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Weekly Internet Poll # 351

Q. Should all sides cut their losses and let Melamchi die?

Total votes: 2,810

Yes 21.4%

One last shot 1%

No 68.4%

Weekly Internet Poll # 352. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. How do you rate the performance of the interim government since it was installed two months ago?

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“Maybe I will still find him,” Ram Krishni Chaudhary says, but from the tone of her voice one can tell she has very little hope.

It has been nearly four years since her 25-year-old son, Bhaban, left for work in India. He was picked up by soldiers from the Chisapani Barracks along with seven other young men and never seen again.

One of the seven was later released because he was related to a soldier. According to his testimony, they were made to lie down in the back of a military truck underneath sacks on top of which the soldiers sat. They were severely tortured.

Under pressure from the National Human Rights Commission, the army finally disclosed in 2004 that three of the detained had been killed in an “encounter”. The army said it didn’t know about the other three.

“There is now an interim government, maybe someone will tell me where my son is,” Ram Krishni said recently in Nepalganj where she inaugurated the nepa-laya exhibition by unveiling her own portrait.

One year after the ceasefire, Bhaban is among 937 people still officially listed as missing by the International Committee of the Red Cross. Unlike other countries, the number of disappeareds in Nepal’s conflict is rising as families overcome fear and report missing relatives. Most were taken by the army, while the Maoists usually owned up to those they killed to terrorise others.

Army sources say personnel at Chisapani Barracks directly involved in disappearances in western Nepal in 2003-4 are now retired and one of them is working for a private security firm in Afghanistan.

Ram Krishni says Bhaban was a quiet man who worked hard in the fields to take care of his family, and brought back earnings from India. Bhaban’s young son died soon after he disappeared, and his wife has taken his daughter to live with her mother.

“It has been very difficult to survive without him, he was our life,” Ram Krishni says. Then she tells us to take this message to Kathmandu: “If he is alive give him back to us, if he is dead tell us.” ●

Kunda Dixit in Nepalganj

937

The number of
Nepalis still listed
as disappeared
during the war



KUNDA DIXIT / RAMESWAR BOHARA

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TELL ME WHERE HE IS:
Ram Krishni Chaudhary next to her portrait in which she is holding the citizenship certificate of her son, Bhaban, disappeared by the army nearly four years ago.

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Time passes

Neither Rome, nor Nepal, was built in a day

DISAPPEARING TRUTH

For a country and its once-opposed groups, a peace process is about many things. There are accords, weapons lockdowns and cantonments, struggles to carve out and maintain fresh political positions, re-designed legislative bodies.

But there must also be a peace process for individuals. Those who have lost loved ones, those who have been tortured, and those who live with the anguish of not knowing whether their relatives are dead or alive deserve closure. Healing is as important as the right to vote in constituent assembly elections. A society cannot move towards a lasting peace if it does not acknowledge personal losses, and a state cannot regain its credibility until it is open about its past. A people denied answers and justice by the state will not engage productively with its processes.

Politically, a powerful commission on the disappeared is a minefield. Most parties are willing to tacitly collude against it. Some because they are sweet-talking the army for support now. Others because they themselves live in glass houses, and still others who are willing to turn a blind eye for tactical gains. So, Girija Prasad Koirala waffles and Pushpa Kamal Dahal doesn't want a commission on the disappeared because it will unearth skeletons in his own closet.

And there is no point in the army getting defensive and saying they started it. After all, it is the responsibility of the state to protect its citizens. Even as a military strategy, victimising innocent civilians was completely counter-productive. As a matter of principle no one should ever be disappeared, and if they are, those responsible need to be accountable.

The National Human Rights Commission remains rudderless and toothless. This is ironic, given how much we love the idea of our homegrown peace process. The support of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has been essential in keeping records of the disappeared and of systematic, institutional violations such as at Bhairabnath. But now Nepal needs strong, independent institutions of its own to uncover the past and put it to rest. The people have the right to know what happened.

For true reconciliation, there has to be a coming together of those who want to remember, those who seek forgiveness, and those who need justice. Let's not argue about which is most important. It's not whether to forget or forgive, or whether peace is more important than truth. We need to do it all together so our past does not burden our future.

The hot sweaty nights foretell monsoon and the rhythms of the land assert themselves inexorably. Nepal's living culture, based on the seasons, crops and family needs, flows on, unaffected by politics and earthly events.



HERE AND THERE
Daniel Lak

It's easy to lose sight of the factor of time. This is a young country, not the ancient polity its Panchayat-era royal hagiographers make it out to be. The sputtering attempts at democracy in the 1950s hardly count as modern nation building. Nothing much happened to make this a 20th century place before 1990's Jana Andolan.

Who can forget the mass impatience and impossibly high

expectations of that decade? Nepal's wanted everything, and they wanted it now. Democracy had arrived and prosperity was its handmaiden, the two were linked at the waist. No effort was needed, no sacrifices required, a particular political party in office was enough to guarantee development.

As a measure of national mood swings, days became significant. A place that used to track change by generations awoke each morning convinced that a new day would bring new realities, just as the politicians promised. People quickly soured on this patently false notion and began to blame the system itself.

Forgetting that all major national projects of recent years have taken decades to gel and thrive, Nepal's thought they'd been robbed of their rightful heritage in a matter of a few years by political corruption and venal elites. In part, they were right, but it was ever thus. The democrats of the pre-Peoples' War 1990s are guilty of mishandling expectations, and stealing somewhat from the trough, but they had good teachers—the royal, Rana, and Panchayat eras produced far worse outcomes.

The Maoist war sped up events and darkened expectations further. Not knowing when next the guerrillas would strike almost neutralised time. When screaming men and women with rifles and khukuris poured from the jungle around isolated police and army posts, of what use was a calendar or a farmer's knowledge of growing seasons. The downward spiral of war, royal massacre and inept monarchical meddling

turned the nation away from time altogether. Things always got worse. Why measure the passage of entropy?

