The dramatic announcement on Wednesday evening of a reshuffle in the council of ministers was a lot of sound and fury, but doesn’t seem to signify much.

The cabinet was expanded from 24 to 36. Some incumbents were sacked, others were kicked upstairs, few were moved sideways, fresh faces were brought in. But the fourth royal cabinet after February First is still a status quo government and proves King Gyanendra is determined not to deviate from his three-year-old roadmap just because the parties and the rebels have got together against him.

By now, the king has tried just about everything: from the technocrat-filled Chand cabinet in 2002, the Surya Bahadur Thapa cabinet, to the NC-D UML coalition. What is striking about the new faces this time is that five of the 12 new ministers are heads of their own showcase parties mostly set up recently. Keshar Bahadur Bista who formed his own Prajatantrik Nepal party last month is on board with the agriculture portfolio. Durga Pokhrel who launched her own Nepali Congress-Rastriya with Prakash Koirala, and Salim Miyan Ansari of the Samajbadi Party are also ministers. Narayan Singh Pun, the architect of the 2002 ceasefire and head of the Samata Party, is back this time as Minister of Land Reform.

Analysts say the new cabinet is unlikely to help mend relations between the palace and the mainstream parties. There are also doubts about whether the new team can improve service delivery, governance, find a resolution to the conflict, or mend strained relations with international partners.

Some donors may be happy about the departure of Madhukar Rana from the Finance Ministry (Roop Jyoti has been promoted to his post) and the exit of Jagat Gauchan and Senate Shrestha may launder the government’s image abroad, but it is unlikely that the new lineup will convince donors to unfreeze grants and loans suspended after 1 February. The reshuffle is mainly a show of defiance against a critical international community.

However, the timing of the reshuffle three days before the visit here of Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran has raised speculation that there is more than meets the eye. King Gyanendra could be trying to drive a bargain with the Indians for support in exchange for geopolitical concessions.

RAJENDRA DAHAL

The reshuffle proves King Gyanendra is not deviating from his roadmap

AND A WOMAN: State Minister of Women, Children and Social Welfare Durga Pokhrel, Minister of Home Kamal Thapa, Minister of Land Reform Narayan Singh Pun and State Minister of Information, Shirish Rana on Thursday before their swearing in at the royal palace.

He’s tough, yet gentle. Truly, he is my Special Editions Man!
Nepalis still remember the blockade, and that squeezing his long-suffering subjects. Many and you shoudn’t try to squeeze the king by Indian babudom: diplomatic ragging backfires comes to Big Brother, whatever they may say khaki coalition for moral support. When it rising rage here at home. While India-baiting in public, monarchists public through sponsored write-ups in Indian dailies by their pet. the king and his army are the bulwarks against the Maoists while the is how to go about preventing a Maoist takeover. The brass thinks own goal.

Debate after the party-rebel pact. Our view on this is straightforward: India’s role in fixing Nepal’s mess has become an issue of heated Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran’s visit to Kathmandu next week. preparing for general elections with a strong and united pro-

exceptional elements, but it is the very process of engaging in this alliance that must first be condemned. Gandhi’s legacy is that even in just political struggles one needs to choose just means. How is total democracy to be ushered in with the aid of total terrorists?

Who has usurped the power and legitimacy of the mainstream parties? Is it the Maoists with their violence-backed refusal to allow parliamentary elections. February First could be use in a flash with a newly-elected parliament.

Yet the parties have chosen to add the Maoist weapon to their arsenals in their fight against the active monarchy. Once unblooded, who will control this weapon and direct where it will go?

Forging a significant alliance with the Maoists without the latter’s pre-commitment to forgo violence and lay down arms is to acquiesce in their terrorism. Most tragically, it sets a long-term precedent that political parties need only put together an armed militia to get their way. Secondly, who has given this band of carnivores (mainly four bahun men) the authority and legitimacy to demand a new political order for Nepal through a constituent assembly? Two of them came riding on the tiger of terrorism and the other two on the back of their past failures and incompetence to take Nepal democracy forward after the gains of the People’s Movement. Their slogans are ‘total democracy’ and ‘new people’s democracy’ yet they are autocrats in their own right, representing factions or personal cliques with little practice of democracy.

Their apparent grand design is to hoodwink the Nepali people and the globe international community with the promise of a ‘peace dividend’ by ending the ‘people’s war’ and a return to parliamentary democracy by bringing the Maoists into mainstream politics. With such vague promises, these four believe anything can be demanded of war-weary Nepal, including approval for a constituent assembly.

Peace is precious to all Nepal but not peace at any price. The seven parties have given away too much and departed from democratic values ever. After all it is a country where criminals have become ministers, the unchristened are leading the post civil society movement and murderers are called true democrats.

"PACT" OK Lal’s ‘Precursors to peace’ (State of the State, #275) is prefatory. By defending the political parties and western-bred ideas Lal and Kanak Mani Dixit in the Country at the Crossroad’ (Isle) #275 argue about the finer points of system of governance which has been run aground by 12 years of milestone by the parties. The system is now ‘fault’, it’s people politicians by birth who have no sense of democracy. It is in their field that terrorism was allowed to breed. For them, government was ‘by us, for us and to us’. It seems to think it is ‘fascist’ to speak against the party-rebel alliance but we should, no matter which party, to tell our household elements? And how come the Maoists are free to interact with the South Block? Do Lal and Dixit espouse the idea of ‘end justifies the means’? They were Nepal from their high horse of pseudo intellect. They are only worried about democracy, but not about how to get there. Unless basic fundamentals are in place, democracy cannot flourish. Let’s not be misled by people who want only want to jack up their credentials in the eyes of foreigners.

-Prawn, pravin

- It was unfortunate that OK Lal was rebuked (Letters, #274) for his State of the State (Military fatigue, #273) regarding the excesses by soldiers in Jaleswor last month. A columnist and political analyst of his respect was accused of bias and unfairly supporting his community, which itself was a sign of chauvinism and narrow-mindedness. The RNA never reflected Nepal’s true diversity. It cannot be the case that caste-based discrimination is prevalent in the ranks and lies. There is an exceptional element regarding certain classes and races are incapable of being soldiers and are barred from recruitment. Only recently has the army decided to form new platoons exclusively to accommodate excluded communities. And of what cases like Mina Sunwar? What if she had been their daughter or sister? A girl loses her life after torture to death and the perpetrator just gets six months’ suspension by a secret military

"MOONIES HERE" It was astonishing to see Nepali newspapers praise Sun Moon Moon, a fundamentalist of the ‘Unification Church’. Some newspapers even said Dr Moon is famous for his ideas of interreligious harmony and peace around the world’! Nepal announced the launching of an alternative forum to be known as Universal Peace Federation? Only in Nepal does such balderdash get media play. Despite being accused of gun running, tax evasion, money laundering and promoting a view of women as inferior, the Moonies get a royal reception in Nepal. And trust the Nepali media to fall for it. After all it is a country where criminals have become ministers, the unchristened are leading the post civil society movement and murderers are called true democrats.

