

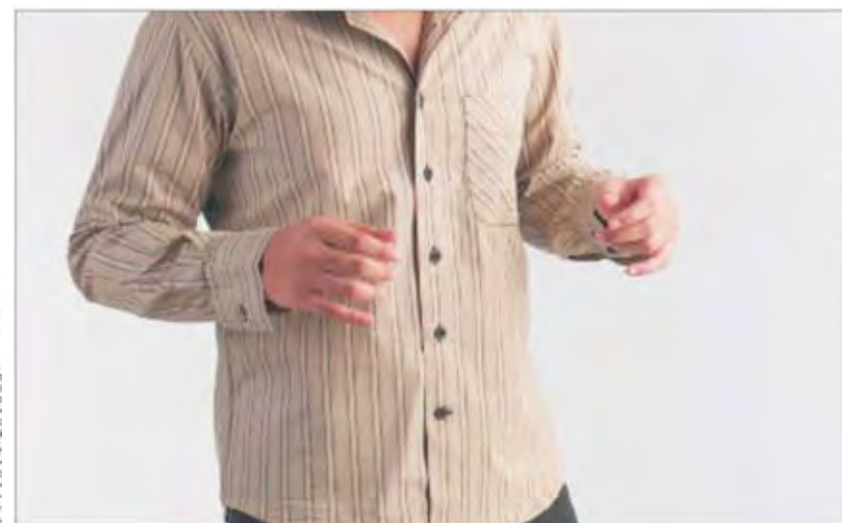
## Press Freedom for Peace and Democracy



KIRAN PANDAY

## King Gyanendra does the Patan walkabout

(With reporting by Sharad KC and Kiran Nepal)



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## TO KINGDOM COME

There are only two ways to go from here: tighten up or loosen off. Which path will the architects of absolutism take?

All indications are that the hardline clique that is dictating policy is pushing the king to tighten up and take care of the unfinished business of February First. The royal takeover was supposed to be designed to crush the insurgency. It has been used to crush democracy instead.

Recent orchestrated public threats against civil society, political parties and the media aren't even veiled anymore. Royal nominees in the districts are beating up administrators, intimidating and arresting journalists. Shady front organisations that serve as apologists for the royal right are resorting to McCarthyite ultranationalism. State-run media has descended to gutterspeak against proponents of democracy. The new chief secretary is wagging his forefinger ominously at the civil service and warning it to be loyal or else.

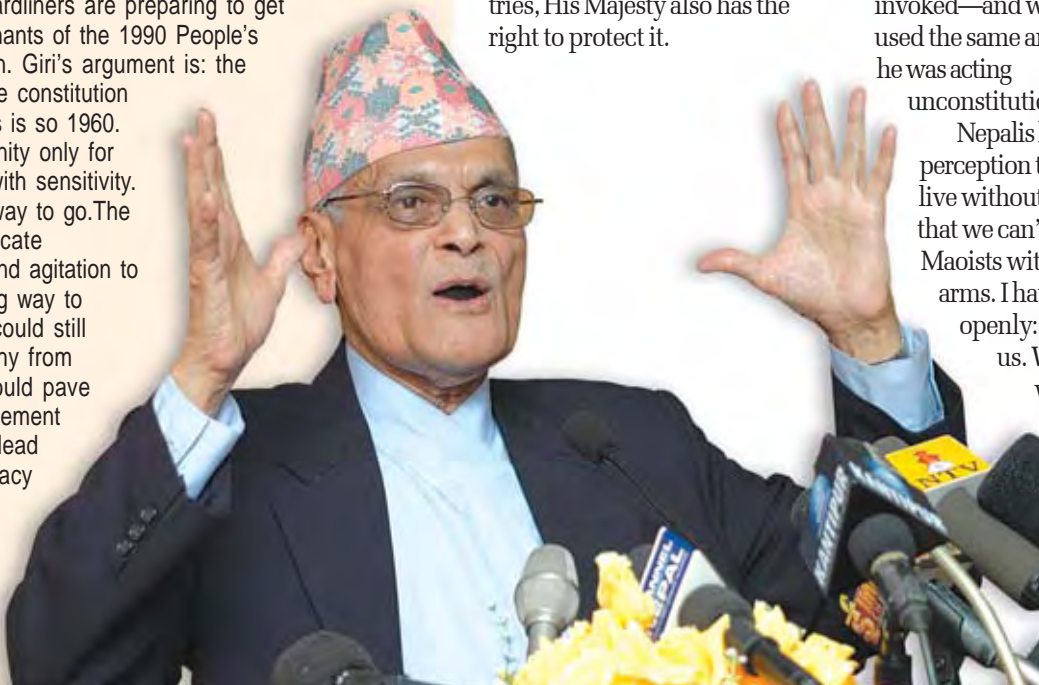
We haven't yet heard the Maoists being criticised in as harsh terms. Caught off-guard by the rebel ceasefire the regime hasn't even shown the maturity to respond fittingly. And in the countryside all this half-hearted ceasefire has meant is that the Maoists have temporarily suspended killing combatants. But their harassment, extortion and abduction of non-combatants, including children, continue unabated.

Now, a politically-incorrect vice-chairman has broken his puzzling silence to lash out at the 1990 constitution, saying it is a hindrance to silencing dissent and gagging the media. Whatever one may say about Tulsi Giri, he isn't someone who just shoots his mouth off. His impatience with the present "neither duck nor chicken" regime is well-known, but what is intriguing is the timing of his outburst. Giri has in the past advocated banning political parties altogether and has argued with palace moderates about it. He has told diplomats: "The king believes in the parties, I don't."

The Biratnagar speech transcribed opposite could be an ominous sign that royal hardliners are preparing to get rid of the last ragged remnants of the 1990 People's Movement: the constitution. Giri's argument is: the king bestowed upon us the constitution and he can change it. This is so 1960.

A crisis is an opportunity only for those who can handle it with sensitivity. Loosening up is the only way to go. The political parties must extricate themselves from a dead end agitation to offer the king a face-saving way to backtrack. Such a move could still rescue the Nepali monarchy from imminent irrelevance, it could pave the way to a tripartite agreement on peace and justice and lead to a restoration of democracy and civil liberties.

Any delay will make these three options moot, prolong the conflict and push Nepal to kingdom come.



KIRAN PANDAY

# Tulsi Giri speaks out

In-house translation of excerpts from a transcript of the speech delivered by Vice-chairman Tulsi Giri in Biratnagar on 20 September.

These days His Majesty is touring various parts of the country to find out for himself the condition that you, his subjects, live under. Isn't that his right? Yet, those who call themselves the people's representatives are saying he shouldn't be doing it. They say that as a constitutional monarch he should relax in his palace. Girija Prasadji says that the king is like the idol of Pashupatinath. What he doesn't realise is that hundreds of thousands of devotees seek the blessings of Pashupatinath and they turn to it in times of difficulty even though it is just a stone figure.

When the 1990 constitution was promulgated it wasn't because of the People's Movement, it was because His Majesty himself exercised his right to change the constitution. This is an inalienable right that has been vested on the monarch from time immemorial. No one can take it away and if anyone tries, His Majesty also has the right to protect it.

Now, they say they want to debate whether the monarchy should be kept or done away with. It's not so simple, this is a potentially huge leap. Where did these so-called democrats get the right to demand that? After all, His Majesty has said he is committed to multiparty democracy and constitutional monarchy. The parties have now called for a democratic republic even though they know the people will never accept it.

The parties say there is no democracy after February First. On what basis are they saying this, give me one reason. There are parties, they are allowed to hold meetings and demonstrations. After all, the king had to make his move because there was no parliament. I told foreigners: parliament was dissolved by the parliamentary parties themselves, years before the king took over. Now the parties want to restore parliament and for that Article 127 needs to be invoked—and when the king used the same article they said he was acting

unconstitutionally.

Nepalis have a perception that we can't live without foreign money, that we can't control the Maoists without foreign arms. I have told them openly: don't threaten us. We will survive without your money. We will live without your guns. This country will live independently. I told them let's be

friends let's cooperate to solve this problem and they said the parties and the king have to work together. No one disagrees with that. His Majesty agrees. Faced with terrorism, all those who love peace and democracy have to work together. Now, if the parties are not for peace and democracy then I have nothing to say.

We can't do anything against newspapers that write against us because of the constitution. Nowhere in the world can newspapers get away with what papers get away with here. One can sue the editor of *Kantipur*, a cartoonist or a publisher and if you win they may get two years behind bars but they can get out on bail and continue writing whatever they want. This constitution allows such things. How does one deal with this?

It is easy to blame the government for not fulfilling His Majesty's wishes. But how can it when politicised forces threaten strikes and pen downs? If we try to stop it they will go to the Supreme Court. Another problem. After all, the justices are also human beings they are also affected by what happens outside. Now I hear the Supreme Court wants to dissolve the RCCC.

The parties who swear by this constitution have made it meaningless by their own statements and by removing constitutional monarchy and opting for democratic republic. If they have cast aside the constitution, there is no reason why others should adhere to it. We are battling terrorism, we are fighting anarchy and we have to move ahead by circumventing constitutional provisions. ●

# Something is rotten

The smell is unmistakable and overpowering

This is the time of the year when Nepalis do their annual shopping, house repairs and autumn cleaning in the run-up to the upcoming Dasain-Tihar-Chhath.

There is a parallel in the political scene: a mood of anticipation tinged with apprehension about something Big that is about to happen. No one is quite sure what, but it is sure to be significant.

## STATE OF THE STATE

CK Lal



The unilateral ceasefire by the Maoists

has caught the state in a bind. Judging from the outburst by Vice-chairman Tulsi Giri in Biratnagar this week, it appears that hardcore monarchists are feeling a bit cornered by the proactive rebel ceasefire and pressure from the international community. Regressive elements in the palace may be trying to get the king to hit back decisively.

It goes without saying that any such

move will be counterproductive. But then hardliners aren't known for their clear-headedness. Giri wasn't just issuing empty threats when he lashed out at the constitution. Prior to February First, we ignored Mohammad Mohsin's prediction of a "return to autocracy" and look at what happened. Something nasty is cooking once again in the royal political kitchen. The smell is overpowering.

