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Truly new

A paradigm shift in Nepali self-perception

Nepal is not safely en route to a peaceful resolution to most of its outstanding problems, despite settled public belief to that effect. So far the tarai movement representing madhesi aspirations has claimed the lives of 38 people and more lives seem to be at stake.



GUEST COLUMN
Shrishti RL Rana

The tarai issue can make or break the country not only because the region is home to more than half the population and resources of Nepal, but because this is an uprising of people who have shared a common history with other Nepalis without ever being truly an integral part of the nation. The movement therefore reflects a changing perspective in the political discourse of Nepal, destroying old perceptions and creating new ones.

First, the movement marks the start of a seemingly irreversible shift in the Nepali ethos, which was predominantly

characterised by the people of the hills. The national consciousness is thus slowly accepting the pluralistic aspect of the state and its populace. Despite viewing madhesi with suspicion and prejudice due to their geographical and cultural proximity to India, political leaders and the people at large have now acknowledged that these grievances are genuine.

The solidarity expressed by various ethnic outfits and the student organisations of the major parties is proof of this growing consciousness of and sensitivity to madhesi demands. This tiny nation could become an exemplar of multi-ethnicity and multi-culturalism if such issues are addressed seriously. Xenophobia has less of a chance with such a broad social perspective.

Second, the tarai movement has given a new direction to the state building process in Nepal. The upsurge suggests that the April Movement, more than merely restoring democracy, is a continuing political feature of present-day politics in Nepal and the beginning of state-building. Debates such as this one were untouchable for fears

they would disrupt 'national integrity'.

But, as we are seeing, if such situations are handled deftly, the protesting groups, such as the madhesi, are far more likely to remain loyal Nepalis. The process of state-building in any part of the world is more often than not long and violent. There are likely to be a series of such stirs, expressing the concerns of various interest groups. It will take years of patience and sacrifice before Nepalis have peace in the true sense of the term.

Finally, the tarai movement has struck a strong blow to the Maoists, the self-proclaimed saviours of the Nepali people. Insinuations about reactionary forces or a foreign hand being behind the tarai backlash do not hold water. The movement was almost wholly spontaneous. The recent shifts in the Maoists' policy statements (aggressive demands, such as that for a republic) and tactics (the use of violence to reinforce their edicts) appear to be a consequence of their loss of control over the tarai and perhaps even the Nepali electorate at large. Clearly, if the Maoists have so much public appeal, a significant chunk of the population residing in the tarai would not have revolted against the interim constitution, a statute wholeheartedly endorsed by the Maoists.

In the tarai movement we can see the emergence of a new identity for Nepal and its institutions, its people, their ethos, and even the very individual. ●



KIRAN PANDAY

When words are weapons

Girija Koirala is playing a clever game

Koirala's recent pronouncements suggest he isn't yet done with what he sees as the twin dangers to his mission of establishing enduring democracy in Nepal: the monarchy and the Maoists.

He's been reviled by republicans, despised by democrats and censured by socialists for his controversial stand over ceremonial monarchy. At considerable risk to his party's poll prospects, Koirala tried to save some space for the king in the emergent political order.



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

But palace strategists weren't happy with the constitutional concessions he offered, and after the promulgation of the interim constitution, intensified their campaigns to weaken the position of the prime minister. Through wilful distortion or outright disdain of government directives, diehard monarchists in the bureaucracy and the defence forces did their best to defame and weaken the interim government. Now, predictably, King Gyanendra is the prime target of Koirala's ire.

The communal bias of the establishment was the major reason for so many casualties during the madhes uprising. Allegations of infiltration during peaceful protests can't be dismissed out of hand either. Similarly, it's likely that the administration in Nepalganj used inflammatory language and repression in order to incite violence to undermine the legitimacy of the interim government.

Koirala disregarded all such mischief-makers hoping they'd die out once the political juggernaut of constituent assembly elections gained momentum. But he was forced to speak when his own nominees in the Nepali Congress central committee started to question the judgement of their party president.

The Congress has been the biggest loser in the game of caste politics and electoral arithmetic in recent days. True, the Maoists have lost face due to carelessness and overconfidence of their tarai cadres, but Matrika Prasad Yadav's core support base remains intact. The Maoists have given identity and dignity to Chamars, Doms, Dusadhs, and Musahars—castes that were always prevented from voting. Come elections,

they are sure to exert their presence in favour of their saviour.

The UML, ironically enough, depends on the petty bourgeoisie for its existence. Its main constituency in the tarai consists of newly-settled pahadi farmers and itinerant madhesi shopkeepers. If anything, Upendra Yadav has helped Madhab Nepal consolidate his traditional support base.

The Congress has been comfortably dominating every election in the madhes since the 1950s for three reasons: compared to almost all other national leaders, the Koiralas are seen as the most madhesi-friendly, it has traditionally been a party beyond caste politics past, attracting leaders with secular credentials and national stature, and it was known for nurturing and promoting promising leaders from all communities. Bijay Gachhedar, Ram Baran Yadav, and Surendra Chaudhary broke through the communal glass ceiling in the party mainly due to Koirala's patronage early in their political careers.

The Madhesi Janadhikar Forum has demolished all this with a single blow. In the wake of the tarai unrest, Koirala's

cronyism and nepotism have been blown out of all proportion. The caste coalition that has evolved around Mahantha Thakur has been exposed for what it is: top-heavy and wobbly. These days Congress madhesi leaders have more sycophants than supporters. Maoist and MJF motivators have shown that they offer the best chance for young people with dreams of a bright political future.

The immediate fall-out of Koirala's short but well thought-out statement has been an embarrassment for the Maoists, who've had the wind taken out of their republican sails. Even the UML's principal political plank, their pseudo-republicanism, will have no buyers. The MJF has been forced to rethink its strategy, and monarchists now know the risks of playing foul. But the biggest repercussions of Koirala's anti-monarchy observations are inside his own party. Fence-sitters waiting for a nod from the palace to sabotage the seven party-Maoist alliance have given a strong warning.

Now there should be less dilly-dallying in the formation of an interim government and announcement of dates for constituent assembly polls. ●

LETTERS

BABY BAJAR

I applaud any attempts to expose trafficking and/or profiting off of those less fortunate. Thank you for doing so ('On sale', #339) and I understand that full attention needed to be paid to this activity for the subject to remain in discussion and not disappear after a week. However, adoption is a complicated subject and the piece was not balanced.

In Nepal, women do not have the right to legally relinquish children to welfare agencies for the purpose of adoption. Even an unnamed father has over a decade to claim his progeny, leaving the child to be institutionalised. I opened the paper earlier this week to read that Nepali women are gaining many rights. This right, to make provisions for a child for whom care cannot be given, must also be granted. Until such time, welfare agencies will use other 'systems,' such as fictional police documents, to enable such children to be placed for adoption. Though in these circumstances fictional documents are prepared in the child's best interests, the 'system' throws down the welcome mat for abuse. It also robs children of their pasts, the only thing they have as they move on to new lives with adoptive parents. Give women the right to provide for their children as they see fit, and the 'legitimate' need for fictional documents is eliminated, and adopted children are given a great gift.

A decade ago most adoptees were either unwanted babies or the children of widows and widowers who needed to give them up in order to make a new life. They were given up as much for cultural reasons as for poverty. However, many children who needed a new family did not find their way into this system and grew up unwanted and with minimal care.

In recent years western agencies have descended on Nepal in search of adoptable children. They have created demand and, without asking questions, the supply is being 'found.' Lessen the demand by enforcing accountability. Insist that foreign agencies operating in Nepal perform rigorous oversight of the money they send here for adoptions instead of being in 'don't ask, don't know' mode. Without a state-funded orphanage and adoption system, even with all its inherent flaws, people who work in adoption need to support themselves. This is true for agencies in wealthier adopting countries and social welfare organisations in the countries from which children are adopted. By what standards they pay themselves is the issue and where the remainder of the money goes is the root of the problem.

There are two kinds of unconscionable activities going on in Nepali adoption. One, children who are not truly in need of new families are being trafficked. This is not unique to adoption and must be addressed on many levels. The second is that inordinate sums of money are being pocketed in adoptions, regardless of the child's true need. Social workers deserve to be paid and ethical child welfare organisations deserve donations that enable them to expand their work and support the children left behind. I hope the proverbial baby is not thrown out with the bath water.

