







editors@nepaltimes.com,  
www.nepaltimes.com

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Desk Editor: Marty Logan  
Design: Kiran Maharjan Web: Bhushan Shilpakar  
Vicepresident Corporate Affairs: Sneha Sayami  
Advertising: Sambhu Guragain advertising@himalmedia.com  
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## HEAR NO PEACE, SEE NO PEACE, SPEAK NO PEACE

Many of us mistook hope for conviction. It was our hope the Maoists would extend the ceasefire and therefore we tried to convince ourselves it would be in their best interest to do so.

But wars have their own momentum and those who wage them can't always influence their course. The Maoist leadership wasn't really worried about the Royal Nepali Army action in Rolpa or pressure from India, it was more concerned about its own rank and file. In the past ten years its guerrillas have become a battle-hardened and committed guerrilla force. Foot soldiers are indoctrinated to march with scant regard for personal sacrifice and hardship towards the ultimate goal: overthrowing the ruler in Kathmandu and establishing a people's republic.

A fighting machine with such steadfastness to a cause can't just be told, ok folks the revolution is over we're going to share power with the enemy. However desperate the leadership is for an exit, however fervently it believes this is a war that can't be won, a revolution is not like a tap that can be turned off. Ever since the first shot killed the first policeman in Rolpa on 13 February 1996, the wheels of war had started turning. It is now a runaway train hurtling down the tracks.

It is when they stop fighting that fighters get tired of fighting. While the conflict rages there is no time to think of peace. A war is self-perpetuating. However Baburam Bhattarai may try to explain it (see p 6-7) during the ceasefire, desertions and defections from the Maoist force hit record highs. Local commanders were worried and itching to get back to war as a way to keep their force together.

The Maoist leadership must have reasoned the king and his army are not going to negotiate unless there are hit harder where it hurts. They may not be able to capture Kathmandu, but they can certainly carry out some headliner-grabbing attacks.

The rebels could also be hoping to ride the seven-party street agitation and profit from future street unrest. That way they don't even need a military victory and there are plenty of examples of how that works: Teheran, Addis Ababa, Havana. And when things start snowballing, who knows where that will take us and who will remain standing when it is all over.

There is a similar compulsion on the regime's side: as long as the war drags on it can keep political parties shackled, genuine democracy on hold and rule with an iron hand. There are also less principled reasons to keep fighting, like profiteering from arms purchases.

That is why it on both warring sides are now on a hear no peace, see no peace and speak no peace mode.



# A healthy Nepal

## Health care is not what makes people healthy

After almost a half century of development in Nepal, there have been substantial health gains in Kathmandu, eastern and central districts. But the farwest and northwest are little changed over this period.

The recent census shows a gap of 30 years of life expectancy separating those areas. The health of people in Nepal's west is on a par with those in high AIDS prevalence countries in

**GUEST COLUMN**  
**Stephen Bezruchka**



sub-Saharan Africa which represent the worst health conditions in the world. Yet the causes are not the HIV virus, the causes are starvation and inadequate food.

Research over the last 30 years has demonstrated that determinants of health of populations are different from the common perceptions of personal hygiene, a balanced diet, environmental sanitation, health education, and the need for health checkups that Nepalis are taught to recite when asked what produces health.

What matters first was covered by the basic needs

concept enunciated by late King Birendra 30 years ago: enough food matters most, whether or not there is a balanced diet. One needs to avoid marginal nutrition that leads to infection and death. That is what is lacking in Nepal's northwest where people are mostly socially egalitarian, at least in terms of landholdings, but that land doesn't produce enough to eat.

Before democracy, the Nepal Food Corporation subsidised food in that region as the marginal nutritional status was recognised. These days such subsidies are inconsistent with a market approach to life. So people there are dying much younger than the rest of Nepalis because they don't have the economic means to sustain life.

What is a better solution? Other countries like Canada, Sweden, Sri Lanka and Kerala in India have legislated that wealthier parts of the country subsidise the underprivileged areas. Could Nepal also legislate such a Robin Hood policy to take from the rich and give to the poor?

Once basic needs are satisfied, creating a society which cares and shares matters most in producing a healthy population. It is the nature of human relationships, the psychosocial and cultural elements that matter for health. That is why Cuba is as healthy as the world's richest and most powerful country, the United States. Cuba's infant mortality is lower than in America even though it spends much, much less on medical care. It is clear it's not just spending in health care that makes people healthy.

How can Nepal learn from this example and promote the caring and sharing that has previously characterised marginal existence in this country?

Obviously peace is the first priority. After that, dealing with the results of physical and psychic trauma will be necessary. This can be a useful role for newly graduated Nepali doctors from the current epidemic of medical schools.

It is early childhood where caring and sharing is most important for producing good health. The key element is mother-child contact in infancy. Nepali mothers used to wear their infants for the first year of life and never allowed them to cry but put them to the breast or massaged them and played with them. As Nepali women are 'empowered' they will increasingly leave the task of feeding and attending to infants to others. Research shows this may produce behavior problems later and worse health.

Research also shows that where women do better, everyone's health is better including that of men. In Sri Lanka, too, health is almost as good as in the United States and it is the women that inherit the family land. The country has enjoyed a series of women prime ministers. Despite the civil war there the health of the population is remarkably good.

As the famous British epidemiologist, Geoffrey Rose, concluded in his monograph *The Strategy of Preventive Medicine*: 'The primary determinants of disease are mainly economic and social, and therefore its remedies must also be economic and social. Medicine and politics cannot and should not be kept apart.' ●

Stephen Bezruchka MD, MPH is SENIOR Lecturer in the School of Public Health and Community Medicine at the University of Washington, and works in Nepal to help remote communities have appropriate medical services.

# Between Bar and Bench

## Like in everything else, loyalty rather than competence has been handsomely rewarded

Barely a month after issuing a joint statement about protecting constitutionalism together, the Supreme Court Bench and the Bar have once more locked horns. This week, the Nepal Bar Association (NBA) called upon Chief Justice Dilip Kumar Paudel and the newly-appointed justice Pawan Kumar Ojha to resign.

The retaliation from the Bench was swift, and it sharply rejected the allegations. The confrontation is likely to intensify as four controversial personalities commence

**STATE OF THE STATE**  
**CK Lal**



functioning as ad-hoc judges of the court.

Ojha is one of the beneficiaries of a contentious decision, and was allegedly elevated to the Bench as a reward for his sterling performance as the Attorney General after February First.

He is the one who made the submission while defending the constitutionality of

RCCC that a Hindu king is beyond the scope of judicial scrutiny. This set off an uproar in the legal fraternity but His Honour stood his ground. Like in everything else, it looks like it is loyalty rather than competence that has been handsomely rewarded. Lawyers fear that the independence of the judiciary is now imperilled because the Bench is being packed with royal favourites.

On the surface, the Bar-Bench faceoff could be seen as a case of clash of personalities. With his back-slapping familiarity with vice-chairman Tulsi Giri, Chief Justice Paudel gives the impression of being unabashedly establishmentarian. As an outspoken critic of post-February regime, Bar President Shambhu Thapa has carved a niche for himself in the civil society movement for democracy and peace. Thapa is a progressive activist, Paudel is a status quoist and it looks like the never the twain can meet. These two legal eagles may be sitting on either side of the low wall separating the Supreme Court

and the Bar on Ram Shah Path, but they are poles apart politically.

In the royalist scheme of things, enunciated quite clearly by Ojha, the king is the supreme law giver, final dispenser of justice and the ultimate court of appeal. Such a king isn't just an incarnation of Vishnu, he is the personification of the Brahma-Vishnu-Mahesh triumverate of creator, custodian and destroyer. In the absence of a parliament to impeach erring judges, their lordships are secure in knowledge that as long as they follow the divine order they are safe.

Concerns of the Bar, on the other hand, are more mundane. In its concept of justice the seven pillars of an independent judiciary are necessary though not sufficient condition of democracy. Supremacy of law, equality before law, judicial independence and impartiality, juristic personality, non-retroactivity, legal representation, and presumption of innocence are the canons that under-gird any democratic society. It has no place here for the myth of divinely ordained monarchs.

The only thing bridging the generation gap between them is the constitution. But ever since the statute was held hostage to Article 127, that sliver of commonality has also vanished. That it took so long for this mutual suspicion to come out in the open is itself testimony to the deep-rooted conservatism of Nepal's legal fraternity.

Despite some exemplary rulings in favour of fundamental rights, there is a nagging suspicion that the court's sympathies have traditionally sided with the palace rather than the people. Politicians, too, don't hold the Bench in very high esteem. A judiciary weakened by its inner contradictions is a liability rather than an asset for the rule of law.

If at all an excuse was needed to restore parliament, this is the clinching reason to activate the constitutional process. In the absence of a functioning legislature, the judiciary has no force of its own. To save itself from those who consider themselves divine, the court needs to work to restore the people's sovereignty. ●



## LETTERS

## JAUNDICED

Notwithstanding the jaundiced view of some people (Krishna Adhikari in Letters #279) in response to my column ('Rebuilding democracy', #277) King Gyanendra himself has said that February First was a temporary move. So the challenge to rebuild democracy lies solely in the parties' court. Since the leaders have confessed having 'made mistakes' (obviously, a euphemism for their massive corruption), the parties should have kicked out the stinking among them and laid out measures to provide clean governance in future. But sadly, the very corrupt continue to rule the roost. Lately, they have added to their sins by turning for help to our perpetual tormentor, India which, by facilitating the 12-point pact, has now reduced them to being the Maoists' mouthpiece in Kathmandu. So long as the parties do not go through necessary ablutions, the vast silent majority will continue to be beholden to the monarch. NRNs, UN officials, donors or diplomats, instead of behaving as partisan NGO activists, should work for taming the parties along this line. The brilliant success of the 1988 Panchayat-time innovation of community forestry results from three good governance conditions, popular participation, transparent management and accountability of leaders. Replicating this devolution across all development sectors could be one commitment the parties could make for their return to power.

**Bihari Krishna Shrestha, Kathmandu**

● After reading your editorial ('Let's not go back there', #279) it became even harder for me to figure out what is going on inside the head of Nepal's ruler. It has been a year since he took over power and it is clear to everyone that he has increased his isolation and fragmented the Nepali people. If he is reading the independent and credible media like yours, he will know that Prachanda has now put himself on the same pedestal as the king of Nepal. The Maoist chieftain may not be as powerful, the king's army may be bigger but in the people's perception it is now Prachanda vs Gyanendra. What could be worse for the continuity of the monarchy and future of this country than this? It is time His

Majesty realised he made a mistake and take the least cost-option which is to patch up with the parties and then negotiate with the Maoists. It will save the Nepali people and him a lot of grief.

