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Weekly Internet Poll # 256

Q. How confident are you that the new budget will help Nepal make an economic turnaround?

Confident 21.3%

Not confident 74.3%

Don't know 4.4%

Total votes:413

Weekly Internet Poll # 257. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Should the ban on news on FM radios be lifted?

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Press Freedom for Peace and Democracy

UPSIDE DOWN-WORLD: Pedestrians reflected in a puddle at Basantapur after rains on Wednesday afternoon.

KIRAN PANDAY

Comrades-in-arms

Looking at Nepal's Maoist revolution through Indian Naxalite eyes

CK LAL in BIHAR

Here in the densely populated Ganga plains, the 10-yard strip separating Nepal and India has never been treated like a national frontier.

Land is too precious to leave it as a no-man's land. Nepali and Indian farmers use it for grazing livestock, playing cricket or even growing vegetables.

But as the Maoist war in the Nepal tarai intensifies, the Indian fear of spillover of violence has begun to change that relaxed attitude. Along with border check points, the traditionally

open *dasgaja* strip too is now under close security watch. India's paramilitary Seema Suraksha Bal (SSB) now pull up rickshaw wallas if they park their tricycles on no-man's land.

Security is stricter than before and there is talk here of introducing identity cards and barbed-wire fences to regulate crossborder movement. Still, the India-Nepal frontier is probably the most relaxed international border in the world.

The SSB guard does ask you where you are headed as you saunter across but doesn't even blink when you answer that you're

going to Panditji's paan shop down the road.

On the Nepal side, every shopkeeper is up to date on the latest Maoist exploits. In Bihar, despite media hype about the Naxalite 'menace' engulfing 160 districts in 12 Indian states, people along the border seem barely aware of the activities of the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) in Bihar or the People's War Group (PWG) in Andhra Pradesh. The two merged last year to form the CPI-Maoist but a local teacher isn't even aware of it.

Even after last month's

Naxalite attack on the town of Madhuban in which 21 people were killed and six government buildings razed (see: 'Spillover', #254), there is a surprising lack of concern about Maoist activity along the border.

If the local people aren't the least bit interested, we thought we should try to track down an Indian Maoist to ask if there was indeed collaboration with their Nepali comrades during the attack, as alleged by Bihari police.

Editorial p2
Democracy in installments

Continued p2


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DEMOCRACY IN INSTALLMENTS

Billboards on the city's intersections have been painted over with soundbites from King Gyanendra's recent proclamations. The one outside Singha Darbar stands out, it reads in translation: 'We firmly believe that centralisation of power is against the spirit of democracy.'

No, it's not a spoof. But we don't blame people for being bemused because that has been the problem all along since October 2002: the gap between words and deeds.

The current regime's detrimental defiance of domestic aspirations and needless needling of the international community isn't helping it win any friends. It should have realised long ago that the public's apathy towards the political parties doesn't mean there is support for its authoritarian tendencies. If the royal-appointed council of ministers had been able to take a great leap forward in restoring peace or service delivery to the people, there may have been some support. We have looked but haven't discerned any such dramatic improvement. On the contrary, there are daily reports of inspection teams behaving high-handedly, political witch-hunts, inconsistency and contradictions in the state's functioning.

Many people went along with the royal move nearly six months ago because they thought there was A Plan. But the only plan seems to have been a systematic and premeditated plot to use the insurgency as an ploy to disassemble democracy, gag the free press and put civil liberties into deep freeze.

What really worries us now are feelings being expressed publicly by genuine well-wishers of monarchy. They are aghast at the ways of the extremist right who are running the show and are concerned that this will ultimately undermine the institution of monarchy as a symbol of Nepali nationhood. Beware of those who are more royal than the king, they say.

This is democracy in installments: release a few detainees here, allow banned tv stations back, relax press controls somewhat. The idea seems to be to stretch this out for three years. Problem is, there isn't that much time.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

The media's ethnic gap

Madhesi are Nepalis and not just residents of the southern plains

It was an anguished email from a well-known author and editor, a pahadi janajati, citing a small news item which reported that no journalist turned up for a press conference called by madhesi students. He was agitated by this gross discrimination. This is my response to his fury and distress.

GUEST COLUMN
Rajendra Pradhan



Journalists surely are entitled to decide which press conferences they want to attend or ignore what they want to construct and communicate as news. They have the right to write about the antics of a minor starlet in Kollywood or the news

of a diplomat who sang at a private party or about human rights abuses, the activities and wise words of our respected politicians and rulers. We may not agree with their choice, but it is their choice. They exercise press freedom on our behalf.

The media influences public knowledge and opinion both by what it reports and what it leaves out. While

many of us pay attention to what is covered, we often overlook what they deliberately exclude due to the media's collective self-censorship. The subject matters that journalists leave out reveal either their ignorance or more ominously, their bias.

It could be argued that the grievances of a handful of madhesi university students being beaten up is hardly worth reporting during a period of very grave political turmoil. Other happenings are more newsworthy and of interest to the public. Or is it one more example of the perhaps unconscious collective effort of the *pahadia* dominated press to erase madhesi from the media and thus from public knowledge and national discourse?

The press invariably reports on all workshops and conferences held in Kathmandu, even the most insignificant ones, especially if inaugurated by a public figure (the public figure being the news and not the meeting). But the press on the whole did not report on the first ever national conference on the tarai, focusing especially on the madhesi.

The conference was held in a well-known hotel, press releases were faxed and it was attended by several journalists. Two columnists (one a madhesi) wrote about the conference and a popular magazine published a photo of

the madhesi musical evening but there was no serious reporting on the discussions of the conference nor even a mention of the *dukkha* of being a madhesi in Nepal.

Journalists do write or speak about the madhesh or tarai but mainly as a location down south where negative events occur. The madhesi themselves hardly figure in the stories. Or as one madhesi journalist bitterly complained during a conference, the national press usually ignores madhesi except to portray them in bad light. A reputed organisation which has published a series of landmark books on the media's coverage of dalits and janajatis has not yet brought out a publication on the media and madhesi.

We often complain that Nepal is almost totally ignored by the world media except when there are stories about poverty, violence, political instability and natural disasters. In a similar manner, pahadi media gatekeepers are doing injustice to madhesi (and many other groups) by what they cover, more importantly by what they omit. The violence of erasure is perhaps even more painful for the madhesi for they are fellow Nepalis—and they would like their compatriots to know them, to have their voices heard and their *dukkha* discussed nationally just like other Nepalis.

Madhesi are Nepalis and not just the residents of the southern plains. ●

...but they want to fight their wars separately

from p1

After three days of persistent enquiry at various tea, paan and cycle repair shops, a young man claiming to be a local labour organiser sympathetic to the Maoist cause comes up outside a drugstore. He calls himself Bidrohi. He wears a hunted look, refusing to talk anywhere except in his battered Maruti.

Comrade Bidrohi is surprisingly well-informed and excessively paranoid as he drives randomly across the dry farms of northern Bihar. He believes that a capitalist conspiracy has encouraged caste confrontation in Bihar to undermine an inevitable class war. That seems logical enough, and other than his unrealistic portrayal of a global capitalist conspiracy to defeat Maoism worldwide, the comrade sounds quite articulate and convincing.

He dismisses outright the allegation that Indian Naxalites and Nepali Maoists train together in Bihar and is even more categorical in denying Nepali Maoist involvement in the Naxalite attack on the police station in Madhuban. "The Bihar police was just trying to hide its incompetence," he says.

Bidrohi thinks state governments in Uttaranchal, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar routinely exaggerate the threat of Naxalite activity to get more funds from New Delhi for their police forces. "Unlike in Nepal,

the Maoist movement in north India has not yet acquired a critical mass," he says in Hindi, skirting potholes, "they wouldn't risk ruthless reprisals by random attacks."

How does that explain the landmine attack on a police van in UP last November that killed 16 people? Or the attacks in Madhuban and Baigania? "They may have been executed for tactical gain rather than strategic reasons." What he means is that the attacks could have been criminal rather than ideological in nature.

Bihari Naxals would be wary of joining hands with Nepali Maoists for three reasons, Bidrohi says. First, the Nepalis are better motivated, better armed and are more battle hardened. The Naxals would have to accept a secondary role in any joint exercise and that is not something the Indian comrades would relish.

Second, if the Naxalites were to be as reckless as Nepali Maoists they would be decimated in Bihar. "In Nepal, security forces look the other way when Maoists move around and do nothing as long as they aren't directly under attack. But Bihari Naxals have simultaneously fought on two fronts for decades—the police and the private armies of landlords," explains Bidrohi. Indeed, as we drive past mango orchards and parched paddy fields, it looks like Bidrohi is more nervous about vigilantes than the police.

Third, Bidrohi thinks the brutality of

Nepali Maoists is too shocking even for India's hardened Naxalites. "The Maoists seem to have no qualms in killing innocents, we never do that," he argues, adding, "affinity between Maoist groups of the world over is natural and mutual cooperation between the Maoists and Naxals can't be ruled out. But we never do joint exercises or training."

Indian Naxalites are expecting the ruling coalition in New Delhi to launch a massive coordinated offensive against Naxalite groups all over India. "Wherever there is a Marxist government, Maoists suffer the most," explains Bidrohi, "capitalist conspirators want to use the cover of a Marxist government in New Delhi to hit at all leftist groups."

