posts, health centres and health workers have been spared. Health services are still as accessible as they were 10 years ago, probably with a more qualified workforce because of the surge in training of the health professionals and CMAs. Admittedly, health services have been unable to expand and health workers

have become more reluctant to travel to provide health care but I don't think the level of services available in-house has deteriorated. In a country with a high incidence of TB and half the general population carrying the bacteria in some form, any effort made by the private sector to combat the disease and save lives should be commended, not disputed. I would be more worried and would prefer to research casualties due to non and under-diagnosis of the condition than the distribution of patients between NTP and the private sector. I don't mean opening the floodgate and letting all pharmacies sell TB drugs but base my comments on a recent trip to a few health posts in Argakhanchi, newspaper reports and analyses, and informal discussions with health workers.

Santosh Khanal, email

READER'S GRIPE
As much as the media and journalists are cribbing about their rights having been curbed post-February First, they themselves haven't acted to provide any corresponding respite to readers. The size and price of most newspapers have gone in opposite directions with most media houses shrinking the size of their publications. To add to readers' woes the share of advertisements during the same period has hit the roof. One shining example of this phenomenon is your own #250. Out of 16 pages, nearly 6.75 pages (a whopping 42 percent) of space were ads. It is sad to see that the same media house that has been very vocal about the journalists rights has become very insensitive about the reader's right to demand value for money.

Sunil Sharma, Teku



CROCODILE TEARS
The sleepy reptile sunning himself on a sandbar in the main picture accompanying your interesting article on gharial conservation in Chitwan ('No more crocodile tears for gharials', #250) was an adolescent crocodile and not a gharial. You owe gharialdom an apology.

Jeff Lane, Boston

LETTERS
Nepali Times welcomes all feedback. Letters should be brief and may be edited for space. While pseudonyms can be accepted, writers who provide their real names and contact details will be given preference. Email letters should be in text format without attachments with 'letter to the editor' on the subject line.

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Mass murder in Madi

KANAK MANI DIXIT in CHITWAN

The sun is setting as 13 bodies are cremated on the banks of the Reyu on Tuesday. They were among the 38 who died when the Maoists bombed a bus packed with 150 people in Nepal's worst terrorist attack.

The Shaligram Travels bus descended into the dry riverbed next to a broken bridge at 7.55 AM. The wire-guided sulphur compound explosive was triggered from 200m away. It ripped through the cabin, lifted the vehicle into the air and deposited its shattered remains in an explosion of smoke, dust and sand. Most of the men who had left their seats to the children, women and elderly and climbed

Soldiers, as citizens, can travel by public transport when they are off-duty. But they often do so on patrol, in civilian clothing with their M-16s under wrap. They are presumably relying on a hope of some level of humanity amongst the rebels not to attack civilians. The soldiers in Madi couldn't have imagined the depravity of the rebel who would blow up a bus packed with civilians.

Krishna Chaudhary, an active social worker, kept the master list of the dead and the wounded: Tharus, Gurungs, Magars, Chepangs, Bahuns, Chhetris and one Shrestha—a Little Nepal of migrants who had settled in this fertile and scenic valley whose original inhabitants are the Tharu.

allow this. It was impossible for the villagers to make such demands of the RNA and the rebels obviously did not care how many civilians died in order to get at a few soldiers.

Maoist chieftain Pushpa Kamal Dahal apologised on Tuesday via email to the media. But it is not clear how much his writ runs any more among young men whose heads he has filled with the romance of violence. The Madi valley is the ideal guerrilla terrain surrounded by jungle on three sides and just a hill away from Bihar. To the north, the rebel supply line passes through the national park, across the East-West Highway, past Pithuwa, up to the Chepang Hills, into Dhading and

It is now Tuesday. Two passengers are still missing. An eight-year-old boy's body is found in the sand, headless and unclaimed. Already decomposing, he is buried under a foot of earth which is then covered with a straw mat retrieved from the wreckage. A jeep hired by Ramanuj Bhandari carries the body of his mother Sumitra Bhandari, 52, to Gaidakot for cremation. She had come to her sister's for a wedding. On their way back from the same wedding, a family of Lamsals from Jhapa—father Dinesh, mother Ganga and daughters, Dipa and Dipika—all perished.

The four sons of Ram Chandra Subedi, a 56-year-old local activist for the Nepali Congress, are already deep into funeral rites. Says the eldest son, Krishna Subedi,

PICS: KANAK MANI DIXIT



KUMAR SHRESTHA/NEPALNEWS.COM



Madi's well-known social worker Krishna Chaudhary checks his list of dead and wounded, the terrifying scene on the dry riverbed on Monday afternoon, and the furrow for the wire that led from the site 200m away where the bombers hid.

to the roof survived. Those inside didn't stand a chance.

Within minutes of the explosion a Red Cross unit from the Tharu village nearby was at the site. "There were writhing bodies and torn limbs everywhere," recalled a student volunteer. The local health post ambulance, which could fit four people, immediately made off for Bharatpur Hospital and buffalo carts were pressed into service to ferry the wounded.

By the time the military rescue team arrived from the Royal Chitwan National Park, the locals had already dealt with the civilian wounded and only the dead lay about. Of the 12 army men who had been on board, three died, four were wounded and the surviving five had dragged their companions to a nearby knoll to await rescue. Their guns and magazines were collected by the villagers and handed over to the military.

"Madi is a very close-knit community, it is isolated from the rest of the country by the national park and its regulations, we suffer flash floods and wild animals, we have learnt to look after each other," says Chaudhary, "every villager in Madi feels the pain of what happened to the bus because we are a special kind of community within Nepal."

In Chaudhary's list were: 'Woman, wife of Nirmal Sapkota', 'Child, son of Nirmal Sapkota'. I had flown with Nirmal Sapkota to Bharatpur from Kathmandu earlier that day. When we landed, he had headed straight to Bharatpur Hospital by riksha in search of his wife and son. He would have already learnt the terrible truth.

The soldiers on the bus were moving between the military posts of Baghai and Bankatta. For more than a year, the villagers had been warned by the Maoists not to

Gorkha. Maoist commander Kshitij, said to be of a friendly sort, was replaced a month ago by someone obviously quite different. The transfer perhaps had to do with the rift in the rebel ranks between the Baburam Bhattarai and Pushpa Kamal Dahal camps.

The week previous to the bus attack, there had been abnormal night activity on the trails. Dogs were constantly barking into the darkness. On Monday night, the rebels had laid out the trap for the bus, packing sulphur compound, a chemical used in rock blasting, into a 10-litre bucket and buried it in the dry riverbed. Thick red and black wires snaked away under the sand and through the grass to the point at which someone was holding a switch in the morning watching two tractors and a bus negotiate the dry riverbed before the ill-fated one arrived.

"Why do they ambush the public like this? And why does the army take public transportation?"

Besides the tragedy that it is, the Madi mass murder is also a reminder of individual acts of Maoist cruelty across the land which add up to quite a bit. Nepalis abhor violence and are not with the rebels on this. To wipe the bloodstains from its hands, and if it is truly revolutionary, the rebel leadership must make a clean break from violence and join peaceful politics. First, stop attacking civilians. Cancel the landmines and ambushes. Next, drop the gun.

As the sun sets on the cremation of Ram Chandra Subedi and 12 others by the banks of the Reyu, one elder turns to me and says, "The Maoists had some friends here, now, they have none. Some people used to give them shelter, now no one will." ●

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 बाल उद्यान र अन्य
 मनोरञ्जनात्मक कार्यक्रमहरूका
 साथै औद्योगिक उत्पादनका
 सामानहरू फुड फेस्टिबल
 स्वना प्रविधिको मेला एके टाउंमा

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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."

