SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME: Pushpa Kamal Dahal with his wife, Sita Poudel, flies the national flag in Home Minister Krishna Sitaula’s official car as he arrives in Kathmandu airport last Friday for talks.

L ast week’s pact between the seven parties and the Maoists revived hopes for durable peace but recent hardline remarks by Maoist leaders has dampened the mood in the business community.

The rebel comrades have been using their first month above ground to make contradictory and often extremist statements. The government on the other hand sounds disunited, confused and weak. Because the Maoists have better soundbytes, the media has given the comrades wide play. Although the people have cautiously welcomed all this as a sign that peace is at hand, the statements have spooked Nepal’s beleaguered businesses.

“The situation is very bad for us,” says Rajendra Khetan of the Confederation of Nepali Industries (CNI) which organised a conference on Tuesday to which the head of the Maoist’s Economic Department, Deb Gurung, was invited.

Businessmen at the meet accused the Maoists of inciting workers to make unrealistic salary and benefit demands. Maoist-affiliated trade unions are competing with mainstream unions to be more populist, and this has promoted unions affiliated to the NC and UML to also make even more radical demands so they don’t lose members.

Dozens of factories have closed in Kathmandu, Chitwan, Hetauda, Birganj and Biratnagar and businesses accuse the government of inaction. “How can we go on like this?” asks Khetan who has shut down his Himalayan Snacks and Gorkha Brewery units in Chitwan.

Gurung, who is also a member of the Maoist negotiating team, tried to assuage businessmen at the CNI meet by saying he was for capital accumulation.

“Development and prosperity will not happen without industrialisation and wealth creation,” he said.

But his separate remarks in interviews in newspapers on land reform and nationalisation have not gone down well (See p7).

The conference also heard Arjun Narsingh KC of the NC and Bam Deb Gautam of the UML who, aside from asking businesses to “be patient” and wait for the political issues to be sorted out, had no immediate concrete ideas about reopening industries.

Kiran Panday

Businesses are spooked by what they have seen so far of Maoists above ground

More delay

After gender rights groups went on warpath because of the absence of women in the commission set up to draft up an interim constitution, the UML also decided it didn’t have a representative and has demanded a slot.

The wrangling has meant that a week has gone by after the Maoist-parties pact and there is only one more week for a draft interim constitution to be ready. Even the Maoists agree that is not possible.

Although it will be a cut-and-paste job (throwing out everything from the 1990 constitution that doesn’t tally with parliamentary proclamations last month) the parties want the commission to take its time. The delay means an interim government is at least a month away, if not more. Parliament still exists, and its various committees have been busy electing chairmen this week. Since the budget can’t wait for the start of the fiscal year, Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat is presenting an interim budget on 7 July.
Why, when and how?

We have to move beyond quick fixes to strategic restructuring of the state

Let’s not let our doubts become a self-fulfilling prophecy

I

n marked contrast to the air of optimism in the country today, Kathmandu’s bourgeoisie is wallowing in doom and gloom. It is deeply suspicious of the dead-end nature of the peace talks and the Maoists last Friday. Taking its cue from the gossip of the corridors of power, the sighted and the blind are buzzing about a negotiated settlement.

The bottom line here is that the Maoists are the only party in a multi-party government without a public commitment to renounce violence. An eight-party government can’t be an all-party political entity; it is a perception that the government gave too much away and didn’t make a symbolic effort to dump the rebels from the democratisation process. A legal framework is necessary to implement the interim provisions. The constituencies of the Maoists are almost entirely a rural constituency with minimal urban presence. The Maoists haven’t renounced violence, but then neither has the army accepted its commitment from the Maoists to renounce violence or agree on a draft interim constitution.

The Eight-Party Agreement signed in November last year embodies a number of bold and promising initiatives. It includes the maintenance of a seat at the banquet table. The Maoists haven’t backtracked from their position of a seat at the banquet table. The Maoists haven’t renounced violence, but the army hasn’t renounced violence either.

The preparation of an interim constitution is a risk: not of being marginalised by the parties or decimated by the Maoists, but then neither has the army accepted its commitment from the Maoists to renounce violence or agree on a draft interim constitution. The Maoists haven’t renounced violence, but the army hasn’t renounced violence either.

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LETTERS

MEDICAL

I was pleased to read Ashutosh Tiwari’s Strictly Business column (‘Disputes at OMC’, #302) on the importance of alternative dispute resolution in Nepal. The formal judiciary is inaccessible to most Nepalis. While the courts have traditionally relied on informal dispute resolution practices, those have broken down in recent years as social order eroded. For the past six years, a handful of non-governmental organisations have promoted community mediation as a means to bridge the gap. The Asia Foundation and its partners have trained more than 2,800 mediators who currently provide community mediation services in coordination with local government offices in 13 districts. More than 7,000 cases have been registered since 2004, ranging from land disputes to household quarrels. Eighty-seven percent of these cases have been resolved amicably.

Although Tiwari proposes arbitration, the process of facilitating it is far more appropriate for community disputes. In arbitration, judgements are imposed like in a court. This can lead to flawed and biased decisions if arbitrators do not have adequate legal knowledge or are biased. A mediator, on the other hand, helps the parties reach their own agreement. No decision is imposed. The process is considered consensual and results in longer lasting settlements. While mediation services are filling an important need in the communities where they operate, sustaining them is a challenge. The Local Self-Governance Act (1999) provides for mediation services by VDCs and municipalities but the government program has not yet been implemented. As Nepal now moves towards peace, it is critical to institutionalise and expand mediation services, especially as a means for reconciliation in communities recovering from the conflict.