**Name withheld**

● Seeing Prachanda's picture on your page one ('Prachanda's new path', #278) I now see why the Maoists get such good press. It is because you in the media glorify them and launder the image of these blood-thirsty criminals. It is now clear that the political parties, desperate for recognition have taken the risky step of riding the tiger. Sooner or later, the tiger will eat them up.

**Mina KC, email**



● Kunda Dixit hits the nail on the head by exposing India's double standard in dealing with Nepal by pointing out its support for the Burmese junta ('Indian sinophobia', #279). Is this another example of the Kirkpatrick Doctrine in action of everything being ok as long as "they're our sons of bitches"? What Dixit does not mention is that there is a bit of disquiet in India about Bhutan's king public relations exercise of voluntary abdication because it was done without New Delhi's concurrence. For once in Nepal we have a visionary king who knows where he is going and doesn't want to be anyone's puppet, and the Indians don't like it one bit. All this talk of democracy and constitutional monarchy is just for public consumption.

**JB Shah, email**

## GURKHA HISTORY

Enlightening article by Kanak Mani Dixit ('The Lahure of Kot Kangra', #278) Even as a member of the British Army I was unaware of some of the facts presented. During our extensive recruiting phase in the brigade where our culture, tradition, religious faith (Hinduism) and brigade history are taught, our history starts from 1814-1816 when a young British Officer, 2Lt Fredrick Young was taken POW by the Gurkhas (Gorkhas of that time). He was so impressed by our fighting spirit and professionalism that he offered to take some of the native Gorkhas to recruit into the then East Indian Army and that was how our history begins. I believe the sole reason why we are not taught the 1809 incident and Maharajah Ranjit Singh has something to do with our proud tradition of Gurkhas joining directly into the British (then East Indian) Army rather than Gurkhas first joining Maharajah Ranjit Singh paving the way for very watchful Gora-shaibs, which would mean Gurkhas didn't join British Army first hand and which also would mean that

2Lt Fredrick Young's impression of the Gurkhas recruitment was influenced by the Gurkhas joining Maharajah Ranjit Singh. So the history taught to us will continue to say that there was mutual respect amongst the two great adversaries that led to the start of this proud tradition. It sounds better this way. Yet, I have learnt the correct history from Dixit's article and will cite it wherever I have an opportunity.

**Ram Kumar Rai, email**

## COSMIC SIGNIFICANCE

Reading Naresh Newar's investigation on Cosmic Air ('Pull up...pull up...', #278) gave me a strong sense of déjà vu. Having worked at Necon Air, I saw how after the demise of Anoop Rana the airline was picked clean by the businessmen who ran it. A once-proud airline was sent crashing to the ground by greedy tycoons

who bankrupted the carrier, owed CAAN millions, had huge arrears with the French company for the leased ATRs, and then quietly pocketed millions of shareholder rupees and closed down the airline. The most amazing part about all this is that the tycoons are still in our midst, strutting about in fancy cars, living in villas and looking for the next big thing to scam. They never lost a single paisa of their own money in all this. Shame on them. Now it looks like history is repeating itself with Cosmic. It is the same old story, and one wonders where the government is when we need it to protect staff, customers and shareholders from being swindled.

**Subodh Koirala, email**

## LETTERS

Nepali Times welcomes all feedback. Letters should be brief and may be edited for space. While pseudonyms can be accepted, writers who provide their real names and contact details will be given preference. Email letters should be in text format without attachments with 'letter to the editor' in the subject line.

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## Highway mishaps can't be called 'accidents' when they are due to negligence and carelessness

PRAGYA SHRESTHA  
in MUGLING

On a trip from Butwal to Kathmandu last week, we counted 17 major accidents. Carcasses of dead buses and trucks had been scraped to the side of the road. On the Mugling stretch, rusting skeletons of buses lay among the boulders where they had plunged from the highway.

Even by Nepal's own horrific standards of highway safety, November 2005 broke all records. Between 15-30 November more than 56 people died in highway accidents across the country. Twenty-seven of these deaths occurred during three different accidents on a single day: 30 November.

It has now got to a point where the fatal incidents can't be called 'accidents' anymore because most are due to negligence, carelessness and a blatant disregard for traffic norms.

The most dangerous stretch of road by far in Nepal is the 36 km between Mugling and Naryangarh. The highway was blasted out of the sheer rock face of the Trisuli gorge 25 years ago and is a major artery that sees 1,100 vehicles a day. But the road is also narrow, has hairpin turns and steep drops.



TURNED TURTLE: On a trip last week from Butwal to Kathmandu, relics of 17 major highway accidents were spotted.

In November and December there were 18 major accidents on this route in which 36 people died, 49 were seriously injured and 32 needed medical treatment. The Roads Department has pinpointed nine red alert spots along the stretch where most of the accidents occur and most of these spots lie at a sharp bend after a straight stretch.

The rate of accidents has increased after the highway was rehabilitated recently. "Last year when the road was not in good shape everybody was careful but after it was repaved drivers are speeding," notes Prem Joshi, inspector at the Traffic Branch of the Department of Roads in Chitwan.

Indeed, speeding and overloading are the two main

causes of fatal accidents in Nepal. Other reasons are landslides, poor condition of roads, bad design of roads and human activity along the roadsides. In terms of number of vehicles, Nepal already has the highest rate of accidents in South Asia.

The Department of Roads (DoR) has established a specialised Road and Traffic Unit that does a regular safety audit of the kingdom's highway network as a preventive measure to detect potential safety hazards before the road is open to traffic.

"When the Tribhuban Rajpath was opened in early 60's there were accidents every day because of its improper geometry and structure," says Devendra Dhar Pradhananga a DoR engineer for the past 40 years. "identifying

and rectifying such defects in the design stage is a much more effective way to reduce road accidents."

The standard for traffic signs and road markings are very poor and improving it would reduce the number of accidents. But by far the most important factor is training and awareness of drivers and roadside residents. "The Road Safety Audit report problems and make recommendations on how they can be remedied," explains head of DoR's Road and Traffic Unit at Babar Mahal, Saroj Kumar Pradhan.

In Bharatpur, a Road Accident Investigation and Minimising Committee was set up after the spate of accidents in November. It concluded that the main reasons were driver negligence,

overloading, absence of centreline, roads tilted towards the river and lack of coordination with local administration.

Hum Bahadur Dhungel was the driver of the bus that plunged into the Trisuli on 28 November in which six passengers were killed. Dhungel is still in custody at the Chitwan district police office. "I tried to overtake, it was my mistake and I couldn't see the vehicle from opposite direction and when I hit the brakes, the bus skidded and rolled down into the river. I threw myself out of the door and survived."

Dhungel is lucky he is alive. Most drivers never make it. Even those who are injured die on the way to the hospital in Bharatpur or Kathmandu which takes hours. ●



ALL PICS: PRAGYA SHRESTHA

### Fatal November

16 November	Daunme, Nabalparasi	24 injured	4 killed
17 November	Salyanmara, Argakanchi	5 injured	2 killed
19 November	Pakhahalali, Dolakha	10 injured	
24 November	Kalikhola, Mugling	31 injured	14 killed
27 November	Chandanda, Chautara	14 injured	
28 November	Darechok, Chitwan	18 injured	6 killed
30 November	Swargadwari	19 injured	16 killed
	Deurali, Palpa	8 injured	9 killed
	Chitwan		2 killed

### Highway hospital

With the commissioning of the Highway Community Hospital at Malekhu next week there is hope that the number of fatalities along the Prithvi Highway will be reduced.

Many of those who are killed in highway accidents on this dangerous stretch of road would have lived if proper medical attention was available nearby. Many injured die on the way to hospitals in Kathmandu.

The hospital and trauma centre was built by the Accident Victim Relief Association of Dhading and Friends of Nepal with Rs 12.5 million in support from the Italian charity, Amici Dal Monte Rosa. The



hospital is fully-equipped with an x-ray unit, emergency room, operation theatre and laboratory.

The hospital has two doctors and three nurses and will also serve adjoining villages in Dhading and also has an ambulance to rush more serious cases to Kathmandu.



## Growing load

Nepalis are being forced to adjust to the new load-shedding regimen, which is seeing electricity cut at least once a week, for about 1 ½ hours each in the morning and evening for Kathmandu Valley residents and slightly less for the rest of the country. As reported often in *Nepali Times* (#229, 274 and 277), the problem is simply one of supply and demand: as demand grows in cold winter months the nation's rivers that drive the power plants are shrinking for lack of rainfall. This winter's drought in some parts of the country is making the situation even worse now. The Nepal Electricity Authority says that it can produce only 470 megawatts of power from the total 540 MW generated by the nation's various power projects, whereas demand during winter exceeds 600 MW. The only relief is the 70 MW Middle Marsyangdi project, slated to start working at the end of 2007 but the NEA says load shedding is here at least until the summer.

## Tourism tumbles

Despite good news on the tourist front in the last months of 2005, overall arrivals declined by 3.9 percent during the year, says the Nepal Tourism Board. Total visitors numbered 277,129 compared to 288,356 in 2004. Japanese tourists led the drop—their numbers fell 17.7 percent last year. Visitors from European countries were down 10.9 percent, while US arrivals fell 9.8 percent, according to the NTB. However, arrivals of Asian tourists jumped 10.3 percent overall, led by Indian, Bangladesh and Sri Lankan nationals. Arrivals grew overall during the last two quarters (24 percent and 16 percent), which coincided in part with the Maoist ceasefire. Lumbini was one tourist destination to benefit from the increased inflow of tourists. The birthplace of Buddha recorded a five percent increase in visitors, to 39,784, according to the Lumbini Development Trust. The largest number of visitors (15,519) came from Sri Lanka, followed by Thailand, South Korea, Japan and Burma.

## Handicraft hike

Exports of handicrafts rose 11 percent in fiscal year 2004-2005, earning Rs 2.84 billion, said the Handicraft Association of Nepal (HAN). The increase was due to the addition of 16 products to the 'export basket, according to HAN President Pancha Ratna Shakya, speaking at the group's 26<sup>th</sup> AGM. Sales to the UAE zoomed up by 347 percent, to Hong Kong 95 percent and to Tibet 70 percent. HAN also repeated its call that the government exempt cottage industries from paying income tax.

