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Weekly Internet Poll # 254

Q. Should there be a foreign arms embargo on Nepal?

Yes 37.6%

No 60.8%

Don't know 1.6%

Total votes:556

Weekly Internet Poll # 255. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. How do you evaluate the security situation since 1 February?

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Spillover

Even if Nepali Maoists were not involved in last week's Naxalite offensive in Bihar, the tactics used were familiar

AJIT TIWARI in JANAKPUR

There are signs that the feared 'spillover' of the Nepali Maoist insurgency across the open border into northern India is beginning. The spate of coordinated assaults on three police stations in Bihar in the past week have been so sudden and serious that Indian officials who were caught offguard suspect involvement of Nepali Maoists. Indeed, the tactics of overwhelming police stations and destroying government buildings with human wave attacks were eerily similar to the method rebels have used here. Immediately after the attacks, Bihar police blamed Nepali Maoists and said there were "Nepali-looking people with Mongoloid features" among the dead attackers. Maoist spokesman Krishna Bahadur Mahara immediately denied his party's involvement but there are fears of unprecedented coordination between Nepali Maoists and the Maoist Communist Cell (MCC) in India. Three Indian security personnel and 18 Naxalites died in the attack on the town of Madhuban on 23 June in which six government buildings and a police station were destroyed. Three days later, the town of Bainganina 75 km south of the Nepal border was attacked. That very night on 26 June, the rebels moved to the town of Piparahi. Nine Naxalites, one more soldier and a civilian were killed in the two attacks. On Monday, reports reached here saying there was a daylong firefight at Pachpokhariya 10 km south of the border. Seven Naxalites were captured.

"There were definitely Nepali Maoists involved," maintains Bihar Police Chief Ashish Ranjan Singh whose initial statements were carried widely by the Indian and Nepali media. Independent analysts doubt Nepalis were involved and say Indian police are just trying to coverup their inability to prevent the attacks. They say it is more likely that the MCC has seen how effective the tactics have been in Nepal and have borrowed them in launching what looks like a monsoon offensive when security response is slower in Bihar due to floods. Nepali and Indian Maoists could also be using each other's territories to escape hot pursuit by security forces. Last week's attacks took place in north Bihar where Naxalite activity has not been as pronounced, and follows a big landmine attack in northern Uttar Pradesh in November in which 15 policemen were killed. India's paramilitary Sasastra Seema Bal (SSB) has now sealed the border immediately to the north of its base in Chekana and asked for reinforcements. An official at the Jayanagar base of the SSB told us there are plans to restrict travel all along the Bihar border. ●

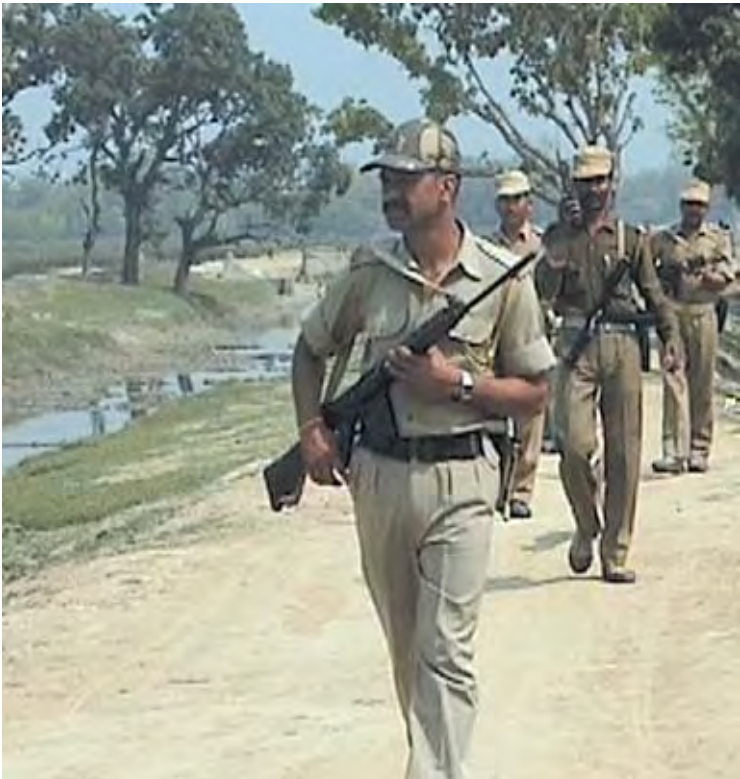
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AJIT TIWARI

TENSE BORDER: Indian SSB on patrol along the Indo-Nepal frontier in Rautahat. Motorcyclist and bus passengers from Nepal being checked.

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DOES PUBLIC OPINION MATTER?

Doesn't look like it, given the way it has been disregarded by every political force in the country. They all claim to stand for the people but have consistently dashed all hope.

The Maoists say they are fighting a 'people's' war although many who supported the revolution don't want to have anything to do with it anymore. The king says he took over to save the people from conflict but all we have seen in the past three years is a systematic plan to dismantle what remained of democratic institutions and surviving civil liberties. The political parties haven't faced their electorates in six years, their mandates have expired and there is little public enthusiasm toward their call for restoration of parliament.

All three forces think that lack of support for the other two translates into support for themselves. The Maoists pose as the people's genuine liberators, promising to wipe the slate clean of a feudal monarchy and malfunctioning democracy. The king thinks the lack of public support for the parties means the people back his autocratic experiment. And the political parties take it for granted that most Nepalis are against February First.

What we have seen year after year in nationwide polls since 2000 is a vast and overwhelming yearning for an end to violence. If the three forces want to genuinely address the people's most important concern they should be making urgent moves to restart the peace process instead of clawing at each other.

Eighty percent of Nepalis surveyed have always rejected communist totalitarianism and royal authoritarianism. Extremists of the left and right will overlook this at their own peril. But the mainstream political parties haven't stood up convincingly for the middle ground either.

Their leaders still don't seem to have realised how low they have sunk in the public's eye. Chanting 'democracy' alone will not win people back to the cause. Our political leadership was always much better at struggling for democracy than making it work, they now have to prove that this time it will be different.

The underground comrades for their part should read the writing on the wall: the people may still vote you to power if you give up violence. But they won't if you wait any longer.

We may have forgotten it in this long detour on the road to democracy but the only true reflection of the people's will is when we allow them to choose their representatives and make them truly sovereign.



STATE OF THE STATE

CK Lal



further. By using coercion,

repression, violence, rewards or punishment and manufacture of consent through propaganda, an authoritarian order may be relatively stable in the short-term. But it ends up undermining itself from within.

There are signs of things to come and recent pronouncements by loyal royals are ominous. Former Brig Gen Bharat Keshar Simha, an honorary ADC to the king, argued recently that since the monarch was a Bishnu incarnate he was above the constitution. Yet another retired general and member of the Raj Parishad, Sachit Shamsher, warned that politicians deserved to be treated as in the 1960s when

parties were proscribed and their leaders imprisoned by King Mahendra. And then, there is Donald Camp, who tells the king when he meets him that going back to pre-1990 is out of the question as far as the international community is concerned.

If these statements by people perceived to be close to Narayanhiiti are anything to go by, even tougher restrictions on political activity appear to be in the cards. Hallucinators who yearn for a return to absolute monarchy forget that it had already brought the country to the brink of disaster in 1990. If it were not for the safety valve that democracy accorded, the state would have crumbled under the combined weight of people's frustrations with the system, an Indian economic blockade and international apathy towards the plight of Nepalis. But, it seems, no one ever learns anything from history. By making reform impossible, the courtiers are bent upon making revolution inevitable.

The royal regime's dismal performance inspires even less confidence. Maoist violence has escalated, the economy is in a tailspin weighed down by stagnation and inflation. Failures on the foreign policy

Let's talk about caste

When will 'others' qualify to be 'one of us'?

Even as we painstakingly wrest back the right to debate openly, caste remains a strangely under-articulated topic in political discourse today.

Many enlightened Nepalis abhor the caste system, though few have broken caste taboos in their personal lives. Still, activists have long organised 'joint feasts' to allow people from 'high' and 'low' castes to defy

GUEST COLUMN

Manjushree Thapa



segregation. The Dalits' rights movement is gaining pace despite elite resistance. Thousands of Nepalis across the country have even discarded their surnames to shrug off their caste identities. (Hence the proliferation of Nepalis with such surnames as 'Sorrowful' or 'Inspiration').

In the 1990 to 2002 period, the political parties had all been captured by Bahun men—who unfortunately blocked reforms on women's, Dalits' and Janajatis' rights. Studies were showing Panchayat-era caste profiles to be comparatively more diverse. Even now, the political parties remain the bastions of Bahun men.

Then came the king's October 2002 takeover. Dramatically, the Chettri caste that had monopolised power before 1990 returned. The heads of all the cabinets under King Gyanendra's rule have been Chettris: Chand (a Thakuri sub-caste), Thapa, Deuba and Shah (also Thakuri).

A recent cover story in *Nepal* magazine further reveals how narrow the absolute

monarchists' caste base is. It lists the king's closest friends and advisers. These include: Prabhu Shamsher Jung Bahadur Rana, a childhood friend who accompanied the king to Indonesia and China. His nephew Prabhakar Shamsher Jung Bahadur Rana heads the Soaltee Group and is also close to the king. Another trusted friend is Birendra Shah, better known by his nickname 'Lava Raja.' He was in Pokhara with then-Prince Gyanendra during the 2001 royal massacre. Sharad Chandra Shah is Lava Raja's nephew. He heads the Information Technology Commission but his informal powers are extensive. Another adviser, DB Rana, used to work in the Soaltee Group. Mahendra Kumar Singh, married to King Tribhuban's daughter from out of wedlock, sustained a bullet wound at the 2001 royal massacre. Ravi Shamsher Jung Bahadur Rana and Queen Komal's brother Suraj Shamsher Jung Bahadur Rana are also advisers to the king. Similarly close is Shanta Kumar Malla, former army chief, oversaw a five-person military inquisition into the 2001 royal massacre. Among other advisers are Sachit Shamsher Jung Bahadur Rana, Bharat Keshar Simha and Kesharjung Rayamajhi. That's 11 Chettri men, all but one a Thakuri.

