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 off guard 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 Madhubon on 23 June in which six government buildings and a police station were destroyed. Three days later, the town of Bairgana 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. •
E ven as we painstakingly wrest back the right to debate openly, caste remains a stubbornly under-articulated topic in political discourse today.

Many enlightened Nepalis about the caste system, though a few have broken caste taboos in their personal lives. Still, activists have long complained “joint feasts” to allow people from “high” and “low” castes to defy segregation. The Dalits’ “rights movement is gaining pace despite elite reservations. Thousands of Nepalis across the political spectrum have even discarded their surnames to shrug off their caste identity. (However, the position of Nepalis with such surnames as “Scrofulous” or “Innovation.”) In the 1990 to 2002 period, the political parties that had been captured by Bahumens who unfailingly blocked reforms on women’s, Dalits’ and Janajati rights. Studentcans were clashing Parachyana-era caste profiles to be comparatively less diverse. Even now, the political parties remain bastions of Bahumens. Then came the king’s October 2002 takeover. Dramatically, the Chettri caste that had monopolised power before 1990 had returned. The heads of five-person military inquisition under King Gyanendra’s rule have been Chettris-Chambers. Thapa, Debuh and Shah (also Thakuri). A front 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 Prakash Shamsher Jung Bahadur Rana heads the Soaltee Group and is also close to the king. Another trusted friend is Birendra Shah, known by his nickname ‘Lava Raju’. He was in Pakistan with him during the 2001 royal massacre. Sharad Chandra Shah is Lava Raju’s nephew. He heads the Information Technology Commission but his informal powers are extensive. Another adviser, Bina Rana, used to be the king’s ADC in the Soaltee Group. Mahendra Kumar Singh, married to King Prithvi Narayan’s daughter from out of vedlock, sustained a bullet wound at the 2001 royal massacre. Ravi Shamsher Jung Bahadur Rana and Queen Kamal’s brother Sunil 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, Birendra Singh Simha and Kenturaj Raushanwali. That’s 11 Chettris, men all but one a Thakuri.

But sometimes trying to reduce the struggle between absolute monarchists and democrats to a struggle between Chettris and Bahumens, 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 Bahumens.

And herein lies a lingering weakness of the democratic movement. Be they political parties, community or business organisations, NGOs or INGOs, or 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 is it perhaps the case that, despite being so far out of our comfortable circles.

There is of course a difference between the caste of absolute monarchists and democratic; the democratic’s ideals oblige them to be inclusive. And the absolute monarchists’ caste base to be so but first, they just need to restore democracy.

Yet, which kind of democratic values or democratic policy? This is a question that many Nepalis—particularly those who were Chetris—has been asked. Asynchronous, the king’s closest friends and advisers are at the core. This could be done, though it would take more time. The ground realities of Nepal are better reflected in the view of Anil Bhattarai of Nepal South Asia Centre: “You cannot bring democracy today first, reduce poverty, than have awareness-building campaigns, than 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 overturn the contradictions, shall we? Let’s start by talking about caste.
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 to recently, 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 of different ethnicity, 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 ‘Bhutanese’ refugees? After all, they are ethnic Nepalis who speak the same language, share the same culture and have names that sound not different from ours. Why have they not been granted Nepali citizenship? They are as much Bhutanese than you and I. In fact, they are more Nepali than many Nepalis themselves. Living in isolation among Bhutanists 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 to the new political and customs of the host country— that and their revolt against Bhutan’s autocratic rule which was foolishly inspired by the political change taking place in Nepal at the time. That should have been beneficial in more ways than one, not least of which is that’ll be more people to send abroad for non-skilled jobs, that although low paying, bring in dollars.

Name withheld

TYRANNY AND TERROR

In posing questions to editorial ‘Trial and terror’ (#525). In 1903, John Tanner wrote in The Revolutions in a New Book: ‘Revolutions have never lightened the burden of tyranny; they have only shifted it to another shoulder.’ Hopefully, what Tanner had a hundred years ago is not happening in Nepal. A revolution to overthrow the Rana regime has left it ushered in a decade of unbridled democracy. It needed. It did actually overthrow the Rana regime but the people only got to see a sham recipe 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 bringing about political and economic situation. Ultimately, King Gyanendra appointed executive powers given to him by the ‘democratic constitution’ in October 2002. Like King Mahendra, King Gyanendra too took what wrongfully he 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.

Himaly Ghimire, Sydney

Kanak Dixit’s eyewitness report from Madi (‘Sorry’, #251) graphically shows the level of correspondence that is inherent amongst Maoist ‘warriors’. Kindly send a free copy of that issue to Girja Prasad Koirala and Mahadab Kumar Nepal who are now flitting with the terrorists.

