King Gyanendra does the Patan walkabout

KUNDA DIXIT

F
acing mounting street protests at home and continued international isolation, King Gyanendra has stepped up efforts to demonstrate that he enjoys widespread support and respect from Nepalis. After whirlwind tours of towns of western and central Nepal in the past month, the king on Thursday walked through Patan greeting thousands of curious onlookers and school children instructed to stand on the sidewalks as he made his way to inspect the regional office of the Central Zone in Jawalakhel. (Pic: the king at Mangal Bajaar)

The royal trek

The king walked on recently patched potholes, past stumps of trees chopped down after 1 February and under dozens of welcome arches and banners that the local administration compelled local hotels, institutions and schools to put up overnight.

The palace has said these royal tours are routine and an effort by the king to feel the pulse of his subjects and to reassure them that he is working to restore peace and “meaningful” democracy. But some see the walkabouts as proof the king wants to be an active monarch and suspect a sinister prelude to further crackdowns.

King Gyanendra gave himself the task of restoring peace when he took over seven-and-a-half months ago. And since the Maoists stole his thunder by announcing their three-month unilateral ceasefire, this could be a royal PR offensive. Indeed, ever since the ceasefire on 3 September the royal regime has been on the defensive, lashing out with an orchestrated attack on pro-democracy elements in the media, judiciary and civil society. This has sparked rumours that royal hardliners are pushing the king to launch further crackdowns.

Vice-chairman Tulsi Giri made a hard-hitting speech in Biratnagar on Tuesday in which he pinpointed the 1990 constitution as a deterrent to fulfilling the king’s wishes. (Transcript on p. 2) Such talk has worried even committed monarchists who say the king is painting himself into a corner and pushing the country on an irreversible path to republicanism. The vitriolic rhetoric of royalist hardliners is now making even King Gyanendra’s stated commitment to “democracy and constitutional monarchy” sound moderate. “Too many crazy mistakes have been made. Enough is enough, the king should take five of the clearest most respected people in the land and give them only one mandate: to talk to the Maoists and the parties and find a solution,” says Padam Thakurati, the Panchayat era editor.

Other monarchists are worried that the king is now being directly blamed for everything that is going wrong and for the immoderation of his own royal nominees many of whom have shady pasts. “The king is trapped in a conspiracy,” explains retired Brig-Gen Dipta Prakash Shah, a former nominated member of the Upper House, “to hide one mistake the royal courtiers are making a thousand mistakes…both an active monarchy or military rule are out of the question.”

(With reporting by Sharad KC and Kiran Nepal)

He’s tough, yet gentle. Truly, he is my Special Editions Man!
To Kingdom Come

There are only two ways to go from here: tighten up or loosen off. Which path will the architects of absolutism take? My sense is that the hardest choice that is dictating policy is pushing the king to tighten up and take care of the unfinished business of February First. The royal takeover was supposed to be decided by the king and the insurgency. It has been crushed democracy instead.

Recent orchestrated public threats against civil society, political parties and the media aren't even veiled anymore. Royal nominees in the districts are beating up administrators, intimidating and arresting journalists. Shady front organisations that serve as apologists for the royal regime against the Maoists, nationalism in the districts are beating up administrators, intimidating and arresting journalists. Shady front organisations that serve as apologists for the royal regime against the Maoists.

State-run media has descended to gutterspeak and civil liberties. Royal nominees in the districts are beating up administrators, intimidating and arresting journalists.

Loosening up is the only way to go. The pendulum of power can swing either way depending on signals emanating from the palace, it's puzzling silence to lash out at the 1990 constitution, saying it is a façade. The royal regime isn't about to happen. No one is quite sure what, but it is sure to be significant.

The smell is unmistakable and overpowering. Something is rotten in the political scene: a mood of anticipation lingers with the imminent national election. But the military, or a softer authoritarian move will be counterproductive. But then hardliners aren't known for their clearheadedness. Giri isn't just issuing empty threats when he lashed out at the coalition in February First. We can't do anything against newspapers that write against us because of the constitution. Nowhere in the world can newspapers get away with what papers get away with here. One can sue the editor of Kantipur, a cartoonist or a publisher and if you win they may get two years behind bars but they can get out on bail and continue writing whatever they want. This constitution allows such things. How does one deal with this?

It is easy to blame the government for not fulfilling February First. But how can it when political forces threaten strikes and pen downs? If we try to stop it they will go to the Supreme Court. Another problem. After all, the justices are also human beings they are also affected by what happens outside: Now the Supreme Court wants to dissolve the NCP. The parties who swear by this constitution have made it meaningless by their own statements and by removing constitutional monarchy and opting for democratic republic. If they have cast aside the constitution, there is no way why others should adhere to it. We are battling terrorism, we are fighting anarchy and we have to battle terrorism, we have to battle anarchy.

Tulsi Girí speaks out

In-house translation of excerpts from a transcript of the speech delivered by Vice-chairman Tulsi Girí in Biratnagar on 20 September. The parties are not for peace and democracy then have nothing.

Now, they say they want to debate whether the monarchy should be kept or done away with. It's not so simple, this is a potentially huge leap. Where did these so-called democrats get themselves to demand that? After all, His Majesty has said he is committed to multiparty democracy and constitutional monarchy. The parties have always been called for a democratic republic even though they know the people will never accept it. The parties say there is no democracy after February First. On what basis are they saying this, give one reasonable reason. That are they, are allowed to hold meetings and demonstrations. After all, the king had to make his move because there was no parliament. I told foreigners: parliament was dissolved by the parliamentary parties themselves, years before the king took over. Now the parties want to restore parliament and for that Article 127 needs to be invoked—and when the king used the same article they said it was acting unconstitutionally. Nepalis have a right to live without foreign money, that we can't control the Maoists without foreign arms. Have told them openly: don't threaten us. We will survive without your money. We will live without your guns. We will live independently. I told them let's be friends let's cooperate to solve this problem and they said the parties and the king have to work together. No one disagrees with that. His Majesty agrees. Faced with terrorism, all those who love peace and democracy will live independently. His Majesty agrees.

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CEASEFIRE
The Maoists’ unilateral ceasefire has naturally been met with some scepticism as noted by Naresh Newar in ‘What next?’ (#264).
Those who hail it as a sign that the Maoists are ready to compromise have conveniently forgotten that Baburam Bhattarai himself had on more than one occasion stated that acceptance of multiparty democracy and market economy would be just but a stepping stone to the final goal: the establishment of a totalitarian communist state. It is surprising then that the political parties are ready to strike a deal with the Maoists not withstanding the fact that hundreds of their party workers have been murdered by the rebels. Moreover they seem to have failed to notice that Indian Maoists, who share not only the ideology but also resources and a masterplan for a regionwide ‘compact revolutionary zone’ with Nepali Maoists are not fighting against a ‘feudal monarchy’ but against a ‘democratic republic’.