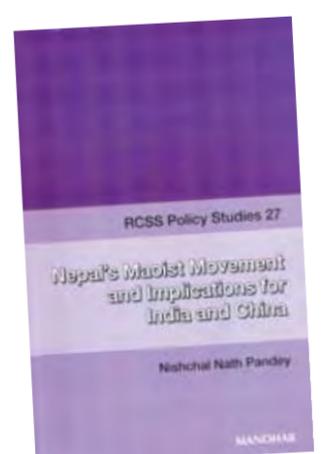
In his new book, Nischal Nath Pandey takes a regional geo-political perspective on Nepal's Maoist movement and what it means for Nepal's big neighbours. The book traces the history of the crisis, repercussions of 9/11 and the obstacles to finding a negotiated settlement and looks into what sustained 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.



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FM radios on warpath

Bolstered by the Supreme Court stay order this week against the government for closing down the radio syndication service, Communication Corner, FM radio owners have intensified their nationwide protest program. The most dramatic protest will be to defy the government order and simultaneously broadcast news of King Gyanendra's departure for Doha on 13 June at 8PM on all FM stations throughout the country. The stations have already been broadcasting silence, blowing of conch shells and reading the news through loudspeakers from impromptu 'studios' at the main squares of all major towns.

There are nearly 60 non-government radio stations throughout the country employing 10,000 people and representing Rs 100 million in capital investment by businessmen, NGOs, district and village councils and ordinary citizens. Most stations are on the verge of bankruptcy because of a fall in ad revenues. Says Raghu Mainali of Save the Independent Radio Movement: "We need press freedom not just for ourselves, it is the citizen's right to information that is being violated." Sundar Mani Dixit of the Citizen's Committee for Peace and Development agrees, saying: "The curbs on the media have made a mockery of the claims this government makes about its commitment to restore democracy."

Standard in Dharan

Jaspal Bindra, GM of the South Asia Region of Standard Chartered Bank, inaugurated its Dharan branch on 1 June. The new branch located in Buddha Marga is the 12th point of representation of Standard Chartered in Nepal which closed two branches—Duhabi and Arghaun—last year due to security reasons.



Lines of fortune

Nirmal Chhetri of Syangja who lives in Ghairidhara won a Maruti 800 car in the Mayos Bhagya Rekha campaign. A product of Himalayan Snacks and Noodles, Mayos still has its campaign going strong with many more prizes to be won.

Mart success

The NATTA mart held in BICC last month was a huge success according to organisers. It gave international tour and travel operators the opportunity to see Nepal first hand. Many agents from China, India, Malaysia, Hong Kong, UAE and South Korea have shown interest in promoting Nepal.



NEW PRODUCT

WHISKY: McDowell Nepal Limited has re-launched three of its products: Signature Rare Whisky, McDowell No 1 Whisky and Blue Riband Duet. All three have been repackaged.



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Old songs should be shared, not treated like fossil

In the 1970s, as a Parents' Night performance, one of my grade school classmates danced to the song *Mai chhori sundari*. The song sank into oblivion thereafter, only to resurface last year through a video that featured a nubile model swaying to remixed beats.

STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari



Struck though I was by the video's technical, artistic and commercial dare, I took it as an example of how musical creativity is all about the promiscuous process of copying, playing with, changing, enhancing and transforming music that's already with us in one form or other.

But Nepal's Appellate Court thought otherwise. Recently, it ruled that tweaking old music is illegal and forbade production, distribution and sale of remixed songs. Though old musicians appeared satisfied, it is worth noting that the court's decision is based on a flawed understanding of copyrights and this is unlikely to help develop Nepali music.

A copyright is a legally granted monopoly privilege. Such a privilege is generally considered bad. But what makes copyright an accepted form of monopoly is that its duration is short while its long-term aim is to help the society. To that end, it is packaged to do two things. In this case, it lets musicians assert ownership over their creations for a limited time (a reasonable time-frame would be for about 25

years) so they have the incentives to make money and more music.

But when that time expires, it pushes those creations into the public domain where they belong to everyone. This is how the society maintains access to its own cultural creations as democratically available shared musical experiences. As such, anyone is free to dip into that cultural pool, find old music and use it in any way to create newer, cheaper, daring, unusual and even different forms of art—musical or otherwise. Indeed, this is how a creative process works anywhere—with the new coming up as variations of the old.



By adopting a sledgehammer approach to un-bundle Nepal's copyright laws, all that the court did was stress the ownership part of the copyright equation at the expense of the cultural sharing one. And the consequence is that old songs have now been locked up forever—treated as though they were fossils that are bound to remain unchanged and forgotten in some cultural attic from where they can never come to life through novel means and

technologies. Nor can they be used to take advantage of new opportunities to appeal to younger audiences of changing times. What's more, the court has created not a single winner.

The old musicians have lost out in two ways. They see their songs driven out of circulation through competition to make room for new ones. They are further stuck with seeing the rights of their songs decline in value. Who's to buy those rights when the law is against making changes to old songs to reach different markets? Young musicians can no longer experiment with old Nepali music to come up with transformative pieces. Who is to blame them if they now cite non-Nepali sources as having greater influences on their creativity? Meantime, the audience has fewer chances to enjoy and pay for old songs in both classic and in remixed formats.

True, old musicians' concern that those who bring out remixed songs do not pay up is valid. But the way to address that is not to push for a ruling that limits musical choices for everyone. Instead, given the commercial vibrancy of the music industry today, it is worth looking for ways to strengthen old musicians' bargaining positions vis-à-vis new singers and record companies. This way, the old musicians get to file claims for credit and compensation while the audience gets to appreciate creative interpretations of *sundari* and other old songs. ●

"We are here to stay..."

Sanjay Pradhan is the executive vice chairman of the SOI Group, the parent company of Cosmic Air. He spoke to *Nepali Times* about the current strategy and future plans of the budget airline.

Nepali Times: Cosmic has been very aggressive in its pricing strategy. Do you think the budget airline strategy works in Nepal?

Sanjay Pradhan: The budget airline strategy is working the world over: Ryan Air, Deccan Air and Air Asia. The business concept is universal and not confined to budget carriers—competitive pricing and cost efficiencies. Budget airlines even make profits, which may surprise some people. Increased capacity and sophisticated technology make it possible to implement a multi-pricing strategy that is attractive, flexible and effective—both to the passenger and the airline. Cosmic Air now has over 50 percent domestic market share, over 40 percent share in the Delhi sector and recently Dhaka sector and over 85 percent occupancy. As the numbers show, the strategy is working and we are here to stay.

Don't you think the pricing is predatory and will put other smaller airlines out of business?

Pricing is not the only factor that determines choice. Anybody who buys a single product or service knows that a consumer will choose a superior product that is offered at a reasonable price. The need of the day was to fly larger and more sophisticated jet aircrafts in the domestic sector and to remove the bottleneck in our country by flying regional routes. We have filled a latent demand. We have grown the overall market both in the domestic and international sectors that we operate, in some sectors by more than 40

percent—many were first-time fliers. Each airline has a business model that it follows and its own target market. We have our own. We are willing to form alliances with other airlines like we do in the regional sector because no airline can fly everywhere.

But do customers really benefit?

Definitely. Let the numbers tell you the story. Customers have a choice and in some sectors more than 75 percent of customers choose Cosmic Air for many reasons. Simply put, over 50 percent of the domestic air passengers fly with Cosmic Air because they benefit from the choice.

What are Cosmic's plans for expansion on the domestic and international sectors?

Two more flights have been added to the Dhaka route making it five weekly. With the arrival of the fourth Fokker 100, we intend to fly to Kolkata, Banaras and Rangoon from July. Cosmic Air is also awaiting the approval from CAAN for Bhadrapur and Pokhara using the Fokker jet. Two more jets will be added by October and two more in February 2006. By then we will fly Paro, Bangkok, Mumbai and Bangalore after we get the allocated seats.

But you only have 1,500 seats a week allocated for the India sector, are you trying to get Necon's and Air Shangrila's unused seats?



