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Weekly Internet Poll # 282

Q. Should the municipal elections be put off?

Total votes:6,089

Yes 55.8 %

No 41.5 %

Don't know 2.7 %

Weekly Internet Poll # 283. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Do you agree that having a constituent assembly election would solve the current crisis?

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BILASH RAI

Back to February First

The government doesn't seem to know who its real enemy is

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

While the Maoists are at the gates, threatening attacks on the capital, authorities decided to engage on a sweep of political party leaders and civil society activists instead.

It's a scene many had expected to see during the municipal elections. But with the polls still 20 days away, the government started rounding up pro-democracy activists ahead of a promised mammoth rally on Friday.

"Under no circumstances will we take back our rally program," said CPN (UML) chief Madhab Kumar Nepal at the Press Chautari on Friday, adding that the detention of leaders early Thursday morning was the act of a "desperate and fearful regime".

"Despite all the prohibitions of the government, we will go ahead with our peaceful and non-

violent demonstrations on Friday," echoed NC leader Arjun Narsingh KC. "But if the situation turns violent, the government will have to take the responsibility."

As for the government, Minister of State for Information and Communication Shrish Shumsher Rana told us: "We are prepared to safeguard the basic human rights of the people and we will not shirk from our duty."

Immediately after the deadly Maoist attacks that left 12 policemen dead in the Kathmandu Valley on 14 January, the government introduced curfews and banned demonstrations within the Ring Road. The parties defied the bans. But in a scene reminiscent of February First last year, the government arrested more than 70 leaders and activists and cut mobile phones within the Valley on Thursday.

While the arrests were taking place, landlines also went out. Security personnel had been mobilised to make the arrests from late Wednesday night and some of them, in plainclothes, could be seen around party leaders' homes from early morning. Some leaders evaded arrest by sleeping away from their homes.

UML leader Amrit Bohara who escaped the dragnet, told us from a secret location: "With such a condemnable action the government has admitted defeat."

The government has been using last week's well-planned Maoist attacks as evidence that the rebels have infiltrated the valley disguised as political party cadre. Said Rana, "The rebel-party pact clearly states that both would target the government in their own ways and that is what is exactly happening now."

Party leaders refute the

possibility of any infiltration, saying it has never happened in the past.

Meanwhile, Maoist chief Prachanda on Wednesday issued a statement saying the rebels would not infiltrate Friday's rally nor use any kind of force to supplement street protests. "There is no reason why we should believe the Maoists," Rana retorted. Even our security forces stopped passenger buses coming into the valley from the west and the east.

The parties want the government to cancel municipal polls due on 8 February. "If the polls are called off, there could be an environment for an outlet for the present crisis," said Nepali Congress leader Girija Prasad Koirala.

Both sides look set for a confrontation on Friday, with the Maoists waiting and watching in the wings. ●



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A lose-lose war

Both sides are fighting not to win but for a stronger bargaining position in future talks

Recent writings in this paper have discussed the application of game theory to the present political gridlock in Nepal. The end of the unilateral ceasefire on 2 January provides the opportunity to extend the analysis and examine

GUEST COLUMN
Avidit R Acharya

the conflict between the army and Maoists as a game of war.

The outcome of the standard war of attrition game between two sides is that the weaker side, knowing that it cannot win, cuts its losses by accepting defeat immediately. But since we don't

observe this outcome (in Nepal and in most real-life wars or conflicts) this simple logic sheds very little light on the true mechanisms at work. The next obvious step is to ask what factors are complicating the situation. There could be two explanations.

First, the absence of reliable information makes it hard to determine which is the weaker side. The two parties may have different beliefs and are taking a chance prolonging the war in hope that there will be a clear advantage in the future.

The problem is that each party must also believe that its military strength will grow faster than the other side's rate of improvement. As the government comes closer to signing a truce, limited foreign military assistance may induce it to think that it has achieved the military capability necessary for victory, when in fact it is under-calculating its target level.

The army is more likely to get it wrong since the Maoists can observe the army's militarisation better than the army can monitor rebel strength. The result is that both sides continue to fight even though there is no clear winner. In hindsight, both sides will find that bloodshed could have been avoided.

The second explanation is that both sides are fighting not to win but to achieve a stronger bargaining position at the negotiating table. One strategy

for both parties is to dynamically signal to the opponent how patient it can be (or how many deaths it can endure) by not giving up or by not being perturbed by the number of casualties it suffers. This is similar to a war of attrition game where the impatience level of each side can't be observed by the opposing side.

By continuing to fight, the government can signal to the Maoists that it is ready to suffer many more casualties. If the Maoists behave similarly, the game that is played is no longer a war but a signalling game. In the absence of proper intelligence, all threats are credible, resulting in an escalation of casualties.

On the other hand, false signalling may not be an optimal strategy at all. Signalling impatience levels or offering different settlement deals at different times may give the opposing side information regarding one's belief about one's own strength relative to the other, or it may be a method of providing false information.

If true beliefs are revealed over time (as fighting continues) the lying side loses credibility and negotiating a fair settlement becomes harder. In the end, the lying side will have actually given more information than intended (eg, the method it uses to lies). If such information creates

APRES MOI

The kindest explanation we can come up with for the irresponsible brinkmanship being shown presently by the palace, parties and rebels is that it is all part of a bargaining strategy so they have an upper hand in any future negotiation.

But that presupposes there will still be room for negotiation when things are pushed to such extremes. By openly provoking confrontation, all three sides are inviting an outcome that can only be absolute anarchy. This in turn will make it much more difficult to find a easy or speedy compromise. With their bloodthirsty behaviour the warring sides are behaving as if they aren't satisfied with the present level of slaughter. How brave is it to massacre policemen in cold blood with assault rifles?

So, could it be that the king is pushing for absolutism so that in a future negotiation he doesn't have to settle for a ceremonial role (or no role at all) but bargain for a Jordanian model of active kingship?

Could it be that the Maoists are asking for a republic so that when there are talks they don't have to give in to active monarchy and may agree to a figurehead king? Caught in the middle, the political parties have been pushed by the palace's rigidity to agree on a common agenda with the rebels. But this could be trap and give the regime an excuse for a harsh crackdown in the coming days.

A monarch's role is never to divide and rule but to bring various political forces together, not be one himself. It is now up to the king to show foresight to make a proactive announcement of devolution, put off municipal elections and bring the parties and Maoists together in an interim government to oversee a return to representational politics.

There is still time, and it will not be a sign of weakness or a climb down for him to announce an adherence to the principle of parliamentary supremacy. It may be just what is needed to prevent the pressure cooker from blowing its lid off.



SUBHAS RAI

LETTERS

OPTIMISTIC OVERSEAS

Thanks to Jemima Sherpa for her excellent Nepali Pan (Thoughts escape, #279). She is an excellent storyteller. Once an immigration officer asked me where Nepal was. I told him between India and China, which he interpreted to mean in India. So I drew him a map. When he saw a tiny Nepal sandwiched between giants India and China, he said "Sorry, we cannot allow you to go out". While I try to always read Jemima's columns, I have a hard time understanding her complex style. Maybe she could simplify it a bit so us readers who are not native English speakers can get her full meaning? I hope in the future to read her optimistic views in contrast to the ideas of those overseas Nepalis who suffer from inferiority complexes. It's important when comparing Nepal with western countries to also consider our social values and social capita, not merely income levels.

Rajan Khatri Hamburg, Germany

TUNNEL VISION

Mr. Bihari Krishna Shrestha's columns are becoming acutely one-dimensional. They do little for mutual rapprochement amongst the warring sides and more to incite partisan delinquency. His writing lacks diplomatic flavour and the subtle nuances of international or domestic relations, which can bind and add cohesiveness to a bleeding nation. This is not the way forward for an intellectual. Statements like 'but sadly, the very

corrupt continue to rule the roost' can sometimes speak for themselves and point towards less likely targets or towards those that are being defended. Words can boomerang. 'February First was a temporary move.' What is the definition of 'temporary' in political discourse and in the Nepali scenario, which defines the notion of this so-called impermanent move? Whenever we address issues of such importance, as good Samaritans, our discourse and our perceptions must be multi-dimensional. Blame games usually reek of self-cantered hypocrisy. If we continued to reflect upon what 'they' did, the saga would stretch back to centuries of mismanagement and onerous infighting rather than a specific and concise timeframe that Mr Shrestha relentlessly repeats. He fails to see the bigger picture. There is a generation in this country that is stuck in the paradigm of a superficial reality, envisioning that political paradise can be attained through despotic means rather than an all encompassing vision capable of incorporating different players in the political or social spectrum. It is almost true when they say Nepal is a land of opportunists.

Shiven Thapa, Kathmandu

LITTLE BUDDHA

Thanks to Keith D Leslie for his excellent write up (Nepali Pan, 'The Little Buddha of Bara', #281) on the meditating boy. We have been hearing so much about Ram Bahadur Bomzon going without food and water for almost eight months that it

surprises me that no one has voiced any concern about the dying state of this young, underage Nepali boy nor has there been any discussion on ways to salvage him. What should be the responsibility of the civil and rational society, particularly when the person in question happens to be a minor? I ask: are we to be blinded just like anyone else and ready to sacrifice the budding life of a teenager for the sake of meditating for peace? Who would be responsible if he died? Is he being ignored because the country is in a state of internal conflict and so many young people are dying? I think it is time we thought about saving him while there is still life in the young boy and not when he has reached a point of no return.

JK 'Canchha Hajur', email

10 STEPS

I am writing this letter to save monarchy and democracy in Nepal. My suggestions are step-by-step and self-explanatory.

1. Declare Falgun 7 Election Day in Nepal.
2. Nominate one member from each of the 75 districts for the National Assembly.
3. Nominate all of the members for the House. You could nominate the same representatives from the dissolved parliament.
4. Let the 75 members of the National Assembly choose the prime minister. Anyone could be a candidate but ex-prime ministers, ex-deputy prime ministers, ex-chairmen and ex-deputy chairmen of the Council of Ministers should be barred from running for the post.

5. The elected prime minister will choose the ministers and assistant ministers.
6. The prime minister, ministers and assistant ministers should not be members of the National Assembly or the House.
7. This arrangement is only for two years only.
8. Two years from now there should be a general election for all the members of the National Assembly and the House. At the same time there should be an election for prime minister.
9. There should be no nominated members in the National Assembly or in the House.
10. There should be a term limit of six years for the members of the National Assembly, three terms of two years for the members of the House and one term of six years for the Prime Minister.

