People Power II

Editorial p2
Anarchy in a monarchy
Whatever was cooked in Pokhara is not likely to be pleasant

Guest Column by Kyoko Ogura p2
Days of future passed
Comparing 2006 with the People’s Movement of 1990

State of the State by CK Lal p2
Among the deceivers
The day of reckoning is coming closer

Kirtipur and Gongabu p6
A tale of two demonstrations

Five days that rocked Nepal p8-9
At the edges of a curfew

Comment by Narayan B Thapa p10
Exit strategy
You know by now what the new year message contained

Southasia Beat by Kanak Mani Dixit p13
From the belly of the beast

Profile p15
Krishna Khanal

INTO 2063: The Seto Machendranath chariot sits abandoned at Hanuman Dhoka on Tuesday during a curfew after being dragged through riot-torn streets the previous day.
ANARCHY IN A MONARCHY

Nepal’s war-wary public is not holding its breath for the king’s traditional new year message to the nation on Friday. Going by the pattern of past behaviour it wouldn’t surprise us at all if it contained the usual platitudes about restoring peace and democracy. In the past four years, King Gyanendra has always said the right things but done just the opposite. We must be prepared to be disappointed again.

To be sure, there are those who in a convoluted sort of way see that the king is taking himself down. But a sudden collapse of an absolute monarchy can only lead to absolute anarchy. This is why it is so important for the political parties to assert themselves, develop a cohesive agenda and give the movement meaningful leadership.

In the past week, Nepal crossed a threshold. Ordinary people who till a month ago were watching from the overhead bridges stepped down into the streets. No one is neutral any more: the FNCCI has thrown in its lot with democracy while civil servants, bank and corporation employees, and even the state-run media have crossed over. What’s more, even the chairman’s own ministers are breaking away.

The king’s only option is to begin a dialogue with the parties and the Maoists to work out interim measures for restoring true sovereignty to the people. This would be a face-saving way for him to go back to sit on his throne and not worry about day-to-day running of the country. The parties, too, need an honourable exit that will not expose them to the charge of self-shying.

But most of all, it is the Maoists who need a way to explain to the Nepali people that what they couldn’t achieve after 10 years and 13,000 lives lost is within reach after just five days of street action. The Maoists and the armed forces are extending the real reach of Jana Andolan (People’s Movement).

The king’s immediate option is to declare the total mobilisation of Jana Andolan as an act of treachery. He can then step up his efforts to create the cushion for his own soft landing.

Sixteen years later, people are back on the streets once more. The seven parties’ four-day general strike on 27 April was the turning point that spurred the people to suddenly join the agitation. There are scores reminiscent of 1990, burning tyres to block roads, boys throwing stones at police, civil servants, doctors and medical staff on strike. The king’s government is using the excuse of Maoist infiltration to suppress the movement, just like the royal government in 1990 claimed penetration by the people.

The 2006 movement is spreading more rapidly across the country than the 1990 one. Partially it is because of the atrocities committed by the police and the army backed by the king’s absolute power. The difference with 1990 is the presence of media—especially photojournalism, TV and FM—in vigour, ready and reporting in graphic detail the daily demonstrations. The slogans for Lokostha (democracy without a king) are spreading.

There is the possibility of even more strict suppression by the state through direct participation of the Nepali Army. But that is one thing that is going to stop this movement. The people are calling the “all-powerful” Panchayat slogans and how the police were shaking hands with demonstrators.

Most of the people in this historical demonstration were not party activists but members of the general public who had never taken part in a political rally before. The main reason that brought the people, especially professionals and the local Newars, to the streets was state suppression of the movement.

Sovereignty to the people. This would be a face-saving way for him to let his subjects slip back to their safe havens and make speeches from the pulpit of the Reporters’ Club.

They have to be ready to stand in front of the guns and lathis to make their goal clear and assert their commitment to democracy before the people. Otherwise, party leaders now have no right to claim any share of this Jana Andolan that will certainly bring a bigger change than 1990.

Most of those killed by the state in the last two decades during the 1990 movement were Newars who belonged to the local community. Nearly all were political people.

When I meet their family members recently many expressed dissatisfaction with the political parties for their disregard of victims of the movement.

That is why local Newars, except in Kirtipur, are still hesitating to join the present agitation. That must mean they themselves do not trust the parties. Political leaders should not expect them to join the movement. They lack leadership and responsibility for the movement.

Third World rulers, King Gyanendra has chosen to ignore these censures and his ministers are already expected to label it “false and hysterical interference in our internal affairs”. Frankly, they have a point there.

Parliamentary parties have been paying too much attention to what minor functionaries of international agencies say about the situation in Nepal. The NC and the UML, blinded by withholding anti-monarchy funds, are upon themselves to certain ambassadors who hail. Since been refused customary audiences by the king. You have to do better than this. We know how to deal with meddling dips. He once said: “They will say what they have to say, but people will have the last word.” The parliamentary parties should adopt that approach to fend off international criticism of their lack of action.

Kathmandu’s comely classes are feeling the king and his subjects are in a state of shock and are hoping the king will extend an olive branch towards political parties through his new year message. Even if there is a branch, olive or not, it will be too little, too late. Only unconditional unity between the forces of the people on the need for a constituent assembly can help rescue us.
PLAN B
Most of the youth in Nepal are talking about the Plan B that you cite in your editorial (‘Conflict of interests,’ #293). It is not right for the king to take absolute power and he should come up with some sort of compromise with the parties. Whatever we have now may not be working but that doesn’t mean an unknown Plan B will be better. Plan B means handing the country over to the Maoists. If and it is a big if, the monarchy falls in the matter of hours, not even days, the Maoists will take over the country and you will not be able to write editorials like these. No one dares to say anything against the Maoists and they’re not even in power yet! Let’s all urge the political parties to come up with genuine solutions and not just posture to get back to power. The king must sincerely consider the proposal to save all Nepalis from the anarchy.