MIN BAJRACHARYA

We have Necon's 610 seats on a conditional basis. We have already approached the government to allocate the unutilised seats, which we are ready to return if the other airlines start operating. In the present circumstances when Jet and Sahara have cancelled their flights to Nepal, additional seats are required immediately. Right now, even in the Delhi sector we have been getting requests for additional seats and flights. We have reapplied for a third flight daily to Delhi but the question of quotas has to be addressed. It is ironic that the seat quota is being under-utilised and our country is suffering due to it—the hotels, the tourism industry, etc. In terms of lost opportunity and revenue to the country this amounts to millions of dollars and eventual loss to many in the tourism industry.

attackers were and whichever faction they belonged to, this event has to be universally condemned. This is pure terrorism which will bring misery and sorrow to the nation and her people. There has been overwhelming condemnation of the bombing, which exposes the ill intentions of the terrorists.

Butcher

Column by Suresh in *Jana Astha*, 8 June

आस्था

There is a meat market at Khichapokhari which sells goat, buffalo, chicken and fish. The only thing missing is human flesh. This gives Prachanda the opportunity to open his own meat stall where he can sell fresh human flesh from the slaughter houses he runs all over the kingdom. At the rate Prachanda is killing people, the meat is guaranteed to be fresh and there will never be any of the shortage we sometimes see with chicken or mutton. Human flesh is always in ready supply thanks to Prachanda and his comrades. I see a bright future for Prachanda in the meat business. What say, comrades?

“Talking without understanding”

Interview with Royal Nepal Army Spokesman Brigadier General Dipak Gurung *Samaya*, 9 June

समय

The security forces are being criticised for getting involved in non-security matters.

The army is the nation's defence. How the state chooses to use it is the nation's independent right. Those who criticise and question the army's contribution instead of appreciating it are prejudiced.

Shouldn't a disciplined and organised institution like the army be mobilised to control natural disasters? After we took responsibility of the security of national parks the results have been encouraging. Water resources areas are being preserved. If we discontinue our duties there, who will benefit? Should our contribution to international peacekeeping based on the nations foreign policy be stopped?

Those who are ignorant of sensitive issues like security speak meaninglessly about them.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

But the army is said to be involved in central and district administration.

The army is loyal to the law and the constitution. Even now the CDO is legally the most powerful person in a district. The army still respects this system. The security forces are only mobilised after district security committee consultations, the civilian administration still holds supremacy. This is clear from the fact that not just majors but even generals take part in meetings at the CDO office.

The army is seen to be micromanaging administration.

If you have good intentions anyone can give suggestions from a common citizen to the highest-level official. It is false to say that the Defence Ministry dances to the tune of the security forces. Those who have no knowledge of security are waving flags in Asan saying whatever they want about the army.

The Defence Ministry's letter regarding the closing of Communication Corner to controlling organisations has not been taken as an independent decision.

The Defence Ministry is higher than the army and we are confident that it can make independent decisions.

The army is accused of disregarding the government during the 12 years of civilian governance and increasing its activities after February First.

The claim that the army's relationship with the governments of different political parties were weak or that the army did not follow their orders is imaginary. Those who are shouting against us should pinpoint which cabinet order the army did not follow. Otherwise they can't cook up stories especially since we are dealing with a sensitive issue like security.

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श्री ५ को सरकार सूचना तथा सञ्चार मन्त्रालय सूचना विभाग

Comrades in Delhi

Sudheer Sharma in *Nepal*, 12 June

नेपाल

Maoist leader Dr Baburam Bhattarai was in New Delhi in mid-May hobnobbing with the Indian leadership and officials. In a statement on 27 May, Maoist Supremo Prachanda said the party had given Comrade Krishna Bahadur Mahara and Comrade Baburam Bhattarai the assignment of assessing the standing of various political parties in India including that of the Indian government and conveying the party's views to them.

According to sources, Bhattarai's team also had the undercover presence of another politburo member Kishan Pyakurel aka Top Bahadur Rayamajhi who leads the Maoist organisation in India. The Maoist plenum last year had transferred Rayamajhi to India from the post of commissar of Lisne Gam Third Brigade. Mahara, who was promoted to the party's standing committee, is in India to take care of the party's foreign affairs. He is considered a Prachanda supporter while Rayamajhi is aligned to Bhattarai. Mahara also had the responsibility of monitoring Bhattarai's and Rayamajhi's activities in India, according to sources. The team led by Bhattarai held talks with three kinds of people: political leaders in India, high-level Indian government officials and Delhi-based representatives of Nepali political parties.

Bhattarai and his team met many leaders—from the newly-elected General Secretary of the CPI-M Prakash Karat to General Secretary of the CPI, AB Bardhan and former Defence Minister George Fernandez. But none of them have formally confirmed these reports. Though Karat admitted to meeting Nepali Maoist leaders in *The Times of India*, he immediately issued a press statement saying that he had 'met Nepali Maoists in a meeting arranged by Indian security agencies'.

The news of the meeting between the Maoists and the Indians was first broken by the Dubai-based *Gulf News* a week earlier. Informed sources say their relationship dates back to the 1970s when both were studying at Jawaharlal Nehru University. The Indian intelligence

agency, RAW, has had its hands soiled in many political episodes in South Asia right from Sikkim's integration (into India) to the establishment of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka's Tamil rebellion. PK Hormiz Tarakan who was appointed chief of RAW early this year is reputed to have an in-depth knowledge about Nepal's politics and was the RAW station chief in Nepal until June 2001. Tarakan, who was set to retire this month, may have been promoted to make his own priorities felt. Some agree, although Bhattarai flatly denied Indian intelligence officers had a role in his Delhi mission.

Whatever the case, it is clear that after Bhattarai's Delhi tour the Maoists have received unprecedented political recognition from the Indian government. It was India who declared the Maoists as terrorists in 2001 even before the Nepal government. Prachanda has deliberately used Baburam, who is said to have an 'Indian leaning', to garner Indian support. For his part, Bhattarai is trying his luck through his contacts in the Indian left movement.

The principal accomplishment of the Maoists in New Delhi is a possible coalition with agitating political parties in Nepal. There has been coverage of the Maoists and Nepali political parties looking at the possibility of working together for a 'democratic republic'. The visit of the NC President Girija Prasad Koirala this week is being seen in similar perspective.

Bhattarai had held talks with the Delhi representatives of

Nepali political parties at various stages. Krishna Prasad Sitaula and Shekhar Koirala of the Nepali Congress, Pradip Giri of NC(D), Rajan Bhattarai of UML, Hridayesh Tripathi and Rajendra Mahato of Sadhabana Party and Chandradeb Joshi of the United Left Front and so on are in Delhi. Nepali politicians are actively working through the Nepal Democracy and Human Rights Advocacy Centre.

In the words of a Delhi-based Nepali leader, "The discussions with the Maoists have been very positive. Though there has been no immediate formal agreement, some common agenda might be reached to fight for a democratic republic." If this is so, then elections to a constituent assembly could be a point of convergence." *Nepalnews.com Translation Service*



Terrorists

Editorial in *Annapurna Post*, 8 June

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

By massacring innocent civilians, the terrorists have exposed their political bankruptcy and hollow ideology. How can they think that killing non-combatants will ever help their revolution? Even those who thought that the Maoists were not terrorists but a political force are shocked at this heinous act. With their extortion, threats, abductions and massacres the Maoists have proved that they are not after political power but are in fact, terrorists.

mainstream. However if the inhuman trend of annihilating hundreds or setting innocent children ablaze continues, the result will be disastrous.

Criminal

Editorial in *Jana Astha*, 8 June

आस्था

Whatever the Maoists may say about the 'mistake' in bombing the bus in Chitwan, it has exposed their terrorist character. The people would like to see the perpetrators punished. It has shown the increasing anti-people character of the Maoists and their maximum negligence



Barbarous

Editorial in *Rajdhani*, 8 June

राजधानी

All political forces have continually stressed their belief that a revolution cannot succeed by killing people. The Chitwan incident is exactly the type of growing trend that the different political parties, human rights organisations and the international community have been condemning. The rebels must understand that they are only distancing themselves from the common people. It is important to analyse and learn from world history the declining state of undemocratic forces who seize power by massacring people. With the people's support it is possible to legitimise their beliefs by choosing to come down to a peaceful competitive political

about the welfare of the people. This incident is too serious to be classified as just a 'mistake'. You can't turn innocent people into cannon fodder. Neither side should use human shields. The government has no right to rub its hands in glee at this and must refrain from allowing armed security forces in mufti to ride civilian buses which lead to incidents like Maina Pokhari and Bandarmude.

