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Weekly Internet Poll # 261

Q. Can recent critical statements by some ambassadors be considered interference in Nepal's internal affairs?

Yes 46.9%
No 50.8%
Don't know 2.3%

Total votes:3,957

Weekly Internet Poll # 262. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Should the embargo on lethal arms exports to Nepal be lifted?

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MARTY LOGAN

Thousands attended the huge sit-in for peace and democracy on Tuesday afternoon that filled up Basantapur (above).

The square was festooned with banners, placards and even cartoons. Poets, writers and academics spoke and there was even a 12-minute silence to mourn those who have died in the past nine years of conflict. On stage, women held 36 peace lanterns “to show the way back to democracy” and others dressed as widows sat cross-legged amidst a performance depicting grief and bereavement.

The opinion of people in the streets of Kathmandu this week:

“If the king really is thinking about the future, he should think about the poor and the indigenous people. The rebellion started because only the rich had

People power

Citizens are increasingly vocal in calling for peace and democracy

power, unless poverty and caste are tackled, the situation in this country is not going to improve.”

Ram Bahadur Bika, security guard from Charikot

● “The political parties can’t show the way, the king and the Maoists are busy fighting and the people are confused. I think the people need some hope.”

Janajati rights activist Keshab Man Shakya

● “Most Nepalis are illiterate and uneducated, and since 1990 they started thinking democracy

may not be suitable for Nepal. King Gyanendra is using this. But eventually the people will rise up. It may take a long time, or it may take a short time, but it will happen.”

Third Year arts student Sagun Poudel

● “Everybody knows what happens: people talk, people listen, then next week everyone forgets about it...they want peace. I also want peace but the government doesn’t listen.”

Man playing chess at Basantapur

● “I thought young people

would be for a republic, but even older people are now saying it. They are the ones who previously would have backed the king as some sort of god.”

Former Nepali diplomat

● “We expected the king to take the lead, but we see it is not happening, the politicians are also up to no good and the country is being torn apart by the Maoists. I see no way out.”

Jay Lama, taxi driver from Kabhre

Editorial p2
Cease fire



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Published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd, Chief Editor: Kunda Dixit
Desk Editor: Marty Logan
Design: Kiran Maharjan Web: Bhushan Shilpakar
Advertising: Sunaina Shah advertising@himalmedia.com
Subscription: Pushparaj Sharma, subscription@himalmedia.com
Sanchaya Kosh Building, Block A-4th Floor, Lalitpur
GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: 01-5543333-6, Fax: 01-5521013
Printed at Jagadamba Press, Hatiban: 01-5547018

CEASE FIRE

Six months ago King Gyanendra took full responsibility for restoring peace. The onus is still very much on him, but public opinion is turning. Even the cheers are turning to jeers.

The only accomplishment of February First that we can discern is the irreversible dent on the reputation of the monarchy. We don't need a republican movement in this country—the palace is doing pretty well by itself.

This rapid radicalisation of citizens has created a 'red shift' in Nepal's political spectrum: former friends of monarchy have turned diehard republican, constitutional monarchists now want a ceremonial king to grace jatras, and proponents of active monarchy warn there is still time for the king to settle for a constitutional role. The Maoists didn't do this, the king did it to himself.

The rebels have played their cards well so far. The strategy of creating a rift between and within constitutional forces—the king, NC, UML, media and the civil society—has worked. And none of them seem to realise that by fighting each other they are helping the Maoists consolidate.

But the strategy of divide-and-dominate can take the comrades only so far. The dogmatism of the dominant hardliners in the Maoist leadership has succeeded in alienating just about everyone including its silent sympathisers.

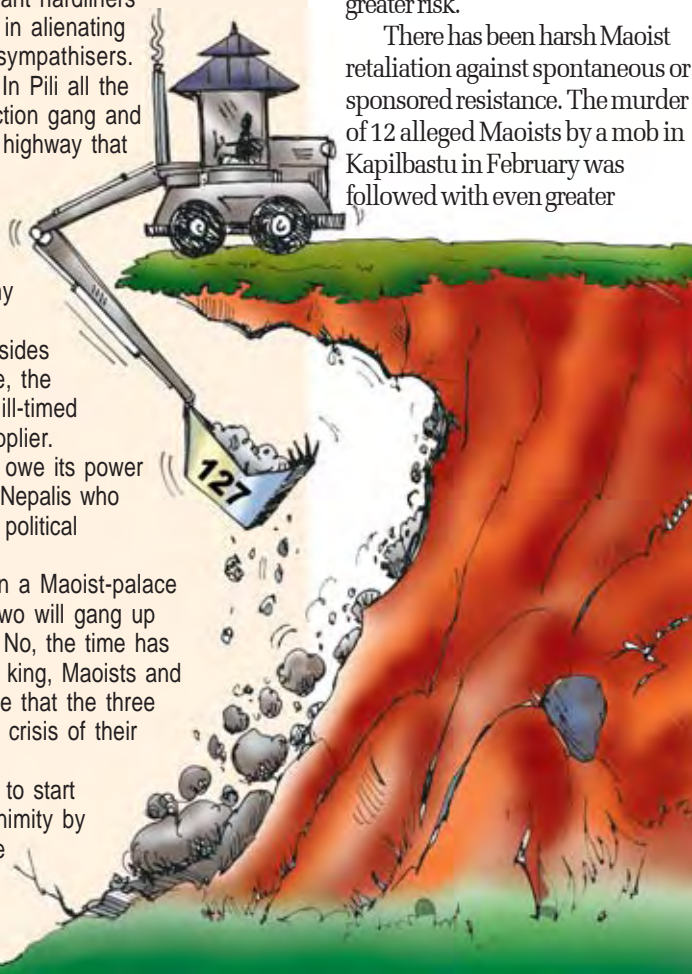
This war never served any purpose. In Pili all the Maoists did was overrun a road construction gang and delay by a few months construction of a highway that would have benefited ordinary people in Nepal's poorest region. How was that a victory?

The dispute about malfunctioning Indian rifles is just a distraction: the army says the gun isn't slaughtering as many Nepalis as the manual said it would. Besides trying to mask its own intelligence failure, the army just shot itself in the foot with this ill-timed allegation by angering its main arms supplier.

In all this, the only force that doesn't owe its power to the barrel of a gun and can speak for Nepalis who want nothing to do with this war, are the political parties. Warts and all.

There is little point choosing between a Maoist-palace or Maoist-party alliance, either way the two will gang up against the third force and keep fighting. No, the time has come for a tripartite summit between the king, Maoists and parties. Only that will convince the people that the three forces now understand the gravity of the crisis of their own making.

Time is running out and the king has to start somewhere. How about showing magnanimity by declaring a unilateral indefinite ceasefire leading to an all-party conclave. It will not be seen as weakness, but a sign of courage and statesmanship.



ROBIN SAYAMI

A peace vigil

State-sponsored vigilantism spreads more terror

On 23 July, a vigilante group killed five alleged Maoists and two of their supporters in Makwanpur. Another five Maoists were lynched by villagers in Banke this weekend.

Although the state attempted to portray these as spontaneous popular uprisings, it is evident

GUEST COLUMN
Hemlata Rai



these are just the latest cases of orchestrated vigilantism. Their recurrence shows the state is unwilling to heed warnings that such actions put civilians at greater risk.

There has been harsh Maoist retaliation against spontaneous or sponsored resistance. The murder of 12 alleged Maoists by a mob in Kapilbastu in February was followed with even greater

brutality. Many innocent people who had nothing to do with either side were caught up in the counterviolence, and there was serious danger of this igniting a greater communal or ethnic conflagration.

By encouraging the villagers to tit-for-tat violence, state security has blurred the distinction between combatants and non-combatants. The result is a spurt in the number of unarmed civilian casualties as the rebels make them legitimate targets in the pretext of their association with vigilantes. Even spontaneous uprisings against the Maoists will then be seen to be state-managed and targeted for retaliation as happened in the uprising by Dailekh's mothers against the Maoists in November last year.

The government's attempt to replicate the Dailekh uprising with the help of vigilantes not only exposed its own insecurity but also put a lot more non-combatants in harm's way. Popular uprising may deflect rebel power, but providing arms to lawless vigilantes will only lead to anarchy.

There are lessons to be learned from the international experience as well. In Angolan weapons given to civil defense groups ended up in the hands of rebels. In Guatemala a civil defense patrol was responsible for more than 12 percent of all war crimes.

Last month Amnesty International condemned the vigilante groups in Nepal for escalation in violence, and said that the government is putting more civilians at risk by

supporting them. Activists and citizens are concerned that if vigilantism spreads it will push the country into full-fledged civil war and warlordism.

The policy to arm local civilians against the Maoists was first implemented last year in Ilam and Saptari. But faced with strong protests from rights groups and civil society the plan was never fully implemented. In fact, some of the light arms distributed were taken back for fear they would fall into the hands of the rebels.

This sent state-sponsored vigilantism plan into deep freeze. But the idea didn't die, and the policy is now covert support for local militia and resistance. Human rights groups have reported active involvement of local army units in formation of civil defence committees and hundreds of vigilantes are distributed identity cards that bear signatures of army officers.

Vigilante groups with their summary justice function as both judge and the jury. Local vigilantes in many places are criminals who have preyed along the badlands of the Indo-Nepal border. Murari Pahalwan Kuswaha, one of the many vigilante leaders in Nawalparasi, reportedly carries a IRs 500,000 reward in Bihar. Ordinary people are caught between two outlaw groups, with one of them getting active support from the state.

Nepalis across the country are already living in fear, the least the government can do is to ensure that it doesn't make things worse for them by supporting lawless vigilantism. ●

Revolution, regression and reformation

The parties, Maoists and monarchists are like the pot, kettle, and charcoal calling each other black

The latest buzzword in Kathmandu's seminar circuit is 'triangular conflict' and the need for unity among constitutional forces. Civil society would prefer the parties and the Maoists joining hands to establish absolute democracy. In the cacophony, it seems we are all fighting for a lost cause.

The Nepali Congress leads the mainstream agitation to have the supremacy of constitution restored. Its political agenda has universal sanction. The issue of constitutionalism

is faultless. Even King

Gyanendra finds it convenient to use the word with a "meaningful" prefix while he consolidates power in the state apparatus.

Despite the physical gains posted by nearly a decade of democracy the NC has failed to convince the populace that it was devoted to ensuring socio-economic justice. All those kilometres of roads, number of health-posts and impressive universities do little to convince the exploited and excluded that the

government they repeatedly elected worked for them. Out-of-job management consultants and aspiring technocrats drafted economic policies of the NC. Despite the assertions of Mahat, Acharya & Co the middleclass refuses to accept that the decade of multiparty democracy was indeed good for them.

As for the Maoists, they represent an ideology that has been discredited everywhere in the world. They swear by Marxism-Leninism-Maoism synthesised as Prachanda Path which is just leftist extremism with a Nepali brand name. Communism had its chance and failed. Economically, it destroyed nations. Socially, it created a hierarchy more rigid than what it replaced. Its hegemonic culture was so intolerant of diversity that chaos ensued as soon as it was overthrown.

But it is the moral collapse of communism that has been the most spectacular. The Soviets and the Chinese had a historic opportunity to create a new world order, but failed to rise over narrow nationalism. Communism created schizophrenic societies to scared to look into the mirror. It evolved into a card-

carrying caste system too scared to think beyond its own survival. Cuba and North Korea aren't freak cases: they represent the natural state of an ideology based on fear—fear of class enemy, fear of freedom, fear of openness, and most of all, fear of change.