It is sometimes tempting to reduce the struggle between absolute monarchists and democrats to a struggle between Chettris and Bahuns. This would be a facile conclusion, of course. Yet the non-political sectors that embody the present democratic movement—the media, the legal profession—are

also overwhelmingly composed of Bahun men.

And herein lies a lingering weakness in today's democratic movement. Be they political parties, community or business organisations, NGOs or INGOs, or even families, the vast majority of democratic institutions remain markedly segregated—not by intention, maybe but by omission. There are apparently no 'others' who qualify to be 'one of us.' Or it is not worth the effort to reach out beyond our comfortable circles.

There is of course a difference in the ethics of absolute monarchists and democrats: the democrats' ideals oblige them to be inclusive. And they do sincerely intend to be so but first, they just need to restore democracy.

Yet, which comes first—democratic values or democratic polity? This is a question that many Nepalis—particularly non-Chettri-Bahuns—are now asking. Absolute monarchists would say that democratic values must come first and actual democracy can follow. Democrats would say the opposite.

But the ground realities of Nepal are better reflected in the view of Anil Bhattarai of Nepal South Asia Centre: "You cannot bring democracy first, then reduce poverty, then have awareness-building campaigns, then bring about social change. It all happens simultaneously. Look at what is happening. That is our reality."

So, democrats: while overthrowing Nepal's political anachronisms, let's also overthrow our own lingering contradictions, shall we? Let's start by talking about caste. ●

In an unstable state

By making reform impossible, they're making revolution inevitable

Any legitimacy-challenged regime, whether benign or malignant, is oppressive. It doesn't take long for even a benevolent dictatorship to degenerate into tyranny. Insecure and paranoid, illegitimate governments inevitably go about centralising authority, thereby undermining their legitimacy

further. By using coercion,

repression, violence, rewards or punishment and manufacture of consent through propaganda, an authoritarian order may be relatively stable in the short-term. But it ends up undermining itself from within.

There are signs of things to come and recent pronouncements by loyal royals are ominous. Former Brig Gen Bharat Keshar Simha, an honorary ADC to the king, argued recently that since the monarch was a Bishnu incarnate he was above the constitution. Yet another retired general and member of the Raj Parishad, Sachit Shamsher, warned that politicians deserved to be treated as in the 1960s when

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The royal regime's dismal performance inspires even less confidence. Maoist violence has escalated, the economy is in a tailspin weighed down by stagnation and inflation. Failures on the foreign policy

front are so stark that even a routine royal visit to Qatar is being labelled as a monumental achievement. But nowhere is the record as abysmal as in the arena of fundamental freedoms. Five months after February First, political prisoners continue to languish in prison.

Sher Bahadur Deuba and Prakash Man Singh are victims of political vendetta and a selective witch-hunt. They are being unlawfully prosecuted by an extra-constitutional watchdog. Unfortunately, Deuba and Singh lack the moral fortitude to question the RCCC's decisions. After all, they themselves functioned as loyal nominees until the king dismissed them.

But people who never acquiesced to the post-October 2002 royal order and were imprisoned for their beliefs can be considered prisoners of conscience. Ramchandra Poudel was released on Tuesday but Narhari Acharya and Krishna Pahadi are still in detention. Unlike Deuba and Singh, Acharya and Pahadi aren't where they are for what they did or didn't do. They are in prison because they stand for certain values.

Prisoners of conscience delegitimise regimes and draw international attention to this state of unreason.

The press is still suppressed and the bar is debarred from taking up constitutional issues in the courts. Both have been forced to take their agitation to the streets. February First loyalists interpret acquiescence of a repressed people as evidence of their consent for royal rule and the possibility of a rapprochement between constitutional forces has never been more distant. Instead, a showdown between the forces of autocracy and democracy is imminent.

US Ambassador James Moriarty predicted the outcome of intensification of confrontation in his address to the East West Centre last week: millions of Nepalis are refugees in India, and anarchy inside the country. But such a doomsday scenario is probably scare mongering tactics to make donors fall in line with the royal regime. The result of political upheavals is unpredictable. Royal rollback is the safest course to save the country from unintended consequences of catastrophic confrontation. ●

LETTERS

BAMBOO CURTAIN

Thanks to Ashok R Shakya ('Bamboo Curtain', #152) for his poignant photos from the Bhutani refugee camps and his emotional tribute to those of us who were chased out of our homeland. He has called a spade a spade with his sharp rebuke of the Druk regime which is ultimately responsible for our tragedy.

Ganesh Lama, Jhapa

- Shame on the royal regime in Bhutan for doing this to its people. Since they are Buddhist and believe in karma they must know that one day the misery they have sowed will come back to haunt them a thousandfold.

Ina Petersen, Copenhagen



- So, finally there's talk about integrating into our society ethnic Nepalis who were expelled from Bhutan more than a decade ago. Why this has taken so long is something one can only speculate on. To quote an example, when famine hit Ethiopia in the early 80s, Israel sent planes to rescue and bring back orthodox Jews who had been living there for centuries. Up until then, the Ethiopian Jews had not even been aware of the existence of the state of Israel, thinking they were the only Jews in the world. And yet, Israel did what it did even though the people it brought back were different ethnically, culturally and socially. Now the 'Ethiopian' Jews are very much a part of Israeli society, having been integrated into the social fabric of the country. Why has this not happened with the so-called 'Bhutani' refugees? After all, these are ethnic Nepalis who speak the same language, share the same culture and have names that sound no different from ours. Why have they not been granted Nepali citizenship? They are no more Bhutani than you and I. In fact, they are more Nepali than many Nepalis themselves. Living in isolation among Bhutanis must have made them more aware of who they were and created a desire to preserve their identity and culture. Ironically, that is what got them expelled from Bhutan in the first place— not being able to adapt themselves to the culture and customs of the host country—that and their revolt against Bhutani authorities, which was foolishly inspired by the political change taking place in Nepal at the time. Integration can be beneficial in more ways than one, not least of which is: there'll be more people to send abroad for non-skilled jobs that, although low paying, bring in dollars.

Name withheld

TYRANNY AND TERROR

In context to your editorial 'Trial and terror' (#252). In 1903, John Tanner wrote in *The Revolutionist's Handbook*: 'Revolutions have never

lightened the burden of tyranny: they have only shifted it to another shoulder.' Hopefully, what Tanner had written a hundred years ago is not happening in Nepal. A revolution to overthrow the Rana regime and usher democracy was needed. It did actually overthrow the Rana regime but the people only got to see a short glimpse of democracy and multiparty system before King Mahendra made an executive decision to ban parties and become the centre of power. Thirty years later, after various ups and downs, democracy was re-established. Once again elected governments were not successful in improving the political and economic situation. Ultimately, King Gyanendra assumed partial executive powers given to him by the 'democratic constitution' in October 2002. Like King Mahendra, King Gyanendra too took what he wrongfully believed was rightfully his. The next revolution is bound to be for a republic considering how constitutional kings have deceived us twice.

One could safely conclude that all the revolutions aimed at establishing democracy have failed. They have just shifted the burden of tyranny. Actually, if we do want something to happen in this country, let's start an internal revolution within parties and overthrow the incompetent leaders that they have. Who knows, we may be third time lucky.

Himal Ghimire, Sydney

- Kanak Dixit's eyewitness report from Madi ('Sorry.', #251) graphically shows the level of cowardice that is inherent among Maoist 'warriors'. Kindly send a free copy of that issue to Girija Prasad Koirala and Madhab Kumar Nepal who are now flirting with the terrorists.

Sri Ram Chaudhary, email

- Thank you for printing Rabindra Nakarmi's article ('The lion king', #253). My wife, son and I watched that movie together and all of us were very upset when Uncle Scar snatched power and were very happy when the young lion prince was able to return to his rightful throne. The parallels between the movie and Nepal's reality are eerie. The only difference— and our country's great misfortune— is that we do not have any figure such as the young lion prince.

J Aryal, email

TB-3

I'd like to thank Shrestha, Clapham and Gunneberg for responding to the issues raised in my letter posing questions to TB control activities (Letters, #252). The complex relationship between the conflict, the growth of the private sector and their impact on state provision of health services is a pressing one and one it is hoped is being both acknowledged at policy level as well as being further researched. A start to addressing these issues would be to gather the 'anecdotal' and other evidence on the conflict's impact and begin to articulate what the questions to research and address might be. Shrestha et al's example of how a well run DOTS program in Lalitpur actually decreases the numbers of those who attend the private sector and consequently the availability of anti-tuberculous drugs from this sector, is very encouraging. Some of us who

research on and engage with, health service issues in Nepal have data that support our concern that the lack of regulation of private sector health services can lead to dangerously unintended consequences— it is thus heartening to hear evidence of high-quality public health services reducing public demand for high-risk private services. It is hoped that the NTP will make the results of such research more widely available for discussion of its broader implications, in addition to its use to defend the DOTS program. There may be a need, however, for caution in interpreting the Lalitpur research data. Lalitpur is not representative of most of Nepal, of course, and the degree to which such findings can be generalised should be considered.

I join 'international TB experts' in applauding the achievements of the NTP. I would like to note, however, that different types of experts have their own areas of expertise and frame their judgements accordingly. Judging a TB control program by its 'cure rate' is an important epidemiological approach to program evaluation. There are, however, other types of experts who in addition look beyond 'cure rates' when they raise questions about a program and seek to assess its strengths and weaknesses. I hope that the NTP, DfID and the WHO, as leaders of the effort to control tuberculosis in Nepal, will not be satisfied with basing their own evaluation of DOTS in Nepal solely on the verdict of those 'experts' that laud its epidemiological success. I would also further hope that there was room for critical and public debate of broader issues so that the lessons—both positive and negative—can be understood, debated and used to further strengthen an already successful program.