Cowards

Editorial in *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 8 June

नेपाल समाचारपत्र

This is the most serious attack on unarmed civilians since the start of the Maoist violence and we are forced to say that it exposes the unconscionable barbarity and cowardice of the rebel movement. Whoever the

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"We are deeply saddened and anguished over the death of a large number of people from the landmine explosion in Badare Khola of Chitwan district. It has always been our party policy not to militarily target any innocent civilian."

Maoist leader Prachanda in *Krishnasenonline.com*, 7 June

"Apologising through the Internet is not enough. Their apology will be publicly accepted only when the guilty are brought to the victims and punished before them."

Thakur Dhakal, central member of Janamorcha party in *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 8 June

"There has been an improvement in the country's security situation."

Durga Shrestha, Minister of Women, Children and Social Welfare in *Annapurna Post*, 8 June



Editor-in-Chief In

कान्तिपुर Kantipur, 4 June

Open letter to western envoys

Krishnajwala Debkota *Kantipur*, 7 June

कान्तिपुर

You must be having fun watching the Delhi Marathon of the king, the Maoists and the parliamentary leadership. You must be thinking all roads lead to Delhi. The American ambassador in Delhi has said it many times: the US is ready to let India take the lead in solving Nepal's problems. Britain's view seems similar. Even the UN wants to know what India is thinking before committing. But, excellencies, Nepal is not India's internal affair we are not Uttar Pradesh. India and Nepal are not big brother and small brother, they are two sovereign nations. Yes, in the past 60 years it does look like Delhi is Nepal's political Mecca and Medina, Jerusalem, Lumbini and Pashupati. But we are paying the price of permanent anarchy because of that position. Handing Nepal over in a platter to India will be international injustice. Nepal may be wounded but it is a nation that is alive, it is not a project that India can 'deal' with. Please don't think of Nepal as Delhi's backyard or a chessboard. Peace here is linked to social and political justice not to guns. A neglected populace forgotten by history and politics demands a voice and justice. By putting the king in the centre, parliamentary forces on the sidelines and the Maoists outside, looking for a solution with Indian mediation will be a recipe for long-term instability. We have a lot of past wounds we have to lick: King Tribhuban's exit, the 1950 agreement written by Jawaharlal Nehru, Kosi and Gandak treaties, King Mahendra's agreement to gift Kalapani in order to protect the Panchayat system and the Congress, UML and RPP all agreed to the Mahakali Treaty to earn the pat of the southern friend. Excellencies, now you must strengthen Nepal's self-sufficiency. You must make the UN the referee and through the medium of the constituent assembly, move towards a peaceful transformation. Otherwise this could sow the seeds of a Third World War.



s on Nepal's rivers

TRISULI

Three to four hours west of Kathmandu, this river en route to Pokhara or Chitwan, is easily accessible along its entire stretch. In fact the highway is pretty much above your head throughout, which means you can easily head back if you get seasick. This also means you can have a flexible itinerary of one to three days.

BHOTE KOSI

Class four to five, it is one of the most challenging white waters in Nepal. Four hours northeast of Kathmandu, the rafting river action can take two days. The steep river plunges from the Chinese border down to Dolalghat. A thrill pill, it is only for those daring experienced adventurers.

ARUN

Wild and remote, this river that starts in Tibet and flows between Makalu and Kangchenjunga to the plains, giving it a fantastic gradient in its upper stretches. It has powerful currents and eddies and is one of the most technically complex rapids.

KARNALI

For sheer remoteness you can't beat the unspoilt Karnali. Nepal's mightiest river descending through magnificent gorges and huge loops through the mountains. And it's loooooong—10 to 12 days across a roadless part of Nepal. Once peace returns to this country, Karnali will be the place to be.



KALI GANDAKI

This river has it all—exciting rapids, sandy beaches, cascading waterfalls, gorges, wilderness and remote villages. The raft action is interrupted by the hydroelectric plant at Mirmi. This is one of the deepest gorges in the world and one of the longest rafting stretches with three days to a week. A pure adrenaline rush for rafters.

SETI

This usually gentle river can turn its raging waters into a test even for experienced rafters and is a real roller coaster during the monsoon. The river is easily accessible from the raft's entry in Pokhara and the exit in Narayanghat but there are no roads in between. This makes for a very untouched stretch of river punctuated by short and straightforward rapids.

SUN KOSI

Three hours drive east from Kathmandu, like the Kali Gandaki is one of Nepal's few east-west rivers and follows one of the main geological fault lines in the Himalaya. Its class four to five rapids make it one of the top 10 white water rivers in the world.

MARSYANGDI

Its class four to five rapids are not meant for the fainthearted. The river rises in Manang and swoops down to join Trisuli at Mugling. This raft route is also disrupted by two hydroplants but still has its excitement intact.

TAMUR

This is the wild east of Nepal, along a river that comes straight down from Kangchenjunga's icy glaciers. The Tamur has more than 100 rapids of class four to five with non-stop action. Hold on tight.

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ALL PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

The wild white waters of Himalayan rivers wait for riders

The decline in tourism has affected rafting adventures but this pre-monsoon season is probably the best time ever to shoot Nepal's awesome rapids. And look at it this way, rafting is the only form of transportation not affected by bandas and blockades.

The rivers are frothing over with melting snows and their bracing cold waters are in stark contrast to the sizzling summer heat of the valleys. And the best thing is that there are very few other rafters. For people who remember the traffic jams on the boulders along the Trisuli at Fisling in the old days, this is a very welcome change. You have the river to yourself and there is still a week or two to enjoy this quiet before the monsoon truly sets in.

Nepal has always been acclaimed as the world's most challenging white water rafting destination. No other country on earth has as many world-class rapids where the real pros can demonstrate their mettle and the

relatively easier white waters which take a beginner's breath away.

Rafting is also a great way to conclude a trek: cruising down the calmer stretches of the Seti or the Kali Gandaki watching bird life and rounding it off with a safari in the tarai. For amateur geologists, rafting is a great way to see the rock formations that built the highest mountains in the world. Along the bottom of the river valleys, you can easily imagine the Himalaya getting pushed up over aeons and it is intriguing to reflect that Nepal's rivers are older than the mountains, which is why there are such stupendous gorges—the rivers cut through the rocks over millions of years as they rose.

Himalayan rivers are graded on a scale of one to six depending on their rapids. Grade four and above are for those with prior rafting experience. Grade three and below are not too dangerous for novices.

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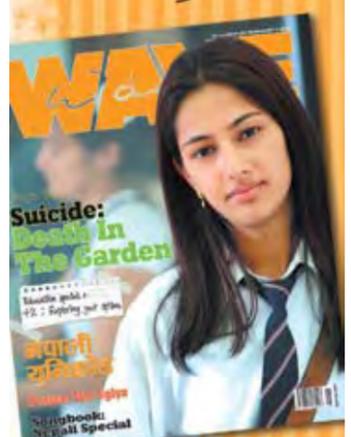


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JAMES GIAMBRONE

Wax works

Nepal and Bangladesh share an endangered art form

The statue of the Buddha that King Gyanendra unveiled at the Boao Chan Monastery as Nepal's gift to China in May is one of the largest images made from the traditional lost wax method.

This age-old method of making bronze figures of deities is slowly dying out and Nepal and Bangladesh are two of the few countries where it is still practiced. But while the art is thriving in Nepal, Bangladesh is struggling to keep it alive. "Bangladesh is a dominantly Muslim country and images of Hindu and Buddhist deities hardly have a market," says Sabreen Rahman of the American Centre in Dhaka, which has awarded its Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation to Initiative for the Preservation of Dhamrai Metal Casting, a Bangladeshi NGO. As a part of the program, six Bangladeshi artisans are in Nepal learning the Newari lost wax technique in Patan.