Nick Langton, Country Representative, Asia Foundation

CEREMONIAL

Enough fuss has been made about GP’s stance on the ceremonial king. What’s wrong with the remark made by a prime minister appointed by the king himself? What indeed can these republican revolutionaries expect to get just by thumping tables in a house revived by the king himself? How naive have these parliament people, their cadre, and even the members of the civil society to dream that the king will announce his dethronement just like he revived the house. The set-protocled revolutionaries could not even suspend the CoAS who proclaimed revolutionaries could do. The civil society to dream that the king himself? How naïve for republican revolutionaries ceremonial king. What’s wrong about GP’s stance on the government program has not yet moves towards peace, it is a challenge. The Local Self-Governance Act (1999) provides for mediation services by VDCs and municipalities but the government program has not yet been implemented. As Nepal now moves towards peace, it is critical to institutionalise and expand mediation services, especially as a means for reconciliation in communities recovering from the conflict.

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WOMEN WHERE?

Regrettably arrested (#302) I couldn’t but help marvel at the numberous and gigantic steps that the leaders of the seven party alliance and the Maoist leadership have accomplished in just one day. What we are witnessing in Nepal these days, weeks and months is truly revolutionary, inspiring and very unique. But where are the women of Nepal? The intellectuals, writers, politicians, fighters, teachers, parliamentarians, doctors and nurses, mothers, midwives, grandmothers and even mothers-in-law. Where are all our dads and bahris when the country’s future is being redesigned, reinvented and rewritten? Are they not going to be allowed a say in this new Nepal? The eight-point agreement supports ‘restructuring the state in a progressive manner through constituent assembly elections so that it can solve all problems including those related to caste, class, region and gender’. Where are they waiting for? Where are the women on the government and Maoist negotiating teams? Where are they in the leadership of the seven parties? Where are they in the government’s cabinet? Where are they in the 31 member Constituent Assembly of Conduct National Monitoring Committee (yes, there is one, but really, one odd of 31)? And where are they in the six-member interim constituent assembly drafting committee?

Julia Sanchez, Kathmandu

DIPLOMACY

CK Lal in Diplomacy for dummies (#302) compares the Nepal Council of World Affairs (NCOA) to the Foreign Affairs (IA) and says that both are irrelevant and uninspiring. He himself was a member of the executive committee of the NCOA so if that organisation has become senile, Lal himself has to share the blame. As a student of political science in TU, I have been regularly visiting the IFA library at Tripureswor. It has over 1,000 books on various aspects of foreign policy and is one of the best in the country. The IFA also published half a dozen books last year. If the organisation was formed as Mr Lal says, to ‘groom the son of the former foreign minister’, I don’t think it was a bad decision at all. Very few think-tanks in the country organise so many brainwashing sessions or publish so much. Instead, it was a horrible decision on the part of new Foreign Minister K P Oli to remove an energetic youth as executive director of the IFA and not appoint anybody for more than a month. It seems that very soon IFA too will become senile like the NCWA.

Shrishti Shrestha, Political Science Student, TU

C K Lal’s Diplomacy for dummies highlights something that is generally assumed hidden: diplomacy needs preparation and practice to master. A country wedged in between two giants and stuck in a time warp until the 1950s will naturally find it hard to understand the world. India, and to a much lesser extent China, were the only countries until then that Nepal had any relationship with. Now the shell is broken and the light too blinding and confusing. Unlike the United States, which can always go back to being insular if it chooses, to countries like Nepal can afford no such luxury. Nepalis are now permanently linked to countries like South Korea, Kuwait, Malaysia, Indonesia and the US. But we know little about these countries where hundreds of thousands of our passport holders work. Edward Said lamented how little the Arab World understood the US even as the latter’s influence on the former was increasing. The same goes for Nepal. Ten years ago, people in Kathmandu heard about Marxism taking root in the midwestern hills. We should have realised that the ideology came from a neighbouring country, which should have prompted us to take a closer look at this phenomenon. I blame centuries of isolation during the Rana Shah period. Mr Lal is right: we need to see things differently now. The business of interacting with other countries should be as important as anything else. Nepal now depends on foreign countries for its survival. Archaic methods will simply do not more. Nepal’s links to Malaysia, South Korea and other countries are its links to modernity. The isolationism of the past, discouraged by the old order, must be done away with.

Manish Gyawali, email WELCOME RAIN

Alok Tumbahangpeey’s ‘Here comes the rain’ (#301) was timely and relevant. We need to educate every person about the importance of rainwater harvesting. The municipalities should make rainwater harvesting compulsory in every new building and house. In addition, the government has to start looking for alternative sources of water. Till then, rain water is the only way to meet our demand.

Rabin Racharica, Green Team, Bhaktapur

DOG’S LIFE-2

I feel I must take issue with Helen Palmer (‘Dog’s Life’, Letters, #302). Street dogs are often a dreadful nuisance, their yowling and howling late in the night is not conducive to peaceful sleep, especially if they have congregated in masse. My own dogs are evidently equally aggrieved judging by the racket that they make when a street pack comes sniffing at the gate. One can never conceive cruelty to dumb animals but lobbing a rock or two is a temporariliy effective way to encourage them to desist. Snipping off and whipping out their canine naughty bits seems to me an expensive and ultimately ineffective way of dealing with the problem. When I lived in Cairo, the local municipality used a much more effective solution: once a month or so the armed police would make a巡游 around with a large street dog population and shoot them all in the head, effectively cutting the population and ensuring that residents of the neighbourhood (and their attendant dogs) could sleep soundly. Surely there are more pressing things than the city’s street dog population that require time and money.

Andrew Steele, Handigaon-5

LETTERS

Nepal Times welcomes feedback. Letters should be brief and may be edited for space. While pseudonyms may be accepted, names and addresses of correspondents 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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Home alone
Who will help the thousands of displaced people who might soon return?

PLenty TO SAY:
Villagers in Taphetok VDC, Taplejung, gather to meet the UN's IDP mission in May.

MARTY LOGAN
The ceasefire and recent political progress towards peace have allowed thousands of internally displaced Nepalis to start thinking seriously about returning home. Many will face the initial hurdle of getting approval from the Maoists who forced their exit in the first place. And if they clear that hurdle, another challenge awaits: will they have the resources to reestablish their lives?