Ian Harper, email

STREET SMART

Those of us who live or work in and around Jawalakhel in particular cannot have failed to notice that there have been some improvements recently to the smoothness of our journeys. But have we considered the following:

Are we tackling the root causes of the rough and potholed pathways that we have become used to? Have suitable foundations been laid? Has the budget been diverted from other more worthy causes? Is there any effort being made to tackle the problems that occur whenever several parties meet at a junction only to find that personal self-interest overrides any semblance of cooperation or personal restraint and compromise for the greater good? Will we continue to be faced with that familiar confusion of whether the signal to the right means 'please pass' or 'I am about to turn'? Will we continue to see progress being achieved only by the large and powerful machines at the expense of the smaller, less visible and weaker vehicles? How about children on the frontlines? There have also been some improvements in traffic management elsewhere in the capital with the introduction of central barriers. Does this smooth the flow of people or simply transfer congestion to other problem areas? Finally, despite the surface dressing, will we see any changes

to the rules of the road or the rules of the game?

'Z Crossing', Jawalakhel

WEDDING BLUES

Kapil Tamot's experience of being among 1,500 guests at Kathmandu weddings is one shared by many ('Pre-monsoon weddings', #253). There is a law in Nepal which prohibits inviting more than 51 people (excluding close relatives) for wedding parties. The penalty for violation is a fine up to Rs 20,000 or imprisonment up to 15 days or both. The rationale is that people don't overspend and be indebted for the rest of their lives. So far no one has ever been convicted. In a

country where most legislation is not enforced, this is no surprise. The wedding catering business, meanwhile, has taken off adding revenue to the government's depleting coffers. If this is the reason behind non-enforcement of this particular law by the government, then the right approach would be to repeal the law. Two warnings to Kapil: the monsoon wedding season is not over yet and parties are being held in 'war zones' like the Mahendra Police Club and the Army Club where you need to go through barbed wire and sentries with assault rifles behind sandbags.

Anup Raj Upreti, email

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The great green road



PRAGYA SHRESTHA in JIRI

When the Lamosangu-Jiri road was commissioned in 1985, it marked a turning point in the life of this sleepy town in the middle of nowhere.

This was the first highway designed not to be just a highway but one that took socio-economic costs and benefits to rural Nepal into account. It aimed to maximise benefits for the local population by providing access while reducing the impact on the villages of being suddenly opened up to the outside world.

Technically, the highway was a marvel of engineering. The Swiss who helped build it brought their experience from the Alps and aimed to reduce

landslides and erosion with innovations that they hoped would serve as a model for other mountain highways in Nepal.

Now, 20 years later, the impact of the Lamosangu-Jiri Highway appears to have been positive. The road opened up Dolakha, Charikot and the remote Ramechhap districts and the integrated rural development effort that followed construction tried to ensure that the local economy took advantage of access.

The Swiss invested heavily in community forestry, soil management, trail bridge building, district roads and rural health activities. Agricultural extension allowed farmers to grow value-added crops and the road became a backbone to take the produce to market and increase family income.

Jiri became the roadhead for the Everest trek and its economy was transformed by tourism. Dolakha was no more a food deficit area, the road opened up markets for the region's produce which included cheese, herbs, potatoes and vegetables. The Khimti hydropower project wouldn't have been feasible without the road, and other potential generation sites are now viable because of feeder roads. Jiri's dairies went through a boom since the road brought Kathmandu Valley within reach.

Bitumen emulsion was used as a binder for black-topping which reduced the reliance on firewood to melt the asphalt. Bio-engineering techniques were applied for the first time to stabilise slopes along the alignment. Gabion baskets filled

Twenty years later, the Jiri highway survives the test of time and serves as a model for other mountain roads

with boulders were used here for the first time. Many of these techniques have since been applied successfully on other roads in Nepal. Environment friendly construction has kept the highway relatively landslide free, and blockages during the monsoon are much rarer than in other highways in Nepal. The engineers settled for a three-metre one lane highway with wide hairpins, good drainage and a system of maintenance by lengthworkers from local communities.

"It's amazing, the road is still in good shape after 20 years even though the resealing which should have been done every five years was not done," says Devendra Dhar Pradhananga, the highway's project manager. He believes regular and planned maintenance is not a technical issue, not even financial, but an institutional, political and administrative problem. The entire road is now being resurfaced and the work is expected to be finished by end July.

Road engineer CK Lal, agrees the Jiri road is a model for highway engineering in the mountains but says it was too expensive. "The main problem with replicating it is that it wasn't cheap to build and isn't cheap to maintain," he says.

The Swiss say the road took



LONG AND WINDING ROAD: King Birendra inaugurating the highway in Jiri in 1985 (above) and a hairpin bend above Lamosangu.

relatively long to build since it was purposely made labour-intensive to provide local employment, and it cost Rs 250 million for the entire 110 km stretch in 1985 prices, which was relatively cheap.

"The most important lesson of the Jiri road is the change from ad hoc road maintenance to the concept of planned road maintenance carried out locally by lengthworkers," says Jorg Frieden of Swiss Development Cooperation in Nepal, "the other important innovations were the use of bio-engineering and environmental friendly road construction techniques." ●

"We are very sorry to see the country divided"



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Jorg Frieden, the Nepal representative of Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) spoke to *Nepali Times* about the difficulty in the delivery of donor-assisted projects post-February First and development priorities.

How does SDC perceive the attacks on aid workers by the Maoists?

Fortunately, across the country, physical attacks have remained an exception. Both parties to the conflict and especially the insurgents have, however, frequently threatened and put aid workers under pressure in order to obtain tactical or material advantage. These are against our Basic Operational Guidelines and they constitute a major challenge for the continuation of development work in rural Nepal as SDC and all other agencies give the highest priority to the security of their staffs, who are, in their vast majority, Nepali citizens. However, we have come to the conclusion that the best way to ensure the security of development work is to

strictly respect the principle of impartiality, be ready to speak to all stakeholders, be accountable and transparent. The tentative enforcement of these principles has improved the quality of our development activities and their acceptance by the rural population.

How has the collaboration with government evolved since 1 February?

The direct collaboration, as well as the security situation, has not changed much. Strengths and weaknesses of the government have remained basically the same. Programs and projects have however been affected by the numerous changes of personnel that the new government has conducted over the last months. The major problems have arisen from the deterioration of the overall environment: censorship and restriction of media freedom have made more difficult a serious assessment of risks and opportunities. The pressure exerted on human rights activists and democratic parties in the districts has made more difficult the communication with all stakeholders and the search for practical solution to projects' implementation problems. The appointment of the monitoring commissions has weakened the local authorities further and has started rolling back the decentralisation of state responsibilities crucial for peace and development in this country. We feel very sorry to see that (February First) has divided the country drastically and the government is trying to sort out the problem with military solutions, which is definitely not a good sign.

The Swiss government sponsored the human rights resolution in Geneva in May, are you satisfied with the outcome?

We are pleased that the government renewed its commitment to fully respect its international obligations and accepted, in a comprehensive memorandum of understanding, the presence of the international monitors reporting to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

We are satisfied by the positive reception given by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) to this mandate. The work of the international observers—if really accepted by both parties to the conflict and effectively implemented—will mean the end of impunity for the perpetrators of abuses as well as for their commanders and political masters. We believe that accountability to the international law will progressively improve a situation on the ground that has remained appalling.

The Lamosangu-Jiri road built with Swiss assistance is seen as an example of well thought-out development aid. Twenty years later, what are the lessons?

The road served as an example of how mountains roads should be built. It was a model and the road helped improve the economic condition of the local population to some extent. The Khimti hydropower project and now, maybe Upper Tamakosi are possible because the road already exists. There may have been some negative impact but to mitigate the problems, the Integrated Hill Development Project (IHDP) was implemented to harmonise people for the road so that they could take advantage of the new possibilities arising from it. Since the road was built we have been involved mainly in community forestry, soil management, trail bridge building, district roads, rural health and so on. And the road has played a major role in accessing and developing the entire area.

How do you see a future commitment in road sector from SDC?

We have shifted our concerns from the expansion of the strategic network to the construction and maintenance of rural roads. Through the District Road Support Program (DRSP) and with SDC's know-how and budget, the construction of green roads in six districts east of Kathmandu has been sustained for five years. DRSP, with its know-how will now expand to 18 additional districts and support the implementation of a large ADB financed rural infrastructure project.

Lukla suffers another mishap

Six months after a Sita Air Dornier suffered an undercarriage failure while landing at Lukla airport, (pictured) a Gorkha Airlines Dornier



skidded off the runway on Thursday morning. None of the eight Nepali passengers and three crew were hurt. Lukla's famous inclined runway was tarmaced three years ago and has since seen a big jump in landings and takeoffs. There have been eight mishaps here in the past 10 years, although none of

them resulted in fatalities. Pilots regard landing in Lukla as one of the most challenging in Nepal because of the terrain and weather.

The World Bank's confidence

WASHINGTON—The World Bank approved a \$3 million grant this week to help finance technical assistance needs of its reform agenda. The Economic Reform Technical Assistance Project intends to strengthen home-grown reforms in the areas of public sector capacity, service delivery, social inclusion, governance and reducing unproductive public sector intervention in the economy, all of which will be critical to placing Nepal on a higher growth path. "Key policymakers in Nepal are keenly aware that these improvements are central to promoting social equity and building lasting peace," says World Bank Country Director for Nepal, Kenichi Ohashi. The project is structured to provide flexibility in the use of the funds, which can finance the hiring of skilled professionals, consultants and training.

Another ATM



Standard Chartered Bank Nepal has installed another 24-hour Automated Teller Machine (ATM) at its branch in Lalitpur which was inaugurated by CEO Sujit Mundul on 28 June (pictured). StanChart now has 10 ATM sites in the country which also serve Visa, MasterCard, Cirrus and Maestro cardholders.

Qatar adds Alexandria

Qatar Airways has added the Egyptian port city of Alexandria on its route map with a non-stop three-times-a-week from Qatar Airways' operational hub of Doha using Airbus A320s. This is the 64th destination on the airline's rapidly growing global network.

