DEAL

RAJENDRA DAHAL

When King Gyanendra flew back from Pokhara on Thursday for the weekly cabinet meeting and an audience with a visiting Chinese official he must have looked down and seen the deserted Prithvi Highway. The Maoist blockade has brought the kingdom to a complete standstill while the parties and Maoists patch up their differences in New Delhi.

After some initial confusion, the seven party alliance and the Maoists have come to a deal. It just needs the stamp of approval from a meeting of party leaders on Friday after which the Maoists are expected to lift their blockade and retract the indefinite shutdown planned from 3 April. In return, the parties promise to intensify this month a ‘people’s movement’ for a constituent assembly.

The central committees of the seven parties were meeting late into Thursday to discuss this formula but even the most sceptical of the lot (the Deuba Congress and the NWPP) were said to be on board.

The 12-point agreement has been boiled down to seven and will be signed on Friday in Kathmandu. But some party seniors are worried the pact is fraught with dangers. “We are riding two horses—one is the king and the other is the Maoists,” confided one, “and they are galloping in opposite directions.”

In secret talks in New Delhi, mistrust between the parties and rebels was ironed out and the parties appear to have convinced the comrades that the compromise formula is the only path to the mainstream.

In the midst of negotiations, Prachanda had to douse home fires and expel two central committee members after an unusual public display of disunity. That immediate crisis seems to be over but Home Minister Kamal Thapa’s offer on Tuesday of amnesty and rewards to defectors may be counterproductive if it would hardens the beleaguered rebels.

Meanwhile, King Gyanendra’s strategy seems to be to ride it out till the monsoon washes away the people’s enthusiasm for a movement. And he is also trying to chip away at New Delhi’s opposition by lobbying with Indian kings, the Hindu right and some of his grandfather’s old buddies. Also meaningful is the presence in Kathmandu this week of former Indian ambassador K V Rajan who is said to be lobbying for the palace in New Delhi.

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.

SPRING WONDERLAND:
Tengboche Monastery on Tuesday after heavy snowfall blocked trekking routes in the Khumbu stranding tourists during what should have been the beginning of the spring trekking season.
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, but 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 sides seem to appreciate each other’s positions.

Other contradictions abound. Peace activist Krishna Pahadi who has probably been the most critical among our human rights watchlists 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 ‘great-grand-mothers’ are in positions of power.

And what of Ram Chandraw 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 functionaries in the 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 is this country’s staunchest monarchists. If even they have come to the conclusion that the mandates are taking the country down with them, then that must be what is happening.

The regime’s strategy is to sow confusion by buying time. But the palace is lost in a maze of its own creation and the generals are in the labyrinth of their own making.

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 us, then it will fall to us to force them to leave civilians alone.

STATE OF THE STATE

Those espousing the communist model of the proletariat have assiduously cultivated these petty capitalists. They are the ones who accommodate Maoist leaders, care for the treatment of wounded cadre and bear the cost of bourgeois education for the progeny 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 concern.

“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 hamstring the negotiations, according to all our leaders realise that “nothing comes out of nothing!” asked one exasperated party leader, “they should stop the facade, they are just playing politics 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 among armed militia and party cadres at the grassroots.

The Maoists argue that they will acquire more support if they provide a coherent package from mainstream parties. The equivalent ceasefire would amount to surrender. So the Delhi dialogue is stuck. But both sides seem to finance each other’s apprehensions and compulsions. The detection 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 could come to a grinding halt. Even Indian Nationalists seem to be/projects, that is probably channelled through organisations of Nepali exiles.

Narayani 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 network of relatives and friends. It is time for hidden motives and competing perspectives of every activity are exposed. Maoist personalities are monopolies. But what is the best, only one day I do is correct? We are attempts to receive universal acceptance and approval and characterise the personalities of the king, G.P. Koirala and several other personalities.

Joining the royal government will be a masterstroke if the blockade has been corrected only to wake up the next morning to realise the truth and regret ever having exemplified the possibility of reconciliation. To fall into hidden meanings of comments and events and carry grudges throughout life.

