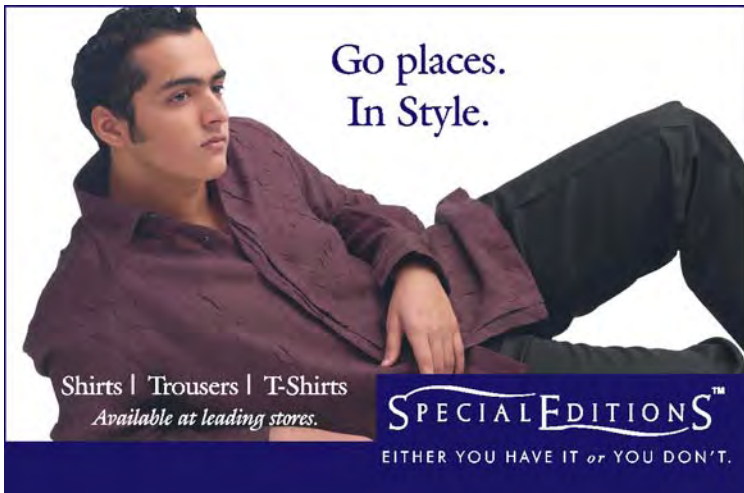




RAMESWOR BOHARA



Coming home

A hint of peace is all it took for thousands of Nepalis to return

western Nepal, there is an inescapable feeling of relief among farmers, traders and ordinary people. Mostly, they are relieved there are no bombs going off, and they don't have to be worried about being caught in the crossfire. The Maoists have also suddenly vanished from the villages, and locals think they have gone to the towns.

"They used to come all the time, ask for food, shelter for the night and threaten us if we didn't give it," says Bhagbati Chaudhari of Saurahawa in Bardiya, "now they're gone and it's a big relief."

In another village, the people gathered in the village square are chatting and smiling. There is no tension in the air when a stranger approaches, as there used to be. School that had been closed by the Maoists are open again, and in the morning the roads are packed with children walking, bicycling or taking rickshaws to school.

"The Maoists used to be all over here, they had made our village their base," says Bhuban Chaudhari, "and the soldiers would come looking for them and we'd be caught in the middle."

In Nepalganj itself, the sound of bombs going off had become such a regular feature of life that if people heard an explosion they'd ignore it. Shops would down their shutters by five in the evening, most nights there would be curfews. Today, the

market is open till ten and there is a lot of traffic on the road.

For many in the city, it is hard to imagine that unarmed Maoists are now walking openly in streets where there used to be firefights till a month ago. For a region that was most affected by the conflict, people are returning to their normal lives as if making up for lost time.

The most vivid sign of normal times is the resumption of night bus service from here to different parts of the kingdom. Kohalpur junction is bustling all night as buses come and go along the Mahendra Highway, the 24-hour restaurants are doing brisk business.

For three years VDC chairmen from Banke used to live in Nepalganj, they have now started to return to their villages. "I'm going back," says Indra Bahadur Shrestha, secretary of Sitapur VDC, "we had to leave because of the situation, but things are now back to normal." LDO Krishna Chandra Ghimire is surprised how quickly things are returning to normal.

A policeman guarding a government office in Kohalpur says he's never felt as safe in the past ten years: "We have to protect this peace, and I'm willing to get out of my uniform and demonstrate outside the palace in Kathmandu if that is what it takes." ●

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Guns and slogans

At the crossroads in Nawalparasi p14

Times nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll # 297

Q. Do you approve of the choice by the SPA of Girija Prasad Koirala as prime minister?

Total votes: 11,962

Yes 39.3%
No 57.6%
Don't know 3.1%

Weekly Internet Poll # 298. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. Do you agree with the recall of ambassadors by the SPA?

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RAMESWOR BOHARA
in BARDIA

They come in groups of 20-30 carrying heavy bags, villagers from the hills of central Nepal, walking across the border from India to Nepal. (see pic.)

Till a month ago, they were going in the opposite direction—fleeing the conflict and violence, seeking work in India. There is no immigration office at the border in Nepalganj, so there are no statistics but on just one day last week 1,500 Nepalis had come home.

The first person they meet in Nepal is a reporter, they are emotional and all eager to talk. "We only left because of the violence," they say in unison, "we'd rather till our own fields than work for others."

Across Banke and Bardia in

Sale

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Myths and martyrs

The real struggle comes when a movement

succeeds

Personally, I blame Gandhi. He's the one who started the South Asian cult of the freedom struggle, the hartal, the banda, the andolan, the righteous use of the street. After all, it was the Mahatma's vision of nonviolent civil disobedience that drove the British out of India—with a little help from the Second World War and the way it ravaged the Imperial bank account.

HERE AND THERE
Daniel Lak



India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and even Nepal got their freedom from Gandhi's glorious revelation that the people could triumph without weapons against the military might of a state. Might wasn't right. But what remains of Gandhi's noble vision in today's Nepal? A culture where struggle is venerated more than outcome. Where the noble means of Gandhi can be used time and again to achieve democracy and, yes, freedom, but where few seem to realise that the real struggle comes when the andolan succeeds.

Thus we see the new government in Kathmandu embarking on mythmaking exercises, establishing more martyrs, nominating more villains to the pantheon of blame for past failures. In the 1950s, it was the Ranas. For awhile in the 1990s, it was the Mandales. Now it's the Chhetris, various people named Thapa and the Shahs, including that villain sent straight from central casting, Crown Prince Paras.

We have a 'high-level probe commission' to find out who told what cop to fire what bullet at which particular demonstration at a certain time and so on. It's all just part of the permanent andolan mindset that grips most members of the restored parliament. In fact, Prime Minister Koirala, once admitted to me in our first interview for the BBC in 1998, that he and his ilk were better at freedom fighting than nation building.

At the time, political instability and the Maoist uprising seemed real challenges to Nepali democracy but no one knew just how horrible things were going to get. Now, with the Shahs and their bungling cohort sidelined, the victorious political parties are following and all too familiar script. Let's vilify the past. Let's glorify the struggle. Let's do little or squabble over how to build a coherent, stable future for Nepal.

Yes to truth and reconciliation and yes to justice for victims of war, abuse and violence. A free society may decide that a few of the worst violators need to be punished as an example to those still lurking in dark rooms plotting another

war, another takeover. Perhaps there could be UN war crimes proceedings against those who planned the outrage at Doramba in 2003 when the army killed 19 people as the government and rebels were meeting for peace talks. The Maoists too might just have stern justice to face.

But frankly, in the end, the blame game is for losers. Nepal's interim government should be proceeding with energy and dispatch towards setting up the institutions that will move the country on. That means a Constituent Assembly, a body of transitional law that fixes sovereignty with parliament, the people, the courts, and not with some uniformed autocrat of royal descent, that means making the army obey civilian orders and getting the Maoists to live up to promises made last year to submit to international scrutiny and decommissioning of weapons. That means rescuing the ravaged economy with fast track development spending and emergency loans to pay for it all. It means governing, taking freedom seriously as a legacy that must be left to future generations.

Can we set Gandhi aside for the moment? Lose the obsession with democracy's myths and martyrs? With time-tarnished monarchies or Maoist peoples' paradises that never were or never will be. The Nepali people want a modern, stable, prosperous welfare state with health and education for all, with jobs, schools and the rule of law and justice throughout the land. For the sake of the future Messrs Koirala, Oli, Mahat, Sitaula, Shreshta, have to get going now. The real andolan has just begun. ●

GUNS AND SLOGANS

It's natural for people who have achieved a breath-taking overthrow of dictatorship to be on the guard against sellout.

And that is even more understandable in this country where last time the euphoria of freedom didn't take long to evaporate. When expectations are so high, people get impatient. And it doesn't help when we see the same old faces up to the same old tricks.

But before we get too cynical, we have to only remind ourselves of the alternatives: Maoist totalitarianism or absolute monarchism. The seven party alliance may be slow, but they are the least of the evils. Also, if we recognise the magnitude of what the people have achieved this time compared to 1990, perhaps it will help us be a little more patient.

After all, we are now digging down to the core issues that 16 years ago were so sensitive even the framers of the constitution left it deliberately ambiguous. The moral high ground that People Power II gives parliament allows it to be the supreme body to undertake any changes that the people's representatives deem necessary.

Which also gives the legislators and the seven party executives the responsibility to get it right. Let's not push them into doing things in half measure, or to take needlessly harsh decisions in the heat of the moment that they may regret later. Rational decisions can't be made in a charged atmosphere when parliament is forced to appease rebels with guns while it tries to tame a royal army it defanged. You can't expect MPs to think straight when they have their heads bashed in at the house gate. You can't change things with a witch-hunt. Decision taken so far smack of a government stuck in vendetta-mode. It should be spending more time in building rather than carrying out an inquisition.

As things cool down, policy-making will gradually move from the street to parliament. But the government can't wait to act like a government. How about urgently filling the vacuum at the grassroots by setting up village committees made up of ex-VDC members, party representatives and even Maoists. This would immediately improve service delivery and bring us back on track to meet MDG targets in health and education.

How about creating jobs by rebuilding destroyed infrastructure and unleash a Marshall Plan of new highways, hydropower and telecommunications. No money? Free up resources by canceling army recruitment, helicopter purchases reducing the palace guards and the royal allowance. Let's, for once, tell the donors what we want instead of the other way around.

To be sure, there are urgent political decisions parliament should take in order to keep this movement on track. It must give itself the power to decide on royal succession, reject the concept of king-in-parliament and jettison all articles of the 1990 constitution that were the fundamental demands of People Power. And the most important test: let's see progress on a peace process, get the Maoists to renounce violence and agree on an internationally-supervised demobilisation.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

A coalition of the concerned

Remembering Galbraith, the man who trashed trickle-down economics

Reconstruction and rehabilitation have become new buzzwords, even though disarming militants and demilitarising society is a much more urgent concern. Peace has begun to be coupled with development rather than democracy. Economist Ram Sharan Mahat is back at

STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal



Bagh Darbar and is reportedly

busy urging donors and diplomats to help him with budgetary support.

Speaking of economists, last week marked the passing away of John Kenneth Galbraith, probably the last of the true Keynesians at age 97. Galbraith turned Keynes into a seer of our times with irreverence, wit, courage, compassion and turns of phrases that would have made his master proud. The economist who coined such evocative phrases as 'the affluent society', 'conventional wisdom' and 'countervailing power' is no more.

John Maynard Keynes' prescription that the government must tax the rich and spend the proceeds on creating jobs—paying them

for digging and filling holes if necessary—arose from his realisation that unemployment was the main predicament of the poor and it should be the chief concern of all economists. Growth will then take care of itself. Appropriately enough, the passing away of one of the pillars of a planned economy was hardly noticed in a kingdom beholden to the prescriptions of Bretten Woods Sisters.

Galbraith was better known in South Asia as the US ambassador to New Delhi during Indo-China war. Very few remember that Galbraith was one of the pioneers of need-based economic planning propagated by Prof P C Mahalanobis of Indian Statistical Institute in 1950s where he worked as an Adviser to the Indian Planning Commission.

In the rarefied stratosphere of professional economists, critics hold that Galbraith's works lack mathematical rigour. But the old horse never let his critics come between his words and their devotees. Amartya Sen has compared *The Affluent Society* to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* for its force. 'It's full of quotations,' said

Sen. He wrote as if there was no tomorrow for over half-a-century and has left a legacy almost impossible to equal, let alone surpass, in the age of the ether.

Art Buchwald once introduced Galbraith with: "Since 1959 alone, he has written 12 books, 135 articles, 61 book reviews, 16 book introductions, 312 book blurbs and 105,876 letters to *The New York Times*, of which all but 3 have been printed."

Galbraith's rejection of trickle-down economics remains unparalleled: 'If you feed enough oats to the horse, some will pass through to feed the sparrows.' He was even more strident in his criticism of free-market fundamentalism. Citing fellow-economist William K Black's provocative book *The Best Way to Rob a Bank Is to Own One*, he prophesied that predatory entrepreneurs will rob whatever they can if not held in check by stringent regulatory mechanism. In Nepal, robbing banks, airlines, spinning mills, luxury hotels has been honed into a fine art.

