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Weekly Internet Poll # 285

**Q. How do you rate King Gyanendra's address to the nation on Wednesday?**

Total votes: 7,320

|               |       |
|---------------|-------|
| Encouraging   | 36.4% |
| So-so         | 6.5%  |
| Disappointing | 54.2% |
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**Q. The past 10 years of conflict has:**

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# Which way?

After 10 years of death and destruction, there is only one road to take

**KUNDA DIXIT**

It was 1996 and the euphoria of democracy was beginning to evaporate. After two general elections, patronage dominated politics and infighting were paralysing governance. Incumbents used the police to sideline opponents in polls. Corruption and politicisation tainted nearly all institutions.

A newly-independent media reported the scandals in all their gory details and indirectly helped spread cynicism about politicians and tarred democracy itself.

To be sure, at the grassroots political freedom made elected officials accountable. For the first time, rural Nepalis felt in control and demanded basic services.

But the Maoist wing of the CPN got tired of waiting for democracy to iron out its kinks and took the shortcut of armed struggle. Rural Nepal was ripe for revolution because of the neglect and indifference of Kathmandu which democracy had failed to address.

By 1998 even the Maoists were surprised by how rapidly their revolution had spread. It wasn't just because of their tactics but because the state was so fractious and weak. They were following Mao by the book, surrounding the cities from the villages.

"They tried to terrorise the state by destroying the rural infrastructure but it only hurt the innocent rural poor," recalls the economist Pitambar Sharma, "the rulers had never cared for the villages so they weren't bothered." Politicians in Kathmandu engrossed in their petty bickering ignored the problem



BILASH RAI

until it was too late.

Ten years of war set back development and wrecked the economy. Tourist arrivals in 2005 were less than half the 500,000 who visited Nepal in 1998, investment dwindled, industries closed down and in the past 10 years one million Nepalis have left to work in the Gulf and Malaysia. The economy which was growing at six percent in 1996 is down to 1.5 percent.

But the conflict has forced Nepalis to examine the structural problems of exclusion and unaccountability in their society. Says former minister Harka Gurung: "The past 10 years have at least brought the socio-political roots of the crisis to the surface. I take that as a positive

development."

Theoretically, then, finding a negotiated solution to the conflict should also allow Nepalis to address its root causes. And the mechanism for that could be voting an electoral college to draft a new constitution, which is a key Maoist demand.

Says Gurung: "A constituent assembly is the only antidote to the problems raked up by the past ten years of conflict and to do so King Gyanendra must hand power back to the people just like his brother did in 1990."

The slew of high-profile media interviews in the past week may mean the Maoists want a political exit but need something to show for the past 10 years. In the past they have preceded every

peace overture with a major strike to improve their bargaining position and that seems to be their present strategy.

"The Maoists know they have reached a deadend with violence, so they have two options: talks or irrelevance," concludes former Maoist commander Puskar Gautam.

"We should be satisfied if the last 10 years bring at least some changes in the way Nepal is ruled." ●

For detailed analysis by people quoted in this article see *Himal Khabarparika*, 13-27 February.

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# Hapless, hopeless, helpless

## The parties must turn the apathy of Nepalis into outrage

### THE LONG WAR

Coming up to the tenth anniversary of our own long war, it clear that the Maoists who started it now know it is make-or-break time.

How else does one explain the flurry of face-to-face interviews with the comrade leaders in the Indian and Nepali media? Suddenly after being elusive for ten years and seeing him only in a rough drawing we have Prachanda's stubbled visage staring at us from the newspapers. We can now put a face to the revolutionary path that bears his name. Together with Baburam Bhattarai, he has tailored his message for specific target audiences: for Indian policy-makers through *The Hindu*, the Nepali urban middle class through *Kantipur* and perhaps to Kathmandu-based reps of the international community through this paper (see p 10-11).

Shorn of customary revolutionary jargon, the message has been unusually conciliatory: we are reasonable people, we are tired of the bloodshed too, we don't want any position in a future government, the parties should take the initiative and we'll support them, we are willing to even accept an autocratic monarchy if that's what the people want.

As a public relations offensive, it has worked brilliantly. Few who have read the interviews have failed to be impressed, which can only mean that it makes the king and his army look uncompromising and rigid. Just as the four-month unilateral ceasefire made the RNA look like warmongers even though the Maoists continued with their extortion and war preparation, this time too their superior psywar tactics have made many forget that they have been shooting mayoral candidates in contravention of their assurances to the UN.

It is not difficult to see where the Maoists are headed next. They are preparing for a tenth anniversary big bang and keeping up the pressure on the capital till their D-Day on 6 April. All this can only mean one thing: more bloodshed, more district capitals reduced to ashes like Tansen and Dhankuta and mounting desperation and misery for the Nepali people in the next two months.

The solution lies in the hands of one man: King Gyanendra. By vesting on himself all power the monarch can resolve this deadly stalemate if he wants. What could be better than to seize the opportunity of Democracy Day on 19 February to defuse the crisis by beginning the process of restoring power to the people and together negotiate the safe landing that the Maoists now seem to want.

Time is running out and this long war has gone on for long enough.

**IN FLAMMATORY:** The hisotric Tansen Darbar burns on the morning of 1 February after a Maoist attack , just as King Gyanendra was delivering his proclamation in whcih he said terrorism had been reduced to 'isolated criminal acts'.



GOVINDA LUITEL

The Roman satirist Juvenal (60-140AD) suggested that the people long eagerly for two things: bread and circuses. Today's potentates seldom bother with bread but they love circuses. The municipal election this week was one such.

#### STATE OF THE STATE

CK Lal



The regime wanted to distract the attention of urban population away from its abject failure of the past three years of interventionist monarchy. Nothing else can explain an electoral farce that was opposed by Maoists, boycotted by political parties, disparaged by international community, sneered at by media, ignored by human rights activists, barely tolerated by the bureaucracy and warily watched by a largely-indifferent population.

That the polls still drew nearly 20 percent of eligible voters (if that indeed is the true turnout) is probably because security personnel outnumbered voters in many booths. The

security forces actually had to seek help from the gods in Bhadrakali on 2 February, a day after the first anniversary of the royal-military coup. COAS Pyar Jung Thapa, APF chief Sahabir Thapa, Nepal Police chief Shyam Bhakta Thapa and the NID head Debi Ram Sharma together placated Bhadrakali with animal sacrifice. The next day the supreme commander-in-chief also graced the closing puja. The goddess seems to have heeded their prayers and decided to let the show go on.

The self-congratulatory tone of Kamal Thapa and Keshab Raj Rajbhandari is quite understandable. As Panchayat veterans they know how royal elections work. All that matters is that the command of the chairman has been obeyed.

The seven-party alliance now needs to review its strategy. It must accept that one in every five voters did turn out despite threats to personal safety. The Nepali bourgeois relatively safe in urban clusters is still indifferent to the concerns of democracy, freedom of the press and human rights. Their biggest concern is still whether there is gasoline for their motorcycles and the availability of fresh vegetables. This apathy is a manifestation of the collective failure of the political parties. Unless they tap this dormant force, they can't revive the middle ground in Nepali politics.

The only ones gloating over the futility of municipal polls were the Maoists leaders. They withdrew their weeklong strike call two days in advance saying it has 'achieved its purpose'. Meanwhile their destruction of

what remains of Nepal's district towns continues apace. The comrades must realise that they can't bluff their way to Singha Darbar by carefully orchestrated interviews and reckless propaganda. In ten years of Maoist insurgency, hope has been conspicuously absent in all their campaigns. Sowing despair won't take them any further.

For the royal regime, the election by itself wasn't important it just needed to go through the motions of conducting it. In fact it did everything under its power to undermine the credibility of the process by arresting political leaders, human rights activists and independent professionals opposed to the polls. Had it been a political success, it would have been a strategic failure.

Mainstream parties underestimated the determination and influence of an institution as entrenched as the Nepali monarchy and are paying for their miscalculation. Every time a Jitendra Shrestha is murdered by Maoists or a Umesh Thapa is shot by security forces, a hapless, helpless and hopeless Nepali weeps in silence. To turn that apathy into action, to wake up people power through a non-violent movement is the challenge for the political parties.

Parliamentary parties need to accept that the right-of-way in monarchical societies is the preserve of the royalists. To survive in competitive politics, they must stand for those who are left out. The palace may be good at organising circuses. The parties must promise bread, not just democracy. ●

## LETTERS

### HAMMER AND NAIL

Your editorial ('Hammer and nail', #285) hits the nail on the head. The threat to democracy in Nepal was never the monarchy but the Maoists' violent rebellion. Most of the Maoist demands, including those relating to the constitution, are achievable through peaceful means. Nepal's media, civil society and parties have delayed for far too long in stating this point forcefully enough. There is no military solution to the conflict. Cornering the king and putting a magnifying glass on his activities alone will not help. It's time we started working seriously towards removing the nail instead of breaking the hammer!

However, your continued support of the parties' agitations is depressing. They are prolonging the conflict and besides stone-throwing, tyre-burning and destroying property do not constitute 'peaceful' protests. Finally, your contention that 'there would be no need for pro-democracy rallies' but for the 'throttling of democracy a year ago' is spurious. Street agitation has been going on in Kathmandu since 2002 when parliament was dissolved by Prime Minister Deuba. So whether it's the king or someone else in power does not matter, disturbances and demonstrations will go on. The only way to stop them is by a legitimate government through the ballot.

**Abhishek Basnyat, email**

● While it presents an interesting analogy I disagree with 'Hammer and nail'. The editorial makes the generalisation that 'those who believe in violence as the only way to rise to power have a deeper distrust of those who don't than they do for each other'. This is misleading. Rather than taking action on

account of fear, Chairman Gyanendra is making an example of the protesters. His oppressive regime can only be sustained by appropriately despotic ways—through power discourse or violence. Curfews, police brutalisation, arrests: these are all tools of totalitarian dictatorships. Not signals of fear.

**Name withheld, email**

● I echo Jacob George's assessment (Letters, #283) and totally disagree with Pranabh Shrestha's response (Letters #284). When there is a violence it is the state's duty to respond and protect citizens. Unfortunately the political mafia has made life of all Nepalis miserable. Political leaders must first bring democracy into their own parties and then talk about democracy in country.

**P Pratul, email**

● In reference to Bihari Krishna Shrestha's Guest Column ('Crisis within a crisis', #284) I find it difficult to swallow the rhetoric of Sikkimisation perpetuated not only by the Maoists but by the very administration who before the arms embargo shared endless history of close ties. In the bag of tricks that the monarchists carry with them, the threat of The Foreign Hand is definitely one. One could literally hand over the plate called Nepal to India just to realise how much of a burden that would actually be to the southern neighbour. Hence for now we can quietly put to sleep the fantasy of getting annexed by India. I agree with Shrestha's view that party structures need immediate reform, so much so that the current struggle to gain back 'people's power' is almost meaningless in its absence. However, I find it useless to further stretch that line of reasoning to infer people's whole-hearted support for the king. Further, it becomes very disingenuous to criticise

the lack of democratic ethos within the agitating parties when we clearly see the assumption of absolute control and forceful implementation of unwanted authoritarian tactics on general population by the self-professed saviour/s of democratic ideals. If the parties are the legitimate representation of the people why are the two warring sides fighting if not for retaining what they have and acquiring what they don't? 'Countervailing forces' are created by implementing appropriate checks and balances within a system which is monitored by the judiciary and legislative branches of the government. In other words, the people and not the king. The lack of legislative body and insignificant judiciary is not only a reflection of countervailing force as a farce but an expression of dictatorial tendencies, not towards the sworn enemies but towards citizens themselves.

