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Weekly Internet Poll # 257

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



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Total votes:936

Weekly Internet Poll # 258. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Should the parties respond to the Maoist offer of negotiations?



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The UN, India and Nepal

Why India's lobbying for a Security Council seat could be a window of opportunity to resolve the Nepal crisis



ALL EARS:
Rao Inderjit Singh on arrival Thursday at Tribhuban International Airport.

KIRAN PANDAY

KUNDA DIXIT
in NEW YORK

India is lobbying hard for expansion of the UN Security Council despite staunch opposition from the US and China, a move that could in turn have a bearing on its role in resolving the crisis in Nepal.

Indian diplomacy has moved into high gear with officials fanning out to world capitals to garner support for expansion being pushed by the G-4, which also includes Brazil, Japan and Germany. Indian PM Man Mohan Singh was on a state visit to Washington this week to make the case. Despite American plans to enlist India to contain China, however, Singh was not able to sway Washington from its now-is-not-the-time policy on Council expansion.

India has ASEAN endorsement and has amassed more than 100 of the 128 votes

needed. Indian Minister of State for External Affairs, Rao Inderjit Singh, arrived in Kathmandu on Thursday to secure Nepal's nod. "This is the quarter finals and every vote counts," quipped one diplomat here.

The G-4's proposal is to expand the Council from 15 to 25, with six permanent and four non-permanent members. But the fact is that the G-4 are firmly opposed by some of their own neighbours. China doesn't want Japan in. Brazil doesn't have the Latin bloc, India has only Bhutan's support from South Asia and Italy doesn't want Germany.

"Nepal's vote is quite important," says a foreign policy analyst in Kathmandu, "the question is what will India give us in return?" Rao is said to be meeting King Gyanendra during his three-day stay.

The government may feel it can use the 'Security Council card' to soften the Indian stance vis-à-vis

the royal takeover, and thereafter use New Delhi's influence on the US and UK. But the Indians seem to be sticking to their guns.

At the Oval Office on Monday morning, Prime Minister Singh and President George W Bush agreed that, "...it's going to be critical for the king of Nepal to restore civil liberties." A US Embassy press release Thursday pointedly stated, "The Oval Office conversation represents the highest level American conversation on the state of democracy in Nepal, and the president and prime minister were in close agreement on the issue."

To be seen as a world player worthy of a permanent Council seat, India can't be seen to be supportive of autocratic tendencies in the region. It may also have to review its opposition to UN mediation in the Maoist conflict. New Delhi today needs Kofi Annan's goodwill, knowing he has taken a keen interest in

helping Nepal resolve its conflict. Besides, there is a real danger the revolution could spread to India.

The palace and the army do not like the idea of a UN role, while in their search for a soft landing the Maoists have sought UN or international mediation.

There is heightened concern at the UN Secretariat about Nepal's crisis after the fact-finding mission by the secretary general's special envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi, returned from Kathmandu last week.

The expansion of the royal cabinet, announced on 14 July hours after the king met Brahimi, is seen here as a retrogressive step.

Some officials say India's desire for a Council berth and its need to be seen as a regional stabilising force present a window of opportunity to lift objections to UN mediation. But that leaves the palace. ●

Editorial p2
Writing on the wall



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WRITING ON THE WALL

The more things change, the more they remain the same. That is all we have to say on last week's expansion of the ministerial council.

Much has been written about the personal history of many of the new inductees but even by the standards of past royal appointees this crass and retrogressive move has elicited overwhelming ridicule. The king's enemies are cheering. Among those who wish for the genuine welfare of the Nepali monarchy, there is now a sense of frantic hopelessness.

It's hard to see how this group of absolutists is going to run day-to-day governance—let alone bring meaningful political and economic reform and restart the peace process. No one in Nepal can now possibly doubt which way the country is headed. You can't fool the people all the time.

The cabinet expansion came soon after pointed warnings from international visitors, the latest being the UN Secretary General's special emissary, Lakhdar Brahimi. He is only sent to places in real crisis or to countries that have imploded. The fact that Brahimi was in Nepal is an ominous sign. The world is worried that our rulers aren't worried.

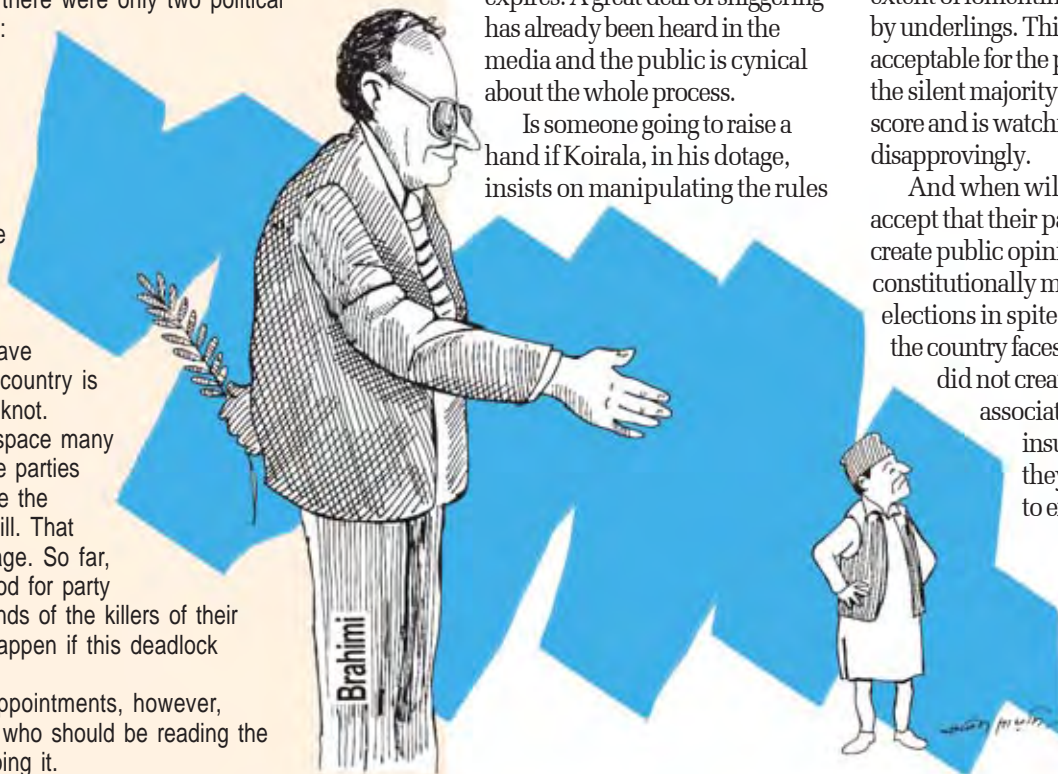
Another sign that Nepal is now a global hotspot was the visit here by a dozen international press freedom organisations on a fact-finding mission. Their scathing report last week didn't mince words and has tarred the regime's image even further.

The world is one with the Nepali people in understanding that, except for inside the Ring Road, things are getting worse every day. Just read between the lines of the Finance Minister's own budget statement: we are really clutching at straws. This military stalemate is bleeding the country dry and the political paralysis in Kathmandu offers no hope at all.

Before October 2002, there were only two political contestants in the country: constitutional parliamentarians and the Maoist outlaws. After that, and specially in the past six months, the king has presented himself as the third power centre. Had he succeeded in taking either the Maoists or the parties on board, the resulting polarity would have stabilised things. But the country is now stuck in a three-way knot.

We have said in this space many times that the king and the parties have to patch up otherwise the parties and the Maoists will. That was also Brahimi's message. So far, there is too much bad blood for party members to shake the hands of the killers of their colleagues. But it could happen if this deadlock continues.

Last week's council appointments, however, confirmed that the person who should be reading the writing on the wall isn't doing it.



RABIN SAYAMI

The silent majority

Listen to us

There was an erudite piece in a national daily the other day exhorting Nepal's so-called intellectual class to come out in support of the restore-the-democracy movement.

I'm afraid I'm not going to exactly follow that advice. Rather, here is a counter-question: why are those intellectuals and indeed the rest of the population, silent? At a time when the present

GUEST COLUMN

Narayan B Thapa



setup is beginning to resemble a runaway train, the need to restore sane governance is urgent. Here is my perception of what the people are looking to happen before any solid support to the political parties becomes possible or even desirable:

Girija Prasad Koirala must stop making a mockery of public credibility and let others take over when his second term as president of the Nepali Congress expires. A great deal of sniggering has already been heard in the media and the public is cynical about the whole process.

Is someone going to raise a hand if Koirala, in his dotage, insists on manipulating the rules

to engineer a third term for himself? Unfortunately, the public postures of the rest of the NC leadership in this matter are suspiciously supine.

The UML must show unity of purpose among its own leadership, tone down its rhetorical arrogance and demonstrate real political clarity and consistency. All parties great and small must start demonstrating transparency in financial affairs. Corruption is common in all poor countries and they remain poor because of it. We must see some signs that the leaders we voted to power will be more accountable in future even if they weren't in the past.

The rule of law is paramount and no one is above it. Every time there is some legal investigation into financial irregularity, every time leaders are subjected to scrutiny, the response from the senior party leadership is that of pique and defiance even to the extent of fomenting riots by underlings. This may be acceptable for the party cadre but the silent majority knows the score and is watching disapprovingly.

And when will all politicians accept that their parties exist to create public opinion for constitutionally mandated elections in spite of the dangers the country faces. The people did not create the terrorism associated with the insurgency and they have the right to expect the

leaders that they supported in the past to face down the same dangers.

Boycotting future elections is not an option for a democratic party since such elections are the only way to safeguard the interest of the people by ensuring representation.

Their argument is that it is too dangerous to have elections. Let's not forget that the silent majority has been living in the middle of these dangers now for nine years. If some are unwilling, let others in the rank who care more for the rights of the people take the lead. In fact that may be the test by fire which will finally forge a new inspiring leadership the people are looking for.

If it is political power the party leadership wants reinstated, let's see the leaders do some good old fashioned hard work for a change. Even out of power, it is possible to demonstrate true grit, hard work and commitment to the people and not the self-serving, reckless and politically expedient utterances we have heard so far.

Where am I in all this? I am a member of the silent majority working hard at the profession I was trained for. I have no political expertise and no such advice to dole out. But as a member of the silent majority, I have the right to expect the individuals we elect speak for us and take heed of what we think of their behaviour in and out of power.