Human rights group INSEC has repatriated 357 IDPs so far, with support from ActionAid, DFID and the UN’s humanitarian affairs office (OCHA). Twenty each went home to Rautahat and Sindhupalchok while INSEC resettled 317 people from midwest centres, delivering 142 to Jumla last year and 26 to Bajura and 149 to Dailekh last month. Each member of those families received Rs 3,000 to buy food. “Their major problem is land,” INSEC’s Rupesh Nepal told us. “For two or three years no one has been cultivating so they lack the seasonal foods that they need for survival.” Otherwise the returnees will be on their own, getting a follow-up visit from human rights groups only after three months.

Members of a recent mission to eight eastern districts returned alarmed by what they saw. “The conditions for return are really not there for several reasons,” Bjorn Pettersson of the UN’s Nepal human rights office (OHCHR) told us. One problem was intimidation by local Maoists, despite the rebel leaders’ pledge to allow IDPs safe return home. Other impediments were the lack of state support and the absence of homes and farms. “We went several VDCs because that were abandoned—they would need repairs,” said OCHA’s IDP adviser, Hanne Medland. Some locals said they would be willing to care for their returning neighbours initially. Others told the mission “we can’t really support them”.

IDPs’ other practical needs might include farming tools and seed, said Pettersson, who added: “The district authorities need to be taking the lead to provide them some sort of support.”

The UN’s mission last month included 15 people who travelled on foot and by vehicle for nearly two weeks to assess the situation in the region, visiting some VDCs that hadn’t seen international workers during a decade of conflict. They found that one or two displaced families from each VDC had ventured home but many other people indicated they were waiting for signs of stability after the Maoists’ ceasefire expires in July.

The team’s rough guess is that an average of 30 individuals left each VDC during the conflict. Estimates of the number of IDPs countrywide vary widely. UNHCR suggested 350,000 when it appealed for $1 million to help the midwest centres, delivering 142 to Jumla last year and 26 to Bajura and 149 to Dailekh last month.

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Villagers in Taphetok VDC, Taplejung, gather to meet the UN's IDP mission in May.
The IMF pre-budget mission is now looking to allow boosting private capital through state-of-art capital markets. Are we going to signal that earning money is good or bad? Are we going to work towards having a better company registrar’s office? Do we have an agenda for the multi-laterals and the bilateralists to look at and decide where to help? Are we going to pursue a decentralised fiscal policy that has existed once? Are we going to allow Nepali companies to raise capital outside Nepal and become trans-regional or global players? Do we have a plan to flood the markets with the losses and revenues of 13,000 plus people killed during the past ten years? The questions can fill pages and as this Beed continues to raise them in this column every fortnight, perhaps there are no signposts in Kathmandu. Of course, Kamal Dahal’s reference to darkness and the appalling state of affairs at his first legal appearance hopefully extends beyond the symbolic light bulbs. We are yet to hear them speak on an economic agenda, we are yet to understand the key ten economic issues that the Maoists would like to see implemented. He has an opportunity to emerge from the Beltadux/Shaftaxia of Nepal but will he choose that or go the Prakash Karat way? The past 50 years has shown us that an economic agenda and continued to squander economic opportunities. It began with adopting a half-baked faulty-Nehruvian model and till recent times a completely anti-enterprise labour law that killed productivity and comparative advantage. Economics have just been pangs in election mantras, which are nothing better than lip service. The multilaterals and bilateralists have chosen to fill in with a constantly changing set of prioritisation that shuffles the people who arrived to fill their ‘hardship’ positions in Nepal. Billions of dollars of assistance have resulted in very little positive intervention. The private sector, which should have filled the vacuum by pursuing a decentralised fiscal policy that has existed once, has been more interested in politics, be it via the plethora of trade bodies or through a direct route in governance. We need to create economic prosperity. We need more millionaires and billionaires to create more jobs, tax revenues, opportunities and philanthropy. We need an economic agenda that allows creation of wealth without being shameful about it. If there was no Bill Gates, there would have been no foundation, therefore no dollars pouring into the needy sections of the world. If there is no wealth there will be no thinking to be shared on how to address the issue of inclusion and inequality will be meaningless. All debates on an empty stomach are useless. Hopefully Nepal will not have to continue this debate in tourist-less hotels or in the dark tents of a poor country.
"One person per house, or Rs 3,000 fine"

Anju Chhetri and Manju Thapa in Samaya, 23 June

“We have suffered enough,” says NC district leader Nanda Bahadur Bista of Rukum. “But we must make sure the peace process is successful so we don’t have to hear the sound of guns and bombs again.”

According to Bista’s count, 1,500 people of Rukum have died in the past 11 years of war. Of them, 94 percent are men from the ages of 17-40 and most are Dalits and Janjatis. An estimated 4,000 children have been orphaned.

The scars of war are everywhere in the trails leading out to the district capital of Khalianga. In the town itself there are endless stories of suffering from every family of the internally displaced: disappeared family members, bereavement, forced labour, extortion, abductions and rape.

We run into Grade 7 students Bimala Bohara and Krishna Rokaya (pictured) on the trail on 24 May. They were carrying small bags with just enough food for 15 days. They had been told by the Maoists to gather at a house in Gunjil Dhunga from where they were supposed to go and dig a ‘martyr highway’ in Rolpa. Krishna,13 was still wearing his school uniform. They had to go because the Maoists had said to go and dig a ‘martyr highway’ in Rolpa. After that the women in the village couldn’t send anyone. Krishna was among about 50 people who marched towards Rolpa that day. Among them was the son of the woman in whose house everyone had gathered. Her Grade 8 son was among those who went. “They say they will return in 15 days,” said the mother. “Two days to go, two days to return and the rest to dig the road. I have given him some money so he can buy food to eat. I hope he’ll be ok.”

She has heard stories of others who have died during road construction or killed in crossfire. “But now there is going to be peace, no?” asks neighbour Lila Rokaya who also had to send her sister who was in Grade 7, “maybe they shouldn’t have taken them.”