## Nabil grows

Nabil Bank Limited reported a 13.9 percent after-tax profit at its 21<sup>st</sup> AGM on 25 December. In fiscal year 2004-2005, the bank's net worth grew 11.9 percent while deposits increased 3.3 percent. Non-performing loans equalled 3.35 percent of total loans, reported the bank. The AGM also approved a cash dividend of Rs 70 per share.

# Effective activism

## Tough advice helped the free kamaiya movement succeed

In early June 2000, together with Dilli Bahadur Chaudhary of Backward Society Education (BASE), I spent one week in Nepalganj attending a camp on social activism. It was run by Vivek Pandit, a prominent Indian anti-slavery activist. Vivek was in Nepal to assist Dilli and others to come up

STRICTLY BUSINESS  
Ashutosh Tiwari



with plans to make the then nascent *kamaiya andolan* (the movement to emancipate bonded Tharu agricultural labourers in far western Nepal) victorious.

It was clear right from the beginning that Vivek had little respect for the excruciatingly polite, therefore ineffective, way with which Nepali activists were treating the issue of kamaiya emancipation. With donor funds, some had long been running saving-and-credit courses for kamaiyas, who then slipped deeper into debt. Others had spent years running programs to improve relations between feudal landlords and kamaiyas. Still others were organising literacy and income-generating classes.

All these, Vivek argued, were activities that kept the *NGO-wallahs* in the aid business while the kamaiyas stayed mired in debt bondage. In that vein, Vivek's challenge to the assembled activists was this: either you take the andolan seriously to really fight to make

the almost 200,000 agricultural labourers free from the vicious cycle of debt bondage or you go back to your safe and secure *NGO jagir*.

Vivek's framing the goal in such stark either-or terms had an electrifying effect on the participants, all of whom replied that they wanted to push the andolan through. With role-plays and tales drawn from his experience in India, Vivek then talked about the ingredients that help make a social movement effective.

**One goal at a time:** Many of the early failures of the kamaiya andolan stemmed from the fact that the activists made too many demands. While each of those demands were legitimate, having so many made the final output look like a laundry list of wishes and hopes, which were then ignored by the people in power. Vivek insisted that the activists focus on freedom first for the kamaiyas. Once that was accomplished, he said, then go for land, then for housing and so on.

**A human face:** Too many people want to be the hero of any andolan, said Vivek. This meant factional squabbles which further meant derailment of most struggles. The kamaiya andolan too had its share of credit-seekers. But Vivek was insistent that all should rally around one believable leader who would serve as the de facto face to drive the andolan forward. Too many leaders only confused the followers and diluted the intensity of the

single goal.  
**Flood the media:** No andolan could ever move forward without having the media on its side. To that end, Vivek urged the activists to write letters to editors, hold press conferences, prepare position papers and repeatedly make public presentations. Soon after the camp, activists did step up activities to get their messages picked up and amplified by national and international media.

**Justice and fairness:** Vivek cautioned that using the media could be interpreted as an act of propaganda if the messages did not appeal to people's innate sense of justice and fairness. Thereafter, the andolan's thrust was recast to reflect ethical and legal concerns that few would object to. Who, after all, was going to argue for the continuation of debt bondage when it was portrayed as a slavery-like condition?

**Powerful enemies:** One trade-off of doing an andolan is that friends' numbers decrease while enemies' ranks swell. Vivek's equation was simple: no enemies, no andolan, therefore one needed enemies for any andolan. He worried that Nepali activists were too nice and wanted to be liked by the other side and were thus reluctant to make enemies.

But he need not have worried. By applying his methods, Nepali activists won the first milestone. In mid-July that year, the then government declared the practice of debt bondage illegal and declared all kamaiya to be free citizens of Nepal. ●

# “The biggest challenge is to restore peace”



Jugal Bhurtel of the Non Resident Nepali International Coordination Committee (NRN-ICC) spoke to *Nepali Times* recently looking back at the achievements of overseas Nepalis in 2005.

**How has 2005 been for the overseas Nepali community?**  
The most important achievement was the second conference that was held in Kathmandu in October. The amount of work that went into the conference shows how seriously overseas Nepalis take the development of their homeland. The conference went much better than expected.

**Concrete accomplishments?**  
First, as I said, it showed that overseas Nepalis are concerned about the country and are willing to help. It proved that the first conference wasn't just a whim or homesickness, it showed a commitment to start a process of interaction with the government to try to find out where we can fit in the development of our homeland. The second conference gave the non-resident Nepali movement a permanent place in Nepali society.

**How do you gauge the government's response?**  
There was support from the government, political parties and all sides. We met the leaders of all the big parties. There was no pressure to toe any line. I think this was because everyone regarded the NRN issue as one of national importance that had to be kept out of the political arena.

**How is the networking among overseas Nepalis progressing?**  
Since the second conference there is expected to be a big leap forward in participation of overseas Nepalis in nation-building, not just paying lip service to helping Nepal. Also, from this time there is more participation of women and we hope to reach the communities and groups of NRNs we haven't reached yet. This year's conference helped increase our self-confidence.

**So what next?**  
Our organisational structure is more or less strong. Although it still has limitations, the NRN Act has come into being which gives us a legal basis for investment. We hope there will be reforms in the law through ordinance. The other big achievement this year was the commitment to help

in a future peace process in the country and a committee is being set up to deal with it. The concept of a \$100 million Nepal Investment Fund has been floated which can take the NRN movement into a new phase. There is also a proposal to start a Skills Training Centre for Nepalis working overseas for which there is another \$10 million fund proposed. We also want to work with local bodies in the districts with a project in each area of education and health. So, this year we pledged to carry out some effective interventions.

**Exactly how do you propose to spend the funds?**  
There will obviously be some difficulties with the implementation of the \$100 million fund. Firstly, NRN Association can't even be registered according to prevalent laws of the land. There will be further complications because of post-9/11 restrictions on registering international funds in conflict zones. Still, our international consultant is working on this and many of our friends have already pledged money to the fund.

We feel the biggest challenge is to restore peace. We can show all the commitment we want but if the country remains at war our commitments for investment won't mean much. The government must also amend the NRN ordinance so as to include a big group that is now kept out.

**So what are you doing till the next conference?**  
We must establish offices in all countries where Nepalis reside. It is huge task. And while seeking a more pro-active role in the socio-economic transformation of Nepal we have also accepted a lot of responsibilities towards our ever-suffering motherland. The third conference will evaluate what we have done so far but I am confident we will see results.



# Why we ended the ceasefire

Baburam Bhattarai in *Jana Aastha*, 4 January

आस्था

Since the launch of our People's War ten years ago, we had said that war itself is not feasible but just a medium as our main aim was to establish a forward-looking government. Everyone knows about our initial 40-point demand (before People's War and then our three demands during two peace talks). But it was all due to lack of vision on the part of the ruling parties and subsequently the stubbornness of the monarch and his army that failed to even meet our ordinary political demands.

Consequently, the country and ordinary citizens have been the ones to suffer most. It was basically to respect the people's aspiration for peace and democratic republic, and also to show our sincerity towards a forward-looking political resolution that led us to declare our unilateral ceasefire on 1 September. This move has helped to bring to close the forward-looking political resolution in that the historical 12-point understanding has been developed between the parties and us. However, there has not been effective implementation of the understanding and political resolution due to the stupidity and obstinacy of the repressive forces.

There will obviously be the question as to whether extending or calling off the ceasefire can help bring close to political resolution. Our party believes that extending ceasefire further would only be damaging to democratic republic, peace and political progress. The situation would have been different if there had been joint ceasefire and the king had accepted our 12-point understanding. Extending the ceasefire would not be good for the country and people at a time when the king and the royalists are actively opposing the understanding, escalating military offensive activities all around the country and making attempts to legitimise military rule through municipal election polls. It was this very situation that led us to end the ceasefire but not before informing everyone about it.

There is a need for every democratic republican to pay attention to some crucial points. As evident from failure of peace talks in the past and failure to reciprocate to our ceasefire, it is clear that the army will never support establishing democratic republic



MIN BAJRACHAYA

and favour constituent assembly elections as long as it remains under the king's command. The main reason why the king was able not to give in to heavy international or national pressure was because he has the army with him and that's the only reason. This only means that the main assault of democratic republic should be more on the army. It would be meaningless to attack only the royalists. As long as the army is around, there will never be peace and security for the people. All should seriously understand that democracy can never be established unless the royal army is de-established and replaced with a new national army. Another important point is that that the understanding can never be achieved by peaceful people's movement. Also, ordinary protests against the municipal election will not be enough because this is being held inside the barracks.

Important point is that we don't foresee any difficulties in implementing the 12-point understanding because this was conceived on the first hand with a common goal to end the regressive monarchy rule and establish democratic republic. There is no clause in the understanding which says that a ceasefire is a must to achieve our goal.

## Bring in the king

Former Minister Dinbandhu Aryal in *Nispakchya*, 3 January

निसपक्ष

If monarchy and democracy can co-exist in Japan, Thailand and Britain, it would be wrong to think that the same can't happen here. After all, the king has been saying over and over that he supports the constitutional monarchy. Now that the parties have an understanding with the Maoists, they should try to forge one with the king too. That would mean moving the Maoists to a position the king would be satisfied with. The parties are in a position to play that role because they have not said that they oppose monarchy: only that they will not accept an autocratic king. Worldwide, there have been cases where kings refused a ceremonial role and there have been times when even after becoming a republic, a country has had to revert to kingship. In our case, how can the king decide whether to agree to a constituent assembly or to restore the parliament just because demands are being made in the streets, without the mandate of the people? The Maoists can't stage state capture and neither can the parties and Maoists uproot the monarchy. The king can't ban the parties. If they can't get their own way, all three should work together to reach a conclusion.

