

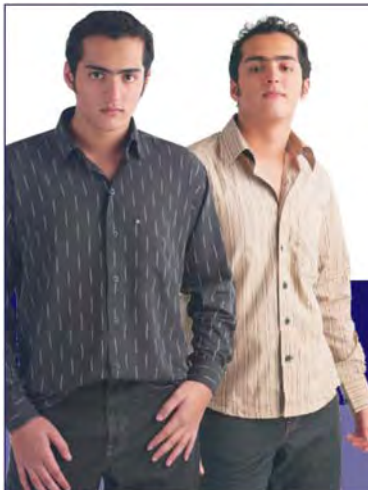
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Forgetting to remember BP

He is safe, but gagged and bound, invisible but always present

I never got to know BP Koirala well. He came to a couple of seminars at Columbia University in New York where I taught for many years. I remember one meeting that was very crowded: BP came toward the halfway point, and I instantly recognised him. I asked him to come to the front. He politely refused and sat cross-legged on the floor in the back with the students.

GUEST COLUMN
Ted Riccardi



I later met him once more when he came to New York for medical treatment. He gave a talk at the weekly brown bag lunch at the Southern Asian Institute, and it was then that I saw the charisma of this man and learned why he remained the most respected and loved of Nepali leaders. At one point in his talk, he announced his return to Nepal. When someone asked what King Birendra might do to him, he said wryly: "I don't think that he will kill me." Unfortunately, I never saw him again, and he died shortly thereafter of the disease that had plagued him for so long.

Sometime after the Jana Andolan of 1990, I received a call in New York saying that a statue of BP was to be unveiled on the campus of World College on Long Island and asking if I would attend. I consented gladly, and in the company of several Nepali friends made the journey to Huntington, the home of the college. There, in a quiet grove on the school grounds, the

ceremonies took place and the image was unveiled.

The statue itself, done by a Bulgarian sculptor, was an attempt at a likeness of BP in bronze that sat on a tall salmon coloured stone base. It was, though no one said anything, something of a disappointment. The sculpture was not a full bust or head of BP but a small part of his face that emphasised his nose and his glasses. The guests, including Ganesh Man Singh, made the appropriate remarks and we disbanded.

A couple of years after the installation, I received a call from a friend saying that World College was going to close due to financial difficulties and we had a limited time in which to move BP's statue. Otherwise, it would be bulldozed with the rest of the school. The question arose, however, as to where the sculpture could go. Would Columbia accept it and find a place for it? I volunteered to talk to the authorities and see what could be done. The answer at every level was a polite but firm "no". The director of the Southern Asian Institute, the most appropriate place for the statue, said that there was simply no room. The famous had already cluttered the small seminar room of the Institute: Ambedkar, Tagore and Tarakh Nath Das. As time passed, it became increasingly difficult to find a place for BP. There being no room at the inn, I then volunteered that temporarily, for a few weeks or months, I would house the statue in my own office rather

than have it undergo some undignified fate.

Years passed, and of course the statue remained in my office in Kent Hall, often garlanded by people who had learned of its presence. Even Girija placed a garland on it on one visit to the Columbia campus. My office had become part shrine.

In the end, the statue stayed until I decided to retire and depart myself. I remember well when first my books and papers were packed in cardboard and tape. I then watched as the movers covered BP with the same tape and cardboard.

When we got to our new destination, I decided to keep BP safely wrapped until I could find an appropriate place for him. He stood for a long time on the back porch of our house near Washington, safe but gagged and bound, invisible but always present. I took to saluting him to remind myself of who was behind the tape and wrapping paper.

More time passed, and my family and I decided to return to Nepal for an extended visit. Where to put BP so that he would be safe and out of our tenants' way? We decided that he should live in Rappahannock County, Virginia, deep in the backwoods of rural America.

And that is where he is now, far from his own country, unnoticed either there or anywhere else. Still bound and gagged. Alapatra. ●

Ted Riccardi is a retired professor from Columbia University now living in Kathmandu.

FREEDOM AT MIDNIGHT

On Monday night when King Gyanendra restored parliament, we as a nation actually went back four years to 22 May 2002. So it is hard to say why we are celebrating.

Just go to the internet archives (www.nepalitimes.com) to read #95 of this paper and check out the country's state that week four years ago. Deuba and Koirala were at each other's throats even while the Maoists had just escalated the war by attacking the army.

Deuba had just dissolved the house to save his own skin from a Koirala onslaught and we wrote in this space: 'Once more, we are made to pay for the tiny minds and large egos of our politicians. Once more the nation is held hostage by their myopia. The dissolution of parliament, the November elections are just outer manifestations of infighting in the ruling party.'

That was how parliament was run the last time we saw it. On Friday, it reconvenes and the same faces are back. How is it going to be different this time? Have our politicians really learnt their lessons? It is difficult to be optimistic. Yet, we must be because the alternatives are worse.

The first order of business is to pass a resolution on a constituent assembly to fulfil the parties' pledge to the Maoists—this is the roadmap to convince the comrades to join multiparty politics.

This is important because without removing loopholes in the constitution that allow for royal mischief, we will keep going round and round in circles and need a street uprising every 10 years.

But constituent assembly elections won't happen for a bit, what are the honourable members going to do till then? We hope they won't get bogged down fighting for allowances and portfolios.

Here is an urgent checklist: reciprocate the Maoist ceasefire to create the atmosphere for a peace process to start, bring the army effectively under parliamentary control, halt all major purchases of military hardware and helicopters and use freed up funds to kickstart service delivery of health and education to all corners of the country.

Before the euphoria evaporates, people need to see immediate proof that democracy this time will mean an improvement in their lives.



KIRAN PANDAY

Can't fail this time

This transitional parliament must hit the ground running

On Thursday, the raw energy of slogan-shouting demonstrations attracted three-year-old Arambha of Kuleswor. He insisted to be taken to the *andolan*. And off he went to the curfew carnival on the shoulders of his proud cousin. When he came back, he was all excitement. "I saw fire, I saw an uprising," shouted the little boy. Nepal's future leaders better beware of Arambha in 15 year's time. Those who see the flames of uprising firsthand never forget its intensity.

When King Birendra bowed down to People's Movement and announced restoration of the multi-party system on the night of 9 April 1990, firecrackers went off in every neighbourhood. Spontaneously

STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal



people lit candles and earthen lamps to greet a democratic dawn in the dead of the night. Conch shells boomed and temple bells rang when King Gyanendra admitted on Monday night that his autocratic adventures had come unstuck and an unconditional acceptance of the roadmap prepared by the seven-party alliance was his last chance to save the institution of monarchy.

Restoration of democracy was certainly the rallying cry of People's Movement II, but the motive force of the uprising was the hope of the resolution of the Maoist insurgency. Peace-building has to be the primary agenda of the transitional

parliament reconvening on Friday afternoon in Singha Darbar.

Resolving longstanding conflicts in countries torn asunder by armed insurgency and ruthless counter-insurgency is challenging even in normal times, and these are not normal times for Nepal. Four years of royal rule have all but destroyed the national economy. The diplomatic debacle suffered by palace propagandists has sullied the image of the country in the community of nations. Rapid militarisation has sapped the morale of the police force. Rampant politicisation has crippled civil administration and society stands deeply divided, dangerously polarised.

The shady reputation of some of the lawmakers sitting in the reconvened parliament makes their task doubly difficult: they will be considered guilty until proven innocent as they pave the way to elections for a constituent assembly. During the transition, MPs have to ensure that an all-party government does all it can to deliver development and peace through good governance.

Parliament must hit the ground running, and mainstreaming the Maoists tops the national agenda. It will not be possible to write a new constitution without bringing the insurgents on board. No less important is the task of democratising parliamentary parties. If main parties continue with their waywardness, Maoists will sweep the

constituent assembly polls even if the arms of the security forces and rebels are taken care of under the terms of a reliable international guarantee.

Formation of a high-level commission for truth and reconciliation is another important task. The excesses of some of the officers of security forces upon peaceful protesters made their own former officers hang their heads in shame. The constitution has no provision for forced exile or capital punishment, but

some form of prosecution is necessary to deter responsible officers of the state from descending into lawlessness in future.

The palace secretariat, the Raj Parishad and the Royal Nepali Army will now have to be kept under intense public scrutiny. Since the Narayanhi Massacre, these institutions haven't exactly covered themselves with glory. The secretariat may have to be reduced and the Raj Parishad dissolved forthwith. But the RNA will have an even more important role to play in a functioning democracy and it needs to be thoroughly overhauled and reformed for a different kind of function: security and service of the people rather than the royal family.

These are staggering responsibilities for a frail octogenarian thrust upon by destiny to correct the course of a careening country. But Girija Prasad Koirala must succeed if he is to redeem himself and find a place in the history that the children of Arambha's generation will write and read. In the agora of time, Koirala is all set to enter what may prove to be his last show: a barefoot walk on the embers of an autocratic monarchy. Four generations of Nepalis are watching. He must not fail this time. ●



DAMBAR K SHRESTHA

LETTERS 1

PEOPLE POWER II

I would like to comment on the repeated misrepresentation in the democratic press of EU views in relation to the King's declarations of 21 and 24 April. The EU position has consistently favoured the full restoration of democracy in Nepal. As I am sure those party leaders involved in our joint meeting on 22 April will confirm, EU Ambassadors were arguing that the peoples' movement had fundamentally changed the balance of power in this country in favour of the democrats. Far from arguing for compromise with the King, we were arguing that the parties should exploit the dynamics of people power and use that power to implement fully their 7-point program. There are, of course, different routes to achieve the same goal. We are delighted that the Parliament has been restored and look forward to early moves by that Parliament to implement the SPA program, work towards a cease fire agreement with the Maoists and restore peace to this country through integration of the Maoists into a fully democratic system.

Keith Bloomfield
UK Ambassador, Kathmandu

● The best definition of democracy is that it is for the people, by the people, of the people. The responsibility is in the hands of the people. But are we actually mature, responsible citizens who can put aside bloated egos and self-interest and put forward the interest of the country? Can we put faith in the people who will be running this country if the king does gives up? King Gyanendra has been inviting the parties for dialogue and they have refused so maybe he should start thinking of another way to get the country going. The Maoists are waging a war based on a philosophy that is losing its sheen by the day. Acts of vandalism, extortions, human rights violations, the list goes on. The international community seems to change its stance by the minute—yesterday it was the king and today it is the so-called democratic parties. At the end of the day, who do I support? We seem to be headed for every man for himself.

S Tuladhar, email

● Finally we are heading in the right direction, the end of autocratic monarchy in Nepal. There is the same optimism among people, that we had in 1990 that everything is going to be fine after regime change. We were all disillusioned fairly quickly, and there is no guarantee things will turn out differently now especially since the people in charge after 1990 are the same ones who will be taking charge if the political system changes. Also, not all dictators are kings. We may get rid of the king and he'll be replaced by a military dictator or a so-called democratic president who refuses to yield power.

Sagar Sharma, email

● I have been following the exchange on Plan B triggered by your editorial ('Conflict of interest', #293). The main thing is that Nepal should be able to survive and do better even without a monarchy if everyone follows the constitution. There are hundreds of countries without monarchies which are doing pretty well. But the constitution has to be made in such a way that no one

political force (army, king, parties, Maoists) can ever monopolise political power and destroy multiparty democracy.

B Subas, Sydney

● I am torn and enocouraged by the Jana Andolan II that has swept Nepal. Yes the king needs to hand power back to the people, yes we need democracy, but we do not need 14 governments in the next 14 years. The same people who are instigating Part II of our revolution started the Maoist problem with police operations in 1996, they tore our country apart with crony politics and now they have joined hands with the Maoists to hand the country over to them. Can we trust them again?

I Bhandari, email

● Very interesting interviews with Mahara and Girija Koirala ('God save the king', #294). I live in a country that managed to come out of dictatorship and become a democratic monarchy. This country is Spain. Your country is different but you should never allow acts of violence against your own people destroy you. Freedom is possible but it comes with responsibility. We all need to learn and apply tolerance of each other's point of views. Otherwise we will fight forever. But when peace and democracy are finally restored, whoever is in charge should immediately begin investing in education, otherwise their restoration will be only temporary.

Name withheld, Spain

● Political parties and their concurrent avatar in the form of the seven-party alliance are indulging in nationwide pro-democracy demonstrations. But what is their political, socio-economic and development agenda? There are demonstrations and rhetoric but nothing about socio-economic plans, educational reform, bureaucratic restructuring or development in general. In the long term, results matter and without results, monarch, commoner or politician, all will be reduced to an ungraceful exit. The Maoists have so far thrived on populist militant tactics but if they are to enter mainstream politics, they'll have to disclose their economic and socio-political agenda. None of the three sides look credible or farsighted.

Shiven Thapa, Kathmandu

● We the Nepalis in the Philippines want the political leaders to be bold and lead this movement ton its ultimate goal—people's sovereignty. They must be more united and avoid taking sole credit for the movement: that would be a great mistake. This time the citizens of Nepal are more than worthy to receive all the credit for the movement.

BP Khanal, Manila

● I haven't read such sane writing as your editorial 'Anarchy in a monarchy' (#294) in a long time. It has no vitriol and at times like these, it is really commendable. Hope all sides listen/read this too. I am all for retaining the monarchy but it must be a unifying force not a divisive one.

Name withheld, email

● How strange. There is a country in Asia which could be nearly a paradise on earth. But there is a man who as king is in charge of this countrny who mixes up his personal destiny with the destiny of this country—to a degree that he destroys so

much that he might enter into history as a maniac who used his power to shift his country's place in the family of nations to one of the last positions. I am full of admiration for the energy of the Nepali people.

Frank Schwalba-hoth, ex-Member of the European Parliament Brussels

● We have not heard the voice of the people only that of the politicians who claim to speak for the people or the press who keep telling us what we should be thinking or the authorities who keep telling us what is best for us. The people are speaking now loud and clear and the powers that be better listen. We are now ready for change and should be prepared to face the challenge of uncertainty. If we don't, we will never know what is at the end of the tunnel. Let's face change with the same dignity with which we have been trying to avoid it in the past.

R Bhandari, email

● Loktantra is not for the people, it's for the political gangsters that are misleading the people. It is just like the Maoist taking the lives of innocent Nepali people and still saying they're fighting for the people. Right now what the people need is peace. We all have a dream to once again see a peaceful Nepal, like it used to be.

