

Times

Weekly Internet Poll # 305

Q. Which among these is your favourite team in the 2006 Football World Cup?

Total votes: 9,257

Argentina 13.6%

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France 13.8%

Germany 24.5%

Other 15.4%

Weekly Internet Poll # 306. To vote go to: [www.nepaltimes.com](http://www.nepaltimes.com)

Q. Should Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala now resign and make way for a successor?

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# Great expectation

## Can next week's budget turn the peace dividend into development?



SHYAM TEKWANI

### KUNDA DIXIT

Two months after parliament was restored and the palace sidelined, the seven party alliance is working to transform the economy just like it transformed politics.

But as Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat prepares to deliver the budget to parliament on 11 July he is faced with formidable challenges: a huge revenue shortfall, a government distracted by keeping the peace process on track, Maoist warnings that they want to have a say in budget priorities and hesitant donors.

Mahat knows the people's expectations are high and wants a big budget that can dramatically improve services and create jobs.

"We need the money to show we can do it," Mahat told a pre-budget conference on Tuesday. Nepal's donors all say money is not a problem, they want a list of

priority areas from the government and a strategy to improve disbursement.

Mahat shows visible impatience with this talk: "We have an urgent liquidity crisis and we need them to put their money where their mouth is for budgetary support."

Despite wanting to reward Nepal for restoring democracy, donors are still wary about what the Maoist role will be when they join the interim government. They also don't seem convinced that just pouring in more money will help.

"I'm not sure a big increase in the budget is necessarily what we are looking for," one senior donor representative told us, "We want to be convinced that the money can be spent properly."

The government is so caught up in trying to bring the Maoists into the mainstream that it hasn't had time to think about how to

improve disbursement. Prime Minister Girija Koirala's health is also a factor. His presentation to parliament of the government's pre-budget plans and programs, a ritual that used to be carried out by the king, has been postponed till Sunday.

"It is almost immaterial to which specific programs the new budget will allocate its resources, as long as they meet some significant needs," says World Bank Nepal representative, Ken Ohashi, "It is, however, absolutely essential that what is promised is delivered." (See p 4-5)

The government was reportedly working on an ambitious Rs 200 billion budget but has been forced to scale it down to about Rs 120 billion. Revenue has fallen below Rs 80 billion and most of the rest must come from foreign aid. There has been a chronic shortfall of 20

percent between expenditure plans and actual spending and in fiscal 2005-2006 this is expected to cross 35 percent. "There is really no point adding more money unless we can spend it," one ministry official told us.

Scared off by radical Maoist rhetoric, investment is also at a standstill.

It is urgently needed to address electricity generation shortfalls which NEA estimates will mean up to eight hour per day loadshedding every winter for at least the next six years.

The two big projects that can be completed fastest are Upper Karnali and Upper Tama Kosi but both are stuck because of government indecision. ●

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**Beyond Koirala**

**Budget** p4-5  
**Binit Sharma, Ken Ohashi**

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## BEYOND KOIRALA

Even those who love to hate Girija Prasad Koirala grudgingly admit that he has been the only party leader who stuck to his guns after King Gyanendra embarked on his creeping coup in October 2002.

Sher Bahadur Deuba, Surya Bahadur Thapa, Lokendra Bahadur Chand and even Madhab Kumar Nepal all succumbed to the king's lethal charm. This won Koirala political stature, which is why the seven parties chose him to lead the post-April government. But the prime minister's health is deteriorating and he has now been advised complete rest for at least two weeks.

The man is 84 and is on oxygen. He used to chain smoke, his lung is malfunctioning and he has prostate problems. He was too ill to take the oath of office in April, too ill to attend parliament's historic post-reinstatement session and now too ill to deliver the all important pre-budget speech in parliament. His illness is not just a concern for family and friends but also for his party, the governing alliance, the Maoists and the country.

Because he is so central to the unity of the alliance, Koirala's health is a national concern. The palace problem has been sorted out for now, but the parties next need to negotiate a peace, ease the Maoists into mainstream politics and forge a new Nepal from the ruins of our recent violent and dictatorial past. These tasks require robust and visionary leadership.

For much of his life, what Koirala lacked in the vision department he made up for with tireless championing of the democratic cause. Though many still blame him for the drastic slide after 1990, he has by now atoned for those sins by forging a workable alliance with the Maoists and then rallying the democratic forces to victory against royal rule. His long life has been amply rewarded with four prime ministerships in 15 years.

But now it's time to think of a future beyond Koirala. Although the alternatives at the top of the alliance are limited, there is a crop of leaders who can rise to the occasion. Within the NC a governing collective must be formed before cronies use the prime minister's power in his name and hotheads hijack the agneda.

Whoever emerges as leader, the search must begin immediately. One needn't be overly worried about the question: after Girija who? This nation of 26 million people has enough potential leaders with vision and statesmanship to meet the challenge of these crucial times.



ONG KAI LING

# Favoured victims

## Men continue to appoint men to power

This is a critical period in the history of Nepal when decisions being made now will determine the future course of the country.

But neither the negotiating team of the government nor of the Maoists have women in them. Besides two token women, there are no females in the 31-member Ceasefire and Code of Conduct

**GUEST COLUMN**  
**Bina Pradhan**



National Monitoring Committee and the Interim Constitution Drafting Committee. The decision to include women in the constitution committee has been left pending even though drafting has started.

Despite the rhetoric of inclusiveness it is clear the political leaders and the Maoists are set in their old ways as they prepare for a 'new Nepal'. High caste men representing only about 16 percent of the population are deciding the future for the entire population, including women who have different needs, constraints and priorities.

Principles of human rights and democracy are held high in the aftermath of dictatorship and conflict. Yet Nepali women find themselves still fighting for a voice in the decision making process. Mainstream politics has yet to recognise the situation of millions of Nepali women whose condition has been worsened by conflict.

The Maoists identified marginalisation and disempowerment of women and Dalits to legitimise their war and attract recruits. Dalits and women

are said to make up half the lower Maoist rank and file, 30 percent of the guerrillas are women and the central committee is 10 percent female. It would seem that the Maoists excelled where the government and other political parties had failed in including and empowering women.

However, patterns of representation in post-conflict rebuilding shows continued domination by the same upper caste men within the Maoist movement. About the seven party alliance, the less said the better. They pulled down the only woman speaker despite her competence in conducting the house in the most difficult of times. All evidence and trends show that Dalits and women will continue to be 'favoured victims' of the new regime whoever comes to power.

The 8-point agreement of 16 July between the seven parties and the Maoists has serious implications for the future approach to decision-making as well as on the promises of an inclusive democracy. The extra-democratic process through which parties and Maoist leaders agreed on the eight points, ignoring the peace talk team, monitoring committee and all other major stakeholders, undermines and endangers the democratic process in the peace-building and reconstruction process. Such a style of functioning shows high caste men assume they know what is best for all other population groups and it is a betrayal of the promise of democracy.

Women engaged in relief work, promoting peace initiatives and monitoring human rights, including women's rights, are mostly in the informal sector. But only men with access to formal political and economic power are

seen around the negotiating table. Resolutions in favour of social and gender inclusion alone are obviously insufficient, it is the implementation that counts.

But from what we have seen, the marginalised will continue to be excluded from negotiations, treaty-making, interim governments, post-conflict reconstruction, planning and policy-making. Above all, men will continue to appoint men to power and largely it will be the men who set the post-conflict and reconstruction agenda even in the new Nepal.

Experiences of women and men in Nepal's conflict have been different, as elsewhere. While the entire nation has suffered, the impact on women and men, particularly concerning access to power and decision-making, is unequal.

Besides being victims, in response to the conflict situation women have stepped outside their traditional roles. They have joined the armed forces, political organisations and peace movements, as well as taken over traditionally male occupations and responsibilities for the protection and maintenance of their families. The women's role in economic and agricultural production has expanded.

After the crisis, however, the same patriarchal values and mindsets exist. The role of women is marginalised in post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation efforts. Such general exclusion of women from decision-making positions prior to, during and following violent conflicts reinforces their victimisation. This has significant implications on the future of a reconstructed Nepal and scope and extent of the democratic process. ●

Bina Pradhan, PhD, is a gender population and development expert.

# The lazy days of summer

## UN officials are away at a time when their presence is most needed in Nepal

Norwegian peacemaker Vidar Helgesen is in Kathmandu. He has been involved in the conflict resolution processes of Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, two countries that still have a long way to go towards peace and stability.

But at this point, lessons from failures may be even more significant than experience of successful peace processes. The role and responsibility of the international community in peace, reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation are likely to increase in the days ahead.

The arrival of the former Norwegian deputy foreign minister this week coincided with the government's decision to invite the United Nations as a supervisor for arms management. The rebels are unhappy with the government writing to the

UN on its own even though UN involvement in the peace process has been their long-standing demand. But Girija Prasad Koirala seems to have assumed that as the legitimate government of a UN member state, he is well within his rights to request the world body for technical assistance in resolving a domestic conflict.

The 12-point understanding between the parties and the Maoists in November 2005 had an escape clause about involving 'any reliable party' and by the eight-point declaration of 16 June, the two sides had agreed to urge the UN to help in 'management of arms and armed personnel of both the sides and to monitor it in order to conduct elections for the constituent assembly in a free and fair manner'. In the past, India has been against any interlocutor other than itself but even South Block now seems to want a limited role for the world body.

India's CPI-M acted as a mediator and some leaders even functioned as

guarantors in the formation of an unlikely alliance between politicians and armed rebels. But Sitaram Yechury, a confidante of Shekhar Koirala (nephew and close aide of the premier) and Baburam Bhattarai alike can only do so much. Beyond a point, any understanding, agreement or declaration without the endorsement of a legitimate authority becomes pointless.

Under the circumstances, no agency other than the UN can legitimise an armed group as a political force. But we must realise the limitations that the UN works under. During a recent visit, Kul Chandra Gautam admitted it may take months to decide and post peacemakers on the ground after appropriate requests are received from the host government. We may not have that much time to keep Maoists guerrillas in hibernation once the monsoon is over.