Ellie Skeele, Patan

- Children are being kept like gold mines— orphanages make money from sponsors and from adoptions. But I was surprised that the most notorious orphanage was not mentioned at all: Nepal Children's Organisation, Bal Mandir. I have heard horror stories: undisclosed rape cases, the bosses getting very rich, children living in bad care. Some are there for life, because it is lucrative to keep the whole place running by getting foreigners to sponsor children. Go there yourself, it feels like a medieval place where children are held hostage. Isn't the job of every child welfare organisation to either repatriate children to their own village or nearest of kin, or find loving parents for them if they really are abandoned? Certainly not to hoard children and keep the programs running in hope of funds. Was it because too many 'big people' are involved that Bal Mandir was not even mentioned?

†Name withheld, email



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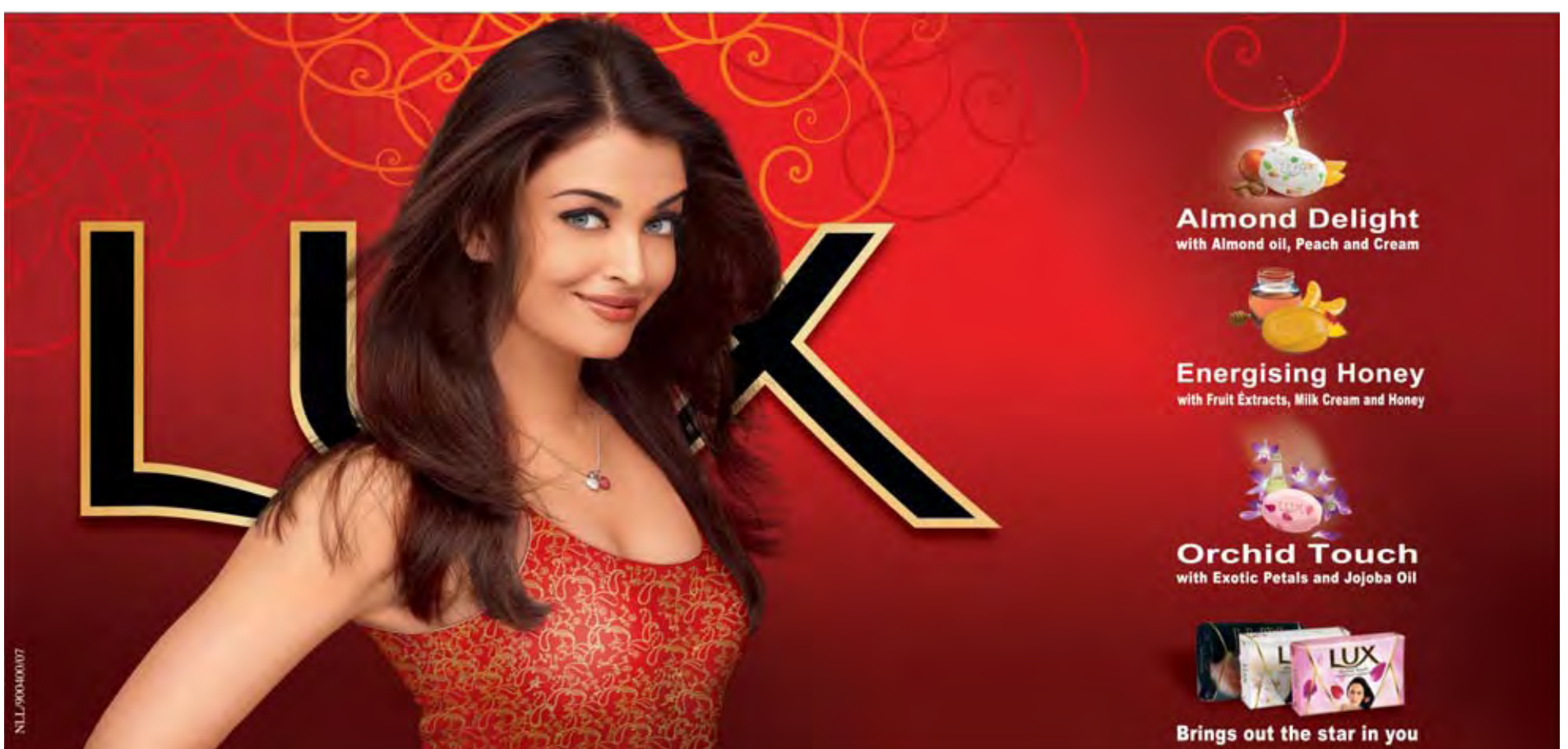
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Not by promises alone

Nationalising education could be the worst thing for an already-fragile system



NARESH NEWAR

MALLIKA ARYAL

Over 400,000 Nepali children are not in school, the majority of them girls. Among those who do attend, there is a 15 percent middle-of-the-school-term dropout rate. Government scholarships don't reach students who depend upon them in time, textbooks are scarce, as are teachers, and infrastructure is poor to nonexistent in some places.

But you wouldn't know any of this looking at the grandiose plans periodically announced by the Ministry of Education, and now by the Maoists, whose Hisila Yami is tipped to be the next

Minister for Education.

At last year's budget announcement, the ministry strongly suggested a move to expanding 'primary' education to include lower secondary grades as well. By law, primary education in Nepal is free. The Maoists, says Yami, want near-free, nationalised, revolutionary education at all levels (*see interview*), and other student unions have also been making noises about taking the private sector out of education.

There is no discussion about who will pay for all this and how. Extending primary education to grade eight will cost an additional Rs 3.8 billion for teachers' salaries, funds for infrastructure, textbooks,

and scholarships, calculates Shailendra Sigdel of DANIDA's Technical Review of School Education (TRSE). That's over four percent of the country's total internal revenue.

Another study by the National Planning Commission and UNDP on Millennium Development Goals shows a deficit of more than Rs 2.5 billion in the basic primary education budget. The gap is expected to widen in the coming years because of low GDP growth. Even with a modest GDP growth rate and continued foreign assistance, there will be a huge funding gap.

Officials at the Ministry of Education,

faced with uncertainty over which party will run their office in the interim government, are now backtracking and saying that the proposal is still in the planning stages and will not come into force until 2009.

The real problem—nationalising education—is far more pressing and serious. Lekhnath Neupane, president of All Nepal National Free Students Union (ANNFSU-Revolutionary), argues that if education is a fundamental right, as declared by Nepal's new democratic government back in 1990, then providing it is the responsibility of the government alone. The Maoists maintain that school education should be nationalised to make education accessible to all Nepalis.

Other political parties and unions affiliated with them are pushing a similar, if slightly softer, line. "The contribution of private schools cannot be ignored, but their existence is also the reason for disparity," says Pradeep Poudel of the Nepali Congress-affiliated Nepal Student Union. Unlike Neupane, Poudel has some solutions. "Take money away from defence, cut the army down, and invest that money in education, charge minimum tax on products made in Nepal and put the revenue away for education," he says.

Education sector experts and economists warn that hastily nationalising education up to any level will do far more harm than good. "The quality will deteriorate, and the donors will not support it. It's also tricky because the government simply can't pay private schools any compensation," says economist Shankar Sharma. Sigdel cautions that "the government does not have a good history of implementing policy," and asks "Why is it making new commitments when it hasn't even delivered what it promised earlier?"

Sharma recommends strengthening government schools instead, as creating conditions for more poor people to receive higher education through scholarships, and start vocational training and skills-oriented programs. ●

"We will link education with labour"

Interview with Hisila Yami, MP and politburo member, CPN-M

Nepali Times: What went wrong with Nepal's education system?

Hisila Yami: Fundamentally what went wrong is that we started thinking about education as an industry. People started investing in education—they would sell off their land and homes, so their kids could go to private schools. So much money was invested, but in the end young people just left the country seeking a better life abroad.

What should the new education policy look like?

First the state should regard education as fundamental right. During the 'People's War' our efforts in education were appreciated because our emphasis was on monitoring. Government schools need to be consolidated, facilities provided, and the performance of teachers monitored. Our education policy will be inclusive and will merge the natural and social sciences. The emphasis will be more on polytechnic education because people who get such training can be employed quickly. Kathmandu-centric education may not work for the rest of Nepal. Similarly we will link

education with labour, because it is our biggest asset. The future generation will understand Nepali culture not as a feudal Hindu dominated Bahun-Chhetri culture, but as inclusive of all ethnicities, castes, and languages.

What is your stand on nationalising private schools?

When our war was on, we did not let private schools operate in our areas. Our emphasis was on improving government schools, but we also invested and made model schools. We had our own syllabus, we intervened in some private schools, and monitored to see if there was mismanagement. Our stance is, if we provide enough facilities and qualified people, there will eventually be a move away from private schools. There are ways to nationalise private schools without using coercion—by taxing them etc. I do not look after education, but I think universities may be the first target to be nationalised. In areas the government has not been able to reach, private schools will be allowed to operate.

