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Weekly Internet Poll # 263

Q. How do you evaluate the Nepali media's role post-February First in upholding press freedom?



Total votes: 2,336

Weekly Internet Poll # 264. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Should the security forces and the Maoists declare a one-month Dasain-Tihar ceasefire?

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00263



A statue for Ramesh

A year later, one Nepali family remembers the terrifying death of their young son



ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY
in LELE

Exactly a year ago this week 12 Nepali workers were brutally slaughtered by an Iraqi terrorist group but Nepalis tempted by higher salaries continue to work in the nation despite the dangers and a government ban.

In the rest of the world the murders sparked outrage and revulsion but in politically-charged Kathmandu the news set off two days of coordinated vandalism, pre-meditated arson of manpower companies and unprecedented attacks against Nepali Muslims.

One of those killed, 19-year-old Ramesh Khadka, had left his lush green village of Lele on the outskirts of Kathmandu two months before he was abducted. Ramesh's body and those of 11 other Nepalis were never found.

On Wednesday, Ramesh's family and neighbours marked the anniversary by unveiling a bust of him in the courtyard in front of the small family home. As people filed past garlanding Ramesh's statue, his relatives



Ramesh's father Jit Bahadur Khadka with mother Radhika, Ramesh's sister and nephew last week in Lele.

T MILLER

broke down and wept. Lalitpur CDO Sthaneswor Debkota was the chief guest and sat at the front reading a newspaper. The grieving family was nevertheless grateful that a government official was present.

Ramesh was the youngest son of a family of four brothers and three sisters. He was schooled only till Grade Seven but was an independent lad, working in a restaurant in the city whose owner also ran Moonlight Manpower Company, the firm that recruited him.

Ramesh's dream was to build a cement house for his family and

start a small business.

"He was a simple village boy with small dreams," remembers his father Jit Bahadur Khadka, 57, a farmer. Sitting outside the family house after a day in the paddy fields, Jit Bahadur recalls trying to persuade Ramesh to delay his trip. "Wait till you're a little older, then we will send you wherever you want," he implored. But Ramesh persuaded the family to collect Rs 200,000, most to be used to pay Moonlight and the rest for his expenses.

Ramesh said he would be able to send back money to repay loans

in a few months. "Don't worry, I will be fine," Jit Bahadur's voice breaks as he recalls his

son's final words just before he saw him off at the airport on 3 July last year.

On the afternoon of 1 September, a video clip of the cold-blooded murders (one man was beheaded, the others were shot) was aired by Al Jazeera and relayed by Indian news channels. Nepali stations found the footage too gory to broadcast.

Continued p4



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SEEING ENEMIES EVERYWHERE

The palace is so fixated on the past it can't see a future with a political party that has consistently stood for reconciliation with the monarchy. The Nepali Congress is still regarded by royal hardliners as the most resistant roadblock to a powerful kingship.

But Nepal's ship of state has post-February First swung sharply in the direction of republicanism. The king's takeover had an equal and opposite reaction in the NC, which this week jettisoned 'constitutional monarchy' from the preamble of its statute ahead of the party convention.

The NC's legacy was built on the work ethic and commitment of thousands of party workers not always reflected at the top by shady power brokers like Khum Bahadur Khadka, Govinda Raj Joshi and Bijaya Kumar Gachhedar, all of them it has to be said, groomed by Girija Prasad Koirala himself.

The NC is defined by its revolutionary uprising against the Rana shoguns and was steered by the likes of Subarna Shumshere and BP. The People's Movement was brought to its successful conclusion by Ganesh Man Singh, whose absence so rankles today. The fast footwork required to get the country a new constitution was possible because of the wily Krishna Prasad Bhattarai. Even the much-maligned Girija Prasad has at least been consistent in standing up against autocracy.

The palace needs all the friends it can get. But one by one it has alienated its closest allies: even sympathetic Americans have turned scathing, the army needlessly needled friendly Indian brass over the INSAS rifles and at home it has radicalised parties that used to swear by the constitutional monarchy.

The NC may still work with a king, but only one who is apolitical. There are many within it, however, who consider the very term 'constitutional monarchy' an oxymoron in present day Nepal.

The king has never concealed his allergy for Girija Prasad but the NC will inevitably have a leadership after him that will give the monarchy even less leeway. Pushed too far, the NC's 'moderate centre' has shifted and it would be a mistake to think this is just a movement lead by lawyers and journalists.

When the king took over he promised peace and democracy. We have neither. To fix things, all he needs to do is sit down jointly with party leaders and sort it out over tea. Otherwise the current changes will be truly irreversible.



KUMAR SHRESTHA

A dirty war

Will Condoleezza Rice cite 'national security' to waive restrictions on US military aid?

NEW YORK—On the eve of King Gyanendra's departure for the annual meeting of the UN General Assembly in New York, Washington is deliberating whether or not Secretary of State

GUEST COLUMN
Tejshree



Condoleezza Rice should apply an exceptional waiver to allow lethal military assistance to the Royal Nepali Army to continue.

In October 2004 the US Congress passed legislation, spearheaded by Senator Patrick Leahy and later signed by President Bush, which required improvements in the RNA's behaviour on some fundamental human rights issues. This legislation included conditions that the army obey orders laid down by the Supreme Court, that it cooperate with the NHRC and

that it investigate allegations of abuses by forces under its control.

Washington had found the RNA's actions in combat such a liability that it could no longer provide military aid unless these conditions were met. Only the Secretary of State, citing 'national security' concerns, could waive the conditions. This came as a blow to the RNA and the government generally. Initially, the RNA did not take the 'Leahy amendment' seriously. Arbitrary arrests, disappearances and torture at RNA hands continued unabated.

In the aftermath of February First, India and the UK suspended lethal military assistance to Nepal although both have since resumed provision of non-lethal military assistance. The US did not announce a suspension but no lethal military aid went in. In the face of such strong international condemnation, the RNA adopted some cosmetic measures, which it hoped would be read as real reform. Instead of refusing to produce a detainee before the courts, the security forces have adopted the cynical practice of immediately re-arresting the same detainee after a court ordered release, often from the very steps of the courthouse.

The NHRC has been occasionally allowed to visit military detention centres but has often been denied access to all prisoners—conditions under which the ICRC has refused to operate. The RNA sometimes now announces prosecutions of soldiers but as no details of alleged offences are offered, whether these are for war crimes or

for drunken or disorderly conduct is anyone's guess. And even in the handful of cases where soldiers have been tried for serious crimes, the court martial results—when available—are shocking: for homicide a two-year sentence, for sexual assault and rape a transfer to another barracks.

The US believes firmly that the Maoists are a real threat to Nepal and to the region. Given ongoing US military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and its long-standing anti-communist policy, there is strong sympathy in Washington for governments like Nepal fighting a brutal insurgency campaign—and even more sympathy given that those insurgents are self-declared Maoists.

Even if there is a special waiver, it is very likely the US will follow the lead of India and the UK and send only non-lethal assistance. If the US chooses this route, the RNA should not interpret it as a signal of support. It is not a step towards future lethal military assistance, for which the RNA has been clamouring but a rebuke. It will be a way of maintaining leverage over the RNA without providing it the weapons to commit further abuses.

The Maoists regularly and systematically violate human rights and the laws of war but that does not justify the RNA engaging in similarly brutal tactics. For two years in a row now, Nepal has the sad distinction of having the largest number of reported 'disappearances' worldwide. This little known fact says a lot about how the war is being fought by the RNA.

If the RNA does not care about the rights of Nepali citizens, then the US will have great difficulty accepting it as a legitimate partner. ●

Tejshree Thapa is a researcher in the Asia Desk of New York-based Human Rights Watch.

Constitutional farce

What to do when the constitutional forces are pulling in opposite directions

When the government reneged on its promise to let the Nepali Congress use the BICC premises for its 11th general convention, the party held it in an open playground in the sweltering heat of August.

But this just gave thousands of delegates from all over Nepal a sense of déjà vu. Their party was once more on the street

STATE OF THE STATE
CK Lal



doing what it has been doing since the reign of King Tribhuban: raising its voice against the excesses of yet another activist king. In Jawalakhel on Tuesday afternoon speakers most critical of the king got the loudest applause.

Meanwhile, King Gyanendra ignores pleas for unity between constitutional forces and continues to consolidate his 'constructive' role. On a tour of the west last week the king frequently changed between casual and camouflage. He instructed newly nominated district development chiefs as head of government in pastel civvies and then changed into the military fatigues of the supreme

commander of the Royal Nepali Army to boost troop morale.

In mannerism, too, the king switched between king and chairman of the council of ministers alternating between the first person singular 'I' and the royal 'we'. The chief executive threatened "departmental action" against errant officials. There was no mistaking the royal resoluteness to be the real ruler. Then, speaking to state media the king asserted he was directly answerable to the people and was forthright about his ambition to be a hands-on king.

On a conceptual level, absolute monarchists are much clearer in their beliefs than votaries of absolute democracy. A constitutional monarchy is a political fantasy that can't be replicated anywhere other than in the country that first thought it up. Britain doesn't have a written constitution but it has a constitutional monarchy. So every parliament is a 'constituent assembly' because it can depose the reigning king with a simple majority. In that sense, every general election is a

referendum on the future of monarchy and a contest for the formation of a constituent assembly rolled into one. The arguments of Nepal's ardent royalists aren't without merit—the idea of a ceremonial king is antithetical in a hierarchical society.

All this has pushed the political parties to rephrase their agenda. Democracy is a system of governance 'of the people, by the people and for the people' and organisations claiming to represent the people must challenge the idea of absolute rulers or be prepared to be consigned to the dustbin of history.

To be regarded as a 'constitutional force' you had to be a practitioner of peaceful politics, you had to come together to counter the violent insurgency in a united way. Nobody seems to believe in it anymore. The king wants to chart his own course and live up to the expectations of those who want him to be a true Hindu monarch reigning and ruling in the name of god.

And by adopting a republican agenda, political parties have also accepted that the 1990 constitution is now beyond redemption. Developments since the 4

October 2002 takeover have thus confirmed the Maoist prognosis: the age-old conflict between the palace and the people can only be resolved by a competent constituent assembly empowered to assert the supremacy of the people.

Now it's the international community's turn to respond. India's twin-pillar doctrine of stability hasn't worked and is unlikely to. The Americans seem to be having doubts about a military king keeping an unruly country under control and feel that with the Maoists continuing their rampage, the search for a political solution can't be delayed much longer. Due to an association dating back to 1816, nobody understands the peccadilloes of Nepal's ruling families better than the Brits. They have seen a lot of intrigue in the Kathmandu Darbar but nothing like what is going on today.

In the final analysis, it is democracy that links peace and stability in the country. The search for alternatives to establish the people's supremacy must extend beyond the boundaries of a constitution made ineffective by repeated willful abuse. ●

LETTERS

TURNAROUND

A travel agent is quoted in 'Tourism turnaround?' (#262) as saying that "at least 30,000 go via Nepal" to Tibet. A quick check of the seasonal weekly schedule and plane size of Air China tells you that this figure is nonsense. A similar delirious figure was circulated months ago about Khumbu. Nepal's tourism statistics are rife with double and triple-counting. Go to Bhutan and Tibet via Kathmandu and, presto, you are three tourists. "In Nepal the violence is not random" is the best sales pitch ever—it feels much better when it is targeted. Nepali tourism pros are the Rip van Winkles of Shangri La. Since 40 years they offer the same product: trekking where they make you stay in lodges that are dumps. Not even one percent of worldwide tourists want or are able to go to Khumbu, yet Nepal markets it like crazy.

Tourism is in the dumps because of the Maoists, they say. Not true. Nepal's tourism decline started in the mid '90s when top tour operators started either reducing their commitment or pulling out completely (not only from Nepal but other Asian destinations) due to frequent customer complaints. I don't know of any quality travel agency that still features Nepal in its program, nor am I aware of any newsletter that promotes the country. Nepal is nowhere on the radar screen.

Still, for what it offers Nepal is way overpriced. Examples: a three-week trip with trek is more expensive than a four-week hike across the Alps where there is excellent accommodation plus food and a clean environment. Or you have a week in Malaysia including hotel, breakfast, rental car, or one week in a beach in Turkey with full board.

So Indian tourism looks promising? Hey, that's the biz you want to be in and with profit margins in the decimals. Finally the China illusion: the potential Chinese tourist sliding out of a 3-series Beamer glancing at a travel brochure from Nepal—the land where they read the Mao book backwards.