Bimal Bastola, email

• Your editorial is concise, clear and well thought out. The way KG is wasting time in Pokhara using a remote control, it is clear he is not going to listen to anyone. After all, the crown was just a hobby for him and history shows that no Nepali Shah king has listened to anyone. After all, the crown is not right for the king to take absolute control, it is clear he is not going to change his ways.

H Orlhim, France

• It seems Kunda Dixit is becoming more of a politician than a journalist (‘Cut and clearly’, #293). Special. It seems he wants to enter politics and become a minister like everyone else. Have any of the parties offered him a position?

Name withheld, email

• All feudal lords have three characteristics: IMy Syndrome, Know-it-allness and the unflinching faith that they are indestructible. IMy-syndrome brings in them the notion of property rights, where they start believing that it is all mine and others have neither any right or any voice. ‘It belongs to me’, so the question of ‘a’ and ‘ours’ is not in their real vocabulary. Barely educated, much less experienced, mostly rich and powerful feudal lords believe that they know it all and they know what is best for all especially for the people and nation. Last but not the least, they are absolutely confident that nothing can ever happen to them and nobody can stop them. In all three counts, the king of Nepal is a case in point. He and his off-spring still believe that the country and the people of Nepal are his ‘mero deshbashi, mero desh, mero desh’ or prajal. He has taken extra pains in going ahead and against all norms (national and international) and advice of others since he ‘knows all’ and he ‘knows best’. And he of course believes that he is Lord Narayan. All of this stems from the fact that the king believes the army is his (even though they are paid by Nepalese taxpayers money) and that he can do anything he wishes. It is also surprising that a monarch is so ignorant of history and what happened to the likes of him in the rest of the world. Power blinds them and absolute power blinds absolutely.

Mike Duggan, Canada

• The article by Shiva Gauné (‘Not knowing if they are dead or alive is killing us’, #293) hit me like a thunderbolt and broke the heart of every person like me who has been to Nepal and has fallen in love with the people and country. As violence erupts again we share the anxiety and helplessness of peace-loving Nepalis. The saddest part is that the people have no one to look up to. The monarchy is distancing itself from the people and constantly being surrounded by sycophants. The seven political parties still have no clear agenda and still show their greed for power. And the Maoists, putting the country towards a future based on obsolete ideology. Despite everything, the monarchy still holds the key to a solution. I wish the king comes out of his palace and smells the coffee.

Sakal Ray, email

CK LAL
Buddholti’s rebuttal (‘Letters’, #293) was amusing and based on his comments The Economist may soon be rushing in to hire the services of ‘one of our most prolific writers’, CK Lal. However, he missed the vital point in the deadly writing, ‘It’s for La’ writing. To be on par with the best political journalists, one has to be neutral and not brazenly appear to represent a political outfit. Why shouldn’t there be comparisons between Lal and Bihari Krishna Shreshtha—their display of loyalty is obvious to everyone! Vijay Sharma, UK

ARBITRA BEED
Though I do not have a complain specifically against the Economic Sense columnist, Arthta Beed, what does concern me is that year after year I read unprepared individuals to create a professional culture that creates a boundary between politics and business? Instead of instituting truly liberal economic reforms we instead see banks and similar financial intermediaries reap fortunes out of artificially manipulated interest rates instituted by the central bank’s monetary policy and lack of proper financial alternatives.

In a nation where one cannot even create a true joint-stock corporation that can look to beyond the major banks with their risk-averse culture for investment, why would any professional entrepreneurial class emerge that can uplift the country? Our stock market is a joke and there is no other viable securities and bonds market in Nepal to be had. Thus, instead of creating value and growth in their own nation, our smartest, and brightesters are slaving away in foreign markets, making minimum-wage (if that), happy to be able to afford that next third-hand SUV. Please tell me where I can find the stories that explore the true back-ground of our nation’s woes, rather than regurgulating the popular-wisdom of the streets as if they were accurate socio-economic research papers.

Name withheld, email

KIDNEY CENTRE
We, the students of Bachelor of Arts in Social Work currently placed at National Kidney Center appeal the Nepali Times for Naresh Newar’s piece ‘Staying alive’ (#290). The article cites the gruelling situation of kidney patients in the country, also included our appeal for donation to help save the life of Ramesh Lama, a 26 year old bus driver suffering from hepatitis C and kidney failure for the last two years. Earlier, we appealed for help in other national dailies but managed to collect only Rs 10,000 from an anonymous donor. However, within the first week of the Nepali Times article, we received calls from various generous individuals and the total pledges have exceeded Rs 43,000 (from: Asian Paints, Singhe Carpets, Everest Insurance, Mr Sabien, Mrs Bina Agrawal, Dr C S Rizal) which has provided huge relief to the patient and his family. Unfortunately, his long term need is a kidney transplant which is currently and beyond the reach of the patient. On behalf of the patients we would like to acknowledge the altruism shown by benevolent donors who wanted to remain anonymous.

Shanti Gurung and Gayatri Kharel, Kathmandu

Letters
Nepali Times welcomes all feedback. Letters should be brief and may be edited for space. While we do not accept anonymous letters, we provide their real names and contact details will be given preference. Email letters should be sent in the format without attachments with ‘letter to the editor’ in the subject line. Email: letters@nepalitimes.com Fax: 877-1 020103 Mail: Letters, Nepali Times, GPO Box 7215, Kathmandu, Nepal.

LETTERS
Nepali Times welcomes all feedback. Letters should be brief and may be edited for space. While we do not accept anonymous letters, we provide their real names and contact details will be given preference. Email letters should be sent in the format without attachments with ‘letter to the editor’ in the subject line. Email: letters@nepalitimes.com Fax: 877-1 020103 Mail: Letters, Nepali Times, GPO Box 7215, Kathmandu, Nepal.
Today's Nepali people will not accept that there is a 1990-type compromise during the movement; it would be disastrous. This movement is heading toward a republican goal. We see clearly that the king will retreat to his old position, only then is dialogue possible. Otherwise, I am not going to rush as soon as the king summons me. It is the king who will have to move first.

The Maoists have announced additional protest programs including highway blockades. What impact will this have on the parties' movement? The Maoists held such programs in the past and we continued our protests even then. Now, too, we will carry on our movement. We are responsible for our own movement.

