

NARESH NEWAR

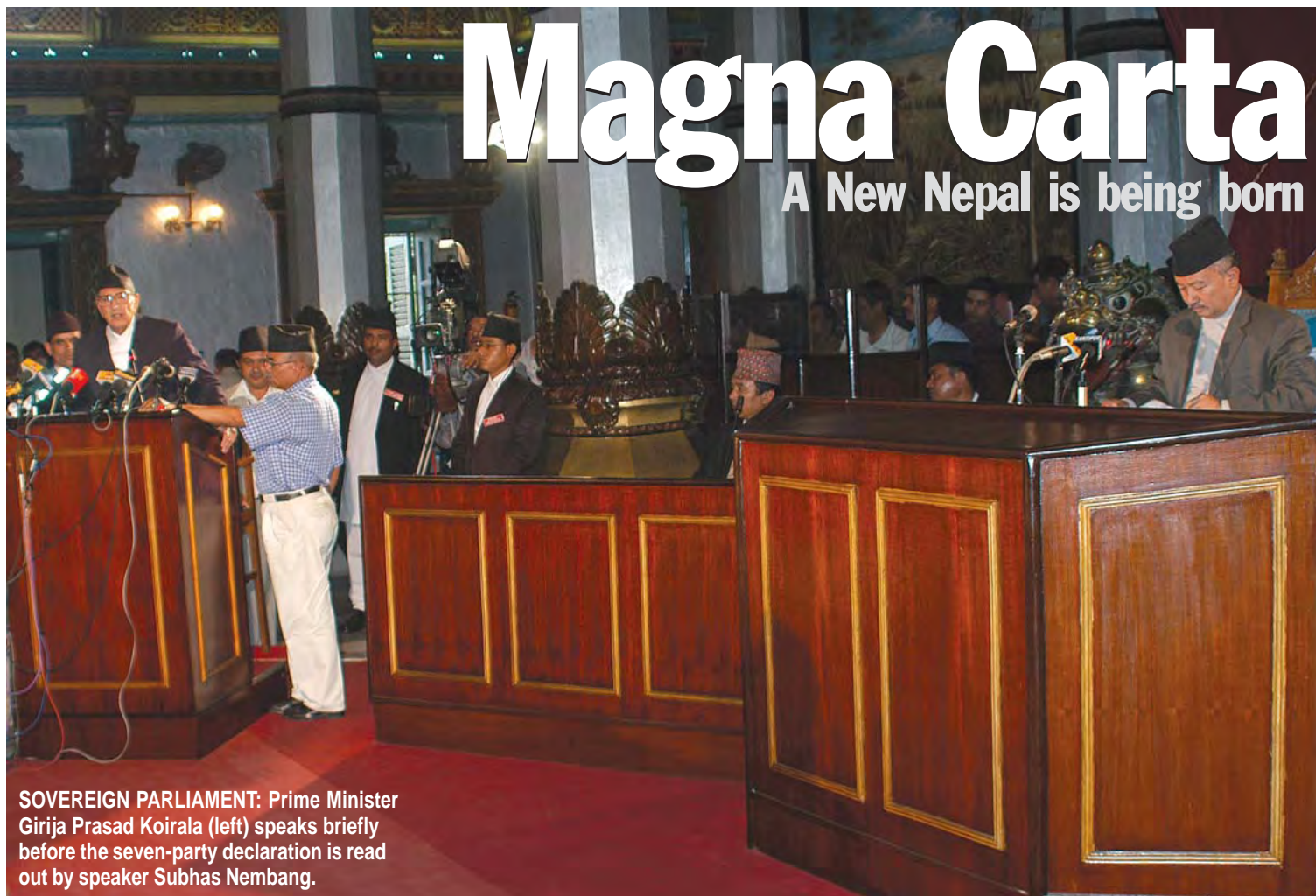
May 18, 2006—the day a new Nepal was born. The day the parliament restored by people power declared itself supreme and decided to save the monarchy from a king who nearly took it down with him.

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 Subash 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 king-in-parliament
- 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. ●

Magna Carta

A New Nepal is being born

MIN BAJRACHARYA

Times nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll # 298

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

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Q. Is it time now for the Maoists to renounce violence?

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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.

GUEST COLUMN
Pravin Rana



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: absolute poverty, class, caste, gender and ethnic issues, a large unemployment rate, poor education and an untenable political arrangement.