B R Gill, email

"NEGATIVE" Jemina Sherpa’s Guest Column (‘BetweenMugabeandShrew’, #274) rang true. The outside world has a very negative image of what is happening in Nepal. It is getting harder and harder for us to tell others that Nepal is still a beautiful place and peace will return. Let’s hope we don’t have to wait too long for that to happen.

Anita Shreshtha, email

"Diaspora" The Nepal Times keeps using the word ‘desire’ to describe overseas Nepalis. But the word originally referring to the exiled Jews cannot be used by any of us living abroad. Within a globalised economy, I would argue that Nepal is as free as any other citizens of Europe of America to go and work in their respective country if he or she (or I/me) freely chooses and plan to return to Nepal in the future. I do not think this is that brain drain. Prof Oded Stark, a Professor of Economics challenges traditional views on the ‘brain drain’ suggesting that this is not the case and in fact the opportunity for emigration can have the opposite effect of

RESHUFFLING THE PACK

The king has tried to buy time by falling back on his father’s favourite trick of reshuffling the deck. There seems to have been an effort to surprise in a smart move, but things are too far gone to make legitimacy this way. But it shows the king is determined to ride it out and is following his three-year timetable to install loyalists in key places.

The political parties are encouraged by large turnouts at their public meetings. But they are so hung up on process and on changing the boycott mants that they are in serious danger of being sidelined by both the king and the Maoists. Instead of being kneejerk reactionaries, they must come up with a proactive plan. Reuniting the Nepali Congress would be a good start, preparing for general elections with a strong and united pro-democracy.

The reshuffle has coincided with the announcement of Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran’s visit to Kathmandu next week. India’s role in fixing Nepal’s mess has become an issue of heated debate after the party-rebel pact. Our view is this is straightforward: if your house is on fire and you do nothing to put it out, you can’t come to your neighbour. India’s leftist politicians had a hand in breaking the Maoist-party pact. So? Defanging the Maoists is in India’s national interest because what if a Maoist insurgency in Nepal would mean for their own Naxalite movement. That should coincide with the king’s own goal.

What sections of the Indian establishment perhaps disagree on is how to go about preventing a Maoist takeover. The brass thinks the king and his army are the bulwarks against the Maoists while the Sarans are mainstays, marauders and restricting full democracy for long-term stability. The two sides are having it out in public through sponsored write-ups in Indian dailies by their pet punjabis.

The Pink Palace thinks it is cleverly playing these factions and using the China card to gain leverage in Delhi. But it forgets the rising rage here at home. While India-baiting in public, monarchists are actively courting India’s VHP—royally— khaki coalition for moral support. When it comes to Big Brother, whatever they say at home Nepali political forces of all hues have always suked up to their Indian patrons.

It comes as no surprise that the Indians are turning the sissies once more on a regime that is thumbing its nose at them. There is a strong sense of déjà vu, it looks like 1988-89 all over again. A word of caution here to Indian babamus: diplomatic ragging backfires and you shouldn’t try the king by squeezing his long-suffering subjects. Many Nepalis will still remember this move, and that is not the way to win hearts.

"LETTERS"

"BREAKTHROUGH OR BETRAYAL?" Being in love with the Maoists can be more dangerous to Nepali democracy than being at war with them. T he 12-point Delhi Agreement has many objectionable elements, but it is the very process of engaging in this alliance that must first be condemned. Gandhi’s legacy is that even in just political struggles one needs to choose just means. How is total democracy to be ushered in with the aid of total terrorists?

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An uncertain centre

Active monarchists are restive because they have realised Nepalis are not docile anymore

P orting stones is much more than rowdy behaviour. It is a symbolic expression of anger over a long-standing and a ritualistic act of rejection. In traditional societies, excited crowds throw pebbles at carriers of evil spirits to chase them away from the village.

The irony of the 12-point agreement is how it highlights the distinction between the Maoists and the seven parties: they agree on everything except the demand for recalling the dissolved House. So now the CPM (Maoist) is of the same democratic-pragmatic and crassly practical viewpoint as the Nepali protesters than they could ever get by military means. The irony of the 12-point agreement is how it highlights the distinction between the Maoists and the seven parties: they agree on everything except the demand for recalling the dissolved House. So now the CPM (Maoist) is of the same democratic-pragmatic and crassly practical viewpoint as the Nepali protesters than they could ever get by military means.

For the seven-party alliance and the Maoists, the coming weeks are critical. The rebels have been playing their cards well, putting the palace on the defensive with its unilateral ceasefire and peace-mongering. But the alliance needs to be more explicit about its programs and tread carefully in dealing with the rebels and the palace. If they fail to adapt to the new situation, the Maoists will win the next round without firing a single shot.

In uncertain times, it is the fate of the centre that is most uncertain. But centralists politics has its advantages because it has the capacity to bounce back. The leadership of monarchist parties are understandably cautious about balancing opportunity against risk and balancing both against uncertainty.

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EXPERIENCES
After reading 'Turf war wrecks expedition' (#275) the question arises why a program with such a positive mission was done without legal permission. A program of global interest, and importance was started only after verbal approval from an official of the Ministry. This shows the arrogance and callousness of Conservation International and The Mountain Institute towards our national laws and legislation. CI says its intentions was not to collect samples, yet another member of the expedition is quoted as saying "we collected samples of streams were returned to the habitat. These are contradictory statements. Scientists do not have the right to think even mistakenly that permission was just a formality. It is appreciable that the government stood its ground and cancelled the permit. Nepal has the potential to produce experts in various fields who can explore our natural resources ourselves. It may take some time but the day will surely come when scientists from our own land discover our resources and make them public. Till then, it is the responsibility of the government to protect the national resources for future generations. So, Nepal has not lost anything.