However, Kathmandu-based dips are on vacation for the next month so we won't see much happening. Summer holidays

are almost a religious ritual for the UN system and other western missions here. Once scheduled they can't be cancelled, the dates are written in stone—whatever may happen in the host country.

Even though the UN expected a request letter from the government, its Res Rep Matthew Kahane is already on holiday. So are other Kathmandu-based diplomats. Nepali officials are often accused of delaying decisions, what about decisions delayed by this mass summer hiatus?

UN priorities also change. Nepal's OHCHR chief Ian Martin has been dispatched on damage control to East Timor but who's going to do damage control in Nepal if things fall apart here? Martin is one diplomat with enough credibility, competence and commitment to influence the Maoists and the military alike. His absence from Nepal at a critical time when the UN's role is called for can only delay a resolution. ●

**STATE OF THE STATE**

**C K Lal**





## LETTERS

## BHUTANI RESETTLEMENT

Re: 'Bhutani refugees', #304. The refugees have spent 15 years in camps already. I can imagine the frustration among the young refugees who could be productive and earning their own living elsewhere rather than living on handouts. Many refugees are trying hard to emigrate to third countries. I would like to request refugee leaders to rise above their political agenda and think about the future of the youth. Please work with UNHCR and the Nepali government to begin the process of third country resettlement. I don't believe this process would hamper repatriation of refugees to their homeland because only a small number of refugees are normally accepted by western countries.

**Pasang Sherpa, email**

## DON'T GIVE IN

There is a lot of talk of 'weapons management' these days, including in your editorial ('Turn down the volume', #304). But one should make the distinction between weapons demobilisation by the government's legitimate army and that by a rebel group. The government is a legal entity even if it has the king as head of state. Yes, we need the UN to monitor the Maoists' weapons. Home Minister Sitaula should stand his ground and not give in to the Maoist demand to also manage the army's weapons. And let's stop all this fashionable republican talk, the Shah dynasty made a big contribution to the unification of Nepal—let's not forget that.

**Min Pandit, Dubai**

I liked your editorial this time ('Turn down the volume') more than ever because it is unbiased and analytical. We have come to rely on you for your unprejudiced and analytical reports. Now that everything seems to be on track, everyone should make concessions on their most radical demands. The seven parties and the Maoists both have good and bad plans, we need to make sure Nepalis get only the good ones.

**Rishav Shrestha, email**

I have been a passive and distant observer to all the events in Nepal since April. I can only see two things happening. The Maoists are washing away their sins and everyone else is being punished. The army is constantly criticised and the parties are vilified but the Maoists go scot free. Wake up, Nepal. Baburam and Prachanda should be brought to justice for the 13,000 lives they have cost this country. As for the SPA, remember: once bitten twice shy. Don't ever forget all your people that the Maoists have killed.

**Abhishek Bhandari, email**

Every which way you look you notice that the Maoists are gaining ground and the parties are losing. The party leaders are trying very hard to make the Maoists

happy. It is very clear what the Maoists want but the parties' agenda is not clear. If things go on like this, the parties will be overtaken by the Maoists. Believe it or not, the constituent assembly is going to be a poison pill. The only way for the parties to save their dignity is to declare an election for a national assembly and house of representatives immediately. Only then deal with the 1990 constitution.

**Shree Shrestha, email**

You say the Maoists are talking tough to assuage their cadre ('Why should we trust you', #303). I think they are talking



KIRAN PANDAY

tough because after April the parties pretended as if the entire Jana Andolan was their doing and left the Maoists out. There is no doubt that if it hadn't been for the non-violent support of the Maoists, the pro-democracy agitation would not have succeeded. The Maoists just want to be recognised for their contribution. If only the parties saw that simple truth, there would be more trust.

**Thakur Sharma, Lajimpat**

The seven party alliance must admit that they have been totally eclipsed by the oratory and commitment shown by the Maoist leaders in their media appearances recently. The Maoists have a plan and a vision for a new Nepal, the parties have neither. You may not agree with the Maoists' past methods but now that they want to join the mainstream they deserve a chance.

**Jayant Yadav, email**

I don't understand why no one from the Nepali media is raising the question of Sitaram Yechury's meddlesome activities in Nepal. I don't understand in which capacity he is involved: he is not a member of the Indian government, nor is he officially appointed as a special/ political envoy. Yechury has his own agenda which is favourable to the Maoists. I have not seen or heard any news where he has publicly raised the issue of Maoist kidnapping, extortion, intimidation, murder, and handover of all seized properties. These are the pre-requisites to the Maoists joining the multiparty democratic system. Yechury is in the middle of various issues that are very sensitive to Nepal and his role needs further scrutiny.

**Pravin Regmi, USA**

I am amazed that a ranting and raving lunatic like Prachanda gets so much publicity and attention in the Nepali media ('An October Revolution', #303). Everyone seems to be falling over backwards to please the man who is more responsible for the mess that the country is in than any other political figure. The enigma and myth surrounding him has been completely shattered and I am surprised how a morally and politically bankrupt individual has led thousands astray all these years and not been questioned within his own party. In the current climate, one needs to be responsible and mature and demonstrate

leadership qualities and statesmanship, which the Maoist supremo obviously lacks. God help us all if this demented personality is given the responsibility of leading the country in the not too distant future.

**Vijay Sharma, email**

## ELDERLY

Congratulations to Shehab Uddin for that superb photo feature on the Pashupati Bridhashram ('These strangers are family now', #304). His pictures and text bring out the humanity in all of us. How, despite all odds, we Nepalis help each other in times of need, and the way in which however difficult the circumstances, we look at the bright side. Strange though, that it took a Bangladeshi to help us to see ourselves.

**Rita Gurung, Kathmandu**

## STRICTLY BUSINESS

Ashutosh Tiwari obviously doesn't know anything about what ANFA is doing and definitely did no research before writing his Strictly Business column ('How we can make it to the World Cup', #304). ANFA needs to build the infrastructure he so easily condemns so that it can find the right kind of talent. Building academies all over the country gives more grassroots exposure to football, which is what ANFA has been trying to do. Mr Tiwari dreams that we could qualify for the World Cup in 2014 or 2022. If it was printed in the 'Under my Hat' section, that wish would have been more appropriate. Nepalis are still physically inferior to the nations that make it to the World Cup. Look at the number of Africans playing in the national league here. They aren't good enough to play even in India and they are stars here. What does that tell us about our players? Development of football is not an overnight thing and the

activities that you list, ANFA is already doing it. Look at the development and exposure of football in the last few years and you might begin to appreciate ANFA's work. Mr Tiwari should stop criticising something just because it is an easy target. Still a fan of the paper.

**Suvash Gurung, email**

## DOG'S LIFE- 4

Andrew Steele must have spent too many sleepless nights (Letters, 'A dog's life'-2', #303). Otherwise how can he condone shooting and torturing street dogs? If he would have done a little homework, Mr Steele would know that the Kathmandu municipality for years invested loads of money in poisoning dogs and has come to the conclusion that (apart from being inhumane) it is completely ineffective. He would also know that virtually all over the world Animal Birth Control (ABC) is accepted as the only scientific, effective and humane solution. WHO and the Nepali authorities are proud of the KAT centre, which has introduced ABC to Nepal. We would also like to inform Mr Steele that even though Nepal does not have animal welfare legislation yet he can be punished under the Muluki Ain for throwing rocks at street dogs.

**Animal Nepal  
Jhamsikhel, 9841334537**

As long standing residents of Kathmandu will know, barking dogs have always been an annoying feature of life here. But we at Kathmandu Animal Treatment Centre (KAT) urge that dog shooting or poisoning is not an ideal short-term solution to the dog population problem as Andrew Steele suggests ('Dog's life', #303). Dogs are not simply shot in the head with precise targeting. The killing is a messy nasty business, in which the dogs die slowly and very painfully in clear view of distressed local people. Plus, the obvious risk to humans is a serious factor. Children have actually been caught in the crossfire. Animal Birth Control (ABC) has been proven to be the best longterm solution. In the last two years, KAT has succeeded in reducing the dog population with the ABC method in the areas where we work and is getting very positive local support. We invite interested people to find out more by coming to our centre at Chapali Gaon, Budhanilkanta.

**Khageshwar Sharma, KAT Centre**

I find it astonishing that at a time when Kathmandu is in the process of recovering from an extremely jittery period with the army and the Maoists eyeball to eyeball guns a-ready, Andrew Steele (Letters, #303) can seriously suggest that the police take up arms and shoot at street dogs. It is not difficult to imagine the scenario if a pitched battle broke out. "Opps, sorry, I was only shooting at street dogs." Rest in peace, Mr Steele.

**Mary Morris, Gairidhara**



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# The fallacy of large numbers

**BINIT SHARMA**

**T**he budget season is upon us and like every year, the collective national imagination is gripped with images of the finance minister cooking up a concoction that will please everybody.

The ingredients—scholarships for students, a raise for civil servants, tax relief for businessmen and traders, special rehabilitation packages for the families of martyrs, roads and bridges for remote districts and the mandatory increase in expenditure for education, health and agriculture—are the same but the expectations from the budget are palpably higher this year.

This is not only because the budget is being presented by the peoples' representatives after a three-year hiatus but the cessation of Maoist violence, many feel, offers an opportunity to accelerate investment in rural areas.

These expectations, as well as the national affinity with

large numbers in the budget are captured amply in the 'model budgets' being forwarded from various quarters. The independent National Council for Economic and Development proposes a Rs142 billion budget while the CPN-UML's Planning and Policy Coordination Division, led by one of the shadow finance ministers Bharat Mohan Adhikary feels Rs150 billion to be the more appropriate figure for a 'people's budget'.

These numbers are at least 30 percent higher than what the government has been able to spend in the current fiscal year. But, the country has turned a major corner politically and a peace dividend through the budget is perhaps deserved. An expansionary budget loaded with populist programs, however, is a risky way to deliver this dividend.

