



KIRAN PANDAY

People Power II

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Weekly Internet Poll # 294

Q. Can parliamentary polls be held within a year under current circumstances?

Total votes:6,079

Can't say 37%
Can't 67.3%
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Q. Who do you blame for the state of the country?

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Days of future past

This week's unfolding events are a eerie replay of April 1990

On 30 March 1990 I arrived in Kathmandu to see the movement for the restoration of multiparty democracy that had been launched by the Nepali Congress and the United Left Front 40 days earlier. (That's me on the picture below, left.)

GUEST COLUMN
Kiyoko Ogura



This happened to be the same day when the public in Patan staged a demonstration that ended in a clash with police in which two local Newar youths were killed in police firing. With this incident as a turning point, the movement started to take the real shape of Jana Andolan (People's Movement).

Immediately after the incident, people in Patan started to prevent the police from entering their city by blocking the entry points and they declared their town a 'Free Zone'. The agitation soon spread to Kirtipur and then to Kathmandu. Kirtipures also came out on the streets on 2

April and began to make their place police-free.

The climax came on 6 April. After hearing the king's proclamation to dismiss prime minister Marichman Singh Shrestha and to appoint loyalist Lokendra Bahadur Chand, angry citizens spontaneously came out to take part in demonstrations. I clearly remember how the people openly chanted anti-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.

Sixteen years later, people are back on the streets once more. The seven parties' four-day general strike on 6 April was the turning point that spurred the people to suddenly join the agitation. There are scenes 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 Indian agents.

The 2006 movement is spreading more rapidly across the country than the 1990 one. Partly 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 witnessing and reporting in graphic detail the daily demonstrations. The slogans for Loktantra (democracy without a

king) are spreading.

There is the possibility of even more strict suppression by the state through direct deployment of the Royal Nepali Army. But I don't see how that is going to stop this movement since it is rooted in the failure of all rulers, including the monarchy and the political parties.

The international community, including the US government, has been sharply critical of the king and his regime for their crackdowns on pro-democracy supporters. The party leaders now need to come out into the streets, not hide in 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 before the people. Otherwise, party leaders 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 Kathmandu Valley during the 1990 movement were Newars who belonged to the local community. Nearly all were non-political people. When I met 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 still don't trust the political parties. Political leaders should not expect them to join the movement but should take leadership and responsibility for the movement. ●

Japanese journalist Kiyoko Ogura is the author of *Kathmandu Spring: The People's Movement of 1990* (Himal Books 2001) and its original in Japanese.

ANARCHY IN A MONARCHY

Nepal's war-weary 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 are glad 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 on 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 charges of sell-out.

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 activism by the parties.

The wise thing for the Maoists to do now is to declare another unilateral indefinite ceasefire. This would once and for all remove any remaining reason the king may still have to continue on his autocratic path, and create the cushion for their own soft landing.

None of the three forces can hope to win it all. The Maoists can't come to power even if they sideline the king and the parties. The king can't win by removing the Maoists and the parties. The parties will be nowhere without accommodating the king and the rebels.

Let's hope that in the new year all three sides see the light.



MIN BAJRACHARYA



KIRAN PANDAY

Among the deceivers

The day of reckoning is coming closer for Messrs Thapa, Thapa, Thapa, Thapa and Thapa

For a former AIGP, Govind Prasad Thapa, PhD, is unusually erudite and surprisingly unassuming. Like most scholars, he refrains from making hasty comments and prefers to qualify even well argued remarks with ifs and buts. When a

STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal



person of his stature decides to call

the excessive use of force on peaceful protestors "shameful" there is reason to believe something is really wrong rotten.

AIGP Thapa says nothing about the person responsible for the excesses of the security forces, but history will hold King Gyanendra ultimately responsible for them. On the day of reckoning, which is getting closer by the day, Messrs Thapa, Thapa, Thapa, Thapa and Thapa (the Home Minister, the Law Minister, the Army Chief,

the Chief of the Armed Police Force and the chief of Nepal Police) will all point their fingers at the chairman. The buck has to stop somewhere, that's the way it works in all authoritarian systems: once the statue is toppled the most trusted lieutenants of the dictators turn out to be their loudest detractors.

The idea of a benevolent dictator has been discredited almost everywhere it has been tried. There is something in the notion of an all-powerful saviour that appeals to aristocrats and plebeian alike. Actually the moment a dictator tries to be benevolent, he risks losing his chair because a more ruthless despot emerges to oust him. That's the way it has been from Roman times to Rana times. Almost every Rana prime minister lost his throne that way. Whenever a Sri Tin tried to introduce even cosmetic reforms, his brothers and nephews would pounce upon him. Autocrats need a

permanent state of crisis to survive and thrive.