Linking up

World Link Communications has received an ISO 9001:2000 certificate from the Norwegian company, Det Norske Veritas. It is the first Nepali communication services provider to get an ISO certificate.

NEW PRODUCT



LIANA: Arun Intercontinental Traders, authorised distributor for Suzuki Motor Corporation, has launched Liana, its new 1300 cc family car priced at just over Rs 2.1 million.



NEPALNEWS.COM

Graft busters

Corruption control as an excuse for political witch-hunts

What better topic to discuss now than graft, especially as the former PM Sher Bahadur Deuba and his team have just been acquitted of giving away cash to supporters at Dasain. Does this mean they've got a clean chit?

ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed



Governments the world over, especially democratic countries, have used graft charges to nail opponents. Classic cases of South Korea, Japan and of course India show how showcase corruption trials are done live on tv. Autocracies, too, it seems use corruption charges to sideline opponents succumbing to the temptation of launching political witch-hunts disguised as corruption control.

In fact, it is easier because the accused doesn't have the usual recourse to rule of law when media functions under state diktat. Pakistan has examples of how a state's relief fund might be acceptable if it intends to use it but is unacceptable if its opponents do the same.

This is just drawing parallels between countries where different forms of regime exist.

Surely, in a pluralistic democratic set up, graft is more democratic too as the trickle down effect reaches the village political levels. In the past decade-and-a-half of plural democracy, we found more grassroots level politicians in graft scandals than in earlier regimes when it was relegated to the upper echelons.

This Beed has always been harping about making political donations legit in order to ensure that there is little incentive for people to risk getting involved in corrupt practices. Every country perhaps has its own anti-corruption watchdog and our own CIAA has been found to have quite a few of its teeth missing. With a larger high-level-outside-the-pyramid body in place to even act as a watchdog on the watchdog body, the current state of dealing with graft is still unpredictable. While government servants languish in reserve pools anticipating some action, either positive or negative against them, no one is sure about the right definition of graft.

In times of conflict, graft becomes even more difficult to understand as security expenditure and actions necessitate decisions in closed

rooms that are immediately effectuated. This makes analysing the expenditure of the state or various governmental and non-governmental organisations that proclaim to be helping conflict mitigation, management and elimination rather difficult. With the media cautiously on tiptoe, journalists have to be careful about what they report so the debate on graft cannot fully surface either.

There is a very thin dividing line in developing societies like ours between legit activities and graft. The onus lies with the state whose responsibility it is to devise a mechanism where graft policies are equitable and not biased towards a certain section of the society. The ruling elite always have more opportunities for corruption than the opposition, that is why self regulation must be strongly in place. Lee Kwan Yew has set many examples and there are lessons to be learnt from his experiences in dealing with graft in Singapore. But let's not use the Singapore model of autocracy as an excuse for corruption control. You can never replace rule of law with rule of Lee. ●

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“Not until they give up violence”



UML STRONGMAN:
Bam Deb Gautam assists party workers in paddy planting in Kathmandu on Wednesday.

SUNDAR SHRESTHA/NEPAL SAMACHARPATRA

UML Leader Bam Deb Gautam in Dishanirdesh, 26 June

I had long conversations on the telephone with Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai, separately, while I was in New Delhi. But I did not contact them, they had somehow located my hotel and called me there.

The conversation I had with Prachanda dwelt on issues ranging from the democratic movement in Nepal to the end of the king's autocracy and from peaceful movement to the violence of the Maoists. Prachanda told me that his party was willing to participate in the joint movement of the seven parties. He stressed that his party wanted to form a

common slogan of 'multiparty democratic republic' with the parties. I explained that it was not possible right now. As long as the Maoists continued their violent and chaotic ways, parties could not respond to their call for unity.

Baburam repeated what Prachanda had said. He tried to assure me that there was no rift between them and that their strength had increased. He also added that his party was willing to forge unity with the parties and move ahead in a new way under changed circumstances. I noticed a slight difference in the way the Maoist leaders used to speak before and the way they speak now. Earlier, they used to ask us to join their armed struggle and support their demand for the election of the constituent assembly and republican system. Now, they say that we (the parties) need to include them in our struggle against autocracy.

It is wrong to say that the political leaders run to Delhi whenever a political crisis arises in Nepal. We must not forget that there are around eight million Nepalis in India, the UML has a strong base among

them. Nepalis have fought in India's struggle for freedom and Indian leaders have expressed their solidarity in the democratic movement of Nepal. This has been a cultural tradition between the two countries.

It is not the political parties but the supporters of monarchy and autocracy who often reach Delhi and try to appease the Indian authorities. The stories of their sycophancy are unbelievable. There are many of them in New Delhi, people associated with institutions like the World Hindu Federation lobbying for their interest. During our stay in India, we came to know that the king himself sought support from Indian leaders, whether it was during the meeting in Jakarta or elsewhere. We also came to know that the king has been sending messages to the Indian establishment through intermediaries repeatedly. Pro-monarchists have been meeting extremists in India requesting them to quell our movement. So it doesn't behave them to say that the political parties' leaders are India-dependent.

State injustice

Jana Aastha, 15 June

आस्था

BHOJPUR—It was dangerous for 17-year-old Bidya Chauhan to fall in love. Despite protests from her parents, she eloped with a local man. Eventually, her parents sought help from the Maoists to break up the couple. In return, they agreed to force their daughter to join the rebels. Against her own will, Bidya became a full time Maoist worker. In June, she was killed in an encounter with the army, she was carrying a bag full of plastic grenades, socket bombs and other ammunition. The next day, Bidya was reported in the news as a terrorist killed in action. Villagers knew how she had been forced to become a Maoist. This should teach the security forces a lesson, not everyone becomes a Maoist out of their own free will. They shot her dead in cold blood, defenceless and while she was not attacking anyone. “What can be worse than the government declaring an

innocent person a terrorist,” says human rights activist Tulsiram Rai. CDO Sudhir Kumar Shah did everything to cover up the truth when a team of human rights workers visited the site. Injustice against innocent civilians suspected of being Maoists is increasing. Three youths in Boya VDC have been in jail after they were accused of being Maoists. Among them is a nine-year-old boy.

22 days in jail

Chandra Lal Giri in Jana Aastha, 29 June

आस्था

I am the chief correspondent of *Shram Saptahik*. Plainclothes security personnel arrested me on 31 December 2004 near the *Samaya* office while I was on my way to inform human rights activists and the media about the arrest of Sitaram Parajuli, our editor. They shoved me into a pickup, gagged me and made me lie on the floor while five or six people sat on my back. Every few

minutes, they would feel my neck to check if I was still breathing. For half-an-hour, until we reached an army barrack, they verbally abused me. In the barrack, I was made to sit on a cold cement floor and frisked. All I had was a press pass from the Department of Information and a few documents related to human rights. They tied me up, joined electrical wires to my ears and started electrocuting me. An hour later, I was bleeding from my tongue and teeth because I was biting them too hard. The barrack must have been Chhauni because from time to time I heard helicopters landing. But since my head was covered with a sack I couldn't see anything. Then they took me to a toilet and pushed my head into a bucket of cold water. I couldn't breathe and thought I would drown.

For a week I was tortured. The minute I moved or stood up, I'd get punched and kicked. They would wake me up when I was asleep and start beating me. Some days, I was electrocuted twice—

once in the morning and once in the evening. My ears are bleeding even now, my memory is growing weak and my teeth, which were ok before are all deformed. Whenever I had to go to the toilet I would get pushed against the wall, abused and beaten up again on my way back. Food was given once a day but it was with a watery soup that I could hardly eat. They neither let me bathe nor wash my face. I could hear screams from another room. One week later, Kulbindra Funyal from Dolakha, Anantaram Ghimire from Mahottari and I were transferred to Singha Darbar barrack at nine in the evening. Funyal and Ghimire had also been charged with contacting the Maoists. At round 10PM, a major shouted, “Who is that journalist? Bring him here.”

I was made to jump and run for a while, then the torturing began again. They kicked and beat me with a rubber pipe until I fainted. I regained consciousness when they splashed water on me and found myself in a sewer. I was made to stand up and a gun was pointed to my head. “What is your last wish?” they asked. “To report,” answered I. I was kept this way in Singha Darbar barrack for another 14 days.

Bargaining

Jana Aastha, 22 June

आस्था

The Maoist-affiliated Kirant National Front (KNF) has been holding secret face-to-face talks with the representatives of the government. The Maoists, however, have not been officially informed about the talks. “The Kirant National Front is an independent party, it is not a sister organisation of the Maoists,” the leaders of the front said. Last month, the government held two phases of talks with the KNF. The king's representatives are said to have told KNF leaders that it should support the king. In reply, the KNF reportedly replied that it had supported the Maoists so certain demands were fulfilled, and they would support whoever meets those demands.

The Kirants demanded federal rule, secular religion and special political rights for 18 districts east of Ramechhap. The government did not comment on the demands. Prachanda and Baburam had taken part in the ceremony that marked the formation of KNF some years ago after which it decided to support the Maoist people's war. KNF leader Gopal Khambu is a politburo member of the Maoists and he is also the chief of the eastern regional front of the Maoists. Another leader, Bhaktaraj Kandangwa is a central-level adviser for the Maoists. Interestingly, only second echelon leaders have taken part in the talks with the palace which if successful will be a setback for the Maoists.

Pokhara's turn

Himal Khabarpatrika, 1 July

हिमाल

What do you do when tourist numbers fall? You start taxing the few who still come. That is the mindset of the Pokhara sub-metropolitan office which has decided to charge tourists \$10 to enter the fair city. While tourist operators are struggling to lure more international visitors into the resort town, the government is all set to scare them away with this new tax. The decision has provoked a huge outcry among travel agents already in deep depression because of the slump. The municipality has not made a single contribution to promote international tourism and is now trying to squeeze every cent out of the few tourists who venture here. In 1998, Pokhara saw 100,000 tourists and that didn't even include Indians. The number has now plummeted to 87,000 counting Indians. And even the visitors who come are budget tourists who stay at the cheapest hotels, prefer bakery food and ride bicycles. “How can the fee be justified when all Pokhara has to offer is polluted Fewa Lake, empty hotels and restaurants?” asks Ganesh Bahadur Bhattarai of Pokhara Tourist Council.