"We use beeswax and resin, 90 percent copper and 10 percent zinc, cast our images in clay mixed with cow dung, keep mouldings for reproduction and carve the more intricate designs after the wax has been lost and the clay removed," says Rajan Shakya (pictured, second from left), a Nepali metal craftsman who is participating in the workshop.

"Our way of doing it is very different," says Sukanta Banik, chairman of the NGO, "we use beeswax and paraffin, cast the entire image in wax and do not keep mouldings for reproduction. Also we use 70 percent copper and 30 percent brass, which means the metal is not so easy to work with. Our designs are dominantly Pala and very different from those made here."

The images made from the Newari lost wax technique are known to have better finishing than the Bangladeshi images and have found a bigger market. The main market for our metal craft products now is China but Bhutan and Taiwan, which at one time dominated the market, follow close behind.

"In the week that we've been here, we have shared a lot of ideas. But our tools, materials and ways of working are different even though the process is very similar," says Banik, "When we return home, we will definitely keep what we have learnt in mind and see how we can improve our work. Like Nepal, we hope to create some sort of a market for our art." ● Abha Eli Phoboo

Development by lists

The youngest South Asian country could build upon the resilience of its business community

Most Nepalis are unsure about what to make of Bangladesh. When asked, they grope for clichés: floods and cyclones, heat and dust, overpopulation and food shortage, poverty and destitution. Others who have been there talk about the allure of Bangladeshi textiles and handicrafts, the zing of Bangla cuisine, Sylhet's stunningly beautiful tea gardens and mangrove forests of Sundarbans. Some mention the vitality of politically conscious theatre and arts scenes, a few may even hum a stanza or two of evocative Rabindrasangeet.

But tell them how this youngest South Asian country, with a land area that's

slightly smaller than Nepal's but a

BOOK
Ashutosh Tiwari



population of 150 million, has today created food surpluses. Explain to them its success in reducing population growth at a rate lower than Nepal's. Describe its pioneering use of micro-credits to help impoverished women through NGO networks. Talk about how its \$5 billion-a-year readymade garment industry has managed to maintain a steady growth despite the end of the global quota system. Add further that South Asia's largest shopping mall opened for business in Dhaka last October and you are likely to hear the inevitably lamentable comparisons with Nepal. To be sure, highlighting Bangladesh's recent achievements is not going to make its problems related to governance, economy and geography disappear anytime soon. But doing so does recast them as manageable problems that—given the political will, resources and time—are likely to yield solutions.

And offering lists of solutions to Bangladesh's problems, in a format similar to that of a typical donor report, is what Abdul Awal Mintoo's 466-page book *Bangladesh: Anatomy of Change* does. Mintoo, who retired as the president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FCCI) in 2001 after being active on the Chambers scene for about 20 years, believes that 'a nation-state can be run like a corporation'. A fan of various western management theories, Mintoo says that a nation 'can benefit from



adopting a strategic management approach'. One imagines him putting on his CEO cap to lay down, in 23 sprawling chapters, his compilation of how to address Bangladesh's problems—everything from parliamentary governance to energy infrastructure to Dhaka's transport system.

Most of the time though, Mintoo's 'strategic management' way of explaining Bangladesh—similar to what some of our own high-profile businessmen propose as answers to complex social and political problems—appears simplistic. He picks a topic, tries to lend credibility to it by throwing in quotes of western sages and stacks of Bureau of Statistics tables, then ends with lists of do's and don'ts. For political parties and politicians, for instance, he proposes that 'all decision-making processes must be transparent and that (lobbying) for any personal benefit should be considered fundamentally wrong'. Fine but how does one ensure that this recommendation can be put into practice?

Likewise, his prescription to improve governance is that 'political parties should not support the closure of ports, airports, highways and railways'. On further reading, it becomes clear that in his rush to offer solutions, what Mintoo misses is a discussion about why and how Bangladesh's democratic governance has come to be characterised by pervasive

corruption, nepotism and the seemingly endless and increasingly violent rivalry between the two political Begums—the present PM Khaleda Zia and the leader of opposition Sheikh Hasina. Such a discussion would have placed his to-do lists in a realistic and changing context. Else, they risk ending up as generic lists that could be applied to any developing country anywhere.

Anatomy's chapter on Economic and Financial Infrastructure goes on for 50 pages. But again, it is no more than a catalogue of various lists about what to do about VAT, exchange rate, rural development, informal trade and the like. A typical recommendation is 'All hotels, motels, restaurants, duty-free shops and rental services should be privatised on a priority basis'. Yes, that may have to be done but how? Mintoo does not discuss the fine-grained details. Instead, he piles list after list—leaving the reader exhausted by his earnestness.

In retrospect, Mintoo would have been better off showcasing the resilience of the Bangladeshi business community which has, by all measures, done an admirable job of delivering, say, garments and frozen foods to global stores—despite persistent delays at the Chittagong Port, power outages, natural disasters and anti-business mindset of the bureaucracy. Bangladesh could well build upon the resilience of its business community to shore up its commitment to unblock constraints in the private sector.

Anatomy is useful as a reference book to flip open from time to time. It is best read as a compendium of wish lists of foreign-returned members of the Bangladeshi business elite as to what their aspirations are to develop their country in a linearly technocratic matter in the coming years.

On one hand, such wish lists, with a tinge of angst, have the advantage of conjuring up postcard-perfect pictures of the future without having to confront the messy, contradictory and dirty realities of the present. On the other hand, Bangladesh's future potential may send Nepali readers to seek other sources to better understand how their country can make use of additional trade advantages with this important neighbour. ●



Bangladesh: Anatomy of Change
Abdul Awal Mintoo
The University Press, 2004

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KIRAN PANDAY

“We are not terrorists.”

They fled the Maoists, now they are hounded by the government

NARESH NEWAR

It was politics that nearly killed Ramesh Wada. He was abducted by Maoists in Ramechhap for being an NC supporter but escaped to Kathmandu leaving behind his fields and home.

Two years later, 60-year-old Wada is still living alone in Kathmandu in a rundown rented house. “Politics is the least of our concerns now, we just need the government’s support and sympathy,” he tells us, “is that too much to ask for?”

Over 25,000 families displaced by the Maoists are in Kathmandu asking the same question. If the government doesn’t help them, who will? They set up the Maoist Victims’ Association (MVA) five years ago but despite dramatic street sit-ins and setting up a ‘refugee camp’ at Tundikhel the authorities have failed to be moved by their plight. (See: ‘What about us?’ #244). MVA protests have been forcibly dispersed and members taken

into custody.

Even the displaced whose association with political parties like the NC caused them to flee their home villages have not received support from the parties.

“First we were hounded by the Maoists, now we are hounded by the government,” says Mahili Sunwar, a 35-year-old mother of five children who has been living in a rented house in the capital for the past year. She can’t afford to send her children to school.

It’s not just the government and political parties, even relief organisations haven’t shown much interest in the plight of the Maoist victims. But after they set up their Tundikhel camp, took to the streets, blocking roads and sitting in outside the UN, media coverage picked up and the MVA has been able to galvanise attention.

On 6 June, nearly 150 MVA members living in the camps were detained (see pic). The government justifies its action by

saying that demonstrations were held in prohibited areas but some MVA members say they are being targeted by the state because of their past political alignment.

“We are desperately looking for our friends, family members and our leaders. We don’t know where the police took them,” says MVA member Padma Raj Kandel. Padam Bahadur Sunwar, just shakes his head and says: “What will the government really gain by arresting poor and helpless victims? We aren’t terrorists.” Sunwar ran out of money and was living in a temple but now has been told to move on.