Utopians aren't going to like it, but Galbraith believed that it was impossible to completely eradicate inequalities from

society. He recommended a constant search for balance through politics instead. His last major work is a compact treatise on *The Economics of Innocent Fraud*, said to be capable of doing for liberals what the *Manifesto* did to the communists. In an open affront to extremists of the left and the right alike, he calls for a coalition of the concerned rather than that of the willing and urges negotiations between unequal economic beings in the egalitarian arena of politics.

"The affluent will still be affluent, the comfortable still comfortable, but the poor would be part of the political system," he wrote. This is a far cry from his earlier stand that it was impossible to comfort the afflicted without afflicting the comfortable. But perhaps the wise old man realised in the end that there was no getting away from suffering in this world.

On Buddha's birthday we could remind ourselves that coping even while constantly engaged in lessening the affliction of fellow human beings is the best even an economist can aspire for. ●

DEMOCRACY

Prakash Shrestha, Kathmandu

- I Pradhan, email**

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email

- growth. It's time that Nepal's citizens demand a stop to this era of corruption. People Power works. Keep the pressure on and elect individuals who will represent all of Nepal, not just a chosen few.

Donna Spoon, email

WHAT'S OUT

What's in	What's out
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Crown prince	Clown prince

Gyan Subba, Kumaripati

- Name withheld, email**

MEGAWEALTH

Converting flowing water into a productive resource for economic development is much more than exporting the generated power to provide financial revenue to the government. Modern Nepal's challenges need innovative and practical solutions that cannot be provided by the antiquated paradigm of power export enunciated by Nepal's myopic elites since the early 1970s.

Shiva Bishangkhe, Lalitpur



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	Readings for Peace	Talking about reading: guest speaker and open discussion	Readers Choice: Read from your own work or someone else's	Memorise and recite a poem	Talking about reading: guest speaker and open discussion	
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Peace and development plan

How donors can support the incipient peace process in Nepal

To orient their future engagement in Nepal, donors now need a medium term 'peace and development plan' based on the existing Poverty Reduction Strategy and on the Medium Term Expenditures Framework adjusted as necessary to take into account the economic and fiscal impact of the recent events.

The transitional plan should include:

- Programs targeted at victims of the conflicts, political prisoners and their families
- Promotion of human rights, combined with initiatives of reconciliation and transitional justice
- The return or the definitive relocation of internally displaced persons
- Demobilisation and reintegration in the society of soldiers, policemen, Maoist combatants and political cadres
- Investment in physical and institutional rehabilitation representing a new era in the relations between the state and its citizens as well as between Katmandu Valley and the rest of the country. The diverse movements that constitute the civil society, women organisations and associations of discriminated minorities as well as

organisations close to the Maoists should be actively associated to the definition of this medium term strategy.

At the end of the process, possibly by the end of this year, the program resulting from this large consultation could be submitted for support to the international community in a formal Nepal Peace and Development Forum. The armed conflict has a strong local character and is rooted in local development deficit. It is conducted among people that have known each other and effective development work can substantially contribute to the peace process. The first responsibility of development agencies therefore will be to ensure that development continues and whenever and wherever possible expands, while respecting the conflict sensitive principles defined in the basic operating guidelines.

During the peace talks, activities supported by donors should continue to reach remote areas including those solidly controlled by the Maoists. The implementation modalities should be carefully adapted to the ground situation, avoiding the creation of new tensions and ensuring full transparency through public auditing and review of results and actual allocation of expenditures. Activities should benefit the poor and discriminated groups to a substantial extent and ensure a balanced mix of short term measures during the transition period and medium/long term benefits.

Civil servants presently barred from rural areas by the Maoists should progressively find their way back to villages. The planning and the monitoring of development activities will also be an opportunity to engage the Maoists in a development dialogue that recognises the reality of their political and administrative strength in many partS of the country.

Ideally, development work and intermediation by foreign agencies will ensure that civil servants are once more accepted in rural areas and will establish working relationships with whomever the Maoists designate to follow and coordinate development work. Donor agencies should help establish or consolidate intermediaries that ensure people participation in deciding, planning and executing development initiatives.

Even in autocratic times, rural Nepal and districts municipalities have maintained a solid network of user group committees. In this phase of political transition these organisations offer opportunities to practice inclusion and diversity, while allowing all political forces present at the local level to follow and orient the allocation of budgetary and donors resources and to get acquainted with the practical and the policy aspects of development work.

It should be a central concern of donors agencies to strengthen these intermediary institutions and to try to make them more inclusive by giving voice to women and men that represent discriminated groups. At the same time, donors should try their best to defend and support the autonomy of community based groups (community forestry user groups, mothers groups etc) against the ideologically motivated interference of the Maoists, the electoral manipulation of the democratic parties and the paternalistic intrusion of the administration.

Donors should also be conscious of their responsibility in fostering good governance in districts, municipalities and village administrations as well as in local non-governmental organisations. Based on experiences so far, the practice of public auditing is likely to constitute an important tool in this effort to improve transparency and avoid misuse of funds.

Democratically legitimated DDCs, municipalities and VDCs should be reactivated urgently. In particular, VDCs could constitute an essential instrument in ensuring social and political integration of hundreds of Maoist cadres that have assumed de facto administrative responsibilities in the years of the armed struggle. Inclusive democracy and peaceful political competition will have to be established starting from the villages up. ●

Jörg Frieden is the Nepal director of Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) in Kathmandu.

“Renounce violence



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Head of the EU Delegation in Nepal, Eduardo Lechuga Jimenez spoke to *Nepali Times* about how the political changes in Nepal are viewed from Europe.

Nepali Times: How closely were events here over the past month followed in Brussels and other European capitals?

Nepal is an important country for us. The European Commission very closely follows the events taking place here. This interest has increased even more lately, which is reflected in European media also. There is a strong likelihood that more resources would be directed towards Nepal now that democracy has found better footing here.

The visits by the EU TROIKA last year put pressure on the royal regime to rollback. A delegation of MEPs is visiting Nepal soon, what is the purpose of their visit?

The EU disagreed with the

“The sun is shining over Nepal”



Nepali Times interviewed Norwegian Minister for Development Cooperation, Erik Solhem who was also the architect of the Sri Lanka peace process during his visit to Kathmandu last week. Excerpts:

Nepali Times: The new government has announced a ceasefire and the Maoists have said they want to start negotiations. What are the pitfalls we should be on the lookout for?

The sun is shining over Nepal now, from skies without any clouds. Anything seems possible. It's terribly important to keep up that momentum and that optimism and to move forward rapidly. However, there is also a cynical point of view from my experience with other peace processes we should all be patient because it usually takes a longer time than people hope for. There is a need to sustain a process which will take some time.

From your experience in Sri Lanka where do those difficulties come from?

Number one is intentions. If the government and the Maoists very clearly want this to be a success, then the chances of it being successful is very high. But even when that is a starting point it is always easier to make a general agreement, it is much more difficult to resolve all the nitty-gritties and the details which will have to be addressed. There will be a lot of unfulfilled expectations. At this time Nepalis naturally demand democracy but they also demand tangible benefits in their lives and a better future for their children from all this. But this can't happen all of a sudden and they may blame political leaders or the Maoists and this may create many obstacles down the road. But one mustn't always take a

pessimistic view, just being cautious that that there may be difficulties ahead would be a realistic approach.

Did you make any offers for facilitation or mediation while here?

No, we made no offers of facilitation or mediation but we did offer to help them in anyway in anything they decide to do. Of course it must be a two-side approach whatever the government and the Maoists agree to we will be ready to support with the rest of the international community.

You have been involved in the Sri Lankan peace process what has been India's geopolitical role there?

I think everyone understands that India is in a very different position than anyone else in the international community. If anything goes wrong in Sri Lanka, of course Norway can go home we will be sad we may even be in tears but it won't affect Norway as such. The same in Nepal, if things go wrong and Nepal become a failed state, all the outsiders would go home. But India will be around because it is a neighbour and it may have to deal with an influx of refugees, whatever happens in Sri Lanka or Nepal will have a major impact on that country. So we should respect that India is in a different position than any other foreign country and that they have legitimate national interest in what happens in let's say Sri Lanka or Nepal which Norway and for that matter the United States don't have.

completely”

political developments that followed the royal takeover on 1 February 2005. We suspended all our pipeline projects and adopted a policy to collaborate with the civil society organisations only. We wanted to express our disagreements with the government but we were careful not to punish the people. The last TROIKA in October 2005 emphasised the message to the government and the palace. If any MEPs come to Nepal in future I would pass on the message regarding our changed position towards Nepal and intentions for the near future.

Now that the country is back to the democratic process, where do you see the commission fitting into the task of reconstruction, rehabilitation and development?
We have welcomed the recent political changes with great expectations. But we work on demands—we expect that the Nepali government approaches us soon with meaningful proposals. Presently the EU is preparing its global plan for 2007-2013 known as Country Strategy Paper, it is likely to put greater emphasis on education in Nepal as it lays the foundation for all empowerment and growth. In the forthcoming

Country Strategy Paper emphasis is likely to be laid on economic cooperation with greater private sector participation. However, it would not mean that we will stop our on-going efforts in areas of poverty alleviation, human rights and conflict resolution in Nepal. The EU suspended all its funding after 1 February 2005. An important meeting in May will decide about how to proceed in future.

Where do you see the main political hurdles in the peace process in the coming months?
We welcome the recent declarations of ceasefire from the government and rebels. We expect that the both parties will respect their commitments to the fullest. Now we suggest that the CPN (M) renounce violence completely and make a commitment to decommission weapons. We have already called upon the Seven-party Alliance to continue working together in implementing its roadmap and to make the process leading to constituent assembly election and subsequent reforms inclusive and participatory. All parties need to respect the sovereignty vested in the Nepali people.

Let’s get cracking

The government has to get off its behind

When one sees the instances of cars and bikes jump the red light at Maiti Ghar or the arrogance in the eyes of the pedestrians crossing the streets in Ratna Park not using the overhead pedestrian bridges you know that democracy has arrived.

ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed



While the much required political freedom has been achieved, your fortnightly columnist of the past six years (yes, it’s been that long) has always lectured you that if there is economic growth economic freedom should follow. Economic freedom surely would mean a process of economic reforms. Political parties should remember how the effective first wave of reforms was squandered by meeting the demands of the labour vote bank thereby creating an environment of a psuedo-militiant labour force that has pushed our comparative advantages out of the window. While trade union leaders should police the businesses that do not give their labour their due, they should also push the agenda of reforms in the labour legislation. There is no point

having a workforce that does not have productivity or efficiency at par with global standards. With the WTO in force, we will loose whatever little we had as our USP if we do not have labour laws that are competitive. The other is the knotty issue of party financing. This Beed has always maintained that contributions to political parties should be made transparent and legit. This would allow the businesses to contribute without feeling scared, financial reforms will begin in the political parties as accountability will become important and one of the root causes of corruption will have been addressed. Countries that have allowed legitimate campaign funding have had more vibrant democracies. If they try to please everyone, the political parties and the current government may end up pleasing no one. Reform oriented legislation need not be pulled back just because it was passed by the previous regime. Some of them were initiated by some of the parties which are now back on the saddle. The government should make it loud and clear that there is no respite for willful defaulters and subsidies that bankrupt the exchequer will not be reintroduced. They should also ensure that

the state owned enterprises that have been made a playground for nepotism (‘Nepal+Optimism’) be handed over as far as possible to professionals working there. Further, it is important to go through the 2006-07 budget going through a fine tooth comb. Businesses, the engine for economic growth can only function in an environment that is conducive for smooth operations. Industrial and business security has been a primary issue and it is important that personal threats, extortion, labour excesses should be wiped out through the ceasefire code of ethics. The option of integrating the Maoist militia post disarming into a well functioning Industrial Security Force that businesses can pay for should not be ruled out. Finally Nepalis will have to deliberate and debate a national agenda for economic growth before it is hijacked by parachute consultants. The donor community should perhaps help and wait for the Nepalis to put-together a prioritised laundry list rather than impose one. While the political parties with different ideologies are trying to agree on a common political agenda, it is important that the diverse donor community for once agree to a common plan of action. ● www.arthabeed.com

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“Heed the people’s voice”

Krishna Jung Rayamajhi, Chairman Judicial Investigation Commission *Sanghu*, 8 May

How do you as a former judge of the supreme court look at the reinstatement of parliament?