How does one explain seemingly well-informed Baburam Bhattarai, Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Ram Bahadur Thapa still believing in an ideology that brought so much misery to so many for so long?

An authoritarian monarchy is the mirror image of totalitarian communism. It also draws its strength from the dread of the 'other'—other beliefs, other nationalities, and anything that doesn't conform to the officially described definition of 'us'. When King Gyanendra urges party leaders to stop saying 'me' and start saying 'us', he is in fact telling them to discard individuality, the real enemy of all authoritarian rulers. Free citizens pose the greatest challenge to fear societies. The international community is making too much of the appointment of Giri, Gauchan and their ilk. What do you expect from a sick system where loyalty rather than ability is the criteria for selection?

The game of name calling between the parties, Maoists and monarchists is like the pot, kettle, and charcoal calling each other black. Mainstream parties have at least one saving grace: they don't kill people who don't agree with them. They will stand on their own without joining forces with the other two proponents of violent politics.

Revolution is revenge with the past. Memories of enslaved ancestors—not dreams of utopia—drive people to kill each other. Despite their liberation ideology, the Maoists have failed to fire the primal passion that leads a revolution to a swift conclusion. So they have no option but to join the middle ground which they helped destroy. That will be the revenge of history.

Regression is the exact opposite of revolution: the desire of the ruler to restore the glory of his forefathers. Both revolution and regression are fuelled by contested versions of the same history.

Reformation is an affirmation of faith in the future. Mainstream parties need support in opposing those who are imprisoned by their pasts. ●

STATE OF THE STATE
CK Lal



LETTERS

IRRESPONSIBLE

The State of the State column by CK Lal ('Parallel histories', #260) contains inaccurate and irresponsible reporting about my 9 August speech before the Nepal Council of World Affairs. Mr Lal reports incorrectly that I 'strongly urged political parties to accept any proposals for elections emanating from the Palace'. While I did indeed emphasise in my remarks that democracy means elected government, I never said that the parties should kowtow to the Palace as to how and when those elections take place. Indeed, I made it quite clear that the Palace not only needs to make good faith proposals designed to bring back democracy but must also expect to negotiate with the parties on the way forward. My actual words were: "We call on the Palace to reach out to the political parties with sincere proposals that reflect their common agenda of multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchy and a return to full electoral democracy. For their part, the political parties must keep an open mind and accept a hand, if offered. That doesn't mean accepting everything the government says at face value, but it does mean being willing to negotiate in good faith to find a solution to Nepal's problems."

I believe that Mr Lal was present during the speech on 9 August, so it is especially difficult to understand how he could have so inaccurately reported this crucial point. The U.S. government shares the concern of every Nepali that any proposed elections be free and fair and that they be a true representation of the electorate. Democracy means rule of the people, by the people, and for the people. Democracy in Nepal obviously will require elections, but how and when those elections take place is a question for the people of Nepal to decide.

The full text of my statement is available on our website at <http://nepal.usembassy.gov>. I encourage Nepalis to read it and see for themselves that the United States is serious about its commitment to freedom, civil rights, and democracy. Our policy in Nepal is to encourage and support those principles that we hold dear in our own country—for the sake of democracy and ending the insurgency.

James F Moriarty
US Ambassador to Nepal

KARNALI

I am surprised and happy to see Jivan Bahadur Shahi's article ('Don't kill the Karnali with your aid', #260) in your paper. Having travelled all over Nepal, I was always skeptical about the food shortages in the far west. Speaking with officials, it was exactly what they meant by that, no rice. In Nepal, people do not say "hello" as a greeting but "have you eaten rice". Without it they are apparently "starving". Fortunately this is not the case in western Nepal where there are other food grains, as Shahi points out. And then

these same officials say that Nepal is a poor country having their ministers begging for devevelopment aid. Nepal is such a wonderful and rich country, and don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

Hans Zollinger, email

- What irony that DDC chairman Jivan Bahadur Shahi's excellent and heartfelt plea for the development of the Karnali coincided with the attack on Kalikot. And what is even more poignant is that the Maoist attack was on the very activity that will ultimately lead to the development of this region, the Karnali Highway. By stopping the progress of the Surkhet-Jumla road, the Maoists have done nothing to advance their revolution. In fact, they have pushed the Karnali back and damaged their own reputation among the people. Planners in Kathmandu should read and re-read this article, especially Shahi's great line: 'The Karnali is not a food-deficit area, but only a rice-deficit one'.

Name withheld on request

NOWHERE

I agree wholeheartedly with your editorial 'Road to nowhere' (#260) and pray that others read and appreciate what it said. Sadly, I think though that the road is going somewhere and that is to oblivion. I do wish



MOHAN MAINALI

all the participants who are protesting or arguing, whether they be the Royalists, the politicians, the Maoists, the students, the media etc., realised that if this situation continues Nepal may cease to exist as an independent kingdom. If this happens then not only they, but the Nepali people, will lose everything purely because these disputes could not be settled in peaceful discussions. I pray that I am wrong and that everyone wakes up before what I dread comes to pass. Long Live Nepal.

J Winstanley, England

- Much as I would like to agree with the sentiments expressed in your editorial 'Road to nowhere', you exhibit a dangerous naivety in thinking that a band of ruthless revolutionaries like the Maoists will ever listen to anything other than counterforce. They have showed this time and again by using peace talks and ceasefires only for tactical advantage. Yes, many Nepalis will be killed but there is really no other way to

subdue to the Maoists and bringing them to negotiate than by giving them a bloody nose. And the sooner the arms embargo on Nepal is lifted to bolster the RNA's capacity to fight the Maoists the better it will be for India and the foreign community as well. Otherwise they may have to come here to help us fight the Maoists.

JN Singh, Kathmandu

- For several years now, no independent defence analyst worth their salt in Nepal, South Asia or the rest of the world would claim that a final military victory for either side in Nepal is possible. Yet both the government and Maoists continue to champion their respective abilities to prevail militarily. The hopeful imagery of approaching triumph propagated by both sides is nothing more than a sickening ploy to mask painful realities. Over the course of Nepal's conflict, some of the language used by both sides to refer to what they have done or will do to their enemies, for example, 'smashing', 'crushing' and 'annihilating', is not only childish but also plain wrong. It is true that both sides may experience small-scale military successes (no doubt coupled with heavy civilian casualties) but there is nothing in the military sphere that will break this stalemate and give either side a clear

strategic advantage.

If the Maoists suffer a series of defeats, they will simply revert to the more elementary guerilla tactics they employed during the initial stages of the 'people's war' until they have restored their capacity to fight on a larger scale. Whatever damage the Maoists inflict, they will not be able to capture significant amounts of new territory.

In any case, a final military victory in itself never offers any long-term answers, and is unlikely to offer any prospects of a real solution to the root social, economic and political causes of violence. Only a rights-based, democratic governance system with elected representatives who control one national security force can legitimately and successfully address the structural factors of exclusion and poverty. And the only way to achieve this is through a ceasefire, negotiated solution that includes all sections of society, free and fair elections, and amendments to the constitution.

Nine years and 12,000 lives later,

genuine grievances have not been addressed, rather they have increased. It is a great tragedy that both the government and Maoists want to continue this pointless violence against the wishes of the vast majority of Nepalis.

Sunit Bagree, email

- It seems the press and politicians will never tire of lecturing the government. It keeps repeating to the army, for example, that there is no military solution to the Maoist problem, especially given Nepal's difficult terrain ('Road to nowhere', #260). What are the chances that army servicemen who've spent their lives learning the science of warfare are unaware of this? But is it realistic to expect them to openly acknowledge this and put down their guns? Is it even desirable? The effective solution to the present turmoil requires the populace to be prepared to battle the lethal ideology of the insurgents. The idea that violence is a valid tool for political ends, the belief in fighting existing injustices and inequities with further injustice and terror, and the idea that everything needs to be smashed before anything else can be built have to be roundly defeated. The intelligentsia of Nepal is tasked with the challenge of preparing such an ideological front against the Maoists, as the political leaders are tasked with building a strong, unwavering political policy and strategy to confront them. In their single-minded aim of wresting 'democracy', these leaders are leaving our backsides exposed to an even more virulent form of totalitarianism. These leaders can make themselves more useful by preparing their own fronts against the Maoists and convincing the people of it. Unless this happens, it may not even be wise to ask the army to dismantle the only deterrence against totalitarian victory. Is further depressing an already demoralised populace the best our leaders can do?

Abhishek Basnyat, Washington DC

- After all suffering that one can bear, from killing of beloved royal family to abuse/misuse by political leaders, from witnessing thousands being killed in a senseless war to loosing democracy, the only way Nepalis can move is to move on the road to peace. But alas, the road does not go further ahead but turns back ('Road to nowhere', # 260). Victory in war is always illusion, the sacrifice is futile. Maoists once again have proved that they are not genuine political agents of change but terrorists who want to hurt the poorest of Nepal's poor who live in the Karnali by sabotaging a highway. Prosperity is their main enemy, they want to stop it in the name of revolution. The only thing more disappointing than that is the apathy of political parties and their continued blame game. The onus is now on the people to rise up and struggle for peace and development.

Sameer Ghimire, Sydney

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Defensive about democracy

Ram Sharan Mahat says in his new book that democracy with all its flaws is our only hope

Ram Sharan Mahat's book, *In Defence of Democracy: Dynamics and Fault Lines of Nepal's Political Economy*, due to be released on Tuesday, ends up being a post-mortem of our adolescent democracy. The 1990 People's Movement brought unprecedented political and economic freedom to Nepalis, but democracy died young. This book is Mahat's attempt to figure out what went wrong, what went right, and an effort to trace the structural stresses that contributed to the country's present state.

Mahat gave up a promising career in the UN system to return home after 1990, was appointed to the National Planning Commission, contested elections from his native Nuwakot and became a NC member of parliament to serve as Finance and Foreign Minister. Mahat witnessed the heady euphoria of democracy, the subsequent disillusionment with it, and its eventual dismemberment by the Maoists and a reassertive king.

The creeping coup that started with the royal move on October 2002 was justified on grounds that political parties had made a mess of things with their incessant bickering and corruption. It was further argued that these shortcomings contributed to the rise of the Maoist revolution and its rapid spread. If asked, most Nepalis would agree.

But despite disenchantment with the shenanigans of politicians, Nepalis still overwhelmingly favour parliamentary democracy. The reason may be that although politicians in Kathmandu may have let the people down, there was a groundswell of demand for services from elected local councils. Rural Nepal was being transformed by this empowerment.

In his book, Mahat backs this up with figures. The road network more than doubled between 1990 and 2002, the proportion of Nepalis with access to electricity went up from nine percent to 40 percent, and those with access to safe drinking water nearly doubled. The average

life expectancy of Nepalis rose six years to 59 within a decade.

As Finance Minister, Mahat was entrusted with the job of budget allocations and had his priorities. Not everyone agreed with those priorities, and as a politician he had to make compromises. But post-1990 economic reform and political decentralisation had created the environment for progress, allowing Mahat and his colleagues to lay the foundations for achievements in community forestry, media and communications, privatisation and deregulation, trade and exports, hydropower, foreign investment and sustained economic growth.

In *In Defence of Democracy* Mahat sounds defensive, and the reason is that there is such a concerted offensive now to uproot democracy. The ex-minister gives us a peek behind the scenes at the struggle to craft policy reforms necessary to make change happen. And all this becomes terribly relevant post-February First as the nation is being dragged back not just to pre-1990 but pre-1960.

Any Nepali who says Nepalis aren't ready for democracy is insulting himself. We were not only ready for democracy, we thrived under it. Yes, we could have done a lot better if the politicians had been less venal. But dictatorship was worse: just look back at the 1960-1990 period, the two and half centuries before that, or post-October 2002.