Mahara said you have not been open about the 12-point pact. What have you been hiding? There has been no agreement between us and the Maoists, it is only an understanding. There is a big difference. My basic principles are for an end to autocratic rule, peace, full-fledged democracy and an independent, sovereign and prosperous Nepal. Under these principles we held talks with the Maoists on the 12-point understanding and also talked with the international community.

The Maoists have been encouraging their protesters to announce what they call 'free areas'. What is the goal of this movement: a people's republic or reinstatement of parliament? The seven parties' agenda right from the beginning was to reinstate parliament and form an all-party, constitutional government. That government will hold talks with the Maoists and then move toward a constituent assembly.

What will be the king's role? This is something the king will have to decide for himself. If he fails to do so, I can only say this much: God save the king.

If the king invites you for dialogue, will you go? I will not rush as soon as the king summons me. It is the king who will have to retreat to his old position, only then is dialogue possible. Otherwise, I am not going to go to him like a dog with its tail between its legs.

That means what the government says is true—it is not a peaceful movement of the parties alone but also involves your violence. The two streams have set the end of monarchy as their goal. Only proper coordination and understanding between the two sides can accomplish that and that is the essence of the 12-point understanding. It is about amalgamating the peaceful political stream and the political stream of the 10-year-long people's war.

The government claims you have infiltrated the parties' agitation. The understanding between us and the parties is to help their movement in the urban areas. To facilitate the Kathmandu Valley program of the parties, we have even suspended military offensives in the valley. We have focused our armed action outside Kathmandu and in other areas. Even if we will not be present with our arms in the urban movement, we will be there unarmed.

But why are the parties not saying that same thing? Why have they not been open about your involvement in the movement? We too are surprised that the parties have not been able to speak confidently about the alliance and our agreement. We wish to have a joint program, a combined front and a common slogan to fight monarchy.

We too are surprised that the parties have not been able to speak confidently about the alliance and our agreement. We wish to have a joint program, a combined front and a common slogan to fight monarchy.

The two streams have set the end of monarchy as their goal. Only proper coordination and understanding between the two sides can accomplish that and that is the essence of the 12-point understanding. It is about amalgamating the peaceful political stream and the political stream of the 10-year-long people's war.

The government claims you have infiltrated the parties' agitation. The understanding between us and the parties is to help their movement in the urban areas. To facilitate the Kathmandu Valley program of the parties, we have even suspended military offensives in the valley. We have focused our armed action outside Kathmandu and in other areas. Even if we will not be present with our arms in the urban movement, we will be there unarmed.

But why are the parties not saying that same thing? Why have they not been open about your involvement in the movement? We too are surprised that the parties have not been able to speak confidently about the alliance and our agreement. We wish to have a joint program, a combined front and a common slogan to fight monarchy.

We too are surprised that the parties have not been able to speak confidently about the alliance and our agreement. We wish to have a joint program, a combined front and a common slogan to fight monarchy.

That means what the government says is true—it is not a peaceful movement of the parties alone but also involves your violence. The two streams have set the end of monarchy as their goal. Only proper coordination and understanding between the two sides can accomplish that and that is the essence of the 12-point understanding. It is about amalgamating the peaceful political stream and the political stream of the 10-year-long people's war.

The government claims you have infiltrated the parties' agitation. The understanding between us and the parties is to help their movement in the urban areas. To facilitate the Kathmandu Valley program of the parties, we have even suspended military offensives in the valley. We have focused our armed action outside Kathmandu and in other areas. Even if we will not be present with our arms in the urban movement, we will be there unarmed.

But why are the parties not saying that same thing? Why have they not been open about your involvement in the movement? We too are surprised that the parties have not been able to speak confidently about the alliance and our agreement. We wish to have a joint program, a combined front and a common slogan to fight monarchy.

We too are surprised that the parties have not been able to speak confidently about the alliance and our agreement. We wish to have a joint program, a combined front and a common slogan to fight monarchy.

That means what the government says is true—it is not a peaceful movement of the parties alone but also involves your violence. The two streams have set the end of monarchy as their goal. Only proper coordination and understanding between the two sides can accomplish that and that is the essence of the 12-point understanding. It is about amalgamating the peaceful political stream and the political stream of the 10-year-long people's war.

The government claims you have infiltrated the parties' agitation. The understanding between us and the parties is to help their movement in the urban areas. To facilitate the Kathmandu Valley program of the parties, we have even suspended military offensives in the valley. We have focused our armed action outside Kathmandu and in other areas. Even if we will not be present with our arms in the urban movement, we will be there unarmed.

But why are the parties not saying that same thing? Why have they not been open about your involvement in the movement? We too are surprised that the parties have not been able to speak confidently about the alliance and our agreement. We wish to have a joint program, a combined front and a common slogan to fight monarchy.

We too are surprised that the parties have not been able to speak confidently about the alliance and our agreement. We wish to have a joint program, a combined front and a common slogan to fight monarchy.

That means what the government says is true—it is not a peaceful movement of the parties alone but also involves your violence. The two streams have set the end of monarchy as their goal. Only proper coordination and understanding between the two sides can accomplish that and that is the essence of the 12-point understanding. It is about amalgamating the peaceful political stream and the political stream of the 10-year-long people's war.

The government claims you have infiltrated the parties' agitation. The understanding between us and the parties is to help their movement in the urban areas. To facilitate the Kathmandu Valley program of the parties, we have even suspended military offensives in the valley. We have focused our armed action outside Kathmandu and in other areas. Even if we will not be present with our arms in the urban movement, we will be there unarmed.

But why are the parties not saying that same thing? Why have they not been open about your involvement in the movement? We too are surprised that the parties have not been able to speak confidently about the alliance and our agreement. We wish to have a joint program, a combined front and a common slogan to fight monarchy.