The Nepali Maoists seem to inspire awe and fear among Naxalite groups in India. But how come Indian Marxists are friendlier to Nepali Maoists even while they fight their own Naxals on home turf? "Perhaps they want to watch and wait for the outcome of the political experiment in Nepal before they make up their mind about armed rebellion in India," says Bidrohi, as we make a U-turn and head back to Panditji's paan shop.

What would his advice be to comrades in Nepal? Bidrohi replies without hesitation: "Make common cause with other political parties, without bourgeois democracy, a proletarian revolution is

impossible. That is the reason Naxalites in India support political parties representing the downtrodden."

With Girija Prasad Koirala's offer of talks eliciting tempting responses from Chairman Prachanda this week, it appears that the possibility of Nepal's mainstream political parties working with the Maoists are now higher than a unity between two fraternal Maoist parties on either side of the border.

It is also clear that the Indian establishment needs to listen to the peasants of northern Bihar and learn from Nepal's wildfire insurgency for proof of what could happen in its soil, too. If sparks from Nepal ignite the tinder-dry Ganga plains, a full-blown Maoist rebellion could spread rapidly to Andhra Pradesh and beyond. Given the objective conditions for revolution in these badlands, that future conflagration is not just an alarmist prediction. And it could be the fear haunting 'capitalist conspirators' pushing the theory of a Maoist-Naxalite military alliance.

Otherwise Comrade Bidrohi's arguments are quite sound: a common cause between Nepali Maoists and Indian Naxals will harm both of them. They may be comrades-at-arms but for now they want to fight their wars separately. ●

Some details have been omitted to protect identities and localities.

LETTERS

WFP REPLIES

World Food Program (WFP) Nepal wishes to disagree and argue certain statements made by James Shikwati in an interview from *Der Spiegel* reprinted in your paper ("For god's sake, please stop the aid", #255).

JS: 'WFP is a massive agency of apartheidiks.'

WFP is a United Nations development agency guided by humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality (to which transparency and accountability are often added). Therefore, it is not political but rather apolitical. JS: 'WFP demands more money than the respective host governments' request.'

WFP estimated requirements are based on comprehensive food need assessments which are conducted by food security experts in consultation and coordination with host governments and relevant national civil society actors (ie NGOs).

JS: 'WFP assistance comes predominantly from highly subsidised European and American farmers.'

A large portion of WFP's global food purchases (69 percent) is made in developing countries. In Nepal, 85 percent of WFP food assistance is locally purchased from Nepali producers and suppliers. JS: 'A portion of WFP assistance goes directly into the hands of unscrupulous politicians while another portion ends up on the black market.'

WFP's food assistance is entirely intended for its targeted beneficiaries, mainly hungry/poor rural populations. WFP has set up extensive monitoring and control mechanisms ensuring that the food reaches food insecure households. Such mechanisms also prevent WFP food assistance from being sold in markets. Less than 0.5 percent of WFP food assistance is misappropriated or ends up on markets.

WFP Nepal Country Office, Patan

MUSEUM PIECE

As a founder member of Tamu Pye Lhu Sangh and the first director of the Kohinbo Museum I was delighted to see the review

of our museum in your paper ('Museum town', #255). But it contained some inaccuracies. Tamu Pye Lhu Sangh was founded in 1990 and our museum was opened in 1997. It provides a guide to Tamu cultural heritage and in particular to our shamanic traditions. It does not offer 'a detailed description of the different subclasses of the Tamu people'. This statement is a misrepresentation of our exhibition and has the potential to create bad feelings. There are different clans in Tamu society, all of whom are equal but there are no 'subclasses'.

Yarjung K Tamu,
director, Tamu Pye Lhu Sangh
Museum, Pokhara.

TERRORISM

While it is sad that more than 50 innocent people died in London blasts, as a Nepali I am tempted to ask the British Ambassador Keith Bloomfield what is the difference between a bomb blast in a passenger bus in Chitwan and the blast in a double-decker bus in London? If the tragedies were equivalent, there is no rationale for the British government to keep arm-twisting Nepal to negotiate with the Maoist rebels while it has vowed to "eliminate terrorism through determination and resoluteness"? Shouldn't we issue a travel warning to Nepali tourists not to make unimportant trips to London? Shouldn't we also issue a formal statement calling on the British government to negotiate and accept the genuine demands of Osama bin Laden in the context of the British army and the British intelligence totally failing to curb terrorism?

Preeti Koirala, Baneswor

● The terrorist attack in Madi ('Sorry.', #251) and the terrorist attack in London are both very similar. The terrorists have only one objective and that is to terrorise innocent people to attract attention of the public. We join millions of others to express our sympathies to the families of the grieved people. After the London bombs, King Gyanendra was reported to have sent a message of condolence to Queen Elizabeth. Yet, we did not hear a single word from him after the Madi carnage even though both had about the same number of casualties. Why the double



MIN BAJRACHARYA

standard? Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip both visited victims in hospitals and made a public statement. In Nepal, not even the Royal Palace issued a public statement after Madi.

G Pokharel,
West Virginia, USA

● The interviewer of Minister Ramesh Nath Pandey failed to ask several important questions ('Esle janata lai dukkha huna hundaina', #255). Granted that His Majesty is qualified, intelligent, hardworking and has all the qualities of a visionary leader but these things only speak about the king, not his cabinet of ridiculous clowns like Tulsi Giri, Tanka Dhakal, Buddhi Raj Bajracharya or Dan Bahadur Shahi. With their antics, they make a joke out of democracy and development. Our problems of mass poverty and political hypocrisy are so serious and solutions are required so urgently that these inefficient people are incapable of rescuing us from the crisis. To do so, we need people at the top, decision-makers who have foresight and good minds, who are open to ideas, who can seize opportunities like Deng Xiaoping, Lee Kuan Yew and Mahathir Mohamad. What say, Ramesh Nathji?

Salini Johnson, Melbourne

● Our country has grown without a dynamic architect. The king has come forward to fill the vacuum but he has done it by dismantling democracy. This will make the road to modernisation and the nation even more difficult.

Only through representative government can this country move forward. The king has to help its formation and work closely with it. This is a participatory process in which the country will need not only political parties but also other social institutions. People want to see democracy in action, not in words. They want to feel that the country is in safe hands. That is not happening either. Ramesh Nath Pandey and his colleagues in the cabinet belong to a school of thought which believes that democracy has to be in abeyance while concentrating on economic development. The country cannot go ahead with this *naya sandesh* type of historical baggage.

Raj Bahadur Chand, Seoul

CASTE ASIDE

I agree with Manjushree Thapa that the caste system is still very much a part of Nepali society ('Let's talk about caste', #254) but I don't agree with categorising people on the basis of their caste and then forming an opinion whether they are capable or not. It is ok to be a Chetteri and hold a high position if that person is there because of his knowledge and experience. Just being from a so-called 'under-represented caste' does not entitle someone special treatment irrespective of capability. Let us have a merit-based society, not a caste-based one.

Bhumika Ghimire, email

● Having seen Ashmina Ranjit's performance at my college here in the US I am very disappointed to say it was nothing close to the hype that it received in your review ('Into the heart of darkness', #254). It is a dull, unoriginal, and highly boring performance and I am quite surprised that a newspaper of your stature has stooped so low. Ms Ranjit's performance was devoid of any of the special mentions that your reviewer portrays and in no way can we relate her description of a cow to the current situation in Nepal. It is an affront to our country and its artistic community to have such feeble performances.

Nripesh Dhungel,
Bard College, USA

● CK Lal got a little carried away by alliteration in 'Our 3Ms' (State of the State, #255). Nevertheless, I'd like to build on the theme:

Modern Marvels
MP: Member of Parliament.
MP 1: Military Police #1.
MP 2: Maoists Parties Palace
All have forgotten
the most important part,
the people.
MP 3: More Power (to the)
People Period.

Plug it in
Plug in on
Plug it on your head
to the beat of
Hear no evil
to the sound of
Do no evil
to the rhythm of
Say no evil.
Lord have mercy
Hare Pasupatinath.

S N Singh,
All in the same boat

JIRI ROAD

I just had a visit to Jiri and Charikot last month. This was my fourth visit to Jiri since 1992. I can easily see the meaningful impacts of the road to the whole Dolakha and neighbouring districts as mentioned in Pragya Shrestha's article ('The great green road', #254). My conclusion is that building the road with development and economy of the area in mind as the Swiss did was the key to this success. I am happy to hear that the district rural road project is expanding to 18 other districts which is another sign of the road's positive impact. While in Jiri and Charikot last time, I asked myself if the people here would be better off without the road. The answer is definitely not.

And that's all that counts.

Devi P Dahal,
Training & Employment
Project

LETTERS

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

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LESS SEEDS, MORE HARVESTS: Ananta Ram Majhi points to week-old rice seedlings, while agriculture extension officer, Rajendra Uprety, examines copious tillers on a field Majhi planted with the new technique in April (right).



PICS: KUNDA DIXIT

The miracle is it's no miracle

Seeing is believing for rice farmers in eastern Nepal who are reaping bumper paddy harvests from fewer seeds

KUNDA DIXIT in MORANG

On a recent morning, Ananta Ram Majhi was getting ready to transplant another plot of paddy in this tranquil, green village 30 km east of Biratnagar.