Many of the displaced families have brought their children with them and they aren’t going to school. “There is a danger that they might become street children,” says Bishnu Neupane. Others accuse the government of turning a humanitarian crisis into a political issue to wash their hands off it. ●

Drinking responsibly

...without threatening indigenous culture

As a result of what I am now convinced is a carefully thought out conspiracy to cement the demise of whatever might remain of my credibility as a serious scholar, I find myself once again pressed into service to write about booze. As readers of this paper may recall, in my last effort of this genre, I had reluctantly settled into the routine of writing a column about beverages once every three years, reasonable enough though demanding in its own way. The pace has apparently now accelerated to once every two years, with no abatement in sight. In the spirit (pun intended only in retrospect) of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory, joining them if you can’t beat them, and so on, I offer the following.

NEPALI PAN
Bruce McCoy Owens



This installment actually begins where the last one ends. If I may quote myself, my last column (‘In vino veritas’, #150) ended with the wish ‘that there

were some way of making aylah and twam, in their authentic and varied forms, available in ways so that they could take their rightful places alongside the Johnny Walkers and San Miguels in the Bluebirds, Namastes and Green Lines of the Valley and thus be valourised by the market economy that now seems to be so readily dominated by foreign intruders.’ In effect, this is a report on a recent effort to do just that.

A tasting of a locally made soda brand at Dhokaima’s Rukhmuni Bhatti was the source of inspiration. This particular brand of what are known as ‘guccha’ sodas take its name from Nepal’s original cinema hall, Janasewa, where they were first sold and comes in the distinctive bottle with the glass marble stopper that goes phuph when you pop it to gain access to the drink inside. As we were tasting Janasewa Soda at Rukhmuni, it occurred to me that they could be the basis of a new drink menu that highlighted indigenous spirits as well as mixers, thereby taking a step toward rectifying the deplorable situation that I had lamented in my earlier column.

Thvam remains immune from this author’s attempts at creating *swadeshi bhaleko puchhar* (indigenous cocktails). Though its closest relative, beer, can be successfully combined with lemonade or ginger ale or even lemon (not orange!) soda to make a less inebriating but thirst-quenching shandy, thvam stands inviolably on its own. Other local spirits have proven more amenable to mixing, however. The most challenging of these is aylah. Aylah is the *Newa bhay* term for what many others know as raksi, arak, or, more universally, fire water. Generally made from rice, it has many different distinctive tastes, depending on its maker, but it is generally, to put it mildly, assertive. A local version of the famous Bloody Mary, usually made with vodka, proved remarkably successful, provided the usual spice does not overwhelm the aylah. (For who shun alcohol, there is always Kumari Mary.)

I recalled times past in which it was very difficult to find beers in the Valley that consistently had bubbles or enjoyable spirits or wines, unless one was a diplomat or rich. One exception to that rule even back then was Khukri Rum, which I have always thought should enjoy an international reputation. This wonderful rum, some Cola Janasewa Soda, a bit of lime and some local spice, makes—naturally—a Nepa Libré.

Finally, Janasewa Soda’s apple version is an obvious mixer for that higher-altitude firewater, Marpha Brandy. Adjusting this with a cinnamon sugar syrup and garnishing it with a slice of apple makes for a fine Aadi Paap—intended to mean ‘original sin’ but also reasonably interpreted as ‘half-sin’, for there is, after all, nothing sinful about brandy. ●

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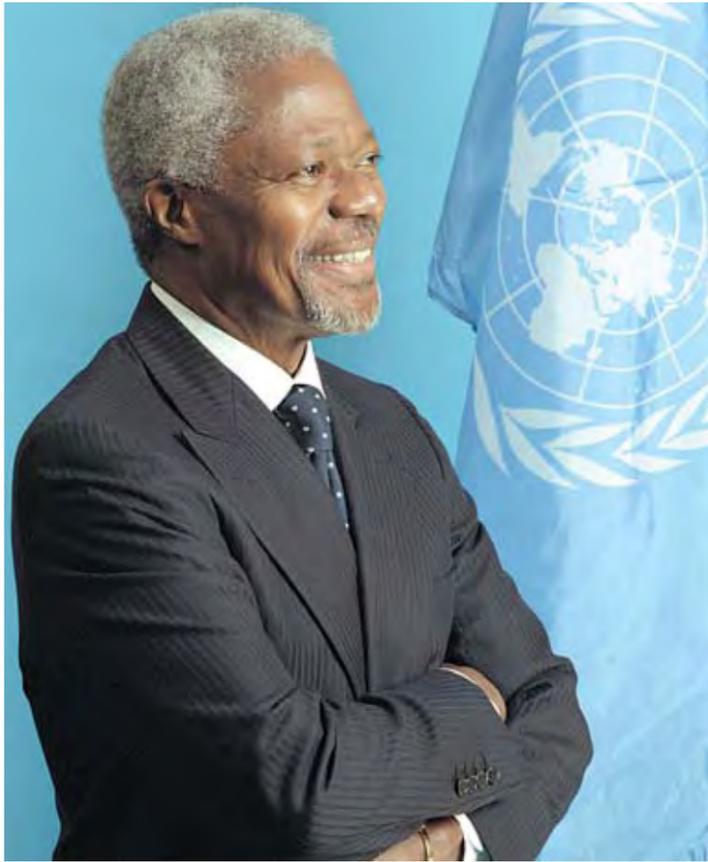
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After Kofi, who?

It's Asia's turn next for the top UN job

pressure—the Asians have already come up with two candidates who have formally declared their intention to run for the secretary general's office: former UN Under Secretary General for Disarmament Affairs Jayantha Dhanapala of Sri Lanka and ex-Thai Foreign Minister Surakiart Sathirathai.

China, a veto-wielding permanent member of the UN Security Council, recently announced its intention to back an Asian candidate for the job but didn't name names. Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar said that China has expressed its "possible willingness" to support Dhanapala. "China has written to us saying that our candidate will be seriously considered," he told reporters in Colombo.

Asia has not had a secretary general for nearly 34 years, since Burma's U Thant. But Eastern Europeans with covert backing from the United States appear poised to challenge Asian claims to the job.

US President George W Bush "might prefer Annan's replacement to come from a region seen as more sympathetic to US interests: Eastern Europe," according to *Newsweek* magazine. One possible candidate is the current president of Poland,

Aleksander Kwasniewski, whose five-year term as head of state ends in October.

"Kwasniewski is a White House favourite for supporting the Iraq invasion with Polish troops and for his domestic free market policies," the magazine said. In a newspaper interview in Warsaw, Kwasniewski admitted that he would be willing to run for office as an Eastern European candidate if the United Nations undergoes far-reaching changes. "Then it would be an interesting challenge. But if the United Nations functions as it does now, I am completely unsuitable for such a role," he was quoted as saying.

UN diplomats say Eastern Europe as a regional group does not exist anymore—except at the United Nations. Ramesh Thakur, a senior vice-rector at the Tokyo-based UN University (UNU), said that under a longstanding convention, it is Asia's turn to have the next secretary general.

"Eastern Europeans claim they have never had a secretary general, so they should get priority. But Europeans have had three compared to one for the other continents," he said, "Asians, who account for 60 percent of the world's population, would be disenchanted if denied the top

UN post."

If Asians cannot agree on a candidate or propose a weak one, they will have only themselves to blame, Thakur added. They should look at who will be good for the United Nations and for Asia—not who will be good for their bilateral relations.

Phyllis Bennis, a senior fellow at the Washington-based Institute for Policy Studies, said she believes that Eastern Europe should be integrated into a unified European group. "Eliminating the Eastern European claim will be important partly to move forward the UN efforts at recalibrating regional groups to reflect geographic realities rather than Cold War-shaped political formulations," she said.

Norman Solomon, executive director of the Washington-based Institute for Public Accuracy, said, "The selection of the next secretary general will indicate the extent to which the Bush administration has succeeded or failed at dominating the United Nations where it counts most." He added, "Installing a UN secretary general with such a bias would have been unthinkable during the Cold War. If such an installation becomes a reality, it will fundamentally alter the secretary general's role and shatter the remaining credibility of the United Nations as a global institution that represents law and reason instead of economic blackmail and brute military power." ● (IPS)

THALIF DEEN in NEW YORK

When UN Secretary General Kofi Annan was asked recently about his likely successor when he completes his second five-year term next year, the UN chief hinted at the possibility that an Asian might take over from him.