Sri Ram Chaudhary, email

Thank you for printing Rabindra Naskar’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 recent past are eerie. The only difference— and our country’s misfortune is that we do not have such a prince like the young lion prince.

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The great green road

Twenty years later, the Jiri highway survives the test of time and serves as a model for other mountain roads with hairpins were used here for the first time. Many of these techniques have since been applied successfully on other roads in Nepal. Environmental 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 setted for a three-metre one lane highway with wide hairpins, good drainage and a system of maintaining longhwoekers from local communities.

It’s amazing, the road is still in good shape after 20 years even though the maining which should have been done every five years was not done,” says Devendra Dhaul, 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 resurfaced and the work is expected to be finished by end of 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 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.

“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 local people,” says Jorg Frieden, the Nepal representative of Swiss Development Cooperation Norway, “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

We are satisfied by the positive reception given by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) to this mandate. The work of the international observers—we really accepted by both parties to the conflict and newly implemented will mean the end of impunity for the perpetrators of abuses as well as for their commanders and political masters. We believe that this will mean the end of impunity and 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 Koshi hidro power project and now, maybe Upper Tamakoshi 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 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.

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 upped 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, Charkot and the remote Raschhap 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 and other rural health activities. Agricultural extension allowed farmers to grow value-added crops and the road became a backlink 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 deficient area, the road opened up markets for the region’s produce which included cheese, herbs, potatoes and vegetables. The Khanti hydro power 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 with boulders were used here for the first time. Many of these techniques have since been applied successfully on other roads in Nepal. Environmental 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 setted for a three-metre one lane highway with wide hairpins, good drainage and a system of maintaining longhwoekers from local communities.

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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 challenges 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 came 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 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 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.

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Six months after a Sita Air Dornier suffered an undercarriage failure while landing at Lukla airport, a Gorkha Airlines Dornier clipped off the runway on Thursday morning. None of the eight Nepali passengers and three crew were hurt. Lukla’s famous inclined runway was tarred three years ago and has since seen a big jump in landings and take-offs. There have been eight mishaps here in the past 10 years, although none of them resulted in fatalities. Pilots regard landing in Luka 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 unpredictable 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 Mundal on 28 June (pictured). StanChart now has 10 ATM sites in the country which also serve Visa, MasterCard, Cirrus and Maestro cardholders.

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, if given a chance can transform corruption charges into sideline opponents succumbing to the temptation of launching political witch-hunts disguised as corruption control.

In fact, it is easier because the accused does not 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 politics in graft scandals than in earlier regimes when it was relegated to the upper echelons.

This Deed has been always 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 CAGA 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 legitimate activities and graft. The onus lies with the state whose responsibility 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 Kuan 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.
“Not until they give up violence”

Jana Aastha, 22 June

The Kiimsi demanded federal republic and some political rights for 18 districts in east of Ramshuchep. 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 several meetings with the Maoist people’s war. KNF leader Cgpal Karmil is a prominent political figure in Nepal and he is also the chief of the eastern regional front of the Maoists. Another leader, Baburam repeated what Prachanda had said during a similar meeting with King’s officials. He stressed that his party wanted to form a political party to join their armed struggle and support their demands. It is wrong to say that the political parties are being forced to the end of the king’s government. The Maoists, however, have not been officially informing about the talks. “The government has informed about the talks. The Maoists need to respect the political parties and their demands,” the leaders of the front informed about the talks. “The government has not been officially informed about the talks. The Maoists need to respect the political parties and their demands,” the leaders of the front said. Last month, the government held two phases of talks with the KNF. Tanka Dhakal in Kantipur, 28 June. The government has not been officially informed about the talks. The Maoists need to respect the political parties and their demands,” the leaders of the front said. Last month, the government held two phases of talks with the KNF. Tanka Dhakal in Kantipur, 28 June. The government has not been officially informed about the talks. The Maoists need to respect the political parties and their demands,” the leaders of the front said. Last month, the government held two phases of talks with the KNF. Tanka Dhakal in Kantipur, 28 June. The government has not been officially informed about the talks. 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**Maoist polls**

Nepal, 1 July

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, grass, leaf, umbrella, fish, radio, malai, 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

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 about the king’s new role. 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’s legitimacy has been questioned by some of its members who have confessed that they support the king’s move. What is the king up to?
udddy, 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.
Sing-Ma