I didn't say I wouldn't give you government ads, just get down on your knees and take them.

समय Samaya, 22 June

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“We won't brook any interference from our neighbours, why don't they learn from China?”

Government Spokesperson Tanka Dhakal in Kantipur, 28 June.



Maoist polls

Nepal, 1 July

नेपाल

ROLPA—The Maoists are holding their local elections here and have brought in the media as ‘election observers’. Maoist elections are different in many ways but the paraphernalia is similar to the government’s elections. Instead of the swastika rubber stamp, the Maoist stamp has a red star. While the state deploys government officials as election officials, the Maoists use their own party members. The rebels had 14 signs for different candidates on the voting ballot. They had put their party symbol—hammer and sickle—as number one followed by a house, watch, oil lamp, glass, leaf, umbrella, fish, radio, madal, jug, pen and key. The process employed was government-style, complete with witness, representatives, stamping, signing and counting. The turnout at the Maoist elections was the same as the turnout of the government elections of 1997 in Rolpa. The Maoists had 11 election booths in Thabang instead of the nine that were put up by the state. In a show of inclusiveness, they made it compulsory to have 40 percent of candidates female and 20 percent dalits. Independent candidates have to submit to the party’s ideology, objective and declarations. The Maoist directive states that if the candidate does not get 10 percent of the total votes, his deposit will be revoked. Constitutionally, a candidate must be over 18 years but 16-21 is the age requirement among the Maoists. The name of the candidates were finalised and they went campaigning door-to-door. Black plastic drums served as ballot boxes, covered in white cloth with a hole in the middle. *Pictured, above: vote counting in progress.*

Royalists

Deshantar, 27 June

देशान्तर सम्प्रेषक

The royalists are doing everything to tighten state control over the rights of citizens by putting the king above the constitution. Almost six months have elapsed since the king assumed direct rule in the country, yet he has been unable to convince the international community about his move. He has remained unsuccessful in his attempts to reassure the world despite going abroad himself to attend international forums. While intellectuals are advising the king to work within constitutional limits and hold talks with the

parties, his men are on their way to jeopardise the monarchy by encouraging the king to be even more authoritarian. They are now trying to coax the king to declare political parties anti-national. Sachit Shamsher is especially active these days in advising the king to do this. The royalists are clearly not interested in restoring democracy. The consequences will be dangerous. Already, there are signs of the government trying to undermine the justice system by lying to the court. The NHRC has serious legitimacy problems. Some of its members have confessed that they support the king’s move. What is the king up to?



VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT



The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Nepal was established in May 2005, following the signature of an agreement of cooperation with the Government of the Kingdom of Nepal.

The Office has a mandate to monitor the observance of human rights and international humanitarian law, bearing in mind the climate of violence and the internal conflict in the country with a view to advising the authorities of Nepal on the formulation and implementation of policies, programmes and measures for the promotion and protection of human rights in Nepal.

The Office is interested in identifying non-Nepali professionals who could work, on a short or full-time basis, as International Nepali Interpreters/Translators

The duties would include:

- To accompany and interpret for international human rights staff gathering information related to the conflict and incidents of human rights and humanitarian law violations.
- Written translation of Documents from Nepali into written English.
- Assist in establishing contact with the population and representatives of local groups.
- Assist in drafting/editing of reports.
- Participate in field missions.

Requirements:

University degree, preferably in foreign languages or equivalent, law, international relations, literature, anthropology or other disciplines related to social sciences.

Other desirable skills:

At least 3 years of relevant professional experience. Fluency in oral and written Nepali and English is essential; knowledge of other local languages is an asset. Ability to work in an international or multicultural environment, under pressure and in difficult circumstances. Knowledge of technology and use of office computer applications. Good physical condition.

Candidates are requested to complete a UN Personal History form available either from UN offices throughout the country or from the UNDP webpage <http://www.undp.org.np/vacancy.htm>.

The deadline for applications is 20 July 2005. All applicants are strongly encouraged to submit their applications by email mentioning the vacancy title to the following address: personnel.ohchr@undp.org.

If applicants cannot submit an application by email, they may send it to the address indicated below: Personnel Officer - OHCHR – Nepal, c/o UNDP, UN House, P.O. Box 107, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted

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Suddenly, Kathmandu can't get enough of lip-smacking Thai, Singaporean and Malaysian cuisine



NARESH NEWAR and AARTI BASNYAT



PICS: NARESH NEWAR, MIN BAJRACHARYA, KIRAN PANDAY

Muddy, damp, wet, rainy days are here again and what better way to celebrate the monsoon than to track down southeast Asian food in the Valley.

Gastronomists have long debated why Thai, Vietnamese and Malay food is so popular around the world. Part of the reason is their distinctive taste. Spicy, saucy and hot with a fiery mix of salty, sour, sweet and bitter.

Whenever you say 'Asian' food, many think of Indian and Chinese cuisine. But nothing compares to the varieties offered by the Singaporeans, Thai and especially

Malaysians. "You would have to spend a whole lifetime tasting all the Malay food," says Josephine Lee from the Singaporean and Malaysian restaurant, Sing-Ma, in Jawalakhel.

And there is a nuanced taste difference: Malay food is rich in sauces and spices, Thai food is hot and spicy with abundant use of coriander and lemon grass, Singaporean Chinese food retains the noodles and styles of the mother country. Whether it is satay, seafood curries, aromatic soups or Chinese food from the south seas they are all in Kathmandu.

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Sing-Ma

Perhaps the only Singaporean restaurant in the country, Sing-Ma offers authentic Singaporean cuisine with a mix of Malaysian. Among the most sought after dishes are chomp chomp noodles, Yeo's chicken rice, Hok's Yok, Kampung Kitchen and for snacks the bestseller is the satay.

Singaporean cuisine is a total mixture of influences from the Malays, Indians, Indonesians, Chinese and Europeans who settled in the country and is also packed with a cuisine that is rich in herbs and spices. To pull in more Nepalis, the restaurant also gives a mix of Nepali flavour by introducing rotis and parathas served with mixed vegetables, plain yogurt, salad made of cucumber and onions, curry, dal and rasam. **5520004**



Krua Thai

Krua Thai has been around for seven years now and is known as one of the finer Thai restaurants. Manager Nirajan Shrestha says the test that it is genuine is the number of Thais who dine here. Chef Wichai, is from Phuket and has worked for the past 13 years in Thai restaurants in Kathmandu.



His Kang Kien Wan Koong green curry and Tom Yang Koong or Thai clear soup are very popular. But he is renowned for his Som Tam Thai or papaya salad. The restaurant is changing ownership and is going to be called Krua Thai Nepal but they assure that us the food won't be any less Thai. **4414291**

His Kang Kien Wan Koong green curry and Tom Yang Koong or Thai clear soup are very popular. But he is

Royal Thai

Located at heart of the city in Darbar Marg, just above Kasthamandap Departmental store, this restaurant offers hot and spicy authentic Thai cuisine. Thai food is usually considered the spiciest and oil free, making it healthier, nutritious and almost medicinal. Paste is used instead of oil in most varieties and all the spices are natural and herbal. Among the most popular are Tom Yam soup, Pla Nung Manac, Pad Thai, satay kai and papay salad. Thai cuisine can be broken into five different categories: gaeng, yam, dip or sauce, pad or fry and ar-harn jam or miscellaneous food. **2066152**



Royal Lotus

One year old, Royal Lotus in Kopundole imports all its products directly from Thailand when the shareholder and chef, Tana Korn Saythont, makes regular trips. "We had to make four trips this year just to be well-stocked," says Saythont who has worked in five star hotels in Thailand.



His Pat Po Tak or spicy seafood is the most popular with regular guests and the specialty of the house is Kao Tant Na Tante which is based on the chef's nickname 'Tant': rice cakes which are deep fried with a special meat sauce on top and though not on the menu the chef will happily create this special dish for you and any other dishes that may not be on the menu. **5521231**

His Pat Po Tak or spicy seafood is the most popular with regular guests and the specialty of the house is

Ying Yang

Ying Yang restaurant is in the heart of Thamel. A Thai restaurant with a Chinese name that serves Nepali and continental food, it is housed in a restored Ranaesque building. It has a Swiss owner, Martin Kromer and Thai cook, Daeng. "We got the name from the Ying Yang in Basantapur during the hippie era which was a very popular restaurant," says Martin. Though tourism business has been down since 2000, the locals keep the place busy. Daeng is not only willing to cook for you but also recommend dishes according to your tastes. The phrase that comes to ones mind as one samples the dishes is "assault of the senses" as the spices of Thailand tingle your palate. **4267381,4425510**



Jalan Jalan

Ever since Jalan Jalan opened six months ago, it has been known for it's fine and varied Malaysian cuisine. Proprietor Sailesh Bhatta says, "Most of our customers come back again and again." More dishes have been recently added with the Penang special, Panggan,



which is a lunch set that is a treat for the taste buds. The Nasi Ayam on the other hand is a simple dish in which the taste of chicken comes through without any distracting spices. Jalan Jalan now also offers cuttlefish dishes and is introducing a western menu section for those who can't handle spices. **4410438**

which is a lunch set that is a treat for the taste buds. The Nasi Ayam on the other

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Restoring the god of

The shrine of Kal Bhairab at Kathmandu Darbar Square

ABHA ELI PHOBOO

Artists, poets and photographers have all marvelled at it: the golden monsoon light of the slanting afternoon sun at Hanuman Dhoka. It is a magical light that bathes the ancient heart of Kathmandu in a holy glow—an oasis of calm amidst the busy streets, honking impatient vehicles and the blinding neons of New Road.

On the fringes of the square, opposite the Hanuman Dhoka is the two-storey figure of Kal Bhairab, god of destruction and justice. For centuries, the arresting god has looked down at passers-by with his terrifying gaze and ferocious dance.