Dil Shobha and Sapana Sunar worked in the highway last year when the Maoists asked for one person from every household. Sapana marched to Rolpa and worked on the road with her one-year-old baby strapped to her back. The Maoists would also make the workers drill, watch cultural programs and sing songs. Both Dil Shobha and Sapana’s husbands have married second wives and don’t live in the village anymore.

Not even the brother of the Khalanga representative of the child rights centre, CWIN, was spared. He was forced to work on the highway but was caught up in a firefight and was hit in his leg by an army bullet. Very few people go out of their own free will because of the dangers, the villagers have to go whenever called, and they have to march for days from their homes before they reach the construction site.

Khadge Buda, 27, of Athbiskot committed suicide last year when the Maoists tried to force him to go work on the highway. After that the women in the village prevented their men folk from going too. The Maoists say 13km of the 19km road from Tila to Ghartigau is completed. We ask the local Maoist leader Sarun Batha why his party is using children. “When everyone in the village go to work on the highway, the children also join them out of their own free will,” he reasons, “after all in many of these households 13-14 year olds have to work in their homes. We let them work according to their capacity.”

It is clear the children should not be forced to leave school to work on the road. The Maoists should have tried to convince the people about the importance of the road rather than impose a fine on those who don’t send one person for the work gang. This could be counter productive for the Maoists themselves.

There have been positive developments for women in districts like Rukum. Polygamy and untouchability have been virtually eradicated. The Maoists have forced Dalits to enter the houses of upper caste people wearing shoes or forced Thakuris to take water from the village tap from Dalits.

They have become bolder, they speak out against injustice, they are politically aware,” says Dilmaya Pun of Chhing village in Rukum.

But other women admit the negative effects of the insurgency outweigh these benefits. Their complaints mainly centre around being forced to attend mass meetings and work on roads, not being allowed to travel freely to Khalianga and the loss of lives and livelihoods.

“In the last ten years, the lives of many women and children here have been ruined,” says Sitla Ol, a NC activist, “many have been widowed, women are struggling to survive and the children have a lot of mental stress. This has affected their studies.

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Times 23-29 JUNE 2006 #303 www.timesthisweek.com
Rabindra speaks out

Interview with Rabindra Shrestha who was expelled from the CPN-Maoist this year after he publicly criticised party leaders and published an appeal for a ‘new cultural revolution’. Excerpts:

Jana Aastha: Are we going the Peru way? Rabindra Shrestha: We feel that Prachanda and Baburam have the same attitude that brought about the failure of the Peruvian people’s war. Gonzalo used stubborn, puritanical, individualistic and mechanical methods. Prachandaji is doing the same.

What was late Prince Dhirendra’s role in talks? What Dhirendra said was ‘set (palace and Maoists) unite, deal with the all the parliamentary parties and share power’. We want this letter made public. Second, Dhirendra said that Gyanaendra and Baburam agreed but that Baburam was against her as he wanted to bring Gyanaendra back.

Why this attraction towards the palace? Both Baburam and Prachanda realised that they could not reach the seat of power without the help of a powerful nation. Baburam started saying we needed India’s help while Prachanda wanted to use the palace. After all, Gyanaendra had already begun his coup on 4 October. Prachandaji also started displaying neo-Ramayana tendencies. How foolish could he be have been to expect something that was not even given to the seven parties? The same politico-military must decide to take action against Baburam and missed the issue of overthrowing Gyanaendra. For Prachanda 1 February was a surprise. He had tried to hold talks with Gyanaendra after that his political career would have been over. At that time Baburam was accused of being pro-India. He was angry that they took away his chairmanship of the United Revolutionary Peoples Front and only started leaning towards India after his disagreement with Prachanda. But Prachanda definitely began siding with Baburam after Gyanaendra stepped on Prachanda’s back and did his coup. Baburam said, “We need to get together with India and fight against the king.” But our point was that India might just use us. Gyanaendra made a fool of Prachanda and India made fools of both Baburam and Prachanda.

Differences between Baburam, Prachanda and Baburam came to light during the Bangalore meeting. The fight between Prachanda and Baburam and between Baburam and Prachanda became public. We said then that a counter-revolution has begun, our leaders have shown their power greed. We want power. Who said this indicate? Whom did they have an undisclosed working agreement with? Gyanaendra or Dhirendra?

“An October revolution”

Pushpa Kamal Dahal in Nepal, June 18

What’s the real reason for the 12-point understanding with the seven parties? Our party was never into rigid politics. Even after starting the People’s War, we emphasised that we were never traditional communists. We are different and flexible.

What was the 12-point formula of power sharing? The country would have headed in a different direction if only the seven leaders had the capacity to think independently. If only there were political leaders who could use their own brains. India particularly provided positive support to the 12-point understanding.

But seems like your understanding with the UML doesn’t seem to be working? The UML seems to feel it is losing ground and always felt threatened by us entering mainstream politics.

You held talks with India in Rolpa prior to the king’s coup? We had our Indian friends with us and they suggested restoring parliament but we were not in favour of it. The people who rose up against the king did not even demand parliament’s restoration, which we only as a tool to reinstate the seven parties to power.

So are you positive the peace talks will work? We want a peaceful resolution but the parties are creating unhealthy atmosphere by doing inappropriate things without respecting the sentiments of the people. We still want to continue pressing our ground-level demand and want to increase that even at the high level. There will be an October revolution if the talks fail again and we are ready to take the lead in that.

Are you ready to wait until October then? Frankly, the situation will move towards revolution in October if the seven parties fail.

Do you doubt Koirala’s sincerity? It’s not his sincerity but his political stand that is more important. In my first meeting with him three years back, I had told him we are ready for multiparty system if he agreed to a republic. In that way, there will be a new Nepal. He promptly responded that NC would never do that. He is still where he was three years ago. He still talks of ceremonial king and this shows how rigid he is.