The only logical longterm way to deal with this has always been reconciliation between the palace and the parties. The country is more than ‘at a historic crossroad’ it is on the brink of an abyss.
S K Aryal, Bishalnagar

- When the Maoists declared a three-month unilateral ceasefire, they presented the government with an opportunity to respond so there would a chance for peace. Our country’s future is at stake, our posterity and the wellbeing of all the people who share not only the ideology but also resources and a masterplan for a regionwide ‘compact revolutionary zone’ with Nepali Maoists are ready to compromise have failed to notice that Indian Maoists, who share not only the ideology but also resources and a masterplan for a regionwide ‘compact revolutionary zone’ with Nepali Maoists are not fighting against a ‘feudal monarchy’ but against a ‘democratic republic’.

- With their track record, the Maoists have to do more than just sending around faxes to the media announcing the ceasefire. In the past, they have always declared a ceasefire when their guerillas needed to rest, rearm and recruit. This is what they are doing now. That is why I don’t agree with the tone of the editorial in your last issue (‘One-sided truce’, #264) calling on the government to respond. Why should it? It is a public relations stunt done at the behest of Indian political parties.
J B Singh, email

NAMING AND SHAMING
Kunda Dixit’s ‘Naming and shaming’ (#265) provides a true story of Nepal’s progress in meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Unlike many developing countries, Nepal has been working very seriously to meet the MDGs. To achieve the highly ambitious but achievable goals, Nepal and development agencies must have a conducive environment as a prerequisite to meet the targets. First, the ongoing conflict in the country must be resolved to bring political stability. Second, as Mr Dixit rightly emphasises, the restoration of ‘true’ grassroots democracy is prerequisite since the development of Nepal’s villages are in the hands of local communities and their elected representatives. Nepal made significant progress in sustainable development since the 1990s precisely due to decentralisation and community empowerment through various hardware and software development programs. Third, an appropriate institutional framework must be in place to effectively link both central and local government resources with civil society and the private sector in meeting development targets. Fourth, all MDGs must be integrated for synergistic impact. And lastly, we need to constantly review progress and learn from experiences.

Although the good news is that Nepal has made progress as highlighted in the UN Human Development Report 2005, we may regress unless the challenges are addressed. The Nepal Times deserves praise for bringing up development issues instead of just focusing on politics.
Hum Gurung, Griffith University, Australia

- It’s hard to believe that Nepal’s poverty figures have gone down. Statistics can be twisted and the United Nations and World Bank are notorious for this. So what if Nepal has gone up four points in the poverty index? What kind of difference has it made on the ground for ordinary Nepalis?
How do you put a dollars and cents count on a mother who has lost her life because she can’t get to a hospital in time because the conflict has closed down the health post, the road and all mobility? All this talk of meeting Millennium Development Goals are meaningless unless we address the political problem of resolving this conflict.
Sudarshan Duralal, email

INDIA CHINA
If both India and China are lukewarm about a transit through Nepal (‘Traversing the middle kingdom’, #265) I don’t see why Nepal is so enthusiastic about it. Besides, as Pragya Shrestha argues in her excellent column in ‘What next?’ (#264), ‘What next?’ it’s not going to benefit from having all these smoke belching trucks going from the plains to the plateau.
Hum Gurung, Griffith University, Australia

Before chasing this pie in the sky, how about building an east-west railroad within Nepal? How about using our hydropower for transportation, and how about maintaining our existing highways properly?
Dinesh Aryal, Babar Mahal

TOP TIPS
Asthulosh Tiwari’s column about jobs and careers ‘Tips to reach the top’ (Strictly Business, #265) makes some valid points about jobseekers approaching their job search, jobs and careers in a systematic and professional manner. However, employers too need to improve the way they handle the hiring process. It is true that Nepali jobseekers could present their strengths and skills much more convincingly. At the same time, employers also need to be clear about what they are looking for in the candidates. Most wanted ads are extremely generic and don’t even have the company or contact names on them. And the way most interviewees go, I am not sure what the primary motive of the interviewers is– hiring the best candidate or simply going through the motions. No matter how much a candidate tries to ignore the deep rooted culture of ‘source-force’, it is there alive and kicking. There are numerous instances where candidates with very strong resumes are not even invited for an interview. Yes, it is at the discretion of the hiring company but one cannot help but wonder if interview decisions are solely merit-based, especially after noticing the people who eventually get hired for the position.
Bichar Nepali, via email

RAINBOW
Great picture of a rainbow and the all-seeing eyes of the Prince of Peace (#265) to coincide with International Day of Peace this week. Let’s hope our ruler believes in omens.
Lin Sedlar, email
from his perch atop a stool in his dry goods shop, Yog Prasad Bhattarai sees much that happens in the village of Awikbhanjyang, just off the Siddhartha Highway to Pokhara. The numbers of people moving up the road that curves past his shop have grown in the past three weeks after the ceasefire announcement. But there is no increase in the number of customers in the his shop. “Business is down, there’s been no change,” he tells visitors wearily.

Such response is typical from the residents of Tansen when asked about the ceasefire. “We’re happy”, “it’s good news” or “I can move easily” people say but there is always a but: “But the government should also agree to the ceasefire.”

Palpa’s beauty is breathtaking even with the Annapurnas shrouded in monsoon clouds. Terraces of emerald paddy and lush forests shine in the sun. On the path to Buddhikot, villagers shield themselves with umbrellas as they hurry their livestock along rocky, rutted roads and trails. At the local school, headmaster Jaganath Sharma sits on a straw mat under a pipal tree.

The area has been little disturbed by the conflict because it’s not on a main rebel route. But some months ago some soldiers disguised as Maoists entered one end of the village while two rebels on a motorcycle rode in at the other. After the shooting stopped, one Maoist was dead while the other was wounded and escaped.

“After the ceasefire things like that haven’t happened,” says the headmaster. “People are hoping that if both sides drop their guns there will be peace.”

Further down the trail, past plots of yellowing corn, a local NGO worker says things are more relaxed. “I can go anywhere now,” she says, “Before I used to have many problems.” Earlier this year in eastern Palpa about 5,000 Maoists had gathered at a school where she was supposed to train locals. “They interrogated me about our training, why we were doing it, what its benefits would be, who was being paid what. Finally they said OK, you can go ahead,” she recalls.

On 23 March three secondary students stopping cars for donations during Holi were shot by soldiers who claimed they were Maoists extorting taxes. Generally, Maoists act respectfully when they’re on duty, they pay the fare and don’t ask for special treatment, says a young jeep driver on the road from Tansen to Chidipani. As for soldiers: “I have never been harassed by them but I know they have beaten drivers who were forced to give rides to Maoists.”

At one time Tansen used to be bustling with tourists, there are none to be seen now. The local restaurant is almost empty. Tourist arrivals have dropped from 3,700 in 1998 to around 500 last year, says a local businessman. The only businesses that are thriving are those linked to the overseas workforce: money transfers and international phone call centres.