Not only does such a budget jeopardise the already precarious fiscal situation but in its zeal to 'scale up', it is very likely that the government will let in a lot of projects with dubious quality and justification or projects that

would normally not be undertaken during years of fiscal austerity.

Budget planning and analyses in Nepal typically start with an expenditure target, proceed with a rueful commentary on the weak revenue effort and the limit on

**How is the finance minister going to please everybody?**

domestic borrowing and end by pointing out the centrality of foreign aid in filling the gap between resources and the proposed expenditure.

No surprises then that the primary objective of the finance minister in the run up to the budget becomes the maximisation of aid commitments. Two important lessons of the past

should not be forgotten. First, boosting public investment programs, particularly through borrowed money, might actually narrow the available space for private investment which is infinitely more efficient. Second, using aid commitments from donors to bolster the spending portfolio is pointless because we are constrained not by the scarcity of donor funds but by our inability to spend what's already available.

It is true, however, that the present government needs to play a more aggressive role in the provision of social services and the financing of resettlement and rehabilitation. But even from this perspective, an overly expansionary budget does not make sense.

If there is one enduring positive to come out of the most recent spate of reforms in Nepal, it is the development and deepening implementation of the medium term expenditure framework (MTEF), a tool to plan and prioritize spending in a multi-year framework. MTEF has been the cornerstone of fiscal

stability since 2002. Not only did it help thwart pressures to make unreasonable increases in security expenditure but it also enabled the government to protect the most pro-poor expenditure headings.

This was made possible largely by the prioritisation framework embedded within the MTEF which ensured that even during episodes of severe revenue shortfalls, there was sufficient cash (saved from the pruning of lower priority activities) available for the highest priority projects.

The experience during Nepal's democratic nineties shows that short-lived governments are keen to start new projects rather than giving continuity to the ongoing ones. Given that the government's spending packages for the last few years already contain the highest priority projects with significant rural orientation, it is important to remember that any marginal project that is added to the portfolio is actually of a lower priority than those that are already in there.

# Seizing the open moment

**Next week's budget is larger than a budget, it must establish the credibility of the state**

**B**eing the first budget after Jana Andolan II, the upcoming budget has special importance and it must respond to the aspirations of the people.

It must address the plight of the rural people who have suffered the brunt of the conflict. It must be inclusive and support the peace process. Noble as they are, all

**COMMENT**  
**Ken Ohashi**



those goals cannot possibly be met

by this budget. The real importance of this budget lies elsewhere: it is about establishing the credibility of the state.

The political transition in April has brought Nepal a rare opportunity in history, an 'open moment'. The enormous popular energy that was mobilised against the old order also lifted many social and political constraints that the people used to accept as given. The Nepali people now feel a new future is within their grasp.

It is also a very fluid moment. Along with great opportunities, it presents serious risks. The huge energy mobilised in April, if not given a direction, can easily tear the country in different directions. Already there are such signs.

The rising demands, from organised labour in private factories and the civil service to even universities, may benefit narrow interests of small groups in the short-run, but they will surely not help put Nepal on a sustainable path of growth and prosperity. If these demands are all accommodated, Nepal would find itself in an even more difficult quagmire of patronage politics and weak global competitiveness.

To direct this energy away from self



TIFFANY ANG

**BY THE WAYSIDE: Women break stones all day at a gravel depot at Balaju on Tuesday. How will next week's budget improve their lives?**

interests to a collective purpose, there must be a vision that can captivate the people's imagination. The vision must be complemented with a sequence of actions to sustain the momentum and the people's belief that the country is indeed moving towards a better future. This requires leadership and that is the role of the state.

Unfortunately, the state in Nepal has been by and large an instrument for the privileged. Even under multiparty democracy, annual budgets tended to promise many things that seemed politically expedient and failed to deliver most of them. This was a perfect way to undermine the confidence of the people in the state. This must change.

But Nepal also starts with considerable

assets to build on. Five decades of development efforts have demonstrated that the real strength of Nepal lies at the community level. Many successful community-based programs, from forestry management and rural drinking water schemes to school management, give overwhelming evidence on this matter.

It is obvious that the new concept of the state must be based on a partnership between the communities, or the people, and the state. By creating the space for the community and providing it with some resources, the state can facilitate far greater development impact than it has ever been able to by itself. Partnership should also extend to the genuine private sector (as opposed to 'crony capitalism').

Nepal must act quickly and forcefully if it is to seize this open moment and realise the dream of a New Nepal. The most important step the budget can take, then, is to begin redefining the state and its relationship with the people. That is what this budget should be about.

It will take some time for Nepalis, the state and the people together, to define a clear vision of the New Nepal. But, its outline is already visible. It must be focused on three things: peace, social and political inclusiveness, and economic growth.

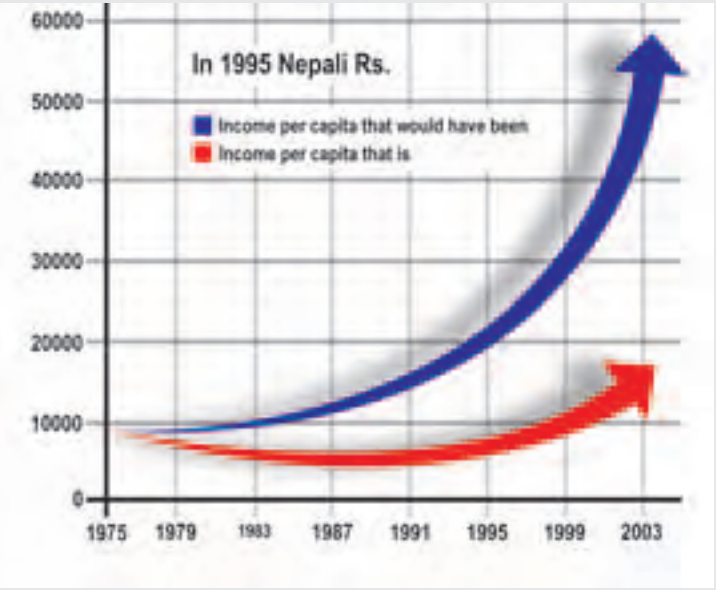
The kind of state that must emerge to make this vision possible is also clear enough. This budget can begin to take the first steps toward effective implementation by building real partnerships with communities. It is almost immaterial to which specific programs the new budget will allocate its resources, as long as they meet some significant needs. It is, however, absolutely essential that what is promised is delivered.

Those simple actions will go a long way toward constructing a credible state that can facilitate inclusive development in Nepal. If the people feel that such a state is being built, which will eventually meet other pressing needs of the country, they will be willing to wait.

On the other hand, if this budget fails to convince the people that an important beginning is being made, there is little for which to wait. The importance of this budget goes far beyond a normal budget. It is about the credibility of the state, and by extension the fate of New Nepal. ●

Ken Ohashi is the World Bank Country Director for Nepal





Additionally, the expenditure shortfall, the difference between the budgeted expenditure and actual expenditure, in the last three years has averaged about 20 percent and has been driven largely by capital expenditure. Again, this shortfall represents underperformance of the highest priority projects and reflects implementation setbacks suffered due to conflict among other things. So essentially, if the budget implementation were to improve, a maximum of 20 percent increase in actual expenditure could be realized without even increasing the budget.

What the revolutionary

budget needs, therefore, is not a double digit increase in the promised expenditure through new projects but revolutionary strategies on how to spend what is already being spent more efficiently and effectively. Violating the prioritisation framework that exists presently under the MTEF to undertake an ambitious expansion would be tantamount to opening the floodgates and bringing back the era of the 1990s when successive governments competed to overload the budget with some promising to build bridges in places that had no rivers and others proposing to build roads that already existed. ●

# Nepali cynicism

## Can we ever get out of it?

The glitterati and the twitterati in the cocktail circuits of the capital are ready with their doomsday scenarios. Without a *khattam kanccha* theory it seems they cannot down the free booze at these soirees. They did so when Nepal opened up in early 1990s to say how we weren't ready for democracy. When Nepal opened for foreign investment, they predicted how domestic industry would collapse. When tariff was brought down, they complained about how our core industry (smuggling) would be affected. When private hydropower players came into the market, they complained of a national sell out.

**ECONOMIC SENSE**  
**Artha Beed**



In the rest of the country the story is different. In Dang, after five years people are rejoicing that there is no curfew after 8 pm. In Kabhre, villagers told your weekly Beed how they do not need to throw milk or vegetables away anymore because there are no more bandas. In Pokhara, there are more tourists and vehicles even late at night. The supply chain to and from Dhangadi or Mahendranagar is not disrupted. For the common Nepali, these are signs of hope that the ceasefire and the glimpse of a longterm peace have brought. Yet, instead of celebrating these changes, we insist on proclaiming that the glass is half empty. The nabobs of negativity in the elite hobnob with expats in their hardship postings and feed each other's paranoia. These can be read, seen and heard very clearly, be it at the forums of business people or in interviews. Perhaps the American ambassador doesn't want things to return to normal because he wants to justify his new fortress-like embassy. P K Dahal has perhaps in his own mind given more than he would have ever thought to concede in such a short span of time. Perhaps, he sees his

party's strength in being able to engage the youth, earlier for a violent purpose and now for perhaps some nation building. As this Beed wrote in an earlier column, Dahal has the opportunity to emerge as the Buddhadeb Bhattacharya of Nepal. However, if he gets carried away by his own rhetoric of land reform, revamping education and nationalisation of businesses he and his party will fail. As long as a Nepali can connect to the internet and buy goods with a card and get shipped by a global carrier, Nepal will be globalised. As a WTO member, Nepal will have to negotiate better but not cancel its membership.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

The option remains of either seeing the glass half full or half empty. We have always opted to see the latter. As a young economist at a US university said, economics should go beyond looking at the magic potion of the annual budget. We need to go beyond looking at the eight-digit calculator as all big numbers will be reflected as an error. Economies are always resilient. Let us recall all the action between 1990-1995 when the economy was deregulated and reforms initiated. New banks, finance companies, insurance companies, media houses, private institutions, civil society structuring, stock markets, carpets, garments came up. We can replicate that period and not squander this chance. ●

## Powerful dung

The number of Nepali households with biogas plants has hit 150,000, according to the Biogas Support Programme (BSP), which has disseminated biogas technology to 2,617 VDCs in 66 districts, led by Kaski (with 10,686 plants), Tanahu (10,200 plants) and Makwanpur (10,166 plants). Biogas, produced by converting dung, reduces consumption of firewood and kerosene, helps create a smoke-free indoor environment and saves villagers time that they would have used collecting firewood, time that can be used for income generation activities. Biogas also helps to produce organic manure and pesticide, and saves money on firewood, kerosene, chemical fertilizers and pesticide. The plants can also operate for long periods at low cost with little maintenance required.