Don’t do that! That will send a wrong message to the people! Men’s Power: Greenpeace

Seven Parties

Abin Shrestha inSamaya, 22 June

“There could be no constituent assembly elections as well. That is true. We are talking about forming an interim constitution until now. But the parties in the present government are already paranching about dissolving parliament. What happens to the People’s Liberation Army? Even with the 30,000 PLA and 90,000 NA soldiers, we will still not think of fighting with China or India or any other country. Only our own people will be killed. National security is possible if the whole population is turned into a militia. With compulsory military training, we will have an army of strength of 27 million people and they will help to protect our country in case we are attacked by India or China. I have already proposed that both armies should reduce their size and rather give militia training to the citizens who will then maintain law and order. The army should be kept only to give military training to citizens.”

Deb Gurung, head of the Maoists’ economic division, in Abhyā, 19-25 June

“Land to the tiller”

The only way to economic transformation of society is through an industrialised economy. In the past this wasn’t allowed to be developed. Post policies favoured foreign multinational companies, allowed them to establish markets, take away cheap raw material and sell their manufactured goods here. This shouldn’t happen.

Our view on the free market is to encourage competition between domestic capital, national industries, or cottage industries. If domestic capital isn’t allowed to develop in the name of a free market economy then it won’t have a chance to compete with big capital coming in through multinational companies. Outside capital has to be regulated for projects and investments.

We’re not saying we don’t want multinational companies, or to ban them from investing here. We have to see where they want to invest, and we want to first see under what conditions they want to invest. Is it in the national interest? Only then should we allow them in.

We want to encourage domestic manufacturers and industries so that they become robust so that we can encourage them to invest more and make them economically stronger. We want to promote them in a planned and strategic manner. Instead of supporting servile capitalist enterprise or foreign broker capitalism. We would like to encourage a self-sufficient domestic economy by using locally available resources. We want to encourage and assist merchant class and industrialists and go hand in hand with them into the future.

Our program of revolutionary land reform is focused on the tarai. There are many families there who farm someone else’s land since the time of the Ranas and Shahs. In these places we will implement the policy of giving land to the tiller, the property deeds should be completely handed over to them. But landown capital must be done with this land and we have devised a formula whereby they will be allowed to keep 10 bigas of land for their own upkeep.
Like hundreds of other residents of Patan’s historic heart, Debendra Shrestha could have torn down his ancestral home and replaced it with a concrete highrise and earned lots of money renting out apartments. But the Shrestha family decided that their 18th century Malla-era home was too precious, so they collectively decided to restore it. They were looking for money when in 1997 the German aid agency GTZ came along to promote urban development through local initiatives. It was making an inventory of buildings that deserved to be preserved and the Shrestha household was included. The Department of Archaeology then secured support for restoration from UNESCO, which had in 1979 declared Patan Durbar Square one of the seven monument zones in the Kathmandu Valley World Heritage Site. UNESCO had been getting increasingly worried about urban sprawl eating away at the old buildings and of the Valley losing its architectural and cultural heritage. UNESCO worked with the Patan Tourism Development Organisation and found a unique formula to turn the restored private houses into bed and breakfast pensions. It took five years but the Shrestha’s house was reborn on Wednesday as Newa Chen.

Like Debendra, Uday Rajbhandari’s ancestral home, which is adjacent to a 2,000-year-old Kirat-era excavation site, was also crumbling. The Rajbhandari House was also inaugurated on Wednesday as a tourist inn.

“Preservation of architecture is an integral part of Kathmandu Valley’s culture which is under great threat from urbanisation,” said UNESCO’s Nepal representative, Koto Kano (pictured left at Newa Chen). “The Shrestha and Rajbhandari houses in Patan are models for rehabilitating traditional buildings and also how they can be sustainably preserved through tourism.” The National Federation of UNESCO Associations of Japan raised money for the restoration of the two houses.

The Shrestha House is located in Kulimha Tol on the ancient road leading from Patan Durbar Square down to the Bagmati at Sankhamul. It is built of brick and timber in the traditional Malla style with three wings around a sunny courtyard. The rooms have been functionally restored and are cozy—although tall guests must be warned not to get up suddenly or they will bump their heads on the ceiling. The suite and bedrooms are minimally stylish and are ideal for long-term guests.
The two inns have modern amenities, but keep the traditional ambiance of Newari houses with their low ceilings, mortar and brick walls, warm subdued lighting and quiet courtyards. Newa Chen and The Rajbhandari House are open to tourists as well as long-term residents. But more than just preserving two houses, Debendra and Udaya both hope other old buildings in Patan can also be similarly restored.

Kathmandu Valley heritage expert, Anil Chitrakar, says he is convinced the word will spread as the inns start making money. “The good thing is that it is not only bad things that are contagious in Nepal, good things are also contagious,” he adds. Indeed, the trend of bringing back the brickwork facades is spreading in Patan and Bhaktapur.

The restoration of the two private houses shows that support is now available not just to restore temples and public buildings but also private houses of architectural importance. It also shows what can be achieved when local communities get together for a common cause.

Says Dilendra Shrestha of the Patan Tourism Development Organisation: “In Kathmandu Valley the formula is: monuments minus the surrounding residential buildings equals no tourists. That is why it is important not just to preserve the temples and darbar squares but also the historic core of the towns.”

There are two kinds of restorations going on in Patan these days. The first is the tearing down of low, old buildings which are replaced by high rises with traditional brick facades. This trend has been encouraged by the municipality giving subsidies on construction material for buildings with historical looks. However, many of these buildings look disproportionately tall on the old skylines.

A much more harmonious way is to restore the old buildings like the two inns, strengthening them structurally and keeping true to the original in dimension, looks and building materials. And a useful side benefit is to turn them into hotels so they earn their keep.

Debendra’s wife, Saraswoti, hopes that the tradition of restoring old homes will now spread. She adds: “This is not just an old house. This is who we are.”