The April protests did not lay to rest these demons but brought them to the streets in a near anarchical 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 education, health, 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.

Elites, even in mature democracies, are uncomfortable or have downright disdain for military culture. Some of our own elites, who were at the vanguard of the current campaign in April, are no different. Some of the sentiment about the RNA is justified. But unless our civil society members and politicians in Nepal have invented an alternative paradigm to security, one of the first needs of humanity, they need to recognise that there is now an imperious 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 reputation, took it upon himself during his tenure as Clerk of the Pennsylvania Assembly to raise an armed

militia despite the prevailing pacifist ethos of the Quakers, who dominated the Assembly in pre-revolutionary colonial America. Franklin raised the militia because he understood, as Edmund Morgan, the historian notes, that “Its people were unprepared to do anything (for security) themselves 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 and continue to give the Maoists a pass in almost Ostrich-like fashion.

Will the leaders continue to engage in delusions that peace an 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 real 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 advisers must be willing to look at the Maoist solution from all possible angles including all ‘peaceful’ approaches but maintain a strong military option, or they will find themselves not in the company of Churchill or Franklin but in that of Chamberlain and Daladier—historical emblems of craven appeasement who believed they could negotiate with Hitler and failed. ●

A NEW NEPAL

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

Now that the parliament has been declared supreme, and it has taken 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 ‘Shri Panch’, appointment of the COAS, parliament's state affairs committee to over see the royal palace) were just details. The other decision we applaud 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-path of the parliamentary democracy that rescued the institution whose current stakeholder was 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 the nation can finally turn its attention to socio-economic progress.



KIRAN PANDAY

LETTERS 1

APRIL UPRISING

After seeing destruction, fighting and killings on television and newspapers I have learnt that there is no respect or mercy for anyone in this world. Instead of learning good things in life there is only mistrust and bad feelings for one another. Yes I sound like a grown-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 banda or something happening in our country. Everyone looks angry and always ready to fight with each other. As I grow older I can see many things happening and they are scary. This was a most beautiful and peaceful country until the government and parties disagreed on something. 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.

Aashna A Lama,



● The new government has done a right thing by punishing those involved in suppressing the people's movement. But this process should not just stop here, after all 1990 was just 16 years ago and that is

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, politicians, ministers and others involved in corruption during the brief democratic period should also be prosecuted. Forgiving may be the best option in order to move forward but forgetting never is and never should be.

Sagar Sharma, email

● Ending absolute monarchy is one thing; having concrete plans about the next steps is another, and I hope that the leaders won't fail this time. I am tired of going online to read of various leaders dedicated to punishing people. Can we really afford to be going on a revenge drive at this point in our history? The last 10 years have shown that turning one Nepali against another was our biggest curse. Did it ever occur to them that perhaps a civil servant, or a villager 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 Nepali people stood up for their right to choose their own form of government, their right to decide who should lead them, 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 who provide their real names and contact details will be given preference. Email letters should be in text format without attachments with 'letter to the editor' in the subject line.

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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 Sharan Mahat has conclusively shown, spiralling defence

STATE OF THE STATE

C K Lal



costs have driven the country to bankruptcy.

In effect, Nepal has been under undeclared martial law administered by a military-dominated unified command for the past four years. The army is complicit in every excessive use of force in suppressing the peaceful people's movement. The army chief should have resigned the day the mandate of the popular uprising was established. His refusal to shoulder moral responsibility seems to have put the government under tremendous pressure.

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 Nepali 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 1950s and 1990: 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 Rukmangad Katuwal '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 1996 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



MIN BAJRACHARYA

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 bloated 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 cadres 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 Tarai 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 is 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, as 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 need envy Koirala's quandary. ●



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Many small plans

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

THE *Nepali Times* has reminded readers of the need to begin economic reconstruction and development 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 paradigm embodied in the Marshall Plan is appropriate in present day Nepal.

Meant for a different time and place the Marshall Plan worked for different reasons. It derived its name from US secretary of state George C Marshall who first suggested it with the objective of healing the wounds of the Second World War in Western Europe. Between 1948-52 the United States pumped into Western Europe about \$13 billion in food, machinery and other products. Europe did recover and began to achieve well-being with the Marshall Plan but it did not happen simply as a result of the Plan. The notion that well-being, prosperity and happiness could be enjoyed hereafter in human life by common citizens was a result of the 18th century European enlightenment. Three preconditions converged to bring it about: the rational pursuit of self interest for an individual’s material betterment and progress, achievements in science and technology and the competitive market, universities as sites of knowledge production, problem solving capacity building, primacy of the rule law, representative polity, accountable governance and functioning institutions of capitalism such as banking and insurance.