Hans B Nix, Munich

REGRETS

I feel nothing but pity for Sachit Shumsher Rana's delusion of not understanding how much the Nepali people understand ('No regrets', #262). He should now know that this is a democratic country where all the people can't be fooled all the time. It seems that he has inherited his ancestral traits and he hasn't grown out of it even after 1990.

His interest is still to establish an autocratic system where the 'king should be given the authority of the head of the state'. I don't trust the hypocritical party leaders wither but that doesn't mean autocracy is an alternative to democracy.

Milan Gurung, email

TOONTIME

I was somewhat perplexed by the following amazing 'sentence' that appeared in the *Rising Nepal* on 25 August. Can your esteemed fourth organ enlighten me on what it is supposed to mean and let me know whether it sets any sort of record?

'In their comments to RSS, they said it is a complete violation of the law and an effort made to tarnish the image of free press for the fourth organ of the state, that advocates for independent press in pursuance to the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal and regulations under it, to publish cartoons aimed at bringing Constitutional Monarchy, the foundation of belief and trust of Nepal and the Nepali people into dispute.'

Yours patriotically

Stephen J Keeling, Kathmandu



KADIRGAMAR

Kanak Mani Dixit's point about the media in South Asia not taking much interest in the assassination of Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar is well taken (Southasia Beat, #262). However, I'd like to point out that here at Radio Sagarmatha 102.4 FM we conducted a 45-minute studio discussion on the *Aja ka Kura* program with Nepali foreign policy experts on the implications for Sri Lanka of the killing and the lessons for Nepal from the Sri Lankan peace process.

Kiran Pokhrel, Radio Sagarmatha

REPLY TO RESPONSE TO RETORT

Re: Sambhav Sharma's retort (Letters, #262) to my earlier reply (Letters, #260) to his first response (#259) to my Guest Column ('Support by default', #258). The difference in the incidence of corruption between mature democracies and ours is that in the former you have to look for the

corrupt with a floodlight and in ours, they are everywhere. The monarch did not breach the constitution but salvaged it by taking over the reign because corrupt politicians had so ruined the nation that there could be no election, no parliament and no elected cabinet. While I am not an apologist for all the monarch's appointments, we should be thankful that there is an article 127 in the constitution to keep the country from going astray. To say that democracy has a self-cleansing system is to collude with the corrupt politicians who want to make their millions now and tell the people that democracy will take care of them later. A real democracy must begin to do better than the preceding regime from Day One. That is the bottom line of a genuine democracy. Regarding ex-generals in the Election Commission, they too are respectable citizens and must not be deprived of opportunities to serve the nation. So the only option for the country to return to democracy is for the parties to cleanse and reincarnate themselves under a new set of leaders capable of evoking trust among the people once again. The monarchy will continue to be there as the fallback position in the country's tryst with democracy whatever the outcry of ever-hungry politicians and their well wishers.

Bihari K Shrestha, Lalitpur

COMMUNITY

Re: Guest column by Jorg Frieden ('Imagined communities', #260). While I agree with Frieden's assessment of the situation, I find his conclusions rather one-sided and unhelpful. There is no denying that well-functioning grassroots democracy stimulates the community development process. However, we can't agree with his conclusion that in the absence of grassroots democracy, community development efforts do not have any role. Self-help groups, community owned resource management initiatives and micro-enterprises play a big role in creating the framework for a peaceful society leading to well functioning grassroots democracy. When people learn how to resolve conflicts in local saving and credit groups or production cooperatives and how to elect representatives in these community level organisations, they will also learn how to tackle local Maoists commanders or elect responsible village level representatives once democratic institutions are in place.

Development is a complex and continuous process. It is not contingent upon a single precondition or premise. Yes, vibrant local democracy promotes

community development efforts. However, in the absence of the first, we should not imagine that the second is invalid. In fact, the role of the community becomes even more important in the absence of democracy.

Frieden's suggestion to plan projects with VDCs and DDCs is not realistic. Given the conflict it could take decades to restore elected VDC level institutions. Does this mean that development agencies do nothing more than advocate a return to democracy? Democracy should be a local need not an externally-imposed phenomenon. For rural people caught in the crossfire, it is only community-based initiatives that can bring hope. And the role of development agencies to support meaningful community initiatives is ever more prominent.

GB Banjara, Tinthana

INCOMMIIIHIIII!

Pravin Rana's piece ('The art of diplomacy', #263) hits all the right points. The one clear point is that INSAS rifles are to blame for the RNA's disaster in Pili. There is no doubt that many 'brave and under appreciated soldiers' lost their lives. But there is a reason for this tragedy that Rana misses: it's called bad planning, horrible execution and even less common sense on the part of the RNA leadership. If the INSAS rifles are so bad, why did the RNA buy 30,000 of them? After this tragedy and all the lies and excuses to cover up the RNA's own tactical blunder, what impact does this have on soldiers who carry the INSAS into battle? Maybe in his hurry to cover up for the RNA, Rana missed the point that undermining the INSAS exposes the RNA to even more criticism. Rana should maintain his comical writing and stay away from defending the RNA leadership: they don't need another PR disaster to cover up their list of past disasters.

Raj Thapa, email

HEROES

Herogig is insane. And that is a compliment. I would like to buy you a drink when I am in Nepal next, a 'girlie' drink.

Vinita, email

● I can't quite figure out which part of your paper makes me more depressed: the two resident lunatics Herogig and Kunda Dixit or the ruler featured in the rest of the paper including the front page. Anyway, the fact that you can still make us laugh gives me hope.

Gina Rai, email

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from p1

Even as Kathmandu erupted in riots, thousands of poor, rural Nepali youth were waiting to go to Iraq circumventing a government ban on working there. Nine thousand Nepalis were stranded in Bombay alone after waiting several days to board flights to Iraq via Jordan. In Lele another young man was preparing to leave for Iraq even as news of the abductions came.

Although it was and still is illegal to send workers to Iraq there are still myriad ways to circumvent it. There is a heavy demand for workers willing to go to such a dangerous place, and Nepalis are desperate enough to be tempted by the three times higher salaries in Iraq compared to Kuwait or Qatar.



Most are recruited by agencies in Nepal who pretend not to know they are Iraq-bound. The workers are picked up in Jordan by middlemen and taken into Iraq where many work as cleaners or cooks in American military bases. Many ex-British and ex-India Gurkhas and former Nepali security

personnel are today employed by private security contractors in Iraq. The families of the 12 killed last year received Rs 1 million each from the government, Ramesh's family used a part of it to erect his statue. However, under US law the dependents could be entitled to much more money if they can prove their sons were working for US contractors in Iraq. Jit Bahadur recalls that just before he left, Ramesh had indicated that he might be "cooking for the Americans".

By evening, the guests had left. Jit Bahadur and his family sat in the veranda. All they had was a statue to remind them of Ramesh.

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Our work with Nepalnature.com began in early 2004 when we contacted Rajendra Suwal regarding his work with Demoiselle cranes, alongside the Lumbini Crane Foundation, in the Annapurna region of Nepal. This initial contact blossomed into a highly successful trip in October 2004, where under the guidance of Rajendra we successfully filmed 50,000 Demoiselle cranes migrating through the Kaligandaki Valley, and also for the first time filmed Golden Eagles attacking these cranes on the wing. From the moment the team landed in Kathmandu until our departure, Nepalnature.com were instrumental in overseeing a series of highly efficient logistical arrangements, that often changed without warning, and proved themselves from the outset to be more than capable in tackling every eventuality.

In March 2005, The BBC provided Nepalnature.com with a new request – "How do we film the best ever high altitude aerials of Mt. Everest?" I do not need to mention how ambitious this project was, given the potential risks. The set up involved countless liaisons between the BBC, Nepalnature.com and the Royal Nepalese Air force, and required proficient logistical awareness from the team at Nepalnature.com to co-ordinate this. I genuinely believe that this trip would not have been possible, and certainly would to have been as successful as it was, if we had not had the expertise of Nepalnature.com working with us in Nepal.

Following the success of filming high altitude aerials of Mt. Everest, we sent a team to Sagarmartha National Park to film mountain wildlife and mountain scenic. Again, planning and co-ordination were key to the success of this trip, and again Nepalnature.com was a key member of our team. They proved themselves again able to adapt to the differing needs of filming crews, to provide accurate information on the wildlife of the region, and to be able to tackle each and every task that was required of them.

Finally, I would like to mention Rajendra Suwal's part in managing and co-ordinating these trips. From the very beginning, he has worked beyond the call of duty in overseeing each and every detail of our plans. More importantly though, he has become a close friend to all of us, and one that we hope to work with for a long time to come.

It is extremely rare to work with an operator who can so easily and efficiently handle such varied logistics without faltering. I should also mention Nepalnature.com's determination to ensure the success of each and every one of our missions. It is these factors that make them one of the best operators that I have worked with across the globe. Nepalnature.com is continuing to work with BBC on a variety of projects and I have the utmost confidence that they will prove themselves time and time again.

Vanessa Berlowitz
Senior Producer, BBC Natural History Unit, England



Self-immolation

This week last year, Kathmandu's streets were in flames after a coordinated orgy of violence

ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY

By 7:30 PM on 1 September Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba had called an emergency cabinet meeting to discuss diplomatic responses to the killings of 12 Nepali hostages in Iraq. His government was being blamed for not doing anything to secure their release but the cabinet completely failed to anticipate possible backlash at home.

Things were already volatile in Kathmandu that week. Four days previously the Girija Koirala-led Nepali Congress had called a valley *hartal*, cars were stoned and motorcycles set on fire as rented mobs went on a rampage. All it needed was a spark and the killings of the Nepalis provided it.

DSP Dinesh Amatya of Kathmandu District Police Office says unrest was expected. "We had discussed at our level about the possibility of violence erupting," he told us. But there was little preparation even though by 10PM a mob of NC activists had gathered outside the Jama Masjid and were stoning the shops and setting tyres on fire on the street.

When police finally arrived, the riot was already underway and carried on till midnight. "If the police had used a little more force in the beginning, the crowd would have dispersed," recalls Sohan Shrestha of Kantipur TV. The crowd went home threatening to return the next morning to burn the mosque down. In Kupondole a large crowd attacked Moonlight Manpower, which had recruited the workers.

Still, no one took it seriously. There was no government statement through the media asking people to stay calm. The secretary of the Nepali Jama Masjid, Mohammad Asraf, had told the police that night the mosques would be attacked. Mohammed Nizamuddin, a

mosque committee member, recalls: "DIG Shrestha spoke of the possibility of protesters going out of control and advised Muslims not to come out of their homes and said the mosques would be protected."

In the early morning of 2 September, some journalists were called on their mobiles by party activists who they knew from anti-regression protests to come to the Jama Masjid. By 7AM protestors were already burning tyres in Maharajganj, Chakrapath and Chabahil junctions. One overseas employment office in Chabahil was the first to be attacked.

The Jama Masjid was attacked, looted and religious books destroyed. Several of the attackers were later identified in video footage and photojournalists' pictures as regulars during NC anti-regression riots but there were also Hindu fundamentalist groups and unknown agent provocateurs in the mob. They were emboldened when they saw the riot police and army patrols weren't doing anything to stop the arson. They climbed to the mosque's dome, ransacked the prayer rooms and set fire to the building.

Across town Muslim homes and the butchers' shops at Dharara were being attacked.

By midday, 298 of 511 registered manpower companies, offices of Gulf Air, Pakistan Airlines and Qatar Airways were plundered and torched, Kantipur and Space Time were attacked. One person was killed when police opened fire on rioters marching on the Egyptian Embassy but even though the situation had spiralled completely out of control the death toll was surprisingly low. When a curfew was finally declared at 2PM it was too late.

The official report of a commission of inquiry into the riots, headed by Supreme Court justice Top Bahadur Singh, was never made public. Singh said Wednesday the inquiry made recommendations regarding compensation to victims and on a rapid security response in future.

But the report failed to clearly answer two main questions: who was responsible and why did the security forces take so long to respond? What was the cabinet, which included Mohamad Mohsin, doing? Then Home Minister Purna Bahadur Khadka was reported saying he instructed the police to intervene several times on the morning of 2 September but they didn't heed his orders. Khadka finally talked to Deuba who called C-in-C Pyar Jung Thapa and a curfew was finally declared at 2PM. Why the delay?

Although there was popular anger against Iraqi terrorists, the attacks on the mosque, manpower agencies and against the media houses bore all the hallmarks of a coordinated, pre-planned attack. If so, who was behind it? The commission of inquiry is silent.