When King Gyanendra assumed all state powers in October 2002 in a carefully orchestrated putsch, the comfortable classes gave him full benefit of doubt. They hoped the king would eliminate the Maoists, discipline wayward politicians, mobilise moribund administrators, restore normalcy in the country, conduct elections and hand over power to the representatives of the people.

We somehow assumed that the all-powerful 'international community' had enough clout to keep the ambitions of the monarch in check. But the king continued with his phased coup until 1 February 2005. All the donors and lenders could do once the deed was done was to issue by the pronouncements. Recent statements of US State Department and European Union are a continuation of the routine. Like fellow-

Third World rulers, King Gyanendra has chosen to ignore these censures and his ministers are allowed to label it "foreign 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 blundered by withholding anti-monarchy protests upon the requests of certain ambassadors who have since been refused customary audiences by the king. You have to hand it to our king, he knows how to deal with meddling dups. He once said: "They will say what they have to say, we must do what we have to do." Maybe the parliamentary parties should adopt that approach to fend off international criticism of their 12-point pact with the Maoists.

Kathmandu's comfy classes have been feeling claustrophobic in the curfews 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. ●

LETTERS

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 Maoist 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! Lets 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 lottery for him and history shows that no Nepali Shah king has lived past his 60th birthday. At this rate the 25 percent who support his 1 February move in your public opinion poll (#292) will decrease further. So Plan B is not a bad option for normal Nepalis like me.

G Pokharel, Beckley, WV, USA

● Nepalis must not just have a Plan B but also a Plan C, Plan D and Plan E. I see the same mistake being made in Nepal as in 1990. Then, while fighting for 'democracy' in the streets no one had a clue of how to go about things if the Panchayat was overthrown and today the whole nation is suffering from that lack of a plan. Big words like constituent assembly or even just republic don't mean anything unless all things are considered. It is imperative to have backup plans to avoid chaos later. But the way things are headed, I see only two options: a military dictatorship or a communist dictatorship. Both are far worse than what we have now. By siding with the Maoists the political parties have not only alienated the security forces but betrayed them after first pushing them into the war and then later joining the enemy camp. They can never gain the trust of the security forces, which they hope to command when they come to power. If the monarchy falls tomorrow I don't see any prospect of a democratic Nepal in near future. But if the political parties and the monarchy agree, democracy is just round the corner

N Suputra, email

● Re: 'Conflict of interests', #293. Fools rarely listen, specially when they think they are in place due to divine grace...just ask George Bush. One of

the best thing that can happen to Nepal, with peace of course, is that the major political players, both chairmen (Comrade Awesome and the armoured Jaguar gang) take their favourite relatives and chamchas, the old arsonist-in-chef and his Koirala clique... settle down in a empty island near Tonga or somewhere and let Nepalis live happily ever after.

H Orhim, France

● It seems Kunda Dixit is becoming more of a politician than a journalist ('Cut and cut cleanly', *NT eSpecial*). 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: I/My Syndrome, Know-it-allness and the unflinching faith that they are indestructible. The I/My-syndrome brings in them the notion of property rights, where they start believing that it is all 'mine' and others have neither any right nor any voice. 'It belongs to me', so the question of 'us' 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



BRIAN SOKOL

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 desh, mera deshbashi or praja*). 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 it's paid from Nepali taxpayers money) and that he can do any thing 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 Gaunle ('Not knowing if they are dead or alive is killing us...' #292) 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 the 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 pulling are 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.

Saikat Ray, email

CK LAL

Budathoki'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 debate over Mr Lal's 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 Shrestha—their display of loyalty is obvious to everyone!

Vijay Sharma, UK

ARTHA BEED

Though I do not have a complain specifically against your Economic Sense columnist, Artha Beed, what does concern me is that year after year I read uninspired

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 mandated 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 brightest 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 regurgitating 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 applaud 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, former 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 can cost Rs 200,000. 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 pseudonyms can be accepted, writers who provide their real names and contact details will be given preference. Email letters should be in text format without attachments with 'letter to the editor' in the subject line.

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2722

Imagine what it can do.

“God save the king”

Maoist spokesman Krishna Bahadur Mahara and NC President Girija Prasad Koirala in separate interviews with the BBC Nepali Service, 10 April

नेपाली



MIN BAJRACHARYA

BBC Nepali Service: What is your party's role in the ongoing movement?
Mahara: This is a joint program based on an understanding. This is not just our program neither is it only of the parties. All steps are being taken on the basis of the understanding between the two sides.

Does that mean there is cooperation between the two sides?
After the 12-point understanding between us and the parties, the two sides have been working together to end monarchy and create the people's republic.