Despite the physical devastation wrought by a monstrous war, the social wherewithal built over several centuries was intact. It only needed the injection of capital in the form of Marshall Plan to lead Europe to greater height of prosperity.

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 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 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 creative partnership with less bureaucratised 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 trail suspension bridges, micro-hydropower, biogas, the national private sector’s participation in hydropower development and community distribution of electricity. The strength of these innovations is institutional rooted-ness, 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 tenet, 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 institutional innovations to soften the impact of rapacious capitalism by developing competent governments, competitive markets and by fostering tolerance and understanding of their dissenting civic movements 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 *mofsul* and fostering creative interaction among them. This creative interaction can fare better when individual initiatives can flourish, when government regulation 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’.

NEPALI PAN
Ajaya Dixit



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

Hunger for learning

Over one million children in the far west miss school due to hunger

NARESH NEWAR in MAKWANPUR



FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Children of Kalika Debi Primary School taking a day meal provided by WFP.

PUJA Lama stands in a long queue of 170 students waiting to fill her empty plate with *haluwa*, a fortified blend of maize, wheat and soya. “So delicious,” says the four-year-old after filling her mouth with the daily afternoon snack provided by her Kalika Debi Primary School in Palung village of Makwanpur.

The food is Puja’s reward for coming to school everyday. It is given to the children of all the poor families here whose parents cannot provide enough daily food for themselves or their children, and so often opt to keep the kids at home rather than send them to school on empty stomachs.

With help from the World Food Programme’s food for education program (FfE), many schools like Kalika have been able to motivate poor parents from food-deficit districts to send their children to school knowing that they’ll be fed a free lunch.

Introduced in 1996, the FfE has helped to feed over 200,000 children in primary and lower secondary schools in 20 districts of the far west region. Without such programs the food shortage that is currently affecting the Karnali Zone could be much more acute. (see ‘The West is hungry’, #296).

“Such an initiative has already helped to enrol more children and successfully retained them,” says Krishna Man Shrestha, a teacher from Kalika Debi School, which in the last three years has managed to enrol over 170 new students. Around

365 primary and lower secondary schools in Makwanpur have also introduced the FfE program.

“Children with empty stomachs can neither learn nor stay in schools,” says Dina Lama, a local villager who works as Kalika’s cook for Rs 1,500 a month, money that is raised by villagers who formed a food management committee to get, store and distribute the food provided by the WFP. Each student’s family pays the committee a monthly fee of Rs 10 to cover the cook’s salary.

“I’m here to check whether the children are being fed well and attending their class,” says Thuli Golay, 50, a member of the committee, which regularly checks the school to ensure the children are attending. Because of the feeding program, her two granddaughters and a grandson have enrolled. “This would have never been possible without the help of the school and WFP,” Golay explains.

Before the FfE, many students in the area did not attend classes regularly and most of them eventually dropped out. Local teachers say that most of them had to make a long walk home during lunch hour and never returned for afternoon classes.

“The feeding programme has been helpful mostly in enrolling and retaining girls in schools,” said Jean Pierre de Margerie, acting director of WFP in Nepal. The UN organisation’s programs will reach more than 450,000 students during the 2006-2007 school year.

To promote girl education, the FfE offers a special incentive for girl students: those attending at least 80 percent of classes receive two litres of vegetable oil a month. Around 128,000 girls, and their families, will benefit from the provision this year.

While it’s well known that rural schools have been badly hit during the 10 years of Maoist conflict, closing frequently because of *bandas*, strikes, Maoist propaganda meetings or violence, many students have been absent because of hunger.

Nearly one million children miss school because of hunger in districts like Humla, Jumla and Kalikot in the Karnali region, according to the WFP’s Lekh Raj Upadhyaya. “Around 12 million people in Nepal do not consume enough food daily, among them two million children under the age of five”, added de Margerie.

On Sunday, Nepal will join the WFP’s global ‘Walk the World’ day. Last year, over 200,000 people in 266 locations walked to raise money to feed 70,000 children around the world. This year, the event is expected to raise \$ 5 million for WFP’s global school feeding programme.