The local bank has also left and the police post has relocated. Yog Prasad says he will be next if peace does not return soon. Where will he go after 28 years? “Home to the tarai to farm,” he says with a shrug, “where else?”

The Maoists have worked in ‘pocket areas’ and had kidnapped some people. On one occasion the Red Cross walked for five days to take back prisoners captured by the Maoists. But when the military captures people, half of them don’t come out alive, says one local.

Maoists would occasionally demand food. Soldiers would come after that and say, “if you had not fed them they wouldn’t be here.”

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Kalikot food project resums

There is reason to be happy for the impoverished families in Kalikot— their favourite project Rural Community Infrastructure Works (RCIW) is being resumed after nearly four months of suspension. Project donors UK Department for International Development (DID), Dutch development agency SNV, German aid agency GTZ and the UN’s World Food Programme (WFP) announced its suspension in May to protest against the beating of a female project staff by Maoist rebels.

We have received guarantees (from the Maoists) that there will be a secure environment for the staff,” says WFP’s JP Demanpreet. According to DID’s Robert Smith, “We have been given assurance that the Maoists will abide with the basic operating guidelines. RCIW projects are run in the districts facing the greatest food deficits and provide impoverished families with food in return for road construction work.

A royal bill

Hiranya—It was merely a three-hour visit by King Gyanendra so many local people are asking if it was worth spending so much on decorations? Coming here was part of the king’s visit to Narayani Zone headquarters last week. This industrial town spent over Rs 800,000 on 55 welcome gates. Administration and security officials in Birganj had given strict orders to local businessmen to prepare for the king’s visit by putting up photos of the royal couple near their shops. On two consecutive days traffic along the Mahendra Highway was totally blocked for seven hours without prior warning. Thousands of passengers were left stranded without food and water. (Bhaskar Aryal)

Community forests forced to pay

Both the Maoists and the government have been interfering in community forest consumers’ groups, said the Federation of Community Forest Consumers Groups (FCFCG). The government is also charging extra “revenue” and has even set up security camps in community forests. FCFCG also warned the government to scrap plans to establish district forestry coordination committees or it would launch protests. A provision under the plan to allot 25 percent of the revenue generated to forest management committees and 75 percent to a government fund is unfair, said FCFCG Secretary Bhim Prasad Shrestha.

Gated community

Valley Homes Private Limited has launched the gated community, Terraces, in Sunakothi. The initial development will be on 49 ropanis of land, according to FCFCG Secretary Bhim Prasad Shrestha.

More mobile

Spice Nepal launched its Mero Mobile service on 17 September. The rate for calls between Mero Mobile subscribers has been set at one paisa per minute until the end of 2005. Spice Nepal says the service will be available in other parts of the country by the end of this year, including Birganj, Janakpur, Butwal, Bharatpur, Banepa and Dharan.

Reform 2.0

Nepal desperately needs another wave of economic reform

When Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi opted for elections everyone knew they would be a litmus test for further economic reforms in Japan. As it turns out, all are expecting him to tackle his nation’s $3 trillion in postal savings.

ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed

Economic reform is the order of the day. Everyone is talking about The World Is Flat, a treatise on demystifying the future global economy, which Friedman labels a ‘flattened’ one. The message for us is that if we do not embrace the waves of technological innovation, reform and globalisation, we shall be left behind.

We can draw parallels from Guruswamy’s The India Unbound, which describes how nation rejected reform to stick to Nehruvian mixed economy, making it suffer for many decades post independence. There are many other similar lessons to learn from the experiences of economies that do not reform.

The message emerging from various parts of the world is very clear—reform, reform and more reform. And your ever-faithful Beed will keep harping on this till it is blue in the face.

Nepal’s Reform 1.0 launched in 1993 succeeded gloriously but we squandered it in the mid-1990s when the political will required to support the changes dried up. In spite of power, various political alliances were formed and the power brokers’ main objective became keeping political partners, and therefore the vote bank, happy. Thus, we never stopped trying to please labour unions or protection-seeking domestic businesses.

But reforms never result in easy political payoffs as they need sacrifices for services and the business syrphonts that fund elections lose their competitive edges.

There is a school of thought that reforms happen best under authoritarian regimes, the so-called Singapore Model. Unfortunately, we have tried authoritarianism and it didn’t work either. If sceptics pre-February First gave the palace the benefit of the doubt in exchange for hope for sweeter political rewards, they are in a dilemma today. The best way for the current regime to win popular support will be to take the country forward.

We returned to protectionism, stalling critical legislation while issues likeевич the six-week week dominated policy pronouncements. However, in our confusion on pursuing a 21st century economic strategy, we lost it all.

The absence of reforms started hitting hard as the revenues began shrinking and borrowings grew as multilateral donors, seeing no reform, started cutting support. Today, after a long time, the government has started talking with the Central Bank to meet its expenses. Multilateral aid flows are dependent on regimes as long as a reform agenda is pursued. Aid continues to move into Kathmandu.

We cannot miss the opportunities in this ‘flattened’ world, chances that will exist only if we continue to reform. The solution to the current Maoist impasse is neither political nor military—it has to be economic, the integration of all Nepalis in the country. How do we, with the world’s 40th most populated country and with a market of one billion people to the north and a billion people to the south perhaps the moment is right for Nepal’s own economic exploitation. But we need Reform 2.0 to lead the way.

“Nepali drugs are now of international quality.”

Nepal Times: Is the problem of substandard drugs in Nepal getting better?
Har Bhakta Sharma: The problem is our inefficient regulatory bodies. There is limited technical knowhow and intervention for quality control. There is only one government lab and it can analyse just 1,000 samples per year. That is possible only if chemicals and manpower are available. According to government statistics, there are 12,000 brands available in the country every year. Medicines are supplied outside Kathmandu but there isn’t the infrastructure to monitor the medicines supplied in places like Ilam and Dadeldhura.

Nepali pharmaceutical companies have a small share of even the domestic market.

If we want to go to India or other South Asian countries, we will be subject to high tariffs and other difficult barriers.

Reciprocal restrictions should apply to foreign companies that come here. Unfortunately, the government favours the import of medicines to local manufacturing. I haven’t seen such policies in other countries.

How do you change that?

We have been unable to explain clearly the importance of the pharmaceutical and biotechnology sectors to the government. People involved in policy making have to understand the business paradigm, the type of technology, policies and facilities that are needed. Even when we are successful in educating one official, by the time he grasps the idea, he gets transferred to another department.

Our policies are the same as they were 20 years ago. If you look at the pharmaceutical sector in other places, there have been tremendous and rapid changes.

What are the other constraints?

Suppose we need to get new equipments—there are heavy tariff barriers. In terms of capital, the cost of maintaining the quality is three times expensive than purchasing. Our overall investment in terms of fixed capital has gone up. In spite of all this, we have been able to do what is possible in this country. We have integrated and upgraded our technology. It gives me pride to say that our company is not too far behind in terms of drug technology than those in America or Europe or India. That is a major achievement. This is proven by the WHO certification of GMP (current good manufacturing practices) granted to us.