Among Kathmandu's Muslims, many of whose ancestors have lived here for centuries, the riots were unprecedented and left an indelible scar. Most still don't want to talk about the trauma of the mob attacks, and say they want to forget the past and move on. Said one Muslim shopkeeper in Bag Bajar: "Those who died were after all our Nepali brothers as well." ●

See also:
www.nepalitimes.com/issue212/index.htm
www.nepalitimes.com/issue213/index.htm



KIRAN PANDAY

KU biotech takes off

DHULIKHEL—Kathmandu University has received overwhelming response to its new Department of Biotechnology masters program. Five hundred students applied for 30 slots in the department last year, indicating job saturation in the IT industry and the perception that biotechnology is the wave of the future, according to faculty members. Vice Chancellor Suresh Raj Sharma is pleased with the response and says it will allow Nepal to build human resources in the field, which has applications in agriculture, the food industry and in development of herbal products. “We made a late entry into the information revolution, we can’t remain behind on the bio-technology revolution,” Sharma said last week at a KU seminar on key areas in the application of biotech. The keynote address was given by Kasipathy Kailasapathy, associate professor at the Centre for Advanced Food Research, University of Western Sydney. Kailasapathy spoke on the growth of the health food industry using encapsulation technology and probiotic nutrition. “With Nepal’s biodiversity and cash crops this is the time to jump on the biotechnology bandwagon, there is tremendous potential,” he said.

With or without you

Life-changing trekking fiction has got another boost with British author Carole Matthew’s new novel *With or Without You* that transports readers to the Himalaya. This is an enlightening personal journey with quite a few laughs along the way. While huffing and puffing up Himalayan trails, neurotic, urban, recently dumped editor Lyssa Aleen tries desperately to win back her boyfriend from the gorgeous young outdoorsy type who swept him away. As her assumptions are challenged by the American tour guide who serves as a catalyst for her transformation, Lyssa wonders if she can ever return to the old life she now sees with new eyes. When it’s time to go home, she has the chance to find out ... and faces the hardest decision of her life. (Red Dress Ink, \$17.95 ISBN: 0373895453, not yet available in Kathmandu stores).



Banking on football

Nabil Bank has signed an agreement with Three Star Club, which will now be known as Nabil Three Star Club. In addition to making a financial contribution, the Bank will also assist the football club with merchandising and other promotional materials. As part of its “three pillars” approach, Nabil has also made alliances in the health and education sectors. It supports the Tilganga Eye Hospitals Glaucoma Centre and is in talks with a charitable institution to provide schooling to underprivileged children.

NEW PRODUCTS

CLEAN DRINKING WATER: Drinking water purification system WaterGuard has been launched in Nepal. Manufactured by Srijana Pure Drinking Water Industries and distributed by Himalayan Snax and Noodles, WaterGuard is based on a diluted chlorine solution that is added to water storage vessels just before drinking.



Painfully rebuilding

A year after his shop was destroyed by an angry mob, Tulsi Tuladhar struggles to keep going

This week last year Kathmandu was burning. Expressing rage against the brutal killings of 11 Nepali migrant labourers—who have since been forgotten—in far-away Iraq, roving vandals ransacked mosques and Muslim-owned small businesses all over the city. Hundreds of offices of overseas labour suppliers were

STRICTLY BUSINESS

Ashutosh Tiwari

destroyed in a matter of hours. By the time a curfew was slapped in place at two in the afternoon, many looters had made off with computers and other valuables.

Though civil society pundits blamed intolerant Hindu fervour and misplaced nationalism, victimised businessmen I spoke with at the time said that what they witnessed were not mobs imbued with religious hatred and insular Nepali nationalism but crowds of people who, once they figured out police would not come, turned their ostensible grief into an opportunity to loot. One businessman who saw his 10-year-old motorcycle spare parts business go up in smoke on Kantipath was Tulsi Tuladhar (see Strictly Business, #214). Recently, I caught up with Tulsi.

On the present: “I have learnt to move on but with great effort. Last December, I borrowed

money from relatives, friends and a bank. I now run a spare-parts shop, much smaller than the one that was destroyed, in a new location on Kantipath. Sometimes I am very busy. Often I feel disappointed, hopeless and lost.” **On his losses:** “I lost an inventory worth over one crore. Furniture, software, contact books, manuals—all were lost. My three employees lost their jobs. When you lose your thriving business on one fine Wednesday morning for no reason, it’s hard to live with the whys and the hows. I was devastated for months. I still have difficulty controlling my emotions. These days I have to make a real effort to get excited about work.” **On the government’s efforts:** “The government set up an investigation committee. I visited all the committee members and pleaded with them to do something. The Nepal Chamber of Commerce helped some of us meet with the appropriate government officials. Initially they were all sympathetic. But over time they saw that they had to deal with the owners of hundreds of businesses and the task appeared to have overwhelmed them. Later they started making excuses to avoid us. In the meantime, the government fell and the committee got lost in the shuffle. I don’t know whether they ever came up with

an investigative report of any sort.” **On the culprits:** “The police reported that they did arrest a few looters. Looking back, that announcement seems to have happened because of the pressure put on them by a high-profile victim—Kantipur Publications. But no one contacted any of us on Kantipath for identifications and follow-ups. There were no trials. No one was sent to jail for widespread arson, vandalism and looting. The events of 9/1 have pretty much been forgotten, except by people like me who have to live with the memories every day.” **On his future:** “I take heart from the story that Min Bahadur Gurung (Strictly Business, #178) was able to start afresh to build his Bhatbhateni Supermarket after he lost his small shop to fire. Sometimes it’s that kind of hope for something better that gets me going.” Would we be able to cope better if the 9/1 riots were to reoccur? No. The police haven’t shown any further competence in crowd management. Civil society refuses to do the unglamorous work of bringing the truth to light, long after the stories have fallen off the headlines. And the government, continuously operating on a crisis mode, remains unable to be accountable to any section of society, let alone to individuals such as Tulsi. ●

The Melamchi mirage

An upcoming donor meet will decide whether the project is too tangled up in politics to salvage

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

It should be Nepal’s biggest-ever infrastructure project: a \$500 million scheme to bring snow melt through a 27-km tunnel to augment Kathmandu Valley’s water supply. But its fate hangs in the balance as key donors link it to a rollback of the royal takeover. Technically the project has been controversial because of criticism that cheaper alternatives are available, that it lavishes investment on an already-pampered capital and Melamchi Valley villagers want to be compensated. But all that pales in comparison to the scandal that has erupted over the Royal Commission for Corruption Control’s conviction last month of former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and his works minister Prakash Man Singh on charges they got kickbacks on the contract to build a road to the project site. Coming after the February First royal move, the conviction has raised allegations of a political witch-hunt against Deuba and Singh. Norway, which had suspended new aid money to Nepal until democracy is restored, also announced on 20 July it was pulling out of

Melamchi, which is also funded by the Asian Development Bank, Swedish aid agency SIDA and the Japanese Bank for International Corporation, among others. Donors will meet in Kathmandu soon to decide Melamchi’s fate. “The review meeting will see if the project is still viable,” explains the ADB’s Nepal country director Sultan Hafeez Rahman. This is obviously not going to be an ordinary review and insiders say will be a make-or-break meeting. If the mindset of some of its major donors is anything to go by, the project is doomed. “Only a miracle can save it now,” a senior official of one of Melamchi’s donors told us. Donors, who were already angry at the crackdowns after February First, see the arrests of Deuba and Singh as politically-motivated. That is said to be the reason Norway pulled out its nearly \$25 million contribution to the tunneling component of the project, which has left a serious shortfall. “We have been provided with no evidence that suggests that there was corruption in the Melamchi project as claimed by the RCCC,” said Kikkan Haugen, charge de affaires at the Norwegian

Embassy. “We have no reason for not believing the ADB report that said that there was no corruption.” The Norwegian assistance was valued not just for its money but also for its expertise in digging long tunnels. As lead donor the ADB has acquired a copy of the RCCC verdict for examination. An official at ADB headquarters in Manila told us this was to “see what our internal investigation missed out and what the RCCC found”. After its own internal probe in May, the ADB said it found no evidence of corruption in the road construction contract, which was the focus of the royal commission’s investigation. The bank official said whether the bank’s tallying of its findings and the RCCC verdict would match or not, the process that would follow would be a long legal tangle. “That might take quite a long time,” he said adding that until the bank gets through the legal process, it would not resume the project work, if at all. The ADB is sensitive to allegations of corruption in projects it funds and claims to have elaborate measures in place to safeguard transparency and integrity, so it is sure to go through the RCCC verdict with a fine tooth comb.



The bank has pledged \$120 million for the project that aims to pipe in 170 million litres of water a day to the Kathmandu Valley from the Melamchi Khola just outside the Langtang National Park. The valley needs 200 million litres of water daily but during dry season its leaky and obsolete distribution system can’t even supply 100 million litres a day. Whatever the ADB’s own findings, project funding from bilateral donors is now tied up with a rollback by King Gyanendra of his 1 February takeover. Given the mood in the donor community, the upcoming meeting is sure to bring bad news for the government. ●

Invisible power centres

Cover story in *Samaya*, 2 September

समय

A shadowy power centre viscerally opposed to multiparty democracy holds sway over the country today. And the king doesn't seem to want to get out of its clutches. This underground force even has its own shadow cabinet at the Narayanhiti Palace. "Singha Darbar is just a façade, the people really running the country are elsewhere," says a political figure close to the palace. Palace sources say there are four people active in this group, which takes information to the king and helps craft policies needed to make the monarchy work in practice. The four are the king's close friends and confidantes: Sharad Chandra Shah, Prabhu SJBR, Bharat Keshari Simha and foreign minister Ramesh Nath Pandey. This is the clique that engineered the royal takeover, planned the detention of politicians and their release and lobbied for support with the international community.

Although he prefers to remain behind the scenes Sharad Chandra Shah is more active than the others and was so even during the Chand, Thapa and Deuba premierships. "He was always pushing for a more active role for the palace," recalls a Thapa aide. There are many who say Sharad Chandra Shah holds all the keys to power, that he advises the king on how to appear in public, what to say, does the final edits on his speeches and delivers feedback to HM daily.

After a family quarrel distanced Prabhakar Shumshere JBR from the king, Prabhu Shumshere JBR, is a childhood friend of the monarch, has come closer and is included in royal visits. The other two, Sachit Shumshere JBR and Bharat Keshar Simha, are given to sharp public rebukes of political parties and bad-mouthing democracy. While Sachit has been threatening to declare parties "antinational" if they forge an alliance with the Maoists, Bharat Keshar has been pushing the controversial move of making the king more powerful by using his Hinduness. Although his efforts to enlist the support of Hindu fundamentalists in India has come to naught, he remains powerful and close to the palace.

Below these four powerful people is a palace bureaucracy that has divided up ministerial portfolios like an undeclared shadow cabinet. It

includes principle chief secretary Pashupati Bhakta Maharjan, information secretary Yogeshwar Karki, secretary to the personal secretariat Sagar Timilsina and chief military secretary Gajendra Limbu. According to palace sources, Maharjan has been given the foreign and finance portfolios as well as responsibility over the cabinet secretariat, National Planning Commission, zonal and regional administrators, Supreme Court and other constitutional organs. He had a hand in the appointment of ambassadors after Feburary First, which was dominated by ex-army brass.

Yogeswor Karki has a military background and looks after information and communications, physical planning and land reform. He is the architect of post February First media management and the formulation of new media laws. Minister Tanka Dhakal was supposedly taken aback when the new heads of Gorkhapatra and RSS were suddenly appointed recently. Instructions about

cutting phone lines and stopping news on FM also came from Karki's office.

Gajendra Limbu looks after the defence, home and forestry ministries and has been involved in decisions to expand the Royal Nepali Army, appointments, inducting helicopters and new weapons. Sagar Timilsina appears to be more powerful than the others in this group and competes with Maharjan for influence. He also looks after the largest number of portfolios, including education, industries, commerce, supplies and agriculture. He was

behind the recent changes in the civil service laws and appointments to district development committees.

One source says: "The role of the council of ministers is only to inaugurate official functions, ride cars with flags, abuse political parties but the real power to run the country is being directly carried out from Narayanhiti."

Minister Radha Krishna Mainali has been outspoken about his misgivings and even complained directly to the king and crown prince about the dissolution of the Sports Council without his knowledge by Sharad Chandra Shah. But when the king ignored him, Mainali declared: "This country is being run by Pashupatinath."