Shree Shrestha, Madison, WI, USA

LETTERS

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

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advantages for the honest side it may actually be optimal to be honest.

If both sides agree on what would happen if they continued to fight, they should cut their losses and sign a truce immediately. Further, if each side recognises the optimality in being honest about its capabilities, then it may be possible to come to a consensus on what the disagreement payoffs would be (ie, what the consequences would be if they continued to fight).

Coming to such a consensus should be the first stage of negotiations. In the second stage, the parties would have to agree on what present arrangements would equal the disagreement payoffs of the future.

The desire of the political parties, on the other hand, is that democracy will be preserved and reinstated. There is obviously a trade-off between minimising deaths and keeping the status quo (since the government can minimise the costs of the war by giving up now but given the Maoist agenda that is unlikely to preserve democracy) and this trade-off is probably very high given that presently the government under the king is seeking not necessarily to preserve democracy in general but to preserve the monarchy, while the Maoists are fighting primarily for the establishment of a republic of some kind.

Nevertheless, it is likely that there are some intermediate arrangements that are possible and acceptable to all three sides, although finding them may require a more creative approach from scholars and a purposeful dialogue between the government and Maoists. ●

Avidit Acharya is studying mathematics and economics at Yale University in the United States.

Hyper reality on the tv screen

The neo Panchayat is taking us back to the future with vengeance

In an age of audiovisual images, television sets the national agenda. What's shown on tv is hyperreality. If it did not happen on the idiot box, it did not happen.

These days tv news begins and ends with extensive coverage of royal excursions in the eastern region and the encounters between the monarch and his subjects are carefully orchestrated photoops.

The king in his olive greens is often shown mixing freely with impoverished Nepalis clutching at straws. King's interactions with the masses are constantly monitored by watchful guards cordoning him in multi-layered security rings.

The planned spontaneity makes for moving scenes. Figures in these acts appear to have come alive out of history books. The urban

intelligentsia considers the visage of supreme commander-in-chief in every frame supremely boring. But for the bread-denied, such

meticulously staged circuses are temporary diversions from the drudgery of their daily life.

The way the chairman has been doling out assurances about various projects, it's almost impossible for a resource-starved government to follow through any of them any time soon. However, whether promises made by the king can or will be kept or not is beside the point. The purpose of periodic royal trips to countryside has always been to create a distant familiarity, the kind of bond that exists between a deity and his devotees. Towards that end, King Gyanendra has brilliantly succeeded in renewing a regal tradition that goes back to the hunting trips of Ranas to tarai every winter and regular forays King Mahendra and King Birendra undertook throughout their years of absolutism.

Let there be no confusion, even though the chairman of council of ministers is not in the capital, he holds sole control over all the organs of the state. Kamal Thapa, aspiring to be His Majesty's Most Loyal Political Servant, flew out to Itahari headquarters of Eastern Command before issuing prohibitory orders against political protests and imposing nighttime curfew over almost all the heavily populated areas of the country. Earlier, the chairman himself had helicoptered into the capital for a day to clear the Budget by Ordinance issued by his government.

Roop Jyoti, the well-meaning technocrat with trading background, has been defending the budget to the best of his considerable ability, but there is little doubt that the financial ordinance is no less of a gamble than the high-stakes games being played out in the political arena. Daredevilry is written all over this half-yearly budget.

The financial plan of the government is fundamentally flawed: it disregards the principle of no taxation without representation and attempts to completely upturn the economic bases that successive popular governments since the People's Movement of 1990 had sought to build. Gone is the commitment to planned economy. The royal regime favours *laissez faire*, the economic model of choice for the adherents of social Darwinism all over the world. With customs duty



KIRAN PANDAY

waived, reduced, or brought to minimum, welcome to the brave new world of Nepali economy where high-spending consumers will be the new lords of the realm.

Child labour is to be regulated rather than prohibited. Foreign investment will be sought from Saudi Arabia. The government in its infinite wisdom has decided that like water, labour surplus will find its way to the low-lying areas of wage-earner shortage. In any case, when trade is to be the mainstay of economy, everyone is expected to become a shopkeeper. The shutters along Indo-Nepal border are expected to do brisk business to alleviate the shortage of Indian currency at the centre. Promotion of 'import-export' with all its connotations is the primary focus of recently promulgated financial ordinance.

Shock and awe propaganda, repress and control politics, and a funnel route for overseas trade—doesn't the combination looks distantly familiar? In case you have missed the message, it's a revised and updated edition of LOOT (Lure supporters, oppose neutralists, ostracise critics, and tyrannise the opposition) of political economy perfected through practice during the Panchayat. Rightly it has been said about orthodox societies that the more things change, the more they remain the same. But if only Nepali society were as simple as the strategists of Narayanhiti think it is.

A majority of Nepalis may still be powerless, but we know the temporariness of tyranny too well to be terrorised by it for long. It has been said of the fascist mindset that they tend to overestimate the extent of 'influence over outcomes' that is realistically possible to attain. In its bid to control everything, the palace seems to be slowly moving towards an outcome where it will be lucky to be left with anything to hold. The LOOT Model is history. No amount of political acrobatic is going to bring it back. That's the message that will start to circulate once phone lines resume ●



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Donors' dilemma

On and off violence is interrupting the foreign aid flow



Despite international criticism against the February First move, humanitarian aid has remained intact.

NARESH NEWAR

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA
in LONDON

Almost one year after the royal takeover, Nepal's foreign donors are sending mixed signals about their future engagement in the country. That was evident at a recent donors' meeting at the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DfID) headquarters here.

Some of those who participated had already slashed

their assistance while others were reviewing the situation on the ground. Few have chosen to increase their aid.

The changing scenario has been the main concern for them all. "We are concerned if there will be a conducive political environment for donors to do their work properly and it applies to the government, king and also to the Maoists," says Stephen McClelland, head of the Asia Directorate at DfID headquarters.

"The interference in the

development activity, whether from the Maoists or the security forces, makes it very difficult for the donors to do their job," he added.

Such apprehensions could be the main reason for the significant drop in aid this year, at least judging by the first half of fiscal year 2005-2006. Of the more than Rs 52 billion allocated to development, more than Rs 32 billion was expected to be drawn from a mix of foreign loans and grants. But after six months, just

slightly over Rs one billion has arrived as foreign assistance.

Despite the various challenges and troubles discussed in the London meeting, the donors had one common stand: they were not walking away from Nepal. "That all of them decided to remain engaged was an important message," says McClelland.

That was when the Maoists' unilateral ceasefire was still in place. Now the truce is no more and the rebels have even started targeting Kathmandu Valley.

While the renewed full-scale conflict and violence has donors worried about how to implement projects, the government has a strong belief that next month's municipal elections are good news for development. "It has been difficult to spend the development budget because there is no local government. That is why we have been stressing local polls," recently appointed State Minister for Finance Roop Jyoti told us.

His immediate predecessor, Madhukar Shumshere Rana, believes the donors made a turnaround after King Gyanendra announced the polls last year. "Before, they had many issues to cite reservations about but once we announced the elections they have shifted their position and have become quite positive."

But most representatives of the donor community who we spoke to didn't agree. One of them told us privately, "The Election Commission has received not a single penny from any of the donors—that shows if the donor community supports the election or not."

The conflict has prevented many donors from monitoring

their works on the ground, especially bilateral donors who are directly implementing their projects in rural areas. That is the reason why the donors have made it a point to highlight their Basic Operating Guidelines time and again, in which their employees' safety is given top priority. "If our staff's safety is compromised, then we will act accordingly," said McClelland referring to the undergoing review in DfID's engagement in the country. (see 'It's definitely a missed opportunity for Nepal', p5).

The risk in sending staff on monitoring missions is what is keeping much of the donors' money unused. "In fact, this problem is getting more severe because most of the bilateral donors have not been able to send their staff to the field due to the conflict situation," says National Planning Commission Vice Chairman Shankar Sharma.

While the worsening situation has led to a decline in foreign assistance from most bilateral donors, officials say that aid from many multilateral agencies has increased. One example is the Asian Development Bank. "Not only has the bank released the assistance it had put on hold but it has also entered into new negotiations," a senior NPC official told us.

"The bilaterals can afford to talk about politics and they can take a political stand to decide about their assistance but we cannot," one chief of a multilateral agency told us.

The multilaterals and the bilaterals may have some differences about their operations today but both must face the uncertainty that renewed violence has once again posed. ●

Caught in between again

Villagers in Kapilbastu see security only across the border

JB PUN in KAPILBASTU

It was ceasefire that brought Ram Ranjit Yadab home to his family in Gangolia village of Rupendehi after five long years. Now he's fleeing again because of threats from Maoist rebels. His fellow villager Bechu Kunwar is joining Yadab on the path to India.

Kunwar agreed to rebel demands to resign from the police force but that didn't satisfy the Maoists, who insisted that he join their military wing. Yadab knows that their threat cannot be taken lightly after he saw his friend and ex-cop Tribeni Tharu shot in cold blood.

"Why is it again the unarmed civilians who have to be victimised," asks Asta Bhujja Chaudhary, former ward chairman and leader of a local Tharu welfare group. Chaudhary was abducted and then slapped in front of all the Tharu villagers in Rupendehi during a public meeting.

It is not just the rebels but also state authorities and vigilante groups who have been terrorising ordinary villagers. As the Maoists intensified their activities, the state also scaled up its search operations. The security forces have harassed and arrested villagers in Rupendehi, Kapilbastu and Nawalparasi when they were unable to provide information about the rebels. Even ordinary rickshaw driver Brijman BK and



The poor are always hurt most by the escalating violence

DAMBER K SHRESTHA

his fiancé were arrested on the eve of their marriage last week.

Constant announcements by the district administration that anyone resisting arrest during checking would be shot have terrified civilians.

Anti-Maoist vigilante groups, especially in Marya Bajar of Rupendehi, have also launched fresh violence by attacking political workers, burning poor villagers'

homes and intimidating locals in the name of flushing out the rebels. The group, led by Santosh Sribastab, extorts about Rs 5,000 from locals, and force families to pay Rs 20,000-30,000 for those working abroad.

"Many are leaving their native homes as they are unable to bear the injustice," says Ramchandra Dhakal, district president of the Nepali Congress in Rupendehi. Political workers and their families have

been the worst victims, he added.

