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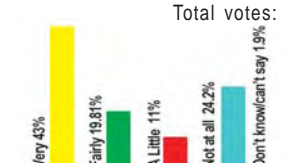
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Times nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll # 339

Q. How important do you think it is to address the demands of indigenous rights groups?

Total votes: 3,664



Response	Percentage
Very	43%
Fairly	19.81%
A little	11%
Not at all	24.2%
Don't know/can't say	1.9%

Weekly Internet Poll # 340. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Do you think elections to the constituent assembly can be held in June?



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THOMAS BELL

On sale

Adoption from Nepal is beginning to look like trafficking

A NEPALI TIMES INVESTIGATION

In the cramped Anamnagar office of an adoption broker and his dusty orphanage in Ratopul, *Nepali Times* this week made arrangements to buy a child for adoption.

We posed as a British couple wishing to adopt a Nepali child and were told that the process was complicated and involved eight government offices and agencies. The broker said he could take care of the entire process for a \$1,500 fee. If we

decided to adopt from his orphanage, a further donation of \$5,000 was strongly suggested.

Although he initially insisted on up-front cash of a third of his fee, he agreed to take a cheque for just over half the total amount. Immediately after we agreed to pay, he said he had "just met a family from his village who wanted to put up for adoption a child the age we wanted". Earlier, he had said it could take months to find a child as young as we were looking to adopt.

Then came the promises of "guaranteed approval" because he

had his representative on the adoption recommendation committee and that while he could not jump the queue he could use his influence.

We met the parents. They hardly looked unable to support four children as is required by law. The father said he was a political worker-turned-teacher and earned "72 pounds". He spoke fluently in English about choosing a bright future for his youngest child "because love is not enough", enumerated the child's many good qualities, and used phrases like "transparency", "unfair practices" and "legal relationship". There was one condition, he said, his wife wanted to periodically meet the child. They were evasive about where they would like the

meetings to be.

We were not asked by the birth parents or by the lawyer and orphanage chairperson what our motivation was for seeking to adopt a Nepali child, or about our ability to take care of the baby.

An international conference on adoption that begins on Sunday in Kathmandu aims to promote Nepal as a destination for adoption and make the process easier. It is happening amidst reports of adoption rackets giving Nepal a bad reputation.

Our broker said the committee was pushing through 25 adoptions a day ahead of the conference, so parents could "come, attend the conference, pick up their child, and fly away".

Full story p12-13



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The power of one

If one girl could do this, imagine what governments can do

In my community it is not surprising to find girls and women lagging behind, especially in education. Many people still feel that it is a waste educating a girl because she will marry and go to someone else's house. I was not sent to school as a child. I was lucky that an agency



GUEST COLUMN
Sunita Tamang

like UNICEF was there assisting girls who missed out on regular school to attend catch-up classes.

After two years of non-formal education, I joined regular school in grade five. I am now in grade 10 and in two months I will be appearing for SLC. I go to school in the mornings and work at a factory assembling match boxes in the afternoons.

While at the out-of-school

classes, our friends got together and opened a 'Working Children's Club' to help other working children in our community. We organised street dramas, quiz contests, cultural programs and painting competitions so everyone would know about discrimination between sons and daughters, on HIV/AIDS, the rights of working children and similar issues.

There was a girl in our neighbourhood working as a domestic helper in the house of a deputy superintendent of police. We suspected that she was being abused by her employers, because one of our club members had heard screams from the house. We approached the employer. Because he was a policeman, he tried to scare us off. But we didn't give up. We persisted and with help from others finally convinced the policeman not to abuse the rights

of the girl, and to send her to school.

This is an example of how we have been fighting for the rights of disadvantaged children forced to work at the expense of their education and their future. This is what we were able to do with just our enthusiasm. If this is what children could do, governments, with all their power and resources, should be able to do much more so that every girl and boy can go to school.

Huge effort is needed to bridge the gap in social beliefs, economic conditions to change people's minds on getting girls educated. It takes much more effort to send girls to school. What helped me was the break I got to attend catch-up classes, the uniform that was provided to me free of cost to attend regular school.

What would help many other girls who are not as lucky as me is for the government to ensure free education for all children, with the option of vocational education for working children, or children who have returned from the conflict. All it needs a little bit of effort, extra money and commitment in providing opportunities for disadvantaged children to get educated.

Look at me, I work in a match factory and today I have been able to come here and share my feelings and experiences with you all. ●

Sunita Tamang, 15, is a student at the Jana Bikas Secondary School in Biratnagar. She was in New York last week as a panelist in the 'Girls Speak Out' session at the 51st Commission on the Status of Women. Binita Shrestha, radio producer of 'Saathi Sanga Manka Kura' translated Sunita's speech at the session.



Sunita Tamang

Let the games begin

The politics of masks, sidestepping, feints, and gambits

The sudden spurt in politicking is a sign that the major actors are readying themselves for constituent assembly elections. It will only intensify after the Maoists join the government and since Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Madhab Nepal are competing for the same political space, there is fierce contestation between them.

Balkhu fired the first salvo, tabling a motion to amend the interim constitution to give parliament the authority to impeach the king. This proposal is in clear contravention of the political understanding



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

reached in New Delhi, where it was decided that the fate of the monarchy would be in limbo until the first session of the constituent assembly.

But the motion also, in a roundabout way, confers a certain legitimacy upon the king. Impeachment is reserved for positions otherwise considered inviolable. The UML wants to woo its traditional patrons in the establishment. Now in an anti-monarchy alliance, the UML is finding it difficult to prove its traditional loyalty to the palace.

Nepal has tried, by assuming the role of

arch gadfly. In the morning, he threatens a walkout from Singha Darbar if the interim government is not formed by mid-March. In the afternoon, he warns that the coalition between the seven-party alliance and the Maoists will collapse if the dates for the elections aren't announced immediately. In the evening, he instructs his party nominees in government to delay the entry of Maoists in the cabinet. Then, having placed obstacles in the path of all processes that are preconditions to the constituent assembly elections, he lays all the blame on the prime minister.

The UML are past masters of realpolitik. The anti-monarchy gambit is a ploy to pre-empt republican campaign slogans. Those who begin their political education with the teachings of Mao—as most UML apparatchiks did in early seventies—invariably reach Machiavelli via Stalin, Lenin and Marx.

Comrade Dahal is still traversing through the first quadrant. He continues to believe that all the eggs in the farm must first be broken in order to make a single omelet. The Maoists want the interim parliament to declare Nepal a democratic republic immediately, even while they

know that such a rash decision can have unintended consequences. But if a decidedly conformist political outfit like the UML can pretend to want the same thing, there really is no telling what Maoists could do to protect their revolutionary image.

In its own ham-handed way, the NC too is playing the politics of pretence. Sujata Koirala wants Krishna Sitaula to resign though she knows him better than anyone else in the party. Ramchandra Poudel revs the anti-king engine, while Sushil Koirala counters by a tirade against Maoist excesses, as if the two can't go together. Leaders of the rump NC-D seem oblivious to the ignominy ahead if they do not make up with their parent party.

But Gyanendra remains ahead of everyone else in the playacting game, perhaps because he is typecast as a poker player. The law of all gambling dens is that while losers may come in many guises, the house always wins. That is the position the king is manoeuvring himself into.

The Madhesi Janadhikar Forum has weakened the Maoists and brought them to the level of the UML. But for all their

republican slogans, the MJF didn't even mildly criticise Gyanendra's inflammatory Democracy Day speech. Perhaps the articulate Upendra Yadav, the experienced Sitanandan Roy, and the irrepressible Kishor Bishwas just overlooked it. But now they are face to face with their own irrelevance in the wake of transporters' resistance against their general strike.

Slowly but steadily, the NC's monarchists have begun to assert themselves in intra-party squabbles. Amod Upadhyay, Govind Raj Joshi, Mahesh Acharya, and Ram Sharan Mahat have suddenly discovered that their anti-Maoist rhetoric resonates at party forums in the countryside. That wouldn't have been possible without at least tacit approval of Koirala. It seems the NC president is still firm on his conviction that ceremonial monarchy is the borderline but not quite the republic.

In the end, all politicians are actors. The one who persists wins, and the king certainly has an advantage here. Every other player knows too well not to discount the possibility of his victory. Ultimately, that is the factor that will ensure elections soonest. ●

LETTERS

IMAGINE

I have been following Ashutosh Tiwari's Strictly Business columns ever since he started writing them for *Nepali Times*. However, in the past I have been put off by the tone of his articles. He has come across as an arrogant know it all. But he has redeemed himself with 'Imagine' (#338) it made my imagination come true. It is by far one of the best articles I have seen in your paper. It is honest, thought provoking, inspiring and, of course, imaginative. Thank you John Tiwari Lennon for a great melody this week.

Bal K Joshi, email

● Your editorial 'Disarming candour' was itself full of disarming candour. It left me and my colleagues wondering if the political charade being played out with arms management has exceeded its redundancy. The Maoists say they are now firmly on the democratic path, but are not willing to quit Prachanda Path. The biggest proof of this is to show that they have handed in only one weapon for every 10 guerrillas. Who are they trying to fool? OK, the UN fell for it, but the Nepali people haven't. The Maoists have made fools of themselves to think that they can fool us. Most find it hard to digest the explanation that the discrepancy in guns and guerrillas is due to a 'frantic recruitment drive' or 'guns were washed away by floods'. The Prachanda Pathists have a lot to learn from Mao's mentor, Sun Tzu.

J Argon, email

● Time and again I express my views rather remotely as an unseasoned outsider. Often praised, occasionally laughed and brushed aside by both Nepalis in Nepal and abroad. Whatever turmoil Nepal may be going through over the years, perhaps the most dangerous game of all is being played by the Madhesi Mukti Morcha. It may be an agitation for fair representation, but it could turn Nepal into Bosnia. Before the sparks ignite the armoury we must stop playing games and find a meaningful political resolution. A multi-cultural Nepal needs a system of balance so that those clamouring for rights also realise that they have the responsibility to respect the rights of others.