The Rajbhandari House

In Kwalakhu adjacent to an ancient Kirati religious site which is being excavated by the Department of Archaeology, the house is located in one of the squares within the Patan Monument Zone and has a courtyard and a garden. Rooms on three floors are accessed through elaborately carved wooden balconies. It is an oasis in the middle of bustling Patan, perfect for retreats for authors.

rajbhandarihouse@gmail.com
As a college professor, I hear a lot of career concerns. As my students prepare to enter working lives that will last 50 years or more, practically all of them try to be futurists in choosing the skills in which to invest. If they pick an occupation that declines in the next half-century, they may deeply regret it. They know that a mid-life career change is difficult, so they want to make the right choice while they are very young.

From what my students tell me, there is a widespread fear of commoditisation of jobs in the modern, information technology-driven global economy. They worry that in coming years even highly skilled people might be hired and fired indiscriminately, bought and sold like so many tons of copper or cases of frozen turkeys. Job satisfaction would suffer accordingly. After all, if the job requires nothing more than knowledge of existing technology, then it can be done by anyone anywhere in the world who has learned this technology, or, worse by some computer.

What are you going to be when you grow up? Stop worrying, immerse yourself in the field you love thought that computers will replace only low-skilled jobs, my students remind me otherwise. Medical expertise is in some ways being replaced by computer-based diagnostic systems and much of the work that engineers once did has been replaced by computer-assisted design systems. My students worry that such trends may continue, reducing job security, lowering rates of pay, and even eliminating some of the jobs altogether.

Should students really be worried about commoditisation? In their recent book The New Division of Labour: How Computers Are Creating the Next Job Market, economists Frank Levy and Richard Murnane, using job descriptions that go back to 1960, carefully classify jobs according to the kinds of cognitive skills that they require.

They were particularly interested in identifying jobs that were routine, even if complex and difficult, which could in principle be replaced by a sufficiently well-programmed computer. They then show evidence from the United States that jobs involving both routine manual work and routine cognitive work have become much less plentiful in recent decades, and that these jobs have indeed tended to be replaced by computers.

In an important sense, their research confirms that my students are right to be worried. But these trends tended to persist within occupations, industries, and educational attainment levels, thus providing little guidance concerning what occupation to choose and how much education to pursue. The important issue, according to Levy and Murnane, is that the most promising future careers will be those grounded in either expert thinking or complex communication skills. Expert thinking means understanding how to deal with new and different problems that do not fit the mould of past problems. Complex communications skills entail understanding ideas, how to evaluate their social significance, and how to persuade—tasks that no computer can accomplish.

The important point for students to bear in mind is that they should motivate themselves to attain deep understanding, not rote memorization, of the subjects that they study, in order to fulfill the role of a true expert in whatever field they ultimately choose to pursue. At the same time, they should invest in acquiring the communications skills that will be similarly crucial to a successful career. Achieving this kind of education probably means pursuing what one naturally finds interesting and engaging, whether that is finance or physiology. Students should stop worrying so much, immerse themselves in the field they love, and learn to appreciate the people who populate it. What may appear to them to be an unaffordable luxury is really a necessity that they can’t afford to reject.

Robert J Shiller is Professor of Economics at Yale University and author of Irrational Exuberance and The New Financial Order: Risk in the 21st Century.
Looking back at the April Uprising and analysing media coverage of the last days of royal rule, what seems to have played a bigger role than bricks and barricades was the power of ridicule. In Kirtipur, a formerly unknown student recited satirical poetry entertaining an audience of thousands for hours. Even riot police within earshot burst into laughter at the mockery of monarchy. Elsewhere, a student did impersonations of the king imitating his regal gestures and was greeted by gales of laughter.

And then there were the cartoonists. Every day, as the palace dug itself deeper and deeper into a hole of its own making, the illustrations got more and more daring. A cartoonist depicted the king burying his head in the sand with his crown next to him, or showed him sawing off one of the legs of his own throne. It was risky because lese majeste laws were still in place and punishment was harsh. But cartoonists became more and more defiant, caricaturing the king’s face, his wrap-around shades, jowls and a frowning visage.

Although Batsyayana did not directly depict King Gyanendra his cartoons on the front pages of Kantipur and Kathmandu Post his cartoons lampooned a morally bankrupt regime and helped bring it down. One of Batsyayana’s memorable drawings from last year is of a soldier escorting an underfed and near-naked farmer carrying a Rolls Royce into the royal palace. Because he is so famous, Batsyayana doesn’t have to prove himself and be overtly contemptuous—his subtlest cartoons are his most scathing. He sets aside his sharpest barbs for sycophants, yes-men, opportunists and hypocrites that infested post-1990 Nepal, the ones who through lust and greed squandered the gains of the 1990 People’s Movement and thus set the stage for the conflict.

With his prominent proboscis Girija Koirala seems to be Batsyayana’s favourite cartoon character, Madhab Nepal is a close second with his Charlie Chaplin moustache and owlish spectacles. With Sher Bahadur Deuba is it his permanently smug smirk. Batsyayana takes apart Koirala’s arrogance and tolerance of corruption, Nepal’s flip-flopping and Deuba’s shameless kowtowing of the king and his army. His biting cartoons attack the Maoists’ cynical justification of violence for political end.

Batsyayana’s real name is Durga Baral and he never started out being a cartoonist, he is a painter. Living in Pokhara, he kept an eye on the shenanigans of the capital from a perspective that the people of Kathmandu lacked. What he saw was so funny, he just had to make fun of it. Baral’s son Ajit has compiled his father’s best cartoons of post-1990 Nepal in this elegant volume and writes in his preface: ‘We want this book to be a sustained visual history, warts and all, of post-1990 Nepal…’ The book went to press in March 2006 and includes some cartoons from the post-February First period of censorship. But mostly it reminds us of the hope and hopelessness of the past 15 years of Nepali history: a sobering reminder to the same politicians who came to power after People Power II not to make the same mistakes again.