This is how democracy works. Lack of support for the present movement is ample indication that the people are looking for real and accountable leadership and empty words alone will not do. Wise up and stop taking the people for fools. ●

Dr Narayan Bahadur Thapa is a paediatric surgeon.

LETTERS

JESTERS

Nepal is engulfed in political turmoil and is on the verge of economic bankruptcy. That did not stop his majesty's birthday from being celebrated in a most brazenly lavish manner. Despite rhetoric, it did not make an iota of difference to the average citizen, either those displaced from their homes or those mourning the loss of their loved ones in a senseless war. Instead of any message of reconciliation or succour to the masses, the court jesters, advisers and ministers alike, continue to advocate the virtues of authoritarianism under the pretext of democracy. A truly constructive monarchy, indeed.

S Shrestha, email

TITANIC

The other day while going to collect my air tickets from my travel agent's in Nag Pokhari, I noticed the signboard of another, newly-opened travel agency: Titanic Tours & Travel! Its logo: the ill-fated Titanic steaming along. Now, that kind of says it all about Nepal's travel and tourism industry. I couldn't help wondering if they sell travel insurance as well? If anyone cares (or rather

dares) to book with Titanic, their email address is titanic_travels@hotmail.com.

Daniel Haber, Paknajok

FROM SCRATCH

Re: ('Democracy in Installments #256)
 When the king took over on February First, I dared to hope. While expats were skeptical, I stood by the monarch saying all he said was true and correct, that he had the guts to make the bold step which had been urgently needed. I wrote an email to my friends saying that the king had taken this risk to save the kingdom. In five and a half months, all we see are his ministers shouting themselves hoarse trying to explain what it's all about. The Nepali people are yet to see anything worthwhile. Despite all this, the sympathy of foreigners is not going to help. The Nepalis have been cheated again. We will have to start from scratch.

Name withheld, email

MIRACLE

Thank you for publishing the article about System of Rice Intensification (SRI), ('The miracle is it's no miracle', #256). I could also hardly believe the claims of the SRI practice when I first read about it in an

international magazine four years ago. I decided to try it out myself with some farmers here in the mid-west and we were quite pleased with the results. I hope this article has generated some interest among those involved in the agricultural sector in Nepal. Why not try it out yourself? I believe SRI has great potential with farmers in Nepal and it is gaining momentum. I would like to mention that there is a Nepal SRI Network. Readers can view the web page and join as a member: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sri-nepal/>

Andreas Jenny, International Nepal Fellowship, Nepalganj

BROWN

'Brown Man's Burden' by Kanak Mani Dixit (# 256) reminded me of how America has changed in the last 20 years. When I was in America's heartland, Iowa, in 1987 as an undergraduate student, there was a backlash against brown people right after the Reagan administration's bombing of Tripoli. I almost got into trouble trying to convince a redneck in a local bar that I was not a mujaheddin from Afghanistan. But things have really changed. Everywhere in the United States, be it in

Du Pont Circle in Washington DC or Uptown in Minneapolis, you see many brown faces. In recent times, the role of religion in stereotyping identity for Asians and those of Middle Eastern origin has changed post-9/11. Our identity in the western world is based on not only what we think of ourselves but also on what others perceive it to be. The dividing line of our identity is the colour of our skin. The difficulty is in convincing the whites that there is so much diversity among brown people. You could be a fundamentalist, an atheist, a secular, a practicing or non-practicing Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist but at the same time, you are also brown. After a major terrorist attack when sentiment and emotions run high, vulnerability of a possible backlash is higher. This is the sad fact of the contemporary globalised world we live in.

Rajesh Aryal, email

HEROJIG

I love your Herojig cartoons, they make me laugh every time – well, not every time— sometimes I don't get it and keep reading and reading until I give up. Keep up the good work.

Sameer, email



KIRAN PANDAY

This state in a state

Five years later, we are still going round in circles

In Kathmandu, time either stands still or it races like a monsoon flashflood. As a columnist trying to make sense of the baffling drama unfolding on the national stage, I have ruefully realised that no matter how fast you run you can never catch up with events. Media thinks it can predict or influence the course of a nation's history. Alas, here we are just spectators.

The Maoist attack on Dunai in September 2000 exposed the vulnerabilities of democratic Nepal for the

STATE OF THE STATE CK Lal



first time. Armed with crude bombs and improvised guns, they overran the district headquarters and then mercilessly massacred hapless police personnel while the Royal Nepal Army watched the carnage from their nearby barracks. That event proved King Birendra's assertions to premier Krishna Prasad Bhattarai that the army was under the sole control of its supreme commander. And the Maoists learnt that there was no point sacking the headquarters of Dolpa—ultimate state power rested in Narayanhiti.

A frail government made feckless by the insurgency failed again in December 2000 when rumour-mongers succeeded in stoking the fires of hyper-nationalism over what Hrithik Roshan never said. Within a span of four months, an elected government had been successfully challenged by extremists of the left and the right.

But even for a country numbed by senseless violence, there was nothing to compare with the shock of the Narayanhiti Massacre of 1 June 2001. It exposed an anachronistic institution that created the conditions for probably the worst slaughter of royals in human history. When the army again failed to rescue policemen abducted from Holeri in July 2001, leading to the resignation of premier Girija Prasad Koirala and his replacement by Sher Bahadur Deuba, many saw it as proof of a conspiracy hatched on high.

Things started getting even more bizarre when Deuba dissolved parliament in the dead of night on 22 May 2002. A day earlier, COAS Prajwalla S Rana had hinted about the army's impatience with

democratic rule. The creeping militarisation of the state had started in earnest but Deuba failed to see the trap.

The intent of the sudden dissolution of parliament became abundantly clear when King Gyanendra on 4 October 2002 dismissed Deuba, assumed all powers, and made the constitution of 1990 redundant. Deuba never learnt. When appointed premier once again by the king, he exulted in an interview to this paper, "The Maoists are a bigger problem than the king" (#203). The decision of his own party to hold talks with the insurgents while he remains in the unlawful custody of the royal government is a testimony of his impertinence.

Two years after October Fourth came February First. The king dismissed the government he had himself appointed, imposed a state of emergency, posted security forces at media houses and curbed fundamental freedoms. All in the name of protecting democracy. Despite intense international pressure, the king has refused to correct the course of post-modern monarchy where the country is run like a large estate with the help of traditional loyalists.

The liberty gauge of this paper has moved slightly upwards since we had a guest editor-in-chief poring over our copy. But other than that, there is nothing to suggest that the king believes in the supremacy of the people exercised through their elected representatives.

The safest course for journalists and editors these days is to stick to facts attributable to identifiable apparatchiks. Any attempt to explore the truth behind the lies is liable to be declared unpatriotic. The charge of not being sufficiently nationalistic has been levelled at me so often that I have come to regard it as a professional hazard.

After five years of occupying this space I find to my dismay that the country is still going round and round in circles. Palace propagandists portray the process of circumambulation as a divinely ordained duty but the country is clearly yearning to throw the shackles of its accursed history. Absurdities will most certainly cease and together we shall build a more just and rational society. That's the only state this state should be in. ●

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“Ample space for innovative players”



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Siddhant R Pandey is executive director of Ace Finance Company Ltd which recently upgraded into a full-fledged bank. He spoke to *Nepali Times* about the state of the banking sector.

Nepali Times: What is your view on the court's refusal to grant stay orders on willful defaulters?

Siddhant R Pandey: In our experience, in the past few months, the courts have acted decisively in not granting stay orders in the case of our defaulters. We certainly hope that this will be the norm rather than the exception. The only recourse financial institutions have in recovering bad debts is through the legal channel. When all procedures are complied with and the courts do not support the actions, the entire process of financial sector reform becomes futile.

I believe that whether a defaulter is willful or not, when the banks and financial institutions undertake and fulfil the processes laid out by the rule of law, the courts should honour and expedite all actions. The recent move is welcoming.

Does this mean Nepal's banking sector reforms are on track?

I wouldn't go that far. There should be a separate judicial body that looks into these problems the banks and financial sectors are facing. I don't mean just the debt recovery tribunal. Financial sector reform without judicial sector reform, to use an analogy, is equivalent to jumping out of an airplane without a parachute on. Basically, prudent regulatory systems should be in place. Therefore, it is imperative that our judicial system undergoes reform measures and keeps up with the times. Otherwise the loopholes in the system can and will be exploited to retard any progress.

How are credit institutions like yours faring in general? The economic stagnation doesn't seem to be affecting banking as much as other business sectors.

The handful of professional and innovative players in the market will continue to survive and do well. We at Ace Finance have continued to evolve with the times. Our ability to identify, analyse and respond to

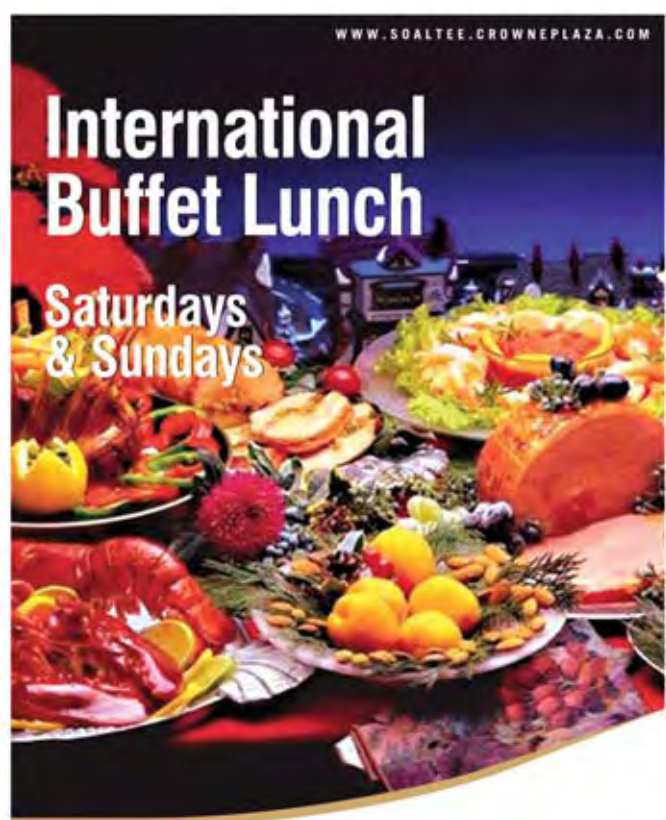
opportunities has served us well. In the fiscal year 2004/05 we will be in a position to give our shareholders at least 15 percent cash dividend. Having said that, I think banks and financial institutions will have to go through a time of deep introspection in the near future. Investment banking products need to be introduced and new financial instruments allowed. The recent introduction of bonds being traded in the secondary market is a healthy start towards developing the financial market. I fear that the next fiscal year will be difficult for the financial sector. The downturn in the economy will have a systemic effect in the entire market.