Many villagers have already started crossing the border to India. Local NGO workers from Maiti Nepal, which tracks the movement of sex traffickers and their victims in the border area of Bhairawa, have noticed that the flow of Nepali villagers towards India has more than doubled after the ceasefire ended.

"We were forced to quit our schools and are now going to India for our own safety," said a group of young boys who had reached Butwal before moving on to India.

"The Maoists tell us to join their military and the security force intimidate us to give information about the rebels," said Deb Kumar Magar.

But while the forces have extended curfew hours and increased their operations, there is still no sign of the Maoists reducing their military activities. In fact after the ceasefire, the Maoists established a new Fourth Military Division, which has already been mobilised in the Gandak region.

According to Rukum Division Commander Ganesh Pun, a special task force has been assigned to target the town area. It has already attacked custom officials at the key border area of Belhiya, where two police officers were killed and two more seriously injured. ●

FDI highs

Despite the widening political rift and business instability, a latest government report says that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) commitment to Nepal recorded a robust 250 percent growth during the first six months of the current year. "The amount soared because the number of FDI projects registered with the Department of Industry itself doubled during the period," said a senior government official. According to statistics, 67 projects were approved compared to only 31 at the same time last year. India and the US were Nepal's most important FDI partners.

United Finance AGM

United Finance Limited increased its operating profit by 100 percent and its net profit by 188 percent in the past year, according to its just finished 11th AGM. The company also welcomed Jagdish Prasad Konodia as new director from M/S Rahul Infrastructure. Company Chairman Basanta Kumar Chaudhary presented the annual report, adding, 'the target of United Finance limited is to provide customised service to suit the needs of individual clients'.

TourControl

Data Analysis and Software Solutions (DASS) has unveiled TourControl, a software application tailored to the specific needs of tour operators and travel agencies. The application caters to a range of functions, from air ticketing, excursions and hotels to trekking and pre-formatted itinerary. It gives tour operators a smooth and efficient operation for planning a tour from beginning to end.



NIB 19th AGM

Nepal Investment Bank Ltd (NIBL) held its 19th Annual General Meeting at Royal Nepal Academy on 6 January. Chairman and Chief Executive Director Prithibi Bahadur Pande presented the directors report, balance sheet and profit and loss account for fiscal year 2004-05. NIBL was awarded the prestigious 'Bank of the Year 2005' by London based Financial Times Group's *The Banker*, making it the first Nepali Bank to win the award two times in three years. NIBL also opened its 13th branch in Narayangarh in the past year.

NEW PRODUCTS



A STORM IN TOWN: Saakha & Co will next week launch the new San Storm convertible roadster. With a Renault D7F-MPFI engine, 58.5 bhp and sleek looks, the San Storm is sure to be a favourite among the youth of Kathmandu.

Change is coming

Demography, geography and globalisation make it inevitable

Reading Nepali newspapers quickly becomes a depressing exercise. Who wants to wake up each morning to learn about the killings, the arrests, the mass rallies, the curfews and the political stalemate?

STRICTLY BUSINESS

Ashutosh Tiwari

The media report as though a few Nepalis—the king, the political *neta* and the Maoists—have the power to change the fate of 25 million Nepalis. But what if there are forces far stronger than any one side's show of muscle, brewing in and around Nepal? What if the effects wrought by those forces will radically change Nepal from the path on which it's been muddling along since 1769? Regardless of who governs it, the forces that are going to change Nepal in the next 20 years are demography, geography and globalisation.

Demography: Nepal, the oldest country in South Asia, has a population with a median age of a mere 20 years. That figure is slightly higher than that for military-run Pakistan and the single-party-run Maldives. On one hand, such a low median age presents an opportunity. With good governance that represents people's aspirations, millions of young Nepalis can easily be inoculated against diseases and sent to school to pick up knowledge and skills to be productive citizens later on. Similarly, through incentive-

driven policies for infrastructure development and improvement in service deliveries, millions more can be lifted out of poverty within our lifetime.

But in the face of continually draining political fencing that favours one group of people over many, the same young people—like their counterparts in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s—could well grow up to form cohorts that, through their sheer number, throw out any oppressive regime that slams a door on their dreams for a better future. For Nepal, it's not history but demography that is destiny.

Geography: The biggest story of our generation is going to be the unfolding of China and India as prosperously self-confident giants on the world stage. Only 15 years ago, those neighbours were mere footnotes that wielded little global influence.

In 1991, cash-strapped India had no choice but to shrug off decades of socialist policies to light the fuse of economic reforms, the pace of which is only going to go faster in coming years. Likewise, at the grand old age of 87 in 1992, communist leader Deng Xiaoping visited southern China and blessed bolder market reforms. Since then, Chinese economic growth rates have been so astoundingly high that today every developed nation has its own strategy to benefit from China's economy. But at war with one another since 1996, we remain unable to come up with any coherent, much less credible, plan to take advantage of what's



ANUP PRAKASH

spinning on either side of us. **Globalisation:** In Panchayat days, Radio Nepal would tell us that the world loved us and we believed it. These days, Nepalis get their news from so many sources that they are able to decide the truth of what they see, hear and experience without anybody's telling them what's what. Meantime, with a stronger remittance economy, lower information-gathering costs and the further fall of barriers to interconnect markets, global Nepalis and friends of Nepal have emerged with a louder voice about how this country should or should not be governed.

All these are slowly transforming Nepal from being in a state of trance over its history to a state of spasms about its future possibilities. That is why these unstoppable changes need to be taken seriously by all. After all, as Charles Darwin put it, it's not the strongest of the species that survives, nor is it the most intelligent but the one most responsive to change. ●



Canada has been providing development assistance to Nepal for 40 years and today focuses on supporting local NGOs, particularly those working in communities in primary health and rural livelihoods. But Jean-Marc Mangin, Canada's first secretary (development), told *Nepali Times* that future aid has become more precarious since Nepal was left off a new list of nations on which Canada will focus its development efforts.

'It's definitely a missed opportunity for Nepal'

Why is Nepal not listed among those core countries?
Based on poverty criteria, Nepal should have been one of those 25 countries but it was not chosen in large part because of poor governance and the armed conflict. Instead of being able to attract additional resources (from Canada) Nepal's long-term funding is now at risk. Each time money is tied up, it becomes more difficult for new programs to come online in countries like Nepal, not included in the key policy commitments.

So, governance was the main reason Nepal didn't make the list?
Yes. The two main criteria were—poverty and governance. Certainly based on poverty, Nepal would make the list. But other poor countries are better able to absorb assistance.

Does that mean Canada's funding to Nepal is at risk?
Canada intends to continue development assistance that delivers direct benefits to vulnerable populations as long as these three elements are in place: 1. the conflicting parties respect the Basic Operating Guidelines (BOGs) (on the rights and responsibilities of development agencies and their staff), 2. the security of our staff and partners is not compromised, 3. we can demonstrate to ourselves and to the people of Canada that we are still able to obtain good results in helping Nepal's poor. The public endorsements of the BOGs by the Government of Nepal (last July) and by the insurgents (last December) were critically important milestones.

But when current projects end, will more funding be available?
I don't have the answer to that question. We weren't able to start new bilateral programs last year. And after 1 February, all assistance to the central government was frozen, though it wasn't much. We're working on a new interim strategy. Till now we have decided to maintain a presence. We believe our assistance is still making a positive difference, notably working directly with poor women, dalits and janajatis. Canada wants to remain engaged. Canada doesn't want to abandon Nepal.

How much is Canada's contribution this year?
In 2005, our funding to Nepal was between \$ 8 million and \$ 9 million US. This year it should be about the same but I don't know because Canadian contributions to the CAP (Consolidated Appeals Process—a new UN-designed pool of money devoted to the humanitarian dimensions of the conflict) have not yet been finalised.

How will that CAP money be spent?
There will be assistance to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNHCR, OCHA and possibly other agencies. What is clear is that we support the analysis and rationale behind the CAP. One of the key aims of Canadian efforts here has been to support the UN's response to the various dimensions of the crisis affecting the people of Nepal.

Rats and plough

Jana Aastha, 18 January

आस्था

Kamal Thapa, who was labelled a rat by RPP leader Lokendra Bahadur Chand, is on the verge of being beaten by other rats. The palace rats are waiting to see if the Election Commission grants Thapa's RPP the recognition and the plough election symbol. They will only support him if he receives both—if he fails, their support will go elsewhere. Provisions to include other royalists in the Thapa-led RPP have been made by including a permanent committee in the party's constitution. But Thapa himself is not aware of who will come to his faction, whose division was planned entirely by Tulsi Giri. Provisions have been made to include the party's former chairmen, past and present prime ministers and elder leaders in the permanent committee. But neither the former chairmen, nor prime ministers, are with Thapa. Surya Bahadur Thapa has already formed the Janashakti Party, while Lokendra B Chand does not even want to hear Thapa's name. Even though there are two leaders, Rabindra Sharma and Padma S Lawoti, capable of being included in the permanent committee, its possible that Lawoti will break away and form another party. Thapa might have plans to put the likes of Giri, Kirtinidhi Bista and Marichman Singh in the committee, however they are said to be waiting to see if the party does form and get official recognition. It was Giri who made the plan to remove Pashupati Shamsher Rana and critics of the February February move from the party. Thapa and six other central committee members were included in the ministerial cabinet so they could get away from the circle of the party and be brought within the palace circle. However, Giri's plan to use Thapa and Lawoti has not been entirely successful. Thapa will have to bear the brunt of this. It is estimated that if the RPP does not get official recognition and the party symbol, those who followed Thapa will once more slide towards Rana. After Rana filed a case in the court, even before the Election Commission decided to grant Thapa the plough symbol and recognition, many who followed Thapa started to accuse Giri of weakening their position. If the palace had taken Rana, it could also have got the support of India as he has relatives in the ruling Congress party of India as well as in the main opposition BJP.