J Thapa, email

● From the moment the situation started to change in Nepal, Kunda Dixit has been on a roll with his king-bashing binge ('A first step', 'Less majesty' and 'Power to the people', *Nepali Times eSpecial*). While his comments are bona fide they have been rather one-sided. I hope that he understands that the status quo is not the end of the story but a mere beginning. Yet again the stars of new game are the same old wicked leaders who are just as responsible for the state of the country as the king is.

Sushil Bogati, USA

● In 'Less majesty' (*Nepali Times, eSpecial*) Kunda Dixit has drawn a far-fetched analogy between Ferdinand Marcos

and King Gyanendra to augment his piece. He is aware of the quotes but ignorant of the geo-political situation. Outspoken critic of communism, Marcos enjoyed enthusiastic support from the US for his 21 years of rule from 1965-1986. As he was serving the US geopolitical and ideological interests in the region, he was able to rule the country till he had to fly out in a US Air Force jet in 1986 to exile in Hawaii. Though the US ambassador to Nepal still has not understood the culture and society of Nepal, it would be remiss not to thank him as his statement (about King Gyanendra having to fly out in a helicopter) also played a role in restoring democracy.

Dinesh Gautam, Kathmandu

● Less majesty? We know the country belongs to the people but without the kings to build this country we would still be in bullock carts. This country is nothing without the king. Stop making the monarchy the issue and start focussing on the Maoists who are standing with you. Long live the king.

Name withheld, email

● I agree with Kunda Dixit that sovereignty resides with the people but who does he mean when he says 'people'? The seven-party alliance? Does anyone still believe they represent us? Giraja Prasad Korila ruled 80 percent of the time after 1990 in the so-called democracy and practically ruined the country.

Name withheld, email

● Kunda Dixit, how can you say that the restoration of the dissolved parliament is a 'victory' ('Power to the people', *Nepali Times eSpecial*)? Deuba asked the king to dissolve the house. Now the king restores the house without elections which is not mentioned in the constitution. Surely the king did not win, the party leaders got back their parliament without an election, and the people are surely losers.

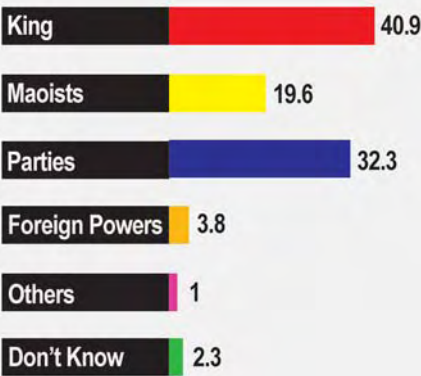
E Deja, email

more letters p4

POLL QUESTION

Your weekly internet poll of 14-20 April (#294) asked: 'Who do you blame for the state of the country'? The number of votes registered was the highest ever in any of your polls, 14,448, and the results were 40.9% the King, 19.9% the Maoists and 32.3% the parties. So a sizeable number of the voters, the majority actually, (51.9%) only a week ago were not ready to blame the king for the all the evils of the country like the people in the street were doing. These days we have seen massive demonstrations including a large chunk of civil society which has successfully brought an end to the absolute rule of the king, so now the big question is whether or not the political parties can live up to the people's expectations, reign in the Maoists and thereby end 10 years of violence, and act in a statesman-like manner to bring a true and meaningful democracy and development to the Nepali people. From their past record, there is reason to be sceptical. We need reconciliation and change and the political parties should recognise the decisive contribution made by civil society to the movement, and perhaps offer the post of prime minister to one of its outstanding figures, like for instance, Prof Krishna Khanal ('A leading professor', #294)

Who do you blame for the state of the country?



S K Aryal, email



Imagine what it can do.

LETTERS 2

● Kunda Dixit is right that the country belongs to the people not only to the king ('Less majesty', *Nepali Times eSpecial*). The king should announce general elections and hand power back to parliament to defuse the current situation.

Shree Shrestha, email

● Kunda Dixit's 'The first step' in the *Nepali Times* online edition is a sobering piece amidst the revolutionary fervour and chaos in the streets. It is the people who have the ultimate power, not the king, the politicians nor the insurgents. The people of Nepal will not be held hostage by this triad of doom. Here is my own 12-point program on defusing the crisis and moving forward towards peace, stability and nation-building:

1. King becomes a ceremonial monarch with no powers
2. Army is brought under parliament
3. The king's royal expenditure budget is to be brought down to the pre-2001 level and his assests are to be made public on a yearly basis, income will be taxed
4. The seven parties form a unity interim government
5. Party hold talks with the Maoists
6. Maoists to lay down weapons and contest elections, people's representatives will decide on changes to the constitution
7. Only political leaders who are 55 years or younger and who have not held a ministerial post will be allowed to lead the unity government provided they and their family members disclose their wealth and tax information
8. No one can serve more than two terms as prime minister
9. Political parties practice internal democracy, no one can be a leader for more than two terms or change the party's statute
10. No political party cadre or member can have a government related job
11. Participation of janjatis, dalits and women in the political party structure, bureaucracy and the unity government
12. Mandatory taxation and appropriate utilisation through good governance

SN Singh, email

● It is appreciable that even in these polarised times you have proved yourself an unbiased media outlet. Unlike the others who have been supporting a single side blindly, articles in your paper air the views of all sides. However, your editorial ('Take it or leave it', *Nepali Times eSpecial*) missed an important point. Your last line goes: 'We just hope and pray that the price the country has to pay for one man's ego is not too high'. I would like to add a couple of other people. We can't forget the last 15 years easily nor the 10 years of Maoist activities. Hopefully all three will finally see the fourth power: the people.

G Subba, email

● Following the royal proclamation, it's hard for the people to understand what is stopping the seven parties from forming a government that includes the CPN-Maoist, which then will conduct constituent assembly elections. Don't they have any confidence in their own political power and people's support?

Rajeeb Satyal, Kathmandu

● The veiled Maoist threat that they will wipe out anyone who doesn't support their agenda of abolishing the monarchy just

proves that this is a force the whole nation needs to stand up to. If we can get together and fight against a monarch who has the army at his side, why would we not get together again and fight terrorists? We are scaring each other out of a chance to build ourselves a better future and a stronger nation. Nobody is going to do it for us.

KJ Shrestha

● This is a decisive moment for all seven parties—they must keep their cool and stay united. As Kunda Dixit suggests in ('The first step' *Nepali Times eSpecial*) they must keep in mind the sacrifices that the people have made. Don't restart infighting again please.

LN Silwal, email

● Kunda Dixit seems to have got quite big bucks from King Gyanendra ('The first step', *Nepali Times eSpecial*). Otherwise why would an opportunist elite media mogul support a crumbling king who's been nothing but a burden for over 25 million people? The king has been cornered and is now trying to buy time. Dixit's duplicity and double standard has been exposed here. He must have been assured ministerial portfolios by King G.

S Upadhyaya, London

● Kunda Dixit says ('The first step', *Nepali Times eSpecial*) of King Gyanendra: 'He has to be satisfied with being a ceremonial monarch, otherwise there is no place for him. Not so fast! I say there is no place for him. It is about time that this white elephant be removed from our country. The royals should now become private citizens and contribute to the society for change rather than being just takers. We have fought long and hard. We have suffered much. And we have come far. We shouldn't stop half-way and let our revolution fizzle out. Now is the time to step out of 250 years of feudalistic mental slavery and learn to shape our own future, instead of cowering with fear and wondering what we are going to do if we have no king. If we can stare down the barrel of M16s and bear brutal beatings from the army and police we can surely fight the Maoists' oppression should they dare to do so. Having said that, let there be a referendum on whether we should keep the monarchy. I vote for a republic but let's see what the majority wants.

Sangey Norbu, email

● I have appreciated your balanced reporting and editorials. Even CK Lal it seems, had an epiphany about the Maoists ('Insurgency of the intelligentsia', *Nepali Times eSpecial*). At some point we have to hit the middle in politics and move on...politics alone will not transform Nepal or more accurately, its culture.

P Rana, email

● Kiyoku Ogura is correct in saying in her Guest Column that the Newars of Kathmandu were exploited by political parties during the 1990 movement ('Days of future past', #294). And after the party bosses became prime ministers, their sacrifices and those of other Janjatis were quickly forgotten. They even forcefully expelled Ganesh Man Singh from the Nepali Congress even though he was the true democratic Newar Nepali. I think the feudal lords described by Mike Duggan in Letters in the same issue also applies to Nepal's political parties and their chieftains. They

run their political parties as their personal fiefdoms and act as if they know everything. And after they got democracy in 1990, they thought they were indestructible and did ill-disciplined and corrupt activities in the name of democracy which led us to today's mess. The so-called democratic practices after 1990 left the Newars and Janjatis isolated from these political chieftains. Now the tables have turned and the chieftains are appealing to the same people they once betrayed. If this isn't power lust, what is it? The *Nepali Times* must understand the aspirations of Nepalis and must not support these corrupt leaders blindly. What about making them apologise first to Newars, Janjatis and to all Nepalis?

Kanchan Dahal, Shantinagar

● The biggest surprise was the US, UN, EU, China and India welcoming the king's first speech of 21 April calling on the parties to submit the name of a prime minister. The EU went a step further and tried to coax the seven-party alliance to accept the king's offer. The diplomats even went to Koirala's residence and tried to influence the alliance before it could issue its official reaction to the King's speech. India, on the other hand, heartily welcomed the speech one day and upon seeing the people's refusal of the speech, expressed caution the very next day. Hasn't it now become obvious that these foreign powers are not the least concerned about the plight and sentiments of the Nepali people? Can we rely on 'friends' at times like these when we most need them? We should now learn to stand on our own feet.

Bibek Singh, Kathmandu

● Thank you so much for the piece oNaresh Newar ('A day in the life of the riot police', *Nepali Times eSpecial*) in your online edition. It is rare to see such reports in the media these days. What we have been forced to read and watch are news about the cruelty and inhumanity of the security forces. We have seen one side of the story too often: the masses, the police raining down blows, the police with their guns aimed at the crowd, the security forces portrayed as inhuman beasts. The tv cameras never highlighted instances when officers helped to defuse a volatile situation and protect civilians from harm. The Nepali public has a right to be informed on the situation in its entirety, and not be fed just one facet of the issue. The public deserves more respect from the media who should offer a balanced view so we can make our own informed decisions. Telling only half the truth is lying. Thanks to Mr Newar for showing us the other side.

Srikhala Sharma, Kathmandu

● Photographs of bloody riots and reports of the wounded can communicate the effects of the present crisis but how can you help to engage people in finding the best way out of it? During my last visit to Nepal in February, I could find no one who was prepared to support the politicians, the Maoists or the king. The family was their first concern and how to earn enough money to survive today, let alone tomorrow. Winning the understanding, trust and support of the People for these priorities must now be the first objective of all right thinking people in Nepal. As a long time friend of Nepal forced to watch the present situation unfolding from a distance, may I be allowed to suggest that it could be timely to invite

each of the political parties to set out its political manifesto? What are they committed to delivering for the benefit of the people? Apportioning blame is no longer helpful. What is important is to present the politicians of all colours with a clear challenge and opportunity: to lead the way out. It is up to them to give this leadership. I imagine that all Nepalis will want to hear what it is that they have to offer.

Tim Harward, Central Himalaya Project, UK

● We the people may have won but there are some ifs and buts. The mistakes of 1990 should not be repeated. There should be a referendum on whether to keep the monarchy or not and if we do, under what arrangement. There should be adequate provision for Maoists to join the mainstream. Armed forces should be squarely under civilian authority, not under the king. Those who committed atrocities during the protests should be brought to justice. Banks should open. And heck, the American Consular Office should reopen so folks can get visas.

B Yonzon, email

NEWS

In his Strictly Business column ('News as public good', #294) Ashutosh Tiwari labels news as a public good. But a 'pure' public good is a good that is non-excludable non-rival like fresh air. News cannot categorically be termed as a pure public good because even though its non-rival, i.e. 'consumption' of news by someone doesn't lead to depletion of news for others, its still can be excludable. Cable news and the *Nepali Times* with its hefty cover price are other examples. However, it is a market-determined excludability. But, the present government is trying to interfere in the process by making certain news excludable to the public resulting in a deadweight loss to society.

Santosh Pokharel, Maine, USA

● I had a good laugh reading Kunda Dixit's Under My Hat 'Job Openings in Nepal' (#294) I would like to add two more qualifications for Nepali prime minister: ability to lie and drink excessively. Once we have democracy in place, though, we want prime ministers who are willing to work 24 hours a day to take the country forward. There are very few candidates to choose from so why not give us memeber of the younger generation a chance too?

Amrita Khadka, ASCOL

CORRECTION

The credit for the photograph accompanying 'Nepali ama' (#294) should have been Suraj Shakya instead of what appeared due to an editing error.

● The credit for the photograph accompanying 'News as a public good' (#294) is by Dambar Krishna Shrestha.



27222

The Choice is endless.

Now for the hard part

The parties will find that fighting for democracy was easier than crafting a new constitution



KIRAN PANDAY

SHIVA GAUNLE

So far so good. The parties have their parliament, the king gets to keep his throne for now. But the Maoists need something to show their cadre that the last 10 years were worth it: and that something is a constituent assembly.

Under the 12-point roadmap agreed by the party leaders and the comrades in the New Delhi suburb of Noida in November, the Maoists said they were ready to begin the process of re-entering peaceful multiparty democracy as long as their demand for a new constitution was met.

Shunned by the king and tugged by a republican rank-and-file, the parties had already agreed in principle to a constituent assembly. Since the parties and the Maoists now had the same goal there was no more need for

armed struggle, which is probably the reason for the three-month ceasefire announced Wednesday night.

The astonishing success of the Peoples Movement II surprised everyone, most of all the parties. Having sidelined the king, it is now crunch time for the parties to deliver the pound of flesh to the Maoists. They have put a resolution supporting a constituent assembly as the number one point in the agenda for the reconvened parliament on Friday.

If it is passed, it will be the first time in Nepal's 237 year history that the people will get to craft their own constitution. Commissions set up by the king were responsible for drafting the post-Rana 1949 constitution, the multiparty constitution of 1957, the partyless Panchayat statute of 1962 and the constitution

of 1990.