Although personally I have a different view regarding this, it has helped to bring an agreement between the Maoists and the seven political parties. The SPA wants to head for a constituent assembly through parliament while the Maoists want to form a interim government and straight away head for a constituent assembly. This does not mean they are against each other, but rather that they have different approaches.

But both parties agree about the constituent assembly?

Both agree. The Maoists were also a part of the peaceful people’s movement called by the SPA. Because the movement was spearheaded by the SPA and it was largely peaceful the Maoists also did not involve in acts of violence. Each one played its part and that was why the movement was effective.

Are the present actions constitutionally correct or are they only moving forward through political decisions?

The parliament restored through the People’s Movement may also act according to the demands of the movement. If the conflict is to be solved in a peaceful manner it can’t be done constitutionally. If there is a solution it can only come through political decisions, whether that is the reinstatement of the house or having a constituent assembly. The present constitution does not have a provision for a constituent assembly. I have always said that nothing is going to come out of having four parties in power and four on the streets.

Does that mean the 1990 constitution is now unnecessary?

Let us not say that it is unnecessary. This constitution has not been scrapped. It can only be discarded after another constitution is formed. The constitution of 1962 was scrapped by the 1990 constitution and the present constitution can only be scrapped after another is made. At present the peoples demand is to change the present

constitution and that is why talks of constituent assembly came forward. The constitution is above all and everybody must follow it and in a democratic system. The people hold sovereign power.

How will day-to-day work go ahead in a democratic manner when there is no constitution, and the process to build a new constitution is taking place?

The people will make the constitution, throw it and amend it. The people have the rights and they will see to it. If there is anyone above the constitution it is the people. That is why everyone must obey this voice. There is no other alternative. There cannot be a solution without respecting the peoples voice. The people have already headed for a constituent assembly.

So the argument between the king and the parties is over?

The argument between the king and the political parties reached the people. The people have shed their blood. Now without taking the peoples sentiments into consideration neither the king nor the parties can expect to solve the crisis.

When the constitution and law is not active will this not cause problems?

Wherever there are problems it can be solved through political decisions. The main objective is to fulfil the peoples mandate. The constitution will not stop political decisions. For other

matter, following the directives of the parliament and the peoples responsibilities, the rule of law must be observed.

What if a government decision is not acceptable tomorrow? Will there be space to go to the courts?

The only thing remaining is to scrap the present constitution. The people have already given a mandate to go for constituent assembly. There are no obstructions to do so now.

What is the constitution? How is it made?

The constituent assembly is where the people use their sovereign rights. The constitution is made according to what the people want which is relayed by the representatives they choose. The people decide on the structure of the state.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Democracy and dependence

Yubaraj Ghimire in *Samaya*, 11 April

समय

Sometimes, victory and success can bring discord but it can also bring additional responsibility and humility. Will the preliminary success of the people’s movement transform the energy of the agitation to greater responsibility? How is the government going to address good governance, reconciliation, talks, relief and rehabilitation? India has already announced a huge aid package to make it easier for the interim administration. Other countries have assured us they will not just restore aid frozen after the king’s takeover but even increase them. In other words, there will be a flood of aid money coming into the country and this in fact may be the biggest challenge. What are the conditions under which we will be given this aid? Will the money be spent according to a strategic plan and done transparently or will it be directed by the donors? The government needs to be clear about this. Opening the floodgates of money can bring with it corruption which is what happened after 1990—the lack of transparency among INGOs and the NGOs dependent on them was the main reason for this.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

But a democracy can’t exist side by side with economic dependence. The end of the people’s movement actually means the role of the people is even more important. The people must be told that they are sovereign. If foreign loans and aid are needed, these should be brought in after full and open debate in the house of representatives. It is when democracy is not meaningful, is not responsive to local needs and power is centralized that development is skewed. However, even after parliament has expressed its commitment to go ahead with the demands of the movement, the small crowd on the streets is still sticking to its radical demands. They even attacked leaders CP Mainali and Pradeep Gyawali. But neither the political parties, government, civil society nor the Maoists have condemned it. The leaders should not dismiss this extreme behaviour of the crowds. If you can’t control anarchy, after a while it threatens the state and politics. It is the demands of the Maoists and others that the constituent assembly should be unconditional. OK, there should be no conditions on the future of the monarchy but how about conditions on the protection of press freedom, the protection of life, security, the freedom not to be threatened by guns, the rights of children to go to school. Should these be conditions? If they aren’t this country will never come out of the whirlpool of conflict.

www.abin.com.np



Paper: Spirit of the Peoples Movement

समय Abin Shrestha in *Samaya*, 11 May

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“You ministers are all dancing to your own tunes, you are not coordinating among yourselves.”

King Gyanendra at the cabinet meeting at the royal palace 13 April, *Jana Aastha*, quoting palace sources

Tragedy in Jhumka



समाचारपत्र Sanjib Khanal, *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 10 May

Thirteen children on their way to school drowned when a packed three-wheeler careened off a highway and fell into an irrigation canal at Jhumka in Sunsari District on Tuesday morning.

All the children were from Jhumka and were on their way to Moonlight Unique Secondary School which was only 150 m from the school. Nine other children were rescued.

“All my friends have gone to god’s house,” said one eight-year-old pupil who survived the accident. Many of the children couldn’t swim and drowned while crying for help. The village of Jhumka is in deep mourning.

Ten years in jail

Nepal Samacharpatra, 10 May

Nepal Samacharpatra
राजधानी

Nepalganj-Rajkumar Bista has spent his life in prison ever since the start of the conflict. Living within the four walls of his prison cell, Bista has for the last 10 years hopes to get released.

He was arrested in Chunwan village of Rukum for being a member of the Maoist students union. He is probably one of the only few political workers who has spent such a long jail term. Despite the court order for his release, the administration denied his legal right. Nearly seven years ago, the Rukum district court had ordered the police to release him but the administration refused. He was then transferred from Rukum to Dang and finally to Nepalganj.

Arrested on charges of being a terrorist, Bista is now being charged with a murder case. Everytime there was a ceasefire, he had hoped for the government to release him. But he remained in jail without being noticed even during the two rounds of peace talks. Now even with the recent ceasefire which will be followed by peace talks soon, Bista has little reason to be optimistic.

Looters

Editorial in Rajdhani, 9 May

राजधानी

Over 30 buses have been looted in less than a week along the Dhangadi-Dadeldura road. The incidents of looting have been growing in the tarai, and there has been a spurt in armed robberies in the capital. This has already terrorised the people and already there are rumours that they are being perpetrated by the previous regime which wants to discredit the government. The robbers have been going around intimidating their victims claiming to be Maoists, security force personnel or even members of the seven parties. At a time when there is a ceasefire and the political forces are united, such activities jeopardize the peace process. Most importantly, the security forces should get into action to curb these elements who are out to defame democracy. Whenever a nation is in a transitional phase, anti-establishment forces start hatching conspiracies against the new rulers. In such a situation, the role of the security force becomes imperative to curb such activities bent on weakening the new government. Along with looting and robbery, there have also been attacks on political workers. The people should resist these anti-social elements.

Why they joined the protests

Himal Khabarpatrika, 14 May

हिमाल
काठमाडौं

"It is because the king is autocratic that we are on the streets. Now the people will decide whether we want to keep the monarchy or not."

Nabina Lama, sociology student, Baneshwor Campus (pictured)

"Nepal's national parks are guarded by the army. But unless the people feel ownership, you can't enforce conservation with a gun. You can only have nature conservation when there is participatory democracy. That is why I am here."

Dr Bibekanand Jha
Incharge of Community
Cooperation at Kosi Tappu
Wildlife Reserve

"The king is only for the rich. Democracy is for the poor like us..."

Abbas Ansari, construction worker, Inaruwa

"We need a monarchy, but the king must follow the rules. This present king is overstepping, that is why we are here."

Hom Bahadur Gurung, Sunsari

"Our leaders told us to come here that is why we are here. They told us if we have democracy, we will be happy."

Shibanath Mandal, Morang

"An open society is important for us. A closed society can't be creative. That is why we are on the streets demonstrating for the restoration of democracy."

Tara Chamling, Model and choreographer, Dharan

"I am here so the voice of us workers will be heard. The Maoists killed our colleagues, the army did the same. Maybe with this democratic government we will be safe from harm."

Durga Pokhrel, Transport worker, Dharan

"We have been at the same rank for 12 years and we're still temporary workers. We aren't allowed to organize, if the country becomes democratic maybe this institution will also have internal democracy."

Bijaya Rimal, BP Koirala Health and Science Academy, Dharan

"If we have democracy, we the poor people and our children will have jobs. I have seven children."

Rabi Kamat, labourer, Dhangadi

"Change will only come through non-violent action, even the Maoists must join the non-violent struggle."

Om Bahadur Thapa, ex-serviceman, Butwal

"Maybe after democracy is restored our demands will be met, we want a resolution."

Sitaram Chaudhari, Chairman, Free Kamiya Society, Dhangadi

KIRAN PANDAY



Students Partnership Worldwide (SPW), a youth-led international development agency, is in the process of dramatically increasing its operations and impact. Currently SPW has offices in Australia, India, Nepal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, UK, USA, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

As an integral arm of the international agency, SPW Nepal is registered as INGO under a formal agreement with HMG/Nepal since 1991. SPW Nepal partners with local NGOs and works very closely with local communities and schools to implement its programmes, targeting health (in particular sexual health), community resources and civic education. SPW Nepal recruits and trains highly motivated youth from different backgrounds who are well educated but unemployed to serve as full time development workers on the ground for an academic year.

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2. Sensitising all partners and stakeholders about the SPW programmes
3. The financial and human resource management of SPW Nepal
4. The development of all present partners and forging new partnerships in order to increase impact, secure investment and ensure growth and sustainability of SPW's programmes in Nepal
5. The content and delivery of training, programme implementation and delivery of the SPW programme
6. Reports as required for SPW International and all investing partners.

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Application: by SPW *Application form* only (**no cvs accepted**). Please ensure you meet the requirements (skills and qualifications) stated in the *Application Pack* before applying. Unfortunately, SPW will only contact applicants who have been selected for interview.
Application closing date: 26th May 2006.

SPW Nepal is an equal opportunity employer. Eligible female candidates are strong encouraged to apply.