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's about amalgamating the peaceful political stream and the political stream of the 10-year 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.

But how can a struggle that is peaceful and one that is violent be reconciled?
Our violence is for peace. It is aimed at ending the monarchy and towards that goal, violence is necessary. We don't believe that the monarchy will come to an end just via a peaceful movement.

Do you need the help of the parties because you have been unsuccessful in the last 10 years?
The parties too need us. We embarked on our campaign after the parties failed to end the monarchy and change the traditional social set-up.

What if the king ends his direct rule and the parties are satisfied with that?
This movement is heading toward a republican goal. We see clearly that the people are getting energised by the slogan demanding the end of monarchy. If there is a 1990-type compromise during the movement, it would be disastrous. Today's Nepali people will not accept that.

BBC Nepali Service: Maoist spokesman Krishna Bahadur Mahara has just said this movement is being conducted by the rebels and the parties jointly. What do you say?
GP Koirala: I don't know what Mahara had to say. I speak for myself, the Nepali Congress and the seven-party alliance. This movement is of the seven parties and is being conducted by us in a peaceful manner. It will move ahead peacefully and we don't really care what the Maoists say about it.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Are you saying the Maoists are not at all involved in this movement?
Yes that is what I mean—there is no involvement of the Maoists. We (the parties and Maoists) will be working together in the future but there is no such alliance now in place.

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 talks with the international community.

The Maoists have been encouraging your 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.

Dialogue
.....
Editorial in *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 11 April

समाचारपत्र

Judging from the current situation there is no saying where the protests that began six days ago will head. There is no clue of when the general public, caught between the government curfew and the parties' protest, will be able to go to work in safety. The government has not only claimed Maoist infiltration among the protesters, it also alleges to have already caught four rebels. The seven parties protesting for the full restoration of democracy may not deem it necessary to convince the government that Maoists have not infiltrated but they must make this clear to the general public and as responsible political forces must devise a strategy on how to reduce the protests' impact on the public. As the effects of the demonstrations grow and government employees, bank workers and professionals join in, everyday life is affected. The government must understand this. It also must refrain from exploiting its strength and attacking the people indiscriminately. In many places, security forces are known to have attacked people inside their homes, uninvolved in the protests. This will only further aggravate the people. Dialogue is the only way out of this crisis.

Sit-in for peace
.....
Ameet Dhakal in *Kantipur*, 12 April

कान्तिपुर

It has been six days since the seven party alliance announced its peaceful movement and already there is a distinct change in the air. Those who had given up are seeing a new ray of hope and a solution to the ongoing conflict. The movement has been



“Bye bye.”
Boy: 2063 Democracy
Man in shades: 2062
Gate: Nepal

हिमाल Robin Sayami in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 14-28 April

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“Four or five people getting killed in a week is not really a big number for such a large scale movement.”

- Former RNA Chief Sachit Shamsher Rana in *Himal Khabarpatrika*

His Majesty ready to talk

Nepal Samacharpatra, 12 April

समाचारपत्र

His Majesty King Gyanendra met with personalities from various professions this week at Ratna Mandir in Pokhara. He said he had repeatedly called for dialogue with the political parties and was willing to discuss the country's crisis with them even in the present situation. Among the 41 people who collectively met the king were politicians, journalists, professors, lawyers, and tourism entrepreneurs. To a question from Hari Lamsal, editor of Rastrabani weekly, His Majesty said talks between the government and the parties were necessary to find a resolution. “Peace is what all Nepalis want, peace is our roadmap and we have to work together to reach that goal,” Lamsal quoted His Majesty as saying. Asked about the party-rebel pact, His Majesty's response was: “Terrorism is unacceptable and it is also unacceptable for anyone to assist terrorism.” All others who met the king were given the same message: let's not fight each other, let's not get tangled in disputes, let's work together to resolve the present crisis.



MIN BAJRACHARYA



SUNDAR SHRESTHA

DAMAGE CONTROL: A protestor protects DSP S Chand from further beating as angry demonstrators at Tribhuban University singled him out for attack on Friday.

संसार **Nepal Samachar**patra, 8 April

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.

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Joint Commission INTERNATIONAL
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News as public good

It's time to think differently about press freedom in Nepal

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

STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari



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.



KIRAN PANDAY

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, authorise 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 behaviours 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



KIRAN PANDAY



KIRAN PANDAY

In Nayabajar 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 Kalle recite revolutionary poems.

Organised by students, farmers, housewives, young boys and social workers from across the capital, the crowd clapped and cheered, laughing at the satire. Even gun-toting, baton-swinging 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 Kirtipur that held out longest against the siege by Prithivi Narayan Shah in 1768.