Except for 1949, all three constitutions were made to legalise a political need. This time, it will be the constitution that will have to come up with new state and governance structures.

"We will not repeat past mistakes," the political party leaders have said publicly, vowing not to be distracted by infighting and corruption. But the delays this week in selecting a new speaker, the tug-o-war over ministerial portfolios and the inability of the NC and the NC-D to reunite even now show the parties may be afflicted by an old malaise.

Even greater hurdles lie ahead. The Maoists are trying to exert pressure on the parties by holding a public meeting at Tundikhel on Friday even while parliament is in session and even without their

terrorism tag being lifted. Their demand is an unequivocal resolution on an unconditional constituent assembly by the house. But going for an open-ended constituent assembly without agreement on broad parameters of a new state structure first may open a can of worms.

The Maoists want the election to a constituent assembly to bring in all groups that have so far been excluded from the nation's political mainstream, including women, janjatis, dalits and regional groupings. What will this do to the political side of the debate? How are the constituencies going to be demarcated and who will do it?

Elections could be divisive and contentious because ethnic and regional demands may overshadow the need for national unity. Some expect the campaigning for constituent

PEOPLE PRESSURE: the seven party victory rally at Tundikhel on Thursday before the audience stormed the stage.

assembly elections will be reduced to its bottomline: republic versus monarchy.

That may not necessarily be a bad thing but the political manifestos may be so polarised that moderates are squeezed and the people may be forced to chose only between two extremes. The other issue may be federalism, and if so what kind.

Then there are the practical aspects of explaining complicated manifestos to people many of whom haven't even heard about a constituent assembly and if they have can't really explain what it is for (*See box*). It is obvious that the elections must be preceded by a neutral information campaign. ●

CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

Direct participation of the people in framing a new constitution, first mooted in 1949 after the overthrow of the Ranas but never revisited.

Mechanism: A nationwide election based on proportional representation of gender, caste, ethnicity and regions is held and people vote for candidates with manifestos that lay out their vision for a new constitution. For example: republican, constitutional monarchy, civil control of the army, etc. A constituent assembly made up of elected candidates is then formed to draft a new constitution.

Advantages: Earlier constitutions have been 'given' by the kings of Nepal to the people. With a constituent assembly, the people will have a direct say in the new statute.

Problems: Not all parties and not everyone within parties agrees on the technicalities, for example on how the candidates should be weighted in proportion to the population. There is also divergence on whether there should be guarantees that the new constitution retain the monarchy and how the constituent assembly will decide.

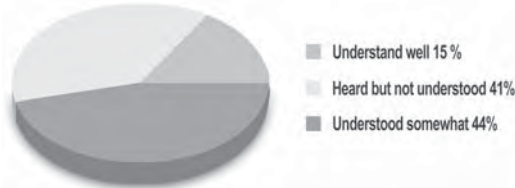
There are also doubts about whether a constituent assembly election should be held without demobilisation of the warring sides and whether there should be international supervision.

HOW IT MAY GO

The main platform in a future election for a Constituent Assembly will be the future of the monarchy.

Straw polls done recently among young pro-democracy protesters in Pokhara and Kathmandu showed an overwhelming swing towards a republic. But a nationwide Himalmedia poll taken last month is less clearcut (See 'Poll', #292). It showed that although the king is personally unpopular, nearly half the 5,066 respondents said they wanted a constitutional monarchy and a quarter said a monarchy in some form is still necessary. Fourteen percent wanted the monarchy abolished and only one percent supported absolute monarchy. The brutal suppression of the pro-democracy movement of the past three weeks could have increased the number of those in favour of abolishing the monarchy altogether.

If you have heard of the Constituent Assembly, do you understand what it is?
(Of the 57 percent who said they had heard of it.)



However, the Himalmedia poll also proved that a future constituent assembly election must be explained clearly to the people. In last month's poll 57 percent said they had heard of a constituent assembly and when asked if they understood what it stood for, 40 percent replied 'heard but not understood' and 15 percent said they 'didn't understand'.

“We will not accept monarchy”

Interview with Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai by Rabindra Mishra of the BBC Nepali Service, 25 April

Rabindra Mishra: Why do you call the parties’ decision to welcome the reinstatement of parliament a betrayal?

Baburam Bhattarai: It is a betrayal of the movement. When we signed the 12-point agreement, we agreed that none of the sides (the parties and the Maoists) would hold talks with the king or reach an agreement with him. But the parties talked to the king by themselves, thus violating the agreement. The minimum meeting point of the 12-point agreement was election for the constituent assembly, but the parties went for the reinstatement of the parliament.

The 12-point agreement had clearly stated that the power of the movement would reinstate the parliament through which an all party government would be formed and that in turn would hold talks with the Maoists to move toward the constituent assembly. That was the demand of the seven parties who had conducted this movement and you had only supported it. So, how was that a betrayal?

The first thing to be made clear is that this movement was not led by the seven parties. We had fears that the demonstrators would be called terrorists if we had called it a joint movement. Therefore, we had agreed that the parties would call for the movement and we would support it. As per the parties’ demand for the reinstatement of the parliament, we had expressed our disagreement just when the 12-point agreement was signed. We had then said that we need to proceed towards constituent assembly through political conference and an interim government.

If it was a joint movement of the parties and your party, why have people been bringing out victory rallies in the streets? Shouldn’t they have intensified the anti-king agitation?

The rallies you are talking about actually went to surround the place where the leaders of the parties were holding a meeting. They had then demanded that the movement had to be continued until the election for the constituent assembly.

The parties have been saying that they would go for the election of constituent assembly by the means of dialogue and agreement and the same has been stated in the 12-point agreement as well. Even after reassurances by the parties in that regard, would you create any obstacle or not?

It is not about creating obstacles. What we have been saying is that it is still not clear under which law or article of the constitution the king reinstated parliament. Reinstatement through a royal announcement means the parliament now is equal to the royal privy council (Raj Sabha). But it was you who had been saying that the present

national crisis is not a constitutional problem but a political one and therefore it should be solved politically. And now that they are trying to solve it through politics, you are coming up with constitutional objections.

Exactly, what we have been saying is there no constitutional way now. But they took the way of the parliament which was not a constitutional course but a political one.

You seem to be in the habit if everything that doesn’t go your way. When the Sher Bahadur Deuba government wanted to hold talks with you, your party said it would not hold talks with a puppet government and that it would hold talks with the king directly. When the king took direct power, you backtracked and said you would talk to the parties only. And now that the parties have come to power, you are still having problems.

The main point here is the monarchy should come to an end and there should be the establishment of republic. Our saying has always remained the same.

See, you just contradicted yourself again. Your party and leaders have been saying that they would accept any result of constituent assembly even if that means active monarchy. Your Chairman Prachanda had said that and now you are saying that you have no other goal than the end of monarchy.

What our chairman had said and what our party’s policy has been is that we would in principle agree to the result of the constituent assembly. But we have not said that we would accept monarchy. Agreeing to the result of constituent assembly does not translate into acceptance of monarchy.

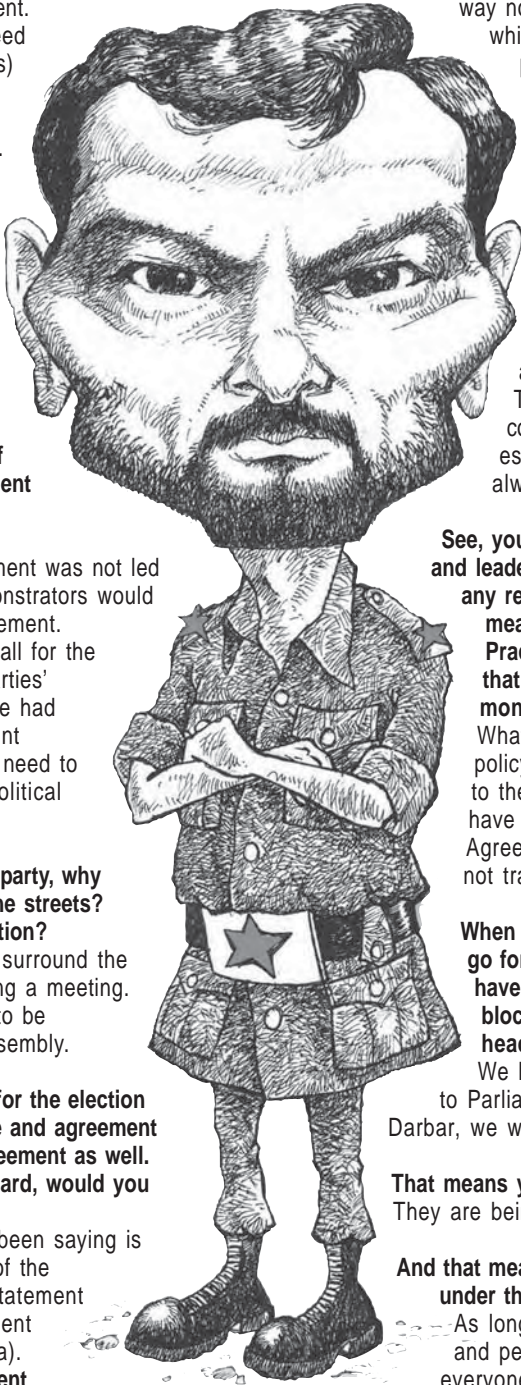
When the parties have been saying that they would go for the election of constituent assembly, why have you been creating obstacles by announcing blockades against the capital and district headquarters?

We have not said that we would obstruct the road to Parliament. They (the parties) can go to Singha Darbar, we will only create blockades in highways.

That means you will continue your military activities. They are being continued now.

And that means you will carry on fighting with the army under the parties.

As long as there is no forward looking political outlet and people’s democracy, we will be in war, and everyone is clear about it.



SUBHAS RAI

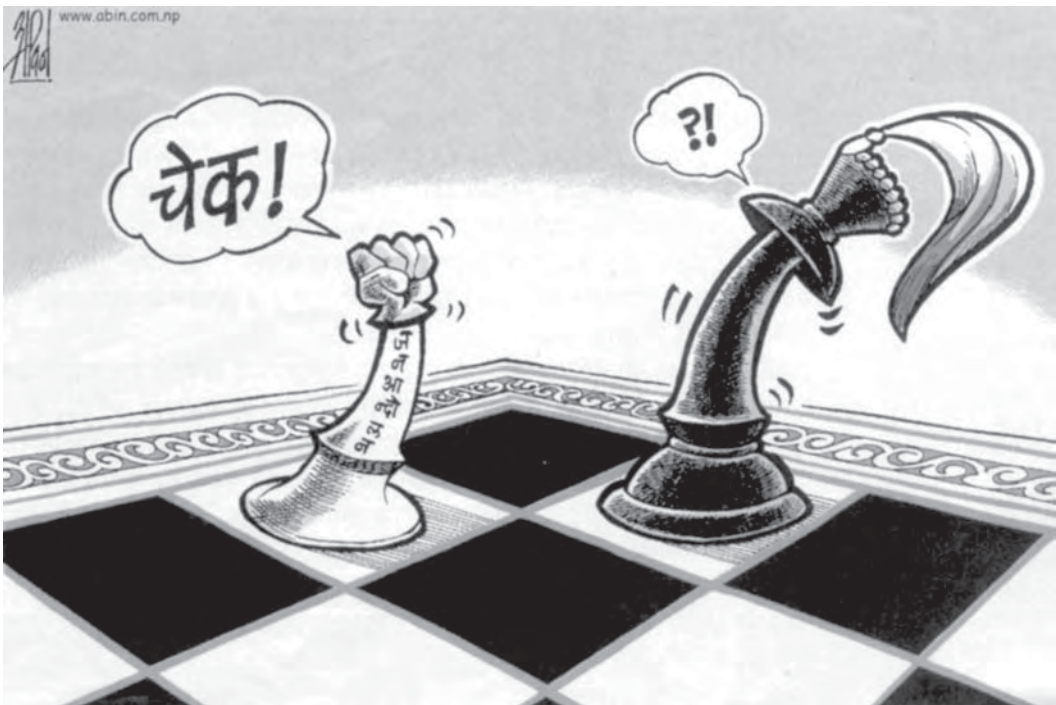
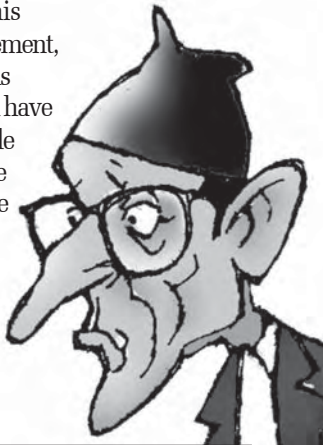
Girija is back

Jana Aastha, 26 April

अस्था

So girija Prasad Koirala is once more in a position to become prime minister. He is the man who when in office never listened to those who opposed him. He didn’t even listen to colleagues in his own party, he fired at non-violent demonstrations, he politicised the bureaucracy and filled it up with kangresis. He played divide and rule game. The question everywhere is if Girija can turn things around this time. The district and regional administrators are still in place. The nominated members of the DDCs and municipalities are still there. The black media ordinance, the one-window advertising policy and there has to be a move to publicise the fate of the disappeared. What about the ambassadors and other appointments? How is Girija going to deal with all this?

Meanwhile, sources say the main cause for the delay in the king’s statement on Monday was Crown Prince Paras’s reluctance to return power to the people. Paras entered Narayanhiti palace surrounded by security at 6PM and returned to Nirmal Nibas at midnight. As a result, King Gyanendra, who bowed down to the people’s movement after thousands planned to surround the palace on Tuesday in defiance of security forces, had to delay his announcement, which was supposed have been made some time during the day.



People’s Movement Pawn: “Check!”