NEPAL

JOB OPPORTUNITY

VSO is an international development agency that works through volunteers. VSO works in 35 countries around the world and in South Asia, VSO works in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bangladesh and Nepal. We aim to increase the inclusion and participation in decision-making and mainstream development of disadvantaged groups in Nepal, in particular women, people with disabilities, Dalits and people living with HIV and AIDS. In the context of our evolving Programme, we are recruiting for the following new positions:

PROGRAMME SUPPORT MANAGER (PSM): Responsible to: Country Director	SOUTH ASIA REGIONAL FINANCE OFFICER (RFO): Responsible to: Regional Programme Development and Funding Advisor (RPDFA) – South Asia (location Nepal)
PSM is a national post and as a senior manager in VSO Nepal he/ she will provide dynamic and collaborative leadership for the effective management of the Programme Support function of VSO Nepal and ensure efficient management of the financial and administrative systems of the office.	The RFO is an international post and will provide support to VSO offices in South Asia in all areas of sourcing and managing external donor funding. In particular provide advice and support on financial management of funded programmes to ensure VSO fulfils its financial management and reporting obligations to institutional donors.
Key responsibilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">♦ To line manage and provide leadership to the Programme Support Team♦ To develop and manage financial and administrative policy systems and procedures♦ To develop and implement VSO Nepal Human Resource policy and VSO volunteer policy♦ To develop and monitor the budget of the Programme Office and specific programme budgets♦ To ensure effective administrative and logistical support to VSO volunteers♦ To efficiently negotiate contracts with the different service providers	Key responsibilities: To advise and support to the RPDFA and VSO programme offices in South Asia: <ul style="list-style-type: none">♦ In the development of new financial proposals for institutional donors and establishing suitable monitoring and reporting systems.♦ In all aspects of the financial administration and management of contracted externally funded project work.♦ In the external reporting of co-financed proposals♦ To contribute towards the development of financial systems generally within South Asia♦ To work as part of a global team of RFOs to liaise and share best practice and information
Required competencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none">♦ Excellent verbal & written English & Nepali language skills♦ Good interpersonal and communication skills♦ MBA or equivalent♦ At least 5 years of experience in a senior management position and in Human Resource Management♦ Good knowledge and understanding of the development sector♦ Excellent computer skills	Required competencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none">♦ Excellent verbal and written English language skills♦ Post foundation level accountancy training eg ACCA, CIMA or AAT and proven ability to produce reconciled financial statements♦ A minimum of 5 years accountancy and/or experience of setting up and running financial administrative systems♦ A minimum of 5 years experience of financial management of externally funded grants♦ A high level of IT skills, particularly Excel♦ Ability to provide training and coaching to individuals and groups on complex financial issues♦ Willingness and ability to travel extensively throughout South Asia

We believe in equal opportunities and particularly welcome applications from disadvantage groups. Please submit applications in writing by email (application should clearly mention the position applied for and should include a motivation letter of 1 page describing why you are motivated and suitable for the position described above; and a full resumé/ curriculum vitae) to: Email: vsonepal@vsoint.org
Deadline for the Completed applications:
MAY 15th 2006 for Programme Support Manager
May 31st 2006 for Regional Finance Officer
Telephone enquiries will not be entertained.

At the crossroads in Nawalparasi

All quiet as a war zone turns overnight into the idyllic land it once was

NARESH NEWAR
in NAWALPARASI

Young Magar women sing love songs as they plant maize in this remote corner of Nawalparasi. In Dhaubari VDC Newari schoolgirls sit by the road laughing and talking. Bahun women tend cows. A little up the road, Chhetri boys flirt with teenage Gurung farmers.

It is hard to believe this idyllic multi-ethnic setting in the plains of central Nepal was till two weeks ago a battlefield. The sound of bombs and gunfire rent the air and army helicopter hovered overhead menacingly.

"I do not fear the dark anymore and my mother has stopped crying whenever she sees me alive," says Khem Bahadur Rana, a young community volunteer. The end of fighting has made Rana's three hour roundtrip on foot for a literacy program for Magar women much easier.

For Humkala Sapkota, the past two weeks have been an answer to her prayers for peace. "It's so soothing to hear people sing again, chat about their crops, their cows and newborn babies," she tells us, "now we don't have to fear any *maobadi* or *shahi sena*."

Indeed, Nepal's who were caught between the Maoists and the RNA have heaved a collective sigh of relief. The joy is most palpable in places like Nawalparasi which were at the frontline of the conflict with chronic vigilante attacks, disappearances and human rights violations by both sides.

Given the way past ceasefires



PICS: NARESH NEWAR

turned out, there is still some skepticism among villagers, but they already see tangible changes.

"The civil servants have returned and they feel safe even in areas where the Maoists were," says Rajendra Debkota, secretary of the Benimanipur VDC. He was the first government staff to be abducted by the rebels two years ago and the rebels he meets these days tell him to let bygones be bygones even promising to return his property that they seized.

Local communities are not waiting for the parliament in Kathmandu to get its act together so they have formed committees to begin local development work. Some have even dashed off formal

requests for funds through their VDCs for irrigation, women's literacy work and child support programs.

"Earlier, we were not sure about setting up savings groups because of the fear that the money would be stolen by the Maoists, the vigilantes or by the army," says a local female community worker.

Another big relief has been the disbanding of anti-Maoist vigilante groups who walked with guns in the villages and intimidated farmers with extortion and looting. A week ago, the most notorious groups led by Muna Khan, Murari Kuswaha and Nasir Ali surrendered arms

provided by the security force to the local Maoist leaders.

"Now my friends and I are thinking about joining the Maoists but not until we are sure their ceasefire will last longer than before," says 19-year old Sugrim Rajbhar who was on his way to attend a Maoist rally in Parasi. Villagers were taken in 50 buses to the venue along the Mahendra Highway shouting pro-Maoist slogans. At checkpoints, the RNA and APF armed with machine guns watched quietly and let the buses pass.

Many farmers, traders, students sat down under tents listening to the Maoist leader. Confused and nervous, many

were afraid the meeting may be attacked by the army. Birendra Chaudhary scoured the horizon for signs of approaching helicopters. "You can't blame us for being worried, we are always the ones caught in the middle," says Chaudhary.

Maoists were going around shaking hands and assuring everyone that there was no need to be afraid. "There will be no betrayal on our part," said Comrade Saurab, "it now depends on the parties."

But among the local traders and farmers, there is still serious concern about Maoist extortion. "I just wish they stopped asking for taxes," says a villager from Ramgoran. The rebels here have stopped asking for 'donations', now it's called an annual tax and it is usually worth half the value of their property.

Despite this, most villagers reason it is a price they have to pay for peace and have come to terms with it. Schools have re-opened after nearly two months, parents are no longer afraid that their children will be caught up in a firefight, or forcibly recruited. Residents near here have still not forgotten how two young women Asmita Chapagain and Paru Biswakarma were killed by roadside bomb left by Maoists in February (See: 'Daughter slaughter', #286).

"My father doesn't have to come to school anymore to fetch me home, there is peace now," says 11-year old Santosh Shrestha as he heads off to his Sri Dipendra Secondary School 83 km from Butwal. ●

"Our war is not over"

Nepali Times: Your leaders have been sending messages from India that they are optimistic about joining the mainstream politics.

Comrade Akash: We have the same optimism at the local level that there is every possibility for us to join open politics. But the government has to be more transparent and consistent. There are signs that the parties are more sincere but there are doubts. Our main concern is that the Royal Nepal Army is still loyal to the king. We hope that the power of the people will change this.

How about your soldiers. Are the soldiers willing to come under the people?

The People's Liberation Army is a political army with one ideology and it will respect the decision of the party which speaks for the people.

Will peace last this time?

We don't want a dead peace but a peaceful political resolution. Now it is all up to the seven-party government and how it will make that possible. The process for peace talks, formation of interim government and



The leader of the Maoists in Nawalparasi, Comrade Akash spoke to Nepali Times near the district's army barrack from where RNA soldiers watched him with undisguised curiosity.

constituent assembly can make the peace last longer. Ceasefire will not be broken from our part because our demands are very clear and consistent.

So you are still skeptical about the parties.

We are not expecting changes overnight but the parties need to make their political decisions fast. The king and his sycophants are waiting for them to trip and start making the mistakes of the past.

The parties have to be very cautious and vigilant about the royalists of the old regime.

Despite the ceasefire, people are complaining that your extortion has not stopped.

Extortion or donation terror are absolutely wrong words to define people's contribution to our cause. We are merely collecting taxes for the war fund. Our party has no choice but to collect taxes from especially the business community who can afford to contribute a small portion of their income. You have to realise that this is merely a ceasefire and that our war is not over yet.

"We need more traffic jams"

It no longer takes the best part of a week to cross Nepal by bus. Mankamana is three hours by car from Kathmandu again. The roads are smooth and the only sign of the conflict are the rusted hulks of burnt trucks and blasted cars by the roadside. Security at checkpoints is more relaxed, soldiers no longer harass bus passengers and force them to walk a km with their luggage.

"I couldn't believe I could reach here in just four hours," says Bimal Chhetri of Chitwan who was able to make it to a relative's wedding from Kathmandu. The only reason for delays nowadays are traffic jams caused by thousands of buses, trucks and private cars as people become mobile again.

But Ram Sharma who runs a restaurant in Mugling isn't complaining: "We need more traffic jams. That is sign of life coming back to normal." Mugling's famous eateries are now back in business, doing most of their turnover at night when the night buses crisscross this junction.

"The business is picking up gradually and there is no space during the weekends," says Suresh Maharjan from the Riverside Resort. There are no more booby-trapped obstacles along the way. Soldiers stand by the road but wave everyone through. The police sit in their posts and only note the number plates.

"This is just routine to register the number plates in case any criminal activities take place," says a police constable near Chitwan. There is no more curfews or Maoist blockades. The only danger now is the rising number of accidents. "We have to teach these drivers a lesson and this time we have to be stricter than the police," says a local resident who was leading a six-hour road blockade near Chitwan highway after a child was killed by a microbus.





KIRAN PANDAY

Carried away by cars

Bandas and blockades are suspended, the firing has ceased, it's time to zoom off into the outback in your shiny new hatchback

The first thing that strikes people who haven't been to our dusty capital for ten years is the traffic. And in the past two years, it is the sheer number of brand new cars in Carmandu. OK, they are fossil fuel guzzling dinosaurs. OK, the sporty SUVs can hardly go faster than 35 km/h even on the Ring Road. But motorcyclists graduate to cars and banks fall over themselves to enable them to, so there is a lot of

interest in the latest models in the market. Barely a decade ago, owning a car was considered a luxury, today it's more utilitarian, also because buying one was never so affordable. Even for the lower middle class families owning a car used to be just a dream now they can buy and pay after seven years. Or you can trade your senile Datsun for a svelte Alto. No wonder then, that car sales in Nepal have doubled

in ten years. The best indication that Nepal's car market has come of age is that we have our own auto magazine- and it is in Nepali language. As a service to all readers who are in the market for a model, Nepali Times took out a selection of cars for test drive as soon as the curfews were lifted along roads strewn with tyre pyres and off road trails on the Valley rim.

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KIRAN PANDAY



TEST DRIVER:
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TEST DRIVER:
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Mazda 3

You either have a Mazda 3 or you don't. And you don't have to be a rich spoilt brat to get your hands on this 16 valve, 1.6 litre all aluminum, muscle bound beauty. You can feel the torque kick of the 45 Newtons/meter at 4,000 rpm as you hit the accelerator and the maneuverability is dreamlike. At high speeds, it's close to bungee jumping. The sporty 5 speed manual transmission is exciting but easy to use and the responsive suspension cuts out all vibration and noises. The exterior styling and aggressive body lines gives the 3 a very bold and voluptuous look if you're into that sort of thing. The automatic climate control measures temperatures, solar radiation and then decides on the best temperature for you. Nepal's roads may not be ready for the Mazda 3, but are you?

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Nissan, X Trail

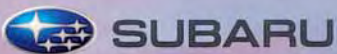
Don't blame yourself if you are intimidated at first by this sexy beast. It looks impossible to tame but once you fire it up you know immediately that this 2,200 cc SUV is a class of its own. With a unique easy to use 6-speed manual transmission and push button 4 wheel drive system, the X is made for uncharted territories and cratered city streets. Powerful and agile, driving the new X Trail is surprisingly relaxing. This Japanese predator took the off-Ring Road trails in its stride and the only sign of strain was a higher pitch hum from the engine. Discs brakes in all 4x16" Alloy wheels coupled with ABS/ EDB allowed us to bring the X Trail to a sharp and smooth halt when some ducks decided to wallow across the road on the Godavari road. You'll love the in built can cooler in the central console which allows you to have a cold one by simply turning on the a/c. Nice touch.