KIRAN PANDAY

Ram or ruin

NC-D's Pradeep Giri in Kantipur, 8 January

कान्तिपुर

Since the country cannot shoulder the burden of a prolonged civil war and because all Nepalis are for peace, the Nepali Congress-Democratic has adopted a middle of the road approach and that is constituent assembly. NC-D was the first political party to make it clear that a constituent assembly was the only solution to the present impasse. The Maoists had come for peace talks during the premiership of Sher Bahadur Deuba. During the preliminary talks before the formal dialogue, they had hinted that they could abandon their demand for a communist republic, which they actually did. At present, they have been reiterating their commitment to a constituent assembly as an immediate way out of the political deadlock. In view of the need for peace and a constituent assembly, the seven parties including the NC-D, have made an agreement. It is true that the king is not ready for a constituent assembly. But, a democratic party cannot make decisions on the basis of the king's stubbornness, arrogance and whim. That is because the party survives and grows among people, not within the premises of the royal palace. It is clear that the country can have peace and stability only through a constituent assembly. In this context, there is one particular point that needs to be raised with the king. NC-D tried its best to be flexible and work with the king. But the partnership became unsuccessful because the king's coterie and his advisers

have projected him as a Hindu king. The vice chairmen and the attorney general appointed by the king have gone to the extent to say that the Hindu king does not need to follow the constitution. Certainly there may not have been a written constitution during the regime of Ram. But the Ramayana is full of episodes that prove that King Ram was quite sensitive even about small exceptions. The constituent assembly is the litmus test for the king and the monarchy. Our party does not wish to say anything about it but the people are becoming quite vocal. They have been chanting slogans and they are becoming audible to the king and the crown prince. Under such circumstances, what should an ideal Hindu king do? The situation has provided the king with an opportunity to prove himself unblemished. The king should not turn elsewhere now. If the king passes the litmus test, the monarchy will be even more acceptable and respectable. On the other hand, if the constituent assembly decides against him and the monarchy, the king should step aside.

What republic?

Nepali Congress Vice Chairman Sushil Koirala in Janabhavana, 16 January

जनभावना

Nepali Congress has not demanded a republic. The party has not yet embarked on the journey toward that end. Nor has the seven-party alliance pronounced the word. Have a look at the understanding made among the parties, there is no mention of a republican set-up in it. Some parties' leaders have been speaking in support of a republic, it is their individual right. The 12-point understanding with the Maoists also does not mention a republican set up. The new generation of our party has been raising their voices for republicanism because they have suffered while demanding democracy. Every time they have gone out onto the street in support of democracy, they have been beaten and their rights have been violated. They are frustrated and therefore they are talking about a republican agenda. But the Nepali Congress as a party has been demanding the reinstatement of the House of Representatives and for peace and reconciliation with the king. The party has not given up that demand. It's not just the Nepali Congress—the seven party alliance too has not abandoned the agenda of having the House reinstated. We still believe that would be the way out of the present political crisis. We have already relayed this message to the state and the king. But our voice remains unheard. The king has chosen to go his own way. But, the Maoists listened to us. That is why they declared unilateral ceasefire and extended it for one month. Because the Maoists were receptive to us, they could enter into the 12-point

understanding with the seven-party alliance. When the Maoists approached to propose working together, we made it clear to them that there cannot be such a partnership unless they give up violence and terrorism. We want to solve this problem peacefully. If the House of Representatives is reinstated, the political environment will change completely and the crisis will end.

I became a rebel

Shyam Bhatta in Samay, 19 January

समय

KAILALI—Four years ago, Arati Chaudhary was a bible teacher going from village to village in Kanchanpur preaching the holy book. But everything changed when she started to get harassed by the security forces. It was then she heard the word about Maoist ideals, which impressed her so much that she left her five brothers, two sisters and parents to join the rebels and became area in charge in Poudan. "I haven't been able to think of my personal life, especially marriage, due to my political life," says Arati, who hails from the Tharu community. Due to their simple ways and restrained nature, the Tharus have always



been exploited by high caste Nepalis and eventually many ended up working as bonded labourers. They have now been liberated but still live in extreme difficulties due to the government's lack of concrete plans to reintegrate them into mainstream society. The Maoists dangled big dreams in front of them, easily luring many to join. Today, a large number of female Tharus dominate the Maoist western division command. But none of them have been able to get promoted to senior positions. Still naïve, they say all the right things about the Prachanda Path, the right to revolution, social change and war. But sadly, Maoist women still play a stereotyped role that includes cooking, chopping fuel wood and ironing clothes. This is contrary to the Maoist leaders' principles about empowering women. Although Arati is an area-in-charge she really only oversees cooking. Arati believes that women are more capable than men even in the rebel force because they have more endurance and better overall abilities. Five years ago, 25-year-old Grisma (pictured above) also

शान्ति चाहियो महाराज !

खान पाउने महाराज !

सेवा लाग्यो महाराज !

स्कूल चाहियो महाराज !

बाटो चाहियो महाराज !

समाचार सकियो महाराज !

We need peace, Your Majesty
We need food, Your Majesty
I'm sick Your Majesty
We need schools, Your Majesty
We need roads, Your Majesty
And that is the end of the news, Your Majesty

हिमाल Robin Sayami in Himal Khabarpatrika 14-28 January

“ We expect all members of the international community, including China, not to add to complications. ”

—Indian Ambassador Shiv Shankar Mukharjee on Kantipur Television, 8 January

joined the rebels to fight for the liberation of women. Living on the battlefield has become normal for her. But she moved all the way from Kailali to Doti after she got tired of some Maoists constantly misbehaving and intimidating the local villagers. Her ultimate aim is to educate her daughter when the conflict ends.

Artistic opposition

Actress Bipana Thapa in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 28 January

Your contemporaries are for municipal polls, why are you not?

I believe the polls will worsen the conflict. Besides being a citizen I am also an artist, I have a responsibility to create public awareness. Instead of heading toward a solution, we are moving toward a bloody situation. Even if elections are a democratic practice, if polls are held today without political consensus, it would mean inviting a bloodbath.

So, you won't vote if there are elections?

No I won't. I am not anti-king, rather I am a supporter. But, the government must understand who it is holding the elections for. If it is for the people but the people are not safe, then how can

the government be justified? It would be better for it to wait for some time and hold the elections once there is consensus.

So, what should the king do?

The king should move in line with the people's desire. Those who have taken up arms are our brothers. Those unarmed ones who have been hit by bullets in their own homes are our sisters. Therefore, the solution lies in talks and not in conflict.

Why surrender?

Nepal, 22 January

A large number of Maoists have been surrendering to state authorities due to ideological differences in the party and punishment of their own cadres. Around 3,500 have already surrendered. Their number grew even more following differences between top Maoist leaders Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai. The government's policy of giving immunity and rewarding those who surrender also motivated more to give up their arms and their party. But the rebels still confined in the army barracks are complaining that in reality the government deal is different. "Ultimately, it benefits the government if we all decide to surrender and aspire to lead better

lives. But what do we get in return?" asks ex-rebel Mandabraj Karki, former regional bureau member. Rebels like Karki, Sangarsa and Prabhat were all senior military commanders. Himlal was already a brigade commander when he surrendered and even helped the army for 45 days during its operation against the Maoist militants in mid west Nepal. It was then that the government announced that rebels who surrendered would be given the opportunity to settle abroad. But the government has not even allowed them to move freely in the country. According to the law, no can be detained inside army barracks for a long time yet those jailed have not even been given permission to meet close family members. They get regular meals but no extra clothing. All this was reported by the National Human Rights Commission, which was strongly condemned by the army who argued that the ex-rebels are held inside the barracks at their own request. But the commission says that when they asked the army to release them, the officers told the members that they were making arrangements to send them to a foreign country. "Forget about going abroad, I can't even live a free life anymore," says Himlal. So far it seems that the government is using these ex-rebels only for its vested interests.

One aim

Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai in Budhabar, 18 January

There is no direct relation between the end of the ceasefire and the 12-point understanding between us and the seven parties. When we entered into the agreement, we had very well envisaged that fighting would escalate once the king rejected the pact. That is why we made it a point to mention in the understanding paper that we (Maoists and parties) would separately launch offensives against the autocratic monarchy. Moreover, everyone understood that the role of the people's liberation army would be crucial if the king stood his ground to hold the municipal polls even within the army barracks. In this context, the end of the ceasefire would not negatively affect the 12-point understanding. It would rather be complementary to it. People agree that we need to have a mechanism that will monitor if the understanding has been followed. Toward that end and to make the agreement more effective, there has to be high-level talks between the two sides soon. What should be the nature of the movement depends on its goal. If the goal is to end the autocratic monarchy and establish a complete republic or democratic republic, there has to be coordination between the movements in rural and urban areas and also between armed and peaceful movements. It was due to the lack of coordination that the movements of 1955 and 1990 failed. That is why people need to be assured that our future military offensives will be complementary to the urban-centred peaceful movement. History has shown that there cannot be any Chinese wall between armed and peaceful movements. They are interchangeable. It is the leaders of the movements who can identify the timings for such transformations (from peaceful to armed movement and vice versa). We don't think it is wise to point fingers at one another remembering past enmity. If people talk about what they call atrocities by our cadres, then we too can recall how they (the parties) placed bounties on our heads and issued red corner notices against us, how they equipped civilians with the arms of the Royal Nepali Army to gun down our fighters. Till yesterday, because we Maoists and the parties had separate working policies and different goals, we clashed. But now we have a common target—the autocratic monarchy. Since our working policy is now the same, we have forged this partnership. But tomorrow if the nature of the political inter-contradiction changes, the nature of our relations could change as well.



Vacancy Announcements

IUCN - The World Conservation Union, Asia Region

IUCN

The World Conservation Union

Our mission: "To influence, encourage & assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity & diversity of nature & to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable & ecologically sustainable."

IUCN is a world leader in developing knowledge & understanding for effective conservation action. A unique worldwide partnership, IUCN brings together states, government agencies & NGO members, & some 10,000 scientists & experts from 181 countries in a global web of networks to provide a neutral forum for dialogue & action on environment & sustainable development issues. IUCN Asia Regional currently has over 500 staff members working in its offices in 9 countries (Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam). The IUCN Asia Regional Office is located in Bangkok, Thailand.

In 2002 a decision was taken to take a phased approach to the re-organisation of the IUCN Asia Region. The implementation of Stage 1, with a major focus on the grouping of the regional thematic programmes, as planned, began in January 2003. In the light of the success of Stage 1, the management of IUCN in Asia is executing Stage 2 of the reorganisation process, i.e. organisation of the country programmes into Country Groups (CGs).

Country Group Head (Nepal & Pakistan)

JOB DESCRIPTION

Reporting directly to the Regional Director Asia, the Country Group Head (CGH) has the responsibility to lead and direct the transition of country programmes into a cohesive regional organizational structure, through the establishment, management and development of a Country Group as an integrated 'strategic business unit' with oversight of the performance of its component countries.

