May 18, 2006—the day a new Nepal was born. The day the parliament restored its own supreme and declared itself supreme to save the monarchy from a king who nearly took it down with him.

In one razor sharp resolution that can only be described as a 21st century Magna Carta, the parliament cut off powers and privileges enjoyed by Kings of the Shah dynasty for the past 237 years.

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala in a speech to the parliament broadcast live delivered a warning to extremists of the left and right: “The whole nation will rise up against anyone who works against this historic proclamation,” Koirala declared before asking Speaker Subhas Nembang to continue. As Nembang said, all powers of the king will now be handed to the people, the table thumping from the MPs was deafening.

The declaration was to have been passed by parliament on Monday, but the parties hesitated. There were differences within the parties about the momentous step. A key element of the declaration is the transfer of decisions on royal succession and other palace matters to the parliament’s State Affairs Committee. Other provisions include:

- Slashing royal allowances
- Taxing royal income
- Trying royal family members in court in case of criminal offences
- Stripping the king’s title as supreme commander of the army
- Replacing the royal household with civil servants
- Abolishing the concept of kings consultancy
- Declaring Nepal a secular state

SOVEREIGN PARLIAMENT: Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala (left) speaks briefly before the seven-party declaration is read out by speaker Subhas Nembang.

There has been no official reaction from the army but one senior officer told us: “If the nation demands it, this should not be a difficult transition. There will be a few hurdles, and there will be challenges because it is such a big change.” Other sources say army chief Pyar Jung Thapa will be replaced by Lt Gen Balananda Sharma who has been recalled from peace-keeping duties in the Golan Heights.

Political analysts say the house declaration paves the way for the country to now deal with the issue of bringing the Maoists in from the jungles. The 12-point agreement is a point to start, but the road is fraught with challenges: a long-term ceasefire, launching a peace process, stopping unprecedented rebel extortion, renunciation of violence by the Maoists, setting up a new interim government made along with the Maoists, demobilisation and integration of the guerrilla army.

The lesson of the past month is clear: Nepali citizens now know their power. They didn’t take to the streets just to end royal rule but also to force the Maoists and parties work together to end the conflict.
A NEW NEPAL

Building is harder than destroying. Revenge is easier than reconciliation.

Now that the parliament has been declared supreme, and it has made the far-reaching historic decision to find a way to accommodate a figurehead king we must start looking beyond dismantling to building. If we don’t, we’ll forever be stuck in this rut of retribution and counter-retribution.

Parliament’s Magna Carta for Nepal is nothing less than revolutionary. But it is also accommodative. By giving the monarchy a last chance it has shown considerable courage in standing up to the republican wave that swept the country during the April uprising. By doing so, it is leaving the final decision to the fate of the monarchy to the people.

The decisive and radical measure to bring royal successions under purview of the people’s representatives was actually the only decision that was really necessary. The rest (removing ‘Royal’ and ‘Shi Panch’, appointment of the COAS, parliament’s state affairs committee to over see the royal palace) were just details. The other decision we applauded is the one to declare Nepal a secular state.

The seven-party alliance has saved the institution of monarchy by a slender thread. We hope the king and his absolutist and fundamentalist cohorts have got the message. If not, he should look hard at this accompanying picture of protesters atop the statue of the founder of his dynasty on Thursday. In the end, it was the moderate middle of the parliamentary democracy that rescued the institution whose current stakeholders were bent on destroying it. Rather than gloating or baying for more blood, it is now time to stop dwelling in the past and start building a new Nepal.

The special resolution of parliament on Thursday lays the groundwork for this to happen. We must now work towards making this transitional stage of constitutional limbo as short as possible. That way we can resolve the political and legal questions once and for all so that the nation can finally turn its attention to socio-economic progress.

Kiran Panday

Not the beginning

Politicians will be wise to keep all options open

“Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.” So observed Winston Churchill in 1942 as he continued his epic leadership of the free world against Nazi Germany.

We are also facing a difficult and dangerous time in our history. The raw emotions in the Nepali streets in April are reminders for any leader, elected or otherwise, of what lurks beneath the thin veneer of civility: state poverty, class, caste, gender and ethnic issues, a large unemployment rate, poor governance and an unstable political arrangement.

The April protests did not lay to rest these demons but brought to the streets in a near amoral cartoon-like conflagration that might have had negative long-term effects for an already battered society.

If Nepal is ever to get any progressive momentum, the leaders of this movement must effectively deal with the Maoists or we will continue to fail in every sector – health, education, technology, governance, foreign investments, and commerce. These cannot be delivered through protest and “every-man-a-king” politics but from the daily grind of governance, sound economic policies, and strong leadership.

Ethics, even in mature democracies, are unforgivable or have downright disdain for morality. Some of our own elites, who were at the vanguard of the current campaign in April, are no different. Some of the most powerful about the harm that has been caused.

But unless our civil society members and politicians in Nepal invent an alternative paradigm to security, one of the first needs of humanity, they need to recognize that there is now an imperative need to reflect and radically adapt their thinking so they become protectors of a democratic state by military force, if necessary.

Benjamin Franklin, a “civil society” member of considerable talent and repute, took it upon himself during his tenure as Clerk of the Pennsylvania Assembly to raise an armed militia despite the prevailing parochial ethos of the Quakers. He also dominated the Assembly in pre-revolutionary colonial America. Franklin raised the militia to ensure that in case of emergency, as Edmund Morgan, the historian notes, “its people were unprepared to do anything (for security).” Remarkably because everyone was looking for someone else to do something, “Our intellectuals, activists and political leaders have enormous faith that talks, political arrangements, the Norwegians or some third-party will solve our existing security dilemma and lead to “permanent” peace. But continue to give the Maoists a pass in almost Ostrich-like fashion.

Will the leaders continue to engage in defections that engorge the automatic dividend of democracy? What if the constitutional assembly proceeds under murderous threats or the truce is yet another well-timed sham? Our masses need to be educated about the possibility of a resumption of military action if all options fail. Our media needs to educate the public that many current democratic societies have defended themselves by military force during critical periods in their history.

The prime minister and his advisors must be willing to look at the Maoist solution from all possible angles including all ‘peaceful’ approaches but maintain a strong counter option, or they will find themselves not in the company of Churchill or Franklin but in that of Chou En-Lai. Dalai–historical emblems of craven appeasement who believed they could negotiate with Hitler and failed.

LETTERS

APRIL UPRISING

After seeing destruction, fighting and killings on television and newspapers I have learnt no respect or mercy for anyone in this world. Instead of learning good things in life there is only hatred and bad things for one another.

Yes I sound like a grow-up, but I am just a nine-year-old girl and this is about my little experience in life. Since I was born I have only seen destruction everywhere. Every other day there is Nepal bands or something happening in our country.

Everyone looks angry and always ready to fight with each other. As I grow older I can see only a stoppage and they are scary. This was a most beautiful and peaceful country until the government and parties destroy it.

Then unfortunately the king and many members of the royal family died. Everything started going wrong after that. The people that requested something found out that the government had disagreed and so they were furious over it. So they started to argue and started to kill, destruct or burn everything and from that day on they were called Maoists.

From that day on until now they still struggle and fight to get them to agree on the request. I do not blame government or the Maoists but if they do not agree we will all be in danger. Nepal may be destroyed completely if you can understand, somebody try to end this before it is too late.