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KIRAN PANDAY

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ALL PICS: MIN BAJRACHARYA

Subaru Forester

This is the car for those who seek adventure but also consider family's safety first. The good news is that the new Subaru Forester is here. The bad news is that you wouldn't be spending time at home-you'll be out on the road at the slightest excuse. The 2457 cc Forester is a Japanese SUV with the utilities and elegance of a luxurious family sedan. The manual transmission has finesse, suspension is a perfect 10. You accelerate from 0 to 100 km/hr in under 9.8 secs and no more swerving at high speeds because of the bottomed center of gravity of the revolutionary boxer engine, making it equally balanced on all four wheels. The monastery on top of the hill? No problem. The Forester's all time all wheel drive makes mince meat of most off roads and the gear lever is easy to operate. The power steering makes this 4.48m long car easily driveable through Khichapokhari as well, not that you'd want to take it there.

The Anti Brake System (ABS) and Equal Brake Distribution System (EDS) make sure that your 16" Alloy wheels don't skid and your kids don't skip a heart beat. Dual front, head, side and torso airbags and side intrusion bars makes the Forester safer than a safety pin.



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TEST DRIVER:
Shristi Bhandari

Hyundai, Getz

The going Getz better. Look up Hyundai Getz in the dictionary. It'd probably read 'Peppy.' With a 4 valve, 1.4 litre petrol engine, this latest smart and stylish mini is much more than your average neighbourhood small car. The suspension and brakes are well calibrated; and the short stick 5 speed transmission is receptive every time. The large panoramic windscreen provides excellent all-round vision and you can feel the instant pick up even when the air con is on full blast. The key word of the Korean designers is functionality. Good looking enough to used as a city car, small enough to park inside Jai Nepal and with seating for five adults and a dog. With the look of a hungry jaguar about to charge, the Getz comes in exciting hot colours that are, well, cool. The Getz, like its best selling cousin, the Santro, is bound be popular amongst young upwardly mobile.

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Daihatsu Sirion

Just when you thought that they couldn't make small cars any better comes the Daihatsu Sirion 1.3 will be literally kicking up a storm this year. Japanese by birth and design, the Sirion is a combination of compactness and cool. With a 4-cylinder, 1,298 cc engine (the same as in Daihatsu's SUV, Terios) this super mini has enough power and audacity to rub elbows with the big boys. The Sirion handles beautifully at both high and low speeds and has a turning radius of only 4.7 meters. Small outside and big inside is Sirion's mantra and can easily seat five adults with leg room to spare. The control panel and the dash board bear a futuristic and sporty design and the controls easily accessible. The Sirion is small and beautiful with power and fuel efficiency.

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CD player, Rear fully-foldable rear seats
Mileage 17.24 kpl/city, 20 kpl/highway
Rs 1,900,000
Hansraj Hulaschand & Co, Thapathali
4250001, 4219578



UAZ Hunter

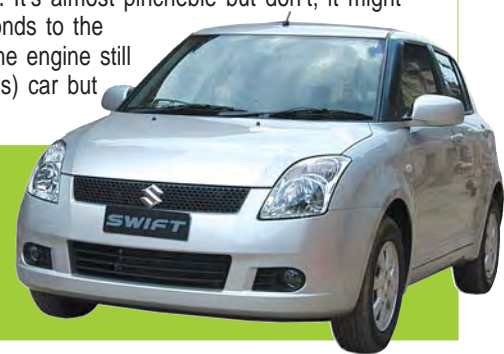
This is a silhouette from the past: the Russian Jeep. But the UAZ Hunter is a spruced up version of its rugged ancestor many of which can still be seen along Nepal's backroads. The grips on the road surface and small road bumps and surface unevenness remain unnoticed. The hydraulic power steering makes driving much easier, lights hydro-adjuster and equipment of the vehicle and in-built fog lamps increase your safety when driving at night or in poor weather conditions. A double closed door-gasket prevents water infiltration and improves heat insulation. UAZ Hunter allows you to transport cargo up to 750kg.



Maruti Suzuki, Swift

Legend has it that the new Maruti Suzuki Swift was built around the 1300cc Suzuki Hayabusa, the fastest production motorcycle in the world. That must be true because this mean machine is a wolf in wolf clothing. Hailed by BBC's Top Gear as the Design of the Year the Swift is unabashedly stylish and sinewy. It's almost pincheble but don't, it might bite. And it did just that. The Swift ZXi's 1.3 litre, all aluminum engine responds to the slightest push underfoot and even with the vrooming 87 bhp at 6000 rpm, the engine still was quieter than a cat. The Swift is clearly a DINK (Double Income, No Kids) car but could easily blend in any family and make relatives envious.

Solid Bright Red, Metallic Azure Grey
Power windows, remote keyless entry
Mileage 14 kpl/city, 17 kpl/highway
Rs 1,750,000
Arun Intercontinental, Jhamsikhel
5545891, 5546223



Skoda, Laura

Latest offering from Skoda India, the 'Laura' is based on a celebrated Czech design and comes with its usual fine finish, has sanded down parabolic fine lines and the shoulders are slightly accentuated. The Laura's bonnet is slightly raised from the middle, its headlights well defined and has Xenon lamps with power washers. The car generates power from the 1.9 litre block that has a direct injection engine which will help burn Nepal's impurity-rich fuels cleaner and give more power. An on-board diagnosis constantly checks all component assemblies that influence the composition of the exhaust emissions. Skodas are manufactured in a plant in Aurangabad for the India, Bangladesh and Nepal markets.



Toyota Corolla 1.5 LX

One glimpse at the stunning new Toyota Corolla 1.5 Litre LX and you know why it is a global best-seller. It's a great brand, has contemporary looks and is power packed to the boot. The traditional Corolla drivers will immediately realise that this model has a much more powerful and responsive engine. And it's quieter too. The solid electric steering allows you to take high speed turns like a hot knife through butter. Excellent field of vision from the cabin is due to the high hip point of the seats. Even on the Chabhil-Gokarna section with the stop-and-go traffic and potholes the sedan didn't lose its cool and nor did its driver. It helps that the Corolla has an excellent history of low maintenance and superb fuel efficiency. The revamped exterior is muscular; pronounced clearly with contoured mouldings. The Corolla is definitely a looker, in any available colour. Most people buy a Corolla to stop worrying about what to buy next or when. And if you know what you want, you wouldn't need more information.

Power windows, side rear view mirrors
ABS/EDS, dual air bags,
14 kpl/city, 17 kpl/highway
Rs 2,700,000
United Traders Syndicate, Tinkune
4478301, 4478305



Honda, City ZXi

The aptly named City offers an unhindered outside view because the seats are slightly higher and the blind spot is reduced. The power steering has tilt adjustment. The stout gear shift with chrome knob needs only a nudge. Too bad you don't need to change gears all the time because Honda's new i-DSI engine provides maximum torque even at lower rpms. No sweaty palms driving this versatile 1.5 litre chariot. The aerodynamically streamlined body reduces drag which may not mean much when you are stuck at Ratna Park but is an asset on the straight stretch between Hetauda and Patlaiya. The turning radius of 4.9 is exceptional as the gas tank in the previous model has been relocated, making the boot more spacious.



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Remote trunk/fuel-lid opener
Mileage 12 kpl/city, 15 kpl/highway
Rs 2,175,000
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New CITY ZX



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Tel : 5549741



West Bengal votes red again

PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA in KOLKATA

India's West Bengal state, called the world's last bastion of popular communism, is preparing to usher into power for a record seventh time since 1977.

Opinion polls indicate that the Left Front, a coalition of seven political parties led by the Communist Party of India-Marxist (or CPI-M), is almost certain to win the elections to a provincial state legislative assembly that serves 80 million people.

The debate in this former capital of the British imperialism is only about the margin of victory when the results are declared on Thursday. The celebrations have already begun and this city of colonnaded palaces is awash in a sea of red and crossed hammer and sickle.

The political opponents of the Left Front say supporters of the ruling coalition have rigged the elections and has been winning election after election because its sympathisers control the local administration and the police force.

India's Election Commission has deployed federal paramilitary forces in strength to prevent partisan local officials from influencing voters and staggered the elections over five days (on 17, 22 and 27 April and 3, 8 May) to ensure the presence of federal forces in adequate numbers.

Why have the strong anti-incumbency sentiments that have prevailed in all states in India been conspicuously absent in West Bengal? Supporters of Left Front attribute this to the quality of governance and a land reforms programme that ensures greater rights to tillers of the land, implemented through the 1980s.

The weakness of the main opposition Trinamool Congress is another reason. Five years ago, Trinamool struck an electoral alliance with the Congress against the Left but failed and this time around there is no electoral understanding. "The division in the anti-Left votes has made life that much simpler for the communists and that has helped them further enhance the positive image of chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee (who became chief minister of the state in November 2000)," says sociologist Surojit Mukhopadhyay at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences.

Bhattacharjee, 63, took over from former chief minister Jyoti Basu, now nearly 93. He is said to be a practical 'new Left' leader who is not afraid of welcoming foreign investors to the state and who wants to establish socialism in one state of an essentially capitalist country.

For this election, the Left has inducted many young supporters as candidates and dropped older representatives, including over a dozen ministers in the state government.

Whereas the base of the communists in West Bengal has been largely rural, the chain-smoking Bhattacharjee has focused his attention on the renewal of Kolkata. The city has become notoriously decrepit and has only in recent years begun a programme of revival.

"Bhattacharjee has become the darling of the urban upper classes and middle classes, they see in him a reflection of their hopes and aspirations," says Sumit Mitra, author and journalist.

Opponents of the communists contend that the Left too has been opportunistic in its political strategy. In New Delhi, the Manmohan Singh government is dependent for its survival on the outside support of 61 communist members of parliament. In West Bengal, on the other hand, the communists and the Congress are arch political opponents.

"There is no contradiction in our position," says Sitaram Yechuri, CPI-M politburo member. "In New Delhi, we are supporting the Congress-led coalition for the specific purpose of keeping communal forces represented by the BJP out of power on the basis of a common minimum programme. At the same time, we are opposed to many of the (pro-liberalisation) economic policies of the Congress and are opposing the party tooth-and-nail in West Bengal," Yechuri says.

The BJP's Tathagata Roy accuses the Left of not wanting to let go of power at the centre while holding on to an ideology that has been discredited the world over. "They are just a bunch of hypocrites," he asserts.

The West Bengal government has accused successive non-communist governments in New Delhi of discriminating against the state, such as through a policy of freight equalization of coal and steel prices that robbed the eastern region of many of its locational advantages. West Bengal, once a centre of steel making and heavy industry, has seen many large factories shutting down.

Ironically, if the Left Front wins again it will be because of its policies of liberalisation rather than the doctrinaire Marxism of the past. ● (IPS)

How is it that the communists have ruled the Indian state continuously since 1977?