Mahat admits that the political failures of successive elected governments to respond to the national needs may have contributed to the rise of Maoism, but argues that much more of a factor was the entrenched feudalism and the traditional disregard of Kathmandu for the rest of the country. He admits: 'Democracy is essential, but not necessarily the sufficient condition to prevent a sense of injustice and exclusion of marginalised groups.'

But after 1990 power was transferred from Kathmandu's oligarchs to a new breed of rural middleclass Nepalis. Many of them



MIN BAJRACHARYA

turned out to be hill bahuns, so what we saw was parliament, politics and the bureaucracy more bahun-chhetri dominated since 1990 than ever before.

Mahat devotes an entire chapter to rake up Arun III and thinks its cancellation was a 'national loss'. Although he himself flipfopped on Arun, in the book he is bitter about activists who opposed it, the donors who dumped it and the UML government which played politics with it. Ten years after the \$1 billion project was cancelled, he is convinced the two Aruns would have delivered the cheapest firm energy. What Mahat doesn't point out is that in place of Arun III we have dozens of smaller plants that generate nearly twice the energy built in half the time for less than half the cost of that mammoth project.

Subsequent chapters are on corruption (graft in Nepal was blown out of proportion by a newly-free press), the Bhutani refugee crisis (Nepal shouldn't

agree on assimilation), a recap of the Maoist war right down to February First (the king has played into the Maoists' hands by polarising the political forces against the monarchy). The last chapter goes into the 'fault lines': the stresses in the polity that led to democratic decay, disparities and centralisation, the crisis in education, deepening donor dependence.

Yet, as Kul Chandra Gautam of UNICEF argues in the foreward, 'democracy tends to be a self-correcting system, and given a fair chance the distortions can and will have been rectified'. Given time, Mahat is convinced we would have got there.

Unfortunately, the people couldn't wait. And as it turned out, neither would an ambitious king. ● Kunda Dixit



In Defence of Democracy: Dynamics and Fault Lines of Nepal's Political Economy
by Ram Sharan Mahat, PhD
Adriot Publishers, New Delhi, 2005
417 pages

Death at mid-day

THOMAS BELL
in KAKARBITTA

I was in the immigration office at Kakarbitta on Monday when the shooting started. The Nepali officials who were examining our passports parted the curtains and peered outside. "Ke bhayo?" they asked each other. I went into the street.

Outside people were asking the same question: "What was that?" Almost immediately there was a loud explosion from behind the police station. The army later said it was a socket bomb going off.

The people of this sleepy little town seemed unsure whether to take cover or stand and stare, but there was nothing to see. For a moment even the police seemed at a loss for what to do.

A few armed policemen with rifles ran down the road (picture) and into the trees behind the station. There was a burst of automatic fire much louder than the original shots. Some more

policemen commandeered a man with a rickshaw, rushing him out of sight but everything was quiet now. There was a low, speculative murmur in the street and a cigarette seller packed up her wares and got ready to move off.

When the police came back into sight they were in a ragged group around the rickshaw, with the rickshaw-wallah toiling on the pedals. Lying across it was a bloody and unconscious member of the armed police. Shouting and waving they went down the road trying to stop a public jeep.

Another car sped away with a casualty in the back seat, slumped over the shoulder of a colleague. Gossip spread instantly through the onlookers, who said three armed policemen had been hurt and the Maoists had escaped. One policeman later died while the others were in critical condition. Two civilians were also injured, but there have been no reports of rebel casualties.

Ten minutes after the attack a large silent crowd had gathered in



THOMAS BELL

the street, gazing in the direction of the shooting. They stood holding hands or with their arms around friend's shoulders. Some people wore strange nervous grins, apparently still filled with the brief adrenaline of the event.

I was struck by the humdrum squalor of death where violence erupts suddenly at mid-day and disappears just as quickly, leaving three broken bodies in the streets. Already Kakarbitta was returning to normality.

While the attack was taking

place, 200 yards away my travelling companions were in the immigration office arranging their Nepali visas. The commotion did not distract the officials from extracting a Rs 500 bribe to process the request.

We drove on, leaving the rickshaw-wallah rinsing the blood from his vehicle by the concrete arch that welcomes visitors to Nepal. The cigarette seller had unpacked her doko again.

The attack had probably been timed to disrupt a visit by the king

to eastern Nepal, and hundreds of soldiers and police slouched by the side of the road as we went, providing security for the visit.

The army base at Itahari was surrounded by barbed wire and high netting to keep out grenades. Two helicopters, one of them carrying the king, rose from the compound and wheeled around. They beat away across the emerald paddy fields and palm trees of Jhapa's beautiful plains. ●

Unilever shuts Hetauda plant

Maoist threats have once more shut down the joint venture Unilever Nepal plant in Hetauda from Thursday. The Maoist-affiliated trade union had given Unilever a deadline to reinstate sacked workers and a 15-point list of demands to improve conditions. Unilever said since the demands couldn't be met, the plant was being closed to ensure the safety of its workforce. Non-Maoist trade unions had appealed to the government to intervene and called on the Maoists not to carry through on their threat. FNCCI on Wednesday appealed to the Maoists not to shut down the plant that employs 200 people and supports a host of downstream industries. Unilever is owned 80 percent by Hindustan Lever of India and the rest is spread among Nepali investors. Insiders told us the Maoist threat was "extortion plain and simple". Local businessmen confirmed the Maoist threats were related to annual Maoist "donations". Unilever is reported to have sent its response to the Maoists but there hasn't been a reaction yet from the rebels. (Santosh Neupane/Hetauda)



Nepal Telecom employees protest

They may be government employees but Nepal Telecom staff are threatening to resume protests from Sunday unless pre-paid phones, blocked since 1 February, are allowed to start operating. Telecom Employees Association of Nepal (TEAN) said it was disheartened by the government's lackadaisical attitude which is costing the company billions of rupees. "We have been forced to announce the protest programs once again because of the lack of response from the government," said Kumar Jang Karki of the Nepal Telecom Workers Union (NTWU). The unions accuse the government of a conspiracy to allow the private-sector Spice Nepal to begin operating before NT is allowed to restart its pre-paid mobiles phones. Of the 250,000 mobile phones the government has resumed only 41,500 post-paid lines in Kathmandu, Pokhara and Biratnagar. Another 170,000 pre-paid lines remain out of service.

NEW PRODUCTS



PARRYWARE IN NEPAL: Parryware, India's No. 1 bathroom products and services brand, has announced it will set up a first of its kind 24-hour customer care centre in Kathmandu. The one-stop shop will open its doors within the next three months and will operate seven days a week. Parryware is a division of EID Parry (India) Ltd, and part of the Murugappa Group.

MUNCHIES: Smartways has recently launched Munchy's premium brand of biscuits and wafers. The product is a popular brand in Malaysia and Japan. It is manufactured by Munchy Food Industries.



BUTTERY: PS Trade Concern has just launched the Walkers Shortbread collection, made by a UK manufacturer and market leader. Free from artificial flavouring, additives and colouring, it is presented in handsome tartan packaging.

Get back to business

New FNCCI leaders should shelve any political ambitions

Working with Nepali entrepreneurs a few years ago, my then colleagues and I developed a shorthand to identify Nepali businesspeople. There were those we called 'the FNCCI types' and there were others who were 'non FNCCI types'.

STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari



The FNCCI types were card-carrying Kathmandu-based members of the Federation of Nepali Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI). Often these were physically overweight businessmen (and they were always men!) who had—since the heyday of the Panchayat—benefited from close ties to various power centres. If you studied their foldable business cards you'd realise that these people, with various titles they gave themselves, had their hands in every pie, regardless of whether such an arrangement made business sense.

Once you got to know them, you found that they disliked open competition. They were always ready to form cartels or obtain monopoly privileges. They clamoured for market protections. They yearned for a dictator to enforce order and stability in the country. And more tellingly, they spent more time using the FNCCI as a platform to launch their political careers on the side than for running their own various businesses. Given a microphone, some would even turn into economists—eagerly offering solutions as though what was true of a, say, beverage business was true of the economy as a whole. The press called them

'captains of industry' and collected advertisement rupees. The donors found it convenient to see them as the face of the Nepali private sector—funding anti-corruption workshops and local development efforts, sponsoring study tours to other countries and giving grants to improve industrial relations.

The non-FNCCI types on the other hand did not have it easy. Often these were younger, hungrier, scattered and politically unconnected single-business owners who had no choice but to pour all their energies into making their businesses grow. Not having easy access to Kathmandu's upper class, they

ambitions beyond making their businesses commercial successes despite repeatedly facing a hostile bureaucracy, unclear laws, governmental arbitrariness and infrastructure-related problems. In a competitive economy with a level playing field, the focus that these non-FNCCI types had would have served them well. But in Nepal, unless they were connected to global customers, they had to either play second fiddle to the FNCCI types or somehow find a way to become FNCCI types themselves.

Given this perceived dichotomy, can the new—even if unanimously (s)electd—FNCCI executive committee do

anything? Yes, but only one of these two things: First it can cling to its past, blame various political crises for making things difficult for businesses and use the Federation as a platform for a few to launch themselves into second careers as the state's hand-picked politicians. Or it can take a difficult but ultimately rewarding path of single-mindedly staying true to its mission of 'facilitating Nepali businesses become globally competitive'. To do that, it needs to stay on course to aggressively remove barriers to doing business in Nepal and

found it hard to convince the banks to give them loans, relying on their own savings and private borrowings to start and sustain their enterprises. They did not know how to charm the donors or court the press. So they spent their time fixing the nuts-and-bolts of their businesses rather than running around pretending to be policy-makers-in-the-making.

Indeed, they showed no

push for relevant laws, standards, compliance issues and markets so that the size of the pie becomes bigger globally for all Nepali businesses. Anything else, no matter how lofty-sounding, would be just a distraction—an excuse really for rich and bored businessmen to while away their time fancying themselves as future ministers who can somehow set this country's financial mess straight. ●



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Three people, three views

King power

Civil Society activist Mathura Shrestha in *Drishti*, 9 August



MIN BAJRACHARYA

The monarchy is terminating itself through its moves. The king is doing so by going backwards. At present the biggest threat for the palace is the palace itself. It cannot run away from its responsibility by simply blaming the parties. It is understandable that the palace has been threatening the parties because it wants to intimidate them but it is well aware that if it fails

toward that end, it will have to pack off. If wisdom prevails in the king, he should be ready to remain within the walls of the palace. Only in that case will the monarchy have hope for the future. It is not the parties who did not abide by the agreement of 1990. If the king does not abide by that agreement, the people will naturally not accept the monarchy. I do not see any hope for a change of heart because the king is such a staunch proponent of regression. First, the king is not prepared to give up the power he usurped. Second, he is surrounded by those who will not let him do that. When the 1990 constitution was being prepared some army generals went to brainwash the then prime minister. But we told them, "If the king himself has no problem with what we are doing with the constitution, why should you bother?" During a meeting then even the majority of generals favoured democracy. The army too wants change. They have the discipline of the 17th century. They should be transformed into a dignified and respectable institution of the 21st century. The Royal Nepali Army should be made a national army. Remember how powerful Iran's army was? But could they protect the Shah from Khomeini? If the king continues in his present ways the parties should

forge an alliance with the Maoists. This will not be an alliance of guns but a political partnership. The parties should be able to convince the international community that their alliance with the Maoists is not to further the rebel agenda.