Jana Andolan 2 exploded with frenetic speed and remarkable success, a glowering king surrendered and Nepal's rediscovered high, instant expectations. Peace negotiations dragged on but they heightened hope and supercharged a long depressed national mood. At long last, the dark night was giving way to dawn's glowing promise, a view that promised things weren't just getting worse.

Things haven't gone according to plan. They never do. Organising and holding constituent assembly elections in June was always beyond realism. Nations aren't built in a few months. National politics take years of negotiation and patient compromise. They require leadership and broad input, co-operation and resilience. Time must pass at an almost glacial pace, at least when stacked against expectations.

Let us not be cynical or depressed by the day to day manoeuvres and perceived failures of parties and players in the constitutional process. Let us demand input, involvement, and commitment and let time be applied realistically to a complex process that can finally banish the dysfunction that has paralysed this country for so long.

Restoring realism to politics and peoples' expectations is the place to start. Just admit that it won't happen overnight, or perhaps even this year. Neither Rome nor Nepal was built in a day. ●



HRW

The buck stops at Baluwatar

Our judges are perceived to be even more corrupt than cops

Let's start with a mea culpa. We in the media don't put much effort in digging for the roots of what makes news. We like to report things as they appear rather than as they are. This saves time, effort and money. Whether it informs or enlightens our audience is a different matter.



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

A senior journalist is fond of saying that real money in the Nepali media can only be made by suppressing news. Cynical the old warhorse may be, but there is no denying that the Nepali media's only saving grace has been its successful struggle for freedom in the past five years.

Take the flashflood of recent coverage of sandalwood smuggling from India, via Nepal to China. The journey between Sunauli and Kodari may take 15 hours, but it is the most minutely policed bit of highway in the country. OK, the

sandalwood has to pass through several Indian states before it gets here from Karnataka, and what happens to corrupt cops in India is their business. But it looks like kickbacks from transiting sandalwood is a huge business here, too, lining pockets of cops all along the line. One can bet that as the flash-in-the-pan coverage wanes sandalwood trafficking will resume, greasing our law enforcement machinery.

The latest Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International shows Nepal's judges have an even worse reputation than cops. That is surely an exaggeration. TI also didn't ask people to tick boxes for wilful defaulters masquerading as industrialists. But it does say something about our judicial system where government attorneys of two adjoining districts offer different legal opinions on issues of identical nature.

Closely related to the culture of impunity is the tradition of hunting, deeply engrained in the psyche of the high and mighty in the land. Wildlife smuggling in Nepal is what blood

diamonds are to Sierra Leone, or the Ivory Coast. They are factors that fuel corruption and fund conflict. Hunting lore about preferences of Arab sheikhs, Chinese tycoons, and American arrivistes are legion among the innkeepers of various conservation areas, gaming reserves, wildlife sanctuaries, and national parks in the region.

An addiction to guns and hunting could be part of the explanation for the Narayanhi massacre seven years ago today. King Dipendra was in the habit of blazing away at cats and bats in the royal compound whenever he felt a little edgy. The connection is rather peripheral, but a person who shoots animals for fun can shoot at anything.

Getting back to sandalwood, the entire episode seems to be tangled in the lack of faith between the prime minister and his cabinet colleagues. It is pretty widely known that Girija Prasad Koirala sharply reprimanded Forest Minister Matrika Yadav when concerns about the culpability of security forces in the illegal

wildlife trade was raised by the Maoists in public.

That is something widely perceived to be true: supplying rare *sukuti* to the royal palace and the villas of various jarsaps is still one of the primary duties of forest guards from Shivapuri to Bardiya. If Koirala has succeeded in changing that reality, it's his responsibility to work for a change in public perception.

When IK Gujral was the Indian prime minister, Chaturanan Mishra once shot back upon being censured, "I am your colleague, not your employee." In deference to Koirala's seniority, or senility, Yadav reportedly held back and walked out in silence. It has been over a month since that altercation and the cabinet has scarcely met after that.

The onus of backing up his position falls upon Koirala: he should either prove that Yadav was wrong or direct his home minister to prosecute the guilty. In the parliamentary principle of First Among Equals, the buck can't be passed up or down. It stops at Baluwatar. ●

LETTERS

WATER TROUBLE

Once again we have a prime example of how unfit our new leaders are to rule this country (ëTroubled watersí, #350). Once again a project that would have helped Nepal is cut down to gain popularity. I doubt Hisila Yami has any idea what she is doing. She is unfit to be in a public position and should be sacked unless she can prove otherwise. Arun III and now Melamchi. How many more? Only in Nepal does a leader destroy infrastructure and gun-toting guerrillas become ministers overnight.

A B Nepal, Australia

● It may not matter to the cat owner whether the cat is black or white as long as it catches mice (ëNot a drop to drinkí, #350). However, if seen from the catís perspective, it does matter if itís the white cat that gets the mice, the black one goes hungry, and vice versa.

S Pal, email

● Most state-owned corporations are running up huge losses due to lack of new investments. The closure of such institutions is inevitable because the government does not have the money or the desire to keep them running. We can prolong the process and incur endless losses or privatise it for the greater good. NWSC is a living example. It comes down to: what is in it for me.

Dibesh Shrestha, email

● Navin Singh Khadka (ëTroubled watersí, #350) and Ratna Sansar Shrestha (ëNot a drop to drinkí, #350) are both realistic. Preserving traditional taps, rainwater harvesting, and underground water generation are good options but will not cater to the massive and exponentially growing demand. The groundwater level of deep tubewells within the valley is decreasing rapidly every year and recharging them may take more than 10 years. Similarly, traditional taps cannot be revived in most cases as their channels have been destroyed by urbanisation. So the ultimate crux of the problem lies with the

uprooting of existing distribution system network. With the lack of political will, is this possible? Perhaps we do need a non-Nepali boss.