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Letter from Doti

Things are so bad, even restoring peace is not enough any more

DOTI—From Nepalganj, the road to Doti is varied and beautiful. The extension of the ceasefire has brought people out, allowing them to be visible in the fields and along the highway. They prepare the fields for winter wheat in these idyllic mountains of terraces and forests dotted with little farm houses. The only visible sign of the past 10 years of is the Maoist graffiti on bridge pylons from Kohalpur to Karnali.

The Situation in Doti seems alot different from a previous visit two years ago, the people look visibly more haggard and malnourished. Silent hunger stalks the scenic valley of the Seti and the streets ofSigad's main bazaar is piled with dirt and garbage. Wide-eyed children peer longingly into the tea shop as we eat. Peace is now no longer a distant dream here, the people know ceasefire and peace is indispensable. The women can now articulate and organise, thanks to a program of Care Nepal but their increased workload and the cost of the war on everyday life makes it hard for them to cope. Disabled youth are engaged in a Community for Peace program supported by Ceda/Nepal and they are enthused and inspired by all they are learning and are beginning to hope for a better future. The program is coordinated by an internally displaced youngster who is now an activist and tells us with a sparkle in his eyes: "My life is now committed for peace."

But despite the ceasefire, western Nepal is in the cusp of a humanitarian crisis. Even if peace returns, who is going to take care of the food shortage? The health and education crisis? The destroyed infrastructure? The displaced and broken families? Recently local Maoists exhorted over 12,000 villagers to take a petition to the district capital to pressure the government to respond to their unilateral ceasefire. The administration stopped them on the outskirts of the town and told them to go back. Most were women with little children. Fearing reprisal from the rebels if they returned, some fled to India. Others camped out in the cold for days.

Nepali Times: How do you see the overall situation in the ceasefire period?
Charlotte Seymour-Smith: My overall impression confirms what my team has been telling me, that the most important thing for development in Nepal is the people's process and return to democracy. In a conflict situation, it is indeed very difficult to bring sustainable development to the people of Nepal and to the remote areas. It's difficult for donor agencies to provide support for basic services and to work with the government to extend the reach and quality of these services. It's very good that the government has acknowledged the Basic Operating Guidelines (BOGs) and endorsed them. The Maoists should do the same, and both sides should work not just to embrace them at a high or central level but throughout the country so that development agencies and partners can bring development to poor people.

Did you discuss these issues with senior government officials?
We talked mostly about the leadership of the Ministry of Health, the management reforms that are needed in the health sector and the difficulties of delivering health services to people in remote areas.

Is there a possibility for a humanitarian crisis if the conflict drags on?
We would hope that a large-scale humanitarian crisis will not occur... stability is the prerequisite to avoiding a humanitarian crisis. Peace and democracy and normalisation and stability are what we should work towards. We will also look at different instruments and channels where we are able to be most effective. We will work through the government as long as we can and as long as they are effective.

Will the conflict affect DFID aid?
It can do. If I can't report back to my minister and he can't report back to our parliament that the money that we are spending in Nepal is reducing poverty, then we can't justify continuing in the same way. We have to look at other ways. There are also concerns about the safety and security of staff.

Your visit is focussed mostly on health issues. What are your concerns?
There are a lot of issues with health services, capacity gaps, lack of resources compounded by the conflict. It means that very many ordinary people in Nepal will not receive basic health services, which have to be provided by the government. There is really no substitute. This is something of great concern.

How would you evaluate DFID's aid effectiveness in Nepal?
We are looking at the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Nepal is at risk of not meeting these MDGs, particularly in the health and education sectors. Therefore it requires action to improve results and effectiveness. That’s where we would focus and try and monitor how other’s trends are going and what differences we are making.

What is your assessment of the ground situation after the ceasefire?
The levels of violence have definitely declined. The ceasefire is a helpful thing. The international community should definitely work towards a peace process and towards democracy and normalisation.

Is it true that DFID did not increase its aid as planned this year?
It is true for the reasons I have described to you because of the operating difficulties. Under a positive scenario and more normal situation, it becomes possible to disperse high levels of aid more effectively but it’s also about effectiveness and the safety of our staff.
The report has identified key issues that conducted a joint comprehensive study on neighbouring countries such as India as a demand but also help fulfil the needs of industry. Besides, rural electrification has considerable hydropower capacity could Nepal is barely able to meet its existing in the world. Only about 40 percent of the income families

Academic economists are often accused of being in love with mathematically tenses that bear no resemblance to the real world. But Schelling’s case is different. Through plain English, logic and creativity and wide-ranging interest in the social sciences, he has extended the reach of economics into topics such as ‘promises and threats’, ‘self-restraint’, ‘reputation’, ‘social co-ordination’, ‘mutual assurance’, ‘ethnic-segregation’ and even ‘global warming’. He has taken some of Schelling’s insights—that by acting crazy one can make a credible threat—and see how it might play out in our political world. It’s been more than three years since Nepal’s major political parties started agitating against royal rule. They had group meetings at the palace. They published opinion pieces. They called on supporters. They had rallies in Katmandu Park. They demanded that the House be re-instated. Some even joined the royal government for a few months. But all those efforts have come to naught. Over time, divesting public power has alienated and sidelined the political parties as they believe that unless they can pose a credible threat to the king, they risk being irrelevant. It was at this point that the King suddenly urged the parties to shake hands with the Maoists, which they did recently. The alliance has certainly helped the parties to increase their appeal. To the war-weary public, the parties could finally say that they are the promoters of peace and can tame even the violence-prone Maoists. But they know what they cannot claim: that the alliance of the seven parties and its alliance with the Maoists will hold for long. In the short run, the parties have succeeded in communicating that they are serious about politics. But they are as divided as ever on their national agenda and the parties are simultaneously negotiating elections and thereby increase the odds of emerging with an empty chest. But Schelling’s three major agendas that their adversaries would have to react to. Yes, given present realities, both of these actions are indeed crazy. But they are consistent with Schelling’s conclusion that in politics, as in life, a purposeful indulgence in craziness can be of strategic advantage. When other sides find their behaviour unpredictable, they end up believing your threats and do what you actually want them to.
Tulsi Giri: “Impure alliance!”

Batsayan in Himal Khabarpatrika 1-15 December

Radio: “Listeners! We might be back after a short break or we might not.”

Abin Shrestha in Samay, 8 December

Uttam Nepal in Purnajagaran, 6 December

Nepal mobile telephony progression
2001 2002 2003 2004 2005

Rajesh KC in Nepal, 4 December

Tulsi Giri: Wait! You’re a Dalit. You’re not supposed to splash water!