What is your 'revolutionary education' (janabadi sikhhyia) all about?

Janabadi sikhhyia is a type of education answerable to the people. More than 80 percent of our country's population is in the villages, which

means this type of education has to be rural-oriented. Our economy is dependent on agriculture, therefore there must be a strong focus on agricultural economy. The emphasis will be on creating manpower that is productive and science-based, and it will define nationality in a new way. We can't change the structure right away, we will change the base first and eventually revamp the entire system.



KIRAN PANDAY

Nepal's first ABBY

Prisma Advertising won Nepal's first ABBY at the 40th annual ceremony of the prestigious awards in Mumbai on 3 March. Prisma won the Merit Prize for their public service campaign "What do you want?" run in association with Himalmedia. The ad encourages people to see education as essential for children, even if they must also work. Prisma has previously won an International Bell Ringer award from J and J School of Advertising in the USA, two Crite Agency of the Year awards, and a *The Himalayan Times* Pegasus Critics award.



Better banking

Ace Finance says it has Rs 320 million in paid-up capital, the highest of all non-banking financial institutions in the country. The company has now applied to Nepal Rastra Bank for an upgrade to development bank status. If it is granted the license, Ace Finance will be the first national level finance company to make the step up. The license is issued based on criteria set out in the requirements on the BFI Act 2063.

Going Hollywood

Foto Hollywood, a digital photo studio, has opened in Kasthamandap Bazaar at Kamaladi. The studio, which uses the newest technology to develop digital prints, also offers other services such as modelling, family photos, and product photography. Foto Hollywood has the largest photo enlargement machine, able to develop prints of up to 100 inches.

Branching out

Everest Bank, which recently opened its 20th branch in Balaju, now has the largest banking network of private commercial banks in Nepal. Since it started in 1996 in association with Punjab National Bank, Everest Bank has won a number of awards including *The Banker's* Bank of the Year 2006, and the Excellence Award of the Nepal India Chamber of Commerce and Industry twice.



Fun run

Nepal Investment Bank is organising a Run for Fun on 17 March to raise funds for the Patan Darbar Heritage Conservation project. The marathon, which will award a total cash prize of Rs 500,000, has a number of categories—21km for professionals, amateurs, and foreigners, 10km for women, 5km for children, and 1km for the handicapped.

Bajaj at Everest

Financing options for Bajaj motorcycles are now available through Everest Bank's Teku branch. The scheme requires a down payment of 30 percent, and buyers can pay in up to three years at a nine percent interest rate.

NEW PRODUCTS

ICE: Sun Gold Brewery, the maker of Oranjeboom and Haywards 5000, has launched a new beer Nepal Ice. The company says that a unique combination of Nepali raw material and Australian malt gives the beer a Nepali feel with international standards. The 5.5 percent alcohol beer is available in all urban areas in 650ml bottles.



Mind your business

Manage yourself before you manage others

One stimulating by-product of writing a regular business column is that acquaintances often want book recommendations. What good books have you read lately, they ask. What do you suggest to read so we know how to handle employees and run our organisations well.



STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari



Most glossy management books, I tell them, are overpriced, over-hyped and terrible—no matter how high they climb on global bestseller lists. Yes, some become flavours of the month. But soon enough, they sink into oblivion, and are not of lasting help to most managers whose jobs call for managing resources and people.

In fact, it could be argued that Nepali managers can learn more about management by re-reading Shakespeare and Bal Krishna Sama than by understanding some clever marketing methods developed by Cisco or Apple in the United States. After all, to most people, what is management but a form of human drama that revolves around the lives of employees and one protagonist at the office, aka the boss?

Still, one management book I recommend again and again is Peter Drucker's classic *The Effective Executive*. Written in clear English, the 178-page book's thesis is beguilingly simple: executives can be knowledgeable, charismatic, or imaginative. But such traits mean nothing if those executives are not effective. If executives cannot manage themselves, they are unable to manage others, and so

are ineffective. In other words, good self-management comes before good management. Fortunately, Drucker assures us, with enough practice, the art of managing oneself can be learnt by just about anyone, regardless of temperament.

Re-reading the book the other day, I was struck once again by what Drucker says about three critical executive tasks: managing time, setting priorities, and making decisions.

Effective executives, Drucker says, do not start with tasks. They start with their time. An organisation with too many employees, where managers are always in meetings, and where much effort is spent on fighting yesterday's fires is a time-waster. Drucker's advice to executives in such organisations is that they watch how they spend their time, and consolidate

discretionary time to tackle routine activities, and set aside large chunks of uninterrupted time to do work that is likely to take their organisations forward.

Drucker is no fan of multi-tasking. Even a juggler, he says, can only keep the balls up in the air for about 10 minutes. Having

observed many executives in action, Drucker reports that the effective ones concentrate on completing one future-oriented activity at a time before moving on to finish other tasks. This way, at any given time, such executives are likely to have completed more tasks than have a perpetual display of many half-begun and unfinished activities.

In his discussion about the elements of decision-making, Drucker talks about the importance of converting decisions into actions lest they remained just intentions. Most decisions, he says, do not have an action element woven into them as someone's work assignment. This ensures that most decisions are never carried out. For the ones that are carried out, there is often no system to accept feedbacks, and that further ensures that little gets learnt about how the ultimate results compare against earlier expectations.

At its root, management means getting things done by using resources through people. To practice it well, there's no need to buy every business bestseller that appears in bookstores. One favour thinking managers can do for their own effectiveness is to apply the lessons of Drucker's book to how they manage. ●



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Supreme corruption

Shiva Gaunle in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 15-31 March

Himal has obtained a recorded phone conversation that proves how rife bribery is in Nepal's Supreme Court. And it goes right to the top: the tape implicates the Chief Justice himself in payoffs so that plaintiffs can get favourable decisions. The recorded conversations also show how blatant corruption is in the country's apex court.

The conversations are between a 'Baburam' who, until recently, was employed in the Supreme Court, while 'Rajesh' is a defendant who recently lost a property dispute in the Patan Appellate Court and took the case to the Supreme Court. The gist of the conversations implicate Chief Justice Dilip Kumar Poudyal in irregular appointment of judges to look at cases and not through a secret draw as is standard. Rajesh Shakya admits he bribed officials in the Supreme Court, but says he lost many cases despite this. He has hours of phone recordings with various members of the justice system, and says he was asked for bribes every step of the way, including a hefty Rs 300,000 demand at the Supreme Court itself. Shakya didn't have the money, his case was dismissed, and says: "I admit having paid bribes, and I regret it. I am willing to bear any punishment."

Excerpts from the tape:

Rajesh: Hello, sir.

Baburam: Hello, it's now fixed for the 17th, right? The old man has also agreed to fix it for the 17th...we'll do what we have to do on the 17th. Come

to me on the morning of the 17th. We'll do whatever we have to do there.

Rajesh: OK, sir.

Baburam: But in case your turn comes before that, and I have to arrange a few things in the first hour, how much shall I say?

Rajesh: I didn't quite get you, sir.

Baburam: You know, if your turn comes what do I do?

Rajesh: How much would you say, you tell me.

Baburam: This is about eight annas [of land] You must have a figure in mind...

Rajesh: How much, sir? Shall we put it at three?

Baburam: OK, that sounds about right. OK...who's your lawyer?

Rajesh: Basantaram Bhandari.

Baburam: Tell him to argue the case well. I'll lay everything out clearly, call me at 10.30.

Rajesh: OK, sir.

Rajesh: What shall I do, sir? Is this it?

Baburam: This is what we will do now, Rajeshji. I can't keep letting you down...in your next case we will first

decide whether it will go through or not...we will confirm it, then it will be easier to catch the judge by the neck if he doesn't deliver. Unless you pay them, put cash in their hands, they will try to wriggle out of it...they won't be serious.

Rajesh: Right, that way we have them in our hands.

Baburam: From now on, let's not talk on the phone. We have to meet at home, and whoever [judge] is trying the case we put some money there right away. That way he won't have any excuses if the judgement goes wrong.



Property rights

Editorial in *Abhiyan*, 12-18 March

अभियान

If the country is to move forward, the right of citizens to private property needs to be guaranteed. There can be no foreign investment without this. But the recent capture of private forests in Chitwan's Kumrose and Siraha prove that the Maoists have systematically and methodically been confiscating timber from private land and selling it off. This is a threat to the right to private property and, as in Chitwan, it is also a grave threat to the environment. Local communities had worked with Purnori Agro-forestry to plant and nurture the forest in order to prevent devastating floods that have caused havoc there in the past. There is outrage about these incidents, and maybe the Maoist leadership will say sorry. But that is not going to help local communities.