Name withheld, email

NO LOGIC

Because ím a foreigner with only a conversational knowledge of Nepali and 20 years of residence here, ím not getting either the economics or the social logic of the situation (ëBankruptí, #348). NOC pays rates for petroleum products set by IOC which are higher than what NOC is mandated to sell them for and incurs a monthly loss of Rs 250 million and has a debt worth Rs 60 billion to settle with IOC



and Rs 4 billion to the local banks. Meanwhile people queue up for 8-10 hours to get a petrol ration amounting to between Rs 500-700 (This figures to around Rs 7 per hour making the minimum wage loss for queuing up about Rs 56 per day). However, Commerce Minister Rajendra Mahatoís solution is to extend fresh loans to NOC. NOC Chief BN Goyalís solution is to sell most of the petroleum back to the Indian consumers just over the border at prices Indians pay at their pumps and thereby reduce NOCís losses.

Who is crazy enough to loan money to a losing proposition with a long track of red ink that is controlled by politicians with advanced bombastic degrees? Who

appointed these numskulls to their jobs?†By the way, in case you are wondering, I drive an aging Honda Kinetic scooter and use about five litres of petrol a week, subject to availability of course.

PM Brandt, Hattisar

REACH OUT

Ashtutosh Tiwariís article (ëWhy is it we are hereí, #350) on corporate social responsibility (CSR) is interesting but lacking in content. Perhaps instead of interviewing people from trading houses or financial institutions, he should have captured the CSR practices of the Nepali†business community. As a general member of Care and Fair Nepal, it gives me tremendous pleasure to announce that we have been helping the poor for over 11 years through six projects.†In 2006, over 15,000 patients received rudimentary checkups at clinics and over 1,300 students received some form of scholarship. I am sure there are other businesses in Nepal that deserve a mention. I suggest Tiwari go beyond the familiar path and be more inclusive.

Ramesh Lama, email

NAC

We wish Minister Prithibi Subba (ëThey have sucked NAC dryí, #350) a successful tenure at a time when NAC has the reputation of being hopeless, corrupt, and erratic. I agree that politicians are responsible to an extent, but not all the time. Ninety-nine percent of flights to Mumbai were either delayed, cancelled, or suspended in the last three years. There have been no flights from Mumbai for the past year, but NACís Mumbai branch has renovated its rented office at Nariman Point and still maintains expensive flats for the staff. In the meantime, NAC aircraft have old napkins and faded seat covers. If Nepal Airlines wants to revive its reputation, urgent changes are needed. We hope Subba and his party will positively look into this matter.

A tourism entrepreneur, Kathmandu

CHRISTIANIA

Obviously we in Christiania have a lot more to learn from Nepal about how to unleash

anarchy (ëChristianiaí, #350). But we have made a start. For example, we still donít close down all schools all over Denmark because our Maoist party (yes, we have one) wants to put pressure on the government. We donít yet prevent parliament from having a session for over a month. We donít let a minor traffic accident shut down the whole town. And we didnít declare a snap two-hour banda when police charged us in Christiania. But we are learning.

Marta Andersen, Copenhagen

● ëRunning riot in Christianiaí was devilishly pleasing and very true to our psyche. As the popular Nepali saying goes, íAño aang ko bhaisi nadekhne, arkako aang ko jumra pani dekhne,í which translates as, íCanít spot a buffalo on your own back but can clearly see a louse on someone elseís.í

Swagat Raj Pyakurel, email

● Kunda Dixitís ëRunning riot in Christianiaí is an absolute joke. Is he trying to preach to us that if tyres are burnt in Denmark then itís perfectly fine to do the same in Nepal as well? Is he supporting the mockery the Maoists and political parties have let loose in Nepal? Or is he trying to brag that he has actually been to Denmark?

Name withheld, email

LETTERS

Nepali Times welcomes 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 ëletter to the editorí in the subject line.

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HIMAL SOUTHASIAN'S JUNE ISSUE IS NOW ON STANDS!

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 "Inflation up, government down", Amer Ahmed
 "Testing time for Dhaka's media", Asif Saleh
 India's mixed signals on a stable neighbourhood, commentary
 Under the emergency: seven short pieces

ALSO IN THE JUNE ISSUE:
 Bhutani resettlement anxiety – Himali Dixit
 Remember the Southasian farmer – C K Lal
 Never again: Nepalis react to 10 years of war, photo feature
 King Mayawati – Pratab Somvanshi
 12 May in Karachi and Islamabad – Q Isa Daudpota
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on the streets of Bangladesh

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Who says Nepal is poor?

KIRAN NEPAL

Looking around the country you wouldn't be able to tell, but Nepal is awash in cash.

One year after the return of democracy, investment is down, there is an oil shortage, water shortage, electricity shortage. District hospitals are still waiting for doctors, schools still don't have roofs, infrastructure damaged during the conflict still hasn't been repaired. Yet, paradoxically, the country's macroeconomic situation has never been better.

The treasury has Rs 15 billion in cash. The Rastra Bank has \$ 2.5 billion worth of foreign currency reserves, enough to pay for more than a year of imports. The dollar has fallen by Rs 9 making imports even cheaper. Inflation is down and the balance of payments is looking good.

The internal borrowings target was Rs 18 billion, but there is so much liquidity that the government hasn't borrowed more than Rs 10 billion. In fact, in the past month the Rastra Bank has paid back Rs 9.3 billion worth of past treasury bills. On 22 May alone, Rs 2.9 billion was paid out. All this has increased liquidity in the financial market and put a downward pressure on interest rates.