In Kathmandu, 1,500 children and 500 adults are expected to walk from Dasrath Stadium to Patan. “This initiative is to use a platform to raise millions of funds for hungry Nepali children,” said Mark Squirrel, security officer for WFP Nepal, before leaving for Mt. Everest, which he plans to summit by Sunday.



RAVI TULADHAR

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, Nepalis, Australians, New Zealanders and a 70-year-old Japanese summited 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 (Lakpa 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 Lakhoupati Deposit Yojana, 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 tv are eligible for the company's 'Sure Shot Prizes at Best Prices' offer. Prizes include an LG t-shirt or football with the purchase of 14, 20 and 21 inch 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, DVDs 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 Noodles are pre-cooked, flavoured, fried and come with seasonings. Bingo consumers can win attractive prize coupons.



Focus on public relations

Top businesses build their brands with PR, not slick advertising

I recently asked a group of business-savvy friends to name a few Nepali ad agencies. To my surprise, they could name no more than three agencies out of the many

STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari



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 ad 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 be 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



MIN BAJRACHARYA

experience, Sinek charges 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 supermarket saturation in Kathmandu, for instance, you never see ads anywhere that say, 'Shop at Bhatbhateni: Low prices everyday'. Yet the absence of such ads has not stopped thousands of shoppers from going to Bhatbhateni 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 for 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 out ads that say, 'Come taste the coffee, the beans are from Gulmi.' Java's success can be credited to the PR prowess of its owner (along with its location and the frequently changing couch-and-sofa decors 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 commoditised", and that "agencies struggle to justify their own value in a sea of sameness", he could have been talking about the Nepali ad industry. That is why the message that every thinking CEO should adapt to is this: When building a brand, unless you see clear benefits from advertising, put greater resources into PR. And in case of doubt, remember that successful Nepali businesses seem to build their brands through PR and not by advertising their product lines. ●



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नारानी बजार
काठमाडौं

“The House can do anything.”

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 those 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 also unanimously declared its commitment 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 towards a constituent assembly?
The HoR will be making a political proclamation to institutionalise the achievements of the People's Movement. This proclamation, which many refer to as Nepal's 'Magna Carta', will bring forth many changes and present a roadmap that the HoR and the whole country can follow to move forward.

Will such a proclamation allow for the amendment of the constitution straight away?
The reinstated HoR is the only official representative of the Nepali people. This is why the HoR can do anything. The makers of the 1990 constitution are united on this. They say that the HoR should immediately scrap that constitution, issue an interim governance act and produce 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.



KIRAN PANDAY

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 fulfil 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 say that moving ahead 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. But the process was not fixed. The parties said they wanted to move toward the assembly via parliament while the Maoists wanted to do so through a roundtable conference. That is why there is no need to take their demand otherwise.

NC unity essential

Chandra Bhandari in *Himal 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, 1990's people's movement and 2006's loktantrik andolan. But this party, which even defeated the autocratic Rana regime, suffers immensely from factionalism. This started following the 1990 elections. After BP Koirala's death, cunning, greedy and scheming politicians started to surround leaders like Ganeshman Singh, Krishna P Bhattarai and GP Koirala. Eventually, the party split in two, one faction led by GP, the other by Sher B Deuba. Leaders like Ramchandra, Taranath, Bhimbahadur, Ramsharan, Mahesh, Narhari and I went 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 conspirators 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. Madhab Nepal is claiming that he will fulfil 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

Janadharana, 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 Bhakta Thapa and demanded that army chief Pyar Jung Thapa and Rukmanga Katuwal also be let go. The soldiers also want action taken against the two for extorting money from soldiers and the extravagant wedding of Pyar Jung Thapa's daughter probed. According to one of the letters, "Lieutenant General Rukmangad Katuwal'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, "Pyar Jung Thapa, Chhabi Lal Khadka and some other high ranking officials of the army used money from the Army Welfare Fund, which should be distributed to ex-servicemen... the generals have abused the fund for personal purposes. As if this was not enough, they curtailed ex-servicemen's pensions and used the money for themselves." Another letter reads, "The faces of Nepalis have brightened after the movement last month. We are hoping that ... Nepal will see better



Cop: 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!

हिमाल Robin Sayami in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 15-29 May

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

 “No repressor (of the People's Movement) will get away this time,”

Reinstated Attorney General Yagya Murti Banjade in *Kantipur*, 16 May



JUICE FOR GUNS: Political prisoners Ganesh Regmi, Tejnarayan Sapkota and Prakash Gautam drinking juice after CPN-Maoist Chairman Prachanda requested them to end their weeklong hunger strike. 225 prisoners of conscience are locked up in 73 jails across the country.