Shuklaspeak

Rastriya Janashakti Party spokesman Sarbendra Nath Shukla in *Janadharana*, 11 August

जबधरणा

On one hand the agitating political parties have been expressing their commitment toward constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy while on the other they are talking about holding a dialogue with Maoists who have been waging a violent movement against the very two principles the parties believe in. It is this double talk on the part of the parties that has led to foreign powers intervening in the country. The foreigners have the opportunity to make their moves in Nepal because the Maoists have been waging violence, the parties have been talking about joining the Maoists and have been making speeches against the king while the government has been unable to do anything to get the parties on board. Till yesterday foreigners were only consulted, today they have been offering their opinions. This is quite ominous, and if it continues anything could happen. I would not call it foreign interference right now. But given the expansion of the influence of foreign countries in Nepal, their concern may soon turn into interference. The first thing we need is an agreement between constitutional forces. Only if there is an agreement between the king and the parties will the Maoists be pressured to come for peace talks. But the ongoing movement of the parties has been widening the distance between the three major powers in the country. That is the reason why the conflict is heading towards a more dangerous turn.

Disarm the Maoists

Speaker Taranath Ranabhat in *Jana Aastha*, 17 August

आस्था

The government set up after February First has been a failure. It's up to the king to set up a new council of

ministers, after all he has taken over all power. He can do what he likes. We can just give him suggestions. His Majesty has two options: carry on with help from the army or go back to the people. The first option will be unpopular and very short-term. The second will allow him to go back to a parliamentary system with people's representatives.

The real debate today is about how much power the king should have. If he wants to have the same authoritarian powers as Prithbi Narayan Shah and other kings then it will not be suited to the times. In the modern world, there is only place for a constitutional king who doesn't involve himself in day-to-day administration. If he doesn't make this mistake then his relevance will remain. The Nepali monarchy is not an institution that has survived because of the people's affection, nor has it survived only because of conspiracies. It has survived because the kings and people of Nepal have kept it together. I haven't had a chance to talk to His Majesty after February First. I don't know why he asked for three years. I don't think this problem will be solved by military means. We need to talk to the Maoists and get them to disarm under UN auspices and then address their economic, social and other demands. However, on the political front the Maoists must agree to democratic norms. After that, why stop at just talking to the Maoists, why not share power with them? But first they must disarm and enter the democratic mainstream. Personally, I am not for UN mediation: they can facilitate but mediation will open up a can of worms. I have been a kangresi since I was a baby. I don't want the forthcoming convention to be tied up with a debate on republic and constituent assembly. Nor do I want to express my outrage at the king by threatening to talk to the Maoists. I just don't get it: why this debate about democracy and republic? Within a democracy there can be a republic or a monarchy. Our democracy has a monarchy, India's has a republic. Why quarrel about the definition of monarchy? I just don't get it. All I know is that whether it is democracy or people-cracy, the people have to be sovereign. They have to rule. The people need to be involved in the allocation of resources, in setting priorities and in sharing of opportunities.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

BBC Bashing

Letter in *Gorkhapatra* 12 August

गोरखापत्र

At a time when the world is united against terrorism, a powerful media house like the *BBC* is posing as the spokesperson of the terrorists. *BBC* Nepali is following suit by boosting the morale of the terrorists. Its reporters were always regarded as Nepali

Congress party stooges and they made a big deal out of GP Koirala's meeting with Maoist terrorists in India, during which time they disseminated the suggestion that Nepal should be included under the Indian security umbrella. The government should take action against such anti-national journalists working for this service. What seems strange is that even when journalists are directly attacking the nation's integrity,

the Nepali Federation of Journalists seems quite relaxed about it. *BBC* Nepali service also tries to suggest that the democratic leaders it supports need not adhere to any laws. Take the case of the RCCC for example, which has been described as an anti-democratic body even after doing such a responsible job of exposing corrupted leaders. It is in the best interests of the nation for the people to be careful and stay

as far away from this news service as possible. The role of a broadcaster is to be unbiased. It is time to investigate how these reporters managed to qualify to work at *BBC*. The state has to start investigating journalists who enjoy creating quarrels between Nepali people. They are surely affiliated with some other organisation besides being journalists. *Samjhana Adhikary*

“Use this weapon, it won’t let you down.”
Microphone: Talks

हिमाल Robin Sayami in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 17-31 August

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“Even if they may wriggle out of national laws, international law is much stronger and no one is outside of the law.”
Ian Martin, Head of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights quoted in *Kantipur*, 18 August

Pili postmortem

Samaya, 12 August

The Royal Nepali Army is equipped with modern weaponry and by now has gained enough experience fighting the rebels. But this did not show in Pili, where the soldiers were mostly armed with SLRs rather than M-16s. Over half of the soldiers attacked by the rebels were non-combatants and didn't have military training. The 81mm mortars were said to be defective. Also, they paid scant attention to stepping up security around the bunker and outposts when they established the temporary base camp two weeks ago. The RNA is said to have little knowledge about the local terrain. Its Ranger battalion arrived from Kathmandu 30 hours after the Maoists had abandoned the destroyed camp and launched a search operation in upper Kalikot jungles but by that time the Maoists had reportedly fled to Accham. The rebels are publicising this attack as one of the greatest achievements of their 'strategic offensive' phase. However, the mutilated corpses of soldiers will make it tough for them to defend the serious allegations that they violated international humanitarian law. Rebels reportedly mutilated the genitals, limbs and tongues of some of the soldiers before shooting them, while some were burnt alive with their hands and legs tied. Prachanda has denied these allegations. But the attack on soldiers assigned to road construction itself proves that the Maoists violated humanitarian law. It also shows the rebels' political section is now dominated by its powerful military wing. The Pili attack also makes it less likely now that the party-Maoist dialogue will go ahead.

Royal silence

Himal Khabarpatrika, 17-31 August

The Kalikot incident was the biggest Maoist attack since 1 February. Nearly 50 RNA soldiers died and over 70 are still missing. Earlier, prime ministers used to visit battle sites to console families and express sympathy. This time the people of Kalikot expected the king to boost the morale of army personnel and local residents. On the contrary the king, accompanied by the army chief, flew off to eastern tarai. The king's entourage sacrificed a goat at a local temple (pictured) even as the bodies of young soldiers were being sent for cremation. Everyone wished he had at least postponed his east Nepal visit and gone west instead.



DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA

Anti-schools

Samaya, 18 August

ILLAM—At a time when donors and the government are backing the handover of school and health services to local communities, the Maoists have been forcing the closure of schools that are run by local management committees. Ilam, where 255 of the 387 schools had already been handed over to local groups, is the worst affected. The Maoists' reasoning for this is that schools are supposed to be run by the government and it can't just shift its responsibility to grassroots groups and concentrate on militarisation. "We tried to explain to them that by handing over management to us, the government's investment actually increases but they are not prepared to listen," says Ambika Gautam of Nepaltar Secondary School which has been closed. Children haven't been to school in the more than two weeks since it reopened after summer recess. Nearly 40 others schools in surrounding areas are also closed. The rebels insist that the schools bring a documents saying the management contract with the government has been annulled but the district education office says it is not authorised to cancel the agreement. The handover to local

management began with the 2058 BS Amendment to the Education Act with support from the Asian Development Bank.

Circle of fear

Himal Khabarpatrika, 17-31 August

PALPA—Thirteen-year-old Harikala Thapa (pictured) was bitten by a hornet in Basantapur, Palpa. Under ordinary circumstances, she would have been rushed to hospital. But the Maoists were in her village and they said no one could leave for fear the army would find out they were there. The Maoists refused to let Harikala go to the hospital. "Instead they gave her an injection which made her pain worse," said one relative. Harikala finally died and the Maoists buried her near her house without a proper funeral. The rebels had surrounded Basantapur from 30 July to 2 August preparing for a major attack and had forced young villagers to go with them. Locals are worried if the army finds out they gave the rebels shelter their houses will be bombed.



Guerrilla journalism

Nepal, 21 August

नेपाल

Garlanded as a hero, Sachin Roka Magar goes to places where most journalists hesitate to tread. The difference is, Magar is a Maoist journalist, the coordinator of the 'Radio People's Republic'. Nearly a dozen Maobadi radio reporters work under Magar, moving frequently to avoid security forces and carrying their generator and radio station in a doko. When they arrive at their new location—usually high in the hills so the news can carry far—the station is installed in a tent, from where all their work is done: preparing reports, recording and post-production. They use a generator when electricity is not available and are protected by about 30 militants. The Maoist radio program is aired on 95.1 mhz for half an hour in the morning and 45 minutes in the evening and broadcast in Nepali, Magar and English. But the broadcast location is kept secret, even from other comrades. "We never bring any worker for fear of location discovery. Even politburo leaders do not know about our radio work," says Sachin.

Two years ago an international conference on community radio was held at Hotel Yak & Yeti. No one knew Maoist journalists also attended the training. There they learned about portable suitcase

radios that can be carried by hand. According to sources, the Maoists also established contact with an American radio production company, one of whose representatives was in Nepal for the conference. They also took the representative to one of their areas where six Maoist journalists were given technical training. Roka Magar, from Pokhara, was one of them.

Nearly two years ago Maoists started broadcasting north of Rukum. They claim to now have five stations each within a broadcasting range of 100 km. Besides the Rapti-Dhaulagiri region, broadcasts have been launched in Seti-Mahakali, Bheri-Karnali, Sagarmatha-Janakpur and the Kathmandu Valley. But broadcasts from Kabhre, Nuwakot and Sindupalchok have been jammed by security forces.

The question is: are they journalists or terrorists? Since 2001 the Maoists have stressed that the media is another of their weapons and that they planned to train a correspondent in each company and battalion. Most trainees are from the Maoist students union. Their main training tool is the book *People's Revolutionary Journalism*, written by Om Sharma and Manrisi Dhital.

Some two-dozen Maoist war correspondents have so far been killed in encounters with security forces. But journalists from the Federation of Nepali Journalists do not consider them reporters and while the Maoists admit that they are not career journalists they are journalists with a mission.



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A new leaf

Nepali tea growers hope a fresh brand will lead their push for international success

MALLIKA ARYAL

The history of Nepali tea dates back to the early 1860s when Jang Bahadur Rana returned home with tea he got as a souvenir in China. Nepali tea is of good quality, is older than Ceylon tea and tastes like Darjeeling yet tea producers here, despite international demand for Nepali tea, are struggling to find ways to market it.

Nepal produces 11.7 million kg of tea annually from estates that grow on 15,000 hectares. Over 40,000 people either work on tea plantations or are directly reaping benefits from the industry. Figures gathered by the Tea and

Coffee Global Development Alliance (TCGDA) of Winrock International Nepal suggest that since 1998 orthodox (leaf) tea production has grown at the rate of 17 percent a year.

Very little orthodox tea from the hills is consumed in Nepal where demand is mostly for tarai grown CTC—cut, tear and curl—tea, usually sold in the form of round globules.

But producers say Nepal has not been able to successfully market its tea products overseas. As a result they joined together to create a new brand ‘Nepal Tea—Quality from the Himalayas’ to spearhead their marketing efforts. They are hopeful the ‘Nepal Tea’ logo that is slated to hit markets

soon will boost their exports.

Demand from Germany and the US for Nepali tea is growing, says TCGDA Team Leader Chandra Bhushan Subba at Winrock. Today, 13 of 15 tea producers in the country work together in Himalayan Tea Producers Corporation (HIMCOOP) to export the large quantities demanded. “When the producers realised the government was not doing much to brand and promote Nepali tea they decided to come together and form the corporation,” said HIMCOOP Chairman Udaya Chapagain.