Man: Party (Dal)
House (left): Peace
House (front): Democracy

Uttam Nepal in Rajdhani, 27 November

Bridge: 12-point Pact.

Dewen in Kantipur, 1 December

News: Maoist ceasefire extended for another month
Tulsi Giri: Why are the Maoists provoking us?

Abin Shrestha in Abhiyan, 5-12 December

Girija and Madhab: Here, it comes, fresh sweets from India. Come and get it.

Yogesh Khapangi in Gorkhapatra, 29 November

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“These sycophants are only spreading dirty lies and indulging in useless rhetoric against the positive message that came out of the understanding (between the parties and Maoists) reached in New Delhi.”

Former zonal commissioner Surya Bahadur Sen in Samay, 8 December

“They (the Maoists) are going backwards because they are still talking about things Karl Marx said 150 years ago at the time of Jang Bahadur.”

Former minister and hydropower expert Deepak Gyawali in Nepal, 3 October
**Stoned**

Dhish, 6 December

Crowned Prince Paras drove to police headquarters on Saturday, allegedly to register his Bhikhu Thapa by his collar and threatened to fire him. The prince was angry about the stones thrown at his car on Friday at Min Bhaban as he drove to meet King Gyemendra at the airport. When the prince reached the police office, representatives from the four security bodies were meeting to discuss the incident. According to our sources, the DIG tried to explain that they were taking steps to investigate the event but the prince would not listen.

The prince reached the headquarters at 10.34 AM and stayed for 11 minutes, mostly yelling and threatening. After the joint meeting, a committee was set up under DSP Him Gurung to probe the incident. It was to submit a report in three days but a conclusion was not reached. However, Kathmandu district DSP Indra Neupane, Syamthali Ward Police Inspector Surendra Mainali and Bhaktapur Police Inspector Bhabesh Rimal were surprised even on Sunday even before the report could be completed. This demonstrates that authorities were not committed to finding the real culprits. How could these officers be charged when the report was not out and the names of those to be charged weren’t made public?

According to our sources, the streets on Friday were ready and cleared half an hour before the king was supposed to land. When the prince’s car was caught in the crossfire. Right after this incident there was an attempt to attack the UML’s central office, proving that the royalists had planned everything in advance. Out of this, DSP Neupane was on duty at the UML meeting and learnt about Crown Prince Paras’ arrival only two minutes before everything happened. He obviously had no time to act. The army, police and royal bodyguards had prohibited people from moving about freely at the meeting. Had they been allowed to move about, this incident would not have happened. Several people were charged for involvement in the Min Bhaban incident but for the state to put people in jail for something they did not do, is wrong.

**The prince’s move**

Buddhabar, 7 December

Questions have been raised about the palace crossing its limits after Prince Paras went to police headquarters to question police chiefs. It’s true that some demonstrators at Friday’s rally threw stones in the direction of the prince’s limo but his vehicle just ended up at the wrong place at the wrong time. The rally organizers had absolutely no intention, scheme or plan to target the prince since all this happened after the demonstration was over. Queen Aiswarya’s vehicle was attacked in 1990 in the Pasupatinath area. Although she had the authority, the late queen never acted the way the crown never acted the way the prince did. Last week’s incident was a set-up by conspirators inside the police force who wanted to make the palace happy for their own vested interests. It is learnt that several people, especially Kumar Mohan Bahadur Shahi and Rajbahadur Singh, played key role to replace SP Indra Prasad Neupane with SP Kesav Bahadur Shahi.

**ICU closed**

Rajdhani, 4 December

The only children’s hospital in Nepal, Kanti Children’s Hospital, has closed its Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and has stopped registering child patients at PICU (the treatment unit for serious illnesses) and NICU (the unit for newborns). This has caused alarm among the medical personnel, who have warned the move could lead to the deaths of many children. Hospital officials told the medical staff the action was taken for “sanitation reasons” but the staff allege there is more to this than meets the eye. The Ministry of Health said it is not aware of the decision and added that it will investigate the matter. Most of the children who visit the ICU need treatment for meningitis, poisoning and pneumonias.

**Disband RCCC**

Ghasta in Bhisay, 7 December

The Royal Commission for Corruption Control, created to put corrupt officials behind bars, has gone underground for the last several months. As the RCCC was busy when it came to busting democratic leaders. Now, it has gone quiet after its successful political vendetta against former premier Sher Bahadur Deuba and some former parliamentarians. Nobody knows what its members are now doing. It only moves after receiving orders to fix someone. It’s time now to dissolve this royal commission as it serves no useful purpose.
s officials haggle over emission targets and a long-term strategy to address climate change this week in Montreal, glaciological experts have warned of ‘Himalayan tsunamis’ caused by outbursts of mountain lakes swollen by snow melt.

At a recent international workshop here, scientists agreed global warming was now a certainty and it was already bringing dramatic changes to snow cover in the Himalaya. ‘Projections indicate that the magnitude and frequency of flashfloods in the greater Himalayan region may increase in the future as a result of change in climate and its variability,’ said the Lhasa Declaration issued at the end of the conference that was sponsored by the Kathmandu-based ICIMOD and the China Meteorological Administration.

ICIMOD already has a regional flood initiative for exchanging hydrological data but says Himalayan flashfloods need even greater crossborder cooperation because many of the steep rivers flow across boundaries and reaction time is measured in hours, not days.

‘Major Himalayan rivers are transboundary river basins and flashfloods will not respect national borders,’ says Xu Jianchu, a Chinese scientist with ICIMOD, “that is why we need to think regionally and act locally.”

Indeed, an existing bilateral early warning mechanism between India and China prevented what could have been a catastrophe on the Sutlej River in February this year. By the time flood waters surged through Himachal Pradesh, people had been evacuated and no lives were lost.

Similarly, despite strained relations between India and Pakistan they share warning through radio broadcasts and this prevented another potentially devastating loss of life on the Chenab River earlier this year.

However, officials say a lot more needs to be done to map hazardous valleys, glacial lakes in Bhutan, Nepal and Tibet that are in danger of bursting and to transmit rainfall data in real time so downstream regions have time to evacuate.

“There is a lack of exchange of real time data and there needs to be a regional mechanism for this,” says Mandira Shrestha, a water resource specialist at ICIMOD. Although Nepal has got the most experience in the region in mapping and draining glacial lakes, our domestic warning system for big rainfall events is almost non-existent which is why flashfloods triggered by cloudbursts in the central midhills during monsoons in 1981, 1993, 2002 and 2003 were so catastrophic.