Was February First an all-or-nothing gamble that has to logically continue with more and more repressive measures? Or was it merely a two-step-back-one-step-forward move to further consolidate monarchical power? Based on conflicting signals emanating from the palace, it's difficult to say. Between Dasain and Tihar, the pendulum of power can swing either way: an even more despotic regime run by the military, or a softer authoritarian version functioning under a multi-party façade.

The Maoists may have hoped to score big with their overtures to the parties. But

the parties remain suspicious of their intentions. Civil society is hesitant to give them an unqualified benefit of the doubt. The international community is sceptical. Nobody is taking the Maoist commitment to pluralistic democracy at face value.

In the countryside, the ceasefire has meant the continuation of their non-lethal war through abductions, extortions and indoctrination campaigns. Will they strike back at the state with even more vehemence if the ceasefire isn't transformed into a full-fledged truce? Just look at the past pattern.

It is easy for civil society to be critical of absolutism but the devil lies in the detail: what is the alternative vision, slogan, ideology and plan of action to replace this tottering regime? Pointing fingers at the leaders of political parties will not do, their inaction is already cause for genuine concern and exasperation. How can it include and stir an apathetic Nepali public into action?

Meanwhile, the Americans fear the fall of monarchy will lead to a Maoist takeover.

They are hopeful the king will mend his ways and restore democracy. Indians fear absolute anarchy in Nepal more than an absolute monarchy and are concentrating their efforts in mainstreaming the Maoists. The EU believes that as long as human rights issues are taken care of, there isn't much to worry about. For the Chinese, indifference is the best defence against charges of unwanted meddling. The UN system feels strongly about what needs to be done but its charter limits its role to the wishes of member states. (See Kul Chandra Gautam interview, p 7).

So, civil society is pushing for a government response to the ceasefire and has set up a monitoring mission. Political parties say they'll talk to the Maoists. The foreigners say they are stepping up the pressure on the king. And the king himself can't be untouched by all this.

All we can say is: at least they're not sitting around twiddling fingers. That and the near limitless fortitude of the Nepali people are what give us a glimmer of hope. ●



## LETTERS

## CEASEFIRE

The Maoists' unilateral ceasefire has naturally been met with some scepticism as noted by Naresh Newar in 'What next?' (#264).

Those who hail it as a sign that the Maoists are ready to compromise have conveniently forgotten that Baburam Bhattarai himself had on more than one occasion stated that acceptance of multiparty democracy and market economy would be just but a stepping stone to the final goal: the establishment of a totalitarian communist state. It is surprising then how the political parties are ready to strike a deal with the Maoists not withstanding the fact that hundreds of their party workers have been murdered by the rebels. Moreover they seem to have failed to notice that Indian Maoists, who share not only the ideology but also resources and a masterplan for a regionwide 'compact revolutionary zone' with Nepali Maoists are not fighting against a 'feudal monarchy' but against a 'democratic republic'.

The only logical longterm way to deal with this has always been reconciliation between the palace and the parties. The country is more than 'at a historic crossroad' it is on the brink of an abyss.

**S K Aryal, Bishalnagar**

- When the Maoists declared a three-month unilateral ceasefire, they presented the government with an opportunity to respond so there would a chance for peace. Our country's future is at stake, our posterity and the wellbeing of the people. The government should take this opportunity seriously before it is too late and we reach a point of no return.

**Razesh Ajib, email**

- With their track record, the Maoists have to do more than just sending around

faxes to the media announcing the ceasefire. In the past, they have always declared a ceasefire when their guerrillas needed to rest, rearm and recruit. This is what they are doing now. That is why I don't agree with the tone of the editorial in your last issue ('One-sided truce', #264) calling on the government to respond. Why should it? It is a public relations stunt done at the behest of Indian political parties.

**J B Singh, email**

## NAMING AND SHAMING

Kunda Dixit's 'Naming and shaming' (# 265) provides a true story of Nepal's progress in meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Unlike many developing countries, Nepal has been working very seriously to meet the MDGs. To achieve the highly ambitious but achievable goals, Nepal and development agencies must have a conducive environment as a prerequisite to meet the targets. First, the ongoing conflict in the country must be resolved to bring political stability. Second, as Mr Dixit rightly emphasises, the restoration of 'true' grassroots democracy is prerequisite since the development of Nepal's villages are in the hands of local communities and their elected representatives. Nepal made significant progress in sustainable development since the 1990s precisely due to decentralisation and community empowerment through various hardware and software development programs. Third, an appropriate institutional framework must be in place to effectively link both central and local government resources with civil society and the private sector in meeting development targets. Fourth, all MDGs must be integrated for synergetic impact. And

lastly, we need to constantly review progress and learn our lessons from experiences.

Although the good news is that Nepal has made progress as highlighted in the UN Human Development Report 2005, we may regress unless the challenges are addressed. The *Nepali Times* deserves praise for bringing up development issues instead of just focusing on politics.

**Hum Gurung, Griffith University, Australia**

- It's hard to believe that Nepal's poverty figures have gone down. Statistics can be twisted and the United Nations and World Bank are notorious for this. So what if Nepal has gone up four points in the poverty index? What kind of difference has it made on the ground for ordinary Nepalis? How do you put a dollars and cents count on a mother who has lost her life because she can't get to a hospital in time because the conflict has closed down the health post, the road and all mobility? All this talk of meeting Millennium Development Goals are meaningless unless we address the political problem of resolving this conflict.

**Sudarshan Dulal, email**

## INDIA CHINA

If both India and China are lukewarm about a transit through Nepal ('Traversing the middle kingdom', #265) I don't see why Nepal is so enthusiastic about it. Besides, as Pragma Shrestha argues in her excellent investigation, even if it is feasible Nepal is really not going to benefit from having all these smoke belching trucks going from the plains to the plateau. And now they're talking about an electric train from Birganj to Kodari. Dream on.

Before chasing this pie in the sky, how about building an east-west railroad within Nepal? How about using our hydropower for

transportation, and how about maintaining our existing highways properly?

**Dinesh Aryal, Babar Mahal**

## TOP TIPS

Ashutosh Tiwari's column about jobs and careers 'Tips to reach the top' (Strictly Business, #265) makes some valid points about jobseekers approaching their job search, jobs and careers in a systematic and professional manner. However, employers too need to improve the way they handle the hiring process. It is true that Nepali jobseekers could present their strengths and skills much more convincingly. At the same time, employers also need to be clear about what they are looking for in the candidates. Most wanted ads are extremely generic and don't even have the company or contact names on them. And the way most interviews go, I am not sure what the primary motive of the interviewers is—hiring the best candidate or simply going through the motions. No matter how much a candidate tries to ignore the deep rooted culture of 'source-force', it is there alive and kicking. There are numerous instances where candidates with very strong résumés are not even invited for an interview. Yes, it is at the discretion of the hiring company but one cannot help but wonder if interview decisions are solely merit-based, especially after noticing the people who eventually get hired for the position.

**Bichar Nepali, via email**

## RAINBOW

Great picture of a rainbow and the all-seeing eyes of the Prince of Peace (#265) to coincide with International Day of Peace this week. Let's hope our ruler believes in omens.

**Lin Sedlar, email**

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PICS: MARTY LOGAN



**SOME SMILES:** Villagers in Chidipani VDC say they feel safer travelling under the Maoist ceasefire but shopkeeper Yog Prasad Bhattarai says business is still terrible.

# One-sided hope

**MARTY LOGAN** in PALPA

**F**rom his perch atop a stool in his dry goods shop, Yog Prasad Bhattarai sees much that happens in the village of Awikbhanjyang, just off the Siddhartha Highway to Pokhara. The numbers of people moving up the road that curves past his shop have grown in the past three weeks after the ceasefire announcement. But there is no increase in the number of customers in his shop.

"Business is down, there's been no change," he tells visitors wearily.

Such response is typical from the residents of Tansen when asked about the ceasefire. "We're happy", "it's good news" or "I can move easily" people say but there is always a but: "But the government

should also agree to the ceasefire."

Palpa's beauty is breathtaking even with the Annapurnas shrouded in monsoon clouds. Terraces of emerald paddy and lush forests shine in the sun. On the path to Buddhikot, villagers shield themselves with umbrellas as they hurry their livestock along rocky, rutted roads and trails. At the local school, headmaster Jaganath Sharma sits on a straw mat under a pipal tree.

The area has been little disturbed by the conflict because it's not on a main rebel route. But some months ago some soldiers disguised as Maoists entered one end of the village while two rebels on a motorcycle rode in at the other. After the shooting stopped, one Maoist was dead while the other was wounded and escaped.

"After the ceasefire things like that haven't happened," says the headmaster. "People are hoping that if both sides drop their guns there will be peace."

Further down the trail, past plots of yellowing corn, a local NGO worker says things are more relaxed. "I can go anywhere now," she says, "Before I used to have many problems." Earlier this year in eastern Palpa about 5,000 Maoists had gathered at a school where she was supposed to train locals. "They interrogated me about our training, why we were doing it, what its benefits would be, who was being paid what. Finally they said OK, you can go ahead," she recalls.

On 23 March three secondary students stopping cars for donations during Holi were shot by soldiers who claimed they were Maoists extorting taxes.

Generally, Maoists act respectfully when they're on duty, they pay the fare and don't ask for special treatment, says a young jeep driver on the road from Tansen to Chidipani. As for soldiers: "I have never been harassed by them but I know they have beaten drivers who were forced to give

rides to Maoists."

At one time Tansen used to be bustling with tourists, there are none to be seen now. The local restaurant is almost empty. Tourist arrivals have dropped from 3,700 in 1998 to around 500 last year, says a local businessman. The only businesses that are thriving are those linked to the overseas workforce: money transfers and international phone call centres.

The local bank has also left and the police post has relocated. Yog Prasad says he will be next if peace does not return soon. Where will he go after 28 years? "Home to the tarai to farm," he says with a shrug, "where else?"

The Maoists have worked in 'pocket areas' and had kidnapped some people. On one occasion the Red Cross walked for five days to take back prisoners captured by the Maoists. But when the military captures people, half of them don't come out alive, says one local.