Tea producers and experts have been participating in trade shows, tea seminars and organising press conferences. Next month, Nepal growers will participate in the ‘Tea and Coffee World Cup’ in Hamburg, Germany.

With Winrock’s help the corporation is also promoting tea in the United States and Germany. Winrock has also been talking to TAZO, the organisation of US organic tea producers, which recently bought 500 kg of Nepali tea and tested it in 6,000 Starbucks’ outlets. If the organisation approves Nepali tea it will appear on store shelves either as TAZO tea under the ‘Nepal Tea’ brand or in a blended form. “Our partnership with TAZO is more about exposure than about selling large volumes to make profits,” said Subba. TAZO’s policy is to return five percent of profits to the area where the tea originated.

HIMCOOP has also been inviting potential buyers to deal directly with producers. “We contact buyers, send them samples, they test the samples and come to us if they want our product,” Chapagain added. HIMCOOP also produces promotional flyers, manuals

and booklets.

Dilli Baskota of Kanchanjunga Tea, one of two organic tea producers in the country, says growers can brand Nepali tea all they want but without quality, branding is futile. “Producers need to think long-term. They have to understand that Nepalis have been growing tea for nearly 200 years and plan for another 200 more.”

Total production of organic tea today is 50-60 tons a year. Of this, over 90 percent is exported.

To help ensure quality some Nepali tea producers have adopted a code of conduct, promising to live by stringent international guidelines. In return, they are permitted to use the ‘Nepal Tea’ logo. The codes also commit producers to grow environment friendly products by discouraging chemical pesticides and fertilisers, prohibits child labour and holds producers to respect gender issues. Producers who sign on must also permit inspections of their technology



Just his cup o

Suraj Vaidya’s Guranse Tea Estate spreads across 250 hectares in Dhankuta at altitudes upto 12,000 m making it one of the highest tea estates in the world. Started in 1990 Guranse is one of two certified organic tea producers in Nepal and processes 40,000 kg of black tea a year.

Nepali Times: What are some of the achievements of the Nepali tea industry in recent years?
Suraj Baidya: Nepal’s tea industry is as old as Darjeeling. Yet our first big milestone came with the advent of democracy. After privatisation in the 1990s Nepal for the first time appeared on the lists of international tea producers. Then we realised that hill tea producers were being neglected from all sides and we formed the Himalayan Tea Producers Association (HOTPA).
We understood that quality could be better but farmers lacked knowledge. We selected farmers from seven tea-producing areas and put them through rigorous training. They went back and trained 10 more farmers from their villages and the multiplier effect was quite big. Five years ago, we had estimated that Nepal would produce 1 million kg of tea per year by 2005. Today we have well surpassed that and are now producing 1.5 million kg. That to us is quite a feat. Beyond that, we have participated in seven trade fairs where we have showcased tea. We are going to Hamburg for the World Coffee and Tea Cup next month. Tea producers have understood that the planning should be for the long term. That is why we have been working on our code of conduct.

What challenges do you face?
Our biggest challenge right now is the security situation in tea estates



and product purity and adhere to record-keeping norms.

Sceptics within the government do not think the 'Nepal Tea' logo is going to aid promotion much. "Demand is high for loose Nepali tea that goes abroad in chests," says Madhav Dev Thapaliya of the Nepal Tea and Coffee Development Board. "Whether you brand that tea or not, the chest is going to be opened at some point somewhere and blended with other tea."

Winrock's Subba disagrees. He

says tea for the mass market is of low quality and is often blended with different tea. High-quality tea for the niche market is sold differently. "There is a difference between 'blends of Darjeeling' and 'Darjeeling blend'," Subba explains.

Nepal's tea-growing area is increasing at the rate of 11 percent a year and the country can boast of virgin lands and young bushes that produce quality tea in large quantities. Producers say there is a huge potential for adding new varieties. Some predict the next big boom will be in organic tea. Winrock's Subba says the demand for organic tea is increasing daily and suggests, "All tea producers should start cultivating organic tea."

Thapaliya of the tea and coffee board says competition in organic tea has not yet picked up and that Nepal could be the country that fuels international demand for it. ●

f tea

... there are many people directly and indirectly involved in tea production whose livelihood is hit due to bandas. (Also) we are one of the best tea producers in the world, but we have not been able to market our products well. Private tea producers are also frustrated with the Nepal Tea and Coffee Board. The minister is the chairman of the board. When governments change, a new chairman comes in—we have to start from square one. Government needs to put higher priority on tea production and let the private sector manage the board.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

How do we brand Nepali tea?

We are not late tea producers, we are just late in marketing it. When you brand tea you need a story behind it. It is all about gimmick. Apart from trade shows to promote tea, we need logos and slogans that are catchy. We have to highlight the fact that our tea is branded, follows a stringent code of conduct and is of great quality. If we can brand the logo with the commitment to quality we can sell.

So does Nepali tea have a niche in the market?

Organic tea is big right now and will probably stay that way for a while but in the long run organic tea will lose. Sixty percent of the tea that is being sold in Europe is a blend of tea with fruits. To make a niche means not to have volume but variety. Since we have to fight for market share, we need to innovate. In the long run, new blends of tea with flowers, fruit products and herbs will win.

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SATISH JUNG SHAHI in SALYAN

The night sky is patched with dark pre-monsoon clouds and the porch of a straw-thatched mud house glows with bluish LED lamps lighting a makeshift stage. As the audience sit on straw mats, a peculiar music breaks the silence—a fusion of *madal* and battery powered keyboards.

Performers take turns singing revolutionary songs and dances. Two of them ridicule King Gyanendra and former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. The performers are teachers who have just finished a training program on the Maoists' new curriculum for Grades 1-3 in this remote village on the border of Salyan and Rolpa.

"Education is not only rote reading like in the old regime, our teachers have to be trained," announces Bhesh Raj Bhusal (alias Dhruba) secretary of the Maoist-affiliated All Nepal Teachers' Association.

"The old education is fatalistic, it glorifies the kings and the knowledge it provides is just good enough to become clerks," says Rajan Rokka, 36, one of the 25 trainee teachers, from the Basu Memorial Model School in Rukum.

The Maoists say they are running at least three 'model' schools each in Rolpa, Rukum and Salyan and that their curriculum is now taught in 34 other schools in these districts. Students are mostly children of rebels killed in action, sons and daughters of current fighters or the underprivileged. Many teachers joined the Maoists because they were hassled by security forces for being rebel sympathisers.

That experience may explain why the teacher trainees seemed to ignore the militarism of the Maoist curriculum and that, like government texts that feature the royal family, Maoist Teachings include biographies of rebel chieftain Prachanda and other Maoist 'martyrs' like Suresh Wagle and Krishna Sen.

The curriculum is divided into five subjects: languages, social science including philosophy, politics, history, economics and culture science; health and environment under which military science falls, mathematics; and arts.

From class one children are taught military science by guerrillas. Youngsters are instructed to act normal when the "*satru*" come to their schools and to note their weapons so they can pass on the information. During a mathematics session on teaching graphs, Comrade Anup, dressed in combat fatigues, displays a pie chart showing how many weapons the Maoists captured in their Beni attacks.

In the Nepali language book *chha* stands for *chhapamaar* (guerrilla), *ma* for *masal* (torch) and *ha* for *hasia* (sickle) like the one shown on the Maoist flag. The songs the teachers learn glorify battles like the one in Khara, which is described as the first time the Maoists engaged in conventional warfare against the RNA. The Maoists suffered heavy losses during that attack but this is not mentioned.

Another song is about the cradle of the Maoist revolution, Thabang in Rolpa and describes communes and the 'martyrs highway'.

"We have to move on with the demand of the current situation," says Tufan Singh, secretary of the Maoist education department. "You have to also look at the brighter side of the curriculum that is more practical and involves students getting closer to the community."

The Maoists' *Naya Janabadi Sikshya* emphasises vocational training like agriculture and carpentry and also deals with the hazards of smoking, the need to help the poor and the underprivileged, and etiquette.

But don't the teachers see a contradiction between such community-based education and the violence practised by the Maoists? we ask.

"We are not Maoists nor are we terrorists. We are teachers who went underground because the government didn't pay any heed to our demands for fair education," explains Bhusal. "If the Maoist party ignores us we could even turn against them." ●



Learning the

ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY

When her parents left Niva Atreya, 15 and her younger brother to go and work in the US, they put their children in separate schools little realising how lonely they would be. In June, Niva was enrolled in Maryland Public Higher Secondary School, where she was desperately trying to make new friends. With only a grandmother at home, Niva's parents perhaps thought their extrovert daughter would be better off in the school's hostel.

One day Niva's teacher hit her in class with a duster and the vice-principal made things worse by striking her with a bamboo stick. The humiliation the girl

felt drove her to desperation and on 6 June she swallowed Metacide, a pesticide. She died a slow and agonising death six days later in hospital.

Investigations by child rights agencies show Niva was suffering from depression and stress. But there are suggestions that the punishment she received for doing what children do, make noise, and her resulting depression triggered the girl's extreme action. If the school had a professional student counsellor who had listened to her problems, Niva might still be alive.

"Both teachers and students are under immense stress but because counselling is still new here, unfortunate incidents like these take place," says Devendra

Suicide rates

AARTI BASNYAT

● Mina was a vibrant 19-year-old, a dedicated student and passionate about sports. Popular and outgoing, she had a lot of friends. Earlier this year, Mina came back from college went to her room, locked the door and hanged herself by the ceiling fan. Her shocked family and friends were completely bewildered—they had no idea Mina was going through such personal turmoil.

● Ganesh was the class clown. From mixed parentage he was considered smart, funny and outgoing. At 19 years of age he was teaching at a prestigious school and was also applying to undergraduate colleges abroad. One afternoon, he locked his bedroom room, turned the music loud and hanged himself by a rope. Ganesh had shown signs of alienation but no one expected him to take his own life.

Statistics are sparse but available figures show that suicide is on the rise in Nepal. The cloud of conflict hanging over the nation for the past

decade appears to be a factor: people, particularly the young, worry about their future and many internalise a sense of hopelessness. Unable to cope, stressed with daily life and unable to confide to family and friends about their worries, some end up taking their own lives.

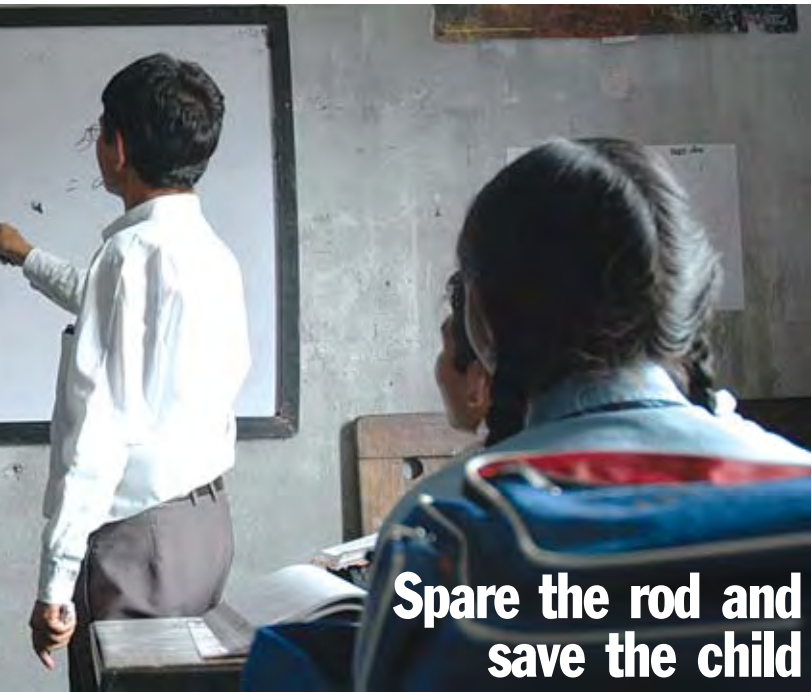
"There are always clues when a person is depressed or alienated but many of us can't pick up on them. Taking one's own life is the ultimate decision as emotions build up and there is no outlet. It rarely a result of just one surge of emotion," says psychiatrist Biswa Bandhu.

