

**RAJENDRA DAHAL**

However, these efforts may be cancelled out by Chinese State Councillor Tang Jianxuan on Friday, who is expected to convey Beijing's message that it is worried about instability in Nepal if the king keeps to his roadmap.

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

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## LEAPING THE MAZE

The crisis in Nepal is now so knotted up it's hard to figure out head or tail of what's going on.

Nepal's Maoists always said they were following Mao Zedong by the book. Now, it looks like they are even trying to copy the Cultural Revolution. The Gang of Two, Rabindra Shrestha and Mani Thapa (Anukul), came out on Wednesday with an unprecedented and scathing criticism of the party to set up their 'New Cultural Revolution Group'. This brought an immediate counter-salvo from The Fierce One himself, accusing the two of being 'traitors and slaves of counter-revolutionaries'. But what is of interest is that both accuse each other of selling out to the royalists.

Other contradictions abound. Peace activist Krishna Pahadi who has probably been the most critical among our human rights wallahs about Maoist atrocities is in detention for 'inciting violence'. Civil society activist and anti-corruption campaigner Devendra Raj Pandey who has consistently campaigned for restoration of peace and democracy is still locked up. Meanwhile, this country's greatest war-mongers are in positions of power.

And what of Ram Chandra Poudel of the NC, one of the most vocal proponents of reconciliation between the king, parties and the Maoists? He has been behind bars now for nearly two months. Meanwhile, those who have vowed never to allow the parties and the king to come together are senior flunkies in the royal regime. In fact, the biggest paradox of all is that both Vice-chairman Tulsi Giri and Prachanda see completely eye to eye on one thing: never allow the constitutional forces to patch up.

What's going on here? Who is on whose side?

Ironically, the people most worried by the present slide into absolute anarchy and prolonged conflict are this country's staunchest monarchists. If even they have come to the conclusion that the *mandales* are taking the country down with them, then that must be what is happening.

The regime's strategy is to sow confusion to buy time. But the palace is lost in a maze of its own creation and the generals are in the same labyrinth. How can we leap this maze? By supporting a return to democracy as a path to sustainable peace-building. And if the warmongers can't help slaughtering each other, to force them to leave civilians out of it.



# Psychopaths and sycophants

## To find out why Nepal is stuck, we may need to psychoanalyse our political leadership

As a psychiatrist it isn't difficult to categorise the personality types of King Gyanendra, GP Koirala, MK Nepal, Dr Tulsi Giri, or for that matter Comrades Prachanda and Baburam. Doing so may actually help us psychoanalyse this nation and its leadership which in turn could provide us with clues about what is wrong with the country.

GUEST COLUMN  
Shyam Chalise



Some general features of personality disorders afflicting 10-15 percent of the general population seems to be much more prevalent among the country's political leadership at present. Such people are inflexible, maladaptive and have only one way of responding to a given situation. It is reflected in all areas of life and is life-long, and the patients are born with the syndrome they don't acquire it.

There are more than a dozen types of personality disorders. **Narcissists** have grandiose sense of self-importance and demand constant attention and they meet criticism with indifference and rage. Those with **paranoid personalities** are preoccupied with issues of trust and are reluctant to confide in others. They tend to dwell into hidden meanings of comments and events and carry grudges throughout life. Unstable is the word to describe borderline personality type as their behaviour and self-image are all unstable. They use splitting as a defense mechanism in which everything is evaluated as two extremes there is no room for anything intermediate.

People with personality disorders are like a clocks that no longer work: it still gives you the right time at least twice a day.

Interpersonal relationships form an important issue in people with personality disorders because of what we in the trade call 'ego-syntonic' effects. They think nothing is wrong with them, it is the others with the problem and thus they seek to change the world, not themselves.

These personality types exist in the general population but if they are clustered in the arena of politics they tend to distort society's functioning. That is when the result is irrational, chaotic, undemocratic and indecisive as we see in Nepali politics.

The interpretation by the king and his cohorts that the Maoists are terrorists, and the futile claims by the rebels that a majority of the country is under their control are examples of narcissistic behaviour.

This 'I am the best, only what I do is correct' are attempts to

receive universal acceptance and approval and characterises the personalities of the king, GP Koirala and several other personalities.

Joining the royal government with a view that regression has been corrected only to wake up the next morning to realise the truth and regret earlier moves exemplify people with **borderline personality disorders**. How can your principles be so unstable, swinging like a pendulum between the extremes of constitutional monarchy and complete republican state within days?

Lack of trust, failing to respect each other's existence and looking for hidden motives and perspectives of every activity are ubiquitous features of a paranoid personality type and is probably the most prevalent disorder among Nepali political figures.

The royal regime dismissed the unilateral ceasefire called by the Maoists, saying it was a ploy to regroup. Then it attacked the rebel-party pact saying it was addressed at the parties and not themselves. Meanwhile, the parties are unwilling or are pretending to avoid reconciliation with the king suspecting he might use them to provide legitimacy to his rule. There is a lack of trust and extreme paranoia on the part of the regime which hides a deep-seated hunger for authoritarian rule.

To untangle ourselves from the political and social impasse the first step is to detect the above personality disorders prevalent in all political players to be followed by thorough psychiatric counselling. ●

Dr Shyam Chalise is pursuing further studies in psychiatry.

# A new deal in Delhi

## Nepali exiles in India have more clout over what happens in Nepal than ever before

NEW DELHI—The conflict in Nepal has swelled the number of Nepalis working in India. Nobody keeps official count, but it's estimated that there are about two million Nepalis in India at any given time working menial jobs: security guards, watchmen, orderlies, waiters and domestics.

A few own small businesses and have benefited from India's booming economy. Running small eateries, operating trucks and buses, and coordinating essential services such as electricity repairs, plumbing, and roofing. These Nepali exiles are making their presence felt in the Indian capital as never before.

STATE OF THE STATE  
C K Lal



Those espousing dictatorship of the

proletariat have assiduously cultivated these petty capitalists. They are the ones who accommodate Maobadi leaders, care for the treatment of wounded cadre and bear the cost of bourgeois education for the progenies of rebel luminaries. Their cars ferry the interlocutors of mainstream parties to undisclosed locations. The Indian government evidently knows all about these

comings and goings but has chosen to ignore the activities of someone else's terrorists.

"Elected and respected political leaders of Nepal have been coming to India from time to time and holding consultations with Maoists but we have neither invited any leader for consultations nor facilitated any discussion," Minister of State for External Affairs Anand Sharma told the Rajya Sabha. Even so, the Indian establishment doesn't seem to be in any hurry to rush the parties and rebels meeting here.

Indecision of their party bosses back in Kathmandu has hamstrung the negotiators here. "When will our leaders realise that nothing comes out of nothing?" asked one exasperated party leader, "they should stop waiting for a positive response from the palace."

For all their extremism and excesses, the Maoists are remarkably accurate in their assessment of where the people and palace stand. The king and hardcore monarchists believe the people's sovereignty is safe in the hands of a hereditary monarch. The Maoists want the people to decide for themselves through a constituent assembly.

In normal circumstances, any political party would have grabbed such an opportunity. But political parties still want the Maoist leadership to do a lot more to establish their democratic credentials. The withdrawal of the blockade and support for peaceful protests would build confidence between armed guerrillas and party cadres at the grassroots.

The Maoists argue that they will be sitting ducks if they decided to join peaceful protests and claim they too favour a longer truce to assist in negotiations, but in the absence of a coherent political package from mainstream parties yet another unilateral ceasefire would amount to surrender.

So the Delhi dialogue is stuck. But both sides seem to appreciate each other's apprehensions and compulsions. The defection of Rabindra Shrestha and Mani Thapa is a relatively minor issue for the Maoists: they are of little value to their war effort. It's the Nepali diaspora in India that the Maoist leadership can't afford to ignore.

With the Nepali countryside denuded, the insurgents now look here for recruits. Without their financial and material

support, the wheels of war in Nepal would come to a grinding halt. Even Indian assistance, if any, is probably channelled through organisations of Nepali exiles.

Narayanhiti Palace has an extensive network of relatives and friends in the erstwhile ruling families of India. Maoists have established numerous organisations that mobilise Nepali exiles. Mainstream parties, however, have neglected their former constituencies in India. One immediately senses this talking to any Nepali in New Delhi. Most don't care much for monarchy, but they care even less about the mainstream parties.

Any new deal in Delhi is sure to have the stamp of Nepali exiles in the Indian capital. Along with their numbers and prosperity, their political clout too has increased immensely. Other than serving Gorkhas, they are the most important Nepalis for the Indian establishment.

Perhaps it's now time to define afresh the notion of nationalism to include the concerns of workers in self-exile in India as well as other countries. In addition to South Block, entrepreneurs of South Delhi are the now the other important players of Indo-Nepal relations. ●



## LETTERS

## PLUNDER

Your editorial 'As if there was no tomorrow' (#288) is a scathing criticism of the financial dealings of the present government. Yet the claim that a restored Parliament would bring transparency to the government actions is preposterous. Have you forgotten the recent past or are you blinded by your resentment and political vehemence? Your are outraged by the purchase of the two royal limousines but what about the waving of import duties on the Pajeros and Prados of MPs? How much revenue was lost to the state then? And how many prime ministers have freely distributed state funds to party cadres and family members? One can go on and on. What difference does it make to the common man if the corrupt belongs to one elite or to the other? Corruption was the main factor that lead to the failure of our democratic experiment and the growing lack of confidence in the democratic institutions and the political parties. The Nepali public is concerned that the political parties want to return to power and re-establish themselves as the only ones with the right to milk the cow. If that is not the case then let the parties pledge to the people of Nepal to pass strict anti-corruption laws if and when parliament is reinstated. Without demonstrating a clear intention to fight corruption all their appeals to democracy and the rule of law are just blatant lies.

*Sunita Aryal, email*

● Your editorial 'As if there was no tomorrow' was depressing. Not only are Nepalis being killed and brutalised by conflict. Not only has development been pushed back, but the new rulers are just taking money from the national exchequer. It seems whoever is in power in Nepal, whether they are self-appointed autocrats or elected ministers, they have treated the treasury as their private bank account. What is different now is that those in power want to rake it in because they know time is running out for them.