Maoists would occasionally demand food. Soldiers would come after that and say, "if you had not fed them they wouldn't be here". ●

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### Kalikot food project resumes

There is reason to be happy for the impoverished families in Kalikot—their favourite project Rural Community Infrastructure Works (RCIW) is being resumed after nearly four months of suspension. Project donors UK Department for International Development (DfID), Dutch development agency SNV, German aid agency GTZ and the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) announced its suspension in May to protest against the beating of a female project staff by Maoist rebels. "We have received guarantees (from the Maoists) that there will be a secure environment for the staff," says WFP's JP Demargerie. According to DfID's Robert Smith, "We have been given assurance that the Maoists will abide with the basic operating guidelines." RCIW projects are run in the districts facing the greatest food deficits and provide impoverished families with food in return for road construction work.

### A royal bill

Hetauda—It was merely a three-hour visit by King Gyanendra so many local people are asking if it was worth spending so much on decorations? Coming here was part of the king's visit to Narayani Zone headquarters last week. This industrial town spent over Rs 800,000 on 55 welcome gates. Administration and security officials in Birganj had given strict orders to local businessmen to prepare for the king's visit by putting up photos of the royal couple near their shops. On two consecutive days traffic along the Mahendra Highway was totally blocked for seven hours without prior warning. Thousands of passengers were left stranded without food and water. (Bhaskar Aryal)

### Community forests forced to pay

Both the Maoists and the government have been interfering in community forest consumers' groups, said the Federation of Community Forests Consumers Groups (FCFCG) on Wednesday. Maoists in districts have been pressuring groups for donations while the government is also charging extra "revenue" and has even set up security camps in community forests. FCFCG also warned the government to scrap plans to establish district forestry coordination committees or it would launch protests. A provision under the plan to allot 25 percent of the revenue generated to forest management committees and 75 percent to a government fund is unfair, said FCFCG Secretary Bhim Prasad Shrestha.

### Gated community

Valley Homes Private Limited has launched the gated community, Terraces, in Sunakothi. The initial development will be on 49 ropanis with houses on plots ranging from six to 10 annas in size. Services will include 24-hour water and electricity supply and a security team aided by closed circuit surveillance cameras.

### More mobile

Spice Nepal launched its Mero Mobile service on 17 September. The rate for calls between Mero Mobile subscribers has been set at one paisa per minute until the end of 2005. Spice Nepal says the service will be available in other parts of the country by the end of this year, including Birganj, Janakpur, Butwal, Bharatpur, Banepa and Dharan.

# Reform 2.0

## Nepal desperately needs another wave of economic reform

When Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi opted for elections everyone knew they would be a litmus test for further economic reforms in Japan. After his victory, all are expecting him to tackle his nation's \$3 trillion in postal savings.

ECONOMIC SENSE  
Artha Beed



Economic reform is the order of the day. Everyone is talking about Thomas Friedman's book *The World Is Flat*, a treatise on demystifying the future global economy, which Friedman labels a 'flattened' one. The message for us is that if we do not embrace the waves of technological innovation, reforms and globalisation, we shall be left behind.

We can draw parallels from Gurucharan Das's *India Unbound*, which describes how that nation rejected reform to stick to Nehruvian mixed economy, making India suffer for many decades post independence. There are many other sad lessons to learn from the experiences of economies that do not reform. The message emerging from various parts of the world is very clear—reform, reform and more reform. And your ever-faithful Beed will keep harping on this till he is blue in the face.

Nepal's Reform 1.0 launched in 1991 succeeded gloriously but we squandered it in the mid-1990s when the political will

required to support the changes dried up. In quest of power, various political alliances were formed and the power brokers' main objective became keeping political partners, and therefore the vote bank, happy. Thus, we never stopped trying to please labour unions or protection-seeking domestic businesses.

But reforms never result in easy political payoffs as they inevitably cost voters more for services and the business sycophants that fund elections lose their competitive edges.



There is a school of thought that reforms happen best under authoritarian regimes, the so-called Singapore Model. Unfortunately, we have tried authoritarianism and it didn't work either.

If sceptics pre-February First gave the palace the benefit of the

doubt in exchange for hoped-for sweeping economic reforms, they are in a dilemma today. The best way for the current regime to win popular support will be to take the reform agenda further. But we returned to protectionism, stalling critical legislation while issues like reviving the six-day work week dominated policy pronouncements. However, in our confusion on pursuing a 21<sup>st</sup>-century economic strategy, we lost it all.

The absence of reforms started hitting the government hard, revenues began shrinking and borrowings grew as multilateral donors, seeing no reforms, reduced their support. Today, after a long time, the government has started borrowing from the Central Bank to meet its expenses. Multilateral aid flows irrespective of regimes as long as a reform agenda is pursued. Aid continues to move into Pakistan!

We cannot miss the opportunities in this 'flattened' world, chances that will exist only if we continue to reform. The solution to the current Maoist impasse is neither political nor military—it has to be economic, the integration of all Nepalis in Nepal's economy. We are the world's 40<sup>th</sup> most populated country and with a market of one billion people to the north and a billion people to the south perhaps the moment is right for Nepal's own economic explosion. But we need Reform 2.0 to lead the way. ●

# “Nepali drugs are now of international quality.”



MIN BAJRACHARYA

As one of Nepal's leading drug companies, Deurali-Janta Pharmaceuticals strives for self-sufficiency in medicines of international quality. Its founder and executive director Hari Bhakta Sharma tells *Nepali Times* he wants to get into the export market.

**Nepali Times:** Is the problem of substandard drugs in Nepal getting better?

**Hari Bhakta Sharma:** The problem is our inefficient regulatory bodies. There is limited technical knowhow and intervention for quality control. There is only one government lab and it can analyse just 1,000 samples per year. That is possible only if the chemicals and manpower are available. According to government statistics, there are 12,000 brands available in the country every year. Medicines are supplied outside Kathmandu but there isn't the infrastructure to monitor the medicines supplied in places like Ilam and Dadeldhura.

**Nepali pharmaceutical companies have a small share of even the domestic market.**

If we want to go to India or other South Asian countries, we will be subject to high tariffs and other difficult barriers. Reciprocal restrictions should apply to foreign companies that come here. Unfortunately, the government favours import of medicines to local manufacturing. I haven't seen such policies in other countries.

**How do you change that?**

We have been unable to explain clearly the importance of the pharmaceutical and biotechnology sectors to the government. People involved in policy making have to understand the business paradigm: the type of technology, policies and facilities that are needed. Even when we are successful in educating one official, by the time he grasps the idea, he gets transferred to another department.

Our policies are the same as they were 20 years ago. If you look at the pharmaceutical sector in other places, there have been tremendous and rapid changes

**What are the other constraints?**

Suppose we need to get new equipments—there are heavy tariff barriers. In terms of capital, the cost of maintaining the quality is three times expensive than manufacturing. Our overall investment in terms of fixed capital has gone up. In spite of all this, we have been able to do what is possible in this country. We have integrated and upgraded our technology. It gives me pride to say that our company is not too far behind in terms of drug technology than those in America or Europe or India. That is a major achievement. This is proven by the WHO certification of CGMP (current good manufacturing practices) granted to us.

**How will you get Nepalis to trust Nepali products?**

By delivering quality. The response to our products is very encouraging. The best thing about our company is that we have the capacity to make quality assurance with scientific proof. You can't fool the doctors with just talk. The most important issue is that the product has to cure the ailment that it has been prescribed for.

**It is said prevention is better than cure, and most ailments in Nepal need prevention.**

It is better for the nation if we focus on prevention. We are also developing health promotion drugs for better and healthier living. But looking at today's lifestyle, economic conditions, living conditions and socio-economic situation, we need to be prepared with proper medications as well. Today's lifestyles are stressful and these lead to premature ageing—we plan to get into rejuvenation drugs and promote them in the international market. This is not easy but we have the confidence that we can be successful and have already applied in selected markets in developed countries.



# “His Majesty shouldn’t fight the people”

Panchayat-era Zonal Commissioner,  
Surya Bahadur Sen  
*Himal Khabarpatrika*, 17-30 September

हिमाल

As the country's government is now run by the king himself, people naturally look to him for relief. This was evident from the reception the king got during his visit to the districts. Everyone had only one concern: peace and security. The war between the state and rebels have escalated after the king's rule. Many children, elderly and the women have died and are still dying. Despite this, no one is making any moves towards peace. The parliamentary parties have intensified their movement on the streets despite facing administrative and legal restrictions and penalties. Literary figures, lawyers, journalists and professionals have joined the anti-king street protest. Politics have come to a standstill. Patriotic Nepalis are filled with despair. Only the disabled, sick, the elderly, women and children are left in the villages. There is a desperate need for the king to act fast to provide peace and security. But the problem is that the people close to him act superior to the citizens, they act like lords, they conspire and play dirty politics. This is all reflecting on the king himself. There is a need to foster an administration that is sincere, efficient, impartial and responsible. The civil service is demoralised, and the introduction of new ordinances, regional and zonal administrations, the monitoring teams have all been causing serious disruptions. Even the controversial appointment or promotion of the chief secretary has been done by the king. This makes the king personally responsible for their actions.

The political parties are the medium through

the problems and needs of the people are addressed. The people want the king to use that political culture for a peaceful resolution but he is doing just the opposite by creating a political vacuum and trying to move ahead by intensifying the war with the political parties. Even the business community has stepped up to pressure the Maoists and the regime to restore peace. Civil society has been active and with good reason has launched a moral crusade against the king's move.

Political statements by the king's men have pushed the chances of peace further. One of the king's political misfits, Tulsi Giri, has said the king and parties can't co-exist. Another political stooge said, "A Hindu king does not have to follow any constitution." The question is if the views of the royal appointees also reflect the king's own views. Are these men provoking the king to wage war against his own subjects? Why hasn't this regime shown any interest in walking on the path of peace for the people who are suffering and living in difficult circumstances? Instead it has been running the government with arrogance and vindictiveness.

We are no more in the age of King Prithbi Narayan Shah when one became king by military conquests. Today, a king has to respect the needs and sentiments of the public and be accountable. Such a king will be carried on the shoulders of citizens but if he is surrounded by people of ill-repute no one will do that. Such a regime is detrimental to the public welfare and is a disaster to the country's time, resources, rights, opportunities and so on. There is still time for the king to play a positive role, he has to stop fighting the people. It is already getting late and instead of wasting time on unnecessary things and listening to nefarious advisers the king should join hands with his people. The Nepali people own this country.