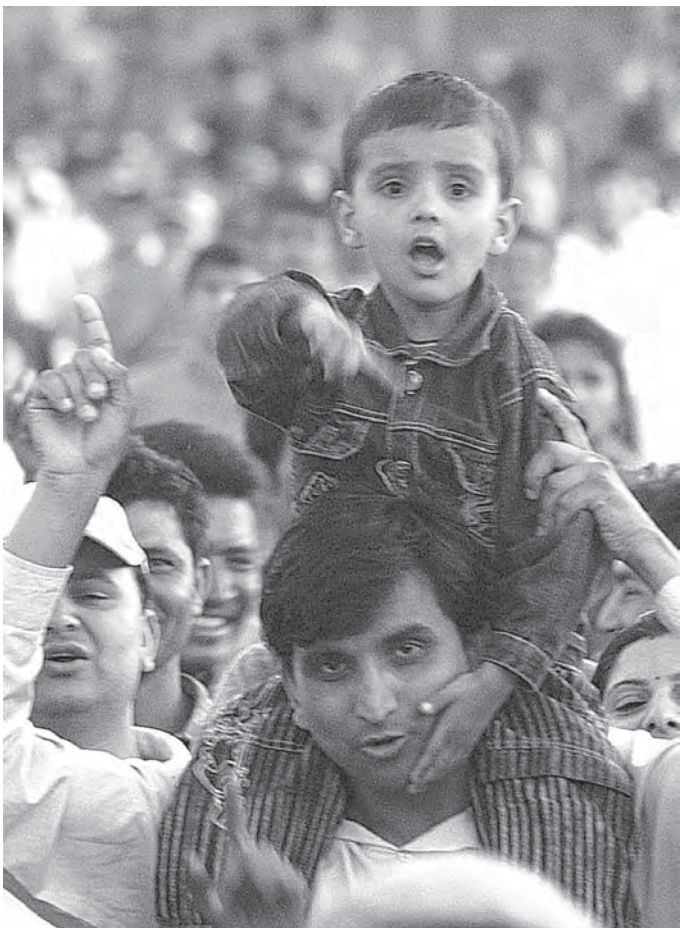
समय Abin Shrestha in Samaya, 27 April

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“That the Nepali media is thoroughly unregulated has been well proven by the blatantly partisan and thoroughly unprofessional role a section of the media has assumed for itself in the ensuing agitation. The irony is that it is this very section that says there is no media freedom here.”

Former minister of Information and Communications Shrish S Rana speaking to nepalnews.com on 18 April.



CHANDRA SHEKHAR KARKI

BABY SITTING: A father carries his boy to a pro-democracy demonstration in Koteswore on 21 April.

नेपाल Nepal in 23 April

The king kneeled

Yubaraj Ghimire in Samaya, 27 April

समय

The king finally retracted his hour-long address of 1 February in just seven minutes with his statement on 21 April handing executive power back to the people's representatives. But he did not want to accept that his power had been retaken by the people's movement of the previous 16 days and instead thanked those who helped him in his oppressive 14-month rule.

There were already many clear indications that handing back power was the only real choice the king had. Like rats jumping from a sinking ship, his aides like foreign minister Ramesh Nath Pandey and member of the royal council permanent committee Sachit Shamsher Rana were already distancing themselves from the monarch in public. In his last days the only people the king trusted were home minister Kamal Thapa and the three security chiefs.

Although the king gave India's special envoy, Dr Karan Singh, his word that he would return democracy to the people, the king played parallel politics by trying to make Krishna Prasad Bhattarai prime minister under Article 127. But

Bhattarai refused, saying the king should first take back his 1 February move publicly, accept the people's sovereignty and form an interim government with a maximum tenure of one year. After this attempt it was clear even to the Indians that the king could not be trusted.

This was why both the US and UK publicly supported India's efforts before the king made his statement on Friday. According to one source, the king was worried about the future government's possible action against those who helped him put down the movement, especially the security chiefs. Although the king realised he needed to give in, he didn't have the courage to correct his mistake. He invoked Article 35 to ask the parties to name a prime minister.

Senior Congress leaders saw it as capitulation but because they knew the Maoists wouldn't agree they were forced to reject it. But diplomatic sources say India is putting pressure on the Maoists to agree to renounce violence and also suggested that the parties get the constituent assembly proposal passed. The bottomline is that this episode has proved once and for all that authoritarianism is disastrous for Nepal.



AJAYA JOSHI



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Management lessons

The current crisis makes a great case study on fundamentals

Students of management, business and economics: Here's your opportunity. A study of the current political crisis would yield great examples to support the fundamental rules that govern management.

ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed



The key ingredient to any successful management is trust between the various stakeholders. Shareholders of companies will only listen to the same promises about planned changes or improved governance for one or two AGMs before they become dissatisfied with mere words. They have too much at stake to just listen to speeches at meetings and take it all lying down. If management doesn't deliver what it promises, the trust is lost. The fall of India's BJP-led government is a classic example of such loss of trust.

Similarly, it is known in management that when a large majority opposes a particular

product design, they will go all out to ensure that it fails. The fact that there are no alternatives immediately available does not deter those who are hell-bent on change. For instance, in Thailand this Beed noticed the masses worked to force out Thaksin without having a clear-cut solution about who would succeed him. Similarly, those in the US gunning for the head of Donald Rumsfeld know that they want him out but are not sure who should replace him. The simple fact that there are no sure alternatives to the Thaksins and the Rumsfelds is no guarantee that they will continue.

Good management is also always dependent on teams that can deliver. It is not only important to have the right mix of team members but also people who can communicate with each other and the team leader. The success of Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore and the partial success of General Musharraf in Pakistan shows how even in a country where the government is synonymous with one leader, a

good team is required for delivery.

Good management is also about being able to see the writing on the wall and being pro-active. Encyclopaedia Britannica, a strong brand and a well-known product, nearly went out of business because it could not adapt to the internet world. The online free editions of many search engines were providing the encyclopaedia's contents without being burdened by the costs and storage of hard copies that the original company has to bear. Similarly, instant camera maker Polaroid did not understand the significance of the digital camera on time and is therefore now tilting on the edge of extinction. On the other hand, pager firm Motorola did grasp the importance of cellular phones and managed to transform its core business.

Management is management, be it in business, politics or society. There are a few fundamentals that should never be ignored, or else failing becomes a very easy step. ●

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“The UN will assist in any way it can”

United Nations Resident Coordinator in Nepal, Mathew Kahane spoke to *Nepali Times* just after King Gyanendra's proclamation restoring parliament. Excerpts:

Is there a sense of optimism that political resolution is on its way?
Nepal now has an opportunity to move forward because the political framework for this has been established. Of course, great challenges lie ahead. The new government will need to work out quickly how to both deliver services and political solutions. But, Nepal now has the best basis on which to move forward and to address some of the fundamental development challenges facing this nation, which is still among the poorest in the world.

What is your message for the king, seven-party alliance as well as the Maoist leaders on this positive development?
Many details need to be ironed out but fundamentally this new development presents a real opportunity to address some of the political issues holding Nepal back. The Maoists have the opportunity to renounce violence and to find a place in the normal political process.

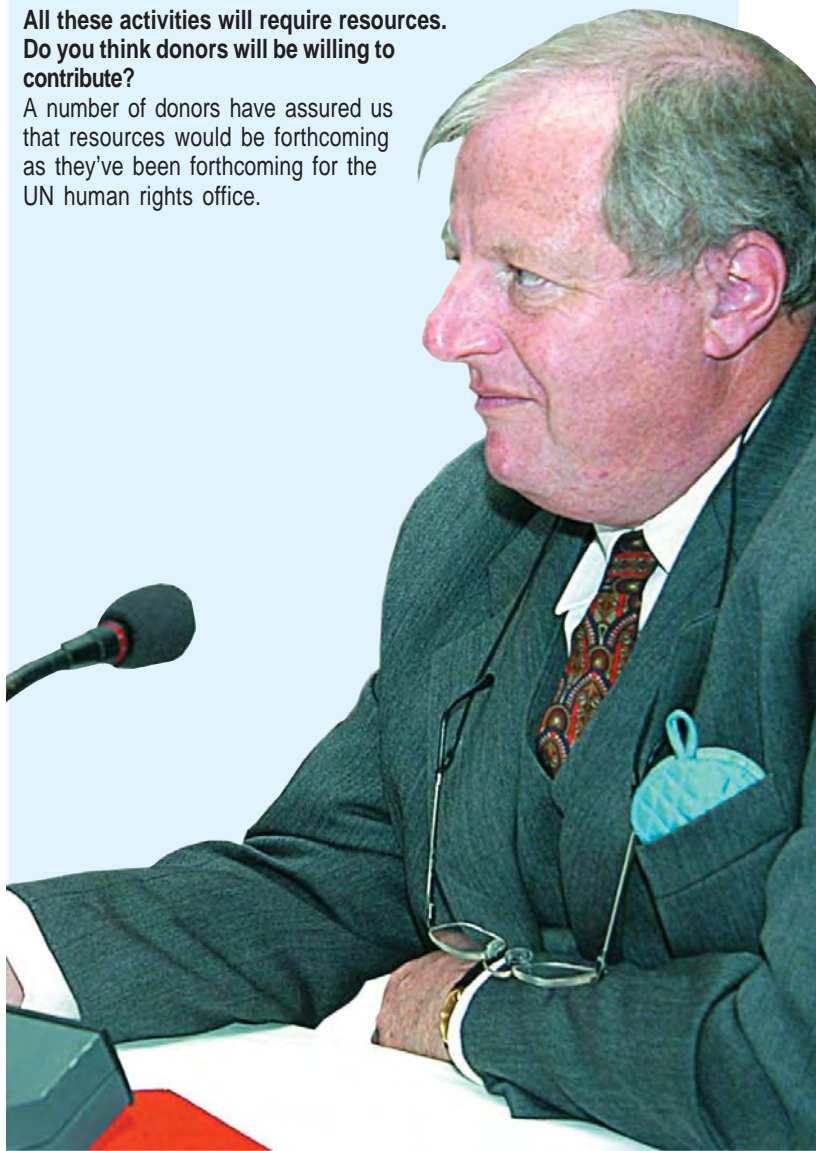
What are some of the other issues?
The parties have talked about restructuring state institutions in a way that there would be stronger checks and balances between, for example, the executive and other arms of the government, the army and judiciary. The UN could be a good source of that advice.

What role will the UN/EU now play in helping Nepal to move the peace process ahead?
Many areas that the new government will need to address are ones that the UN has extensive experience in. The party leaders know that we stand ready to help, in the area of monitoring elections for example. If the people of Nepal and the government seek the help of the UN, we are more than happy to assist in any way that we can.

What about the Maoists in particular?
Much more discussion is needed about the Maoists giving up armed struggle. Those are the kind of discussions where some sort of third-party assistance is useful and may be necessary. For example, to ask probing questions like, 'when you say yellow, do you mean yellow or do you mean orange-yellow'? The Maoists have also previously said that they would agree to supervision of their arms in general but this is a process that needs to start as soon as possible and one where the devil is in the details.

What other challenges do you foresee?
In the long term, Nepal faces great development challenges. Inequality and exclusion, which are the root causes of the insurgency and in many ways have enabled it to spread, need to be addressed. Disadvantaged groups, women and others who have been traditionally excluded now need to be assisted in participating fully in society through education, health and other opportunities.

All these activities will require resources. Do you think donors will be willing to contribute?
A number of donors have assured us that resources would be forthcoming as they've been forthcoming for the UN human rights office.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

LOCATION,

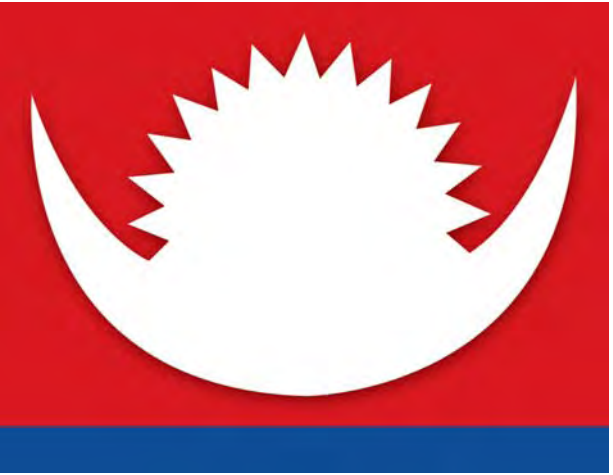
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Durga's journey through time



MIN BAJRACHARYA, 9 APRIL 1990, NIKON FM-2 105MM ON MITSUBISHI 100 ASA FILM

This picture of Durga Thapa leaping out of a crowd of protesters in the 1990 People's Uprising became an icon for the era. It represented the euphoria and hope of the restoration of democracy 16 years ago, hope that was later dashed only to be revived this week with King Gyanendra's restoration of parliament.

Durga was 22 then, a student activist at Padma Kanya. She was attending a mass rally at Tundikhel on 9 April 1990. The protests against King Birendra's absolute rule were spreading and Durga remembers listening to democracy activist Padma Ratna Tuladhar speaking to the crowd.

"Suddenly, I couldn't hold it back any longer," she recalls. "I just leapt into the air to give a double victory sign."

Durga didn't know Min, and Min didn't know he had the photograph of the decade. Min Bajracharya was only 17 then and remembers: "Those were the days before digital, so I had to be economical with film. Suddenly I saw this woman leap up with her hands thrust out, and I took three quick shots."

The two met by chance three years later in a blood donation clinic, and kept in touch. When the seven party pro-democracy movement got underway last month, Min tracked Durga down and decided to follow her around.

This picture of her last week in Baneswor leading a group of civil servants was a turning point in the agitation because government employees for the first time descended on to the streets. Durga is now a member of the Nepali Congress youth wing, and feels her place is on the streets to keep fighting for democracy not to rub shoulders with the party leaders.

"I feel very happy because the king has reinstated parliament," she told us on Tuesday, adding a warning to all political leaders. "parliament should quickly arrange a constituent assembly as the public is demanding. The politicians must not be negligent and ignore the voice of the people—that was why the king took power."

Her husband is a trader and Durga has a 12-year-old son. She says it is for his future that she is fighting now. "Our generation is moving on, now we have to make sure that people of his generation can live in a free country," she says. Durga had kept out of politics since 1990 and hadn't even met a NC central committee member. But when the seven parties launched their agitation, she was convinced it was time to put up another fight.

While most activists of her age have mellowed and started raising families, Durga has lost none of her fervour. Some of her friends accuse her of being extreme leftwing, but she is not deterred. She replies: "Extreme times demand extreme measures." ●



MIN BAJRACHARYA, 18 APRIL 2006, NIKON D100, 24-85 MM DIGITAL

RELIVING 1990



MEDIA UPRISING: Compared to 1990, the 2006 Kathmandu Spring was conducting in full glare of media. Demonstrators battled riot police and went home to watch themselves on the evening news.

Media highlighted the confrontation and played up visuals of pitched street battles. But although there were many more protesters in the streets, 2006 was more restrained and the casualty levels much lower.