Yagya Kanta Rai, Farnborough, UK

● Bullet power is again trying to obstruct ballot power in June. The Maoists are ultra-vocal that the elections need to be held on time, but their deeds are just delaying the polls. They have registered almost 10 times fewer weapons than guerrillas. There are very few takers to their childish explanation about unregistered lethal weapons having been lost to floods and fire. Next, their MP openly threatens to use his gun in parliament. If

Maoists have gone crazy, should the rest of Nepal pretend to be dumb? No government can be pro-public and no election can be fair under the shadow of arms. Since Nepal cannot be an exemption from this, the conscious citizenry must speak-out impartially, in full voice, not for any political line and save this dear country from a political catastrophe.

Pradeepta Sharma, Mumbai

● Re: 'Equal opportunity poverty' (#338). Alok Bohara and Mani Nepal have researched their subject, but here is another point of view:

1. The accompanying map shows that except Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari and Chitwan (where populations are predominantly pahadi), all the tarai districts have high incidences of poverty. Isn't it surprising that a 'resource-rich' tarai didn't fare well in the course of development for last few years? It will be interesting to compare the same map using 1970 data. Districts where the madhesi population is concentrated is much

poorer than the hills to the north? Why was this overlooked in the otherwise well-researched article? Hope it's not deliberate.

2. Ethnic groups are united by common cultural, behavioural, linguistic, ritualistic, or religious traits, usually but not always on the basis of a common genealogy or ancestry. Madhesis are a distinct ethnic group. Yadav is a caste, not an ethnic group. Arbitrary grouping clustering without proper knowledge of

social structure of madhesi ethnic groups may lead us to some misleading results. But if one is out to prove something, statistics can be bent.

3. Bohara and Nepal talks about resource sharing and say, '...resourceful regions could refuse to share benefits with less-privileged areas. Imagine the Limbuwan province bypassing the tarai to sell hydropower to India and keeping all the proceeds...' I can't see that happening. There will always be a powerful inclusive central government which will negotiate with the states concerned if a conflict arises. Moreover, the modality of resource sharing can be well defined in the constitution itself. Fear psychosis among few should not stop the demand for ethnic states once we all admit that there has been ethnic discrimination in past. To borrow from C K Lal, sentences starting with 'But', 'While', 'However', 'Though' to sympathise with the madhesi and janjati cause make them doubtful of the intentions of the ruling class.

Name withheld, email



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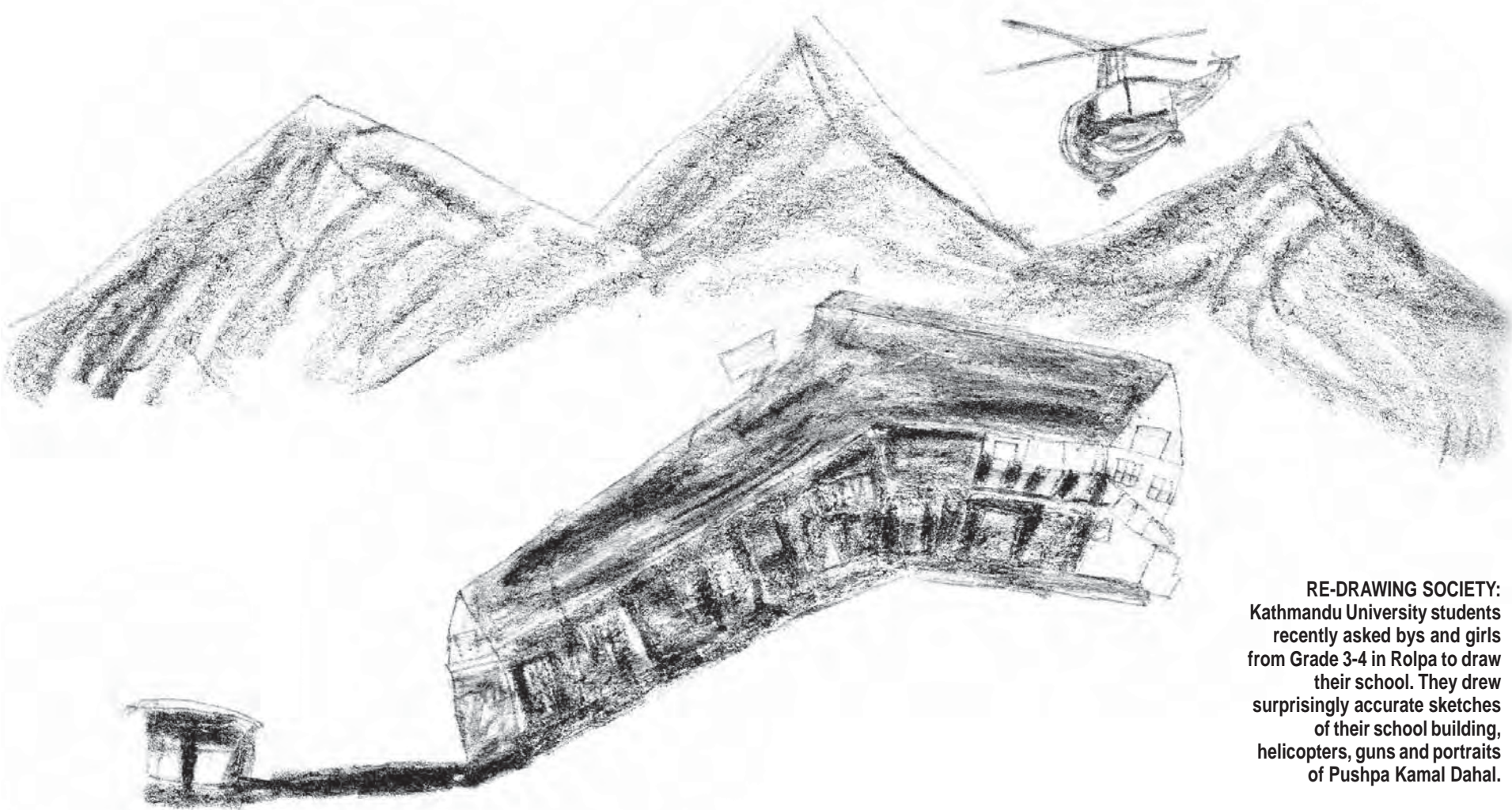
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RE-DRAWING SOCIETY: Kathmandu University students recently asked boys and girls from Grade 3-4 in Rolpa to draw their school. They drew surprisingly accurate sketches of their school building, helicopters, guns and portraits of Pushpa Kamal Dahal.

"I want to be a guerrilla"



PICS: KISHOR RIMAL

KISHOR RIMAL in ROLPA

Travelling to Rolpa from Kathmandu, there are plenty of signs of the physical scars of the ten-year old insurgency. Destroyed bridges, bombed out police stations, VDC buildings in ruins. Along the East-West Highway we also see the more recent effects of the madhes uprising: skeletons of burnt trucks and buses.

Hidden and less apparent are the psychological scars of the violence on children. Many children in the midwestern hills who were five years old when the war started are now 17, and have hardly known peace. Besides the orphans, the internally



displaced and the homeless, there are thousands of children who have grown up with war lore and talk of killings and bombings.

Those who are most traumatised are the ones who have seen parents and relatives killed in front of their eyes, either by the Maoists or in a series of ruthless counter-insurgency operations by state security. Most children are still bent on taking revenge.

Gobinda Pariyar was six when the army came to Rolpa looking for Maoists four years ago. "The Maoists had taken shelter in our house, and my family ran into the mountains with them as the soldiers arrived," Gobinda remembers, "that night the helicopters came and strafed us and our house was blown up." The

soldiers caught his elder sister and she was tortured. Gobinda is now studying at the Sri Bir Balbhadra School in Thabang and when asked what he wants to be, says simply: "A guerrilla."

Jas Kumar Budha Magar is 11 and is enrolled in grade three of the Janabadi School in Thabang of Rolpa. He knows his father was killed by policemen, and says he wants to avenge his death by joining the 'People's Liberation Army'. Aruna Gharti is six, and raises his fist in a red salute as he says he wants to join the Maoists.

In February, a group of students from Kathmandu University organised a drawing competition for children from Grades 3-4 at the Janabadi School in Thabang. The children drew surprisingly accurate images of their school building, of assault rifles, helicopters and portraits of Pushpa Kamal Dahal. Unlike children in government schools elsewhere, Thabang's children knew the exact names of all the guns they drew: "SLR", "INSAS", etc.

Rolpa has always had a tradition of



sending its young sons into the Indian and British armies, so children here have been brought up with stories of grandparents having fought in the world wars.

"It is nothing new to them, but the insurgency of the past ten years has had an immediate impact on children," says Madan Nepali, an English teacher. Nepali says it is difficult to know if time will erase these memories and how long the scars will remain.

Many still have nightmares, and when they are awake there are still fears that the country will slide back to war. One thing is certain: Nepali children need help and counselling so they learn to grow up in a peaceful land. ●



Bringing the boys back home

Bidesi Nepalis need to find innovative ways to engage with the homeland

Washington DC: The Nepali diaspora has a lot to think about, and a lot to think. Those whose favourite pastime was Gyanendra- or Girija-bashing have few punching bags left, and they aren't quite brave enough to lambaste Pushpa Kamal Dahal.



ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed

But this dilemma of sorts is perhaps leading them to look for more positive ways to engage with their home country. Although the 'visa gods' in Kathmandu reject many, there are more Nepalis outside the country now than there used to be. They work in hi-tech industries, manage restaurants and gas stations, they're in the medical and teaching sectors, and the diaspora's profile is getting more diverse by the year. And while they discuss Hillary Clinton vs Barack Obama, integrated as they are in their new world, they're also interested in the political

world in Nepal. A section of Nepalis I have met here seems to think that there are fewer opportunities for them to engage with their home country post-April Uprising, with the entering of the Maoists into the mainstream, and now the larger debates about the constituent assembly, federalism, and republicanism. The vehement and critical voices that filled the blogs are now falling short of pointers on how to improve Nepal's growth and development. It's difficult to be an expert on Nepal's problems when political developments move so rapidly, that many perspectives are fast outdated. Thankfully, though, some people are trying their best. They might organise e-seminars like the Nepal Study Center at the University of New Mexico does, or conduct regular discussion programs like the Chalphal groups in London and Boston. Some mid-career Nepalis who have spent less than a decade outside Nepal are contemplating returning, as they look at the successful and




gratifying careers of those who came back in the 1990s. The main obstacle to people acting on this otherwise good idea is domestic, rather than anything to do with career prospects, opportunity, or money. Women who lead independent lives and have established their own identity tell the Beed that they do not want to return to be primarily obedient daughters-in-laws. Similarly, school-age children don't want to give up their perceived elite but in fact easier education. The tales of the tough

South Asian education are legion, and not everyone wants to deal with it. NRNs are getting wealthier, and half-a-million or million dollar houses and apartments don't raise too many eyebrows. The lifestyle of *bidesi* Nepalis is also changing, holidaying and hobbies are climbing up the priority list. Most importantly, they are now inclined to invest in Nepal. But they find that there simply aren't suitable instruments that will give them the security of mitigating the fluctuation in exchange rate. The state would do well to see them as an economic force to reckon with. The issues of Non-Resident Nepalis are broader than those highlighted by special interest groups and established cartels. The debate should be expanded now to create space not just for all Nepalis at home, but also for those who live abroad and have a strong connection to their Nepali identity. It'd be great to hear solutions for how to do this from bidesi Nepalis too. ●


Golfing away

Nepal Golf Association, along with Surya Nepal, announced that the annual Surya Nepal Masters Golf Tournament 2007 will be held from 28-31 March at the Le Meridien Kathmandu, Gokarna Forest Golf Resort and Spa. The event will attract almost 90 professionals and 10 amateurs who compete for a prize money of Rs 2 million.




Sharing shares

The Bank of Kathmandu has increased the number of limited shares it holds from 46,35,809 to 60,31,416, an increase of 13,95,604 shares. The BOK has been providing various banking services since 1995 and is soon planning to introduce internet banking and corporate e-banking options.




Growth spurt

Under new management, Lumbini Bank has improved its financial position in various sectors. NPA has been reduced to 21 percent from 40.54 percent while performing loans have increased to 80.64 percent, and deposits have increased by 38 percent. The Bank has been able to achieve a profit of Rs 217 million after tax and loan loss provision compared to last year's loss of Rs 21.88 million.



New miracle

The Miracle Journey electronics store recently opened in Gwarko, Lalitpur. The store holds all of Samsung's electronic goods as well as equipment from other major brands. Appliances available include televisions, refrigerator, air conditioners, ovens, computers, washing machines etc. The goods are available under easy installment plans and at discount rates.



Certified


Surya Nepal has become the first company to be awarded with the SA 8000-2001 Social Accountability Certification from Det Norske Veritas (DNV). The certification is awarded for adherence to human rights standards in the workplace. This latest certification comes on top of the other awards like the Monde Selection, the British Safety Council Award, First National Safety Award, FNCCI Excellence Award, ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 Certification that Surya Nepal has already achieved.




NEW PRODUCTS

GEELY: China's pioneer carmakers Geely will be launching the new Geely CK in Nepal. Saakha has been appointed the official distributor and plans to bring the car into the market in mid March. The CK has already been launched in more than 40 countries. Its major markets include the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Eastern Europe.

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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
MESSAGE ON
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
8 March 2007

I am happy and honoured to send you my warmest wishes on International Women's Day my first one as Secretary-General of the United Nations. I hope you will all come to know me as your representative and ally in the years ahead.

This day is an opportunity for all of us -- women *and* men -- to unite in a cause that embraces all humankind. Empowering women is not only a goal in itself. It is a condition for building better lives for everyone on the planet.

No one can dispute the evidence that this is so. And no one can gainsay the outcome of the 2005 World Summit, when leaders reaffirmed that gender equality and human rights for all are essential to advancing development, peace and security.

Yet we are still so very far from turning this understanding into universal practice. In almost all countries, women continue to be under-represented in decision-making positions. Women's work continues to be undervalued, underpaid, or not paid at all. Out of more than 100 million children who are not in school, the majority are girls. Out of more than 800 million adults who cannot read, the majority are women.

Worst of all, violence against women and girls continues unabated in every continent, country and culture. It takes a devastating toll on women's lives, on their families, and on society as a whole. Most societies prohibit such violence -- yet the reality is that too often, it is covered up or tacitly condoned.

That is why International Women's Day is so important. It spells out our responsibility to work for enduring change in values and attitudes. It calls on us to work in partnership -- Governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector. It urges us to work for a transformation in relations between women and men, at all levels of society. It compels us to strengthen every means of empowering women and girls -- from education to microcredit.

The United Nations must be at the forefront of those endeavours. I pledge to do all I can to ensure that it is -- not only on International Women's Day, but *every* day. I look forward to working with you in our collective mission

Still fearful in Rolpa

UML MP Prakash Jwala in *Himal Khabarpatrika*

The blood-soaked hills and valleys of Rolpa have now been at peace for nine months. There are no rotting bodies by the rivers. The sound of explosions no longer rent the air. Yet, fear still lurks here.

For nearly a decade, the Maoists had de facto control over the mid-western districts. Local political leaders had to flee for their lives, nobody has kept a count of how many were killed, tortured, or had their property confiscated.



After the 12-point agreement and the peace process, political activity is picking up. Party cadre are going back to their villages, and the UML and NC have even re-established offices in Jungar, Ghartigaun, and Iribang after many years.

But the parties are still facing harassment. On 23 March, the Maoists disrupted a UML meeting in Talabang and took away the microphones. It's getting late for the Maoists who have accepted peaceful competitive politics to mend their ways.

The threats, intimidation and coercion is costing the Maoists support. Although the comrades have declared that 'people's courts' will be disbanded they are still running kangaroo courts. Extortion,

forced labor and a show of force are everyday occurrences. The family of every Rolpali who is working abroad has to pay up to Rs 35,000 in annual tax to the Maoists.

In Talabang, the Maoists accused Kaman Singh of 'tax evasion' and he was locked out of his house and property taken over. Others are sick and tired of being forced to repeatedly pay up to Rs 400,000.

The Maoists have been building the difficult 81km 'Martyr's Highway' from Nuwagau to Thabang. They had said it would be completed in three years but it is behind schedule even though villagers from the surrounding districts of Rukum, Salyan, and Dang were pressed into road construction service. The 'voluntary labour' on the road has resumed since 13 March.

Two months ago, the Rolpa district in-charge Comrade Sijal had agreed with other parties to allow the internally displaced to go back to their villages. Many did, but some were harassed by local Maoists when they went to their home villages. There is a trend here of the district Maoists not listening to the central Maoists and the village Maoists not listening to the district leadership.

The police have finally been allowed to return to some of their abandoned posts. In Jungar and Ghartigaun, the Maoists welcomed returning policemen with garlands and then told them: "You stay where we tell you to stay, no armed patrols, before you go out you ask us for permission."

Despite the peace process and UN-verified arms management, Rolpa's villagers are being openly told by local Maoists that they still have a lot of guns hidden away. Some comrades even warn that if they lose the constituent assembly election they will go back to war.

It is difficult to see how voting in the constituent assembly election can be truly free, fair and independent in this situation.

Who's who

Ghatana ra Bichar, 7-13 March

घटना-बिचार

As bargaining for positions in the interim government heats up, the NC has decided to keep the deputy-prime ministership for itself. This is to lessen Prime Minister Koirala's workload and the party will chose between Sushil Koirala and Ram Chandra Poudel for the post. But the leadership hasn't decided which one will be given a government post and which one acting party president. If the Maoists prevail, then it is likely that home minister Krishna Sitaula will retain a ministerial position. Other NC wannabes include Sujata Koirala, Bhim Bahadur Tamang, Rambaran Yadab, Ram Sharan Mahat. Over at the NC-D Gopalman Shrestha, Ramesh Lekhak and Gyanendra Karki have been uncontroversial and seem to be doing a good job, but the NC-D leadership may want a change of faces and include more party heavyweights like Purna Bahadur Khadka, Prakashman Singh, Balkrishna Khand, Uma Adhikari, and Bimalendra Nidhi.

The UML wants Bam Deb Gautam to be deputy prime minister, and he will go into government only if he gets that post. Party cadre want Jhala Nath Khanal to lead the team in government but UML leader Madhab Nepal is said to be against this. The UML is also

trying to balance the aspirations of traditional politicians with the need to include madhesi, women, and janjati candidates.

The Maoists meanwhile have Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Hisila Yami, Khadagbahadur Biswokarma, Lekhraj Bhatt, and Deb Gurung as ministerial candidates.

Still hopeful

Nepal, 5 March

नेपाल

Dhadhabar - It has been five years since Sagunlal Chaudhary of Bardiya was captured by the army and went missing. The family had almost lost hope when Louise Arbour, the United Nations' High Commissioner for Human Rights made a trip to this small village 50km from Nepalganj, met with them, and promised to talk to the government about Sagunlal's status.

This was in mid-January. It's been two months since Arbour's visit and the Chaudharys have still not heard from the government. "We are confident the government will listen to the voice of such a high-ranking officer," says Sagunlal's son Krishna.

Sagunlal used to be the principal of a local school when he was captured in front of witnesses by the army on 27 December 2001. A year later the family heard that he was being detained in the Chisapani

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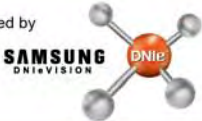
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हेर्न नमूनुहोला



ANNAPURNA POST

GREEN WEALTH: Since mid-February Maoists have been cutting down *sisau* trees from Pumori Agro Forestry in Kumrose, Chitwan, which is spread over 42 of the 55 hectares of Pumori's land. They claim they are only chopping down trees that are dry, dying, or useless, but have also sold them to middlemen and brick kilns, or taken them to the temporary camps.

Pumori bought 55 hectares forest lands over a period of nine years from 1992-2001, but the Maoists forcefully took over it on 23 March 2004. They started felling trees on 16 February and last week the company sent a letter to the chief district officer requesting that the cutting of trees be stopped right away. It is understood that this year alone the Maoists have cut bamboo worth Rs 500,000 and wood worth Rs 1 million. (*Annapurna Post*)

barracks, but they have heard nothing about him since. The army denies any involvement in Sagunlal's disappearance.

Most reports of disappearances in Nepal during the conflict come from Bardiya. Of the 204 people who have gone missing from here, 181 were disappeared by the state and the rest by the Maoists. Louise Arbour has said the government needs to make sure there is no impunity for those involved.