Deputy Superintendent of Police Ganesh KC says he has seen an eight-year-old commit suicide due to sibling rivalry and even a Grade three student who killed herself as she was unable to come first in class. He says, "Children are exposed to stories of suicides, even though they may not fully understand the implications."

Worldwide suicide rates are soaring. Lithuania leads the pack with 45.8 suicides per 100,000 people each year. Closer to home, Sri Lanka has the highest rate:



KUMAR SHRESTHA



hard way

Ale, a former teacher now working with Centre for Victims of Torture (CVICT). Ale admits using corporal punishment himself as a teacher to discipline students but says his perceptions changed once he started working with victims of torture. “The idea of using violence to quell violence begins with teachers and family members punishing a child to discipline them,” he says, “the physical pain subsides but the mental scars will remain.”

Many Nepalis still accept the idea of using corporal punishment to ‘discipline’ and mould a child. Religious scriptures that encourage strict disciplining via punishment further endorse the traditional formula of educating with the fear factor.

Today, parents still pull teachers aside and permit them to ‘give a few slaps’ to discipline their wards. A Nepali child is expected to learn the hard way and that’s where things go wrong. “It is more important to listen and understand the child than to try and treat the problem by beating. Half our problems would be solved if we listened to them,” says Bharat Adhikari of the child welfare group, CWIN.

Most private schools claim their teachers are strictly instructed to not punish students physically or to verbally abuse them, but with no formal training on child development and psychology, Nepali teachers are hardly able to understand the consequences of what seem like

harmless acts. Calling students derogatory names or administering the cane or duster is common.

One primary school teacher in Pokhara made his students lick human faeces when they couldn’t memorise their maths tables. A UNDP report in 1998 showed that 14 percent of school dropouts in Nepal claimed to have quit because they feared a teacher. CWIN reported 188 recorded cases of corporal punishment in Nepali schools in the first half of 2002 alone.

Fr Bill Robins, principal of St Xavier’s School, believes it is not the punishment but the way it is administered that makes the difference. “A whack in the back doesn’t hurt anyone. It is more important to make the child understand why he is being punished. If you can balance punishment with love, the child will understand why he is being punished,” he says.

National Private and Boarding Schools of Nepal which has over 8,000 member schools in 48 districts, is working to train principals and teachers to change their approach and to discipline students using counselling. “Subject teachers cannot identify psychosocial behavioural problems: we need counsellors for both students and teachers,” says the group’s Karan Shah.

Until recently the law allowed parents, teachers and guardians to administer physical punishment if they felt it necessary. This changed when child rights activists filed a case in the Supreme Court and won. On 6 January the court deleted this clause in the law but, sadly, not one circular has been sent to schools from the government informing them of the change. ●

are rising

Stress and competition push more young Nepalis to take their own lives

30.7/100,000. At about 10 suicides per 100,000 people Nepal is down the scale but rates here are climbing. Within Nepal, it is Ilam that has the highest suicide rate, with 25/100,000 per year. The pattern seems to be that it is not poverty but higher literacy, joblessness and relatively high living standard that increase alienation and the incidence of suicide.

Police statistics show that 239 people killed themselves in Kathmandu in 2004-2005 compared to 207 the previous year. Twenty four people out of the 239 who committed suicide in Kathmandu this year were under 14 years of age. In the far west the number of suicides this year has already reached 197. Hanging (in hill areas) and swallowing poison (in the tarai) are preferred methods but Nepalis are increasingly committing suicide with firearms. Last year there was only one case of a person shooting himself in Kathmandu, this year there were six.

Just as the conflict is responsible for easier access to firearms, it plays a major factor in people’s mental health, says

Shaligram Bhattarai, counsellor at Little Angels School. “The main reason for the increase in suicide rates is the situation of the country. The unstable environment creates instability within the individual making them unable to focus leading to frustration, especially among the youth”.

Depression is the biggest killer and usually people don’t even realise the extent of their own depression.

Rabi Rai, 26, has suffered from depression for the past 12 years. His troubles started at 14 when his teacher reprimanded him in front of his entire class and also hit him. The event so traumatised Rabi that he soon lost interest in going to school and eventually in the world around him. As his feelings of worthlessness increased, he shut himself up in his own world of misery and tried to kill himself many times.

Bhattarai counselled Rabi and recalls, “He was depressed and cut himself off from the world. He just wouldn’t communicate. It took many sessions before I could get him to respond by writing on

bits of paper.”

The teenage years are considered to be the most agonising and to grow up in a country that is itself in a state of flux has taken its toll on vulnerable youngsters. “Ego boundaries of today’s youth are not defined and they have problems reconciling themselves to the expectations their parents have and to finding themselves as well,” says Bhattarai.

The answer to dealing with all these pressures is for the whole family to be part of the growing-up process. Says Mahendra Kumar Nepal, professor and head of the Department of Psychiatry at Teaching Hospital. “It is essential that parents know what is happening in the lives of their children and provide support,” he adds.

As Nepal’s social, economic and political fabric is ripped apart, the people seem to be losing their sense of ‘self’. Maybe it’s about time that instead of peace for political reasons we pushed peace for social reasons. ●

Some names have been changed to protect their identities.


Why volunteer?

Watch out: the positive energy generated from helping others is contagious!

Five years ago I sat on a rock scouring the vista of the Kali Gandaki gorge when a short skinny villager with a pair of tattered shorts appeared like a hobbit from behind a tree.

“What are you doing in Nepal?” he asked in an inquisitive manner. A valid question. “I am a volunteer,” I replied. He gave me a blank look. Perhaps it was the pronunciation of my Nepali, or perhaps he just didn’t understand and instead thought ‘volunteer’ was a strange part of England.

NEPALI PAN
Sarah Huxley



Someone who works for no pay? Someone who does something for nothing? These are definitions that are often given. In fact, being a volunteer

means that you have a passion: a committed passion to work towards something you believe in.

Why would anyone do something for ‘nothing’? Why give up your time and effort for nothing in return? Ah, now we are really getting closer to the crux of the matter: the theory of no returns. There is a belief amongst some that if you volunteer you are a saint dedicating your time towards something that you won’t get paid for. Ah...but you do get ‘paid’.

What do you get from being a volunteer? Quite simply, lots. You experience a world and a life outside of your own box. You experience new places, people and importantly, you learn about yourself, how to work with others and how to grow in confidence. These are the benefits I myself gained from my time with Students Partnership Worldwide (SPW).

But volunteering isn’t purely hedonistic. The positive energy generated from it can be contagious. One teacher from Nawalparasi recently commented about SPW volunteers: “After the volunteers arrived the students’ motivation level has increased, and they have made it a habit to work in a team. Because of the different competitions and the activities that volunteers do it has helped students to bring out their hidden talents.”

Two volunteers also recently told me that since they started a pit latrine training program two community members have told them that the process of building the latrines themselves was very rewarding: it encouraged their ownership of the project. They are in fact encouraging other members to follow suit. Magic.

When you volunteer with an organisation like SPW you become a part of a community. However, being a volunteer doesn’t always mean that you join that new community. As Krishna Bhattachan points out in *Volunteerism in Nepal*, there have been many traditional volunteering organisations such as the Chattis Mauja Irrigation system in Rupandehi. In this case, the local Tharus developed a voluntary irrigation system 150 years ago. It is now run by mixed ethnic groups who operate all the activities including maintenance of the system. A need was identified and local people met the challenge. And that itself was a challenge.

So I now realise that sitting on that boulder five years ago there was so much that I could have told the villager from Baglung. If only my Nepali were up to it... ●

www.spwnepal.org.np



YAY: A Green Club student in Baglung

SARAH HUXLEY

Norway to blame

BANGKOK—If militants from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are indeed linked to the assassination of Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar then Norway, which brokered a peace deal in that country, may have to accept part of the blame, according to scathing editorials and commentaries that have appeared in the South Asian press since last week's murder. Monday's edition of *The Hindu* said: 'Norway, as the peace broker, has much to answer for. From the beginning, it argued for a softly-softly approach to the LTTE, claiming the Tiger was changing its stripes. The assassination of Mr Kadirgamar is a tragic reminder that this is far from true.' (IPS)

Gaza ruse

JERUSALEM—Israel's disengagement from Gaza is a historic twist in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. It may seem like a step forward in this conflict-torn region but some analysts think it is no more than an olive branch meant to jump-start the peace process. 'One doesn't have to travel far to find reasons for Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, since this has been elaborated by the Israelis themselves,' said Nadia Hijab from the Institute for Palestine Studies. She quoted Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's senior adviser Dov Weisglass saying, 'The significance of the disengagement plan is the freezing of the peace process ... effectively, this whole package called the Palestinian state, with all that it entails, has been removed indefinitely from our agenda.' (IPS)

Intellectual-property rights and wrongs

Let's share knowledge so we develop together

Last October, the General Assembly of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) decided to consider what a development-oriented intellectual property regime might look like.

The move was little noticed but in some ways it was as important as the World Trade Organisation's decision that the current round of trade negotiations be devoted to development. Both decisions acknowledge the current rules of the global economic game reflect the interests of the advanced

industrial countries—especially of their big

corporations—more than the interests of the developing world.

Without intellectual property protection, incentives to engage in certain types of creative endeavours would be weakened. But there are high costs associated with intellectual property. Ideas are the most important input into research, and if intellectual property slows down the ability to use others' ideas, then scientific and technological progress will suffer.

In fact, many of the most important ideas—for example the mathematics that underlies the modern computer or the theories behind atomic energy or lasers—are not protected by intellectual property. Academics spend considerable energy freely disseminating their research findings. I am pleased when someone uses my ideas on asymmetric information—though I do appreciate them giving me some credit.

COMMENT
Joseph Stiglitz



By contrast, an intellectual property regime rewards innovators by creating a temporary monopoly power, allowing them to charge far higher prices than they could if there were competition.

The economic rationale for intellectual property is that faster innovation offsets the enormous costs of such inefficiencies. But it has become increasingly clear that excessively strong or badly formulated intellectual property rights may actually *impede* innovation—and not just by increasing the price of research.

The creation of any product requires many ideas: sorting out their contribution to the outcome—let alone which ones are really new—can be nearly impossible.

Consider a drug based on traditional knowledge, say an herb well known for its medicinal properties. How important is the contribution of the US firm that isolates

the active ingredient? Pharmaceutical companies argue they should be entitled to a full patent, paying nothing to the developing country from where the knowledge was taken, even though the country preserves the biodiversity without which the drug would never have come to market. Unsurprisingly, developing countries see it differently.

Society has always recognised that other values may trump intellectual property. When America faced an anthrax threat in the wake of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, officials issued a compulsory license for Cipro, the best-known antidote.

Intellectual property is important but the appropriate IP regime for a developing country is different from that for an advanced industrial country. The TRIP's scheme failed to recognize this. In fact, intellectual property should never have been included in a trade agreement in the first place, at least partly because its regulation is demonstrably beyond the competency of trade negotiators.