We too are surprised that the parties have not been able to speak confidently about the alliance and our agreement. We wish to have a joint program, a combined front and a common slogan to fight monarchy.
so successful that even the Maoists are now claiming it as their own. The reason? This movement has received huge support from the public in six days, more than the support the Maoists received in the last 10 years of their so-called struggle. It is quite clear that the public wants a peaceful solution. An end to this conflict is not possible unless the Maoists give up arms and this movement has provided impetus toward a peaceful solution. The royal regime, which calls the Maoists ‘terrorists’ just to prolong its rule, is now running scared. The Home Ministry barred a peaceful rally in Baneswor and jailed Krishna Pahadi, revealing just how insecure Home Minister Kamal Thapa really is. Dear citizens, now is the time to make an assertive decision, one that will not only end the oppressive royal regime but also discourage the Maoists’ love for guns and violence.
Ashutosh Tiwari

Journalists and their associations in Nepal tend to stress the same abstract ideals of a free press for democracy. Their reasoning goes like this: a free press safeguards democracy, just as democracy safeguards a free press. It’s tempting to think that our journalists appear to be fighting to safeguard their own bread and butter concerns under the convenient umbrella of democracy, even when that’s not the case. It’s time the proponents of free press started using two market-based perspectives to talk about the instrumentalist role that a free press plays in making Nepal’s democracy healthier—regardless of who’s in power.

Reducing info asymmetry: No investor or buyer takes a company seriously if the information it gets cannot be verified by independent auditors or market analysts. Likewise, neither voters nor visitors can take a government’s claims about democracy seriously if a competitive and independent private-sector press appears to have been made unable to verify the information provided by the government.

For example, Nepal’s present regime has stuck to a claim that it has formed a legitimate government, which, it says, is accountable to the people. If that’s the case, then why doesn’t it allow an open audit of its actions? Why does it harass journalists, shut down news programs on FM stations, provide subsidies to a few media houses to buy influence, prop up state media organs with public money to air one-sided views and shut down the phone systems?

True, governments everywhere have their own convoluted reasons for suppressing information. But choosing a democracy means choosing openness, which can only be strengthened if there is a free press constantly subjecting the government’s actions to public scrutiny—to correct biases, to expose abuses of power and to bring unpopular viewpoints to the fore. All these reduce the information gap between those who govern and those who are governed.

News as public good: Imagine paying for a service only to receive nothing. Will that make you happy? No. Nepalis pay a variety of taxes to the government. Those who can’t pay, authorize the government to accept millions of dollars worth of foreign loans and grants. All expect the money to be used for universal primary education, basic healthcare, infrastructure development and good governance.

When the public pays money for a bundle of governance activities—ranging from security to food distribution—it has an interest to find out what is happening and why. Viewed this way, news about any democratic government’s activities is never something private for a few officials on the state’s payroll to keep tight about. Such news is a public good to which everyone, by virtue of having paid for it either directly or indirectly, must have access. A free press assures that such a public good does remain in the public domain so that hearings, debates and deliberations can take place to judge, evaluate and reject the government’s actions.

Yes, there is always some danger that a free press might falsify news to emphasize its political biases. But such a concern is unfounded for two interrelated reasons: First, in a competitive market, press members face private incentives to monitor one another much more intensely. An aggregation of such private behaviors results in an act of public service so that false news gets corrected quickly. Second, no media outlet can afford to play footloose with the truth for long without damaging its long-term source of revenue: public credibility.

More than abstract democratic ideals, which can be meaningless when borrowed and abused by all, it’s the market-based perspectives that help us argue the reasons why we want an absolutely free press in Nepal.
A tale of two demonstrations
Will Nepal go the way of Kirtipur or Gongabu?

NARESH NEWAR

In Nayapar at the foot of the hilltop town of Kirtipur, about 2,500 demonstrators on Monday sat down on the slopes above the road listening to university student Mani Kafle recite revolutionary poems. Organised by students, farmers, housewives, young boys and social workers from across the capital, the crowd chanted and chuckled, laughing at the satire. Even gun-toting, baton-wielding armed police stood listening with rapt attention for five hours, sometimes chuckling themselves.

“A new phase of our movement has started with civilians participating wholeheartedly and spontaneously,” said Shambu Maharjan, Kirtipur coordinator of the People’s Movement. Kirtipur residents who had earlier hid in their homes and women who only peered from windows rushed out in the hundreds to join the anti-king rally. There is a sense of historical justice being played out here this week: after all it was the moral might of a peaceful rally that prevented the occupation of Kirtipur that held out longest against the regimented forces of Prithivi Narayan Shah in 1768. A tale of two demonstrations: will Nepal go the way of Kirtipur or Gongabu? Which one will we choose?

Human rights activists and Red Cross staff were all rushing out. “You guys better go back,” one of them told us, “we were chased out of there.” From the warren of Gongabu’s alleys we could hear gunshots. The APS and RNA had taken up defensive positions because they were convinced it was the Maoists shooting.

It turned out to be policemen guarding AIGP Rup Narayan Moktan’s villa who opened fire to scare away protesters who were trying to storm it. One of the policemen, Nanda P Tamang, was caught by the mob and was being badly beaten. “Help me, please,” he pleaded to journalists, who managed to calm the youths and rescue the policeman.

Gongabu actually started as a peaceful demonstration in an area known for its large and unruly transient population. Witnesses said both the demonstrators and security forces were to blame for Sunday’s violence that could easily have been a major massacre.

Unlike elsewhere, there were no political or community leaders here to control the protesters when they started running amok. On the other hand, police and soldiers kept pushing into the demonstration provoking the youth. When it ended, over 30 protesters were injured after the police fired both rubber and live bullets and brutally flailed at them with batons.

Nepalnews.com photojournalist Kumar Shrestha got a bullet in his arm and human rights activists looked helpless as the situation got out of control. The journalists constantly pushed them to take a position between the two sides but the mob was furious at the activists for earlier rescuing policemen from inside the AIGP’s house.

“My god, I don’t know what things went wrong,” said one local woman, “it started out so peacefully.”