Ashasha A Lama,

Not a long time in a country’s history. Culprits at that time as identified by the Mallik Commission’s report should be brought to justice too. Not only that, if we do occur to them that perhaps a civil servant, or a village had no choice but to support the royal (or any other government), or the army just to be able to support the family? If you are really set on punishing people, who will take up the task of punishing those political leaders who have misused funds, bribed and bought people in the past? And what about the atrocities committed by the Maoists? Or is that not on your agenda, because now, you are potentially on the same side? While pointing fingers at the mistakes of other people, do not forget your own.

Last month the Nepalese people stood up for their right to choose their own form of government, their right to decide who should be in power, and that is at the core of the Rhododendron Revolution. Now we have to work with everyone no matter what their political ideology, isn’t that the essence of democracy after all?

#Sujala Pant, Thimphu

LETTERS

Nepali Times welcomes all feedback. Letters should be brief and may be edited for space. While pseudonyms can be accepted, writers details will be given preference. Email letters should be brief and may be edited for space. Letters should be in text format without attachments with ‘letter to the editor’ in the subject line.

Email: letters@nepaltimes.com
Fax: 977-1-5520013
Mail: Letters, Nepali Times, GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu, Nepal.
Defusing the pressure cooker

The PM must make fast decisions on the army and Maoists

Between the abrupt dissolution of parliament in May 2002 and its restoration through the April Uprising this year, the RNA ran the country pretty much as its generals wished. Over all these years, the RNA has exercised a priority claim over the national exchequer. As the White Paper of Finance Minister Ram Sham Mahat has conclusively shown, spiralling defence Minister Ram Sharan Mahat has conclusively shown, spiralling defence
exchequer. As the White Paper of Finance
exercised a priority claim over the national
pretty much as its generals wished.

Tampered with evidence had they remained suspected that they could have Devi Ram Sharma have been suspended as it National Investigation Department head was suspected that they could have
the Armed Police Force Sahabir Thapa and Shyam Bhakta Thapa, Inspector General of the Nepali Police
forces during the people's movement. Based on its preliminary recommendations, the
examining the excesses of the security uprisings was established. His refusal to suppressing the peaceful people's
in every excessive use of force in
military-dominated unified command for
undeclared martial law administered by a country to bankruptcy.

A judicial commission of enquiry is examining the excesses of the security forces during the people's movement. Based on its preliminary recommendations, the Inspector General of the Nepal Police Shyam Bhakta Thapa, Inspector General of the Armed Police Force Sahabir Thapa and National Investigation Department head Devi Ram Sharma have been suspended as it was suspected that they could have tampered with evidence had they remained in authority. But it’s not clear why an exception has been made for the army chief. Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala seems to be repeating the mistake that his brother BP Koirala and friend KP Bhattarai committed in the 1960s and 1990s to keep the RNA unchanged. A carefully constructed myth exists in Kathmandu that the army is somehow infallible, immune from human failings and thus beyond scrutiny. This is the reason that its excesses escape largely unexamined. But when Pyar Jung Thapa and his deputy Rukhramed Katoval ‘briefed’ Girija Prasad Koirala for hours prior to the implementation of the Raymajhi commission’s recommendations it raised a very pertinent question: does this government have the courage to investigate human rights violations by the army or make it implement the decisions of the commission?

Will the RNA listen if the government decides defence spending needs to be cut to 1960 levels? These are the issues that need to be confronted rather than the removal of the ‘royal’ prefix from the army's name. Any army is too big for a country where half the population is afflicted by chronic hunger and all its related pathologies. In absolute terms, the RNA is as big as the Bangladesh military, which has six times our population and a GDP nearly 11 times larger. With the combined strength of the army, the armed police and the police force at about 250,000, Nepal has one of the biggest internal security apparatus in proportion to its area and population. One in every 100 Nepali works for the security forces, but it hasn’t made Nepal a more secure place. In fact, a bilaterated security machine is probably the reason we are insecure. The Maoist menace is even more ominous. No one, not even its leaders, have an exact idea about the number of their caches carrying guns. It’s estimated that only about 20,000 rebels have received some guerrilla training. The rest (about 30,000 others) can use explosives and arms. Even if a very small section of those were to decide to defect with their weapons, the seeds of many more future insurgencies will remain. The Jantantrik Tarun Mukti Morcha has already shown what it implies for the prospects of peace. The army leaders must be brought to book if the rule of law is to prevail. There is no sense in the distorted logic that such a decision will adversely affect the morale of the force. Quite the contrary in fact, it will send a strong message to the RNA rank and file that the days of a golf-playing royal army are over. An army convinced of the sanctity of its purpose is an unconquerable force. The government needs to give that sense of purpose to our defence forces, not the concessions that some influential generals are said to be bargaining for.

Tackling the insurgents is no less tricky. "The Maoists' weapons are a lot less risky than they are made out to be. Most are rudimentary arms looted from the police and the army. But enormous resources are needed to keep weapons of war functional during peacetime. Out-of-action guerrillas, however, remain lethal as long as they are not properly rehabilitated in society. Koirala waits with a pair of scissors in his hand in front of a pressure cooker. There are two wires sticking out of the bomb: one black, another red. He doesn’t know which one is the active wire. Cutting both will eventually set off the bomb, but doing nothing most surely will. Cutting one carries half the chance of defusing the bomb with the risk that it may set off the device. Like in the movies, it’s time to cut one of the wires. Nobody needs envy Koirala’s quandary."
Many small plans

A ‘Marshall Plan’ is not an appropriate paradigm for Nepal

T he Nepal Times has reminded readers of the need to begin a comprehensive reconstruction and development effort in post-conflict Nepal in its editorial (‘Guns and slogans’, #297) urging donors to ‘Unleash a Marshall Plan’.

‘Unleash’ in the figurative sense is used for unleashing one’s temper or ‘the dogs of war’. Neither this military idiom, nor the 1948-52 the United States pumped into Western Europe, has been appropriate paradigm for Nepal.

The situation in many developing countries including Nepal is different. In Europe the wounded organism called capitalism could be revived with the Marshall Plan. In Nepal, a new organism (an effective instrument of capitalism) has to be first created and no external plan can do that in the absence of national statesmanship and visionary leaders. Fifty years of development aid has not been able to create the required attributes. Aid money has tended to create a parasitic class, and aid projects generally have been expensive, ineffective and unsustainable. The problem is not lack of resources but why money cannot be converted into a productive capital.

The question is not whether we should develop infrastructure but how. Overall Nepal may not have fared well in 50 years of development, but in competitive partnership with the best bureaucrat's foreign support, Nepalis have made innovations in major sectors of development. Successful examples are community forestry, community-based drinking water supply and farmer-managed irrigation systems are others.

The decentralised approach to building local suspension bridges, micro-hydropower, biogas, the national private sector’s participation in hydropower development and community distribution of electricity. The Nepal government’s incentive package, which can yield rich dividends with well-targeted support. The tragedy of Nepal after 1950 has been that those bestowed with leadership responsibilities have tended to disregard such innovations and instead sought grandiose ideas and solutions from outside.