ROBIN SAYAMI

- The state treasury has a stash of Rs 15 billion in cash, enough to pay for half the cost of the Melamchi project.
- Nepal Rastra Bank has Rs 177 billion in foreign currency reserves, enough for more than a year of imports.

Ideally, there should now be enough liquidity in the money market for new domestic investments so new jobs are created. But this is not happening because of continued political instability. Rastra Bank director Nara Bahadur Thapa says if only the constituent assembly election dates were to be fixed it would firm up the economy. "Because we don't have dates, there is less certainty all around," he says.

Other economists agree: having lots of cash in the bank is not necessarily a sign of good health. "There is so much to be done, but no plans. There is local demand for development but no mechanism to implement projects. There is money but no policy about priorities on spending," explains one Finance Ministry official.

Although there is now an interim government that includes the Maoists, Nepalis are still waiting for the peace dividend. "This is shameful, says the official, "it's like my pockets are stuffed with cash but my family is going hungry."

There was nearly Rs 45 billion set aside for development in the current fiscal year alone. But till mid-May not even Rs 14 billion of it had been spent.

And despite this there are long lines at gas stations. Nepal Oil Corporation is bankrupt because it has to subsidise fuel and the government refuses to lend it the Rs 6.5 billion it owes Indian Oil. The eight parties act as if they know nothing because they think raising fuel prices would be politically suicidal.

A senior Rastra Bank executive has an easy solution to the stalemate: "If raising fuel prices is politically not feasible, the government could extend a soft loan to NOC to pay up its debts. It's a win-win: oil supplies will resume, we won't be beholden to India and there won't be a political risk." But there seems to be no one willing to bell the cat.

Another reason for the pileup of cash in the treasury is that imports are falling. Last fiscal year, imports increased by 6.6 percent compared to the previous year and this year there has been a 1.1 percent decrease. All this points to stagnant production and it will have a negative impact on economic growth. ●

Water soluble

Show us the solutions, not the problems

Last week there was a showdown on the future of Melamchi between the CPN-M and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Yet another setback to a large scale infrastructure project. The Beed can't really figure out where the government stands. While Hisila



ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed

Yami demonstrated her position very clearly, she still does not have any solutions. So we can just expect more of the same for the next six months.

Melamchi has been a bone of contention for many years. The NGOs that helped end Arun III nearly 15 years ago have managed to now stall Melamchi helped by a populist wannabe minister.

There's a lot of self-righteous talk against the private sector getting involved in hydropower. Globe-trotting activists against the private sector development of hydropower earn hefty consulting dollars. But what do they have to say when we have 12-hour power cuts everyday? What do the anti-Melamchi types have to say about what we'll drink in the Valley?

Self-styled economists go blue in the face debating about whether water should be developed by the public or private sector. The Beed thinks that if you can sell water in bottles and in tankers and, as a government agency charge for water, it is probably a commodity that needs to operate in a regulated environment.

Look at the price we pay anyway. There are overhead tanks



in every house and storage facilities. We consume millions of units of power pumping water into underground and overhead tanks. We have to wake up in the wee hours of the morning to check on the water, spend hours queuing at local stone spouts, and wait further countless hours for tankers to arrive. And this is only about quantity. There are equally dire problems with quality, water-borne diseases being a major health hazard.

On Melamchi, after World Bank withdrew from the process, it was for the ADB to take it up. The Beed is not sure whether these multilaterals have been terribly successful in implementing water projects of this magnitude successfully anywhere in the world. Further, the involvement of more than one donor just delays the process, as the priorities of the different agencies are, apart from imposing donor-country equipment and services, diverse and sometimes completely divergent.

So here's a solution: If we agree that Nepali people need to

pay a commercial price for water, then let us have the private companies bid for these projects, based on public-private partnerships (PPP). Let us create a regulatory environment where the private provider is penalised for not delivering quality or quantity. Let us not foster an environment where they can get away with providing less than they promise.

The electricity business should be looked at as having three distinct parts. First is the source of supply, like electricity generation that could be from the private sector on a build, operate, and transfer model. The pipe network, like the transmission towers, is owned by another PPP company that for a certain charge allows the suppliers to sell to the distribution companies. Finally, distribution PPPs could be formed with VDCs and municipalities to ensure better service to the end consumer. This could perhaps provide sustainable solutions in the long run for all scales of water projects. ●

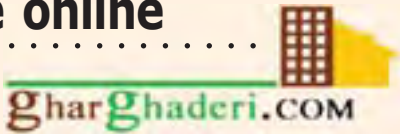
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Real estate online

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Nokia



Nokia has announced the appointment of Neoteric and Paramount Electronics as official distributors of Nokia phones in Nepal. Nokia phones range from the entry-level Nokia 1110i to feature-filled models like the Nseries, Eseries, and the 8800 Sirocco Edition. Nokia was ranked number one by Synovate in 2006's Asia's Top 1,000 Brands.



"We understand the needs of foreign labourers"



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Laxmi Bank has tied up with Merchantrade Asia, a Malaysian calling card and PCO company. Ramasamy Veeran, managing director of Merchantrade, was in Kathmandu last week and spoke with *Nepali Times* about their plans in Nepal and a new remittance service.

***Nepali Times:* You're entering the remittance business, which already has a number of old players. What was the draw?**

Ramasamy Veeran: We may have entered late, but we have done all our homework. There are many players in the market, but we have been working with the labourers who work abroad for a long time. Our network is the biggest in Malaysia when it comes to providing calling cards and PCO services. These are the services that labourers who work abroad use the most. We understand the

needs of the remittance service market and know how to attract our target group.

Aren't calling cards and phone booths, and remittance different businesses?

They are different but if you look at them from our perspective, these services are essential for labourers working in a foreign country. In the past we could fulfil only some of their demands, now we can do more.