The monsoon was late and other farmers had delayed replanting but Dan Bahadur was ready. He is one of a dozen farmers in Morang trying out a new method of rice planting that doesn't need flooded fields, produces stronger plants that don't need artificial fertilisers and pesticides, and yet yields bigger harvests.

It's almost too good to be true. This skeptical reporter wants to find a hole in the story to shatter the myth of this miracle rice. But the miracle is that it's no miracle.

This is not a high-yield genetically engineered rice but the normal mansuli variety of local seed. Only the method of cultivation is different: instead of waiting six weeks, the seedlings are transplanted when they are only two weeks old. The field doesn't have to be flooded, in fact it needs to be drained of excess water. The seeds are planted farther apart so that while a normal paddy field needs 50 kg of seed per hectare, the new method uses less than 10 kg. And the harvest? It is more than double.

"I thought, how can this be?" recalls Rajendra Uprety, agriculture extension officer for Morang when he first read about

the technique on the Internet and decided to test it out. "Since 2002, we've achieved double and triple harvests on test plots. It's just amazing."

Ananta Ram admits he was skeptical. "Initially, I thought to myself if this is such a great idea why didn't my ancestors think of it," he tells us, wading ankle-deep in mud to prepare his next field, "but I decided to take the chance and this is the third year I'm using the new method."

Ananta Ram used to harvest five tons per hectare in his fields, now he is getting at least 10 tons. More importantly, he has achieved those yields with only one-third of the seeds he used before and with less water.

News of Morang's amazing harvests have spread quickly by word of mouth. This year, farmers in Sunsari, Dhankuta, Chitwan, Dang and Jhapa are trying out the new method. Uprety brings many of them on inspection visits here. "Actually, it has been more difficult convincing the agronomists and officials than farmers," he laughs.

It hasn't been easy to convince international scientists either. Ever since a French Jesuit in Madagascar, Fr Henri de Laulanie discovered the new method in 1983, agriculture research institutes have been skeptical. It was only after the Cornell International Institute for Food, Agriculture

and Development in the United States started pushing the idea that it was taken seriously.

The System of Rice Intensification (SRI), as it is now called, has been tried in Tamil Nadu where it has been shown to increase rice production by 28 percent for 53 percent less water. In arid Hyderabad, farmers have reported 85 percent less seed use for double the harvests. In Sri Lanka, farmers earned 44 percent more and in China and Laos there were harvest increases of 35-50 percent. The German aid group, GTZ is pushing SRI in Cambodia where harvest have increased by 41 percent.

However, field trials at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines weren't as successful. To be sure, SRI demands skilful farming, conscientious planting, good timing and careful drainage. Since the traditional method of planting on flooded paddy fields was a weed-control technique, the drier SRI fields need to be weeded several times during the harvest cycle.

But the benefits far outweigh these obstacles and Uprety says the main challenge is training. In Morang, he has turned local farmers like 28-year-old Kishore Luitel, who are now total converts to SRI, into trainers. Dan Bahadur Rajbansi thought Luitel had gone mad a few years ago for adopting the new technique. But earlier

this month, Luitel was in Dan Bahadur's field teaching him how to replant his seedlings the new way.

The tiny two-week-old seedlings look fragile in Luitel's hands as he picks them one by one and plants them 20 cm apart in the pasty mud, not 10 cm apart in slushy muck needed for normal rice planting. Luitel shows us his own field where April rice now grows in thick tufts with more than 80 tillers from one seed. "In the old method, you plant three or four seedlings in one spot and you only get about 10 tillers per seed," he says.

Uprety and Luitel are happy farmers now and don't need any convincing because seeing is believing. They are convinced that no part of Nepal need be food deficit anymore if SRI is promoted as a national campaign. Every year, Nepal needs 93,000 tons of rice seeds but with SRI it will save 80,000 tons and in addition, harvests nationwide could be doubled. Kathmandu Valley farmers presently grow 5.2 tons of rice per hectare, with SRI they could grow up to 12 tons, save most of their seeds and use less chemicals and water.

Uprety sums it up: "Sometimes the best solutions are the simplest solutions." ●

<http://ciifad.cornell.edu/sri/>
<http://www.irri.org/publications/today/pdfs/3-3/grain3-3.pdf>

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Nepal's first flying school

As the number of military and civilian aircrafts increase, the Royal Nepali Army has decided to get into flight training from Kathmandu airport. COAS Pyar Jung Thapa inaugurated the Royal Nepali Army Aviation Training Centre on Wednesday at the premises of the 11th Brigade on the occasion of the king's birthday. Six pilots are enrolled in the first batch and instructors will be from the military as well as from CAAN. The army will be training its own pilots as well as charging a fee to train civilian pilots.

Apartments in Pokhara



Annapurna Developers have built Fishtail Residency, the first apartment complex in Pokhara. Sprawled on the

outslopes with a magnificent view of Machhapuchhre it consists of 63 apartments, three business houses, four community buildings and 70 residential houses.

Easy fares

Indian Airlines has started new fares called 'Easy Fare' for travel to various destinations within India. Under this scheme, it is available for sale on four levels of fares with discounts upto 60 percent on published fares.

NEW PRODUCT

MARKING: NOMARKS, a flagship brand of Ozone Ayurvedics, has launched the herbal cream in 12 gm packs that easily fits into handbags and pockets. It is available now at retail outlets and pharmacies across Nepal for Rs 46.40.



HOT 'N SOUR: Himalayan Snacks and Noodles Pvt Ltd has introduced Mayos Hot & Sour, the instant noodles' latest flavour. The product is available at all stores.

The economics of freedom

Curtailment of economic freedom is detrimental to a nation's growth

Kathmandu: Doug Bandow, a Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute, speaks about economic freedom and why Nepal should also not curtail it.

London: The Middle East Symposium focuses mainly on

ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed



why countries should pursue reforms else run the risk of losing out in the global race for economic supremacy.

Scotland: The G8 urges countries to open up their economies more, emphasising on the direct correlation between poverty reduction and economic freedom.

Beijing: Condoleeza Rice tells Chinese leaders to pursue the path of economic freedom.

Studies have shown there is direct correlation between economic freedom and economic growth. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the state of eastern European economies as well as that of most African countries demonstrate this adequately.

Economic freedom also has direct correlation with the system of governance. Again, studies have suggested that countries which pursue pluralism in their political

structure provide more economic freedom. The perusal of economic freedom mandates least interference from the state and that happens best perhaps in a democratic political structure. With plural political forces, there is constant check on the government in power.

In South Asia, we have seen that democratic India has more economic freedom than military-ruled Pakistan. That perhaps also explains the economic growth of India outstripping Pakistan.

on reforms dwindled, the growth rates fell. While the insurgency can be held responsible for lower growth rates, lagging off on reforms was more of a factor. In Sri Lanka the state has been engaged in domestic warfare for the past two decades but has still managed to keep growth rates steady. Sri Lanka's continuous pursuance of reforms and loosening of state control was the reason for sustained growth.

This Beed believes economic freedom integrates a large part of the informal economy that never converts to the mainstream formal economy. For instance, allowing money transfer firms to compete for remittance from abroad has brought remittances under the legitimate economy that was otherwise languishing in the hundi trade. However, not allowing Nepalis to invest abroad legitimately has kept the hundi business going. Opening this in a regulated manner would surely provide better returns to the tons of foreign exchange sitting on state coffers.


So, repeat after me: curtailment of economic freedom has always proved detrimental to a nation's economic growth and economic freedom is directly correlated to political freedom. ●

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Academia has always locked horns in the debate of whether China with its single party rule might lose its momentum of economic growth to India which has more political freedom.

Nepal's experiment with freeing parts of control on the economy in the early 1990s did lead to positive results. The GDP growth rates early in the decade were good but as the momentum



के तपाईंले आज

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

पढ्नु भयो ?


५/१०/०५

डायमन शम्शेर राणा

वरिष्ठ उपन्यासकार

व्यक्ति अनेक, विचार अनेक, क्षेत्र अनेक तर पत्रिका मात्र एक... अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्टमा प्रकाशित सामग्री सम्बन्धी विविध प्रश्न लिएर हामी तपाईंको घर आँगनमा आउँदै छौं । तपाईंको सही जवाफले आकर्षक उपहार पाउने छ ।



सम्पूर्ण पत्रिका

Protests that go nowhere



PRAKASH MATHEMA

NC leader Narhari Acharya (seen left being released last week) in *Budhabar*, 13 July

There are still some ambiguities in the common agenda of the seven parties that have been agitating against the royal takeover. The agreement hasn't been able to bring out a common mission statement. Since there is no uniformity in the opinion and commitment of the parties' demands, the movement has not been able to convince the people. Forget about the people, the movement has not even been able to attract the parties' own activists.

The process of internal debate within the parties has become very weak. There have been efforts to coordinate but when there is no open debate to generate the necessary

energy for the movement, such coordination isn't productive. Even the NC and the UML have not thrashed out their differences. Every time the parties bring out new protest programs, it appears to be a rehashed version of the same old things. If this is going to be a real movement, it shouldn't limit itself to the parties. In a genuine people's movement, protest programs are shaped spontaneously by the people. In 1990, we witnessed how the movement grew organically out of the decay of the Panchayat. Today, it appears that the parties want to keep the situation under their control. They have been tightly regulating days, schedules, slogans and even the speeches. It is becoming increasingly clear that the parties do not want to see the active involvement of individuals in their protest. The role of the parties has been restricted to simply set the schedules and carefully calibrating the level of protest. If they control everything, the demonstrations will just remain street protests. That is exactly what is happening now and that is where things will stay.