Legend has it that the granite figure was not built but discovered near a water reservoir outside Kathmandu during King Pratap Malla’s reign, which makes it at least four centuries old. Ever since it was put up at its present place, buffalo calves have been sacrificed here to appease the deity. And in the evening, devotees come by to offer flowers and oil lamps.

The Kal Bhairab has been ‘modernised’ by a succession of patrons, someone constructed a marble awning above it and another tried to make the god even more fearsome by painting it gaudy blue, red and yellow. At first it must have looked appalling but even the enamel now seems to be a part of our

heritage. The Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT) has just finished restoring the 17th century figure and has decided to let the colours be.

On 1 July, KVPT will be celebrating the completion of the restoration with a traditional Kshama Puja. “It is a puja where we ask for forgiveness for the sins we might have unknowingly committed while working on the restoration,” says Gautam Rana, director of KVPT.

The resident priest, Satyotara Bajracharya, 86, will perform the ritual and he reluctantly agrees that the restored façade is better but is none too pleased about having lost the marble awning that sheltered the god, priest and devotees from the heat and rain.

There were other elements of the Kal Bhairab that needed to be restored, like the toran over the god’s head. Historians dug up photographs from 1910 to see how it looked and have brought it back. With support from the US Ambassador’s Fund for Cultural Preservation, Nepal Investment Bank, the Soaltee Group and other donors, KVPT was able to finish the restoration in one year.

“It was a lot more work than we thought. We had assumed that the original stone would be reusable but it wasn’t and there were many things that had to be worked on from scratch,” says

Raju Roka of KVPT.

The project has employed craftsmen from Patan to work on the designs and architecture. “We are lucky to still have craftsmen who have the skills and can replicate them,” says Rana, “KVPT

is serving as a training ground for apprenticeship. Once we hand over the restored monuments, they will continue to exist for as many centuries if people don’t tamper with them.”

Most locals who live around the square are happy with the project and often stopped by to worship Kal Bhairab even while the restoration was going on. They believe the deity can heal



(L-R) Arresting Kal Bhairab in 1910, 2003 and 2005.

Trust in preservation

Over the last 13 years, Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT) has restored more than 25 significant monuments such as the Patan Darbar, Chobar Ganesh, Keshar Mahal’s Garden of Dreams, Baber Mahal Revisited and Yetkha Bahal. With the purpose of safeguarding threatened architectural heritage sites in the Valley, it has initiated projects that rescue historical buildings that might otherwise be lost to modernisation and increasing urban encroachment. KVPT has also started repair and restoration operations with training and research programs for its Nepali team. The Trust is based in the United States, but its office in Patan has become a training centre and clearinghouse for information about historic preservation in Nepal. Most notably, it has rallied Nepali businesses and individuals to contribute to preservation of our ancient monuments.

www.kvptnepal.org
info@kvptnepal.org

Into the heart of darkness

Ashmina Ranjit’s ode to the cow is a metaphor for the absurdities of the times

When Ashmina Ranjit organises a show, you can bet it’ll be quite a show. Nothing is ever ordinary in Ashmina’s works. But when the lights faded out at the performance of *Tamas: The Darkness* in Gurukul’s Sama Theatre, what the audience didn’t expect was for the darkness to stay.

Sounds of sobbing, screaming, crying and grating of chains filled the murky velvety darkness. The audience sat (some with goosebumps) waiting, wishing for something to happen, for the horrible noise to end, for the darkness to go away. But it just went on and on.

After an eternity, the darkness gave way to the filmed figure of Ashmina chained to many chains, sobbing, screaming, crying and dragging the chains as she moved like a caged animal pacing its enclosure. Her shadows played on the background as she stepped on stage, dressed in black, pacing back and forth, reading from papers.

“*Gai ko char ota khutta hunchha*,” she began. The audience teetered on the edge of bursting into laughter. “...*duita sing, duita ankha ra euta puchhar*.” The ode to the cow is a national ditty and like the national anthem, all Nepali school students are required to memorise it by heart as an example of good essay writing. That is as far as the Nepali school system goes with creative writing.

But Ashmina is just warming up. “Some cows are tall and some cows are short... some cows have big eyes and some have small ones.” Wait a minute, that was



KIRAN PANDAY

never a part of *Mahendra Mala*, where did that come from? “Cows are simple and calm animals. Cows do not usually attack... Because of their importance, Nepal recognises cows... The law sentences a cow-killer for life... In this way, cows are treated as Nepali subjects. They are simple, docile and useful. Simple, docile and useful. Cows... subjects... Cows... subjects... *Hey aunsibaro gai tiharo bhailo*.”

The bewildered audience filed out. Even the applause after the performance

had been thoughtful, muted. To say “You are a cow” in Nepal is a compliment that means you are reliable, dependable, unquestioning, docile, simple and useful. To say “You are a cow” in English is an insult. To box the whole situation and Nepali society into one hackneyed essay might seem too simplistic but it is powerful, easy to relate to and as absurd as the times we live in.

“Nothing after February First made any sense to me,” Ashimina told us after the

show, “as much as the nonsensical editorials and news published in the papers afterward. I was in New York on 1 February. The initial sense of shock gave way to tears of anger and frustration when all connection with home was cut off. Nothing has pained me as much as the pain I felt then.”

Suffocating in America where she was on a Fulbright scholarship, Ashmina was unable to concentrate. She needed to express her alienation and that was how *Tamas: The Darkness* came about. “Freedom of expression is so important,” she adds, “I needed to take that pain and use it to free myself from it. Using the essay on the cow seemed only too obvious because it is the paradox within which our understanding of the east and west is strung, finely balanced.”

Her conviction grew stronger as differences in viewpoints raged when she talked to Nepalis in America or Americans who knew Nepal. By the end of April, she had staged the play at New School University and Bard University. Bringing it home achieved her next objective—to let darkness merge with itself. She plans to perform it once again in a public space. ●

Abha Eli Phoboo
ashmina@gmail.com

destruction

gets back its old look

aches in their joints if they apply oil to the exact joint on the Kal Bhairab figure. The ungainly police station opposite the shrine was apparently located there because criminals would more willingly confess to their crimes if they swore by Kal Bhairab.

“That is the beauty of our

temples,” says Rana, “they are more than just a part of history, they are still alive.”

KVPT used to concentrate most of its restoration work in Patan till 1999 and is now moving some its activities to Kathmandu. It is working on restoring all the other temples in the Darbar Square. ●



Awakening with Ani Choying



KIRAN PANDAY

In classical languages, every word has a melody of its own. Pronounced correctly, each word of a Sanskrit stanza stimulates a different point of human emotion. Sloks have to be repeated in a prescribed manner to reawaken the soul. This isn't just new age mumbo jumbo, listen in solitude to the chants of Buddhist monks, Hindu priests or even the Gregorian brothers. The vibrations of a chanted mantra are designed to resonate with one's soul, and transport the listener into a trance-like state.

If visiting a monastery or a temple is an indulgence that you can't fit into your busy schedule, do yourself a favour—go get an Ani Choying CD. This singing nun has the power to make an atheist believe in god. Nothing explains the moving melody of Ani's songs more than her own admission that singing is a form of prayer.

A day after Ani released her new album *Smile* at an exclusive gathering at Soaltee Crowne Plaza, she sang at a charity concert in Pragya Bhaban on 25 June to an enthusiastic audience. The concert was labelled 'Smile with Ani Choying' and the performance lived up to its promise.

Ani's hymns and chants are not as well known to the Nepali audience as her hit *Phool ko ankha ma phoolai sansara* from her first popular album

Moments of Bliss. The compositions in *Smile* have the same team as *Moments of Bliss*—lyrics by Durga Lal Shrestha and music by Nhyoo Bajracharya. True to his self, poet Durga Lal has stuck to his choice of purer words rather than pick up colloquial terms common to popular Nepali songs. Ani has succeeded in giving depth to words of Sanskrit and Persian origin by her cultured diction.

Bajracharya makes his own musical strength shine by limiting the use of percussion. With wind and string musical instruments, primarily flute and guitar, as her accompaniment, Ani lets words waft across the ether and envelop you like a balm.

Smile has 10 songs, the last one a new rendition of *Phool ko ankha ma*. Each song is capable of soothing frayed nerves but *Muskan* makes your worries dissolve completely. *Moments of Bliss* and *Smile* assist in reflection, contemplation or pure relaxation. These songs aren't for people who need decibels as they run. Ani's voice and each of her words need to be savoured so they soothe. ●

CK Lal

Moments of Bliss Rs 250, *Smile* Rs 250 at music stores.

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Doug Bandow is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute in Washington, DC. He writes regularly for Fortune and is a nationally syndicated columnist. A prolific writer, he served as special assistant to President Reagan and as senior policy analyst.

ROUND TABLE

Date: 5th July 2005, Tuesday

Venue: Hotel Everest

Time: 11:00 am (Sharp)

Topic: Economic Freedom and National Growth.

TALK PROGRAMME

Date: 6th July 2005, Wednesday

Venue: Soaltee Crowne Plaza

Time: 4:00 pm (Sharp)

Topic: Politics in Trade-Myth or Reality. Bilateral to Unilateral Trade Debate.

TALK PROGRAMME

Date: 7th July 2005, Thursday

Venue: Hotel Shangri-la

Time: 3:00 pm (Sharp)

Topic: Creating Wealth / Entrepreneurship

TALK PROGRAMME

Date: 8th July 2005, Friday

Venue: Hotel Blue Bird (Pokhara)

Time: 3:30 pm (Sharp)

Topic: Creating Wealth / Entrepreneurship

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Jaffna 1998



Kathmandu 2002

MIN BAJRACHARYA

LTTE, JVP and the Maoists

Sagacity is what Nepalis also need today from their rulers

The rise, fall and conversion of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) Sri Lanka's Marxist radicals of the 1970s and 1980s turned Buddhist-nationalist parliamentarians has parallels with Nepal's Maoists.