"Yes, it is true that the secretary general of the United Nations is elected on a (geographical) rotation basis," he said, "and I think there is a general sense amongst the (UN)

membership that next time would be Asia's turn."

Despite the fact that Annan has nearly 19 more months to go before he steps down in December 2006, the race for the secretary general's job is picking up steam. More so because of growing demands by US right-wingers who want Annan to resign now because of scandals involving fraud, mismanagement and sexual harassment in the UN system worldwide.

If Annan relents—either on his own volition or under US

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Mind swings

Think before you shoot

Have you heard of Ernie Els going to a guru to enhance his mental strength for the game? It's true. Just before the start of the season in 2003, he spent some time with his 'mind' teacher and went on to shoot 30 under par and win the first event of the season.

So do the best of the best need to be mentally prepared to perform better also? Els proves that they do. With the right mental approach, players at all levels can synchronise their body's action, swing and mind. Here is a simple example of mind over swing.

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



Do you envision your shots before executing them? Jack Nicklaus, one of the greatest golfers ever, is legendary for his use of imagery prior to every

shot. Tiger Woods often talks about 'seeing the shot' before he hits it. What you do with the pictures in your mind can create your stand behind the ball next time you make your shot. Imagination has an unbelievable power in influencing your capacity to perform on the golf course. If you are not using it, you are neglecting a valuable tool towards being a successful golfer.

Often, making your swing can be paralleled with directing a movie. A director can usually visualise scenes as he reads the script. You have a similar ability. You can make the shot you want to see.



Set the image in your mind exactly the way you want it. Visualise your shot clearly until it creates an imprint on your subconscious mind, nervous and muscular systems. The image actually gets embedded there and your body will begin to respond to the images. When you make the shot, it turns out perfect because you have the confidence to do it. This is the power of visualisation. Here's a little exercise for you to try before you make your next shot:

At the practice range, each time you hit a ball, stand behind it and visualise:

- The ball's flight
- The landing area

At home, practice visualisation skills with free hand exercises. Use imagery to see yourself striking the ball well by doing the following:

- Feel yourself relaxed and comfortable over the ball
- Feel yourself taking a smooth and comfortable swing
- Feel yourself with a full follow through

On the course, use imagery to see the shots you want as part of your pre-shot preparation.

- Visualise the shape, type and landing area of each shot
- See yourself comfortable and relaxed over the ball
- See the picture as clearly as possible
- Add feeling to the visualisation for greater impact (see and feel the positive image you've created).

Your handicap is not a factor in using imagery, both low and high handicappers benefit from it equally. Though the best players in the world do it all the time, it is effective for all levels of play. Give it a try and see how your game improves. If you are already using it, build on it, make it bigger, brighter and clearer. ●

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



SURESH RAJ NEUPANE

The Asian Satellite Badminton Championship taking place in Kathmandu this week has injected new enthusiasm towards the sport among its Nepali aficionados. It's not just the thrill of competing with international badminton stars but also the new infrastructure that has been built for the event.

"It's a different kind of happiness competing with international players before your home crowd," says Pashupati Paneru (pictured), the Nepal champion and captain of the national badminton team. His team-mates Pankaj Chand, Indra Mahata, Prajwall Rana, Puja Shrestha and Sumina Shrestha are as excited.

The tournament started on 7 June and has nine men and seven women participating from Nepal. Everyone in the Nepal Badminton Association (NBA) is geared to make sure that the tournament, put in the calendar of the International Badminton Federation, is a success. The Chairman of the organising committee and General Secretary of the NBA, Naresh Bahadur Singh, says the tournament will reflect the respect badminton can build in Nepal, "It will boost the sport and provide us with international exposure."

The international quality

Shuttling off

Building the sport to play the game



KIRAN PANDAY

infrastructure assembled and built specially for the tournament will belong to the NBA. The Asian Badminton Confederation provided the NBA with two synthetic court mats for the tournament along with umpires and technicians, and Yonex Company of Japan has given equipment. Although 39 nations affiliated with the ABC were invited, only 30 athletes from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal are competing for the prize money of \$7,000. India Number 3 Utsav Mishra and Pakistan Number 1 Wajid Ali Chaudhary have already made their mark in the tournament. The

finals are scheduled for 11 June. Fans following the sport are already rooting for Mishra.

Nepal Captain Paneru, who ranks 303 in the world, is confident about the Nepali team's performance as is trainer Kiran Thapa. The Nepal has reached the semi-finals in the Men's doubles and Mixed doubles. The women's trainer, Rajani Joshi, says, "Our chances are pretty good because the only main competitor is Sri Lanka."

Former Nepal Number 1 and trainer Thapa believes that with the tournament the sport will take a different mode. "Finances were a major problem in our time, however the players now do not face this. The tournament will add to the monetary value as well as the standard of the game," he says. Top Nepali players are not just employees in the Nepal Police and the Armed Police Force but also win upto Rs100,000 a year in prize money. Captain Paneru's equipment is sponsored by the Himalayan Bank.

The NBA plans to organise tournaments at the school, district, regional and national levels. This Championship will also act as pre-preparation for the National Games to be held in November and the upcoming 10th South Asian Federation Games. ●

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ABOUT TOWN

- FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS**
- ❖ **Second Lalit Boudha Kala** Exhibition at Achheswor Mahabihar, Pulchok, till 13 June.
 - ❖ **Nature: Flora and Fauna of Nepal** Photos by Prajwal Pradhan at Bluestar Hotel, Tripureswor, 1PM-7PM, until 30 June. ppradhan@enet.com.np
 - ❖ **Floral paintings** in aquarelle by Neera J Pradhan at Park Gallery, Lajimpat, until 30 June. 4419353



- EVENTS**
- ❖ **First Club Himalaya Mountain Running Half Marathon Championship** and 10 km Club Himalaya Mountain Running Championships on 11 June. 4256909
 - ❖ **The Motorcycle Diaries** Screening at Baggikhana, Patan Dhoka on 12 June, 5PM, Rs 50. 5542544
 - ❖ **World Refugee Day** on 20 June.
 - ❖ **Monsoon Masquerade Party** on 24 June at Latin Quarter Salsa Bar, Baber Mahal Revisited, 7.30 PM, Rs 750.
 - ❖ **Third Annual Wine Festival** at Kilroy's of Kathmandu, Thamel. 4250440
 - ❖ **Selection from KIMFF** Screening at Lajimpat Gallery Café this June, 7PM, Rs 50. 4428590
 - ❖ **Intercultural Exchange Program** Every Wednesday at Goethe Zentrum, Thapathali, 4.15 PM. 4250871
 - ❖ **Tai Chi** Demonstration and group meditation at Swayambhu. 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, citygymktm@hotmail.com
 - ❖ **Sanibar Mela** at Bakery Café, Dharara, 2PM and Boudha, 3PM.