Innocent targets

.....
Samaya, 15 July

समय

BAGLUNG—Seventeen high schools students from Beni had gone home to their villages for holidays. They never returned. On the way, the Maoists accused them of leaving the village to go to school without their permission. The rebels had told them to study in the village school but the classes had been disrupted because the Maoists themselves had forced Grade Nine and 10 students to join their *abhiyan*. A group of journalists ran into the students just after they had been stopped from returning to their schools in the district headquarters. They were all teary-eyed but there was nothing they could do against the threat of Maoist violence. All of them were forced to agree to study in the village school.

Students here are used to being force on one *abhiyan* after another where they have to listen to long speeches on the revolution, drill and get some military training. The *abhiyan* lasts five months and the

students are forced to go back every month for more training. But last month, a group of 600 students and Maoists who were taking them towards their training grounds came face to face with an army patrol. The soldiers had already taken up firing positions but a confrontation was averted when the Maoists ran away. A student from Bhanu Secondary School who had been forced away from her class without even getting a chance to tell her parents trembles as she recounts the incident. "I was never as afraid as I was then," she recalls. Her parents were even more frightened.

The Maoists are obviously doing this as a part of their recruitment drive and to tap young minds which are more malleable. But most of the school children say they only go out of fear and if it were up to them, they would just return to their studies. The Gulmi Baglung head of the Maoist affiliated student union, Sarad Oli, says his group is in a militarisation phase and the training of students is a part of that process. The Maoists have already closed down 49 private

schools in the region and only one is still running. The Maoists say the campaign is working because government schools have improved their SLC records. Out of the 38 students who appeared in the SLC from the Nepal Secondary School, 27 passed. But the closure of private schools has increased the overcrowding in government schools and there are cases where 185 students study in a single class.

Abuser of authority

.....
Nepal Samacharpatra, 12 July

नेपाल समाचारपत्र

BIRGANJ—Nepal Journalist Federation's Parsa Division Adviser and Publisher/Editor of the *Gramin Samachar*, Bhadrnath Adhikari, who was released on Sunday has accused the Mid-Zonal Regional Administrator Rabindra Chakraborty of illegally arresting and mentally torturing him. Adhikari was released after a few strings were pulled but only on the condition that the managing editor of the paper Raghav Saha would be produced before the police. Adhikari was taken into police custody without a warrant at 10AM last Friday on the orders of Regional Administrator Chakraborty. Adhikari, who supports the king's direct rule, was first taken to the Ward Police Office Birta, transferred to the District Police Office in Parsa and then sent to the Mid-Zonal Regional Administrator's office in Hetauda that very day. Speaking to colleagues at the Nepal Journalists Federation Parsa, Adhikari said he wasn't even allowed to call his family members.

Royal bash

.....
Samaya, 14 July

समय

The king arrived a bit late for his 59th birthday bash organised specifically for journalists on 1 July. They stood still as he made his entrance dressed in a white shirt, trousers, black waistcoat and a dhaka topi, expecting him to chat like he did last year. But he walked past them with a serious face that left most journalists surprised and disappointed. This year, 15 minutes after he had arrived, he took his leave with the impression that it was not necessary for the king to either listen or find out what was happening in the kingdom. It clearly proved that he no longer saw himself as a constitutional

figurehead but as the chief executive. Two years ago, at a public felicitation in Nepalganj, he declared that it was not possible for a 21st century monarch to be seen only but to be heard also. He proved this by granting several interviews to both local and foreign journalists and interacting closely with media representatives.

Troika

.....
Jana Aastha, 13 July

आस्था

After Prachanda called on the political parties on Sunday to set up a negotiating team, the parties are learnt to be deep in discussions about how to respond. But the Maoists themselves haven't set up any such negotiating team of their own. If Girija Koirala is in the team then the Maoists are expected to set up a new team, according to the Maoist mouthpiece *Janaadesh*. Sources say the Maoist offer for talks came after secret overtures between them and after Koirala affirmed he was ready to talk if the Maoists stopped attacking political parties. The parties are still suspicious of Maoist intentions and are also wary of the government's response to them talking to a group declared as 'terrorist'. But they haven't ruled out negotiations and are reportedly discussing the composition of their team. If Koirala and Madhab Nepal are on the team, it is likely that Prachanda will also be on the team from the Maoist side. Government ministers have said the parties will also be declared as terrorists if they talk to the Maoists. Other party leaders like KP Oli of the UML have dismissed the Maoist calls for talks, saying talks with those believing in violence was out of the question. It is not clear how the government will react to future talks but there are rumours

of an imminent reshuffle in the council of ministers.

Meanwhile, the army sent commandos to Kabhre and Sindhuli after getting intelligence reports that Prachanda was in the area. Although the units looked for the Maoist leader everywhere, he appears to have slipped away after Maoists got wind of increased military activity. One of the units that was returning to the capital after the operation was ambushed at Nepalthok on the Sindhuli Highway on 7 July and two soldiers were injured.

Eye for an eye

.....
Editorial in *Drishti*, 12 July

दृष्टि

The action and behaviour of state authorities prove that the country has been pushed back to the 16th century where the rule of law was nonexistent. Dictatorial behaviour is dominant. It is the government's responsibility to oversee the arrest and interrogation of suspects but when it is involved in atrocious treatment of civilians, we need to rethink things. Security forces dragged Rama of Jhapa out from inside her house and shot her dead in front of her family members. How is this different from the Maoist atrocities that took place recently in Kailali when a policewoman and her child were killed in cold blood? The state is the protector of citizens, it should not give any excuse to be compared to the Maoists. Rama's murderer must face justice otherwise it will show state security as barbaric and uncivilised.

Forced march

.....
Rajdhani, 9 July

राजधानी

Human rights and child welfare groups have spoken out strongly against the government forcing students to march on the streets on various anniversaries and ceremonies. Often, the children have to march under the scorching sun or in the rain and there have been cases of children fainting from dehydration. They say such forced marches are a violation of human rights. They have asked government organs, schools and others not to use children to push their case on the streets. Earlier, it used to be political parties, now it is the government that is forcing children to march on the streets using the excuse of one occasion or another.



National Commission on the Rights of Rats Chariman

क्रान्तिपुर Batsayan in *Kantipur*, 9 July

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



"I often wonder why I ever returned to Nepal. I was very comfortable living abroad. Now, I'm in a mess."

Tulsi Giri in *Purnajagaran*, 12 July

“The euphoria has evaporated”



KIRAN PANDAY

Himal Khabarpatrika,
30 June - 15 July

हिमाल
खबरपत्रिका

Six years ago, Dirgharaj Prasai hit headlines by leading a demonstration to Narayanhiti Palace shouting the famous slogan: “Raja au, desh bachau.” Today, Prasai says: “It will be disastrous if this regime stays for a moment longer.”

Himal Khabarpatrika: How has the past five months of the royal regime been?
Dirgharaj Prasai: February First was a result of the incompetence of the political parties. Unfortunately, His Majesty couldn't find the right people. Even this regime is incompetent, corrupt and in the grip of smugglers and that is why there is no national unity. The euphoria of the royal takeover has now evaporated.

And you, a person who wanted the king to takeover!
Raja au, desh bachau was a demand intended to balance nationalism, monarchism and parliamentary democracy. The people are sovereign; the king has to be their protector. The ball is now in the king's court, he has to create the condition to hand over power to the people's representatives. This regime is submerged in economic mismanagement and steeped in self-glorification, it will be disastrous if this regime stays for a moment longer.

Why do you think the political parties aren't on board?
The king doesn't have people around him who want the parties on board. Why should anyone try to agree with people who are intent just on provocation? That is why the parties and the Maoists haven't come for negotiations. The people around the king want to push His Majesty towards authoritarianism. The RCCC shouldn't have character assassinated Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, who is the most committed democrat. That doesn't help the king.

Maybe you're being critical because you didn't get a position?
I am speaking the truth because I am a patriot, I have to speak against those who are bent on destroying the monarchy. There is no greater danger to the nation than having a monarchy that is not for the country.

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Double traverse in t

Diary of a rainshadow trek



STEPHEN J KEELING

Days 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Fly Pokhara-Jomsom (2,710 m) and the next day reach Muktinath (3,760 m). Climb the dramatic Dzong Dadaa (5,200 m) that towers north of Muktinath. Tough going with no clear path to the top and great views towards Upper Mustang. Next day ascend Thorung La pass (5,416 m) and then head east and down, overnighting in the dramatic surroundings of Thorung Phedi.

Day 5.

Down to Manang village (3,540 m) with my mind on the challenge of crossing back over the Annapurna massif to Jomsom via Tilicho (lake). Accounts of this trip warn of difficult route finding and inaccurate maps.

Day 6.

Not feeling too well but 'the thing that drives me' starts to rumble. I buy a walking stick for the treacherous scree slopes ahead and head for Khangsar village.

I find the keeper of Tilicho Base Camp Lodge. He agrees to open the lodge. He promises to follow me out there and points out the way—an improbable-looking route across some distant steep scree slopes. Beginning to feel

good as my engine engages. Climbing and climbing and taking in the amazing wild landscape of snow peaks, forests, whitewater streams and anticipating the challenge ahead.