Nepal’s challenges are democratising the mechanism for creation of new assets and converting them into a productive capital. If one recognises this as a basic feature, then the character of how transformation would occur becomes a function of the nature of local societies, education, institutional base, politics, and the physical landscape. Physical models of development from elsewhere cannot be transplanted without major modifications in our unique environment.

The march of capitalism has shown how the transformation took place in the West. Western societies were also able to put in place institutions of education, training of the indigenous capitalists by developing competent governments, competitive markets and by fostering tolerance and understanding of their dissenting civic populations much better than the developing countries.

The way forward for Nepal is to decentralise competent government, competitive market and a critical and dissenting civic movement to its motif and fostering creative interaction among them. This creative interaction can fare better when individual initiatives can flourish, when government regulations are facilitative and not restrictive, and when alert civil society champions broader ethical values. Nepal should rejoice in many plans of local make and not be straitjacketed into a ‘Marshall Plan’.

Ajaya Dixit is a water resource analyst with Nepal Water Conservation Foundation.
New heights

Twenty-seven people scaled Mount Everest on 14 and 15 May, a sign that the tourism industry is rebounding following slow times during the political unrest earlier this year. Americans, Swedes, Tibetans, Britons, Nepal's, Australians, New Zealanders and a 70-year-old Japanese summit the world's highest peak, according to Mountain Experience Pvt Ltd. The Japanese climber became the world's oldest person to make the ascent. Other records set in the two days include a sixth ascent by a woman (Lelepa Sherpa), and the first double amputee to reach the summit (New Zealand's Mark Inglis).

HBL schemes

Himalayan Bank has announced two new schemes for its customers. Those signing up for the Lipheopiaptu Deposit Yujana, a fixed deposit scheme will receive one ticket for every Rs 25,000 they deposit. Each ticket will be included in a quarterly draw for Rs 1 million. Depositors will receive one percent interest based on a minimum time period of six months. HBL has also announced it will provide loans to small businesses at 7.99 percent interest, the lowest rate of all commercial banks, according to Kishore Maharjan, HBL deputy general manager. The loan amount ranges from Rs 0.5 million to Rs 1.5 million. Both new schemes will be available at all branches of the bank from next week.

NEW PRODUCTS

FLATRON TV: Buyers of LG Flatron Lv are eligible for the company's 'Sure Shot Prizes at Best Prices' offer. Prizes include an LG i-shirt or football with the purchase of 14, 20 and 21 rich conventional sets and gifts such as LG wrist watches with 15, 17, 21, 25 and 29 Flatron sets. LG is also offering free Rio trays with the purchase of LG refrigerators, 6kg of Surf Excel with LG washing machines, a cooking kit with LG microwave ovens, DVD's with the purchase of a music system and free accessories for those who buy LG mobile phones.

VICON CONDOM: Jyoti International has introduced the Vicon condom in Nepal. It will be available in drug stores across the country.

ATTA NOODLES: The maker of Wai Wai have introduced Bingo Instant Atta Noodles. Priced at just Rs 10, Atta Wai have  introduced Bingo Instant Atta Noodles. operating in Kathmandu. I then asked whether they remembered seeing ads of those agencies anywhere. They said that they did not, and that they knew of the agencies through professional contacts.

I repeated the experiment with American and Bangladeshi friends. They too could not name more than two ads in agencies in their respective countries. Moreover, they recalled no instances where those ad companies had placed ads about themselves in mainstream media. In all cases, I concluded: If ad agencies themselves don't appear to use ads to advertise their own services to build up their brand, why should you believe them when they say that you have to spend a small fortune on ads to build up your brand in the marketplace?

Truth he told, my little experiment was inspired after reading an online article (“Advertising Execs are Hypocrites”, 17 April 2006, Brandweek) by Simon Sinek. Talking about the American experience, Sinek changes that modern ad agencies work hard to reinforce the value of their product with their clients… studies are whipped up to prove the effectiveness of (ads) … when clients’ budgets are tight, agencies will provide data to show the importance of advertising in a down market.”

He asks, “If advertising is so effective, why don’t ad agencies advertise?” Sinek answers by arguing that “more than advertising, agencies rely heavily on public relations, implying that clients would do well if they also relied more on public relations and less on advertisements to build up their brands.

That implication strongly resonates with what I have observed about successful brands in the Nepali marketplace. Even in this age of super market saturation in Kathmandu, for instance, you never see ads anywhere that say, 'Shop at Bhathhatik. Low prices everyday'. Yet the absence of such ads has not stopped thousands of shoppers from going to Bhathhatik every day to buy just about everything from vegetables to lawn mowers.

Two years ago, I asked Min Bdr Gurung, the self-effacing proprietor who started out as a small entrepreneur running a cold storage, why he placed no ads touting the offerings at his ever-expanding supermarket. He said he was more interested in attracting repeat customers by bargaining hard with suppliers to get low prices than in throwing away good money to listen to PowerPoint presentations made by ad agency executives.

Similarly, I have never seen Thamel's Himalayan Java put ads out that say, 'Come taste the coffee, the beans are from Golmi'. Java’s success can be credited to the PR prowess of its owner (along with its location and the frequently changing couch-and-sofa decor that make you feel as though you were stepping into the studio of the American sitcom Friends).

Indeed, Gagan Pradhan seems to know just about anybody and everybody in town—the kind of customers who would recommend his restaurant to others for “coffee, community and conversation”. Of course, it doesn’t hurt that the coffee, however overpriced, is good too.

When Sinek points out that “advertising has been commoditized”, and that “agencies struggle to justify their own value in a down market”, he could have been talking about the Nepali ad industry. That is why the message that clients need to prove the effectiveness of their product with their customers who would recommend their restaurant to others for “coffee, community and conversation”. Of course, it doesn’t hurt that the coffee, however overpriced, is good too.

When Sinek points out that “advertising has been commoditized”, and that “agencies struggle to justify their own value in a down market”, he could have been talking about the Nepali ad industry. That is why the message that clients need to prove the effectiveness of their product with their customers who would recommend their restaurant to others for “coffee, community and conversation”. Of course, it doesn’t hurt that the coffee, however overpriced, is good too.

When Sinek points out that “advertising has been commoditized”, and that “agencies struggle to justify their own value in a down market”, he could have been talking about the Nepali ad industry. That is why the message that clients need to prove the effectiveness of their product with their customers who would recommend their restaurant to others for “coffee, community and conversation”. Of course, it doesn’t hurt that the coffee, however overpriced, is good too.
Subash Nembang, Speaker of the House of Representatives, in Budhabar, 18 May

How comfortable is the Speaker’s chair?

There are many challenges. The situation demands that we face these challenges and move forward.

What are these challenges and goals?

The People’s Movement has placed upon us the task of going for a constituent assembly. This has established that the people are the source of the state’s power and that sovereignty and self-rule are the people’s rights. To convert these words into action we must be able to completely end oppression, restructure the state and establish an inclusive, participatory and democratic rule of law. The People’s Movement has clearly determined that the elected representatives must construct a new constitution. This has been accepted by all. The king also accepted this in his statement on 21 April. The House of Representatives has more formally

Will such a proclamation allow for the amendment of the constitution straight away?

The reinstated HoR is the only official representative of the sovereign Nepali people. Legal experts in the country agree that a proclamation to institutionalise the NC unity movement will make it possible for the HoR to move toward a constituent assembly. The challenge for the House and its Speaker is to see that this actually happens.