*Gyan Subba, email*

## PAX INDICA

Kuldip Nayar's column 'Schizophrenic Nepal policy' (#285) was cynical and schizophrenic itself. The column smacks of Nayar's indentification of his government's imperial ambitions in south Asia. The king of Nepal is not another Hindustani raja, but a dynasty that is identified with Nepal's unification and formation. Nayar is behaving in a typical Pax Indica manner of his government. Enough is enough, people like Nayar should just mind their own business, god knows there are enough poverty-stricken people in his own country that need attention. His expertise in rhetorical journalism is better suited to Nayar's own jurisdiction.

*Ang Lama, Thailand*

## SLAPDASH SOCIOLOGY

In an opinion piece that slams Pico Iyer for sloppy thinking and misinformed judgments ('Pico Iyer makes an ass of himself', #288) it is lamentable that Kunal falls into the same trap of slapdash sociology. When Lama writes 'Christianity...is a recent import largely spread by unspiritual promises of economic advancement.' I wonder what evidence supports his assertion. Never mind that there was a viable indigenous Christian community in Kathmandu valley in the late Malla period whose descendants still live in Bihar. This might be considered an historical anomaly that had little long-term impact on Nepali culture and society. It is Lama's comment on how (evangelical Protestant) Christianity has spread that is, to borrow his vocabulary, clichéd and specious.

As a religious ethnographer with some research experience in this area, I find that a more common reason Nepalis are initially attracted to Christianity is the promise or claim of miraculous physical healing. Regrettably, from a theological perspective, a faith based on enthusiasm for such events can run perilously close to magical thinking. I suspect some are attracted to churches because Christianity represents for them a religion that is somehow more modern and international. The judgment that converts are primarily low-caste would be an off-the-mark truism in Nepal. There are large numbers of Brahmin and Chettri converts. Nonetheless, there are certainly some Dalits and Janajatis who embrace Christianity to signal a definitive break with what they perceive as an oppressive cultural and religious system. Dr Ambedkar's Buddhists did the same. Socio-economic factors clearly play a role in this. But for Lama to equate this motivation with a venal desire for economic advancement is demeaning to a significant number of the countrymen whose praises he otherwise rightly sings.

*Gregory Sharkey, SJ Thamel*

## RANG DE BASANTI

Rang de Basanti is more than relevant in Nepal because things are going backward ('Why not to kill the minister', #287). Nepalis are all holy and they are waiting for Pashupatinath to come down and rescue us. For gods sake this is not going to happen during kaliyug. The king, party and Maoists are at loggerheads, so what are the people supposed to do? This movie should be shown all over the country free of cost and scare the hell out of these political players,

*Robin Joshi, email*

## CORRECTIONS

- The photo accompanying Wayne Amtzis' Poetic License (#289) should have been credited to Nick Dawson instead of what appeared.
- In 'Differently-abled' the correct form of the acronym DHRC should have been the Disabled Human Rights Centre and Sudarshan Subedi's correct age is 33.
- Sarahana's Shrestha's name was mis-spelled in 'Sarhana's Samudaya' (#287).

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# Growing despite the conflict

In the latest in its series of economic roundtables, Himalmedia's Business Bahas went in-depth into the banking sector on 10 March.

The banking sector is doing well despite the conflict, but it would do even better if the insurgency was resolved and investment opportunities expanded. Banking is a role model for other sectors of the economy because of proper regulatory mechanisms and transparency are in place.

Invited participants zeroed in on the challenges and prospects thrown up by the conflict. Will the short-term focus on consumer banking and remittances give way to bigger things? Speakers agreed this was only possible if the conflict is resolved.



ALL PICS: MIN BAJRACHARYA

## Radhesh Pant CEO, Bank of Kathmandu

- Nepal's banks are serving barely 15 percent of the population, and growth has been affected by the conflict. But despite this the banking sector has found ways to expand the market through consumer banking and remittances. Even tough investments may be down, profits have not dropped and part of the reason for that is transparency. Because of the tight regulation of the Nepal Rastra Bank, banks can't hide poor performance like other sectors.

- If it hadn't been for the conflict, the banks would now have had a network of channels right to the rural areas. We would have branches in village after village. The rural population would have access to loans and bank services would have expanded.

- On non-performing loans, the biggest problem is that big business buys off politicians (so they don't have to pay loans).



informal economy is converting to formal, the growth of transparency and remittances. Besides, Nepal Bank Limited and Rastriya Banijya Bank have 40-50 percent market share and their reform in the past five years has had a ripple effect on other banks.

- After the banks entered the remittance business, the competition has brought down the cost of money transfers. And the Rastra Bank has a system where money from remittances are exchanged at a 15 paisa higher rate.

- After the conflict started, there has been no investments in large capital intensive industries. If the situation hadn't deteriorated there would have been big projects that would have needed financing. Such projects are still viable, but reluctance is due to the risk factor.

- The Rs 1 billion threshold for paid up capital is not logical. How much capital a bank wants is its business. We need to decide whether the Basel-2 deadline of January 2007 is desirable here or whether we need to adapt it for Nepali conditions.

## Parsuram Kunwar Chief Administrator, Nepal Bank Limited

- Looking at the past five years of bank dividend rates, I would say the banks are not doing too well. Some banks may have done well, but overall the rate of dividends has gone down.

- No one know who in Nepal earns how much from where. If you look at company balance sheets, there is no salary dividend anywhere for the directors yet their lifestyles are disproportionately luxurious. This is why transparency is important.

- Even if it wasn't for the conflict, consumer banking would have come to Nepal. And it's not that there was no opportunity elsewhere so consumer banking grew. Even in India, banks that are doing well in other areas are attracted to consumer banking.



## Suman Joshi CEO, Laxmi Bank

- The main reason banks are on a sound footing is because of good governance and risk management in the past three-four years. Internally the banks have cleaned up their act. All this has helped.

- Because of the lack of transparency we don't know exactly how much profit companies in Nepal are making, but many are actually doing quite well. Even till five years ago, a middle-income Nepali family had to think twice before getting a home loan. Today, it is accepted practice. This brings a culture which requires a borrower to think about repaying loans, so they start working harder and productivity goes up. So it is a chain reaction that helps the economy in the long run. The banks have adapted to the abnormal situation and learnt to survive.

- It is too hypothetical to plan for 2010 when we don't know if we can resolve the conflict by then. If the insurgency is still going on then, would international banks want to come here? There will be no big infrastructure and no big projects. The problem is non-economic, unless that is resolved we can't look at the economic side of things and plan for them. We may make-do with remittances and consumer financing for a while but this won't be the long-term solution.



## Surendra Bhandari CEO, Kumari Bank

- Despite the conflict there are trends in the economy that have indirectly helped the banking sector. They may be temporary benefits, but it's not as if the banks are going to go under. Investments in garments, carpets, hotels have dried up because of the conflict.

- In the old days, big debtors used their connections not to pay loans and the banks used to focus on smaller debtors. But the Rastra Bank is strict now, banks are forced to declare non-forming loans when a time limit is crossed and this can hit the bank's bottomline.



## Surendraman Pradhan Chief, Banking Administration Division, Nepal Rastra Bank

- I agree that one factor in the strength of the banking sector is Rastra Bank regulations. Until you have cash collection you can't show it as income. It's not just for show.

- But the banks have indirectly benefited from the conflict, mainly because of rapid urbanisation. This has sent real estate prices soaring, and this has had an impact on property

collaterals Customers are paying back their loans so the bank doesn't seize property and auction it.

## Basudevram Joshi Banker, Nepal Rastra Bank

- Overall, the economy has shrunk by up to three percent. If this hadn't happened the economy would have expanded and there would be more capital mobility. So banks have nowhere to invest and are floating on high liquidity and this has kept interest rates low. In addition, there have been problems on loan repayment because of the conflict. For example the Rastriya Banijya Bank has Rs 1 billion invested in hotels. These loans can be repaid only if tourism bounces back, and for that we need the conflict resolved.

- Big debtors know how to use the court system and file a writ petition, the court easily issues a stay order. If you look at NBL and RBB, most of the bad loans are of this type. This can drag on indefinitely in the courts and the banks just have to sit back and wait twiddling their thumbs.



## Anil Shah CEO, Nabil Bank

- Bank now have to be accountable towards Nepali overseas workers because the money they send home is such a large part of our business. Banks have been forced to provide more reliable, more accessible and affordable money transfers. They have appointed sub-agents in villages so families can easily and safely collect transfers. In addition, workers have access to Rs 100,000 in loans at 8.5 percent interest if they want to go abroad to work.

- Now we want to tell them, why wait till you earn your money to buy a car or home? Why don't you build your house or buy a car before you go abroad. You can pay while you earn. We at Nabil have also allowed workers to open a special account, after all they are clear about two things: to work and to earn. They know very well which agency gives the best rate for money transfers home.

- At present the major business for banks are remittances and consumer banking. In the future it will be hydropower and physical infrastructure. Today, even if we wanted to invest in Upper Trisuli we'd need \$50 million and we won't have enough money. That is why it is important for us to have big banks and this is possible only through mergers and acquisitions.



## Sudhir Khatri CEO, Development Credit Bank

- I agree, banking is regulated and transparent. Proof of this is that in other sectors profits can be hidden and balance sheets show losses which is not reflected in the lavish lifestyles of so-called 'bankrupt' industries.

- If you want to open a commercial bank today, you need paid-up capital of Rs 1 billion, but how much capital does an industrialist need to open an industry? It's all bank loans.

- Because we haven't yet developed a 'corporate culture' I don't think there will be consolidation in the banking sector with mergers. Basel won't harm us, it will benefit banking. Nowhere else in South Asia except Nepal do you have 12 percent liquidity. We have already hit rock bottom, there is nowhere to go but up.

## Narendra Bhattarai Managing Director, NCC Bank

- Banks are only a small part of the entire economy. So banks can't be an island of normalcy when everything around is abnormal. Even so, the banking sector has a few good things going for it. Our economy is dominated by the informal sector and the banks have made inroads into it in the past 15 years.

- Insurgency-driven urbanisation has changed consumer patterns and lifestyles and the banks have benefited. Even in the midst of the conflict, banks did well because more Nepalis started migrating overseas for work and remittances grew. This entire conflict-driven cycle is factor in the growth of the banking sector. However, the overall situation is not good. The conflict has also affected business, villages are empty, and this hurts the national economy. The profit banks are reaping now is temporary.