Take us home

Kantipur, 30 August

कान्तिपुर

Phidim—Since March, Maoists have locked over 20 houses in Ranitar forcing most villagers to live in the district headquarters and adjoining villages. The rebels targeted the families because their relatives are in the army. "For how long can we live like this? What is our crime?" asks Khadga Tamang, one of the displaced villagers. Villagers here live impoverished lives and most of them join the army to help provide for their families. As the government has been unable to help the families return, they are now relying on human rights activists to convince the Maoists to let them go home. "My son's in the army. Why do we have to suffer for that?" asks Jukki Maya Shiba, who was beaten by rebels enraged that her son joined the security force.

Reporters' diary

Nepal Samacharpartra, 31 August

नेपाल समाचारपत्र

It all started while reporting at Khudunabari when a group of Maoists led by Jhapa district leader Shyam and student leader Prabin Mishra met us and forced us to walk with them to their secret hiding place. We walked for nearly 168 hours. We had to walk even at night. We slept in the jungles covering ourselves with raincoats. On the first night, we halted at a small hut. But as soon as the people in the hut heard our murmurs, they put off the lights and locked their door. Prabin banged on the door and managed to get it open after declaring that we were Maoists. There was only a

poor old mother inside. Prabin asked her to cook for 14 of us. But she said a group of eight Maoists had finished her food and there was nothing to eat. At around 4AM, the Maoists woke us up and made us walk in the rain. After we crossed Soyak village and reached Jitpur of Ilam, it was daylight. We then realised that most of our companions were young Maoists between 12 and 22 years. None of them were armed. Diya, Astha, Sajita, Kamala and Aakash were all school girls and boys. By then, our feet were bleeding. We again walked the whole day and the following night the Maoists realized that we could no longer walk and decided to let us go. The rebels had planned to take us to one of their secret hiding places where Maoist central leaders were also planning to attend an important function. We are ready to bear any suffering in the name of journalism but we cannot tolerate such inhumane behaviour.

Secretaries quit

Rajdhani, 30 August

राजधानी

Under pressure from Maoists, 39 district secretaries have submitted their resignations in Khotang. The letters await approval at the local development office. In a press release the secretaries said they were forced to quit because earlier this month rebels issued a statement threatening them with abduction, seizure of property, severe punishment and displacement. They have asked the Maoists to revoke the threats and to create an environment where they can work effectively.

Biswabandhu Thapa



Biswabandhu Thapa in *Nepal*, 3 September

नेपाल

"His Majesty seems to think that only direct rule will bring development. The alternative to democracy is not good governance, it is democracy itself. His Majesty hasn't understood this."

"His Majesty must confer with the party leaders, set up an all-party government and hold elections as soon as possible."

"I haven't met the king since Tulsi Giri became close to him. Giri's line and mine are divergent. The king says the party leaders aren't cooperating, how can they when he locked them all up?"

"Our party, the RPP, is a pro-monarchy party but that doesn't mean we will do everything the king says."

"The call for a republic is just a slogan. The monarchy is a symbol of national unity. Even Girijababu has said it just to scare (the king) but a senior leader like him should have been more careful about rabble-rousing."

"I don't want to give so much importance to the Maoists just because they have taken up the path of violence. If the king had worked with the parties we'd have solved this Maoist problem by now. There would be elections and a representative parliament."

"The king ordered the politicians locked up—maybe the army was just following orders but should the army obey everything? They shouldn't. What will happen if there is an independent court—these things will come out. And if the court asks the army chief and the police chief they can't say they were just following orders."



QUOTE OF THE WEEK



"We are hoping that the king wakes up to the fact that Nepal is going to be poorly served in the long run by the deteriorating circumstances, deteriorating economy and frightening away of investments."

US ambassador to India David Mulford in New Delhi, 31 August

“We musn’t get stuck at every bend”

Interview with King Gyanendra on NTV, 30 August

Your Majesty has recently visited the far-west and mid-western regions. What were the sentiments and desires expressed by the people?
King Gyanendra: What I found were different sentiments but one wish—people wished for peace. Some spoke about personal things, some about their districts, some asked for favours, some gave suggestions but mainly wherever we went the people wanted peace. Peace first and only then development.

There have been more requests for peace than development. How does Your Majesty view this?
This has come from the hearts of the people. The state has given preference to this. Peace is about the mind, it's not just about a peaceful environment. If there is peace of mind this will spread and there will be peace in the environment as well. But the difficulty for us is that unfortunately there are some factors spreading violence. We hear they are raising donations, there is terrorism and the people are terrorised. It's natural that the people want to be able to sleep peacefully at night, to be able to eat two meals a day and go to work peacefully. We hear that terrorists are targeting industries again. When there is a fight between brothers others will take advantage.

What I believe is that if those who have lost their way put the nation and national unity at the centre and think, there will certainly be a way out. There was a time when I used to hear from the people themselves that the terrorists are trying to bring change for the better, that they are doing what the people want but what has happened? When they crossed the line and leaned towards terrorism the people left their side.

Before we used to hear there are 41 demands, this many demands, that many demands. Not that there weren't any good demands, there were good ones as well. Perhaps past governments did not give it enough thought? If they had, perhaps we would not be in the pit we are in? There are many things we have tried to address in our 21-point program. If we can make the nation the centre there will certainly be a way out.

During Your Majesty's visit the people raised different demands about peace and security, about development, slow administration and many have even expressed personal demands. Will Your Majesty give any directions concerning this?
There have been different demands, some are personal too. We will look at it all once we return to the capital. Some will be genuine. We



must give special attention to those. Some are about the district, some about peace some about education. The state must give preference to them and think about whether these have been considered for our main strategy and if not, how to incorporate them.
The state cannot do everything, that is why I have always been stressing participation. Leave it to the people and the people's representatives. But those who call themselves the people's representatives should truly represent the people. They should take people's problems seriously.

The far-west and the mid-west are considered to be heavily influenced by the Maoists but Your Majesty's visit was conducted amongst the people present in great numbers. What has Your Majesty taken from this?
First of all I would like to thank the people. I have learnt a lesson from them. Even in this heat they stood waiting and sweating. The flowers in their hands had already dried but they were determined to give them. I heard that there were some factions who tried to disrupt this. They were trying to make their presence felt but the people answered them by coming.
I have also learnt patience from the people. They waited patiently to see their king. They had to talk to me even if it was difficult. One should be able to listen to everything, whether good or bad. We might be able to do some things and maybe be unable to do others. Going to the people means this. One should be able to listen to both sweet things and sour words with patience. This was what I learnt.

During the visit Your Majesty met and talked with different members of society: the intelligentsia, the old, physically challenged. What difference have you found after the Royal Proclamation of February First?
One thing I experienced is that the confidence level of Nepalis has increased, so has their nationalism. After February First we have also heard that services are now a little faster. Some said that they have decreased. For those who are in the service of the people and the country and are not providing that service to the people I will warn them—now is not the time to show this attitude. The people must receive services. Those responsible must do the people's work. They can't say 'this is difficult' or 'that is difficult'.

How should the media operate considering the present state of the nation?
I feel this is the most difficult question. (Coughs) This has given me a cough. How they should operate is not something I have to tell them. Our wish is that those who have taken the responsibility should work in a disciplined way considering this crucial time that we are going through. I have said this before and I would like to repeat it again—terrorism must not be encouraged. We must not forget that the country is still in a crisis. The crisis has not been averted. Did the 'fourth estate' keep quiet only during the emergency? I did not think so. The country is in a difficult state, we must all think about it and we must all aim for this target—how to make the country peaceful, stable and democratic. We need democracy. But without making democracy strong in the base it is no use just shaking the head.

We must think about it and democracy will have meaning. What is the lesson from the *Gita*? To do your work, not search for rewards. Once we are born we must do something or the other. Today, the nation has already taken an aim and this was also what we meant in the February First proclamation. Terrorism is unacceptable and how are we going to make democracy strong and able? There are different ways to get to the destination but while walking down that road if we see a turning and worry about it when are we going to reach the destination? We must come out of the habit of getting stuck at each bend.
It is the same thing happening with the political parties and the monarch. They should be clear on three, four points. They must be clear about terrorism. If they can't tell the king they must answer to the people. Then comes discipline and corruption. The parties need to be clear that many things have been politicised. They should have clear views on this. I have heard that civil servants are politicised. I am open from my side, but there must be some basis for talks. I am also responsible to the people.



के तपाईंले आज

अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

पढ्नु भयो ?

विजय लामा
नायक / पाइलट

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

The tij hunger strike

Tij moves in tune with the times

MANISHA ARYAL

On Tuesday, 6 September, the whirling dancers at Pashupati will be dressed in different hues of red: the married will be draped in maroon, burgundy and orange saris and the unwed clad in lavender, pink and peach kurthas. As bangles clink and anklets ring, they will sing as their sisters have for centuries about their personal lives: their devotion to their husbands, their yearning for life in their parents’ homes and their nostalgia for childhood days. But recently the songs have become more radical, as befitting the times.

For generations, midhill Hindu women have gathered at temples around the country to worship Shiva and Parbati, the divine couple epitomising the ultimate in conjugal bliss. The festival lasts for three days: the day of the feast (*dar khane*) when women eat sweet goodies late into the night to gear up for the next day’s fast and then there is the tij day itself when they replicate the fast Parbati observed eons ago to obtain Shiva as her lord and husband. The grande finale is that evening when they break their fast with a puja.

On the day of the fast, till late into the night, women collect in groups in front of Shiva temples and sing and dance to shoo hunger and sleep away. The songs provide rare insights into the multiple roles of Nepali women. Traditionally, the spontaneous, free-form songs have been about women’s roles as daughters, sisters, wives and daughters-in-law and about their relationships with their fathers, brothers, husbands and other female in-laws.

The advent of democracy in 1990 opened up this cultural space for Nepali women and they started using tij as their own March 8th women’s day, singing about inequality, discrimination, lack of opportunities and for their rights.

Now as armed conflict rents the fabric of Nepali society, the injustices inflicted on women are revealed as never before. Women are increasingly beginning to sing about the bigotry and intolerance they face in society and some of the songs are even militant, where the symbolism of wearing red now stands for revolution.

Through tij songs, Nepali women reveal their changing roles in their families, communities and even the nation. Like this bitter-sweet song of suffering, struggle and hope:

Naulo tij
We ploughed the fields, roofed the huts, even contested elections, sisters
There isn't a job we didn't do these last years

While brothers and husbands left by buses and trucks
We took care of cattle, the sick and the poor

We held up the roofs as walls crumbled around us, sisters
We never once stepped back and said it wasn't our job.

Chorus:

Yet now they say we are weak, dear sisters
That we are uneducated and don't know right from wrong

We'll fight if we have to and die if need be, sisters
We are gearing up for our last battle now

Lets go door to door, this coming tij sisters
And gather all others feeling down and low

Let's usher in a new tij with all hues of red sisters
We can then finally let go and do as we please...

We'll sing together and destroy the enemies, sisters
Then we will dance with abandon...*bari lai lai*

This song is not scripted by NGO workers, it is not written by women cadres of an underground political party, they are spontaneous honest words that come straight from the heart and are woven into the age-old tunes of tij. They are sad, yet empowering because the pain is processed and shared.

This tij, we will hear the songs on our streets but let's listen carefully to the lyrics. They need to be heard not just because the women singing them have unusually delightful voices or because the words are different and powerful, they need to be heard because they are a testimony to the times. This is oral history or shall we say herstory. ●



MUKUNDA BOGATI

मूल्य रु.१०

अजल्को

अभियान

अन्तराष्ट्रिय बजारमा कच्चा रेल को मूल्य उच्च पृष्ठ ३

गोवाङ्गल को प्राविधिक परीक्षण पृष्ठ ५

भजदुरले स्वामिन्ध बेचेर उजोत्र चलए पृष्ठ ६

जुट उत्पादन २५ प्रतिशत घटले अनुमान पृष्ठ १०

पर्यटन बिज

डबल होस् या डलर बैक होस् या बिलगेट्स वंखे होस् या चाणक्य मंसार होस् या संसार

अर्थ-राजनीतिक साप्ताहिक हरेक सोमबार

न्यू बिजनेस एन् (प्रा) लि.को प्रस्तुति फोन नः ४४२९८१६, ४४२९८९३, २०३००८२ फ्याक्सः ९७७-१-४४२९८९३ ई-मेलः abhiyan@newbusinessage.com

परम्पराका नाममा अन्धविश्वासी हुनु र आधुनिकताका नाममा भ्रष्ट र छाडा हुनु उस्तै हो । त्यसैले आफ्ना परम्परा, संस्कृति र संस्कार हरूको सूक्ष्म अध्ययन र विश्लेषण गरी कमसल पक्षहरूलाई समयानुकूल परिमार्जन गर्दै राम्रा पक्षहरूलाई सगर्व अनुसरण गर्नु पर्छ । आधुनिकताका नाममा सभ्यताहीन र छाडा प्रवृत्तिलाई प्रश्रय दिनु हुँदैन । बरु समय, स्थान र परिस्थितिअनुरूप आधुनिक प्रविधि सीप र शैलीलाई संयमतापूर्वक ग्रहण गर्दै जानुपर्छ । यसैमा सबैको भलो छ ।

श्री ५ को सरकार सूचना तथा सञ्चार मन्त्रालय सूचना विभाग

Not a tease anymore

Ten new ways to celebrate the festival of sisterhood

AARTI BASNYAT



That time of the month...oops...I mean year, is here again. It is tij once more as us women folk across Nepal come together in a festival of sisterhood.