The main responsibilities are:

- Assume the strategic management of all IUCN activities in the Country Group (CG);
- Establish and maintain the CG's management procedures and tools;
- Oversee programme development, implementation and evaluation of the CG; ensure adequate maintenance of financial & human resources for delivery;
- Provide direction to strategic, long term resource mobilisation;
- Oversee resource allocation of existing programmes and investment in new programme initiatives;
- Carry out final sign off on budgets of programme, operations and staffing for the countries in the group;
- Monitor external relations in the countries in the group;
- Promote synergy between countries and other programme units with the CG;
- Be the link with other CGs in Asia and with regional thematic and corporate functions;
- Develop IUCN presence in countries other than the existing ones;
- Act as a change agent in the ongoing and future reorganisation processes.

QUALIFICATIONS AND SKILLS REQUIRED

At least 10 years relevant professional experience in a senior managerial position, preferably in Asia; an academic degree, preferably post graduate, in subjects relevant to management, environment and sustainable development, demonstrated management skills in complex, multi national, multi ethnic organizations, including financial management; proven political savvy and people relationship skills; ability to work under pressure and to deal tactfully with sensitive political issues; willingness to travel frequently; excellent analytical, communication and facilitation skills, and command of spoken and written English. Knowledge of Nepali or Urdu will be an advantage.

DUTY STATION AND DURATION: The CGH would be co-located in the IUCN Pakistan Country Office in Karachi. The position will initially be for a 2-year period, with long term possibilities

Country Representative (IUCN Nepal)

JOB DESCRIPTION

The Country Representative (CR) for IUCN Nepal has the overall responsibility of representing IUCN in Nepal, working with the membership – both governmental and non-governmental – and with other appropriate partners. The CR is also responsible for the management of IUCN's Programme in Nepal, and is part of the management team of the Country Group (Nepal/Pakistan) with a responsibility to help build a strong organizational unit, which brings 'value-added' to the management of the Asia Region. The CR will report to the IUCN Regional Director for Asia on representational matters and to the Country Group Head (Nepal & Pakistan) on programmatic, management and administrative matters

The main responsibilities are:

- Ensure that the IUCN programme in country is in alignment to IUCN's global and regional priorities as well as to the national agenda as defined by its members and partners in the country;
- Provide leadership in programme development, take responsibility for ensuring that funding for the programme is secured. This will include supervision of country specific project development activities and contribution to the development of integrated inter-country, regional and transboundary projects where and when appropriate;
- Ensure effective and efficient delivery of the Country Programme and its component projects with due consideration to quality and satisfaction of IUCN's constituency in the country;
- Effectively deploy the administrative, financial and technical resources available to the IUCN Secretariat Programme in the country, and ensure that these are used in conformity with relevant IUCN norms and standards;

QUALIFICATIONS AND SKILLS REQUIRED

7-10 years relevant professional experience in a senior managerial position, preferably in Asia; an academic degree, preferably post graduate, in subjects relevant to management, environment and sustainable development; capacity to manage an adaptive organisation and handle complex operations and large teams; strategic programme planning, project development and management skills; team building, inspiring and motivating skills; knowledge of key conservation & development and government networks; extensive knowledge and contacts with donor communities, ability to work under pressure and to deal tactfully with sensitive political issues; an ability to communicate, negotiate and write fluently in English and Nepali is essential.

DUTY STATION AND DURATION: The position of CR Nepal will be based in the IUCN Nepal Country Office in Kathmandu. This position will initially be for a 2-year period, with long term possibilities.

Interested candidates should send their applications and CV along with the names of three referees by 10 February 2006 to: Human Resources Unit, IUCN - The World Conservation Union, Asia Regional Office, # 63 Sukhumvit 39, 10110-Bangkok, Thailand.
Tel: +662 662 4061; Fax: +662 662 4389; email: iucn@iucn.org url: <http://www.iucn.org>

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There is a rhythm to life in Mangalbajar despite today's hustle and bustle

MALLIKA ARYAL

As the fog slowly lifts in Patan Durbar Square, Mangalbajar wakes to piped temple bells and a serene chorus of *bhajans*.

Approaching from the west side of the square, one can hardly ignore the breathtaking beauty of the 15th-century Malla palace. Following the chants takes you to Krishna Mandir, where barefooted women with baskets full of flowers, butter lamps and other offerings scurry along to line up in front of the temple.

The pigeons fight to feed on grains scattered by a woman who appears unconcerned as they flock and flap around her. She barely looks up as the birds suddenly take flight together.

For a long time, the pigeon lady and I are the only ones sitting in front of the temple. It is still dark and all I can see are the silhouettes of Krishna Mandir and the butter

lamplights. The flower lady brings baskets of yellow and marigold garlands and sits near the main path leading to the temple.

One by one the vegetable vendors pass by with spinach, cauliflower and carrot on their *kharpan*s. They are not allowed in the square area, so they set up their temporary shops in front of the waterspout, where a couple of stalls have already started firing up kerosene stoves for tea.

Astha Laxmi Shakya, 50, has been selling flowers for 16 years in front of Krishna Mandir. "So much has changed," says Shakya sipping her tea. "I see new faces everyday, most of my old customers are dead and gone and the square is not what it used to be."

She sighs and explains that the young people who should be taking care of the square are leaving town in search of better opportunities.

It is almost 8AM, the bazar a little further down from the

temple is bustling with people taking sips from steaming cups of tea, smoking their first morning cigarette and discussing politics. The cleaning ladies arrive, sweeping along the pathway. They work systematically—one cleans the left side while the other takes the right and they push the rubbish into little piles along the pathways.

The ladies create a cloud of dust as they move. From the dust emerge young teenagers carrying traditional instruments. They pass the street between the temple and the museum entrance beating their drums and bells—*chyam chyam chyam*. The flower lady, vegetable sellers, tea stalls and the pigeon lady all pack up and leave for the day just as a truck arrives to collect the garbage.

Right behind the truck, children dressed in neat school uniforms follow. Their ties are nicely knotted and their trousers have the necessary creases. At the south side of the square a young man has set up a temporary



ng centuries



newspaper shop attracting a curious crowd. Some people stop and buy a paper, stuff it in their bags and move on. Others try to take a quick peek at the headlines and then give up when they realize they will never push past the crowd.

Finally, the fog lifts completely and the shops along the busy roadside open. A music store blares Nepali pop. In the middle of the square, blue and red chairs are set up for a function to mark the anniversary of the 1934 earthquake. This is the ideal location for the event as part of the palace was reduced to ruins after the disaster and was later rebuilt.

People are dashing off to get to work; they push one another to try and climb aboard *safa tempos*.

It warms up and the tourists come and go with their guides.

They stop at the rooftop cafes for a quick bite or a cup of coffee,

they shoo away the little boys who follow them hawking more souvenirs. Elderly men sit on the benches outside the museum, soaking up the sun eating peanuts and oranges and watching as the day goes by.

The red and blue chairs are packed up as the day's function ends. By late afternoon, the schoolchildren who hastened to get to school in the morning wearing their neat uniforms are returning. With tired faces, dishevelled hair and loose ties, they hang out in the square, sipping tea from plastic cups.

The tea stall and vegetable sellers are also back. The tourists slowly disperse as the sun goes down. Women ride by on their scooters, taxis wait with their lights on and evening shoppers line up in front of the vegetable markets.

Suddenly it's dark everywhere as load shedding begins. But it's

too early for the square to sleep so vegetable vendors, restaurants and bead and bangle sellers light *tukis* and stay open for business. Passers-by hurry home to their families and youngsters part ways.

The only place with electricity is the path between the Patan Museum and Krishna Mandir, which looks like a glowing caterpillar from atop a terrace. Looking down, the harmony of the different architectural styles strikes me: the museum's pagoda style next to the mandir's Shikhara look.

It is time to leave. From the west side of the square all I can see are the silhouettes of Krishna Mandir and the palace. It is dark and quiet but I can still hear the temple bells. For the last time I look at a place that has stood the test of time and I see it breathing as if waiting for a new day, new and new stories ●



DAY DAWNS: The morning vendor displays the day's items (*above*). (*left, top to bottom*) Selling flowers to devotees. Durbar Square is still quite empty early in the morning. Locals rest outside Patan Museum after a hard day's work. Durbar Square lights up as the day's activities come to an end.



Big Macs and Mickey Maos

Chinese Ambassador Sun Heping and others look on as Sangita Thapa, proprietor of Siddhartha Art Gallery points out a painting of Zhou En-Lai namaste-ing a nepali girl by Awang Zaba.



DANIEL B HABER

American cultural icons such as Mickey Mouse, Big Mac hamburgers and dollar signs are not the subjects that one would expect from painters from Tibet. But that is exactly what viewers saw at the 'Contemporary Paintings from Tibet' exhibit at the Siddhartha Art Gallery last week.

True, there were the usual Buddhas and Buddha eyes, stupas, yaks, Om mani padme hums and girls in (and out of) ethnic dress (some even showing bare bosoms). Much current Tibetan art depicts these stereotypical elements mostly in flat thangka styles. With a few exceptions, it is mostly airport art.

But for China-watchers and Tibetophiles, the most interesting and original works that stand out—at least from

a sociological/anthropologic perspective—are the works of the new Tibetan pop artists, such as Gade, which can be gauged as a barometer of the new Tibet.

Having met Gade (pronounced Gah-day) in Lhasa at a 2004 Tibet University Art exhibition, where he is also a lecturer in art history, I easily recognised his tongue-in-cheek, playful homage to commercial cultural icons. Here at the Siddhartha was a good sampling of his work—painted monochromatic symbols on rough paper like oversized palm leaf manuscripts. Here, in a series of triptychs titled 'New Holy Book' the artist in mock seriousness spoofs the new icons of contemporary Tibet as part of the greater Chinese of the globalisation era.

The first panel depicts a typical Buddha head set in grids for thangka painters and is juxtaposed with a head of Mickey Mouse in similar thangka grids as the new god.

Tibetan pop art gets exposure outside the plateau

The second panel depicts three food icons, a bowl of rice crossed by a pair of chopsticks (Chinese diet), a bag of tsampa (roasted barley, the Tibetan staple) and a Big Mac hamburger in the middle and in case you missed the symbolism, a golden double-arched 'M' over the burger.