Besides passing the proposal of intent, what else is the HoR doing to move toward a constituent assembly?

The HoR will be making a political proclamation to institutionalise the achievements of the People’s Movement. This proclamation, which is to be called ‘Magna Carta’, will bring forth many changes and a roadmap for a constituent assembly. During such times it is natural that the HoR should issue a political proclamation and for the people to provide legal acceptance.

Will the Parliament make an announcement that the 1990 constitution has been scrapped?

For now, all the parties in the HoR have agreed to release a political proclamation. There are other things to be done as well. The political parties will stand on this proclamation and do the necessary homework regarding other issues and reach a conclusion.

You said the statement would be issued on Monday. Why was it delayed?

What I said was that such a statement would be made after the next meeting or the one after that. On Monday, the finance minister issued a white paper and said the proclamation would come on Thursday. I am confident that Thursday’s session of the HoR will be able to issue the proclamation. Serious groundwork is being conducted on this and it has reached the end stage. The delay has not been caused by any differences in opinion or arguments but because serious homework is being done to fullfil the responsibility.

Will work done on the basis of this ‘political decision’ and in the absence of any law be liable to challenge in the courts?

Everyone has the right to challenge it. In a true democracy, the citizens’ rights must be respected. But the present HoR is the only official representative of the people. If its decisions are challenged, I am confident that the court will see it as the official representative of the sovereign Nepali people. Legal experts in the country agree that a proclamation to move toward a constituent assembly in this manner will eradicate possible reasons for coming to any other conclusion.

The Maoists have demanded that the HoR be dissolved.

The 12-point agreement between the Maoists and seven parties includes the consensus to head for a constituent assembly while the 10-point agreement is mainly concerned with internal power struggle. The Maoists want to move with the times. It calls on all political parties to move with the times. The Maoists want the HoR to be dissolved as an end stage. The delay has not been caused by any differences in opinion or arguments but because serious homework is being done to fullfil the responsibility.

Cops. You ordered curfew as a joke, shot people as a joke, challenged the people as a joke. What to do now? You’re in jail for real!

QUOTED OF THE WEEK

"No repression [of the People’s Movement] will get away this time,"

Reinstated Attorney General Yagya Murti Banjade in Nepal Samacharntra, 15/29 May

JUICE FOR GUNNS: Political prisoners Ganesh Regmi, Tejnarayan Sapkota and Prakash Gautam drinking juice after CPN-Maoist Chairman Prachanda requested them to end their weeklong hunger strike. The prisoner’s of conscience are locked up in 73 jails across the country.

Sundar Shrestha, Nepal Samacharntra, 18 May

NC unity essential

Chandra Bhandari in Filmal Khabarpatrika, 15-29 May

There is no denying that the Nepali Congress has played a historic role in Nepal’s democratic movement. The NC leadership was prominent in all the key national movements: 1950’s people’s revolution, 1960’s people’s movement and 2006’s loktantra amolani. But this party, which even defended the autocratic Rana regime, suffers immensely from factionalism. This started following the 1986 elections. After BP Koirala’s death, cunningly and scheming politicians started to surround leaders like Ganneshman Singh, Krishna P Bhuttunni and GP Koirala.

Eventually, the party split in two, one faction led by GP, the other by Sher B. Deuba. Leaders like Ramchandra, Tanash, Bhairabchaur, Rambhasan, Mahesh, Narburt and two to meet Deuba, the then prime minister, to request he reunite the divided party. Deuba agreed and GP also said that he was ready to do anything for the sake of party unity. Unfortunately, all such efforts were blocked by independents loyal to the palace. Today, it is imperative that the NC reunites. And it is the responsibility of the NC youth leaders who led millions of Nepalis during the loktantra movement to create this unity by transforming discord into agreement. The timing is crucial.

Right now, the UML is doing all it can to impress the masses. It calls itself a communist party but wants to move with the times. Madhub Nepal is claiming that he will fulfill every demand raised on the streets. The Maoists, who have killed, severely injured and displaced people who did not support them, are coming to talks merely for the sake of changing the constitution. The palace is still waiting for a chance to again seize power by fuelling fire among the seven parties. If it fails to reunite now, the NC will disappear for good and the entire nation will suffer. But first, GP needs his supporters to help remove the opportunists who are still trying to use him for their own vested interests.

Democratic troops

Janalshammi, 18 May

Letters received from soldiers in the Royal Nepali Army show that even security personnel favour democracy. Their letters clearly indicate that they want the army to be controlled by the cabinet and not the king. Received on 14 May, 14 the letters welcomed the move to dismiss the three security chiefs Sahabir Thapa, Devi Raj Sharma and Shyam Bhikda Thapa and demanded that army chief Piyar Jung Thapa and Rukmangad Katwal also be let go. The soldiers also want action taken against the two for extorting money from soldiers and the extravagant wedding of Piyar Jung Thapa’s daughter proved.

According to one of the letters, “Lieutenant General Rukmangad Katwal’s words are patriotic but his moves are regressive. So even though it’s technically his turn to become the chief of the army, someone else should be given that post.” It adds, “Piyar Jung Thapa, Chhabil Lal Khadka and some other high ranking officials of the army used money from the Army Welfare Fund, which should be distributed to soldiers, to their personal and political interests.”

Another letter reads, “The faces of Nepalis have brightened after the movement last month. We are hoping that... Nepal will see better
days. Whether it’s the administration, the army or the police, traditional practices should be abolished and all the corrupt punished.”

Royally spent

Editorial in Kantipur, 6 May

One justification for the February First move was that the political parties had failed to maintain financial discipline. But Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat’s White Paper details how the royal regime not only failed in its financial responsibilities but pushed the country towards economic mayhem by spending tens of millions of rupees raised from taxes on poor Nepalis without any accountability.

Besides extravagant foreign visits and expensive spendings of security forces, huge sums were spent on municipal elections and in other unnecessary areas. The royal government ignored the needs of the poor and neglected development. Now the present government faces a huge challenge to raise enough money to keep the country afloat. The financial crisis raises the possibility that some development projects might have to be put off. The royal government’s outrageous expenditures at taxpayers’ expense should be discussed in parliament and those responsible should be penalised to ensure that such acts are not repeated.

Such incidents illustrate that the economic powers of the home minister can be misused, so parliament should also discuss if these powers are appropriate. It should also ensure that government spending is transparent and that its non-budgetary expenditure is presented in parliament and released only after it is approved. The government has very limited time to find and allocate funds. The finance minister has said that he will soon introduce interim economic programs, which should be approved immediately and not subject to political hassles.

Palace wheels

Samay, 18 May

At the height of People’s Movement II, the palace was demanding funds for a special car for the king, worth about Rs 1 million. On 18 April, the Ministry of Finance received a letter from the palace saying that the king needed a mine-proof car to tour the rough roads of the districts. Even after the palace lost its authority following the successful janandolan, palace officials did not stop pressuring the ministry to release the funds. Initially the budget unit was rushing to release the money but it has now kept the request pending. King Birendra used only two cars all his life but this king is demanding new cars left and right at a time when poverty remains a major problem. In the last three years, cars worth about Rs 370 million have been imported for the king’s use, including a Rolls Royce and Jaguar. Many are now wondering what luxury model is on the king’s shopping list today—we should know in a few months.
Looking at the phenomenal growth of Nepal’s printing industry in the past decade, one wonders how much more it would have grown had it not been for the economic downturn caused by the past 10 years of conflict.