Tij is traditionally celebrated by Hindu women on behalf of their husbands. Let's not go into the gory details of how it started but Parvati reportedly wanted desperately to marry Shiva and the romance had a happy ending because she fasted for him. So women through the ages have fasted to replicate the success of our most popular divine couple.

The colour for tij is red which denotes the married status of women. Not to mention love, lust, passion, prosperity and even communism (though I don't think that counts here). The celebrations kick off almost a week or two in advance when women start shopping for the festival.

The shopping takes on mammoth proportions should you have a married daughter in the house as there have to be saris, bangles, tika and food bought not only for the daughter but her mother-in-law and possibly every other woman in her house as well. The evening before the fasting is the *dar khane* party when women gorge themselves to their heart's content.

Tij is ultimately a celebration of womanhood despite its tradition in fasting for the husband's health and wealth. Tij is for mothers, daughters, sisters, sister-in-laws and friends to meet up. It is their time to let their hair down and rejoice in their femaleness.

There is the traditional way to celebrate tij and there are some slightly unconventional ways. But however it is done, this year let men and women celebrate tij together. We offer 10 suggestions:

1 Temptation

It resulted in the downfall of Eve and there is no reason why it shouldn't result in the downfall of your wife. So this tij follow your wife around all day with food items trying to tempt her to eat to get rid of your own guilt at watching her starve while you gorge yourself.

2 Drink

Drinking is always a good option on any day during any festival at any time—though we recommend you start from dawn. Who wants to wake up early to go stand in lines for hours? We say hit the bottle early and keep it up all day—you might have a hell of a hangover the next day but trust us, it will be worth it.

3 Organise a Tij Couples Party

This could be fun and it entails that the menfolk get to get into some of the action as well. Organise a tij party, starting from



KIRAN PANDAY

the *dar khane* and then the next day everyone fasts together. Make sure they are all couples, after all you do not want to do this alone.

4 Dress up

For once, instead of the wife showing her commitment by wearing red, both partners should wear red. Dress up in matching red clothes and go out. Even if you are staying at home, going to work or just hanging out, wear red.

5 Go Bungy Jumping

...or some other equally death-defying holiday. It will get the adrenaline pumping while engendering a newfound respect for life. Tij is about praying for long life so you can actually put your faith to the test.

6 Ladies Night Out

Tij is supposed to be about women right? So then why do all the temple tours happen during the day? This tij, give the men the keys to the house and the children (don't forget to tell them where the nappies are) and go out on the town. Get all your girlfriends together and have a huge girls night out.

7 Dinner and Dancing

So you men didn't like the idea of sitting at home while the missus was out? Instead of letting your wife fast take her out for dinner and don't forget the dancing, after all you do want to get rid of those calories.

8 Renew your vows

Did I hear someone say, "What vows"? A simple way to reaffirm your commitment to each other would be to take the fast together. And it is also a great way to detox your body.

9 Pamper your wife

It is her day. It is about womanhood. Today pamper your wife. Let her sleep in late, bring her breakfast in bed, cook her lunch, clean the house, look after the kids, shower her with love and, best of all, buy her flowers.

10 Charity

As with any festival, tij means a lot of spending. This year, don't spend that money, collect it and in fact, ask everyone who sends you *dar* also to send money instead. Donate the lot to the most deserving charity. And then go on a tij hunger strike.



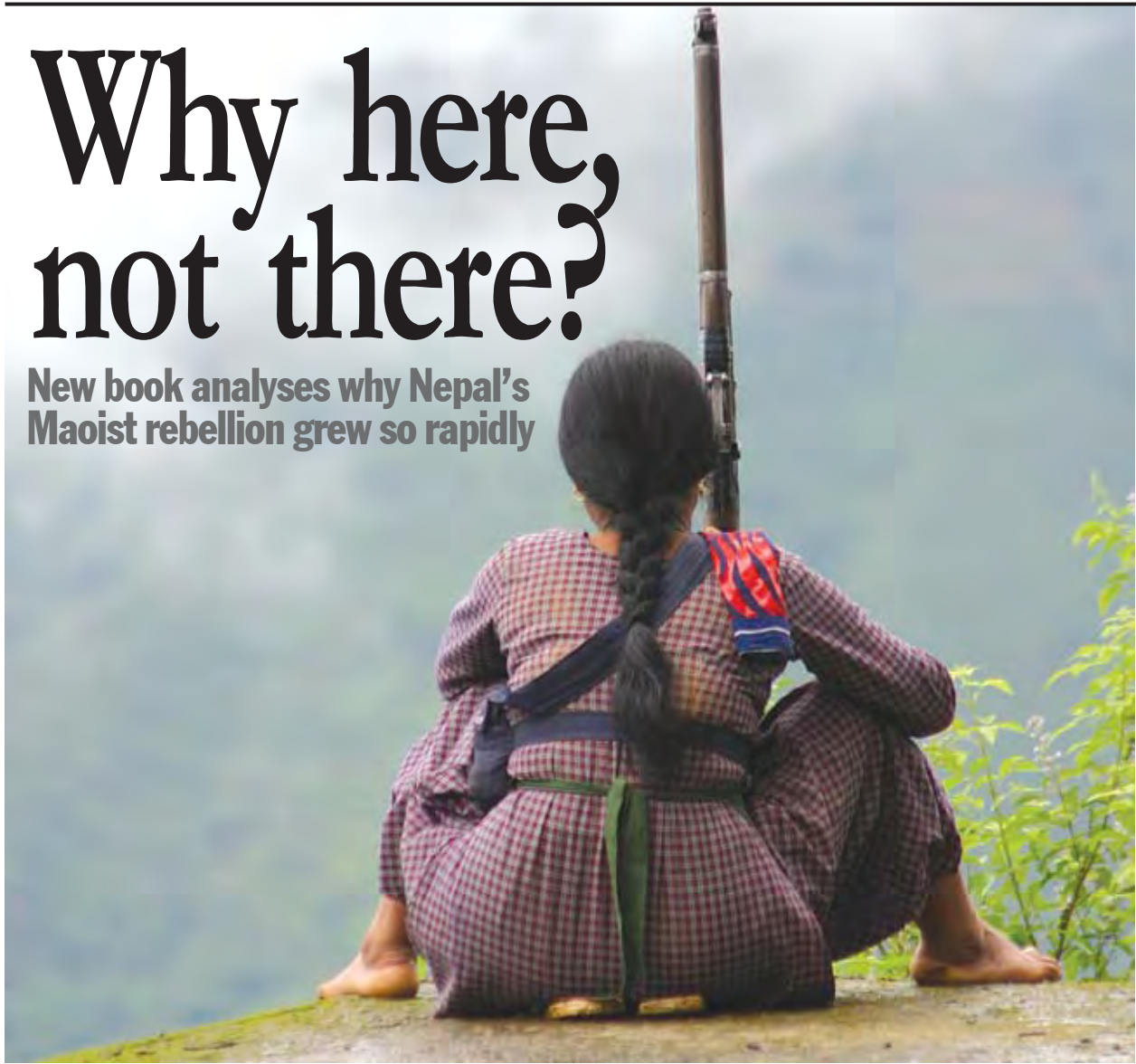


Coming up!

The hottest designs money can buy.

Sunsilk Nepal Fashion Week. Your only chance to pick and choose out of creations from the hottest designers of the country, all under one roof for your convenience. So if you want to give your wardrobe a cutting edge make-over, be there at the **Sunsilk Nepal Fashion Week**, Hotel Yak & Yeti. Exhibition time: 10.30 am - 5.30 pm, Entrance free. Call 4247475 for Fashion Show tickets.



KIRAN PANDAY

Why here, not there?

New book analyses why Nepal's Maoist rebellion grew so rapidly

KUNDA DIXIT

When the first police station was attacked in Rolpa to mark the beginning of the ‘people’s war’ in Feburary 1996, home minister in the NC government Khum Bahadur Khadka said: “I am confident that we will be able to bring the present activities under control in four or five days.” Not much more needs to be said about how bickering political parties in Kathmandu underestimated and ignored the signs

Since 2000 there has been heightened academic interest in dissecting the conflict. Poverty and development experts suddenly found a whole new dimension to their research. In a way, the outbreak of violence was predictable. Given the contradictions inherent in Nepali society and the unfulfilled promises of the unfinished revolution of 1990 it was only a question of time before the lid blew off.

Five months after the royal massacre and weeks before the army entered the fray, the School of Oriental and African Studies organised a conference in London to find out why a discredited ideology had taken such virulent form in Nepal. Nepal experts and Nepali experts were flown out and Micahel Hutt’s *Himalayan People’s War: Nepal’s Maoist Rebellion* is a compilation of some of the papers presented there. (Contrary to rumours, the book has not been banned in Nepal. We checked.)

Hutt is a reader in Nepali at SOAS and writes in the introduction: ‘This book is intended to provide the contextual detail without which one is not really able to explain why the people of Nepal had to experience their

beautiful country being torn apart by civil war.’ The various authors recap Nepali history, the saga of the leftist movement in Nepal, the ethnic and economic inequities within society and the inability of the post-1990 polity to show results fast enough. They provide the historical depth to understanding Nepal but things are changing so fast that any analysis has a very short shelf-life. Post February First, events in Nepal have gone into fast forward: just watch how the republican juggernaut has in the past two months become a runaway chariot.

The book’s first chapter (by Deepak Thapa, author of two books on Nepali Maoism) is a historical overview of the cleavages among communists that lead to the launch of the ‘people’s war’ in 1996 . Thapa tries to get to the bottom of why the comrades couldn’t get along- was it personality or ideology, or both? There is no definite answer but it seems revolutionary leaders the world over are never satisfied with being top dog, they want to be only dog.

Journalist Sudheer Sharma looks at the Maoist internal structure, illustrates it with a chart, and examines how successive elected leaders in Kathmandu played the fiddle while Nepal burned. Political scientist Krishna Hachhethu takes apart the ‘root cause’ theory that the revolution was driven by poverty and argues that there are many districts much poorer than Rolpa. The answer can be found in other chapters, including the one by Philippe Ramirez who looks at the convergence of ‘autonomous political networks’ and the presence of ethnic minorities as the reason why the Maoists may have chosen the

midwestern midhills. There is the curious twist of why Pyuthan became the cradle of the revolution and Ramirez traces this to activists including communist pioneer Mohan Bikram Singh who set up the ‘Progressive Study Group’ as far back as the mid-1950s. Ramirez also looks into how despite repeated assertions the Maoists have perpetrated and justified annihilation of individuals, leading to the ominous conclusion that the revolution may be degenerating into using violence for violence’s sake.

Anthropologists Sara Shneiderman and Mark Turin look at the case study of Dolakha, Marie Lecomte-Tilouine at how Magar activism adjusted to the growing power of the Maoists in their heartland and Judith Pettigrew zooms in on a fascinating real-life account of a village she calls Maurigaun to see how families have endured and adapted to the conflict. One is struck by how just in three short years Maurigauns are multiplying all over Nepal.

Historian Pratyoush Onta looks at the ‘duplicities’ in post-1990 politics, civil society, media and business in Nepal that the Maoists have exploited to further their revolution. Activists Mandira Sharma and Dinesh Prasain detail how the Maoists drew on the ‘widespread and legitimate discontent among rural women’. Sociologist Saubhagya Shah gazes south of the border at the ambivalence of the Indian state towards Nepali Maoists and the ‘Legacy Raj’ of post-colonial India that contributes to this perspective.