- The reasons banks are doing well is because the





### Wages slow to grow

Wages of bank employees rose higher than those of workers in other sectors as of mid-January, according to the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB). The increase was 10 percent at banks and financial institutions compared to 4.3 percent overall. During the same period, inflation grew about seven percent, leaving the average worker with less buying power. Agricultural labourers followed bank workers with wages growing 7.3 percent while the wages of construction workers dropped one percent, according to the NRB's *National Salary and Wage Index*. The salaries of government workers did not change while those of employees at public corporations grew 4.4 percent.

### Little research

Most institutions running hospitals and health research centres are not doing any research and simply using the designation to evade taxes, according to a report prepared by the Nepal Health Research Council (NHRC). Of 367 institutes active in 40 districts till 14 July 2005, nearly 77 percent were not conducting any health research, says the document. Officials said hospitals put the word 'research' to evade taxes and the report says the institutes have been evading taxes while importing equipment in the name of research.

### Gold imports

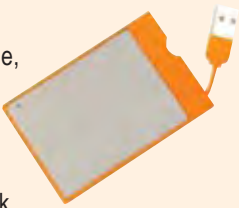
The Nepal Rastra Bank has introduced a new provision permitting commercial banks and private finance companies to import unlimited amounts of gold. Implemented under the Finance Ordinance, the move's main aim is to discourage illegal imports of gold, said a bank official. It will also end existing constraints on gold imports, previously set at 10 kg for each traveller returning from abroad, and promote export of Nepali gold ornaments.

### Peter England

Peter England is offering 15 percent discount on all its products, from shirts, trousers, T-shirts, denims, jackets, suits, blazers and accessories.

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# Invest in management

## A good boss beats out money, machines and location

Good management practices deliver superior results. Even bad Nepali managers know that. But the extent to which good management makes a company successful has long been a topic fraught with uncertainties. A recent paper, drawing on the conclusions of a study done on 700-plus manufacturing companies in America and

STRICTLY BUSINESS  
Ashutosh Tiwari



Europe by the London Business School and McKinsey & Company, argues that for a company to deliver superior results, the quality of its managers is more important than its industry sector, its regulatory conditions and where it works.

In other words, what managers do inside their companies is a lot more important than the external conditions under which their industries are placed. Managers matter because their decisions have a disproportionately larger effect on their companies' success than money, machinery or location.

But good managers do not happen by accident. For them to do their work, the paper says that their companies need to be in a competitive landscape in the first place. That's because competition is known to spur the introduction of efficient methods and the industry-wide diffusion of new processes. As such, managers who respond to

competition tend to be quick to adopt proven best practices "such as lean-production methods on the shop floor and techniques for setting targets and tracking outcomes". Alternatively, an absence of competition means that managers have no incentive to practice better management. Indeed, the study correlated the improvement of one point on a scale of 1 to 5 in the quality of management practices to an increase of six per cent on total productivity.

But in case you thought that increasing productivity in the name of better management meant squeezing the juice out of employees to leave them dry, the study also reported that the same well-managed companies also scored high on metrics such as employee satisfaction and morale. Obviously, good managers seem to know that they cannot deliver the results if they don't have a talented workforce with high morale. As such, good management aimed to boost productivity in a competitive sector also includes employee-friendly practices.

What does all these mean for us in Nepal?

First, it means that competition is essential if we want to introduce better management practices in our companies. Policy-wise, this means that the government needs to recast its role as a promoter of competition in almost all sectors. It can do so

by making it easier for domestic and foreign entrepreneurs to compete to provide goods and services to Nepali consumers. There is no reason, for example, why consumers cannot purchase their mobile SIM cards from the offerings made by, say, a dozen competing telecom companies.

True, no one likes competition and there is much resistance to it. But in these times of open borders and cheaper goods and services from abroad, our businesses are better off learning how to profit from competition than resisting it.

Second, Nepali companies need to take their employees seriously. Having better buildings, more land and fancier computers no longer differentiate one top company from another. What is increasingly important is the quality of people working for the company. Hire mediocre people and get mediocre results. As such, spending money on the recruitment, training and professional development of the staff and tracking that investment need to be on the agenda of all forward-looking companies. To this end, companies need to start thinking about making human resources a front-line office and not a backroom bureaucracy.

After all, as the study shows, competition, good management practices and higher productivity are all positively related if we want to boost productivity. ●

# Two sides of The North Face

## Off trekking? Try original or knock-off designer down from Thamel.

ANOOP PANDEY

Today's Nepali motorcyclist is less interested in looking cool than keeping out the cold judging by those bulky down jackets many of them sport. And one label seems to have cornered the market on winter wear: The North Face.

The outdoor product maker was born in 1966 and the name The North Face eventually chosen because the north face of a mountain, most notably Chomolungma, is considered the steepest, coldest, and most difficult to route to climb. But in the shops of Nepal you can say that this international brand wears two faces: the original North Face products and their cheaper imitations.

Despite Nepal's attraction for trekkers and climbers, original North Face products only arrived here in September of 2003. Recognising the widespread availability of counterfeit goods sporting the label and with increasing demand from Nepalis for high-end products, a showroom was set up at Durbar Marg, which later moved to Tridevi

Marg in Thamel.

Initially, it offered basic trekking gear, tents, axes, shoes and wind breakers. Today, the showroom also sells casual wear such as shirts and jeans for teenagers as North Face looks to widen its market beyond foreign trekkers, Sherpas and hotels.

"We want to target every group, from teenagers to trekkers to everyday Nepalis," says manager Sabina Sakya. The shop buys its goods from factories in Bangladesh and distributors in Korea, who also monitor quality. "We can guarantee high-end products and the quality of our goods," adds Sakya. The North Face showroom is making a large profit and expanding its space in Thamel and Sakya plans to open showrooms in Pokhara and other prime trekking destinations. Business is so good, in fact, that North Face offers sales twice a year, with discounts of up to 70 percent.

Meanwhile, in countless outdoor wear shops deep in the narrow, busy streets of Thamel, North Face is ubiquitous, shops offering what look to be the same products but at much lower prices. Here the price of a fleece jacket ranges from Rs 500 to Rs 1,500. These knockoff North Faces are now

even seen on Maoist field commanders in the mountains.

Smadn Girel of Dolkha moved to Kathmandu eight years ago and is now settled in his own trekking shop. He lays out a number of gloves, glasses and jackets on his table, all of them brandishing the words The North Face. He picks up socks neatly packed in a plastic box that bears the picture of a climber with the silhouette of the sun behind him, looking uncannily like the package at the North Face showroom.

"North Face sells these socks for Rs 1,200, I sell it for Rs 200," he says. "They also get their products from China- they just charge more."

Girel says that unlike the showroom, he caters to people who cannot afford original prices. Many shopkeepers like him also run small factories that make jackets, gloves and socks, one reason why their clothing is so cheap.

They simply stitch on the North Face logo afterwards. These goods are also sold wholesale to smaller trekking shops. Heavy equipment such as axes, shovels and tents are imported from China. But these days Girel has too much free time. "No tourists,



MIN BAJRACHARYA

no trekkers, no business," he says forcing a smile.

Despite their competition, neither Sakya nor Girel show any signs of dislike for one another. "They sell what they need to in order to make a good living and I respect that. It would just be so much better if The North Face would start a factory in Nepal," says Sakya. Girel, for his part, is resolute, "I still get my customers when times are good. The showroom has had no effect on me or sales," he says. ●



# Does the monarchy belong just to the king, or to the people?



KIRAN PANDAY

Yubaraj Ghimire in *Samaya*, 16 March

समय

The biggest power of democracy is that the people can change a ruler who doesn't meet their expectations. The people haven't seen these expectations fulfilled after 4 October 2002 or 1 February 2005. There is not only no reason for Nepalis to be impressed by the king's performance, but they have been able to see and bear his weaknesses.

It is now no secret that the king has a very negative opinion of the political parties and their leaders. The sycophants around him have turned the king into something of a king out of Hans Christian Andersen *Emperor's New Clothes*, but he doesn't seem to realise it. He seems to be supremely confident about his own abilities for which there is no concrete proof. In fact, the king is being known less as the protector of the constitution and more as just a commander-in-chief of the army. His reputation inside the country

is now also reflected outside. Even George W Bush spoke of King Gyanendra in the same breath as General Musharaff and the Burmese junta. By bringing the message that the king must hand power over to the political parties, Donald Camp also brought the same message. By completely ignoring the Supreme Court decision which implied that the king should only rule on advice of the council of ministers as stipulated in the constitution, the king has proved his real intentions: that he wants to keep power in his fist.

Is the monarchy the property of the king, or of the people? This debate is now widespread because King Gyanendra has shown that he is not behaving according to the spirit of the constitution. From time to time, the king has shown that he is aware of what the people are saying about him. He once told Krishna Prasad Bhattarai: "I don't want to go down in history as a person who usurped the people's rights." And he even told Sher Bahadur Deuba after reinstating him as prime minister: "I have swallowed my pride, I am now feeling lighter." And he admitted to diplomats that he may have made a mistake by ousting Deuba. But these were private comments, and besides if there is no public outcome from them it will be difficult to see it as more than just a tactical move.

All this raises the question: what is the opinion about all this of the successor to the throne, Crown Prince Paras? It is easy to guess the lifespan of the monarchy at a time of extreme polarisation between the Maoists who want to overthrow the monarchy, the political parties who have in the past supported the constitutional monarchy but are being sidelined and the public which has always regarded the monarchy as a symbol of national unity. There are people like Dr Tulsi Giri who have stepped in to demonstrate their loyalty to the king and serve as lightening rods. In a way, by being even more hardline than the king on the parties, Giri has actually made the king look like a moderate. But the people aren't going to measure the king's support for the constitution from this.

The monarch now faces the challenges of relevance and credibility. If King Gyanendra fails to see the writing on the wall, the future will be unstoppable. If he doesn't heed the aspirations of the people, he will have done injustice to them and also to the institution of the Nepali monarchy.