## History lesson

Former national assembly member and Brigadier General Dipta Prakash Shah in *Deshantar*, 1 January

देशान्तर

One needs to realise that a country cannot be ruled simply by having the army at one's side, as was the case two centuries ago. The military strength of the Royal Nepali Army is quite limited as is the assistance it receives from foreign governments. But the Maoist's real strength remains unknown. From where do the rebels get their arms? How do they get them? Is any country involved in supplying them? The government needs to know all this. The rebels have established 12 divisions, which could mean that they are stronger than the army but it is for the government to prove if they have become weaker. Just saying that the Maoists have become weak will not serve any purpose—the government will only create an illusion while the rebels can carry on with their devastating missions. Ultimately such a strategy will only invite disaster. The Maoists are said to have embarked on a military tactic with a historical precedent. More than two centuries ago, King Prithbi Narayan Shah first occupied nearby cities before successfully launching an attack on The Maoists are up to the same thing now. But they must understand that one can't win state power today through military force alone. Today, any political force needs to have the people on its side. The rebels have said that they are trying to move towards peace. If they are sincere, they may end up

winning state power on the basis of the partnership they have forged with the political parties. The rebels have also assured the chief of the UN's human rights office in Nepal, Ian Martin, that they will not commit violence while disrupting the upcoming municipal polls. Amidst all these developments, if the king still wishes to resolve the crisis he should bring together all the powers, including the Maoists, and hold a referendum. He should let the people decide if they want monarchy or not and if they do, what form it should take.

## Parties' dilemma

*Nispakshya*, 3 January

निसपक्ष

Everyone is worried that the Maoists will unleash violence now that they have called off the ceasefire. The seven parties have suffered the worst loss, politically. They are now in a dilemma over whether to retain their 12-point understanding with the Maoists who, in a bid to display their power, have already planned a series of violent attacks, abductions and killings. But the parties are ridiculing themselves by holding the government responsible for any future terror and violence. Such a statement is shameless and despicable coming from the parties, who took the side of the Maoists. Meanwhile, their leaders are already anticipating an invitation from the palace after the king returns from his 21-day tour of the eastern region. They are putting all possible pressure on him to invite them for talks, stop the planned municipal elections and establish another government. But as they have failed to make the king submit to their demands, the parties are now looking to the United Nations, European Union and others in the international community to apply pressure. Some of the party leaders are now regretting their boycott of February's municipal elections because they see that the king and his supporters are benefiting most from the move.

## Blockade

*Nepal Samacharpatra*, 1 January

समाचारपत्र

PACHTHAR—For the last four months, Pachthar's Rabi Bajar has endured a Maoist blockade that has severely affected the lives of local people. It was imposed after the unified security force set up a base camp here but it's the civilians who suffer most and who are already running short of basic supplies, including medicines. During the first two months, the rebels barred all transport trucks from entering here. Then they blocked all public buses. Ironically, all this happened after the Maoists first announced their ceasefire four months ago. Today, people are unable to buy rice, kerosene, sugar, salt and cooking oil in the marketplace. Pharmacist Dipak Rai has no choice but to turn away customers empty-handed as he has already run out of medicines.

आगामी निर्वाचन.....



उम्मेदवार



मतदाता

Forthcoming election  
Candidate.....Voter

हिमाल

Robin Sayami in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 31 Dec-13 January

### QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ It would be suicidal for us to extend the ceasefire any further. ”

- Maoist leader Prachanda in a statement on 2 January, after calling off the four-month unilateral ceasefire



# Trade and transit renewal

Himal Khabarpatrika, 31 December-13 January



The trade transit treaty between Nepal and India expired on 5 January. Officials from Nepal's Ministry of Finance have yet to clarify if it will be renewed, with Secretary Bhagat Bahadur Thapa's saying that it is under consideration. We spoke to Javed Asaraf, commerce counsellor at the Indian Embassy, whose diplomatic responses implied that good news is not on the way.

### What is the state of the Transit Treaty?

**Javed Asaraf:** The treaty can be automatically extended for seven years during its first term if none of the signatories has decided to end it by giving notice six months in advance. But amendments and reviews can be made before it is renewed.

### Is India attempting to amend the treaty?

Generally, the treaty has been working well. But it has been in force for seven years and we are thinking it is time to make amendments in order to improve it. The treaty's clause 11 also states that amendments can be made if the situation changes.

### What will the amendments be and when will they happen?

We are still in the process of discussing this. On 2-3 December, His Majesty's Government of Nepal organised a meeting at which several key issues were discussed. The results were quite productive.

### Do you think the treaty will be renewed?

We are interested to sit with HMG/N to speed up the process of amending and renewing it.

### How are economic and trade relations between India and Nepal in the present political context?

We have very good economic and trade relations. Despite the current political and financial state of Nepal, trade has been growing between the two countries. Indian investment in Nepal has also increased and Indian tourists have helped to boost Nepal's tourism sector. Indian economic support to Nepal has also been growing. There are now over 100 projects supported by India country-wide in education, health and development sectors. India is also implementing big infrastructure projects. Till now, India has launched programs worth more than Rs 13 billion.

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# What they are reading



We asked *Nepali Times* readers what else they have been reading over the holidays besides this paper and came up with this list. A sample survey of who is reading what and why.



**Ramesh Nath Pandey**  
**Minister of Foreign Affairs**  
Getting some free time out from my schedule, I have just finished reading *The Use and Misuse of American Might: The Superpower Myth* by Nancy Soderberg, senior foreign policy adviser to President Clinton. It was gifted to me by my son and I don't regret spending time going through the well researched and analysed chapters on some of the major crises during the Clinton administration including the inner dynamics at work inside Washington during that

time. It is a must read for every practioner of diplomacy and those who take a keen interest in the conduct of international relations. The author elaborates the negative (or) the positive impact of the use or misuse of political, economic and military power and influence of the US on the international community. Clinton himself says in the foreword: 'No nation can ignore terrorism or defeat it alone.' The author lucidly describes how the international community failed in Haiti and how the re-instated Aristide 'failed his own country'. She concludes that outside-backed governments seldom succeed in winning the hearts of the people. The book concludes with a plea to 'realigning American foreign policy to work in concert with the international community, rather than clashing with it'.



**John Fry**  
**British Council, Kathmandu**  
Over the holidays I have been re-reading Thomas Kennealy's *Confederates*, a novel set in the American Civil War of the early 1860s. Kennealy is a master story-teller and can operate over a large canvas. He weaves the subplots into the overall narrative expertly and the result is compulsive reading. I think he is at his best when he is dealing with a historical theme. In *Confederates* he brings it all alive: the squalour, the desperation, the rank fear of simple farmers whose lives have been swallowed by the awful destruction, the awful waste of war and culpability of those who wage it. I love reading history when it is in the hands of someone who can really project you into the period.

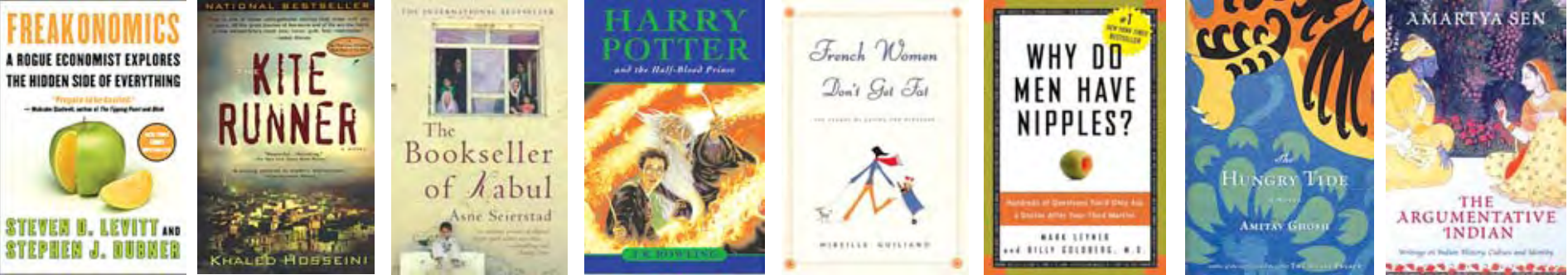
## Our choice

Staffers at *Nepali Times* and their friends were polled about what they read in 2005 and would like to read in 2006, and we came up with this list.

- The End of Oil: On the Edge of a Perilous New World**  
**Paul Roberts**  
A must-read for every consumer of fossil fuel worldwide who by using petrol, diesel or gas allows the oil industry to wield such enormous economic and political power and pushes the world to an ecological disaster.
- The World Is Flat**  
**A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century**  
**Thomas L Friedman**  
What Friedman means by 'flat' is 'connected': the lowering of trade and political barriers and the exponential technical advances of the digital revolution have made it possible to do business, or almost anything else, instantaneously with billions of other people across the planet.
- French Women Don't Get Fat**  
**The Secret of Eating for Pleasure**  
**Mireille Guiliano**  
If you have a chocolate croissant for breakfast, have a vegetable-based lunch — or take an extra walk and pass on the bread basket at dinner.
- Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince (Harry Potter #6)**  
**J. K. Rowling**  
A darker book than any in the series thus far with a level of sophistication belying its genre, this Potter moves the series into murkier waters and marks the arrival of Rowling onto the adult literary scene.
- Freakonomics**  
**A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything**  
**Steven D. Levitt**

- Forget your image of an economist as a crusty professor worried about fluctuating interest rates: Levitt focuses his attention on more intimate real-world issues, like whether reading to your baby will make her a better student.
- The Hungry Tide**  
**Amitav Ghosh**  
Ghosh's nuanced description of the mood and texture of the Sundarban delta forest serves as a lush backdrop for an intricate narrative that moves fluidly between past and present.
- The Kite Runner**  
**Khaled Hosseini**  
An educational and eye-opening account of Afghanistan's political turmoil with characters whose heartbreaking struggles and emotional triumphs will resonate with readers in Nepal.
- The Bookseller of Kabul**  
**Asne Seirstad**  
After living for three months with the Kabul bookseller Sultan Khan in the spring of 2002, this Norwegian journalist penned this astounding portrait of a nation recovering from war, undergoing political flux and mired in misogyny and poverty.
- The Tipping Point**  
**How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference**  
**Malcolm Gladwell**  
Little changes can have big effects; when small numbers of people start behaving differently, that behavior can ripple outward until a critical mass or 'tipping point' is reached, changing the world.
- Why Do Men Have Nipples?**  
**Hundreds of Questions You'd Only Ask a Doctor after Your**

- Third Martini**  
**Mark Leyner**  
This is much more of a humour book than a health one. The truly curious will find better, more in-depth answers on medical websites but this is funnier.
- Collapse**  
**How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed**  
**Jared Diamond**  
*Collapse* examines why ancient societies, including the Anasazi of the American Southwest and the Viking colonies of Greenland, as well as modern ones such as Rwanda, have fallen apart.
- The Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants**  
**Ann Brashares**  
If you've seen the movie, here is the book. Four girls who have been lifelong friends spend the season apart and pass along among themselves a pair of thrift shop jeans which oddly seems to fit each of them even though they have very different physiques.
- Edge of Empire: Conquest and Collecting in the Eastern Frontiers of the British Empire 1750-1850**  
**Maya Jasanoff**  
Jasanoff challenges the idea that the British Empire imposed its own culture on its colonies, arguing instead that the empire thrived because it was able to 'find ways of accommodating difference'.
- The Argumentative Indian**  
**Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity**  
**Amartya Sen**  
This Nobel laureate's essays have such meticulous reasoning and expresses his point of view so courteously that it is difficult to argue with him.