**Pradip, email**

● I agree with Bihari K Shrestha's views in 'Crisis within a crisis' because it identifies what is wrong with the Nepali polity: we are still following these corrupt politicians even though they have left us high and dry, time and again. The politicians are perhaps the true reflection of us all: the degradation of our ideals and our moral bankruptcy. Why would a so-called democrats run away from polls? Nepalis replied empathically by going to the polls braving adverse conditions. What bigger of a slap in the face could there be to these politicians? Big powers with questionable intentions and their accomplices perched in powerful media houses are backing these parties.

**Pramila Gurung, Golfutar**

### KARNALI NEGLECT

As Indu Nepal highlights in 'Ten lost years' (#283) Jumla has been more ravaged acutely by the on-

going conflict in the country than any other region of Nepal due to its geographical adversities as well as the neglected state's political priority. However, Karnali should not be a synonym of poverty, backwardness and inaccessibility. As previous coverage in your paper have cited: Karnali is not a food deficit area, just a rice deficit area.

It's also a pity that some NGOs from the Karnali keep bemoaning the neglect by the centre and point their fingers at Kathmandu rather than think of innovative ways for self-help. Why do they always think that somebody else should come to help them? Before pointing the finger to Kathmandu, there is a lot to do in creating awareness at the local level, there is a dire need to change attitude of the Karnali people themselves. They have to come out of their own fatalism. Some Karnali thinktanks have themselves become Kathmandu-centric running their activities by remote control from the capital. Nobody should expect the development of Karnali region overnight, it takes time. And the priority should be to resolve the conflict.

**Rajan Khatri, Hamburg**

### LOST WORLD

Conservation International's Rapid Assessment of the Barun Valley was called off ('Turf war wrecks expedition' #275) because of opposition by the Ministry of Environment. Had the Barun research been published perhaps Nepal would have enjoyed the same international spotlight that Indonesia is getting this week for the amazing discovery of a lost world in Irian Jaya. At least for a brief period there would have been some positive coverage of Nepal instead of our tumultuous politics.

**Priya Joshi, email**

# Ten year timeline

**13 February 1996** Maoists attack a police post in Holeri, Rolpa signalling the launch of their 'people's war'. Earlier, Baburam Bhattarai presented a 40-point demand to Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba who ignored it and went to India on a state visit.

**25 February 1996** Home Minister Khum Bahadur Khadka promotes a hardline approach and says the Maoists can be crushed 'within days'.

**March 1996** Deuba convenes an all-party meeting to look into the Maoist issue but there is lack of seriousness.

**Rest of 1996** Maoists make sporadic raids on police stations in mid-western Nepal and Sindhuli capturing weapons, ransack distilleries and multinational targets.

**February 1997** Government launches a harsh police crackdown in the midwestern hills but many innocents suffer and this feeds the Maoist insurgency with fresh recruits.

**March 1997** There is continued disarray in coalition politics in Kathmandu and disillusionment with the return of Panchayat-era apparatchik Lokendra Bahadur Chand as prime minister in a UML-RPP coalition.

**May 1997** Maoists boycott local elections, eight people are killed in campaign violence. Government forms a task force to find a political solution to the Maoist problem.

**July 1997** Home Minister Bamdeb Gautam tries to pass TADA but backtracks after protests.

**October 1997** The RPP splits and Surya Bahadur Thapa replaces Chand to form a government with the NC and NSP. By now more than 50 VDCs in Rolpa alone under Maoist control.

**March 1998** Public disenchantment with political parties grows as the UML also splits and Girija Koirala takes over and immediately launches Operation Kilo Sierra Two to nip the Maoists before it's too late. By the end of 1998 500 people had been killed, most of them not Maoists.

**October 1998** The Maoists spread out of the midwestern hills for the first time into central Nepal and the eastern hills.

**May 1999** Parliamentary elections are held and the Maoists call for a boycott. Krishna Prasad Bhattarai becomes prime minister and he appoints Sher Bahadur Deuba into a committee to find a solution to the Maoist problem.

**March 2000** Congress infighting intensifies and Koirala ousts Bhattarai. Maoists use the chaos in Kathmandu to continue attacks on police posts and government offices. Police start pulling out of rural areas in the midwest.

**25 September 2000** Dunai attacked 14 policemen killed, first of many subsequent human wave attacks by Maoists on district capitals. Home Minister Govinda Raj Joshi resigns.

**October 2000** Deputy PM Ram Chandra Poudel meets Maoist leader Rabinendra Shrestha in Kathmandu to find a solution.

**February 2001** Maoists use anniversary of war to announce the Prachanda Path doctrine

**April 2001** In a wave of attacks in Rukum and Dailekh Maoists kill 70 policemen in a week and loot weapons. Police chief says he can't fight Maoists by himself the paramilitary Armed Police Force is set up.

**1 June 2001** The royal massacre, three kings in four days. King Gyanendra is enthroned. The Maoists infiltrate street protests in Kathmandu.

**July 2001** Maoists begin attacks against public schools and declare war on alcohol.

**6-13 July 2001** Maoists attack Holeri, army refusal to rescue captured police creates political crisis and Koirala resigns as prime minister to be replaced by Deuba. Maoists kill 40 policemen in an attack in Lamjung, Nuwakot, Ramechhap, Gulmi Dailekh and agree to a ceasefire.



NARENDRA SHRESTHA

**August 2001** Madhab Kumar Nepal and Bamdeb Gautam meet Prachanda in Silguri in India.

**November 2001** After three rounds of talks Maoists escalate the war by attacking the army for the first time by overrunning the Ghorahi base and attacking Salleri, killing soldiers and looting a large amount of automatic weapons and mortars. King Gyanendra declares Emergency and deploys RNA to fight Maoists.

**February 2002** Maoists storm Mangalsen, out of a garrison of 59 soldiers only two survive.

**Spring 2002** Tourism collapses, investments plummet, industries are hit by Maoist extortion and threats.

**May 2002** Deuba dissolves parliament, announces elections for November.

**4 October 2002** Deuba proposes postponing elections because of security situation, King Gyanendra sacks him, assumes executive authority and sets up government of technocrats.

**January 2003** IGP Krishna Mohan Shrestha and wife murdered in Kathmandu, ceasefire declared three days later.

**May 2003** Chand replaced by Surya Bahadur Thapa

**August 2003** Doramba massacre of 19 rebels and civilians by army leads to collapse of ceasefire, Maoists step up campaign of destroying infrastructure: mainly phones and bridges. Step up attacks and closure of schools, abducting children for indoctrination.

**October 2003** Maoists kill 37 police in raid on police training base in Bhalubang.

**December 2003** International community increasingly concerned about human rights violations, India arrests Matrika Yadav and Suresh Ale Magar and hands them over to Nepal.

**February 2004** King Gyanendra addresses rallies in Nepalganj and Biratnagar.

**April 2004** Political parties launch street agitation against 'regression', it is slow to gather momentum. Surya Bahadur Thapa replaced by Deuba again.

**September 2004** After small explosive goes off at USIS, the Peace corps is withdrawn from Nepal.

**November 2004** Dailekh's mothers can't take it anymore and as against the Maoists.

**December 2004** Raids in Argakhanchi, Dailekh heavy casualties on both sides. Maoists blockade Kathmandu for one week.

**1 February 2005** King Gyanendra sacks Deuba again, dissolves parliament, cuts phones internet and sends army into newsrooms. Hundreds of politicians and civil society activists are jailed. International condemnation.

**April 2005** After debate at the UN in Geneva, an office of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights is set up in Kathmandu. Deuba arrested on corruption charges.

**June 2005** Maoists blow up bus in Madi, killing 37 passengers and injuring 70. Worst-ever terrorist attack in Nepal.

**September 2005** Maoists declare three-month unilateral ceasefire, government fails to respond. King Gyanendra continues his walkabouts in various parts of the country.

**October 2005** Tourism bounces back with ceasefire.

**November 2005** Government crackdown on media and prepares guidelines for NGOs.

**December 2005** Maoists extend ceasefire by a month

**3 January 2006** Back to war.



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# Bungling on bundling

Under donor pressure, the government is readying a royal ordinance to unbundle the electricity utility into three pieces

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

Nepal's power sector has come full circle. Bundled up into a single agency to handle generation, transmission and distribution in the 1980s at donors' behest, it is now being 'unbundled', again because of donor pressure. Will the reorganisation work this time? Draft copies of the Electricity Ordinance and the Nepal Electricity Regulation Commission Ordinance are now being reviewed at the Law Ministry. Once they are introduced the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) will be broken up into different entities for power generation, transmission and distribution.

"The act is being introduced basically to lure in the private sector," explains Minister of State for Water Resources Binod Kumar Shah.

On the generation side things will change little because already nearly one dozen independent power producers (IPPs) contribute almost one fourth of the total 600MW of electricity currently generated. Transmission too will be managed by only one grid operator.

The biggest change will be in distribution sector, which will see five public companies for the five development regions. These firms will be responsible for buying power from the national



grid and distributing it to consumers. The new Electricity Ordinance will permit the private sector to invest in distribution as it now invests in generation.

"But they will have to build the required infrastructure if they want to come in," says a senior official at the Water Resources Ministry. "They will not be allowed if they simply plan to take advantage of the distribution infrastructure the NEA has already made."

Will such 'unbundling' help clean up the mess that has resulted in the 17-hour-a-week load shedding the country is suffering today? Experts are divided.

Before the NEA came into being, there was the Electricity Department under the Ministry of

Water Resources, the Nepal Electricity Corporation and the Small Hydro Development Board. The World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB), which in the 1970s and 1980s pushed for amalgamating them into the NEA now want the utility cut up again. When the ADB was finalising the fourth power project in the 1980s, it conditioned its approval on the creation of the NEA, which it now labels a liability and hindrance to the growth of the power sector. The bank's report on the fourth power project read: the Nepali government was required to decide on the reorganization of the electricity supply sector and the creation of a new institutional structure acceptable to the bank.

The World Bank too had

supported ADB's idea then. Its report on Marshyangdi hydropower project said: International Development Association integrated the same condition in the agreements concerning the project. So why unbundle what was already bundled? Advocates say mainly because NEA has grown into an unwieldy and inefficient juggernaut. When the NEA was born in 1985 it had about 3,500 staff, by the early 1990s it counted 10,000 employees. But although the hydropower policy of 1993 set a target of installing 700MW of power by the end of 2000 not even 400MW was in place by then.

NEA is plagued by political interference and mismanagement and has never managed to cut its electricity leakage which is at a shocking 40 percent. High-ranking NEA staff have often been found to be involved in electricity theft and the underpayment of bills by some industrialists.

The NEA and the political bosses who controlled it became so corrupt they paid overruns of \$50 million to the contractor of the Kali Gandaki A project without even getting approval from its board (see # 155 ) It also signed agreements with private companies that resulted in Nepalis paying the highest electricity tariffs in the world.

Other agencies such as the Department of Electricity Development, however didn't

assert themselves. For instance, of the 70 million electricity units Nepal gets from India's Tanakpur power plant, not even half have been used despite the huge domestic power shortfall.

"Bundling of the power sector agencies was a wrong suggestion in the first place," concludes former NEA boss Santa Bahadur Pun, "it resulted in the NEA wasting most of its time chasing unsuccessful projects like Arun III while feasible projects like the 225 MW Sapta Gandaki adjoining the highway were ignored."