From a country that used to spend Rs 80 million hard currency every year till a decade ago to get printing jobs done in India and Thailand, Nepal today is nearly self-sufficient in printing. The growth in the media post-1990 was the initial catalyst. As newspapers improved production quality, the advertising industry kept pace with creativity and this had a spillover effect on the rest of the industry. By the end of the 1990s, publishers imported state-of-the-art printing machines to churn out world-class magazines.

We offer the best quality products when it comes to printing but we are still struggling with our outdated binding technology, which is why we cannot print large quantities in one go.

Amar Shakya
Sewa Press

Challenges still remain but we have big plans for the future, which includes expanding to full automatic 28X40 inches machine.

Gautam Shrestha
Jagadamba Press

Scan Pro introduced colour separation and computer through plate (CtP) technologies for the first time in Nepal. Now our customers get higher quality and economical pre-press products.

Om Pradhan
ScanPro
The slump came in 2001-3 when economic stagnation hit advertising and this had a chain reaction in media and then on the printing industry. Because this coincided with heavy investment in new printing equipment, many presses felt the painful strain of keeping up with bank loans. But most weathered the storm by diversifying and in some cases also taking on export jobs.

The fact that Nepal has its own magazine devoted to the printing industry must mean that the sector has come of age. Sunil Shrestha of Wordscape launched Print Comato foster quality in the sector. “Nepali clients need to be educated about quality and be willing to pay for it.”

Sushant Limbu of Millennium Press agrees: “There are two types of competition one of price and one of quality. The problem with Nepalis is that if they are given something at a cheaper price they will not take into consideration the quality.”

Wordscape also publishes what everyone agrees is Nepal’s best-designed magazine, ECS, which caters to Kathmandu’s expatriate community. ECS is printed at Jagadamba Press, which has been around for 50 years and started modernising with state-of-the-art equipment ten years ago.

“It was difficult in the beginning to convince customers that if they wanted quality and reliability they had to pay slightly more but it’s much easier now,” says Jagadamba’s Narayan Poudel, “with the ceasefire volume is also picking up again.”

Jagadamba has the country’s only heat-set web machine that can print at 35,000 copies per hour. It now prints 15 newspapers and magazines besides Himalmedia’s own Nepali Times, Himal Khabarpatrika and Wave magazine. Indeed, most printers are now working overtime to keep up with demand for new products like promotion posters, calendars, magazines and annual reports.

Laxmi Bank has pioneered turning bland annual reports into works of art. Says CEO Suman Joshi: “For us, the annual report is a passionate project every year and we believe it reinforces our brand much more than a regular ad.”

It was Jang Bahadur Rana that brought in Nepal’s first press in 1851 on his return from his visit to England and France to print Gorkhapatra. Today, there are more than 100 printing presses across Nepal. Many of them not only have modern machines but are now also investing in top-of-the-line pre-press equipment like imagesetters and computer-to-plate (CtP) technology. CtP removes one stage in the printing process by eliminating the need for plastic film, reducing cost and generally speeding things up. Four companies already have CtPs and more are in order. Says Om Pradhan of ScanPro: “What we can now offer with CtP is rapid turn around at much lower cost and a much better final print quality.”

With so much achieved in so little time, it may be tempting for Nepal’s printers to rest on their laurels. But the field is still wide open and there are lots of areas where no one has yet ventured. Security printing of bank notes, bonds and stamps is one. Labelling and packaging could do with more investment as the economy grows. And if tourism takes off again there will be in-flight magazines, post cards, posters and brochures. The good news is that with the improvement in pre-press and design, these products will be as good as the world has to offer.
Tell me about life underground.
In the beginning it was a bit difficult. I was teaching at an institute, earning money and taking care of my family so I had a very hectic life. But once I went underground I had to adjust to not seeing people around. I overcame it, and finally now I’m quite at home underground. It has plus and minus sides. Plus, we are able to focus on the cause that we are giving our lives for. The negative is that to an extent you are cut off from the public. So you become very subjective. But it is a price you to pay.

What about your daughter?
Manushree must be about 20. I think she’s 20. I get to spend time with her maybe once a year, that’s it. I can’t disclose where she is. I make sure that I write to her. She’s also studying political science, so that makes it easy for us to communicate with her.

Do you travel often to Nepal?
Very often, very often. My job is with the international department. It is Nepal’s poverty that is a problem but also the reason that is making people rebel. I have been to America and Europe, there are a lot of people there who are depressed and there is no spirit for rebellion. We may be very poor but we are political and we rebel.

How did you get politicised?
I did my schooling at IIT in Kanpur, and the environment there was very idealistic, the people very cultured, very educated, so every time I comeback to my country I found that people were very backward especially the women. That really made me wonder where my society was, where I was. I made up my mind to help these women. I associated with the feminist journal, Manushree and that’s how I came into the Maoist circles. I also got to know about the Maoist movement in India, the harassment they face. I’m from a rich middle class background and it forced me to ask why Nepal is so poor.

What is your current work in the movement?
I am involved with the annual magazine, the Worker, the website, correspondence, information, disseminating our information. Many times our party sends us to see what the problems are, to give them classes, to see if there’s any gender disparity. When I was in charge of women’s department around 2003, we undertook a study dealing with women, and one thing we found was that many women have rebelled against their home and joined the movement. This is the first time in South Asian history that you find this.

Do you feel that you are giving people false promises?
I feel really sad, you know, that when people hear the word communist, they see only warmongers. Let’s look at the basic word, communist, it has to do with the communist. You don’t become individually free, when the rest of the people are tied down by poverty.

Engendering
For Maoist women empowerment comes out of the barrel of a gun
MALLIKA ARYAL
in DHADING
Under the scorching heat of early summer sun at a Maoist meeting in Dhading Bist, I would have expected the audience to be old and old have been revolutionaries. However, this time the audience was young. There were young girls and women dressed in Maoist uniform, dancing and singing revolutionary songs with hands raised and voices lifted. It was a scene that made me wonder how the young women of Nepal are fighting for a better society.

What is your message to the women of Nepal?
I would tell them not to give up. We are fighting a system that enslaves us. We are fighting for a better society, for equality, for freedom. Our movement is a source of empowerment for village women. We are women guerrillas, we light a candle in our hearts and cross the oceans, “we are walking for people’s liberation, we can play hide-and-seek with guns and we are ever ready to bomb the camps of our enemies...”

The Maoist leadership claims that women make up more than 40 percent of the cadre base. Prachanda has admitted that over the years the movement was overshadowed by the unexpected response of women to join the armed struggle. Proof of growing women guerrillas can also be estimated by the increasing number of women casualties on the Maoist side during crossfire.
The human rights group INSEC estimates that the number of women in the frontlines has grown. Since the armed struggle started 10 years ago 182 women from the Maoist side have been killed of which 21 died in 2003 and 53 in 2004.

“I have to admit I did not know much about the party’s ideology when I joined as a 15-year-old, but as a woman and as a victim of oppression, I could relate to and was encouraged by it,” says Kamala Dung, 20 from Kabre. She then turns to a visiting reporter and asks: “You are a woman too, do you think our society is gender sensitive? Some people may be fine with doing nothing but I couldn’t sit idly by.”