Such behaviour does not befit a party that is now represented in the interim parliament and will soon be joining the government. The least the Maoists should do is declare their policy on private property. Are private individuals allowed to own and grow forests? If not, they should first pass a law through parliament.

Instead, the Maoists continue down their well-trodden path of terrorising people and destroying property. The Maoists' behaviour is just proving the Americans



Maoist cut down trees

"Switching over from extortion to enterprise, are we?"

right, and the prime minister, who claims to have brought terrorists to the way of peace and democracy, wrong. They continue their culture of threats, intimidation, and violence and they haven't returned property confiscated during the conflict. The looting of private property and threatening industries with labour militancy may be less common now, but it hasn't stopped. We haven't yet seen a commitment to negotiation, compromise, and rule of law. Instead we see the Maoists taking the law into their own hands. The kind of scorched earth policy, if not controlled in time, will reduce the country to ashes.

The Americans haven't



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thumb ta thumb thumb !

Nepali Ringtones

Ringtone	Album	RT ID
Aaja Timi	Mad Zone	N1887
Aadha sapana	Aadha sapana	N1884
Maskimaski	The best of best	N1975
Mutu bhari	Ishan by Rajan Ishan	N2000
Mysterious girl	The best of Dhiraj Rai	N1980
Jaba tara ganera	Nirwan N' music link	N1910
Simsime Panima	Anil Singh	N2032
Badaliyau timi	Khubi by Denil Tuladhar	N2014
Pani Muni	Jigisa	N2027

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New Message
Select

RT **N1887**
Write Message

27221
Send

Go to New Message

Type RT **N1887**

Send to **27221***

Hindi Ringtones

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Mere Haton Me	Chandni	1080
Muqabla	Humse Hai Muqabla	1262
Jab Koi Baat	Jurm	1336
Jaati Hun Main	Karan Arjun	1373
Chod Aaye Hum	Maachis	1494
Dheere Dheere Pyar	Phool Aur Kaante	1639
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removed the Maoists from the terrorist list. They have said they won't do that until the Maoists formally renounce violence. Even countries that were soft on the Maoists are now fed up. If they enter government without a commitment to peaceful politics and an end to intimidation and violence, we will be inviting an even bigger catastrophe. If those who are plundering the people are let into government they will never have the public's confidence.

Gun addicts

Editorial in *Kantipur*, 13 March

The Maoists are desperate to be a part of the interim government soon to be set up, but they are losing credibility everyday. That is the message we get from the opinions Maoist Chairman Prachanda expressed in Baglung on Monday: he seems to be getting ready not to enter government but to go back to armed struggle. A party that should be assuring the public about its intention to be involved in mainstream peaceful politics is sending just the opposite signal.

By saying that "thousands" of weapons are not in containers and that fighters are not in cantonments Prachanda has cast doubt on the entire role of the UN in arms monitoring. The statements also confirm the doubts many have about whether the camp inmates really are guerrillas. The whole point about guns in containers and guerrillas in cantonments was to remove the fear of violence, but Prachanda's statement undermines this intention. Such statements are going to be major obstacles in assuring the public about the process of bringing the Maoists into the interim government.

Dilemma

Sanghu, 12 March

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has said time and again that the next prime minister will be selected impartially. But it is understood that, secretly, Koirala

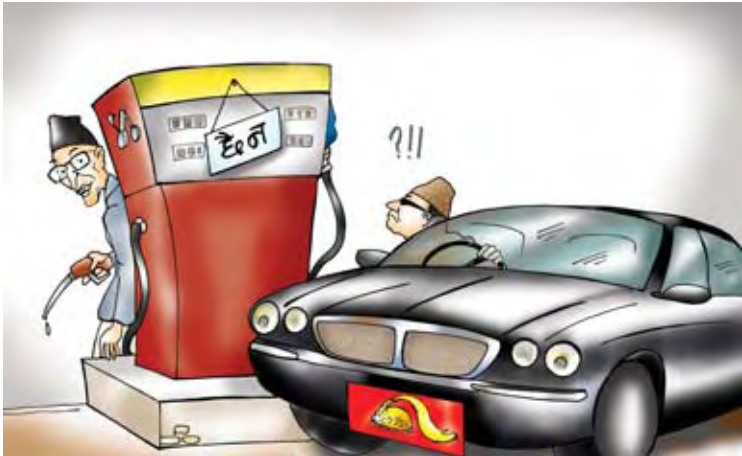
wants to see his daughter Sujata take on the responsibility. This is why senior Nepali Congress leaders are not seen in important party, administration, or government positions. But that isn't Koirala's biggest worry at present. He is more concerned about the fact that after all these years, Sujata is still not accepted in the party. Other parties don't trust her to be a responsible leader either. Koirala is said to be looking for a person who can take on the responsibility during the interim period and quietly let Sujata take over when the time is right.

Sujata is not the only person hoping to get a powerful position. NC vice chairman Sushil Koirala is also eyeing the post of deputy prime minister. The new constitution shifts the power to the deputy prime minister in case the prime minister dies suddenly. Similarly, NC chairman Ram Chandra Poudel is also eyeing the same position. However, it is not clear what Koirala, the UML, and the Maoists have agreed upon, in connection with the position of deputy prime minister.

When the Speaker of the House of Representatives was being selected, the Maoists said that the party from which Speaker comes is not eligible to make recommendations for the position of deputy prime minister.

If the post of Home Minister becomes vacant, Shekhar Koirala will have to be made the next minister, because it is important to have someone who the Maoists trust. But if Shekhar Koirala is made the next Home Minister, he automatically becomes Sujata's future competition. Shekhar Koirala is understood to be a very ambitious man, which is why the prime minister may recommend Chakra Prasad Bastola or Amod Prasad Upadhyaya's name instead.

Critics say Koirala is being selfish and that this confusion is delaying the unification of the NC and NC-D. Others say Koirala does not really want the two parties to unite, because he hopes to see the NC-D be part of the NC instead.



"No petrol."

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

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“The situation at present is abnormal, which means the Constituent Assembly elections will be abnormal, but they will happen in June.”

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala quoted in *Kantipur*, 15 March

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Spring climbing

Mass summits and treacherous solos this mountaineering season

BILLI BIERLING

Together with warm weather and spring, mountaineers from around the world will also descend on Kathmandu in the next few weeks. Most teams this spring will attempt Chomolungma, either from the south side here in Nepal or from the north across the border in Tibet.

Last year was tragic—11 people lost their lives on Chomolungma—but that isn’t deterring the regular stream of first-timers, mountaineering veterans, and individual climbers trying to put up new routes or aiming to do something special, like climbing half-blind, half-naked, or without arms or legs.

One of the major highlights for Nepal is the joint expedition of two heroic, record-breaking Sherpas. This year Apa Sherpa, who has stood on the top of the world 16 times, and Lhakpa Gelu, who holds the speed record of 10 hours, 56 minutes and 46 seconds from base camp to the top, want to draw more attention to the essential role of the Sherpas in the mountaineering world. The two Super Sherpas will climb via the South Col, on the route Tenzing Norgay and

Edmund Hillary took on their first ascent in 1953.

Meanwhile, 50 Chinese mountaineers want to take the Olympic torch to the top from the north side. The China Tibet Mountaineering Association says this is a trial run for the 2008 torch ceremony ahead of the Summer Olympics.

Another expedition will have fewer people but will lug almost 22 tonnes of equipment through the Khumbu region to base camp. A British research expedition, led by high altitude clinician Mike Grocott, hopes to learn lessons from the parallels between the human body pushed to its limits in extreme environments, and during critical illness. The tests include experiments with an exercise bike and the first arterial blood samples taken on the summit. This could pose a problem, given the harsh, freezing conditions on the mountain.

But if the doctors are having trouble pushing needles through their own down suits, they could look out for Dutchman Wim Hof, who plans to climb from the Tibetan side wearing just boots, shorts, gloves, and a cap.

The *Brisbane Times* quoted expedition leader Werner de Jong as saying that Hof would not be scantily clad all the time, but

that he was certainly out there to set a new record. The 47-year-old, also called the “Iceman,” holds nine endurance records and recently ran 21km barefoot above the Arctic Circle in Finland. Hof says he has special abilities to withstand freezing temperatures.

Norwegian climber Cato Pedersen, who lost all of his left and half his right arm when electrocuted in 1973, wants to be the first person to summit Everest without arms. Pedersen, who calls his expeditions “Unarmed”, has summited two mountains so far, the last being Cho Oyo in autumn 2005. In 1994 Pedersen reached the South Pole with a 109kg sled, after skiing for 56 days over 1,545km.