It wasn’t a politician that took the lead in Kirtipur but a wise old professor, Krishna Khanal, who teaches political science at the nearby Tribhuban

University. “No stones my friends, let’s do it peacefully,” the grey-haired prof told demonstrators. Young men who had clutched bricks when the security forces arrived cast them aside and sat down to listen and applaud the poetry.

And when the army’s armoured personnel carrier moved in menacingly to clear the road of the crowd defying the curfew, Kirtipur residents lay down on the road in true Tiananmen fashion. Khanal showed how the moral might of a peaceful rally can overpower repressive state forces.

In the end, no stones or bricks were thrown, no smoke billowed out of burning tyres. There were no bloodstains in the hot dust, no tear gas that made people cry, no rubber bullets lodged in the bleeding backs of demonstrators. And yet, it was a victory for the people who prevented the regime from entering their town to enforce an unnecessary curfew.

At the other end of the Ring Road at Gongabu, however, it was a war zone on Monday (pic above, right). Over 100 APF paramilitaries had taken cover on the highway embankment, their SLRs trained and cocked to open fire at a crowd of hundreds of agitated protesters. Another 50 or so RNA soldiers were lined up behind them with machine guns.

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 APF 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 Sagar 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 where 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 groups joined hands and walked towards the curfew area to resume their sit-in front of soldiers and police.

Every demonstration in Kathmandu this week has been different. Nepal itself is poised between a Kirtipur scenario and a Gongabu scenario. Which one will we choose? ●



Five days that sh



SHEHAB UDDIN



MIN BAJRACHARYA



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



JUDY PETTIGREW

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.

ook Nepal



MIN BAJRACHARYA



Children in harm's way

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 Suomi 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 APF 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. ●



TRISHNA GURUNG

Nepali ama

A grasscutter's journey through a street uprising

She is a tiny thing, not even five feet tall standing up and only about half that distance from the ground with the heavy burden of grass on her back. Her steps are small but sure in the hot midday sun.

Around her, young men roam in packs on Day 2 of the General Strike. Some have smiles on their faces, detracting from the venom of the anti-monarchy slogans. She is in their blind spot. They spot a motorcyclist and his passenger. "*Hande, hande,*" cries a voice from the crowd and things look sticky for the helpless rider when suddenly an overstuffed trolley bus grinds past. Stones are hurled and glass shatters on the road. There are a few cheers from the protesters. This is looked

COMMENT

Trishna Gurung



upon as a victory of sorts, their bit for democracy and the ordinary Nepali everyman. Or everywoman.

Everywoman in this case is bent double under the grass (*pic above*), with little opportunity to look or much less participate in the revolution being waged in her name. She can't see the people watching the street protesters from the tops of tall buildings or at a safe distance from the action. She shuffles past casino employees who have popped out during a break to watch the action. One side lobbs bricks, the other tear gas and the spectators just look on.

Like a game of advance and retreat, the mob scatters into the narrow alleys below the main road when riot police arrive. They regroup as soon as the police van moves on. Many are children. The adults have raised fists and voices. Someone issued them a license to vandalise and they seem to be taking their job seriously. The arrival of a tv crew adds an incentive- now they can watch themselves in the evening news.

She stops to rest at the bridge near Bijuli Bajar. "*Ama*, can I help you carry that?" She laughs. Her eyes are bright in a nut brown face lined with wrinkles. "No, no it's much too hot for you to do this and besides I'm going all the way to Kalanki." Kalanki is at least another hour and half at her pace.

I insist. She declines again. Smiling. She adjusts the band that supports the weight of the grass on her head and neck before setting off again.

Below us a putrid stream choked with empty plastic water bottles. On the bridge are bricks, burning tyres and broken glass. Acrid smoke curls into the blue sky. I ask her name and where she comes from. "Mausuli from Ramechhap," she says briefly. I hear Mausami but she corrects me. I keep pace with her for a while, both of us walking in silence.

It's brisk business for the fruit sellers who have set up shop close to Maitighar. Revolution whips up the appetite of protesters, passersby and people who need snacks to watch the street theatre. We walk past a group of riot police on a khaja break. It's a standard issue snack: Fruti and instant noodles. A father teaches his son to ride a bicycle at Thapathali. A few motorbikes whiz past as do large SUVs with blue plates.