Isn't the market too crowded and the competition getting too cut-throat for it to be cost effective?

There are unhealthy practices in the market. I feel that unprofessional players will be slowly weeded out. Mergers and acquisitions will have to take place to meet the capital requirements set out by Nepal Rastra Bank. However, I feel there still is ample space for innovative players. In terms of GDP, the percentage of total capital of banks and financial institutions is about 0.65 percent, which is not too high. In numbers there are many banks and financial institutions but in terms of capitalisation, at present, it is nominal. In the present context, we have enormous difficulties raising funds for even a mid-level hydropower plant of about 20 megawatts.

You are turning Ace from a finance company into a development bank in the more classic sense. Why is that?

In Nepal, the categorisation of financial institutions is governed by the capital base. The activities allowed are dependent on the capital as well. We have reached saturation point at our present core capital base of Rs 120 million. In order to grow we need to inject more capital and be allowed to perform further activities. Our strategy can only be fulfilled once we upgrade.



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Starting from scratch

Political parties need to recast their image as solution-driven leaders

Three out of four Nepalis today (those less than 35 years of age) know of no other system than the one under which they grew up and became adults—multiparty democracy. Yet the political parties remain

STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari



unable to drum up wider public support for pro-democracy efforts. The *netas* make speeches, rally in Ratna Park, publish opinions, and beg foreign governments and international NGOs to help restore democracy in Nepal. It's time they borrowed ideas from the business world to identify and understand their customers, and then craft and deliver consistently clear messages to push for the results they want.

Their first task is to understand who their constituencies are and flesh out what they want. For historically entrenched reasons, the institution of monarchy can paint the entire nation as its constituency and get away with it. But no matter how national they think they are, the political parties do not enjoy a similar historical advantage. As such, their strategy must be different. They must stop trying to represent all Nepalis all the time.

Why? Doing so only makes them seen as representing everyone and therefore no one, making their pro-democracy messages spread too thin over abstract goals.

Who, for instance, does Girija Prasad Koirala represent? People of Biratnagar? The Koirala clan? The Nepalis in the villages? The Maoist victims? Various people

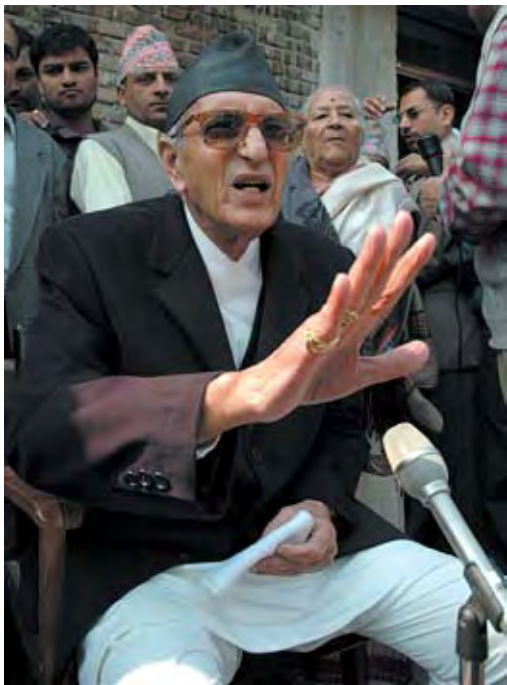
will give different unhelpful answers. Unless the parties rework their image as forces fighting for the concrete interests of their constituencies—farmers who want market access for their vegetables, journalists who want to keep their FM radio jobs, people of Kapilbastu who want secure neighbourhoods or the urban middle-class that wants strike-free schools for children—and come together to repeatedly explain how those interests are best safeguarded within a democratic framework, their constant attempts at martyrdom on behalf of the generic Nepali

persistently non-partisan manner. This is where genuine political leadership is required. Besides, such efforts will showcase their abilities to work together for straightforward national goals—helping them recast their image as solution-driven leaders rather than entitlement-seeking *netas*.

The public is hesitant to support the parties' bid for power lest it gives them another chance to loot the treasury. And the acts of corruption that took place in the 1990s remain much more vivid than the details of bigger crimes that went on earlier.

That is why, playing the blame game or saying 'We are sorry' achieves little at this point. The clearest signal of change comes from replacing the corrupt with young and untainted Nepalis of different castes and backgrounds and allowing them to assume decision-making positions to shape the future. Or else, the parties risk being continually seen as clubs for quarrelling and corrupt old men who, despite the rhetoric, have no fresh agenda to address oppressive social conditions, urban and rural displacement, joblessness, decreasing opportunities for social mobility and the forces of globalisation that appear to make most Nepalis no more than janitors worldwide.

Knowing what the customers want and then relentlessly catering to their demands is what successful competitive businesses are about. Having failed to get what they wanted since October 2002, it's time the political parties started consulting their customers and then putting out believable messages as to why what they are selling is better than what the other side is peddling. ●



KIRAN PANDAY

janata will never make their pro-democracy messages stick in people's mind.

Nepalis tell pollsters that they want the civil war to end. For the parties, this presents an opportunity to start engaging the public to help end the war. Merely chanting, 'Give us a chance again and we'll show how' is not going to help. They need to seize the initiative to treat the end of the war as an urgent, difficult, yet achievable goal and then go about lining up resources in a



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Ground to a halt

Samaya, 21 July

समय

TERATHUM—All NGOs’ activities have come to a standstill in the last month after the Maoists ordered them to stop working for one year. Affected are around 60 NGOs and INGOs throughout the district, including those registered with the people’s government.

Many of the NGOs were working with money given by donor countries for the development of remote areas in the region. Chairman of the NGO Federation of Terathum, Kapil Deb Singh, says, “NGOs here have contributed to the health, education, road, drinking water facilities, bridges and agriculture in the district to improve the economic status of the people. But now, all this has come to a standstill.”

According to the Federation, around six organisations that had started work here have terminated their programs altogether. The Maoist decision has also put Helvetas, a Swiss INGO that had just started building the 80-km ‘green road’ connecting Myaglung to Sankranti bajar, in a difficult position. The objective of the road



construction was not only to connect but also to improve the economic, social, cultural and educational conditions of the people in the 15 VDCs that it would touch. With an estimated cost of Rs 30 lakh per km, Helvetas had aimed at completing the green road within the next three years.

Kishor Chandra Dulal, former chairman of the Village Development Committee of Terathum, says, “This negative attitude of the Maoists toward development activities has created problems for road construction in the Atrai area.” After the warning from the rebels, 293 community forest areas, dalit awareness organisations, environment development programs for the empowerment of the people and many others also face setbacks.

The 30 NGOs registered with the Terathum NGO Federation had set aside a budget of Rs 150,000 for development activities in the area. Now, since the budget cannot be used, all the plans and efforts of the people will go to waste.

Corrupt captain

Jana Bhawana, 11 July

जना भवना

Employees of the Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation say that ever since the CIAA and the RCCC began investigating the RNAC, the state carrier’s top officials are out to shield its operations director, Capt Shishir Kumar Sharma. According to sources, on 28 April the RCCC had issued a notice asking the RNAC to furnish a personal file on Capt. SK Sharma. Signed by the Undersecretary of the commission, Yadhab Prasad Koirala, the notice stated that the file be presented within seven days. The airline has bent over backwards to save Sharma. It is understood that both the CIAA and the RCCC are now investigating Sharma’s fake education credentials, phoney age certificates and various shady dealings, like his attempt to smuggle a plasma tv screen into the country on board the royal flight bringing King Gyanendra back from his visit to Jakarta and Boao.

Injustice

Letter to the editor in
Himal Khabarpatrika, 16-30 July

हिमाल

After the government administration was forced from rural areas, the Maoists have been exercising their rule through Village People’s Committees. However, entrusting such power to local cadres has resulted in injustice towards villagers, as the party workers are busy collecting donations. The rebels’ disregard for social justice has caused society to slide even further backward than it was before, resulting in the people losing their trust in the Maoists. But opposing them in the village means unnecessary trouble. The people have tolerated this so far

but now the Maoist cadres have started issuing notes to them saying, “If our orders are not followed...” What kind of justice can be expected from such people?

Tek Bahadur Oli, Saudi Arabia

No books

अन्वपूर्ण पोष्ट
Annapurna Post, 16 July

It has been three months since the new academic session started but most community schools in the eastern district of Ilam are still without textbooks. This has made running classes and conducting exams a problem. “Grade One students do not have books at all while students from Grade Two to Five do not have enough books,” says Tulsi Baral, a primary teacher of Amar Secondary School in Batbote. Textbooks were distributed on the basis of the coupon system this year. According to the District Education Office (DEO), 40,000 sets of books were distributed to primary schools on the basis of the numbers of students who passed the exams and new enrolments. But teachers complain that the books weren’t made available to the schools according to the coupons sent. They say that many of the deliveries are yet to be made.

Kamaiyas

Editorial in Kantipur, 19 July

कान्तिपुर

Five years ago on 17 July, the government declared all Kamaiyas free. Thirty thousand bonded labourers of five districts in the west were granted freedom. This abolishment of the Kamaiya tradition was one of the most important decisions made by the democratic government.

The Kamaiya revolution is still active today as a peaceful movement. Ever since, the free Kamaiyas have been demanding

their right to earn a livelihood, and on the occasion of five years of freedom, they took out a protest march and sent the government a plough as a gift. Their meaning was clear—but still the government remains blind to the problems these Kamaiyas face even today, five years after having gained freedom.