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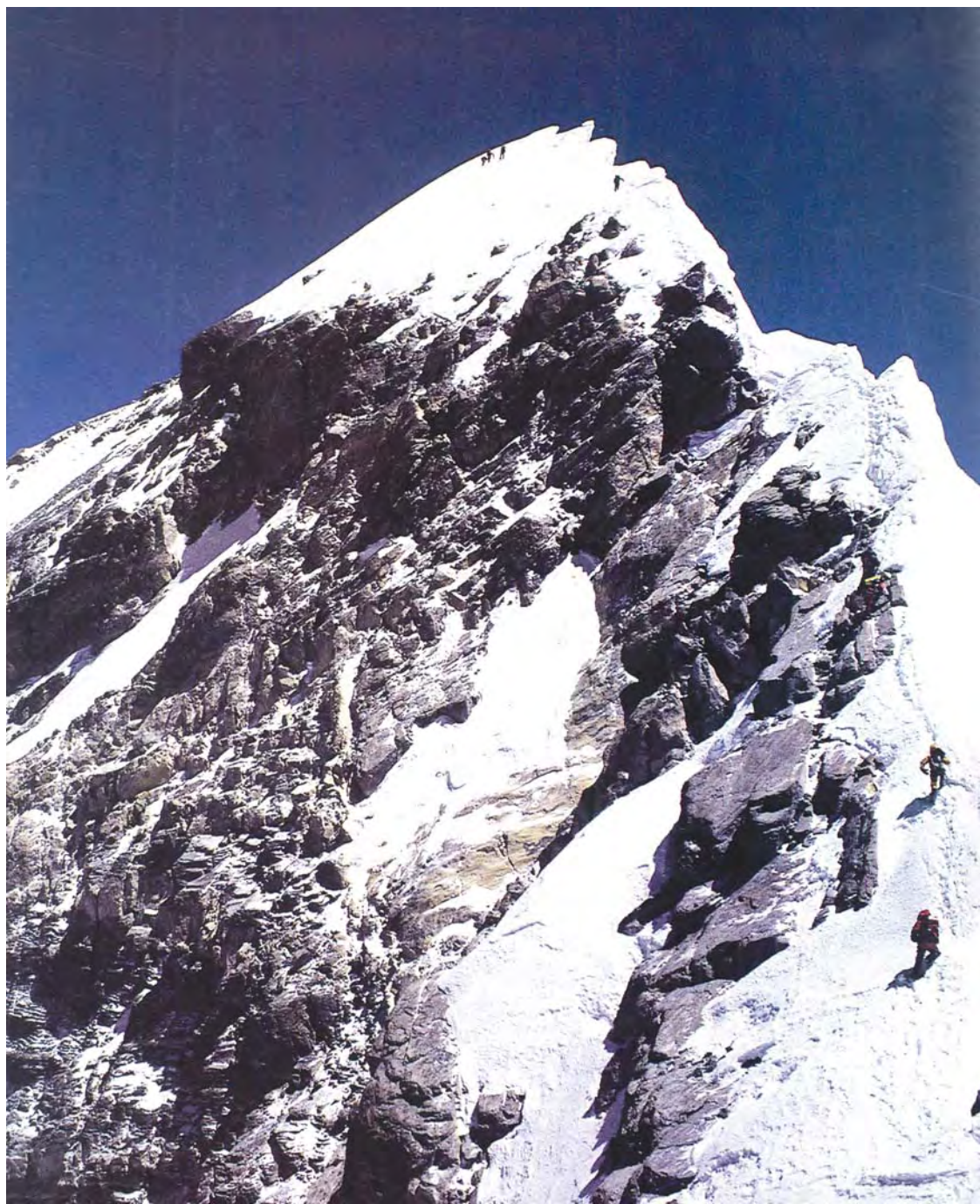


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It's been ten years since eight climbers were killed on Chomolungma that day but the storm it unleashed about the commercialisation of expeditions refuses to die

ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY

Ten years after a combination of freak storms and commercialisation of expeditions caused one of the most tragic single-day loss of life on the world's highest peak, climbing experts say mountaineers still haven't learnt their lesson.

By the first week of May 1996, there were more than 30 expeditions at various stages of their effort to set foot on the top of Chomolungma before pre-monsoon storms arrived. Among them were seasoned mountaineers, Sherpas who had climbed Everest multiple times, and also novices who were being guided to the top for a fee.

The tenth of May dawned with perfect weather. Some climbers had started off from the South Col at three in the morning and were by now plodding up to the South Summit as the sun came up. Others were snaking up the knife-like ridge that leads to the top.

Thirty-three climbers from four expeditions were on their way to the top, 24 of them succeeded from the south side alone. Only 19 of the 24 made it back to camp. Three Indian climbers scaling Chomolungma from the North side perished that day as well. What transpired in the high rarefied air on top of the world that afternoon and night is the subject of the best-selling book *Into Thin Air* by one of the climbers who made it back, John Krakauer as well as the wide-screen IMAX film *Everest* which was a box-office hit worldwide.

Most agree that a sudden storm that transformed a perfect climbing morning into a whiteout with 160 km/h winds and temperatures of -55 degrees was to blame. But there were just too many climbers queuing up along the ridge, this slowed them down so they were trapped by the storm on the way down.

But why were there so many climbers on that high narrow ridge in the first place? The lure of Everest is one of them but it is



Seeing is

Thanks to a unique charity, inhabitants of a remote corner of Nepal can see again

It is just a 30-minute helicopter ride from Kathmandu to Tsum, but it could as well be another world.

Tucked into a hidden valley behind the Ganesh Himal, the village lies in that peninsula of Nepal that juts out into the Tibetan plateau. Tsum's isolation from both Nepal and Tibet is complete. It is a two week walk to the nearest road and the news of the king's dramatic capitulation didn't even create a ripple of interest at the Rachen Nunnery.

But what did catch the people's attention was the Mi-17 carrying ophthalmologist Suman Thapa of the Tilganga Eye Centre and his team as it landed at the nunnery for an eye camp.

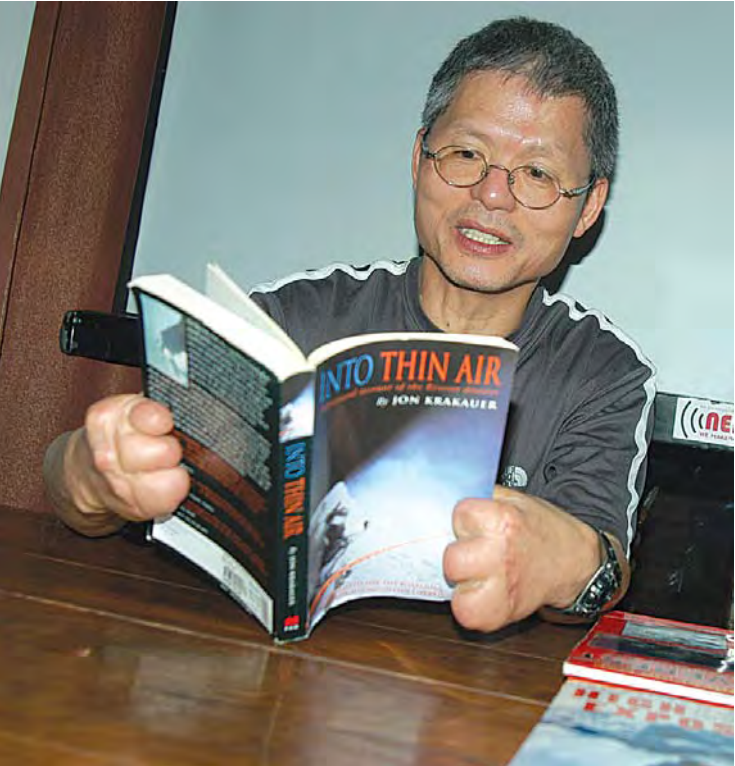
The equipment and supplies were unloaded and set up, registration and testing began in a

carnival atmosphere. Over the next two days screening continued and the operations began.

Patients got their pre-op drops, eye-lashes were trimmed and they were led off for the anaesthetic. The nuns explained in the local Tsumpa dialect that the patients were to lie still after the injection, while a weight was placed on the eye as the anaesthesia kicked in.

The 'operating theatre' was remarkably dust free, smelt of Dettol and had an operating table, doctor's chair and shining modern surgical microscope all flown in from Kathmandu. Dr Thapa made a small incision into the eye with his diamond knife, removed the cataract and replaced it with a Tilganga-made lens. A few minutes later, a patch was





TRAFFIC JAM: Climbers on the southeast ridge of Chomolungma on the morning of 10 May 1996 (left) and Makalu Gau reads what he calls “fabrications” in John Krakauer’s account of the day in Kathmandu on Sunday.

also the need on the part of the Nepal government to maximize profit from the \$65,000 royalty for the mountain and the fact that such a high fee encouraged professional climbers to take on fee-paying climbers to finance their expedition. Many of them weren’t experienced enough to be on the mountain.

“Rivalry between the leaders of the various commercial expeditions was one of the key factors contributing to the tragedy,” says mountaineering historian and Kathmandu-based journalist, Liz Hawley. In his book, Krakauer writes about these tensions including Rob Hall and Scott Fisher (two of

the most experienced mountaineers on the mountain that day, both competing by leading two different commercial expeditions).

Krakauer’s account of the day has been contested by many including the late Anatoli Boukreev of Kazakhstan who survived on Everest but died in an avalanche in December 1997 on Annapurna. Another climber who wants to set the record straight is a member of the Taiwanese team Makalu Gau, who survived but lost all his fingers and toes to frost bite.

Gau was in Kathmandu last week for the tenth anniversary to launch the film Prayer Flags made

by Japanese journalist Yoichi Shimatsu about his ordeal. “The purpose of the film is to restore honour, not to make money,” he told us.

Gau read Into Thin Air while recovering from his amputations, and it stung him. “Many of the facts were simply wrong and misrepresented,” he said. Krakauer says Gau broke his promise at a joint meeting and went for the summit but the Taiwanese said he was never invited to the meeting.

One of the Sherpas in his team might have been there but never communicated the decisions to him. Gau went back to the base camp in 2004 for a reconciliation with the mountain and the ghosts of the past. “Unlike Jon Krakauer who said he will never go back and that he hates the mountain, I don’t. I revere the mountain, perhaps the difference is in our eastern way of looking at nature,” he says.

Ten years after the tragedy the pressure on Everest has not ceased. Raising the permit fees to divert traffic to other peaks has not helped.

Neither have suggestions for a moratorium on permits. Last year a total of 101 teams were on the mountain while this year 29 teams are attempting from the Nepal side and 56 from the China side. Among them are two expeditions from the Philippines who are racing to the top and are sponsored by rival tv channels back home. So far, three Sherpas have died when a serac collapsed on them on the Khumbu Ice Fall. Says Gau: “Perhaps ten years ago, the mountain was trying to teach us all a lesson. We must all learn from our mistakes.” ●

The Situation

To understand, we must first cross the distance in mind, if not in miles.

Don’t go back to Nepal, the situation is growing worse, there is nothing to do, if you’re so desperate, wait for a few years. My well-wishers may have lived in the US all their lives but they were insistent: Nepal is a mess, stay out of it.

When I came back to Kathmandu, I saw that the sun still rose every morning and people still went about their daily business. Bandas were more frequent, there were street protests almost every day but men still sat in teashops soaking up newspapers. The Ghanta Ghar still chimed mournfully every hour. For good or bad, life was still going on in the capital.

Only the emails I received from the other side of the world expressed horror: ‘We have been following the events in Nepal, it all sounds so scary!’ My American professor canceled his trip to Kathmandu and sent me his prayers. Potential tourists rerouted to other destinations. And Nepal’s abroad mourned the tarnished image of their homeland. But life here in Kathmandu went on.

When my job took me outside Kathmandu, people began alerting me on the ‘situation’ again. Those who had never stepped out of the Valley seemed most wary of the unseen dangers. Some seemed to think that the Maoists wait to pounce on every traveller on the road. The highways are paved with landmines, passengers are caught in the crossfire, set foot beyond Thankot and you tread between the jaws of death. Watch out, they might be creeping into the capital. Protect your family and stock up in time.

Right before a trip to Kailali, I heard about a minor bomb in the district. The news quickly roused my middle-class instinct for self-preservation. I called up a local colleague in Dhangadi to assess the risk.

“It can’t be so bad, sister,” he replied, “after all, we live here.” And so they did. Children were still chanting lessons in roofless classrooms. Young women were cycling to work past the army barracks. And the tired laborers were often forced off to ‘jansarkar’ gatherings on their way home. Anything can happen anytime. But when it does, they are the ones to lose their lives and their limbs and their loved ones. They can’t chatter about ‘the situation’ because their only choice is to live it.

As a college student, I used to wonder how people must live in Iraq and the Palestinian occupied territories. In my mind, Iraqis and Palestinians got shot and arrested and bombarded so often they were used to such atrocities.

“Of course not,” said a friend who had lived in those areas, “they have their jobs and their routines, their boredoms and their dreams. Each new disaster shocks and breaks them all over again, even if it is the hundred thousandth.”

Distance, how it divides us and distorts other peoples’ tragedies. If we are to ever understand their suffering, we must first of all cross the distance in mind, if not in miles. But as we dramatise their condition and dehumanise their losses, we only grow further and further apart. ●

NEPALI PAN
Shradha Ghale



believing



THE GIFT OF SIGHT: Dr Suman Thapa checks patients’ eyes the morning after surgery when many found they could see again. The Tilganga team with the first group of patients to be discharged in Tsum recently.

placed over the eye and volunteer nuns led the patient to the ward.