Finally at the lights before the Bagmati bridge, Mausuli and I part ways. As she recedes into the distance all I see on the other side of another smelly river are empty promises of plenty on billboards shimmering in the heat. ●



MIN BAJRACHARYA

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 realisation 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

COMMENT
Narayan B Thapa



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 is an unruffled 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 got misused by the parties and the king is why some want to change it. What kind of a system we will get under a new constitution and will its spirit be respected, is anybody's guess. So, the only way forward is for the king and the parties to come to an agreement, make amends for past mistakes and make the constitution work to uplift the lives of Nepalis. How is this process to start? Since it was the king who took matters into his own hands and precipitated the crisis of confidence, it is incumbent on him to start the ball rolling by accepting his mistake of 1 February 2005 and thereafter put out a sincere call to the parties for negotiations. This may instil some respect for him and could be the beginning of a rehabilitation process for the monarchy. The parties should accept this and if they can bring their newfound friends, the Maoists, to the table we would be heading in the right direction. There will be many more months of hardnosed bargaining, perhaps with international mediation, but it will be worth it. Accommodation requires flexibility and an understanding of the positions of the other sides in the triumverate. By the time you are read this, we will know if the new year message from the king will have addressed the issue and whether it 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

The centre

PRANAV BUDHATHOKI
in LONDON

An amicable Iranian man in his 50s puts finishing touches to the meeting of the World Peoples Resistance Movement (WPRM) in Dalston, North London. A Polish man sells T-shirts with the message 'Revolution—Making It Happen in Nepal'. A stout Chinese man thinks that picketing in front of the Royal

these monthly meetings on Nepal. Revolution can mean many things on the first floor of the *Hundred Flowers Cultural Centre* in Dalston. But amidst dreary British weather and a sharp whiff from the greasy chicken shop downstairs, a crowd congregates every first Sunday of the month in this decaying neighborhood with the persistence of evangelists. It is difficult in this day

No issue is out of bounds and one of the subjects at a recent discussion was even 'what to do with Narayanhiti palace when our comrades seize it'. 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 are Nepali migrant workers scraping by in London, some are students and others reply "kam gardai" 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.

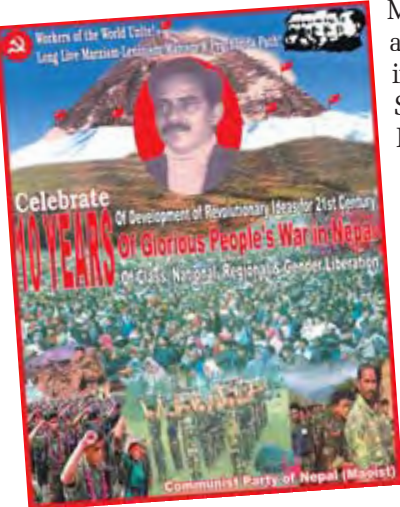
Speakers can be visitors from Nepal, Indian activists like Ananda Swaroop Verma who published Baburam Bhatarai's book *Monarchy vs Democracy: The Epic Fight in Nepal*, or even Kurdish communists who expound on the 'people's war' or the 100 mile Martyr's Highway in Rolpa. The Nepal revolution may be homegrown but for the international communist movement it is a model for

Mao's disciples in Europe hawk Nepal's showcase revolution

Nepali Embassy in London "doesn't make much sense". A hirsute young Nepali holds forth in faltering English about "our final strategic offensive against the dictator King". Welcome to the Maoist European roadshow which is raising money and trying to generate support for the Nepali Maoists. A mandatory donation of a minimum of £5 sometimes gets participants a seat at one of

and age to come across an organisation that admonishes both the Iranian regime and the US president in the same breath. But the WPRM does it and it also supports the Palestinian struggle, the urban uprising in France and it has been organising a campaign across Europe to muster 'urgently needed support for the people's struggle for liberation in Nepal'. The next meeting supported by WPRM is on 18 May at the School of Oriental and African Studies and will include the South Asia Solidarity Forum and the Friends of Africa group.

Nationality is no bar. In the audience are leftists and Mao nostalgists from Italy, Britain, Iran, Ireland, Turkey, China, India, the Philippines and even Tibet. 'A new world is possible' is the WPRM's motto and the rhetoric and jargon that floats thickly across the room is more Dickensian than Marxist.



“We want autonomy and self-rule”



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Malla K Sundar of the Newa National Forum talked to us before he was detained last week (pictured above right with Padma Ratna Tuladhar in a police van on Saturday) about how the struggle for janjati rights is linked to the fight to restore inclusive democracy.

Nepali Times: Do you think most Newars supported your call for an election boycott and to see your group making a political statement?
Yes, our call was heeded, there was very low turnout in Newari areas. If you approach the issue as a matter of community rights not as one of political rights then people accept our stand quite readily.

Does the boycott mean that you wholeheartedly support the seven-party alliance?
We've joined the movement for the return of democracy although on many issues we have differences with the parties. We're happy to be the only indigenous group in the country that has spoken out in support of the movement but our struggle for indigenous rights should continue beyond short-term political changes.