## Women's day

Himal Khabarpatrika, 14-28 March

हिमाल

KAILALI—The center of attraction during the celebration of International Women's Day by the Maoists was their sub-company commander, Asha Bista who was sporting an AK-47. "This is part of our effort to make up 50 percent of the army ranks with women, our women are capable of using AK-47s and other weapons in future." Asha Bista herself had her assault rifle slung across her shoulder (pictured) and said: "This is what will allow us to defeat the state's M-16s, we are forced to carry arms like these to liberate women. Nepali women will not be freed by talking nonsense in five-star hotels in Kathmandu." The Maoists marked women's day with a drill on the Mahendra Highway and out of the



150 male guerrillas 60 were women. Six of them had AK-47s. The program came to an end at five in the evening with another march past. Asha Bista had a message for visiting journalists: "This rifle is my jewelry, you hurry along to your housewives, we have to return to our bunkers and carry on our liberation struggle."

# Prison diary

Bijaydeb Bhattarai in *Jana Aastha*, 8 March

आस्था

I was rushed to an army barrack soon after my arrest last year, where I was blindfolded, handcuffed and kicked to the ground. Then they put me in a sack, hung me upside down, beaten and submerged in water. Later, I found that there were different levels of torture. Those in Grade A were electrocuted. Detainees in B were choked and their bodies slashed while prisoners classed as C were hung up and beaten until they died and in some cases were raped, buried alive or shot to death. There were three or four detainee camps inside the Bhairabnath Barrack.

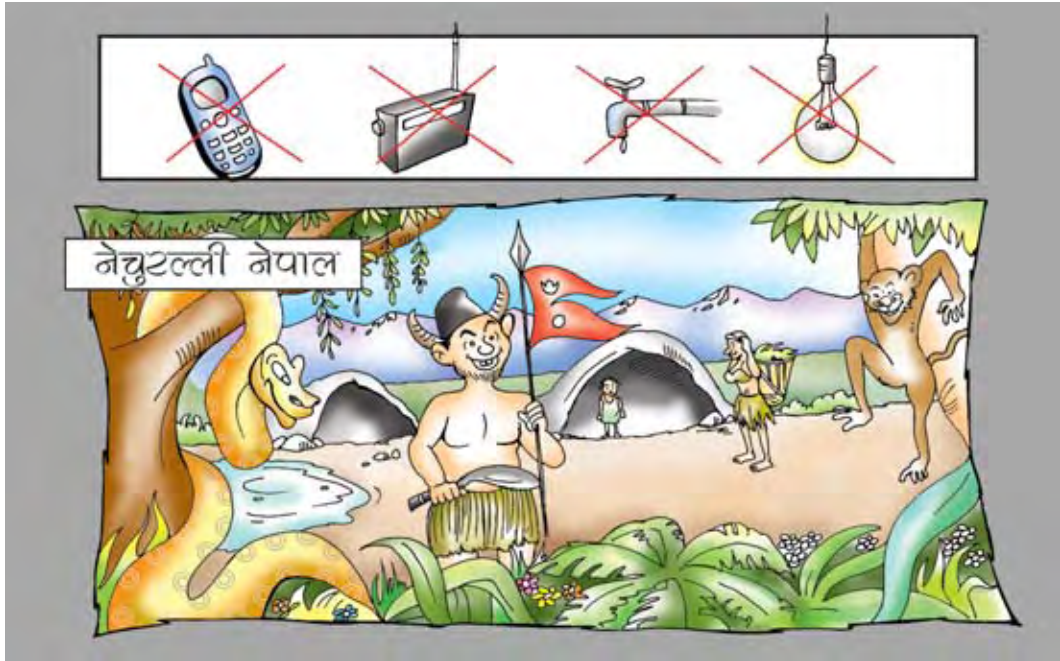
There, I met many individuals accused of working as Maoists but most of them were innocent civilians. Pradip Sarki, a driver, and Rajkumar Basnet, a bus conductor, were released after 10 months of torture. Kaluman Tamang was let go after 11 months of cruelty. Other detainees included Bhaikaji Ghimire, Krishnaraj KC, Ganesh Dhakal, Suryaman Maharjan, Resam BK, Sarita Sharma, Rambahadur Basnet, Jitman Basnet, Amrit Maharjan, Madhab Neupane, Tyalgen Sherpa, Gobinda Ghimire and Jujubhai Maharjan. The whereabouts of 500 others whom I came across are unknown. In addition, many prisoners like Surendra Khadgi, Anuman Shrestha, Madhab Adhikari, Kaji Gurung and Kamal KC are suffering from infections of their wounds and smelled bad. The army used to bring in 100-200 detainees a day and take them to unknown places the same night. Dipendra Pant, BK Shrestha and Pipal Shrestha were beaten to death in front of our own eyes. Renu Dulal was stripped naked and then beaten to death.

A pregnant Tamang girl was kicked until she bled to death despite her pleading to him to spare her unborn infant. Suchendra Maharjan's neck was slit and his head was squashed with a hammer while Bhim Maharjan's beating left him bleeding all over. Haribahadur Roka and Buddhi Lama were caned severely. Dharendra Basnet, Puspa Basnet and Ashok Akela were beaten until they were half dead.

We found later that Nischal Nakarmi, Bhim Giri, Bhabnath Dhamala, Gokul Niraula, Nima Lama, Shantiram Bhattarai, Arjun Pokhrel, Rupak Adhikary, Deshbhakta Chapagain, Dileswar Limbu, Lila Acharya, Tejman BK, Arjun Maharjan, Surendra Thapa, Kamala Waiba, Astaraj Bajracharya, Sudarsan Rijal, Jalandhar Gautam, Kumar Dhakal, Arjun Neupane, Amrit Kandel, Prakash Lama, Madhab Adhikari, Rajendra Mali and Lila Pande were all squeezed into a truck and taken to Shivapuri forest where they were killed and buried. Evidence can still be found there.

Only 30 of us, including Krishna KC and Himal Sharma, are among the survivors who witnessed these events. The mental torture was also so extreme that we were not even allowed to go to the toilet without first being beaten. Every night we readied ourselves for beatings when we heard the soldiers rattle the doors with iron pipes. We learnt that representatives from the ICRC and other human rights organisations were looking for us. But just prior to their visits we were made to wake up and run barefoot to hide in the bunkers. This happened three or four times and many of us got sick. Two detainees, Khadag Dharti and Padam Nakarmi, died when they were forced to lie on the cold floor. One rainy night, 18 of us were crammed into a truck and taken to a forest where we heard the sound of insects. We were soaked and it was extremely cold. We were blindfolded and our hands tied so that we imagined this was the end of our lives. We were told to lie on the ground and then dragged by ropes tied around our necks. This went on for five nights and then we were taken back to the Bhairabnath.

(Bhattarai's testimony to *Jana Aastha* at Nakkhu Jail)



Naturally Nepal

हिमाल

Robin Sayami in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 14-28 March

### QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“In the decade long People's War, comrades Prachanda and Baburam have spent eight years lavishing in a foreign land, for which reason they are isolated from the realities of the battle front and have turned rhetorical and this has lead towards unnecessary destruction.”



- Central Committee Maoist leaders Rabindra Shrestha and Mani Thapa, 13 March. Both leaders were expelled the next day by Prachanda who slated them as traitors



Tulsispeak

Editorial in *Dristi*, 14 March

The international community is suggesting that the country’s crisis can be resolved if the king and parties join hands. US President George W Bush made the call at a New Delhi press conference and India, China,



Japan, UK and the European Union have been asking the king to unite with the parties. But Dr Tulsi Giri’s reiterated anti-alliance statements make it plain that this is not in the cards. It also seems clear that Giri is voicing the thoughts of the king, who called him back to Nepal last year to make him his shield. It is true that the crisis may not be resolved with a king-party alliance unless the Maoists are also dealt with effectively. But this is not why Giri is against the king aligning with the parties. He believes only in containing ‘terrorism’ with military strength.

Foreign countries critical of the king’s move have to apply more pressure to convince the monarch to rectify his mistake—only then will dialogue between the king and parties be possible. Unless this happens, both sides will follow their own roadmaps.

No saying no

*Nepal*, 12 March

BARDIA—Darbari Tharu shakes his head in frustration as he tries to get Maoist leaders to reveal the whereabouts of his son Keshab Prasad, who was forced to carry militants on his tractor from Motipur on 25 February. Keshab’s 90-year-old grandmother Somli remembers rebels promising to return him by afternoon but until today, there is no sign of him. Keshab, 24, was first asked to carry rice but after reaching Jagatiya, he was asked to leave it and transport Maoists. Concerned about his life, he saved a message on his tape recorder and left it with villagers. “I’ve been forcefully taken to the battle. I may not return alive,” were Keshab’s last words. Around 5PM, about 500 heavily armed Maoists were seen travelling to Nepalganj on jeeps, trucks and a tractor to attack security forces. The battle lasted five hours but the rebels returned without Keshab. In their desperate search for him, his family met Comrade Bistaar but instead of apologising for dragging their innocent son to war, he slammed the family. “Thousands of people like him have been

killed. So why are you only troubled about your son?” He also threatened them not to villagers not to mention the incident to journalists or human rights activists.

Alienated king

*Deshantar*, 12 March

The king is further alienating himself from the people by using the police and army as a shield, digging a path towards a fully authoritarian rule instead of one that could lead to dialogue and democracy. Last week’s talks were only to fool the people. The king gave audiences only to his ministers and a few other pro-monarchists but he cut even those short in order to meet security chiefs. In the last week the king has met them twice, the last time being Friday. The king called the chiefs of the army, police and armed police, as well as the chief of the investigation department, to Pokhara. That session went on for more than an hour. The same group met last Sunday. The king has no intention of returning to people’s rule. That interpretation is reinforced by public statements made by the king’s first vice-chairman, which signal the end to any chance of dialogue. In a public program on Thursday, Dr Tulsi Giri said, “The king and the political parties uniting will not end terrorism neither will the parties and the Maoists uniting bring forth any solution to the country’s political crisis.”