## Royal 737

*Jana Aastha*, 28 September

आस्था

The army has in principle decided to buy a Boeing 737 for the king's visits abroad to be paid for by the Royal Nepali Army's Welfare Fund. The need for such an aircraft was raised by C-in-C Pyar Jung Thapa because Royal Nepal Airlines' 15-year-old 757s could not be guaranteed to be snag-free during preparations for His Majesty's visit to New York which was scrubbed. The idea is for the army to buy the \$45.5-77 million plane and lease it to Royal Nepal Airlines for its regional routes. The 737 could be of the 800 or 900 series and would be equipped for VVIP flights or to carry 177 passengers in the airliner configuration. Royal Nepal Airlines has been planning unsuccessfully to buy 737s and the deal would also give local middlemen some added income.

## Encroachment

*Rajdhani*, 17 September

राजधानी

CHITWAN—A team of border experts have concluded that India has indeed encroached upon Nepali territory in the disputed Susta area of Nawalparasi district. The team of surveyors, historians and border experts said that nearly 500 Indians were found destroying the forest area to construct huts on the Nepali side of Susta. Indian citizens have moved into Nepali territory by clearing out the forest. The deforestation is still taking place in Dhanaiya and Bhadiyari. "The team stated that the Indian political parties and border security might have encouraged the encroachment.

Former chief of the Department of Survey and a border expert, Buddhi Narayan Shrestha, a former member of the monitoring team, said the Indian political parties assured their citizens that they would distribute land if they gave votes. The state assembly polls is being held in Bihar soon. There are 2,500 people living in 335 households in the Susta area.

## Peace-loving

UML leader Keshab Badal  
*Jana Aastha*, 14 September

आस्था

The Maoists have agreed to come on the path of peaceful democracy as a result of the efforts of citizens, political parties, and Nepal's well-wishers in the international community. It is becoming increasingly clear who is against peace. The palace has been opposing peace because it knows that with more peace, the lesser scope will be for dictatorship. It is a well known fact that dictators love crises, problems, poverty, mismanagement and conflict. They know that these are the evils that can help them retain power.

After the unilateral ceasefire, the palace certainly has been on the defensive because it doesn't wish to see an end to the conflict. The developments have also proved the parties' claim that the palace is the main impediment to the peace process. As a result, even those who are for peace in the palace have begun to ponder if it is the royalists who have been obstructing peace efforts.

The slogan that there will be no Nepal without a monarchy is outdated feudal talk. What the royalists actually mean by that is that they will wipe out the existence of Nepal if there is no monarchy.

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समय Samaya, 22 September

### QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“As the chairman of the council of ministers, the king has to make public his clear view about the constitution but this has not happened yet.”

President of Rastriya Jansakti Party Surya Bahadur Thapa in  
*Rajdhani*, 22 September



# “The UN is talking to India, China and the US”

**BBC Nepali Service:** What did Nepal gain or lose by not having its head of the state at the UN Summit in New York last week?

**Kul Chandra Gautam:** It is quite unfortunate that the difficult situation in our country kept him from participating in such a big summit at the highest level. But in the present circumstances, even if the king had participated, Nepal would not have earned respect. So it is good we escaped what could have been a disgrace.

**Is there a role for the proposed UN peace building commission in Nepal’s peace process?**

The commission is being established to solve the problems of countries like Nepal. It will not only help end conflict but also play an important role in the rehabilitation of conflict-torn countries and disarmament and reintegration of the military wings of conflicting parties.

**UN documents speak of ‘the responsibility to protect’. Does that mean the commission can play a role if the conflict continues in Nepal?**

The international community’s responsibility to protect citizens is aimed at preventing genocides like that in Rwanda, Cambodia and Bosnia. Since Nepal has not reached that stage, the particular provision is not applicable to Nepal. What the commission can do is protect civilians during conflict and make special attempts to bring such conflict to an end. That is where Nepal will fit in.

**What is the UN’s take on the unilateral ceasefire by the Maoists and Prachanda’s willingness to disarm under UN monitoring?**



**As an Assistant Secretary General at the United Nations, Kul Chandra Gautam is the seniormost Nepali in the world body. He spoke to the BBC Nepali Service last week about the prospects of a negotiated solution to the Nepal conflict. Excerpts:**

Secretary General Kofi Annan has repeatedly said that the Nepali conflict cannot be solved militarily and that the UN offers its offices to help dialogue between the two parties. Given the increased military might of the army and the Maoists and soaring security expenditures, the UN can certainly help in

disarmament and demobilisation of both sides. In this context, Prachanda’s point is relevant and there are possibilities of a UN role as elsewhere.

**What can the UN’s good offices actually achieve?**

The Secretary General or his representatives can do many things if the two sides ask for mediation to prepare points of agreement. The UN has adequate experience on minimising differences and maximising agreements between warring parties and working on compromise. We are still hopeful that the offices of the secretary general will be acceptable to both the rebels and the government in Nepal. But that will not be enough. The role of Nepal’s immediate neighbours will also be crucial. The two neighbours have not spoken about the UN’s role so far. Therefore, the UN will need to get the nod from three sides: the Maoists who have already sought such role, the government and Nepal’s two neighbours.

**If that is the case, how come the UN is always bogged down in developmentese and never addresses the geopolitical reality of Nepal’s insurgency?**

It’s not that the UN has not understood geopolitics. Since it recognises the gravity of the matter, it has been in consultation with neighbouring countries before making any move. It may be true that the UN has not been as active as it could be considering the geopolitical situation of the country. What I can tell you is that the Secretary General’s special representative, Lakhdar Brahimi, has been holding talks with India, China and the US. He has been trying to receive their cooperation without which it is difficult to see progress towards resolution.

Translated transcription of interview broadcast on *BBC Nepali Service* 14 September.



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# Film South Asia '05

## Feasting on films

For documentary enthusiasts in Kathmandu, the weekend of 29 September will feature movies galore. This year 43 films were chosen from the 189 entries to Film South Asia (FSA). India, with its tradition of documentary-making, will have the largest number of films at FSA 2005. Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh have impressive line-ups while Sri Lanka and Nepal have a modest presence. The festival also includes films on South Asian subjects from Burma, Canada and South Africa.

Well-known directors such as Tanveer Mokamel from Bangladesh, Rakesh Sharma from India and Shireen Pasha from Pakistan will be here and the festival will showcase a selection of the best films made in or about the region over the last two years.

The four days of Film South Asia will be followed by a two-day showcase, 'Barrel of the Gun,' featuring of films from all over the world on political violence.

Contact: [www.himalassociation.org/fsa](http://www.himalassociation.org/fsa) or 5542544.



**The New Boys**  
Life in a school dormitory focusing on group dynamics is the subject of the fourth film in the series of David MacDougall's long-term study of childhood and adolescence at the Doon School in northern India. The film provides unique insights into the values and training of the Indian middle class and, more generally of postcolonial elites at India's foremost boarding school for boys.



**My Brother, My Enemy**  
For the first time in 15 years, the Indian cricket team is on tour in Pakistan. Two Indian and Pakistani filmmakers, travel with the team and create a film that is a part of a plea for understanding between their nations.



**The Catch:**  
The film chronicles the struggles of a fishing community casting its nets in the waters of the Arabian Sea off the coast of Sindh in Pakistan and Gujarat in India. Their lives are followed against the backdrop of a dispute between the Pakistani and Indian governments, both eager to claim the oil-rich land and natural gas reserves found in this region. The film calls for the two governments to work together to reach an understanding before the area is declared international waters by the UN.



**The Day My God Died**  
This film presents stories of young girls whose lives have been shattered by the child sex trade. The film provides actual footage from the brothels of Bombay captured with "spy camera" technology. Through the film we come to know victims such as Gina and Anita who are gang-raped and forced to service up to 20 clients a day.



**Home of the Brave – Land of the Free**  
This one-of-a-kind documentary takes a unique look at the manner in which the US Special Forces operates in Afghanistan. The film was shot in February 2003 by John Sullivan and Gar Andreassen who stayed in Jalalabad under the protection of a local warlord. Never before has anyone followed the actions of the US Special Forces so closely.



**The Great Indian School Show**  
The story of a school in which the administration has installed 185 CCTVs to cover every inch of its premises and monitor its students. This film also goes on to ask what hidden agenda underlies the surveillance.



**The Other Woman**  
Growing up in the south of Sri Lanka in a Sinhala Buddhist family, the filmmaker was taught to define the woman who lived next to her as 'other,' – a Tamil who belonged outside of her own community. When civil war ensued, the two moved even further apart, Anoma staying within the south, her neighbour moving north. When a ceasefire agreement allowed the reopening of the main road connecting north and south, the filmmaker goes in search of her old neighbour.



**Final Solution**  
The film is a study of the politics of hate. Set in Gujarat in February-March 2002 and July 2003, the film graphically documents the changing face of right-wing politics in western India through an examination of the carnage wrought on Gujarat in 2002.



**Lanka-The Other Side of War and Peace**  
On the 22 February 2002, after more than 20 years of fighting the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the Government of Sri Lanka signed a ceasefire agreement. The opening of the A9 highway after 12 years became a symbol of the hope for peace in Sri Lanka. Structured in travelogue fashion, the film traverses the northern and southern landscapes of Sri Lanka.



**Im Schatten der Pagoden – dad andere Burma (In The Shadows of the Pagodas – the other Burma)**  
A picturesque journey through fairytale Burma, the golden land of a thousand Pagodas that ends in the jungles where hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people live, on the run from the government army. Yet much of the world is unaware of the suffering of millions of Burmese civilians.

Film South Asia (FSA) is a competitive biennial festival of documentary films on South Asian subjects. The festival provides a quality platform for exhibiting new works and promotes a sense of community among documentary filmmakers and connoisseurs.

It is the only such event solely dedicated to showcasing contemporary South Asian non-fiction film and has gained deserving recognition within the region and globally as a world-class festival. FSA is organised by Himal Association, a non-profit institution dedicated to spreading knowledge and information in Nepal and South Asia.