The following morning when the team removed the dressing and examined the eyes was the moment when the miracle was revealed. Patients realised they could see their relatives, see the

mountains, see where they were walking, see a whole new life ahead of them. Patients are told not to drink alcohol, and one Gurung woman couldn’t believe that the doctor had given her vision only to take away her rakshi. Still, she danced off in

delight and gratitude when it was time to head for home.

Some of the patients had walked five days from lower Gorkha. One of them was a boy with inverted eyelids which would lead to blindness who was carried by his father for four days. The boy will now lead a normal life. The eye camp was sponsored by the Kopan Monastery with the technical expertise of the world-renowned Tilganga Eye Centre in Kathmandu.

As a new government in Kathmandu prepares to write a new constitution, one can only hope that in the future, remote areas like the Tsum Valley will also benefit. In the meantime, a reasonable amount of well-directed funds can enable a handful of young, dedicated professionals to completely change the lives of people in remote parts of Nepal. ●

Camilla Corona and Frances Howland in Tsum
www.fpmt.org/projects/tsum/
www.cureblindness.org/tilganga/expansion.html



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“Peace comes from within...”

Gautam Buddha was born 2,446 years ago in Lumbini. His teachings on peace and compassion are as relevant to us today as they were then. Lumbini is in present-day Kapilbastu districts which till recently was at the frontline of the Maoist insurgency.

In the past two weeks, a sense of normalcy has returned to the tarai plains, farmers are getting ready for the rains, and they are looking forward with hope to a future without war.

To commemorate his birthday on Saturday, 13 May, Nepali Times brings you a selection of the Buddha's words.

GOODNESS: A dog is not considered a good dog because he is a good barker. A man is not considered a good man because he is a good talker.

EXISTENCE: All things appear and disappear because of the concurrence of causes and conditions. Nothing ever exists entirely alone; everything is in relation to everything else.

PEACE: Better than a thousand hollow words, is one word that brings peace.

AHEAD: Do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind on the present moment.

HATE: Hatred does not cease by hatred, but only by love; this is the eternal rule.

CAPABLE: He is able who thinks he is able.

IMPARTIAL: He who experiences the unity of life sees his own Self in all beings, and all beings in his own Self, and looks on everything with an impartial eye.

LOVE: He who loves 50 people has 50 woes; he who loves no one has no woes.

FAITHFUL: Health is the greatest gift, contentment the greatest wealth, faithfulness the best relationship.

ANGER: Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned.

HOLINESS: However many holy words you read, however many you speak, what good will they do you if you do not act on upon them?

FATE: I do not believe in a fate that falls on men however they act; but I do believe in a fate that falls on them unless they act.

TRUTH: In a controversy the instant we feel anger we have already ceased striving for the truth, and have begun striving for ourselves.

DISCRIMINATION: In the sky, there is no distinction of east and west; people create distinctions out of their own minds and then believe them to be true.

TRIUMPH: It is better to conquer yourself than to win a thousand battles. Then the victory is yours. It cannot be taken from you, not by angels or by demons, heaven or hell.



WISDOM: Just as treasures are uncovered from the earth, so virtue appears from good deeds, and wisdom appears from a pure and peaceful mind. To walk safely through the maze of human life, one needs the light of wisdom and the guidance of virtue.

GRATITUDE: Let us rise up and be thankful, for if we didn't learn a lot today, at least we learned a little, and if we didn't learn a little, at least we didn't get sick, and if we got sick, at least we didn't die; so, let us all be thankful.

PURITY: On life's journey faith is nourishment, virtuous deeds are a shelter, wisdom is the light by day and right mindfulness is the protection by night. If a man lives a pure life, nothing can destroy him.

REAL PEACE: Peace comes from within. Do not seek it without.

HUMANITY: Teach this triple truth to all: A generous heart, kind speech, and a life of service and compassion are the things which renew humanity.

FAILURE: The only real failure in life is not to be true to the best one knows.

GOOD HEALTH: The secret of health for both mind and body is not to mourn for the past, nor to worry about the future, but to live the present moment wisely and earnestly.

MISTAKES: There are only two mistakes one can make along the road to truth; not going all the way, and not starting.

DOUBT: There is nothing more dreadful than the habit of doubt. Doubt separates people. It is a poison that disintegrates friendships and breaks up pleasant relations. It is a thorn that irritates and hurts; it is a sword that kills.

HAPPINESS: Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.

UNHIDDEN: Three things cannot be long hidden: the sun, the moon, and the truth.

DILIGENCE: To be idle is a short road to death and to be diligent is a way of life; foolish people are idle, wise people are diligent.

DISCIPLINE: To enjoy good health, to bring true happiness to one's family, to bring peace to all, one must first discipline and control one's own mind. If a man can control his mind he can find the way to Enlightenment, and all wisdom and virtue will naturally come to him.

SELFLESS: To live a pure unselfish life, one must count nothing as one's own in the midst of abundance.

JOY: We are formed and molded by our thoughts. Those whose minds are shaped by selfless thoughts give joy when they speak or act. Joy follows them like a shadow that never leaves them.

WHAT WE ARE: We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts, we make the world. What is the appropriate behavior for a man or a woman in the midst of this world, where each person is clinging to his piece of debris? What's the proper salutation between people as they pass each other in this flood?

WORDS: Whatever words we utter should be chosen with care for people will hear them and be influenced by them for good or ill.

FEAR: When one has the feeling of dislike for evil, when one feels tranquil, one finds pleasure in listening to good teachings; when one has these feelings and appreciates them, one is free of fear.

SELF RELIANCE: Work out your own salvation. Do not depend on others.

LOVE: You can search throughout the entire universe for someone who is more deserving of your love and affection than you are yourself, and that person is not to be found anywhere. You yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe deserve your love and affection.

WORK: Your work is to discover your world and then with all your heart give yourself to it.



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Going that extra mile

Nirmala Bharati finds excitement lies first in setting a record and breaking it



ANUP PRAKASH

Nirmala Bharati had to go to Berlin to break her own record for half marathon. She finished the 21 km race in 1.18.46—beating herself by 33 seconds.

What's more Nirmala left 3,622 runners from 67 countries trailing far behind as she stood first in her 20-30 age group.

Is Nepal about to break into international athletics with the same fame as the Ethiopians and the Kenyans? With our high altitude and proper training there is no reason why not, after all Nepalis take all the big prizes in the Everest and Annapurna Marathons.

Nirmala is not new to setting and breaking national records. Last year, she set three national records, only to break them herself later. She first set a record time of 37 minutes 47 seconds at the 10km race at the National Open Running Championships in Kathmandu, and broke it with a timing of 37 minutes 21 seconds at the Athletics Championships. Her next record was the Dabali Half Marathon where she finished first with 1 hour 26 minutes 3 seconds only to break it later by completing the same run in 1 hour 20 minutes 13 seconds.

"I started out in school by

participating in sports competitions before I ventured into professional running," says Nirmala, 23. In 1994, she represented her school at the Birendra Shield Tournament. Her first run was a 3km race at the Athletics Championship in Pokhara where she finished in 11 minutes 11 seconds and took home the gold. This performance qualified her to run in the regional games and eventually in the national games.

In 1997, Nirmala joined the Mahendra Police Club, which helped her focus on her career as an athlete. Nirmala is like any other policewoman except, her job is to run and get paid for running. At the Berlin event, she won a cash prize of Euro 300. Though prizes for runners amount to comparatively less than those for cricketers and footballers, our national runner says, "Until a few years ago, we couldn't live on what we earned. Now we can't complain."

Next on Nirmala's calendar is the 10th SAF Games to be held in Sri Lanka in August. She will compete in the 5km and 10km races. Says our ace runner with a confident grin, "I've improved my timing and I'm know I will break my record again." ●

Prerana Marasini



Thinking positive

On the courts and for the sake of the country

Here are my ten thoughts for this week:

1. If I may just take this warm-up period today to say just how proud I am that the Nepali people helped restore democracy. The world watched with admiration at the defiance and marveled at how people from all walks of life put their differences aside to achieve a common goal. Can we duplicate that in the arena of sports? I believe we can and we must. People in position of authority must be held accountable for their decisions.
2. Sunday is Mother's Day here in the States. It is the time to thank our moms for all that they do for us and the unconditional love they provide. My mother was a true pioneer of tennis. Thirty years ago when it was taboo for women in Nepal to play sports, she was out there on the courts swinging away. She passed away a few years back but I will remember the valuable lessons she taught me. Above all, I learnt that the most valuable player in our lives is our mother.
3. Singles or doubles? If you are having a hard time deciding which one to pick, here is a tip. Do you like the net or do you avoid the net? Yes means doubles and no means singles.
4. For most club tennis players, back hand is disaster time. Grip change causes headache and they resort to slicing and hacking. Why not try the two-handed back hand? More strength and easier to grip and rip. So why do most club players have a one handed back hand? Go figure!
5. Is it time for three time French Open champion Gustavo Kuerten to hang his racket for good? Arguably one of the most popular player on the tour, Guga will miss the French Open after undergoing his second hip surgery. I want to remember the great Brazilian for his flair and for his signature back hand and drop shot. I do not want to see him limping around and struggling in early rounds of tournaments.
6. If you are struggling with your serve, the quick fix is the toss. It is the root of all evil. For slice and flat serves, the toss should be above and slightly in the front and to the right. For topspin or kick, the toss should be slightly behind the head and to the left. When you release the ball from your hand, keep the rotation to a minimum.
7. Martina Navratilova will be 50 this year and yet she is going strong playing doubles on the WTA tour. She is a true inspiration and by her efforts, she challenges us every day to rethink how we look at ageing gracefully. Mind over matter, huh?
8. How do we cope with a cheater on the other side of the net? First of all, stay composed. Do not aim too close to the line and finally stand up and make sure you voice your concern. I have seen good people make bad calls because they want to win so badly.
9. Wimbledon is the only Grand Slam event that pays women less than the men. It is definitely not about the money so it must be about making a statement of some kind. So what kind of point are the Brits making?
10. And finally, we owe it to those that died in the recent weeks to put aside negative thoughts and skepticism as we move forward. Just like on the courts when we are battling our opponent, our mind must focus on the present and stay positive for Nepal to develop and prosper.

GAME POINT
Sujay Lama



Bel Bibaha is a ceremony which celebrates the coming age for girls.

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"Manako baha kasailai nakaha" - Don't publish your troubles in the Nepali Times - as translated by UNACOOTs, the UN's Association of Cartoonists - NEPAL



See all the Adventures of your favorite Nepali characters at www.extreme-nepal.com or right here each Friday.

Next Change: Is a new petro-thirsty SUV right for you?

#122- © 2003 by jigme gaton - read. love. write.

ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ Nick Dawson's photography exhibition at Indigo Gallery till 14 May.