Forced labour

Ex-MP Prakash Jwala in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 14-28 March

The long line of people included school children and 75-year old men. They carried hoes and digging equipment, some were crying others were wheezing. Other villagers were forced-marched by the Maoists into the procession as it moved across the Salyan’s Tharemare. This was part of the rebel’s construction gang for the Maoist ‘martyr Highway’ in Rolpa. The 90-km road was started last year and villagers from Rolpa, Rukum and Salyan are forced to work ten days in construction, failing which they have to pay a fine. Teachers from Rukum have also been forced to travel to Rolpa to work on the road, so schools have been affected. However, in January villagers of Chaurjhari in Rukum refused to go for which they had to pay a heavy price. Since then the Maoists have cut off the irrigation water for the fertile Chaujhari valley. Because there is no water in the canal, the electricity has also gone off since then. All these factors have brought difficulties in the implementation of the 12-point Maoist-party agreement. The Maoists are still force-marching the people, they haven’t returned confiscated property, they are still extorting and forcing people to pay taxes. At this rate, how can human rights, dignity and civic rights be upheld? How can there be cooperation and competitive multiparty democracy with such behaviour. The people had been hopeful about the Maoists, but now even they are put off by the sweet-talk and their return to the old way of intimidating people.

“The 7 parties have no agenda”



KIRAN PANDAY

*Nispakshya*, 14 March  
Interview with ex-Kathmandu mayor and former UML member Keshab Sthapit.

**So you left UML to support the king?**  
I quit because Madhab Nepal started acting like a king himself. The UML has displayed double standards in the past. The leaders talked about regression and at the same time approached the king with their petition. They were also happy when parliament was dissolved. The party itself is authoritarian.

**What’s your opinion of the 12-point understanding?**  
I had never realised that the Maoists were so clever. They are using the seven parties to attack the monarchy. There is no escape for the parties, which are now even willing to give shelter to the rebels.

**So the parties have fallen into the Maoists’ trap?**  
The Maoists are leading and the parties are following. For so many years, the parties have been organising rallies but they have failed to progress. The king easily brushed them off, especially because of the meagre support for their demonstrations. This forced them to seek aid from the rebels. You see more people joining them now but are they really from the seven parties?

**Does this not push the country further into crisis?**  
The problem is the leading parties themselves. On one hand, the Nepali Congress has become a family affair while the UML displays double standards. The people have virtually no trust in them.

**So, there is no hope with the parties?**  
The parties have no agenda at all. They had none before reaching their understanding with the Maoists. The parties have no sense of self-sacrifice and still don’t realise the mistakes they made while in power.

**Then what’s the solution?**  
The 12-point understanding is pushing the country towards more crisis while the king is going his own way. He has to call everyone for talks.

**You’ve criticised the king’s move, yet you support him?**  
The UML have been falsely labelling me a royalist. A king has to be like a king. He has to call for a national assembly that can come up with a common agenda. Both the Maoists and the king have clear agendas. It is the seven-party alliance that does not.



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हाँसुस त मज्जाले — हाँसुस —





# Clean & green

Drive this new Made in Nepal electric van and you not only save



ALL PICS: MIN BAJRACHARYA

**GREEN WITH ENVY:** The MiniEv as it cruises down Baneswor on Thursday with hardly a sound. The motor under the car is a neat little thing (*below, left to right*) the 14 six-volt batteries are under the seat covers and the inverter and charger fit inside the driver’s seat.



**KUNDA DIXIT**

**T**he new Hulas MiniEV is a traffic hazard because it is so quiet you can’t hear it coming. Driving the electric van it is mandatory to honk so other road users know you are there.

On a test drive this week, the only time the van emitted a half-purr half-whine was when it was doing the 15 percent incline up Swayambhu with three passengers and driver. At a traffic light, the driver gets the feeling the engine has cut out and the fingers reflexively go to the ignition switch. With only a small rattle coming from the rear of the fiberglass chassis this is a ride smoother and quieter than on a SUV.

The Italian-made 8 kilowatt Zapi motor is a dream, and kicks in powerfully when you step on the gas, oops sorry, pedal.

You don’t need to hit the brakes because taking the foot off the accelerator automatically puts the motor on regenerative braking which means it goes into recharging mode to convert kinetic energy that would otherwise be wasted.

So we get to the parking lot. And the hand once more instinctively goes to the gear knob to put the car on reverse. Wrong again. You put the car on reverse by turning a switch on the dash board and pressing the accelerator. Careful, though, the motor on reverse packs quite a torque so you feel the van lurch backwards.

On the downhill, the van



coasts without brakes and the Zapi is busy putting the energy to good use by recharging the 14 six-volt batteries under the seatcover. Honk to alert the kids trying to cross the road, honk again to overtake the motorcycle, honk out of sheer delight.

The Mini-V doesn’t turn heads because with its green enamel skin it looks just slightly bigger than a Maruti Omni. Hulas Motors of Biratnagar has used its Mini platform for electric conversion with the help of the Kathandu Electric Vehicles Alliance (KEVA) . The alliance has worked to popularise Safa Tempos in Kathmandu and recently partnered with Bank of Kathmandu to help 20 women get owner-driven Safas. It wants to use this experience now to

promote electric four wheelers.

“Because of the success of Safa Tempos, Nepalis have always thought electric cars are only three wheelers, that is why we want to bring in four-wheelers for personal and business use,” says KEVA’s Bibek Chapagain. KEVA is working with Surendra Golchha at Hulas with support from SDC and USAID to promote the MiniEV as an economically and ecologically attractive vehicle for Nepal.

Indeed, the MiniEV compares favourably with the Rs 900,000 cost price of the Maruti Omni and is half as cheap to run as the Rs 7 per km that it costs to operate the Omni at present electricity and gas prices. (*See box*) Aside from the economic factors, owners of MiniVs can also sleep more



# & electric

e money but also save the planet



soundly at night knowing they haven't pumped more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Just to compare, the 600 electric Tempos in Kathmandu prevent more than 8 tons of carbon from being emitted every year. Imagine how much more we could do if electric cars were more popular.

KEVA's Megesh Tiwari works on managing the program and says: "While the rest of the world is into energy independence we

in Nepal have a solution staring at us right in the face. It is the electric vehicle that you can charge at night during off-peak periods."

Both KEVA and Hulas are realistic enough to know that the MiniEV will not catch on immediately with cautious car buyers. That is why they are first targeting 'green consumers' and hope that the economic argument will steadily win over the others.

The MiniV isn't a Toyota Prius: it doesn't have the looks, the range, or the power. But unlike the hybrid Prius it is fully-electric and perfectly suited for Kathmandu's distances. And it makes even more sense during blockades or when the gas prices go up again as they surely will.

Markus Eisenring, the Swiss engineer who helped design the electric drive in the MiniEV and



	Maruti Omni	Hulas MiniV
Cost	Rs 890,000	Rs 900,000 (estimate)
Mileage	Rs 6.7/km	Rs 1.8/km (plus battery depreciation)
Range	300 km on full tank	70 km on full charge
Made in	India	Nepal
Exhaust	Carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrous oxide, sulfur dioxide, benzene, soot particles.	Zero Emission

Anil Bajracharya say it is a very sturdy system and they wouldn't mind owning one of the cars themselves.

It takes only three hours to ensure near-full charge of the battery pack which will run for up to 70 km. Considering most all-day driving in Kathmandu Valley for delivery vans and commuters rarely exceeds 40 km, this is quite manageable.

With proper use, the batteries

can last up to three years and will cost Rs 80,000 for replacement. Unlike the Safa, the MiniEV comes with an inbuilt charger, and you can just plug it into a 15 Amp wall socket.

So, what are you waiting for? Call KEVA and book you MiniEV now before people wise up and there is a long waiting list. ●

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# STAYING ALIVE

For an institution that saves so many lives, the Nepal Kidney Centre itself is struggling to survive



NARESH NEWAR

NARESH NEWAR

Ramesh Lama looks intently at the dialysis machine, his artificial kidney, as if trying to fathom how much longer it will keep him alive. Both of Lama's kidneys are so severely damaged that doctors at the National Kidney Centre (NKC) in Naxal have placed him in their

Personalised Care Room.

"We need to save him as long as we can," says Ram Krishna Dulal, a public health expert who specialises in diabetes and kidney disease and is also chief administrator of the hospital, the country's largest dialysis centre.

Treatment has impoverished the Lama family. One dialysis session at NKC costs Rs 2,000 and

he needs three sessions a week. Still, this is cheaper than going to India, or at other hospitals where he has to wait his turn.

Lama's father in Nawalparasi has sold his house and all the family's property to pay the bills and now lives destitute in the monastery in Swayambhu with the rest of the sick man's family. In the next room (*pic, above*)

Ramesh Poudel, a 27-year-old policeman, is suffering from chronic kidney failure caused by hypertension and has taken 442 dialysis sessions in five years. Two friends who work in Qatar are paying for his treatment after the Nepal Police stopped footing the bill. Poudel says, "I just hope that I can get better one day and work again." But that is unlikely unless he can get a transplant.

Public health experts say a silent kidney disease epidemic is sweeping Nepal because of changing lifestyles. Hypertension and diabetes top the growing list of reasons for kidney disease. About 14 percent of Nepalis 20 years or older and around 19 percent of those over 40 are reported to have diabetes. A quarter of them develop kidney failure if not treated. "We can easily expect a growing number of kidney failure patients in the short run," says Rishi K Kafle, one of only 10 nephrologists in the country.

Globally, up to 10 percent of the population suffers from some form of kidney disease. But only a fraction of those who have it in Nepal come to the National Kidney Centre and other hospitals in Dharan, Pokhara and Nepalganj that offer treatment. For most it is already too late, or they can't afford even a dialysis.

"Many die even before being diagnosed in areas where there are no facilities as not everyone can come to the capital for treatment," explains Kafle. All the country's experts are permanently based in Kathmandu and two from the government-run Bir Hospital have not returned from London where they went for further studies

## Everyone at risk

Early detection and prevention, via simple and cheap tests, are the keys to keeping kidneys healthy. Even if you are diagnosed with an unhealthy kidney (when kidney cells lose their ability to filter minerals and balance the body's fluids) there is no need to panic as the excellent treatment available in Nepal can slow kidney failure. But ignoring an early diagnosis and postponing treatment could lead to serious problems because chronic kidney failure is always progressive, incurable and irreversible. Dialysis can last a lifetime and patients need a special diet, regular blood tests and an expensive blood transfusion injections called erythropoietin. In addition, after kidney failure a patient is 10 times more likely to get cardiovascular disease. Kidney failure is virtually a disease multiplier.

seven years ago. Established in 1995, the NKC has grown into a national hospital that attracts most kidney failure patients because of its high quality and affordable treatment.