The third panel depicts mahjong symbols, disembodied high-heeled legs of chorus girls and a bottle of whiskey in between. During the Dalai Lama's reign in Tibet, mahjong, considered a decadent waste of time, was outlawed in Tibet.

The 'New Holy Book' also includes a canvas that is a page out of someone's weekly planner, with entries such as 'Love at First Sight', 'First Kiss', 'Party'. Also depicted are icons such as dollar signs, mobile phones, playing cards and cigarettes.

Many Tibet watchers (not only those in Dharamsala who see the developments in contemporary Tibet as cultural genocide) are concerned with the erosion of traditional Tibetan culture, particularly the Buddhism that was once its core. While political and social criticism may not be entertained in the TAR (Tibet Autonomous Region) as in the rest of China, Pop artists like Gade can freely point to how mammon and Mickey Mouse have replaced traditional Buddhist symbols and values.

Visitors to Lhasa, especially those coming from Nepal, are usually struck by how developed and 'Chinese' the Tibetan capital appears. There is no dearth of entertainment, from discos in the shadow of the Potala, nightclubs, hotels, spas and restaurants, but one would be hard-pressed

to go anywhere for a dharma talk. Ironically, while Buddhism is discouraged in Tibet itself, there is increasing interest in dharma in the mainland and in Hong Kong.

As Tibet becomes more consumer-oriented it is not surprising to find this trend reflected in contemporary art like Gade's work, which seems to question the get-rich-is-glorious concept. We asked Gade what he thought of Nepal. "I am very impressed by the preservation of the architectural heritage such as in Patan's Durbar Square," he replied.

Aside from the whimsical pop work of Gade, another artist of note is Awang Zaba, who is more versatile in his style. Although not a Pop artist, he does decorative modernistic canvases of ladies in Tibetan costumes meant for the tourist crowd but his Socialist Realism style in which he was obviously trained, is more noteworthy.

It is his canvas of a towering Zhou En-Lai looming over and namaste-ing a Nepali dancer in front of (and blocking) one of the Buddha eyes of a stupa that enigmatically greeted the visitors to the recent Siddhartha show. The artist says he painted it especially for Nepal audiences, although some observers might see it as ominously foreboding. Interestingly, the Siddhartha exhibition was part of the 50th Golden Jubilee of Nepal Chinese Diplomatic Relations and was inaugurated by the Chinese ambassador to Nepal, Sun Heping.

Few people know the contemporary art of Tibet but the Siddhartha exhibition and Jim Aplington's Lotus Gallery in Thamel will help bring it more exposure. ●

FORESIGHT... is the WORD

आवरण				
सङ्घटको समयक्रम				
तिथि	महत्त्व	दरबार	इल	माओवादी
१३ पुस	माओवादीको एकपक्षीय युद्धविरामको अवधि समाप्त	छिटफुट सैनिक कारवाहीद्वारा माओवादीलाई युद्धविराम भङ्ग गर्ने उद्देश्यले	युद्धविराम सम्झौता माओवादीलाई आग्रह	सन्तोलाई दबावमा राख्न प्रहारान्तरले युद्धविराम सम्झौता वा आंशिक भंग गर्ने
१३ माघ	नगरनिर्वाचनका लागि उम्मेदवारी दिला	चुनाव स्थिति अथवा दलहरू चिस्ट अरु कठोर रबैया	जनप्रतिरोध	कथित 'जनकारवाही' शुरु गर्ने
१८ माघ	शाही अधिकाधिक प्रथम वर्ष पुरा	दमनको नयाँ सिलसिला। फेरि फोन बन्द गर्ने सक्ने आदि	अर्धभूमिगत अबस्थाबाट जनपरिचालन	राज्य संयन्त्रमाथि आक्रमण/छडाको सम्भावना
२६ माघ	नगर निर्वाचनको मतदान			दलहरूलाई नक्सा
१ फागुन	माओवादी			

Again and again, Himal Khabarpatrika is at the forefront of analysis. Our 31 December issue predicted the lapse of the Maoist ceasefire, a new start of intimidation tactics by the state, closure of phone communications, etc. Now, look ahead to the fate of the 8 February municipal elections and harsher actions on the political parties.



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Himal Khabarpatrika, 31 Dec '05 - 13 Jan '06.

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Jamming with jazz giants

Cadenza has been a big name in Nepali music since their *Jazz at Patan* cd established a whole new sound for local music. Now the pioneers of local jazz improvisation are going global with a gig at the prestigious Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival.

Established in 1967, the festival at the University of Idaho is one of the biggest jazz events in the world. With past performers including giants such as Ella Fitzgerald, Bobby McFerrin and Sarah Vaughn, Cadenza know they have to pull out all the stops to shine in this concert. "It's huge," says front man Navin Chettri, unable to hide the excitement in his voice, "almost the equivalent to the Olympics for jazz musicians".

The band will perform in two separate shows—on 21 February for the festival for school children and on 22 February at International Night. Chettri says Cadenza is probably the first outfit from South Asia to play at the world-renowned festival, and will set its performance standards high. "Till now, *Jazz at Patan* has done well so we hope it will have the same magic out there. The biggest thing is to expose people to nep jazz. There have been different styles of jazz but none with our original twist on it." The band has been promised free food and lodging and also has support from the Nepal Tourism Board but is still running low on funds. So with a little help from their friends, a fundraiser, Cadenza and Friends Live in Concert, will take place on 26 January, 5.30 PM, at the Radisson Hotel. Tickets are Rs 800. ●

Aarti Basnyat

Signs of sorrow

The low morale of Bhutani refugees is giving way to deep social problems



(left) Bhutani refugees sitting on the porch outside their mud hut. (above) Nirma with her daughter Kamala

AARTI BASNYAT
in JHAPA

It almost looks like a movie set—perfectly lined, well-thatched mud and bamboo houses, wide paths everywhere, solar parabola cookers reflecting the winter sunlight and faces peeping out from every nook and cranny.

Beldangi-I appears as normal as any other village on the plains of Nepal, its only distinct feature being an almost obsessive cleanliness. But this is one of seven refugee camps in Nepal that has housed Lhotshampa refugees from Bhutan for the past 15 years. While their numbers have grown and living conditions deteriorated over the years, their plea hasn't changed—"let us go back to our houses, our lands and our dignity".

The seven camps house around 100,000 refugees, who were evicted by the government of Bhutan's King Jigme Singye Wangchuk. Fearing demographic inundation of his Ngalong-dominated state by ethnic Nepalis who had been arriving for decades in search of land, the Druk government created a mass fear psychosis to ensure that the farmer families left Bhutani land.

It alleged that anti-national terrorists were wrecking havoc in the country's south and began to carry out wide-scale evictions, closing southern schools, confiscating citizenship cards and burning and demolishing homes. Says Khadua Bahadur Ringalung (Rai), formerly the Dagadzon District President, "they refused to let our wives and daughters wear *sindur* and *pote* and said they wouldn't even let us burn our dead, in order to chase us out of the country".

Many of those kicked out were also made to sign voluntary migration forms at gunpoint as they left Bhutan. When these migrants entered India, they were steered through the Duars region to Nepal. Sanumaya Karki Chettri, mother of three, remembers her flight. "As we ran from our houses we thought that we would definitely be killed. We had nothing and we thought that life

was over but then we came here and soon we found the camps." The hopelessness of the newly-arrived refugees has turned into despair within the Bhutani camps recently as news from the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), which partly funds and administers the camps, circulates among residents—schools are to be cut back to class five and briquettes will replace kerosene for fuel.

These are only the latest in a litany of developments that have made life harder for the refugees, most of who were once innocent farmers content with their simple lives. Such day-to-day struggles and the failure of the Nepali and Bhutani governments to agree on a solution have turned many of them 'political'. They are now aware of the rights and freedoms they hold within the little space they now occupy and those that they could claim if they had a country they could call their own.

Growing awareness has also lead to politicisation along party lines, which some say has distracted refugee leaders away from pressing problems such as human rights and an early return. The rise of political parties has in fact impeded the way to a solution as instead of working together the parties compete against each other, they add.

As frustrations rise and morale dips, there are disturbing signs such as increasing indiscipline, rise in alcohol abuse and domestic violence. The walls of a nursery school are lined with posters decrying domestic violence and rape. Asked if the condition was so bad that children had to be made aware from such a young age, a passing local smiles and explains, "that is not for the children, it is to create awareness among the parents who come to drop their children off".

Increasingly, husbands here are taking second wives, abandoning the first. This happened to both Nirma and her mother Krishna Maya. "It has been five years since he left me and my newborn child Kamala. I hear he is now living in another camp with a younger woman but we haven't heard from him since," says Nirma echoing her mother, Krishna Maya's story. Krishna Maya's husband left her the year they arrived from Bhutan because she did not have a son.

Officially the refugees cannot work outside the camps but every morning at around seven, a stream of cycles leaves the camps. One aid worker revealed that the Nepali government is 'relatively lenient' about employment so the refugees work but for shamefully low wages due to their illegal status and oversupply.

The frustration is more apparent among the well-educated youth as their ambitions rise beyond the camps. Says Karan Gurung, a class 12 English student of Sanischare Camp in Moran, "I already teach grades one and two in the camp here. Later I want to teach at a private boarding school. I know finding a job will be difficult—there are many who complete their degrees and move out only to be forced to come back because they can't find jobs. Those are probably the most frustrated people here".

Although the camps lack barbed wires, fences or gates to block their passage to the outside world, an invisible wall surrounds the refugees. The outside world is a sinister place for a person without citizenship and no papers to prove who they are. As Hari Maya, 60, says, "I am an old woman now, I want to go back to my own country, back to my farm and die there. That is my only wish—to be able to die in my own backyard". ●



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Country in Vernacular



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Resilience despite the stress

In the depths of despair, as a self-appointed royal chairman of the cabinet tries to drag down society and the economy with the able assistance of the royal military, Nepalis need to remind themselves that the national prospects are bright. In fact, brighter than for most of the rest of Southasia.