What was driving me on was the prospect of the beautiful wild landscapes and the need to push my limits now and again. I am not suicidal but like a challenge. "Never trek alone!"... "Take a guide as the route is arduous and difficult to find"... "Only climb 300 m a day over 3000 m altitude!" You can set aside this sensible advice if you know what you are doing, are fit and the conditions are favourable.

What a fantastic trail through huge scree slopes and along cliff sides. I linger taking in the wilderness atmosphere and the precipitous drops as the lodge keeper catches up with me. We pass scarecrows designed to keep snow leopards away.

Day 7.

The next morning's pull up to the lake is tough. There is 800 m of lung-bursting altitude to climb with my rucksack feeling like it's full of boulders. I cross the rim and...what a sight...a huge expanse of azure water surrounded by rock, snow and ice.

It is 11AM as I set off towards the other end of the lake. I take the

safe route the long way round the eastern side over two high passes. I am slowing down and have to push myself forward. Passing a few blue sheep I soon reach the first 5,240 m pass. The path then peters out and from here the going gets really tough for the next, somewhat challenging, 24 hours.

I navigate along the side of a melting glacier to the Eastern Pass (5,340 m). Terrific views of the lake framed by a cliff-sided gully.

At 4.15 PM I lift myself up and set off towards Meso Kanta La (5,121 m) along the large lateral moraines. I make good progress but keep losing the path as I follow the suggested route from the Internet round the north of a shark-toothed peak. I plod on at a pace of about 30 steps and then a minute's rest.

At 6PM I reach the saddle and look into the valley leading towards Jomsom. The gusting wind and the late hour stop me from lingering. The next part is supposed to be pretty treacherous and so I quickly head down what is the wrong steep scree and boulder-filled gully. A few large stones whiz past. I keep to the side thankful for my 25-rupee stick to negotiate the patches of steep snow and ice.

I feel relief from the drop in altitude (4,700 m). Now it is a



the trans-Himalaya

across Thorung and Tilicho

PICS: STEPHEN J KEELING

question of finding the route. I can't make sense of the map and am convinced it is wrong. Anyway, I am heading in roughly the right direction and losing altitude but the indistinct tracks show no human footprints. I have in my mind the need to avoid the risky prospect of stumbling into the army's high-altitude warfare training camp below Nilgiri in the half light.

Heading further northwest and down I reach the treeline. I keep going by the light of the half moon and at 8PM, stop at a level patch of dusty ground and spread my sleeping bag out for the night.

Day 8.
I don't get much sleep worrying

about a leopard leaping on me. Somehow feel quite rested as I set off at 5.30 AM the next morning. I head down into a ravine clambering through wild forest.

Below I try to work my way downstream but soon find my way barred by a waterfall with no way around. I then head back upstream and pass what looks like a fresh bear footprint on a boulder. I then try to climb out the opposite side up some slaty scree and cliffs thinking that if I come across a bear's den with cubs I'll be a goner.

Near the top it gets too risky and I painstakingly pick my way back down. Finally I manage to clamber up the northeast side of the ravine reaching more level

ground at about 11AM with great relief. After crossing another ravine I reach a good path and a few hours later, pace into Jomsom feeling relieved and quite exhilarated but puzzled about my route-finding difficulties.

The next morning sitting in Pokhara airport waiting for the connection to Kathmandu I take another look at the map. I laugh out loud as it suddenly makes sense. I pick out the meandering route across the contours I had taken the day before and realise that the Internet route photo was wrong and had sent me to the wrong side of the shark tooth peak. Next time I'm going for a beach holiday in Thailand, although the time after that I'll be back in the hills. ●

Route

The first part of the route follows the Annapurna Circuit in a clockwise direction from Jomsom to Manang village. Most people do the circuit anti-clockwise partly to avoid having to climb the Thorung La pass from the Muktinath side as it involves 1,700 m of ascent.

Quite a number of trekkers reach Tilicho from Manang as an acclimatisation trip with at Tilicho Base Camp Lodge on the way. Very few make the trip over to Jomsom from Tilicho and it does help if you know the right way!



Fiction more real than fact

Narayan Wagle's first novel drags us to the edge and forces us to peer down at the abyss below

Nepal's slide began with the beginning of the insurgency 10 years ago and it was after the royal massacre of 1 June 2001 that things really started hurtling out of control.

The person with a ringside seat to all this is Narayan Wagle, the journalist who rose up the ranks to become the chief editor of *Kantipur*. He taught himself English spending days at the British Council while the People's Movement protests raged on the streets outside.

Unlike most of his laid-back peers, Narayan was never satisfied with reporting

just on the corridors of power in the capital. He'd rather be trekking to remote corners of the country bringing stories of neglect and apathy to the notice of a government in faraway Kathmandu.

It helped that Narayan loved to travel and had a spirit of adventure instilled in him by his doting father. Growing up in Tanahu, Narayan was so fond of taking high dives to swim in the river that after he nearly drowned twice, his parents sold off their riverside property and moved to a farm up in the mountains just to take their son away from danger.

It was an idyllic home and Narayan has a gleam in his eye as he describes the mud and tile house at the edge of a rhododendron forest, terrace fields, a clear brook flowing through it and across the valley, the icy ramparts of the Annapurnas. Even as a child, he remembers the excitement of climbing hills to see what was on the other side. His most vivid memories are of holding his father's hand as they walked across the mountains to attend melas several days away.

Narayan Wagle's bylines will be familiar to the readers of *Kantipur* over the past 10 years and the datelines were usually of the most farflung places: Mugu, Bajura, Bajhang. As a fellow editor, I

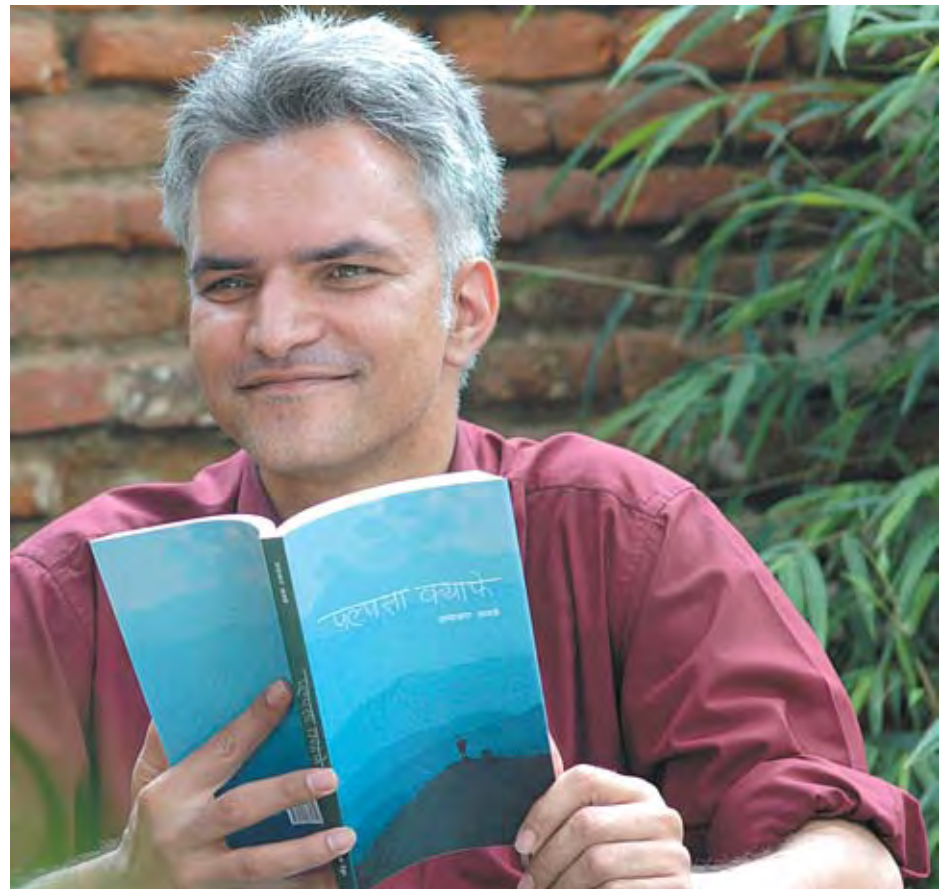
empathise with Narayan's feeling of inadequacy about journalism's capacity to provide a true picture of our nation's trauma. We wrestle with reportages, columns, editorials but somehow what isn't getting through is the brutalisation of society by conflict. Nepal's social fabric is being torn apart and all we are doing is reporting it with the journalism of detachment. So, Narayan has taken the courageous step of choosing the medium of a novel to get the real story across.

In all countries in the throes of a messy conflict, facts are often more dramatic than fiction. As journalists in Nepal, we feel that every story of a landmine killing children, abduction of students, young women disappeared by security forces is a heart-rending family tragedy. Unfortunately, by the time the deaths are reported the manner of their reporting turns them into statistics. We rarely see, hear or share the pain and personal loss of someone's loved one.

Narayan Wagle's first novel, *Palpasa Café*, is a fictionalised account of some actual events, the lives and deaths of ordinary Nepalis caught in the vice of war. In the first chapter, Narayan makes a cameo as himself, the editor of a paper in Kathmandu who hears of the abduction of a friend by soldiers.

That much is fact but in the next chapter Narayan turns his disappeared friend into an imaginary artist named Drishya and the rest of the book is his story told in the artist's own voice. The author admits that much of what Drishya goes through are semi-autobiographical.