When did you start offering the remittance service?

We started this year, and Nepal is our first foreign venture. Nepali labourers contribute a lot in Malaysia and we are happy to be providing them this service. In addition, we are also in the final stages of launching our services in Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Vietnam.

Why pick Nepal for your first venture?

In the Malaysian labour market Indonesian labourers occupy over 60 percent, yet we chose Nepal as our first venture. This is because of the efficiency of our Nepali partner Laxmi Bank. We have to give them credit for bringing us here.

How is your remittance service unique?

Big companies like IME and Parbhu Money Transfer are already in this business. We are unique because we understand the need of labourers working in a foreign country. We provide remittance service, but we also understand their other needs, so we tie them together while providing services. This means, they come to us if they want their other demands fulfilled as well. We want to combine communication with remittance, for example if a Nepali labourer wants to call his home, they can use our calling card. Eventually we want to tie up all our businesses like this.

What are your future plans?

Right now we have between 50-60,000 business transactions in Nepal. Our aim is to occupy 30 percent of the market in the first year. We will do so by combining remittance with communication, strong brand positioning, and easy access.

India's role

Refugee crisis

Editorial in Kantipur, 31 May
कान्तिपुर

Seventeen years ago Bhutan carried out an ethnic cleansing of its Nepali speaking population. The refugees travelled across Indian territory to arrive in Nepal. India, which facilitated the movement of Bhutanis to Nepal can't now stop them from going back. Even legally India can't do it since Nepalis and Bhutanis are allowed to move across the Indian border freely.

India's actions support the Bhutani dictatorship and it bolsters the argument of those that are discriminating against the refugees. India has tried to say this is a bilateral matter between Bhutan and Nepal and remain neutral, but it can't when it allowed a neighbouring country to evict nearly one fourth of its population through its territory to another neighbouring country. Bhutan has for the past 17 years played for time, hoping that the refugees would assimilate. Nepal's policy of keeping Bhutan engaged while internationalising the issue has worked.

The Americans and Europeans now recognise this as a gross violation of human rights. Still, Bhutan is getting away with it despite international shaming and pressure. It is inhuman to keep any people in a camp for nearly two decades, and if there is no other alternative , third country resettlement is an option. Refugee groups know that unless they



BIKAS RAUNIAR

FACE OFF: India's security forces bar the Bhutani refugees from crossing the Mechi bridge in Kakadbhitta.

launch an even stronger movement, diplomacy alone is not going to get them back to their homeland. The US, Canada, New Zealand, Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark , and Australia have all said they are willing to take the refugees. The Americans alone are taking more than half. It is natural for some refugee leaders to be despondent about third country resettlement. But the question is: how long can more than 100,000 people remain in camps? There is now donor fatigue, and food aid is running out.

Everyone should help find a pragmatic solution. Refugees should be free to choose whether to go to a third country or return to Bhutan. And it is India that should put the pressure on Bhutan.

Editorial in Naya Patrika, 30 May
नया पत्रिका

On Tuesday the Indian police indiscriminately fired at Bhutani refugees trying to return to their homeland. The cold-blooded shooting left one dead and dozens injured, and only went to show India's oppressive and hypocritical nature.

India has neither the legal nor the moral right to stop the refugees from returning to Bhutan. India itself created the situation where they were forced to choose its soil as a pathway to Bhutan. Nepali-speaking Bhutanis were the victims of the violent ethnic cleansing mounted by the Bhutan government in the early 1990s. Many strayed into India seeking refuge, but the Indian government shepherded them

into Nepal. Those same refugees now want to return to their homeland but India bars the way. It magnanimously allowed them to leave Bhutan, but now refuses them passage back.

India calls itself as the world's largest democracy but there is nothing democratic about blindly accepting the actions of the racist Bhutani government. King Jigme's ethnic cleansing could never have worked without support from India. And it was also because of India's support that Jigme could ignore international pressure. Seventeen years have passed since the refugees first came to Nepal, their children have already grown into young men. Inside the refugee camps, the humiliation of having to live off charity and fear of an uncertain future lead to sadness, depression, and anger.

Various nations including the United States have offered to absorb the refugees, but this has only stoked the fire. Perhaps third country resettlement will mean a better life for the refugees but to do so is a slap in the face of human rights and would be like giving the Bhutani government permission to chase out the remaining Nepali-speakers from Bhutan. It is the right of any refugee to be resettled in a third country if they want to. But it is undeniable that this option is a conspiracy to keep the racist Bhutani government in power.



thumb ta thumb thumb !

Nepali Ringtones

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

For example, to get ringtone of Aaja Timi

New Message

RT N1887

27221

Select

Write Message

Send

Go to New Message

Type RT N1887

Send to 27221*

For more list of Ringtones

Categories	Keywords	Send to
Nepali	RT<space>NEP	2722**
Top tones	RT<space>TOP	2722
Bollywood	RT<space>BOL	2722
Love	RT<space>LOV	2722
Devotional	RT<space>DEV	2722
Help	RT<space>HELP	2722

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RINGTONES

Hindi Ringtones

Ringtone	Movie	RT ID
Hamma Hamma	Bombay	1054
Mere Haton Me	Chandni	1080
Muqabla	Humse Hai Muqabla	1262
Jab Koi Baat	Jurm	1336
Jaati Hun Main	Karan Arjun	1373
Chod Aaye Hum	Maachis	1494
Dheere Dheere Pyar	Phool Aur Kaante	1639
Kay Sara Sara	Pukaar	1658
Pyar Karne Wale	Hero	1677
Roja Janeman	Roja	1704

For example, to get ringtone of Hamma Hamma

New Message

RT 1054

27221

Select



Write Message

Send

Go to New Message

Type RT 1054

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How Krishna Sen was killed

Naya Patrika, 27 May

After five days of isolation and torture Krishna Sen died, the blows, boots, and lathis of the men in uniform raining down upon him. He was kept captive in the highest building in Mahendra Police Club, next to its Judo Hall. His hands were bound behind his back, and he was repeatedly asked to say “This country belongs to the king.”