Other comrades think it is the achievement of women in the movement that has motivated many to join the ranks. “Our society did not even trust women to go out of the four walls of the kitchen, when women took guns they scoffed,” says Bimala Subedi of the Maoist student wing in Nuwakot. “Now women are leading, they hold high positions and the movement has given them the opportunity to use their leadership skills.”

She adds that the movement has most importantly taught them to ask for their rights including financial and property rights. Because of their programs many people in their villages have started thinking critically and questioning old values. “When I go home, I see a change in the way society looks at me and I know it is because of the movement that people’s mindset is changing,” says Walha.

Women comrades say that the male-female relationship between party members is equal. “Women who felt suffocated by discrimination in society feel like they have finally found their true identity within the party,” says Subedi. With their burnished faces the women look battle-hardened, but also war weary and relieved that the ceasefire is in place. But they also feel the work of making Nepali women stronger needs to go on.

The Maoist women’s wing says it is now planning to push citizenship by mother’s name, property rights to women, ending child marriage, banning polygamy, and introducing laws relating to abuse and domestic violence. They say lobbying by gender activists after 1990 haven’t produced enough results.

“We start those programs from places where our government is working and then we will take it all over the nation,” says Subedi. The speeches go on at the public meeting, the wind picks up and soon the rain comes down in torrents. Purbati Kandel of Balkot keeps on speaking without a microphone. She was arrested in 2005 from Nuwakot and released last month, she says after torture. “I can’t just quit because I was beaten up,” she says, “our movement continues and I am ready to give up my normal life to make the lives of Nepali women better.”

Lots women around the world are oppressed. Is Marxism-Leninism-Maoism the only way to fight it? It’s holistic, it takes care of all the oppression. Our whole system is very much related to economic exploitation. Having said that we also say we are not dogmatic communists, who say that class exploitation is the only kind and negate all other exploitation. In that sense our party is different from other parties because we incorporate gender, regional autonomy, the ethnic struggle. Our party found that in the course of the war, the numbers of women that were coming into our movement, in terms of numbers, sacrifice, in terms of work they were doing was just tremendous. And then we felt we had to consolidate, we had to bring them into the leadership level.

Do you have a message for the king? He’s a prisoner of his own system. The people have been very empowered they can’t accept a biological leader anymore. And in that sense I feel really sorry for Paras. Had he not been a prince, he would have been one of the best boxers in the world. All his aggressiveness would have been released, I feel sorry for the king and his son who don’t understand that they’re living in the 21st century.

But does Maoism make sense in the 21st century either? Look at the way people regard communism. They don’t even get into the essential meaning of what communism is, so it is their ignorance which is speaking, I’m sorry for those who think like that.

What about your husband, do you have intense political conversations? Last year both of us were put into disciplinary action by our party. We had a lot of political discussions with each other then and in fact that helped us because we started looking into history, its contradictions, how they were solved. The class war helps sharpen your class instincts, similarly the inner party struggle helps you increase your political, ideological instincts. We read a lot of books together, it really enriched not only our knowledge but our relations also. (Laughs.)

What are the links between Maoists in Nepal and the Indian Naxalites? When you share an ideology, naturally, you have an alliance. The Maoist movement in Nepal has certainly helped the Naxalites to think about themselves. You see the speed in which we have spread is certainly remarkable, within 10 years, 80 percent of the country is in our control. So obviously they are looking to their own ideology as to why they couldn’t? I make the progress we have made in Nepal. Now, they have increased their activities and are now coming in the forefront in the newspapers.

What about the 12-point agreement? The political solution that the Maoists are seeking with the political parties is for the best. This is going to be very challenging. We don’t want to fail like China or Russia. If we Nepalis can’t manage the republic it will mean the whole country is being commercialised, cheap prices, cheap labour, sweatshops.
Pride and punditry
How accurate are your pet pundits?

E
evry day, experts bombard us with their views on Iraqi insurgents, Bolivian coca-growers, European central bankers, and North Korea’s Politburo. But how much credibility should we attach to the opinions of experts?

The sanguine view is that as long as those selling expertise compete vigorously for the attention of discriminating buyers (the mass media), market mechanisms will assure quality control. Pundits who make it into opinion pages or TV and radio must have good track records. Otherwise, they would have been weeded out.

Sceptics, however, warn that the mass media disseminate the voices we hear and are less interested in popular prejudices. As a result, fame could be negatively, not positively, correlated with long-run accuracy.

Until recently, no one knew how to stoke self-confidence can be infectious. environmentalism, etc. Their libertarianism, Marxism, and love for grand theories works better if it is easier for citizens to see the trade-offs between accuracy and entertainment, or between accuracy and party loyalty.

Wouldn’t they be more likely to read pundits with better track records? If so, pundits might adapt to accountability by showing more humility, and political debate might begin to sound less shrill.

At this point, uncharitable sceptics chortle that we get the judgments we deserve. But that is unfair. No society has yet created a widely trusted method for keeping score on the correctness of experts.

Imagine your job as a media executive depends on expanding momentum in an argument by multiplying reasons why they are right, and others are wrong. That wins them media acclaim. But they don’t know when to slam the mental brakes by making concessions to other points of view. They take their theories too seriously. The result: hedgehogs make more mistakes, but they pile up more hits on Google.

Eclectic foxes are better at curbing their ideological enthusiasms. They are comfortable with protracted uncertainty about who is right even in bitter debates, conceding gaps in their knowledge and granting legitimacy to opposing views. They sprinkle their conversations with linguistic qualifiers that limit the reach of their arguments: “but,” “however,” “although.” Because they avoid over-simplification, foxes make fewer mistakes. Foxes will often agree with hedgehogs up to a point, before complicating things: “Yes, my colleague is right that the Saudi monarchy is vulnerable, but remember that coups are rare and that the government commands many means of squelching opposition.”

Imagine your job as a media executive depends on expanding your viewing audience. Whom would you pick: an expert who balances conflicting arguments and concludes that the likeliest outcome is more of the same, or an expert who gets viewers on the edge of their seats over radical Islamists seizing control and causing oil prices to soar? In short, the qualities that make foxes more accurate also make them less popular.

At this point, uncharitable sceptics chortle that we get the judgments we deserve. But that is unfair. No society has yet created a widely trusted method for keeping score on the correctness of experts.
Addictive

Here's a beginner who practises at midnight

M any times I have heard: “Golf is the most addictive sport!” This is probably because it somehow manages to draw players back to the course whether they have just finished a fabulous day with a high score or dunked to the end of a frustrating round. I have witnessed people bunking their office work to play a friendly round and myself have had sleepless nights before big tournaments. These all testify to the sport’s allure and challenge.

Interact with seasoned golfers and soon you will be astounded by their dedication and keenness for the sport. Golf is probably one of the few sports where you will find almost equal enthusiasm and dedication among hardcore players and novices, excluding of course the pros who earn millions of dollars yearly just for swinging the club.

As a professional, I am truly impressed and fascinated by the dedication and keenness of one novice who has been working in Nepal for the last eight years. Ranjith Shetty, I recently caught up with him over a cup of coffee and gleaned some reflections.