In the first chapter, Narayan Wagle the author and protagonist gives us a hint about why he is writing the book. As he takes dictation from a district reporter about another firefight in the mountains, he thinks: "Nothing new here. Every day it is the same. Tomorrow's paper will be the same as this morning's. The same stories of an army patrol being ambushed, suspected spy executed by Maoists, a bomb going off



KIRAN PANDAY

somewhere. We are just chroniclers of carnage."

The storyline weaves the fragile and undeclared love between Drishya and Palpasa, a first-generation American Nepali who has returned to the land of her parents after being unable to take post-9/11 racism, into the artist's reunion with his school friend, Siddhartha, who is now a guerrilla. Siddhartha comes to Kathmandu in the aftermath of the royal massacre to seek shelter in Drishya's house, the two argue over whether the goals of revolution justify the means.

"How can you ever justify violence?" Drishya asks.

Siddhartha replies: "Without destroying you can't build anew."

"But people are dying," Drishya pleads.

"The people don't need peace, they need justice," says his Maoist friend, "If there is justice there will be peace."

"But you are carrying out injustices in the name of justice," says Drishya one last time but it is clear the two can't even agree to disagree.

Drishya travels to his home village to meet Siddhartha and finds it torn apart by war. They are all there in these pages: the atrocities, executions, disappearances and people caught in the crossfire that we read

about every day in the newspapers. But because they happen to characters we now know intimately the incidents seem more real than the factual headlines.

That is the power of fiction. Not only is this novel as fresh as an open wound, the author's imagination makes Nepal's real unfolding tragedy come alive with raw urgency. The plot is rendered in non-linear style that is experimental in the world of Nepali fiction. Wagle's Nepali is simple, colloquial and his voice is genuine and sincere. Drishya comes across sometimes as being unnecessarily abrasive, but *Palpasa* is an authentic diaspora daughter caught between love for her motherland and alienation from her adopted home.

Narayan Wagle's book can be called an anti-war novel. It drags us to the edge and forces us to peer down at the abyss below. It is being released this weekend and is going to be talked about for a long time. ●



Palpasa Café
by Narayan Wagle
245 pages
Publication Nepalaya, 2005
(in Nepali)
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Underfed and underfunded

Seventy percent of child deaths in Nepal are indirectly a result of malnutrition

NARESH NEWAR

Despite recent official statements about rising average living standards, grinding poverty and the conflict, the effects of junk food in cities have made undernourishment and malnutrition a serious national epidemic.

Protein-energy malnutrition affects 63 percent of Nepali children which means they don't get enough food to ensure normal physical and mental development. More than half of Nepali children are therefore physically stunted, and although this is reversible if the child starts eating enough after age two, they may suffer learning disabilities as well if undernourishment persists.

Hunger increases their susceptibility to diarrhoea, measles and acute respiratory infection. Diarrhoeal dehydration

alone causes an estimated 30,000 child deaths every year as undernourished children are weaker and more likely to be brought down by the vicious spiral of disease and malnutrition. Combined with worms, undernourishment is seen by many as Nepal's primary health concern for children.

"Global studies have shown that malnutrition is an underlying factor in 55 percent of all child deaths. Since the rates of malnutrition are very high in Nepal—South Asia is the worst in the world, worse than Africa—we can assume that the situation is similar or worse," says UNICEF's nutrition expert, PO Blomquist.

Malnutrition hits many Nepali children even before they are born because their mothers don't have adequate food while pregnant. Between 30-50 percent of Nepali children are born

underweight, below 2.5 kg.

The need to combat undernourishment doesn't get as much attention from donors or the government as it deserves. Protein-energy malnutrition, they say is much more serious than Vitamin A, iron or iodine deficiency. Surveys have shown it is responsible for 70 percent of child deaths through related illnesses. "Malnutrition doesn't get priority because it doesn't yield visible and immediate results," explains Dilli Raman Adhikari of the government's Child Health Division.

"The government has to introduce more nutrition wards and programs to specifically deal with malnourished children," says Som Paneru of Nepali Youth Opportunity Foundation (NYOF), which runs nutrition rehabilitation centres in Kathmandu, Mechi and Bheri.

"Usually, sick children are discharged from hospitals after having had other diseases treated but their malnourishment remains neglected," says Paneru, "this causes relapse and leads to other diseases and often death."

Child health experts have pushed for school feeding programs and it was implemented with donor support in coordination with the Health, Education and Agriculture Ministries. But it was phased out in 1990 due to lack of coordination. Nepal's target to reduce malnutrition by half by 2015 is therefore not going to be met.

A UNICEF report says that even with 6.2 percent of annual reduction of malnutrition, it will take another 26 years. ●



NARESH NEWAR

A hungry war

Nutrition experts are concerned that the conflict has worsened the state of child malnutrition. "The constant migration and displacement of villagers has made the problem even worse because it is the children whose food habits we have to change once they arrive in the cities," says Pradeep Silwal of World Vision International Nepal which has been working in several food deficit districts and villages with nutrition projects. Silwal adds that the parents won't be able to afford green vegetables or enough rice, so the children are fed dry and non-nutritious food lacking in proteins.

In Maoist-affected areas like Kalikot, Jumla and Dailekh a recent security ban on transport of food items, clothing and shoes is sure to make the situation worse. In Diktel and Khotang in the east, a Maoist ban on transporting food items is causing a severe food shortage. Even in Kathmandu, the internally displaced are under nourished.

"Scarcity of food due to constant road blockades cause severe crises, especially in deficit areas," says World Visions's Indra Baral. This is already evident in Humla which has the highest hunger rate in Nepal, with 90 percent of the children suffering chronic malnutrition.

The problem is getting worse because whatever nutrition projects that remained are gradually phasing out as more organisations shift towards conflict-related humanitarian and relief work.

Junk food malnutrition

Lakpa Sherpa's staple diet while growing up in Solu Khumbu was instant noodles. By age 13, she was so addicted to it that she had lost all appetite for regular meals. Her mother didn't detect Lakpa's deteriorating health because she had four other children to look after. Last month, Lakpa collapsed from severe stomach pain and headaches. She had become weak and weighed barely 19 kg. She was flown to Kathmandu for treatment. Her condition has improved steadily afterwards at the Nutrition Rehabilitation Centre (NRC) which has helped over 1,000 malnourished children.

"The problem is not just poverty and ignorance but neglect by mothers especially those who bear more than five children," says nutritionist Manosa Bhattarai. Lakpa suffered protein-energy malnutrition, a chronic form of undernourishment, indicated by stunting and underweight. It is usually the result of lack of food but can also be caused by the wrong kind of food, as in Lakpa's case. Lakpa is lucky to have survived because her family could afford to fly her to Kathmandu. Many other Nepali children aren't so lucky.

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Brown man's burden

Who is to distinguish between a young Muslim of 'Pakistani' ancestry and a young Muslim of 'Indian' ancestry both living in Leeds?



It was in the autumn of 1980, at the height of what was known as the Iranian Hostage Crisis, when over 50 Americans had been taken in by Ayatollah Ruholla Khomeini's radical followers in Teheran.

In the US, Jimmy Carter was in deep trouble in the last days of his presidency and anti-Iran hysteria was at its height. I was at the Criminal Court of King's County (Brooklyn), New York City, as a journalism student covering a murder trial. I asked a question of the prosecution bench, and the government's counsel turned around and lashed out, "Where're you from, Iran?" He

SOUTHASIA BEAT
Kanak Mani Dixit

pronounced it 'eye-ran', just as in a later era

George W Bush would say 'Sad-damn'. There was no reporting for me that day in Brooklyn.

The gentleman was of course making the characteristic mistake of the ugly insular American who can be found even in ultra-cosmopolitan New York: that anyone who is white is right, all blacks are former slaves and brown people forever the unreconstructed alien. The worldview of that particular prosecutor has doubtless progressed since the Iran hostage-taking, even as the national ire has been diverted from the Ayatollah to Osama, with a brief diversion at Sad-damn.

Without doubt, following the tide of brown immigration to the United States since the 1970s from Latin America, Southasia and West Asia, Americans are today better educated as to the nature and content of world humanity. But at moments of crisis, the deeply held prejudices will boil to the surface. The 9/11 attacks were such a crisis, and afterwards, people with Muslim names and/or brown skin tone became the targets of venom.

The inability of the occidental to distinguish Osama bin Laden's headgear from the Sikh's turban made life unbearable for a while for sardars all over, and among the first to be murdered by vigilantes in the US after the World Trade Centre attack was a Sikh in Arizona for his 'Middle Eastern appearance'.

The way in which 'Islamic radicals' are seen in the west will have changed subtly with the London attacks of last week, and there will be a simultaneous shift in how all Southasians are perceived outside the subcontinent. The 9/11 attacks were all carried out by young Arab men, mostly from Saudi Arabia. The only link to Southasia then was through Osama's network,

which extended to Afghanistan and Pakistan. In the case of the attacks on the London trains and bus, all suspects thus far are of 'Pakistani' ancestry.

Granted, a Great Britain which has seen such overwhelming brown migration since half a century—enough to change the composition of British society—is vastly different from exclusivist America. As a result, there will be much more introspection in London and less of a blame-the-world syndrome evident.