# ading



**Erika Joergensen**  
**World Food Programme**  
**Representative in Nepal**

*Half a Life* by V S Naipaul. It was published in 2001, the same year Mr Naipaul was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature. *Half a Life* tells the story of a father and his son, a man and his wife and of how the Indian caste system plays with peoples lives. It tells the story of Willie Chandran, who springs from

an unhappy alliance between a low-caste mother and a father constantly at odds with his life. It's a brilliant story, good humoured and so well told.



**Manjushree Thapa**  
**Author of *Forget Kathmandu* and *The Tutor of History***

I'm reading Tahar Ben Jalloun's *This Blinding Absence of Light*, which is based on the 20 year incarceration of several military officers who attempted a coup against the Moroccan king. The book is very relevant to Nepal's situation, especially in regards prison conditions and torture. It brings to

mind RK Mainali's jail writings—though the man did not, in the Moroccan case, later join the very forces he had once tried to overthrow.



**Shankar P Sharma**  
**Vice Chairman, National Planning Commission**

Jeffery Sachs' *The End of Poverty* is a fascinating book. He argues that eradicating extreme poverty at a global level is feasible in this generation. What is needed is the political commitment and some resources to help address the basic needs: hunger, access to basic health services and primary

education of the roughly one billion people who live below the extreme poverty line of \$ 1 a day.

How to achieve that? Sachs recommends: i. Overseas development aid (ODA) be greatly increased, as countries, trapped in poverty cannot escape on their own efforts alone, ii. market access to the poorer countries be widened for sustained economic growth, iii. developed countries should transfer useful technologies to poorer ones and address their priority R&D needs, iv. because poorer countries cannot repay their debts and at the same time achieve the MDGs, their debts must be cancelled. In Nepal over the past 15 years there has been significant progress, despite limited resources and weak governance. The country has

the potential to slash poverty significantly over the next 10 years. The main challenge is consolidating the gains that have been made and finding a resolution to the conflict, whose impact could not only halt progress but even reverse past gains.



**Dubby Bhagat**  
**Author and journalist**

Greg Rucka is the Ludlum of the future and proof of this is his thriller, *Private Wars*. I only read thrillers, and this particular book is from a series called Queen and Country and is set in Uzbekistan and a heroin whose name is Lara Chance. Lara is there to 'exfiltrate' the son of the president who is dying and rescue him from the evil designs of his sister

who is a vicious woman with dangerous ambitions. That's how far I've got.



**Narayan Wagle**  
**Editor, *Kantipur* and author of *Palpasa Cafe***

I've nearly finished reading *The Maximum City* by Suketu Mehta. It is light-hearted book on serious subjects, and is entertaining and engaging. Mehta takes you on a tour of Bombay following the stylish, the tycoons, politicians, Bollywood personalities and of course the underworld. The writing is simple and

based on research and interviews. It is non-fiction yet it reads like a novel. This thick book set me back Rs 1,000 but is worth every rupee. At one point, Mehta satirically plans to meet Bal Thakeray only on the day when he leaves the city and only on the way to airport. Because after the hard-talk interview with the Shiv Sena supremo, Mehta felt he wouldn't be safe in the city. In the book, Thakeray comes across as a comedian.



**Joydeb Chakravarty**  
**Managing Director**  
**Thompson Nepal Private Limited**

One of the many books that I enjoyed reading in 2005 was gifted to me by a client. CK PRAHALAD'S *The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid* is a compelling argument about an 'inclusive' capitalist model of eradicating poverty through profit, while delivering dignity, empowerment and choice to the

billions at the bottom of the pyramid by creating markets and not just products.

Having partnered with clients in both the development and the private sector in this region, I was captivated by Prahalad's forceful contention of a self-sustaining economic model. His book with numerous case studies amply illustrates the viability of this challenge. His viewpoint that by mobilising the investment capacities of large companies, the masses at the BOP will be able to reap economic benefits thereby enhancing the quality of their lives is also supported by many of the development agencies who believe that private-sector partnership will be an integral factor for poverty alleviation. A must read for heads of the development agencies, NGOs and the CEOs in the private-sector.

# Books on Nepal

**Books in Nepal that you may have missed in 2005 and should get around to in 2006.**

## *Pas/pasa Café*

Narayan Wagle (In Nepali)  
245 pages  
Publication Nepalaya, 2005

A fictionalised account of some actual events, the lives and deaths of ordinary Nepalis caught in the vice of war. Record-breaking best-seller.

## *Ropeways in Nepal*

Dipak Gyawali, Ajaya Dixit, Madhukar Upadhy (eds)  
NWCF and KEVA, 2004

*Ropeways in Nepal* is that the best way forward for Nepal is to shun long-distance multi-stage ropeways and go for an 'arranged marriage' of micro-hydro projects with the capabilities of the suspension bridge industry.

## *Forget Kathmandu: An Elegy for Democracy*

Manjushree Thapa  
Penguin/Viking New Delhi, 2005

A skillful mix of history, reportage, memoir and travelogue, this book revisits three centuries of Nepali history as an elongated journey towards individualism and freedom. This is a personalised account of Nepal's past and present from a local perspective.

## *A History of Nepal*

John Whelpton  
Cambridge University Press, 2005

The most recent history book on Nepal is an orderly account of the nation that ranges from the geological formation of the Himalaya many

millions of years ago to the political intrigue of 2003 and all in under 300 pages.

## *Himalayan Perceptions: Environmental change and the well-being of mountain peoples*

Jack D Ives  
Routledge, London and New York, 2004

One of Nepal's foremost mountain scientists debunks the myth of Himalayan Degradation and says our mountains are susceptible to erosion due to heavy monsoons and geologically fragile topography, not necessarily because of reduced forest cover.

## *From Goddess to Mortal: The True Life Story of a Former Royal Kumari*

Rashmila Shakya as told to Scott Berry  
Vajra Publications, 2005

*From Goddess to Mortal* is the story of a former Kumari, Rashmila Shakya, who was chosen to be the living goddess at the age of four and spent eight years away from her parents at Kumari Ghar living a life vastly different from that of a conventional young girl.

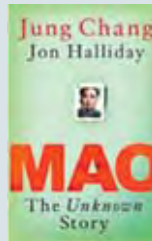
## *Clear Sky, Red Earth: A Himalayan Story*

Text by Sienna Craig, Illustrations by Tenzin Norbu  
Mera Publications, 2004

A charming illustrated tale of Namsel, a young girl from Dolpo who exhibits an unusual artistic talent and succeeds in realising her dreams. Entirely suitable for adults but targeted at children aged seven and up.

# Brushing up on Mao

**Some recent and not-so-recent books about the rise and spread of Maoism in Nepal that could help us better understand what drives this insurgency.**



*Mao: The Unknown Story*  
Jung Chang and Jon Halliday  
Jonathan Cape, 2005



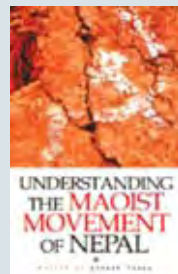
*Himalayan 'People's War': Nepal's Maoist Rebellion*  
Michael Hutt, editor  
C Hurst & Company, 2004  
Foundation Books (in South Asia)



*Nepal's Maoist Movement and Implications for India and China*  
Nischal Nath Pandey  
RCSS Policy Studies 27  
Manohar New Delhi



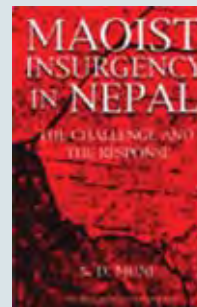
*The People's War in Nepal: Left Perspectives*  
Arjun Karki and David Seddon (eds)  
Adroit Publishers, Delhi, 2003



*Understanding the Maoist Movement of Nepal*  
Deepak Thapa (ed)  
Martin Chautari, 2003



*A Kingdom Under Siege: Nepal's Maoist Insurgency 1996 to 2003*  
Deepak Thapa with Bandita Sijapati  
the printhouse, 2003



*Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: The Challenge and the Response*  
SD Muni  
Rupa & Co, 2003



*Maoists in the Land of Buddha: An Analytical Study of the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal*  
Prakash A Raj  
Nirala Publications, 2004



*Domestic Conflict and Crisis of Governability in Nepal*  
Dhruva Kumar (ed)  
CNAS, 2000



# Human rights wronged

Both sides in the conflict must see that democracy is now a right

NARESH NEWAR

**B**ad news is always not bad especially when it comes to publishing opportunities. Nepal has never been so well-known worldwide as today, when writing about the conflict has far overshadowed the books about sex workers and mountain adventures that used to dominate bookstores' 'Nepal' sections.

Dozens of volumes have already been written about the Nepali Maoists, their leaders, history and ideologies but another new book on this issue is always an attraction. Dutch University scholar Bishnu Pathak had only planned to write the dissertation for his PhD but after researching and collating information for nearly seven years, he turned his work into a book. The result is one of the most comprehensive and exhaustively researched publications on the politics of the Maoist insurgency, with a heavy dose of discussion on human rights.

What makes this book, *Politics of People's War and Human Rights in Nepal*, stand out is the author's inclusion of academic theories on the Maoist uprising and a presentation of western vs eastern perspectives on human rights. It comes at an opportune time as Maoist leaders are now transforming themselves from pure communist ideologists to politicians, as evident in their flexibility to accept political solutions ranging from one-party government to a multiparty



**SHOW OF FORCE:** The Maoists brought in thousands of people for their 'people's democracy' rally in Bhawang of Rukum on 10 December. Two weeks later, the army staged a health camp here.

system and in the willingness of Maoist leaders Baburam Bhattarai and Prachanda to work closely with the same political parties they once vowed to eliminate.