समाचारपत्र Sundar Shrestha, *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 18 May

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.









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MIN BAJRACHARYA

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.



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Amar Shakya
Sewa Press



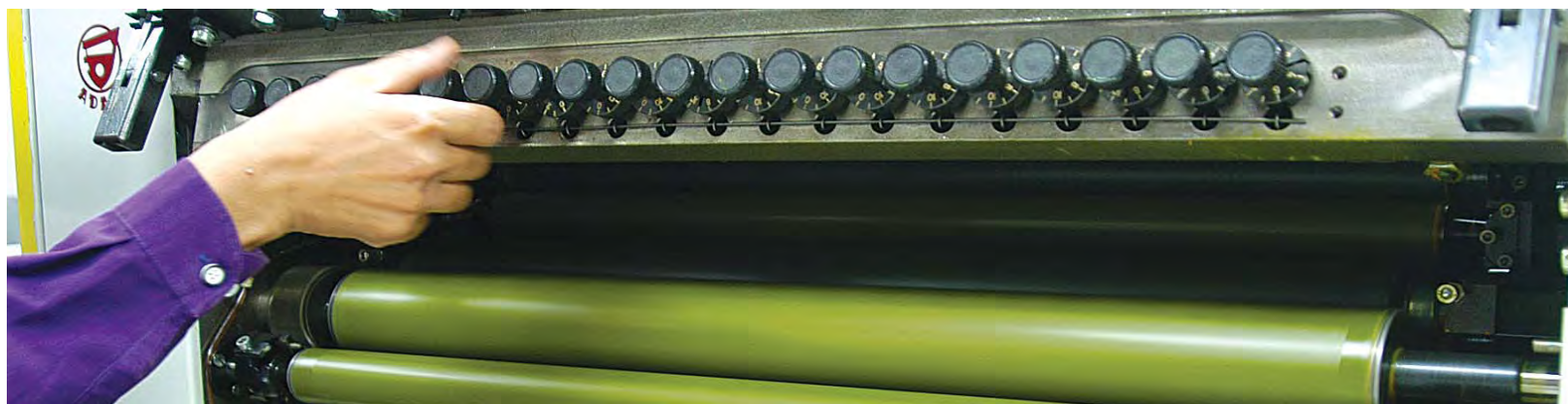
Challenges still remain but we have big plans for the future, which includes expanding to full automatic 28X40 inches machine.

Gautam Shrestha
Jagadamba Press



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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 Comm* to 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.

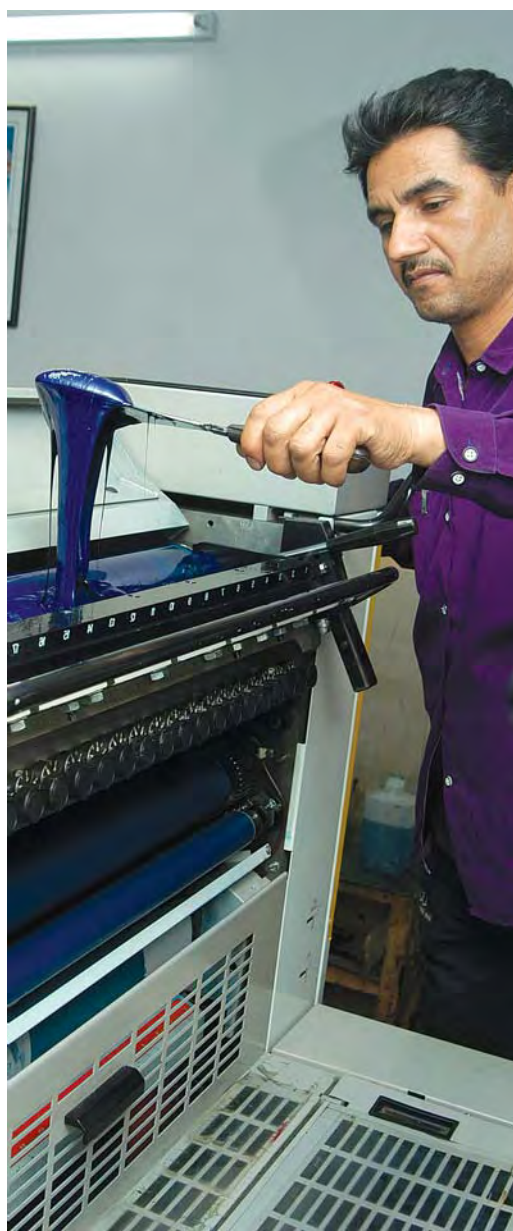
Laxmi Bank has pioneered turning bland annual reports into works of art. Says CEO Suman Joshi: "For us, the annual report is a passionate project every year and we believe it reinforces our brand much more than a regular ad."