Back in Kirtipur on Tuesday the peaceful movement turned into a public debate on the pros and cons of parliament reinstatement. After initial disagreement, even the student unions seemed to have learnt to compromise. A short speech by pro-NC student leader Prakash Neupane calmed the students down and the two sides sat down to decide on a compromise. A new phase of our movement has started.

Every demonstration in Kathmandu started out so peacefully.” said one local woman, “it started out so peacefully.”

Back in Kirtipur on Tuesday the peaceful movement turned into a public debate on the pros and cons of parliament reinstatement. After initial disagreement, even the student unions seemed to have learnt to compromise. A short speech by pro-NC student leader Prakash Neupane calmed the students down and the two sides sat down to decide on a compromise.
Five days that showed

At the edges of a curfew

Beyond the teargas and rubber bullets, citizens play cat and mouse to reclaim their space

ANDREA NIGHTINGALE and JUDY PETTIGREW

Besides the burning tyres, defiance of curfews and brutalisation by police there was another, more subtle resistance in the lanes and alleys of Kathmandu and Patan this week.

As the curfew hours draw near, people stake out their ‘curfew points’—safe spaces from which they can watch the action. These points move as the balance of power shifts.

On the first morning of the curfew, Saturday, at 10 AM we stood with local people watching the Ring Road as a group of protesters on the other side put up obstacles. The Ring Road was a crucial curfew boundary. Outside it, people gathered to observe and move freely, and on this side we were tightly constrained.

The protesters and the police eyed each other over this boundary as the curfew hour approached, each side daring the other to claim the space. In many ways this confrontation helped define where the edge of the road actually lay and therefore the curfew. At 10:10 the police decided to act, enthusiastically taunted by protesters 100 m up the road. They called out and gestured at the police to come after them. When the police charged they ran through the alleys and reappeared opposite our little lane. They seemed pleased with their stint and laughed at the police who were now 50 m in the wrong direction.

But once the group across the road slipped into the alleys of the non-curfew zone, the police turned their attention to us. They whistled and waved their batons as they approached, sending all 12 of us adults and children scurrying well back into the alley and out of sight.

Shortly afterwards, an elderly woman approached the road and did not break her stride. A policeman caught sight of her and blew his whistle, but she kept walking calling out that her house was on the other side. The other policeman drew his gun. Undaunted, she carried on walking at the same pace passing very close to him. He looked as if he wanted to stop her, but took no further action. She reached the other side safely.

During the curfews these alleys remained defiantly civil society spaces where people gathered, moved between neighbourhoods and constantly tested the boundaries of the security forces’ control. The people are not ‘protesters’ but exercising a more subtle form of civil disobedience by refusing to accept their neighbourhoods and lanes as the king’s. In other parts of the city, the security forces violated not only local claims to alleys and lanes, but also peoples’ houses.

Three days later, six young men came down the lane and entered the ‘no man’s land’ before the Ring Road—our original vantage point on Saturday. Their timing was not good, it was 15 minutes into the curfew and the police had just chased some other boys away. The group of six hesitated, then gingerly moved towards the road where a policeman intercepted them. The teenagers indicated they wanted to cross over but their brief interchange was futile. Almost at the same moment, the policeman hit one of the young men with a heavy blow. He then raised his rifle and brought it down with crushing force. The young man managed to duck and the group immediately ran deep into the lane. Throughout the incident, we deliberately positioned ourselves as witnesses, refusing to look away or be intimidated by his actions. By witnessing, we thought his violence would diminish but it seemed to have no effect whatsoever.

The testing of the neighbourhood space stood us well because by Sunday the neighbourhood had managed to claim movement on some roads. We decided to explore an unknown lane on the opposite side of one of these roads and to our surprise not even 20 m back we seemed to step out of the curfew all together. There were cricket and football matches in the middle of the lane (see pic, left) a lot of people out and even shops open.

These spaces of resistance were fluid, contested and in many ways highly subversive. While in some parts of the city tyres are burning, police are firing rounds of rubber bullets and tear gas at protesters, in the less overtly contested areas people express their defiance through everyday acts: crossing roads, opening shops, gathering to share news and confronting the security forces over the boundaries of control.

For now, it appears the security forces will continue to try to control the city through excessive force but what city do they rule? It is clear they cannot control the everyday spaces of most peoples’ neighbourhoods and through subtle acts of resistance and defiance, the authority of the regime is eroded.

Andrea Nightingale is a geographer at the University of Edinburgh and Judith Pettigrew is an anthropologist at the University of Central Lancashire.
UNICEF Nepal has expressed its deep concern about children being injured, arrested and detained in the recent demonstrations in Kathmandu and other cities. “Children have no place in violent demonstrations,” UNICEF Representative Dr Suzumi Sakai said on Thursday. “It is of great concern that children, some under the age of 10, have been seen taking part in demonstrations…some of these children have been injured.”

"While children do have the right to freedom of expression under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, their parents and guardians also have the right and responsibility to ensure that children are exercising their rights in an age-appropriate manner,” Sakai added.

Organisers of any demonstration or public gathering have a responsibility to ensure that children are out of harm’s way, particularly children without family, such as street children, UNICEF said.

Meanwhile, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour said Thursday she was “shocked by the excessive use of force” by security forces in Nepal as well as the arbitrary detentions of protesters. “On Tuesday our human rights officers witnessed the most excessive use of force to date against demonstrators in Kathmandu by members of the APP and Nepal Police, and the toll of serious injuries added to three fatal shootings around the country has risen alarmingly,” Arbour said. This follows UN Secretary General Kofi Annan’s statement last week that virtually all avenues for peaceful protest in Nepal seem to have been closing.

Arbour reminded the government of her office’s commitment to provide the UN’s Department of Peacekeeping Operations with information regarding individuals implicated in human rights violations by the police and army.
Exit strategy

The agitation against direct royal rule found traction this week, forcing the government to counter it with daytime curfews. Home Minister Kamal Thapa justified the curfews because of the real possibility of infiltration by insurgents, but surely there are more sophisticated means at the disposal of the security forces than to hit people over their heads with batons. What is the purpose of curfew anyway if they are being defied?