But the relatives of many who have disappeared haven't even filed cases. Because the government rejects complaints that are not backed by evidence,

families are waiting to file their cases after the government makes the status of the disappeared people public.

Arbour said that Bardiya was top on her list of priorities. After Arbour's visit the government has not set up a commission to investigate disappearances, and nor has it said it will take action against the military personnel involved in the Bardiya disappearances. The families are forming a committee to pressure the government. "A government that does not listen to the United Nations is sure to commit more crimes," says committee chairman Krishna Chaudhary.



It's true! Weapons were washed away by the river as Prachanda said.

नेपाल Nepal, 5 March

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ I will pick up the phone right away and call an eight-party meeting to form the interim government if you promise to create an environment where Nepali people and the international community feel safe. ”

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala to Pushpa Kamal Dahal quoted in *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 4 March

SELECTED MATERIAL TRANSLATED EVERY WEEK FROM THE NEPALI PRESS

UNITED NATIONS

NATIONS UNIES

Joint Statement by the United Nations Country Team in Nepal on the occasion of International Women's Day

On the occasion of International Women's Day, the United Nations agencies working in Nepal would like to reiterate that violence against women is not a 'women's issue' alone but an issue affecting all members of Nepali society. It violates basic human rights of all mothers, sisters and daughters and therefore is a matter of concern for everybody, including the State at large from law enforcement agencies to organisations providing assistance to the victims.

Today, violence against women is still a universally tolerated and often unpunished crime. However, this is generally downplayed by the public as well as by policy makers. Violence that is tolerated in times of peace often intensifies during times of armed conflict, political instability and even during peace process. The breakdown of law and order and the displacement of people are often manifested in increased violence against women, particularly those in vulnerable situations, such as young women, refugees, displaced and internally displaced women, women with disabilities and women migrant workers.

Figures documented around the world show as many as one in every three women has been beaten, coerced into sex, or abused in some way. Of three girls sitting in a classroom, one will suffer violence directed at her simply because she is a female. Of three women sitting in a market selling their crops, one will be attacked-most likely by her intimate partner. Violence against women not only devastates lives and fractures communities, but impedes development. While its extent is hard to estimate given it is so widely under-reported, no country or society can claim to be free of domestic violence; it cuts across boundaries of culture, class, education, income, ethnicity and age.

UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Nepal Mr. Matthew Kahane has reiterated that virtually excluding women from the political arena, not giving women adequate access to education and information and barring women from decision-making positions is also a form of violence against women.

There is a need for more open debate as well as stronger action concerning gender based violence, including preventive education. We appeal to the government, civil society organizations and the international community to promote respect for internationally recognized principles, norms and standards of human rights, particularly women's rights.

The need of the country is to bring effective laws into practice. The Act on Gender Equality in Nepal has repealed and amended 56 discriminatory legal provisions to ensure women's rights. Now it is the responsibility of all state organs and civil society at large to join in the efforts to stop violence against women and promote gender justice. The United Nations in Nepal strongly urge that there must be no impunity for gender-based violence and stands ready to support Nepal to take active steps to address this intolerable crime.

Get on with it

Editorial in *Janadesh*, 6 March

जनादेश

Although the Nepali people demand that the palace be disposed of and Nepal declared a republic immediately, the government is still unwilling to let the Maoists [who are asking for the same things] join the interim government. In fact, the government is afraid of letting the Maoists party into the constituent assembly. Clearly, the interim government plans to let things continue without a resolution for a month or two, effectively delaying the constituent assembly election.

The fact is, the Maoists do not need anyone's approval. The Nepali people trust, love, and support them. If they fought the ten-year 'People's War' with the support of the people, they will also fight for peace and democracy with the same support. There is no doubt the Maoists can establish a democratic republic in Nepal with such support. It is a misconception that delaying the Maoists from entering the government and the constituent assembly will lead to freedom earlier for Nepal and its people.

The Nepali people do not need to be taught that the dilly-dallying of the interim government is a conspiracy to herald retrogression.

Suicidal

Editorial in *Punarjagaran*, 6 March

पुनर्जागरण

Maoist weapons have landed in containers and yet everyone is dissatisfied with the number. The relatives of the murdered tell of vast stores of stockpiled weapons. Even the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations, Ian Martin, seems dissatisfied.

What we are seeing is that there is one weapon for every ten soldiers, meaning that the other nine are unarmed, their weapons have been washed away by rivers, or blown to bits in fires. A lie of this magnitude warrants a place in the Guinness Book of World Records.

What repercussions could it have for Nepal and for the world if these Maoists, who haven't even been properly disarmed, are allowed to enter the interim government? What do we say of the dignity of the seven-party alliance if they allow the Maoists to bully themselves into the government?

The Maoists need to return all land and property they have seized from individuals. Everyone needs to be able to vote under their own name without any coercion. The environment of fear needs to change, because no election held under such conditions has any significance whatsoever.



USHA TITIKCHU



KIRAN PANDAY

10 years on air

In 1997 Radio Sagarmatha opened the gates for Nepal's radio revolution

Most young radio journalists today probably don't know what a long and hard battle it was ten years ago to liberate Nepal's air waves and to create public space for radio.

When Radio Sagarmatha was finally granted a license to be Nepal's first non-government radio station in May 1997 it was a milestone not just for Nepal but the whole South Asian region. The day 102.4 FM went on air was the day the government monopoly of radio ended and frequencies were recognised as public property.

Sagarmatha opened the gates to dozens of community FM stations, private commercial radio and public broadcasters. Ten years later, there are 66 independent stations through Nepal, 27 more are going on air within two months and dozens more licenses have been given out.

"Sagarmatha was a hard-won group effort, it took years of lobbying," recalls Bharat Koirala the media trainer and activist who was given the Magsaysay Award in 2000 for his contribution. Koirala's original idea was to turn Sagarmatha into a nucleus for training community broadcasters throughout Nepal, and use grassroots communications to empower rural Nepal and help development.

But even after the license was granted to the Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ) to run Sagarmatha, there were numerous hurdles: fixing the tax for public broadcasters, distinguish between community and commercial stations and finding a legislative framework.

"In April 1997, we sent a letter to the Ministry of Communication asking for a permission to test broadcast," recalls present station manager Mohan Bista, "the government didn't respond so we went ahead and broadcast anyway."

Journalists erected the tower themselves, using drinking water pipes and driving around Kathmandu on motorbikes with radios to test the transmitting range. Even when the government threatened strong action, Radio Sagarmatha persisted. Finally, on 18 May 1997 the license was granted.

Getting Sagarmatha on air was instrumental in creating awareness that community radios could expand the public sphere creating the conditions for democracy and development to thrive. But it hasn't all gone according to plan. The virtually unregulated process has brought with it commercial pressures on the quality of programming. Many private stations, dependent on advertisement support, cater to young, urban, middle class people with high purchasing power.

Nepal needs public broadcasters, doing inclusive and participatory programming, to supply rural communities with access to relevant information. These programs being information-based have higher running costs and lower advertisement revenues than commercial stations.

Forced to pay 4 percent tax on income and a high annual broadcasting royalty, community stations including Radio Sagarmatha find it hard to sustain themselves. So it depends on donor support, partnerships and sponsored

programming.

In July 2001 a landmark Supreme Court decision assured broadcasters the same freedoms as those available to print media and ruled that a ban on news restricted the constitutional right to information. But broadcasters have faced constant harassment and restrictions culminating in a blanket ban on news on radio after the royal coup of February 2005.

In November that year police raided Sagarmatha, seized equipment and took five journalists into custody for a BBC interview with Pushpa Kamal Dahal. The fact that the station hadn't actually run the interview wasn't considered. Sagarmatha took the case to the Supreme Court which ruled that BBC rebroadcasts should be allowed on FM. Sagarmatha had won this victory on behalf of a dozen other stations that also relay the BBC Nepali Service.

FM in Nepal is now no longer a development project, thanks to Sagarmatha's pioneering work, it is a mainstream phenomenon that has contributed to the creation of public space. "Now we are facing the second generation problems, monitoring, regulation and the setting of quality standards being the most urgent," says Binod Bhattarai of the Centre for Investigative Journalism who was station manager in 1998-99. Licensing should become more transparent and differentiate between non-profit and commercial broadcasters and handled by an independent monitoring authority, he adds.

To achieve this the government should step back from being the monitoring, licensing and broadcasting agency at the

WAR AND PEACE: Radio Sagarmatha has seen a lot in its 10 years, from soldiers occupying it after the royal coup in 2005 to being a true public broadcaster battling commercialisation in peacetime.

same time. It should take the role as a regulator in the public interest and guarantee the survival of public broadcasters and institutions like Sagarmatha that try to promote this. Licensing and regulation should itself be decentralised.

Radios have given voice to indigenous groups and neglected languages, but it has a long way to go in ensuring ethnic and gender diversity in staffing.

Raghu Mainali of the Community Radio Support Center (CRSC), says: "Sagarmatha has helped community radios throughout Nepal with training now we need to work together to improve the quality, participatory nature of programming and ensuring sustainability." ●



Thinking nationally, acting locally

Nepal's radio success story faces new challenges

KIRAN NEPAL

Ten years after it transformed Nepal's media landscape, Nepal's network of radio stations are now being threatened by the dominance of national-level news and the control of the airwaves by politicians and businessmen.

"If the process of centralised network broadcasting continues at its present pace, local identity and capacity will be eroded," warns media expert Binaya Kasaju.

There are now 69 FM stations all over Nepal with another 27 going on air soon. Existing stations are now filling airtime with up to four hours of nationally-syndicated news and current affairs programs daily.

Communications Corner, for instance, simultaneously broadcasts its news programs through 22 stations nationwide. Antenna Foundation has talk and discussions like 'Nepal Chautari' going through 29 stations. BBC Nepali Service is broadcast every evening through a dozen stations.

FM stations are by definition local because of their signal reach, but networking has allowed them to have a national character. Local content allowed these stations to voice community concerns and reflect Nepal's ethnic, linguistic and geographical diversity.

The reason for the loss of local character is that although most FM stations are in the 100-500 watt range, high-power transmitters up to 10,000 watts are being permitted. There is no criteria for deciding who gets what transmission capacity, and there are no limits to the number of licenses in an area. Kathmandu Valley alone now has 18 FM radios.