The number of dialysis sessions at NKC has increased from 724 in 1998 to 1,029 in just January 2006. It has more dialysis machines (20) than the country's largest hospitals, including Bir, Army Hospital, Teaching Hospital and Nepal Medical College put together.

As a public service institution, NKC cut its already subsidised cost of dialysis from Rs 3,500 to Rs 2,000 per four-hour

## TRIBUTE

# Chu Nyima is gone and we are still here

All too often we read of a bus plunging (always plunging, never falling) from the highway into one of the great rivers of Nepal. Too many vehicles and too many speeding drivers trying to overtake and eventually an overloaded bus goes off the edge.

On 6 March another bus plunged into the Trisuli and prematurely snuffed out the lives of 50 or more Nepalis. The tragedy swiftly became a media statistic, but it took away the near and dear ones of hundreds of families and friends.

Among them was our beloved Chu Nyima Rimpoche (Trinley Gyamtso), a Nyingmapa lineage hereditary Nepali Buddhist lama, who was returning from visiting his guru in Sikkim. For over 30 years he had touched the hearts and minds of thousands of people. Among them were those who raised funds to rebuild the 500-year-old monastery he inherited high in a remote valley in northern Gorkha.

Not only was he a spiritual guiding light for those who knew him, he had single-



handedly revived education in northern Gorkha. Alas, without offspring, he was the last of the hereditary line.

One of the very first modern visitors to the valley, in 1973, had this to say about Chu Nyima:

"Expecting a venerable old man who might tell us about local history, we were at first a bit disappointed to see that the lama was in fact a very young man of 19. Speaking fluent Tibetan, however, he soon

impressed us with his alert and sympathetic nature."

Fast forward to the 1990s, his personal vision realised, Chu Nyima was presiding over the education of 100 young monks and nuns. I quote one of his many western friends: "I remember his...determination to treat the nuns and monks equally, having them pray together in the same hall...breaking from tradition when needed and when correct but strictly abiding by tradition to further growth and development of the dharma."

I have tried to imagine the acute fear of the passengers as the bus fell 100 m but if anyone was prepared for this sudden translation into the next realm, it must have been Chu Nyima. For years he had been working toward a multi-year retreat but his guru in Sikkim told him he must continue his educational work. The concepts of both irony and karma arise in this particular case.

For the fourth year running Chu Nyima declined a free plane ticket from Bhadrapur to Kathmandu to avoid the arduous bus journey, this time arguing that he had 100 kg of Tibetan

texts that would simply not fly. Some of these sacred texts were washed up downstream on the banks of the Trisuli and are being dutifully dried in the sun.

But there are those who argue that this was his karma, and his time was up, plain and simple. Fact is, our beloved Chu Nyima is gone and we survive. His fellow villagers who winter in Kathmandu are seriously tough mountain folk, and they went to the accident site the next day and managed to winch the bus to the surface of the Trisuli. As they did so, Chu Nyima miraculously floated out through a window and was recovered. He was brought to Kathmandu and is sitting in state in a small chapel at Swayambhu.

The plan is to helicopter his remains to his valley in the high country for a proper cremation. This is not as easy as it might seem in the modern reality of war-torn Nepal, but as this goes to press on Thursday Chu Nyima is preparing to fly back to his monastery on his final journey. May his vision continue to be realised. ●

Charles Gay





session which means the centre is struggling to make ends meet. Its dialysis machines are donated by German hospitals and overheads are partly covered with donations from German benefactors Beate Vogt and Richard Storkenmaier. NKC needs to expand to meet the demand of Nepalis for affordable treatment, but has no space or money. In fact, it is now finding it difficult just to pay overhead costs.

Before NKC opened, Nepali kidney patients simply died while waiting their turn at Bir's

single dialysis machine (see: "The worst disease for a Nepali", NT, #97). Others who could afford it went to India for treatment for transplants. The demand for kidneys is so high and the price so tempting that many Nepalis are falling victim to kidney brokers to sell one of their kidneys. Meanwhile the National Kidney Centre, despite the vital service it provides the nation, is itself in urgent need of a financial dialysis. ●

[National Kidney Center, Naxal, Tel: 4429866]



### Saviours needed

Ramesh Lama used to work as a driver but now he depends on his carpet weaver wife to support him, his 7-year-old son and a daughter who is barely 16 months. The family has already run out of money to pay for his dialysis, the only thing that is keeping him alive. "The wife calls us every day appealing for help," says Shanti Gurung, one of two students at St Xavier's College who have raised Rs 16,000 for the treatment. They have also opened a bank account but have got no contributions to date. Bir Hospital has been providing Lama free medicine and another individual, Kedar Karanjit, gives Lama free blood from his blood bank.

**To help contact:**  
shanti\_gurung\_1@hotmail.com  
Tel: 9803168643

# Agony of exile

## It is not the war that is killing Dailekh

RITA THAPA in DAILEKH

Twenty-five-year-old Rajendra has been living in Surkhet for the past year after fleeing his native Dailekh. His wife was a key activist who led the anti-Maoist uprising in Dullu in November 2004 (see: NT, 'We couldn't take it anymore', # 223). But the Maoists retaliated harshly against the activists for daring to oppose them. Rajendra's wife, who was then pregnant, his father and himself, were all abducted for periods ranging from five days to one month. A cousin was murdered for being an informant. Ratna is also from Dailekh and has a catch in her throat each time she tries to open her mouth to share her experience. Her eyes are dark pools of deep pain that gave out more than words ever could.

The Dailekh uprising (see pic) was seen by many as a milestone: for the first time the people had said enough to Maoist atrocities and despite the fear of reprisal stood up to the rebels. Rajendra and Ratna remember those days well. The behaviour of the rebels was getting unbearable: being forced to cook food for the militia, running errands, extortion. One day the body of a local person said to be killed by the security forces was thrown into a ditch. The soldiers didn't remove it, and the Maoists spread word that the body was booby-trapped.

Finally, in desperation women family members of the deceased retrieved the body. The Maoists then covered it with their red banner—at which the outraged women began throwing stones at the rebels. Everyone joined in and the Maoists were driven out of the village. The security forces and the local administration encouraged the locals of Dullu to organise themselves into vigilante groups. Sure enough, the Maoists reacted and killed some members of the resistance. Rajendra and his family had no choice but to flee for their lives.

Even after 12 years, the motorable road is graveled only up to Chupra, after which there was only a dirt road up to Dailekh Bajar. As we bump along, the surrounding hillsides are ablaze with rhododendron. Higher up, there are orchids dangling from trees along the road. It is hard to believe there is a nasty war going on in such a beautiful place.

Along the road we pass scanty teashops, women carrying backbreaking loads of fodder or weary travelers. There is neglect and misery etched on their faces. The district capital is like an army base: checkpoints and barbed wires all around. The town itself is overcrowded and squalid to the internally displaced and lack of services.

The government's apathy, fear and neglect is in complete contrast to the energy and commitment of civil society. Everyone of the NGOs we met were doing what they could under difficult circumstances to empower the people and build local capacity.

They could still do a lot in peace-building, but they were taking care of the basic requirements of those most in need.

One can only marvel at the innate Nepali capacity to survive and adapt despite all odds. There are signs everywhere of a people who have been abandoned by their government: the lack of health care, the abject poverty, the failure to blacktop a lifeline highway even after 12 years.

But it's not the war that is killing Dailekh, it is neglect and irresponsibility of those who wield power. Rajendra is homeless and displaced, living far away from his home village. The power struggle in Kathmandu, the royal audiences in Pokhara and the party-Maoist talks in New Delhi may as well be happening on another planet.

Rajendra has found work with the Community for Peace Program supported by Cedpa/Nepal which helps displaced youths and peace centers that provide counseling services and skills and a monthly stipend of up to Rs 1,500. Rajendra's family manages primarily on his income and odd jobs working on someone's farm or selling vegetables. Ratna has not fully recovered from her ordeal.

The families in Surkhet yearn for their fields and homes in the mountains. There are many more families like Rajendra's and Ratna's in Surkhet and across Nepal. Most districts like Dailekh just need roads and an end to the conflict so the people can innovate and improvise. Not ensuring this means the state and all who have held their share of power in it are silent allies to abuse and even murder of their fellow countrymen. The 12-year neglect of Dailekh is screaming to be heard. ●



## Why not transplant?

It is not a lack of skilled doctors or lack of kidney donors that has discouraged kidney transplant in Nepal but the 'Transplant Act', which makes transplants legal but risky for doctors. They say the law is unclear but could mean that if a kidney donor dies, the doctor can be sentenced to five years in prison and fined Rs 500,000. A clause says that if a donor dies within three months of the operation due to psychological trauma or shock, the physician can face life in jail. Because of the Act, many Nepalis have no choice but to go to India for transplants, where they spend Rs 500,000 to Rs 1 million. Doctors say they can do transplants safely but the government has to amend the law before they'll start operating.

# Flinging open the doors

To one side, an artist is working to transform the aluminium strip on a bullet-proof door from the French Embassy. Nearby, another artist splatters red on a wooden door—as if someone has been shot in front of it.

There are other doors: one with wires taped across it, another with a second door painted upon it, a black door is being painted on by well-known artist Asha Dongol and a differently abled person.

Someone just visiting the 108 Doors Project at Siddhartha Art Gallery may just walk past admiring the artistic strokes and colours that brighten these usually utilitarian objects and miss the message.

"The doors are about dialogue," explains Siddhartha's Sangeeta Thapa, "it is bringing together different communities."

Inspired by the Rene Magritte painting 'La reponse imprevue' and the 100 Doors Project held in October 2004 in Belgium, this version has been modified and adapted for Nepal. The Lincoln School's Jonathan Edou is coordinator of the program for students at Bal Mandir and Siddhartha is running a parallel program for artists, poets and social groups to contribute 35 of the 108 doors.

"I believed it was more realistic to have professional artists and amateurs collaborate,



KIRAN PANDAY

as they could help interpret each others ideas," says Thapa. The number 108 was chosen not only because is it considered a 'perfect' number but also because it seen as auspicious in Nepal.

"The symbol of the door has similar connotations," heritage expert Anil Chitrakar explained during one of a series of workshops that accompanied the painting sessions, "inside the door is heaven, outside is hell and the door itself is seen as the middle ground."

But that is not the last word on the meaning behind the doors, with various participants contributing their own understanding.