The demonstrators in front of Singha Darbar (left) were replaced by motorcyclists queueing for petrol when curfew was lifted briefly (below). The primitive riot gear of police in 1990 was replaced by full ninja regalia by 2006 (right).



ALL PICS: MIN BAJRACHARYA

Covering the Battle

NARENDRA SHRESTHA

SLRs confront SLRs as journalists risk their lives covering Kathmandu's street uprising



PHOTOJOURNALIST IN THE NEWS: Kumar saves a policeman from being lynched, the next day on 11 April, he was shooting a raging street battle

For Kumar Shrestha, Day Five of the pro-democracy demonstrations on 11 April began routinely enough. He had packed his helmet, several handkerchiefs and water to ward off the tear gas, and headed off towards Gongabu.

This area near the Bus Park on the Ring Road had been a hotspot, but the demonstrators that afternoon started peacefully enough. Party flags raised pro-democracy and anti-king slogans and taunted the police. It started raining and the protests died down somewhat.

Suddenly there was a sound of a rapid burst of

automatic gunfire. Some demonstrators had started throwing stones at the house of Additional Inspector General (AIG) of Nepal Police Rupsagar Moktan and security inside the house started firing back with SLR and pistols. The sound of gunshots spooked the riot police who were already conditioned into believing that the Maoists had infiltrated the demonstrators. In fact Home Minister Kamal Thapa a few days before had said Maoists had fired shots in the Gongabu area.

The riot police were out in front facing a narrow side street leading into Gongabu. The blue-uniformed

Armed Police Force were lined up behind them on the Ring Road and then there was a unit of the army that had taken up battle position as soon as they heard the shots.

Kumar Shrestha, who films for Himalnews and Nepalnews.com and is an occasional contributor to Nepali Times, decided to investigate where the shots were being fired from. He saw five security personnel firing out of the windows of the house. Bullets were ricocheting all around and Kumar thought this is getting a bit dangerous. The riot police then gave charge down



KIRAN PANDAY

e of Gongabu



at the same spot when he was shot and carried away unconscious. Kumar in his hospital bed.



the narrow street and there was pandemonium. “I literally don’t know what hit me,” recalls Kumar, “I remember thinking oh no I’ve been hit by a stone and then I became unconscious. Next thing I knew I was being x-rayed in hospital three hours later.” Kumar was lucky, it was a rubber bullet from the riot police and not the guns inside the police inspector’s house. And it hit his shoulder. A week later, Kumar was back on the streets, with a smaller camera because he can’t use his hurt arm. It is conceivable that the rubber bullet came from the

policeman that Kumar himself saved from being lynched the previous day in Gongabu itself. Eight policemen were cornered during a pitched street battle, and one of them was being badly beaten up by the angry demonstrators. “I crouched and took pictures for a while,” Kumar says, “but after a while I thought I have to save this man otherwise he’s going to be killed.” A while later photojournalist Narendra Shrestha arrived and the two dragged the policemen away. “Take him away,” the boys with stones in their hands told Kumar, “otherwise he might die.” ●

“Will they beat us?”

Nine-year-old Pratikshya Gurung finds herself in prison

My home is in Taplejung, but last year I came to Kathmandu to go to school and live in Banasthali in Kathmandu. I am in Grade 5 of Sauryadeep Boarding School. On 8 April, some policemen came into our house. It was 4:30 in the morning and we were fast asleep. There were five of them and they weren’t wearing uniforms. They woke us up and asked us, “Are you Shiva Gurung?” My uncle answered, “Yes, I am Shiva, why are you asking for me this early in the morning?” They answered, “We are police and we’ve come to arrest you.” Then they gave my uncle a 90 day arrest warrant. We

put on our clothes quickly. My uncle said, “I can’t leave my little niece here.” The police spoke on the phone and asked, “Shiva Gurung has his niece with her, what do we do with her?” The police at the other end replied: “Bring her along also.” So they drove us to this armed police barrack in Duwakot.

The guard at the gate asked us who we were. The policeman said “We are also police” and they opened the gate. They asked my uncle his name and asked, “Do you have any mobile or radio?” My uncle replied that he didn’t have a radio, but had a mobile. The policeman said, “No one here is allowed to take a mobile inside.” My uncle and me went inside. I had thought we were the only ones to be arrested, but inside there were other people, many were my uncle’s friends. I didn’t know anyone and I was sad.

The police kept bringing other people after us. My uncle introduced me to the other uncles. One of them asked me, “Why are you sad?” I asked her, “Will they beat us?” He answered, “No one is going to beat us.” That made me feel better. He said his name was Dharma Datta Debkota and he was also arrested like my uncle.

Every morning I wake up and wash my face and then go for a walk, and after that have snacks at the police shop. After that I read or study till about 11 o’clock. Then I go to eat. We get meals in the mornings and evenings. I rest for a while after that. Then study till 3 o’clock. Then I go for the evening meal and then go for a walk again.

There are 195 people here who have been arrested from protests. Many of them can’t talk too much and can’t walk around alone. There are only three women among us. Later 26 more human rights people were also brought here. On 26 Chait we observed Jana Andolan Day and on 27th had a 15 minute blackout. The UN and human rights council were also here and asked us everything. I answered all their questions.

I am all right here. I am happy. Everyone likes me. I am just worried about one thing. I don’t know if my school has reopened or not. If they let me go I could go back to school. I am waiting for that. ●

Pratikshya Gurung
Duwakot, Bhaktapur
Armed Police Barrack

Note: Pratikshya was released with her uncle and all other political prisoners on Tuesday.



GUTSY GIRL:
Pratikshya in her jail cell in Duwakot that she shares with two other female detainees.

TIMELINE Royal rollback

1 February 2005 - King Gyanendra takes over. Declares emergency, sacks Deuba yet again, cuts phone lines, sends army into newsrooms. Hundreds of politicians and civil society activists are jailed. International condemnation.

April 2005 - After debate at the UN in Geneva, an office of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights is set up in Kathmandu.

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

September 2005 - Maoists declare three-month unilateral ceasefire. King G continues walkabouts in various parts of the country.

October 2005 - Tourism bounces back with ceasefire.

November 2005 - Seven-party alliance (SPA) and Maoists sign 12-point 'understanding'. Government cracks down on media and prepares guidelines for NGOs.

December 2005 - Maoists extend ceasefire by one month, still no government response.

January 2006 - Ceasefire ends, Maoists intensify attacks.

February 2006 - In anniversary speech, King Gyanendra says he will continue direct rule and calls for elections by April 2007. Palpa attacked, Maoists shut down country before municipal polls. Twenty percent turnout in local elections. Maoist insurgency enters 10th year.

March 2006 - Maoists impose three-week blockade. King and queen leave for Pokhara. Seven parties and Maoists reaffirm 12-point understanding and prepare for April protests.

6 April 2006 - Malangwa attacked, RNA Mi-17 down. First day of pro-democracy demonstrations—over 450 protesters arrested in Kathmandu alone. Many political activists and academics under house arrest.

7 April 2006 - Nationwide protests, roads blocked, buildings vandalised, meanwhile King G inaugurates World Hindu Convention in Birganj.

8 April 2006 - Curfew in Kathmandu. Activists arrested as they defy curfew. Mobiles disconnected. Clashes with Maoists in Kapilbastu and Rupandehi, 25 killed. One pro-democracy protester shot dead in Chitwan.

9 April 2006 - 12-hour curfews become routine. Maoists blockade highways. One killed at a pro-democracy demonstration in Banepa.

10 April 2006 - Professionals and civil servants join the movement. A woman injured in police firing in Chitwan dies. Demos spread nationwide.

11 April 2006 - Curfew hours reduced. Peaceful rally in Gongabu turns violent. Tourists join the pro-democracy movement, dozens arrested in Thamel. Two protesters shot dead at a rally in Pokhara.

12 April 2006 - Daytime curfew lifted. King and queen return to capital from Pokhara. Over 500 journalists, lawyers, human rights observers and professionals arrested. Protester shot dead in Nawalparasi.

13 April 2006 - Lawyers injured in police crackdown on demo. Development workers join the movement, civil servants strike. Massive rallies in Kiritpur where students recite poems and sing revolutionary songs.

14 April 2006 - King addresses the nation on the occasion of Nepali New Year 2063, Maoists and parties say protests to continue.

15 April 2006 - UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan urges the king to take steps to solve the crisis. Over 20,000 march in Dhading. Nationwide protests intensify.

16 April 2006 - Businesses remain closed for 11th consecutive day. Journalists arrested, protests flare along Ring Road. Shortages hit Kathmandu. King Gyanendra meets ambassadors from the US, India and China.

18 April 2006 - Pokhara tense and under daytime curfew. Civil servants at the Home Ministry in Kathmandu protest, many arrested. King meets political party leaders.

19 April 2006 - 18-hour curfew in Kathmandu. Clashes in Jhapa leave three dead. CPN-UML General Secretary Madhab Kumar Nepal and other senior leaders released. Indian special envoy Dr Karan Singh arrives

20 April 2006 - 25-hour curfew. Three protesters shot dead at Kalanki when security forces open fire, 50,000 protesters march to Kalanki. Curfew passes denied to media and the UN. K P Bhattarai refuses the king's offer to become prime minister. Karan Singh returns to India 'optimistic'.

21 April 2006 - Ring Road fills with over 500,000 protesters, several killed hundreds injured. King Gyanendra addresses the nation, hands executive power back to the people and asks parties to recommend a prime minister.

22 April 2006 - Seven parties reject king's offer to nominate prime minister. Thousands of protesters defy curfew, break security cordons and march towards the palace. Thunderstorm intervenes. Mobile out again.

23 April 2006 - 11-hour curfew in Kathmandu. SPA leaders announce mammoth Ring Road rally for 25 April over 200,000 people participate in demonstration in Dang.

24 April 2006 - King addresses the nation near midnight and reinstates dissolved parliament. Jubilation on streets.

25 April 2006 - SPA nominates Girija Prasad Koirala to head the new government. Victory rallies all over the country. Detainees released. Mobiles restored. Curfew lifted. Maoists reject king's offer.

26 April 2006 - Maoists remove blockade. Soldiers slay six in Morang.

27 April 2006 - Maoists declare three-month unilateral ceasefire. Huge rally at Tundikhel. Maoists announce rally for Friday to coincide with reconvening of parliament.

Citizen scribes

Blogs offer a grassroots view of the pro-democracy movement

MALLIKA ARYAL

>I get a lot of frenzied little boys posting here demanding the king meet all their needs before they will talk. How pathetic. A mature politician interested in dialogue would take the king's invitation and build on it. The king has created an opportunity. Responsible leaders would capitalise on it and begin dialogue.

- *Blogdai* <http://nepalnow.blogspot.com/>

>A return to the old constitution could not stir a popular movement, a more radical idea was needed to attract crowds. Today, a constituent assembly or even a republic meets the requirement according to popular rhetoric.

- *Samudaya* <http://www.everybodybreed.com>

>The Maoists should immediately declare a unilateral ceasefire and come out on the streets with a peaceful campaign. The reason is quite simple: it is only through non-violent means that an oppressive regime is defeated.

- *Ganatantra Nepal* <http://ganatantranepal.org/>

Logging in Nepal took off after February 2005 as a means to both bypass official censorship and to protest against it. The royal takeover was marked by a crackdown on the Nepali media and as in other repressive regimes, blogging here graduated from personal, sometimes self-indulgent observations to an important vehicle for free speech. This month, the blogging boom accelerated. While journalists struggled to get out the news and Nepalis desperately gobbled up all the information they could find, local bloggers kept posting on the web. Their reports, pictorials, personal essays and analysis filled the Nepali blogosphere.

After 1 February 2005, Kantipur reporters Dinesh Wagle and Ujjwal Acharya felt the need to express their thoughts and opinions to a wider audience in a non-news format and created *United We Blog!* tying it to the political slogan, 'For a free and democratic Nepal'. Other journalists started contributing and a year on, *United We Blog!* has become a home for uncensored analysis, news and images about Nepal, all of it open to debate and discussion from readers. *Radio Free Nepal* also started as a response to King Gyandendra's ban on independent news broadcasts.

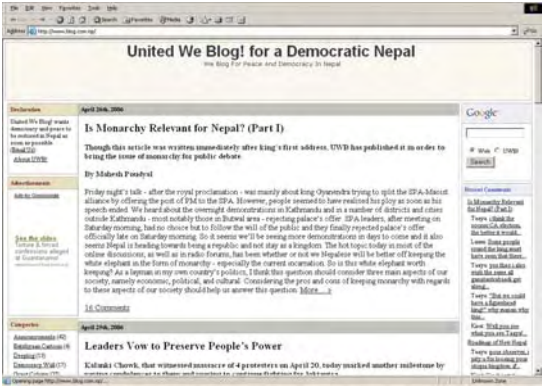
Blogdai has been posting since December 2004, becoming more active with his slightly politically conservative postings in the past year. His blog is a unique collection of news and analysis, translations and Q&As with much of the response from readers speculating about whether Blogdai is a *kuire*.

Samudaya is a collective promoting the promotion of the active involvement of young Nepalis. Its April entries range from news snippets, discussions and images from contributors in Nepal, to pictorials and audio files.

Friends of Nepal includes links to websites, papers and updates on the Maoist insurgency. *International Nepal Solidarity Network*, also blocked by authorities in mid-2005 and also accessible via a mirror site, has a wide collection of images. The Associated Press's *AP blog* contains excellent personalised accounts from its correspondents covering the pro-democracy protests, proving that traditional media outlets can also blog.

Most blogs oppose the king's February First takeover. For instance, *WeBlog Nepal* asks, 'Do the royals read newspapers? Do they listen to FM? Then why is the king so silent when the street protests are deafening with slogans against him?'

Srijan's *Blogger Nepal* calls the king 'out of



touch with reality', adding that a ruler who was in sync with the people's needs would not make shocking comments such this from his 1 February 2006 speech: 'the Maoist movement had dwindled down to a few criminal activities'.

Similar scepticism is expressed by Joy of *Road Blog Ahead*. She is critical of the royal government and especially the behaviour of security forces, which becomes brutally clear in viewing the work of photographer Sagar Shrestha in the blog *Bijaya Paudel's Journal*.