How will you get Nepal to trust Nepali products?

By delivering quality. The response to our products is very good. The best thing is that we have the capacity to make quality assurance with scientific proof. You can’t fool the doctors with just talk. The most important issue is that we know how to cure the ailment that it has been prescribed for.

It is said prediction is better than cure, and most ailments in Nepal need prediction.

It is better for the nation if we focus on prevention. We are also developing path promotion drugs for better and healthier living. But looking at today’s lifestyle, economic conditions, living conditions and socio-economic situation, we need to be prepared with proper medications as well. Today’s lifestyles are stressful and these lead to premature ageing—we plan to get into rejuvenation drugs and promote them in the international market. This is not easy but we have the confidence that we can be successful and have already applied in selected markets in developed countries.

As one of Nepal’s leading drug companies, Deurali-Janta Pharmaceuticals strives for self-sufficiency in medicines of international quality. Its founder and executive director Hari Bhakta Sharma tells Nepal Times he wants to get into the export market.
His Majesty shouldn’t fight the people

Panchayat-era Zonal Commissioner, Surya Bahadur Sen

Himal Khabarpatrika, Surya Bahadur Sen

Panchayat-era Zonal Commissioner, makes the king personally responsible for their chief secretary has been done by the king. This administrations, the monitoring teams have all new ordinances, regional and zonal service is demoralised, and the introduction of efficient, impartial and responsible. The civil need to foster an administration that is sincere, is all reflecting on the king himself. There is a for the king to act fast to provide peace and are left in the villages. There is a desperate need for the king to act fast to provide peace and security. It is already getting late still time for the king to play a positive role, he has resources, rights, opportunities and so on. There is welfare and is a disaster to the country's time, the king will be carried on the shoulders of citizens but..."
“The UN is talking to India, China and the US”

BBC Nepali Service: What did Nepal gain or lose by not having its head of the state at the UN Summit in New York last week?

Kul Chandra Gautam: It is quite unfortunate that the difficult situation in our country kept him from participating in such a big summit at the highest level. But in the present circumstances, even if the king had participated, Nepal would not have earned respect. So it is good we escaped what could have been a disgrace.

Is there a role for the proposed UN peace building commission in Nepal’s peace process?

The commission is being established to solve the problems of countries like Nepal. It will not only help end conflict but also play an important role in the rehabilitation of conflict-torn countries and disarmament and reintegration of the military wings of conflicting parties.

UN documents speak of ‘the responsibility to protect’. Does that mean the commission can play a role if the conflict continues in Nepal?

The international community’s responsibility to protect citizens is aimed at preventing genocides like that in Rwanda, Cambodia and Bosnia. Since Nepal has not reached that stage, the particular provision is not applicable to Nepal. What the commission can do is protect civilians during conflict and make special attempts to bring such conflict to an end. That is where Nepal will fit in.

What is the UN’s take on the unilateral ceasefire by the Maoists and Prachanda’s willingness to disarm under UN monitoring?

As an Assistant Secretary General at the United Nations, Kul Chandra Gautam is the seniormost Nepali in the world body. He spoke to the BBC Nepali Service last week about the prospects of a negotiated solution to the Nepal conflict. Excerpts:

Secretary General Kofi Annan has repeatedly said that the Nepali conflict cannot be solved militarily and that the UN offers its offices to help dialogue between the two parties. Given the increased military might of the army and the Maoists and soaring security expenditures, the UN can certainly help in disarmament and demobilisation of both sides. In this context, Prachanda’s point is relevant and there are possibilities of a UN role as elsewhere.

What can the UN’s good offices actually achieve?

The Secretary General or his representatives can do many things if the two sides ask for mediation to prepare points of agreement. The UN has adequate experience on minimising differences and maximising agreements between warring parties and working on compromise. We are still hopeful that the offices of the secretary general will be acceptable to both the rebels and the government in Nepal. But that will not be enough. The role of Nepal’s immediate neighbours will also be crucial. The two neighbours have not spoken about the UN’s role so far. Therefore, the UN will need to get the nod from three sides: the Maoists who have already sought such role, the government and Nepal’s two neighbours.

If that is the case, how come the UN is always bogged down in developmentese and never addresses the geopolitical reality of Nepal’s insurgency?

It’s not that the UN has not understood geopolitics. Since it recognises the gravity of the matter, it has been in consultation with neighbouring countries before making any move. It may be true that the UN has not been as active as it could be considering the geopolitical situation of the country. What I can tell you is that the Secretary General’s special representative, Lakhdar Brahimi, has been holding talks with India, China and the US. He has been trying to receive their cooperation without which it is difficult to see progress towards resolution.

Translated transcription of interview broadcast on BBC Nepali Service 14 September.

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**Radio Times**

23 - 29 September 2005 #266

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**“The UN is talking to India, China and the US”**
Feasting on films
For documentary enthusiasts in Kathmandu, the weekend of 29 September will feature movies galore.
This year 43 films were chosen from the 189 entries to Film South Asia (FSA). India, with its tradition of documentary-making, will have the largest number of films at FSA 2005. Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh have impressive line-ups while Sri Lanka and Nepal have a modest presence. The festival also includes films on South Asian subjects from Burma, Canada and South Africa.

Well-known directors such as Tanveer Mokamel from Bangladesh, Rakesh Sharma from India and Shireen Pasha from Pakistan will be here and the festival will showcase a selection of the best films made in or about the region over the last two years.

The four days of Film South Asia will be followed by a two-day showcase, Barrel of the Gun, featuring of films from all over the world on political violence.
Contact: www.himalassociation.org/fsa or 5542544.

The New Boys
Life in a school dormitory focusing on group dynamics is the subject of the fourth film in the series of David MacDougall’s long-term study of childhood and adolescence at the Doon School in northern India. The film provides unique insights into the values and training of the Indian middle class and, more generally, of postcolonial elites at India’s foremost boarding school for boys.

My Brother, My Enemy
For the first time in 15 years, the Indian cricket team is on tour in Pakistan. Two Indian and Pakistani filmmakers, travel with the team and create a film that is a part of a plea for understanding between their nations.

The Catch
The film chronicles the struggles of a fishing community casting its nets in the waters of the Arabian Sea off the coast of Sindh in Pakistan and Gujarat in India. Their lives are followed against the backdrop of a dispute between the Pakistani and Indian governments, both eager to claim the oil-rich land and natural gas reserves found in this region. The film calls for the two governments to work together to foster a spirit of peace and cooperation in this volatile region.

The Day My God Died
This one-of-a-kind documentary takes a unique look at the manner in which the US Special Forces operates in Afghanistan. The film was shot in February 2003 by John Sullivan and Gar Arendt, who stayed in Jalalabad under the protection of a local warlord. Never before has anyone followed the actions of the US Special Forces so closely.