"The door works is a metaphor for post-modern politics," says Sanjiv Upreti from Tribhuban University who coordinated the poetry side of the project, "it celebrates differences from various backgrounds, it is a rejection of preconceived notions and hindrances, it is looking at each other openly."

The artistes assigned to each door brought together people of different religions, classes, sexual orientation, political viewpoints, societies and even nationalities. Says Thapa: "People said it was impossible to get a guerrilla and a general to work on a single door, I was determined to prove them wrong". Last Saturday, she managed to bring a former Maoist and a serving soldier into the gallery at the same time, but they worked on different doors.

Thapa says the finished products reflect the opening of participants' minds and ideas but more important was the camaraderie between painter, poet, author, soldier and citizen. Even onlookers joined the creative process.

At the end of it, everyone felt doors had been opened and the feeling that reconciliation is possible. ●

Aarti Basnyat

The next 108 Doors Project workshop at Department of Fine Art, Kathmandu University, Bhaktapur, from 9AM to 6PM on 18 March Saturday.

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# Development aid for development's sake

The use of aid as a political stick deepens the suffering of impoverished and unstable countries

Almost daily, the United States and Europe brandish threats to impose economic sanctions or cut off development assistance unless some vulnerable government accepts their political strictures.

**COMMENT**  
**Jeffrey D Sachs**



The most recent threats are towards the new Hamas-led government in Palestine. Other recent examples include threats vis-à-vis Chad, Ethiopia, Haiti, Kenya, Bolivia, Uganda, and long-standing sanctions against Burma.

Such tactics are misguided. The use of development aid as a political stick merely deepens the suffering of impoverished and unstable countries, without producing the political objectives sought by donors.

To understand why requires taking a long-term view of geopolitics, particularly the gradual decline of US and European global domination. Nationalism continues to produce powerful political antibodies to American and European meddling in other countries' internal affairs.

The failure to understand this lies behind repeated US foreign policy debacles since the toppling of the Shah of Iran in 1979. The US naively continues to view the Middle East as an object of manipulation, whether for oil or for other purposes. The Iraq war is widely interpreted as a war for US control of Persian Gulf oil—a rather plausible view given what we know about the war's true origins. Only incredible hubris and naiveté could bring US (and UK) leaders to believe that Western troops would be greeted as liberators rather than as occupiers.

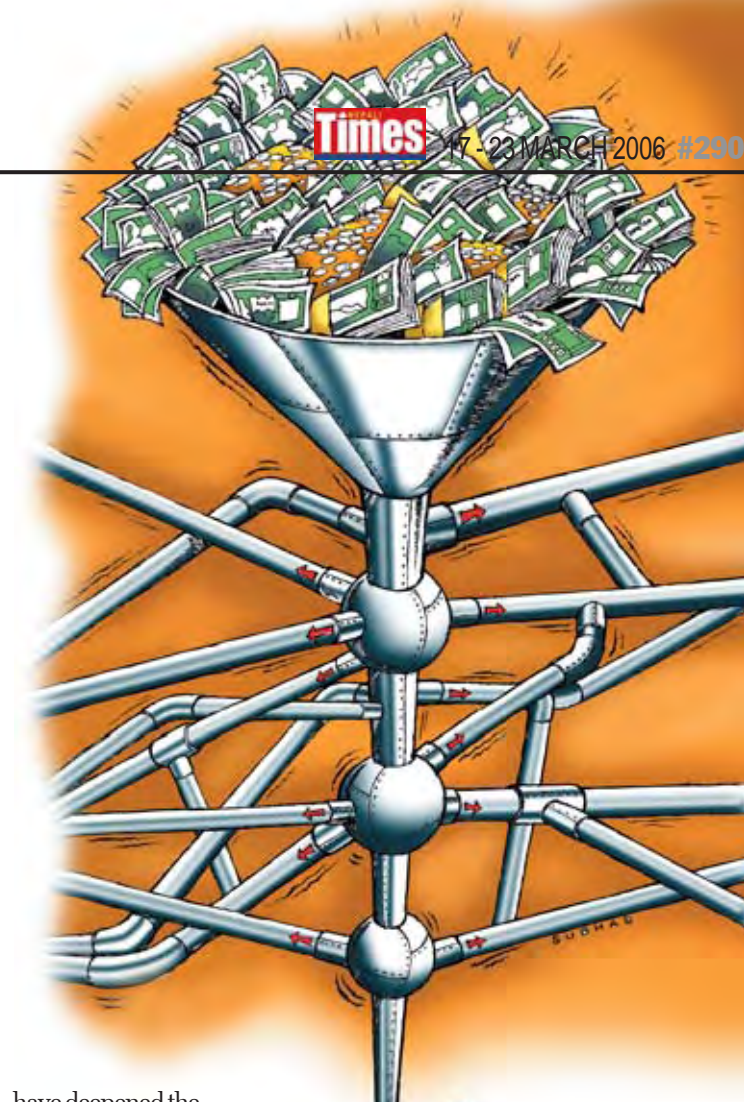
The politicisation of foreign aid reflects the same hubris. Even as the US rhetorically champions democracy in the Middle East, its first response to Hamas's victory was to demand that the newly elected government return \$50 million in US aid. Hamas's doctrines are indeed unacceptable for long-term peace, but cutting aid is likely to increase turmoil rather than leading to an acceptable long-term compromise between Israel and Palestine. An aid cutoff should be a policy of last resort, not a first strike.

Aid cutoffs regularly fail to produce desired political results for at least two reasons. First,

neither the US nor European countries have much standing as legitimate arbiters of good governance. Rich countries have long meddled, often with their own corruption and incompetence, in the internal affairs of the countries that they now lecture.

Second, US and European threats to cut off aid or impose sanctions are in any case far too weak to accomplish much besides undermining already unstable and impoverished countries. Consider the recent threats to cut Ethiopia's aid, which is on the order of \$15 per Ethiopian per year—much of it actually paid to US and European consultants. It is sheer fantasy to believe that the threat of an aid cutoff would enable the West to influence the course of Ethiopia's complex internal politics. An aid cutoff to Ethiopia would nonetheless lead to a lot of death among impoverished people, who will lack medicines, improved seeds, and fertiliser.

The track record of on-again-off-again aid is miserable. Stop-and-go aid has left Haiti in an unmitigated downward spiral. The decade-long sanctions against Burma haven't restored Aung San Suu Kyi to power, but



SUBHAS RAI

have deepened the disease burden and extreme poverty in that country. Threatened aid cutoffs in Kenya, Chad, and elsewhere would make desperately bad situations worse.

None of this is to suggest that the US and Europe should abide every move by every corrupt dictator. But realism in international economic affairs requires accepting that ODA can help achieve the broad political objectives of stability and democracy only in the long run. The most reliable path to stable democracy is robust and equitable economic progress over an ample period of time.

The overwhelming standard for supplying ODA should

therefore be whether it actually promotes economic development. As such, it must be reliable, predictable, and directed towards development needs in ways that can be monitored, measured, and evaluated.

If development aid can be directed to real needs, then it should be given to poor and unstable countries, knowing that it will save lives, improve economic performance, and thus also improve the long-term prospects for democracy and good governance. ●

Project Syndicate

Jeffrey Sachs is Professor of Economics and Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University.

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# A big hit with the pros

A year has passed since the last Himalayan Bank Open, which is special for Nepal's professional golfers because it offers more prize money than any other local pro event and it also donates a huge sum towards a golf development fund.

This year, thanks to sponsor the Himalayan Bank, the Open has become a five-day extravaganza, giving casual golfers as well as serious sportsmen a chance to test their skills. The first four days are dedicated to professionals and top amateurs. The final day, Saturday 18 March, is set aside for 100 amateurs, golf lovers and important corporate clients from across the country who are expected to tee off at the picturesque Le Meridien Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa. The course has been put into top shape for this tournament that tests the skills of Nepal's bests.

"The bank is also committed to support and sponsor the talented amongst the best of our professionals and amateurs of this game through the golf development fund," said Himalayan Bank CEO Ashoke SJB Rana at a press conference before the tournament.

**TEE BREAK**  
Deepak Acharya



To get an idea of how important golf is in the corporate world, take a look at the Himalayan's board of directors, which includes avid golfers such

as Ashoke Rana, Prachanda B Shrestha and Bijay B Shrestha. Board members are genuinely convinced that continuous support is vital to developing excellence in a sport and have taken the initiative to combine a sensible corporate strategy with doing something extra

## Himalayan Open showcases corporate support for golf

for the country. Transforming last year's four-day tournament into an event geared toward both amateurs and professionals will go a long way towards creating a sustainable golf program in Nepal.

This week, myself and my fellow pro golfers competed for a total purse of Rs 150,000 from which the winner, Sabin Sapkota from Dharan, bagged Rs 51,000. Deepak Neupane finished second with a 296 while myself and Deepak Thapa Magar tied for third at 299. At 301, CB Bhandari was tops among amateurs. All the golfers but those finishing in the last two places earned prize money. What a great boost for the country's professional golfers!

I and other professionals look forward to other corporations jumping on the bandwagon, not only to develop golf but to promote all sports in our country. ●

Deepak Acharya is a golf instructor and Golf Director at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, Kathmandu.  
prodeepak@hotmail.com



KIRAN PANDAY

# Straight as an arrow

## Nepali archers are aiming traditional skills at international competitions

**ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY**

Celebrated over three days in spring, the Thakali Toran-La festival is a community event that includes ancestor worship, merry-making, gambling for women and archery for men.

Archery was an important skill for a Thakali man in Mustang not just for hunting but for defence against marauding bandits. During Toran-La, archers take aim at a target shaped like a human figure. Each archer is allowed to use two arrows and given 20 shots over 10 rounds. Bets are placed and the winner is the marksman who hits the target most often, scoring more points for piercing the heart. During this week's festival in Kathmandu, archers earned Rs 200 per hit.

Now, archery is going beyond tradition and Nepalis are turning to the modern version of the sport.

After so many generations of playing at the annual festival it

was natural that a few skilled marksmen would emerge among Thakalis and today they are starting to train their arrows far beyond Mustang.

Ramesh Bhattachan in November took part in Nepal's first-ever entry to an international archery competition and Yogendra Sherchan was a member of the Nepali team at the First South Asian Archery Championship in Dhaka in February.