Perhaps the only Singaporean restaurant in the country, it offers authentic Singaporean cuisine with a mix of Malaysian. Among the most sought after dishes are chop chiomp noodles, Yoo's chicken rice, Hal's York, 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 known as one of the finer Thai restaurants. Manager Niraj Shrestha says the test that it is genuine is the number of Thais who dive here. Chef Wichi, 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 Krusa Thai Nepal but they assure that the food won’t be any less Thai. 4414291

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 healthy, 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 papaya salad. Paste can be broken into five different categories: gaeng, yam, dip or sauce, pad or fry and a-harn jam or miscellaneous food. 2066152

Royal Lotus

One year old, Royal Lotus in Kopundole imports all its products directly from Thailand where the shareholder and chef, Tanon Korn Saythom, makes regular trips. “We had to make four trips this year just to be well-stocked,” says Saythom 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 Tant 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

Sing Ma

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

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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. 4041038

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Into the heart of darkness

Ashmina Ranjit’s ode to the cow is a metaphor for the absurdistFrame

We know Ashmina Ranjit organises a writers’ show, you can bet it’ll be quite a show. Nothing is ordinary in Ashmina’s works. But when the lights faded out at the performance of 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 she attended the performances of Tamas. “To box the whole situation and say ‘You are a cow’ in English is an insult,” she adds. “To say ‘You are a cow’ in Nepal is a compliment that means you are reliable, dependable, hardworking and thoughtful.”

A cow is a sacred animal in Nepal, and in her essay, Ashmina explores the concept of the cow as a metaphor for the ordinary Nepali woman. She writes about the symbolism of the cow in Nepali culture and how it is often used to describe women as humble, hardworking, and unassuming.

Ashmina’s essay is a reflection of the changes that are happening in Nepal, and how the traditional values of the country are being challenged by modernity. She writes about the contrast between traditional values and modern Western culture, and how this contrast is reflected in the experiences of Nepali women.

Ashmina’s essay is a powerful exploration of the theme of identity and cultural heritage. It is a call to action for the Nepali people to embrace their culture and values, and to use them as a source of strength in the face of modernity.

Ashmina’s essay is a testament to the power of creative writing in expressing complex ideas and emotions. It is a reminder of the importance of freedom of expression, and of the need to celebrate the diversity of cultures around the world.
Awakening with Ani Choying

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. Slokas 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.

Moments of Bliss. The compositions in Smile have the same team as Moments of Bliss—lyrics by Durga Lal Shrestha and music by Myoob 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 wash across the ether and envelop you like a balm.

Smile has 10 songs, the last one a new rendition of Phool ko angha 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.

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

destruction gets back its old look

aches in their joints if they apply oil to the exact joint on the Kal Bhairab figure. The unattractive 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 over its activities to Kathmandu. It is working on restoring all the other temples in the Durbar Square.

Himal is on its way!
The JVP, too, was into a class war but unlike the Maoists, 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 nationalism and anti-Indianism of Nepal’s Maoists, which ironically take after the chauvinism of Nepal’s Maoists, of the JVP is akin to 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 course and improvement 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 control 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 Maoist takeovers is one the Leftist administration 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, what the Maoists want is that our Constitution places the army within civilian control the realpolitik 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, in a matter of course, military officers have become de facto administrators, with the civilian and police administration delivering 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, dislocation and commercial losses, and expenditure on displaced persons, is estimated at S$7 billion. The total including the cost of forgone 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 population over the years.

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

SOUTHASIA BEAT
Kanak Mani Dixit

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Big 5

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Jaffna 1998

Kathmandu 2002

LTTE, JVP and the Maoists

Sagacity is what Nepalis also need today from their rulers
**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 ingrained 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 old bad habits and re-teach the muscles. It is at these times you can be more useful if you practice free hand without actually hitting a ball. The following drills can help produce good results.

**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 power and speed.

**Drill 2** (leverage)

a) Assume your set-up position. Begin by ‘pushing’ the club back with your left hand placed on the club head. As you turn, place your right hand on top of the left hand. 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 lack 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.

d) 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.

**Tee Break**

Deepak Acharya

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.

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 a half-swing posture.

Not that this is to use drills that break down old bad habits and re-teach the muscles. It is at these times you can be more useful if you practice free hand without actually hitting a ball. The following drills can help produce good results.