Besides, an international organisation already exists to protect intellectual property. Hopefully, in WIPO's reconsideration of intellectual property regimes the voices of the developing world will be heard more clearly than they were in the WTO negotiations. The aim of trade liberalisation is to boost development, not hinder it. ● (Project Syndicate)

Joseph E. Stiglitz, a Nobel laureate in economics, is professor of economics at Columbia University.

के तपाईंले आज अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट पढ्नु भयो ?


उपेन्द्रमान सिंह
 पूर्व कप्तान-राष्ट्रिय फुटबल टिम

व्यक्ति अनेक, विचार अनेक, क्षेत्र अनेक तर पत्रिका मात्र एक... अन्नपूर्ण पोष्ट

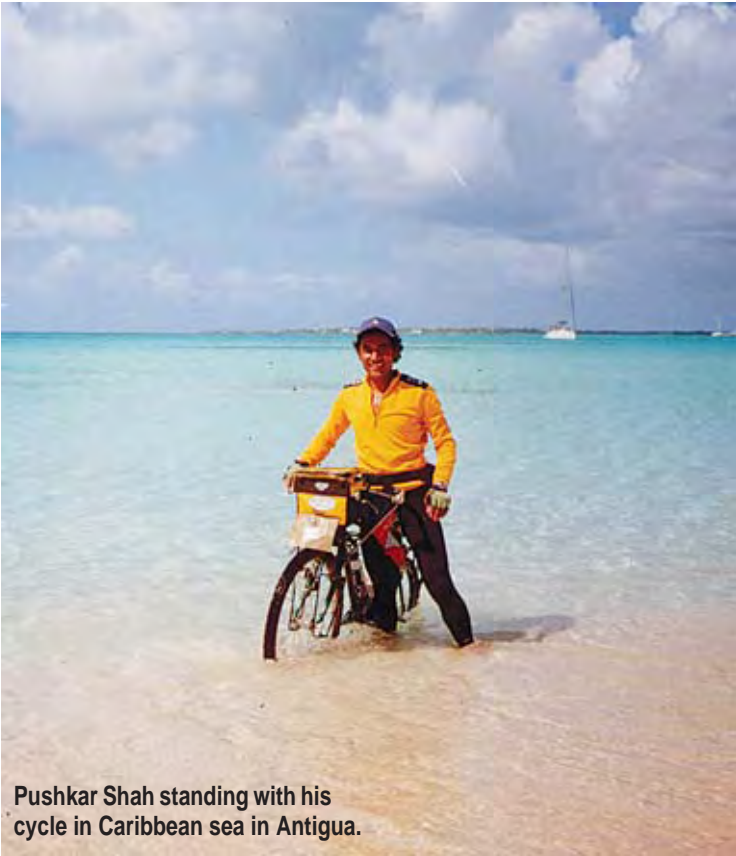
अन्नपूर्ण पोष्टमा प्रकाशित सामग्री सम्बन्धी विविध प्रश्न लिएर हामी तपाईंको घर आँगनमा आउँदै छौं । तपाईंको सही जवाफले आकर्षक उपहार पाउने छ ।



सम्पूर्ण पत्रिका

Peddalling with purpose

Nepalis are going global cycling for peace



Pushkar Shah standing with his cycle in Caribbean sea in Antigua.

AARTI BASNYAT

Why would anyone want to spend time and effort cycling around the world? In Nepal the obvious answer seems to be to raise awareness for peace, though personal popularity might come a close second. Whatever the cause, the number of cyclists who have decided to tackle the world on two wheels have grown. It seems to be the thing to do and why not? It is healthy, adventurous, requires little financial backing (you can always beg) and is for a good cause: peace that our country and the world desperately need. The noble cause was first

taken up by Nepal's most popular cyclist, Pushkar Shah. When Pushkar decided to hop on his bike and go around the world in November 1998 many people were sceptical. "They thought I had lost my mind," he says. But seven years, 160,000 km and 70 countries later, Puskar has proven himself. The idea of an 11-year world tour represented everything important to the Charikot native: a purpose in life, adventure and the message of peace. The going has been tough and Pushkar has certainly got his share of adventure. In the

past seven years he has been mugged on the streets of New York, kidnapped in Mexico and had his bicycle stolen in New Zealand where Sir Edmund Hillary came to his rescue buying him a new one. Cycling around the world is not always about fun and health and Pushkar is living testimony to the hardships faced by a world cyclist. Cycling has recently gained popularity in Nepal both as road racing and mountain biking. Cycling around the globe on the other hand is a phenomenon started by Pushkar but not one that ended with him. Many others have been inspired by his adventure. Yam Lal Rasaili is one such cycling enthusiast. In spite of being handicapped this spunky cyclist embarked on a journey from Mechi to Mahakali. The younger generation seems to be getting more and more imaginative. Twenty-year-old Dipendra Nembang from Damak rode reverse on his bicycle from the Mechi Bridge to Kathmandu, a distance of 651 km. The latest group of long-distance cyclists are more in tune with Pushkar's aims. Four of them set out earlier this year. Narayan Prasad Kharel, Thakeswor Chettri, Lok Bandhu Karki and Khadga Siwakoti rolled off aiming to travel to 113 countries in nine years. They plan to make Brunei on the first leg of their tour and reach Japan on the second. They have not only followed Pushkar's trail by embarking on the world tour but have also taken up his worthy cause: peace. ●

The Federer express

Seven tips from Nepal's top tennis champ

A few years ago, I was recruiting at the Orange Bowl Tennis Tournament in Key Biscayne, Florida. Orange Bowl is arguably the premier junior event in the world and it is one of my favourite tournaments because you get to see future tennis stars as well as enjoy the beautiful island that is minutes away from Miami. I remember watching this little kid playing on one of the outside courts. He had an effortless game and was smooth as silk. Sampras-like I thought and definitely a player I wanted to keep an eye on him in the years to come. I looked at the draw sheet and marked his name: Roger Federer. Little did I know I was watching perhaps the greatest tennis player of all time. What makes Roger so special and what can we learn from watching him play? Besides the fact that he is a great athlete and an amazing talent, what separates him from the rest is his efficient stroke. He is technically sound and that is why he does not break down under extreme pressure. Roger keeps every thing as simple as possible and there are a few things we can incorporate in our game from watching the Federer Express.

GAME POINT
Sujoy Lama



- 1 Grip.** Make sure you have the right grip. For forehand, start with an eastern grip and do not let it go past a semi-western grip. For backhand, switch to the eastern backhand grip with the help of the non-dominant hand. And for serves and overheads, use the continental grip. Proper grip gives you the ability to get the proper contact on the ball and a smooth follow through. Roger does not have extreme grips and that is why he is so successful on all surfaces.
- 2 Balance.** Next time you watch Federer on tv watch how still his head is on all his strokes. Balance is very important in tennis and the minute your head bobbles, you lose control of the ball. Keep your body upright and think about balancing an egg on your head while you hit the ball.
- 3 Preparation.** Turn your shoulder as soon as you know which side the ball is coming to instead of waiting for the bounce of the ball to turn. If you do that, it's too late. This tip is for all your strokes including the overhead.
- 4 Compact swing.** Keep your swings circular and compact for ground strokes. (Letter C) For volleys, a shoulder turn is all you need for a back swing. A huge back swing means you are going to be late with your contact point and that leads to disaster.
- 5 Contact point.** Keep the ball out in front of you at all times. As soon as the contact point is behind you, it will be difficult to direct the ball.
- 6 Stay Relaxed.** Easy to say but hard to do. Be aware of your breathing pattern and make it a point to inhale and exhale during and between points. Having relaxed muscles will help you execute the way you want to. When you have adequate oxygen, you are going to be able to make the right decision quickly.
- 7 Proper Footwork.** Stay on the balls of your feet and take smaller steps the closer you get to the bounce of the ball. You must have a split step (small hop) before you move towards the ball. This will help you react to the ball quicker and get you in a better position to hit the ball better.



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"Lata ko desh ma gaando tanderi." (In a land of fools, even a man with a bad goatee can be a hero.) - as translated by UNACOOTs, the United Nation's Association of Cartoonists



by JIGME GATON



NT ON NETV D.

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- Paris Hilton, Reality Show Star

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#80 2062 by jigme gaton - read. love. write.

The Adventures of HeroJig can also be seen at www.extreme-nepal.com

ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Slide Show and Art Exhibition** by Alphonso Doss at Siddhartha Art Galley, until 19 August. 4218048
- ❖ **Kathmandu's Reflection in Japan** art exhibition by Raja Ratna Sthapit at Buddha Art Gallery, 19-21August , 4PM, 4441869
- ❖ **World Photography Day** at Baber Mahal Art Council Gallery, 19-25 August. 4220735
- ❖ **Art Walk** Traditional artworks at Hotel Yak and Yeti, Darbar Marg. 4248999

EVENTS

- ❖ **Janai Purnima** 19 August.
- ❖ **Bagmati Eco-Challenge**, Chobar-Balaju-Shivapuri-Sundarijal-Gokarna, 19 August.
- ❖ **Mini Math Olympiad** for girls at St. Mary's School, Jawalakhel, 19 August. 4720396
- ❖ **MTV Blast** featuring Vjs Nikhil and Ramona. Rs 1499, Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 6PM onwards,19 August.
- ❖ **Dance with the Ghosts** at Club 1905 Kantipath, Rs 350, 6PM onwards, 19 August.
- ❖ **Funk Night with Mctwister** at Moksh, Pulchowk Rs 150, 7.30 PM onwards, 19 August. 5526212
- ❖ **Gai Jatra** 20August.
- ❖ **Peace and Harmony** Gai Jatra annual pride festival, starts from Sanchaya Kosh building, Thamel, 20 August, 12PM. 4445147
- ❖ **Jal Jatra** grand finale and closing ceremony, Bagmati River Fest, 20 August.
- ❖ **Thought Transformation** by Ivy van Eer, 10AM-4PM, 20-21 August, HBMC, Thamel, 441483
- ❖ **International Day for Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition** 23 August.
- ❖ **Changa Chait** at Club Himalaya, 9 September. 4433949
- ❖ **Sunsilk Nepal Fashion Week** at Hotel Yak and Yeti, 9-13 September.
- ❖ **Intercultural Exchange Program** Every Wednesday at Goethe Zentrum, Thapathali, 4.15 PM. 4250871
- ❖ **St. Xavier's Monsoon Rendezvous** fundraising dinner, 6PM onwards, 19 September . 5521050/5521150
- ❖ **Film South Asia '05** 27 September-2 October, entry forms and details. www.himalassociation.org/fsa
- ❖ **Tai Chi** Demonstration and group meditation at Swayambhu. 4256618
- ❖ **1905 Sundays** Garage sale, pet practices and more. 4215068

MUSIC

- ❖ **Hindustani Classical Music Concert** Tuesdays at Hotel Vajra, 7PM. 4271545
- ❖ **JCS Trio** Saturdays, 8PM at 1905, Kantipath, free entrance.
- ❖ **The Duo** Live at the Jazz Bar, Hotel Shangrila, Lajimpat.
- ❖ **The Good Time Blues Band** at Rum Doodle, Thamel, 7PM. 4701208
- ❖ **Ladies Nights** Wednesdays at Jatra, Thamel, with live acoustic music. 4256622
- ❖ **Live Music** at Hotel de l'Annapurna, Darbar Marg. 4221711
- ❖ **Jazz** at Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lajimpat, Wednesdays and Saturdays, 8PM.