Before they were declared free, Kamaiyas were indebted from birth, their rights to education and freedom curtailed. After the 1990 Constitution guaranteed their organisational and individual freedoms, it also granted thousands of young people freedom from slavery. After repeated requests for support to the local district administrations of Bardiya, Banke, Kailali, Kanchanpur and Dang were ignored, representatives of the Kamaiya revolution showed up outside Singha Darbar to stage a protest. This support group was able to explain their problems to the democratic government and forced the government to grant them complete freedom. Their strategy was to first gain freedom from slavery and then to fight for their rights.

After gaining freedom, many started their own businesses, some became a part of organised farming, their children went to school, and due to freedom and unification, their self-confidence also increased. But there are still thousands who remain clueless and unable to adapt to their new free lives. It is necessary for them to understand that freedom is most important. In spite of the internal conflict between leaders of the Kamaiya movement, they continue to work for the unification of the organisation. Even today, like five years ago, they have to be able to implement the support they receive from NGOs, society and media. It will then be impossible for the government to ignore their pleas.

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कान्तिपुर Kantipur, 18 July

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“... they agreed that on the case of Nepal, it’s going to be critical for the king to restore civil liberties. And both of them hoped that that would happen as soon as possible.”

R Nicholas Burns, undersecretary for Political Affairs of the State Department, at a press briefing on 18 July on the meeting earlier that day between Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh and US President George W Bush.

SELECTED MATERIAL TRANSLATED EVERY WEEK FROM THE NEPALI PRESS

New cabinet appointments

हिमाल Himal Khabarpatrika, 16-20 July



Badri Prasad Mandal: Within a week of the king telling him: "Sometimes it is necessary to act in politics", the Sadhabana Party's general secretary, one time vice-prime minister and minister many times over, Badri Prasad Mandal, has again been named minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives. During the Panchayat era, Mandal was infamous for sexually assaulting a nurse at Bir Hospital. But the fact that Mandal shares his home district Morang with Girija Prasad Koirala seems to be the real reason behind his new appointment.

Prakash Koirala: He stood against the People's Movement in 1990, has no personal attributes and is known more for using his father BP Koirala's name. After he was named the Minister for Science and Technology, Koirala had this to say: "I have walked with BP's ideology of national friendship." However, many are surprised that Prakash hasn't given up his loyalty to the palace, even after his uncle Girija Prasad Koirala helped him win the election, made him minister and even elected him to the core committee of the Nepali Congress. His support for the February First move got him expelled from the party's general membership.



Salim Miya Ansari: His political birthplace is the UML. Ansari, however, opted for constitutional monarchy as his main religion and chaired the Socialist Party three years ago. In 1994, the UML made him the minister of Forest and Soil Conservation, and the coalition government after that gave him the Tourism Ministry. The only reason Ansari made it to this list is because he represents a minority community. After taking RNAC to the brink of extinction, Ansari left the UML and entered caste politics with the Muslim Ittihad Sangh.

Yankila Sherpa: Tourism and Civil Aviation Assistant Minister Yankila Sherpa is a tourism entrepreneur and a nominated member of the Upper Assembly. However, although now an MP and minister in the king's political experiment, she says: "Don't ask me anything about politics, ask those who have been ministers before."



Golche Sarki: Sarki is among those few in the UML who supported the February First move and quit the party. He was elected to parliament on a UML ticket in 1990 and came to the limelight after he assaulted then Minister Ram Chandra Paudel with a shoe while parliament was in session. After being nominated Assistant Minister for Transport Management, Sarki said, "My nomination is an honour for the whole Dalit society"

Chakka Bahadur Lama: Otherwise known as Chewang Lama in Humla, Chakka Bahadur has been appointed assistant minister for Local Development. Before being elected an MP on a Janamorcha ticket in 1990, Lama spent most of his time with western professors and academicians who visited Humla. He has worked on documentaries such as *The Magic Mountain*, *Dragon Bride*, and even Discovery Channel's *Lonely Planet* series, promoting his native place. In addition to being an expert on the culture, history and people of the region, Lama also acts as a guide for trekkers heading for Mt Kailash and Mansarovar..



Nikshya Shamsher Rana: With the national flag embossed on his jacket, Nikshya Shamsher Rana is a chief protagonist in the "*raja au desh bachau*" campaign. He is the coordinator of the National Unity Committee and a hardened pro-monarchist who does not wish to hear of multiparty democracy nor lay his eyes on democrats. Rana, now Assistant Minister for Health and Environment, is the great grandson of Juddha Shamsher, youngest son of Keshar Shamsher and a relative of the queen.

Jagat Gauchan: The man chosen by the king to take charge of the Ministry of Physical Planning and Works, Jagat Gauchan was jailed for a year for his involvement in the murder of journalist Padam Thakurathi. Gauchan, a karate player, is known for riding around town with his friends armed with a gun. He also has a business on the side making money by sending non-athletes abroad.



PICS: KIRAN PANDAY



Niranjana Thapa: Thapa was Home Minister in 1989, during the Panchayat era, and played a significant role in attempting to quell the people's movement. He has now been chosen for the Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs. Thapa never participated in multiparty democracy but chaired the commission for legal amendment.

Senate Shrestha: Assistant Minister for Education, Senate Shrestha's family members have all been named after the fundamental factors of democracy. Cabinet is his younger brother, Parliament and Sansad are his two sons while his daughter is named Session. Senate's father Dil Bahadur Shrestha is considered a loyal pro-monarchist and a hardened supporter of direct rule. Senate is also facing corruption charges relating to a fertiliser scam, along with Home Minister Dan Bahadur Shahi, and has to report to the Supreme Court. Trained as a pilot, he also made big business as a commission agent.



Binod Kumar Shah: Newly appointed Assistant Minister for Water Resources, Binod Kumar Shah was elected from Dailekh on the ticket of the Nepal Majdoor Kisan Party (NMKP) in 1994 but switched to UML. That created such a rift between the two parties that NMKP was soon calling UML an 'MP stealer' and Shah was labelled 'runaway MP'. Shah quit the UML and joined pro-monarchists to support the February First move. "

Dr Roop Jyoti: That the vice-chairman of the Jyoti Group, Dr Roop Jyoti, is a king's favourite became known when he was nominated for the Upper House. However, it remains to be seen how the Harvard PhD holder in Political Economics and Government can help his colleague Finance Minister Madhukar Shamsher Rana. Jyoti, who stood in the municipal elections for pradhanpanch from Kathmandu in 1986, and lost, is a firm proponent of the hire-and-fire policy for the Labour Act.





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Legend has it that during the construction of the Changu Narayan temple in Bhaktapur, one of the stone elephants, which was incomplete, began crying and bleeding. The event disrupted the kingdom and work on all other sculptures was halted until King Mandeb ordered that the statue be erected as it was—half-finished.

Back then, stone sculpting was considered sacred. Sculptors considered their work to be an offering to the gods. Various rituals were performed to purify the stone, the sculptor and installation site before hammer and chisel were put to the stone. But modernity and technology soon changed things. Religion gradually lost its place and sculptors became known more for the art value of their work rather than the spiritual value. With photography and instant prints, the demand for sculpting as an art form and other methods of carving declined.

“In the old days sculptors had perfected the art of imitation. They could make statues that looked like they would bleed if you cut them but with technological advancement, this skill was pushed away. Contemporary stone sculpture was born as a rebellion against technology,” says sculptor Om Khattri. The need to make art unique and technologically irreproducible increased, encouraging creativity, imagination and feeling.

At the month-long exhibition held in the Nepal Association of Fine Arts after a 15 day workshop which concluded on 2 July, contemporary sculptors of Nepal gathered to showcase their work. It was powerful evidence that the Nepali tradition of stone sculpting is very much alive and has taken new diverse directions from just temple art.

Professor Govinda Narayan Jya-poo, 80, is a scholar of contemporary art. He stands by his sculpture of a pregnant woman whose womb has been cut open to reveal the child inside and explains: “What I’m trying to show is the eagerness of the child to



ALL PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

escape the womb and enter the world to become his own person.” The details are subtle: the heaviness of the woman’s breasts signifies pregnancy but the sculptor has left the stone rough to depict pain.

“Contemporary sculptures are based on traditional foundations,” explains Jya-poo, “the difference is in the shape and style. Contemporary works focus more on expression of emotions and presentation skills rather than on adornment.” The other artists at the workshop agree, saying that traditional sculpting concepts demand life-like statues. They recount numerous tales of sculptors who painstakingly crafted the eyes of statues. It was believed to be the moment when life was injected into their creations, one ray of light from those eyes was powerful enough to kill a person so they used buffaloes as shields, which too, died.

The times have changed and with them the artists’ idea of inner light. Hridaya Ballabh Pandey’s works consist of a fishlike form radiating light from its centre. “I wanted to show the light and energy that is in all of us,” he says.

Contemporary sculpting is now getting its due as an art but is still struggling commercially. Jya-poo tells us proudly, “I have never really sold my work. I give it away to people as tokens of friendship or respect.” But many sculptors do make a living by selling their work. Khattri says, “It is possible but Nepalis need to appreciate our work, help create an environment where sculptors, artists and such creative people can thrive.”

This is not to say traditional sculpting techniques have faded. It is still popular among sculptors and has a lucrative market both in Nepal and beyond. “The traditional art of sculpting is established in the art world and in Nepal, has a special niche carved out with the worship of idols,” says Khattri, “but to be able to compete internationally, artists now need to expand into contemporary forms.” ●



Clockwise from top: Govinda Narayan Jya-Poo’s ‘Let Me Come Out Soon’, Ram Krishna Bhandari’s ‘Nari Mukti’, Ganga Dhar Saru’s ‘Nari’, Sharadha Man Shrestha’s ‘Time and Power’, Raju Pithakoti’s ‘Hejjo ra Ajiha’ and Laxman Bhujel’s ‘Waiting’.

Polishing up the past

Itumbaha regains its old glory

On 21 July, the auspicious day of Guru Purnima, four gilded gajurs were installed on the ridge of the Agam Chhen shrine, marking the completion of the restoration of the south and west wings of Itumbaha Monastery in the heart of Kathmandu. The third project under Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust's Buddhist Kathmandu Campaign, the restoration was begun in 2002 with the support of the Federal Government of Germany.

The Buddhist Kathmandu Campaign focuses on restoring and documenting the city's Buddhist heritage sites, such as bahas, bahis and shrines. Itumbaha is one of the five principal monasteries in the capital, especially important for its ritualistic significance in Newari Buddhism and for its woodcarvings, some from the 13th century. Its courtyard is dotted with votive structures and chaityas of great artistic and religious significance.