Mero Sansar offers rare audio files of the sloganeering protesters on the streets during the recent 20 days of demonstrations. Twenty-four activists, journalists and doctors who were detained on 8 April for defying a curfew and then incarcerated at Duwakot started their own photoblog, *Chaubise*, by smuggling out digital images on pin drives.

Blogging has its limitations in Nepal, where only 0.7 percent of the population has an internet connection. But because of its non-news format, blogs give people interested in Nepal a much more detailed and nuanced picture than the international media about what is happening here.

Blogging can be considered free speech at its purest because it makes information interactive, taking it out of the hands of journalists. But for the same reason, the blogosphere has a credibility problem, an image of being home to self-indulgent rantings of the over-enthusiastic.

But its future in Nepal looks bright thanks to bloggers like *Blogger Nepal*'s 'Srijan', who posted recently: 'I may support a republic but if a majority of Nepalis still support a constitutional monarchy, so be it'.

- Blogdai** <http://www.nepalnow.blogspot.com/>
United We Blog! <http://www.blog.com.np/>
Youth for Peace and Democracy <http://sharadchirag.blog.com/>
Prabasi Nepali <http://www.prabasinepali.com/>
AP blog http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/national/1104AP_INT_Nepal_Weblog.html
WeBlog Nepal <http://www.weblognepal.com/index.html>
Ganatantra Nepal <http://ganatantranepal.org/>
Samudaya <http://www.everybodybreed.com>
International Nepal Solidarity Network <http://66.116.151.85/Friends of Nepal Blog>
Friends of Nepal Blog <http://blog.friendsofnepal.com/>
Srijan's Blogger Nepal <http://www.srijan.com.np>
The Radiant Star <http://www.ujjwal.com>
Radio Free Nepal <http://freenepal.blogspot.com>
Umesh Shrestha's Mero Sansar <http://www.merosansar.com.np>
Joy of Road Blog <http://www.customjuju.com/joy/joyblog/?p=166>
Bijaya Paudel's journal <http://bijayapaudel.bravejournal.com/>
International Nepal Solidarity Network <http://www.insn.org/>
Keep Nepal Free <http://friendofnepal.blogspot.com/>
Web Chautari <http://www.webchautari.com/>
Chaubise <http://www.chaubise.blogspot.com/>

2722

It is just like ABCD.

Nepal’s people phenomenon

Very late in the modern era, long after other countries of Southasia had experienced their uplifting cathartic moments, Nepalis by the millions stood up against feudalism.

People Power simultaneously pushed back a despotically inclined king making space for pluralism and created the conditions for peace. The mission now is to bring the Maoists in from the jungles while ensuring that kingship is forever barred from mischief.

The Kathmandu Spring suddenly turned into a people's movement of colossal proportions fuelled by the scorn Gyanendra continuously heaped upon the citizenry. Suddenly, the weakened, unarmed middle ground represented by the political parties and civil society gained the upper hand. Meanwhile, a hopefully chastened Maoist leadership saw a nonviolent mass movement achieve what 10 years of their war had failed at.

A menacing autocrat who sought to rule on the basis of dynastic right, outright misrepresentation and military might, Gyanendra was incapable of acknowledging the political maturity of the people. Taking energy from an insular, self-serving Kathmandu Valley upper class equally contemptuous of the political parties, he began appointing prime ministers at will in October 2002 and finally took over as head of government on 1 February 2005.

Gyanendra's excuse for his army-assisted takeover was to fight the insurgency but the intent was to maintain himself as a corrupt all-powerful autocrat. His worst act was to militarise an innocent society, already devastated by years of

insurgency. Fortunately, despite the worst of intentions this man did not have the intellectual or organisational skills to run a police state.

This empowerment of the masses since 1990 is what the feudocrat in Gyanendra never understood, and he would have been overthrown immediately after 1 February had a violent insurgency not been raging in the countryside. For a decade, that misconceived rebellion of Maoist chieftains making their own grab for power through the barrel of the gun had sapped the energy of the nation. Politicians engaged in nonviolent politics were caught between two guns. It was last autumn, when the Maoists conceded the failure of their 'people's war' and agreed to come into open politics through a constituent assembly that the People's Movement became possible.

On 22 November 2005, tired of waiting for dialogue with a sneering Narayanhiti palace, the political parties signed a 12-point understanding with the rebels to fight the regime in parallel. The political rallies suddenly began to attract more and more people because the parties were able to promise a return to both democracy and peace.

Meanwhile, even as Gyanendra was receiving felicitations as a 'Hindu Emperor' from conservative Hindus in Birganj last month, the movement sparked and took off. The bottled-up anger unleashed a political tsunami of a kind no one had imagined. And when Gyanendra sought to provide measly concessions they were too little and too late. Close to midnight on Monday, 24 April, he gave in to the popular will, restored the Third Parliament and asked the political parties to form a government.

This 'people phenomenon' holds larger meanings besides the shunting aside of an active monarch. It has united a country that

has been historically, socially and geographically divided. Between 8-10 million citizens were engaged in the weeks-long agitation, coming in from the fields and terraces, trekking to the roadheads, demanding loktantra.

Perhaps the greatest gift of the People's Movement of 2006, besides creating conditions for an end to the Maoist rebellion, is that it sets Nepali nationalism on more inclusive and solid foundations. So far nationalism has relied on xenophobia and frivolous symbolism based on the midhill caste/ethnic identity, the Nepali language, a 'Hindu' monarchy, and a particular brand of hill Hinduism. Each of these elements had the consequence of excluding a large section of citizens.

Having been ushered in by citizens of all ethnicities, castes, languages, faiths, gender and regional origin, this new democracy is no longer a gift from Kathmandu's powerful clique to the country at large. The inclusive democracy to be crafted on the basis of the People's Movement, through the promised constituent assembly which will write a new constitution, will provide all the people at long last with 'ownership' of their country. The Nepal of the future will be a raucous, occasionally unruly, democracy. But the state will have the stability required for nation building.

Already, the people have gained confidence from their ability to fight a despot and define their own future vis-à-vis a nervous international community. This confidence adds to the country's stature, and will henceforth provide it with self-assurance in the conduct of foreign relations, particularly with India. The confidence will translate into numerous other dividends, including more equitable development where the goal-setting is done indigenously rather than by the ubiquitous



KIRAN PANDAY

The Kathmandu Spring gave Nepalis confidence in their ability to fight a despot and define their own future

'donor' government or agency.

The path ahead will be bumpy but the goal is clear: making inclusive democracy happen, righting the historical wrongs against the majority population in this country of minorities. The task began with the defeat of Gyanendra's preposterous agenda. The kingship has been brought to its knees, which is where it will have to be kept, if at all. ●

This article was written in detention, originally for Himal Southasian magazine. The writer was released on 25 April.



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STATUTORY DIRECTIVE: SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

Chernobyl's turning point

It was Chernobyl and not perestroika that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union

The very morning of the explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear station, 26 April, 1986, the Politburo met to discuss the situation and then organised a government commission to deal with the consequences.

COMMENT
Mikhail S
Gorbachev



The Politburo did not immediately have appropriate and complete information that would have reflected the situation after the explosion. Nevertheless, it was the general consensus that we should openly deliver the information upon receiving it. This would be in the spirit of the *glasnost* policy that was by then already established in the Soviet Union.

Thus, claims that the Politburo engaged in concealment of information about the disaster is far from the truth. In fact, nobody knew the truth, and that is why all our attempts to receive full information about the extent of the catastrophe were in vain.



We initially believed that the main impact of the explosion would be in Ukraine but Belarus, to the northwest, was hit even worse and then Poland and Sweden suffered the consequences.

The nuclear meltdown at Chernobyl 20 years ago this month, even more than my launch of *perestroika*, was perhaps the real cause of the collapse of the Soviet Union five

years later. Indeed, the Chernobyl catastrophe was an historic turning point: there was the era before the disaster and there is the very different era that has followed.

The Chernobyl disaster, more than anything else, opened the possibility of much greater freedom of expression, to the point that the system as we knew it could no longer continue. It made absolutely clear how

important it was to continue the policy of *glasnost*, and I must say that I started to think about time in terms of pre-Chernobyl and post-Chernobyl.

The price of the Chernobyl catastrophe was overwhelming, not only in human terms but also economically. Even today, the legacy of Chernobyl affects the economies of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

Some even suggest that the economic price for the USSR was so high that it stopped the arms race, as I could not keep building arms while paying to clean up Chernobyl. This is wrong. My declaration of 15 January 1986, is well known around the world. I addressed arms reduction, including nuclear arms, and I proposed that by the year 2000 no country should have atomic weapons. I personally felt a moral responsibility to end the arms race. But Chernobyl opened my eyes like nothing else: it showed the horrible consequences of nuclear power, even when it is used for non-military purposes. One could now imagine much more clearly what might happen

if a nuclear bomb exploded. According to scientific experts, one SS-18 rocket could contain 100 Chernobyls.

Unfortunately, the problem of nuclear arms is still very serious today. Countries that have them—the members of the so-called nuclear club—are in no hurry to get rid of them. On the contrary, they continue to refine their arsenals, while countries without nuclear weapons want them, believing that the nuclear club's monopoly is a threat to world peace.

The 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl catastrophe reminds us that we should not forget the horrible lesson taught to the world in 1986. We should do everything in our power to make all nuclear facilities safe and secure. We should also start seriously working on the production of alternative sources of energy. ●

Project Syndicate

Mikhail Gorbachev, the last president of the USSR, is chairman of the Gorbachev Foundation in Moscow and the head of the International Green Cross.

Freedom imperilled

World Press Freedom Day is on 3 May

In the post-1990 wave of liberalisation, media in South Asia has multiplied many times. In the place of one or two television stations controlled by the state in each of these countries, now there are dozens of channels with overlapping satellite footprints all over the region and beyond. Cable networks now bring up to 100 channels into living rooms across the subcontinent. Staid old newspapers that filled their pages with tender notices of government contracts and handouts from press information bureaus have jazzed themselves up to full-colour and respected national dailies have turned into tabloids.

Pop music and chat radio crowd the airwaves with names like Radio Mirchi and Hits FM. Glossy magazines compete in the marketplace with lifestyle supplements in daily papers. Pink papers with pages upon pages of stock market prices are lapped up by upwardly-mobile investors. On the face of it, everything

appears to be hunky-dory in a region on the rise. But scratch the surface and you encounter the seamier side of South Asian media.

Media Monitor—2005, an annual publication of the Lahore-based South Asia Free Media Association does one better. It scrapes the sheen, and slime, off the media scene to show the different world within in its true colours. The country report for Bangladesh begins with Afsan Chowdhury's report on the 'Most Dangerous Place in the World' for journalists. Bhaskara Rao exposes the obsession of Indian TV channels with trivia and the country report shows that corporate interests have begun to dictate the agenda of the media in India. In the chapter on Pakistan, the case of Amir Mir under the title 'No Buyers of Free Expression' is a damning indictment of media owners who don't hesitate from silencing critics under their umbrella.

The media in Sri Lanka is paranoid,

parochial and partisan. Perhaps it's so because it has to operate within a very narrow space, caught as it is in the nutcracker of insurgency and counter-insurgency firepower. Maldives is rightly characterised as a 'prison for journalists' and the overview about Afghanistan is appropriately titled, 'Surviving under Pressure'. It sums up the status of journalists in the entire region.

Grace under pressure, however, becomes the second nature of journalists fighting simultaneously on several fronts. State authorities, non-state militias, drug-dealers, religious bigots, security agencies and shady businessmen are united in their hatred for free media. Nowhere have all these factors been at play as forcefully as upon Nepal's media. The overview of the Nepali media has a self-explanatory title: *Press in Chains*. Perhaps that is the reason journalists in the faraway plains and mountains of this country have fought hardest to safeguard their freedom.

"If they snatch my ink and pen, / I should not complain, / For I have dipped my fingers / In the blood of my heart." Thus sang Faiz Ahmad Faiz

about the intensity with which writers defend freedom. Committed journalists shine brightest in the darkness of the night. Nepal was under the spell of two daunting predators of press freedom—King Gyanendra and Chairman Prachanda. But the media held its ground and have triumphed over the monarch. There is a lesson here for Maoist totalitarianism as well: the Nepali people will never tolerate any future curtailment of freedom. Shooting the messenger is the worst form of politics.

Media doesn't just hold up the mirror to society, it is the mirror. Media monitors almost everyone but there aren't many who monitor the media. SAFMA's effort of self-monitoring is commendable and there is a need for South Asian countries to have national ombudsmen. That said, there is no point in producing such lavish books to document a profession often operating on shoe-string budgets. A humbler production may even remove the necessity of finding Western donors. ●

CK Lal



Media Monitor South Asia
SAFMA, Lahore, Pakistan.
2005
201 pages

2722

This is just the beginning ...

From the foreign press

What the international media is saying about the crisis in Nepal

Time for Nepalis to decide

Editorial in *The New York Times*, 26 April

The New York Times

In the confusion coming out of Nepal right now, one thing seems crystal clear: the Nepali royal family is responsible for the dire straits in which it finds itself. Now the question is whether this remote mountain kingdom should remain a kingdom or become a republic. It seems that the best possible course would be a referendum, as soon as possible, on the future of the monarchy.

With King Gyanendra's 14-month takeover of power now apparently over, it's not surprising that the unified front of politicians, rebels and pro-democracy protesters who brought Nepal to a standstill in recent weeks appeared to disintegrate.

King Gyanendra's apparent capitulation does offer a glimmer of hope, but it is really no wonder that people are still angry, and that demonstrators are calling for his abdication. That may be an extreme demand, but it is time for Nepalis to decide for themselves, once and for all, whether they are getting what they need from their royals.

King sans country

Editorial in *The Times of India*, 26 April

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Nepal continues to be a country with a king, but Gyanendra has become a king without a country. The message from the streets of Kathmandu has been emphatic: Nepalis want a republic.

The first step towards the formation of a republic has been the revival of Nepal's parliament by the king, who had no choice but to do so. Parliament is now expected to guide the country out of the ruins of the decade-long civil war. It will have to convene a constituent assembly to decide the future of Nepal.

The Maoists, now a decisive factor in Nepal, have been demanding so and should cooperate with mainstream political parties to give shape to a new nation. New Delhi should recognise the legitimacy of this process since it is willed by the people. Popular will in Nepal has moved beyond the idea of monarchy as the guardian institution of the people.