Sen had been caught in Naya Baneswor on 20 May 2002 and been in captivity in the Police Club since. Journalist Sangeeta Khadka, who saw Sen at 2 AM on 21 May, said, “After some hours of torture, Sen was vomiting, his arms and legs were broken.” Khadka says two policemen were propping Sen up against a wall as a jackbooted DSP Bikram Thapa kicked him repeatedly.

Bharat Sigdel, then a correspondent for *Janadisha* was also at the police club at that time. He says policemen taunted Sen, and assistant inspector general Amarsingh told him, “This country loves only Gyanendra. Do you really want to go against the thakuris who built this country... The army is going to be deployed. The American Army will also be here. And you’ll be six feet under, that’s where you’ll be. I’m a loyal solider of the king. I’ll bury Prachanda and Baburam too, and pack off Sher Bahadur and



CHANDRA KHAKI

Girija to jail.”

Sources say that on 27 May, Sen’s body was bundled into a sack and tossed into a Hilux that had its government number plates roughly coloured over red. The same night, Sen was secretly cremated at Aryaghat. DIG Shah said to his collaborators: “we were just joking, but Sen was already dead.”

Yet, the government put out the news that Sen had been killed in an encounter in the Gokarna forest. The announcement didn’t even include his name, just a description.

The government under which Sen was killed made no comment. There has never been an investigation. The people involved in his murder are high-ranking police officers.

Shah denies being involved. “Such work was the domain of the unified command (the army). It was not our concern.” He even denied knowledge of the fact that

Krishna Sen had been caught. “Capturing, transporting, taking action was the lookout of the army. How would we know anything about it?” He then deflected the question to the headquarters. “And where is the accounting for all the policemen killed,” he added. “No one is investigating incidents like Nepalganj or Naumule.”

Asked again how the head of the Valley police could not have known, Shah replied: “That’s how things were then. Anyway, this is an old story, and I don’t need to know anything about it.”

DSP Bikram Thapa was sent abroad right after Sen’s murder and won a peacekeeping award. He also denies knowing anything about Sen’s death. In fact, Thapa says, “I’ve never heard of Krishna Sen or of *Janadesh* weekly.” Thapa who is at the Number 1 Battalion in Naxal is trying for a promotion. Sen was apparently taken into custody by Sub Inspector Vijaya Pratap Shah, who was immediately promoted to inspector. Shah returned from peacekeeping duties in Kosovo six months ago.

Food first

Rameswor Bohara in Himal Khabarpatrika, 30 May-14 June

हिमाल

On 25 May, women, children and Social Welfare Minister Khadga Bahadur Biswokarma reached the village of Lui in Mugu by



RAMESWOR BOHARA

helicopter to inaugurate a higher secondary school. No sooner had the minister launched into his speech about building a New Nepal that the villagers started their own chant: “First food then elections.”

The people of Mugu view themselves as ‘citizens without a country’. The average lifespan of Mugu people is 36, there are no roads, agricultural production is enough for barely three months, and communicable diseases are endemic. The lack of jobs means most of Mugu’s young abandon all hope and seek their fortunes as labourers in India. There is no

higher education campus and only 18 percent of the men and nine percent of the women are literate.

The people in Lui had walked for two days to see the minister on 25 May. The crowd included women balancing babies on their hips and many elderly people. All had come to tell of their sorrows and pain. And when the minister started throwing around political verbiage like constituent assembly and republicanism, the Mugulis were enraged. Their demands were simple: first feed our hunger and then we talk about politics.



Table: Unity
iCan't reach you, why don't you lean forward a bit!i

समय Abin Shrestha in Samaya, 25 May

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ We may be ministers, but we still have to please Girija Prasad to get things done. This feudalism in politics needs to end. ”

Minister of Education and Sports Pradeep Nepal quoted in *Gorkhapatra*, 30 May.





A WORLD VIEW: Increasingly this view from the top of Chomolongma, with Makalu and Kanchenjunga in the distance, is not enough. Climbers want a ‘first,’ no matter what it is.

ANNE PARMENTER/PROJECT HIMALAYA

Spring - 2007

A staggering number of people have already climbed Chomolongma this year

BILLI BIERLING

Apa Sherpa’s 17th ascent of Everest was deservedly all over the national and international media. But another remarkable feat went under the radar—**Chhiring Dorje Sherpa** climbed to the top of the world three times in two weeks.

The 32-year-old from Rolwaling first reached the top on 2 May and planted a statue of the Buddha in honour of his birthday. “As a devout Buddhist it was important to me. I did not mind carrying the 12kg statue,” he said.

Chhiring Dorje then reached the summit of Everest two more times, on 15 and 16 May, both times with an Indian Army expedition.

This year also gave some western mountain guides the opportunity to show their strength. Two Brits, **Kenton Cool** and **Rob Casserley**, and American **Willy Benegas** all managed to top out twice in one week.

Another British climber, **David Tait**, with **Phurba Tashi Sherpa** pulled off a traverse from the Tibetan side of Everest into Nepal on 15 May. This was the first north-south traverse by a western climber. “I was planning to go back to the north side again but I was too

tired. I am not really a mountaineer, but it was good to see that Phurba Tashi was also exhausted on the way down,” Tait said upon his return to Kathmandu.

Other firsts this year include 18-year-old **Samantha Larson** from the US becoming the youngest person to have climbed the highest summits on all seven continents, and 71-year-old **Katsusuke Yanagisawa** from Japan becoming the oldest person to summit Everest. Another record might have been set at 8,848m. British climber **Rob Baber** claims to have phoned his wife and kids from a standard mobile phone from the summit.