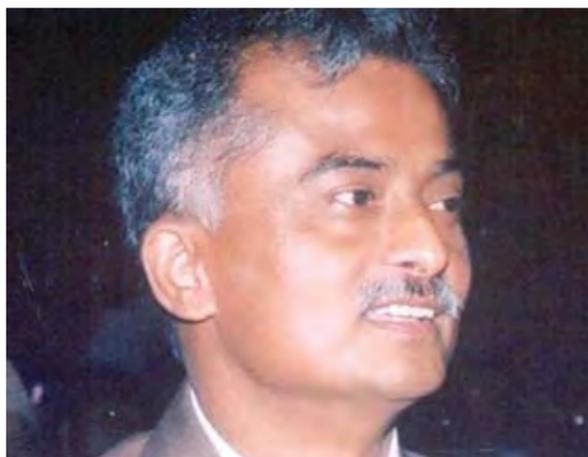
Water resources expert Binayak Bhadra concurs: "Basically it was the planning that failed and also the fact that NEA had both the monopoly and monopsony that kept it from progressing or correcting problems like power loss."

So, will dismantling the NEA be the answer? "Since the unbundling will shorten the chain of command and generation, transmission and distribution will have to prepare their own profit and loss account, their performance level will certainly rise," says the senior official at the Water Resources Ministry.

Donors have been peddling unbundling. The ADB tied a \$100 million loan for rural electrification project to cutting NEA up into three components. We asked the ADB why it first pushed for the bundling and now is for unbundling again. The bank's office in Katmandu forwarded our questions to its headquarters in Manila but there was no response.

Nepali experts say the change could benefit the power sector provided past mistakes are not repeated and demand side interventions including differential pricing are also implemented to address the present power shortfall. ●

## "Unbundling may not solve load-shedding"



**Ratna Sansar Shrestha, a former board member of Nepal Electricity Authority, speaks to us about the effects of the new electricity ordinance that will break the NEA into three components.**

**Nepali Times:** What do you think about the electricity ordinance?

**Ratna Sansar Shrestha:** Actually, I'm not fundamentally opposed to unbundling. I believe competition in the electricity sector will definitely help consumers as well as other stakeholders and make the market itself competitive. I am more apprehensive about implementation. So, instead of one big sick organisation that is losing Rs 2 billion per year we may just end up with three small sick organisations.

**Why is the idea being mooted, especially by the means of ordinances, at this time?**

That is a mystery to me. I don't see why the hurry at a time of instability which means there isn't a wider discussion on the pros and cons. Besides, splitting the NEA has long term implications, while an ordinance is an instrument valid for six months only.

**Why wasn't it put forward when your team was in the NEA?**

The new Hydropower Development Policy 2001, did envisage unbundling the NEA but parliament survived only six months after that. By the time I was nominated to the NEA board parliament had been dissolved. But I can confide in you that we did start work on unbundling the NEA which to an extent has paved the way for the present move.

**In the early 1980s donors including the ADB helped set up the NEA now they want it dismantled. Changing horses in midstream seems to be as much a donor habit.**

Yes, poorer economies like ours have been subjected to the covenants imposed by these multilaterals and many of their conditionalities are problematic. If one looks at this particular concept dispassionately it is clear NEA has too small a system (just about 465MW of its own and about 149MW belonging to IPPs, already unbundled) to warrant splitting. The action could very well end up costing more to consumers as the unbundling only increases the number of institutions ending up as an opportunity for powers-to-be to hire more CEOs and leading to unnecessarily high expenses. Besides, post-unbundled successors of NEA could still continue to be subjected to interference from bureaucrats and politicians.

**So you think it may not be the right solution?**

In Nepal many plans that look sound on the drawing board have floundered when put to practice. There is a danger the economic model will be called total failure and people will again clamour for reintegration of the NEA. This will be very messy. The ordinance has a single-minded focus on splitting the NEA while it is silent on how competition at both wholesale and retail levels will be instituted.

**Do we have the right and adequate infrastructure for the unbundling of, say, distribution and especially if the private sector is allowed in?**

Forget the infrastructure which will have to be thought through and created, even its layout is not visible in the draft ordinance. With due respect to my colleagues in the private sector, they will exploit any loophole available and the whole exercise could boomerang on the economy and consumers. Stronger and stringent regulatory mechanism needs to be placed before allowing the private sector to play a significant role in the electricity market to ensure forward linkages vital for the economy.

**Given the fiasco of the tariff fixation commission how optimistic can we be?**

Even when I was a board member of NEA we requested the commission for introduction of seasonal tariff in view of the fact that NEA was spilling more than 700GWh of electricity at that time (we are still spilling 500GWh). But one or other excuse was trotted out and nothing happened.

**How would the new plan rope in the private sector?**

First of all, the private sector does not just include business houses. Community-based cooperatives, users' groups, NGOs are also private initiatives, with or without profit motive. If you drop by the office of Community Rural Electrification Department (CRED) of NEA you will be amazed by the groundswell of support for NEA's efforts to involve communities in rural electrification. So many communities are coming forward under the 80:20 program that CRED is overextended. The immediate problem in the power sector is load shedding and Ministry of Water Resources officials themselves admit that the unbundling is not the answer to load shedding.

**Will the new ordinance enable us to be in a better position to deal with, say, India in power related issues?**

On the contrary, it may weaken the position as the splinter NEAs negotiate with, lets say, India's Power Trading Corporation. They will be a much weakened institutions But export of energy is a different Pandora's Box entangled with security perceptions of our southern friends.

## Park privatisation

The government is all set to 'privatise' the management of national parks and wildlife reserves via ordinance. One was issued recently to amend the National Park and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1973. Previous laws allowed private bodies to manage conservation areas only. According to the Fifth Amendment to the Act, an interested organisation can submit a proposal to the government explaining the proposed duration of takeover, an action plan of programs to be implemented and the organisation's experience. "On one hand, the fifth amendment to the Act will help national park management to become more transparent, while on the other private organisations may not be able to control poaching and illegal trade of wildlife parts," said Ravi Sharma Aryal, wildlife law expert. Officials say that handing over the management to private organisations will make it more efficient and permit the government to save money by cutting back current staff.

## Not bankrupt

The economy is on the right track and there is no risk the government will go bankrupt, State Minister for Finance Roop Jyoti said Tuesday, responding to a recent report by the Institute for Development Studies (IfDS). The report claimed that the economy might go bankrupt if the current situation prevails for a few more months. Speaking at a press meet Jyoti said that in the first six months of the current fiscal year, revenue collection touched over Rs 31 billion, more than during the same period last year. Also, Nepal has yet to receive excise duty worth over Rs 2 billion from the Indian government, which will help the government maintain a sound financial position, he added.

## A bank that cares

Laxmi Bank employees on 27 January donated belongings and basic necessities to the children of Conflict Victims' Orphans Support Centre (CVO), an NGO at Gangabu. Since its inception in 2002, the bank has launched a series of initiatives under the theme 'Laxmi cares'. Employees have decided to provide long-term financial and other assistance to this centre, which houses children aged three to 10 years.

# "Elec-shun!"

## Political ambitions cost the economy dearly



MIN BAJRACHARYA

**E**lections have been used as tools by many governments around the world to fit their own definitions of democracy. Saudi Arabia has had its first polls of sorts while the definition of elections in Africa is totally different. In Nepal too, elections have happened both out of necessity and as smaller pieces of larger power struggles. Even

### ECONOMIC SENSE

Artha Beed



during multiparty rule, polls were held not out of necessity but after power sharing failed. Generally, these exercises are more about doing what you want rather than really choosing peoples' representatives to manage the country for four years.

Irrespective of the regime and its aims, elections are a big-ticket expenditure for the state exchequer and a drain on the economy. In developing nations like ours where 'real' literacy levels are low, elections seems to revolve more around money than any purpose. Luckily, this week's election did not include many parties doling out money to buy votes but the costs remain the same.

Holding elections entails both tangible and intangible costs. For instance, for these local elections the government had to spend more to make citizens aware of the voting process and their voting rights than in previous years since there were more parties opposing the polls. Getting the ballot boxes to polling stations, printing ballot papers and other costs of running the elections are also significant. Security costs in the current environment have obviously been high—in an effort to conduct free and fair elections the government had no choice but to beef up security.

The display of armoured personnel carriers and other *bandobast* during bandas in the streets of Kathmandu perhaps does give some candidates and voters a sense of security but these vehicles unfortunately run on scare petroleum products that regrettably do not come free. Perhaps the saddest issue is that citizens will never know the actual price-tag of this election, as security expenses, the largest cost, cannot be disclosed in the national interest.

Then there are the intangibles. The government will be shut for a week as people do

election duty, meaning public servants will not be available to the public. Educational institutions, including universities, are shut so students lose out. A day of national productivity goes by the wayside, out of the very few productive days that remain in our annual calendar. Add to that the cost of the Maoist-declared week-long shutdown and the costs are incalculable.

It is unknown how long these elected representatives will remain in office. If they start resigning soon after being elected, the process of by-elections will have to be initiated. Despite Wednesday's elections, many more seats need to be filled, so more money will be spent.

Political decision-making requires economic introspection, especially in an economy that is stagnating. It is the right of the taxpayer to see that the portion of the hard-earned money that has been taken by the state goes to provide the services that the state should supply. Continuous channelling of taxpayers' money for unintended purposes never makes taxpayers happy. ●

www.arthabeed.com

### NEW PRODUCTS

**INCOMING CASH:** Western Union Financial Services Inc has tied up with the Golchha Organisation (Hulas Remittance) to provide inbound money transfer services across the country. "Our alliance with Golchha Organisation is a giant step towards achieving the goal of reaching out to more and more customers. Western Union's unique network model ensures that the Nepali Diaspora is provided with fast, convenient, legal and reliable transfers of money," said Western Union Director Kiran Shetty.



**LALITPUR TO KATHMANDU:** The Jawalakhel Cable network is expanding its services to Kathmandu from April 2006. The network uses fibre-optic cable to broadcast more than 70 channels including news, educational, entertainment, sports and religious programs, cartoons, films and documentaries.

**SCOOT AROUND:** Kinetic has released its new Scooter Kinetic 4S with a four-stroke, 113.5 cc engine that it says increases fuel efficiency to 55-60km per litre. The new model is light and comes with enhanced suspension that gives more ground clearance. Side rubber has been installed to protect against scratches and the new scooter has a glove compartment big enough for documents. The Kinetic 4S comes in red, white, grey and black.