The first edition of FSA was held in 1997, after which there have been festivals every two years. In 2003 the film *The 18<sup>th</sup> Elephant - 3 Monologues* directed by P Balan from Kerala won the best film award. *Tale of the Darkest Night* by Kawsar Chawdhary, came second Best Film Award and *Sand and Water* by Berlin-based Bangladeshi filmmaker Shaheen Dill-Riaz third.

FSA 2005 gets underway next week at Kumari Cinema in Kamal Pokhari.



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## FILM SOUTH ASIA '05

Festival of South Asian Documentaries

29 September to 4 October, 2005  
Kumari Cinema, Kathmandu

### HALL A

**THURSDAY**  
29 SEPTEMBER

- 4:30 pm **She Write (54')**  
India, 2005, dir - Anjali Monteiro & K. P. Jayasankar  
Women look for space
- 5:45 pm **Sunset Bollywood (54')**  
Bombay/India, 2005, dir - Komal Tolani  
Life off the stardom lane

**FRIDAY**  
30 SEPTEMBER

- 9:00 am **Days and Nights in an Indian Jail (63')**  
Delhi/India, 2003, dir - Sunandan Walia & Yugesh Walia Life inside Tihar jail
- 10:15 am **Teardrops of Karnaphuli (60')**  
Bangladesh, 2005, dir - Tanvir Mokammel  
Bangladesh's hill people
- 11:30 am **Discussion**  
- Censorship in the South Asian Documentary
- 2:00 pm **Kitte Mil Ve Mahi: Where the Twain Shall Meet (72')**  
India, 2005, dir - Ajay Bhardwaj  
The musical tradition of the Sikh dalit
- 3:30 pm **From Behind the Barricade (78')**  
Punjab/India, 1993, Tapan Bose  
Sikh uprising in the 1980's
- 5:00 pm **My Brother My Enemy (42')**  
India/Pakistan, 2005, dir - Masood Khan & Kamajeet Negi  
Watching Indo-Pak cricket series
- Team Nepal (37')**  
Nepal/India, 2004/2005, dir - Girish Giri  
To India on a football journey

**SATURDAY**  
1 OCTOBER

- 9:30 am **Presentation on "Funding and Marketing Documentaries"**  
By Rada Sedic, Jan Vrijman Fund, The Netherlands
- 11:00 am **Jaal (The Catch) (67')**  
Gujarat/India, 2005, dir - Hridayanath Gharekhan  
Fishing in Indo-Pak waters
- 12:15 pm **In the Name of Honour (19')**  
Pakistan, 2003, dir - Hammad Ghaznavi  
How proud, the honour killing
- Manufactured Poverty - Director's Cut (12')**  
Manipur/India, 2005, dir - Wenceslaus Mendes & Simran Issar  
Big business pushes out women entrepreneurs
- 2:00 pm **Still, the Children are Here (88')**  
Meghalaya/India, 2004, dir - Dinaz Stafford  
Existential angst of the Garo
- 3:45 pm **Dirty Laundry (42')**  
South Africa, 2005, dir - Sanjeev Chatterjee  
Identity: South Africans of Southasian origin
- 4:45 pm **The Legend of Fat Mama (23')**  
Bengal/India, 2005, dir - Rafeeq Elias  
Among the Chinese in Calcutta
- 5:45 pm **Cosmopolis: Two Tales of a City (14')**  
Bombay/India, 2004, dir - Paromita Vohra  
Non-vegetarian in Bombay
- The Day My God Died (53')**  
Nepal/India, 2003, dir - Andrew Levine  
Nepali sex workers in Bombay

**SUNDAY**  
2 OCTOBER

- 9:00 am **The Life and Times of a Lady from Awadh: Hima (135')**  
Awadh, 2003/2005, dir - Shireen Pasha  
Remembering the Awadh that was home
- 11:45 am **My Village is Theatre, My Name is Habib (73')**  
India, 2005, dir - Sanjay Maharishi & Sudharva Deshpande A life dedicated to the stage
- 2:00 pm **Search for Freedom (54')**  
Pakistan, 2003, dir - Munizae Jahangir  
Women of Afghanistan speak out
- 3:15 pm **City of Photos (60')**  
India, 2005, dir - Nishtha Jain  
Neighbourhood photo studios that we knew
- 4:30 pm **I For India (70')**  
India/UK, 2005, dir - Sandhya Suri  
Four decades as an immigrant in UK

### HALL B

- 4:00 pm **The New Boys (100')**  
Uttaranchal/India, 2003, dir - David MacDougall  
12-year-olds join Doon School
- 5:45 pm **The Boy Who Plays on the Buddhas of Bamiyan (96')**  
Afghanistan, 2003, dir - Phil Grabsky  
Everyday travails of an Afghan kid

- 10:00 am **Ganges: Rivers to Heaven (77')**  
Uttar Pradesh/India, 2003, dir - Gayle Ferraro  
They come to die here
- 11:30 am **The Die is Caste (83')**  
Bihar/India, 2004, dir - Ranjan Kamath  
Lower vs upper caste in Bihar
- 2:00 pm **Continuous Journey (87')**  
Canada/India, 2004, dir - Ali Kazimi  
Entering Canada in 1914
- 3:45 pm **The Other Woman (82')**  
Sri Lanka, 2004, dir - Anoma Rajakaruna  
A Sinhalese re discovers the Tamil
- 5:15 pm **Bhal Khabar (Good News) (17')**  
Assam/India, 2005, dir - Altaf Mazid  
Looking for good news in 1980s Assam
- A Certain Liberation (38')**  
Bangladesh, 2003, dir - Yasmine Kabir  
Ghost of the Bangladesh war

- 9:15 am **Final Solution (149')**  
Gujarat/India, 2004, dir - Rakesh Sharma  
The extremism that was in Gujarat
- 12:00 pm **The Happiest People in the World (94')**  
Bangladesh, 2004, dir - Shaheen Dill-Riaz  
High spirits amid hardships in the delta
- 2:00 pm **Snapshots from a Family Album (63')**  
Bombay/India, 2004, dir - Avijit Mukul Kishore  
Candid portrait of a couple
- 3:15 pm **Looking for Amitabh (5')**  
India, 2003, dir - Meenakshi Shedde  
The superstar and the visually challenged
- Journeys (37')**  
Bombay/India, 2003, dir - Vinayan Kodoth  
Riding Bombay's commuter trains
- 4:15 pm **The Great India School Show (53')**  
Maharashtra/India, 2005, dir - Avinash Deshpande  
The young ones under CCTV gaze
- 5:30 pm **Sundar Nagri: The City Beautiful (78')**  
Delhi/India, 2003, dir - Rahul Roy  
Being laid off in global India

- 9:00 am **A Million Steps (22')**  
India, 2003, dir - Pankaj Butalia  
Secret agent pundits during the Great Game
- Home of the Brave - Land of the Free (52')**  
Afghanistan, 2003, dir - John Sullivan  
Following the grunts in Afghanistan
- 10:30 am **Kora Rajee Land of the Diggers (51')**  
Jharkhand/India, 2005, dir - Biju Toppo  
Jharkhandis work in Assam tea gardens
- 11:45 am **In the Shadow of the Pagodas - the Other Burma (74')**  
Switzerland/Myanmar, 2004, dir - Irene Marty  
Overview of the Burma crisis
- 2:00 pm **The Curse of Talakad (48')**  
Karnataka/India, 2005, dir - Sashi Sivramkrishna  
No sons for a royal Mysore dynasty
- 3:00 pm **Kaalam (27')**  
Kerala/India, 2004, dir - Ramachandran K.  
A lifelong dedication to percussion
- Girl Song (29')**  
Bengal/India, 2003, dir - Vasudha Joshi  
Jazz nights in Calcutta
- 4:15 pm **Lanka: The Other Side of War and Peace (75')**  
Sri Lanka, 2005, dir - Iffat Fatima  
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# The highest and longest gigs

Shattering world records to help Nepali children with music



**RABINDRA MISHRA** in LONDON

A group of musicians from around Britain broke a world record this week by playing music continuously for 44 hours in Central London in a fundraising drive to help Nepali children.

Such record-breaking events may not be special in a country where a Scottish band set the longest record by playing for 42 hours and 38 minutes last year, but this year's longest gig record will go to raise money to build a shelter for conflict-impacted children in Nepal.

At the trendy Soho Lounge

(www.thesoholounge.co.uk) in London's famous West End the band composed of three women and two men were allowed 10 minute breaks every eight hours. When I visited, they had just crossed 24 hours and Craig Mitchell was singing his own composition, 'Crush your heart and hope to die/There is million and one thing you can try/How long now...?'

"Another 20 hours," I muttered. The musicians looked tired, sleepy and, at times, closed their eyes for several minutes as they played mostly soft and soothing numbers from the Beatles, Cold Play, George Michael, John Lennon and

many others.

Someone asked, "Are you alive?"

"Just..." replied front man Oz Bayldon of the band, The Hidden.

It was Oz who felt the urge to do something for the children in Nepal after he travelled to Kathmandu in 2002. He was both shocked and inspired when several street children flocked around him begging him to buy them something to eat. "I felt there were more important things in life than just playing music," he recalls.

Back in London, Oz with his musician friends formed a charity, Nepal Balbalika Trust (NBT), with the aim of building a self-sufficient shelter for destitute children. Since the establishment of the charity in 2004, Oz and his group have performed dozens of gigs in and around London to raise funds.

This week's longest gig is a prelude to set another Guinness record breaker for the World's Highest Gig

(www.theworldshighestgig.com) in October 2005. This will take place just above Everest base camp at 5,545 meters.

To build the shelter, NBT will work with HELP NEPAL Network (HeNN) www.helpnepal.net, a global charity run by Nepalis and friends of Nepal, which, incidentally, has made the conflict impacted children of Nepal a priority target group for 2006.

HeNN has already reached an agreement with a school in Dhulikhel to secure land for the construction of the shelter. Apart from providing logistical support to NBT, the network, through its

own fundraising efforts is planning to help grassroot level organisations which have demonstrated exemplary commitment in helping the conflict affected children.

With nearly a dozen chapters around the world, including registered groups in Australia, America, Britain and Nepal, the network has also developed a program called *Bhai-Bahini* to support children affected by the conflict. A child of Nepali origin or any child in the world will support another child who has been impacted by the conflict in Nepal until they become capable of living their own lives and supporting themselves financially.