The Great Indian School Show
The story of a school in which the administration has forced to service up to 20 clients a day.

Final Solution
The film is a study of the politics of hate. Set in Gujarat in February-March 2002 and July 2003, the film graphically documents the changing face of right-wing politics in western India through an examination of the carnage wrought on Gujrati Hindus in 2002.

Lanka-The Other Side of War and Peace
On the 22 February 2002, after more than 20 years of fighting the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the Government of Sri Lanka signed a ceasefire agreement. The opening of the A9 highway after 12 years became a symbol of the hope for peace in Sri Lanka. Structured in travelogue fashion, the film traverses the northern and southern landscapes of Sri Lanka.

Im Schatten der Pagoden – der andere Burma
A picturesque journey through fayyate Bums, the golden land of a thousand Pagodas that ends in the jungles where hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people live, on the run from the government army. Yet much of the world is unaware of the suffering of millions of Burmese civilians.

Film South Asia (FSA) is a competitive biennial festival of documentary films on South Asian subjects. The festival provides a quality platform for exhibiting new works and promotes a sense of community among documentary filmmakers and connoisseurs. It is the only such event solely dedicated to showcasing contemporary South Asian non-fiction film and has gained deserving recognition within the region and globally as a world-class festival. FSA is organised by Himal Association, a non-profit institution dedicated to spreading knowledge and information in Nepal and South Asia.

The first edition of FSA was held in 1997, after which there have been festivals every two years. In 2003 the film The 16th Elephant - 3 Monologues directed by P Bulan from Kerala won the best film award. Tate of the Darkest Night by Kawsar Chawkhary, came second Best Film Award and Sand and Water by Berlin-based Bangladeshi filmmaker Shahan Oli-Raz-irsh.

FSA 2005 gets underway next week at Kumari Cinema in Kamal Pokhari.
29 September to 4 October, 2005
Kumari Cinema, Kathmandu

Festival of South Asian Documentaries

THURSDAY 29 SEPTEMBER

4:00 pm The New Boys (93)
Uzbekistan-India, 2004, dir. - Davard MacDowall
India, 2005, dir. - Anjali Menon & K. P. Jayasekaran

5:45 pm Bollywood Saga: A Dream of Bollywood
Suman Bhandary (94)
India, 2005, dir. - Karmal Tuli
Life off the sunlit lane

9:00 am Days and Nights in an Indian Jail (92)
Shekhar Kapur, India, 2003, dir. - Sanjay Suri

10:15 am The Hostages of Karanput (90)
Bangladesh, 2005, dir. - Tariq Mohammad
Bengalure, 2005, dir. - Rajeshwara

11:30 am Documentary: Screening in the South Asian Documentary
Kite Hill Via Mathri: Where the Tear Shall Roll (72)
India, 2005, dir. - Asim Bhatti

3:30 pm The Musical Tradition of the Ganj-dutt
From Stevens (Kunal Singh) (76)
Bangladesh, 2005, dir. - Asif Ali

5:00 pm My Brother My Enemy (62)
India/Pakistan, 2005, dir. - Meesook Khan & Kamakari Negi
Watching India-Pakistan cricket series
Team Nepal (37)
India, 2005, dir. - Gillin Gill
To India on a football journey

SATURDAY 1 OCTOBER

9:00 am Presentation on “Finding and Marketing Documentaries”
By Ritu Sud, Jan Urban Fund, The Netherlands
(The Dutch) (77)

11:00 am Revolution: An International Issue
India, 2005, dir. - Hridayanath Bhattacharya
Fishing in Indo-Pak waters

12:15 pm In the Name of Rentner (19)
Pakistan, 2003, dir. - Harishchandra Bhatt
How proud the national flag

2:00 pm Screening of the film: The Writer’s Cut (12)
Moradpur, India, 2005, dir. - Wenceslaus Mendis & Simon Tisser
Happy business bunch out women entrepreneurs

2:30 pm, The Children are Here (80)
Mukhesh Mandavia, India, 2004, dir. - Giselle Beauford
Exilized children of the snow

3:45 pm City’s Law: A Crony’s corruption saga
South Africa, 2005, dir. - Sarawir Chinatra

4:30 pm The Legend of Pat naam (23)
Bangladesh, 2005, dir. - Rehsho Elias
Aming the Chinese in Calcutta

5:15 pm Cossanspora: Two Tales of a City (14)
Panama Vohra
Non-violent is in BomBay

5:45 pm The Day By Day Dead (61)
Nepal, 2005, dir. - Andrew Levine
Rape sex victim in BomBay

SUNDAY 2 OCTOBER

9:00 am The Life and Times of a Lady from Awadhi Hima (135)
Amar, 2005, dir. - Praveen Pasha

11:45 am The New Boys (93)
India, 2005, dir. - Anjali Menon & K. P. Jayasekaran

2:00 pm Search for Freedom (94)
Pakistan, 2003, dir. - Muhammad Ali
Women of Afghanistan speak out

3:15 pm City of Photos (92)
India, 2005, dir. - Nishtha Jain
eight photo studios that we know
4:45 pm Four Decades as an Immigrant in UK
India, 2005, dir. - Nishtha Jain
Four decades as an Immigrant in UK

HALL B

4:00 pm The New Boys (93)
Uzbekistan-India, 2004, dir. - Davard MacDowall
India, 2005, dir. - Anjali Menon & K. P. Jayasekaran

5:45 pm The Boy Who Plays on the Buddhash of Bamiyan (86)
Afghanistan, 2002, dir. - Faslab Gulati
Everyday travails of an Afghan kid

10:00 am Gangsta: Rivers to Heaven (77)
Uzbekistan-India, 2004, dir. - Gaye Ferraro
They came to the here

11:30 am The One in the Castle (60)
Bihar, India, 2004, dir. - Raman Khamat
Living in Telugu

2:00 pm Continuous Journey (77)
Cambridge, India, 2004, dir. - Al Kazmi
Entering Canada in 1914

3:45 pm The Other Women (67)
St Lanka, 2004, dir. - Ananda Rajakumar
A Sinhalese re discovers the Tamil

5:15 pm The Girl From the Other Side (93)
Assam, India, 2005, dir. - A. Sailabzad
Looking for good news in 1989 Assam
A Camel’s Liberation (93)
Bangladesh, 2003, dir. - Yasmeen Kazmi
Ghost of the Bangladesh war

8:15 am Final Solution (149)
Guatemala, 2004, dir. - Rajesh Sharma
The extremism that was in Gujrat

12:30 pm The Neogata People in the World (94)
Bangladesh, 2004, dir. - Shaheen Bilt-Riaz
High spirits amid hardships in the delta

2:00 pm The Courage of Fakir (60)
BomBay, India, 2004, dir. - Ayos Mukul Khoshoo
Confront the facts of existence