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मूल्य रु.१०

**अजकको अभियान**

अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय बजारमा कच्चा तेलको मूल्य उच्च पृष्ठ ३

गोमाङ्गलको प्रतिद्वन्द्वी परीक्षण पृष्ठ ५

मजदुरले स्वामित्व बेचेर उद्योग चलार पृष्ठ ६

जुट उत्पादन २५ प्रतिशत घटने अनुमान पृष्ठ १०

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मंसार होस् या संसार**

**अर्थ-राजनीतिक साप्ताहिक हरेक सोमबार**

**न्यू बिजनेस एज (प्रा) लि.को प्रस्तुति** फोन नः ४४२९८१६, ४४२९८१३, २०३००८२, फ्याक्सः ९७७-१-४४२९८१३ इमेलः abhiyan@newbusinessage.com  
आजको अभियानका स्थानीय वितरकहरूः काठमाडौं उपत्यकाः आरवी न्यूज, न्यू रोड, ४२४४६७९, ४२३२७८४, पोखराः न्यू रोड, ०५१-४३८९१३, भरतपुरः नारायणगढ चौक, ०६४-४३०६६८, बिराटनगरः महेन्द्र चौक, ०२१-४३२२८७

# Electing violence

Editorial in *Samaya*, 9 February

समया

The government's stubbornness to hold town elections at any cost has been futile. Its ability to find candidates for only 42 percent of the posts in 58 municipalities clearly proves that the elections were largely boycotted. When ordinary civilians were made to stand for election by force or enticement, it proved that law and order had deteriorated. Ordinary citizens will never back a king pushing for his own sovereignty. The government chief should realise that it is not moral to push citizens towards the path of death by making them stand for election. What could be worse than government minister claiming that the Maoist attack on Lalitpur candidate Dhan Bahadur Rai was just an ordinary incident? The Maoists on the other hand have failed to show any sincerity and sympathy towards the citizens' right to life. Several candidates became victims of Maoist violence. It is neither a political culture nor a democratic practice to deprive an individual of his right to life just because they have a different political stance. Should the seven-party alliance, especially the Nepali Congress and UML, fail to criticise the Maoist attacks on unarmed candidates, then we can easily interpret their silence as collusion with the rebels. The Maoists have already violated the 12-point understanding with their violent actions. It is the responsibility of these parties to bring the Maoists towards peace and to promote a culture of tolerance. By being silent on a culture of violence they have failed to uphold democracy.



Accomplishment of one year of rule.

## Tragicomedy

Janadharna, 8 February

जनाधरणा

As per the king's definition, the elections were held peacefully. The voting took place with utmost silence. There was no argument at the polling centres. There was no capture of booths. The voters did not have to think much about who to vote for. Election officials did not face any hassles. Now which other country in the world can hold such a grand, successful and calm election? With this as a model, it won't be difficult at all to hold parliamentary elections. The government has demonstrated its democratic leanings by expressing gratitude towards all the men, women, the handful of parties and criminal groups for obeying the king's orders to participate in the polls. All conflict-ridden

countries should think of hiring great election organisers like Kamal Thapa. Add to this the grand weeklong Maoist banda and only security personnel were seen walking along the empty streets of the capital. Furthermore, no one had to pay attention to the fuss created by the 2,000 detained political workers inside detention centres. So, if this is a not a successful democracy, then what is? The only problem is, where on earth is the government? Do we still have one?

idea. But for that, all sides should have been consulted. The government should have held talks with the seven parties and through them it should also have dialogued with the Maoists. Even when the seven parties decided to boycott the polls, the government could have done more to create an environment of participation.

## Amusing election

Hari Pariyar in *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 8 February

समाचारपत्र

There was none of the excitement that usually accompanies news of an election. The event was supposed to bring joy to citizens but only terror and fear filled their hearts, especially those people whose relatives stood as candidates. It was a strange election. There was no campaigning, nor posters of the candidates. Woodcutters and farmers were announced as nominees. A husband and wife teamed up to contest for the posts of mayor and deputy mayor. The election became a national joke. Is this how the royal government intends to preserve the little respect it has? The king chose the easy way out by going for municipal polls. What does the government expect from candidates who have neither the capability nor the credibility to build our towns and cities? This election was supposed to douse the raging fire in the country but it has only fuelled the flames.

## Forces in forests

Nepal, 12 February

नेपाल

Users of community forests in western Nepal are kept out of resources they have conserved because of a ban on entry by security forces. For one year, the district administration of Dang has imposed such prohibitions in 17 community forests. Seven community forests in Banke are out of bounds after security posts have sprung up in the jungles. Army camps have also sprung up in Pyuthan and Salyan keeping the people away. Worse yet, security camps close to forests have begun to encroach on the woods. Local



MIN BAJRACHARYA

## State failure

Former Rajparishad chairman Keshar Jung Raymajhi in *Sanghu*, 6 February

साधु

The main responsibility for taking initiative to resolve the present crisis is in the hands of the ministerial council. Since the king is also in the council, his intervention is required. The first step should be talks, among other things to learn why the Maoists abandoned the ballot and resorted to bullets. There is no alternative to talks. If we do not opt for a peaceful resolution and continue using force the country will be destroyed. The more time we lose more serious will be the outcome. It is the responsibility of the king's council to begin the process. I don't think enough is being done to resolve the conflict. During the talks in Dang (in 2004) the Maoists said that they would talk with the king directly. The four-month ceasefire was a respite to the people but now attacks are taking place everywhere, including the capital. The spirit of the king's 1 February speech appears positive but his wishes are not being translated into practice. The king has repeatedly expressed his commitment toward constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy. Let's assume the king took over because he thought the parties were unsuccessful. Now that the parties are saying that the king should remain as constitutional monarch, the king should move in that direction. The main basis of democracy is people's vote. In itself, an election is not a bad



TV: "Terrorism has been reduced to isolated criminal activities."  
Woman: "Who is this new news anchor?"

कान्तिपुर Batsayan in *Kantipur*, 5 February

### QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“It's not just the king who has been disgraced internationally, we realise that even Nepal's image has been tarnished.”

- Prachanda speaking about 10 years of the 'people's war' in an interview with *Kantipur* 7 February.



administrations in these districts have argued the felling is necessary for security reasons. But for villagers in these districts, forest resources are their lifeline. "The ban on entry has been in place for more than a year now," says Bhim Bahadur Khadka of the Community Forestry User Group Federation of Dang, "and it has affected our livelihood." Some communities may be defying the decrees but in most places, community forests are almost totally controlled by security forces. Any work related to forests now must first be approved by the army and user groups even need to get permission to sit for their regular meetings.

## Royal bathroom

Jana Aastha, 8 February

आस्था

ITAHARI-The kings of other countries lead ordinary lives. They will wear poor man's clothes and even eat ordinary food. But during his trip to eastern Nepal our king stayed at the regional headquarters of the APF where the walls of the VIP guesthouse was torn down to build a toilet costing Rs 200,000. After the king's departure the toilet was locked up and no one is allowed to use it. Even when women political activists were detained inside the room, they were not allowed to use the royal bathroom—they were asked to use the police constables' toilet that does not have even a working light. Female inmates finally concluded the agitation to use the 'regressive toilet' was futile and gave up the agitation.

## Quiet Ian Martin

Nispakshya, 7 February

निष्पक्ष

We all know how (the UN's human rights representative in Nepal) Ian Martin et al use threatening language and condemn the smallest mistake committed by the state but remain soft on Maoist terrorist activities. They also keep mum about the activities of the seven-party alliance, no matter what they do. The likes of Martin never remind Maoist supremo Prachanda of his commitment to respect human rights when his people are involved in killings, abductions, attacks, looting and other human right violations. The Maoists claim their party does not kill innocent people, political workers or election candidates but no matter what their press statements say, they continue abusing human rights. The big question is why human rights activists are not openly criticising their activities.

# Tough nut

Student leader Ramkumari Jhankri in Kantipur, 5 February

कमन्तिपुर

The declared municipal polls have proved to be a tough nut to crack for the king. He began his publicity stunt for the elections after throwing political leaders and workers behind bars. The government, in other words, has adopted the Musharraf style by curtailing basic rights like peaceful gatherings and protests. But the situation has changed. No old-fashioned and outdated mechanism is going to work. Time has opened the doors to a revolutionary coming of age. Forget about the king, even the parties cannot move ahead with their traditional styles and values. Neither their demand for an all-party government and reinstatement of the House of Representatives under the constitution's Article 128 nor the king's takeover based on Article 127 can be justified. Rather, the ongoing movement should demand a constituent assembly that would be used to create a people's republic. That should be its only agenda. The royal regime may try to create mistrust and a rift between the agitating parties, especially the UML and Nepali Congress so the parties need to be alert. Their litmus test will be whether their leadership is responsible toward the aspirations of the new generation within their organisations. There has to be an end



MARTY LOGAN

to this repeated struggle over generations for fundamental freedom. The Maoists too should conduct intensive discussions among themselves and should be ready to make all needed sacrifices to establish a people's republic non-violently. Ten years ago, in order to chant republican slogans the Maoists had to take up guns and enter the jungle. Today, the same slogans are echoing right under the nose of the palace. Then there is the king, who has obliterated terms like 'dialogue' and 'agreement' from his vocabulary. So why should the parties talk, especially when they have been gaining ground? In fact, it is the king who should be discussing talks

because he needs to ask the people for a space for himself. The people's first agreement on democracy was made in New Delhi in 1950. It gave King Tribhuban the throne. But, the power of Singha Darbar was handed over to the palace. The Delhi agreement also had a provision for drafting a new constitution through a constituent assembly. But, the idea was kept in deep freeze for eight years. Then King Tribhuban singled out Mohan Shumshere as a possible threat and proposed to then Home Minister BP Koirala that the army be kept answerable to the monarch. Ironically, Koirala agreed and we are paying the price for that mistake today. In 1990, when the people once again tried to remake the constitution, the king claimed that he was not a defeated monarch and had to have his rights. We must learn lessons from this history. We need to be determined that the present movement should demand a constituent assembly that would pave the way for a people's republic.

## VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

**SNV** Netherlands  
Development  
Organisation

SNV Nepal, the Netherlands Development Organisation, has been working in Nepal since 1980. SNV Nepal focuses on capacitating key institutions at the district, regional and national level with the ability to serve the interests of marginal areas. SNV's sectoral niches are in governance, private sector development and natural resource management.

SNV Nepal invites qualified Nepali citizens to apply for the position of:

### Portfolio Coordinator-Central Terai

The **Portfolio Coordinator** will be stationed in Central Terai with an overall responsibility for the coordination of the advisory practice within the Central Terai portfolio and for development and formulation of policy for the effective performance and management of the portfolio team.

#### Specific responsibilities include:

- Establishing and coordinating the Central Terai Portfolio activities with partner(s)/client(s);
- Leading the positioning and strategy development process within the portfolio;
- Managing the portfolio team;
- Linking with other SNV practice areas and ensuring multi-disciplinary approach;
- Building up functional and professional linkages with relevant network of actors and stakeholders

**Qualifications:** University degree (MA or equivalent) or equivalent through experience; at least 10 years experience in the relevant field; exposure working in (I)NGOs, with government, private sector and civil society organisations; experience and recognised expertise in strategy development, (change) management, process consultation, district planning & networking; experience in livelihood approach, income generation and market linkages; knowledge of and experience in (inter) organisational and institutional development; experience in working with conflict and social inclusion.

**Required Skills:** Fluency in spoken and written English and Nepali; excellent communications skills; proven management capacity; coaching and advisory skills; analytical skills; computer skills. Knowledge of local Terai languages will be an added advantage.

### Senior Advisor in Local Governance

The **Senior Advisor in Local Governance** will be stationed in Kathmandu with the requirement to make frequent trips and missions to SNV working districts and regional offices. The Senior Advisor in Local Governance will have an overall responsibility for providing advisory services to SNV Advisors and Regional Coordinators on local governance, institutional governance and decentralisation and in aspects related to civil society strengthening and peace building.

#### Specific responsibilities include:

- Backstopping SNV advisors on technical matters related to governance, peace building and decentralisation;
- Liaising with Nepali institutions at national, regional and district level on local governance and decentralisation issues;
- Actively contributing in strategic thinking within SNV in the field of local governance and peace building;
- Building up functional and professional linkages with relevant network of actors and stakeholders.