“Pervasive research on glacier lake outburst floods (GLOFs) is an international expert on glacial lake outburst floods (GLUFs) and

Available in select outlets in Kathmandu valley only.
Bhote Kosi that are in danger of bursting. The Bhote Kosi Power Company has installed sensors all the way up to the Chinese border that gives the 46 MW project five minutes warning in case of a GLOF. There are 42 glacial lakes in the Bhote Kosi basin in Tibet and the river has a history of flashfloods. “What we’d like is to have sensors further upstream and extend the warning time,” says Bhote Kosi’s Sandip Shah. There have been 25 glacial lake floods recorded in Nepal and more than half of them originated in Tibet. Of the 2.315 glacial lakes within Nepal, 20 are said to be extremely dangerous. And one only needs to look at geological evidence of past events to see the kind of damage they can cause.

Pokhara is situated on the debris field of a catastrophic flashflood on the Seti some 800 years ago which if it happened today could cause up to 200,000 deaths. Average temperatures across the Himalayas are increasing at 0.06 degrees a year. Glacial lakes that used to be small ponds 20 years ago are now 5 sq km and larger.

Closer cooperation between China and Nepal could protect downstream infrastructure and towns in Nepal not just in the Bhote Kosi but the Trisuli and Arun as well. Saya REMO Director General J Gabriel Campbell: “We must make information travel faster than flashfloods.”

Gangpurna Glacier in Manang. (overleaf)

Nara Jigat was working in the village of Ghat in Manang when the world started to crack open and he was rushing out of his house. He emerged to see his herd of cattle being swept away by a wall of water. Jigat and his fellow villagers were able to scramble to safety. They were lucky: “If it had come at night, none of us would have survived.”

Ghat was destroyed when a lake, high in the Annapurnas, burst its banks. Sweden with glacier melt its water pipeline and ice had suddenly disintegrated. Several million cubic metres of water crashed down the mountain. When Ghat was destroyed in 1985 such incidents were rare. Not any more.

Last week, scientists revealed that there has been a tenfold jump in such catastrophes in just the past two decades, the result of global warming. Himalayan glacier lakes are filling up with more and more melted ice and 24 of them are now poised to burst their banks in Bhutan, with a similar number at risk in Nepal. But that is just the beginning, a report in Nature said. Future disasters around the Himalaya will include floods, droughts, land erosion, biodiversity loss and changes in rainfall and the monsoon. The roof of the world is changing, as can be seen by Nepal’s Khumbu glacier, where Hillary and Tenzing began their 1953 Everest expedition. It has retreated 5 km since their ascent. Almost 95 percent of Himalayan glaciers are also shrinking and that kind of ice loss has profound implications, not just for Nepal and Bhutan but for surrounding nations, including China, India and Pakistan.

Eventually, the Himalayan glaciers will shrink so much their meltwaters will dry up, say scientists. At the same time, rivers fed by these melted glaciers, such as the Indus, Yellow and Mekong, will turn to trickles in the dry season. Drinking and irrigation water will disappear. Hundreds of millions of people will be affected.

“Hi and too much water coming out of the Himalayas and a greater long term danger of there not being enough,” says Dr Phil Porter of the University of Hertfordshire. “Either way, it is easy to pinpoint the cause: global warming.”

According to Nature, temperatures in the region have increased by more than 1°C recently and are set to rise by a further 1.2C by 2050, and 2°C by the end of the century. This heating has already caused 24 of Bhutan’s glacial lakes to reach “potentially dangerous” status, according to government officials. Nepal is similarly affected.

“A glacier lake catastrophe happened once in a decade 50 years ago,” said UK geologist John Reynolds, whose company advises Nepal. “Five years ago, they were happening every three years. By 2010, a glacier lake catastrophe will happen every year.”

An example of the impact is provided by Luggye Tsho, in Bhutan, which burst its banks in 1994, sweeping 10 million cubic metres of water down the mountain. It struck Paro Valley, 50 miles away, killing 21 people. Now a nearby lake, below the Thorthormi glacier, is in imminent danger of bursting. That could release 50 million cubic metres of water, a flood reaching to northern India 150 miles downstream.

Not only villages are under threat. Nepal and Bhutan have built hydroelectric plants selling electricity to India and these could be destroyed in coming years. Nepal’s glaciers melt, there could be no water to drive run of the river plants. A Greenpeace report last month suggested that the region is already experiencing serious loss of vegetation.
Music lovers cannot afford to miss ‘Project Experience’, a unique attempt by four major Nepali players to tell the stories of their journeys in music. The four need no introduction, as they are linked with some of the best music produced here in the last decade.

Nirakar Yakthumba is the bassist and the driving force behind Nepal’s premier rock band 1974AD and has also played with popular jazz-funk ensemble, The McTwisters. With his deep blues vocals, Robin Tamang has had a cult following among the youth ever since he stepped on stage with his groundbreaking number ‘Nepal Mero Gulaf ko Kada’ in 2000.

“Your own image is very different from what the public thinks of you. Professionally we have all come a long way but musically there is a lot more distance to cover and this is an attempt to define our relationship with music through music,” says Robin.

The third participant in this musical journey is Yubesh Shrestha, who entered the music scene in 1995 with the fusion trio Shristi and now gives 1974AD’s hit numbers a special flavour.

The group has been busy composing new songs as well as working on their own versions of popular tunes by Bob Marley, Cat Stevens and Bob Dylan, who are major influences on the musicians. They also hope that Project Experience can lay deep roots so that next year other players can get together and explore their work.

“We hope other musicians pick it up and put up something like this next year because individually all of us do our own things but working together with others gives new ideas and is an experience in itself,” says the youngest of the lot, Sanjay.

Project Experience will take place on 17 December in Patan Museum Café and will be recorded for an album. Looking at the work being put into the event, that album is sure to become a collector’s item.

The four, along with guest artists such as keyboardist Upancha Maa Singh and Spanish saxophonist Mariano, who played alongside Cadenza at Jazzfest, are organizing a show they say is solely dedicated to music. And they stress that they still have a lot to learn musically although in their fans’ eyes they are already rock stars.

Four of Nepal’s top modern musicians will team up solely to play
On Saturday, 3 September, 32-year-old Celine Henri signed her name into the entrance book at the gate of the Nagarjun Forest at 12.00 PM. She never showed up. No one has seen or heard from her since.

That morning Henri, who served in Nepal as a volunteer, stored her luggage at Hotel Pilgrim in Thamel and told the receptionist she would be back by evening. Family and friends raised the alarm only a month later when they hadn’t heard from her.