If we bothered to ask ordinary Nepalis what they think, they would see an urgent need to resolve the political and military stalemate with dialogue. There is universal realization now that situation is careening into a dangerous phase the outcome of which can only be very undesirable.

The public posturing of the seven-party alliance and the Maoists are well known, although it is by no means clear that it is the same thing that they want from the 12-point agreement and the constituent assembly demand. The king wants to hold a parliamentary election in April 2007. The protagonists have already rejected each other's plans and it seems to be clear that neither the palace nor the parties will undertake any dialogue unless the other is on its knees. And if in the process the country is ruined, just too bad.

We see an uncurved king flying back from Pokhara with his entourage and a government in Kathmandu determined to prolong his direct rule. As shown in successive public opinion polls, the citizens of this embattled nation desire something different. They want a benign and respected monarchy and multiparty democracy.

Most people also feel that the 1990 constitution had a pretty good arrangement in relation to the monarchy. That the constitution get misused by the parties and the king is why some want to change it. Whatever kind of system we will get under a new constitution it will be many more months of hard-nosed bargaining, perhaps with the more sophisticated means at the disposal of the security forces than goes far enough to break the stalemate.

By the time you read this, we will know if the king's new year message offers a solution or not. No issue is out of bounds and one of the subjects at a recent discussion was even 'what to do with Nanyuki palace when it is no longer a palace to inhabit?'. WPRM markets the conflict in Nepal as 'the most advanced struggle against imperialism in the world today' and seemingly has no difficulty in finding an audience. It is usually a friendly crowd of up to 25 people but attendance goes up whenever there is a prominent speaker. Some migrant workers scoping it by in London, some are students and others reply "karm garda" or "accountant" when asked what they do.

The Royal Nepali Embassy in London seems to have got wind of the WPRM speaking tour and among those attending was a Nepali with a distinctly Sandhurst crewcut. London is one of 13 European cities where Maoists seek 'help and support' and in the past few months the roadshow has moved through Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. Organisers are usually European chapters of the WPRM.

Speakers can be visitors from Nepal, Indian activists like Ananda Swaroop Verma who partly built Bhutan's landmark magazine Monarchy vs Democracy: The Epic Fight in Nepal, or even Kurdish communists who camped out on the 'people's war' or the 100 mile Martyr's Highway in Rolpa. The Nepal revolution may be becoming more bearable but for the international communist movement it is a model for...
others to follow. Verma himself painted a glorious picture of the Nepali masses and a feudal regime which was backed by imperialists led by the US, UK and India.

There are other communist groups hawking Nepal’s war, most notably the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM) which groups revolutionaries from the world over. Nepal Communist Party (Masal) became a member 22 years ago but was replaced by its Maoist wing and it includes the New People’s Army of the Philippines, Columbia’s FARC and Peru’s Shining Path. There was a time when Nepali Maoists used RIM to project their international revolutionary image but as the end game nears in Nepal it is now the other way around. It is RIM that uses Nepal to show that Maoism is alive and kicking.

These global communist networks look eagerly to news from Nepal and the day when Nepal’s Maoists can succeed in setting up a people’s republic in Nepal, WPRM and RIM help comrades with travel arrangements in Europe like they did for a senior Nepali Maoist on a clandestine trip here in January and pays for it from donations from members and supporters. This ideological camaraderie has a real potential to turn into a solid working relationship across borders. WPRM has started appealing for ‘money for travel’ for the Nepali Maoists and RIM believes that the insurgency by Maoists will be at the ‘storm centre of world revolution’ and ‘new sacrifices will be required by the comrades’.

www.awtw.org/rim/index.htm
www.wprm.org

PRANAV BUDHATHOKI
Phil Mickelson avoids final-hole drama at the legendary tourney

The Masters tournament live on tv is always a thriller for golfing enthusiasts as it pits the sport’s superstars against one another at one of the game’s most spectacular venues—the Augusta National Golf Club in Georgia, USA. Almost always, that is.

But last week the first grand slam of the season was handled masterfully by a left-handed veteran who kept his composure and steady hand throughout the final round to capture the ‘Green Jacket’, leaving no room for last-minute heroics from his many challengers.

The match heated up after 54 holes, as 20 players were within six shots, close enough to overtake the leader. Just one shot behind Mickelson were Fred Couples and Chad Campbell and two shots back were superstars Tiger Woods and Vijay Singh.

But finally, the player with a dozen years of experience under his belt outlasted all those contenders to seize his second straight major (after winner last year’s PGA Championship) without resorting to a nerve-racking finish. Mickelson closed with a 3-under 69 for a two-shot victory over Tim Clarke and donned his second green jacket in three years.

The only surprise was the way he won. There were no thrills in Phil’s closing holes, just his safe, steady play that forced other great golfers like Tiger Woods, Fred Couples and Vijay Singh to strive to catch him. Instead, they stumbled with three-putts and a litany of other mistakes that allowed Mickelson to stroll up the 18th fairway with no worries. The match was in his pocket after he rolled in a birdie on the 15th hole to move to eight under par with a four-shot advantage.

The win earned Mickelson $1.26 million and after winning the Bellsouth championship a week before, put him atop the PGA Tour money list and moved him to No. 2 in the Official World Golf Rankings behind Woods.

When I look back, Fred Couples had the best chance to challenge Mickelson and had he won it would have been especially poignant. Couples would have become the oldest Masters champion, a record now held by Jack Nicklaus, who took the title at the age of 46. Fred was charging hard and looked well in contention until his putter betrayed him. First came a three-putt on the 11th, his par putt spinning around the cup. On the 14th hole, Couples had a four-foot birdie putt that would have pulled him to within one shot but he three-putted, missing the second putt from six feet. But he wasn’t alone—no one performed to the expectations of an Augusta gallery grown used to last-day heroics.

Mickelson himself was in a major drought until he won the same tournament two years ago—known as an exceptional player who couldn’t deliver when it mattered, especially in the majors. But now he has proved that he can handle the pressure and is going to be a thorn in the side of Woods, who of course is on a run to break all previous golfing records.

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

“I love my country but I hate the government.”