**Qualifications:** Masters Degree in Public Administration, or other education background related to development with comprehensive experience in local governance; at least 10 years experience in the support to public administration and in development planning in Nepal; 5 years experience in the decentralisation process in Nepal; work experience within or in partnership with Government's institutions (at central, regional and local level); overall proven work experience in capacity building of local organisations (support to NGO sector and private sector for organisational and institutional development) and good knowledge of social mobilisation strategy, practices and achievements in Nepal; experience in working with conflict and social inclusion.

**Required Skills:** Fluency in spoken and written English and Nepali; excellent communications skills; coaching and training skills; analytical skills; computer skills; ability to handle accounting software packages; willingness to travel to remote and conflict affected districts. Strong advisory experience will be an advantage.

Applications are to be sent to the below address along with a cover letter with the latest curriculum vitae, daytime contact number, a recent photograph and the names of two referees along with their contact address/telephone numbers. Only shortlisted candidates will be notified.

**Deadline for submitting applications: Tuesday, February 28, 2006.**

Job description is available for pick up from **Organisation Development Centre (ODC)** from **Thursday, February 9, 2006** onwards or it could be accessed through our website under the category "Recruitment". Candidates unable to pick up the above or access the website may request for it through e-mail.

**For further details and registration, please contact:**



**Organisation Development Centre (ODC)**

Hariharbawan, Pulchowk, Lalitpur  
GPO 8975 EPC 443, Kathmandu, Nepal  
Phone: 977-01-5551979, 5524540  
E-mail: hrd@odcincorp.com  
URL: www.odcincorp.com

**SNV Nepal gives special consideration to female candidates and candidates from marginalised and disadvantaged groups.**

# Living in the dark

A Nepali Times guide to surviving

## LET THERE BE LIGHT

Nothing like that dim glow of a battery-powered fluorescent lamp to show us the light during the 17 hours of powercuts every week. With the influx of Chinese emergency lights, there are now affordable lights for our emergencies. For bargain prices, Chinatown Market in Sundhara is the ideal place to get cheap rechargeable lights. A word of caution: be wary of the lifespan of these products. Shop hop and bargain, bargain and bargain.

### Sunca

Made in China  
emergency lights  
Rechargeable batteries  
and they also work well  
with 4 D size batteries.  
One searchlight.  
Two fluorescent lamps  
six watt each.  
Siren (yes, its  
audiovisual)  
Only in red.  
Runs for only two hours  
after eight hours of  
charge.  
Rs 875  
Avaialble at Churchill  
Chinatown, Sundhara



### Bazooka

Made in China, wall hanging  
emergency lights  
Not portable  
20-watt lamp  
Runs up to four hours on full charge.  
Rs 950  
Available at Bishal Bajar and  
Chinatown Market.

### Carnival

Made in China  
Two fluorescent lights.  
One spot light  
FM and AM Radio  
Cassette player  
Clock  
Only in maroon  
Rs 750  
Available at Churchill Chinatown Market.  
Comments from users: The batteries are not good and the cassette player tends to give away first. Good to use and throw away after one season.



**Are you hoping that this winter's load-shedding is just a temporary aggravation? Think again. Latest estimates are that we can expect days and nights with no lights till at least 2010. That's a lot of candles, so you might start considering a more long-lasting solution, and the hardware to power it, featured on these pages.**

### Robo

Made in China  
Two tubes  
One spotlight  
Blinkers  
Siren (some models even come with mosquito repellents)  
Good battery life: runs for at least 4 hours.  
Comes in grey and white mixture colours.  
Rs 900  
Available at Chinatown Market and Bishal Bajar and electronic shops in Mahabaudda.

Comment from users: The best type of emergency lamp that is available in the market today. The blinkers and siren are unnecessary but the battery life is good and the bulbs are very powerful.



## LIGHT A CANDLE (DON'T CURSE THE DARKNESS)

Surprisingly, this winter's load-shedding hasn't lit up the market for candles, lamps and lanterns. The reason, say sellers, is an oft-cited one these days-cheap Chinese imports. This time it's 'emergency lights' powered by rechargeable batteries that are casting shadows over more traditional goods.

"Most people use emergency lights," says Prachanda Chitrakar, whose family has been selling candles from their shop in Ason Tol for 50 years. On the wall beside him hang wax goods of different sizes and colours, ranging in price from Rs 200 each for a huge red wedding candle to Rs 80 for six-inch models, "the ones usually used for load-shedding", he adds.

A few minutes walk away, at Munna Store in Ason Galli, sales of kerosene lamps haven't increased either, says a retailer with a rueful smile. The story was the same at a shop down the lane in Mahaboudha that was selling gas lamps.

### Tuki

The original Indian Tuki is a cheap lantern that can be used to light hallways and corridors. With half a litre of fuel the lantern will easily last a few hours. However we recommend you use other lighting methods for any work that could strain your eyes. Available for Rs 60-90 in Ason.



## GENERATORS

With so much demand, generators are selling like, well, generators. There is a wide range of small, affordable generators of Japanese, Chinese and Indian makes for household use today.

### Yihua

This Chinese generator runs 3-3.5 hours on one litre of kerosene providing 950 watts of electricity, enough to light up your house in the dark days ahead. With a 5 litre tank, it costs Rs 8,000.



### Honda

The vehicle maker also offers a range of generators that run on gasoline and kerosene. Though a bit more expensive than Chinese models, Honda generators have larger tanks thus can operate longer, are quieter and less polluting and are equipped with technological advancements like easy start systems, larger air cleaners and oil alert systems. Prices start from Rs 34,000.

# k ages

power cuts

## POWER UNINTERRUPTUS

Ever shouted obscenities when seconds before you press the save button your computer shuts down because of a power cut? Cut back on your swear vocabulary with UPSs.

Our resident expert tells us that the best way to shop for one is first to decide what sort of power backup you require— is 10 minutes just to save your material and switch off the computer enough or do you want at least 10 hours so that you can keep working throughout the day? Remember, having an LCD rather than CRT screen extends the time the battery lasts.



**Power Tree**  
600 VA  
Gives 15-20 min for a 15 inch monitor and 10 min for a 17 inch CRT monitor  
Rs 2600



**Wipro e-merge**  
600 VA  
Gives 30 min for a 17 inch CRT monitor  
Rs 3500  
1-year guarantee



**Beltronix (Nepal made)**  
600 VA to 10 KVA (on request)  
Gives 10 min to 10 hours of backup depending on type of UPS and screen  
Rs 2900- Rs 450,000  
1-year replacement guarantee  
Power Ware (distributed by Beltronix)  
700VA- 6000 VA  
Gives 8 to 12 min but has also been modified by Beltronix to give upto 15 hrs of backup  
Rs 4,800-Rs 1 million

# दाँत चक्काचक्क

New 'Close up Lemon Mint' has Lemon which removes yellowness and makes your teeth extra white and shiny. The mint makes your breath extra fresh.

NLL-80027706

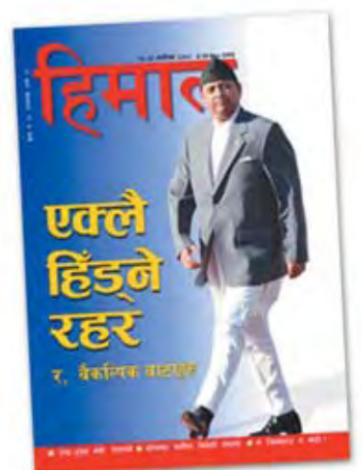
## THE WORD IS FORESIGHT



What explains Himal Khabarpatrika's 575,000 readers? Our analysis and foresight, for a start on 2059 Kartik 16, we talked about King's wish to ride alone. On Magh 19, 2062, he admitted it publicly and said, "I am Eklavya".

The word is "Shelf-life". No matter what, Himal Khabarpatrika has been able to meet the epitome of journalism and of importance of the sense that shelf-life value adds to the trust of our valued readers.

First we spoke of Foresight. Then of trust and this week we speak of shelf-life. Still to come are production values, prestige, steadfastness, investigative skill, etc...



Hatiban, Lalitpur, Nepal  
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# “Every revolution demands its

**Maoist ideologue Baburam Bhattarai returns to these pages to answers our questions on whether the past ten years of conflict have been worth it, on the 12-point agreement with the parties and on the relevance of Maoism in this day and age.**



NARAYAN WAGLE/KANTIPUR

**Nepali Times:** In our last interview with you nearly five years ago (NT, #51) we asked if the loss of 2,000 Nepali lives in five years of war was worth it and you had answered it was. Now, it's been ten years and the death toll is reaching 15,000. How many more need to die?

**Baburam Bhattarai:** Yes, when we talked last in July 2001 King Gyanendra had just seized the throne after the infamous royal massacre and the royal army was not yet unleashed against the revolutionary movement led by the CPN (Maoist). Hence the death toll was comparatively low till then. The death toll mounted in leaps and bound when the royal army entered the scene in November 2001 and it has reached the current proportions. This clearly proves that the royal army is principally responsible for the high rate of loss of life of the people in fake encounters, tortures and disappearances.

As to your query about the worth of the sacrifice on

the part of the people, we would again reply in the affirmative. Of course, if the world moved not by its own objective laws but by our pious wishes, we would prefer liberation of the oppressed masses at lesser cost. But a revolution of this epochal nature goes by its own laws and every revolution in history demands its quota of sacrifice if it has to succeed. The successful revolutions like the French or the Russian or the Chinese have claimed sacrifices in millions and not in hundreds or thousands. Hence we would advise that enlightened persons would look at the question in a more objective manner and not get swayed by sentimentalism or idealism. The amount of sacrifice needed in future would depend upon how soon or readily the feudal autocratic monarchy backed by the royal army would hand over total sovereign power to the people. And we would suggest all democratic fighters to keep this exhortation of Marx in mind: 'Let life be dead but death must not be allowed to live.'

**The 12-point agreement you signed with the seven-party alliance in Delhi has been taken as an indication that your revolution is moving from a military to a political phase. Is this a correct interpretation?**

Both yes and no. Yes, in the sense that the 12-point understanding is an attempt to find a political solution to the ongoing civil war in the country and the CPN (Maoist) has a total commitment towards it. No, in the sense that the Maoist People's War is an integrated politico-military concept and any attempt to separate the political and military components from each other, as some people tend to do, would be unrealistic, unsuccessful and harmful. Anybody who has intelligently followed our revolutionary war for the last ten years would realise that we have strictly adhered to the Clausewitzian dictum, viz: 'War is politics by other (ie, violent) means'. In other words, there is dialectical relation between war and politics and at specific historical junctures one transforms into another but they never get severed from each other. Anybody who does not understand this very basics of politics and war, would never grasp the essence of the Maoist People's War and keep on groping in the dark.

**But wouldn't a return to a mainstream political role allow you to wield more political power than you ever could with continued armed struggle as some other revolutionary movements have?**

First of all. Let it be absolutely clear that we are not fighting to gain power for ourselves but for democratic and progressive restructuring of society in all political, economic, national, cultural and gender dimensions. Secondly, there is no political 'mainstream' at the movement in the country. The old semi-feudal and semi-colonial 'mainstream' headed by the autocratic monarchy and bolstered by certain foreign powers is in tatters. The parliamentary 'mainstream' was never deep-rooted and stable and hence easily toppled by the monarchy and the revolutionary democratic mainstream is just in the process of formation. In such a situation, there is no question of anybody 'returning' to some imaginary mainstream that does not exist. Hence our proposal is to

## A revolution that devours children

Deb Lal Bhandari, Anil KC and Manoj Mahato are the latest child victims of this ten-year war

DHRUBA SIMKHADA

- Deb Lal Bhandari was a third grader in Jungar Secondary School of Nerpa VDC in Rolpa. He was returning home from school on 24 January when he spotted a round object wrapped in torn clothes by the roadside. It looked like a doll, so he picked it up. As he touched it, the bomb exploded and nine-year-old Deb Lal died on the spot.
- Three days later, ten-year-old Anil KC of Banki VDC in Dang was playing with a round metal object near his home when it exploded. Anil is now recovering from severe wounds at a hospital in Ghorahi.
- The Maoists left four pipe bombs on a bridge along the Rangeli-Biratnagar highway. One of them exploded on 3 February injuring 10 people including eight-year-old Manoj Mahato who has deep cuts in both legs.