The weather has been extremely kind on Everest this year, facilitating an enormous number of summits—over 500 so far. But Chomolungma has also claimed seven lives. And nearby Lhotse, the world’s fourth highest peak, took the life of one of the county’s most accomplished female climbers. **Pemba Doma Sherpa**, 36, fell to her death after having successfully climbed the 8,516-metre high mountain.

The notoriously avalanche-prone Annapurna I (8,091m) saw three successful ascents with **Andrew Lock** becoming the first Australian to scale the tenth highest mountain in the world. Lock, who has now scaled 12 of the 14 eight-thousanders, was

climbing with **Ivan Vallejo** from Ecuador and **Fernando Gonzalez Rubio** from Colombia.

The solo expedition on the south side of Annapurna I turned out to be less successful. Swiss climber **Ueli Steck**, who was attempting to open a new route on the sheer south face of the mountain (‘South face solo’, #347), was forced to abandon his climb. During his attempt to finish the route first attempted by two French climbers in 1992, Steck was hit by a rock and took a 300m fall.

“In spite of commotion [sic] and bruises I made it back to Base Camp under my own power. I am well so far,” he said.

Another potential new record could also not be completed. The Dutch Iceman, who had intended to climb Everest in shorts, failed to reach the world’s highest peak. However, **Wim Hof** did manage to reach an impressive altitude of 7,400m, and vows to have another crack at the mountain next year.

However, Himalayan mountaineering is not only about 8,000m peaks. All climbers attempting the normal route of Ama Dablam in the Khumbu this season had to leave the mountain empty-handed. Since an avalanche wiped out Camp 3 and killed six people last year, the route is said to have become more challenging (‘Accident on Ama



JAMIE MCGUINNESS/PROJECT HIMALAYA

LONG WAY UP: Some climbers make a preliminary trip to the North Col to see if they can handle the mountain at a later date.

Dablam’, #324). “The serac that lies on the final ice slope is dangerously cracked and all Sherpas refuse to put up Camp 3 underneath it,” said Italian mountain guide **Giampietro Verza**.

The man to ask about the conditions of the hanging serac of Ama Dablam would be **Bear Grylls**, who paraglided to 8,990m—152m higher than Everest. The 32-year-old British adventurer started in Dingboche, from where the 50kg propeller, which was strapped to his back, carried him straight up above Ama Dablam.

“It was a very special moment when I realised that there was no mountain in the world above me, especially after having stood on the top of the world myself nine years ago,” Grylls said on his

return to Kathmandu.

Italian climbers Hans Kammerlander and Karl Unterkircher have finally summited the 7,350 m-tall Jasemba. This was Kammerlander’s third attempt on the unclimbed mountain and this year’s expedition was in memory of Luis Brugger, his fellow Italian who fell to his death on the mountain last year.

“It was the most difficult but most beautiful expedition in my life,” the 50-year-old wrote on his website. “When we finally reached the top after having climbed the 2,000-m vertical and technical wall for 13 hours my first thoughts were with Luis.”

Having finished 13 of the 14 eight thousanders Kammerlander has vowed to dedicate his climbing career to unclimbed and technical difficult mountains. ●

Himalayan samaritans

Climbers often get a lot of bad press for being selfish. Last year's David Sharp incident was especially damning. As the British climber lay dying under an overhang beside the main climbing trail about 450m below the summit, some 40 people passed him, and few bothered to help.

Despite the good weather this year, a total of 12 people have died on Everest, Dhaulagiri, Kanchenjunga, and Lhotse. And some of those who got back down safe and sound may not have done so without the help of high-altitude sherpas and fellow climbers.

One example is the epic rescue of climber Usha Bista from the Nepal

Democratic Team who fell ill at 8,300m. Canadian climber Meagan McGrath was on her way down from the summit on 21 May when she came across Bista. "I saw her bending over forwards. Her mask was askew, she seemed a complete mess and was completely alone," the 29-year-old aerospace engineer told *Nepali Times*.

McGrath, another western climber and a sherpa started to help the 22-year-old Bista to descend, which proved rather hard. "We moved her about 30m down but I noticed very quickly that I had no experience or strength to do a rescue so I was glad when Dave Hahn, an experienced mountaineer, came to help," said McGrath.

Three other climbers then pulled Bista

down to Camp 4, where they built a stretcher. It was a long, slow, and treacherous undertaking to descend the Lhotse Face and then lower Bista down the Yellow Band to Camp 3 at 7,500m, where doctors of the Extreme Everest research team looked after her.

"They gave me a second life," Bista said. "I can't believe the love and concern they showed to rescue me in spite of such a difficult situation."

Another amazing rescue at 8,300m happened when Marco Epis was helped down to safety by a Russian mountain guide and a team of Sherpas. The 44-year-old Italian suffered cerebral oedema at Camp 3 and would have been unable to get

back down had it not been for his helpers, who dragged him all the way to Advanced Base Camp in less than two days.

"Without help, Marco would not have got down the mountain. He was not clear in his head," said Gian Mario Trimeri, another Italian climber on the mountain at the time.

Kazakh climber Denis Urubko aborted his speed ascent of Dhaulagiri I in order to help down mountain guide Boris Korshunov. The 72-year-old Russian space engineer had been caught in the night alone and without a tent at 7,300m. Denis helped the veteran climber to safety, and then turned back up. He reached the top the next morning in an amazing 4.5 hours. ●

Billi Bierling



LIFE AND DEATH ON DHAULAGIRI: The northeast ridge of Dhaulagiri is treacherous in itself and made more dangerous by avalanches.

KOICHIRO OHMORI



PADAM GHALE

BROKEN MOUNTAIN: Ama Dablam's distinctive 'chin' is no longer.