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

Interpersonal relationships form an important issue in people with personality disorders because of what we the medical and non-medical community call ‘dysontic’ 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’s when the result is irrational, chaotic, undemocratic and indecisive as we see in Nepali politics.

The interpretation of the king and his cohorts that the Maoists are terrorists, and the fault lies solely in the country’s political leadership at the grassroots.

The royal regime dismissed the unilaterals ceasefire called by the Maoists, stating “it was a play to regroup. Then it attacked the rebel-party pact saying it was addressing itself to the parties and not the regime. Meanwhile, the parties are unwilling or pretending to avoid reconciliation with the kingdom suggesting they might move 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 impulse the first step is to detect the above personality disorders prevalent in all political players to be followed by respective psychiatric counselling. ●

Dr Shyam Chalise is pursuing further studies in psychiatry.

Psychopaths and psychopaths

To find out why Nepal is stuck, we may need to psycoanalyse our political leadership.

Nepali exiles in India have more clout over what happens in Nepal than ever before. The Nepali exiles in India have more clout over what happens in Nepal than ever before.
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 venom? You are outraged by the purchase of the two royal limousines but what about the waving of import duties on the Pagores and Prades 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 believes in the elite or the other? Corruption was the main factor that led 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 stop 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 blather.

Sunita Aryan, 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 more money from the people. But for what? It seems whoever is in a position in Nepal, whether they are self-appointed autocrats or elected ministers, they have treated the treasury as their private bank.

Rang De Basanti is more than relevant in Nepal because things are going back way. ‘Why not to kill the minister’, (#287) should have been credited to Nick Dawson instead of Gregory Sharkey, SJ Thamel.

PLUNDER

● In ‘Differently-abled’ the correct form of the acronym DHRC should have been the Disabled Human Rights Centre and ‘Samudaya’ (#287).

Sarahana’s Shrestha’s name was mis-spelled in ‘Sarhana’s Samudaya’ (#287).

CORRECTIONS

Shraddha, Nayar is behaving in a typical Pox 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 SOCIOLGY

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 perceive as an oppressive cultural and religious system. Dr Ambekar’s Buddhists did the same. Socio-economic factors clearly play a role in this. But for Lama to equate this with a vested 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 behaving in a typical Pox 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

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Registration and testing is open from, Thursday 16th March to Saturday 18th March, 8.00 to 11.30 am & 2.30 to 5.30 pm, and Sunday 19th March from 9 am to 12 pm.

Creating opportunity. Building trust.
Growing despite the conflict

In the latest in its series of economic roundtables, Himal Media'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 were 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.

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 would need paid-up capital of Rs 5 billion, but how much capital does an industrialist need to open an industry? It's all bank loans.

Narendra Bhattarai
Managing Director, NCC Bank

- Banks are only a small part of the entire economy. So banks can't be an island where. If you look at company books, there is no salary dividend anywhere for the directors yet their lifestyles are disproportionate luxuriously.
- Even if it wasn't for the conflict, consumer banking would have come to Nepal. And it's not that there was no competition but somehow so consumer banking grew. Even in India, banks that are doing well in other areas are attracted to consumer banking.

Suresh Bhandari
CEO, Kumar 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 has a system where money from the surest agency gives the best rate for money transfers. This has saved some banks. Overall, the banks are doing quite well. Today, it is too hypothetical to plan for 2010 when we don't have a ripple effect on other banks.

Nair Shah
CEO, Annapurna bank

- The problem is non-economic, unless that insurgency is still going on then, would international banks want to come to Nepal? Will we have international banks? We have Rs 1 billion invested in hotels. These loans can be repaid only if tourism bounces back, and for that we need the conflict resolved.

Basudevram Joshi
Banker, Nepal Rastra Bank

- 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 watch their dwindling profits.

Radhash 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 have come 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.

- It hasn'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 banks buy off politicians (so they don't have to pay loans).

Parsuram Kunwar
Chief Administrator, Nepal Bank

- 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 knows 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 disproportionate luxuriously.

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

Sunan 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.