Nevertheless, the discovery of young Southasian Britons as the perpetrators of the terror attacks on Londoners will once again bring to the fore their identification as 'Islamic terrorists' rather than 'terrorists'. Nor will the reaction be limited to brown-skinned people who are Muslim. For who is to distinguish a Pakistani from an Indian, a Southasian Sunni from a Southasian Shia, a Sindhi from a Punjabi, a Bangladeshi from a Gujarati?

Indeed, one must consider the distance or proximity between a young Muslim of 'Pakistani' ancestry living in Leeds and a young Muslim of 'Indian' ancestry living in the same town? We may thus witness a strange situation in which an attack on London's public transport system forces Southasians to consider their own shared natural and cultural heritage—from the colour of their skin (olive to brown) to their accents. General Musharraf's lilt is not that different from that of Lal Krishna Advani's, and now the two even appreciate the same Quaid-e-Azam.

While there are those Southasians of the Himalayan rimland who are considered 'Mongoloid' and 'Australoid', the majority of Southasians are brown 'Caucasoids' who are easily mistaken for one another the world over.

While Southasians have suffered acts of terror often enough, this is the first high profile attack in a western capital by radicals of Southasian descent. It is certain that the worldliness of London, the political clout of the Southasian community in Great Britain, as well as the deeper links between the European island and the subcontinent will not deliver the kind of primitive reaction we saw after 9/11. But there will be a subtle shift in the way that we are perceived and it will once again force Southasians outside Southasia, at least, to consider each other as more similar than dissimilar. Nationalisms cannot get us too far in other hemispheres, howsoever we may treat each other here. ●

Sweeping through

Improve your swing and get the ball flying

Ever watched weekend golfers sweep their drives successfully off the tee, then fluff their fairway woods no matter how hard they try? Well, they have the right key but don't know when to use it again.

In today's game where courses are getting longer, it's imperative to be able to hit fairway woods well. It's also a lot easier to hit a fairway wood than a long iron. Not having these shots in your armoury will inevitably leave you short of the green on any long hole, giving but a slender chance of making par. So why aren't those three

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



and five wood fairway shots getting properly airborne? Generally, woods are designed to hit the ball almost on the upswing. In fact, it's just the

opposite of how irons have been designed (to hit the ball on the downswing). The driver is the largest and longest of the woods and is most effective if used to hit the ball on the upswing. Thus, the long tees are used to lift the ball up above the ground. Fairway woods are also designed to be used in such a manner. The action is to almost sweep the ball with a shallower or more horizontal angle of approach than the irons.

Here are some tips to get you started:

- The first step is to make sure you have the ball correctly positioned in your stance, somewhere opposite the inside of the forward heel. If the ball position is too close to the centre you tendency to hit it downward and the effectiveness of the club is reduced tremendously.
- Next, work with practice swings without a ball until you can consistently sweep the grass in the location opposite the inside of your forward heel as opposed to taking a divot or swinging in the air above the grass. Relax your arms and hands and feel the club swinging more freely, it helps rather than gripping with your hands and trying to force the club to swing faster.



With your practice swings, get to the point where you can sweep the grass for a noticeable distance (let's say three to six inches) rather than at just one small point where the club bounces off the ground. You can usually see the grass blades move when you sweep through or you might even leave a path through the grass that you can see after your swings.

Once you feel comfortable with practice swings, stay focused on this 'sweeping of the grass' when you swing through the ball. Many golfers change their focus at this point and try to hit the ball instead. This usually results in a different swing (with no sweeping) and more problems.

Stay focused on the sight, sound and feeling of sweeping the grass through the ball and the quality and consistency of your contact with fairway woods will improve. The bottom line is: with the less lofted and longer length clubs, you should not hit the ball on the downswing, sweep through it with a shallow angle of attack instead.

Practice the above drills and you'll soon find your entire range of fairway wood shots getting airborne towards the target. Once you can launch the ball further with your fairway woods, don't be surprised to find yourself scoring lower. ●

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

prodeepak@hotmail.com



KIRAN PANDAY

A trigger happy sport

With a new shooting range, new equipment, new tournaments Nepali shooters may soon be bagging medals

AARTI BASNYAT

Considering how much Nepalis are shooting each other lately, you'd expect shooting as a sport to be much more popular than it is.

Shooting and swimming are two compulsory sports in the Olympics but shooting never received much recognition here. Still, Kishore Karki, president of the Nepal Shooting Association says, "Shooting has come a long way and now we are trying to get new equipment to promote it further within the country."

It was recognised as an official sport only after 1980 but it has come to the fore in the past two years after Nepali sharpshooters got experience at international tournaments.

There is evidence of increased interest. The participation of both male and female players in this sport is high and the Nepali team also managed to bag the bronze medal in the 8th SAF games. National player and runner-up in the recent Birthday Cup Tournament, Sangeeta Karki says, "We want to see shooting made more professional with better equipment."

Training and the fact that the

only professional shooting range in Nepal is in Kathmandu has limited accessibility. Then there is the additional problem of costly equipment.

Most of our national level shooters, so far, come from either police or army backgrounds. The top two female shooters, Saraswati Baniya and Sangita Karki, winner and runner-up in the air pistol category of the Birthday Cup, are both from the police. But Asim Yadav, who won the Best Air Rifle in the Birthday Cup Open Shooting Competition is a civilian gun enthusiast.

"I come from the tarai and the men in my family have always been interested in shooting, they used to go hunting but I've liked it as a sport," says Yadav. Saraswati Baniya got interested after she joined the police force. "Shooting is a part of my job, I enjoy it but can understand how it would be difficult for a civilian to take it up," she told us. And even though she is from the police she says she doesn't get enough time to practice. "Regular intensive practice only happens right before a tournament, which is not enough," she adds.

Says Karki, "It does need more exposure but we have to be careful about the people we select to train or accept membership from because of the country's volatile situation." The sport is already being promoted in schools and colleges with an inter-college tournament in the pipeline.

The Nepal Shooting Association is on the look out for new players and is increasing the participation of schools and colleges. "We are not only looking for younger and newer players to send to tournaments but also encouraging the sport by making it more accessible to those interested," says Karki.

Shooting is not as easy as it looks. It needs a lot of focus and concentration, says Yadav, adding: "It helps me stay fit because it requires both physical and mental fitness. Without clarity of the mind, taking a shot can be very difficult."

Now, with the establishment of the shooting range at Birendra International Convention Centre, new equipment on the way, new tournaments in the pipeline and a new committee in place, Nepal should be earning shooting medals soon. ●

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



by JIGME GATON



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

Even though HEROMAN gets the call from *GothamDoo City Central*, he is too depressed to respond. The trouble is too great, and a monsoon gloom has set in, so our sad heroji retires to the Expat Cave...
to be continued next week



but very slowly...

KE GARNE? WHATEVER.
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"Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising everytime we fall."
-- Confucius --

Next change: Bitten by an Expat, Heroman undergoes Rabies Testing at Patan Hospital. Send Condolences c/o this paper.

#75 2062 by jigme gaton - read. love. write.

ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Brief Encounters** Photos by Holly Holzer at Siddhartha Art Gallery, until 30 July, proceeds go to Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust. 4218048
- ❖ **Art Walk** Traditional artworks at Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999

EVENTS

- ❖ **Reggie Party** Speed dating at 1905, Kantipath, on 15 July, 7PM with DJ session. 4225272
- ❖ **Weekend Retreat** with teachings by Ivy van Eer, 16-17 July, 10AM-4PM at HBMC, Thamel. 4414843
- ❖ **Guru Purnima** 21 July.
- ❖ **Bheda Ko Oon Jasto** at Jai Nepal on 21 July, 9AM in aid of Kantipur City College's Educational Tour 2005. 4430239
- ❖ **Photography Workshop** Seven days with Nepal's experts, 21 July at The Bakery Cafe, Sundhara, 7AM-9AM. 4289818
- ❖ **Feel the Drizzle** Monsoon mela at Hotel Yak and Yeti on 30 July, 10AM-8PM, free entrance. 9851043268
- ❖ **Call for entries** Film South Asia '05, submission deadline 31 July. www.himalassociation.org/fsa
- ❖ **God Dance of Kathmandu Valley** Tuesdays at Hotel Vajra, 7PM. 4271545
- ❖ **Intercultural Exchange Program** Every Wednesday at Goethe Zentrum, Thapathali, 4.15 PM. 4250871
- ❖ **Tai Chi** Demonstration and meditation at Swayambhu. 4256618
- ❖ **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

- ❖ **Interpretations of JS Bach's Suites** for Solo Cello by cellist Frank Bernède at Darbar Hall, Hotel Yak and Yeti, 6.30 PM-8PM on 15 July Rs 500. 4241163
- ❖ **Fridays** Best of U2 and more at Moksh, 8PM, Rs 150. 5526212
- ❖ **Shades of Blue** Tuesdays at Moksh, Pulchok, 7.30 PM. 5526212
- ❖ **JCS Trio** Saturdays, 8PM at 1905, Kantipath, free entrance.
- ❖ **The Duo** Live at the Jazz Bar, Hotel Shangrila, Lajimpat.
- ❖ **The Good Time Blues Band** at Rum Doodle, 7PM. 4701208
- ❖ **Ladies Nights** Wednesdays at Jatra, Thamel. 4256622
- ❖ **Fusion** Mondays at Jalan Jalan Restaurant, 7PM. 4410438
- ❖ **Jazz** at Upstairs, Lajimpat, Wednesdays and Saturdays, 8PM.