3:15 pm Looking for Amitabh (91)
India, 2003, dir. - Manojkesh Shrotri
The superstars and the visually challenged

4:15 pm The Great India Show (62)
Maharashtra, South Africa, 2004, dir. - Anvish Deshpande
A young one under colour\\n
8:30 pm Sunday Night: The City Beautiful (78)
Delhi, India, 2003, dir. - Rahul Roy
Being laid off in global India

9:00 am A Million Stars (25)
India, 2003, dir. - Parkhek Rosita
Second generation in the Great Game

10:30 am Kasa Knite: Land of the Bigmen (61)
Jharkhand, India, 2006, dir. - Babu Toppo
Khasi men who work in Assam tea gardens

11:45 am In the Shadow of the Papagora - The Other Burma (47)
Switzerland, 2004, dir. - Hiren Marwah
Overview of the Burma crisis

2:00 pm The Courage of Fakir (60)
India, 2005, dir. - Nishtha Jain
Three little boys from Jodhpur

3:00 pm Kasab (57)
Kashmir, 2004, dir. - Ramachandran K.
A very important documentary on terrorism
Girl Song (62)
Rajasthan, 2003, dir. - Vaishali Joshi
Jazz nights in Calcutta

4:15 pm Sunday Other Side of War and Peace (79)
Sri Lanka, 2005, dir. - Ifit Fatulh
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Veer Book Shop, Jhapa, 4209229
Jee Nepal and Kamat Cinema, 4442209

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Go Documentray
A group of musicians from around Britain broke a world record this week by playing music continuously for 44 hours in Central London in a fundraising drive to help Nepali children. Such record-breaking events may not be special in a country where a Scottish band set the longest record by playing for 42 hours and 38 minutes last year, but this year’s longest gig record will go to raise money to build a shelter for conflict-impacted children in Nepal.

At the trendy Soho Lounge (www.thesoholounge.co.uk) in London’s famous West End the band composed of three women and two men were allowed 10 minute breaks every eight hours. When I visited, they had just crossed 24 hours and Craig Mitchell was singing his own composition, ‘Crush your heart and hope to die/There is million and one thing you can try/How long now...?’

“Another 20 hours,” I muttered. The musicians looked tired, sleepy and, at times, closed their eyes for several minutes as they played mostly soft and soothing numbers from the Beatles, Cold Play, George Michael, John Lennon and many others.


It was Oz who felt the urge to do something for the children in Nepal after he travelled to Kathmandu in 2002. He was both shocked and inspired when several street children flocked around him begging him to buy them something to eat.

“I felt there were more important things in life than just playing music,” he recalls.

Back in London, Oz with his musician friends formed a charity, Nepal Bal balloon Trust (NBT), with the aim of building a self-sufficient shelter for destitute children. Since the establishment of the charity in 2004, Oz and his group have performed dozens of gigs in and around London to raise funds.

This week’s longest gig is a prelude to set another Guiness record breaker for the World’s Highest Gig (www.theworldshighestgig.com) in October 2005. This will take place just above Everest base camp at 5,545 meters.

To build the shelter, NBT will work with HELP NEPAL Network (HeNN) www.helpnepal.net, a global charity run by Nepalis and friends of Nepal, which, incidentally, has made the conflict impacted children of Nepal a priority target group for 2006.

HeNN has already reached an agreement with a school in Dhulikhel to secure land for the construction of the shelter. Apart from providing logistical support to NBT, the network, through its own fundraising efforts is planning to help grassroots level organisations which have demonstrated exemplary commitment in helping the conflict affected children.

With nearly a dozen chapters around the world, including registered groups in Australia, America, Britain and Nepal, the network has also developed a program called Bhai-Bahini to support children affected by the conflict. A child of Nepali origin or any child in the world will be supported by another child who has been impacted by the conflict in Nepal until they become capable of living their own lives and supporting themselves financially.

HeN-N USA’s Muna Joshi, the chief coordinator of the Bhai-Bahini program, says: “We hope this will help children develop an affinity with Nepal, develop a sense of giving at an early age and show how young individuals can make a difference and nurture a future.”

HeN-N is completely voluntary with no overheads and all funds raised go directly to the welfare of the children. The cost of a small administrative office in Kathmandu is sponsored by generous Nepali businessmen.

President of HeN-N USA, Mabi Singh, says: “If non-Nepalis can do such difficult things to support Nepali children, it becomes a moral obligation for us Nepalis around the world to do something as well. We can’t just sit and complain, we must act.”

Rabindra Mishra is the founding chairperson of HELP NEPAL Network admin@helpnepal.net
Robin Needham's niece (right) is auctioning celebrity art to raise money for tsunami victims

The art of care

The 20-year-old niece of Robin Needham, the director of CARE Nepal who died in last year’s tsunami in Thailand, has enlisted the support of hundreds of celebrities to join a unique fundraising drive for victims of the disaster.

Daisy Bell, the psychology student from Edinburgh, has got luminaries like Paul McCartney, Elizabeth Hurley, Damien Hirst, footballers and DJs to draw and doodle on postcards which will be auctioned at Christies on 30 September.

“It was the most terrible feeling when my uncle died,” Bell said in a newspaper interview in Edinburgh. “He was amazing, he spent his life helping people. Everyone has someone in their life who is the most incredible person. He was mine.”

Earlier this year, Daisy decided to raise £10,000 for CARE International in memory of her uncle, who would have been involved in tsunami relief had he not lost his life. Robin Needham had worked with UNICEF in Thailand and served in Somalia and Bangladesh before he was appointed director of CARE Nepal in 1998.

With two weeks to go for the auction, Daisy Bell has already got 300 postcards with celebrity art on them which can be viewed online at www.artofcare.co.uk. Christie’s Scotland is organising the auction and estimates that the overall money raised could top £40,000. Proceeds will go to a special fund set up to help specific villages ravaged by the tsunami.

Bernard Williams, the director of Christie’s who will be auctioning 65 of the postcards at the opening night of the exhibition on 30 September, told The Telegraph: “We are potentially looking at tens of thousands of pounds. Hirst and McCartney are star lots.” The rest of the paintings will be auctioned online.

After being involved in relief efforts in Asia and Africa for more than three decades Needham came to Nepal with CARE and led healthcare, water and education projects throughout Nepal, including Maoist-affected areas. He was particularly concerned with the protection of children from the conflict and was chairman of the Association of International NGOs in Nepal, coordinating the work of more than 50 relief agencies. (See ‘Nepal will miss Robin’, #228.)

Robin Needham was vacationing with his wife and four children at Golden Buddha Beach on Ko Phra Thong, an island off the Thai coast, when the tsunami struck. He was last seen directing people off the beach and his body was found three days later in a forest. His family survived.