SOUTHASIA BEAT
Kanak Mani Dixit

True, Nepal has to unload a lot of historical discriminatory garbage as well as the negative legacy of Chairman Gyanendra in the form of illegal and unconstitutional ordinances, decrees and orders. True, yesterday (Thursday) morning, almost the entire crop of national politicians was once again railroaded into detention. True, the massive destruction of

the national spirit at the hands of the Maobadi rebellion requires a colossal recovery effort. But when royalty is shown the door and the Maoists forced to give up their brutal campaign, the country will have achieved a catharsis and the future will be ours to build. The twin rebel-royal challenge has allowed the nation to mature in a telescoped period of time and the people will be better for it as long as we land on all four feet. Once we land thus, the underpinnings for a successful nation-state are all there. The lack of formal colonisation delivered, in the modern era, a Kathmandu economic power elite so lacking in sophistication that it did not have the perspective to understand the atavistic nature of the royal takeover and react instinctively against the chairman's coup d'état. But no matter, the

advantages of non-colonisation are legion even if oft repeated. Most importantly, the fact that the British stayed away has allowed Nepal a continuous history that provides a spine of identity that other nation states of Southasia began to build only after 1947. While many of the myriad tongues of Nepal are sadly in decline, the fact is that Nepali as the link language provides a platform for political and economic cohesion. Nepal differs from nearly every Southasian country in this sense—there is not the distinction between the English-speaking 'creamy layer' and the vernacular masses you find everywhere else—in Delhi, Colombo, Karachi and even Dhaka. Just to take two examples, the vibrant journalistic sphere and the loud and raucous political arena in Nepal functions entirely in the Nepali language, without English elite interference. There is not the demographic and class divide between the English and Vernacular, which spells more efficient politics, all else remaining constant. It is because all else has not been constant that political stability and economic advance has been denied the Nepali people even though their nation-state is capable. There are enough examples to show that Nepal can make democracy work for the people if there is indeed that stability and the presence of an alert civil society to watchdog and back up the politicians. Nepal's successful experiments in local government, community/public radio and community forestry, just to take some recent examples, prove that this country of 'manageable' size and population

can make things work quicker than countries in the neighbourhood. Nepal is one of the few countries in the world today where there exists today a vibrant movement for a return to democracy and where the contours of that democracy is already visible in dawn's early light - not many can say that for Pakistan, for example. When the chairman cracked down, the civil society—in particular the lawyers, the human rights defenders and the journalists—did not succumb. Instead, over the past year, they ratcheted up their opposition and rejected outright the continuous flow of royal ordinances and orders. This movement for democracy has remained on track despite the fact of the spoilsport Maoists (whose leadership sees the writing on the wall but is yet to pick up the courage to tell the romantically radicalised cadre that the game is up) and the countrywide crackdown with the help of the Royal Nepali Army. As this is being written, the royal regime is hell bent on preventing a rally planned for today by the political parties. But this additional act of authoritarianism will only trigger the end of this authoritarian interlude. Nepal will revert to a parliamentary democracy, only a more mature and committed one than the one introduced in 1990. The national economy is like a coiled spring waiting to take advantage of open society and it will expand at such a pace that it will be all the managers can do to control it. Likewise, the social sphere will respond with alacrity to the demands of inclusive democracy now heard loud and clear, and understood, across the land. All in all, the actions of Chairman Gyanendra are hastening the day of deliverance. Which is why, in the darkest hour, the spirit is up. ●

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Dirty dam draws dirty smelters

KUALA LUMPUR—Trans-national aluminium smelters, some teaming up with Malaysian partners, are beating a path to eastern Sarawak State with an eye to surplus power generated by the problem-ridden Bakun Dam. The much-delayed dam on Borneo Island was originally scheduled for completion in 2003 but is now only expected to start generating electricity from late 2009. Faced with soaring electricity tariffs and raw material costs, many aluminium plants have closed shop in the US and Europe. Major smelters are now scouring the globe for places where electricity is cheap and their sights have narrowed on Bakun's excess potential, even as environmentalists worry about the project's impact. The 2,400-megawatt Bakun project was approved by former premier Mahathir Mohamad in 1994, amidst an outcry that it would submerge rainforests covering an area the size of Singapore and displace thousands of indigenous people. Planners ambitiously aimed to channel 70 percent of the dam's generated power across the South China Sea to Peninsular Malaysia by laying over 600km of submarine cables.

US missiles fuel opposition

KARACHI—Missile strikes carried out by the United States on Damadola village near the Afghan border, killing 18 people, can fuel religious fanaticism in this country and seriously complicate US President George W Bush's 'war on terror', say moderate political leaders and security analysts. "Political realities in Pakistan need to be better understood by the Americans. They could do with more consideration for the sentiments of a smaller power that America claims as its ally," said BM Kutty, organising secretary of the Pakistan Workers Party. Many in this officially Islamic country of 150 million people are opposed to Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's policy of supporting Washington's war directed against the al-Qaeda terrorist network—the leadership of which is believed to be holed up in the remote tribal areas of the Pakistan-Afghan border. Indeed, the target of last week's attacks was Ayman al-Zawahiri, second-in-command to al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden who, according to intelligence agencies, was expected to be present at the scene of the attack for a dinner to celebrate Eid festivities. "Benefit from the incident is being reaped by Islamist parties that are taking credit for the protest campaign (against the air strikes)," said Kutty. (IPS)



Golf with goals

You won't get grumpy when you know what you want

Very often when I am at a golf club I overhear golfers grumbling about their rounds. Their errant drives or three-putts overshadow all other conversation. The truth is that even the world's greatest golfers play very few rounds to their expectations. Tiger Woods says, "I probably hit a maximum of two good shot in a round".

I believe that every golfer should enjoy his round regardless of the score. The best way to do that is to be focused on what you want to achieve. Before you go out onto the course, figure out what you expect from a round. Do you just want to post a good score or crunch a drive 300 yards? Does finding every fairway off the tee make you happy or would you rather play for that perfect swing?

Be realistic—if you're going for a good score than at some holes you may just have to lay up and not go for the green. I remember the

legendary Ben Hogan's famous quote about playing the 11th hole at Augusta (which is flanked on the left side by water). So rigid was his plan of making a chip and putt from the right side of the green that he said, "If you find me on the green, it only means that I have missed my shot."

Determine what gives you more pleasure because, believe me, if golf makes you happy at the end of the day, you are bound to improve. If belting the ball is your game, just go ahead and enjoy yourself. If you want to cut corners with your driver, be prepared to risk the shot going out of bounds.



Length has its risks and rewards and while a reward will make you smile, the risk should not sadden you. You have to learn the importance of accepting a result. If scoring is important, you must put strategies and routines into play. When club selection becomes important, you have to play to your strength and at various times sacrifice distance in favour of accuracy.

I would suggest that you experiment. Go to the course one day and give it your best. Use the most dangerous routes for reaching the green. Don't worry about the score. Keep recalling the few shots that actually turned out as per your plans. On another day, go with the intention of reducing your strokes. Play conservatively. Then analyse both your days to see what gave you more happiness. Once you know that, you will find ways of improving your game.

Remember, the most important thing on the golf course is to enjoy the course's lush green fairways and ambience. ●

Deepak Acharya is a golf instructor and Golf Director at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, Kathmandu.
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'The government should make sports a priority'



ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY

Hatchets have long been buried. The former captain of the national football team, **Ganesh Thapa**, is back in his rightful position as the president of the **All Nepal Football Association (ANFA)**. *Nepali Times* spoke to Thapa about ANFA's current activities and how he plans to take Nepal's most popular sport further.

Nepali Times: What are the future plans of ANFA?

With the help of the Goal Project and our own resources we have established three technical centres where coaches are given training. Our priority at the moment is building our own football stadium. Since most of the tournaments are held in Kathmandu, we are looking for land here. Within two weeks we will know and in two years time the stadium will be ready.

How is the relationship between ANFA and the government's National Sports Council (NSC)?

The relationship is fine but as far as ANFA is concerned, we are an independent body. From this year on we will receive no help (financially) from NSC. Even if we demand, His Majesty's Government perhaps does not have the budget and more importantly sports is not a priority for it. We are collecting our own resources through our own means and are no longer dependent on NSC.

What is most essential for the development of the game?

First we need the help of the government—sports should be given priority. And then of course we need money. We are raising our own resources and are doing the best we can but this is not enough to take the game further.

How is ANFA mobilising the resources it has?

Good things hardly appear in the media. ANFA has been recognised as among the three best football associations in the whole of Asia, along with the likes of Japan and Qatar. I am not saying this because I am the president of the association but as a player. Our grassroots-level programs are being implemented

in 38 districts. To choose the best of the best from all over the nation we are holding school level tournaments throughout the country. Then there are the under-14, under-17 and national level tournaments so we can prepare the best of the best for the future. We have our own Academy (ANFA complex Satdobato) where we are providing everything, including education to 80 kids all year round. Our main goal is to start selecting and training the best young talents so that we can produce the best footballers. You will see the results in the years to come.

What are the weaknesses of Nepali footballers?

Lack of international exposure, which leads to lack of confidence. Second, physically we are not strong. At the Academy (in the ANFA complex in Satdobato) I can only afford to give the minimum diet as per Nepali standards. If we had money I would give them a better diet, have better coaches and send them abroad for training and tournaments. Only if there are proper incentives will players perform better. That is why we have put cash prizes up to 27 lakhs for the league games so that it encourages the youth to play football.

Why do you think the government is not giving enough support?

Its not just football—the government does not have a policy towards any sports. You will see media persons, actors and academicians get felicitated but what about sports personalities? For example, Nepal beat India in the recent SAF games. The captain was Raju Shakya. He was a temporary staff at the RNAC and a week after he came back he was among three people to be thrown out. How will players be able to perform under such conditions? Unless there is a change in thought and mentality there is no use sending proposals to the government.

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The *Adventures of HeroJig* can be seen here in the Times every Friday or also read online at www.extreme-nepal.com



HEROJI TIMES NEWS FLASH: NASA SCIENTISTS BAFFLED

The US Space Agency NASA remain stunned after the STAR DUST mission veered off course Sunday and crashed near Dharan Nepal. A spokesperson for the Agency revealed that was not the only surprise: the capsule containing space dust from a nearby comet was found to contain something even more surprising...



...A NEPALI MONKEY, formerly of Swayambunath, was found inside. US Officials have no explanation, but an RNA Research team has taken the new Nepali Heroji into protective custody and issued a statement: "This is a great day for Nepal, and a great advance in Nepal's Space Program, regardless of how the little chimp got in there"

Stay tuned for more Nepali Space News on this very channel...

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

#106 2062 by jigme gaton - read. love. write.

KE GARNE? WHATEVER.

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"Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there."
Will Rogers,
American Humorist,
1879-1935

Next change: Sanjeeb the Space Monkey Holds a Press Conference in his hometown of Kathmandu.

ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Combination 3** an exhibition of paintings and sculptures. Nepal Art Council 28 January 2PM
- ❖ **Fragments of a Journey** Oil paintings by Aditi Sadhu Chakraborty 18-31 January, Park Gallery Lazimpat. 4419353
- ❖ **Metamorphosis** an exhibition of contemporary paintings and sculpture. 31 January. 11AM-6PM, Siddhartha Art Gallery



EVENTS

- ❖ **The Syrian Bride** A film by Eran Riklis. 22 January, 5.30 PM
- ❖ **Wild Art Gallery** opens 19 January. Thamel
- ❖ **Sutra Art Workshop** 15-30 January, International Mountain Museum, Pokhara. 4242106
- ❖ **Youth Discussion** on the contribution of NYEF for the Development of Young Entrepreneurs. 20 January 3.00-5.00 PM, Martin Chautari
- ❖ **Best of 8 Crafts** art competition at Wild Art Gallery. 1-8 each month. 4218410
- ❖ **Basketball training camp** for school and college level students. 5-25 January. GAA Hall. 4491234

MUSIC

- ❖ **The Cloud Walkers** at Rox Bar. Request the music of your choice. Hyatt Regency Kathmandu: 4491234
- ❖ **Heartbreakers** live every Friday at Rum Doodle Bar & Restaurant
- ❖ **Cadenza Collective** live every Wednesday and Saturday. 8PM, Upstairs Lajimpat
- ❖ **JCS Quintet** at Niek's Place
- ❖ **Jatra Friday** nights, live music by Siron. 4256622
- ❖ **Unplugged** sessions with Strings, Jatra Saturday nights. 4256622
- ❖ **Live Music** at Juneli Bar, Hotel de l'Annapurna. 4221711
- ❖ **Live Jazz** by the pond at 1905, Kantipath. 4225272
- ❖ **Cadenza & Friends!** The sounds of Nep- Jazz . Featuring some of the best Jazz and Classical musicians in the country. 5.30 PM 21 January. Raddison Hotel. Tickets.Rs 800 For more details call 4441067
- ❖ **Uncork the Good Times Fusion:** Ciney and Par-e-jat playing Popular Sounds of 70's Friday 7PM. Rs. 750. Dwarika's Hotel. 4479448

DINING

- ❖ **Buffet Breakfast** at Hyatt Regency assorted salads and deserts. 4491234
- ❖ **Maki Newa Bhutu** for traditional Newari cuisine at Hotel Royal Singi. 4439784
- ❖ **Mexican and Italian** food at Fuzone Café, Lagankhel. 5542935
- ❖ **Great Dining** options at Al Fresco, Bukhara, China Garden and Garden Terrace restaurants, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **Barbeque** at Le Meridien, Kathmandu, every Saturday. 4451212.
- ❖ **Plat du Jour** at the Shambala Garden, Shangri-La. 4412999
- ❖ **Wonderful Wednesdays** at Fusion, Dwarika's, happy hour 5-9PM.
- ❖ **The Sidewalk BBQ** with Shades of Blue, Wednesdays, Shangri-La. 4412999
- ❖ **Breakfast** at 1905 New York style bagels whole wheat pancakes and real croissants baked in house daily. Omelettes made to your gourmet style. 1905, Kantipath
- ❖ **BBQ Dinner** at Summit Hotel every Friday. 6.30-9.30 PM. 5521810

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Home away from home** Shivapuri Heights Cottage for bookings 9841371927. sohan@escape2nepal.com
- ❖ **Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge**, award winning relaxation in Pokhara. Reservations 01 4361500
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- ❖ **Escape Kathmandu** at Shivapuri Heights Cottage. 9851012245
- ❖ **Conferences** at Godavari Village Resort. 5560675

Quest Entertainment

Zinda is about life and how a happy one can easily change. Bala (Sanjay Dutt) and Nisha (Celina Jaitley) live a happy life in Bangkok until one day something strange happens to Bala. He awakens to find himself locked in a room not knowing how he got there with only a television set to keep him company. Not knowing where his future lies Bala spends a long 14 years alone in the room. There he learns what it is to be 'alive' but his happiness drains away as he becomes insane.

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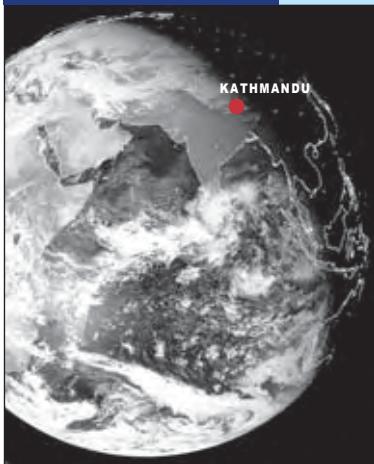
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श्री ५ को सरकार
सूचना तथा सञ्चार मन्त्रालय
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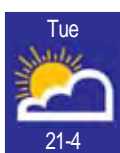
NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



Temperature fluctuations and variations in humidity levels will be seen due to drought in the country. Jet streams above the Arabian Sea have delivered packets of fog over the tarai resulting in reduced visibility and cancellation of all flights to Tarai regions and Pokhara for several days. From Thursday, sunny days are expected to return in the mountains and valleys though parts of the tarai should still be under fog. Satellite pictures taken on Thursday morning indicate sunny days ahead through the weekend . However, a fresh westerly front is on the way and might bring some high and dry clouds early next week.

KATHMANDU VALLEY



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KIRAN PANDAY

IS IT A BOMB? Army personnel taking a video of an unexploded socket bomb on Sunday morning after the attack on the Thankot police checkpost on Saturday evening.



KIRAN PANDEY

STILL FREE: Madhab Nepal waves at the media after attending a program organised by the South Asian Free Media Association on Thursday.



KIRAN PANDAY

LIKE MOTHER LIKE SISTER: Head of Missionaries of Charity Sister Nirmala shares a laugh after her arrival in Kathmandu on Sunday



KIRAN PANDEY

ETHNICALLY ELEGANT: Tharu women in a program organised by the Nepal Tourism Board to mark Maghe Sankranti, the most important festival of the Tharu community



MIN BAJRACHARYA

DOOMSDAY DRAMA: Artists from the Kaalbhairav Event Management group performing a play (peace on war and violence) on the consequences of conflict at Hanumandhoka on Tuesday.

Jailed kids get a release

“If you want to do something you can do it but you have to dare to do it,” says Pushpa Basnet, 22, who overcame failure to become founder and president of the Early Childhood Development Centre in Bhatbhateni. Established six months ago, the centre cares for children under the age of six whose parents are in jail, most of them in the women’s prison in Sundhara.

Basnet was inspired to start the project during a jail visit during her second year of a bachelor’s course at Xaviers College though she has been interested in social work since she worked as an after-school volunteer in Bal Mandir. “I never thought that prisons would have

such young children. We thought we could take them out but you know how it is—friends talk but it’s hard to get things started.”

But they overcame that lethargy and finally got things rolling. With the support of a core group of seven—Rupak Rana, Kammu Pokherel, Purnima Basnet, Juni Shrestha, Mina KC and Aruna Karmacharya— the centre was readied for business. “I am really proud of my team. It’s been all friends and it has been about teamwork,” says Basnet.

She is also proud of her own achievements. Having failed in third grade, Basnet didn’t pass the SLC on her first attempt and was also held back in her second year of college for missing

classes. Making the centre work became her way of proving that determination can overcome past failures. “I could have stayed back and cried but I choose not to. Today I look back and I know I have achieved so much.”

Most of the centre’s children are aged two to six years. They are picked up from the jail at 9AM and dropped back at 4PM, a daylong release from the four walls of the prison where their mothers are confined. Sano Kanchi’s mother is in jail for killing her husband. At the end of a day spent at the centre the girl, barely a year old, refuses to return to the prison until Basnet promises to go get her the next day.

The group has been trying to keep the centre going by raising money from family and friends. They also sell products made in the jails by the children’s mothers and use a portion of the profits to buy the centre’s food and other necessities.

The centre currently cares for eight children and Basnet has approached other jails to inform them of their services. The good the centre has done for the children is apparent in their happy faces and healthy bodies. Says Basnet, “it brings me immense satisfaction to see the improvement in the children. I will never give up. Even now, every chance I get I run back to work.” ●

KIRAN PANDEY



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10 ways you can stop global warming

Only after the scientific community announced last week that forests don't just give off oxygen but also methane did it become clear that we have been barking up the wrong tree all along to counter global warming in this country.

His Majesty's Government seems to have known about this as far back as early last year, which explains why all the trees along Kathmandu's streets were chopped down following the royal movement and why the stumps have still not been replaced by new saplings.

What this discovery about trees as methane generators also means is that all our past efforts to expand this country's



UNDER MY HAT
Kunda Dixit




forest cover and contribute to a greener earth has come to naught. In fact, by increasing the tree cover in Nepal over the past 20 years it seems we may have actually made the earth warmer. Oops, now what do we do? Well, there is really no other option but to start destroying our forests all over again and not let them ever grow back. And we have no time to lose, so let's get cracking.

As responsible global citizens there are lots of other things we can do individually and collectively to stop the earth from heating up. So, in the public interest, we hereby list 10 ways we can all help lessen the impact of climate change:

1. Immediately set a time limit on speeches by the Second Vice- chairman to less than five minutes so that there is a check on the emission of hot air.
2. Stop breathing. Every breath you take consumes precious atmospheric oxygen and gives off harmful carbon dioxide. Remember every molecule counts!
3. Organise tantric rituals and make animal sacrifices at select shrines across the subcontinent to appease the gods.
4. Cut flatulence in cattle and livestock. There are an estimated 22 million cows and 17 million goats in Nepal and if all of them felt free to pass wind without let or hindrance imagine the kind of accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere we'd be left with. We're not even counting yaks and water buffaloes here and we all know how embarrassing those two can be in polite company.
5. Organise *maha yagya* in Tundikhel for harmony in the universe and burn 15 tons of rice seeds and feed 108 brahmins.
6. Immediately scrap the community forestry program.
7. Create artificial shortage of LPG but I notice the government has already thought of that this winter.
8. Soda contains carbon dioxide, a major greenhouse gas, so avoid it. Henceforth, take your double whiskey neat.
9. Burping releases greenhouse gases so burp in moderation.
10. Ask Pashupatinath one last time to protect us all.



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