British climber and fundraiser, Gavin Bate, is coming back to Everest for the fourth time. He got to 8,760m from the South in spring 2005, and now wants a bit of a challenge. Bate plans to traverse from the North to the South face taking 55 to 60 hours and without supplementary oxygen. Although he will be taking along Sherpas, he wants to climb Alpine style. “I will have with me a Nepalese Sherpa called Pasang Tendi, who will follow me and help me if I collapse or need assistance. He will be using oxygen but he will not be carrying any of my equipment,” Bate says on his website. Before

getting to Chomolungma, the 40-year-old climber plans to summit Cho Oyo, the world’s sixth highest mountain.

More than 50 expeditions will share Base Camps on both sides of Everest. Last year more than 450 people reached the top. According to the Himalayan Database, compiled by climbing chronicler Elizabeth Hawley and Richard Salisbury, there have been 3,045 successful ascents of Everest (some people have summited more than once).


Chomolungma is by no means the only peak climbers will tackle in Nepal this spring. At 8,091m Annapurna I may only be the 10th highest mountain in the world, but it is one of the most treacherous and avalanche-prone peaks. Experienced, respected climbers, including Anatoli Boukreev from Kazakhstan, have died in fatal avalanches on it.

This year Swiss climber Ueli Steck will have a crack at the South Face of Annapurna I, a route first climbed by a 16-member British team in 1970. That expedition, under the leadership of Chris Bonington, used supplementary oxygen and fixed about 2,500m of rope.

Steck, who set a new speed record on Eiger’s North Face in Switzerland in February, sees this sheer face as one of the major challenges in Himalayan climbing. “Until now nobody has been able to solo this steep and technically difficult face but I am prepared and ready to take up that challenge,” he writes on his website. ●


SEASON TICKET: The icy tripod of Chomolugma, Lhotse, and Nuptse as seen from Gokyo Valley last autumn.

BILLI BIERLING



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There's no high like having a positive impact on a young person

Tennis and life lessons

One of the perks of being a coach is the chance to be a role model for kids. Studies have shown that besides parents, coaches and teachers have the most influence in a young people's life. I have always embraced opportunities to help and give direction to youngsters. This past winter break, a young Nepali boy came to spend two weeks with me. I was touched by his innocence and moved by his determination to make the most out of his time in the US. Here is an essay he wrote after his time with me and my family:

My name is Utsav Rijal and I am a tennis player from Nepal studying at Luther College, USA. This past Christmas, I had the opportunity to visit and train with Coach Sujay Lama. Being a Nepali and studying in the same college Coach Lama did, it was a valuable experience to meet my 39-year-old compatriot. I had a chance to relate to him and learn the things that he had experienced as a college tennis player and a student. Training with Coach Lama was not only rewarding but it was also an eye opener towards life, discipline, and hard work.

Everyday we would start our training with three hours of tennis. We would focus on intensity and dynamic footwork on the court. We did a lot of match play to build confidence and work on the tactical aspects of the game. To finish off practice, coach Lama would make me do line drills on court for efficient footwork and speed.

We worked on our conditioning in the evening by running for about half an hour. As Coach Lama put it, "Tennis is a game that requires you to be supremely fit to make you mentally tough." Sometimes he would drop me at a street about two miles from his home and ask me to run back in the blistering cold to gain the mental edge.

We ended our day with 30 minutes of workout which involved stretching, abdominal work, push ups, sit ups, and shoulder stabilisation exercises. Coach Lama is innovative in how he trains his athletes.

"Tennis players need to be disciplined" says Coach Lama. He maintains that discipline is very important, not only in tennis but also in life, including proper sleep and eating habits. "Early birds catch the worms" he says.

On court he was a tennis coach and off-court he was a brother to me. During my stay, we not only talked about tennis but also about life. He made me feel like a friend and we did not hesitate to share our stories and experiences. Blessed with a six-year-old daughter, a two-year-old son, and a wonderful wife, Coach Lama is a model father and husband. Coach Lama always gave me positive reinforcement. He is passionate about the game of tennis and helping young Nepali players like me.

As far as my improvement goes, my endurance, mental toughness, and physical fitness were all up. I learnt lessons for life, which will help me become a good human being, a good student, and a good tennis player. I am thankful to have a mentor like coach Lama. ●



GAME POINT
Sujay Lama

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Knowing how to do IT

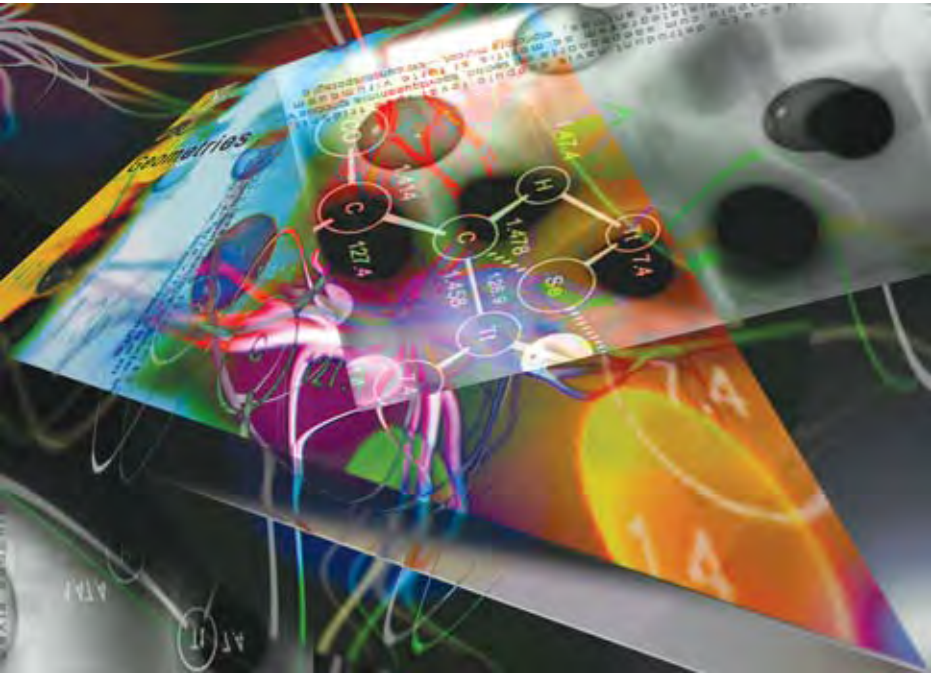
Back when internet and IT hysteria was at its height in India, a newspaper—I forget which one—revealed a startling fact. Many leading members of the political elite in Delhi didn't know how to use computers. They had cottoned on to the need to exploit the IT sector, and take credit for its roaring successes, but they couldn't type, or access the web, or even switch on a PC.



HERE AND THERE
Daniel Lak

At the time it occurred to me that this would be a good way to test our politicians. Can they type a simple document? Find things on Google? Do a complicated series of tasks on a computer and put together a presentation? Or are they the type who snap their fingers and get an underling, a cyber-peon, to do it? If the former is true, they're qualified for public office. But if all they can do is issue orders and take credit for the result, then they should be 'outed' and given a choice: learn how to use a computer or get a new job.

Of course, that might not be fair to the pre-IT generation. In days of yore, gentlemen didn't type. They got a woman to do it. This is no longer acceptable. Now, people of all ages are immersing themselves in skills they never dreamed they'd seek—including the use of keyboards and software. You have to be hands on. You have to know how to do it yourself.



If you can't work a computer, you're unfit to lead a country

In Nepal I wonder who amongst the current crop of leaders and hopefuls is computer-friendly. For make no mistake, information technology is the way ahead for Nepal. Not that we need to build Bangalores everywhere; those will spring up if the local conditions warrant. But the use of IT and the global communications tools that come from the internet and web-driven media will bestow countless

benefits upon the people of this country. It's far too important to leave to the private sector alone.

Whatever form of government this country eventually comes up with must prioritise communications and computers, along with general literacy. That means those cheap laptops NGOs are pushing in villages, PCs in schools, and large-scale use of Nepali and other vernacular language

computer programs. Government departments—especially land registries and the finance ministry—need to gather all their information into data banks and put it online. There should be websites in all areas of government with information and helplines for citizens. Video conferencing and email must be used to make up for distance and rough terrain. Cell phone coverage has to be universal, with government subsidising towers and service in remote areas.

Eventually, broadband internet access needs to be extended to everyone, perhaps through that cellular network. These days, you can go anywhere in North America, plug a small card into a computer and surf the net. Why not in Nepal?