FOOD


- ❖ **Monsoon Madness Special** at K-too!, 30 percent discount on Mexican specialities. 4700043
- ❖ **Kilroy's 3rd Annual Wine Festival** at Kilroy's of Kathmandu, Thamel. 4250440/41
- ❖ **Saturday BBQ** for Rs 888 at Le Meridien, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **International Buffet** Lunch at Soaltee Crowne Plaza, every Saturday and Sunday, Rs 625 plus tax with unlimited drinks.
- ❖ **Ciney and Par-e-jat** BBQ for Rs 625 per person at Dwarika's, Fridays at 7PM. 4479448
- ❖ **Boire and Manger** at Vineyard, Baber Mahal Revisited.
- ❖ **Special Combo** Burmese and Thai Menu at 1905, Kantipath.
- ❖ **Krishnarpan** Nepali speciality restaurant at Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488
- ❖ **Barbecue Dinner** Fridays at the Summit Hotel. 5521810
- ❖ **Earth Watch Restaurant** at Park Village, dine with nature. 4375280

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Three Days** at Nagarkot, health oriented program 30 September- 2 October. Info@goldenagersnepal.com
- ❖ **Spa** Seasonal rates valid till 21 October at Le Meridien, Gokarna. 4451212
- ❖ **Overnight Stay** Breakfast and swimming for Rs 999 per person at Godavari Village Resort. 5560675, 5560775
- ❖ **Stay one night** get one Night at Shangri-la Village, Pokhara. 4435742

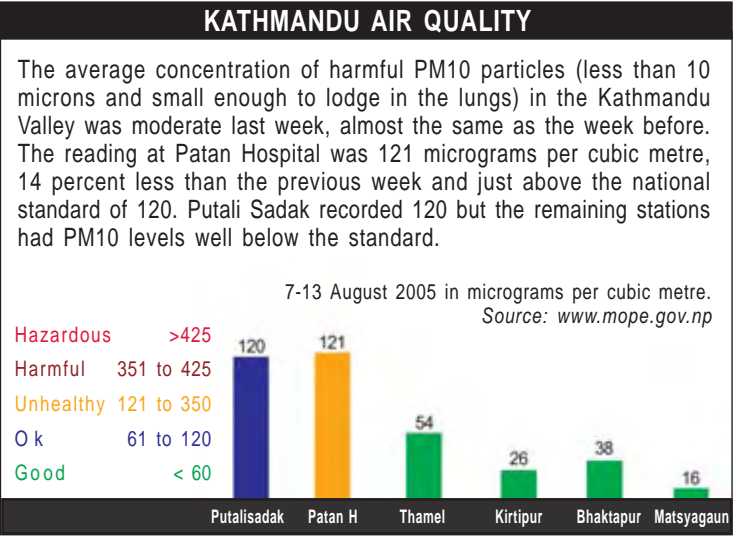
Quest Entertainment

The Rising is an epic tale of friendship, love, loss and betrayal set against the backdrop of the Indian Mutiny of 1857. During a fierce battle in the Afghan wars of the mid-century, Mangal, a heroic sepoy, rescues his British commanding officer William Gordon. The event creates a strong and binding friendship that transcends rank and race. But the friendship is soon challenged by the arrival of a charming and beautiful young aristocrat and new gun cartridges. Suspicion spreads that the British are ignoring religious beliefs in favour of cartridges greased with animal fat. The rumour of this imposed pollution is the spark that ignites the powder keg of resentment in the country. This sweeping epic is based on real historical events, seen as a trigger for Indian independence.



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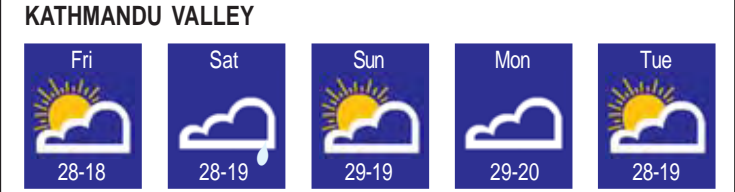
NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



KATHMANDU

Competition between weather systems is responsible for this year's dry monsoon. Unusually this year whenever a low-pressure trough develops over Nepal, moisture deficient clouds from the west and north rush to fill it up faster than those from the Bay of Bengal, the major source of monsoon moisture in normal years. You can see that in this satellite picture taken Thursday morning and it is the reason for the limited rain in recent days despite heavy cloud cover. While rainfall was lacking in central Nepal in June and July, in the first half of August the region got normal or above normal precipitation. Looking ahead, the prevailing high-intensity monsoon trough will advance over Nepal bringing short bursts of medium-intensity showers towards late evening and night.



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MIN BAJRACHARYA

LANTERNS FOR DEMOCRACY : Women representing all walks of life hold 36 lanterns at the start of Tuesday’s mass meeting in Basantapur square called by the Civic Movement for Peace and Democracy.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

IN TUNE WITH OUR NEIGHBOURS: India’s Pandit Mukesh Sharma and Anupriya jam with the Nepali Sukarma band at a concert in BICC on Saturday to mark India’s 59th Independence Day.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

SIGNS OF THE TIMES: Some members of the crowd at Tuesday’s mass meeting for peace and democracy put their opinions front and centre . Police later tried to seize some of the signs.



KIRAN PANDAY

BOMBED POST: A policeman in a pensive mood in front of the Lubhu police post in Lalitpur. Suspected Maoists detonated a powerful pressure cooker bomb at the post on Tuesday. No one was injured.



KIRAN PANDAY

GARDEN FLOWERS: Contestants for the Miss Nepal pageant pose for the media during a press meet at the Hyatt Regency Hotel on Tuesday. The big day is 10 September.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Coming home to Kidz

He has dispensed drugs and directed a local INGO but dishing out food is how Ananta Amatya really gets his kicks. After graduating in pharmacy from Ohio State University he worked for a number of years as a pharmacist in the US. But that didn’t grab him much. It was while managing the South Asian operations of the Swiss food chain Movenpick that Amatya realised his hunger for the food industry. At the same time he explored his passion for interior design by designing Movenpick restaurants in Maldives, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. After working in 16 different countries, Amatya decided to return to Nepal—at a time when most Nepalis are headed in the

other direction. “I have lived and travelled in many places but never felt like I belonged anywhere but at home in Nepal,” he says. Passion for good food and design led Amatya to open Kidz in Kupondole. “I started this place to bring out the child in each and every person,” says Amatya. But catering to kids is a serious business for the restaurateur, who believes in giving 100 percent to everything he does. “You do not need an institution to train you, if you are committed enough you will go that extra mile to train yourself.” Kidz’ menu reflects Amatya’s international CV. Fresh and crisp Belgian

waffles, blue cheese pizza and tiramisu are only a few of the exotic items. More foreign flavours can be found decorating the interior: Kiwi glider kites hanging from the ceiling, a huge steel train from China, green lovebirds and three guinea pigs in cute cages. The cafe’s bathrooms are clean and kid-sized. Amatya’s advice to others who want to do things differently? Go after what you want. “Most people think about the risk of failing and do not forge ahead—there is always a chance that you may fail but you will never know unless you try.” And what a happy state of affairs that he has decided to do that in his native Nepal and not Nebraska. ● *Mallika Aryal*

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His master’s voice

If you are one of those who flicks the remote over to the World Wrestling Federation Channel as soon as NTV’s Six O’clock News Bulletin gets underway then you don’t know what you’ve been missing lately.

The studio design has been transformed to introduce a more sizzling contemporary look, the main newscasters have been replaced with robots, the introductory animation and graphics have been upgraded to show the planet earth spinning furiously out of control through a violent cosmos lit up by exploding supernova, and the content of the news itself has been spruced up with extra-gripping infotainment.

In fact, if one didn’t already know that this was a government news program, one could be forgiven for mistaking it for a scintillating simulcast of Pyongyang TV which itself is the North Korean franchise of Fox News Channel (Slogan: “Proud To Be Unfair and Pleased To Be Slightly Out of Balance”).

Enough of this idle banter. Without beating the bush around any further, let’s go right over to the studios of His Master’s Voice at Singha Darbar and follow this evening’s news lineup.

“Namaste. Welcome to the Six O’Clock Edition of news on His Master’s Voice. Before we start, a longish commercial break which is brought to you today by:

Mutton-Flavoured Instant Noodles: “If it Smells Like a Goat, It Must Be a Goat”

Unrealistic Juice: “Only Permissible Man-made Ingredients Used”

Royal Challenger: “The King of Even Better Times.”

Sucks: “Made from Mother’s Milk, Bee’s Honey and Almonds, the Only Soap in Nepal That Is So Yummy.”

HMG: “Three More Years”

INSAS: “The World’s Finest Non-Lethal Assault Rifle”

...and **SpicyTel:** “Mobiles that Both Outlaws and Inlaws Trust”

Welcome back. Here are the main points of the news in the order that we have been told to read them by the Ministry of Telepathy and Miscommunications:

His Majesty Taufa’ahau Tupou Wala-wala IV of the Kingdom of Tonga has sent an automatically-generated Microsoft Outlook ‘Read Receipt’ to a previous message of congratulations and hearty felicitations transmitted to His Majesty on the occasion of His Majesty’s Happy Birthday last week in which His Majesty’s Nepali counterpart wished His Majesty and the people of Tonga continued happiness, peace and prosperity in the years to come—three attributes which the message said continued to elude us in our own country. The message read: ‘We hope that the bonds of friendship and amity between the landlocked kingdom of Nepal and the sealocked Kingdom of Tonga will transcend the obstacles of geography and history to grow by leaps and bounds in the years to come. Please acknowledge this message. P.S. How do you do it?’

Nepal this week established full diplomatic relations with San Marino, a landmark event that brings ties between the two countries into a more even keel after years of often-strained relations. The Ministry of Foreigners’ Affairs in a statement hailed the decision and said it had helped lessen tensions in bilateral relations that had been running high because hardly anyone in either country knew where the other country was. “The likelihood of full-scale war breaking out between Nepal and San Marino has been considerably reduced with the decision to exchange ambassadors,” said one Nepali official, “but we could in future still invade San Marino if its ambassador here is absent during ceremonies at the airport to see off dignitaries.”

UML leader Madhab Kumar Nepal has taken personal responsibility for the decision to join the third Share Bahadur Deuba government last year, saying “it was a huge mistake”, and has sacked his deputy. Meanwhile, Girija Prasad Koirala yesterday accused everyone in his party of being palace agents, and said he wouldn’t be surprised if he himself was one and didn’t even know it.

And that brings us to the end of today’s bulletin, which was brought to you by **Himalayan Iron Rods** (“Best during Emergency”). Join us again next week. Same time, same station. ●

नेपाल कृषिप्रधान मुलुक हो । यहाका ८० प्रतिशतभन्दा बढी जनता कृषि पेसामा आधारित छन् । कूल राष्ट्रिय आयको फन्दै ४० प्रतिशत हिस्सा अहिले पनि कृषि क्षेत्रले नै ओगटेको छ । सिङ्गो मुलुकको आर्थिक, सामाजिक मेरुदण्डको रुपमा रहेको कृषिक्षेत्र उपेक्षित हुनु हुँदैन । कृष्कहरू देशका वास्तविक नायक हुन् । उनीहरूलाई सम्मान र कदर गर्नुपर्छ । कृष्कहरूले पनि आफ्नो पसिनामाथि विश्वास गर्नुपर्छ । नयाँ नयाँ कृषि प्रणाली अवलम्बन गर्नुपर्छ । पढ्दैमा खेती गर्नु नहुने होइन । फन् कृषिक्षेत्रलाई आधुनिकीकरण गर्न शिक्षित र सचेत कृष्कको खााचो छ । त्यसैले कृषि पेसालाई आदर गरौं, कृष्कलाई सम्मान गरौं ।

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