Surendranad Pradhan
Chief, Banking Administration Division, 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 Rastra Baniya 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 watch their dwindling profits.

Anil Shah
CEO, Nabil Bank

- Banks 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 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 own 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 sector to work.

- 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.
Invest in management

A good boss beats out money, machines and location

Good management practices are sometimes its best practices. Even bad Nepali managers know this. But the extent to which a good management is 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

Ashtosh 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 large 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 responded to competition tend to be quick to accept new management practices such as lean-production methods on the shop floor and techniques for setting targets and measuring and improving the business.

Alternatively, an absence of competition means that managers are less inclined to practice better management. Indeed, the study correlated the improvement of one point on a 1 to 5 scale of quality 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 was enough to keep 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 know that they cannot deliver the results if they don’t have a talented workforce and high morale.

And such a good management aimed to boost productivity in a competitive sector also includes employee-friendly practices. What does all this mean for us in Nepal?

First, it means that competition is essential if we want to introduce better management practices in our companies. For policymakers, 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, companies that practice better management 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 motorists are less interested in looking cool than keeping out the cold judging by the 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 chose because the north face of a mountain, most notably Mount Everest, is considered the steepest, coldest, and most difficult to traverse and climb. But in the shops of Nepal you can even see on Maosist field commanders in the mountains.

Snadu Giri of Dolka 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 intitilizing the words The North Face. He picks up packs neatly packed in a plastic box that bears the picture of a climber with the silhouette on his table, all of them intitilizing the words The North Face.

“North Face sells three socks for Rs 1,200. I sell it for Rs 200,” he says. “They also get their products from China—they just charge more.”

Giri says that unlike the showroom, he caters to people who are short of money and ask for lower prices. Many shopkeepers like him also run small factories that make jackets, gloves and socks, one reason why their clothing is cheaper than the imports.

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 Giri has too much free time. “No tourists, no trekker, no business,” he says, forcing a smile.

Despite their competition, neither Sakya nor Giri 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,” he says. “I would just be so much better if The North Face would start a factory in Nepal,” says Giri, for his part, in jest. “Then I would just be so much better if The North Face would start a factory in Nepal,” says Giri, for his part, in jest. “Then I would just be so much better if The North Face would start a factory in Nepal,” says Giri, for his part, in jest.

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After all, as the study shows, companies that practice better management and higher productivity are all positively related if we want to boost productivity.
Yubaraj Ghimire in chief of the army. His reputation inside the country is being known less as the protector of the supreme confidence about his own abilities for the king into something of a king out of Hans negative opinion of the political parties and their bear his weaknesses.

The biggest power of democracy is that the people doesn’t have to the king, or to 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 your 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 it will be difficult to see it as more than just a tactical move.

All this raises the question: what is the opinion all of this to 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 Tiky Giri who have stepped in to demonstrate their loyalty to the king and serve as lightning 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.

\[\text{does the monarchy belong just to the king, or to the people?}\]

National Nepal

Robin Sayami in Himal Khubarpatrika, 14-28 March

**Prison diary**

Bijaydev Bhattarai in Jana Aastha, 8 March

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. I found that I was being held in 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, butchered or shot to death. There were three or four detainees inside the Bhairahawal Barrack.

There, I met many individuals accused of working as Maoists but now work as innocent civilians. Pradip Sarki, a driver, and Rajkumar Banst, a bus conductor, were released after 10 months of torture. Kaluwar Tamang was let go after 11 months of cruelty. Other detainees included Bhakta Blahaj Giri, Krishna Kumar KC, Gomesh Bhactal, Surya Ram Maharjan, Bimal Giri, Anuman Shrestha and others whom I came across are unknown. In addition, many prisoners like Suresh Man Dhakal, Anuman Shrestha, Bimal Adhikari, Kaj Guri and Kamal KC are suffering from infections of their wounds and smelly body. The army used to bring in 100-200 detainees a day and take them to unknown places the same night. Dipendra Panj, BK Shrestha and Pipal Shrestha were beaten to death in front of our own eyes. Remu Dalal was stripped naked and beaten to death.