All three incidents took place in one week and became the latest in the grim statistics of children killed and maimed in the last ten years of war. And these are just the physically wounded, there is no estimate of the number of children who bear psychological and mental trauma.

Schools have been turned into war zones. The Maoists have used playgrounds for drills and marchpasts, forced students to dig bunkers and trenches. The army has converted some schools into barracks and used playing fields as helipads. In addition, the Maoists have systematically



### COUNTING CHILDREN

From February 1996-February 2006  
341 children killed (172 by the state and 169 by the Maoists)  
473 children injured  
30,569 children abducted with their teachers, most later freed  
236 children arrested by state security  
40,000+ internally displaced  
8,000+ orphaned

targetted the country's education system, closing down schools, forcing students to attend propaganda meetings, and using them as recruiting centers.

Civil society and child rights groups have been lobbying to get both the rebels and the army to leave schools out of bounds by declaring them 'Zones of Peace'. They strongly protested against the location of polling booths inside school premises in this week's municipal elections.

The estimates of children directly and indirectly affected by the conflict in the past 10 years is approximate. Besides those directly hurt, there are hundreds of thousands who have been orphaned or had family members killed or disappeared, been deprived of education, been force-marched for days to re-education camps or coerced into joining the rebel ranks.

Many children are forced to associate with armed forces and armed groups as militia, porters, kitchen helpers, spies and informants or messengers. In addition, the Maoists forcefully recruited children through 'People's Education Trainings'.

"On an average 41 children have died every year in the past ten years," says Tarak Dhital of the child welfare group, CWIN, "in addition there are severe psycho-social effects that we haven't even begun to estimate." A total of 424 children have been killed in the past ten years, but these are only deaths reported to CWIN there may be hundreds of more unreported fatalities. Nearly half of all children in Nepal are now

directly affected by conflict because of recruitment or schools being closed, according to CWIN.

Ceasefires have been good for children. In the four months before the ceasefire, (May-August 2005) 25 children were killed, while six were killed during the ceasefire. However, 3,232 children were force marched to attend re-education during the ceasefire. ●

### Durga Pokhrel to the rescue

State Minister for Women and Social Welfare, Durga Pokhrel, was visiting the eastern district of Sankhuwasabha last week when she came upon a 16-year-old girl who had been arrested by the security forces. She was dressed in Maoist combat fatigues and was captured after the battle in Bhojpur on 27 January. Three other 15-year-old boys with grenades had surrendered and were also at the army camp.

Pokhrel was so moved by their plight that she decided to arrange for them to be enrolled in a boarding school in Kathmandu. The reason for Pokhrel's emotion was her own recruitment at age 13 into the Nepali Congress Mukti Sena in the 1960s.

Pokhrel told us: "Girija Babu enlisted me and now it is Prachanda who recruiting children, both are stealing the childhood of young Nepali boys and girls."

# quota of sacrifice”

create a 'new' political mainstream in the country where all the democratic and patriotic forces can participate for peace, democracy and prosperity. This is the essence of the 12-point understanding, where there is a clear mention of a 'new peaceful political stream' (point 4).

**Your party has killed and tortured many members of the very political parties with whom you now have a pact. Aren't there reasons to doubt the sincerity of your alliance with the parties?**

As Engels had very aptly said, 'Nothing is eternal but eternally changing'. So there is no point in harking back who killed more. Everybody knows that many more of our revolutionary cadres and supporters were killed by the government of the parliamentary parties when they were in power. Hence, the main basis of the current unity is the historical necessity of the country and the political strategy and tactics of the parliamentary and revolutionary democratic forces against the autocratic monarchy. As they say, there is no free lunch and this is particularly true in politics. Both sides have to make certain give and take. As regards the question of sincerity, one has to understand the term in a relative sense as everything else in a class-divided society and judge it in practice. We would, however, caution all the democratic and patriotic forces not to get misled by the vicious propaganda of the royalist and certain imperialist forces who are out to sow distrust among the democratic forces and wreck the historic 12-point understanding.

**Maoism is regarded as an obsolete ideology in most parts of the world including in the land of Mao's birth. What makes you think it has relevance in Nepal?**

Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (M-L-M) is a class ideology of the proletariat and the wretched of the earth. It is thus natural that the ruling exploiting classes would wish it did not exist or got perished. But what is the current state of the ideology of the ruling classes? The religious fundamentalism and neo-liberal market fundamentalism, the ruling ideology of the feudal and imperialist classes,

is in greater crisis. The so-called 'end of history' and 'clash of civilisation' hypotheses have already wrecked havoc upon the world over the past decade. The raging battlefields of Iraq and the left-ward wind sweeping across Latin America in recent years are a case in point. It is quite ironical that those who are themselves increasingly taking recourse to Christian or Muslim or Hindu fundamentalism are pointing an accusing finger towards the most scientific, secular and progressive ideology of dialectical & historical materialism, which is the cornerstone of M-L-M, as 'obsolete'. Yes, every science and objective truth takes time to get accepted and established at the outset. It happened with the Newtonian or Einsteinian natural science and it is happening with the M-L-M social science. But the ever deepening and widening crisis and chaos of the world imperialist system is now forcing more people than ever to listen to Rosa Luxemburg's famous dictum: 'Either socialism or barbarism'. This is at the core of the increasing Maoist popularity in Nepal.

**Public opinion polls have consistently shown that many Nepalis may agree with your aims, but most don't agree with your methods. Is the idea of revolution therefore to eliminate all those who don't agree with you?**

This is another instance of 'honest' confusion or deliberate misleading about the essence of a genuine revolution. To drive a wedge between the 'end' (or goal) and 'means' (or method) of the revolution or raise a Chinese wall between them, has been the familiar trick of the reactionary ruling circles since ages. We don't subscribe to both Gandhian pacifism and anarchist militarism that put means above the end. We see dialectical interrelations between end and means, and realise that two aspects cannot be divorced at will. We believe in Mao's time-honored saying: '...in order to get rid of the gun it is necessary to take up the gun'. To say that the idea of revolution is to eliminate all those who don't agree with you is a big affront or joke upon the common sense of any thinking being and hence does not deserve any rebuttal from us.



## Violence and vengeance

**Stop this mad cycle of cruelty that multiplies cruelty**

**T**hese days it is difficult to watch movies without seeing parallels to Nepal. Sitting in the velvet seat and the womblike darkness of a cinema and being transported to an escapist onscreen world, the brain suddenly switches to the reality of a home faraway. And a haunting worry nags the soul.

So it is whether watching *Motorcycle Diaries*, *Syriana* or *Munich* the thoughts automatically turn to the conflict in my own country. My friends are in tears as we

**NEPALI PAN**  
Deepa Rai



watch *Munich* but I wasn't moved as much by Steven Spielberg's strong emotional effects as I was forced to think

about the violence in Nepal—especially the role that revenge plays in starting and prolonging conflict.

I remembered watching the poignant documentary *Killing Terraces* by Dhruva Basnet in which a young boy from Rukum is interviewed. With an intensity that belies his age and young face he speaks into the camera, vowing to "drink the blood of my parent's killers". His hatred-filled voice, soft yet determined, haunted me for days after watching the documentary.

It made me wonder how many thousands of Nepalis there must be who have witnessed the torture and death of near and dear ones by both sides and how the poison of revenge will stay for generations to come and how difficult that will make reconciliation. More than anything else it is the vengeful wounds of war that will perpetuate violence.

*Munich* makes a point about the vicious circle of unending revenge. The team starts with the killing of those responsible for the assassination of 11 Israeli sportsmen in Munich Olympic Stadium in 1972. What follows is the murder of one suspect after another in different parts of Europe. By the end of the film, there is only the team leader remaining who is haunted by his past and fears the safety of his family from those whose lives he set out to take. The film projects the psychological effect of the killing on team leader Avner even if the cause is to avenge his nation. The message is that killing is not the answer.

Agreed. But tell that to those whose friends and relatives died in Pili, Nagarkot or Tansen. They may be civilians or combatants but every death plants the seeds of hatred among ten other Nepalis. What was political then becomes private, a revolution is transformed into revenge and violence itself becomes self-perpetuating as it devours more innocents along the way.

Ten years after the Maoists started their war, the original 42-points are all but forgotten. Was it worth so many deaths and so much vengeance?

Issues of revenge was always lurking behind the political agenda of the left: inequality fuelled by understandable anger against feudal exploitation was channelled into the justification of armed struggle. But the violence bred more violence and now threatens to sweep us all away.

Did those who lynched teachers in front their families and students think about the hate they were planting in the minds of those who witnessed the murder? Did those who abducted and tortured students and teachers think of how the brutality would affect the victims? Was that worth it, however righteous the cause? After ten years, the cause is now obliterated by the need to get even—and now it is just violence for the sake of violence.

Gandhi knew this and that is why he preached ahimsa, a beautiful word that goes beyond just non-violence. Don't get into the killing game, he warned, or it will come back to you magnified tenfold.

As we walk out of the theatre, I am convinced Nepal will come out of its present trauma because a solution has always been within reach. But only if we mark the anniversary this week by stopping this mad cycle of cruelty that multiplies cruelty. ●

Deepa Rai recently completed her MA in journalism from Cardiff University in Wales.

## The return of the vigilantes

**Another spiral of violence and revenge**

JB PUN in RUPENDEHI

**W**hen Ramjas Chamar was abducted from his house recently and the gunmen demanded a ransom he first thought they might be Maoists.

But they turned out to be victims of Maoists whom the security forces have trained and armed into vigilantes to help in their anti-insurgency effort.

"They said they could easily just shoot me and claim that I was a terrorist unless I paid Rs 80,000," Chamar recalls. His family finally raised Rs 40,000 and bought his release. Another local, Hadis Dewan, was also kidnapped and paid a ransom.

New vigilante groups are springing up throughout the hinterland of this border district with help from the security forces. Victims of the Maoists, they have now turned into vicious human rights abusers themselves—threatening to unleash a spiral of unending violence.

The Marchabar area of Rupendehi district was already notorious for vigilantes forcing many villagers to flee their homes (See # 240). Since the Maoists are difficult to get at, the new vigilante groups target UML and NC supporters in the villages. They often walk side-by-side with soldiers while on patrol and they are protected by the local administration. The UML's Barmananda Pasi was brutally killed last month by suspected vigilantes.

Vigilante leader Santosh Sribastab used to be a NC supporter and says he was encouraged by the local administration to form his own anti-Maoist group. He convinced 40 other villagers who were fed up of Maoist harassment to join him and they were all trained to use weapons by the army.

Sribastab's house was bombed by the Maoists and they accused him of working as a government spy. Another vigilante group member, Pralad Lodh, had witnessed the Maoists kill his father and brother with rocks. Kalaf Hussein also joined the group to avenge the killings of his three brothers while the group's military commander, Muhammad, saw rebels torture his brother by smashing his



JB PUN

leg with a heavy rock.