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. ●



ALL PICS: MIN BAJRACHARYA



KIRAN PANDAY

Engendering

For Maoist women empowerment comes out of the barrel of a gun

MALLIKA ARYAL
in DHADING

Under the sweltering heat of early summer sun at a Maoist meeting in Dhading Besi, Bima Waiba, 19, tells her story.

She became a Maoist at 14 and for the last five years she has been with the rebel's cultural group, Junu Silpa Cultural Company. She lives with her platoon and her work is to spread the message against western capitalist culture, oppression and exploitation of women. "Changing mentality takes time, our war is not over," Waiba says with surprising vehemence.

About 1,000 people had gathered at the Tundikhel here for a public meeting called by the Maoists on Saturday. Young and old applauded revolutionary songs, danced with the dancers and listened to Maoists leaders speak. Meetings like these are part of a Maoist effort to explain their position after the ceasefire, and as elsewhere it is difficult to tell whether the people are here of their own free will. The intention appears to be two-fold: to warn the parties not to

backtrack on the 12-point agreement but, more importantly, to talk tough to their own cadre.

Indeed, the rhetoric is graphic and straight out of the Maoist manual, with speaker after speaker promising to "fight oppression until the last drop of blood flows in the veins".

Waiba herself seems to take her job very seriously. She explains how the revolutionary songs her group writes and performs are a source of empowerment to village women. "We are women guerrillas, we light a candle in our hearts and cross the oceans," she sings, "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 overwhelmed 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.

"We are fighting a system that



DOUALY XAYKAOTHAO

Just before Nepal's people power uprising got underway Maoist leader Hisila Yami (Comrade Parbati) spoke extensively in New Delhi about feminism, the role of women in the Maoist movement and her relationship with her husband, Babu Ram Bhattarai. Journalist Doualy Xaykaothao conducted the interview. Excerpts:

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?

Manushee 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 makes it very 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 come back to my country I found that people were very backward especially the women. That really made me wonder where my society was, where I came from. I was associated with the feminist journal, *Manushee* and that's how I came into the Marxist circles. I also got to know about the Nepali workers 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, state and one glaring thing we found is 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 community. You don't become individually free, when the rest of the people are tied down by poverty.

Your party nearly split last year.

The two-line struggle nearly broke our party into two. But with very skilful political work we were able to solve this problem, we were able to reach a higher unity. There was one incident when we met a martyr's family. They literally pleaded with us saying look it doesn't pain us to lose our sons and daughters we are willing to give you more sons and daughters but it pains us to see this movement splitting and then fizzling out. That really touched us.

What is your message to the women of Nepal?

They should be very proud that Nepali women are fighting against a political system that is enslaving them. Unlike in other parts of the world where there are sectarian, religious or separatist movements where eventually women are the first to suffer, in Nepal, with Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology they are fighting a class war. The world is

revolution



WOMEN IN THE FOREFRONT: More women have joined the armed struggle in the last few yers. Bima Waiba and Kamala Dung (above) of Junu Silpa Cultural Company say the movement has empowered them to demand their rights. Torrential pre-monsoon rain does not discourage those attending a Maoist assembly in Dhading on Saturday.



NARESH NEWAR

The human rights group INSEC estimates that the number of women in the frontlines has grown. Since the armed struggle started ten 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 Waiba.

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 these 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. Parbati 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.” ●

enslaves women.”

watching us, and it proves that there is something new taking place in Nepal that our women can be proud of.

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 focus 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 negates 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 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 same end for us.

How come China has shed Maoism?

And look what it did to the position of women there. It’s very visible. You have prostitution, look at the kind of commercialisation that is taking place on the women’s body, this itself speaks where it is heading. The whole country is being commercialised, cheap prices, cheap labour, sweatshops.