Anthropologist Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka’s chapter deals with Nepal’s democratic transition (‘political take-off has been significant, but a strong headwind impedes efforts to democratise’) and concludes that more radical efforts to pursue democratic reforms are needed outside of the Maoist vision. And if that doesn’t happen, Hari Roka has dire warnings that ethnic, religious and communal tensions could replace the ideological class struggle and the country could be ‘engulfed by even greater conflict’.

Himalayan ‘People’s War’: Nepal’s Maoist Rebellion
Michael Hutt, editor
C Hurst & Company, London,
2004
Foundation Books
(in South Asia)
Pp 322 + x
Rs 1040



A war between two boulders

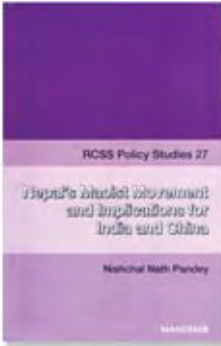
Nepal is not a ‘small’ country. With 25 million people and counting, it is the 41st most populous nation in the world. But we are small compared to the two giant neighbours to the north and south—a geopolitical reality that has been internalised by Nepal’s rulers ever since Prithibi Narayan Shah talked about a “yam between two boulders”.

The gravitational pull of these two have always buffeted Nepali politics. In the 1960s, Nepal’s foreign policy was to maximise advantage by playing them against each other. Recently with Sino-Indian rapprochement it will be futile to continue this policy. Yet in the next 20 years US thinktanks are predicting confrontation between the United States and China in which Washington would like to see India as an ally. Where does Nepal fit into all this? And more pertinently, how does the present conflict play into their fears?

Nischal Nath Pandey of the Institute of Foreign Affairs in Kathmandu in his book *Nepal’s Maoist Movement and Implications for India and China* looks at a revolution that takes its name from the Great Helmsman who has become a tourist trinket in the land of his birth. And what of India and its dual-track policy on the Maoists given that its own homegrown Naxalites have plans to join up in regional revolution?

Pandey takes a geopolitical perspective on the conflict and what it means for our big neighbours. He traces the implications of the post-9/11 shift in geopolitics and examines the obstacles to finding a negotiated solution.

Nepal’s Maoist Movement and Implications for India and China
Nischal Nath Pandey
RCSS Policy Studies 27
Manohar New Delhi
2005-08-31
Pp 175



Rough guide to the insurgency

What do the Maoists want? Nobody seems to be too sure, but probably a one party dictatorship. But if that’s not attainable, they are ready to settle for a ‘real’ democracy. So, what’s the problem, doesn’t everybody love democracy these days? Err...not exactly.

Lindsay Friedman has oodles of sympathy for parachutists perplexed by the complexity of conflict in Nepal. She has compiled a book that can best be termed a conflict primer, a cross between *Culture Shock Nepal* and *A Beginner’s Guide to Marxism*.

Friedman is quick to point out that this is not a ‘simplified account’. There is no way you can keep it simple if you’re going to cram so much detail into such a slim volume. The book has it all: geography, history, culture, sociology, economy and politics of Nepal all compressed to fit in 100 pages.

Even more than the information, it’s the cartoonish illustrations that give the book a fresh look. The volume does have a *bikase* feel, there is even a caste pyramid so popular among empowerment experts. Despite the author’s

promise to eschew jargon, she can’t resist buzzwords like ‘root cause’, ‘disaggregated data on gender and poverty’, ‘targeted programs’ and ‘networking’. In the next edition, the book should include a glossary of developmentspeak.

In the conclusion Friedman comments, “There is, of course, no conclusion. There is only a beginning.” ●
CK Lal



Conflict in Nepal: A simplified account
Lindsay Friedman
Shtri Shakti
Kathmandu 2005
Pages: 107+xi



KUMAR SHRESTHA

Hotel Rolpa

SATISH JUNG SHAHI
in GHARTIGAUN

At a small tea shop in Ghartigaun bajar, Dil Kumari Dangi, 28, is busy baking chapattis and heating chickpea and potato soup (see pic). Customers sit on wooden benches sipping lemonade as they wait for food. A plastic sheet protects them from the rain. This shop is a must stop for travellers walking up from Dang to Libang. Cadres from the Maoist army are the most regular customers, not only because the food stop lies on one of their travel routes but also because it is one of their few rebel-run ‘cooperative hotels’.

“The locals helped us build the shelter for free while we three

invested at least Rs 60,000 to run it,” says Dil Kumari shyly as she blows into the fire. She and her partner Mina Dangi are ‘whole timers’ (WT) in the Maoist party. The third partner is Ganesh Magar, whose daughter was a Maoist but drowned three years ago on a tour of duty.

The owners have to turn over 20 percent of their profits to the Maoists. According to the rebels the accounts are regularly updated and from their 20 percent take, 10 percent goes to their ‘war fund’ while five percent is allotted to each of their ‘emergency’ and ‘social’ funds.

“We want to promote businesses and cooperatives because we need to finance the struggle,” says Tara, a member of

the Maoist local government in Ghartigaun which is designated Area Number 5.

There are said to be at least three other rebel-run shops as well as communal farms in northern Rolpa that use the cooperative system. The Maoist-built Martyr’s Highway from Nuwagaun to Tela cost Rs 10,025,000 and rebels say Rs 25,000 was raised from a cooperative hotel run by the road construction committee.

“It is easier to work in a group,” says Dil Kumari, “The money we make can be used to educate our children and run our daily lives while our husbands are serving away from their homes.” The fact that Dil Kumari doesn’t try to hide her identity shows she is not nervous about the security forces destroying her business.

“We respect labour and hard work,” she says, “if they destroy it we will build it all up again.” ●

Rampur survives

KISHORE NEPAL in PALPA

Rampur’s fertile farms on the banks of the Kali Gandaki used to be on the ancient trade route from Gorakhpur in India to Pokhara and beyond.

But the construction of the Siddhartha Highway two decades ago bypassed this trading town, turning Rampur into a backwater. The only people using the old trade route now are the Maoists who prefer the ungaurded jungle trails up from Nawalparasi to Syangja to move around.

Recently the army set up a base in the middle of the valley near Rampur and the Maoists have been displaced into the surrounding hills. The rebels use Rampur as a base from which to expand their activities in Nawalparasi, Syangja and Tanahu and to preserve its isolation they have halted the construction of the Pipal Danda- Gairakot road which the government was building to connect Rampur to Tansen.

A road south to Kwasoti is so rough it is only motorable during the dry season. Another road connecting Rampur to the Siddhartha Highway has finally been completed. Says ex-chairman of the Town Development Committee, Deb Raj Dhakal: “This must be a record, it took 25 years to build a 48-km dirt road.”

It is that kind of government disinterest that the Maoists have used to spread their revolution in these hills of central Nepal. Soon after the royal takeover on 1 February the rebels organised a first-ever meeting with local leaders of the UML and the Nepali Congress. A local party activist says since that meeting the Maoist attitude towards the parties is more relaxed. “But they are still unpredictable,” he adds quickly. Two NC

activists who had been chased out of Rampur have since been allowed to return.

The Maoist anger is now directed at the security forces and the royal government. The rebels have pasted notices all along the Kali Gandaki Valley warning people not to cooperate with the government’s road projects. Signed by Rupa BK, head of the Maoist ‘District People’s Committee’, it says: ‘Anyone found helping the government will face severe consequences.’ The notice also warns NGOs that they can’t work here without proper registration with the ‘New Regime’.

The ‘People’s Government’ is headed by Nagendra Bhattarai who was elected as mayor in the rebels’ elections recently. The rebels collect anywhere from Rs 25 to Rs 500 as tax from outsiders visiting the town. A commemorative arch they built at the entrance to the town has since been destroyed by security forces.

The Maoists in turn destroyed the local forest and agriculture extension offices and there are no phones left. They did build a small bridge over a nearby stream and a local teacher tells us: “That is the only piece of development the Maoists engaged in.”

The Maoists forced the closure of three high schools and two primary schools in Rampur for two academic years, but after local outrage grew last year they allowed the schools to reopen.

As happens in most parts of Nepal, the presence of security forces has made the situation more tense in contested areas like Rampur. That is why this sweltering valley is perhaps the hottest spot in Palpa today, politically and otherwise. ●

Defying Maoist threats and official indifference

NARESH NEWAR in SANKHUWASABHA

Fear does not seem to move 85-year old Ram Bahadur Rai anymore. “We’re just too exhausted. There is nothing we can say to make them leave us alone,” he fumes, referring to the Maoists.

As the oldest member of Yafu village, five hours from Khandbari, Ram Bahadur tries to convince the young people to focus on developing their village instead of running away. “Who’s left to take care of our village?” he asks.

But Yafu (pictured) has become a beacon of hope in these lush green hills of eastern Nepal because despite fear of Maoists, every household is involved in community service. Fifty villagers contributed Rs 200,000 and their labour to complete an irrigation canal with support from the British aid ministry DfID and technical help from the NGO Rural Reconstruction Nepal.

“Now we know so much can be done if we work together,” says female farmer Bishnu Rai, who believes villagers could accomplish even more if both the Maoists and the government left them alone.

So far the government has been quite successful in that. The money budgeted for this village remains unspent in Khandbari’s district office where secretaries from 33 VDCs sit around without much work.



NARESH NEWAR

The villagers have also started asking local Maoist leaders when they will start spending on development. “I asked them once and they said that this will happen only after their war is over, wonder when that will be,” muses Iswar Rai. Since the villagers have to pay taxes to the Maoists, they feel they have the right to ask those questions. The Maoists, however, are quick to interrogate locals whenever they begin a new project with the help of NGOs. “Starting any project without prior notice would be a grave mistake,” says Iswar.

NGO activists also feel the pressure. Many pay a monthly tax of about 10 percent of their salaries to the Maoists. “No one gets away even if they live in the protection of security personnel in Khandbari, they know how to contact everyone,” explains Narab Bhupal Rai from the Sili Chong Club that works with communities in remote VDCs.

To set an example, the rebels even prevented some NGOs from continuing projects in remote areas. So far they have not been so successful in Jaljala, where villagers recently warned Maoists that if an agricultural project were shut down, they would be forced to take up arms against the rebels.

Although things aren’t as bad here as in midwestern Nepal, Sankhuwasabha lacks electricity, healthcare delivery is poor, literacy rates are still low, water supply is scarce and agricultural production is low.

“We have only ourselves to depend on, the government is not even doing the most simple things,” says Rajesh Shrestha, one of the few young people still left in Sattimure village. Many of his friends fled to the cities after Maoists pressured them to join the movement. Rajesh, 18, is the only person here attending high school and also raises goats.

“We have to be self-reliant and try to survive for the sake of our children,” says local teacher Man Bahadur Rai from Yafu, “The poverty has actually made people so desperate they are in a do-or-die situation.” In June villagers of Nung VDC refused to give in to Maoist demands that each household pay Rs 15,000. “They didn’t care at all and told the rebels that they won’t pay a single paisa no matter what the consequences,” recalls Narab Rai.

The spirit of self-help runs across the district. Locals contributed money and labour to build a 22-km road from Tumlingtar to Syang Khola for which the government has invested nearly Rs 3 million.

Says Mina Gurung, who trains women in Sitalpati, “There is a long way to peace so we keep ourselves busy trying to make our lives better in whatever small way we can.” ●



Asia’s jobless growth

BANGKOK—Continued underemployment and unemployment in Asia are exposing a glaring flaw in the pretty picture often painted of this region as an economic success story with impressive growth figures. Lack of productive work and less than fair wages are key reasons why millions of Asians continue to live in absolute poverty, said the Asian Development Bank (AsDB) in a report released Tuesday. ‘Employment growth rates have been disappointing even in countries that have been able to achieve high growth rates of output,’ says Ifzal Ali, the bank’s chief economist. He predicts Asia’s poor will remain in a state of misery because of few good jobs. ‘There are many causes of poverty but ultimately the poor are poor because they earn too little from the work they do’.

Thailand targets smokes

BANGKOK— D-Day for Thailand’s cigarette sellers is 24 September, when cigarette packets enter a state worse than pornography here—banished completely from the public eye, hidden in cupboards and only to be offered when a smoker seeks his nicotine fix. One of the leading targets of the anti-smoking campaign, the international 7-11 chain of convenience stores, has already been warned by a member of the anti-tobacco lobby that a boycott would ensue if cigarette packets are openly displayed after the deadline. “Seven-Eleven has been one of the vocal opponents of this effort, so they have become a natural target,” said Hatai Chitannondh, a medical doctor who is president of the Thai Health Promotion Institute.