But the vigilantes themselves have started terrorising the villagers with extortion and threats. They are forcing villagers to donate Rs 15,000 each to ensure peace and security. The villagers have asked for protection but the administration has ignored them.

Political activists, especially from the NC and UML have been targeted. Recently, UML member Sadik Kubija was beaten and handed over to the army accused of being a Maoist supporter. Ram Lakhan Harijan, another UML member, was labelled a Maoist leader and tortured.

Sick of threats from Maoist, vigilantes and security forces, ordinary civilians are taking matters into their own hands to defend themselves. In Belaspur, villagers captured some vigilante members and handed them over to the police.

The vigilantes themselves admit that their movement is getting out of hand. "We are trying to stop the violence but we can't control the former dacoits who have joined us," says 'Lorik', who leads a vigilante group in Nawalparasi.

In Kapilbastu, vigilantes beat 11 UML workers in Gugauli village as punishment for their parties' 12-point understanding with the Maoists, who then asked them to report to the army barracks. The vigilante group is led by teacher Rajkumar Chaudhary and joins army patrols. Said one resident who has fled to Butwal: "They come to our homes, take our money and threaten us." ●

# Don't be evil (unless it hits the bottomline)

## Bloggers blast Google for self-censoring the Chinese search engine



BEIJING—Any internet user wondering about the limits of Google's famed commitment to making information 'universally accessible' need only look up the Chinese word for democracy on the US company's new China-based internet search service.

The same search run through Google's US servers comes up with more than 33m results, with a link to the website of Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party in second place.

In contrast, the new Beijing-approved www.google.com website generates less than a quarter as many results and the link to the Taiwanese elected ruling party is deleted in favour of a newspaper run by an arm of the Beijing government.

For Google, censoring searches to avoid offending Beijing's propaganda machine is the price of doing business in one of the world's most important internet markets.

It is hardly an unusual compromise.

Yahoo, Microsoft and News Corp have all bowed, in varying degrees, to the mandarins in Beijing. But it is a strategy that carries particular risks for the world's biggest search company. Unlike most corporate peers, Google stresses its moral business approach. To its high-minded goal of providing universal access to information, the company adds its informal corporate motto: 'Don't Be Evil'. Now many users feel the company has betrayed its principles.

'Suggested new motto: Don't Be Hypocrites', wrote Singapore-based Jos Birken on an online column hosted by Google's own blog service. 'As of today, it's official. Google's 'Don't Be Evil' motto has withered in the face of China's opposition to maintaining any type of human rights within the Middle Kingdom's borders,' Birken wrote.

For its part, Google insists the decision to censor was far from easy. Google has been more open about its actions in China than Yahoo and Microsoft and appears less willing to cooperate with Beijing than some rivals. Microsoft, for example, launched an MSN portal last year that bars use of words such as 'freedom' and 'democracy' in the names of blogs—a level of censorship unusual even in China.

Yahoo, which handed its Chinese operations over to a local entrepreneur last year, already censors searches. A search for 'democracy' on Yahoo's Chinese service yields a paltry 26,000 results.

And Yahoo has acknowledged helping



Chinese authorities to prosecute an outspoken local journalist by handing over information on his email account but has been cagey about the legal basis for what critics say was a betrayal of trust.

Google, by contrast, will not offer email and blogging services in China until it is 'comfortable' it can protect users' interests. The search company argues that Chinese users have long found it hard to access sensitive content through its service, since the Beijing web police are already able to temporarily deny access to its website to users who try to look up banned topics.

Combined with delays caused by using servers in late last year such disruption made Google's situation in China 'unacceptable', it says. While removing search results is inconsistent with Google's mission, providing no information... is more inconsistent, Google says.

Critics argue that the world's most powerful search company could have chosen to stand up to China's censors and are deeply disappointed that it chose not to. 'Google I expected more from, somehow,' wrote another user of the company's blog service. ●

# Schizophrenic Nepal policy

## India should send the message that India would prefer a republic to monarchy if the king doesn't restore democracy

I wish I could make out India's policy on its neighbours. At best, it is a reaction to what they do or do not do. We should cultivate them. But there is nothing called generosity when we come to deal with them.

Where we have exposed ourselves the most is in Nepal. It is the worst case of our prevarication. Do we want the king or not? We can't make up our mind. We want monarchy but no kingship but that's only

king to take popular leaders into confidence has not been heeded. Yes, we have our ambassador at Kathmandu, always going back and forth for consultations with New Delhi. But he must be exasperated, helpless and even embarrassed because he has made no progress with the king. We want the ambassador to ride two boats at the same time: put pressure on the king to restore democracy and convince the opposition that India will eventually get them back their popular rule.

The fact is that we resumed the supply of weapons on his promise to restore democracy before long. The king duped us because there is nothing to suggest that he wants to dismount the tiger he has chosen to ride. Why doesn't a powerful country like India do something? This is the question that the Nepalis ask. One of the reasons hawked about is that if we were to jettison the king, he would go to Pakistan to get arms. I wish he would do that. Presuming Pakistan wants to embarrass India, it can ill-afford to take on the people with yet another unpopular step.

Even China will think twice



DOI

before displeasing India when the two are already joining hands in South Asia for peace and development. All these years, Beijing has kept away from Kathmandu knowing well that New Delhi is oversensitive to foreign interference in Nepal's affairs. After all, India accepted the suzerainty of China over Tibet in no time.

The problem is with New Delhi. It does not want to displease the king on the one

hand and does not like his methods of dealing with political parties on the other. India would wish to devise a formula which could please the king and the opposition at the same time. In fact, it has been vainly trying for that.

Initially, New Delhi was not unhappy over the king's takeover because it saw in it a strong action against the Maoists who had links with the Naxalites in India. Washington was in

tandem with New Delhi's approach. The assumption was that the king would come around soon. But it has been a futile exercise. In fact, the king has consolidated himself. India has been keeping its eyes shut.

The Nepalis generally do not like the Maoists who have introduced violence to their peaceful life. True, the Maoists are today on the side of the opposition but their methodology is considered undemocratic and their ways authoritarian. People are disappointed with the king because he has suppressed their democratic functioning. But they are not pleased with the Maoists either. They want a bit of both: the king providing an overall umbrella and the Maoists bringing in egalitarianism in the still-poor caste-ridden society.

True, New Delhi cannot march its forces into Nepal. But it can at least criticise the king's rule and give some public evidence of support to the democratic forces. The king should get a message that India would prefer a republic to monarchy if he did not restore democracy.

I think he has already forfeited the right to rule. If he were to realise that New Delhi could go to the extent of putting its weight behind the demand for his deposition, he might mend his ways. ●

Kuldip Nayar is a former member of the Rajya Sabha in India, a veteran journalist and author of 11 books. He starts this fortnightly column for *Nepali Times* from this issue.

**BETWEEN THE LINES**

Kuldip Nayar



playing with words. What it means is that we would like the king to be a constitutional head like our president. Thank God, our constitution does not provide for president's rule at the centre. Jawaharlal Nehru once explained that he did not want a dictator in India. Therefore, the writ of our presidents (we had a couple of ambitious ones) doesn't run beyond the precincts of Rashtrapati Bhavan.

In Nepal, the king has himself become the constitution. We are unhappy because he does not listen to us. Our request to the

# Double the fun

Playing doubles is tricky but also a lot more enjoyable

## Doubles is about percentages

Many players think that their job is to cover their side and the partner should cover his/her side (50/50 percentage). Each player's court coverage should be 75 percent.

## The serve

By getting your first serve in, you are putting your opponents on the defensive. When you get your first serve in, your partner has a chance to poach about 70 percent of the time. When you serve a second serve you put your team on the defensive and the chance for your partner to poach drops to 30 percent. Add kick or slice when you intend to serve and volley.

## Hitting through the middle

Three reasons: 1) the net is lower, 2) court is longer diagonally allowing you to hit deep ground strokes, 3) you will confuse the attacking players if both come to the net.

## GAME POINT Sujoy Lama



### If opponents are tall

If you are playing tall players and they are attacking, keep the balls low. Dip the ball with topspin making them bend low. A slice or

a chip is also a nice option. If you choose the slice then prepare early and take it on the rise. On a rally situation, mix top spin and slice to destroy the rhythm of the rally. Remember, tall players are usually hard hitters.

### If opponents are small in size

If your opponents are small and are at the net, your best option is to lob over them. Hitting through the middle will also work. On rallies hit deep and high waiting for a weak shot, then attack.

### When you are at the net and your opponents are on the base line

Both partners must attempt to take the ball that comes thru the middle. It is better to be greedy than to let the ball go thru the middle. When both of you are at the net, aim your volleys deep in between your opponents until you see an opening for an angled shot.



### When both of your opponents are close at the net

Your first choice should be to lob over them (over their backhand shoulder). When successful with lobbing move together towards the hot seat (service line). Your second choice should be hitting through the middle. Rarely would you hit hard directly at your opponents.

### When both your opponents are at the hot seat

When your opponents are at the hot seat the choices you have are: 1) hit a dipper with

top spin through the middle, 2) a dipper shot aimed at your opponents feet (dip it with top spin). Lobbing in this situation is not suggested.

### When you opponents are hard hitters

Against hard hitters you must always mix your shots. Prepare early on the ground strokes and use top spin and slices to upset the rhythm. Hit hard only occasionally.

### If your opponents are playing 'one up and one back'

Both players should start at the base line and stay together, then advance to the net together only when you hurt your rival with a punishing shot or the rally return is weak. Both players should stick together close to the base line in case the net person tries to use a drop volley or drop shot. Patience and consistency are the key components here. The second choice is to lob over the net player.

### Communicate and take time in between points

Communicate with your partner often and feed each other with positive thoughts. Never give up as long as you are on the court. Make each other feel comfortable before, after and during the match. And most of all, don't forget to have fun!

# Female hoopsters

Nepal's basketball boom shows gender is no bar

ANOOP PANDEY

It's hard to pinpoint the reason for the sudden craze for basketball in Nepal in recent years. Sponsorship of tournaments may be part of the reason and also access to television coverage of US and international basketball championships. While the men's game has been around for decades, what is most pleasing about the recent progress is the increased involvement of women in competitive hoops.

It wasn't long ago that basketball tournaments were limited to men's teams but today we have events like the Gyan Carnival, Father Watrin and GAA tourneys along with the recent Samsung National Championships, which was telecast live on NTV that all include women participants.

The women's game has developed so much that girls are increasingly competing equally alongside boys in training sessions—running laps, boxing out and pushing and shoving for rebounds. Schools in the Kathmandu Valley have also begun holding tournaments for girls in the 10-13 age bracket.

Promoting basketball among

girls is one of the main aims of the winter basketball camp at the GAA hall in Thamel organised by the Godavari Alumni Association (GAA) for the past three years. Coach Krishna Maharjan says his main objectives are to provide participants with the fundamental skills—shooting, dribbling and passing—and to develop a sense of team play.

"Basketball is a team sport. Yes, an individual on occasion can win a game for any team but to play good basketball all five players on the court and those off it need to become a unit," says Maharjan who hopes to create a community of basketball players. "At school we play with our friends only, here in the camp they encourage us to play with different players, people we do not know, allowing us to learn from others," said one female participant.

The number of players at the GAA camp has grown each year, thanks to its reputation for good organisation and training facilities. This year more than 60 players were divided into three groups: early morning for the girls, morning for

the boys and afternoon for children. "Although 20 days training is not enough, what we learn from this is very important and we will try to continue developing," said one participant. "In the future, we would be interested in taking more training like this," she added. ●

GAA will organise another training camp after the SLC exams.