## Ayurvedics grows

Ozone Ayurvedics grew 300 percent last year, the company announced at its second annual meeting on 30 June. Officials and shareholders decided at the AGM to consolidate growth and invest more in sales promotion. The company's flagship brand 'Nomarks' is now available in nearly 20,000 outlets in 30 countries.

### NEW PRODUCTS

**DRY GIN:** Highland Distillery has introduced Vogue premium dry gin in Nepal. It will be available in hotels, restaurants, bars and stores throughout the country.

**SMART WHISKY:** McDowell's is now offering its No. 1 Reserve Whisky Smart Pouch. The pouch is tamper proof and once opened, cannot be resealed. It is also designed as a waterproof carry bag. 750ml size only, Rs 500.

**ENTERTAIN AT HOME:** ATC Exim has launched the Fujitsu Despower TX Home Entertainment PC system. It includes a 32-inch LCD screen and 600GB of storage space, enough to store up to 450 hours of tv and movie recording. Rs 275,000 with Fujitsu's one year warranty.



**BANKING OVERSEAS EARNINGS:** Bank of Kathmandu is planning to use the more than Rs 180 million in profits that it earned last fiscal year to open more branches countrywide, develop its information technology capacity, improve service in consumer loans and support businesses that have high rates of return, it announced in a press release. The bank has also launched a new service where customers can convert overseas remittances into cash quickly without having a BoK account.



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# “It’s everyone’s right to rebel”



JB PUN

Interview with Ram Bahadur Thapa (Badal) in Himal Khabarpatrika, 30 June-16 July

## Himal Khabarpatrika: What's your take on the government-Maoist talks?

**Badal:** Our emphasis is that it should be made decisive. There is a possibility of the talks failing, but that is not in our hands.

## So, you see possibility of the talks failing?

We will not be the reason for it but failure is possible if there is foreign interference, armed repression and conspiracy. Statements like the one the Nepal Army made are not helpful.

## Will you return to war if the constituent assembly results do not favour your party?

You can't always ask us the same question again and again. We are often asked about how we will manage our PLA and arms. The future is uncertain and anything could happen tomorrow. But we are saying that we will do as per the aspirations of the masses.

## Why is there a delay in demobilising the Maoist army?

Our proposal is to militarise all the people after demobilising both the Nepal Army and the PLA. Different groups will have their own militia. A regular army of

10,000 personnel is enough to give them training. Nobody will threaten anyone after the whole population is armed.

## Why are you still underground?

We formed our talks team to show that we are in favour of peace. But there is still a lack of ethnic, gender and regional representation in the team. So, there is a possibility of forming another team. Besides, it was our party decision to make our special team public only later.

## So, you are not coming out?

I am grateful to people who want to see me but I have to fulfil my role in other ways. There could be others who are trying to keep me inside but the people brought me out. Only the people and struggle can create leaders. They are not born on their own.

## There are rumours you didn't want to be part of the team due to your dissatisfaction.

This is not true. Such rumours will only create a rift between people and the revolutionaries. I am not yet public not due to discontentment or any feeling of rebelling. You can't expect everyone to be in the talks team.

## Didn't you have a row with Prachanda?

Disagreements, debates and discussions happen in

revolutionary parties and eventually sharpen our ideology. We are not slaves of any person. But we do not make our political differences personal.

## What were your issues with him?

It was about leadership and the process for its development.

## Can you simplify that?

There is an issue of whether the Maoist leadership will join the government, be like the UML. I will not join the government or become the president. If I do so, then I will become KP Oli and a Pajero-man. Why did the Soviet Union fall? It wasn't just because of the Americans. The Janjatis are a majority but why are they being ruled by the minority caste? Why blame only the Bahuns for that? We should be able to identify our own mistakes. We should send deputies and not their chiefs to government. If they make mistakes, they can be brought back on track.

## Is it true you want to rebel?

That is also true. It is everyone's birth right to rebel. There will be rebellion if any party leader does injustice to the people and cadres. I will rebel. Every citizen should rebel against anyone betraying the nation and the people.





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MIN BAJRACHARYA

King’s property  
.....  
Deshantar, 2 July

For the first time, there is an official demand to disclose the property details of King Gyanendra and the royal family. The ‘poor nation’s rich king’ has been given a 15 day deadline, after which the public accounts committee of the parliament has decided to form its own investigation team to reveal the royal wealth. The committee will send a letter to the royal palace through the cabinet. But there is still no certainty if the palace will submit the property details. Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Narendra Bikram Nembang has said the process for disclosing the king’s property will start after discussion at the cabinet. After the royal massacre, all of King Birendra’s property was transferred to King Gyanendra. These included the Narayanhiti Palace, Nagarjun Palace and the forest, Gokarna, Matatirtha and Satungal, Balaju, Sallaghari of Bhaktapur and Pokhara. Other royal property includes Nirmal Nibas, Kathmandu Plaza, Bijaya Nibas in Tahachal, Diyalo Bungalow in Bharatpur, Himalayan Tea Garden in Jhapa and so on. For many years, Nepali citizens have wanted the king’s wealth made public and nationalised. This will be possible after all the royal properties are made public. Sanubhai Dangol, who worked with the palace for the last 35 years, said that the king himself would find it difficult to

estimate his true worth. The king is said to have deposited hundreds of millions of dollars in a Swiss bank. In addition, nearly nine tons of gold were taken to Europe.

Army politics  
.....  
Jana Aastha, 5 July

The generals at army headquarters have decided to celebrate King Gyanendra’s birthday on 7 July although the government announced that there will be no official celebration. Tribhuban Army Officers Club has organised a celebration ceremony inside the club premises and COAS Pyar Jung Thapa is to go to the palace to give the king a birthday present. The royal family used to be invited to the army HQ for a formal dinner and the palace’s army secretariat used to organise another dinner for the ADCs. Meanwhile, the promotions of some senior army officers have been held up due to a tussle between the prime minister and the palace. The names of five officers who cleared Staff College exams and were recommended for promotion to the Colonel position were sent to the palace in April. “Due to this delay in promotion hundreds of majors are holding the position of chiefs of battalions and captains are the chiefs of various companies,” a highly placed army source told us. Army sources say some of the transfers are unfair and based on family ties or loyalty bonds.

In Rolpa  
.....  
Budhabar, 5 July

Megbahadur Shah from Ghodagau, Rolpa is a teacher whose house and land were ‘captured’ by the Maoists on charges that he did not pay the demanded ‘donation’. Shah was declared an ‘exploiter’ for not giving in to the demands and almost two bighas of his land was taken. The Maoists gave the land to its workers to till while Shah’s house is still being used by the village ‘people’s government’. Locals complain that the Maoists are not abiding by their agreement with the seven parties in which they agreed to return all confiscated property to its rightful owners. Makendra Singh’s property was taken over as punishment when his father attacked Maoist village government chief Ram Chandra Thapa. A villager had filed a case against Krishna Bahadur in the Maoist court and the father attacked Thapa in anger during the hearing. Thapa’s son burnt down Singh’s house in retaliation while the Maoists confiscated the land. Locals say that Krishna Bahadur, who works in Mumbai, did attack Thapa but that his son is innocent. The Maoists are still extorting money from locals. While teachers, farmers and civil servants have to pay five percent of their salary, those with family members working overseas have to pay Rs 5,000 a year. “We are not taking loans and risking our lives in Malaysia for the Maoists but

what can we do, we still have to pay them,” complains a young man from Khugri. “They have not stopped extortion even when we show them the code of conduct,” says Netra Giri. Ram Chandra Thapa says he has not received any word from his party’s leadership and adds: “We will have to keep collecting money till the constituent assembly elections.”

Arms management  
.....  
Nepal Samacharpatra, 6 July

Government ministers and the leaders of the ruling political parties have been continuously talking about the need for weapons management before elections to the constituent assembly. Normally, in an assembly election, or election to any body for that matter, all mainstream political parties or forces should compete as independent entities without arms. If any armed force tries to play a role, the result will surely not be in favour of freedom and human rights. Being armed would signal that the groups do not have faith in the people, a point that needs to be considered seriously. Probably that is why the government and the Maoists at their high level meeting on 16 June agreed on the need to manage weapons. Further, they agreed to invite the United Nations to manage the weapons before the constituent assembly elections. Consequently, the government has now sent a formal letter to the UN. UN Assistant Secretary General Kul Chandra Gautam, who was in Nepal a few days back, hinted that the UN would take the request positively. We would expect that no further dispute will arise as the government and Maoists have already agreed to seek UN assistance. Therefore, the UN should immediately assemble a team of diplomats and experts and start work in the areas requested

by the government. No delays should be permitted that might allow the trust between the government and Maoists to fade away.