In the monastery's north wing are four copper plates that tell the legend of Gurumapa and the establishment of Itumbaha. A man named Keshab Chandra is

said to have built the monastery after the premature death of his son but first he had to get control of the land, which was occupied by the demon Gurumapa. Chandra struck a bargain with the demon: if he could have the land, Gurumapa could devour the dead bodies of children.

The deal was made but soon parents appealed to Chandra to reverse the agreement and he banished the demon to Tundikhel, promising him that no one would ever build on his new home. Even today, Gurumapa is said to live near a tree on the east side and every year on the day after Holi, boiled rice and buffalo meat are left there as offerings. When exasperated, parents still scare their children by saying Gurumapa will gobble them up.

The restoration of Itumbaha could also serve as a model for other heritage sites. Of around 83 Buddhist monasteries in the city only three preserve their original architectural style. Many lost their charm when modern concrete buildings were built onto them. Others have been destroyed to make space for modern encroachment.

Vehicles have been denied access in and around the outer courtyards of Itumbaha, guaranteeing an appropriate atmosphere and respite from urban Kathmandu. Restoration work was carried out carefully, using some of the best craftsmen in the Valley. Of the team, Bijay Basukala meticulously surveyed and documented the building and managed construction work. Indra Kaji Shilpakar repaired damaged struts and carved pillars, and Rajendra Chitrakar cleaned and retouched the painted struts.

Itumbaha housed some of Nepal's finest religious paintings. Three of these, dating from the 15th and 18th centuries, were stolen in 1979. Only last year they surfaced at an exhibit in Chicago and are now in the hands of a New York collector. The Itumbaha Guthi plans to bring back the paintings and develop an area in the monastery with the help of Eco Himal, an Austrian NGO, to display such valuable Newari art and artefacts. ●



ALL PICS: NICK DAWSON

The courtyard of the restored Itumbaha monastery (above). A strut of the main shrine of Itumbaha dating approximately from the 17th century (right).



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‘The poorer the people, the



‘Mao Zedong held absolute power over the lives of one-quarter of the world’s population and was also responsible for the deaths of well over 70 million. This is more than any other 20th-century leader.’ That is how Jung Chang, author of the best-seller *Wild*

BOOK
H Forster-Latsch



Swans, and her husband Jon Halliday, expert of the Kremlin archives, start their biography of the Great Chairman and Helmsman.

Even after his death in 1976, when all the truth about the disastrous Cultural Revolution had become evident, Mao was still seen as a great revolutionary who, with his peasant army, defeated the Japanese and chased out the nationalist regime of Chiang Kai-shek.

Even today, movements across the world claim to be the real heirs and successors of Mao Zedong. There are self-styled Maoists in India and a vanguard movement in Nepal. Since 1996, Nepali Maoists have been waging a fierce Mao-style

‘people’s war’ to overthrow the monarchy, establish a republic and finish Mao’s ‘incomplete’ revolution because Chinese communists, in the view of their Nepali comrades, betrayed the Great Helmsman.

This biography unveils the existing myths about Mao and the Chinese revolution. From the beginning, the authors say, Mao was not only a cruel and pitiless ‘party emperor’ but they argue that the revolution never actually took place.

For Henry Kissinger, till as recently as 1997, Mao was a ‘philosopher’ pursuing a ‘quest for egalitarian virtue’. This is a rather macabre and cynical way of describing the man, whose policy—supported by the majority of the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) leadership of that time—of the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961) to a ‘brilliant communist future’ resulted in the most devastating man-made famine in human history, leaving over 30 million people dead.

Mao also played a vital part in installing the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia in 1975 and once told his soulmate Pol Pot: “You have scored a splendid victory. Just a single blow and

Getting to know the unknown story of Mao Zedong

no more classes.”

Born in 1893 into a well-off peasant family, Mao stopped at nothing. His main intention was to destroy the old system with force and violence and to create a new huge Chinese Empire, outdoing all the power and glory of former dynasties.

Before converting to Marxism, he said in 1917-1918 that he did not “agree with the view that to be moral, the motive of one’s action has to be benefiting others”. And how to change China? “The country must be destroyed and then reformed...this applies to the country, to the nation and to mankind...”

Both views fitted very well into his later Marxist-Leninist views of class struggle (‘no mercy for class enemies’), protracted revolution even under the proletarian dictatorship and permanent ‘ideological remoulding’. Chang and Halliday show very convincingly that Mao’s pitilessness was his ‘most formidable weapon: against peasants and intellectuals, in his civil war against Chiang Kai-shek (as a dictator a novice compared to Mao) in his power struggles and in his relationships with other CCP leaders. Unforgiving and vindictive, Mao had two concerns: himself and his power.

The authors subtitle their biography ‘Unknown Story’. This isn’t quite true, quite a lot of the facts are already known. But there hasn’t yet been such a consistent, well-researched biography that presents a lot of new details and information. The authors spent more than 10 years on the book, poring through Russian archives (the CCP’s archives are still top secret) and did innumerable interviews with witnesses of the times.

Some of their main theses: the CCP was a product of Soviet communism—through his intimate and intricate links with Stalin, Mao worked his way up to the top of the CCP, denouncing,

scheming, blackmailing, looting and poisoning.

Mao welcomed the Japanese invasion of China as a chance to seize power. It was not Mao who wanted a united front against Japan, it was Chiang. To undermine him, Mao even collaborated with the Japanese intelligentsia. Mao did not seize power by revolution, there was no uprising anywhere in favour of the communists. His victory was mainly due to the help of foreign powers, especially Soviet Russia, which occupied northeast China with its key industrial bases after 1945 and handed over Japanese arms to the Chinese communists and POWs to fill up the ranks of the Red Army.

Once in control Mao was seized with the ambition of turning China into a superpower. He was obsessed by the idea that after a nuclear war with the USA only China would survive simply because of its huge population.

So he got the Soviets to give him nuclear weapons. Even after Stalin had been replaced by Khrushchev, Mao still held onto Stalinism by promoting armed struggle as the only way to revolution in the Third World and used a lot of money to try to undermine the influence of Soviet ‘revisionism’.

Mao had a pet theory about poverty: ‘People say that poverty is bad, but in fact poverty is good. The poorer the people are, the more revolutionary they are. It is dreadful to imagine a time when everyone will be rich...’ Mao’s last wife Jiang Qing (“I was Chairman Mao’s dog. Whoever Chairman Mao asked me to bite, I bit.”) always warned her staff: “To serve me is to serve the people.”

This book paints the frightening picture of an emperor, who in his last years, being ill and half blind and with a premonition that after his death his achievements would be abolished,

Cowdung takes the cake

Nepal’s biogas program bags coveted award

Nepal’s internationally-recognised biogas promotion program has got yet another feather in its cap. The Biogas Sector Program (BSP) has won this year’s prestigious Ashden Award for Sustainable Energy, beating out hundreds of other applicants worldwide.

BSP Executive Director Sundar Bajgain received the award from Prince Charles earlier this month in London at a gala ceremony at the Royal Geographical Society attended by 300 dignitaries (see picture).

The citation for the 30,000 pound award says BSP won for ‘outstanding achievement in using sustainable energy to improve the quality of life and protecting the environment’. Since it was launched in 1992 with Dutch and German support, BSP has built 137,000 family-size biogas plants in 66 of Nepal’s 75 districts, saving 400,000 tons of firewood, 800,000 litres of

kerosene and preventing 600,000 tons of greenhouse gases from escaping into the atmosphere.

At a ceremony last week in Kathmandu to celebrate the award, Bajgain said the Ashden prize money would be ploughed back into BSP’s cold climate biogas research, which is integrating biogas with rainwater harvesting in arid high-altitude areas of Nepal.

“The award was not just a recognition of the numbers we have achieved, it is a recognition of our success in using appropriate technology to improve living standards of farmers who have installed biogas and helped save the forests,” says Bajgain.

Underground biogas plants are fed a mixture of cowdung and water, and bacteria already present in the dung breaks it down into methane gas which collects in the digester dome under pressure and can be piped to the kitchen stove.

Aside from biogas plants, BSP has helped set up 57 private construction companies specialising in digester construction and development of ancillary industries, which together employ 11,000 people and benefit nearly a million Nepalis. In the next phase, BSP hopes to add another 200,000 plants by 2009, develop a commercially viable market-oriented biogas industry and to follow the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) guidelines so Nepal can collect its reward for carbon dioxide not emitted into the atmosphere because of the biogas plants. Nepal is already eligible for \$5 million a year in CDM compensation for the plants constructed to date, but first it has to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. (See also: ‘Hurrah, Nepal’s future is in the dung heap’, #234)

The Dutch aid group, SNV, BSP’s main backer, is now replicating the project in



Bangladesh, Vietnam, Cambodia and some African countries. Says SNV’s Nepal Director Matthias Moyersoen: “It’s a tribute to the hard work and commitment of our Nepali colleagues at the BSP that the biogas program has become a model for the rest of the world.”

BSP has been testing modified designs of biogas plants in Solukhumbu at altitudes of 2,700 m in the past two years. “The results are promising,” says BSP’s Prakash Ghimire, “we got good gas generation even in winter.” By allowing mixed

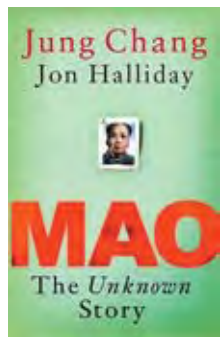
more revolutionary they are'

showed the only human emotion he was capable of: self pity. One month after his death, on 9 Sept. 1976, the Gang of Four around his wife Jiang Qing was deprived of power and Deng Xiaoping cancelled the people's communes and collectivisation and began the process of opening China's doors to the outside world.

What is left today of Mao's totalitarian rule is a deficit of ethics and morals in Chinese society. In the epilogue, the authors write: 'Today, Mao's portrait and his corpse still dominate Tiananmen Square in the heart of the Chinese capital. The current communist regime declares itself to be Mao's heir and fiercely perpetuates the myth of Mao.'