बजारमा उपलब्ध छ

हिमाल

खबरपत्रिका

प्रतिनिधिसभा घोषणापत्र (२०६३)

राजगद्दी उत्तराधिकारी प्रतिनिधि सभाले छान्ने।
‘श्री ५ को सरकार’ लाई ‘नेपाल सरकार’ भनिने छ।
‘शही नेपाली सेना’ लाई ‘नेपाली सेना’ भनिने छ।
राजगद्दी कर्मचारी संसदले नियुक्त गर्ने।

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Pride and punditry

How accurate are your pet pundits?

Every 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?

COMMENT

Philip E Tetlock



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 dictate the voices we hear and are less interested in reasoned debate than in catering to popular prejudices. As a result, fame could be negatively, not positively, correlated with long-run accuracy.

Until recently, no one knew who is right, because no one was keeping score. But the results of a 20-year research project now suggest that the sceptics are closer to the truth.

I describe the project in detail in my book *Expert Political Judgment: How good is it? How can we know?* The basic idea was to solicit thousands of predictions from hundreds of experts about the fates of dozens of countries, and then score the predictions for accuracy. We find that the media not only fail to weed out bad ideas, but that they often favour bad ideas, especially when the truth is too messy to be packaged neatly.

The evidence falls into two categories. First, as the sceptics warned, when hordes of pundits are jostling for the limelight, many are tempted to claim that they know more than they do. Boom and doom pundits are the most reliable over-claimers.

As the sceptics warned, over-claimers rarely pay penalties for being wrong. Indeed, the media shower lavish attention on over-claimers while neglecting their humbler colleagues. We can see this process in sharp relief when, following the philosopher Sir Isaiah Berlin, we classify experts as 'hedgehogs' or 'foxes'. Hedgehogs are big-idea thinkers in love with grand theories: libertarianism, Marxism, environmentalism, etc. Their self-confidence can be infectious. They know how to stoke

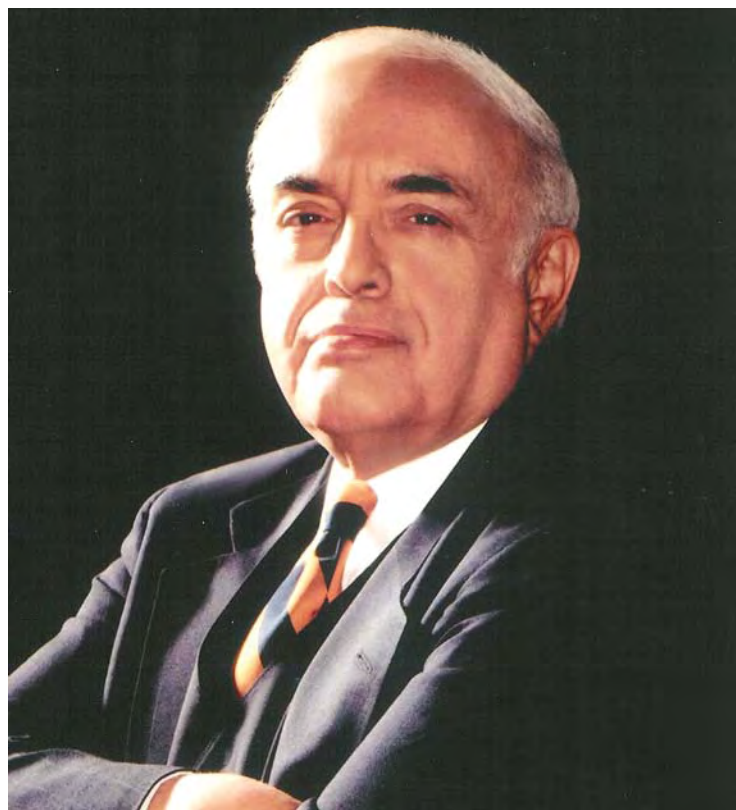
momentum in an argument by multiplying reasons why they are right and others are wrong.

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 oversimplification, 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 media we deserve. But that is unfair. No society has yet created a widely trusted method for keeping score on the punditocracy. The marketplace of

ideas 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. ●

Project Syndicate

Philip E. Tetlock, author of *Expert Political Judgment: How Good Is It? How Can We Know?*, is Professor of Business Administration, Political Science, and Psychology at the University of California at Berkeley.



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Addictive

Here's a beginner who practises at midnight

Many 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 clunked 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.

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



"Hey, today I hit about 25 balls that flew over 100 yards," one beginner says to the other. "I got 4 birdies 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 swing overwhelms all other priorities.



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 - What do you like most about golf?