Is there hope?  
.....  
Janadharna, 6 July

Distrust is growing about forming an interim government that includes the Maoists. It seems like the process will take a very long time especially with both Washington and New Delhi strongly stating that the Maoists should disarm first. And both the Maoists and the seven parties are running into problems concerning two key agendas of their 8-point understanding. One, the existence of the parliament is posing a problem for the Maoists. Two, managing the Maoist militia and arms is becoming a key problem for the parties. The parties are not prepared to dissolve parliament unless there is a suitable alternative that could form a constituent assembly and draft an interim constitution. It is clear why parliament is needed. Besides addressing the economic, political, social and cultural issues raised by the Maoists, the parliament has done well in scrapping the king’s privileges and political authority. But there are rumours that the parties are targeting the king in order to signal to the Maoists that they too could be easily sidelined. This is why the possibility of the talks succeeding is getting slimmer. India and the US are still not convinced that the Maoists will disarm as easily as the SPA leaders claim. Washington has already warned that it would never support an interim government that includes armed Maoists. Prachanda himself has said that his army will not be demobilised and its arms surrendered unless the constituent assembly is formed.



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क्रिडाकार रीबिन सायमी inHimal Khabarpatrika, 30 June - 16 July

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ You (journalists) are all brainless. How can I as a royal field marshal advise the king? I am nothing. ”

World Hindu Federation President Bharat Kesar Simha quoted in Samacharpatra, 6 July, talking to the press following his appearance at the Rayamajhi Commission





**Gateway**

**Bikrant Shrestha**  
 “Manang is one of the most beautiful places in Nepal. It actually feels like you’re in heaven. Before entering the villages one has to usually pass through gateways. This semi-abstract work depicting a gate tries to symbolise entering this heaven.”



**Window of Manang**

**Himalaya Gautam**  
 “The culture of Manang is filled with vibrant colours that represent the beauty of the people living in such harsh conditions. This work is both a window to and of Manang. The vibrant colours represent the beautiful culture that they have while the darker shades depict the harshness of the reality that surrounds them.”



**Reflection of Manang**

**Erina Tamrakar**  
 “I used to work on figures of women most of the time but the beauty of this enchanting place inspired me to try my hand with landscape. In this painting I have tried to showcase the original Manang in a semi-abstract form.”



# Brushing up on Manang

Eight Nepali artists were taken to Manang to paint their impressions. They stayed, they observed and they painted for two weeks in May, soaking in the spectacular beauty of this trans-Himalayan valley. Their 60 works of art will soon be displayed at an exhibition at the Nepal Tourism Board. *Nepali Times* got a preview of the paintings and asked the artists to choose one and say a few words about it. This unique artists’ retreat was organised by the Manang Youth Society to encourage young Nepali artists and to promote eco-tourism in the Himalaya.

**Impressions of Manang**  
 10-12 August, Nepal Tourism Board

ALLPICS: MIN BAJRACHARYA



**Annapurna III**

**Bidhata KC**  
 “For some reason I woke up very early that morning. In the pre-dawn light I went out and saw the silver moon over the snowy mountains while the eastern sky lightened. Prayer flags waved silently. It was this most beautiful moment that made me see the importance of the symbiosis between man and nature.”



**Om Mane Padme Hum Series**

**Sunita Rana**  
 “This is the first of the set of six paintings on Om Mane Padme Hum. I was impressed by the concept of the prayer flags and how they are meant to spread the word of peace. They have colours representing the five elements—earth, wind, water, fire and ether. On the flags are written prayers for peace which flutter in the wind and are carried to the world.”







Milarepa’s Cave

Sudarshan Bikram Rana

“No matter how beautiful nature is, without people it is empty. The great Tibetan Buddhist saint Milarepa is a central figure in the history of Manang. How Milarepa and Manang benefited from each other shows there is far more to be learnt from nature than from any philosophy or ideology. The white in the centre represents the Milarepa cave or the light of learning while the mixture of dark and light depicts the colours of life.”



Landscape (Pisang)

Rajendra KC

“Never before in my life had I seen such a beautiful and touching spot, especially because there were so many aspects of nature in the same place. The beauty riveted me to the spot as I sat there for five hours trying to transfer the panoramic view in front of me to canvass in a realistic manner so that art lovers could also understand what I felt.”



Realistic Landscape

Hare Ram Jojju

“This was a scene I captured on the way to Manang village. It’s a realistic landscape painted with a summer colour which gives a touch of fantasy and mystery to the scene on the canvass.”



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The project that 40 years ago planted seeds of Nepal's community forestry finally winds down

# The greening



NACRMLP



PICS: MARTY LOGAN

**MARTY LOGAN**  
in CHAUTARA

Manik Lal Shrestha remembers 30 years ago when the mountains that surround this scenic capital of Sindhupalchok district were barren.

But over the years he has watched the dry brown hills turn into lush green slopes.

In fact, across Nepal's midhills, the spread of community forestry has dramatically returned forests to

once-denuded hillsides. But few know that the seeds of that success were planted here in Sindhupalchok and Kabhre in 1976 by an Australian forestry project that pioneered the concept of letting villagers manage the commons.

From his porch, Manik Lal can survey almost all 56 hectares of the Chaapal Danda forest that his community manages on a nearby slope, one of hundreds of such areas set up by local communities here in the past decades.

"Thirty years ago there was no

forest, it was difficult to get wood but today there is no shortage," Manik Lal tells us. The success of his Chaapal Danda Community Forest Users Group has permitted farmers to buy extra livestock and communities to invest in infrastructure like roads and schools.

Initially, Australian experts used their expertise for reforestation of the hills on the Valley rim. But through trial and error they soon learnt you couldn't protect forests with barbed wire. Community

involvement and ownership was essential. Also, they found that regeneration was so fast in the Himalayan mid-hills that as long as livestock were stall-fed, the forests would spring back in a few monsoons. These lessons were incorporated into the government's 1976 National Forestry Plan and the 1988 Master Plan.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the forestry project focused on land-use planning, establishing 100 community-run seedling nurseries for example. But by

2000 the project was renamed the Nepal Australia Community Resource Management and Livelihoods Project (NACRMLP), signalling a renewed focus on poverty reduction. The project was finally closed on 30 June.

"The project contributed to a fundamental paradigm shift for forestry academics around the world," Percy Stanley, AusAid's South Asia director told a function in Kathmandu last week to mark the project's end. "Locally appropriate adaptations for ensuring community involvement

## Meeting Pasang in Rolpa

Rare interview with a reclusive Maoist commander

**KIYOKO OGURA** in ROLPA

He sits on a chair in front of a flag depicting two AK47s flanking a mountain with a red star over the summit. He is among the more reclusive Maoist commanders and this is a rare interview. Nanda Kishor Pun, Comrade Pasang, agrees to meet me in an office-like house in the small valley of Kureli in Rolpa and the meeting lasts five hours.

He is one of the four deputy-commanders of the Maoist 'People's Liberation Army' and is directly under Prachanda who is the supreme commander. Pun, 40, was born in Rangsi in northwestern Rolpa as the second among seven siblings. By the time he was in fourth grade, he was already a communist and actively involved in student politics becoming a member of the first district committee of the CPN (Unity Centre-Masal). He led a cultural group during the first general election campaign after 1990 and became the first district president of the newly-formed Young Communist League. This was an armed front of the Unity Centre formed to counter activities of the then ruling NC which was filing cases against their party. This YCL was transformed into *Ladaku Dal* (Fighting Force) which was a precursor to the PLA.

Thirty-five members (including two women) of four Ladaku Dals launched the 'People's War' by attacking a police post in Holeri on the night of 13 February 1996. Pun took part as an assistant commander under Ananta.



KIYOKO OGURA

**RED STAR OVER EVEREST: Maoist deputy commander Nanda Kishore Pun poses in front of a banner at his office in Rolpa in March.**

When the Maoists formed squads in Rolpa made up of members of the Ladaku Dal in May 1996 Pun was made in-charge. And when the PLA was formed in September 2001, he was made commander of the first battalion. When new formations—company, battalion, brigade or division—were formed, Pun always led them.

He took part in most of the major Maoist attacks in western Nepal, from the first action on security forces at the Jhimpe communication tower in Salyan

in January 1999 to the battle for Beni in March 2004. It wasn't always easy, he says.

"When eight of our comrades were killed in a raid on a police post of Rukumkot in April 2001 we felt very bad," Pun remembers, "and we saw the number of martyrs increase after we took on the RNA. We lost nearly 80 comrades in the Beni action and even more in the second Khara attack."

Pun revealed that he personally took part in planning battles including the

first-ever attack on an army base in November 2001 in Ghorahi where he stayed to gather intelligence for the attack. Pun claims 4,500 people, including 1,900 'volunteers', participated in the attack on Beni. The force started their march from Thabang in Rolpa. When they arrived in Takam of Myagdi they brought forward the raid by two days when they found that the army knew about the impending attack.

Pun also admitted Maoist defeats in Bhalubang and Kusum in 2003 and two attacks on RNA barracks in Khara of Rukum. He said the main reasons for these defeats were lack of preparation and leakage of information to the security forces.

Unlike three other deputy commanders, Ananta, Prabhakar and Baldeb who commanded divisions, Pun has been made in-charge of the Maoist military academy. Prabhakar and Baldeb have been included as public speakers at Maoist meetings and Ananta has been enlisted to provide security to top leaders in the capital but Pun's role today is unclear.

Ram Bahadur Thapa (Badal) was himself in Kathmandu last week and told me Pun was providing political training to PLA members. "He's is quite busy these days," Thapa said, "he and some other leaders who have not yet appeared in public will come out soon."

During another meeting last month, Pun himself said: "We were obliged to carry weapons but I am quite happy with the present political development as we have wanted a peaceful solution since the beginning." ●



# of Nepal

**BEFORE AND AFTER:** The hills around Chautara in 1978 (far left) and today. Chaapal Danda Community Forest guard Chok Bahadur Dulal and Secretary Manik Lal Shrestha with trees marked for thinning.

in natural resource management are now found in many countries of Africa, Central and South America.”

“I’m sad,” says Deepak Pradhan of the Lampate Consumer Community Forest here. “The project gave us some training that the government is not giving and we still need to learn more about managing the forest.” Pradhan’s group earns about Rs 100,000 a year selling timber, investing in livestock for members and forest maintenance.