In what way?
The Newari community should have its own political agenda. Are we with the palace, with the parties or with the insurgents? The opposition movement is demanding people's democracy but none of the groups are clear about what it means. Is it a republican system? Is it a federal system? Is it inclusive? Exclusive? We want to bring all Newars together with one political agenda

Is it possible for all Newars to have a common position?
We can find a minimum common agenda. No one will differ, for example, on the need for equal language rights or equal religious rights.

What about other indigenous groups belonging to the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN)?
NEFIN is working in its own way but its affiliated members are sovereign. NEFIN can't impose, it can only coordinate. And that is difficult because some indigenous organisations are supportive of the February First takeover.

Yourself and NEFIN have a number of planks in your platform-language and religious rights, reservations for janjatis in the civil service and others. Which of these would you say is the priority?
We want autonomy and self-rule for indigenous communities on the basis of their historical relationship with the land and also in places where they are today the dominant population. For example, take the Tharu community. If you go by the concept of majority rule, the Tharus will never get decision-making powers. But if we agree that Dang is (historically) Tharu land, then Tharus should get indigenous rights there and newcomers should get minority rights.

Is this something that indigenous people at the grassroots want or just leaders in Kathmandu?
In the last year I travelled to different districts with other janjati leaders. Thousands of indigenous people gathered (to see us). We could see how they wanted to learn more about their rights.

of world revolution'

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



SPEED BREAKER AHEAD: The street in North London where the WPRM meetings are held.

PRANAV BUDHATHOKI

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

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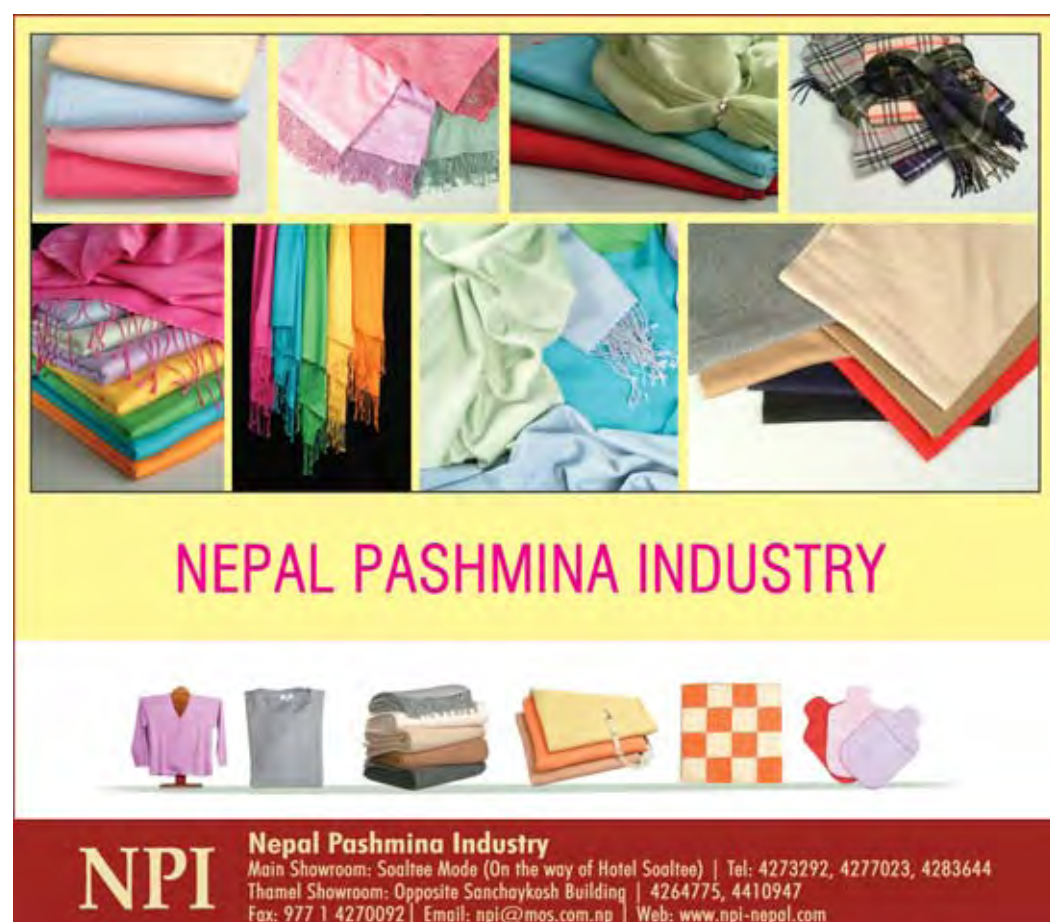
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Masterful

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.