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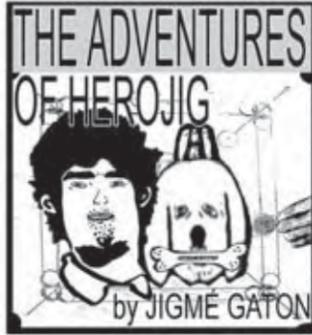
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 Not to make fun of Royal Religious Political Figures  
 Not to make fun of Government Figures  
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 Not to make fun of your wives figure  
 Not to make fun of making fun  
 Not to make fun of Newspaper Figures  
 Not to make fun of funny figures of speech  
 Not to make fun of the pope

Whoops! - OK, starting next week then...

#108 2062 by jigme gaton - read. love. write.  
**KE GARNE? WHATEVER.**  
 But be a heroji and consider the humor of it all  
 "The public is like a piano. You just have to know what keys to poke." -- Al Capp, Cartoonist of Li'l Abner Fame  
 A cartoon making promises, go figure...  
 Next change: UNACOOTS investigates the images found in HEROJIG and finds no violations of your civil liberties.

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

**ABOUT TOWN**

**EVENTS**

- ❖ **Kathmandu Chorale** is beginning rehearsals for its Spring Concert. Rehearsals will be held at the British School hall, Sanepa, from 20 February. 7.10PM.
- ❖ **Korean Movie Show** every Wednesday. Ezer Book Cafe

**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 (Jazz) and Saturday (Afro-funk and Latin) 8PM at Upstairs, Lajimpat.
- ❖ **Best of jazz** JCS trio and Friends. Niek's Place. Every tuesday and saturday. 4701324.
- ❖ **Jatra Friday** nights, live music by Siron. 4256622
- ❖ **Unplugged** 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
- ❖ **Uncork the Good Times** Fusion- The bar at Dwarika's presents Ciney and Par-e-jat playing Popular Sounds of 70's with Fabulous Cocktails, Tantalising BBQs by the poolside every Friday from 7PM onwards. Rs. 750. Dwarika's Hotel. 4479448



**DINING**

- ❖ **Valentines Day** sparkling wine, chocolates, strawberries and delicacies. Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Romantic Valentine's Day** with a rose and free mulled wine by the fireplace. Kilroy's. 4250440/41.
- ❖ **Maki Newa Bhutu** for traditional Newari cuisine at Hotel Royal Singi. 4439784
- ❖ **Mexican and Italian** food at Fuzone Café, Lagankhel. 5542935
- ❖ **Great Dining** at Al Fresco, Bukhara, China Garden and Garden Terrace restaurants, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **Barbeque** at Le Meridien, Kathmandu. Saturday. 4451212.
- ❖ **The Shangri-La Express** Soups, make your own sandwiches and salads and choice of dessert only for Rs 399. Everyday from 11 am to 3 pm. The Shambala Garden.
- ❖ **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. Friday. 6.30-9.30 PM. 5521810
- ❖ **Breakfast With Birds** lunch with butterflies and dinner by the fire place. Farm House Café. 4375279

**GETAWAYS**

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- ❖ **Escape Kathmandu** at Shivapuri Heights Cottage. 9851012245

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नेपाल कृषिप्रधान मुलुक हो। यहाँका ८० प्रतिशतभन्दा बढी जनता कृषि पेसामा आधारित छन्। कूल राष्ट्रिय आयको रन्डै ४० प्रतिशत हिस्सा अहिले पनि कृषि क्षेत्रले नै ओगटेको छ। सिङ्गो मुलुकको आर्थिक, सामाजिक मेरुदण्डको रूपमा रहेको कृषिक्षेत्र उपेक्षित हुनु हुँदैन। कृषकहरू देशका वास्तविक नायक हुन्। उनीहरूलाई सम्मान र कदर गर्नुपर्छ। कृषकहरूले पनि आफ्नो पसिनामाथि विश्वास गर्नुपर्छ। नयाँ नयाँ कृषि प्रणाली अवलम्बन गर्नुपर्छ। पढ्दैमा खेती गर्नु नहुने होइन। रन् कृषिक्षेत्रलाई आधुनिकीकरण गर्न शिक्षित र सचेत कृषकको खाचो छ। त्यसैले कृषि पेसालाई आदर गरौं, कृषकलाई सम्मान गरौं।

श्री ५ को सरकार  
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**NEPALI WEATHER** by MAUSAM BEED

The winter drought enters its fourth month this week. Central and eastern Nepal have received no rain or snow since the third week of October. The normal westerly fronts have been weak or blown away to the north. This satellite picture taken on Thursday morning shows a massive westerly disturbance heading towards the western Himalaya which makes us hopeful. But the prevailing isobars over northern India indicate that this one too may be deflected northwards before it reaches us. There will be some cloudy days into the weekend and even a few drizzles and snow flurries at higher altitudes, but nothing to write home about. Expect continued thick haze being blown in from the Indian plains.

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BIBI FUNYAL

**BULLET BATTERED:** Pots and pans battered in Palpa after the Maoist attack on security force on 1 February.



KIRAN PANDAY

**PROTECTIVE CUSTODY:** Armed police personnel guards ballot boxes on route to the Election Commission from Rastriya Sabhagriha on Wednesday evening.



MARTY LOGAN

**ALMOST MARRIED:** Newari girls wait for a blessing in the finale of their *bel bibaha* last Saturday in Basantapur.



BHASKAR ARYAL

**PROTEST THE MURDER:** Opposition parties in a rally to protest the killing of UML worker Umesh Thapa in Ghorahi, Dang on Wednesday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

**LET ME IN:** AFP correspondent Sam Taylor argues with security forces at Hanuman Dhoka trying to gain entry to a polling station. All journalists were prohibited to enter.



TOM KELLY

# The healing touch

In a region featuring some of the harshest mountain environments on the planet, for centuries they have been the doctors. But a wide line separates the amchi, the healers of the Himalaya, from their modern counterparts. Easing the sufferings of their fellow beings is more than a job for them, it's a responsibility they take on willingly and without pay.

Since the 10<sup>th</sup> century, highland healers have traditionally shared their knowledge in gatherings of healers from Kathmandu, Kashmir, Persia and Mongolia. "Tradition has always been a process of dynamic engagement," says Carroll Dunham, an anthropologist and an expert on Bon culture who has been living in Nepal for more than two decades studying Himalayan peoples.

Carroll also runs Wild Earth, a private company that produces a range of bath products from Himalayan herbs gathered from community-owned forests. Alternative healing, as it's known in the west, is one of the fastest growing industries in Asia and beyond.

This may be good news for economists but the growing

interest in natural herbal remedies signals a challenge for traditional healing methods, products of age-old wisdom and centuries of on-the-ground testing.

Wild Earth is negotiating with its Middle East partner Wafi international and Shangri-la hotels in Asia that would see amchis work in the hotels for one-two years in exchange for their salaries and additional money sent to Lo Kunphen Medical School, the amchi training school in Lo Manthang. In effect, three amchis working abroad would support three others working in rural clinics in Upper Mustang. "Rather than flipping burgers in menial occupations abroad, Himalayan peoples could be respected ambassadors of their heritage," says Dunham.

Wild Earth is currently giving preventive health care training in the form of massage therapy to nine young amchis from around Nepal. Instructed by Joanna Claire (pictured) a specialist in acupressure who has been using Chinese healing techniques for almost four decades, the healers are learning two types of massage therapy based on the vital points used in Tibetan medicine.

"The purpose of this training is to work with the authenticity of

Tibetan medicine using a modality that they have not been versed in," says Claire. The nine amchis have already completed at least eight years of classical training in the art of traditional healing, five of them in Mustang the others as apprentices to an established amchi in Kathmandu. Although that might have included some massage therapy, one of the new things they are learning, especially the women, is how to massage pregnant women using acupressure and hot stones.

What is most inspiring about these young healers is their desire to return to their rural highland homes to practice their medicine. Pema Dolma Bista, 20, is the daughter of the renowned amchi Gyatso Bista, the personal physician of the Raja of Mustang. She learnt the art of healing in Lo Kunphen but unlike many modern young doctors who wish to practise only in cities, Bista is going back. "We lack proper facilities and infrastructure in our village but we can only help if we go back," she says.

Thupten Ngudrup, 27, was born in Solukhumbu but has been living in Kathmandu training to be a Buddhist monk. He, too, wants to go back and apply the healing touch among his own people.

ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY

# War is peace, ignorance is strength

Unceremonial Chairman, Respective Vice-chairmen, Comrades-in-Arms, Fellow Despots of the Great International Proliferate Revolution, Card-carrying Sycophants, Trusted Toadies and Grudging Admirers who have been forced marched to this venue out of their own free will.

It gives me great pleasure to stand before you today to deliver this keynote address to the graduating class of the Nepal College of Disastrous Mismanagement. I promise not to be brief.

You are about to take a great leap forward into the school of life and you will soon understand that history indeed repeats itself, so there is really no need to waste your time learning from it because we can just make the same mistakes over and over again. That is the beauty of scientific dialectic materialism: it's never having to say you are sorry for past wrongs. You don't even need to invent a new dogma, you can just recycle an outmoded one.

Which is why we now have a chance to once more relive the glorious tradition of the people's democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and to experience its therapeutic and purifying benefits through the persecution of intellectuals and counter-revolutionary

revisionist elements as a permanent feature of class struggle in societal transformation. It is therefore incumbent upon us of the leftist persuasion once and for all to

**UNDER MY HAT**  
Kunda Dixit



weed out imperialism, expansionism, feudalism, bureaucrat-capitalism and tourism.

The Great Helmsman must be turning in his maosoleum and itching to get back into the fray when he looks down at us from where he is comfortably ensconced in his happy hunting ground inside his glass casket. It is humbling to see that his name lives on and is still a household word here. Just goes to show that cults of personality can transcend into the afterlife even if you are an avowed atheist because temporal tyrants see themselves as permanent representatives and plenipotentiaries to Earth of the Divine Dictator.

And now in the spirit of the times since getting rich is glorifying and because it doesn't matter whether the cat is black or white as long as it poos outside, let me take a short commercial break here. My harangue from the pulpit today is sponsored by Google (Motto: 'We've removed the word democracy from our search engine') and Yahoo ('So have we').

As you all know since Google is the opium of the masses it is important at this stage in our revolution to be cognizant of the contradictions between correct and incorrect ideas on the internet which are reflections of contradictions within society and it is our duty to remove them by removing ideologically impure words like 'Tashi Delek', 'Press freedom' and 'Sex' that contaminate cyberspace and protect impressionable young minds from being corrupted by subversive reactionary notions of western decadence.

In making revolution, one must strike while the iron is hot, as Comrade Trotsky said, so that one revolution follows another in order to keep spinning without interruption at about 2,500 RPM. It is an absolute law that imperialism is moribund capitalism and the working class and toiling masses must be vigilant against embourgeoisement and distortion by reactionaries in the essence of the revolution by propagated reformism and the theory of class conciliation which may deflect the movement in the road to compromise and put off the victory by fostering a romantic notion of non-violence. It is yet another triumph in the advance of permanent revolution from the bourgeois-democratic phase to the socialist phase and ultimately to utopian communism that ideological consciousness, socio-political relationships militate against antagonistic contradictions to be ratified by uncompromising hostility and the violence of mass campaigns.

Guards! Take away that evil running dog class enemy at the back who has fallen asleep to the dungeons. ●

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