SOUTHASIA BEAT
Kanak Mani Dixit



The JVP, too, was into a class war but unlike the Maobadi, preferred not to fight in the bush. They had some active support among the Lankan urban elite but Nepal's rebels are mostly a rural phenomenon having more in common with the insurgencies in Bihar, Jharkhand and Andhra.

The state's response to the JVP was to crush it with the same brutality shown by the rebels themselves, killing five of their senior-most leaders including Rohana Wijeweera. The nationalism and anti-Indianism of the JVP is akin to the chauvinism of Nepal's Maoists, which ironically take after the nationalism created by King Mahendra to buttress his autocratic Panchayat system.

However, the separatist Tamil war in Sri Lanka is quite different from our insurgency. The only pointers Nepal may take is from the ceasefire and rapprochement that is underway there. (See also, Editorial, 'From warfare to welfare', #253)

In Sri Lanka, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) led an identity-led war, which makes their battle that much more heartfelt, longlasting and angry. This is why you had suicide bombers in Sri Lanka but not (yet) in Nepal. The Maoists, though they have tried to exploit ethnic

discontent, propose a class war. The LTTE has total command of the area that it would like to liberate and are a kind of external enemy that a national army is groomed to battle.

In Nepal, the Maoists have the run of the countryside because they are filling a vacuum evacuated by the government. But they do not control any part of the country in the sense that they can prevent the state security apparatus from entering. All 75 district headquarters remain under government control and the Maoists at best are able to attack during the night and torch some buildings and create some mayhem before they evacuate.

The LTTE wants just a part of Sri Lanka, but the Maoists, in theory, want the whole of Nepal. Even though the Maoists have seen rapid spread in the rural hinterland, the fact is that the Maoists do not have the ability to combat the Royal Nepali Army in conventional warfare, which should give pause to those Kathmandu-based ambassadors who panic at the prospect of a Maoist takeover of Kathmandu Valley and the state. This is view of Maobadi takeover is one the Kathmandu regime would like to propagate, and the Maoists would welcome such an exaggerated view of their capabilities.

Even in the worst days of the civil war in Sri Lanka, the army was very much under the control of the parliamentary system, whether the prime minister or lately the executive president. In Nepal, while the 1990 Constitution places the army within civilian control the reality is that the royal palace

and the king as 'supreme commander-in-chief' call the shots. The complete capture of state power by the palace on 1 February was carried out with the help of the military, which was already deployed throughout to battle the Maoists.

Today, as a matter of course, military officers have become de facto administrators, with the civilian and police administration deferring to them. This, unlike in Sri Lanka, takes the country in the direction of army-ruled Pakistan, a trend which worries those who had hoped to see the RNA evolve into a professional fighting force.

The full economic cost of the Sri Lankan civil war, including military expenditure, damage of physical assets, tourism and commercial losses, and expenditure on displaced persons, is estimated at \$4.7 billion. The total including the cost of foregone economic possibilities comes to \$14 billion. No comparative count is available for Nepal's nearly ten years of insurgency, and when we finally have the tabulated figure it will no doubt be horrendous. And no kind of methodology could tabulate the cumulative pain of the rural populace over the years.

Even in the worst days of the Lankan civil war, the democratic state held ground. Today, Executive President Chandrika Kumaratunga, opposition leader Ranil Wickremasinghe, and even Prabhakaran of the LTTE, are displaying forbearance and sagacity. Which is why the ceasefire holds even though the peace process is stuck. Sagacity is what the Nepali people also need from those who would rule over them. ●

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NEPALI Times

Hit and turn

Power play and leverage can drill many holes

So often we know our mistakes yet just can't seem to correct them. Ever wondered why? It's great fun hitting hundreds of balls on the practice range. How much it helps your golf is something else all together. It all depends on if you are practicing the right swing.

If you've been faithfully following this column, by now you would have appreciated and accepted the importance of shoulder and hip turn in generating the power needed to hit further. Once you ingrain the swing's rhythm and the muscle's memory of motion, it is very difficult to change incorrect movements and the feel of the swing plane. The only way to remedy this is to use drills that break down bad old habits and re-teach the muscles. It is at these times that it can be more useful to practice free hand without actually hitting a ball. The following drills can help produce good results.

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



- Drill 1 (turn)**
- a) Assume your set-up position, feet shoulder-width apart as for a nine iron and your spine tilted, as you would address the ball. Rest a club horizontally against the upper part of your chest, parallel to your shoulders. From here, rotate your shoulders 90 degrees away from your target.
 - b) As you turn, your weight will shift to your right leg. You should feel some pulling in your left hip as you do this. Your weight should remain on the inside of your right foot. If you feel your weight on the outside of that foot, it means you have swayed instead of turned.
 - c) Now begin to turn towards the target leading with your hips and legs. Your shoulders will follow in the same rotational manner.
 - d) Always finish with your weight on your left leg with your belt buckle and the centre of your chest facing the target. You must use your upper and lower torso to generate speed and power!



Another great power source is using the angles you create between your body and your golf club, otherwise known as leverage. You must make a good extension as you turn by 'pushing' the club back with your left side. Many people make the mistake of picking the club up, in

this there is no extension. By making a good extension you will be able to generate power as you swing through the ball and see greater distances with each club.

- Drill 2 (leverage)**
- a) Assume your set-up position. Begin by 'pushing' the club back with your left side as opposed to pulling it back with your right. Make a quarter swing with your arms fully extended. The shaft should be parallel to the ground and the toe of the club-head pointing straight up to the sky.
 - b) Continue your backswing by extending your left arm as you hinge your wrists. Do not lock your left elbow or you will not be able to swing through the ball. Your right arm will fold naturally so the right elbow points to the ground.
 - c) Now that you are 'wound up', pull down as if you are pulling a chain from the sky. Release at the ball and keep swinging your arms out to the target, finishing with arms over your left shoulder, your belt buckle and the centre of your chest facing the target.
- Practice 'the turn' and 'using leverage' separately, then put them together. Remember you don't have to hit balls to practice these moves. Practicing in front of a mirror always helps.

TG Shrestha has one of the most powerful amateur golf swings in Nepal, often hitting his drives over 300 yards. He used this to his advantage last weekend winning himself the magnificent Gokarna Open trophy and a Star Cruise Holiday for two to Singapore. Finally, not forgetting last Friday's promise, TG Shrestha chose an interesting mix of golf balls to compliment his strengths—Titlist Pro V 1x on short holes, Srixon on par fours and Pinnacle on par fives. ●

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



KIRAN PANDAY

Slam dunk at GAA

What Nepali basketball players lack in the height department, they more than make up for on the agility front.

That is the impression spectators get watching the prelims of the 2nd Fr Watrin Basketball Championship at the Godavari Alumni Association (GAA). Basketball is gaining popularity in schools and many of the players at the GAA indoor court appear to have honed their ball-passing skills, displaying well-placed lay-ups and long-distance dunks.

As the prelims of the Championship draws to an end, the excitement is mounting. The current champions Gyan Club were unable to compete this year because most of the team are national level players now training in India. Himalayan Whitehouse, runners-up last year, are therefore having a field day. This tournament is named after American Jesuit Fr Eugene Watrin who died last year, he was an avid sportsperson and worked with GAA for 30 years.

The tournament, which

started on 25 June has 16 participating teams—up from 12 last year. The league matches continue till 2 July with quarterfinals scheduled 4-5 July, semi-finals on 7 July and the finals on 9 July. As the league matches progressed, Everest Southsiders from Pool A, RIBS and KAB4 from Pool B, Himalayan Whitehouse and Galaxian from Pool C and Kathmandudes and Ideal Model from Pool D emerged as frontrunners with the highest scoring team in the tournament so far being RIBS – 122 points. Teams with players from schools like Lincoln were doing a lot better than the others. In fact, it seems that a lot of the teams preferred having players from international schools, not just for their added height advantage (which isn't always the case, it must be said) but because they seemed to be more dedicated and experienced players.

Says head of GAA's Student Organising Committee, Ankit Rimal, "There is a lot of dependency on players of international origin or schools and they also seem to have a lot more teamwork." Everest Southsiders

have one player from an international school while RIBS and Kathmandudes have quite a few. Says Niraj Singh Himalayan Whitehouse skipper, who has no players from international schools, "Having players from international schools can be both an advantage and a disadvantage—you get to learn new techniques and their standards are high but they dominate the game and other players barely get to play."

Lincolnite, Rishi Robertson, highest scorer so far with 43 points says, "We had better coaches in school and were regular with our practice. This is why our fundamentals are better developed, other players normally start playing basketball as recreation and never really work on their technique."

The heat is on and as the end of the league draws near, the players seem pretty confident of themselves. Says Singh of Whitehouse, "Reaching the finals depends on other teams as well but we definitely have a place in the semifinals." ●

Aarti Basnyat



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not really (c) 2003 by Jiggy Gaton so if you want to print this elsewhere please send one sack of rice, care of this newspaper.

ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Paintings in my eyes** by Sagar Manandhar at Buddha Gallery, Thamel, until 7 July. 4441689
- ❖ **Light and Life** Photos by Kishor Kayastha, until 9 July at Lajimpat Gallery Café. 4428549
- ❖ **Raku Pottery** by Gopal Kalapremi for sale at Lajimpat Gallery Shop, Rs 2,000-Rs 3,000. 4428549
- ❖ **Mysterious and Inexplicable Phenomena of Lightballs** Photos by Hirokazu Kobayashi at Siddhartha Art Gallery, until 8 July. 4218048
- ❖ **Quien Sabe** Paintings by Max Miller at The Art Shop, Darbar Marg, until 15 July. 4267063

EVENTS

- ❖ **Dear Liar** ASMAN's Supper theatre starring Naseeruddin Shah and Ratna Pathak Shah, 1-2 July at Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 9851023958
- ❖ **Yoga and Didgeridoo** Healing Weekend 1-3 July at Wild Earth, Tantal Darbar. 4436040 or info@wildearthnepal.com
- ❖ **Two-day Dharma Talk** by Ivy ver Eer 2-3 July, 10AM-4PM at HBMC, Thamel. 4414843
- ❖ **7 July** King Gyanendra's birthday.
- ❖ **Photography Workshop** Seven days with Nepal's experts, 21 July at The Bakery Cafe, Sundhara, 7AM-9AM. 4289818, , www.photoconcern.com
- ❖ **Call for entries** Film South Asia '05, submission deadline 31 July.
- ❖ **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** Saturdays. 4435939, citygymktm@hotmail.com
- ❖ **Sanibar Mela** Saturdays at Bakery Café, Dharara, 2PM and Chuchepati, Boudha, 3PM.