China still hasn't made a radical review of the Mao period and the history of the CCP. The Chinese authorities have banned this biography. Maybe Chang and Halliday focus too much on Mao as a lonesome monster, perhaps they really do neglect a deeper social and political context. But this biography was mainly written to deconstruct once and for all the myth of Mao the Great Helmsman—one of the most totalitarian rulers of the 20th century. With this masterly and thrilling book the discussion about Mao Zedong, the history of communism in China in the 20th century and of Maoism enters a new era. ●

Helmut Forster-Latsch is a German sinologist, translator and author who spent 1977-81 in Beijing where he studied Maoism and became disillusioned with it.



Mao
The Unknown Story
by Jung Chang and
Jon Halliday
Jonathan Cape
814 pages
25 pounds



CHRIS HARMAN

Many people on the left once saw Mao Zedong as a great revolutionary—in the same league as Marx, Engels and Lenin. They carried Mao's portrait on many of the demonstrations across the world in the late 1960s.

Even today you meet people who wear Mao badges, believing his policies were the alternative to present day China's enthusiasm for market driven capitalism. Such people will hate the new book, *Mao: the Unknown Story*, by Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, because it sets out to puncture the Mao myth from beginning to end.

However, this book has two faults. First, it claims the truth was previously 'unknown'. This may be how it seems to the authors, who were both once bedazzled by the Mao myth. Jung Chang, the daughter of a Communist Party official, was indoctrinated with it as a school student in the China of the 1960s. Jon Halliday was a member of the editorial board of the journal *New Left Review* during its semi-Maoist phase in the late 1960s.

But some on the left had already graphically described the most important negative features of Mao's regime and had concluded that it in no way pointed towards human liberation. This was what the founder of the Socialist Workers Party, Tony Cliff, showed in his book *Mao's China*, published 48 years ago.

Secondly, and more importantly, Chang and Halliday's book provides no explanation for Mao's policies apart from his own lust for power. But what happened in China can only be understood if you look at a wider picture than that of Mao's psychology.

A handful of activists, including Mao, came together at the beginning of the 1920s to form the CCP, believing the struggles of

Mao wasn't uniquely evil

the small but highly concentrated working class could provide a revolutionary socialist alternative to imperialism and warlordism.

Mao: the Unknown Story provides some interesting new details about this period but fails to link them to the rise and defeat of a mass revolutionary movement. Instead it falls back on crude stereotypes such as Mao joining the CCP out of careerism, or the revolutionary regime in Russia in 1920 wanting to 'subvert' China so as to enhance its own national power. There is no feeling at all in the book for the power of the workers' movements of the 1920s.

The book may be correct when it challenges past accounts of Mao's role in the famous Long March but it fails completely to explain his success in first gaining control of the CCP and then in defeating Chiang Kai-shek.

History is not just a product of nasty individuals. There were clearly bad elements in Mao's character but particular circumstances brought these to the fore, allowing them to shape events. This was certainly true once Mao was in power. The regime he established rested on a section of the educated middle-class, organised through an authoritarian party, who had taken control using a peasant army as cannon fodder.

The class goal of this ruling group was for China to become a great power alongside other great powers. The goal of catching up with the west and increasing China's military power did not die with Mao. But now it was to be done through participation in the world markets. This has led to economic growth and prosperity but also appalling conditions in vast areas of the countryside, as shown in recent Chinese films such as *Not One More*, about a village school, and *Blind Shaft*, about coal miners.

The weakest point about this book is its claim that Mao was uniquely evil and was responsible for 70 million deaths—more than Hitler and Stalin put together. All rulers in this barbaric capitalist world are prepared to see people die if it is necessary to achieve their goals of accumulating wealth or armaments. And they preside over a system that sees 50,000 die in the Third World each day from poverty-related causes—which means more deaths in just four years than under Mao's brutal regime. ●

(Socialist Worker)

Chris Harman edits the *International Socialism* journal. His books include *A People's History of the World*.

slurry to soak in the sun all day in holding areas and with proper insulation, the temperature inside the plant is high enough to sustain gas generation.

The Ashden award coincides with the launch this weekend of *Biogas: Theory and Development* by the founding father of biogas research and application in Nepal, Dr Amrit Bahadur Karki, with Jagan Nath Shrestha and Sundar Bajgain. This book has everything you always wanted to know about generating methane from dung but were too hoity-toity to ask.

Pare away the chemical formulae, the technical jargon and the graphs and what you see in biogas is nature in its infinite simplicity. The sun's energy is converted into carbohydrate by chlorophyll in plant life, domesticated livestock eat the plants, digest them with the help of bacteria in the intestines and if the digested material is allowed to ferment in the absence of oxygen, it produces methane, which can be used as cooking gas. So, in a roundabout way, you are bringing the sun's fire into your kitchen. All you need to do is have a pressure control system, which is achieved with Nepal's

indigenously-designed biogas digester of which Karki was one of the early pioneers in the 1970s.

This simple technology is beautifully explained with neat diagrams. There are do's and don'ts and a trouble-shooting chapter. The future of the technology is discussed with particular reference to cold climate biogas in higher altitudes and human sanitation aspects.

The book is a result of Karki's lifetime of work in appropriate technology, not just in Nepal but in Africa and southeast Asia. In that sense it is a labour of love. It is also a tribute to the application of the technology in the field by the BSP. The only thing we can add is that this book should be translated into Nepali and disseminated as widely as possible so Nepali farmers benefit even more from biogas' proven benefits. ●

Kunda Dixit

Biogas
As Renewable Source of
Energy in Nepal
Theory and Development
Edited by Dr Amrit B Karki
Prof Jagan Nath Shrestha
Mr Sundar Bajgain
BSP, Kathmandu 2005
Pp 171 +xiv

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Bombs, books and bucks

Universal primary (and secondary) education is attainable

JOEL E COHEN
and DAVID E BLOOM

The \$82 billion emergency supplemental bill to finance American military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan leaves the United States spending more money on military power than is needed on a yearly basis to permit every child in the world to receive, within one decade, both primary and secondary education.

Clearly, the question is not whether universal education is affordable but whether America and the world can afford to neglect the political, economic, social and health benefits of educating the roughly 380 million children around the globe who currently do not attend school.

Education, no less than military might, is a security imperative, for it helps the world—both individuals and societies—to escape the consequences of widespread poverty, rapid population growth, environmental problems and social injustices. Education strengthens social and cultural capital, which contributes to strong and stable polities. It improves human health, increases life expectancy and lowers

fertility rates.

Aside from these obvious benefits, education is also a widely accepted humanitarian obligation and an internationally mandated human right. But this right is unrealised for the 28 percent of the world's school-age children who are not enrolled in school. Most are illiterate and live in absolute poverty. The majority of these children are female. Of those who enter primary school in developing countries, more than one in four drops out before attaining literacy. Moreover, enrolment does not necessarily mean attendance, attendance does not necessarily mean education and education does not necessarily mean good education.

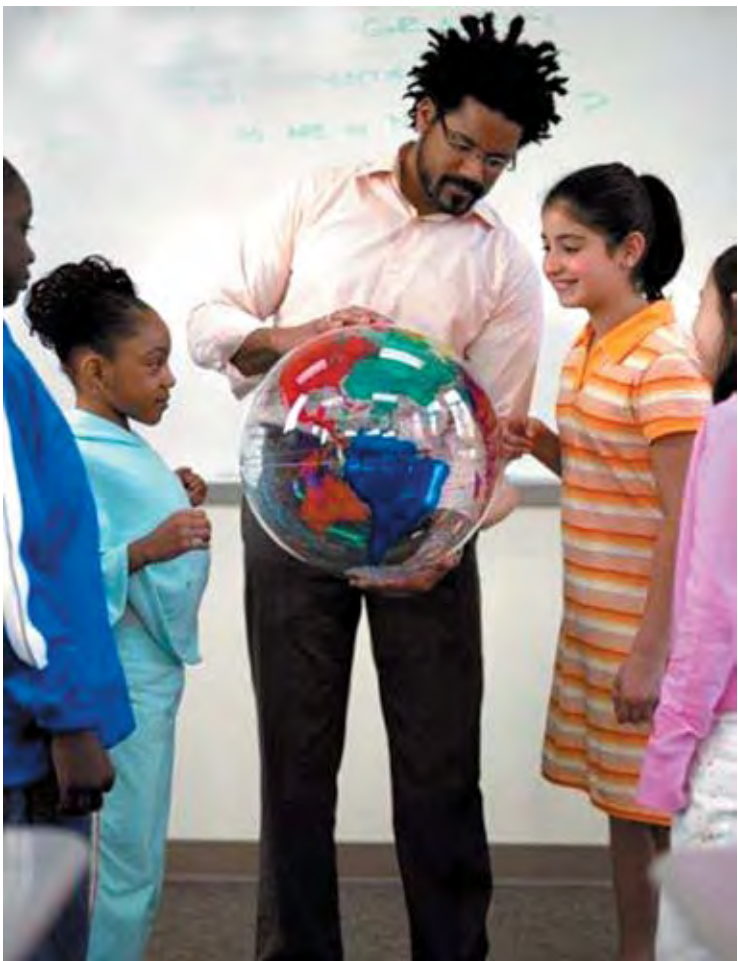
In 2000, the global community pledged to achieve universal primary education (UPE) by 2015. Many poor countries are wildly off track when it comes to meeting this goal. At the current rate of educational expansion, an estimated 118 million children will be absent from primary school in 2015. Nearly twice that number will not attend secondary school.

The World Bank, UNICEF, and UNESCO have estimated that achieving UPE by 2015 will entail annual expenditures of between

\$6.5 billion and \$35 billion, on top of the approximately \$82 billion that developing countries spend each year on primary education. These funds will be needed for schools, teachers, teacher training, materials and equipment, administration and assessments.

We believe that the UPE goal is not ambitious enough: the world should aim for and can achieve, high-quality, universal secondary education, as well as universal primary education. Developing countries spend approximately \$93 billion per year on secondary education. If a gradual approach is taken between now and 2015, the annual additional cost of extending secondary education to every child will likely be between \$27 billion and \$34 billion.

Creating the necessary space to accommodate universal enrolment will require significant investment. These funds would at best ameliorate—not eliminate—prevailing global disparities in educational access and quality. Not included is the cost of other improvements needed to encourage children to attend school, such as meals, tuition subsidies and more effective, dynamic and



knowledgeable teachers. Nor does this include the cost of improving national governments' capacity to collect data and to implement and oversee educational reforms.