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

prodeepak@hotmail.com

**Slam dunk at GAA**

**What are the rules of the game?**

Deepak Acharya

That 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 Going 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 Armenian Jesuit Fr Eugene Watrin who died last year, he was an avid sportsman 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 10 July. As the league matches progressed, Everest Southsiders from Pool A, RRBS and KABA from Pool B, Himalayan Whitehouse and Galaicum from Pool C and Kathmandu Police and Ideal Model from Pool D were the highest scoring teams in the tournament so far being RRBS – 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 Organizing Committee, Ankil 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 RRBS and Kathmandu Police have quite a few. Says Nabin 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 techniques.” The heat is on as the end of the league draws near, the players seem pretty confident of themselves. Says Singh of Himalayan Whitehouse, “Reaching the finals depends on other teams as well but we definitely have a place in the semi-finals.”

Aar Baniyal

**SURYA NEPAL GOLF**

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“A new world of knowledge: for those who dare”
About Town

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS
- Paintings in my eyes by Sagar Manandhar at Buddha Gallery, Thamel, until 7 July. 4441689
- Light and Life Paintings by Kirsho Kayastha, until 9 July at Lajimpat Gallery Cafe. 4428549
- Raku Pottery by Gopal Kalapremi for sale at Lajimpat Gallery Shop. Rs 399 on weekdays, Rs 499 on weekends. 4412999

Mysterious and Inexplicable Phenomena of Lightballs
Quien Sabe

EVENTS
- Yoga and Didgeridoo Two-day Dharma Talk at Goethe Zentrum, 21 July at The Beer Garden, dine with nature. 4375280
- Theatre group meditation at Swayambhu. 4256618
- Photography Workshop Seven days with Nepal's experts, 21 July at The Bakery Cafe, Sunhara. 7AM- 9AM. 4289186, www.photoscon.com
- Call for entries for Art South Asia 10, submission deadline 31 July
- Inter-cultural Exchange Program Every Wednesday at Goethe Zentrum. 4438356
- Tai Chi Demonstration and meditation at Swyambhu. 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. 4458393, citygymktm@hotmail.com
- Sanabel Mela Saturdays at Bakery Cafe, Dharara, 2PM and Chuchepati, Boudha, 3PM

MUSIC
- JCS Trio Saturdays, BPM at 1905, Karpathi, free entrance.
- Live The Duo at the Jazz Bar, Hotel Shangri-la, Lajimpat.
- The Good Time Blues Band at Rum Doodle, Thamel. 7PM. 4701208
- Ladies Nights Wednesday at Jatra, Thamel, with live acoustic music, one free drink. 4256622
- Fusion Time Mondays at Jalari Jairan Restaurant, Lajimpat, 7PM. 4410438
- Live Music Everyday at Hotel de l’Annapurna, Darbar Marg. 4221711
- Jalsaaln experience Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at Ros 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 Cafe, Hotel Shangri-la, Lajimpat, Rs 399 on weekdays, Rs 499 on weekends. 4412999
- Creole East Indian and Chinese cuisine at Lajimpat. 9851608306
- Boire and Manger Pastas and snacks at Roadhouse Cafe, Jawalakhel. 5521755
- Barbeque lunch Saturdays at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot. 6680080
- Special Combo Burmese and Thai Menu at 1905, Karpathi.
- Momo Revolution Saturdays at The Tea House Inn, Nagarkot. 6680048
- Arikno Special Lunch Monday at Hotel de l’Annapurna, Darbar Marg. 4221711
- Jalsaaln experience Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at Ros Bar. 4491234
- Drink at Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lajimpat, Wednesdays and Saturdays, 7.45 PM.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Nepali Weather

With the initial big bang of the monsoon, there is a certain slacking off. Rice farmers are still waiting for the saturation downsours 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 overcast into next week with most of the rain falling at night.

KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

Air quality in Kathmandu Valley improved significantly last week, thanks to the refreshing rains and Lord Machendranath. Even among the busy streets of Patan Sattak 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. 16-26 June 2005 in micograms per cubic meter. Source: www.mopa.gov.np

NEPALI TIME	| 60	| 121 to 350	| 351 to 425	| >425
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Good	| 0	| 0 to 60	| 61 to 120	| 121 to 350
Unhealthy	| 121 to 350	| 351 to 425	| >425
Hazardous	| >425

KAMAL JHA

Radio Sagaraghat 102.4 Mhz
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 Shamsher 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 Durbar) on Saturday.
UNDER MY HAT
Kunda Dixit

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 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 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, Pothihi Highway Octroi, Customs Baksheesh, 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.”

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.

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There is no formula for success, but there are methods.

Every successful corporate follows a path that is distinctly theirs. Most will however, admit to deriving spontaneous inspiration from what they read. With leading writers, professionals, gurus and journalists contributing, Perspectives offers a fresh take on issues that matter most to the corporate world.