With its 472 pages, the book is a useful blow-by-blow account of the Maoists since before the 'people's war' period. More interesting is its detailed study of how human rights concepts evolved from the 6<sup>th</sup> century Lichchabi period to today. Human rights is no longer limited to social reforms such as Rana leaders abolishing *sati* but has

more direct links with democracy, argues Pathak, an assistant professor at TU where he is also establishing a department on conflict studies.

The author argues that what works in western liberal society might not succeed in eastern countries because of cultural and ideological differences. But the bottom line about human rights is that freedom from torture, detention, exploitation and the right to democracy and free speech are universal.

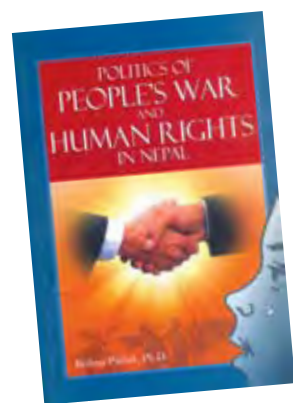
Pathak's conclusion is that

the 'people's war' has ended up abusing the people it was meant to help. The state has been no better. While the Maoists made deliberate killings, abductions and extortion of food grains and money part of their modus operandi, the state answered with more extra-judicial killings, disappearances, arbitrary arrests and torture. He also rebukes the international community for ignoring growing human rights abuses in Nepal. Only after 10 years and 12,000 lives lost and thousands more disappeared has

the UN finally been allowed to get involved by the powers that be.

Pathak does jump to the wrong conclusion when he states that many people have started dying of hunger since the conflict began. Food deficit has always been a problem in certain parts of the country: the Maoists have not really made the situation worse. The poorest families have become the most productive farmers after the huge land holdings of exploitative landlords were redistributed among them. Other land has been seized by the rebels but farming continues no matter who owns it, with migrant Nepalis still returning from India to their villages for planting and harvesting. Land reform initiated by the Maoists has succeeded whereas those of previous governments failed.

The author concludes that there is no alternative but for the government, parties and Maoists to patch things and for all to agree to the latter's demand for a constituent assembly, which is both a rights-based and the most democratic solution. Peace talks, he concludes, will never succeed as long as arms merchants traffickers and feudal elements, particularly the royal family and its supporters, profit from the conflict. ●



*Politics of People's War and Human Rights in Nepal*  
BIMIPA Publications, Kathmandu, 2005  
472 pages  
ISBN: 99933-939-0-8

# The music is the message

Nepathaya's latest CD is an angry, loud anti-war album

**C**onflict is the last theme that most Nepali musicians would choose to sing about, for both commercial and political reasons. And making music about a real incident that implicated both the security forces and Maoists in the killings of civilians is virtually out of the question.

But as usual, folk-rock fusionist Amrit Gurung and his band Nepathaya have taken their own path away from mainstream Nepali music with their latest album *Ghatana*, an indictment of the conflict and its fighters. Released before Dasain, *Ghatana* is still not a chart-topper and perhaps will never sell like the band's previous CDs. But Nepathaya's aim in doing the recording, according to its promoter Nepa-laya, is a social one: to jolt many Nepalis into seeing the bitter reality that most of their countrymen and women are living in.

Delivered with heart-rending lyrics, a heavy metallic sound and angry vocals, *Ghatana* scorns the violence of a



KIRAN PANDAY

fruitless conflict that has dragged on for nearly a decade and whose victims have been mostly civilians caught in the middle of gun-toting security forces and Maoist militants.

The first song, 24-minute *Ghatana*, spotlights the May 2004 incident in

Dholka's Mainapokhari, where Maoists ambushed a public bus because it was carrying soldiers, killing six civilians. Ridiculing both the rebels and security forces for jeopardising the lives of innocent men and women, the song was expected to be banned, especially at a time when the

state was censoring any criticism of security forces. But Gurung and his band performed *Ghatana* live at Maiti Ghar Shanti Mandala on 15 December.

Another tune, *Kata lagyo*, asks villagers forced to flee their homes to ask both warring parties what they have gained so far from the bloody conflict. The song brought tears to the eyes of a group of conflict-affected women and children taking refuge at Maiti Nepal, where the band played live last month.

While *Ghatana*'s powerful message is sure to touch listeners' hearts, one thing that might put some people off is the CD's heavy metal sound, which can get tiring for those used to the easy listening. But people living in conflict zones might actually feel the tension of daily life in the loud, angry beats.

*Ghatana* may not excite the music market but it touches the hearts of Nepalis and by doing so could prove that singing for peace is also a powerful force. ●

Naresh Newar



# Easy to swallow

## A simple filter removes arsenic from tarai water



ENPHO

MALLIKA ARYAL

For years, Nepalis in the tarai have been drinking groundwater from tube wells dug in their backyards. Millions of such wells were built worldwide in the 1970s by well-meaning development groups, which thought they were safer than drinking surface water and would reduce the time spent to fetch water. Few people questioned the groundwater, which looks as clean as piped water, is available at all times and tastes sweet. Then in 1999, the UN's World Health Organisation (WHO) and our Department of Water Supply and Sanitation (DWSS) conducted a survey in parts of the tarai, which concluded that arsenic contamination in groundwater might be a serious problem. After a series of large-scale studies, it is now estimated that more than three million Nepalis are drinking arsenic tainted water. Arsenic is a naturally occurring element found in groundwater, in Nepal mostly in the tarai. Long-term exposure to this poison leads to diseases

such as melanosis (dark and light spots on the skin), keratosis (hardening of the skin on hands and feet), vascular diseases, birth defects and even lung cancer and kidney problems. Nawalparasi, Rupandehi, Kapilbastu, Bardiya, Kailali, Rautahat, Bara and Parsa are the tarai districts most affected by arsenic contamination. Its concentration in tubewell water of these districts was found to be 2 to 20 times greater than Nepal's interim guideline of 50ppb (parts per billion) and 10 to 100 times greater than the WHO guideline of 10ppb. "From skin disease to risk to the reproductive health of women, the problems caused by long-term exposure to arsenic contaminated water are unpredictable. It is a serious public health concern that cannot be ignored," says Makhan Maharjan, program manager at the Environment and Public Health Organisation (ENPHO), a Nepali NGO devoted to science and technology and raising awareness of environmental issues. ENPHO has devised a local solution to this grave problem, which affects millions of people



POISON AND ANTIDOTE: The effect of arsenic poisoning on a patient in the tarai and (above) the filter system that prevents poisoning.

in the Gangetic plain, including 35 million Bangladeshis. Working with researchers from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and NGO Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Support Program (RWSSSP) its researchers have devised an affordable household drinking water filter made from ingredients found in any local bazar. The Kanchan Arsenic Filter uses simple technology to remove arsenic, pathogens, iron, turbidity, odour and other contaminants from water. A round plastic bin is filled with layers of sand, brick, chips, gravel and iron nails, which chemically bind arsenic to them. When water is poured from the top, larger pathogens are trapped on top of the sand layer and smaller ones are removed by hungry micro organisms. "This technologically user friendly filter is a result of many years of research," says Tommy Ngai, research associate at Canada's Centre for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology and a consultant with ENPHO. The Kanchan filter's flow rate is 15-20 litres per hour and operated for 12 hours a day at 15 litres per hour it can produce 180 litres of water. The WHO recommends that each person have a minimum of 5.5 litres per day to meet their basic health and hygiene needs. The filter's price, after transportation and profit, is Rs 1,400-1,800. "The Kanchan Arsenic Filter comes with the best technology available, at the most affordable price for arsenic free water," says Madhav Pahadi, project officer at UNICEF's children and women environment section. ENPHO received \$ 70,000 in grants from Holland's Simavi Foundation. The Kanchan Arsenic Filter also won the US Environment Protection Agency's P3 competition and the *Wall Street Journal's* Technology Innovation Award 2005. ENPHO installed 3,000 filters last year and plans to add 5,000 in the next two years. ●

# Opportunities and opportunists

## The rise and fall of a neighbourhood minister

Someone must be keeping count: there was a recent new item that Nepal has had 18 Prime Ministers in 15 years. But that is misleading. What the tally didn't reveal was how many times some of those prime ministers had been prime ministers before, one of them had been PM up to four times already. The rate at which wannabes are queuing up to be noticed, hoping that the wand will fall on their heads and they'll wake up to be ministers, is getting longer. Goons, activists, journalists, close allies, friends and family members are all ministers-to-be. Businessmen, sportsmen, even ex-cons—anyone is eligible as long as you pass the loyalty test. The mug shot in the papers looked familiar. Yes, it was him, my next door neighbour. Fearing the worst, I scrutinised the notice expecting this to be a death notice put up by near and dear ones. But this wasn't a condolence message, it was a congratulatory one. My neighbour wasn't dead but had been resurrected as minister. No one in our neighbourhood understood how and why he should have been chosen. He used to call himself a politician but had more of reputation for being a thug. The NEA and Nepal Telecom had cut off his electricity and phone lines several times for refusing to pay his bill. Now, he doesn't have to pay them at all. No sooner was the swearing-in at the palace finished things began to change in his life and sadly, in mine as well. He was swamped by the entourage that followed. Along with the flag came a CCTV camera, mobile phones, two blue-and-red plated 4-wheel drives and a black car. A guard quarter for two police guards was quickly built with efficiency and speed that was stunning. From Day Two, I found no use for my alarm clock. The generous chatter of devotees that would gather to congratulate the minister at dawn would rudely jolt me awake. His son-in-law, now his newly appointed personal assistant, acquired an air of importance as he juggled between cordless and mobile phones, screening calls and accommodating visitors into the minister's diary. When the minister was not busy laughing and spitting into the phone, usually in a foreign tongue, he would be thanking his opportunity-seeking admirers buzzing around him like bees around a hive. He enjoyed talking about forming a *tole sudhar samiti* to improve conditions in the area with some neighbours who had suddenly developed newfound respect for the man. They even spent Saturdays playing cards together. Within a week, new street lamps, mostly outside the minister's house, were fixed. The dirt road was quickly asphalted. The neighbourhood drug addicts disappeared, security in the street improved and so did the minister's tarnished image, at least, in our neighbourhood. He entertained in the evenings, and although our narrow lane was always blocked by large SUVs, everything seemed to be going swimmingly for my neighbour. Then, overnight, there was no more flagged car. No throngs of those seeking favours in the mornings and no evening receptions. The guards vanished. His empty house acquired a haunted look. The big cars were all gone. The opportunists had moved on where opportunity knocked, to new territory, possibly to flatter a new minister. Our neighbour didn't show his face for a few days. But when he did the change was dramatic: no one bothered to talk to him anymore. ●



NEPALI PAN  
Kapil Tamot

## Vulnerable Valley

Almost 50 percent of the Kathmandu Valley's total water supply comes from groundwater sources. A joint study done by the JICA Expert Office at the Ministry of Physical Planning and Works (MPPW) and ENPHO in September 2005 found that deep tube wells in the Valley were more vulnerable to arsenic contamination than shallow tube wells and dug wells. "While shallow wells were found more contaminated in the tarai region, the case was exactly the opposite in Kathmandu," says ENPHO's Makhan Maharjan. The project sampled 137 private, government and Nepal Water Supply Corporation (NWSC) deep tube wells (at least 50 metres deep) during both the monsoon and pre-monsoon seasons. The highest concentration of arsenic (265ppb) in Kuleswor was observed during pre-monsoon while 211ppb was recorded in the same area during monsoon. "If you are using groundwater in Kathmandu, we suggest you have it tested first for arsenic before drinking it," says Maharjan. Groundwater can be tested in testing labs like the one at ENPHO, for as little as Rs 50.