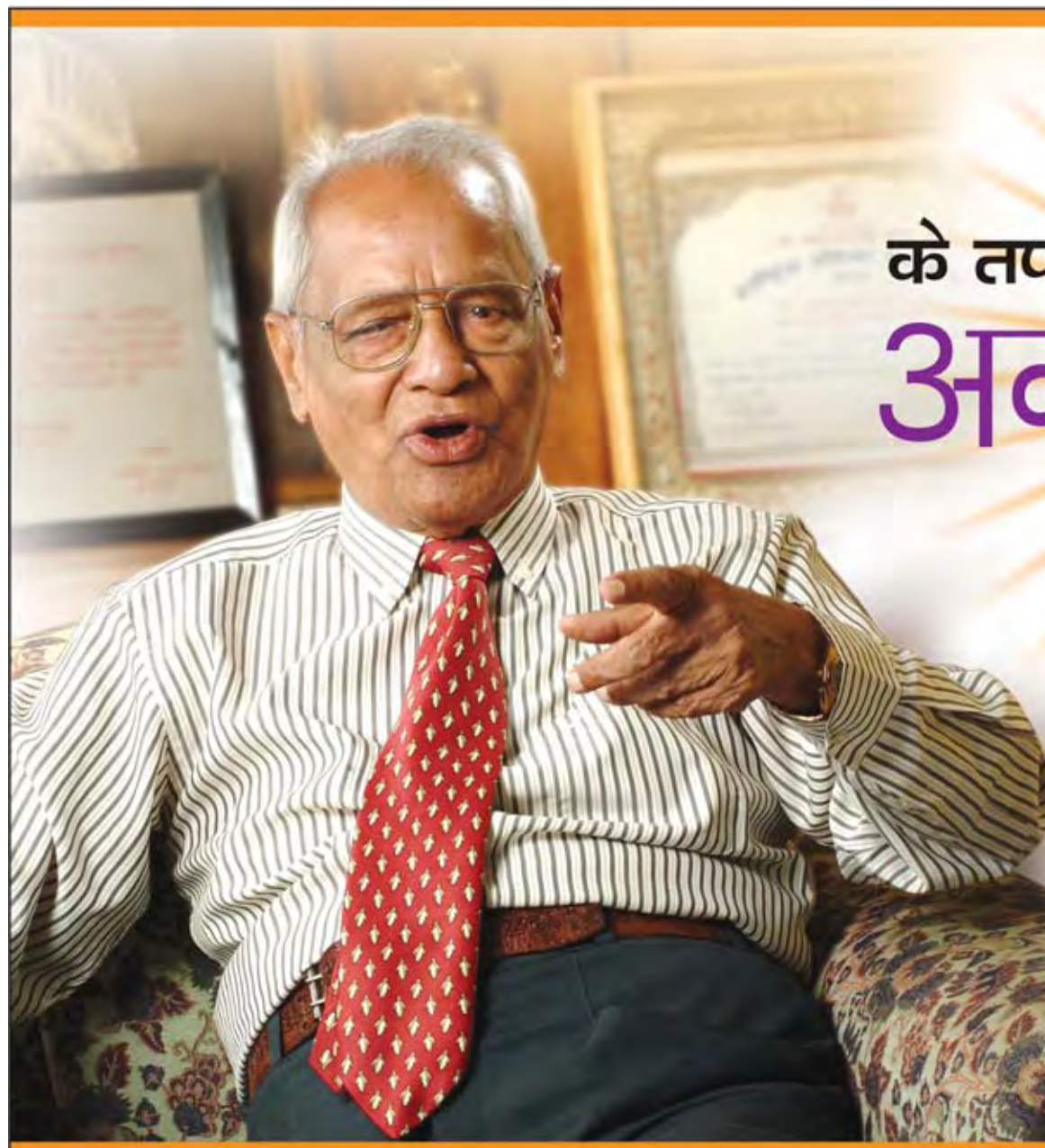
Though more money is essential, it is not sufficient. In some regions, cultural barriers inhibit schooling of girls and of linguistic, religious and ethnic minorities. The political energy required for expanding and reforming education is difficult to muster in the world's

wealthiest nations.

None of these tasks are possible without supplementing the funding already provided by developing countries. The world, or even the US by itself, has the ability to provide the additional funds needed. ●

Project Syndicate

Joel E Cohen is Professor of Populations at the Rockefeller University and at Columbia University. David E. Bloom is Professor of Economics and Demography at the Harvard School of Public Health.




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

Tiger roars again

Golf superstar Tiger Woods takes home his 10th major victory

The 134th edition of The Open Championship (The British Open) concluded last weekend. This year's event was all the more special, the venue being the home of golf itself—the Old Course of the Royal and Ancient at St Andrews. Top golfers, 155 of them, from around the globe qualified to take part in this prestigious event and over 200,000 spectators were present to cheer on their favourite golfers.

The perfect time difference between Scotland and Nepal has always made this event a great pleasure to watch live on tv from evening to midnight. All the other major golf tournaments are held in the United States and cause you to lose sleep.

The Old Course was set up in splendid condition for this great event played from 14-17 July. The links course demands a great variety of shots, thoughtful play and mental strength to overcome its features, which include over a hundred deep bunkers, soaring coastal winds of 30-40 mph and tricky greens with deadly contours.

This year, the players were comparatively fortunate as the usual atrocious weather conditions did not materialise. What was also amazing was the way the balls were rolling like crazy, easily 50 yards with the drives, and the fairways were cut so low that players were using putters even from 60-odd yards out from the green.

In case you missed the live action of this exhilarating tournament, Tiger Woods produced a magnificent exhibition of golf to win and move his total of 'Major' victories to double digits. Winning a single major is the greatest accomplishment for any golfer, just imagine how it must feel to do it 10 times over!

Woods started the tournament in great fashion, running seven under for 12 holes on the first day and finishing with a round of 66 (six under par). This was followed by a bogey free 67 on day two to have a four-stroke lead over Scot Colin Montgomerie going into the weekend.

Saturday was a hard battle for Woods as two of his drives went into bushes on hole six and nine and he had to take unplayable lies. However he was still able to come in at 71 (one under par) and his lead was just a slender two strokes over Spain's Jose Maria Olazabal. South African Retief Goosen and Colin Montgomerie were three strokes adrift at nine under par. Still within the hunt were Vijay Singh, Sergio Garcia, Brad Faxon and this year's US Open Champion, New Zealander Michael Campbell.

On the final day, Tiger displayed really great shot making on the first nine but couldn't turn birdies, even from inside 10 feet, except for two two-putt birdies on hole five and nine. Colin had a great run on the front nine to close the gap to one stroke but from the par three 11th onwards, failed to continue his charge. Thereafter, Tiger just played a safe game with tremendous accuracy and confidence for an easy victory.

Tiger had a score of 274 (14 under par) for four days for his five-shot victory over Montgomerie and earned \$ 1,261,584. The victory was Woods' second in a major this year and his 10th overall, bringing him another step closer to the 18 won by the great Jack Nicklaus, who bid an emotional farewell on the same venerable links only two days earlier. The 29-year-old Woods became the second player to win all four major championships twice—and he did it quicker than Nicklaus by just under two years. At the prize presentation, Woods thanked his dad, praised the skill of his fellow competitors, particularly that of Montgomerie and Olazabal and expressed joy at being able to play at the home of golf. ●

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

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



Really, it's over

Tour de France hopefuls look to life after Lance

GEORGE VECSEY

It's over. Been over for days, ever since Lance Armstrongaced the Pyrenees on Sunday. The only thing that can stop him now is jealousy-induced vertigo.

"You could fall off and break a collarbone," Armstrong said the other day. "Tour over."

Barring that, the other cyclists at the Tour de France recognise that Armstrong has done it again. "I see Lance all the day—very, very strong," said Ivan Basso, the Italian rider with the CSC team which has big hopes for life after Lance.

"I try to attack him many many times," Basso added, in English, one of his alternative languages. "He pass me. Very strong."

Strong of mind, strong of body. Armstrong again arrived at this year's Tour and, without

locker-room trash-talking (not done in cycling), wordlessly announced his presence the way. Larry Bird once arrived at a three-point contest at the NBA All-Star Game, asking which of his colleagues was reckoning on finishing second. Right now it's Basso.

The riders can only hope this is not one of those Michael Jordan retirements. Lance promised.

It can be stated that somebody else will win the Tour de France next year. Nobody has been able to say that with any kind of assurance, not in this millennium.

"Lance wasn't kidding when he said he was coming here to win the Tour," said Bobby Julich, a 33-year-old American with the team sponsored by CSC, a US information technology multinational.

"If there was anything I could do, I would have done it in the last two days," he added, "we're not disappointed. When you try your best, you can't be disappointed."

Julich is intrigued by the new world that starts next year. "It's been so long, he's been so great, but I'd like to see what it's like," Julich said. "He's forever changed the face of this sport. But now there are people who don't have any excuses any more. Every year there are people who say, 'I can beat Lance' but they haven't. Next year somebody will have to step up."

Armstrong has been a one-man dynasty as part of a team effort with the US Postal Service and Discovery Channel. CSC is betting that in the next age of cycling there might be another way to dominate.

The firm is now sinking serious money into Basso and cycling. On Monday CSC announced it had renewed sponsorship of its team and signed Basso for another three years.

Bjarne Riis, the Danish winner of the 1996 Tour de France, runs the company's cycling team. Riis is a strong figure in cycling. He snagged his Tour when Miguel Indurain stayed on one year too long (something Armstrong is not about to do).

Last week Riis said Armstrong had avoided the bad luck that struck two CSC riders on this Tour. Armstrong, taking this to mean he had been lucky, said he had put the Riis comment in his "hard drive" to motivate himself.

"I respect Lance very much," Riis said, "I can see how good he is. But we were unlucky. I will never be controlled by him. He cannot control the whole world."