DUNWAKOT—Taken in by Kathmandu’s royal regime with two dozen other protesters last week for willfully (and with prior announcement) breaking the curfew order, this writer had an opportunity to see how a ‘militarising’ autocratic state machinery can ride rough-shod over some of the weakest members of society. It was an opportunity to take a look at the underbelly of the monster that the government can be. What we have seen during our incarceration is something that the privileged with contacts in high places or money to buy oneself safe passage rarely care to see or understand.

There are three types of inmates in this makeshift detention centre at the Dunwakot armed police barracks outside Kathmandu. The relatively well-known human rights activists have little fear of violence once they are taken in. Then there are political activists both senior and junior, who receive some protection from party affiliations and linkages. But here in Dunwakot there is also an entire category of true innocents. Most of these young adults, some of them mere boys, are migrants who have left their families in faraway hills and plains, to work in menial jobs. They represent the rural poor of all ethnicities and castes but they are united in their lack of influence anywhere in the state structure. This lack of agency is only matched by their absolute poverty. The trauma that these boys of Dunwakot have faced and are facing exists at several levels.

Firstly, it is the chase on the streets, the attacks by batons and staffs, the abuse and the bundling into the back of trucks. Once in the holding center, the toilet facilities are non-existent, then they are transported from one detention centre to another, provided with no information whatsoever. No food is provided for more than a day, and when it is it is of the lowest grade imaginable. There is fear that authorities in need of proving Maoist ‘infiltration’ of the democratic movement can with the flick of a pen declare you an insurgent and do away with your life and prospects. Who will tell the family, who will inform the employer, who is the lawyer or activist to speak for you? Who is to defend you and to charge the regime with wrongful imprisonment and seek a writ of habeas corpus and demand release and reparation?

Dambar Nepali, is 14, from Udayapur in the hills of the east. He works as a construction labourer and was taken in and beaten while coming home from work. Ramesh Baner, 23, from Dhusing, was returning from the printing press where he works as a cleaner when he was dragged out: Dharma Timilshina, 17, of Hetuada, Budhia Lama, 16, of Sindhupalchok, Ramesh Thapa Magar, 17 and Ram Lama, 20, of Chapapani. They have all been moved elsewhere. Individuals who are in the lowest class bracket in detention get the toilet that is furthest, the rice that is worst. It will be important for the ICRC to determine their fate and whereabouts.

Some policemen can be fine, sensitive individuals. But they take orders from an insensitive state run by a ruler who has sought again and again to prove his contempt for the people of Nepal. When autocracy and militarisation is combined with contempt those without recourse suffer unseen and unheard. This is one more reason for a quick return to democracy, pluralism and peace.

Ramesh Baner told me before he was taken away: “This turns out to be the kind of country I was born into. I love my country but I hate the government. I have not picked up a stone, I have not burnt a tyre in protest. Why am I here and where will they take me?”

COURT ANNOUNCEMENT

Applications marked ‘For the post of Director-Development & Resources’ on the envelope should be submitted by April 30, 2006 with a letter outlining your interest and a C.V. or resume, work experience, and contact information for 3 references to:

WWF Nepal Program
PO Box 7690
Kathmandu, Nepal

Email applications to hr@wwfnepal.org are encouraged. Official sahristied candidates will be informed.

Women and indigenous peoples are encouraged to apply.

A detailed TOR is available on our website at www.wwfnepal.org.

This is just the beginning...
KATHMANDU VALLEY

- Kathmandu Valley will see much hotter days into the new year with the temperature in the western plains for the first time this season, and we expect this to climb.

India, and keeping clouds away. The maximum temperature has crossed 40 Celsius in the western plains for the first time this season, and we expect this to climb.

We’re sounding an all clear because a huge high pressure area is covering north

MAUSAM BEED

NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED

We’re sounding an all clear because a huge high pressure area is covering north India, and keeping clouds away. The maximum temperature has crossed 40 Celsius in the western plains for the first time this season, and we expect this to climb.

Kathmandu Valley will see much hotter days into the new year with the temperature in the western plains for the first time this season, and we expect this to climb.

We’re sounding an all clear because a huge high pressure area is covering north India, and keeping clouds away. The maximum temperature has crossed 40 Celsius in the western plains for the first time this season, and we expect this to climb.

Kathmandu Valley will see much hotter days into the new year with the temperature in the western plains for the first time this season, and we expect this to climb.

We’re sounding an all clear because a huge high pressure area is covering north India, and keeping clouds away. The maximum temperature has crossed 40 Celsius in the western plains for the first time this season, and we expect this to climb.

Kathmandu Valley will see much hotter days into the new year with the temperature in the western plains for the first time this season, and we expect this to climb.

We’re sounding an all clear because a huge high pressure area is covering north India, and keeping clouds away. The maximum temperature has crossed 40 Celsius in the western plains for the first time this season, and we expect this to climb.

Kathmandu Valley will see much hotter days into the new year with the temperature in the western plains for the first time this season, and we expect this to climb.

We’re sounding an all clear because a huge high pressure area is covering north India, and keeping clouds away. The maximum temperature has crossed 40 Celsius in the western plains for the first time this season, and we expect this to climb.

Kathmandu Valley will see much hotter days into the new year with the temperature in the western plains for the first time this season, and we expect this to climb.
CAN I COME IN? The head of the UN’s Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Kathmandu, Ian Martin, at the gate of the Nepal Police Academy at Maharajganj during a curfew on Tuesday afternoon to visit detainees there.

THE BAR ON WAR PATH: Members of the Nepal Bar Association marching towards Maitighar on Thursday just before riot police stopped them and beat them back. There were 400 people present at the demonstration where rubber bullets were fired and three lawyers were injured.

GON: A pro-democracy activist paints over a sign at a government training centre. ‘His Majesty’s Government of Nepal’ was replaced with ‘Government of Nepal’.

GONG: Nine tourists from Britain, Israel and Germany were detained by riot police in Thamel after a pro-democracy rally in which up to 300 tourists took part. They were released after six hours.