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# Memories in narrow gauge

## Remembering good people and their good deeds is a good idea

Life is valuable only if we keep a memory. Forget deep history, it is good even if we manage to remember the recent past. Today's English-speaking classes are so rushed – as the much vaunted 'middle class' – raking in the benefits of economic globalisation that they hardly have the time to look up and notice how things have changed in just the last few decades.

While the poor may not have seen a lot of transformation in their lives one way or the other, things are galloping for the rest, in ways mundane and sublime. But in the rush of partaking of the goodies in products and services, we are forgetting the flavour of the past.

Take wood smoke. Most families above the motorbike-ownership threshold no longer experience the particular aroma of burning firewood, something that has been part of the human olfactory sensibility since prehistory. Household heating and cooking is now through the medium of

**SOUTHASIA BEAT**  
Kanak Mani Dixit



electricity, kerosene or gas and while the nose gets more than its share of diesel smoke these days, the flavour of daal is just not the same. Before long, a Southasian

entrepreneur will have to introduce a room freshener with woodsmoke aroma, just to remind us.

Who remembers the DC-3 Dakota, that twin-engined wonder that flew all over Southasia in the three decades immediately following the Second World War? It was the Dakota that developed our airways, piloted by pioneering buccaneers such as a Polish pilot, Capt Bujowski, who flew out of Calcutta for one of the first private airlines of the Subcontinent, Himalayan Aviation. That was when airports were still called aerodromes and when many aircrafts such as the DC-3 were 'tail draggers'. Which meant that once you got in, you walked up a slope to get to your seat.

The drone of Dakota's piston engines is no longer heard today, amidst the whine of turboprops and the roar of jets. You can still see grounded specimen, though, if you are looking. The next time you are flying into Delhi's aerodrome, whether from Lahore, Dhaka or Kathmandu, be sure to take the right window. Coming from the east over the Jamuna, landing on the southern runaway, you will notice a couple of parked Dakotas, conspicuous in their haughty nose-up attitude even when not airworthy.

While still on transport, the narrow gauge 'choti line' is fast disappearing from the Southasian railway network, as the broad gauge continues to squeeze life out of other tracks. There used to be a trans-subcontinental choti line which started out in Agra, wended its way to Gorakhpur in eastern Uttar Pradesh and then hugged the Bihar-Nepal border past the Bhojpur and Maithili regions to enter West Bengal, ending at Siliguri. The metre gauge was allowed to service parts of India which remained poor and the Agra-through-Siliguri line cut through the poverty-stricken north Ganga plain. Not that the poverty index has changed, but even this region is now succumbing to the invasion of King Broad Gauge and railway history buffs will have to hurry if they want to experience the last of the choti line – not polished museum pieces but the grimy people's traveling machine.

All over the Subcontinent's railways, the sharp tang of burning coal is now lost to us with the conversion from steam engines to diesel. The smell of stations and marshalling yards are quite different from what they were even up to the 1970s. Knowing passengers no longer report 'signal up' and 'signal down', referring to the mechanical signal along the tracks that have been replaced by traffic lights. Air-conditioned travel means one less attachment to the passing landscape and its humanity. And for the child, there is no straining against the window bars to take in one of the most amazing sights of an earlier childhood – the engine and bogeys in front as the train takes a bend on the tracks.

Historian and author Ramachandra Guha is one who revels in memory and he uses the social scientist's tools to dig into the lives of people we should not forget, whether it is BP Koirala or Verrier Elwin. He reminded readers in *The Hindu* that it was Madhu Dandavate, the authentic socialist and the minister of the short-lived Janata government of 1977-78 who did away with the wooden benches in the lower class compartments of the Indian Railways and replaced them with rexine upholstery. Hundreds of millions benefited.

Remembering good people and their good deeds is a good idea because it hopefully provides some standards to judge ourselves by. Meanwhile, it is important to remember good machines of the past as well. Do check out those Dakotas the next time you fly into Delhi aerodrome. ●

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# What handicap?

Blind people worldwide are taking up golf

First, let me wish all of you a happy 2006. By now, many non-golfers have made New Year's resolutions to take up this wonderful game and many veterans have vowed to cut their handicaps. I hope to see all the enthusiastic followers of this column at the practice range in coming days.

Talking about enthusiasm, and determination, a couple of days back I was surfing the website of the PGA tour when I saw that a blind golfer was making headlines! Even people with great eyesight sometimes have trouble just making contact with a golf ball so when I read that this blind player had recently made a hole in one, I was astonished.

On the other hand, of course there are many handicapped people in this world who have great will and determination to succeed. You would certainly need that extra bit of willpower to be blind and play golf well. Apparently more than 1,000 blind people worldwide play golf, about 100 of them competitively.

TEE BREAK

Deepak Acharya



Zohar Sharon of Caeserea Golf Club in Caeserea, Israel is the leading blind golfer. On 14 November, he made headlines with a hole-in-one on the 15th hole at Caeserea, the only 18-hole course in Israel. It was the latest in a string of achievements for the 53-year-old Sharon, who became blind while serving in the army more than 25 years ago.

Since 2003, he's won international blind golfers' tournaments in Scotland, Australia, the United States and Canada, where he sank his first eagle at the Ontario Visually Impaired Golfer's Championship in August. He's beaten a slew of sighted golfers, too. Sharon may have lost his eyesight but not his sense of humour. He described himself as "the world's greatest golf player at night". "I want every seeing person to have their legs shake with fear a little when they come play a round with me," he added. Then Sharon turned serious. Golf kept him alive, he said, rescuing him from severe depression.

He was a sniper in a paratrooper unit when a fellow soldier accidentally sprayed a chemical in his face that made him blind at the age of 28.



Sharon's coach, Ricardo Cordoba-Core, a sports psychologist from Bolivia, trained him from scratch, focusing on coordination and teaching him to visualise each shot. It was months before he even let Sharon hold a club.

"In golf there are no restrictions for blind people," Sharon said before adding, "if you have a good caddie." His good caddie is Shimshon Levi, who gently guides the golfer around the course, plants his tees and places the balls. He steadies Sharon's arms and describes what's ahead. When his friend is putting, he places his hand on the club so it is just next to the ball, tells him the distance and then runs to the hole and begins clapping so Sharon will know where to aim.

Hats off to this strong-willed human being. The New Years Cup tournament is back on Saturday, 21 January at Gokarna Golf Club. Don't forget to sign in to win a golfing holiday to Malaysia. For further details: 4451212, 4450444.

Deepak Acharya is a golf instructor and Golf Director at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, Kathmandu.  
prodeepak@hotmail.com



ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY

# Girls get their kicks

ANFA's school tourney is the pinnacle for female footballers

ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY

The All Nepal Football Association's annual school-level tournament kicked off with little media attention this week. For the lads the national tourney is just one of many they are eligible to play in but for many in the girl's teams, this event will be the height of their experience with the 'beautiful' game.

Players aged 14-19 from 22 different districts played in the weeklong ANFA-Mayos Girls School Level Tournament at the ANFA grounds in Satdobato. Each team arrived after triumphing in a district-wide selection process and was comprised of students from different schools within each district.

In Wednesday's semi-finals, a goal from Morang's Pramila Rai in

the 28<sup>th</sup> minute stood up against Makwanpur and Morang sailed through to the final. The other semi-final however, was a tough match between Panchthar and Bara. After Panchthar's Deepa Thapa put her team ahead in the first half, Bara evened when striker Mina Ghale scored an easy goal in the second half. The game ended in a draw, even after three minutes extra time, and the score did not change after two seven-minute extra halves. A round of penalty kicks finally revealed a winner as Bara notched four goals to Panchthar's three.

For many girls like 19-year-old Pramila Rai of Shrijate High School in Morang, the tournament was a once in a lifetime opportunity. Pramila, known as Laure dai to her teammates, has been playing as a defender for the last four years.

"Besides playing the game (the tournament) also gave us a chance to interact with girls our age from across the country," she said.

For others like Bhagimaya Mangmo, 16, of Shri Bishnu High School in Chamtharpu, Panchthar and captain of the district team, playing on regulation fields was a rare treat. "We don't even have a proper football field and have to walk two hours to the district headquarters just to have a real game," she complained.

According to Srijana Bartuala, coach and manager of the Makwanpur team, "we have ample funds and kits are provided by ANFA because it's (ANFA President) Ganesh Thapa's district."

The final game pitting Morang against Bara will be played at 10AM on Friday at the ANFA grounds. ●

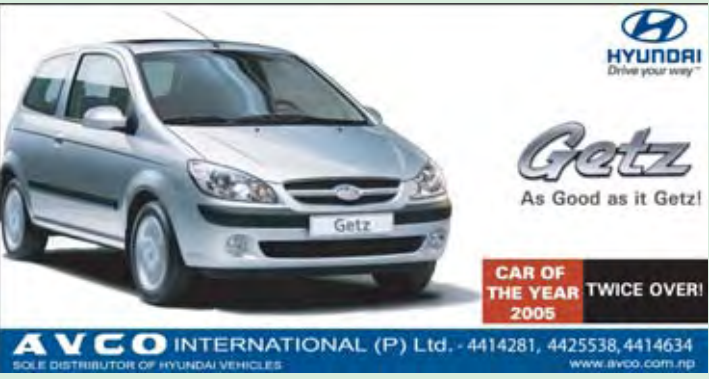


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## ABOUT TOWN

### EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Realisation** paintings by Mohammad Eunus at Nepal Art Council, till 9 January.
- ❖ **Contemporary Paintings from Tibet** at Siddhartha Art Gallery, till 11 January.