Under pressure from Henri’s family, French ambassador Michel Jolivet decided to investigate himself. A trekking guide said he had seen someone fitting Henri’s description climbing to the summit of Nagarjun on 3 September. The French Embassy checked the register at the gate of Nagarjun and found Henri’s name. On 26 October, Jolivet and embassy staff retraced Henri’s steps and 20 minutes climb above the twin bellgaps on Nagarjun’s east ridge they came upon a water bottle, a black jersey and a bra. They immediately called the police from a mobile phone who arrived with sniffer dogs. The police found fresh blood stains, a hair clip and a spot where the high grass had been trampled.

The French were puzzled: Henri had been missing for more than a month yet the blood was fresh and grass in the monsoon doesn’t stay crushed like that. What happened to Henri?

NAGARJUN FOREST

The entrance book at the gate of Nagarjun keeps record of all who register there. The gate is guarded by a police force and cars. The forest gets an average 150 visitors a day. Saturdays, the day of the week when Nagarjun sees most visitors, are certain they are dealing with a killer who will strike again. Investigators are certain they are dealing with a serial killer who raped and murdered the women and then buried them somewhere in the reserve. ‘Whoever did this knows the place very well and by scattering the items all over the park is teasing the police, which is the typical psychology of a killer who will strike again,’ says one official involved in the investigation.

TIMELINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 September</td>
<td>Celine Henri leaves hotel and signs Nagarjun register at 12:05PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 October</td>
<td>French family notifies the French Embassy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 October</td>
<td>French Embassy finds Henri’s name on Nagarjun register</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 October</td>
<td>Sabine Gruneklee signs Nagarjun logbook at 10:20 AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 October</td>
<td>French Ambassador Michel Jolivet finds Henri’s keys and passport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 October</td>
<td>Gruneklee’s friend Peter Dulan reports her missing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 November</td>
<td>Gruneklee’s name is also found on Nagarjun register</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 November</td>
<td>Police find Henri’s and Gruneklee’s items all over the mountain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 December</td>
<td>German Police team arrives with sniffer dogs</td>
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</tbody>
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**Celine and Sabine**

Police have few leads on the suspected murders of two European women on Nagarjun

DHRUBA SIMKHADA

In the past week, the search has intensified further. French police have arrived with their own sniffer dogs. The investigation has now shifted to the steep northern slopes below the summit where there are rocks and caves. Friends and relatives in France and Germany have been posting messages about the slow pace of the investigation and the mainstream media in those countries has started writing about the disappearances. It is only a matter of days before Nepal will hit the headlines in Europe.

There are some notable facts: both disappearances happened on Saturdays, the day of the week when Nagarjun sees most visitors. Both were European women in their early 30s travelling alone. Although the forest gets an average of only 50 visitors on weekends, on 3 September there were 150 entries because there were school children on an outing.

**“Ali ali naramro”**

Sayuri is a professional river rafting guide from Japan who had just finished an adventurous trip down the Tamur River in eastern Nepal. She loves this country and is learning Nepali. She has signed her name into the entrance book at the gate of Nagarjun at 10.20 AM. She never showed up. No one has seen or heard from her since.

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The ebbs and flows of war and peace continue at the two corners of Southasia. The Maoist insurgents of Nepal have decided, at least at their very top echelons, to opt for open competitive parliamentary politics. They have extended their unilateral ceasefire by a month and all but ceased their chthonic of revolutionary war. But the state establishment is unmoved.

SOUTHASIA BEAT
Kanak Mani Dixit

At the other end, past the tip of the Subcontinent, a chauvinistic inaugural speech by the newly elected president, Mahinda Rajapakse, suddenly jeoparised four years of precarious peace achieved and maintained by president Chandrika Kumaratunga and opposition leader Ranil Wickramasinghe. The Tamil Tiger leader Prabhakaran rejected the new president, Mahinda Rajapakse, on Wednesday asked Norway to resume mediation.

While Nepal sees the rays of a possible new dawn, Sri Lanka is suddenly pushed back to the brink of a familiar abyss. It is time to hold your breath in Sri Lanka and Nepal.

There are significant aspects of the Tamil ‘liberation war’ and the Maoist ‘people’s war’ which make the two situations dissimilar. The only lesson from Sri Lanka for Nepal is that a ceasefire can hold even if the peace process is stuck.

Nepal’s conflict can’t be resolved by studying the resolution in Sri Lanka, Munanibique or Sierra Leone. Resolution is always specific to the history of a country and the political and geopolitical matters specific to that society. The millions of dollars spent by the multilateral institutions, assert think tanks and INGOs in taking willing Nepali politicians, administrators, activists and journalists on conflict resolution junkets to Jaffna and Geneva have served a limited purpose. The answers were always in the hills and plains of Nepal not in the pubs of Dublin nor the seminar halls of the Carter Center. There was nothing new in the last week killed 12 soldiers. Rajapakse on Wednesday asked Norway to resume mediation.

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US warns UN
UNITED NATIONS - The United States appears to be on course for a head-on collision with the United Nations over the question of how to protect their health and prevent outbreaks of life-threatening diseases, said Mohammad El-Fatih, head of UNICEF’s water and sanitation programme. Two months after the horrific quake killed 80,000 people, mostly women and children, people, sanitation and hygiene in the aftermath are not yet a priority.

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Come see the big one
Surya Nepal Masters, the country’s largest pro sport event, runs 13-17 December

even if you don’t play golf, you might still want to witness the spectacle of some of the region’s finest professional sportspersons, including over a dozen from Nepal, performing at your doorstep. Yes, the country’s largest professional sport event, The Surya Nepal Masters, is just around the corner. The four-day tournament starts Wednesday 13 December and climaxises with the final round on Sunday 17 December at the 18-hole Gokarna Golf Course at Le Meridien Kathmandu, Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa. Preceding the main event will be the much-anticipated Pro-Am on Tuesday 12 December, where amateurs play a competitive round with the best golfers in the region.

The Surya Nepal Masters began in 1993. Until 1997 the tournament was by invitation only, after which it became part of the India Professional Golf Association (IPGA) tour. Looking back, I realise that I’ve been fortunate to take part in every one of these Surya Nepal sponsored events. I played on the first five as an amateur and in the seven that I have played as a professional, the best finished I’ve achieved is 4th place.