Deepak Acharya

“Hey, today I hit about 25 balls that flew over 100 yards,” one beginner says to the other. “I got 4 birds and drove 290 on one of the par 5s,” says another, so amazed and excited at his performance that he wants to spread the news far and wide. Believe me, if there wasn’t this sort of competition among players, golf wouldn’t be so much fun.

Conversely, you will see golfers heading for the practice range or taking lessons after a bad round. Their eagerness to correct their errant shots. Learning golf requires patience. Practice diligently and take regular lessons from a trained golf professional. And I don’t miss a round on Saturdays. The ecstasy that a good shot provides is amazing. Apart from being addictive, golf teaches a beautiful lesson. As a professional, I am truly impressed and fascinated by the dedication and keenness of one novice who has been working in Nepal for the last eight years. Ranjith Shetty, I recently caught up with him over a cup of coffee and gleaned some reflections.

Deepak Acharya

Is golf addictive?

Yes very much. You know, two weeks back I got up at midnight and started swinging the club. I always look for an opportunity to play and I don’t miss a round on Saturdays. The ecstasy that a good shot provides is amazing. Apart from being addictive, golf teaches a great work ethic because you can’t improve without hard work.

Any suggestions for newcomers?

Being a newcomer I feel that we should not get frustrated over errant shots. Learning golf requires patience. Practice diligently and take regular lessons from a trained golf professional. And remember to enjoy the lush green surroundings and memorize only your good shots.

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

Slaying the dragon

Studio 7’s annual play is uncannily like today’s Nepal

T he directors at Studio 7 have described Evgeni Schwartz’s play The Dragon as a fabulous and grotesque drama about moral cowardice, despots and a hero. Written in 1943 during World War II in Stalin’s Soviet Union, it bears an uncanny resemblance to present day Nepal.

Dragon is a dictator surrounded by power hungry supporters who eliminates all his enemies to retain power. His subjects live hopelessly until Lancelot arrives to save the beautiful Elsa but Lancelot can win only if all the people are freed from the fear that feeds the Dragon’s power. The hero challenges the Dragon to a battle and kills him but is wounded in the process and disappears. Those who once surrounded the Dragon become the new despots. Is the hero dead? Who will liberate the people? Will the people finally find their voice?

“This drama deals with the destructive effects of any totalitarian system and its abuses. It also deals with a rising hero, who chooses to fight and liberate the people,” says the play’s director Sabine Lehmann. “But only when the people themselves realise that they have to make an effort to cut through the age-old complacency, can they avoid yet another totalitarian system.”

The Dragon is an excellent amalgam of music, comedy, drama and politics. “By using the motives and characters of a fairytale, the story is distanced from reality, which allows humour and liberating laughter to set in,” adds Lehmann, who founded Studio 7 in 1981 as an international actors’ ensemble. Every April since then, it has staged a production that Lehmann herself directs.

The Dragon by Evgeni Schwartz, at the Naga Theatre, Hotel Vajra. Opening Day: 19 May, also running every Friday, Saturday and Sunday until 4 June. Show time: 7.15 PM. Reservations: 4271545, vajra@mos.com.np

NEPAL PASHMINA INDUSTRY

Nepal Pashmina Industry

B R I A N S O K O L

Nepal Times, Sunday, May 14, 2006

For improving the status and export of Nepal pashmina. Tel: 427/2929, 427/2023, 428/6444.

N P I

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Neupok showroom: Hotel Nepal, Middle Ring Road. Tel: 427/2929, 427/2023, 428/6444. Showroom: Supreme, Hotel Naga, Middle Ring Road. Tel: 4271545, 421/8844. Showroom: Supreme, Hotel Naga, Middle Ring Road. Tel: 4271545, 421/8844.

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry

Nepal Pashmina Industry
Diego, Manny, and Sid return in sequel to the hit Ice Age. The Ice Age is coming to an end, and the animals are delighting in the melting paradise that is their new world. Manny, Sid, and Diego quickly learn that the warming climate has one major drawback: a huge glacial dam is about to break, threatening the entire valley. The only chance of survival lies at the other end of the valley. So the three heroes, along with a mammoth named Ellie and her two ‘brothers’—possums Crash and Eddie—embark on a mission across an increasingly dangerous landscape towards their salvation.

Call 4442220 or visit www.jal nepal.com

Matrimonial

Engineer/businessman 45 yrs old, 5’11”, very handsone, lives in USA, extremely wealthy. Seeking lady 27-33 yrs old. Must be very beautiful, fair complexion, slim to medium build, nice personality, education not that important. Reply to GPO Box number 7251 or email to

handsome1111111@hotmail.com

Nepali Weather

MAUSAM BEED

KATHMANDU VALLEY

It looks like this year’s weather trend is going to be a repeat of last year’s rather than something resembling normal. Last year’s unusually active western front not only brought above normal rainfall in the pre-monsoon but also showed the monsoon front away, delaying its onset by two weeks. Thursday’s satellite image shows two trends—monsoon storms growing over South India and the Bay of Bengal and an active northeasterly flow continuously shutting light moisture laden cloud from the north. As a result, the warm humid weather we have been getting turns suddenly cool when it starts to rain. From this weekend, look for days with more clouds and chances of light rain towards evening to be followed by humid days and cool nights.

STUDIO 7

Theatre Performance the

D R A G . O N

a fabulous and grotesque drama about moral cowards, despots and a hero.

Sponsored by: Carlsberg

Naga Theatre, Hotel Vaja
Opening Friday May 19th
Performances at 7:30pm
Every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, until June 6th.

Tea and Show Rs 700
Discount available for groups of 10 or more.
For reservation call: Hotel Vaja: 427 15 45

Radio Sagarmatha
Bakhundole, Lalitpur, Nepal
Tel: +977-1-545680, 545681
Fax: + 977-1- 530227
P.O. Box 6958, Kathmandu, Nepal
info@radiosagarmatha.org
www.radiosagarmatha.org

Nepali Weather

by MAUSAM BEED

KATHMANDU VALLEY

BBC Nepali
Daily 2045-2115 on 102.4

Radio Sagarmatha
Bakhundole, Lalitpur, Nepal
Tel: +977-1-545680, 545681
Fax: + 977-1- 530227
P.O. Box 6958, Kathmandu, Nepal
radio@radiosagarmatha.org,
www.radiosagarmatha.org

Nepali News

Adrian Queen / Nepali Times

Nepali News

by Adrian Queen

Nepali Times

14
CITY
19 - 25 MAY 2006 #298

“Manako baha kasalai nakaha” - Don't publish your troubles in the Nepali Times - as translated by UNACOOTS, the UN's Association of Cartoonists + NEPAL

ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- Khulla Dhoka at NAFA Art Gallery, Naikai till 6 June. 4411729
- Watercolours from Nepal annual exhibition of watercolour society, till 18 June.

EVENTS

- The Drag, on a Studio 7 performance about moral cowards, despots and a hero at Naga Theatre, Hotel Vaja. Opening 19 May, every Friday, Saturday and Sunday at 7.15 PM.Rs 700 (discount available), 427 15 45.
- Talking about Reading at The British Council, 19 May, 5.30 PM.
- Constituent Assembly in Simple Language at Martin Chautari, 19 May, 3PM.
- Stahi Shanti: Permanent Peace, a CSGN lecture by Barbara Adams Rs 100, 19 May, 9.30 AM, Shankar Hotel.
- Book Sale at Pilgrims Book House, Kupondole till 21 May. 552 2159

International Day for Biological Diversity 22 May.