A pregnant Tamang girl was kicked until she died to force her pleasuring to him to spare her unborn infant. Suchenima Maharjan’s neck was slit and her head was squashed with a hammer while Bim Maharan’s beating left him bleeding all over. Hanbhahud Roka and Buddha Ram were cane severely. Dhirenra Banst, Panja Banst and Ashok Akeia were beaten until they were half dead.

We found later that Nischal Nakarmi, Bimal Giri, Bhahath Dhamaula, Gokal Niraula, Nima Lama, Shamit Bhattarai, Arij Pokhri, Rajap Adhikari, Deshblahai Chapagain, Dileswor Lambu, Lila Achariya, Tejman BK, Akeia Maharjan, Surendra Thapa, Kamala Waish, Astang Rajpacharya, Suresh Ram Kajal, Jalalbhad Ram, Kumar Dhakal, Anuman Shrestha, Bimal Adhikari, Rajendra Malik and Lila Pandai were all squeezed into a truck and taken to Shivapuri forest where they were killed and burnt. Evidence can still be found there.

Only 50 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 recited ourselves for beatings when we heard the soldiers nail the door with iron pipes. We learnt that representatives from the ICRC and the government organisations were looking for us. But just prior to their visit we were made to wake up and run barefoot to hide in the bunkers. This happened three or four times had of us got sick. Two detainees, Pradip Sarki and Bimal Adhikari, had their 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 around our necks. This went on for five nights and then we were taken back to the Bhairahawal.

(Sharma’s testimony to Jana Aastha at Nakkhu Jail)
**Tulsipeak**

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.

**No saying no**

Nepal, 12 March

BARADA—Darburti Tharu shakes his hand in frustration as he tries to get Maoist leaders to reveal the whereabouts of his son Keshab Prasad, who was forced to carry mulch loads on his tractor from Motipur on 25 February. Keshab’s 90-year-old grandmother Sumili remembers rebels promising to return him home in a few days. Until today, there is no sign of him. Keshab, 24, was first asked to carry rice but after reaching Jagatipati, 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 pray not to return alive,” were Keshab’s last words. Around 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 Commune Bistraar but instead of apologising for dragging their innocent son to war, he shamed 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 visit 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 Khabarpankha, 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 Tharemar. This was part of the rebel’s construction gang for the Maoist martyrs 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 in order to meet security chiefs. 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.”

**“The 7 parties have no agenda”**

Kisaploya, 14 March

Interview with ex-Kathmandu mayor and former UML member Keshab Sthapit.

So you left UML to support the king? I quit because Khadga 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 does not push the country further into crisis?

The 12-point understanding is pushing the country towards more crisis while the king is going his own way. He has to call for everyone 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. A king 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.

**Motipur on 25 February. Keshab’s last words. Around 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 Commune Bistraar but instead of apologising for dragging their innocent son to war, he shamed 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 visit villagers not to mention the incident to journalists or human rights activists.**
TEST DRIVE

Clean & green &

Drive this new Made in Nepal electric van and you not only save the planet you save your pocket.

The 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 dashboard 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 seat cover. 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 Kathmandu 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
The MiniEV 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 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 60,000 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 your MiniEV now before people wise up and there is a long waiting list.

01-4467087
www.keva.org.np

| Make      | Cost  | Mileage  | Range      | Exhaust                        | Made in |
|-----------|-------|----------|------------|--------------------------------|
| Maruti Omni | Rs 890,000 | Rs 6.7/km | 300 km on full tank | Carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrous oxide, sulfur dioxide, benzene, soot particles. |
| Hulas MiniV | Rs 800,000 (estimate) | Rs 1/km (plus battery depreciation) | 70 km on full charge | Zero Emission |

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.
STAYING ALIVE

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

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 Nepal’s 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 Bhaktapur, Nepalgunj and Nepalgunj 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 they have no facilities as not everyone can come to the capital for treatment,” explains Kafle. All but a few 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.