In its last phase, the project worked closely with 20 community forest user groups in the two districts to develop Forest Operation Plans that emphasise good governance, business development and sustainable management of forests. Some of the groups started enterprises that make goods such as bio briquettes and sal leaf plates, which provide 230 jobs to locals.

So why shut down something that was working so well? Australian Ambassador Graeme Lade says it was the new priorities for Australian foreign aid. “Also, a project at some stage has to finish,” he added, “you



have to give the community forest user groups the responsibility to stand on their own two feet.”

Australia will provide US 482,000 to the UNDP’s Micro-enterprise Development Program from 2006-2008 to help forest communities market their products.

Now that the trees are mature, communities are grappling with new problems of forest management. The average forest contains up to 700 trees per hectare but Poudyal says they should be thinned to about 300 trees a hectare, providing room for those remaining to grow larger and more valuable.

The Ministry is now

examining thinning guidelines developed by the project in the last year. The thinned trees could be sold now and would provide a lot of income for the local communities, says DFO Arun S Poudyal. But villagers are reluctant to let their long-tended forests go, fearing that if they let contractors in, they’ll cut everything down.

NACRMLP estimates that selling timber from community forests could earn the villages Rs 1 billion a year for the next 20 years. Said Stanley in his farewell speech: “Rs 1 billion a year in the hands of local groups can finance the building and management of a lot of rural infrastructure.” ●

# In high demand

DANIEL B HABER in LEH

**A**t a sidewalk table on Leh’s Zangsti Road tourists sip an organic seabuckthorn juice made from a high-altitude desert berry native to Tibet. Only a few of them hear the familiar sound of Nepali being spoken nearby.

Chhering Sherpa, 26, is from Dolakha and came overland from Kathmandu in June with his friends. They hoped to find work as trekking guides here in India’s trans-Himalayan region. The journey took them five days via Delhi and Manali, and they feel at home because Leh is just like Mustang.

“This is my first time in Ladakh,” says Chhering who works for Divine Treks, “but my friends come every monsoon.” The Nepali guides watch as jeeps full of backpackers roar off on treks to Nubra Valley or Zaskar, waiting to be called by one of the trekking agencies whose storefront offices are across the street. It seems like Nepalis are around every corner here, all of them migrating for the summer trekking season to a place where their work ethic and skills are highly appreciated.

Dhan Bahadur Magar, 22, is from Bouddha and works as a trekking cook. Just down the street, 18-year-old Santosh Gurung from Balaju was serving Israeli breakfasts at the World Peace Cafe & Pumpnickel German Bakery, which is run by a Sikh. There are several German Bakeries in Leh and not only are they all staffed by Nepalis, they serve the same pastries and yak cheese sandwiches as their Thamel counterparts. But Gurung has a complaint: most of the customers don’t leave tips. This season has also been slow because of the World Cup.

Himal Rana works out of Delhi as a trekking guide and has been coming to Ladakh for many years. Sipping tea at a hotel staffed completely by Nepalis, Rana, 47 and from Dharan, says clients prefer Nepali guides “because we are more experienced, look after them better and don’t tire so easily”.



## From guides to cooks, Nepalis are sought after in Ladakh for their quality work

Rinchin Namgyal, a Ladakhi who runs Yama Adventures, agrees. “Nepalis are more experienced, well-trained and more professional, the locals just aren’t as good,” he tells us.

Nepali cooks earn up to NRs 8,500 a month plus room and travel costs to and from Nepal for the three-month season.

While on the surface there doesn’t appear to be local resentment against the migrants, as there is towards the influx of Kashmiri merchants, two Ladakhi Delhi University students who work as guides during their summer holidays said there were “too many Nepalis” in Ladakh.

There are also complaints about “too many Tibetans” coming not from Ladakhis, who share the same culture, but from other Tibetans. Tibetan refugees come to Ladakh to peddle handicrafts and jewellery, like in Pokhara. “A few years ago there were only three Tibetan goods markets, now there are a dozen,” rued 21-year-old Tenzin Lakmeon, whose family had been coming to Ladakh from Mysore annually to sell goods for many years.

When the summer season ends in October, the Tibetans, along with the Nepali cooks, kitchen staff, waiters and hotel workers, will follow the sun to Goa for the winter while the guides and porters will return to Nepal or Sikkim.

Only the Nepali migrant farm hands will stay a little longer to help harvest the barley and pluck apricots. ●

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Nathu La reopens after 44 years a week after the railway arrives in Lhasa

# China's passage to India



GANGTOK—High in the Himalayas, a barbed wire fence snakes its way across a desolate landscape. On most days, a thick, white, freezing cloud descends across the peaks and it is hard to see anything.

But now and then a figure looms out of the mist, dressed

in combat fatigues. It is like a scene from some old war film. This is where the Chinese and Indian armies have faced off against each other across a border that has been closed for 44 years.

At nearly 4,500m above sea level, the world's highest

custom house is back in business. And it's not a coincidence that the reopening of Nathu La pass on 6 July came a week after China inaugurated its high altitude railroad linking Lhasa to the mainland.

The first passenger train arrived at Lhasa Railway Station at 0:31 AM on 4 July, having left Golmud at 11:05 AM on Saturday. The first train carried model workers and heroes from the railway's construction, 960km of which is 4,000m above sea level and more than 550km of which crosses permafrost. Passenger cabins of this train are the first in the world to be pressurised.

Nathu La once accounted for 80 percent of the border trade between the two neighbours. A border dispute pushed India and China into a bloody, high-altitude war in 1962. This led to the closure of the route, which runs from Sikkim to Tibet.

When the border post reopened on 6 July some of the trade was expected to be much the same as in Silk route days: yak tails, sheepskins, raw wool, china clay and Chinese silk. But manufactured goods such as electrical appliances, watches, crockery, shoes and canned food will also be traded.

"The reopening of border trade will help to end economic isolation in this area," a Tibetan official, Hao Peng, told Xinhua. "If only 10 percent of Sino-Indian trade goes through the pass, it means more than \$1 billion a year." Trade between India and China, conducted mostly by sea, has boomed in recent years. Last year it jumped by more than a third to \$18.73bn.

Mohan Guruswamy, the head of the New Delhi-based Centre for Policy Alternatives, said: "The reopening of Nathu La will also help revive the economy of Darjeeling and West Bengal."

Calcutta is just 500km from Nathu La and the port city will provide much-needed sea access to Tibet. Although

few people live in the area at the moment, the opening of the pass is also likely to bring a rapid increase in population as trade and industry is revived.

But this historic revival of trade ties has also sparked off concern among wild life activists who fear the initiation of a new route for wild life smuggling from India. Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) and World Wildlife Fund-India (WWF-India) have already started sensitising enforcement authorities on this new possibility.



The WWF-India programme coordinator, Dipankar Ghosh says Tibet is considered the conduit for smuggled wildlife from India to China. Nathu La would provide a shortcut to smugglers taking tiger parts, rhino horns and other wildlife products from Indian national parks.

Tibetan nationalists are also worried that the railroad to Tibet and reopening Nathu La will tighten Beijing's hold on Tibet. "The opening of the Lhasa railroad, the new Nyingchi Airport near the tri-junction of Tibet, India and Burma and Nathu La will mark the success of China's long-drawn political, military and economic strategies to deal with domestic and external challenges," wrote P Stopdan in the Indian Express this week.

The Tibetan website Phayul called the railway 'an uparallel track to invasion'.

## China's World Cup

BEIJING—China failed to qualify for the World Cup but the country is still in the grip of genuine football fever, which has had the effect of reversing long-standing government restrictions on unbridled public revelry and large gatherings. Haunted by memories of youthful crowds during the 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations on Tiananmen Square, Chinese communist leaders banned 'illegal' rallies and frowned on spontaneous festivities. But this year, Beijing seems to have given in to the intoxicating thrill of the world's most watched sports event and relaxed its strict rules. The place to be in Beijing is the Summer Temple in Ritan Park where centuries ago Chinese emperors held ceremonies and made sacrifices to the sun god.

## Reporter killed

PESHAWAR—Three weeks after Hayatullah Khan Dawar's body was found handcuffed and shot, his apparent death in custody has become a rallying call for those demanding an end to attacks on journalists in Pakistan's sensitive tribal areas along the Afghanistan border. Many in this frontier city believe that Dawar's murder was related to photographs he took that seemed to prove that Egyptian-born al-Qaeda leader Abu Hamza Rabia, and four others who died in North Waziristan in an explosion on 1 December, were hit by a US army missile. Dawar's pictures, showing fragments from a laser-guided 'Hellfire' missile and published in the local press, contradicted the Pakistani army's claim that Hamza and his associates had died while trying to manufacture a bomb.

## Khmer Rouge

BANGKOK— As Cambodia crossed another milestone in the troublesome journey to create a war crimes tribunal to try the leaders of the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime, the survivors of that brutal period are raising a cry for complete transparency during the trial. This desire for 'an open process' is more important than the indictments that may be served at the end of the trial, says one of this Southeast Asian country's leading crusaders for justice on behalf of the Khmer Rouge victims. "The court must be open and transparent and the public from all sides of Cambodian society must be given access to the proceedings. The need for the victims to hear and tell of their suffering must be protected," said Youk Chhang, director of the Phnom Penh-based Documentation Centre of Cambodia. The Maoist Khmer Rouge regime killed close to 1.7 million Cambodians, nearly one-quarter of the country's population, during its reign of terror from 1975-79.