- MUSIC**
- ❖ **Funk and Fusion** on 10 June at Moksh, Pulchok, Rs 150. 5526212
 - ❖ **70s Night** Adrian and the Love Buds at Jatra on 11 June, Rs 350. 4256622
 - ❖ **Tribute to U2, The Police and Aerosmith** by Eternity on 11 June at Moksh, Pulchok, Rs 150. 5526212
 - ❖ **Live Music** Courtney Preston and Agnes Quimpo at Indigo Gallery on 24 June, 7PM. 4413580
 - ❖ **The Good Time Blues Band** at Rum Doodle, Thamel, 7PM. 4701208
 - ❖ **Fusion** 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
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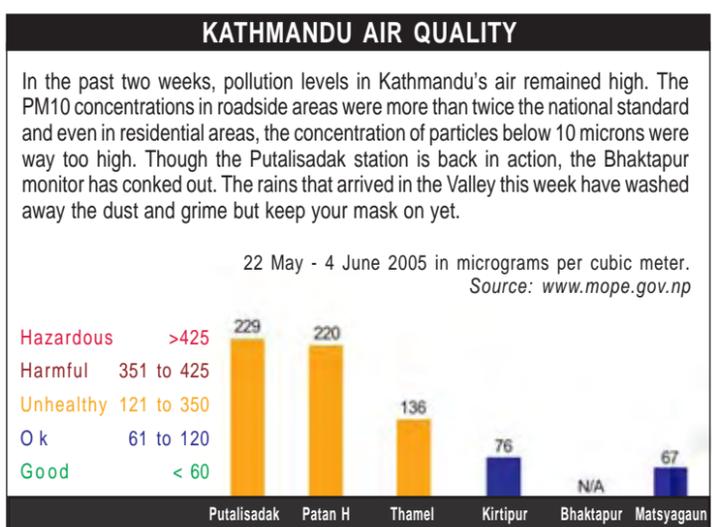
- FOOD**
- ❖ **Goan Food Festival** at Hotel Yak and Yeti from 11 June at 6.30 PM, Rs 799 plus tax. 4248999, 4240520
 - ❖ **Daily Delite Lunch** at Shambala Garden Café, Hotel Shangri-La, Lajimpat, Rs 399 on weekdays, Rs 499 on weekends. 4412999
 - ❖ **Crosskitchen** European and Indian cuisine at Lajimpat. 9851083806
 - ❖ **Boire and Manger** at Vineyard, Baber Mahal Revisited.
 - ❖ **Bawarchi** The Restro Bar for Nawabi cuisine at Lajimpat. 4436673
 - ❖ **Barbeque lunch** Saturdays at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot. 6680080
 - ❖ **Special Combo** Burmese and Thai Menu at 1905, Kantipath.
 - ❖ **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 Vaijyantha, Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
 - ❖ **The Tharu Kitchen** at Jungle Base Camp. Junglebasecamp@yahoo.com

- GETAWAYS**
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NEPALI WEATHER by MAUSAM BEED

The official date for Nepal's monsoon arrival is 10 June. But as anticipated, there has been a slight delay because the jet stream was late in leaving its springtime track south of the Himalaya. The stormy rain that the Valley received on Tuesday was a spillover of westerly fronts piled above the Tibetan plateau. It did break the prolonged drought but its repulsive force chased away the monsoon wind temporarily. This satellite image taken on Thursday morning gives some hope of monsoon's onset a week or so behind schedule. The low-pressure system, which is required to turn the Bay arm of the monsoon into a sharp northwesterly direction, is now rapidly developing over the torrid plains of north India. Hot and muggy afternoons with developing showers next week.



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KIRAN PANDAY

PEACEMAKER: King Gyanendra and Queen Komal at the inaugural ceremony of the Second Lalit Boudhha Kala exhibition at the Achheswor Mahabihar in Pulchok on Thursday.



RNA/DPR

PEACEKEEPER: Crown Prince Paras and COAS Pyar Jung Thapa at Panchkhal on Wednesday to inspect RNA's UN peacekeeping contingent.



KIRAN PANDAY

15 GOING ON 16: Reporters mob Apa Sherpa as he arrives at Kathmandu airport on Monday after climbing Chomolungma for the 16th time.



SRINKHALA SHARMA

NARROW CASTING: An FM radio station in Biratnagar miking the news through loudspeakers from the FNJ building on Monday evening to protest the government's ban on news over the radio.



KIRAN PANDAY

REAL RAIN ON A MOCK HOUSE: Ex-MPs take shelter from the rain under their seats during a mock session of parliament at Patan Darbar Square on Friday.

All beings in the kingdom

It might seem impossible to change the mindset of the people in a country like Nepal where cruelty to animals is sanctioned by tradition. But yes, animalNEPAL.org is a group of activists who want to change this. Their motto is to 'help all beings in the kingdom' by changing the Nepali mindset towards animals and reducing cruelty towards them.

The organisation has three noteworthy crusades under its belt: Worship Without Cruelty Campaign, Monkey Business Campaign and the Anti-Kick-Kukur Campaign. The first was aimed at medieval customs such as the annual festival in Khokana where a live goat is tossed into a pond and the local youth tear it apart with their teeth, while Monkey Business tries to stop the smuggling of the sacred rhesus of the Valley to science labs in America. The Anti-Kick-Kukur Campaign is as the title suggests—to stop the bad Nepali habit of kicking the same dogs we worship in Kukur Tihar.

animalNEPAL.org is also the first organisation to develop a line of pet care products made by Nepali humanitarian groups and NGOs. Their products range from pet food, collars to matching apparels for pets and owners. This is the idea recently won them the second place for Best Business Plan from a Development



Organisation award out of 700 plans submitted from all over the world. During the prize giving ceremony held in Holland on 3 June, the Dutch Minister of Development Cooperation Van Ardene-van der Hoeven remarked, "This is a plan that may sound rather unusual at first sight. However the idea to engage unemployed women and handicraft workers in the production of pet products for pet owning middle class in Nepal is a

very innovative and promising business in development case and plays an exemplary role in entrepreneurial creativity."

One of animalNEPAL.org's chief objectives is to work towards establishing a Bureau for the Prevention of Animal Sacrifice. As they say, you can usually tell how well a country treats its people by looking at how well it treats its animals. ●

www.animalnepal.org
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Gross Domestic Happiness

About time the UN finally came up with a new measure of national progress that is based not just on GDP per person but also on how happy a country feels at any given time in its history.

To give credit where it's due, the original idea of measuring national bliss emanated from none other than King Jigme the Glad who reigns over a country that has achieved one of the highest per capita happiness on earth, a feat he accomplished by making about 100,000 of his people grossly unhappy.

UNDER MY HAT Kunda Dixit



America is another country that takes its national motto ('Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness') very seriously indeed

and it has been doing this by making people in the rest of the world pretty consistently miserable for about half a century now. We in Nepal are not so selfish: we take pride in being able to make others happy even if it means being temporarily sad ourselves.

The Gross Domestic Glee Index is just one of the ways to measure a country's well-being and while we may score pretty low in it at the present juncture, there are other areas of national endeavour where Nepal is secretly forging ahead of the rest of the world. For example:

Toilet Seat Index: Few countries in the world have the density of shops selling bathroom fixtures as we do in the 200m stretch from Tripureswor Crossing to Teku. The choice of toilet seats is particularly staggering and points to a burgeoning standard of living as the nation progresses from squatting to sitting position. At this rate, we will soon be all standing at attention.

The Bagmati Olfactory Ratio: Square root of ambient hydrogen sulphide concentration at Bagmati Bridge divided by wind speed multiplied by seasonally adjusted Sewage Retention Factor rounded off to the nearest decimal point. With such a meticulous formula, it is no coincidence that there is a strong correlation between the NEPSE Index and the Bagmati Olfactory Ratio. In other words, if the smell at the bridge is really bad you can be sure the stock market has gone up.

Casino Coefficient: When it comes to risk-taking and gambling on our future no other country comes even close to Nepal in the game of National Russian Roulette. Even Singapore is now imitating our success and following the same development model in a high-stake game of one-upmanship at Sentosa.

Instant Noodle Quotient: In terms of per capita consumption of instant noodles, Nepal is now way ahead of its closest rival, Thailand. However, combined with the trade-weighted Noodle-Belly Composite Index we rank even further ahead and have surpassed all East Asian tiger economies put together.

Freedom Benchmark: Contrary to slanderous reports about curbs on freedom Nepal ranks fairly high in terms of the liberty to break the law. Generally, the top brass can run red lights again now that Baba-san has left the country, bulls have freedom again to be middle-of-the-roaders outside the Supreme Court, anyone can take over from the right or left it doesn't matter, there is total freedom to make U-turns again on Darbar Marg and driving recklessly on the wrong side of road on the Mahendra Highway is perfectly legal.

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