MUSIC

- ❖ **JCS Trio** Saturdays, 8PM at 1905, Kantipath, free entrance.
- ❖ **Live** The Duo at the Jazz Bar, Hotel Shangrila, Lajimpat.
- ❖ **The Good Time Blues Band** at Rum Doodle, Thamel, 7PM. 4701208
- ❖ **Ladies Nights** Wednesdays at Jatra, Thamel, with live acoustic music, one free drink. 4256622
- ❖ **Fusion Time** Mondays at Jalan Jalan Restaurant, Lajimpat, 7PM. 4410438
- ❖ **Live Music** Everyday at Hotel de l'Annapurna, Darbar Marg. 4221711
- ❖ **Jukebox experience** Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at Rox Bar. 4491234
- ❖ **Jazz** at Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lajimpat, Wednesdays and Saturdays, 7.45 PM.

FOOD

- ❖ **Great Dining Experiences** with exclusive menus at Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
- ❖ **Mango Masti** Tempting tropical treats at Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **BBQ Lunch** at Le Meridien, Gokarna Forest Golf Resort. 4445550
- ❖ **Barbeque lunch** Saturdays at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot. 6680080
- ❖ **Special Combo** Burmese and Thai Menu at 1905, Kantipath.
- ❖ **Momo Revolution** Saturdays at the Tea House Inn, Nagarkot. 6680048
- ❖ **Arniko Special Lunch** Everyday at Hotel de l'Annapurna, Darbar Marg. 4221711
- ❖ **Krishnarpan** Nepali specialty restaurant at Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488
- ❖ **Barbecue Dinner** Every Friday at the Summit Hotel. 5521810
- ❖ **Exotic Seafood** at Rox Restaurant, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Delicacies** Pastas and snacks at Roadhouse Café, Jawalakhel. 5521755
- ❖ **Earth Watch Restaurant** at Park Village, dine with nature. 4375280
- ❖ **Café Bahal** Newari cuisine at Kathmandu Guest House, Thamel. 4700632
- ❖ **The Beer Garden** at Vijayantha, Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **The Tharu Kitchen** at Jungle Base Camp. Junglebasecamp@yahoo.com

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Independence Day** Weekend rates from 3-8 July at Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
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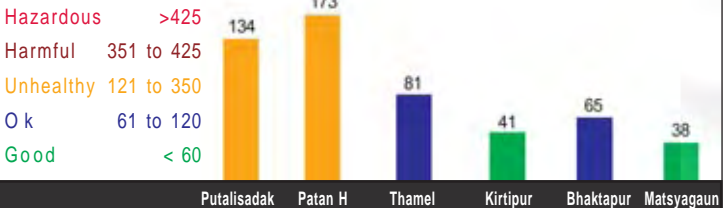
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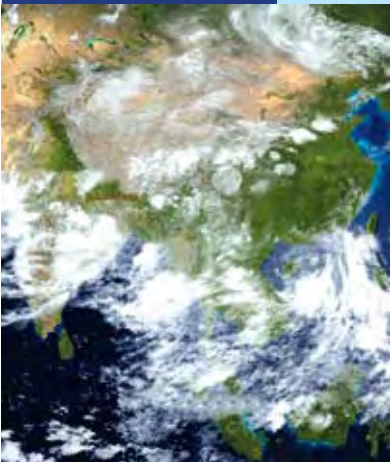
Air quality in Kathmandu Valley improved significantly last week, thanks to the refreshing rains and Lord Machendranath. Even along the busy streets of Putali Sadak and Patan Hospital, the concentration of PM10 particles that are small enough to enter the human body, were within national standards on Tuesday and Wednesday. Even in Thamel the PM10 level was well within the national standard six out of seven days. Pray for more rains to come pouring down so we can finally breathe easy.

19-26 June 2005 in micrograms per cubic meter.
Source: www.mope.gov.np



NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



With the initial big bang of the monsoon, there is a certain slugging off. Rice farmers are still waiting for the saturation downpours they need for the paddy terraces to be ready for planting. But they don't have long to wait. The monsoon is getting its second wind, as it were, this weekend with a huge low pressure circulation over Orissa and West Bengal (seen in this satellite picture taken on Thursday morning) that will drench the Nepali mid hills as well. With the support from this monsoonal trough Nepal will be overcast into next week with most of the rain falling at night.

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DO NOT DISTURB: US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Donald Camp and US Ambassador James Moriarty, at a press conference at the American Library in Kathmandu on Tuesday in which Camp said the US would “find unacceptable a return to pre-1990 Nepal”.



HEALTHY DANCING: The Panchabuddha dance at Chaksibari during a healing session on Tuesday. Novelist Diamond Shamsheer Rana and KP Bhattarai witnessed the event.



BIG SKY: Dharara stands tall against a stunningly azure sky during a break in the monsoon on Tuesday afternoon.



CHECK UP: An Armed Police Force contingent escorting NC central committee member Narhari Acharya for treatment at HAMS on Monday.



SCRUMMING IN KATHMANDU: A friendly rugby match between City Gym family and the British Gurkhas at the American Club (Phohra Darbar) on Saturday.

Carnivorous carnival

It's difficult to figure out why Nareko Sekuwa Ghar is such a popular eatery in Biratnagar. The two-storey restaurant would fail just about every hygiene inspection, it has dozens of cubicles for private dining that give it a slightly uncouth look and the ambience is not what you may call haute cuisine.

Still, it is difficult to find a table because Nareko is a serious eating place with no frills, and there is a carnivorous carnival here every evening. Located just off Mahendra Chok on College Road Nareko's clientele is all of Biratnagar's movers and shakers— civil servants, businessmen, young men and women from Dharan enjoying a night out, a couple of female Japanese volunteers and even a group of boisterous Indian shopkeepers from across the border.

So, what is it that brings them here? The news has spread literally through word of mouth that Nareko serves the most mouth-watering barbecues, sekuwas and goat roast east of Nijgad. They believe in keeping things simple here: no rice, no tarkari, no desserts and other distractions. Just goat, goat and



KUNDA DIXIT

more goat. Goat innards fried, grilled goat, goat braised, goat boiled, goat liver fried, coagulated goat blood, goat brains, goat tripe, goat momos.

Nareko is not for the faint-hearted, yet we are surprised to hear that quite a few of the clients are vegetarian. Maybe the sight of so much meat got their goat. As a major concession to leaf eaters, management recently decided to introduce a potato dish.

“It's hard work feeding 400 people every day but service is quick and we have rapid turna-

round,” explains Shyam Bahadur Gautam (pictured), whose father Nare started the sekuwa shop 35 years ago when he migrated here from Kabhre.

Shyam employs 15 people, and the restaurant is open from 2-9PM. On an average day three goats are martyred, four on weekends. No other animals are served. If you want to decisively turn vegetarian, Nareko is a place to start. But if you just want to be made into a scapegoat, this is the place for you. ●

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Things are a lot better: govt

The first of July will mark five months since that fateful winter morning in February when suddenly without warning, like a bolt out of the blue, we were told of the happy news that Nepal and North Korea would not try to outdo each other and sign a non-aggression pact. Ever since, things in Nepal suddenly started taking a dramatic turn for the better. And they haven't stopped getting any better. Every day and in every way, things are getting better and better and we can say with confidence that everything is



so vastly improved and we have reached such a pinnacle of progress that things just can't get any better anymore. In fact, from here on, it is going to be downhill all the way. Still, we have naysaying nabobs in the media who only see things taking a turn for the worse even though there is ample evidence to the contrary all around them. All they to do is look under every nook and behind every cranny and the place is absolutely crawling with signs of positive change since February First. But the media ignores them because Good News Doesn't Sell. So, in the interest of the public's right to know and feel happy, we are duty bound to publish the following bits of inspirational news from the *Uprising Nepal*:

Five potholes patched in Jawalakhel
Five meteorite impact craters in Ekantakuna that had been bedeviling motorists and pedestrians alike since the reign of King Pratap Malla and were totally ignored by successive democratic governments after 1990 were filled in this week. In a dramatic illustration of the can-do attitude of the post-February order, the potholes were all turned into speed breakers overnight. Three of them immediately reverted into large

cavities again with the onset of monsoon, but hey, look at the bright side: five minus three is two and that still leaves us with two fewer potholes in Patan. The pessimists will, of course, point out that there are other 3.2 million potholes just in the Patan area, but the municipality is on the right track after it decided to kill two birds with one stone and turn potholes into landfill sites for garbage.

Tourists to pay to enter Pokhara
Encouraged by a three-fold increase in tourist arrivals this month after 12 Japanese were hoodwinked into visiting Nepal, Pokhara municipality has decided to cash in on the boom by announcing that it will charge all 12 of them a fee to enter the city. The new fee will be in addition to the Visa-on-Arrival Fee, Tourist Tax, Domestic Airport Tax, Highway Toll, Phewa Cleanup Levy, Davis Falls Excise, Prithbi Highway Octroi, Customs Baksheesh, ACAP Tax, Compulsory Trekking Extortion and TIA Departure Fee. "Bhaktapur did it, Patan did it, there is no reason why we can't do it," said an official, "at this rate, it won't matter if there are fewer tourists because the ones who come will be forced to spend everything they have."

Government thinking about water supply
The government says it is not true that it has ignored the severe water crisis in Kathmandu and is giving it some serious thought. "We're thinking about it all the time," said the spokesman for the Ministry of Hot Air and Obfuscation, "in fact there isn't a moment that goes by when we are not thinking about it. But thank god the monsoon got here in the nick of time, now we can think about other things until next year."



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