But back to the original point. Who in the eight-party alliance can type and who gets others to do it for them? I propose a national test to be put together by young people, business types, and smart Nepalis from other sectors—NGOs, activists, thinkers. Sit leaders and other politicians down at keyboards and make them show their stuff. Tell them to find something on Youtube or United We Blog. Make them download the latest BBC report from Kathmandu and find the UN website, then insist they prepare a simple Powerpoint presentation.

Those that can't should be instantly enrolled in night school or sent to the retirement home. Life's too short to have low standards in high places. ●

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REVOLUTIONARY TREK: The trail from Tila and Thalsang under a foot of snow last month.



PRABIN GAUTAM

PRABIN GAUTAM in ROLPA

For a decade now, Nepal's tourism entrepreneurs have thought of tourism in terms of trekking to Khumbu, sightseeing in Kathmandu, and boating on Phewa.

It's time to push the envelope and define adventure tourism in a

whole new way. Some trekking groups are already travelling to Rolpa and Rukum to combine trekking with the publicity generated by Nepal's Maoist insurgency. Even during the conflict, trekkers used to look forward to encounters with Maoists and took home receipts of Maoist 'revolutionary tax' as

From Maoism to tourism

Rolpa may show the world how to make a revolution a tourist attraction

souvenirs.

"There is a surprising level of interest in visiting these areas," says a Japanese tour leader, "people want to know what it looks like in a Maoist base area."

Contrary to the belief that most tourists are cautious, trekking agencies in Kathmandu specialising in French and Japanese tourists say they have lots of queries about visiting mid-western Nepal or other regions like Rara, Dhorpatan, and Phoksundo that were out of bounds because of the insurgency.

Because of the ceasefire, bookings are strong this year for off-the-beaten trek destinations like Budi Gandaki, Manasulu circuit, and Kangchenjunga, which had seen a sharp drop in visitors because of the conflict.

To be sure, the facilities on the Rolpa trek can be rudimentary—a bit like the Langtang trail 20 years ago. Even so, the terrain is harsh but spectacularly scenic, especially with the unprecedented snowfall this winter. The people are unexposed to the outside world in this remote area and therefore very hospitable.

Trekkers to the mid-west also get a sense of satisfaction from helping these war-torn districts recover, that their money is generating employment, and helping the area return to normal.

Taking a bus from Dang up to Tila, it is a two day walk to Thabang. This is the cradle of the Maoist revolution and was partially flattened in aerial bombardment by the army in 2002. A road is being built to Thabang, and it may be good idea to get to go there before the road does.

The road has several landslides because of construction, but the route has some dramatic vantage points for scenery. There are private tea houses, and also Maoist-run cooperatives, which offer food and lodging, but no beer or alcohol. Food is cheaper here than most parts of rural Nepal: Rs 35 for a plate of rice and vegetables and overnight lodging is usually free if you eat in the shop.

"During the war, the party paid us to feed the guerrillas and cadre who passed through," remembers Comrade Zamana who runs a cooperative restaurant, "but now

we have to run it like a business. It would be good if more tourists came through."

When we get to Thabang, we asked Comrade Inkar, the town's Maoist headman, if Americans are welcome. "Why not," he replied, "we will welcome them like we have welcomed them in the past." Suddenly turning serious, he added: "But their intention should be pure." Inkar said lots of foreigners including Americans have visited Thabang, but admitted most of them were journalists.

The Maoists are trying to make the revolution itself a tourist attraction, and Inkar tells us Thabang is being established as a model commune. Phone lines have been repaired and there will soon be electricity in Thabang.

Just like Mao-chic has become a tourist attraction in China, Rolpa's revolutionary songs and dances can also bring employment and income to local cultural troupes. After all, Rolpa has everything: scenic mountains, a rich folk tradition, and revolution. ●

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Home away from home

For many refugees in the camps, America is the new Bhutan

ANUP KAPHLE in JHAPA

Tika Maya Rai thought hard and looked around her tiny candy shop in the Bhutani refugee camp in Beldangi one recent chilly evening. "No, I don't want to go to the United States or any foreign country," she finally said.

"I don't know if life in America will be any different," Rai explained, and asked, "Is there any guarantee that we won't be repressed there too?" She just wants to go home.

Until a few months ago, sentiments such as Rai's—home, repatriation, being a good Bhutani—were the only thing you'd hear when visiting the camps or speaking with the refugee leadership in Kathmandu.

But that has changed dramatically in recent months. For every Tika Maya Rai we spoke with, there was a chorus of Chandra Bhattarais. "I'd happily go to America or even India". Bhattarai just wants to forget the "dark days" he describes to us in detail, Nepali Bhutanis were forced to give up every symbol of their identity, often on pain of death, rape, or torture. Bhattarai wants the religious and cultural freedoms of other countries, and life outside a refugee camp.

The offers by governments, including those of the US and Canada, to absorb as many as 60,000 of the 100,000 refugees over the next three or four years, has split the refugee community.



ANUP KAPHLE

SCRAPING BY: "Life is hard in the camps," says Jhuma Devi Adhikari, spinning the cotton that is her livelihood. "I'd definitely go elsewhere."

Bhattarai's sentiments are especially common among the young students in the local schools run and funded by Caritas-Nepal and UNHCR. Between classes there is talk of the US, Australia, the United Kingdom, but especially the US. "I want to go to America at least to study," says Subodh Adhikari, who passed SLC two years ago and is now studying hard for the TOEFL. Subodh's only hope of studying

abroad is finding a sponsor. It's a common story in the camps, and young people say they ask every visitor for email and other contact information. "Maybe one of them will finally get me out of this camp," says young Jeewan Khanal.

But it's a sensitive discussion, given how many of the older refugees see the offer of resettlement as a betrayal of their right to go home. Dilli Ram Sharma, the

headmaster of a local school in the Pathari camp, says all the decisions and ambitions of students and increasingly their parents are driven by a desperate need to not live as refugees any more. But, Sharma is quick to add, teachers and students are not encouraged to discuss such issues at school. He takes a more conditional line and says that resettlement is a temporary solution, and that he and other Nepali Bhutanis should be allowed to return to Bhutan, if there is a major overturn, such as change in the present form of government. Tek Nath Rizal, chair of the Kathmandu-based Bhutanese Refugees Repatriation Committee holds firm to the line that the resettlement proposal jeopardises the democratic movement in Bhutan.

A few people we spoke to in the three camps in Beldangi said they felt resettlement was being forced upon them, with vague threats that the World Food Program would not be able to distribute rations any more, or that funding to schools would be cut off. There are other heated debates about who among the refugees would get to the United States, and who to India. "Everybody wants to go to America," Purna Lamgade says above the din. "I think we're being manipulated. How hard is it to start a new controversy about who goes where?" But he is drowned out in the clamour where one word is repeated over and over: America. ●

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Reinvention

‘Another me’ is a vivid record of trafficking survivors’ imaginings of themselves as human, animistic, and divine beings of power, love, revenge, and freedom. Kolkata-based documentary photographer Achinto Bhadra and counsellor Harleen Walia guided 126 girls and women through a “healing journey of psychological transformation”. The girls and women in these photographs, aged 8 to 25, have been in the care of Sanlaap, a non-governmental organisation in Kolkata, India. Bhadra and Walia encouraged them to narrate their powerful stories of disappointed childhood, abuse, betrayal, abduction, and slavery in brothels. They then identified an imaginary being that would be an empowered physical expression of their sorrow, anger and hope. The costumes and makeup were created by the participants and the photography sessions were conducted in ritualistic silence. For a brief time, each woman and child was transformed.

The project was supported by the Swiss Terre des Hommes Foundation. ●

Another me, photographs by Achinto Bhadra, runs from 16-26 March at Indigo Gallery, Naxal, 4413580.



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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Bells** poetry by Megha Raj 'Manjul' Sharma, photographs by Herbert Grammatikopoulous, and mix media art by Manish Lal Shrestha, at the Gallery 32 at Dent Inn, the Dental Clinic, 15 March-14 April.
- ❖ **Exhibition** of paintings and black and white prints by Laxman Shrestha, from 15-22 March at the Siddhartha Art Gallery.
- ❖ **Another Me** photographs by Achinto Badra at the Indigo Gallery, 16-26 March. 4413580



EVENTS

- ❖ **Yuva Chalfal Shrinkhala** on NSU's National Convention in the changed context: role and importance, 16 March, 3-5PM at Martin Chautari. 4107599
- ❖ **Run for Fun** marathon organised by the Nepal Investment Bank, on 17 March starting from NIBL's head office at Darbar Marg. 4228229
- ❖ **ASMAN** annual mela with food, fun, and music at St. Xavier's School, Jawalakhel on 17 March from 10AM-6PM. 9851094461
- ❖ **Haat Bajar** with alternative handmade garments, metal crafts, paper products, and antiques at Nhucche's Kitchen – the Organic Bistro, 11AM-5PM on 17 March. 4429903
- ❖ **Media Discussion Series** on the Nepali transmission of All India Radio, 22 March at 3PM, Martin Chautari. 4238050
- ❖ **Yoga Camps** at the Shivapuri Heights Cottage, 23-25 March. 9841371927
- ❖ **Toastmasters** communication and leadership program, every Wednesday 6PM at the Institute of Environmental Management, Tripureswor.