GOING AROUND IN CIRCLES: The Seto Machendranath chariot enters Lagan Tole as it was being pulled across town on Monday in the middle of a curfew.

A leading professor

For Krishna Khanal, professor of political science at Tribhuvan University, it was like taking class on Monday afternoon in Kirtipur. The only difference was there were over 1,000 people sitting in the slopes below the town and he had to use a loudspeaker.

But in just about every other way, the good professor was speaking on a subject he has always felt deeply about: how non-violent resistance against tyranny is the most effective way to bring about its downfall. Khanal is not a starry-eyed Gandhian, although he does idolise Nelson Mandela. This week’s pro-democracy agitation has been a chance for him to test the political science theory he has always taught in class and see if it works in real life. It worked better than he ever expected. When the Kirtipur demonstrations showed signs of turning nasty, Khanal stood on a large boulder grabbed the loudspeaker and in his deep professorial voice called on the crowd to calm down. There was laughter, clapping and more laughter. At one point a huge armoured car tried to drive through the to enforce the curfew in the town, but the people spontaneously lay down on the street and blocked its path forcing the vehicle to turn back. In the end even the security forces seemed relieved that a confrontation was avoided. Pretty soon, the policemen down the road were laughing along with the people they came to control.

‘Ridiculing those who lust for power is more powerful than throwing bricks at them,’ muses Khanal (third from left in picture taken on Monday in Kirtipur).

Indeed, the government hasn’t yet found a reason to arrest the 73-year-old democracy activist. “This is the kind of movement that should be held all across the nation,” says Khanal’s daughter Suchitra, 22, who suggests that all leaders should follow her father’s peaceful path to empowering the movement. Krishna Khanal strongly believes that a non-violent movement will ultimately triumph over any kind of repression, no matter how extreme. But the professor is modest about his accomplishment and shies away from media interviews. Still we managed to wrest this out of him: “All I’m doing is a citizen’s duty to establish a free and democratic nation.”

Dhruba Simkhada

THE POSSIBILITIES ARE INFINITE

Fujitsu

LifeBook S7021
CPU - Intel Core i7 2.86 Ghz
RAM - 8 GB DDR3
HDD: 500 GB
Drivers - DVD Writer
66K Modern & Built-in Ethernet
Licensed Original
MS Windows with Backup CD

LifeBook P Series P7010
CPU - Intel Core i7 1.2 Ghz
RAM - 512 MB
HDD: 60 GB
Drivers - DVD Writer
56K Modem & Built-in Ethernet
Licensed Original
MS Windows with Backup CD

LifeBook C1321
CPU - Intel Core i3 1.73 Ghz
RAM - 1 GB DDR3
HDD: 9 GB
Drivers - DVD Writer
56K Modem & Built-in Ethernet
Licensed Original
MS Windows with Backup CD

Ipod Shuffle

Evolution Trading Pvt. Ltd.
Place: S71, Ashoknagar, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: 014408, 01480808; Fax: 4223567

One Year Warranty

Authorized Distributor for Nepal

D&D International

Toll Free: 98114 3897
New Job Openings in Nepal

(Advertisement re-issued in the public interest since no suitable candidate has emerged in the past three years.)

Are you an ambitious, morally-challenged Nepali citizen? Do you have a knack for impulsively fixing what ain’t broke, and break what’s fixed?

Are you a go-getter, someone who can get into a daura suruwal when it is time to go? Are you unencumbered by false modesty, an honest streak, pangs of conscience? Are you a self-made avaricious sychophant? Have you been named in the Mallik Commission Report? Has Rasputin been your secret role model?

Then you may be just the person we are looking for to lead the Kingdom into a Glorious Sunset.

This is a tender notice for the wet lease of at least 1 (one) Prime Minister for the Kingdom of Nepal with immediate effect in an ad where is condition. Said Kingdom may be inspected on weekdays between 9AM to 5PM, except during curfews, national holidays and band days which only leaves you ten days in a year. So hurry.

This challenging opportunity is open to all citizens of Nepal and particularly those who have been prime minister before. Candidates who applied for the post previously and were rejected will be given a sympathetic hearing. Perfect for senior citizens looking for adventure and excitement in the autumn of their lives and the chance to escape the monotony of retirement in Bhaisepati.

**Mandatory Requirements:**
- Should ideally be in the 85-90 age bracket and have already commenced showing signs of screws coming loose, but must still have the vision to spot a Maoist in every street demonstration. Possession of at least a few remaining faculties and vital bodily functions would be an asset.
- Should have been prime minister so many times in the past you must have lost count. Age, incompetence and incontinence no bar. You must be able to play the flute and have a vast storehouse of experience in bringing the country to the brink of anarchy at least once before in this nation’s history.
- Must have at least 10 years experience in ribbon-cutting, lamp lighting, shawl gifting, bouquet accepting and an ability to deliver speeches that can knock everyone unconscious within a 25 m radius in full view of TV cameras.
- A proven track record in dissolving parliaments, refusing to extend the tenure of local bodies and inability to raise living standards of Nepalis despite decades of fruitless effort will be an added advantage.
- Skeletons in the cabinet are a pre-requisite. Must start preparing now for a free and fair election in a year’s time. (Think you can manage that?)

**Terms of Reference**
- Must be loyal, but not necessarily competent. On-the-job training provided while country is in flames.
- Chain of command: PM reports directly to HM every AM via FM. Must be superstitious and share passion for decision-making based on tantricism, black magic, voodoo and the movement of the planets vis-à-vis the only Hindu kingdom in the known Universe. Must have excellent alliance-building skills with all stakeholders in society.
- Salary: Let’s just put it this way, there will be adequate opportunities for candidate’s poverty-alleviation. 
- Perks: Unlimited access to resources from the Miscellaneous and Emergency Budget Heads. Maternity Allowance can be arranged for suitable male candidates. HMG is an equal opportunities employer as long as you toe the line.

**Applications**

Surreptitiously slip application with Personal History Form and recent photograph to one of our flunkies during non-curfew hours.

(Till Press time Still) His Majesty’s Government of Nepal
Singha Durbar