National media players are also expanding aggressively to other urban areas. Kantipur FM which used to broadcast to the whole of eastern Nepal now has license to set up FM radios in Nepalganj, Butwal, Bharatpur and Pokhara. Image FM is following suit.

Not everyone agrees all this erodes local content. Gopal Guragain of Communication Corner who is launching a satellite-syndicated service called Ujyalo National Network with 18 hours of programming daily says the unique selling point of community radios is still local content.

"Of course not everyone wants to just hear about how to keep water buffalos healthy," he adds, "there is also a great hunger for national news. So there has to be a balance between national and local."

A recent listenership survey showed that Saptakosi FM in Itahari had nipped the powerful Kantipur FM in ratings in Morang and Sunsari. Community radios that broadcast in local languages also have a powerful advantage over nationally syndicated content. Birganj FM's Bhojpur and Janakpur FM's Maithili programming are popular not just in the tarai but also across the border in India. In fact, both are now selling commercial time for Indian products.

In the ongoing tarai unrest, radio stations in the plains, while pressing for a fair deal for madhesis, have raised their voices for communal harmony and to keep the agitation peaceful.

Some analysts aren't as worried about nationally syndicated content as they are about politicians investing in radio. The Maoists have just bought Paschimanchal FM in Palpa through a Butwal-based front man. Programming chief Ramesh Poudel openly admits his station's aim is to propagate the Maoist agenda. Paschimanchal relayed a live broadcast of Pushpa Kamal Dahal's 13 February speech from Kathmandu.

The UML's Pradip Nepal is involved in Saptakosi FM in Itahari, and another party member owns Suklaphanta FM in Mahendranagar. ML mayor of Tansen Ashok Shahi is involved in Muktinath FM. The RPP's Rajiv Parajuli has put his brother in charge of Birganj FM. Jivan Shahi of NC-D has got the license to operate Kailash FM in Simkot. The Kabhre NC president and a central committee member have got permissions for stations in Kabhre and Janakpur. ●

NATIONWIDE NETWORK: There are now 69 FM stations currently on air all over Nepal. Another 27 will start broadcasts within the next few months, most of them in remote districts.



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International Women's Day, 8 March 2007 Message by Noleen Heyzer, Executive Director, UNIFEM Equality, Development and Peace Means Ending Violence against Women

International Women's Day is the story of women's organizing for equality, justice and peace. Marked by women's groups around the world, it is rooted in the centuries-old struggle of women to bring about a better world. Its commemoration began in 1911 in Europe with a March 19 rally for women's right to vote and took on new momentum after more than 140 working women lost their lives in a fire in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City a week later. It grew in following years as women held rallies each year to protest the devastation of World War I.

This year as always the day is an opportunity for reflection and renewal. In the 12 years since the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing, the signs of progress are many. There is global recognition that gender equality is central to human development and human security, as stated in the Millennium Declaration. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is now seen as a gender issue as well as a health issue; rape has been recognized as a weapon of war and a crime against humanity. Women's human rights—monitored and upheld by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), now ratified by 185 countries—are now on every major agenda, national, regional and international.

At the country level too, there is much to celebrate. Laws and policies are being adopted to strengthen women's economic security in such vital areas as land, property and inheritance rights, decent employment, and access to credit and markets. Quotas or other affirmative measures have been adopted to increase women's representation in political decision-making in at least 95 countries, including many countries emerging from conflict.

But all of this progress can be destroyed through continuing violence against women. Violence against women is deeply rooted in structures of gender inequality. It fuels the spread of HIV/AIDS and destroys women's ability to break through inter-generational cycles of poverty. Such violence, already horrific in times of peace, intensifies during armed conflict as legal and justice systems break down along with systems of social and community support. Whether in peace or in war, violence against women takes a huge toll-- from individuals and societies both.

Fortunately, more and more countries are recognizing these links, acknowledging that until they eliminate persistent gender inequalities and discrimination, both human security and human development will remain a distant dream--along with all of the Millennium Development Goals. Governments are beginning to act: according to the Secretary-General's recent report, 89 states have legislative provisions on domestic violence, 104 countries have made marital rape a crime and 93 states prohibit trafficking in human beings. What is urgently needed is implementation.

UNIFEM has worked with women's groups and governments for over two decades to end the multiple forms of violence in women's lives. What we have learned is that ending violence against women requires multiple strategies working across sectors and at different levels. Laws must be accompanied by resource allocations, institutional regulations and guidelines and systematic training for officials who will monitor and enforce them—including police and judiciary, health and social service providers. Ending violence against women also requires changing public perceptions and breaking through barriers of culture and tradition to find non-violent ways to resolve conflicts in personal and public life.

In the last decade, UNIFEM has spearheaded a set of regional and global advocacy campaigns, working with governments, women's groups and the media to change laws, develop national action plans and scale up community-based interventions to end violence against women and girls. Since 2005, the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, which UNIFEM manages, has supported Governments and NGOs to implement these laws, policies and action plans. Now we are taking this struggle to the next stage--to institutionalize the strategic, practical actions that can bring about change, and incorporate them into national development planning, and state accountability mechanisms.

This year marks the 10th Anniversary of the UN Trust Fund. Ten years of innovation, experience and activism have shown that ending violence against women is possible. What is needed now is a serious strategy and resources to upscale the work through a strong gender entity within the UN system, bringing the system together to promote the strategies and practices that have worked. Only then can the UN, in partnership with Member States and the women's movement, be at the forefront of efforts to end this scourge. Only then will violence against women become a rare occurrence rather than a global pandemic.

On this International Women's Day we owe it to women around the world to take this challenge seriously—to end violence against women, and strike a blow for equality, development and peace.

Youth and hope

Nepal needs to hang on to its most valuable resource, its youngsters

Nepal has one natural resource in abundance that isn't related to water. One that doesn't require a foreign consortium to descend from on high and exchange up-front cash for long-term ownership. This is a commodity that has long since disappeared from the developed world, and though many others beyond America and Europe possess it, there is inexhaustible demand that isn't related to supply.



HERE AND THERE
Daniel Lak

The resource is youth. Nepal is one of the youngest countries in the world, with more than half its population under thirty. That means energy, dynamism, and opportunity galore for almost everyone here, young and old alike. By contrast, France, Britain, and other European countries have discovered one of the great truisms of development—affluence is the only truly effective form of birth control. America and Canada would be equally aged if it weren't for immigration. In both of North America's rich giants, only the newly-arrived are swelling the ranks of the young.

Childless marriages just hit a new all-time high in the United States. More people are living their entire lives as singles, never getting married or having kids. Universities are jam-packed, but



RAMESWOR BOHARA

that's a combination of a demographic bulge about to steeply decline, and foreign students hungry for a decent education. The rich world is aging fast, and places like Nepal are chock-a-block with youth.

I look around Canada, where I bide my time at the moment. What do I see? Old, white people and young brown, black, and Asian people. The new demography of North America. Rich, settled, aging whites who aren't reproducing, and plenty of the world's children from elsewhere coming in to make up for that. Not that all the young incomers aren't white. Some are from

Eastern Europe and many are Latinos of varying hues, but they are mostly poor, or at least lacking in much that the native-born of rich countries take for granted.

I am confident this represents the cusp of amazing change. Some see the flow of people outward from Asia to America or Europe as brain drain and, to a certain extent, it has been. Nepali doctors and academics should be labouring in Nepal, but who can fault them for fleeing war, political stasis, and ludicrous misrule by kings and politicians alike? What's more intriguing than the flight of the elite from

places like Nepal is the status of the others who emigrate, who seek DV visas, or slip abroad with the help of people smugglers.

Many are not especially well-off, but plenty are at least middle class and literate, by the standards of home. They go to Toronto, New York, or London to work as plumbers, waiters, nurses, and office workers. In each of these places, shortages of skilled and semi-skilled labour have cost local economies dearly in recent years. Countries like Canada now court construction workers in overseas jobs fairs, and try to lure welders and pipefitters from China to South Africa. The native-born, it seems, just won't do those jobs. Or they're too old.

The biggest growth area in the job markets of North America and Europe doesn't involve a box of tools or years of post-secondary education. In the coming years, the single, the childless, and the otherwise unsupported elderly of the rich world will need care. And they'll be paying for it. They'll have money but no caregivers to spend it on. More and more Nepalis, Sri Lankans, Thais, and Brazilians are answering that particular call. Courses to help the elderly are oversubscribed.

So, yes, Nepal needs many things at the moment. But of pressing concern is a strategy on its most important natural resource—how to keep the young people here. Before they all leave to high-paying jobs looking after the likes of me in Canada. I pay well, mind... ●

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KIRAN PANDAY

A flawed election is worse than a delayed election

No to June

What do Girija Prasad Koirala, Madhab Kumar Nepal, and Pushpa Kamal Dahal have in common? Like a broken record, they all keep insisting on sticking to the June deadline for elections to the constituent assembly. None offer a coherent reason why elections are so important by June except to say that regressive elements will take advantage if polls are deferred.

And yet, if only all of them were to seriously think for once, they would see why the artificial deadline of June can tear this country apart.

To hold credible elections that form an inclusive and legitimate constituent assembly, a few key conditions must be in place. There must first be a legal framework that allows all constituents to participate in the assembly elections. An environment must then be created that guarantees freedom from threats and intimidation. The elections, finally, must be held according to acceptable standards so that the results are seen as legitimate.

None of these conditions exist today. The comprehensive peace agreement and interim constitution are so myopic that they have barred anyone other than the eight parties from contesting the polls. That means the legal framework does not exist to allow for true participation. Even if the laws are changed and new ones introduced, it is unclear whether that will allow all interested constituents to participate. The recent madhesi movement and janajati agitation were a direct result of this myopia.

As for the political and civil space needed for free elections, it doesn't exist. Though most Maoist weapons are now inside UNMIN containers, Maoist behaviour in the field is still intimidating and threatening. Worse, there is no monitoring mechanism to check their behaviour. Policing is patchy, thin, and corrupt, and the only national monitoring institution was disbanded last November without a replacement in place.

Talk to any of the district cadres of the other major parties. They will tell you how constricted the space for free politics is. With the tarai and janajati votes now moving out of the Maoists' orbit, such behaviour by nervous Maoist cadres will only grow.