Robin had a lively sense of humour and one of his hobbies was collecting single malt whiskey. His wife Lucy is organising a fundraiser with malt tasting in Kathmandu in mid-October. Kunda Dixit

www.artofcare.co.uk

Nepal has the spiritual answer to the cycles of happiness and suffering

A storm surge recedes in the media’s coverage of Hurricane Katrina, one can hardly think of anything new to note on the subject, as we plough through the flotsam left behind.

“Like many, I have been glued to the tube throughout this story, reflecting back on the many storms I’ve survived, mostly in the Carolinas, where year after year our homes and lives were swept into the sea or flattened to the earth, only to arise again in a phoenix-like pattern.

Stock market dips to spike again, beachfront property pops up as fast as it is blown away and personal sufferings turn once again to moderated joys. So goes the cycle of our existence, from homeowner to refugee, from healthy to sick, from happy to sad and then back again.

We lead multiple consecutive cycles in a dizzy series of follow-on stories: tsunami destruction, life during tsunami, life after tsunami and then the obligatory anniversary of tsunami. Inter-dispersed between destruction, suffering caused by destruction and the recovering from destruction, is new news: the grand opening of Disneyland Hong Kong, a new Apple iPod the size of your jeans pocket or how jazz keeps spirits high in Singapore. Then back to the scrolling news bar on the bottom of your screen: sales are up, profits are down, gold is down and oil is up. Now we return to Katrina’s waters receding in the streets of New Orleans and the tidewaters from typhoon Kanun rising in China.

Within all these ups and downs and cycles of suffering, punctuated by moments of bliss (look at that cute puppy rescued!) we try to figure out what is the constant, what is the middle ground, where is it that we, as human beings, can lead instead of just following the media around like a dog chasing its tail. What is the path through these cycles of man-made and natural disasters? Surprisingly enough, the answer seems to be rooted in Nepal (of all places). While our small country is not exempt from any of these cycles: landslides, war, earthquakes, dips in tourism, rises in petrol prices, beauty contests...the cycles of happiness and suffering do exist.

Nevertheless, what may make Nepal unique, is that it is the spiritual epicenter of an older culture based on peace, tranquility, and the Middle Way. Most of us living in Nepal see the counter symbols of anti-extremism everyday. Whether it’s a fluttering prayer flag or an ancient temple or the sound of a monk blaring a horn or the flash of a stupa as we whiz by on our way to work, the inhabitants of this kingdom, consciously or not, are bathed in another kind of daily media, the media of dharma.

Here, the cycle of the day is not rooted in anything seen on CNN. It is the cycle of life and death itself (and sometimes defined simply as the Truth). It is the cycle of the big picture, a much wider picture than we can ever purchase from our local Samsung showroom.

The Dalai Lama on Larry King summed it up this week: “I think it worthwhile to minimise matters of anxiety or mental suffering so that you can build your future more...if your mind is totally dominated by sadness or trauma then that will be great hindrance in rebuilding your life—your new life.”

Jigme Gaton is the cartoonist behind Herojig on this paper’s City page.
Jazzmandu

12 INTERNATIONAL

12 INTERNATIONAL

Hima is a 92-year-old émigré from Awadh, whose father is a talukdar who stayed back. She moved with her husband to Lahore after Partition, while the aging father lives on in what has now become India. As a former nobleman, he represents the best of Lakhnawi civility and grace (tehzeeb), civilizational values that the modern-day power elites of Lahore, Kanichi, Delhi or Bombay have yet to incorporate.

In The Life and Times of a Lady from Awadh: Hima, filmmaker Shireen Pasha has weaved a beautifully complex tapestry of a lifestyle that is now largely evaporated. Her documentary presents old-world Awadh through the medium of across-the-LoC letters between a father and daughter. Additional flavour is added through enactment of short plays written by the elderly talukdar, a sharp observer of human foibles and refreshingly advanced on social matters, including women’s emancipation.

Hima is about as Southasian as a documentary film can get, traversing the horizontal plane of distance across the modern-day frontier of Pakistan-India and the vertical plane of time-reaching back to Awadh, a term that fairly drips with the syrup of history. It is a different matter that ‘Awadh’ has simply disappeared from the nomenclature of modern-day India and Southasia. The former kingdom has been embedded within Uttar Pradesh, a province (‘the northern region’) as lacking in personality as Awadh was full of it. Meanwhile, Lucknow-on-Conti is a shrivelled form of its old self, trying too hard to hold on to some strands of its legendary tehzeeb.

Shireen Pasha’s success is the presentation of the father-daughter correspondence as a prism into a bygone era. She utilises the particular power of non-fiction film to evoke empathy and understanding. We see here how a competently made documentary, dealing with real life players, can be more powerful than all the manipulations of feature film, even the great Satyajit’s Satranj ke Khiladi on the decline of Awadh.

Hima is only one of the 43 competently made non-fiction films being screened at the Film South Asia ‘05 festival of documentaries being organised at a spanking new duplex cinema in Kathmandu from 29 September to 2 October. These films highlight the coming together of commitment and craft in the evolving genre of Southasian non-fiction film and the variety is astounding. (festival site: www.himalassociation.org/fsa)

Among the 43 productions, a team from Birganj in the Nepal tarai visits Sonpur in Bihar for an annual soccer match. To some, this may seem like a trip from nowhere to nowhere but director Girish Giri brings alive the humanity of the deep, neglected, populated heartland of Southasia. Shaheen Dill-Riaz flies back from Germany with camera in hand to understand whether Bangladeshis are indeed “the happiest people in the world” as suggested by a London School of Economics study. M Khan and K Negi present an India-Pakistan production on a cricket tour titled My Brother My Enemy. And in Sunset Bollywood, Sudanand and Yugesh Walia follow the lives of Bollywood stars who have receded into oblivion. Remember Kumar Gaurav?

The trick with documentaries is not only to make them well but to be able to exhibit them, which is why we need a revolution in screening. Television channels all over the region must get wise to the fact that documentaries like Hima can provide great infotainment (even at its unusual length of 135 min). Meanwhile, it would be a good idea for Film South Asia to take Hima to Lucknow for a special showing, inviting Shireen Pasha from Lahore, the former seat of raja Ranjit Singh, to the capital that Wajid Ali Shah vacated. There will be historical justice in there somewhere.
Green greens

Golf course care in Nepal involves grazing animals and village women

I

ancient days, golf courses were purposely built on fields where cattle grazed as keeping the grass trimmed over such large areas was a daunting and time-consuming task for people. In Nepal, when a group of Ranas returned from Scotland they chose to build their first golf playground at Gauchar (literally “where cattle graze”), the site of today’s Tribhunan International Airport.