Tribute

Chu Nyima is gone and we are still here

All too often we read of a bus plunging (sometimes 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 vehicles and too many speeding drivers trying to overtake and...
sessions which means the centre is struggling to make ends meet. "Kidney machines were donated by German hospitals and overheads are partly covered with donations from German businesses. Vincent Vaid and Richard Stenkmairer. Nepal 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 overheads.

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, 20). 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 diaylisis.●

(National Kidney Centre, Naval, Tel: 4439966)

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 means the centre has no space or money. 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 means the centre has no space or money.

Ramesh Lama used to work as a driver but now he depends on his children to support him, his 7-year-old son and a daughter who is barely 6 months. He 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 of St Xavier's College who have raised Rs 16,000 to date. They have also opened a bank account but have got no contributions to date. However, they are not giving up. Providing Lama free medicine and another individual, Kedar Kafle, gives Lama free blood from his blood bank.

To help contact: shanti.gurung.19@hotmail.com Tel: 9803168643

Saviours needed

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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.

On 18 March Saturday.

The 12-year neglect of Dailekhis screaming to be heard.

It is not the war that is killing Dailekh but 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 royalaudiences in Pancha and the party Maoists in New Delhi may as well be happening on another planet.

Rajendra has found work with the Community for Peace Program supported by Cornell 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 at the laundry. Rajendra has not fully recovered from his 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 of the families like Rajendra just need roads and an end to the conflict. People who can come up with ideas and be proactive are needed. Not ensuring this means the state and all who hold their share of power in it are not only to blame but are also the murderers of our fellow countrymen. The 12-year neglect of Dailekhis screaming to be heard.
Development aid for development’s sake

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

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 naïveté 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 $35 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, the most recent threats are towards the new Hamas-led government in Palestine. Other recent examples include threats vis-a-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.

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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 sportspersons 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 all 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.

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 Bjay B Shrestha. Board members are genuinely convinced that continued support is vital to developing excellence in a sport and have taken the initiative to combine a sensible corporate strategy with doing something extra important 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 Chhauri, 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 with a 296 while myself and Deepak Neupane finished second for a total purse of Rs 150,000 from which the winner, Sabin Sapkota, donated a huge sum towards a golf development fund.

Ashoke Rana at a press conference before the tournament. “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.

The Himalayan Open showcases corporate support for golf

**TEE BREAK**

Deepak Acharya

A big hit with the pros...
EXHIBITIONS

- The Hidden Society
- Great American Films
- Celebrating Moods & Expressions
- MUSIC
- Women in Concert
- Heartbreakers
- The Cloud Walkers
- Live Music
- Wine Nights
- Incidental Meeting
- BBQ Ban Bhoj with swimming
- Breakfast With Birds
- BBQ Dinner
- Home away from home
- Barbeque
- Great Dining
- Stupa View
- Strawberry time
- Club Himalaya Chiso Chiso Hawama
- Maki Newa Bhutu
- Nature Retreat
- Go Double, Pay Single
- special air package to Thailand & Vietnam
- Bharatpur 18 March. 9AM-6PM
- Tourism Board. 19 March 5.30PM
- Revisited.
- Anne Lelong. 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 Clauells (Spain), Siddhartha Art Gallery 9-21 March. 5PM
- Events
- Winged Migration Oscar winning documentary film by Jacques Perrin in 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. Rs. 1000.

In the years before World War II, a Japanese child is torn from her penniless family and sold into slavery at a geisha house. Despite a treacherous rival who nearly breaks her spirit, the girl blossoms into the legendary geisha Sayuri. Beautiful and accomplished, Sayuri captivates the most powerful men of her day, but is haunted by her secret love for the one man beyond her reach. The epic drama, Memoirs of a Geisha is based on the best-selling novel by Arthur Golden.