MUSIC

- ❖ **NMC Jazz 07** featuring Norwegian jazz band Motif, 16-23 March, with an open air performance at Khula Manch on 17 March.
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Open Mic Night** at ViaVia Café, Thamel every Friday, 8PM
- ❖ **Gaine (Gandarbhas)** perform at every lunch and dinner, Club Himalaya Nagarkot. 6680080

DINING

- ❖ **Cricket World Cup Promotion Program** food from all countries participating in the 2007 Cricket world cup, 13 March onwards, at the Radisson Hotel.
- ❖ **St. Patrick's Day** celebrations with Irish menu and music on 17 March at Kilroy's, Thamel. 4250440
- ❖ **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, Pulchowk, behind the Egyptian embassy. 5537166
- ❖ **Continental cuisine** and wine by the fire place at Kilroy's, Thamel. 4250440.
- ❖ **Shop Talk** 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
- ❖ **Calcutta's rolls, biryani, kebabs** Indian cuisine at Bawarchi, Bluebird Mall Food Court. 9741000735
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **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 Pulchowk. 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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NEPALI WEATHER

by NGAMINDRA DAHAL



KATHMANDU VALLEY



The rain last week shouldn't have come as a surprise. The vibrant westerlies create good conditions for low-pressure zones and for clouds to collect enough moisture for showers. As a result, the Valley has now received its monthly quota of 30 mm of rain. Unlike the systematic summer monsoon fronts, westerlies have fast-changing high altitude patterns, which makes predicting their onset difficult. This will be a good weekend for Valley residents—Thursday's satellite picture shows no major low fronts around. This means sunny days with passing, patchy clouds, fresh mornings, and breezy afternoons.



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(Can't get no) Satisfaction

To understand happiness, we need both history and science

MICHAEL SHERMER

Imagine you have a choice between earning \$50,000 a year while other people make \$25,000, or earning \$100,000 a year while other people get \$250,000. Prices of goods and services are the same. Which would you prefer? Studies show the majority of people select the first option.

This seemingly illogical preference is just one of the puzzles science is trying to solve about why happiness can be so elusive in today's world. Several recent books by researchers address the topic, but my sceptic's eye found a historian's long-view analysis to ultimately be the most enlightening.

Consider a paradox outlined by London School of Economics economist Richard Layard in *Happiness* (Penguin, 2005), in which he shows that in general people are no happier even though average incomes have more than doubled since 1950 and "we have more food, more clothes, more cars, bigger houses, more central heating, more foreign holidays, a shorter working week, nicer work and, above all, better health." Once average annual income is above \$20,000 a head (in developed countries), higher pay brings no greater happiness. Why? One, our genes account for roughly half of our predisposition to be happy or unhappy, and two, our wants are relative to what other people have, not to some absolute measure.

Happiness is better equated with satisfaction than pleasure, says Emory University psychiatrist Gregory Berns in *Satisfaction* (Henry Holt, 2005), because the pursuit of pleasure lands us on a never-ending hedonic treadmill that paradoxically leads to misery. "Satisfaction is an emotion that captures the uniquely human need to impart meaning to one's activities," Berns concludes. "While you might find pleasure by happenstance—winning the lottery, possessing the genes for a sunny temperament, or having the luck not to live in poverty—satisfaction can arise only by the conscious decision to do something. And this makes all the difference in the world, because it is only your own actions for which you may take responsibility and credit."

Harvard psychologist Daniel Gilbert goes deeper into our psyches in *Stumbling on Happiness* (Knopf, 2006), in which he claims, "The human being is the only animal that thinks about the

future." Much of our happiness depends on projecting what *will* make us happy (instead of what actually does), and Gilbert shows that we are not very good at this forethought. Most of us imagine that variety is the spice of life, for example. But in an experiment in which subjects anticipated that they would prefer an assortment of snacks, when it actually came to eating the snacks week after week, subjects in the no-variety group said that they were more satisfied than the subjects in the variety

group. "Wonderful things are especially wonderful the first time they happen," Gilbert explains, "but their wonderfulness wanes with repetition."

This habituation to even a multiplicity of wonderfulness is what economists call "declining marginal utility" and married couples call life. But if you think that an array of sexual partners adds to the spice of life, you are mistaken: according to an exhaustive study published in

The *Social Organisation of Sexuality* (University of Chicago Press, 1994), married people have more sex than singles—and more orgasms. Historian Jennifer Michael Hecht emphasised this point in *The Happiness Myth* (Harper, 2007). Her deep and thoughtful historical perspective demonstrates just how time- and culture-dependent is all this happiness research. As she writes, "The basic modern assumptions about how to be happy are nonsense." Take sex.

"A century ago, an average man who had not had sex in three years might have felt proud of his health and forbearance, and a woman might have praised herself for the health and happiness benefits of ten years of abstinence."

Most happiness research is based on self-reported data, and Hecht's point is that people a century ago would most likely have answered questions on a happiness survey very differently than they do today. ●
(Scientific American)



United Nations Children's Fund
Nepal Country Office

VACANCY NOTICE

Post Title:	ECD Specialist	Post Level:	National Officer (NO-C)
Post Duration:	Fixed Term	Post Location:	Kathmandu
Vacancy No.:	VN-NEPA-2007-16	Vacancy closing date:	23 March 2007

Purpose of the post:

Under the guidance of the Chief of Health & Nutrition Section responsible for the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of assigned projects within the Early Childhood Development Sector.

Major Duties and Responsibilities include:

- Work closely with the national counterparts in creating enabling conditions for psychosocial care for children through initiatives taken at the national level. Pursue policy development in favor of integrated ECD, incorporate ECD concerns in relevant development plans, strengthen national capacity in the field of ECD, assist in the creation of a national support structure for psychosocial care, enhance inter-agency and inter-sect oral co-ordination with HMG and the donor community, and advocate for increased investment in ECD. Design, prepare and implement plans to accomplish the above.
- Provide support for the establishment and strengthening of home and community based psychosocial care for children in the Decentralized Action for Children and Women Programme. Develop IEC materials and guidelines for psychosocial care, develop human resource for psychosocial care, provide materials on psychosocial care, conduct operational research and studies on psychosocial care, and incorporate latest scientific knowledge on psychosocial care in programme implementation. Design, prepare, implement plans to accomplish the above
- Continuously update the information on the situation and status of children's psychosocial wellbeing through compiling of data, analysing and evaluating the collected information for feedback to programme development at the national, district, and community level.
- Monitor and evaluate early childhood development activities focusing on the psychosocial and cognitive development of children in the selected districts. Analyse and evaluate data to ensure achievement of objectives and/or take corrective action when necessary to meet project objectives. Assist in the development and/or introduction of new approaches, methods and practices in project management and evaluation.
- Undertake field visits to monitor programmes, as well as conduct periodic programme reviews with government counterparts and other partners. Propose and/or undertake action on operational procedures affecting project implementation and management. Provide technical advice and assistance to government officials and other partners in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programme/projects.
- Participate in the development of the sectoral work plan; ensure compliance to specific assigned objectives. Provide guidance and support to staff in meeting project objectives.
- Participate in intersect oral collaboration with other programme colleagues. Assist in development of appropriate communication and information strategy to support and/or advocate programme development.
- Prepare programme/project status reports required for management, donors, budget review, programme analysis, annual reports, etc.

Minimum Qualifications and Experience Required:

- Advanced University Degree in Social Sciences or related technical field.
- Five years of progressively responsible professional work experience at national and international levels in programme management, monitoring and evaluation in related field.
- Knowledge of latest development and technology in related field.
- Analytical, negotiating, communication and advocacy skills.
- Supervisory and managerial skills.
- Fluency in Nepali and English
- Knowledge of computer management and applications.
- Ability to work in an international and multicultural environment.

The application should include cover letter, CV, names of references, contact telephone number/s, e-mail and full address along with a recent photograph.