Last year, at the height of royal rule and the republic vs monarchy debate, Batsyayana’s famous cartoon of Koirala carrying away a horse’s corpse labelled ‘constitutional monarchy’ appeared on the front page of Kantipur. The paper got threatening calls and the minister of information vowed to take action. The government mouthpiece Gorkhapatra wrote a scathing editorial and the king’s henchmen even asked for the death penalty against the cartoonist.

The fact that Batsyayana’s cartoon of Girija and the dead horse is more relevant today than it was a year ago goes to prove just how prescient and timeless his drawings are. For that reason alone, this book which is being launched on Sunday 25 June is a must-have.

Kunda Dixit
On 17 May, Ang Temba Sherpa collapsed on descent from the summit of Chomolungma and was forced to spend the night at 8,600m while his team carried on down to the safety of Camp III.

At a time when news about the controversial death of a British climber and the amazing rescue of an Australian mountaineer dominates media headlines, the tale of Ang Temba Sherpa seems to be forgotten.

Ang Temba has been speaking about his ordeal and told us he just wanted to sit down for a quick rest as he felt exhausted coming down from the summit, which he reached at 12.22 PM.

“I must have fallen asleep as when I woke up it was dark and I had run out of oxygen,” he recalls. “I couldn’t carry on down as the batteries of my headlamp were flat and it was too dark.”

In the meantime, Ang Temba’s team, which consisted of four Japanese climbers and two other Sherpas, were expecting their leader, who had fallen behind on the descent down the north side of the mountain.

“When the sun came up I knew I had to move on in order to survive and even though three Tibetans told me they would bring me down after summiting, I did not wait for them and started walking,” Ang Temba said.

At about 8 AM an international team of mountaineers, who had abandoned their summit bid due to a sick member, found the exhausted Sherpa at 8,400m.

“When we came down we came across this guy who was all tangled up in the rope. He seemed very uncoordinated,” said Phil Crampton, leader of the team. As Crampton was busy looking after one of his own clients who had developed cerebral oedema, the team’s sirdar Jangbu Sherpa helped his worn out compatriot down towards Camp III.

Even though he was left in the death zone overnight, Ang Temba has no hard feelings about his team. “Nobody could have come up from 8,300m to look for me on summit day,” he said, “it would have been too tough for anybody,” said Ang Temba, who is from Rolwaling and has a wife and two children. His fingers and legs were paralysed when he got to Base Camp on the Chinese side, from where he was rushed to Kathmandu.

Ang Temba got very ill on the road to Nepal and the team had nearly given up hope on his survival. He stayed in hospital in Kathmandu for nine days and recovered.

“I had lost my memory completely. I did not recognise my wife or my two sons. It was horrible,” he added. The Sherpa regained his memory after five days and miraculously didn’t lose any of his fingers or toes.

The 46-year old does not think he wants to go back to climbing eight thousanders but he needs the money. “You earn much more on Everest than on smaller peaks,” he says. 

**Sherpa survives night near the top of the world**

**Back from the death zone**

**As featured in the Times 23-29 June 2006 #303**

**BILLI BIERLING on the RONGBUK GLACIER**

**AFTER THE STORM: Chomolungma from the north had a coating of new snow last month after the storm that nearly killed Ang Temba Sherpa (Third from left, above).**

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**Billi Bierling**

**DINESH MAGAR**
This is it?

Coke football commercial stirs controversy

On a windy Himalayan plateau a football game is in full swing between local Nepalis and African players. They crack the ball, which soars in the high thin air and的精神 with snow-capped peaks in the background. Eventually, the smaller Nepalis triumph and celebrate their victory while guzzling the energy drink Powerade, a Coca-Cola product.

The commercial for which the mountain football match was filmed in Jomsom in March has already been launched in Europe to accompany World Cup coverage. But after 10 days of shooting and just when the commercial airs in Asia, some of the actor-players are complaining. Initially Indian ad makers Highlight Films were going to shoot with only Nepali players but the African footballers were brought in at the last minute. Ten Nepalis were chosen from more than 100 who auditioned, accepting Rs 3,000 a day while the African players got Rs 4,000.

For the B division Nepali players it was a rare treat; they made more in 10 days than what they could normally earn in a year. Because, the world would see them. But it suddenly hit them afterwards that they may have been paid too little.

“We should have got more considering how much Coke makes but it was a lot of money for us,” says Raj Kumar Ghising, who plays for the Marang Marsiyanj Club. The African players were not available for comment since they have left after the end of Nepal’s football season.

Highlight Films Producer Shilpa Chatarjee denied there was any discrimination between the African and Nepali players. “For one, they were all paid more than what they asked for,” she said, “the African footballers we used got paid more than the Nepali players since they were from the top teams and the Nepali players got paid more than their average salary.”

Alok Tumbahangpey

Winning ways

Collapse at the US Open, consistency at Gokarna

Prem Sachdev took the seniors’ trophy with 37 points.

The weekend’s drama was really at Mamaroneck, NY, site of the US Open. For those of you who were too engrossed by the World Cup to watch golf live or even catch the highlights, let me sum up Mickelson’s collapse.

The 32-year-old had a two-shot lead with four holes to play but miscues plagued his final round, including missing 16 of 18 fairways. His tee shot on the 18th went far left and rattled through the trees into the trampled rough. Instead of playing out to the fairway and trying to get par, Mickelson went for the green but hit a tree, the ball advancing only 25 yards. His third shot sailed left of the green and got buried in the bunker, plugged so badly that he could only escape the hole with a double bogey.

That opened the door for Australian Geoff Ogilvy, who displayed some exceptional shots in his closing holes: he chipped in from a distorted rough on the 17th to save par, then overcame a miserable break on the 18th when his tee shot came to rest in a divot. His approach shot faltered as it reached the wrong side of the green but Ogilvy followed up with a splendid chip shot and sank the putt for a par.