All this means the basic acceptable standards for elections just do not exist, and it is not likely they will come into place in the three months left till June. Even if we were to speed up things now, negotiations with the traditionally marginalised communities will likely take months before an acceptable compromise on participation and representation is reached. Adequate policing and monitoring of civil and political space will require concerted action by all sides, including by the Maoists, who just don't seem interested in allowing that. This means only one thing: no credible elections in June.

If the June deadline is stuck to, the elections will be flawed, with results contested and atmosphere poisoned—not a good recipe for constitution-making. Sticking with such flawed elections is more dangerous than delayed elections because of the potential that it will increase lawlessness, create new conflicts, and fragment the state. Imagine the effect that would have on the fidgety Maoist combatants in their cantonments.

So why not declare the inevitable now: postpone the polls until all necessary conditions are met. This must be backed up with urgent work on strengthening the cantonment logistics and, crucially, reforming the security services so that Maoist fighters have some hope of finding jobs in a reformed security sector. Otherwise, we may agree to defer the polls only to see the fighters come out of the camps to cause mayhem in the countryside. ●

Post-truth Nepal

Lying for the Cause

You don't need the Hand telling you that politicians are habitual liars. This fact of life has been learnt the hard way, through a litany of betrayal and perfidy, and the Nepali people's lack of faith in their leaders is a damning judgment. Telling the truth is passé and open-hearted honesty old-fashioned. The axiom 'nice guys finish last' is proven by those who rise to the top in the national political arena.

It occurred to the now invisible Hand that those driven by ideology do things differently. Your garden-variety politico makes promises he never plans on keeping when angling for votes, or lies to conceal his incompetence and corruption. This behaviour, while deviant, is not from normal self-interested behaviour.

Politicians driven by Ideology, on the other hand, seem to have a different concept of truth than the rest of us. While

average politicians lie haphazardly to cover their blunders, ideologically driven politicians lie methodically for the cause, which conveniently justifies whatever it takes to achieve the objective. Adhering to ideology gives license for mendacity; if the end always justifies the means, anything goes.

Look at some recent examples of fabrication and reality denial: The shooting in Lahan that sparked the tarai conflagration was perpetrated, say eyewitnesses, by a Maoist cadre travelling in a Party minivan. Comrade Deb Gurung of the central politburo unflinchingly told the press it was actually the work of Royalist agents-provocateurs, begging the question what a trigger-happy monarchist was doing in their vehicle.

In response to a report issued last month by an international organisation condemning rampant Maoist extortion of the business community, Comrade Mahara of the central politburo indignantly declared that coercion is unheard

of and that the millions collected are voluntary donations. This lame defence, conflicting with the testimony of business-people nationwide, suggests he couldn't give a damn whether anyone believes him; toeing the party line is what matters. On the off-chance Mahara actually believes his own words, serious pathological tendencies are indicated that bode ill.

Pasang Lama, caught in a sting operation purchasing arms from a radical Kashmir group, admitted to Indian police that he was a Maoist buying guns destined for Nepal, despite a ban on such activity in the peace accord. But his boss in Delhi, CP Gajurel, displayed the Party's impressive clerical skills, saying there was no such person on the membership rolls.

An organisation with a rigid hierarchy saves the most blatant lies for its supreme commander. Prachanda's recent explanation that the absent Maoist weapons were swept away by a river and/or incinerated in a blaze stretches our credibility to new limits. Reality and truth no longer matter in the national political equation.

Not much surprises the Hand but a few things terrify him. An ideologically based belief system excuses duplicity and encourages deceit to further the cause. Ideology has been used to justify appalling crimes against humanity over the past century, from Hitler's Nazi Germany to Pol Pot's Maoist Kampuchea. Intolerance of awkward facts that conflict with the party line has historically led to the creation of a separate, manipulated truth for the masses, with disastrous consequences.

We have grown inured to being insulted by our leaders through their corruption, strikes, and treachery, but such brazen lies insult our intelligence and are thus troubling on a deeper level. In the New Nepal truth will be a commodity controlled and defined by the Party, whose version stands infallible and beyond reproach.

The Hand, who has often wondered 'how stupid do they really think we are?' now has his answer. ●

MOVING TARGET

Foreign Hand

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Message of Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, UNFPA Executive Director on the occasion of International Women's Day, 8 March 2007

No matter where a girl is born, she should live free of discrimination and violence. Every girl and woman should enjoy equal opportunity and equal rights.

Yet, violence against women and girls continues to be widespread and most of these crimes go unpunished.

The theme of this year's International Women's Day, "Ending impunity for violence against women," calls for stronger commitment and action. The widespread impunity that exists today not only encourages further abuses and suffering. It also sends the signal that male violence against women is acceptable or normal. It is not. Together, we can and must do more to prevent violence against women, provide services to survivors, and ensure that perpetrators are punished.

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, is committed to working with partners to combat discrimination and violence against women and girls. Today, we pay tribute to the women and men in every country who are demanding justice, and to the parliaments and governments that are taking action.

While progress has been made in the adoption of laws, much greater action is needed to ensure that laws are enforced and awareness is raised. Everyone should understand that violence against women and girls is unacceptable and will no longer be tolerated.

UNFPA will continue to work within the United Nations system and with governments and civil society to put national action plans in place that prevent and address violence against women. We will continue to promote human rights, including the right to sexual and reproductive health, women's empowerment and gender equality.

Together, we can change deeply rooted attitudes and practices that discriminate against women and girls. And together, we can ensure that all those who respond to violence against women—whether they are police officers, judges, lawyers, immigration officials, medical personnel, or social workers—are sensitized and trained to provide a response that is compassionate and comprehensive.

By ending impunity for violence against women, we will make greater progress in achieving peace, development and human rights for all.

EYES WIDE SHUT

Sheetal Kumar





Whose baby is this? This painting hangs in the reception of the orphanage in Ratopul we sourced a child from .

THOMAS BELL

ANAGHA NEELAKANTAN

Nepal's exports are down, tourism is still stagnant but the international adoption business is booming. Children are often put up for adoption without their parents' knowledge or consent. The racket thrives in part because there are no laws governing financial transactions in the process. In addition to hefty 'donations' to orphanages and financial support for the upkeep of their 'allotted' child while they wait for their file to be processed, parents also pay hefty sums to 'facilitators' or agencies in Nepal and back home. The whole shady business is lubricated with bribes to offices and individuals.

Posing as British parents wishing to adopt a Nepali child, we visited the Child NGO Federation, one of the organisers of an international conference on adoption in Kathmandu this weekend. We were directed to a member who is also a supreme court advocate and has an orphanage.

Nepali Times has corroborated reports from sources close to the adoption process and child welfare institutions of corruption at every stage of the process. But a senior child welfare official told us: "We have to be careful about taking action because powerful people are involved." No one we talked to about adoption was willing to speak on the record, fearing retaliation from the orphanage and adoption lobbies.

The high stakes are driving a market in which an increasing

number of children are being falsely declared orphans, or taken away from their parents on false pretexts to be handed over to adoptive parents for a hefty fee. Employees of top hotels say confrontations between new adoptive parents and birth parents in parking lots and lobbies are increasingly common.

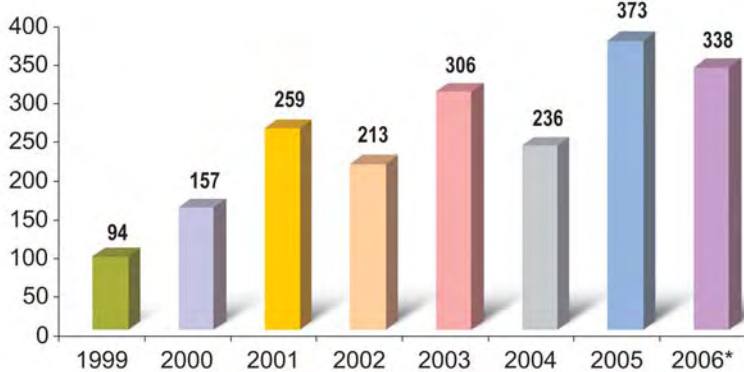
The price of children is increasing. Confidential emails between a US agent and a facilitator from September 2006 put the 'going rate' for a child at \$5,000. But adoptive parents, their interpreters, child rights, activists, and researchers say minimum 'donations' to orphanages put the average figure at up to \$10,000.

This is looking set to be the biggest year yet for adoption. In the first six months of the 2006-7 fiscal year 338 Nepali children had been given up for adoption abroad. The total number for the whole of last year was 373. Most Nepali children are adopted by families in Spain, Italy, the US, France, and Germany. There was a surge in inter-country adoption from Nepal after 1999/2000, when the process was standardised and brought under the Ministry for Women, Children, and Social Welfare.

An international researcher on adoption says that the adoption market is moving to Nepal from India, where a few scandals, tightening of legislation and enforcement in recent years have made things "too hot" for many agents.

Senior government officials and at an international child

Adoption patterns by fiscal year since 1999



*For the first half, through January 2007

Baby bazaar

welfare organisation warn that this week's conference on inter-country adoption will push to make the process easier but it may end up being even less transparent.

"Some of the homes are run by our own board members," a government child welfare official told us, "there's a problem of political pressure. If we publish their names in the newspaper, maybe we can't stay here."

The meet, organised by the Child NGO Federation, the Ministry for Women, Children and the Central Child Welfare Board, aims to improve the process of adoption from Nepal and get feedback from adoptive families on "whether their desires and wishes ... have been well facilitated". On another website, the conference is described as designed to help eliminate "existing rumours and negative attitudes regarding adoption of children by foreigners" and its main focus will be appointing adopted Nepalis as "Goodwill Ambassadors to the respective countries to where their new parents belong to, and will be assigned the duty of playing key roles in establishing a strong bond between the two countries." There is no mention of the best interests of the children, or how to make a notoriously murky process more transparent.

Vinod Adhikary, joint secretary at the ministry and coordinator of the Adoption Recommendation Committee composed of government and NGO representatives emphatically denied there could not be even one in 10,000 cases of dubious adoptions because "we are very strict about it." He also denied that adoptions were being pushed through faster ahead of the conference.