South Korea’s ‘Snuppy’

SEOUL—The success of South Korean scientists in canine cloning has raised hopes of medical breakthroughs and serious ethical questions, especially since the next animal in line at laboratories here is man’s genetic cousin, the monkey. “At the end of August, we will kick start work on monkeys but only for stem cell research purposes,” said Ahn Gyu-Ri, professor at Seoul National University (SNU) and colleague to Hwang Woo Suk, who led the dog duplication effort revealed to the world on 3 August. But a group of NGOs gathered a day after Snoop’s ‘coming out’ to issue dire warnings. “We are very concerned about the ramifications of the cloned dog ... we may have already crossed the technology threshold where it could be feasible to clone a man as well,” said the NGO representatives.

Afghans at risk

ISLAMABAD—Tens of thousands of Afghans living in and around the Pakistani capital Islamabad but not in official refugee centres are uncertain about their future as the deadline for them to return to Afghanistan or move out of their homes draws nearer. Pakistani officials announced earlier this month they want the Afghans to relocate by 15 September. ‘We can hardly subsist here and whatever assistance the UNHCR (UN High Commissioner for Refugees) offers is too meagre to pay for us to get over there and also rebuild our lives simultaneously,’ said Muhammad Nabi, an Afghan who has been living in a shanty area of Islamabad for more than six years. Five informal settlements in the capital house over 30,000 Afghans out of 45,000 living in the city, according to a census conducted earlier this year. (IPS)



To the towers of Babel

Four years after 9/11 an exile recalls becoming a citizen of New York

NORMAN MANEA

I am looking down on Central Park and recall from half-a-century ago in a small town in Northern Romania a tall, white-haired man proclaiming his poem, *The Colours Red and Black*. Gazing over the park I remember those Stalinist era verses: ‘In New York, everything is beautiful. Heroes come, heroes go’. The few trips I was allowed to take as a citizen of Socialist Romania did, of course, have moments of rapture for me, novice that I was. Yet New York remained a dream, so foreign and distant that I never imagined I would have the chance to compare illusion with reality. After my eventual escape to New York, life in and with this city was as hypnotic as a drug. Over the last 17 years this addiction was established through daily negotiations with life’s routine. New York’s metabolism filled me with its energy and its toxins. Although I felt that I, an exile in the land of exiles, belonged

ever more to a world to which no one can really be said to belong, on 11 September 2001 I was finally able to proclaim, “I am a New Yorker,” just as President Kennedy had declared himself a Berliner when that former National Socialist capital was in danger of becoming a Communist capital. In present-day Babylon, in Chinatown, in Little Italy, in Russian Brighton Beach and in the alleys and byways of New York all the world’s languages are spoken. The builders of the twin towers, whatever their native tongues, wanted to be Americans, citizens of the New World, the towers they built symbolizing the stature of freedom. The attack on the towers of Babel was unexpected but not unpredictable in so far as it represented the hatred of Allah’s fanatical followers for the symbols of modernity. In the World Trade Centre, human creativity and collaboration were universally codified. Of course, the building lacked poetry. Yet the towers could have been a symbol of worldwide poetry, not

commerce. As the Surrealist poet André Breton said, “It is above all our differences that unite us.” For such an extensive, cynically efficient cluster of humanity, the city displayed surprising civility and solidarity during and after the attacks. It immediately regained its strength, its sense of humour and its industriousness. After 11 September, skyscrapers, clubs and restaurants of all kinds sprang up like mushrooms, with almost more vitality than before. Moreover, the city refused to give its votes to a president who exploited its disaster for political gain. A famous map painted by my friend and compatriot Saul Steinberg depicts the global village as seen from Manhattan: the distance from the Hudson River to the Pacific Ocean is the same as the distance from Ninth to Tenth Avenue on the Upper West Side and somewhere beyond the calm ocean float Russia, China and Japan. A map of my own fate would encompass Bukovina as my native land, the Transdnistrian concentration camp of my childhood, the Communist labour camp Periprava where my father’s identity was altered, the Bucharest of my student years and my adulthood, Berlin, my exile’s starting point and finally New York, where my exile found its residence. This fate is its own “Babel,” a confused mixture of memories and places. In this city you learn to limit yourself. It is impossible to take in at once all of the innumerable symphonic or jazz concerts or parades celebrating ethnic or sexual minorities. You can’t attend all the lectures, panel discussions and auctions where everyday dramas and dreams are bartered. You can’t sit in all the taxis driven by those loquacious ambassadors from India and Russia and Haiti, from Pakistan and Ghana and Guatemala. At best you can grab a mere crumb of this frenetic global kaleidoscope. ● (Project Syndicate)

Norman Manea is a Romanian novelist. His memoirs, *The Return of the Hooligan*, are being published across Europe.

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Tennis sizzles

Soaring temperatures in New York spark early upsets at the US Open



Some of tennis’ top seeds are wilting in the heat as the US Open got underway this wek in New York. In perhaps the biggest upset of the year number four-ranked Andy Roddick fell to unseeded Gilles Muller of Luxembourg in first-round action on Tuesday.

Svetlana Kuznetsova made Open history by becoming the first defending women’s champion in 118 years to bow out in the first round. “It wasn’t my day. What do I do? Kill myself?” the drained former champ said afterwards.

With afternoon temperatures reaching 29C and humidity rising over 70 percent some players even needed medical attention. Frenchman Michael Llodra fainted on his way to the locker room after retiring from his first-round match against Carlos Moya. On Monday, Japan’s Akiko Morigami had to

be carried away from her match against Nicole Pratt in a wheelchair after hyperventilating.

The favourites to win the title are Roger Federer and Kim Clijsters in the men and women’s draw respectively. Among the other contenders is Maria Sharapova, the first Russian woman at world number one, who is still relishing the sweet smell of success. The two Williams sisters, Serena and Venus, can also never be counted out. Serena won the Australian Open, while Venus won at Wimbledon recently.

But the injury-prone Clijsters might have her best chance at the US Open, especially since she beat her compatriot Justine Henin-Hardenne to win the Rogers Cup. Clijsters has won six titles this year, while Henin has won four. Sharapova and Davenport have three each, while Venus Williams and Amelie Mauresmo have won two each.

While statistics don’t tell the story, they certainly say something about US Open defending champion Roger Federer. Federer has five Grand Slam titles to his name, and if he reaches a final, he’s unbeatable. He has now won 22 in a row. So basically, he has to make a mistake for somebody else to win.

The Swiss player who’s now been World Number One for a total of 82 weeks has won nine titles this year. Spanish tennis player Rafael Nadal has also won nine, though eight of his have been on clay and only one on hard-court, which is the surface at the US Open.

“Well, there’s no player anymore that I fear, really. I respect them all, but I’m so confident and I know that on a good day I beat everybody, you know, and that’s my feeling at the moment,” said Federer.

The opponents are not being underestimated. After-all Federer has won just one Grand Slam title this year but the likes of Lleyton Hewitt and Marat Safin will have to raise the bar if they are to play catch up. ●

Letter to Andre

Thank you also for reminding us that there is more to life than tennis

Dear Andre,
I am in New York this week to see you compete at the US Open. I have been a fan of yours for many years. I first saw you play as an 18-year-old when I was playing in the Japan Open junior tournament in 1985. You made it to the quarterfinals of the professional event and lost to Andres Gomez. You were just 16 but from the moment I saw you strike the ball for the first time I knew you were special. I had never seen anybody take the ball that early and hit it that hard and crisply. Your flamboyant personality and the long blond dyed hair also set you apart.

GAME POINT
Sujay Lama



We followed your career, filled with highs and lows, and learnt a lot from you. Your groundstrokes and return of serve are models I use when I coach my students. The way you have dealt with adversities and carried yourself on and off the court have been great lessons for me. I am proud of the way you have matured as a tennis player and as a person. You have been a great ambassador for the game of tennis and a tremendous role model for young kids all over the world.

Your on court performance speaks for itself and you have had many memorable matches and rivalries. My favourite moment was when you beat Goran Ivanisevic in the Wimbledon final for your first grand slam title. The two-set deficit you overcame versus Andrei Medvedev at the French Open final was a close second. Earlier on in your career you were criticised for not having heart. That was all history after the triumph at Roland Garros.

Your rivalry with Pete Sampras was spellbinding, and I will never forget watching the 2002 quarter final match you played against Pete at the US Open. Those four sets were arguably the best tennis ever played. For me, the match had added importance because my father, tennis coach Hem Lama, had come all the way from Kathmandu to watch his first grand slam event. What a treat it was for him.

Early in your career your lack of physical and mental preparation that allowed you to be the best you could, was infuriating. Fast forward to 2006 and there is no player on the tour today who is better prepared than you. At age 35 you are one of the fittest players around. That is a testimony to your hard work and dedication. I was worried when you limped out of the French Open this year. But the recent win in Los Angeles and a runner up finish in Montreal gives me hope that you might be around for a few more years. Although Federer and Roddick might be the favourites at the US Open, you are the dark horse. I know you have at least one more slam in you.

Andre, you are more than just a great tennis player. You are unique among your peers because you are genuine and constantly give back to tennis. There is no athlete in the world more articulate than you and none comes close to you in using their celebrity to make a difference. Not many people know that you have donated over \$20 million to help young people. Your foundation has raised over \$50 million to build a school for low-income kids in Las Vegas.

Thank you Andre for providing us with many memories and inspiring us to strive to be the very best. Thank you also for reminding us that there is more to life than tennis and that we have a responsibility to make a difference in this world.

Sincerely,
Sujay Lama (Your #1 fan)



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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 UNACOTS, the United Nation's Association of Cartoonists



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Disclaimer: This paper not responsible for this content, no one is, it's a cartoon.

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

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"[Mickey Mouse] spelled liberation for us"
-- Walt Disney - on the importance of a single cartoon to his organization.

Next Change: Super Kukur discovers a new clothes boutique Just for Dogs in Jhamshikhel...and finds a nice top for his super disguise.

#82 2062 by jigme gaton - read. love. write.

ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Ni Rita**, exhibition cum sale of bold jewellery at La Soon, till 26 September. 5537166
- ❖ **Folk Fusion** paintings by Asha Dongol, 2-16 September at Siddhartha Art Gallery. 4218048
- ❖ **Art Walk** Traditional artworks at Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999



EVENTS

- ❖ **Funk Night** with McTwister at Moksh, 2 September, 7:30 PM onwards Rs.150. 5526212
- ❖ **Public Meeting** at Patan Durbar Square 2 September at 3PM, poems, theatre, art and more.
- ❖ **Ibiza Blast** featuring Djs Lloyd and Ankit, Rs 600, 2 September at Galaxy. 4780100
- ❖ **Tij Celebration** with a difference at 1905 Kantipath on 3 September, 2-7PM. 4215068
- ❖ **Walking in the Footsteps of the Buddha**, 3 September, 10AM- 4PM. 4414843
- ❖ **SEBS Reunion**, Hotel Narayani Complex , 3 September. 4411390
- ❖ **Father's Day** 3 September.
- ❖ **REIKI-1** by Elif Koksai, 4-5 September, 9AM-4PM. 4414843
- ❖ **Tij** 6 September.
- ❖ **Rishi Panchami** 8 September.
- ❖ **International Literacy Day** 8 September.
- ❖ **Jaat Sodhnu Jogiko** by Aarohan Theatre Group, till 9 September, 5PM, Gurukul. 4466956
- ❖ **Sunsilk Nepal** fashion week at Hotel Yak and Yeti, 9-13 September 10:30 AM- 5:30PM. 4247475
- ❖ **Dabur Vatika Miss Nepal** at Birendra International Convention Centre, 10 September.
- ❖ **St. Xavier's Monsoon Rendezvous** fundraising dinner, 10 September, 6PM onwards. 5521050/5521150
- ❖ **Changa Chait**, kite flying competition at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot 17, 24 September, 8 October. 4411706
- ❖ **Film South Asia '05** entry forms and details www.himalassociation.org/fsa, 27 September-2 October,
- ❖ **1905 Sundays** Garage sale, pet practices and more. 4215068

MUSIC

- ❖ **Best of Reggae** by Rasta Brother at Moksh, 3 September, 7:30 PM onwards. 5526212
- ❖ **Hindustani Classical Music Concert** Tuesdays at Hotel Vajra, 7PM. 4271545
- ❖ **Shades of Blue** live at the Jazz Bar, Hotel Shangrila, Lajimpat.
- ❖ **The Good Time Blues Band** at Rum Doodle, Thamel, 7PM. 4701208
- ❖ **Musician Night** Tuesdays at Moksh, 7:30 PM onwards. 5526212
- ❖ **The JCS Trio** at Hotel Shangrila, Lajimpat.
- ❖ **Cadenza Live!** Upstairs Jazz Bar Lazimpat, Saturdays and Wednesdays, 8-10PM.