Please send in your application to the following address along with all the required documents with clear indication of the vacancy number on the envelop:

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Cocaine running around the brain in Europe

A THORNY PROBLEM:
Demand for cocaine fuels toxic and dangerous farming in Central America.

Here are some harder facts. For the first time, the level of cocaine use in Spain—3 percent of the population aged 15 to 64—now exceeds that in the US. And the UK is not far behind. In 2005, 2.4 percent of the UK population used cocaine at least once, up sharply from 0.6 percent a decade earlier. Ten years ago, 20 percent of all new clients entering rehab in the Netherlands were addicted to cocaine. Now it is 40 percent. In Spain, the figure in 2002 was 42 percent, up from just 7 percent in 1995, and it has certainly risen again.

Drug users in Europe are switching to cocaine from heroin. Cocaine is fashionable, attractive: white, not dark; sniffed, not injected; consumed in living rooms and nightclubs, not dark alleys. It is seen as a drug for winners, not losers. To many it is a symbol of success, until they end up in a hospital or a treatment centre. Cocaine use by high-profile entertainers, executives, models, and socialites does not help, nor does uncritical reporting by the media.

Cocaine is highly addictive

and harmful. That's why it is a controlled substance. Addicts may be in denial, thinking that they can control their 'recreational use', but cocaine, to quote JJ Cale, "she don't lie."

Too many governments—particularly in rich countries—fail to invest political capital in preventing and treating drug abuse. Their societies have the drug problem they deserve.

This raises a basic credibility issue: how can Europe urge Colombia and Peru to reduce supply when its own drug habit is driving cultivation? The solution is to address both supply and demand. Coca crops in Latin America need to be replaced with agricultural crops, and cocaine use in affluent Europe must be reduced.

On the supply side, there must be more support for poor farmers in drug-producing countries to give them viable alternatives to growing coca. Most illicit coca growers are extremely poor. Crop eradication will not work over the long term if there is no legal economy to replace drugs. Drug control and development assistance must therefore go hand in hand.

Environmental protection is also at issue. Coca farmers and producers slash and burn forests, pollute streams with toxic chemicals, and damage

fragile ecosystems. The Andean region has less than 1 percent of the world's land area, but more than 15 percent of its plant life. Vast areas of vegetation are being destroyed for cocaine. Europeans should be made aware of the long-term destruction done to a precious, fragile habitat for the sake of a short-term high.

But controlling supply is not enough. If Colombia's farmers stopped growing coca tomorrow, unrestrained demand by the world's 13 million cocaine users would quickly generate as much cultivation somewhere else.

The ultimate challenge is to prevent drug abuse and to treat and rehabilitate drug users successfully. Sweden is a good example. Drug use there is a third of the European average due to decades of consistent policies that combine tough punishment of dealers and comprehensive treatment for users.

The fewer people are cocaine addicts, the less harm done to individuals and families, the less money goes to criminals, insurgents, and terrorists, and the less damage done to the environment. ●

(Project Syndicate)

Antonio Maria Costa is executive director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

European leaders need to get serious about Europe's cocaine problem. The 'white lady' is seducing a steadily growing number of Europeans, and denial will only worsen the consequences.



COMMENT
Antonio Maria Costa

Cocaine used to be America's problem, to the point that the United States started a major campaign against sellers and consumers of crack cocaine in the

inner cities, drug traffickers, and suppliers in the Andes. But now demand for cocaine in most of the world is stable or dropping. Coca cultivation has dropped by a quarter in the past five years, and seizures of cocaine have almost doubled. Forty-two percent of all of the world's cocaine was seized in 2005.

Only Europe is bucking the trend. Cocaine use is on the rise, especially in Spain, Britain, and Italy. There is plenty of anecdotal evidence about traces of cocaine found on bank notes and in water supplies.

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COVER FEATURE:

India discovers Southasia

As India takes over as SAARC chair, we offer six stories exploring New Delhi's new regionalism.

COMING UP IN THE APRIL ISSUE ...Tibet, the mundane

Himal Southasian looks at Tibet's evolving relationships – with China, with Southasia, and with itself.

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MIN BAJRACHARYA

[illegible]

Just kidding

The NC-D is going to hold on tight to Hydropower in the interim government even if it means sacrificing Deuba's chance to be President Girija's heir apparent in a unified NC. Girijababu himself wants his cousin Sushil and not Ram Chandra to be Deputy PM. Ticked off, the UML wants Home or nothing. So the Maoists will have to settle for Forests and Information.

But just imagine if the **Maoist Information Minister's job** is to send out CDs like the one that is alleged to contain evidence of Paras' plot to assassinate republicans. The Ass saw excerpts on Mero Sansar and it's just a clipping service of digitised newspaper cuttings. Comrade Mahara will have to do better than that if his job is going to be feeding state media off-the-cuff pronouncements like the ones his boss has been making in the past weeks. First he said the palace was planning to kill Americans and blame it on the Maoists so the Americans would think the Maoists did it and bomb Nepal to smithereens. Then he stated categorically all guns were in containers, but some may have been washed away in floods, suddenly remembered he had a whole lot of them stashed away. When Ian raised a surprised eyebrow, Chhabilal Baje said he was just kidding, and then backtracked again and said he meant socket bombs. OK, PKD, wake us up when you **make up your mind**.

King Gyanendra couldn't stand trees. He saw them as symbols of democracy. So during his royal regime he had all the majestic gum trees along Pulchok and Baluwatar chopped down. Rumour has it that **tantriks** convinced the king that this would keep loktantriks away. It didn't. But the stumps are still there and the democratic governments haven't shown much interest in replanting the trees. And now the Maoists are following the monarch's footsteps and have given orders to cadre to decimate all private and community forests wherever they can find them. Forests have been a traditional source of income to fund elections ever since they were cut down to buy off the yellow votes in the 1980 referendum. Now, the Maoists seem to have reached the same conclusion. As one wag put it: let's at least hope the comrades are cutting down the jungles because they don't intend going back into them.

Girijababu's pronouncement this week that King Gyanendra and Paras should both abdicate doesn't seem to have ruffled too many feathers in Narayanhiti which is still sending out greetings to foreign heads of state just like in the good old days. However, the palace gets responses only from Arab sheikhdoms and Thailand. Certainly, Paras doesn't seem to be planning to go anywhere, he is having a **swimming pool** built in Gokarna.

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Medium size

like.no.other

SONY SHOWROOM: Kantipath, 4250305—Dharmapath, Newroad, 4243793—Chabahil, 4485673. **SONY SERVICE CENTER:** Kantipath, 4259289. **SPECIAL OUTLETS:** A One Sales & Service, Baneshwor, 478-0412—A One Electronics, Baneshwor, 016224247—Ashoka Electronics, Anamnagar, 4441874—Gemini Super Market, Boudha, 4492450—Namaste Super Market, Pulchok, 5520026—New Fortune Overseas, Kumarihati, 554-0613—Core International, Kupondole, 2013291—Walk Man, New Road, 422-2312—Goshali Dep. Store, Pokhara, 61525588—R.N. Shopping Mart, Gabahal. **DEALER NAME:** Giri Tv World, Koteswor, 4601153—Gongotari Tv World, Koteswor, 2054257—Kalanki Tv House, Kalanki, 4287660—Koseli Electronics, Samakhushi, 4382949—Lx Impex, Tripureswor, World Trade Center, 4117292—Muncha.Com, New Road, 425-7549—New Anjali Store, Balaju, 2112088—Prasanti Emporium, Baneshwor, 4491323—Pratik Electronics, Jorpati, 4470555—Shakya Trading Center, Pako, Newroad, 4263909—Shakya Watch, Banepa, 661272—Shree Chandra Binayak Electric Center, New Baneshwor, 9841221910—Shree Krishna Enterprises, Thapathali, 441-5863—Shrestha Electro Enigneers Pvt. Ltd, Balaju Bypass, 4384740—Suraj Electronics Service, Kirtipur, 4330634—Suwal Electronics, Bhaktapur, 6613615—T T Center, Lainchour, 4430918—Tv Point, Thimi, 6634852—Utsav Trade International, Dillibazar, 4422493—Venus Electronic, Gongabu, 1621709—Electro Voice, New Road, 421-6629—International S'service, New Road, 426-3645—Shrestha Radio Concern, New Road, 426-3503—Sony Radio, New Road, 426-4355—Bairam Prasad & Brothers, Janakpur, 41522792—Nishu Trading, Shangha, 063-460117—Pushupati Electronics, Dharan, 25520319—Sai Electrical & Electronics, Nepaljung, 081-520479—Khan Electronics, Rajbiraj, 031-520625—Sai Ram Group, Jhapa, 023-550413—Om Sai Electronics, Hetauda, 57525129