Life Skills Training Camp 26-28 May, call to confirm by 23 May. 4107599.

Civic Concerns to assess youth concerns and share ideas, Rs 100, 3 June, 10.30 AM, PIC, Heritage Plaza. 4107599,

Communication and leadership program with Toastmasters, meeting every Tuesday at IEDP building, Tripureswor. 9841307447

Bagmati River Festival 3 June – 20 August. 501013

Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival 2006, 7-10 December, calling for entries. Forms available at: www.himalassociation.org/kmff

MUSIC

- Funk and Jazz with Stupa at Mokh Live, 19 May 8PM. Rs 150
- Caribbean and Reggae with Jerry and The Explosion, 20 May
- Sun Dance for organic Japanese homecooking. Near International Hotel. Nagpokhari, open Monday-Friday 9AM-9PM. 4442464
- Heartbreakers live every Friday at Rum Doodle Bar & Restaurant
- Cadenza Collective live every Wednesday and Saturday 8PM at Upstairs.
- Live Music at Jai Nepal, Hotel de l’Annapurna. 4107599

DINING

- Sandwiches at Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu. 4491234
- BBQ every Friday at Jalan Jalan Restaurant, Kupondole Heights. 5544872.
- Imago-Dei café, food, garden and coffee. Nagpokhari, open Monday-Friday 9AM-9PM. 4442464
- Cafe U for organic Japanese homecooking. Near International Club, Sanepa. 11AM-6PM. Closed on Mondays. 5524202

GETAWAYS

- Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge, relaxation and massages in Pokhara. 4361500
- Junglewalks, rafting, elephant rides all at Jungle Base Camp Lodge, Bardia. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com
- Escape Kathmandu at Shivapuri Heights Cottage. 9851012245

It looks like this year’s weather trend is going to be a repeat of last year’s rather than something resembling normal. Last year’s unusually active western front not only brought above normal rainfall in the pre-monsoon but also showed the monsoon front away, delaying its onset by two weeks. Thursday’s satellite image shows two trends—monsoon storms growing over South India and the Bay of Bengal and an active northeasterly flow continuously shutting light moisture laden cloud from the north. As a result, the warm humid weather we have been getting turns suddenly cool when it starts to rain. From this weekend, look for days with more clouds and chances of light rain towards evening to be followed by humid days and cool nights.

Clouds and chances of light rain towards evening to be followed by humid days and suddenly cool when it starts to rain. From this weekend, look for days with more clouds and chances of light rain towards evening to be followed by humid days and cool nights.
FINAL FLAMES: Himsa Birodh Campaign held its last sanjbatī (candlelight vigil) at Maitighar Mandala on Monday to remember over 13,000 people who died in the Maoist insurgency. Democracy and a new ceasefire has spelled a welcome end to the ceremony.

FREEDOM TO DECIDE: Members of the Blue Diamond Society hold a sit-in outside the Nepal Bar Association on Tuesday to demand recognition of the rights of sexual minorities.

OPEN DOORS: Visitors mingle at the opening of Khulla Dhoka, an exhibition of doors painted by children at NAFA Art Galley, Naxal on Wednesday.

MIN BAJRACHARYA

WITH FREE REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:

When Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen asked his contemporary Edvard Grieg, a classical composer, to write incidental music for his poetic drama Peer Gynt, the two probably never imagined that someday their works would be reinterpreted in a form that didn’t even exist at the time.

One hundred years after Ibsen’s death, the Norwegians have launched an international centennial to celebrate the life and works of the father of modern drama. As part of that program, different literature, art and music events have been organised by the Norwegian Embassy in Nepal.

Up next is a 17-member jazz ensemble from Norway and Nepal that will perform Grieg’s classic piece reinterpreted by Helge Hulum for the 1994 Winter Olympics in Norway. Eight of the musicians are from Norway while the Rod Band (Shuva Bahadur Sunam, Amul Karkidhali, Nabin Singh, Deependra, Raju Parlay, and Sukrajung Ghale), and drummer Navin Chettri, guitarist Rajat Rai, and saxophonist Mariano make up the Nepali portion. The Norwegian musicians arrived here Tuesday and immediately started practicing with their Nepal counterparts.

Besides the musical thrill, 22-year-old Aalaug hoped that the attempt would “show how people from different cultures could mix together and build an understanding of Nepal’s potential.” The Nepalese players were also looking forward to the experience keenly, as Navin Chettri observed, “This is the first time I am playing set jazz. Even though we speak different languages we communicate through music.”

Two shows have been planned by the Embassy. The first is by invitation only at the BICC on 23 May, the second will begin at 4.30PM on 24 May in Basantapur Darbar Square’s Shiva Parbati Dabali.
Having spent the better part of the past two weeks in the company of a dentist in a hard hat who has been boring deep inside my oral cavity with a pneumatic drill to reach the bedrock so that he can construct a root canal with approximately the dimensions of the Suez Passage in my jaw bone, readers who have been through similar ordeals I know will want to share my pain. Here is a blow-by-blow account of my ordeal:

Day One:
Today, while lying fully reclined on Dr Frankenstein’s chair with the footrest in an upright position and the tray-table on my lap I had ample time to reconstruct in my mind the entire family tree of the Romanovs. This is getting to be almost as bloody as the Russian Revolution, but Czars had it relatively painless in comparison.

Day Three:
As the drill tears a nerve-ending to shreds I think that if I somehow don’t make it through this one, I would like to be reincarnated as a dental surgeon in my next life. Not only do you get an inside look at the nooks and crannies of a cross section of Nepali society, you can also carry out archaeological digs to excavate fossilised remains of a family barbecue which, after carbon dating, are bound to be the relics of an ex-goat from the winter of the year 1977 AD.

Day Four:
No pain, no gain. That is my philosophy. Dentistry is one of the few professions ever invented in recent human history where one is actually paid handsome to inflict pain on other human beings.

Day Five:
Today I got my first bill. The doc said I can pay in instalments. Maybe I need a bank loan. There seems to be a direct correlation between the degree of pain and the size of the bill. I have come to know that dentists take a mandatory semester in medical school in which they practice extracting tusks from unanaesthetised African bull elephants before they are allowed to use the same techniques on hominoid patients.

Day Ten:
At the risk of touching a raw nerve here among those who don’t see the humour in having their precious ivories plundered by bounty hunters disguised as dentists, let me recount a professional trade joke told to me by my dentist. It comes from the horse’s mouth.

Q: What is the difference between a dentist and a New York Yankee baseball fan?
A: One yanks for the roots, and other roots for the yanks.

Since laughing gas is not used anymore as anaesthesia, dentists sometimes tell their patients jokes like the aforementioned witicism in order to kill the pain. "Harharharharhar. Didn’t feel a thing, doc. Tell me another one."

Day 15:
As the days go by, there is less and less to laugh at as one by one I lose my incisors, my canines, my felines and finally my wisdoms. At this rate, pretty soon, I will only be able to gnash my gums while worrying about the state of the nation. (#96)