Ranjith - First, in golf you play against the course and yourself. In other sports you play against the opponent. Golf takes out a lot of stress as I work 13-14 hours a day, and it gives me an opportunity to get out of the boardroom and take some exercise. On top of that, the aesthetic beauty and natural surroundings of a golf course are simply enthralling.

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



BRIAN SOKOL

Slaying the dragon

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

The directors at Studio 7 have described Evgeni Schwartz's play *The Dragon* as a fabulous and grotesque drama about moral cowards, 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



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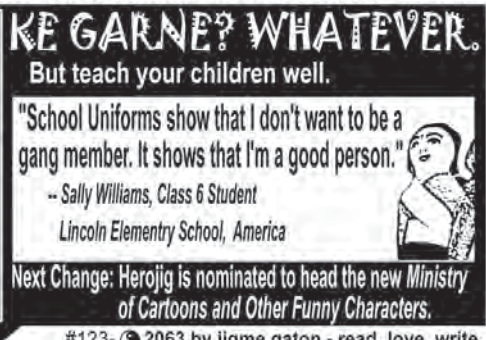
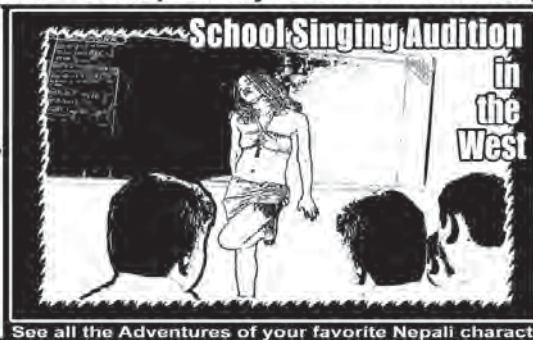
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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Khulla Dhoka** at NAFA Art Gallery, Naxal 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 Vajra. Opening 19 May, every Friday, Saturday and Sunday at 7.15 PM. Rs 700 (discounts available). 4271545
- ❖ **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. 5521159
- ❖ **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. 5011013
- ❖ **Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival 2006**, 7-10 December, calling for entries. Forms available at: www.himalassociation.org/kimff

MUSIC

- ❖ **Funk and Jazz** with Stupa at Moksh Live, 19 May 8PM. Rs 150
- ❖ **Caribbean and Reggae** with Jerry and The Explosion, 20 May at Moksh Live.
- ❖ **Sun Dance** overnight open air music festival, 27 & 28 May at The Last Resort with 1974AD, Jerry & Xplozion and Stupa.
- ❖ **Heartbreakers** live every Friday at Rum Doodle Bar & Restaurant
- ❖ **Cadenza Collective** live every Wednesday and Saturday 8PM at Upstairs.
- ❖ **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.
- ❖ **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

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 5
- ❖ **Escape Kathmandu** at Shivapuri Heights Cottage. 9851012245

Entertainment Quest

Diego, Manny and Sid return in this 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.

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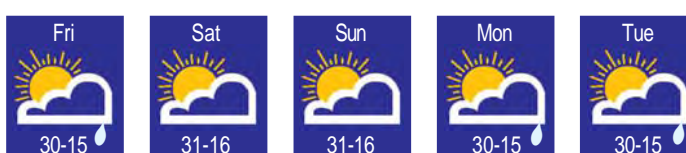
NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



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 westerly front not only brought above normal rainfall in the pre-monsoon but also chased 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 northwesterly front continuously shuttling light moisture-laden clouds 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.

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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।

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MIN BAJRACHARYA

FINAL FLAMES: Himsa Birodh Campaign held its last *sanjibatti* (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.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

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.



KIRAN PANDAY

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



KIRAN PANDAY

Making music with Ibsen

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 Hulm for the 1994 Winter Olympics in Norway. Eight of the musicians are from Norway while the Rodi Band (Shuva Bahadur Sunam, Amul Karkidhali, Nabin Singh, Deependra, Raju Pariyar, 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 Nepali 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." Added Shuva Bahadur Sunam, who leads the Rodi Band, "It's going to an interesting experience for us to play something different with musicians from abroad." ●

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.

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Touching a raw nerve

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 found 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 handsomely 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 witticism in order to kill the pain. "Harharharharhar. Didn't feel a thing, doc. Tell me another one."
Dentist: Open wide.
Patient: My mouth or my wallet?
"Hoho. Good one. Hey, doc, did you just pull out my lower number six molar? Ha!Ha!"

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)



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