My fellow Nepali professionals and I have been practicing hard in preparation for our bid to come out tops this year. Each time I felt I could win. However, success hasn’t come my way yet. The competition in the Indian tour has become tougher than ever. This year, about 60 players from there will participate here after finishing the TATA Open in Jamshedpur, India.

Defending champ Shiv Kapur is believed to be preoccupied with his Asian Golf Circuit calendar and will be absent next week. Past winners Uttam Singh Mundy, Dipvijay Singh and Feroz Ali are expected to participate along with a strong field of contenders from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Far East. From the local side, the challenge will come from, to name a few, Ramesh Nagarkoti, Deepak Thapa Magar, Pushupati Sharma, Tarun Shahi, Deepak Neupane, Sabin Sapkota, Deepak Acharya, Bhattarai Buddha and others.

This year the total purse has been upped to Rs 1.92 million from last year’s Rs 1.85 million. The winner will take home a prize worth 17 percent (gross) of the total prize money. An exciting preparatory tournament that will give an enviable boost to the local pros is the Mercantile Classic, organised by the Nepal Professional Golfers Association in collaboration with Mercantile Communications. This 54-hole event (which ends Friday 9 December) will provide local pros much needed tournament exposure.

Part of the Surya Nepal Masters was the Surya Nepal Western Open in Pokhara last week. I unfortunately missed it. I had been invited to play a skins game for the La Martina Cup 2005 in Mauritius. Well, I fared fairly honourably, shooting six birdies (playing the course for the first time), which helped me win seven skins. It was also a great honour to be invited to do a golf clinic for over 100 golfers (including 30 CEOs from Mauritius). Interest in golf over there is enormous. People take the sport very seriously at every level. Mauritius also offers a couple of great golfing facilities and attracts lots of golfers from the west. Seeing how they have developed golf in Mauritius is enormous. People take the sport very seriously at every level. Mauritius also offers a couple of great golfing facilities and attracts lots of golfers from the west. Seeing how they have developed golf in Mauritius is enormous.

Entries for the 21st World Championship are now being invited. info@elephantpolts.com

Tusker trophy
Scotland charges to second consecutive world elephant polo title

Chivas Regal Scotland thunderted to its second win in a row at the World Elephant Polo Championship this week at Tiger Tops Jungle Lodge at the Royal Chitwan National Park. The victors clinched the Tiger Tops WEPGA Trophy with a 7-6 win over the阀tralas of the National Parks of Nepal. Eight teams and players from 11 countries paid $12,000 each to take part in the mammoth sporting event, which included competition for the world amateur title, taken by a team from Ireland.

Another event, the All Nepal Challenge, featured teams made up wholly of mahouts (elephant handlers) who both drive their mount and play. Proceeds from all the competitions go to local charities.

The final was opened by the Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas, which entertained the players on to the field before the guest of honour, British Ambassador Keith Bloomfield and French Ambassador Michel Jolivet.

When play began, Chivas Regal Scotland leapt to an aggressive start by scoring the first goal in just 18 seconds seizing the initiative. However great play from both sides and dogged defending from Scotland goalie Geoffrey Dobbs left the teams level at the interval.

The second half demonstrated again how elephant polo is one of the most exciting, colourful and certainly the biggest, games in the world. National Parks quicklved the score and then notched another goal to make it 5-4. Scotland levelled the scores with just 2 minutes on the clock. Its star player-manager Peter Prentice, who was playing on the lead elephant, took the ball to the centre of the field but couldn’t break free from the expert stickmanship of the Nepali team, many of whose players work with elephants for their day jobs. But with time slipping away, Prentice charged back and opted for a long shot from 30 yards scoring a spectacular and crucial goal to take the lead 6-5. Scotland then held on for one goal victory.

No trunking
Four elephants comprise a pole team. This year they were provided by the Royal Chitwan National Park. The pachyderms chase a bamboo ball around a pitch some 120m long by 70m wide. Two riders sit atop each elephant, the first a mahout, or elephant handler, and the second the player, who is tied on with ropes and rides a specially built mallet up to 2.5m long. (The games consists of two 10-minute halves, the second halves being played without a break for the animals.) No trunking is allowed, thereby eliminating any possible advantage. No littering in front of goal is allowed. The use of trunks is also strictly prohibited, although elephants are permitted to kick the ball.
**The Adventures of HeroJig can also be seen at www.extreme-nepal.com**

**Harry’s fourth summer at Hogwarts is marked by the Quidditch World Cup and the Tri-Wizard Tournament, in which student representatives from three different wizarding schools compete in a series of increasingly challenging contests. However, Lord Voldemort’s Death Eaters are gaining strength and even creating the Dark Mark. The competitors are selected for a Tri-Wizard Tournament by the goblet of fire, which this year makes a very surprising announcement: Hogwarts will have two representatives in the tournament, one being Harry Potter. Will Harry be able to rise to the challenge of the Tri-Wizard Tournament while keeping up with school or will the challenges along with Voldemort’s retribution be too much for the young hero?**

Call 4442220 for show timings www.jainepal.com

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**NEPAL WEATHER**

by MAUSAM BEED

A dominant high pressure system over north India and Nepal has effectively kept approaching disturbances from the Bay and westerlies away. Although sunny skies will be a norm into next week, the high pressure has sucked in colder air from the Tibetan plateau so expect thicker morning fog in the Valley and along the tarai. This in turn will reduce the sunlight hours, bringing down the maximum temperature further. This satellite picture taken on Thursday morning shows no major system threatening us with snow or rain.

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**FOOD**

**Ciney and Par-e-jat** Fridays 7 PM at Dwarika’s. 4478448

**Plat du Jour** at the Shambala Garden, Shangri-La. 4412999

**Wonderful Wednesdays** at Fusion, Dwarika’s. happy hour 5-9

**The Sidewalk BBQ** with Shades of Blue. Wednesdays. Shangri-La. 4412999

**Ciney and Par-e-jat** every Friday 7PM at Rum Doodle 40,0001/2 ft. bar.

**Unplugged sessions with Strings, Jatra Saturday 4256622

**Live Music** at Basel Bar, Hotel de l’Annapurna. 4227171

**Live Jazz** by the pond at 1905, Kantipath. 4225272

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**GETAWAYS**

**Come Meet Santa at Shangri-La Village, Pokhara, Rs 4999 per person on twin Share. (061) 521995**

**Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge. Christmas and New Year offers. 4361500**

**Shivasari Walk with Shivapuri Heights Cottage, 18 December. Meet at Hare Krishna Temple near Budhanilkantha at 11AM. stieve@escape2nepal.com**

**Junglewalks, rafting, elephant rides all at Jungle Base Camp Lodge, Bardia. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com**

**Conferences at Godavari Village Resort. 5560675**

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**PUNISHMENT OF THE PUNISHMENT**

**Picture taken on Thursday morning shows no major system threatening us with snow or rain.**
BOSS WOMEN: Shalini Wadhwa of Boss magazine (left) and Dwarika Hotel’s Ambika Shrestha at the ‘Crossing the Bar’ event on Monday.