While Bhattachan's team finished 11<sup>th</sup> at the 14<sup>th</sup> Asian Archery Championship in Delhi, Sherchan and his three teammates won the bronze medal competing against Bhutan.

"We were ecstatic when we beat Bhutan because they are considered to be one of the best in archery," he says.

No doubt the annual Thakali games have helped people like Sherchan cultivate their skills. The 33-year-old from Lete in Mustang has taken part in annual

Toran-La festivals since he was a teenager. "Modern archery is different from its traditional form in terms of equipment and rules but the basic skills required are the same," he explained. "During Toran-La we just play for fun but it was from here that my interest in the sport came up." ●

## Take aim

The Thakali Sewa Samiti organised Toran-La this year not just in Kathmandu but in 15 other places where Thakalis have settled. But it was not the last chance for aspiring archers to string their bows. "During the festival we compete against members of our own committee but there are other communities like Gurung, Magar, Manangba and Chintyal who also play the sport," says Committee Secretary Arjun Sherchan. To stoke competitive fires, an inter-community championship will be held on 19-20 March in the community ground at Balaju Chok in Kathmandu.

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*Quote of the Week....*  
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-- George Carlin, American Comedian

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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **The 108 Doors** project at the Fine Arts Department, Kathmandu University Bhaktapur 18 March. 9AM-6PM
- ❖ **Way to Everest** A photographic journey to the foot of Mt. Everest. 17 March. 4PM. Everest Book Shop, Babar Mahal Revisited.
- ❖ **Enfants du Népal** a photo exhibition by Anne Lelong. 16 March. 6PM Lajimpat Gallery Café
- ❖ **Celebrating Moods & Expressions** by Gaurav Shrestha. 16 March. 4.45PM. Buddha Gallery
- ❖ **Group Exhibition** by Artists Society of Nepal 17-24 March. Park Gallery.
- ❖ **Incidental Meeting** an exhibition of paintings by Celia Washington (UK) Sunita Rana (Nepal) & Montserrat Clausells (Spain). Siddhartha Art Gallery. 9-21 March. 5PM



EVENTS

- ❖ **Winged Migration** Oscar winning documentary film by Jacques Perrin Nepal Tourism Board. 19 March 5.30PM
- ❖ **Women in Concert** a fund-raising event. 1 April. Baber Mahal Revisited. Tickets Rs. 2000. 4263070
- ❖ **Great American Films** from 6 March. The American Library Yak and Yeti. 4445577
- ❖ **The Hidden Society** A Documentary on HIV/AIDS in Dolpa. 17 March. 3PM. Martin Chautari
- ❖ **22 March World Water Day**

MUSIC

- ❖ **Ramailo Saanjh** with Anil Shahi and Maya Mantra. Rs. 1000. 7PM-10PM. 5 and 26 April. Poolside Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488
- ❖ **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.
- ❖ **Live Music** at New Orleans Café. 4700311
- ❖ **Best of jazz** JCS trio and Friends. Niek's Place. Every Tuesday and Saturday. Free entry. 4701324.
- ❖ **Jatra Friday** nights, live music by Siron. 4256622
- ❖ **Unplugged** sessions with Strings, Jatra Saturday nights. 4256622
- ❖ **Uncork the Good Times** Fusion Bar at Dwarika's, Ciney and Par-e-jat Sounds of 70's. Fridays Dwarika's Hotel. 4479448

DINING

- ❖ **St. Patrick's Day** festivities at Kilroy's and K-too! Beer and Steakhouse. 4700043
- ❖ **Wine Nights** at Jalan Jalan Multicuisine Restaurant. Friday and Saturday Rs.350. 5544872
- ❖ **Lunch** at Shivapuri Heights Cottage 25 March. 9841 371927
- ❖ **Beat the heat** with milkshakes and smoothies at Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **BBQ Ban Bhoj with swimming** at Godavari Village Resort. Saturday & Sunday. 5560675
- ❖ **Breakfast** at Singma Restaurant. 8.30 – 11AM daily. 5520004
- ❖ **Strawberry time** at Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **Stupa View** vegetarian creations, clay oven pizza, tasty desserts, espresso & latte. Boudha Stupa. 4480262
- ❖ **Maki Newa Bhutu** for traditional Newari cuisine at Hotel Royal Singi. 4439784
- ❖ **Mexican and Italian** food at Fuzone Café, Lagankhel. 5542935
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WITH  
**Mt. KAILASH (TIBET) AND BHUTAN**





RAM HUMAGAIN/NEPALNEWS.COM

NI HAU: State Councilor of China, Tang Jiaxuan being welcomed at Tribhuban International Airport on Thursday by Vice-chairman Kirti Nidhi Bista and Chinese ambassador, Sun Heping.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

97: The number of Nepalis killed in the conflict in the month of Falgun were remembered on 14 March at the Shanti Mandala.



EKAL SILWAL

TIGHT SQUEEZE: Travellers in Chitwan had to resort to a cart-rickshaw to go to Narayangarh from Parsa after the Maoist blockade kept most motorized vehicles off the roads.



KIRAN PANDAY

COLOUR ME RED: Young girls celebrate Holi at 1905, Kantipath on Tuesday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

MODEL BOSSES: Recipients of *The Boss* magazine Top Ten Business Excellence Awards pose at Soaltee Crowne Plaza on Friday.

The lights are dim, the door half open and beyond it the audience glimpses Nora sitting alone under a single beam of light. In Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Nora slams that door as she flees an oppressive household but in his adaptation, *Putali ko Ghar*, director Sunil Pokhrel imagined a Nepali exit for the main character that still captures the essence of Ibsen.

"The slamming of the door echoed throughout Europe to signify women's emancipation, but by leaving it door ajar we have made space for dialogue as we think that better reflects the reality of Nepal," says Pokhrel, founder of the Gurukul theatre school.

*Putali ko Ghar* has already been performed 113 times at Gurukul and is being staged this year to pay tribute to Ibsen on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death. The concept for the Nepali adaptation emerged during Pokhrel's 2002 visit to Denmark when he and a director friend decided to stage European and South Asian versions of the play. "We wanted to focus on what exactly the differences in society were and what the similarities were, though the end interpretation was similar," says the director.

Pokhrel was flattered when many people thought the play was an original Nepali work when it was first staged here. All the details had changed, from the costumes to the festivals, with Tihar taking the place of Christmas. The characters were reduced to five and all their names changed, except for Nora's. Says lead actress Nisha Sharma, "The play had been done



so many times that we had to ask ourselves what could be done differently and then go from there... we worked on the last line for over a month before we settled for the current translation but we are still not satisfied".

Theatre-goers loved it. While *Putali ko Ghar* inspired women it also served as an eye opener for men. "We could see the male audience getting restless though it would be politically incorrect

for them to come out and say it, but the women were empowered just watching it," recalls Pokhrel.

Excerpts from *Putali ko Ghar* will be performed at a ceremony to mark Ibsen's 100<sup>th</sup> death anniversary on 18 March at the Norwegian Embassy. Gurukul is also organising an international Ibsen festival from 1-9 May where they will perform *Master Builder*. ●

Aarti Basnyat

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# Confessions of a fifth columnist

Every week us multi-award winning nationalistic journalists (Motto: 'For Crown and Country, In That Order') go about our selfless duty of endeavouring to bring news without fear or favour to your doorstep so you can totally ignore our muckraking reports and move on to the coverage of the Champion's League.



UNDER MY HAT  
Kunda Dixit

Fair enough, we realise that one can take the proverbial horse to the water but one can't make him soap his proverbial armpits.

So, tell us, now that you've got so far into this article, what does it take to make you read the rest of this nonsense? Shall we slip in a few bright green ones under the table?

Can we offer you another free pack of Instantaneous Noodles as an added incentive?

The most fulfilling part of being in the newspaper business these days is the fact that no one actually reads any of this stuff, so you can get away with just about anything.

That is why I can say you (yes, you on the podium wearing that silly headgear with ostrich feathers) are a dork without fear of having my license revoked. We can also call you a "cowardly traitorous ideological deviant not to mention a splitist nepotistic slave of counter-revolutionary running dog royalist mongrels" and get away with it because we know you are too busy watching yourself on television in your safe haven.

So, since no one is actually reading this we can safely bring you the week's main news in briefs:

**Maoists Say Sorry**  
BY A DEMOLITION EXPERT  
SOMEWHERE IN THE CAPITAL OF NEPAL'S LARGE NEIGHBOUR TO THE SOUTH WHICH HAS REQUESTED ANONYMITY—The Maoists today apologised for the recent bombing of the local office of the World Food Program (WFP) in Jhapa.

"It was a grievous mistake, and we offer sincere apologies to the United Nations, we were actually trying to blow up the Primary School next door as well as the District Forest Office and the Small Farmer's Project. The terror is regretted," said a Maoist spokesman on condition that his location not be disclosed.

In another development, the Underground Insurgents announced this week that vehicles belonging to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the UN's Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) have been granted safe passage along highways during the ongoing indefinite nationwide blockade.

Soon after the statement came out, the rebels as part of their strategic counteroffensive shot at an ambulance in Dang, set fire to a Sajha bus in Kaski and blew up a milk tanker in Chitwan.

**Nationalised Journalists Meet Dr Giri**

BY HIS MASTER'S VOICE  
Office-bearers of the newly-formed Nationalised Union of Journalists (Moustachioed) today met First Vice-chairman Tulsi Giri in his office and vowed to toe the official line no matter what.

Dr Giri then shed light on Nepal's present crisis which we can't report because of the Home Minister's directive this week that anyone mentioning Maoists in a news report will be treated as a terrorist. Sorry.

The nationalistic journalists

were then immediately whisked off to cover the official visit to Nepal by a prominent dignitary whose identity we haven't been able to figure out till presstime.

But the man was Caucasian, of medium-build, slightly balding and well-dressed. He was obviously a very important person because he had some

important things to say, and in a joint communiqué both sides agreed this was a very important visit. Meanwhile in a separate development, the Austrian government has granted visas to two Nepali rhinoceroses because they qualify for highly-skilled permanent residence status in the Vienna Zoo.

However, two humans who were supposed to accompany the rhinos to Austria next week have been refused Schengen visas.

"They weren't satisfied the officials would return to Nepal," said a foreign ministry spokesman, "but we are glad the rhinos are going for good. Lucky buggers."

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