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# Globalised World Cup

If only migrant workers could move freely as football players

BRANKO MILANOVIC

This year's World Cup has proven once again that football is the world's most popular sport and the world's most globalised profession. It is inconceivable that Brazilian, Cameroonian, or Japanese doctors, computer scientists, blue-collar workers, or bank tellers could move from one country to another as easily as Brazilian, Cameroonian, or Japanese football players do. Indeed, London's Arsenal football club is composed entirely of foreigners, including a French coach. Even the captain roles are no longer reserved for domestic players: Thierry Henry, a Frenchman, is Arsenal's captain, Andriy Shevchenko, a Ukrainian, was often the captain of AC Milan and will play next year for the English champions Chelsea. Christiano Zanetti, an Argentine, is captain of Inter Milan. Similarly, dozens of South Americans and Africans play in Russian, Turkish, Polish, and various Southeast European leagues. Football provides a glimpse of how true globalisation of labour would work. In football, as in other occupations, restrictions on labour mobility came entirely from the demand side. No limits

were ever imposed on players' movements. So wherever globalisation and full commercialisation reign supreme, there is an unmistakable concentration of quality and success. The richest clubs are now able to attract the best players in the world. Yet this has arguably been accompanied by improved quality in the game itself, owing to what economists call 'increasing returns to scale'. When the best players play together, the quality of each, and of the team as a whole, increases exponentially. When Ronaldinho and Messi, or Kaka and Shevchenko, play together, their combined output (number of goals) is greater than the sum of goals that each would score if he played in a different club with less talented co-players. Free mobility of labour in other areas would probably produce the same effect. If doctors, computer specialists, or engineers were allowed to move freely, the concentration of talent in the richest countries would most likely increase. Inequality in the distribution of talent across countries would rise, even if total world output of goods and services, and their average quality, improved, as with football today. But, while we see inequality and exclusion in club-level

football, the opposite is true for competitions between national teams. The average winning margin among the top eight World Cup national teams has steadily decreased, from more than two goals in the 1950's, to about 1.5 goals in the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's, and only 0.88 goals in the 2002 World Cup. The same is true of all games played at the final tournament, not only those among the top eight national teams. The decrease in winning margins is all the more impressive because the World Cup has grown from 16 to 32 national teams, many of them new and rather inexperienced. Free movement has meant that good players from small leagues improve much more than they would have had they stayed home. A good Danish or Bulgarian player improves much faster if he joins Manchester United or Barcelona. Improvement in quality was captured by national teams playing in the World Cup thanks to FIFA's rule requiring players to play only for their national team. Eto'o can play for any Spanish, Italian, or English club, but in the national competitions, he can play only for Cameroon. In other words, FIFA has introduced an institutional rule that allows small countries (in the football sense) to capture some of the benefits of today's higher-quality game, thereby partly reversing the leg drain.

The same rule could be applied to other activities. Free movement of skilled labour could be accompanied by binding international requirements that migrants from poor countries spend, say, one year in five working in their countries of origin. They would bring home skills, technology, and connections that are as valuable as the skills that Eto'o, Essien, or Messi bring back to Cameroon, Ghana, or Argentina. The world should learn from the World Cup. ● *Project Syndicate*

Branko Milanovic is an economist at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.



## The worldwide cup

### A Nepali waves the flag in Germany, our flag

KABITA PARAJULI in MUNICH

Downtown Munich, three minutes from our hotel, is bright yellow. Swarms of Portuguese-speaking yellow merge and cross waves of laughing English-speaking yellow. Inflated kangaroos squat on people's shoulders, watching live performances in the middle of a sidewalk. Impromptu shows play out next to fruit stalls and fountains: a breathtaking display of capoeira, a crowd singing Waltzing Matilda, drums, samba and songs in a very different accent. Everywhere you go there are Aussies and Brazilians talking and teasing each other. At one point, a Seleção supporter turns to an Aussie: "You're going to lose 3-nil!" he says. The other guy in yellow just shakes his head and goes, "I know." Both laugh, and finish their drinks. Another day, another city, another colour: this time, it's an invasion of the reds. Stuttgart is the scene of the Spain-Tunisia game. Coming out to the main street from the train station into the sunlight, the noise overwhelms. Nearly everyone is sporting a Spain jersey. Tunisia loses and even though I was cheering for Spain (who executed a brilliant turnaround once Raul came on after half-time), it's a sad loss considering their first half performance. The train station is filled with dancing Spaniards and sulking Tunisians. Côte d'Ivoire was my favourite team going into the competition, Serbia-Montenegro 'my team' eight years ago and both squads had much hype surrounding them. But neither had any chance of making the next round, with their losses to Argentina and the Netherlands. Côte d'Ivoire, fractured by civil war, enjoyed a ceasefire during the World Cup. As Didier Drogba, striker and national icon, said, "The team is what Ivory Coast once was and should be. We have players who have different religions and come from different tribes on the team. We have a lot of fun. We want to win together. That's our message." As I lined up to go into the stadium, I struck up a conversation with a group next to me. "Where are you from?" one tall German asked me. "I'm Nepali," I replied. "From Napoli?" "No, Nepal..." I prepared to launch into an explanation but there was no need. "Wow," the man's friends responded, in genuine amazement. A camera appeared overhead. "We've never seen a Nepali before."



Sitting there with my flag, I imagined being amongst a group of Nepali fans, cheering for our team. Would we be like the South Koreans, relentless in our support of the team, screaming throughout the game, just as loudly when we were up 2-0 as down 2-0? I am sure that we would not be of the booing type, unsporting, derisive of every move made by the opposing team, condemning every call the ref makes against ours. Would we be a tiny, enthusiastic group, like the Ivorians, outnumbered by our non-native supporters and perhaps even by our opponents' fans but adamant in making our presence heard? Nepal didn't make the finals but like the Irish and South African flags the Nepali double triangle also deserved to be there. The power of football extends far beyond the field or the stands. Like a fine, invisible dust it moves through the air, settling on those it encounters. The world loves this tournament. There is the quality of football, inevitable when the most elite players are gathered together on a field: 24 or 25 uninterrupted passes culminating in a spectacular goal, a team effort. The power and grace of a midfielder as he sprints across the field, weaving through the defence, the superhuman strength with which a goalie leaps into the air. I savour the sense of unity, the camaraderie, the energy. Munich as I know it is one big party, where you know you will have something in common with the person next to you. As I watch a game live, it strikes me that people the world over are viewing this exact spectacle. There are individuals cheering for Ghana in Germany and Nepal. Also in New Delhi, in Namibia, in Norway. When you hold your breath before a penalty, there are millions who hold their breaths with you, who utter a collective gasp and cheer. Though you can't hear them, they are there. Perhaps the best thing about being in Germany was this: watching and jumping and shouting with silent fans from all over the world. ●



"Lata ko desh ma gaando tanderi." (In a land of fools, even a man with a bad goatee can be a hero.)

"When American life is most American it is apt to be most theatrical."  
-- Ralph Ellison (1914 - 1994)  
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Herojig interviews Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger

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HeroJig's Adventures can also be seen at [www.extreme-nepal.com](http://www.extreme-nepal.com)

ABOUT TOWN

- EXHIBITIONS
- ❖ **Pillars of Hope** paintings by Gobinda Prasad Sah 'Azad' at Siddhartha Art Gallery till 20 July. 4218018
  - ❖ **Innovative Art** by Sri Lankan painter Deneth at New Orleans Café, Thamel, till 20 July. 9803002631
  - ❖ **Bagmati River** a photo exhibition at Gallery Café, Lajimpat till 11 July.
- EVENTS
- ❖ **Dance Workshop** free hip hop dance classes, 7 July, 12PM at Station Pub, Thamel. 9841292978
  - ❖ **Energy, Health and Millennium Development Goal** with Rojan Pandey at Martin Chautari, 7 July, 3PM. 4238050
  - ❖ **Soccer Night** partying the football way at Megha Malhar, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 7 July 7.30 PM
  - ❖ **Death and Dying- a Buddhist view** with Geshe Tsampel from Kopan Monastery at HBMC, 8 July, 10AM-5PM. Pre-register at 4414843
  - ❖ **Romeo and Juliet** in modern version at The Royal Nepal Academy, 9 and 10 July at 5PM. 4225890
  - ❖ **World Cup Action** at Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Rodi bar till 9 July.
  - ❖ **World Population Day** 11 July.
  - ❖ **Travelling Film South Asia '06, Kathmandu** fifteen outstanding documentaries from the Subcontinent, 14-16 July at Yalamaya Kendra, Patan Dhoka. 5537408
  - ❖ **Bagmati River Festival** till 20 August. 5011013
  - ❖ **Dark to Light** drama and concert by differently abled people at 1905 Kantipath, 15 July, 4-7PM. [www.lights.org.np](http://www.lights.org.np)
  - ❖ **Sunsilk Nepal Fashion Week** at Hotel Hyatt Regency 10-14 August.
  - ❖ **Alcoholics Anonymous** problems with alcohol? 9851016079
- MUSIC
- ❖ **Heartbreakers** live every Friday at Rum Doodle Bar & Restaurant
  - ❖ **Cadenza Collective** live every Wednesday and Saturday 8PM at Upstairs, Lajimpat.
  - ❖ **Live Music** at New Orleans Café. 4700311
  - ❖ **Uncork the good times** with Ciney and Par-e-jat playing every Friday from 7PM at Fusion bar at Dwarika's Hotel. 4479448
  - ❖ **Jatra Friday** nights, live music by Siron. 4256622
  - ❖ **Unplugged** sessions with Strings, Jatra Saturday nights. 4256622
- DINING
- ❖ **World Cup at K-too!** All matches available and a free Irish coffee with every main course. 4470043
  - ❖ **Mezza and Margarita** at Dwarika's Fusion-the bar. Every Wednesday, Rs 555
  - ❖ **Mango Masti** at all restaurants in Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
  - ❖ **Wet & Wild Summer Splash** at Godavari Village Resort, a special package of Swimming & Lunch. 5560675
  - ❖ **Breakfast** at Singma Restaurant. 8.30 – 11AM daily. 5009092.
- 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](mailto:junglebasecamp@yahoo.com)
  - ❖ **Conferences & Workshops** conference facilities at Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
  - ❖ **Park Village**, Budhanilkantha, Full room Rs 1,600. 4375280
  - ❖ **Nature Retreat** at Park Village Resorts & Spa. 4375280
  - ❖ **Escape Kathmandu** at Shivapuri Heights Cottage. 9841371927
  - ❖ **Escape to Godavari Village Resort**, an overnight stay package with breakfast & swimming. For more details 5560675

Quest Entertainment

After the battle with General Zod and his gang of Kryptonian super-villains, Superman mysteriously disappears for six years. After searching for more possible survivors from Krypton and finding none, Superman returns to Metropolis to re-assume the identity of Clark Kent. Once he returns, he discovers that Lois Lane is in a relationship and also has a son. Superman also discovers that Metropolis has learned to live without him, causing him to lose his motivation to fight and protect. To make matters worse, Superman's old nemesis Lex Luthor has devised a plan to defeat the Man of Steel, for good. Superman must put his troubles behind him in order to protect his lost love, and the city that lost faith in him.