KIRAN PANDAY

TASHI DELEK: Foreign Minister Ramesh Nath Pandey welcoming the Chairman of Tibet Autonomous Region of China Chamba Phuntsok at Tribhuvan International Airport on Wednesday at the start of a week-long visit.

KIRAN PANDAY

BOSS WOMEN: Shalini Wadhwa of Boss magazine (left) and Dwarika Hotel’s Ambika Shrestha at the ‘Crossing the Bar’ event on Monday.

KIRAN PANDAY

FACES OF HOPE

British artist Jan Salter made the transformation from pure painter to activist a decade ago when she first started painting the faces of Nepali women and girls who had been trafficked.

An exhibition of those works, Don’t Turn Your Back On All Our Daughters: Keep The Promise, is on display at Yala Maya Kendra this weekend. Salter has made Nepal her home for the past 30 years. A collection of her paintings and drawings of Nepali faces was previously released in the book, Faces of Nepal.

Her work with Maiti Nepal spans almost a decade. The sensitively rendered paintings of Nepali women reflect the artist’s concern about Nepali girls being trafficked to brothels in India and her work with those rescued and those living with HIV.

“...I first started working with these young girls, I thought it was going to be extremely difficult but they were like any other young girls, they liked to laugh and tease each other. There was an urgency to stay happy, maybe because some were extremely sick and all had gone through really difficult times,” she says.

Salter captures the humanity, compassion and tolerance that shines through the faces of Nepalis. “Some critics said I should have put more agony in the paintings,” Salter tells us, “how could I when the girls did not want the paintings to reflect their hardships? They would dress up for the occasion and they said they wanted to like it when they saw themselves in the canvas.”

The purpose of this exhibition sponsored by the UN’s World Health Organisation is to inform people that trafficking is a serious and ongoing problem.

Salter admires Maiti Nepal’s Anuradha Koirala, calling her a “Nepali heroine” and a champion of the disenfranchised. She also hopes that through her exhibition, more people will understand that those trafficked are no more than little girls, she says “They look just like you, your daughters or sisters. It could have been you, the only reason they are there and not you is by a mere chance.”

Mallika Aryal

Don’t Turn Your Back On All Our Daughters: Keep The Promise, by Jan Salter, 9-13 December at Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka.

KIRAN PANDAY

MEN JOIN THE FIGHT: (Right to left) Sancharika Samuh’s Bandana Rana, Radio Nepal’s Robin Sharma, actor Rajesh Hamal and DIG Kumar Koirala at a program on ending violence against women last Friday.

MIN BAJRACHARYA

KILLING TIME WITH THE TIMES: A participant at the Enfielder’s Ride and Rage catches up with the times at Tatopani on the Arniko Highway where a landslide blocked the road.

JOHN GALTON

BOSS WOMEN: Shalini Wadhwa of Boss magazine (left) and Dwarika Hotel’s Ambika Shrestha at the ‘Crossing the Bar’ event on Monday.

KIRAN PANDAY
Nepal sweeps Conde Nasty Traveller Awards 2005

Just as we were all about to give up on Nepal comes the happy news that three of the country's tourist spots were voted among the World's Top 75 Destinations by Wanderlust Magazine this week. (Up to here everything in this column is true. – Ministry of Information and Communicable Diseases). The three spots are: the World's Highest Mountain Chomolungma, the World's Deepest Gorge Kali Gandaki and I think the last one is the World's Largest Cabinet Singh Darbar but let me make a mental note to double check that.

These recognitions put Nepal right up there among the world's top destinations even though as a nation we may not know precisely what our destination is at any given moment. For a country that can't seem to figure out where we it is we are going, we sure as hell are getting there fast. And that's what counts.

The Wanderlust honours come soon after Nepal swept the Conde Nasty Traveler Awards 2005 in two prestigious categories: Hardest Place to Get Into and Hardest Place to Get Out Of in recognition of our elaborate visa procedures and shortage of outbound airline seats.

All this means that the strategy of our tourism planners to preserve Nepal's mystique and aura by making it difficult for visitors to get here is working brilliantly. After all, if we flung open our doors for everybody and anybody from anywhere at anytime we would soon lose our magic wouldn't we?

The tactic used to keep all and sundry out is to maintain strict visa procedures and have at least four different queues for arriving passengers at the Tribhuvan International Airport—that way only the most intrepid adventurer will dare come to Nepal and we can separate the wheat from the chaff or in certain cases, separate the goats from the sheep.

Once tourists get here, though, the idea is to prevent them from leaving. (New promo slogan: ‘Visit Nepal and Stay There!’). The way we do that is by strictly limiting the number of airline seats available. Our officials have adopted several extremely effective measures to do just that, like: price disincentives for airlines to fly into Nepal by maintaining the most expensive landing charges and parking fees in the world so that there is always a shortage of seats. The government has also organised an exodus of Nepalis going to the Gulf and Malaysia so all flights are booked till next June. And last but not least the government reduced by half the total fleet strength of Nepal Royalist Airlines during the top tourist season.

But, as we in Nepal have come to realise the hard way, one mustn’t rest on one’s laurels. We must prepare now to bag more of the World’s Top 75 Destinations of Wanderlust Magazine for 2006. Prime candidates are:

- Ghantaghar. The country may have gone back 50 years but it is still ahead of its time because we have the world’s Fastest Clock right here in the heart of the city.
- Thamel Trash Heap. What is our unique Selling Point that distinguishes our tourist ghettos from tourist ghettos in Bangkok or Istanbul? That’s right, no other country quite rubishes its own tourism industry as much as we do.
- To offer strong competition to Jaipur, the Pink Turret with strobe lights on Darbar Marg will soon become Nepal’s top tourist attraction.

Surya Nepal Masters
Nepal's largest international golf tournament.

Surya Nepal Masters is part of Khelparyaatan, Surya Nepal's initiative to promote and develop sports, culture and tourism in Nepal.

Gokarna Forest Golf Resort, Kathmandu. 13th - 17th December 2005