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



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.

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



2722

It is just like ABCD.

From the underbelly of the beast

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

DUWAKOT—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

SOUTHASIA BEAT
Kanak Mani Dixit

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 Duwakot 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 Duwakot 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 Duwakot 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



MIN BAJRACHARYA

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 Basnet, 23, from Dhading, was returning from the printing press where he works. Ram Kumar Tamang drives a microbus, license plate No 4266,

and was crossing the road during a curfew when he was detained. Biraj Sharma, 18, was loitering outside a roadside shop in an area outside curfew limits. “The policemen were like demons,” he recalls, “they kicked my head as if it

was a football.” Four kids were resting inside a bus at a bus stop where they work as cleaners when they were dragged out: Dhruba Timilsina, 17, of Hetuada, Buddha Lama, 16, of Sindhupalchok, Ramesh Thapa Magar, 17 and Ram Lama,

20, of Chapagaon. 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 the 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 Basnet 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?” ●

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VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

WWF, the global conservation organization leading international efforts *for a living planet*, seeks applications from qualified Nepali citizens for the following full time position to be based in Kathmandu, with frequent field visits.

Director-Development and Resources
Minimum qualifications required are an MSc in Zoology/Wildlife Biology/Ecology or a related field. A related Ph.D. will be preferred. At least 8 years experience in the conservation field with responsibilities like program development, research and monitoring is required. It is essential that the incumbent is technically proficient and qualified in the field of wildlife conservation. The position demands excellent communication skills that include report writing, preparing and delivering presentations, public speaking, facilitating, leading group discussions and communicating with donors. A thorough knowledge of various statistical packages for data analysis, computer programs like MS Word, MS Excel and MS Power Point are required.

The incumbent will be responsible for developing new programs, directing and supervising research activities, and communicating and marketing programs and projects to donors, WWF network and other relevant national and international audience. The position will also be responsible for assisting the Conservation Program Director and Country Representative in fund raising and coordinating. The incumbent will also provide scientific and technical back stopping in designing, monitoring and implementation of programs.

Applications marked iFor the post of Director-Development & Resourcesi 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 7660
Kathmandu, Nepal

Email applications to hr@wwfnepal.org are encouraged. Only shortlisted candidates will be informed.

Women and indigenous peoples are encouraged to apply.

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

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

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THE ADVENTURES of SANJEEB THE NEPALI SPACE MONKEY

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Quote of the Week
"It's only a matter of time before your world turns around."
- Herojigette, Nepali Cartoon Character

Next change: What happens to Nepal when all the cold stores run out of Churots?

The Adventures of Sanjeeb the Nepali Space Monkey and Herojig are all cartoons sanctioned safe for all ages by UNACOOTs, the UN's Association of Cartoonists - NEPAL

ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Shanti Yagya** by Uma Shankar Shah, Siddhartha Art Gallery. 26 March – 18 April. 4438716

EVENTS

- ❖ **New Year 2063** 14 April.
- ❖ **Sunaulo Nav-Bihani**, New Years at Club Himalaya, 14 April
- ❖ **Handicap Youth in Development** Suraj Sigdel, Project Officer Handicap International, 14 April, 3PM at Martin Chautari.
- ❖ **Student Partnership Worldwide Resource Centre Appeal** at Java Coffee House all day 14-21 April. 4411820
- ❖ **Children's Fun Fashion Parade** fund raiser for AmaGhar 15 April. 4PM at Kiran Bhawan, Rs 1,500. 5560652
- ❖ **Samsara or Nirvan** one day course with Ven Thubten Drolkar, Sunday 16 April, 10AM-4PM at Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre. 4414843
- ❖ **Collage** an inter college fest 22-23 April, BICC, music, theatre, art and more.
- ❖ **World Book and Copyright Day** 23 April.
- ❖ **World Book Day** celebrations at the British Council, 23-29 April. 4410798
- ❖ **Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival 2006**, 7-10 December, calling for entries. Forms available at: www.himalassociation.org/kimff

MUSIC

- ❖ **Ramailo Saanjh** with Anil Shahi and Maya Mantra Rs. 1000 7-10PM, 26 April. Poolside Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488
- ❖ **Heartbreakers** live every Friday at Rum Doodle Bar & Restaurant
- ❖ **Cadenza Collective** live every Wednesday and Saturday 8PM at Upstairs, Lajimpat.
- ❖ **Live Music** at New Orleans Café. 4700311
- ❖ **Reggae Night** with various artists at Moksh Live, 7.30 PM. 5526212
- ❖ **Best of jazz** JCS trio and friends. Niek's Place, Tuesdays and Saturdays.
- ❖ **Jatra Friday** nights, live music by Siron. 4256622
- ❖ **Unplugged** sessions with Strings, Jatra Saturday nights. 4256622
- ❖ **Live Music** at Juneli Bar, Hotel de l'Annapurna. 4221711