HeNN-USA's Muna Joshi, the chief coordinator of the *Bhai-Bahini* program, says: "We hope this will help children develop an affinity with Nepal, develop a sense of giving at an early age and see and show how young individuals can make a difference and nurture a future."

HeNN is completely voluntary with no overheads and all funds raised go directly to the welfare of the children. The cost of a small administrative office in Kathmandu is sponsored by generous Nepali businessmen.

President of HeNN-USA, Mabi Singh, says: "If non-Nepalis can do such difficult things to support Nepali children, it becomes a moral obligation for us Nepalis around the world to do something as well. We can't just sit and complain, we must act." ●

Rabindra Mishra is the founding chairperson of HELP NEPAL Network admin@helpnepal.net

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# The art of care



Robin Needham's niece (right) is auctioning celebrity art to raise money for tsunami victims



The 20-year-old niece of Robin Needham, the director of CARE Nepal who died in last year's tsunami in Thailand, has enlisted the support of hundreds of celebrities to join a unique fundraising drive for victims of the disaster.

Daisy Bell, the psychology student from Edinburgh, has got luminaries like Paul McCartney, Elizabeth Hurley, Damien Hirst, footballers and DJs to draw and doodle on postcards which will be auctioned at Christies on 30 September.

"It was the most terrible feeling when my uncle died," Bell said in a newspaper interview in Edinburgh, "he was amazing, he spent his life helping people. Everyone has someone in their life who is the most incredible person. He was mine."

Earlier this year, Daisy decided to raise £10,000 for Care International in memory of her uncle, who would have been involved in tsunami relief had he not lost his life. Robin Needham had worked with UNICEF in

Thailand and served in Somalia and Bangladesh before he was appointed director of CARE Nepal in 1998.

With two weeks to go for the auction, Daisy Bell has already got 300 postcards with celebrity art on them which can be viewed online at [www.artofcare.co.uk](http://www.artofcare.co.uk). Christie's Scotland is organising the auction and estimates that the overall money raised could top £40,000. Proceeds will go to a special fund set up to help specific villages ravaged by the tsunami.

Bernard Williams, the director of Christie's who will be auctioning 65 of the postcards at the opening night of the exhibition on 30 September, told *The Telegraph*: "We are potentially looking at tens of thousands of pounds. Hirst and McCartney are star lots." The rest of the paintings will be auctioned online.

After being involved in relief efforts in Asia and Africa for more than three decades Needham came to Nepal with

CARE and led healthcare, water and education projects throughout Nepal, including Maoist-affected areas. He was particularly concerned with the protection of children from the conflict and was chairman of the Association of International NGOs in Nepal, coordinating the work of more than 50 relief agencies. (See 'Nepal will miss Robin', #228.)

Robin Needham was vacationing with his wife and four children at Golden Buddha Beachon Ko Phra Thong, an island off the Thai coast, when the tsunami struck. He was last seen directing people off the beach and his body was found three days later in a forest. His family survived.

Robin had a lively sense of humour and one of his hobbies was collecting single malt whiskey. His wife Lucy is organising a fundraiser with malt tasting in Kathmandu in mid-October. ● *Kunda Dixit*

[www.artofcare.co.uk](http://www.artofcare.co.uk)

# Media and dharma

## Nepal has the spiritual answer to the cycles of happiness and suffering

As the storm surge recedes in the media's coverage of Hurricane Katrina, one can hardly think of anything new to note on the subject, as we plough through the flotsam left behind.

Like many, I have been glued to the tube throughout this story, reflecting back on the many storms I've survived, mostly in the Carolinas, where year after year homes and lives were swept into the sea or flattened to the earth, only to arise again in a phoenix-like pattern.

Stock market dips to spike again, beachfront property pops up as fast as it is blown away and personal sufferings turn once again to moderated joys. So goes the cycle of our existence, from homeowner to refugee, from healthy to sick, from happy to sad and then back again.



Natural or man-made, we need not wait long on this cycle of disaster and recovery, as it happens daily: 1/9, 3/11, 9/11, 7/7 on and on, throughout our personal and collective diaries. The *CNNs* and *BBCs* thrive on this predictable pattern and the news junkie gets high or low while trying to make sense of it all.

We lead multiple consecutive cycles in a dizzy series of follow-on stories: tsunami destruction, life during tsunami, life after tsunami and then the obligatory anniversary of tsunami. Inter-dispersed between destruction, suffering caused by destruction and the recovering from destruction, is new news: the grand opening of Disneyland Hong Kong, a new Apple i-Pod the size of your jeans pocket or how jazz keeps spirits high in Singapore. Then back to the scrolling news bar on the bottom of your screen: sales are up, profits are down, gold is down and oil is up. Now we return to Katrina's waters receding in the streets of New Orleans and the tidewaters from typhoon Kanun rising in China.

Within all these ups and downs and cycles of suffering, punctuated by moments of bliss (look at that cute puppy rescued!) we try to figure out what is the constant, what is the middle ground, where is it that we, as human beings, can lead instead of just following the media around like a dog chasing its tail. What is the path through these cycles of man-made and natural disasters?

Surprisingly enough, the answer seems to be rooted in Nepal (of all places). While our small country is not exempt from any of these cycles: landslides, war, earthquakes, dips in tourism, rises in petrol prices, beauty contests...the cycles of happiness and suffering do exist.

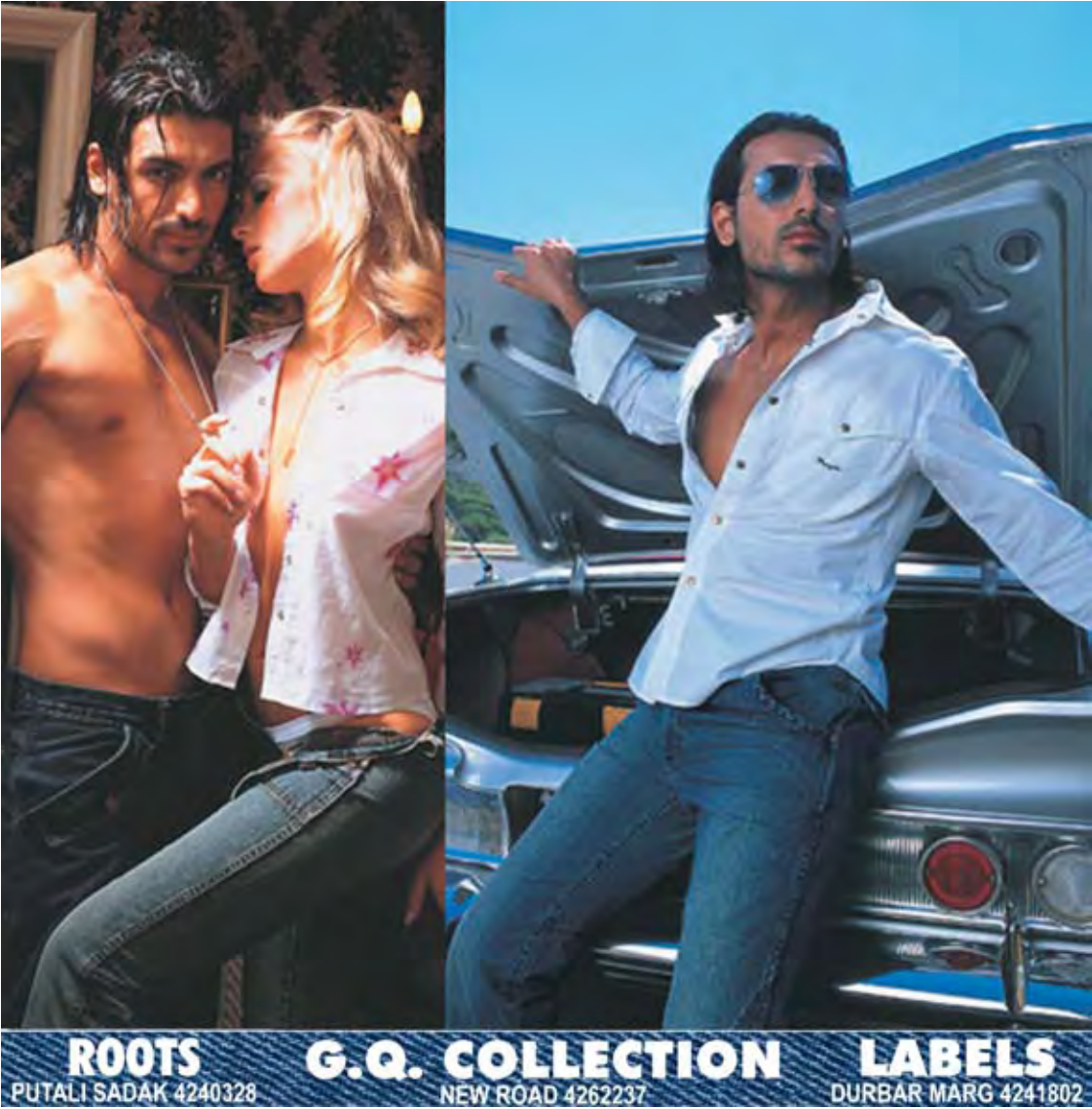
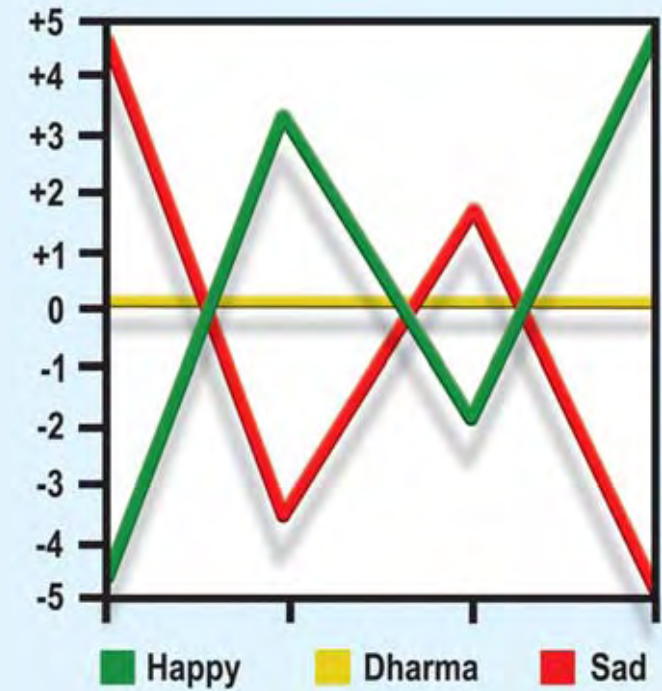
Nevertheless, what may make Nepal unique, is that it is the spiritual epicenter of an older culture based on peace, tranquility, and the Middle Way. Most of us living in Nepal see the counter symbols of anti-extremism everyday. Whether it's a fluttering prayer flag or an ancient temple or the sound of a monk blaring a horn or the flash of a stupa as we whiz by on our way to work, the inhabitants of this kingdom, consciously or not, are bathed in another kind of daily media, the media of dharma.