Call 4442220 for show timings at Jai Nepal www.jainepal.com

ABOUT TOWN

- St. Patrick’s Day festivities at Kiseroy’s and K-10! Beer and Steakhouse. 4700043
- Win’s Nights at Jalan Multian Cuisine Restaurant. Friday and Saturday Rs 350. 5544872
- Lunch at Shivapuri Heights Cottage 25 March. 9841 371927
- Beat the heat with millennials and smoothies at Hyat 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 JIC Trio and Friends. New’s Place. Every Tuesday and Saturday. Free entry. 4701242
- Jana Friday nights. Live music by Siren. 4256622
- Unplugged sessions with Strings. Jata Saturday nights. 4256622
- Uncork the Good Times Fusion Bar at Dwarika’s. Ciney and Pay-jal Sounds of 70’s. Fridays Dwarika’s Hotel. 4479448

DINING

- St. Patrick’s Day festivities at Kiseroy’s and K-10! Beer and Steakhouse. 4700043
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- Beat the heat with millennials and smoothies at Hyat Regency, Kathmandu. 4491234
- BBQ Bar Bhoj with swimming at Godavari Village Resort. 5PM & Sunday. 5566675
- Breakfast at Singma Restaurant. 8.30 – 11AM daily. 5520004
- Strawberry time at Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4279999
- Stupa View vegetarian creations, clay oven pizza, tasty desserts, espresso & latte. Boudha Stupa. 4460026
- Maxi Newa Bhuta for traditional Newari cuisine at Hotel Royal Singi. 4493784
- Mexican and Italian food at Fuzone Café. Lagankhel. 5542935
- Great Dining options at At Fresco, Bukhara, China Garden and Garden Terrace restaurants. Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4279999
- Barbeque at Le Mendis, Kathmandu, every Saturday. 4451212
- The Shangri-La Express Soups, make your own sandwiches and soup croissants baked in house daily. Omelettes made to your gourmet style.
- BBQ Dinner at Summit Hotel every Friday. 6.30PM-9.30PM. 5518190
- Breakfast With Birds lunch with butterflies and dinner by the fire place. Farm House Café. 4379279

GETAWAYS

- Home away from home Shivapuri Heights Cottage for bookings 9841371927. sohan@escape2nepal.com
- Club Himalaya Chiso Chiso Hawama package from Rs 1700 per person with dinner, breakfast, accommodation and shuttle service. 668-0080, 688-0883
- Go Double, Pay Single special air package to Thailand & ASEAN destinations with Air Nepal & Air Asia, valid until 31 March. 4247215, malaysiaholidays.marco@polo.com.np
- Nature Retreat at Park Village Resort & Spa, Budhanilkantha. 4375280
- Star Cruises/Singapore with Oceania offer you cruise packages from Rs 65,500. only. 201244. starcruises.marco@polo.com.np

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with Shades, Water, Electricity supply is in rent in front of Sipradi Trading

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Asmita: 4312019

Nepali weather

MAUSAM BEED

Kathmandu Valley

So our prayers were answered. The weather trough last week dumped 24 mm of rain in the Kathmandu Valley (two-thirds of the monthly quota), and western Nepal got more. The atmospheric circulation created a confluence of cold air from the Tibetan plateau and warmer air mass blown in from the Arabian Sea bringing rain and snow across the mountains. This situation looks quite likely to continue for the coming days. So the sun will not be visible for a long time. Expect some snow showers in the higher hills during the next few days. It will be cloudy in the valleys.

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Rakshya: 5543333
Asmita: 4312019
HE 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 100th 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 100th death anniversary on 18 March at the Norwegian Embassy. Gurukul is also organizing an international Ibsen festival from 1-9 May where they will perform Master Builder. Aarti Basnyat
Confessions of a fifth columnist

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 sing 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 to you (yes, you on the podium wearing that silly headgear with ostrich feathers) you 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 for 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 released 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 bugs.”

Stay Full

Simple Steaks

Savory Tender Prime Steaks... truly memorable meals.

Carve an appetite for elegance. Olive Bar & Bistro is all geared up to deliver excellent steaks in their traditional turn, form & taste.

“Not so simple”, says Chef Reddy, who swears that without proper marinades and seasoning, steaks would be at stake. Care for a mean T-Bone, Sirloin or Tenderloin Filet Steaks or other scary stuff?... you know where to head.

Every Friday, Saturday and Sunday in March. 08B - 6:30 pm onwards.

All steak orders will be accompanied by a glass of Red or Sparkling Wine.

Radisson

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