Over the centuries there have been revolutionary changes in golf course maintenance. In most parts of the world today sophisticated machinery and often expensive organic and inorganic3 enhancers play much more important roles than humans or animals. But in Nepal and other less affluent countries, it is still preferable to make use of natural methods, relying less on expensive and sensitive machinery and providing much needed job opportunities. A marvellous example of this can be seen at the Himalayan Golf Club in Pokhara. The course features breathtaking terrain and an adventurous back-to-nature approach—sheep and cows are allowed free access to graze on the fairways!
FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- Ganesh paintings by Bipin Raj Shreshtha, 22 September - 2 October at Nepal Art Council Gallery
- Melody of Clouds by Rajesh Gautham till 25 September, Buddha Gallery, 4441689
- Nepal Lokta paper and products exhibition at Hotel Yak and Yeti, 26-27 September
- Ni Rita, exhibition cum sale of bold jewellery at La Sooon, till 26 September, 5537166
- Our a photo exhibition, 26 September - 1 October at Singh Art Gallery Lagankhel
- Art Walk Traditional artworks at Hotel Yak and Yeti, Darbar Marg. 4248999

EVENTS

- From Kin to Caste: The Role of Guthis in Newar Society and Culture by Gerard Toffin, 23 September, Russian Cultural Center. 5548412
- Change Chalt, kite flying competition at Club Himalaya, Napakot 24 September and 8 October, 4411706
- ELD Training on participatory monitoring and evaluation, 19-23 September. 5555071
- Compassion and Bodhicitta at HMBC, 24 September, 4418483
- Fun Drive of VW Beetles to Pokhara, 23-25 September.
- Bangladesh Single Country Fair 2005, 29 September at Napakot, BICC, New Baneshwor. 4372943
- Mind Mapping ELD workshop, 28 September at SAP Nepal. 5555071
- Ikebana and Kimono demonstration, Embassy of Japan, 28 September. 4426680
- Film South Asia ’05, 29 September-4 October at Kumari Hall.
- Football Tournament at Dashrath Stadium, 30 October. 5521794

MUSIC

- The Last Waltz with McTwisters, 23 September 7.30pm at Moksh Live.
- Shades of Blue 24 September, 7.30 at Moksh Live.
- Jazz at Patan at Patan Museum Café, 30 September 6.30 PM onwards. 4441067
- The Good Time Blues Band at Rum Doodle, Thamel, 7PM. 4701208
- Ladies Nights Wednesdays at Jatra, Thamel, with live acoustic music. 4256622
- Live Music at Hotel de Annapurna, Darbar Marg. 4221711
- Musician Night every Tuesday at Moksh, 7.30 PM onwards. no cover charge. 5526212
- Cadenza Live! Upstairs Jazz Bar Lazimpat, every Saturday and Wednesday, 8-10PM.

FOOD

- Oktoberfest by Autentik German Kusine at Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 23 September - 2 October. 4273999
- Pizza Promotion at Coffee Shop, 30 September, Hotel de la Annapurna, 4221711
- The Kabab Kurry Karkhana at Radisson Hotel, till 15th October
- The Sidewalk BBQ with live jazz, Fridays, Shangri-La. 4412999
- BBQ Dinner at Summit Hotel Friday, 6.30-9.30 PM. 5521810
- The Chimney Restaurant Signature dishes at Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
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- The Jazz Gourmet fine dining redefined, Shangri-La. 4412999
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- Nature Tour at Shivapuri national park from Park Village Resort, 4434705
- Gokarling Rs 200 for 4 laps, 4361500
ALL SMILES: Minister of Foreign Affairs Ramesh Nath Pandey poses with (left to right) Senator Charles Grassley, Congressman Joseph R Pitts and Royal Nepali Ambassador to the United States Kedar Bhakta Shrestha after a breakfast meeting on Tuesday in Washington, DC.

MERO CAKE: Officials of Spice Nepal launch the Mero Mobile with the cutting of the cake by National Poet Madhah Prasad Ghimire.

A SIGN OF THE TIMES: A rally on Wednesday on the occasion of the International Day of Peace called for an end to violence and militarisation in the South Asian region.

FOUR WHEELS GOOD: Kathmandu’s finest have been gifted sedans for street patrols and as its name suggests, drivers using mobiles better beware.
WANTED
Prime Minister

Insurgency-wracked landlocked kingdom in the lap of the Himalaya on verge of being declared a failed state has urgent vacancy for a tall, bright, homely, convent-educated teetotaler, fair-skinned vegetarian DV-eligible Primetime Minister to replace two incumbent vice chairpersons who are getting a bit long in the tooth.

Caste, age, disabilities, gender, marital status, eating habits, incontinence and incompetence no bar. The post-holders ideally should be 80 years old or above and have served multiple previous tenures as prime minister wherein they should have paid ample lip-service to democracy and exercised their freedom to indulge in wanton arson and stone-throwing, defying bans on demos in restricted areas and inciting communal riots.

They must also have a demonstrated ability to force closure of parliament for three months at a stretch and block off the entire country and parts thereof for a cumulative period of at least 36 days in any given year while in opposition during the late 1990s.

Candidate should be of sound mind and body, be in possession of all their faculties and at least one Pajero, have amassed ill-gotten wealth to an amount not less than Rs 50 million, must have participated in kickbacks in at least one airliner lease and/or gold smuggling scam during the previous 14 years, have relatives who are on standby to immediately take up ministerial berths if asked to do so and in possession of a certificate attesting to exceptional fundraising capabilities signed by at least three referees belonging to the country’s leading business houses.

Duties Include:
- Remembering without fail to dash off personal telegrams to prime ministers from Laos, Kyrgyzstan, Bolivia and other obscure fellow-landlocked countries on their national days to wish counterparts personal health and happiness and continued progress and prosperity to Laotians, Kyrgyzsis and Bolivianos and highlight the importance of bilateral relations with those countries.
- Build personal rapport with these leaders in order to garner international solidarity in support of regime tinkering at home.
- Participate in workshops and seminars in cities around the world and brief state media at length before departure and on arrival at Tribhuban Intermittent Airport.
- Take part in periodical ceremonies to award plaques to distinguished dentists and shields to victors in inter-services taekwondo tournaments.
- Have the stamina and endurance to keep awake during above proceedings and remain fully conscious while delivering speeches on the subject: ‘The Importance of Martial Arts in Defending Multiparty Democracy and Constitutional Monarchy’.
- Must have strong family and clan ties in order to generate employment for near and dear ones in one’s cabinet portfolio.
- Must have a collection of well-preserved skeletons in one’s cabinet.

Experience Required:
- Should have amassed at least 10 years experience in ribbon-cutting, lamp lighting, shawl gifting and bouquet accepting with flair and aplomb.
- Must have dissolved parliament and refused to extend the tenure of local bodies and not held successive general elections.
- Must have a Masters in Horse-trading and a PhD in Sympathy. Must have taken part in at least one major brawl in the august Lower House chambers.

Salary: Negotiable but has in-built perks, maternity allowance and adequate opportunities for candidate’s poverty-alleviation and upward mobility.

Apply with full body profile showing abdominal contours to the West Gate before Dasain. Mark envelope: ‘Has-been Wannabe’.

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UNDER MY HAT
Kunda Dixit

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