Here, the cycle of the day is not rooted in anything seen on *CNN*. It is the cycle of life and death itself (and sometimes defined simply as the Truth). It is the cycle of the big picture, a much wider picture than we can ever purchase from our local Samsung showroom.

The Dalai Lama on Larry King summed it up this week:

"I think it worthwhile to minimise matters of anxiety or mental suffering so that you can build your future more...if your mind is totally dominated by sadness or trauma then that will be great hindrance in rebuilding your life—your new life." ●

Jigme Gaton is the cartoonist behind Herojig on this paper's City page.





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## Star of Awadh

**H**ima is a 92-year-old émigré from Awadh, whose father is a *talukdar* who stayed back. She moved with her husband to Lahore after Partition, while the aging father lives on in what has now become India. As a former nobleman, he represents the best of Lakhnauvi civility and grace (*tehzeeb*), civilisational values that the modern-day power elites of Lahore, Karachi, Delhi or Bombay have yet to incorporate.

In *The Life and Times of a Lady from Awadh: Hima*, filmmaker Shireen Pasha has weaved a beautifully complex tapestry of a lifestyle that is now largely evaporated. Her documentary presents

old-world Awadh through the medium of across-the-LoC letters between a father and daughter. Additional flavour is added through enactment of

short plays written by the elderly talukdar, a sharp observer of human foibles and refreshingly advanced on social matters, including women's emancipation.

*Hima* is about as Southasian as a documentary film can get, traversing the horizontal plane of distance across the modern-day frontier of Pakistan-India and the vertical plane of time—reaching back to Awadh, a term that fairly drips with the syrup of history. It is a different matter that 'Awadh' has simply disappeared from the nomenclature of modern-day India and Southasia. The former kingdom has been embedded within Uttar Pradesh, a province ('the northern region') as lacking in personality as Awadh was full of it. Meanwhile, Lucknow-on-Gomti is a shrivelled form of its old self, trying too hard to hold on to some strands of its legendary *tehzeeb*.

Shireen Pasha's success is the presentation of the father-daughter correspondence as a prism into a bygone era. She utilises the particular power of non-fiction film to evoke empathy and understanding. We see here how a competently made documentary, dealing with real life players, can be more powerful than all the manipulations of feature film, even the great Satyajit's *Satranj ke Khiladi* on the decline of Awadh.

*Hima* is only one of the 43 competently made non-fiction films being screened at the Film South Asia '05 festival of documentaries being organised at a spanking new duplex cinema in Kathmandu from 29 September to 2 October. These films highlight the coming together of commitment and craft in the evolving genre of Southasian non-fiction film and the variety is astounding. (festival site: [www.himalassociation.org/fsa](http://www.himalassociation.org/fsa))

Among the 43 productions, a team from Birganj in the Nepal tarai visits Sonpur in Bihar for an annual soccer match. To some, this may seem like a trip from nowhere to nowhere but director Girish Giri brings alive the humanity of the deep, neglected, populated heartland of Southasia. Shaheen Dill-Riaz flies back from Germany with camera in hand to understand whether Bangladeshis are indeed "the happiest people in the world" as suggested by a London School of Economics study. M Khan and K Negi present an India-Pakistan production on a cricket tour titled *My Brother My Enemy*. And in *Sunset Bollywood*, Sudanand and Yugesh Walia follow the lives of Bollywood stars who have receded into oblivion. Remember Kumar Gaurav?

The trick with documentaries is not only to make them well but to be able to exhibit them, which is why we need a revolution in screening. Television channels all over the region must get wise to the fact that documentaries like *Hima* can provide great infotainment (even at its unusual length of 135 min). Meanwhile, it would be a good idea for Film South Asia to take *Hima* to Lucknow for a special showing, inviting Shireen Pasha from Lahore, the former seat of raja Ranjit Singh, to the capital that Wajid Ali Shah vacated. There will be historical justice in there somewhere. ●

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# Green greens

## Golf course care in Nepal involves grazing animals and village women

In ancient days, golf courses were purposely built on fields where cattle grazed as keeping the grass trimmed over such large areas was a daunting and time-consuming task for people. In Nepal, when a group of Ranas returned from Scotland they chose to build their first golf playground at Gauchar (literally “where cattle graze”), the site of today’s Tribhuban International Airport.

Over the centuries there have been revolutionary changes in golf course maintenance. In most parts of the world today sophisticated machinery and often expensive organic and inorganic enhancers play much more important roles than humans or animals. But in Nepal and other less affluent countries, it is still preferable to make use of

natural methods, relying less on expensive and sensitive machinery and providing much needed job opportunities. A marvellous example of this can

be seen at the Himalayan Golf Club in Pokhara. The course features breathtaking terrain and an adventurous back-to-nature approach—sheep and cows are allowed free access to graze on the fairways!

In order to understand the challenges faced by golf course maintenance teams, just imagine how much effort is required to keep the grass in your courtyard garden healthy, green and free of weeds. Now, project this onto a full golf course of perhaps more than 1,000 Ropanis (over 120 acres) and you can begin to imagine the almost Herculean task involved. To keep a course neat and trim you must deal with different varieties of grass that must be cut to particular lengths, from the roughs that measure a few inches, to the inch-and-a-half ‘first cuts’ and the inch-high fairways, right down to the evenly cut, half-millimetre putting greens. Add to this the need to maintain lakes, ponds, creeks, sand bunkers, thousands of trees, flowers, shrubs, then the nitty-gritty of pulling out weeds, removing litter and you begin to get an idea of how much is involved.

Maintenance must start well before sunrise, ensuring the course is playable for early morning enthusiasts and carries on till close to sunset. Many of the tasks are very sensitive and even a slight loss of concentration during this work can spoil playing conditions, which immediately invites criticism from discerning golfers.



Golf Digest has included Gokarna Forest Golf Resort in its list of the World’s 100 Best Destination Golf Courses. The team behind this ongoing success includes Col. PM Saklani (pictured), the club’s general manager of maintenance. I recently caught up with Col. Saklani, who had this to say: “Well, it’s a fine compliment to hear from golfers that the course is in great condition. I feel that, apart from the heavy monsoon, the course generally stays in a good state.” He added, “We have amongst the best greens in Asia due to the superb climate. We’ve also been able to manage the Bent grass greens well and the course has a very efficient drainage system which makes it playable within half an hour of a heavy downpour.”

Col. Saklani was involved in the construction of the course in 1996, and nine years later enjoys his job immensely. He thanks his hard-working band of boys who keep the course in such great condition and says he particularly loves the ambience created by thousands of trees and other greenery along with the local animals.

One amazing adaptation he has made can be seen on the course throughout the summer when groups of women from the neighbouring Thali village enter nearly every day to cut the longer grass. As I watched them work I thought to myself how harmoniously the golf course and the ladies complimented each other. They were getting the much-needed grass for their cattle and the golf course was getting its roughs trimmed. How perfect! ●

Deepak Acharya is a Golf Instructor and Golf Director at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, Kathmandu. [prodeepak@hotmail.com](mailto:prodeepak@hotmail.com)



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# Crossborder football

## A quaint film about a Birganj club playing in Bihar is the Nepali entry at Film South Asia next week

NARESH NEWAR

For striker Krishna Sakya, football is more of a passion than a profession. He has no grandiose dreams of minting money playing football. Krishna doesn’t want to go to Singapore, he’d rather be in Sonpur.

Last winter that is where he took the Yuba Sports Club from Birganj to the Bihar town of Sonpur for a football tournament. The Nepalis won the hearts of Indian players and spectators and came back with good memories.

The trip also offered a perfect opportunity for novice Birganj-based filmmaker Girish Giri to shoot with his camcorder and make his first documentary film. He filmed it on a shoe-string budget from his own pocket but all the trouble has paid off because *Team Nepal* is the only documentary from Nepal selected for the Film South Asia festival next week.

“This is so inspiring and my gratitude goes to our football team,” says Giri modestly.

*Team Nepal* has the same quirky and quaint feel as *The Other Final* a documentary by two Dutch filmmakers about a match between Montserrat and Bhutan (ranked 202<sup>nd</sup> and 203<sup>rd</sup> in the FIFA tables) that coincided with the 2004 World Cup finals in Seoul.

The film takes us on a train journey across Bihar to Sonpur and the players are on as low a budget as the filmmaker. They are paid only Rs 100 to take part in the tournament, so they sleep in the train and eat from platform vendors.

But once they get to Sonpur, the Nepalis realise that the Bihari fans desperately want the Nepal team to beat other Indian teams.

“All of us want Nepal to take the trophy. They are considered the best here,” says ecstatic organiser Akbar Khan of the ‘Late JN Singh Memorial Football Tournament’. He thinks a Nepal victory will give the tournament more publicity.

At Sonpur railway station, a Bihari says on camera: “We support the Nepal team as they are disciplined and hardworking.”

He was right, these were traits in much abundance as the match gets underway and team Nepal quickly makes it to the finals. The team loses to Patna in the finals, but no one in the crowd jeers.

It is when the team returns to Nepal that the players get disheartened by the lack of response. Their trip didn’t make it to any of the Nepali national media and there was only a small mention in the Birganj papers. But for the players, the

tournament was a big event because their small club was representing the country.

“It feels so good to be treated with respect but back home we get little recognition as our sport is too Kathmandu-centric,” says captain Rajib Lakhe who was rejected from Nepal’s national team. “Only Kathmandu gets the opportunities but we deserve a chance to show what we can do.”