FOOD

- ❖ **Summer Special Cocktails** this July at Rum Doodle. 4443208
- ❖ **Culinary Fare** of Game Food at Hyatt Regency, Boudha. 4491234
- ❖ **The Chimney** Signature dishes at Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
- ❖ **Mango Masti** Tempting tropical treats and International Buffet Lunch at Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **Daily Delite** Lunch at Hotel Shangri-La, Lajimpat. 4412999
- ❖ **Crosskitchen**, Lajimpat, European and Indian cuisine. 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.
- ❖ **Krishnarpan** Nepali restaurant at Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488
- ❖ **Delicacies** Pastas at Roadhouse Café, Jawalakhel. 5521755
- ❖ **Earth Watch Restaurant** at Park Village, dine with nature. 4375280
- ❖ **Café Bahal** Newari cuisine at Kathmandu Guest House. 4700632
- ❖ **The Beer Garden** at Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **The Tharu Kitchen** at Jungle Base Camp. Junglebasecamp@yahoo.com

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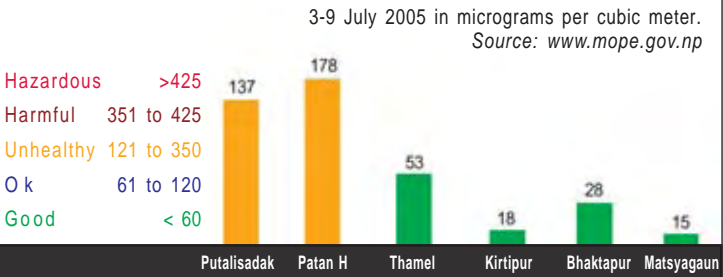
Ray Ferrier (Tom Cruise), a divorced dockworker and less-than-perfect father is about to get his kids for a rare weekend visit. Soon after his ex-wife (Miranda Otto) and her new husband drop off teenage son Robbie (Justin Chatwin) and young daughter Rachel (Dakota Fanning), a strange and powerful lightning storm strikes. Moments later, at an intersection near his house, Ray witnesses an extraordinary event that will change their lives forever. A towering three-legged war machine emerges from deep beneath the earth and before anyone can react, incinerates everything in sight. An ordinary day suddenly becomes the most extraordinary event of their lives—the first strike in a catastrophic alien attack on earth.

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KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

Although the pollution levels along busy streets such as Putali Sadak are still above national standards on most days, the air in residential areas, suburban and rural areas of the Valley is now fairly good, thanks to the monsoon rains washing down the pollutants. The most harmful are dust particles below 10 microns in diameter which lodges themselves deep within human lungs. Even the air in busy streets is breathable on days when it rains heavily. Expect this phase with clean air to last for a couple of more months before the dust starts kicking in again.



NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



Better late than never, that is the feeling among paddy farmers in Kathmandu Valley who have finally planted rice one month late. Central Nepal got its first real monsoon rains this week. Ironically, it was a stronger-than-usual circulation of the Arabian Sea branch of the monsoon that kept the Bay winds at bay. Now, the Bay of Bengal sector is active again and as this satellite image taken on Thursday morning shows, a heavy mass of rain-bearing clouds is headed towards central Nepal. The pressure patterns are also favourable and the rains should be dumped right across the midhills this weekend with the chance that July precipitation may be normal after all.

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KIRAN PANDAY

THAT WAY: COAS Gen Pyar Jung Thapa on his way to lay the foundation stone of the rehabilitation centre for wounded soldiers being constructed at Bhandarkhal Chhauni on Sunday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

FRONTLINE REPORTERS: Nine journalists from the districts came to Kathmandu to share experiences in conflict reporting this week at a seminar organised by Himal Association. (From l-r, back row) S Khanal, Sankhuwasabha, K Tamang, Chitwan, T Pandey, Kalikot, MPoudyal, Surkhet, D Chaudhary, Jajarkot. (Front row) N Karki, Pokhara, JB Pun Magar, Butwal, BK Yadav, Janakpur, A Sunar, Dailekh.



KIRAN PANDAY

ANTI-BANNERS: Student activists of the eight-party student union alliance tear down a banner felicitating the king on his birthday during a protest on Sunday at Baneshwor.



KUMAR SHRESTHA/ NEPALNEWS.COM

DANCING IN THE RAIN: A cultural group performing a traditional dance was caught in a monsoon downpour as it made its way to the inauguration of the National Film Festival at BICC on Monday.



KIRAN PANDAY

TIGER, TIGER BURNING BRIGHT: The premiere of Satya Mohan Joshi's play *Bagh Bhairab* being performed by Aaroahaan Theatre group at Gurukul on Monday.

Fatima the healer

Fatima Younoos is 62 but she is still poking needles into four dozen patients a day. This tireless acupuncturist has steadily gained a reputation as a healer and her clinic, Hua Tho, is crowded with patients. "This is not my business but my life," says Fatima who runs the centre with her son, Jamal Younoos, a medical doctor.

Part-Nepali and part-Chinese, Fatima has studied Tibetan herbal medicine which concentrates on enhancing spiritual goodness, and

Chinese acupuncture. The knowledge of both has enabled her to help patients heal naturally without side effects. "People think acupuncture is a painkiller but in Chinese medicine, we say it is like a tree, we check both the inside and the outside. It is not about killing pain but long-term healing," she says.

"I've always had foreign patients but Nepalis have slowly opened up to acupuncture," adds Fatima, "Now, even pani-puri

wallas come here." But unlike airfares within Nepal, foreigners and Nepalis both pay the same for treatment. Explains Fatima: "The first thing you learn in Chinese acupuncture class is to treat all patients equally."

There are 12 different lines in the body according to Chinese acupuncture and these help find the problem and its cure, which involve skilful and specific use of needles. "The cure for a disease differs from person to person according to its origin. It's like road traffic, you need to check the jam, open up the clog and then make the system stronger. Eighty to 90 percent of the people I have treated have got better," she adds.

Fatima says she has never stopped learning. And everyone is amazed at her energy and youthfulness. "The answer is simple: I love my work and it keeps me in shape," she says, "I learn a lot from each patient, they are my real teachers." ●

Abha Eli Phoboo

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KIRAN PANDAY

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KATHMANDU

THE PLACE TO MEET.

Pillion riders not wearing helmets are now allowed to use pre-paid mobiles

This country is changing so fast, things are in such a state of flux, there is so much uncertainty about what is around the bend that one can't really blame the ordinary man on the street for feeling a little confused with Kathmandu's rapidly changing traffic rules.

What's illegal today (for example making an unauthorised U-turn at Darbar Marg) could suddenly and without warning be legal between midnight and two in the morning, but very well revert back to being illegal again from the crack of dawn onwards. That is why as responsible drivers we all need to be alert about the rules and regulations and keep abreast of changes so we know when we can break them without getting caught. And we in FM radio feel it is part of our public service mandate to issue bulletins every 15 minutes to apprise law-abiding drivers of the latest changes in traffic rules. So, to drive everyone around the bend, here is the 9.45 PM Traffic Rules Bulletin for Thursday:

1. After officially banning motorcycle pillion riders on Friday morning, and then immediately unbanning the ban, followed by a weekend during which it was both banned and not banned, traffic police has finally decided to end the confusion once and for all to categorically state that pillion riding is in fact not banned but if you are caught riding tandem on a motorbike you are liable to have your basic human rights violated on the spot. The head of traffic police has been quoted as saying that it is just a "humble suggestion" that citizens not ride two to a bike, just like all the other traffic rules in this country such as not driving on the right (wrong) side of the road. So, to recap: two people on a bike is not allowed but three, four or even five to a bike is ok.
2. Compared to pillion riding, the rules on helmets are simpler and much more straight forward but we'll repeat them here anyway just so there is no ambiguity. A motorcyclist is allowed to wear a helmet provided it has a clear visor but if he has a shaded visor he isn't allowed to wear a helmet even if his pillion passenger is wearing a helmet with or without a visor and regardless of whether it is shaded or clear. Everything understood so far? Right. To continue: however, if the pillion passenger who shouldn't be there in the first place isn't wearing a helmet with a visor and the child sitting on the fuel tank is wearing a fancy hat and pink plastic sunglasses, then the driver is allowed to wear a visor provided he's not wearing a helmet. Terrorists are not allowed to ride pillion and, but if they insist, should refrain from wearing helmets so they can be easily recognised at checkpoints. People wearing turbans, heads of state and government and security personnel can do whatever they like.
3. The municipality is building another half-dozen overhead bridges in Kathmandu and Patan. These are actually billboard stands and not for pedestrians who should continue to try their level best to cross the road at streetlevel.
4. The Pulchok Road is closed for vacuuming at rush hour every day in order to cause maximum inconvenience to commuters. Says a Roads Department engineer: "If we did the resealing at night no one would know we were doing our job repairing roads."
5. And now the question you've all been meaning to ask: What is the status of the ban on using mobiles while driving? Answer: Motorcyclists can use prepaid mobiles at any time but pillion riders can only receive free postpaid mobile calls for pro-monarchy phone calls provided they are wearing seatbelts and no helmets with shaded visors.

Fine print: These traffic rules can change without warning, so stay tuned for the next bulletin in 15 minutes.

UNDER MY HAT

Kunda Dixit





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