However, in a telephone conversation he had in our presence, he referred to the "international market" and later suggested to us that perhaps competitors such as Vietnam were trying to take advantage by starting rumours about financial misdealing in Nepali adoptions.

Prospective adoptive parents in Kathmandu are often desperate for a child, in culture shock, and unable to speak English. They are being extorted and lied to. First, many pay an agency back home as much as •5,000 since many countries do not allow direct adoptions. When they come here they are hit by demands for more money every step of the way: for child support for the duration of the process, a donation to the orphanage (one parent said she paid •9,000). The demands for bribe money continue up to the last stages of the paperwork. Those who pay can get a child in up to two months. The few who don't, wait for a year or longer with members of the extended family forced to take turns to camp out in Kathmandu when visas expire.

Some new parents have realised soon after their return home that their child is twice as old as they were told. When

birth mothers find out that their child is being taken away for good, not just to be educated as promised by brokers, ugly scenes ensue.

Since February France and Germany have banned all new adoptions from Nepal because of lack of transparency, a spike in applications and serious uncertainty about whether the children were meant to be adopted in the first place. Spain and France are sending missions to investigate the conditions of adoption here.

On n-child, a popular internet discussion forum for parents looking to adopt from Nepal, a recent poster wrote: "As we lived in KTM for our adoption process we got to know people who had been around and watched adoption over the years in Nepal. It was their feeling that ... Nepal would become the next Guatemala or Cambodia, which are now closed to Canadians wishing to adopt there. Too many irregularities and too much money moving in inordinate directions." ●

"Completely rotten"

Parents and child welfare workers speak of paying out bribes totalling as much as •6,000. *Nepali Times* has seen breakdowns of figures reported by adoptive parents, ranging from •250-2,500 paid out to the ministry, 'file fees' from •500-4,500, grants to orphanages from •2,000-4,500, and child support from a •1,500 lump sum to •80 a month for an unknown duration. But, as an official involved in the process explained, parents are extremely reluctant to provide figures and usually under-report how much they really paid. There are no receipts, so there is no evidence of what was paid to whom.

"The system is completely rotten," says an outraged child welfare official, "and it goes all the way to the top." The bribery starts from small local police stations and district administration offices, which are encouraged to certify children as orphans or produce perfectly legal, and perfectly false, documents claiming parents' consent to giving up their child for adoption.

The Adoption Recommendation Committee, composed of government and NGO representatives, makes the final decision on files, which are then formally approved by the Secretary of the Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Welfare.

Adopting parents are charged \$300 each by Nepal Children's Organisation, Bal Mandir, for 'monitoring', usually visits by board members to countries where Nepali children are adopted. "These are perks, foreign trips," a government child welfare official told us. There are numerous reports of parents being asked to foot the bill for sightseeing visits, expensive hotels, meals, and souvenirs. A poster on n-child says: "It is not easy to understand why should we pay such journeys... But we love Nepal and, of course, Nepali children ... so everytime we have paid, everytime we have gone to meet them personally." ●

Lack of laws

The fees charged by brokers and facilitators, and 'donations' solicited by orphanages are in a grey area: nothing in Nepali adoption law specifically prohibits financial transactions. Lawyers and child rights activists say the laws are little more than a detailing of procedure and do not protect children from being exploited. According to the Hague Convention on adoption—to which Nepal is not a signatory—and the Child Rights Convention which Nepal has signed and is therefore bound by, adoption should be the last resort for a child.

Experts on adoption law, such as Rup Narayan Shrestha of the Forum for Women Law, and Development, says transactions of the kind that are taking place in Nepal all the time violate article 21 of the Child Rights Convention, which says that that states must "take all appropriate

measures to ensure that, in inter country adoptions, the placement does not result in improper financial gain for those involved in it." But he and other child rights experts we spoke with stopped short of suggesting that this could be grounds for prosecution.

David Smolin, a law professor at Samford University in the United States and author of three papers in 2004/05 on inter-country adoption, writes that while the adoption business might technically be seen to fall short of actually being "trafficking", because there is usually no "further exploitation" involved, "the inter-country adoption system legitimises and incentivises the practices of buying, trafficking, kidnapping, and stealing children."

A child rights activist from an international organisation that we spoke to expressed fears that there could be a "ring" operating from the villages to Kathmandu and beyond, and that more than just adoption, it might involve the flesh trade, organ trade, or paedophilia. ●

A man with dark hair and a mustache, wearing a white baseball cap, a white button-down shirt, and a red jacket, stands outdoors. He is holding a small, printed photograph of a group of people in his hands. The background is a brick wall and some greenery.

Setting up shop

The hardest part of the business to unravel is the role of agents and facilitators. While most adopting countries have a central adoption authority, parents usually go through approved agencies. In countries like Nepal facilitators work as middlemen between the agencies and the orphanages or birth parents. The email on the right outlines a standard procedure for going into the adoption business and fairly standard fees. Some facilitators are themselves adoptive parents; their early expertise in adopting a Nepali child is an asset in the business.

Facilitators and agencies can both be problematic. Agencies can and do lose their licenses for unfair practices. One, Focus on Children, which also had photolistings of Nepali children until the site was recently disabled, was busted last week by the US State Department for tricking parents in Samoa into giving up their children for adoption. But already back in 2005, after the death of a child in its care, and evidence of gross negligence in an FOC home, the Samoan government tightened legislation. Other agencies, such as one in Spain we were told about, started after connections had been made in Kathmandu to set up an orphanage to supply children.

The connections between established orphanages, Kathmandu- and Delhi-based facilitators, and international agencies in Nepal, extended families own multiple orphanages and children's homes. If an orphanage falls out of favour with agencies, relatives open up another one. Adoptive parents referring orphanages and agencies to friends may thus not know that one they had a bad experience with has simply resumed under a new name.

Meanwhile, there are connections between some Nepali orphanages and facilitators with at least one orphanage in India. One well-known Indian facilitator who acts for agencies in the US, Austria, and for a German agency which lost its license last summer, is also increasingly active in Kathmandu. He is said to charge \$6,500 for an Indian adoption; officially, adopting parents in India cannot pay more than \$3,500. ●

Date: Tue, 12 Sep 2006 13:51:55 +0545
 From: [Kathmandu-based American Facilitator]
 To: US Agent
 Subject: some info

I wanted to work with a Canadian agency because I'm sick and tired of the way the American Consulate treats me. Other American Agent's facilitator has put some rupees in the pockets of a couple of the orphanage's board members so the director has to contend with this. He absolutely wants to work with me.

<snip>

I have to be very careful because I don't want anyone to accuse me of anything, so can't give them much money.

<snip>

Currently, the "going rate" in US dollars is a \$5,000 donation. This can be reduced to \$4 or even \$3 if you can make a monthly donation to be used for initial capital expenditures and operating expenses until they're stable. I imagine this could be done by you by keeping the donation at the same rate from families to you and managing Nepali Orphanage's cash flow for them.

<snip>

Let me lay out the financial details for you:
 Money going to Nepali Orphanage: in total either \$5,000, \$4,000 or \$3,000 depending on the monthly donation arrangement.

- Application fee: \$300
- Processing fee, due at the time family applies to adopt child or on acceptance by US agency of referral: either \$1,000 or \$1,200.
- Donation to orphanage, due on finalization of adoption: Total donation amount less Application Fee and Processing Fee.

Other costs in Nepali system:

<snip>

Costs for US visa:

<snip>

Money going to me [Kathmandu-based American facilitator]:

- Facilitation Fee: \$4,000, half paid when family applies to adopt, half paid on finalization of adoption
- Foster Care: only for babies in my care. \$450 per month, back dated to the date on which the baby arrived in our care. I've got some video I took yesterday for the parents of our current babies. I can give this to you to show families the quality of care. The foster care fee covers care giver salaries, all food, housing, and related expenses.
- Medical Care: for babies in my foster care this usually amounts to about \$500.

[Kathmandu-based American Facilitator]

The Delegation of the European Commission to Nepal on the occasion of the International Women's Day 2007 announces

A Drawing Competition on GENDER EQUALITY for children

- This competition is open to all Nepalese children of 8-10 years
- The participants are invited to create a drawing, with a caption, expressing their vision of equality between women and men
- Caption should be in English and not exceed 5 lines
- The drawing should be on a sheet of maximum A4 size, and only on one face
- Deadline for receipt of the drawing is May 1, 2007

A jury composed of representatives of 4 participating continents/regions (ACP States, Asia, Latin America and Mediterranean) will select a winner per continent-region at the European Commission headquarters in Brussels, Belgium.

The prize will be € 1000.00 for each winner.

The drawing of the 4 winners and 6 runner-ups will be included in a drawing/postcard book that will be distributed in schools of participating countries

Note: The European Commission will retain the copyright of drawings submitted, and participants will not have right of return. No appeals on the method of organising or on results of the competition will be accepted.

For more information please consult:
<http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/projects/gender/index.en.htm>

Send your works to:
 Mr. Ferenc Weigl
 Delegation of the European Commission to Nepal
 P.O. Box 6754, Uttar Dhoka Sadak, Lainchaur, Kathmandu
 Tel: (977-1) 4429445/ 4429446, Fax: (977-1) 4423541
www.delnpl.ec.europa.eu

ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Photo Circle III** an exhibition of photographs at the Sundhara Bakery Café, 9.45-12 noon on 10 March.
- ❖ **Ek Raat** an exhibition of paintings based on BP Koirala's short story, at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, until 11 March, 11AM-6PM. 4218048

EVENTS

- ❖ **Civic Concerns** an effort to assess youth concerns and share views and ideas, 10 March, 10.30 AM-5.30 PM at PIC, Heritage Plaza, Rs 100 for registration. 4107599
- ❖ **Water** a film by Deepa Mehta presented by the Kathmandu Film Society at the Nepal Tourism Board, Bhrikutimandap on 11 March at 5.30 PM.
- ❖ **ASMAN** annual mela with food, fun, and music at St. Xavier's School, Jawalakhel on 17 March from 10AM-6PM. 9851094461
- ❖ **Toastmasters** communication and leadership program, every Wednesday 6PM at the Institute of Environmental Management, Tripureswor.