DINING

- ❖ **Exotic Nepali Cuisine** Nepali food festival at The Café in Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 10-19 April. 4491234
- ❖ **Nepali Cuisine** at Krishnarpan Restaurant. Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488
- ❖ **BBQ** every Friday at Jalan Jalan Restaurant. 5544872.
- ❖ **Beat the heat** with milkshakes and smoothies at Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Café U** for organic Japanese homecooking. Near International Club, Sanepa. 11AM-6PM. Closed on Tuesdays. 5524202
- ❖ **Wet & Wild Summer Splash** at Godavari Village Resort, a special package of Swimming & Lunch. 5560675
- ❖ **Breakfast** at Singma Restaurant. 8.30 – 11AM daily. 5520004
- ❖ **Barbeque** at Le Meridien, Kathmandu, every Saturday. 4451212.
- ❖ **BBQ Dinner** at Summit Hotel every Friday. 6:30 PM - 9:30 PM. 5521810
- ❖ **Breakfast with Birds** Lunch with Butterflies at Farm House Cafe. 4375279



GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Tea House-Inn.** Nepalese Salads with Nepali Thali every Saturday at the terrace garden. Nagarkot. 668-0048.
- ❖ **Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge**, relaxation and massages in Pokhara. 4361500
- ❖ **Junglewalks**, rafting, elephant rides all at Jungle Base Camp Lodge, Bardia. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com
- ❖ **Park Village**, Budhanilkantha, Full room Rs 1,600. 4375280
- ❖ **Conferences at Godavari** special packages available. 5560675
- ❖ **Nature Retreat** at Park Village Resorts & Spa. 4375280
- ❖ **Star Cruises in April**, take your companion at 50% discount. 2012345
- ❖ **Escape Kathmandu** at Shivapuri Heights Cottage. 9851012245

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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 climbing into the low 30s. Some lingering moisture over the eastern hills will bring some showers. The high mountains will see clouds build up towards afternoon with isolated thunder storms. Elsewhere, expect windy and hot afternoons.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Fri 29-12	Sat 30-14	Sun 29-12	Mon 30-13	Tue 31-13
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सूचना विभाग



MIN BAJRACHARYA

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.



RAM HUMAGAIN/NEPALNEWS.COM

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.



RAMESWOR BOHARA

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'.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

ATITHI DEBO BHABA: 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.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

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



KIRAN PANDAY

A leading professor

For Krishna Khanal, professor of political science at Tribhuban 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. The demonstrators sat down, and began to listen to protest poetry and satire. 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*

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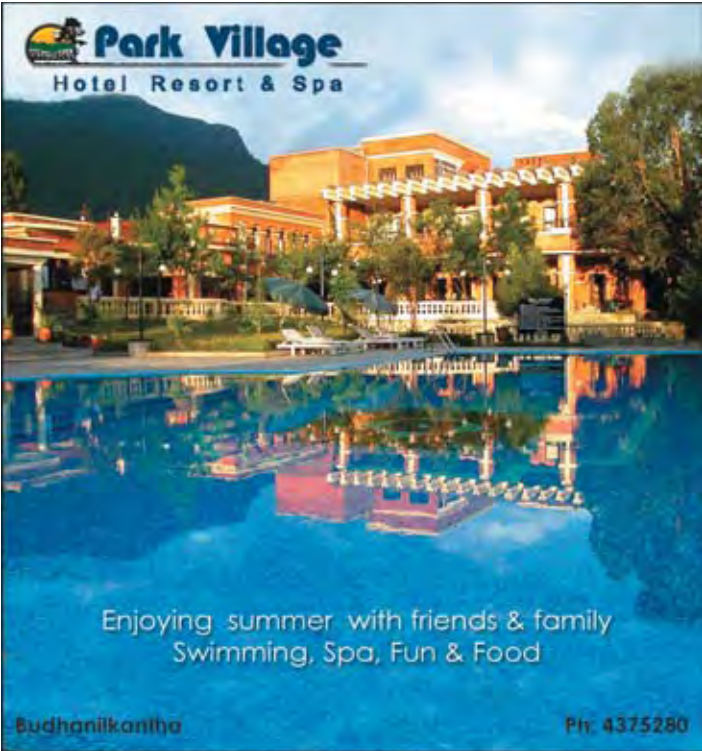
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Surreptitiously slip application with Personal History Form and recent photograph to one of our flunkies during non-curfew hours.


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