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NEPALI WEATHER by MAUSAM BEED

Although the total rainfall in June was equal to the monthly average, the rain was concentrated in just a few heavy storms—not spread out over the month. We still haven't had the prolonged monsoon *jhari* that is normal for the rainy season and which paddy farmers need for their rice crop on terraces. The direct sun and lack of clouds sent Kathmandu valley's temperature soaring to 32 degrees, although it felt much hotter because of the humidity. The subcontinent's weather pattern is dominated by this enormous system that is the combination of two troughs in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. They cancelled each other out and drew the clouds away from Nepal. The fringes of this system will graze western Nepal and will bring rain over the weekend and cloud cover over the rest of the country.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Fri  
  
30-19

Sat  
  
29-19

Sun  
  
29-18

Mon  
  
30-20

Tue  
  
31-21

नेपाल कृषिप्रधान मुलुक हो । यहाँका ८० प्रतिशतभन्दा बढी जनता कृषि पेसामा आधारित छन् । कूल राष्ट्रिय आयको फन्डै 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 । फन् कृषिक्षेत्रलाई आधुनिकीकरण गर्न शिक्षित र सचेत ककृषकको खाचो छ । त्यसैले कृषि पेसालाई आदर गरौं, कृषकलाई सम्मान गरौं ।

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सूचना विभाग





KIRAN PANDAY

**WE SWEAR:** The council of ministers taking its official oath, swearing to god, in parliament on Sunday. Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala was not present due to ill health.



LIANG KAIKIN

**TAKING TO THE STREETS :** Maoist supporters at a rally on Tuesday outside Singha Darbar demanding the restoration of the 'people's courts' that their leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal disbanded due to pressure from the political parties last week.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY YOUR HOLINESS:** Tibetan women dressed up to celebrate the Dalai Lama's 71'st birthday at Jawalkhel on Thursday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

**HIGH TIDE IN THAMEL:** Monday's monsoon rains flooded the alleys of Thamel. Poor drainage due to construction has increased flooding this season.



KIRAN PANDAY

**FANCY FOOTWORK:** Raveena Joshi of Nabil Bank takes a free kick as Grade Five children of Rato Bangala School look on during the launch of Manisha Aryal's children's book *Chanchali's Football* on Wednesday.

# Film South Asia travels back

Kathmandu's documentary enthusiasts who missed Film South Asia '05 have another chance to catch some of the best movies showcased last year. Travelling Film South Asia '06, Kathmandu runs from 14-16 July at Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka.

Fifteen films were chosen from those screened at FSA '05 and they include four of the award winners. These outstanding films are currently also travelling all over South Asia and the world, giving audiences an opportunity to sample an exciting range of topics and themes, presentation styles and techniques.



**A Certain Liberation**

Gurudasi Mondol resigned herself to madness in 1971 when, during the Liberation War of Bangladesh, she witnessed the murder of her entire family at the hands of the collaborators of the occupying forces. Today Gurudasi continues to roam the streets of Kopilmoni, a small town in rural Bangladesh, in pursuit of all she has lost, taking liberties only her madness and her strength of character afford her. In her beloved home of Kipilmoni, Gurudasi has now attained near legendary status and, through her indomitable presence, she has kept the spirit of the Liberation War alive.

**The Legend of Fat Mama**

This is a bittersweet story of the Chinese community in Calcutta intertwined with the nostalgic journey in search of a woman who once made the most delicious noodles in the city's Chinatown district. Thriving street food, disappearing family-run eateries, mahjong clubs, a Chinese printing press that has shut down and its handwritten counterpart that continues to deliver the news every morning and the first all-woman dragon dance group preparing for the Chinese New Year make up the Chinese heritage in Calcutta.



**Sunset Bollywood**

A struggling actor in Bollywood dreams of his big screen break. It arrives, and he skyrockets to stardom. Becoming number one is easy after all—staying there is the hard part. Overnight success is sought by millions but what happens when the lights go out? Where are they now? And why did they disappear in the first place? In Bombay's glamorous celluloid world, failure is not an option. The film follows three actors on their journey back, each one unable to accept failure, craving the narcotic high of celebrity.



**Team Nepal**

A passionate team of Nepali footballers, representing a youth club from the Nepali border town of Birganj, travel to Sonpur, Bihar in India to play in a tournament there. *Team Nepal* is the documentation of their experiences in Bihar, travelling, meeting and mixing with other footballers, living in a foreign country and playing the game they love.

**Teardrops of Karnaphuli**

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is home to 12 predominantly Buddhist ethnic groups, which are collectively known as the "Jumma" nation. The first disruption of the peace in CHT took place from 1959-



1962, when a dam was constructed on the Karnaphuli river, submerging 54,000 acres of arable land and making refugees of 100,000 people in the process. These hill people suffered a second crisis in 1979 when the government brought Bengalis from various districts and settled them in CHT.

<http://www.himalassociation.org/fsa>.  
**01-5542544**

**Friday - 14 July**

- |       |    |  |
|-------|----|--|
| 10.00 | am | Inaugural ceremony                     |
| 10.30 | am | Continuous Journey                     |
| 1.00  | pm | Team Nepal                             |
| 2.30  | pm | Lanka: The Other Side of War and Peace |
| 4.30  | pm | The Legend of Fat Mama                 |

**Saturday - 15 July**

- |       |    |                              |
|-------|----|------------------------------|
| 10.00 | am | Final Solution               |
| 1.30  | pm | A Certain Liberation         |
| 3.00  | pm | Teardrops of Karnaphuli      |
| 4.30  | pm | The Great Indian School Show |
| 6.00  | pm | Dirty Laundry                |
| 7.15  | pm | Girl Song                    |

**Sunday - 16 July**

- |       |    |   |
|-------|----|---|
| 10.00 | am | The Life and Times of a Lady from Avadh: Hima |
| 1.30  | pm | Sunset Bollywood                              |
| 3.00  | pm | City of Photos                                |
| 4.30  | pm | Good News                                     |
| 5.30  | pm | The City Beautiful                            |



# Give us back our holidays

One important trait of us Nepalis (if we may be allowed to modestly toot our own trumpet here) is that we rest on our laurels. Once we achieve what we set out to achieve, we don't just sit around and twiddle our thumbs, we go to sleep.

It's the same with the achievements of Jana Andolan IV. Two months after the Nepali people took power into their own bare hands, it is encouraging to see people are still taking to the streets to demand their right to bring the nation to a standstill in every sphere of life, including the biosphere. The fires of the pro-democracy movement still burn brightly and people from all walks of life are still staging sit-ins, walk-outs, pen-downs, shut-offs and break-ins to show the boss who's boss.

**UNDER MY HAT**  
**Kunda Dixit**



We in the media just can't keep up with all the news of protests pouring in from various parts of the country ever day. At this rate, we in the fourth estate (being self-appointed guardians of freedom and an important part of democracy's cheque and balance) will have to start devoting a separate supplement in each issue for news of agitations. And what better time to start doing that than with this week's column itself.

## Civil servants stage holiday

BY OUR BUREAUCRATIC REPORTER

The All-Over-Nepal Civil Servants Confederation stayed away from work Friday to protest the government's cancellation of the holiday on King Gyanendra's Birthday.

Government offices remained closed in protest against what the Confederation declared was a "unilateral and unjust" decision by the government to cancel the holiday.

"We've had this holiday for 237 years, we demand our right to sit idly by on the king's birthday," said a civil servant while chanting pro-republican slogans during a sit-in outside Singha Darbar. "It isn't fair that only royal palace employees get a holiday."

## Deputy Prime Minister locked up

BY A MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

Employees at the Ministry of Health locked up Deputy Prime Minister Amik Sherchan in his office for eight hours on Tuesday saying he wasn't devoting enough time to his ministerial portfolio.

(Till here, everything in this news item is based on actual fact.) The employees had earlier locked-out the ministry, but found that Minister Sherchan was using it as an excuse not to come to work. So, they waited till the official ceremony welcoming him to his new office, garlanded him and then locked him up. Ministry employees said they fully supported parliament's decision to declare Nepal a secular state, but would lock up the minister again unless their demand that all Hindu holidays (beginning with Janai Purnima next week) be immediately restored are met.

## Ronaldinho's effigy burnt

BY OUR POLITICAL FOOTBALL REPORTER

Nepali fans of the Brazil team staged a rally outside the office of the Honorary Consul General of Brazil at Hatisar on Sunday denouncing the team's loss to Germany in the World Cup last week.

"We had pinned all our hopes on them, but they let us down, we just can't tolerate it," said one enraged fan, "we will block this road until Brazil is put back in the semi-finals." Later, the protesters burnt an effigy of Ronaldinho blaming him for the loss and blocked traffic at Kamaldi for four hours. The protesters also cancelled a plan to put up a statue of Kaka at Tinkune.

## Tourists stage walkout

Hundreds of tourists who arrived in Kathmandu last week staged a mass walkout from the capital and went on a trek.

"We just couldn't stand the filth and the touts so we decided to just walk out and won't return until all our demands are met," said a tourist leading a rally to the airport to board a flight to Lukla. The trekkers, all suffering from upset stomachs, have submitted a 35-point memorandum to the Nepal Tourism Board demanding better living conditions and safe drinking water. If their demands aren't met the tourists threatened to overstay their visas.

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