### EVENTS

- ❖ **Environment Protection and Corporate Social Responsibility** a workshop at Yala Maya Kendra 6 January, 2.15 PM. 5530313
- ❖ **Basketball Training Camp 2006** for school and college students at GAA 5-25 January. 4414785
- ❖ **Lean N Fun** in winter, educational and recreational one week package for kids, 9-14 January. 5523948
- ❖ **RIA Winter Fete 2006** a day of entertainment, games at Reliance International Academy, Kapan, 7 January.

### MUSIC

- ❖ **Vibrations** all Nepal Band Competition at Jawalakhel Ground, 7 January, 12PM.
- ❖ **Crossfire Live** at Nanglo Bakery Café & Pub, Durbar Marg. 4222636
- ❖ **Live Music** every Friday 7PM at Rum Doodle 40,000/2 ft. bar. 4701107
- ❖ **Cadenza Collective** live every Wednesday(Jazz) and Saturday (Afro-funk and Latin) 8PM at Upstairs, Lajimpat.
- ❖ **JCS Quintet** at Moksh every Tuesday. 5526212
- ❖ **Jatra Friday** nights, live music by Siron. 4256622
- ❖ **Unplugged** sessions with Strings, Jatra Saturday nights. 4256622
- ❖ **Live Music** at Juneli Bar, Hotel de l'Annapurna. 4221711
- ❖ **Live Jazz** by the pond at 1905, Kantipath. 4225272

### DINING

- ❖ **Buffet Breakfast** at Hyatt Regency assorted salads and deserts. 4491234
- ❖ **Maki Newa Bhutu** for traditional Newari cuisine at Hotel Royal Singi. 4439784
- ❖ **Mexican and Italian** food at Fuzone Café, Lagankhel. 5542935
- ❖ **Great Dining** options at Al Fresco, Bukhara, China Garden and Garden Terrace restaurants, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **Barbeque** at Le Meridien, Kathmandu, every Saturday. 4451212.
- ❖ **Plat du Jour** at the Shambala Garden, Shangri-La. 4412999
- ❖ **Non Vegetarian Options** with Buzz Bar, Lajimpat. 2081126
- ❖ **Newari, Nepali, Chinese, Tibetan** dishes at Windbell Restaurant & Bar, Kamalpokhari. 4433877
- ❖ **Wonderful Wednesdays** at Fusion, Dwarika's, happy hour 5-9PM.
- ❖ **The Sidewalk BBQ** with Shades of Blue, Wednesdays, Shangri-La. 4412999
- ❖ **The Chimney Restaurant** Signature dishes at Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
- ❖ **Jazz Gourmet** fine dining redefined at Hotel Shangri-La. 4412999

### GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge**, Christmas and New Year offers. 4361500
- ❖ **Bed and Breakfast** at La'soon restaurant and vinotheque. 5537166
- ❖ **Junglewalks**, rafting, elephant rides all at Jungle Base Camp Lodge, Bardia. [junglebasecamp@yahoo.com](mailto:junglebasecamp@yahoo.com)
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- ❖ **Conferences** at Godavari Village Resort. 5560675

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**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

I am a research scholar working on the subject of bullying and peer victimization amongst school children – a topic which has so far not been investigated in the Nepali school context. I would therefore like to invite anyone (male or female) who are now between the ages of 30 to 50 but remember being bullied and harassed while in school, to be a research participant in my project. If you would like to be a part of this important and pertinent research endeavour, please contact 9851012202. Please be assured that the research will be conducted according to strict ethical standards, providing total anonymity. Thank you for your help.

## NEPALI WEATHER by MAUSAM BEED



The continued dry and cold air from the west has sent temperature plunging to just above zero this week, brought brilliantly clear weather free of haze and clouds. The Valley normally receives about 13 mm of rain in January but the lack of precipitation for the past two months looks likely to continue. Last Tuesday saw the lowest humidity level so far this year to only 25 % at 2.45 PM. The clear dry weather brings desert-like climate conditions with wider fluctuations in daily temperature and humidity. This satellite picture taken on Thursday morning shows a disturbance over western Nepal, but this is not likely to bring moisture our way except some high clouds.

### KATHMANDU VALLEY

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MIN BAJRACHARYA

**STILL BEHIND BARS:** A party member examines a poster of the Nepali Congress-Democratic put up for its Convention at BICC on Thursday. Party leaders Sher Bahadur Deuba and Prakash Man Singh have been in detention for eight months.



KIRAN PANDAY

**MAJOR HAUL:** Police at the Anti-Narcotic Department in Baneshwor display 528 kg of hashish seized on Wednesday from a bus in Halchok. Two people were arrested.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

**IT'S A MALL WORLD AFTER ALL:** The Kathmandu Mall has allowed tenants to put up huge billboards that have obliterated its impressive facade.



KIRAN PANDAY

**YOWLS OF APPRECIATION:** Street children and their pet dog cheer at a concert organised especially for them by the band Nepathya and the child welfare group CPCS in Dilli Bajar on Wednesday.



KUNDA DIXIT

**MOUNTAINS ON FIRE:** This forest fire, fanned by strong westerly winds, raged for 10 days in northern Dhading district below Ganesh Himal two weeks ago. Brush fires have become common due to a two-month winter drought.

# On Nyima's farm

It is crisp and cold on the floodplain of the Lhasa River as Nyima Tashi takes visitors on a tour of his life's work: rows and rows of greenhouses up to 100 metres long. Inside, Nyima's spectacles steam up as he shows us cherry tomatoes, miniature cucumbers and yellow watermelons.

It is clear as he caresses the vegetables that this is a labour of love for the Nepal-trained agronomist who has single-handedly made Lhasa self-sufficient in vegetables. The growing season lasts only four months in the cold and arid plateau. The rest of the year, Tibetans have usually relied on dried and pickled vegetables or imported them from Nepal.

On a stint in mountain farming systems with ICIMOD in

Kathmandu, Nyima dreamt one day of growing vegetables on the plateau. Within five years, his Tibetan Academy of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry outside Lhasa is a much talked-about success story. It is testimony to one man's vision and also turns the myth that only the private sector can show initiative on its head.

"Tibet is cold but our winters are sunny," explains Nyima, "so we perfected this greenhouse design that is covered with a blanket at night to keep the trapped daytime heat in." Indeed, the temperature inside stays at 18 degrees at night even when it is below zero outside.

Nyima has a strong marketing team that analyses demand and plans cropping cycles to get the best prices.





Encouraged by his success with organic vegetables, the farm is now branching out into exotic fruits, tissue culture, Tibetan medicinal plants and high-value ornamental flowers. Nyima shows us potted poinsettias and cacti that are being readied for the holiday season (pictured). The farm now sells 2.5 million yuan worth of vegetables and flowers and ploughs the profit into expansion.

The Academy is sharing this knowledge with other mountain regions of the world and has set up an information exchange data base. Says Nyima: "I was inspired to do this in Nepal, and I'd now like to give back what we have learnt here to farmers in similar climatic regions like Manang, Mustang or Ladakh." ●

Kunda Dixit



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# Media is the plural of mediocre

It's that time of year once more when we give away the Annual Advertising Excellence Hall of Fame Awards for 2005 which has the slogan: 'The Medium Is the Massage'.

It goes without saying that without these ads, we in the journalism business wouldn't be here to fulfill our public service duty of ramming our opinions down

UNDER MY HAT  
Kunda Dixit



your  
throats,  
twisting  
facts  
and

bending the truth. That is why we can't but be overwhelmed with a sense of eternal gratitude to our valuable sponsors and want to honour them with the Goose Bump Trophies for the most breathtaking billboards on Bagmati Bridge which we can't walk across these days without taking the precaution to cover one's nose and mouth and breathe normally. It is to honour the creativity and aplomb of our advertising industry that we hereby donate the rest of the space in this week's column to award-winning ads from the year gone by.



**Shocka Locka Boom!**

**Grenades**  
Just Arrived! Fresh Chinese plastic grenades imported directly from the People's Republic to fight the People's War. Buy one get two free. Offer valid till stocks last.  
**Pull Pin and Throw (grenade, not pin)**

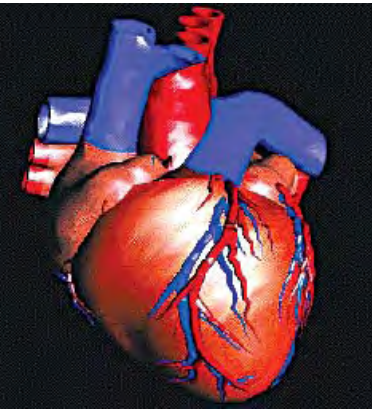



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**Portland Cement**  
Made from pure imported klinker and nothing else. No domestic additives. Get concrete results with Body Builder Brand Cement and live to tell the tale.


**MI-17LX**

**Helicopter Gunship**  
It's sophisticated, it's seductive and it's just \$4.5 million. Drop-dead good looks, the all new MI-17LX is so ultra-cool it's hot. Enhanced with elegant turret-mounted rocket pods, equipped with chic side-firing machine guns, stylish night-vision goggles and sporty 3G ejection seats. Make even your enemy envious!  
The RNA's only airworthy MI-17 is available for test flights. Take it on a spin.



**Housewife**

**Cooking Oil**  
The cooking oil that all Nepali housewives swear by. (Actual housewife quote: "(@#\$\$%&\*?!") Move from the fire into the frying pan with Housewife.  
**Good for the Heart, Bad for Everything Else.**




**POODLE INSTANT NOODLES**

**Oodles of Noodles with Essence of Goat**  
Just when you thought Nepal had run out of instant noodle brands, here comes Poodle Noodle. Don't be fooled by the name, Poodle is actually the country's first he-goat flavoured noodle especially synthesized for the Nepali taste.

**Vanishing Cream**  
Yes, it's finally here the skin-lightening ointment that you've all been waiting for. Apply twice a day after meals and ...going...going...gone...vanish forever. Beware of imitations.

POOF!  
Now you see me, now you don't



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