Despite all this, filmmaker Girish Giri feels his film will help raise the profile of little known footballers who could be as good as national players. It has especially been an educational journey for him, as well, to learn how hospitable people can be when it comes to sports.

“The Nepalis were very popular in Bihar and at the people-to-people level there is a lot of contact,” says GC Dey, coach of the Calcutta team. Which also seems to be the theme of Giri’s film and a feeling echoed in an impromptu farewell song that the linesman Satrugan Singh sings at the end of the film: “The ties that bind us have the power to resist all obstacles and may this bond never break.” ●

*Team Nepal* will be shown on 30 October, 5PM, at Kumari Hall during the Film South Asia festival.

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#85 2062 by jigme gaton - read. love. write.

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

ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Ganesh** paintings by Bipin Raj Shrestha, 22 September- 2 October at Nepal Art Council Gallery.
- ❖ **Melody of Clouds** by Rajesh Gautam till 25 September, Buddha Gallery. 4441689
- ❖ **Nepali Lokta** paper and products exhibition at Hotel Yak and Yeti, 26-27 September.
- ❖ **Ni Rita**, exhibition cum sale of bold jewellery at La Soon, till 26 September. 5537166
- ❖ **Our Nature** a photo exhibition, 26 September- 1 October at Singh Art Gallery Lagankhel
- ❖ **Art Walk** Traditional artworks at Hotel Yak and Yeti, Darbar Marg. 4248999



EVENTS

- ❖ **From Kin to Caste:** The Role of Guthis in Newar Society and Culture by Gerard Toffin, 23 September, Russian Cultural Center. 5548142
- ❖ **Changa Chait**, kite flying competition at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot 24 September and 8 October. 4411706
- ❖ **ELD Training** on participatory monitoring and evaluation, 19-23 September. 5555071
- ❖ **Compassion and Bodhicitta** at HBMC, 24 September, 4414843
- ❖ **Fun Drive** of VW Beetles to Pokhara, 23-25 September.
- ❖ **Bangladesh Single** Country Fair 2005, 29 September at Nuptse Hall, BICC, New Baneshwor. 4372843
- ❖ **Mind Mapping** ELD workshop, 28 September at SAP Nepal. 5555071
- ❖ **Ikebana and Kimono** demonstration, Embassy of Japan, 28 September. 4426680
- ❖ **Film South Asia '05**, 29 September-4 October at Kumari Hall.
- ❖ **Football Tournament** at Dashrath Stadium, 30 October. 5521794

MUSIC

- ❖ **The Last Waltz** with McTwisters, 23 September 7.30pm at Moksh Live.
- ❖ **Shades of Blue** 24 September, 7.30 at Moksh Live.
- ❖ **Jazz at Patan** at Patan Museum Café, 30 September 6.30 PM onwards. 4441067
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Musician Night** every Tuesday at Moksh, 7.30 PM onwards, no cover charge. 5526212
- ❖ **Cadenza Live!** Upstairs Jazz Bar Lazimpat, every Saturday and Wednesday, 8-10PM.

FOOD

- ❖ **Oktoberfest** Authentik German Kuisine at Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 23 September- 2 October. 4273999
- ❖ **Pizza Promotion** at Coffee Shop, 30 September, Hotel de la Annapurna. 4221711
- ❖ **The Kabab Kurry Karkhana** at Radisson Hotel, till 15th October
- ❖ **The Sidewalk BBQ** with live jazz, Fridays, Shangri-La. 4412999
- ❖ **BBQ Dinner** at Summit Hotel, Fridays, 6.30-9.30 PM. 5521810
- ❖ **The Chimney Restaurant** Signature dishes at Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
- ❖ **BBQ** by the Swimming Pool at Le Meridien, Rs 888
- ❖ **Daily Delite** lunch at Shambala Café, Hotel Shangri-La, Lazimpat. 4412999
- ❖ **The Jazz Gourmet** fine dining redefined, Shangri-La. 4412999
- ❖ **Annapurna Value Lunch** at Rs 499 for two. 4221711

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Quest Entertainment

*Dil Jo Bhi Kahey* is a tale of cultural chaos set in Mauritius. Jai Sinha and Sophie Besson fell in love while studying in Stockholm but the two find themselves clashing with their respective parents. Sophie happens to be the daughter of a prominent white family. While Jai's father Shekhar Sinha has a liberal view on marriage and approves of the relationship with no hesitation, his mom Sandhya is not comfortable with the idea of having a foreign daughter-in-law. Thus, Jai is forced to marry an Indian girl, who refuses when she realises where the real love lies. The film underlines the conflicts that can occur between societies when each tries to endorse its own culture.

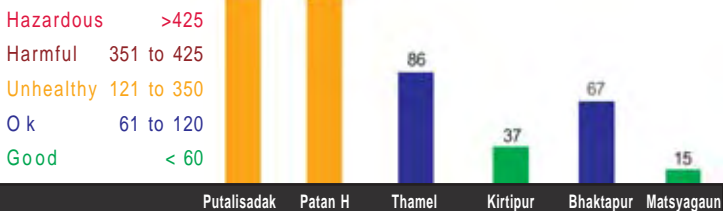
Call 4442220 for show timings [www.jainepal.com](http://www.jainepal.com)



KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

The air pollution level in Kathmandu is behaving like a pendulum. One week it is down and the next week it swings back up again. Last week the average concentration of PM10 particles (those small enough to enter and harm the human body) in the Valley was fairly low but this week it is up by 79 percent. The air in heavy traffic areas such as Putali Sadak and Patan Hospital is once again unhealthy while the rest of the Valley is fairly clean. So stay away from busy traffic, especially on dry days.

11-17 September 2005 in micrograms per cubic metre.  
Source: [www.mope.gov.np](http://www.mope.gov.np)



NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



It is confirmed that this year's monsoon was the weakest in more than a decade (since 1991). After a couple of weeks of little heavy rain, Tuesday's thunder showers brought a good amount of precipitation. These showers were the result of breakaway clouds from the recent cyclone over the Bay of Bengal. This satellite image taken on Thursday morning indicates thin layers of monsoon clouds spread throughout the country. Thus, some light showers remain in store for this weekend. An emerging high-pressure system from the west is likely to push back the Bay of Bengal monsoon till the middle of next week. Expect light rains and a very cloudy weekend.

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KUMAR SHRESTHA

JUST KIDDING: The Kumari teases a photographer from inside her chariot as it was pulled across Kathmandu’s narrow streets on Saturday.



MOFA

ALL SMILES: Minister of Foreign Affairs Ramesh Nath Pandey poses with (left to right) Senator Charles Grassley, Congressman Joseph R Pitts and Royal Nepali Ambassador to the United States Kedar Bhakta Shrestha after a breakfast meeting on Tuesday in Washington, DC.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

MERO CAKE: Officials of Spice Nepal launch the Mero Mobile with the cutting of the cake by National Poet Madhab Prasad Ghimire.



KIRAN PANDAY

A SIGN OF THE TIMES: A rally on Wednesday on the occasion of the International Day of Peace called for an end to violence and militarisation in the South Asian region.



KIRAN PANDAY

FOUR WHEELS GOOD: Kathmandu’s finest have been gifted sedans for street patrols and as its name suggests, drivers using mobiles better beware.

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# WANTED Prime Minister

Insurgency-wracked landlocked kingdom in the lap of the Himalaya on verge of being declared a failed state has urgent vacancy for a tall, bright, homely, convent-educated teetotaler, fair-skinned vegetarian DV-eligible Primetime Minister to replace two incumbent vice chairpersons who are getting a bit long in the tooth.

Caste, age, disabilities, gender, marital status, eating habits, incontinence and incompetence no bar. The post-holders ideally should be 80 years old or above and have served multiple previous tenures as primed minister wherein they should have paid ample lip-service to democracy and exercised their freedom to indulge in wanton arson and stone-throwing, defying bans on demos in restricted areas and inciting communal riots.

They must also have a demonstrated ability to force closure of parliament for three months at a stretch and block off the entire country and parts thereof for a cumulative period

UNDER MY HAT  
Kunda Dixit



of at least 36 days in any given year while in opposition during the late 1990s.

Candidate should be of sound mind and body, be in possession of all their faculties and at least one Pajero, have amassed ill-gotten wealth to an amount not less than Rs 50 million, must have partaken of kickbacks in at least one airliner lease and/or gold smuggling scam during the previous 14 years, have relatives who are on standby to immediately take up ministerial berths if asked to do so and in possession of a certificate attesting to exceptional fundraising capabilities signed by at least three referees belonging to the country's leading business houses.

- Duties Include:**
- Remembering without fail to dash off personal telegrams to prime ministers from Laos, Kyrgyzstan, Bolivia and other obscure fellow-landlocked countries on their national days to wish counterparts personal health and happiness and continued progress and prosperity to Laotians, Kyrgyzsis and Bolivianos and highlight the importance of bilateral relations with those countries.
  - Build personal rapport with these leaders in order to garner international solidarity in support of regime tinkering at home.
  - Participate in workshops and seminars in cities around the world and brief state media at length before departure and on arrival at Tribhuban Intermittent Airport.
  - Take part in periodical ceremonies to award plaques to distinguished dentists and shields to victors in inter-services taekwondo tournaments.
  - Have the stamina and endurance to keep awake during

- above proceedings and remain fully conscious while delivering speeches on the subject: 'The Importance of Martial Arts in Defending Multiparty Democracy and Constitutional Monarchy'.
- Must have strong family and clan ties in order to generate employment for near and dear ones in one's cabinet portfolio.
  - Must have a collection of well-preserved skeletons in one's cabinet.
- Experience Required:**
- Should have amassed at least 10 years experience in ribbon-cutting, lamp lighting, shawl gifting and bouquet accepting with flair and aplomb.
  - Must have dissolved parliament and refused to extend the tenure of local bodies and not held successive general elections.
  - Must have a Masters in Horse-trading and a PhD in Sycophancy. Must have taken part in at least one major brawl in the august Lower House chambers.
- Salary: Negotiable but has in-built perks, maternity allowance and adequate opportunities for candidate's poverty-alleviation and upward mobility.

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