EVENTS

- ❖ People's movement and its achievement – youth perspective 12 May, 3PM at Martin Chautari.
- ❖ Liberation is not enough: the Kamaiya movement in Nepal book launch at 12 May, SAP Nepal Hall, 3PM. 4419718
- ❖ Buddha Jayanti 13 May
- ❖ Readings for Peace - an evening dedicated to peace with readings at The British Council, 15 May, 5.30 PM..
- ❖ Open night celebrate the written word, 17 May at The British Council.
- ❖ Poetry Challenge - read, remember, rehearse and recite a poem, 18 May, 5.30 Talking about Reading 2 with Dr Abhi Subedi at The British Council, 19 May, 5.30 PM.
- ❖ International Day for Biological Diversity 22 May.
- ❖ Life Skills Training Camp 26-28 May. 4107599
- ❖ World No-Tobacco Day 31 May.
- ❖ Communication and leadership program with Toastmasters, meeting every Tuesday at IEDP building, Tripureswor.
- ❖ 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.
- ❖ 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
- ❖ 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

- ❖ Sandwiches at Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4491234
- ❖ BBQ every Friday at Jalan Jalan Restaurant. Kupondole Height. 5544872.
- ❖ Beat the heat with milkshakes and smoothies at Hyatt Regency.
- ❖ Imago-Dei café and gallery, food, dessert and coffee, Nagpokhari, open Monday-Friday 9AM-9PM. 4442464
- ❖ Café U for organic Japanese homecooking. Near International Club, Sanepa. 11AM-6PM. Closed on Tuesdays. 5524202
- ❖ Trendy martinis at Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4491234
- ❖ Momo & Sekuwa Revolution every Saturday at Tea-House Inn. 668-0080,
- ❖ Wet & Wild Summer Splash at Godavari Village Resort, a special package of Swimming & Lunch. 5560675
- ❖ Breakfast at Singma Restaurant. 8.30 – 11.00AM daily. 5520004
- ❖ Barbeque at Le Meridien, Kathmandu, every Saturday. 4451212.
- ❖ BBQ Dinner at Summit Hotel every Friday. 6.30-9.30PM. 5521810
- ❖ Breakfast with Birds Lunch with Butterfly at Farm House Cafe. 4375279

GETAWAYS

- ❖ Buddham Saranam Gacchami special offer 13 May weekend Rs 1250.00 per person. Club Himalaya. 668-0080
- ❖ 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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Mission Impossible III

Ethan Hunt is out again. This time the retired IMF team leader's mission is not just about saving the world from the big bad guys but gets more personal. And, as usual, Hunt has to choose to accept his mission just when he is looking forward to good times. But the plot gets complicated when his professional and personal life cross paths, all thanks to his corrupt higher ups. MI III doesn't leave you wanting for full-throttle action.

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NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



This has been an unusually wet pre-monsoon season. But don't be fooled by the drizzles, they may look like the monsoon but they are actually brought in by the westerlies. A high pressure zone over Tibet deflected westerly moisture our way these past two weeks causing the thunderstorms and rain. Of the average 116 mm of rain for May the Valley floor had already received 65 mm in the first week. This satellite picture taken on Thursday at noon shows us more rain-bearing clouds coming in from the northwest. More rain over the weekend, with a moderate rise in maximum temperatures for the hills with cool nights.

KATHMANDU VALLEY



BBC नेपाली

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नेपाल कृषिप्रधान मुलुक हो । यहाँका ८० प्रतिशतभन्दा बढी जनता कृषि पेसामा आधारित छन् । कूल राष्ट्रिय आयको रुन्डै ४० प्रतिशत हिस्सा अहिले पनि कृषि क्षेत्रले नै ओगटेको छ । सिङ्गो मुलुकको आर्थिक, सामाजिक मेरुदण्डको रुपमा रहेको कृषिक्षेत्र उपेक्षित हुनु हुँदैन । कृषकहरू देशका वास्तविक नायक हुन् । उनीहरूलाई सम्मान र कदर गर्नुपर्छ । कृषकहरूले पनि आफ्नो पसिनामाथि विश्वास गर्नुपर्छ । नयाँ नयाँ कृषि प्रणाली अवलम्बन गर्नुपर्छ । पढ्दैमा खेती गर्नु नहुने होइन । रुन् कृषिक्षेत्रलाई आधुनिकीकरण गर्न शिक्षित र सचेत कृषकको खाचो छ । त्यसैले कृषि पेसालाई आदर गरौं, कृषकलाई सम्मान गरौं ।

श्री ५ को सरकार
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UNITED NATION: Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala after a meeting with UN Special Envoy Samuel Tamarat (left) and UN Resident Coordinator Matthew Kahane Tuesday. Tamrat and visiting chief of UN peacekeeping, Col Ian Sinclair, left for New Delhi on Thursday for consultations and will return to Kathmandu over the weekend.



WE SWEAR: Krishna Jung Rayamajhi on Wednesday swears in Harihar Birahi, Ram Prasad Shrestha, Ram Kumar Shrestha and Kiran Prasad Shrestha of his commission probing crackdowns on the pro-mocracy movement last month.



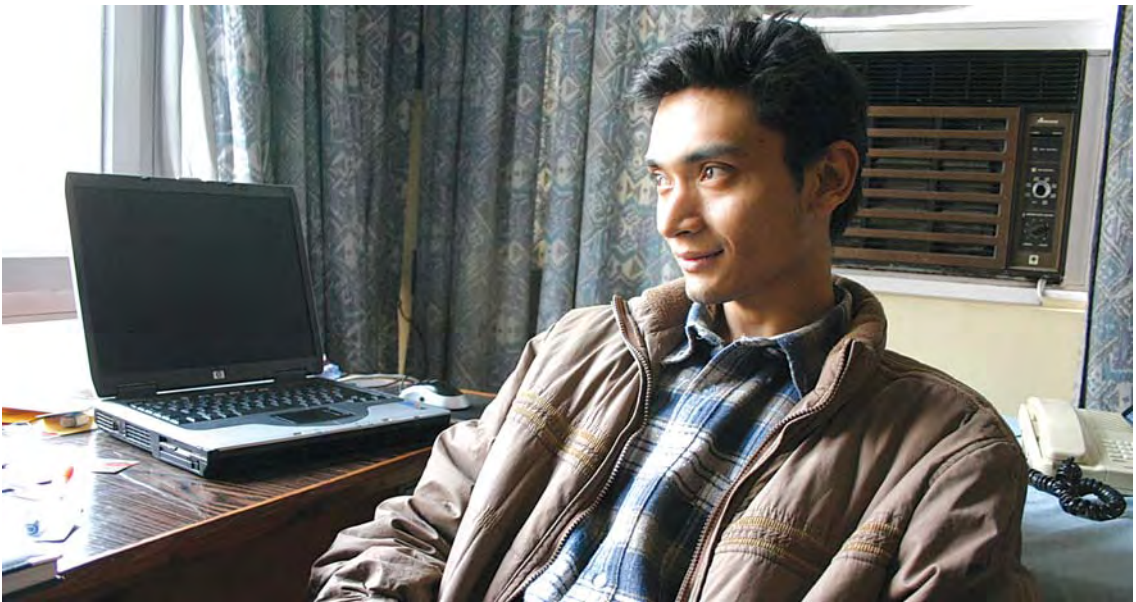
DYNASTY: Chief Justice Dilip Raj Poudel waits with his wife for the start of a tea party in which the justices met with lawyers from the Bar at the BICC on Monday.



BANDWAGON: Maoist supporters ride a bus to a mass meeting on Sunday in Nawalparasi 35 km from Butwal.



BACK BENCHER: MP Pradip Nepal peruses a recent issue of Nepali Times while waiting for last week session of parliament to start.



Umesh's blogosphere

When blogger Umesh Shrestha's blogsite www.mysansar.com received 20 visitors in April 2005, he was ecstatic. One very eventful year and lots of blogging later Shrestha's Merosansar site notched 67,000 visitors on a single day on 25 April. "Merosansar was not born because I was suddenly a blogging expert and had big ideas about changing the world," admits the 29-year, "however, this past year I participated in lots of street protests, all I saw was torture and oppression and I just couldn't stop writing." Shrestha was one of the many laid off from Channel Nepal after King Gyanendra's February First takeover. "I was interested in the new media so after losing my job I had time to teach myself all about

blogging, videostreaming and podcasting," he says. Today Shrestha works full time on his blog and has even started helping other interested Nepali bloggers from Myagdi and Qatar. "You don't have to be a tech guru to be a blogger, all you need is internet connection, a good microphone if you want to podcast, a video and digital camera and you all set to go," Shrestha says. Merosansar gets over 35 percent of its visits from the US and the rest from Hong Kong, Japan, UK, Korea, Belgium, Germany, Qatar and Canada. Only about 7 percent of the visits are from Nepal. "I was the first one to use Nepali Unicode in my blogsite, but I also have podcasts, audio and vide, which

attracts," says Shrestha. Shrestha receives many threats, some of them death threats, via email and was beaten up by security forces once last November when he was out videotaping police atrocities. But this hasn't deterred him. He says Nepali bloggers feel it is their responsibility to spread the message of loktantra and it is very hard to discourage those who are out on mission. Shrestha admits problems with online credibility and says that he sticks to the ethics he learnt as a conventional journalist: "Media bloggers are different we follow the same codes of conduct journalists follow, we don't write what we have not seen with our own two eyes." ● Mallika Aryal



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हॉन्सुस त मज्जाले — हॉन्सुस —



Living in a supernatural state

In any other country they'd have thrown up their hands and given up by now. But not here in Nepal, because we are a hardy and resilient people who over the centuries have got used to being kicked around by our rulers.

It may appear to the casual outside observer that the government is stuck because it has been unable to expand the cabinet after ten days, but we

UNDER MY HAT
Kunda Dixit



know this is far from the truth. Hectic behind-the-scenes negotiations are going on even as we speak—not within the seven party alliance as you might expect, but between the seven party alliance and God.

The matter had to be referred to a neutral higher up authority because negotiations between the parties over portfolios was deadlocked over who would get to be the powerful Minister of Superstition and Black Magic. In ongoing consultations with the Almighty a breakthrough is expected in the next few months and once that happens, god willing, it will be smooth sailing.

God Himself is understandably worried about

His status in the post-democracy period and whether He will still be allowed to rain thunderbolts down from heaven when he gets the urge as He has been in the habit of doing. He may also be perturbed by the spread of atheists and agnostics amongst his congregation, but we would like to reassure God on that score. As a god-fearing nation most Nepalis would like to retain Him and his Pantheon as a tourist attraction. So no need for Him to panic just yet.

It is this belief in the occult in statecraft that sets us apart in the community of nations. When normal methods fail we have always turned to the paranormal. If there are important decisions to be made, we time our decisions to precise calculations of the position and movements of the moon and planets vis-à-vis Intelsat 5-B in geostationary orbit over the Indian Ocean.

If there are intractable differences we don't waste time in messy compromises, we simply wait for supernatural intervention. When the going gets tough the prime minister sacrifices a black goat. And when it is question of survival, one neutralises one's enemies by decapitating five species of livestock and domestic fowl to

propitiate the wrath of the Goddesses. And if all that still doesn't work, one can always stick pins into stuffed dolls.

It is heartening to see that the government has got its priorities right and has set aside non-urgent matters like nominating a full cabinet and initiating the peace process to leave no stone unturned in overturning all decisions of the previous regime. Political appointees rewarded for their loyalty by the previous regime with ambassadorships will now be replaced by political appointees rewarded for their loyalty by the present regime with ambassadorships.

One of the first edicts passed by the autocratic royal regime last year was the rule requiring all brick lorries to cover their cargo with plastic sheets, and we are glad to report that since this is now a free country trucks are no longer required to follow this silly rule. U-turns are allowed again on Darbar Marg and streets that had been converted to one-way by the previous regime are now two-way again. The anti-democratic seatbelt law has been repealed and the draconian royal decree suppressing freedom of speech by banning use of mobile phones while driving has been annulled. ●

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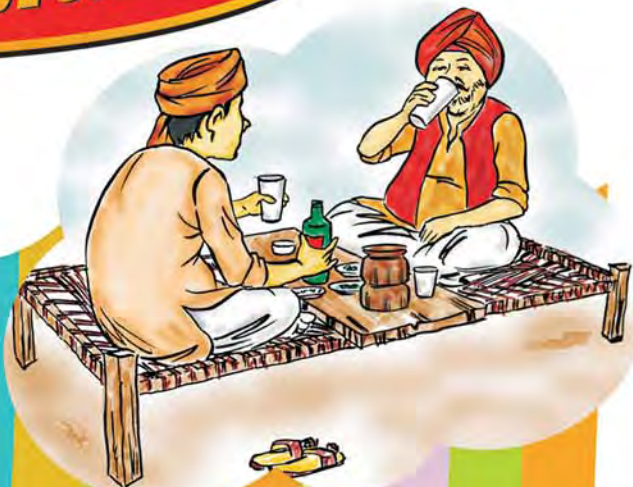
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