With total respect for Armstrong, the CSC people would have liked to beat him this last time around. But those dreams faded when Armstrong powered up the mountains on Sunday. ● (NYT)

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SURYA NEPAL
GOLF

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

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by JIGME GATON

MOONMEEFULL

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-- Margaret Thatcher, X-Prime Minister, UK

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ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Brief Encounters** Photos by Holly Holzer at Siddhartha Art Gallery, until 30 July, proceeds go to Kathmandu Valley Historic Preservation Trust. 4218048
- ❖ **Perceptions of Time** Paintings by Sunila Bajracharya at Lajimpat Gallery Café, until 16 August. 4428549
- ❖ **Art Walk** Traditional artworks at Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999

EVENTS

- ❖ **Bollywood Nite** at Latin Quarter, Baber Mahal Revisited on 23 July, 8PM, Rs 350. 4254260
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Charlie and the Chocolate Factory** Play presented by Rato Bangla School on 6-7 August, 11AM, 2.30 PM, 5.30 PM at St Xavier's School. 5522614
- ❖ **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 at Swayambhu. 4256618
- ❖ **1905 Sundays** Garage sale, pet practices and more. 4215068
- ❖ **Fun in the Sun** at Club Sundhara, Hotel Shangri-la. 4412999
- ❖ **Art Workshop** for kids at Buddha Gallery. 4441689
- ❖ **Rugby Practice** Saturdays. 4435939, citygymktm@hotmail.com
- ❖ **Sanibar Mela** Saturdays at Bakery Café, Dharara, 2PM and Chuchepati, Boudha, 3PM.

MUSIC

- ❖ **Elysium** on 22 July and Reggae Nite on 23 July at Moksh. 5526212
- ❖ **HFT Live** at Hotel Shangri-La on 29 July, 7PM, Rs 350.
- ❖ **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, with live acoustic music, one free drink. 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, Thamel. 4443208
- ❖ **Saturday BBQ** for Rs 888 at Le Meridien, Gokarna. 4451212, dos@lemeridien-kathmandu.com
- ❖ **Culinary Fare** of Game Food at Hyatt Regency, Boudha. 4491234
- ❖ **The Chimney Restaurant** at Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
- ❖ **Mango Masti** Tempting tropical treats at Soaltee Crowne Plaza.
- ❖ **Daily Delite** at Hotel Shangri-La, Lajimpat. 4412999
- ❖ **Crosskitchen** European and Indian cuisine at Lajimpat. 9851083806
- ❖ **Boire and Manger** at Vineyard, Baber Mahal Revisited.
- ❖ **Bawarchi** The Restro Bar for Nawabi cuisine at Lajimpat. 4436673
- ❖ **BBQ Lunch** at Le Meridien, Gokarna Forest Golf Resort. 4445550
- ❖ **Barbeque lunch** Saturdays at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot. 6680080
- ❖ **Special Combo** Burmese and Thai Menu at 1905, Kantipath.
- ❖ **Momo Revolution** Saturdays at the Tea House Inn. 6680048
- ❖ **Krishnarpan** Nepali specialty restaurant at Dwarika's Hotel.
- ❖ **Barbecue Dinner** Every Friday at the Summit Hotel. 5521810
- ❖ **Delicacies** Pastas and snacks at Roadhouse Café. 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

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Spa** Seasonal rates valid till 21 October at Le Meridien. 4451212
- ❖ **Go Karting** at Tiger Karts, special monsoon offer. 4361500
- ❖ **Overnight Stay** at Godavari Village Resort. 5560675, 5560775
- ❖ **Malaysia Dream Holidays** Introductory offers for first four flights of Air Nepal International to Kuala Lumpur. 2012345
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Samir (Salman Khan) is a flirtatious doctor who falls for every second good-looking female but is not ready to commit. As soon as his girlfriend gets serious, he backs off saying he is already married. Enter Soniya (Katrina Kaif), a London-based model who has wild suicidal tendencies and comes to India for treatment. Pyaare (Sohail Khan), an aspiring actor falls in love with Soniya but Soniya falls for her doctor Samir. Samir this time is serious but then starts the chaos.

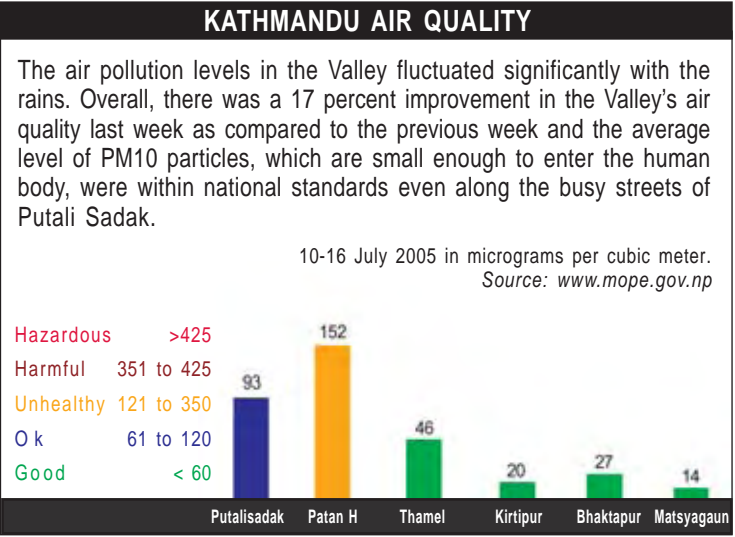
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by DAVID CHAWAN

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NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED

Monsoon has been in its full strength throughout the Himalaya since last week. To ensure the continuous presence of active monsoon, a low pressure line or trough has taken its position along the foothills. This, however, does not signify continuous rains but brief showers only once or twice a day. Due to the topographic effect caused by steep mountains, the monsoon rains occur mostly during nights along the south-facing slope. This satellite image taken on Thursday afternoon shows moisture filled clouds hanging over Nepal indicating occasional rains in the Valley. The days ahead are wet, calm and cool.

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KIRAN PANDAY

SIESTA TIME: First Vice-chairman Kirti Nidhi Bista, Second Vice-chairman Tulsi Giri and Chairman of the Raj Parishad Standing Committee Parsu Narayan Chaudhary take a nap during the announcement of the new budget on Saturday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

WOMEN ON TOP: Ambica Shrestha, founding chairperson of the Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW) Nepal, presiding over the handing over function of international awards received by BPW Nepal at the 25th Congress of BPW International in Kathmandu on Sunday.



KIRAN PANDAY

WELCOME, WELCOME: Girja Prasad Koirala being welcomed by French Ambassador Michel Jolivet and his wife, Michelle Jolivet, at the French National Day celebrations on 14 July.

Congratulation to the winner Times

of the 13th Nepali Times lucky draw

(JULY 6, 2005)



Mr. Surendra Pandey receiving the 1st prize (July 6) from Rajiv Raj Bhandari, Director Himalmedia

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Chaturman, the grass man

T rue to his name, Chaturman Tamang is clever, hardworking and tenacious. This 45-year-old farmer from Ryale VDC in Kabhre has become something of a self-made grass expert.

Agronomists at the National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC) had all but given up hope and abandoned their experiment with different types of grass in leased forests. Chaturman knew nothing about grass, he was just an illiterate farmer. But after the experts had left he started tinkering around with the seeds. Today he's got a lush hillside of grass that would make any cow salivate. Indeed, Chaturman's experiment has become so successful Kabhre's dairy farmers are lining up at his doorstep to buy his seeds.

News of Chaturman's success reached NARC's head office in Khumaltar and the officials travelled to Kabhre to take a look. Indeed, Chaturman's grass is so suitable as cattle feed that it has improved milk yields in this district known for its dairy farmers. It has also stabilised slopes and prevented soil erosion.

NARC officials are now so

pleased that they have turned Chaturman's farm into a model and have brought farmers from all over Nepal here on inspection tours. And in Ryale itself, Chaturman has become something of a celebrity. Others would have let the fame go to their heads, but not Chaturman, who is always up on the slopes tending to his 20-plus varieties of grass. The farmer is now known as Kabhre's grass man and is doing brisk business selling seeds and grass

from his home base.

We ask Chaturman why he works so hard when so many around him laze away their days waiting for the government to come and help and he replies matter-of-factly. "Look at me, I just put in a little hard work and look at the thousands of people who benefited. That's what inspires me, that is my reward."

● Alok Tumbahangphey in Kabhre



ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY



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No noose is good noose

Now that all lorries in Kathmandu Valley are obediently following the new traffic regulation to cover their cargo with blue plastic sheets we can safely say with some degree of certainty, that there has been a vast improvement in the law and order situation in the country and take it as an indication that our democratic way of life is being gradually restored. Of course, there will always be the cynical and jaded communists (oops, columnists) who will see lorry drivers as

UNDER MY HAT
Kunda Dixit



sycophants and write scathing editorials bemoaning the lack of adults-only franchises in this country. But pay no attention to them. Because we know it for a fact that ever since the warbles of mobiles were heard again in Pokhara this week, people instinctively knew that the worst was over and that our ship of state is now sailing forth into a glorious sunset and headed right into the tip of an iceberg.

And for other reports that things are returning to normalcy the public need go no further than our psychosomatic state media which works under the professional principle that no noose is good noose and carried items like these this week:

Council of Ministers Expanded

The government has denied allegations in the anti-national private press that the expanded council of ministers only has sycophants and psychopaths. “That’s a outright lie. The council of ministers also includes wilful defaulters, convicted hit-men, one guy who assaulted an ex-minister with a shoe and a sexual harasser,” said the government spokesperson, “trust the press to only get it half-right.”

A budget budget

The Minister of Belt-tightening announced the new annual budget this week which he said was a projection designed for a “budget economy”. “Everything is budget these days: budget airlines, budget tourists so this is a budget budget,” stated the minister, tightening his belt.

Bahuns even on Everest


KATHMANDU—After dominating the civil service for centuries and making inroads into the army, Bahuns are now going where no Bahun has gone before: to the top of Mt Everest.

The first ever Bahun ascent of the world’s highest mountain was solemnised recently with full Vedic honours including the first-ever thread purification ceremony halfway to the gates of heaven. But the presence of the first priest on the peak did raise some eyebrows from indigenous locals who were heard to mutter: “They’re everywhere, they leave nothing for us.”

Meanwhile, the celebrations in the Newari community over the Everest ascent by the first Newar woman were muted when the Sherpa community proudly took her marriage on the summit to a Sherpa as an indication that their community had a monopoly on Everest. Overheard in a pub at Namche: “After all, she went up a Newarni and came down a Sherpini.”

Unique film festival held

A one-of-a-kind film festival was held in Kathmandu this week in which Manisha Koirala was felicitated in exchange for her Dad agreeing to be anointed Minister of Scientology. The organisers wanted a festival like no other in the world, so no films were shown and no prizes were given.



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