The anger among people is targeted not just at Gyanendra but at the entire edifice of monarchy. As an institution it stands discredited. It will be impossible now to visualise even a constitutional monarchy, which will leave the king as a titular head and without any executive functions.

New Delhi has to gauge its steps carefully since every sign and statement will be scrutinised closely in Kathmandu. The challenge for the foreign office is to be proactive without appearing to be so. Open borders and the presence of a huge Nepali workforce in India leave New Delhi with no option but to walk the tightrope.

A guiding principle in this exercise has to be that people's will should prevail in Kathmandu. All possible diplomatic channels should be worked to ensure that the interests of New Delhi and Nepali society converge.

India's folly

Kanchan Gupta in *The Pioneer*, New Delhi, 25 April

the pioneer

The message that has been successfully conveyed to the king, politicians and people of Nepal by the UPA Government is clear to all: India lacks the integrity to make tough choices and the courage to take difficult decisions. Those who have wrecked India's Nepal policy with gay abandon, including senior bureaucrats in the Ministry of External Affairs and the Prime Minister's Office who need not be named since they have unabashedly associated themselves with anti-palace forces and broken bread with Comrade Prachanda and other Maobadis who have blood on their hands, may now seek to seize the moral high ground by pretending solidarity with the people.

The establishment in New Delhi isolated the king, ignoring urgent appeals for military supplies

to fight the Maobadis and hatched conspiracies with those who have been waging a murderous and rapacious campaign of Red terror—simply because unlike his brother King Birendra, King Gyanendra is nobody's fool and endowed with sharp intelligence. Had he chosen to be a doormat and offered to do New Delhi's bidding, as was expected by our politicians and bureaucrats, perhaps Kathmandu would not have witnessed the hooliganism of the past fortnight.

If the prime minister and his advisers, including National Security Adviser KR Narayanan and Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran, had truly believed in what they now say—that Nepal cannot do without the twin pillars of constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy—then they would not have played such a negative, debilitating role ever since the palace coup of 1 February, 2005

Comrade Prachanda has led a campaign of anarchy, loot and murder for the past decade with the singular purpose of demolishing all institutions of the state, such as they exist in Nepal, and has threatened to train his guns on India after humbling the monarch. In a statement issued on Tuesday has rubbished the King's offer as a 'ploy to break Nepali people and save his anarchist monarchy'.

It is laughable that a man who has relentlessly waged war against all semblance of parliamentary democracy should denounce the king for 'starting a new precedence of constituting Parliament illegally' which, according to him, is a 'gross insult of the parliamentary system'.

Ruling on borrowed time

Editorial in *The Guardian*, London, 24 April

The Guardian

Ruling a poor and remote Himalayan kingdom sandwiched between giants China and India is always going to be difficult. So it is perhaps no surprise that King Gyanendra of Nepal has been consulting the stars to guide him during the recent weeks of crisis and protest. He has been looking in the wrong direction. On Friday he very belatedly offered to hand power "back to the people". India, the US and Britain suggested this may be an acceptable compromise that will allow him to cling on to power. But things have probably now gone too far for that: one Kathmandu-based diplomat was reminded of the events that led to the overthrow of the Shah

of Iran in 1979. Two helicopters of the Royal Nepali Army are already on standby at the Narayanhiti Palace. The Nepali people, piling the pressure on a seven-strong alliance of the main political parties, insist democracy will be worthless unless the king steps down.

A protracted crisis could spark a humanitarian emergency and a political vacuum could give the rebels who already control much of the country a direct route to power—that would not be an advance on a rotten monarchy living on borrowed time. International assistance may soon be needed to help arrange a smooth transition. As part of that, King Gyanendra's friends abroad, so often keen on promoting democracy elsewhere, should now be urging him to step down in favour of genuine people power. It may be that the stars look brighter when viewed from the roof of the world. But they are not the best guide to sensible political action.



DAMBAR K SHRESTHA

India's mumbling policy in Nepal

New Delhi's problem is that it opts for the least line of resistance

Now that King Gyanendra has backed down, how the seven-party alliance will bring the Maoists into the mainstream of democracy is the real challenge before Nepal.

Although the Maoists have rejected the revival of parliament, a rapprochement is possible through a constituent assembly. The parties and the Maoists have been on opposite sides except when they started their joint struggle against the king.

The Maoists launched their armed struggle in 1996 after they felt multiparty democracy wouldn't bring about social change. Can a violent approach now be grafted onto a peaceful democratic structure? Unlike the political parties, the Maoists are fighting an

BETWEEN THE LINES
Kuldip Nayar



ideological battle and the monarchy is a sticking point. The alliance wants the king to stay as a constitutional head. The king may not be

personally popular but many Nepalis are emotionally attached to the monarchy. So too the army, which remains a stable institution. Nothing will work without their active cooperation and they do not look like they are about to jettison the monarchy.

Dr Karan Singh, New Delhi's envoy who met the king on behalf of the Indian government last week, obtained assurance from the alliance that the king would continue. In hindsight, sending a former king to meet King Gyanendra was not a good idea. Nepal's political parties have been close to the socialist leaders in India, and the seven-party alliance would have preferred an envoy from among them.

New Delhi's policy, as enunciated by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, also wants the king to stay as part of India's twin-pillar doctrine. So the Maoist demand to abolish the monarchy is difficult to meet. On the other hand, if the Maoists are kept out of the settlement, the country may return to conflict.

India faces a dilemma. No doubt it has changed its pro-king stand by announcing that it will abide by what the people of Nepal decide. The seven-party alliance is also straining every nerve to persuade the Maoists to accept the parliamentary concept of government. Were they to do so, the Maoists' fear is that they

would compromise on their aim of overthrowing the 'bureaucratic capitalist class and monarchy'. They might face wrath from their own ranks which have been ideologically motivated.

New Delhi doesn't want a scenario where the Maoists are lionised. It can visualise the effect on the Naxalites in its own backyard, who have assumed power which is already causing concern. According to official sources, the Naxalites have an upper hand in one-fourth of 600 districts in 13 out of 28 states. The Naxalites in India and the Maoists in Nepal have also constituted a Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organisations of South Asia (COMPOSA). They want a socialist South Asia through an armed struggle.

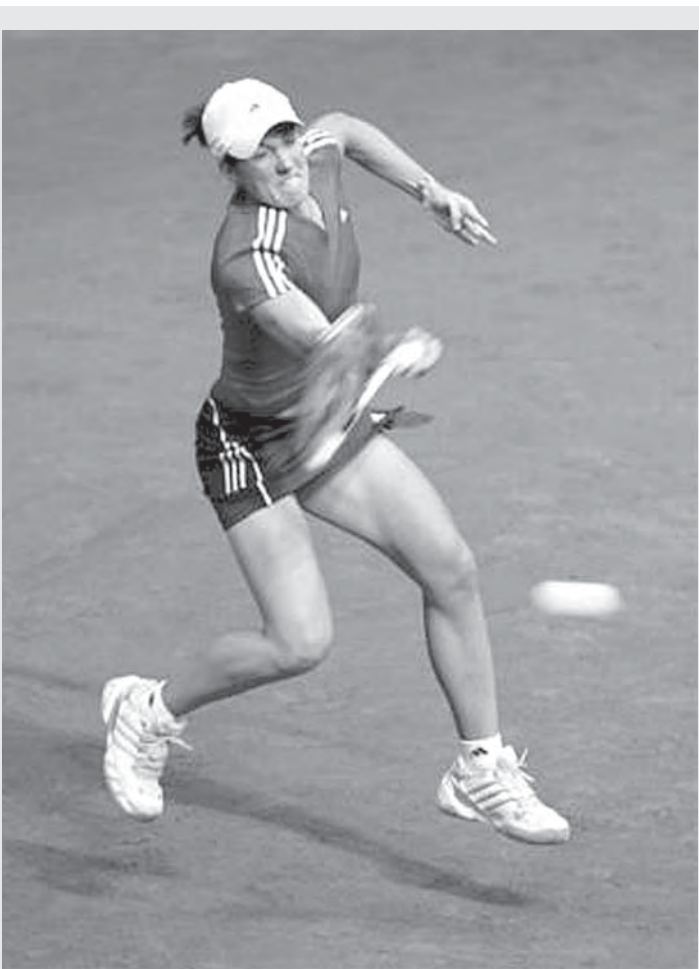
The crisis in Nepal would not have come to the boil if the king had listened to New Delhi. It tried its best to persuade him to give up power but failed. It should have been firmer earlier. New Delhi has not emerged unscathed and is now seen to be on the side of the king.

The Nepalis who put their eggs in the Indian basket are disillusioned. They had to come to the streets themselves and face the bullets to get power. At best, India was a sympathetic spectator.

A constituent assembly is now the best way out of the impasse. But the tough job is going to be the selection of members. No doubt, a free and fair election can throw up people's representatives. But how do you hold free and fair elections if security doesn't improve or the king stays in power even as a constitutional head?

The king did not realise the power of the awakened people. New Delhi can't escape the blame because it just couldn't make up its mind on how far to go to put pressure on the king. At one stage, the fear was that Islamabad and Beijing would assist the king if challenged. They could not have done so in the face of the nation's unity behind the demand for the restoration of democracy.

New Delhi's problem is that it opts for the least line of resistance. Sometimes it succeeds, sometimes it doesn't. Nepal is one example where it didn't. India may have to pay the price for its mumbling policy. ●



Dirt ball time

Clay court specialists will slide all the way to the French Open finals

It's April, time for tennis on the red European clay. For eight straight weeks, men and women on the WTA and ATP tours will be grinding it out on the dirt. For the Spaniards and the South Americans, this is the surface they shine on. For the Americans, Aussies, Brits and many others, clay is a nightmare.

The clay court season climaxes with the French Open starting on 28 May. When all is said and done, two champions will be crowned at Roland Garros and their names inscribed on the trophy alongside such men's champs as Borg, Brugerra, Kuerten and Courier, and on the women's side, Evert, Navratilova, Graf and Sanchez.

Why is playing on clay so difficult? The main reason is it slows the game drastically and neutralises power. You have to work hard to build a point and nothing comes easy. Longer rallies equate to more time on the court so fitness becomes a critical factor. Another

challenge is footwork and movement. It is much more difficult to change direction on clay courts and the ability to slide to maximise reach becomes

essential for survival. Players skilled at topspin, under spin and drop shots adapt to the surface much more easily. I truly believe that learning to play on clay courts helps you become a complete player. This is the one surface where you have to have good defensive and offensive skills, the ultimate challenge for players at any level.

Who will be the contenders at this year's French Open? In the men's field, Nadal and Federer are clear cut favourites and it would not surprise me one bit to see them play in the finals in Paris. Nadal has an amazing 38 straight wins on clay going into this week's master's event in Monte Carlo. Federer has had his share of success on clay and is no stranger to the surface, having grown up on it in Switzerland. Unlike Pete Sampras, Federer will some day win this event but I am not convinced that it will be this year. There will be plenty of challengers waiting. Among them Ferrero, Nalbandian, Gaudio and Coria will pose the biggest threats to Nadal and Federer.


On the women's side, Henin and Clijsters are the favourites. They move well, which is a huge advantage they have over heavy hitters like Sharapova, Davenport, Kuznetsova and Petrova. The health of these two Belgians will be an important story line to follow as we near the championships in France. Keep an eye also on Martina Hingis and Patty Schnyder from Switzerland. They know how to manipulate the ball with spins and both of them have good anticipation and the transition games to be serious challengers.

Weather will also be a factor. More sunshine means drier, and faster, courts. Power players such as Andy Roddick and Marat Safin will benefit from a speedier surface as will serve-and-volleyers like Tim Henman from Great Britain. Don't forget the great run he had two years ago when he reached his first semis in a grand slam event at the French Open. Yes, Gentleman Tim, who served and volleyed his way through the field and came so close to upsetting Guillermo Coria for an improbable berth in the finals.

In 1989, Michael Chang won the French Open and dedicated his victory to the Chinese people while protests were going on in Tiananmen Square. As I follow the great tennis on the clay courts in Paris, my thoughts and prayers will be for peace and democracy in Nepal. ●

GAME POINT

Sujay Lama



Africans get their kicks

But not everyone is cheering the success of these import footballers

MANOJ GHIMIRE

Be it the Martyrs' Memorial League in Kathmandu or big football tournaments outside the valley, African footballers ruled Nepali grounds wherever they played last year. They even raised doubts about the skills of Nepal's national team, holding it to a draw in a friendly match when the team was preparing for the AFC Challenge Cup.

After the African players assembled their own team, African United Club (AUC), and won the Aaha Gold Cup in Pokhara and the Budha Subba Gold Cup in Dharan, football fans around the country started asking where these amazing footballers came from and how they ended up dominating our home grounds.

Initially, 28 Africans suited up for clubs in the A-Division National Football League this year. Some of them played a major role in taking Manang Marshyangdi Club (MMC) to the top while others prevented lower clubs from being relegated.

It was through Sijuwoke, a Nigerian living in Ekantakuna, that players like Jude and Abdul Dhani joined Jawalakhel Club, Omaag Bemori Junior found a home at Brigade Boys, Henary Ituk joined Three Star Club and Felix played for MMC. National team coach Shyam Thapa brought in three more African players for



Boys Union during league play while MMC did its player shopping by surfing websites.

They all got different deals. MMC paid its five African players a monthly salary of \$250 while Boys Union gave them IRs 5,000 per game. The Immigration Department gave the players one-year non-tourist visas after a joint recommendation from the National Sports Council and the Ministry of Education. During the league, their respective clubs paid a monthly visa fee of \$60 per player.

Not all the Africans are footballers and their motives for coming to Nepal are unclear. According to some observers, it doesn't make much sense for them to be playing professional football in a poor country like

Nepal. Jude, who plays for Jawalakhel Club, says he came to Nepal en route to playing league games in India and Bangladesh. But he's staying in Nepal even after the league have kicked off in those countries. However, Nepal's sports officials have been trying to find a place for those players on the national team, ignoring the game's minimum international standards.

Many sports officials don't think it's fair that the Africans are playing Nepali football. According to Lalit Krishna Shrestha, spokesman of ANFA (the All Nepal Football Association), "it's an immature decision to let them play without an international contract letter." ANFA requires that players and their teams be registered before they can play in Nepal. ●



British Embassy - Kathmandu

The British Ambassador and Mrs Bloomfield are pleased to announce that this year's postponed Queen's Birthday Party will now be held on **Friday 5 May** at 1800. Please bring your invitations with you.