FOOD

- ❖ **Malaysian Food** Cultural Promotion, 1-7September, The Café, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **The Jazz Gourmet**, fine dining redefined at Hotel Shangri-La.
- ❖ **Saturday BBQ** for Rs 888 at Le Meridien, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **The Chimney Restaurant** signature dishes at Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
- ❖ **International Buffet** Lunch at Soaltee Crowne Plaza, every Saturday and Sunday, Rs 625 plus tax.
- ❖ **Daily Delite** Lunch at Shambala Café, Hotel Shangri-La. 4412999
- ❖ **Ciney and Par-e-jat** BBQ at Hotel Dwarika's, Fridays, 7PM. 4479448
- ❖ **Boire and Manger** at Vineyard, Baber Mahal Revisited.
- ❖ **Special Combo** Burmese and Thai Menu at 1905, Kantipath.
- ❖ **Krishnarpan** at Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488
- ❖ **Barbecue Dinner** Fridays at the Summit Hotel. 5521810

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Malaysia Dream Holidays**, special discounts at Hyatt Malaysia Food Festival, 1- 7 September. 2012345
- ❖ **Three Days** at Nagarkot, health oriented program 30 September- 2 October. Info@goldenagersnepal.com
- ❖ **Spa** seasonal rates valid till 21 October at Le Meridien, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **Monsoon Madness** package at Shangri-la Village. 4435742

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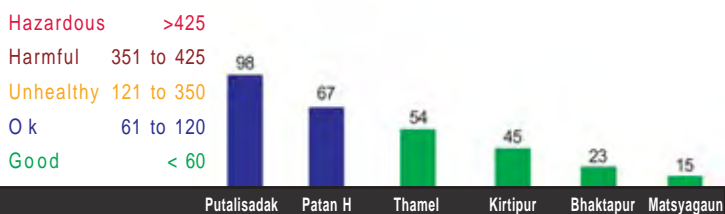
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KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

Last week's downpour in the Valley made breathing easier for Kathmanduites. Levels of PM10 particles (small enough to enter the human body and lodge in the lungs) at all six reporting stations were below the national standard for almost the entire week. On average, readings were seven percent lower than in the previous week.

21-27 August 2005 in micrograms per cubic metre.
Source: www.mope.gov.np



NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



The start of September usually marks the last phase of the monsoon, which rolls back from west to east, and Thursday's satellite picture indeed indicates fair weather and higher temperatures on the way. Although rainfall picked up in August, it was the fifth consecutive month with lower than average precipitation in central Nepal, including Kathmandu. After a high pressure system delivers fair weather this weekend, expect light rains in the beginning of next week when another monsoon front unfolds and the atmospheric pressure drops.

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SUCHANA BIBHAG

TALK TO ME : King Gyanendra instructing district and zonal administrators in front of tv cameras in Dang last week.



KIRAN PANDAY

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION?: NC president Girija Prasad Koirala inaugurating the 11th Nepali Congress general convention in Jawalakhel on Tuesday.



AJAYA JOSHI

TRULY ASIA: A cultural group performing a Malaysian traditional dance to mark the 48th Malaysian Independence Day at the Hyatt on Wednesday.



KIRAN PANDAY

HOARDING BIKES: The latest among billboards is the Yamaha G5 recently put up at Maitighar. The billboard sports an actual Yamaha G5 motorcycle as part of its display.

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September sky

Let's see if you can spot Jupiter just after sunset

Nepali Times begins a monthly review of the night sky which will be presented by amateur astronomer Kedar Sharma Badu of the Pokhara Galileo Astronomical Society on the last Friday of every month.

The growing popularity of astrology in Nepal (every tv channel devotes prime time to

STAR GAZING

Kedar Sharma Badu

zodiacal forecasts) is not matched by a proportional interest in astronomy. The two are linked: astrology is based on serious study of the night sky with measurements of the movement of the planets vis-à-vis the constellations.

As time passed our early astronomers transformed themselves into royal astrologers and converted the science of astronomy into fatalistic astrology. However, over the past few years interest in astronomy in Nepal has grown, well, astronomically. Because of its altitude and relative low light pollution Kathmandu offers ideal views of the night skies.

So let's begin. It's always difficult for a novice to differentiate stars and planets. Here are some clues: planets don't have their own light, they reflect the light of the sun, planets are generally found near the



Night sky on 2 September 11PM

ecliptic path of the sun, stars don't change their positions relative to one another whereas planets are seen to move from one constellation to another.

This month look out for the following:

- Jupiter (with Venus) is visible low in the western sky after sunset in the constellation Virgo. With a small telescope you can even see its equatorial bands and the great red spot as well as the four Galilean moons.
- Saturn lies in constellation Cancer and is visible in the hours before dawn in the east-northeast. It rises soon after 2AM at the end of the month. With a telescope you can easily spot its moon, Titan. If you are in a high and dark place, you can even see moons Rhea, Dione and Tethys.
- Mercury shines very low in the

pre-dawn sky looking east-northeast during the first week. On 4 September, when it rises an hour before the Sun, it will lie just one degree away from the star Regulus (Magha) in Leo.

- Mars rises by 10:30 PM at the start of the month and shines brighter and brighter as it comes closer and closer to the earth. Though its angular size will be smaller than in August 2003 (when it passed closest to Earth in 60,000 years) it will be significantly higher in the sky and clearly visible.
- Venus now appears as an 'evening star' in the west-northwest. On 1 September it will be just 1.2 degrees to the lower left of Jupiter. It will not rise particularly high in the sky but will drift southwards as the month progresses.

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This stuff is top secret

According to recent unusually reliable reports in the state media quoting military sources, things have been going strictly according to plan since the generals took charge, generally speaking.

Far be it for us non-state actors to doubt these assertions, especially because we don't know what the plan was in the first place. The great thing about having a highly classified top secret plan no one knows about is that no one can tell when things are not going according to plan. That's called good planning.

But even the world's best-kept secret plan could, unbeknownst to bystanders, not go according to plan so it is advisable to have a standby



plan as well that no one knows about. That way we ensure the confidentiality of classified material and it is imperative that such top secret information is shared only on a no-need-to-know basis which by definition means that the best military plan is one that doesn't even exist so no one is ever going to blurt it out by mistake.

In the age of information warfare, an even more effective strategy is to create a diversion by spreading misinformation classified as top secret so that the enemy is hoodwinked into thinking that you actually have a plan when in fact you don't so that all their careful planning to counter your phantom plan is a waste of time. Where things can go wrong is when friendly personnel start believing the lies in your own top secret highly classified misinformation and think that is the actual plan.

The experience of the US army in Vietnam is used in military academies as an example of how to conduct information warfare because not even the commander-in-chief knows what the plan is. The Americans are following the same time-tested strategy now in Iraq and we can learn a lot from them. Even George W Bush doesn't know what he is doing in Iraq and only a few generals know what the real plan is and they are (in alphabetical order): General Dynamic, General Electric and General Pandemonium.

It is a matter of pride that the US military is assisting coalition partners around the world with counter-insurgency training because we can learn a lot about their top secret anti-guerrilla modus operandi, ad hoc ergo propter hoc, habeus corpus, ipso facto argumentum ad hominum, post-partum status quo and ad nauseum. The reason the previous sentence is in Latin is because we don't want the enemy to unravel our secret plan which is (and since we are among friends here it can finally be revealed) to send our foes round and round in circles using the theorem of Pythagorian quintiplets, which is that general expressions are derived from the partial transition matrix of elements from any state to a final state by sub-atomic impact using these definite integrals:

$$\sum_{k=1}^n [a + (k-1)d] = \frac{n}{2} [2a + (n-1)d]$$

which are then amalgamated by parts in spherical polar coordinates thus:


$$\nabla^2 = \frac{1}{r^2} \frac{\partial}{\partial r} \left(r^2 \frac{\partial}{\partial r} \right) + \frac{1}{r^2 \sin \theta} \frac{\partial}{\partial \theta} \left(\sin \theta \frac{\partial}{\partial \theta} \right) + \frac{1}{r^2 \sin^2 \theta} \frac{\partial^2}{\partial \phi^2}$$

So, an approximate form of the Fadeev equations including the square-root of the hypotenuse minus the angle of the dangle after multiplying the area by four times π and then extracting the circumference taking into account coupling of all intervening bond states.

Anyway, that's the plan. Just don't go blurting it out to anyone.

GREATEST HATS!

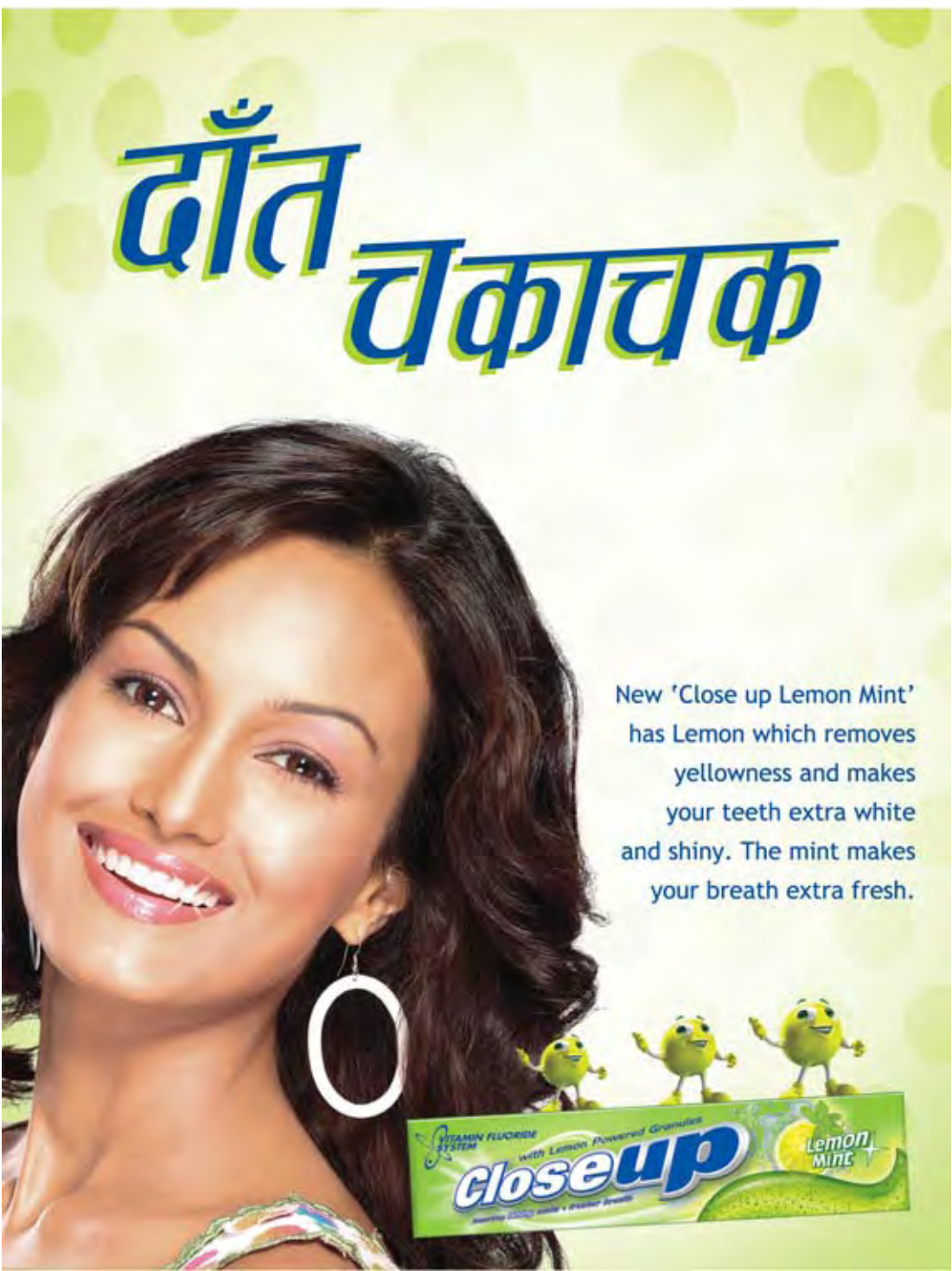
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