Scott Colin Montgomery had the best chance of his career to take the major title but his dreams died when he double bogeyed the last hole. He wasn’t alone. The Winged Foot course punished many players, including Tiger Woods, who missed the cut by shooting 12 over in two rounds, ending his streak of making the grade in 37 consecutive majors.

Deepak Acharya is a golf instructor and Golf Director at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, Kathmandu. prodeepak@hotmail.com
Just as farmers were beginning to fear a repeat of last year’s rainless June, the monsoon has suddenly revived. The onset of the monsoon is essentially a tug-of-war between the moisture-laden southwest monsoon winds that hit the Bay of Bengal versus the westerlies. When the jet stream delays its annual summer migration north of Himalaya, the monsoon is delayed. After a ten-day tussle, the monsoon is now surging westwards along the midhills again, as this satellite picture taken on Thursday morning shows. The storm on Tuesday evening dumped 20 mm of rain in the Valley. Western Nepal has already got its normal precipitation so far, but this is likely to change for the better. The Bay area of the southwest monsoon is now active again and the weekend should see some brisk showers.
**AYO NOON:** Sushil the Magician turns paper into iodised salt at an event at Patan Darbar Square on Tuesday to mark Indian assistance for iodine deficiency and goitre control.

**TELLING IT TO THE WORLD:** The BBC’s Charles Haviland interviews Bhutani refugees staging a relay hunger strike in front of the UN building in Pulchok, on Tuesday, World Refugee Day.

**TRADITIONAL TUNES:** Newar girls perform traditional music at Shiva Parbati Dabali on Wednesday to mark the occasion of World Music Day. Shiva and Parbati watch from window overhead.

**KILLING TIME:** A Maoist cadre (left) and policewoman wait outside the prime minister’s residence in Baluwatar during the summit talks last Friday.

While the rest of the world celebrates the biggest sporting extravaganza by staying up late into the night watching the World Cup, a small orphanage is struggling to keep itself running so the children can have a better future.

Well what better way to raise funds for them than by celebrating the spirit of teamwork and sportsmanship through the beautiful game itself? And that's exactly what our sister publication, Wave, is doing by organising a football match between various members of us in the media and Nepali celebrities including musicians, singers, actors, RJ’s, VJ’s, and even models.

The Wave Kick Off Cup is being held Saturday at Dasrath Stadium and will raise money for the Mayadevi Orphanage in Rupandehi. The orphanage is run on local resources by Baburam Pyasi, a local resident who started it two years ago as a child shelter. Today, the orphanage is home to 47 children who live in the temporary shelter built of bamboo sticks and tin roofs on two acres of Pyasi’s own land.

The children attend school but the organisation is in dire need of financial support and even a little money can go a long way. A child living in the orphanage recently died when a bomb that the Maoists had carelessly left exploded in the nearby jungle. Two other children were severely injured in the explosion.

After the match, a dinner will be held at Himalmedia football field in Sano Hatiban where prizes will be given to the winners and a World Cup match screened on the big screen.

Wave Kick Off Cup
2:4PM Dasrath Stadium
24 June, Saturday
Party: 7PM onwards at Himalmedia, Sano Hatiban
For tickets call: 9851011937

**Foot ball for the kids**
Moving the goalposts

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

We Apologise to Viewers That We’ve Had To Poach The Signal For This World Cup Broadcast From Myanmar TV Because ESPN And STAR SPORTS HaveRefused To Honour The Decision Of The Honourable Patan Appellate Court For An Interim Stay Order Requiring Them To Not Block The Live Relay Of World Cup Matches To This Cable Network Even Though We Haven’t Paid Their Stipulated Fees. We Regret This Inconvenience To Our Valued Customers Which Is Caused Entirely By The Unreasonable Demand of ESPN and STAR SPORTS To Try To Get Us To Actually Pay For Their Service. What Do They Think, That Money Grows on Trees in Nepal or What? Proletariat of the World Unite! You Have Nothing To Lose But Your World Cup Coverage.

This message brought to you by Tangal Cable Network (Pvt) Ltd, Tangal

After watching the Czechs playing the Stripes till three in the morning last night I’m actually writing this week’s column in my sleep, so I would appreciate it if you didn’t make any loud noises or sudden movements while reading it. But wake me up when this evening’s games start.

Is it just me or are some of you also falling asleep while watching the World Cup? This is much more worrying than being unconscious at work. It is an indication that something needs to be done quickly if we are to preserve the interest of Nepalis in football and stop people from flicking their remotes to watch Comrade Prachanda’s interview instead.

I have been in email touch with FIFA President Sepp Blatter and after hard bargaining have agreed on a 12-point MoU which has been distilled from my original 157-point demand and a 40-point final ultimatum to make the game of football more thrilling. Here is the gist of our final 8-point agreement:

1. Move the goalposts. In fact, increase their width from 9m at present to 21m so there are more chances of goals being scored. What we want to see are scores like Argentina 73-Serbia 9.
2. Remove goalkeepers. These spoilsports unfairly block hard-earned free kicks with their hands and keep the score down.
3. Don’t level the playing field. Incline it at an imperceptible 5 degrees to give the stronger side the advantage of running downhill and scoring more goals.
4. Allow offsides. Strikers will be allowed to hang around the enemy goal post waiting for a long pass, making more goals possible.
5. There are too many stoppages for fouls and misconduct. Players will be allowed to tackle, use Thai-style boxing and Greco-Roman wrestling techniques to bring down enemy players and the referee as well if he doesn’t behave himself.
6. God gave us hands. But hands are allowed only for throw-ins. What a waste. Let’s grab the ball and hit the ground running.
7. Get the balls. Defenders setting up a wall to face a free kick near the penalty area will not longer be allowed to protect their crown jewels with their hands. It’s a disgusting habit.
8. Sack the referee and linesmen. We don’t need them, they just slow the game down by stopping play at the slightest excuse. We have democracy now, so let players settle things with fistfights.

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