“Peace is on its way”

Villagers and female comrades are all weary of the war

NARESH NEWAR in DHADING

There were 10,000 villagers who were gathered at Katunje in Dhading to listen to Maoist leaders on Wednesday morning and there were smiles all around. This is part of a series of public meeting the Maoists are holding nationwide to explain their position after King Gyanendra’s restoration of parliament and the comrades seemed intent on selling peace to a war-weary population.

“We firmly believe that peace is on its way and there will be no more deception from the political parties,” said Puspa Bikram Malla, the Maoists’ former western regional chief amidst applause at the meeting eight hours walk from the district headquarter.

The meeting took place just before the Maoists announced their three-month ceasefire. But it came too late for 13 guerrillas who were killed by the RNA in a skirmish on Tuesday west of here. Some of those killed were friends of Maoists here.

“We are not here to kill people,” says 21-year-old Yangje Lama from Thamel, who joined the Maoist army a year ago, “we all want to live peacefully with our families but that is not possible unless all Nepalis are free from this king’s oppression.”

Dhading villagers appear happy that an end to the conflict seems at last at hand with the ceasefire. And the comrades seem as weary of the war as the civilians. “I hope this will be the last day that I will be holding this gun,” says 15-year old Anish who composes revolutionary songs, “all we want is that our vision for which we have been struggling the last 10 years is fulfilled.”

Sonu Lama joined the Maoists two years ago when she was barely 16. She puts her gun aside and joins her friends in a dance that ridicules King Gyanendra. “I want to go to Kathmandu and tell a lot of people about our struggle,” says Sonu



NARESH NEWAR

PEACEFUL SMILES: Sonu Lama (left) chats with female fighters during a public meeting on Wednesday in the hills of Dhading.

with a radiant smile.

The battle-hardened guerrillas are less sanguine about the future. “The UN should mediate,” says Ram Bahadur Bhandari, head of the ‘United Revolutionary Council’ of Dhading, “if we have two armies with equal strength this war will just drag on.”

Adharsila, a medical worker with the Maoists is still sceptical. “It’s still hard to

believe everything will be fine, that peace will return and the king will give up power,” says the 20-year-old, “I have seen so many of my friends die that I have lost all fear.”

Not everyone wants to talk, Suchana is a 22-year-old guerrilla whose husband was killed in action. “We are just soldiers, we just follow orders, talk to

our leaders,” she says.

With the third ceasefire in the last four years, most of the Maoists hoped the parties would not deceive them again. Ram Bahadur Bhandari is even philosophical about it: “We are often seen as people who want to rule the country with guns but no one can go against the will of the masses.” ●

Great celestial gathering

Only Janaadolan-II can outshine the May sky

If you stay outside a few hours past sunset in May you will witness a sky that is moving into its summer phase. Rising from the eastern horizon about an hour after sunset is the brilliant star Vega, the first star of the Summer Triangle. Vega is 50 times brighter than the Sun and only 26 light years away so it beams strongly in our night sky. (See sky chart).

STAR GAZING
Kedar S Badu



Possibly the most fascinating of all celestial attractions is the passing Comet 73P

(Schwassmann-Wachmann-3). Throughout May it will become prominent in our northeast sky after midnight. In 1995, Comet 73P split into at least three ‘mini-comets’ flying single file through space. Train your binoculars towards the constellations Cygnus and Pegasus on 12-14 May to locate it.

Don’t miss the great celestial gathering of the crescent Moon, Saturn, Mars and the Beehive star cluster (M44) just above the western horizon on 31 May. Consider and compare the astounding distances of these celestial attractions-240,000 miles to the moon; 50,000,000 miles to Mars; 800,000,000 miles to Saturn and 3,400,000,000,000,000 miles to M44!

Other May highlights:

Sun

The Sun is in the constellation of Aries at the start of May, moving into Taurus on the 14th.

Moon

The Moon meets Saturn on the 3rd and Jupiter on the 11th, before coming close to Venus on the 24th. It passes just to the right of Mercury in a conjunction on the 27th and meets Saturn again on the 31st.

Mercury

Mercury is behind the Sun on 14 May. By the end of the month it will be just above the western horizon after sunset but in the twilight it won’t be easy to see this elusive little planet.

Venus

Venus is a brilliant morning star, visible low in the east at dawn, an hour before sunrise. After five months of flight, the European Space Agency’s Venus Express spacecraft has arrived at our cloud blanketed ‘evil twin’ to scan its atmosphere and surface.

Mars

Mars is moving rapidly eastward across the constellation of



Gemini, below the twin stars, and towards Saturn. Mars is 20 degrees above the western horizon at sunset and sets close to 11:30 PM.

Jupiter

The King of Planets, Jupiter reaches opposition on 4 May. However, it is at its brightest of the year and nearest to Earth one day later. Retrograding in Libra, it is out all night.

Saturn

Saturn is moving slowly south-eastward in Cancer. It’s in the western sky after sunset, to the left of the Gemini Twin stars Castor and Pollux. Saturn looks like a bright star, brighter than the twins.

Meteors

The Eta Aquarids peak on 5 May as the Earth passes through the centre of a debris trail left by Comet Halley in 1986. These showers appear to come from the constellation of Aquarius. At their peak, we may observe up to 30 ‘shooting-stars’ every hour.

"Hatpatko kaam latpat" - Work done in a hurry ends in a Hurray! - as translated UNACOOTs, the UN's Association of Cartoonists - NEPAL



The Adventures of Sanjeeb the Nepali Space Monkey and Herojig can also be seen at www.extreme-nepal.com

#120- © 2003 by jigme gaton - read, love, write.

ABOUT TOWN

EVENTS

- ❖ **Paleti 28** Manjul solo, 28 April, 5.30 PM Nepa-laya R sala (opposite Patan CDO office), Manbawan. Rs 500. 5552839
- ❖ **A brief history of Nepal** and three true stories with Greta Rana, 28 April, 9AM at the Shankar Hotel. Non-members welcome.
- ❖ **How to develop new products** with Katharina Bebie, training till 28th April. Fair Trade Group, Nepal. 5542608
- ❖ **World Book Day** celebrations at the British Council, 23-29 April. 4410798
- ❖ **World Press Freedom Day** 3 May.
- ❖ **Buddha Jayanti** 13 May.
- ❖ **International Day for Biological Diversity** 22 May.
- ❖ **Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival 2006**, 7-10 December, calling for entries. Forms available at: www.himalassociation.org/kimff



MUSIC

- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Pakeeza Night** dance authentic Mughlai cuisine every Friday 7.30 PM at Far Pavilion Restaurant, The Everest Hotel. 4780100
- ❖ **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

- ❖ **BBQ** every Friday at Jalan Jalan Restaurant. Kupon-dole Height. 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. 6:30PM - 9:30PM. 5521810
- ❖ **Breakfast with Birds** Lunch with Butterfly 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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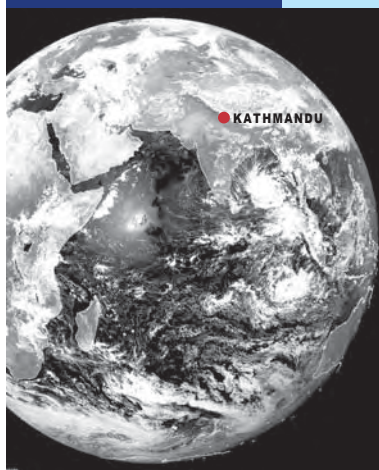


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श्री ५ को सरकार
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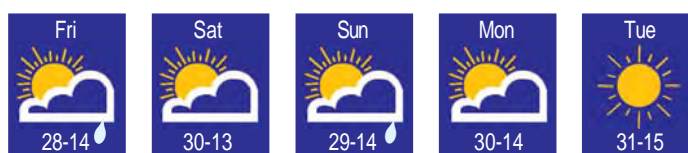
NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



The rains of the past two weeks have been abundant, and in the Valley the 100 mm of precipitation was double the quota for April. This latest satellite picture taken on Thursday afternoon shows the stirrings of the monsoon in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. The pre-monsoon showers are still driven by westerlies bringing moisture which rises along the Himalayan foothills. The monsoons are still more than a month away and these thunderstorms will continue with short sharp bursts of afternoon and night rain. Expect a partly cloudy conditions through the weekend with passing showers and moderate westerly winds.

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KIRAN PANDAY

OVERARCHING ALLIANCE: UML leader Madhab Nepal flanked by other members of the seven party alliance at the residence of Girija Koirala before announcing the unanimous selection of Koirala for the post of prime minister on Tuesday.



SHRIKHALA SHARMA


REJECTED SLOGANS: Billboards with famous soundbites of King Gyanendra after they were toppled by demonstrators on Tuesday at Ratna Park.




KIRAN PANDAY

AFTERMATH: Journalists covering the the big pro-democracy demonstration on Saturday return through rain-drenched streets littered with slippers in Thapathali.

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The monk and the king

As Bhikhshu T Sato chants the Lotus Sutra and softly beats a drum, he faces the massive wall and swaying bamboo groves that hide Narayanhiti Palace from view. In between chants, the Japanese monk has this to say: "You have to open your eyes and minds, the time is coming. Life here is unbalanced-a few people have many things, and the majority of people are still poor."

The resident monk at the Nipponzan Myohoji World Peace Pagoda in Lumbini came to Kathmandu two weeks ago. Sato and two other monks prayed at Boudha for four days, and after his colleagues returned he decided to stay feeling that this is an important time. "I believed that after four days something would change but it didn't, that's why I'm still fasting," Sato says from his prayer mat where he has set up a small altar in one corner of the park at Nagpokhari.

The monk's day of prayer starts at 5AM and ends at 6.30 PM, when he goes to the house of a nearby resident. He doesn't eat or drink during the day and sips water only at night, a routine he plans to follow for 21 days. "We are very happy that a foreigner came here and is praying for the peace that Nepalis have been unable to create," says the monk's host Manoj Tamrakar.

Asked if he believes Sato can bring peace, Tamrakar says he prefers the monk's approach to the ongoing street battles. "His steps



MARTY LOGAN


will lead to peace, fighting among brothers will not."

Sato himself is clear about why he has to do this. "I'm Buddha's disciple. I'm not political. Buddha teaches non-violence so I have to teach non-violence, this is my duty," he says.

This afternoon, rain simmers on the surface of Nag Pokhari, a positive sign, according to Sato but few people are sitting on the benches surrounding the pond. On other days he has greeted

numerous visitors. "Many people come to pray. They don't know how to pray but they sit and namaste and automatically they feel something."

Fifty metres away, two soldiers cradle M-16s and keep a vigil on the eastern wall of the palace. "They don't say anything but they feel it too," says Sato. "They are friendly people, they're human beings. We're all human beings, even the king is." ●
Marty Logan



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Declaring a state of urgency

For a country with the world's most advanced calendar (we are 57 years ahead of our nearest rival) and a nation with the tallest bonsai on earth (at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Godavari) and a rejuvenated parliament with the oldest Young Turks (NC central committee members have to be at least 70 years of age to qualify for young turkhood) it is no wonder that we have more revolutions per minute than any other country.

The regime that was just changed told us a lot of lies. But it was right when it said one thing: that during its tenure there was complete freedom of speech. (It's just that there was no freedom after speech.)

So, now that we have once more earned ourselves the right to be completely partisan, speak utter and absolute nonsense without fear of some draconian ordinance or other making its ugly presence felt, let me just say that this is not the time to be cynical and poke fun at the honourable members who have fought long and hard to revive the august house.

UNDER MY HAT

Kunda Dixit



Since history is written by the victorious and a satire column is history in a hurry, I pledge that henceforth from this week not to indulge in gratuitous cynicism or

unprovoked lampooning unless it is of the losing side. We shall cheer when the speaker is sacked, we will sing hosannahs of all crooks as long as they are on our side. We will also refrain from ridiculing all those who helped restore democracy by sitting on the fence till they figured out which way the wind was blowing.

Still, it is also our heartfelt request to all honourable members that they declare a state of urgency, suspend all floor-crossing, horse-trading, general pandemonium, table throwing, microphone uprooting, fisticuffs in the back benches and three-month boycotts of parliament on Friday. Such fun and games that were the hallmark of our vibrant and rambunctious democracy till 2002 can resume early next week. Think you can wait that long?

Some people are under the impression that the royal climbdown was triggered by pro-democracy protests on the streets. Um, not exactly. Actually it was pressure building up from the Kathmandu's upper crust who were getting sick and tired of staying at home for three weeks without having their blackheads squeezed by professional beauticians. Others suffered severe withdrawal symptoms from not being able to frequent their favourite nightspots, and the strain was beginning to tell. Then there were those who couldn't tear around town at breakneck speed in their Harley Davidsons and enter discos with guns blazing. All these inconveniences were putting pressure for regime change.

Members of the council of ministers were also getting a tad impatient because they weren't able to inaugurate any seminars and give speeches from the podium for over a month. Now that normalcy has been restored these activities can resume, and we have to extend a vote of thanks for all those who suffered prolonged disruptions in day-to-day lives. We wouldn't be where we are today without their active support.

Finally, now that the king is ceremonial we'll have to come up with a whole lot of ceremonies to keep him busy. But first, he needs to sack the royal astrologer. ●


Nepali Times Extra



Inside p9-12

PRETEND KING: Student activist Krishna Bahadur Thapa entertains pro-democracy demonstrators wearing a paper crown and with an accurate impersonation of King Gyanendra at a victory rally in Tundikhel on Tuesday. Amidst laughter and applause, the 26-year-old MED student from Tahachal Campus, continued to imitate royal gestures before student leaders launched into fiery speeches from the podium.





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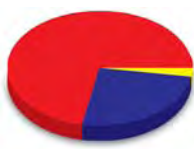
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Weekly Internet Poll # 295

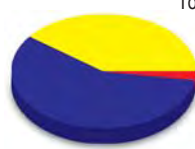
Total votes:4,562



Can 72.8%
Can't 24.3%
Can't say 2.9%

Q. Should the king now give in to the demands of the seven parties to restore democracy?

Total votes:7,116



Yes 39.7%
No 58.2%
Don't know 2.1%

Weekly Internet Poll # 296. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Was the king right to restore parliament?

Times

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