MUSIC

- ❖ **Inner Groove** live at Moksh on 9 March, from 8.30 PM. 5526212
- ❖ **Yala Maya Classic** classical music series at Yala Maya Kendra, Patan Dhoka, 5PM onwards on the second of every Nepali month, Rs 100 entrance. 5553767
- ❖ **Live Music** by Ciney Gurung every Wednesday and Rashmi Gurung every Friday, 7PM onwards at the Absolute Bar, Hotel Narayani Complex. 5521408
- ❖ **Fusion and classical Nepali music** by Rudra live at the Courtyard, Le Meridien, Gokarna every Friday, 7PM onwards, Rs 800. 4451212
- ❖ **Gaine (Gandarbhas)** perform at every lunch and dinner, Club Himalaya Nagarkot. 6680080

DINING

- ❖ **French Brunch** at the Alliance Française, 11 March from 11AM at AF's Bistro and Garden. 4241163
- ❖ **Walk and lunch** every Saturday until 31 March at the Shivapuri Heights Cottage. 9841371927
- ❖ **Trendy martinis** and appetizers at the Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **North Indian** kebabs, curries, rotis and biryani at The Dhaba, Thapathali. 9840290619
- ❖ **Delightful weekend special** with sekuwa, bara, and barbeque, every Friday at Ambassador Garden House, Lazimpat, 5.30 PM onwards. 4411706
- ❖ **Light nouvelle snacks** and elaborate cordon bleu meals at La'Soon, Pulchok, behind the Egyptian embassy. 5537166
- ❖ **Continental cuisine** and wine by the fire place at Kilroy's, Thamel. 4250440.
- ❖ **Shop Talk** Drink and dine at the Olive Bar and Bistro, Radisson Hotel.
- ❖ **Café Bahal** at Kathmandu Guest House. 4700632.
- ❖ **Smorgasbord** lunch at Park Village Resort, every Saturday. 4375280
- ❖ **Gyakok** lunch and dinner at the Shambala Garden Café, Hotel Shangri-La, minimum of four guests at Rs 450 per person, two hours order in advance.
- ❖ **Retro brunch barbecue** with the Crossfire Band at The Poolside, Le Meridien, Gokarna from 12-4PM, Rs 1,000 inclusive of swimming and complimentary drink. 4451212
- ❖ **International Brunch** weekends 11AM-3PM for Rs 499 per person (Rs 299 for children) at Hotel Himalaya. 5523900
- ❖ **Te** Tibetan delicacies at Nepal's first noodle bar, Bluebird Mall Food Court.
- ❖ **Japanese Food** at the Coffee Shop at Hotel Shangri-la, 12-3PM, Rs 499 per person. 4412999
- ❖ **Pizza** from the woodfired oven at Java, Thamel. 4422519
- ❖ **Some Like It Hot** live music from Side B every Friday at Fusion—the bar at Dwarika's. Rs 799 includes BBQ dinner and a beer. 4479488
- ❖ **Senoritas & Margaritas** Inner Groove live at Fusion—the bar at Dwarika's, Rs 599 includes a Mezza platter and a Margarita pitcher. 4479488
- ❖ **Woodfired Pizzas** at Roadhouse Cafe, Thamel, 4262768, Bhatbhateni 4426587 and Pulchok. 5521755
- ❖ **AKA Pizza** at Moksh, delivery available. 5526212
- ❖ **Cocktails and Mocktails** Daily happy hour, 4-7PM at Kathmandu Revolving Restaurant, Ratna Plaza, New Road

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Weekend package** at Le Meridien Kathmandu Gokarna Forest Golf Resort and Spa, two nights three days at Rs 8,888 and one night two days at Rs 4,444. 4451212
- ❖ **Sun and Fun** Three days and two nights package at Shangri-La Village Resort, Pokhara, Rs 7,499. 4412999

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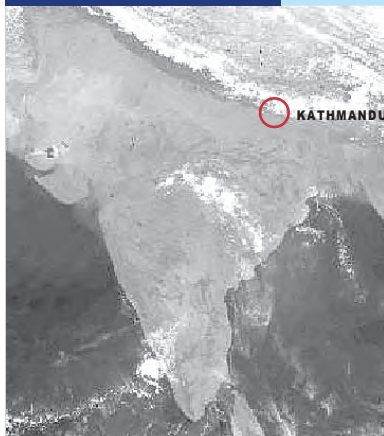
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NEPALI WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL



The steady rise of the mercury since the start of the month is a sign of things to come: winter, having deposited historic snowfall on the Valley this year, is beating a retreat, and spring is in the air, with balmy breezes and brilliant cherry blossoms. The days will be warm, evenings perfect for sitting out, and the mornings just fresh rather than chilly. Thursday morning's satellite picture shows clear skies over Nepal and Indo-Gangetic plain. If the low-pressure trough over central Tibet grows stronger next week while gathering clouds, fragmented layers of it could spill over into Nepal. But that, if it happens, will be early next week, so the weekend looks great.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

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24-8	25-7	25-7	24-8	23-9

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KIRAN PANDAY

WAVING THE FLAG: Norwegian Minister for International Development Erik Solheim, with Ambassador Tore Toreng, on his way to meet Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala at his residence on Wednesday. Norway granted \$2 million for Nepal's peace process and promised more for development.



KIRAN PANDAY

EVERY VOTE COUNTS: Rauni Haapamaki, Counsellor (Development) at the embassy of Finland voting by absentee ballot on Wednesday for Finland's upcoming parliamentary election to be held on 18 March.

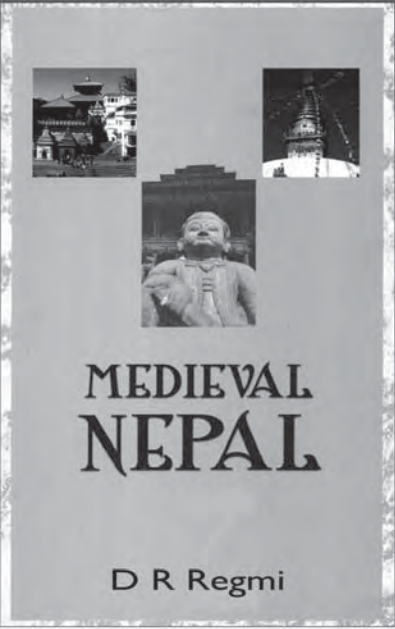


MIN BAJRACHARYA

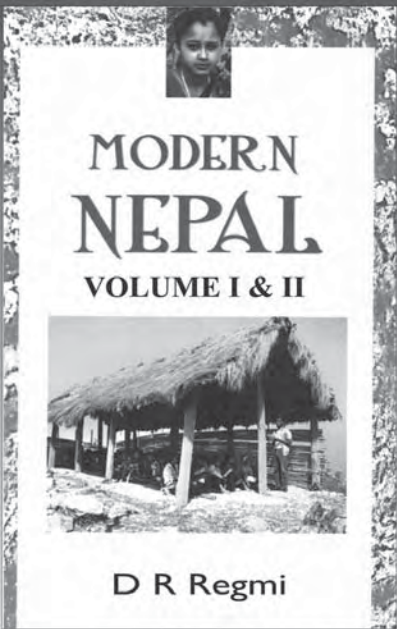
REWRITING HISTORY: Women cadre of the political parties march through the streets of Kathmandu on the occasion of International Women's Day on 8 March, with a diverse set of demands.

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What's the plan, Gyan?

Can't envy Sitaula having to sit through a two-and-half-hour grilling at the kangresi central committee meeting last week. The home minister had to listen to blistering personal attacks during which he was called a spokesperson for the Maoists. But Sitaula showed real thick skin because he kept mum and had the trademark grin on his face throughout the proceedings. He had earlier held a meeting with comrades-in-arms Prachanda and Lal Dhoj at the Himalaya Hotel to forge a broad agreement on the composition and timetable for an interim government.

The Ass thinks the kangresi ministers doth complain too much. After all, if it hadn't been for the home minister's family links to Prachandaji the peace process probably would have been a lot bumpier. Krishna Prasad's amiable personality and easy-going outlook helped him keep things on track despite allegations that he gave away too much to the Maoists. **Slurp.**

He had Girijababu's full blessings to do so, but with the American lobby in the cabinet and the First Daughter Girijaputri baying for his blood the frail prime minister is now under immense pressure to let Sitaula go. Not surprisingly, it is the Maobuddies and Lainchour that have saved Sitaula from the sack. The home minister's game plan is to hang in there until the new government is formed in the next week or so. That way he doesn't have to resign at all, and may even be re-inducted in the cabinet.



Speaking of which, the Maoists have now reconciled themselves to not getting the deputy prime ministership and none of the top jobs: finance, home and defence. They want the Ministry of Forests. From the way they have been chopping down **hardwood** forests at Kumrose in Chitwan to sell off the timber, it looks like they are already rehearsing for the job. Did I hear someone say "campaign finance reform"?



Either the stress is taking its toll on Sri Teen Girija or he has made a full recovery from his hepatitis attack. Why else would the prime minister roar like a lion during his twice-postponed meeting with Prachandababu (and the ever-present Baburam by his coat-tails) on Sunday? The PM lost his temper when El Supremo tried to make excuses about his cadre flaunting weapons, roughing up madhesis and other bad behaviour. "If you keep being a smart alec we'll send you back by helicopter to where we picked you up from," is what the PM is supposed to have told the startled comrades. Now where did Girijababu get the **oomph** to say that? Meeting three ambassadors the previous day?



Badly bruised by their mishandling of the tarai, the Maoists are trying to divert public attention back to 'Gyane Shahi'. The madhes unrest has given the king a sort of reprieve, and he is reportedly trying to muster support from an entire pantheon of Hindu godmen from Down South. The latest was the Art of Living tele-evangelist Ravi Shanker who flew into Kathmandu in his Learjet last week on a mission to save our one and only Hindu monarchy. The twin comrades Prachanda and Baburam were summoned to the Y&Y where the **tv-baba** gave them a proper dressing down.



The Ass is not one to toot his own trumpet, but he must share the good news that he has been voted one of the 2,000 outstanding intellectuals of the 21st century by International Biographical Centre of Cambridge, England. I know that a lot of you had hoped you'd be conferred this prestigious award, but all I can say to you losers is: "Better luck next time." I've already sent the organisers \$295 for a silver-finished Outstanding Intellectual Medal with my name engraved on it. All ass-licking and floral tributes to this email address:


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