Avalanche

An avalanche wiped out Camp 3 on Dhaulagiri I on 13 May, killing Spanish climbers Santiago Sagaste and Ricardo Valencia. The avalanche happened 47 years to the day the 8,167m high mountain was first climbed by an expedition led by Swiss climber Max Eiselin.

Top Austrian climber Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner and Spaniard Javi Serrano barely escaped the deadly masses of snow at 6,650m on the world's seventh highest mountain. "After having spent about 45 minutes digging myself out I looked around me and only then did I realise how bad the situation was. I immediately ran up

to the site where the Spaniards' tent had been and started to shuffle like a mad woman," said Kaltenbrunner.

Unfortunately the 36-year-old mountaineer could only find the dead bodies of Santiago Sagaste and Ricardo Valencia. "I knew it would be unlikely to find anybody alive, but I carried on digging and screaming."

Earlier in the expedition Kaltenbrunner had abandoned her summit push when her climbing partner, Lucie Orsulova from the Czech Republic, got altitude sick at 7,400m. Kaltenbrunner has already climbed nine of the 14 eight-thousanders. "I had planned to push for the summit on my own but when I saw Lucie get worse by the minute it was clear to me that I would go down with her."

Together with her husband Ralf Dujmovits, Kaltenbrunner is now off to Pakistan to attempt the world's second highest mountain, K2 (8,611m). ●

Disappeared, dead

KUNDA DIXIT

Every day, tens of thousands of commuters, civil servants, diplomats travel up and down Maharajganj. The Foreign Ministry and Treaching Hospital are across the street.

Yet, just over the wall inside Mohan Shumshere's former palace at Laxmi Nibas, which served as the headquarters of the Bhairabnath Battalion, thousands of prisoners were detained, tortured, and exterminated between 2003-2005.

This was a concentration in the heart of the city. Bhairabnath showed how easily human rights groups, activists, and even international humanitarian organisations could be kept in the dark about the military's dirty secret.

Two years after their release, former inmates of Bhairabnath have defied threats to tell the tale. Lawyer and journalist Jitman Basnet, 32, is one of them. He was picked up on 4 February 2004 and released in 18 October 2005. Basnet endured 258 days of torture and detention with blindfold and hands tied behind his back. His hair-raising story as told in the book 'Andhyara 258 Din Hari' (258 Days of Darkness) is a vivid account of what thousands went through at Bhairabnath and one of very few testimonies of those disappeared during the conflict.

Many at Bhairabnath were civilians in the wrong place at the wrong time, others were caught when friends broke under torture and gave random names. (Prison

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ANAGHA NEELAKANTAN

On 15 February *Gorkhapatra* carried four pages of names in fine print. They were a list of Nepalis disappeared in the conflict compiled by the International Committee Red Cross (ICRC). The families of the 812 people on that list had no idea about the fate of their relatives. Since then, more families have come forward, and ICRC's disappeared count stands at 937 now.

A new bill on disappearance aims to criminalise the act, but activists say it fails to address past crimes, is not in line with international norms and doesn't treat enforced disappearance as a very serious crime.

The bill effectively lets perpetrators of disappearance during the war off the hook, says human rights lawyer Govinda Sharma, who until recently sat on a supreme court panel to investigate four cases of disappearance.

In its current form, the bill will not be effective retroactively and has a six-month statute of limitations which, says the UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Nepal, doesn't reflect the extreme seriousness of the crime or that it is continuous (ongoing until the fate of the disappeared person are known).

The bill also does not demand institutional accountability and holds only people immediately involved in an act of enforced disappearance liable. Both OHCHR and the International Commission for Jurists (ICJ) suggest that it explicitly address the responsibility of superiors for crimes committed by subordinates and prohibit 'just following orders' as justification.

Hari Phuyal, a legal consultant with ICJ-Nepal says the bill is framed as an amendment to an outdated civil code that lacks the modern structure and procedural provisions that comprehensive and independent legislation on enforced disappearance needs. Phuyal says it also fails to address multiple offences involved in disappearance, such as deprivation of liberty, ill treatment, torture, right to life, fair trial, and other fundamental rights.

Nepal Army personnel alleged to have committed enforced disappearance and torture are subject only to military court jurisdiction and the bill does not require that they be tried in civilian court.

One way to address these loopholes would be for Nepal to sign and ratify the UN convention on enforced disappearances and on non-international armed conflict to the Geneva convention, which addresses disappearance, says ICRC. The interim constitution requires the government to implement treaties it is party to and because the Treaty Act states that the provisions of a treaty ratified by the government of Nepal are automatically applicable at the national level. But Nepal is notoriously poor at implementing conventions even after they have been ratified ('A climate of intense fear', #217, 'Not knowing if they are dead or alive is killing us...', #292, 'Conventional wisdom', #330).

Disappeared family groups, media, and civil society must keep the pressure on for answers, says a human rights worker. There are some divisions within the groups of people who were for a time disappeared, particularly between Maoists, and civil society activists and those secretly detained for no apparent reason. But in Bardiya, where most of the disappeared people were Tharu, families have come together regardless of who they hold responsible.

Who, how many?

The ICRC and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) maintain detailed dossiers on the missing. The ICRC only adds a name when approached by family members who have no news of their relatives. Their figures show the people still missing are overwhelmingly male, and close to a third of them are between 18-24. Kathmandu has the most missing (119) followed by Bardiya which has close to 100.

The number of disappearances increased sharply after the army entered the conflict in November 2001 and during the state of emergency in 2002, and declined with the setting up of the OHCHR office here.

The NHRC divides its list into those disappeared by the state and those abducted by the Maoists. The commission registered 2,105 cases of disappearance, and the status of 653 people remains unknown. Of the 814 people documented as abducted by Maoists, 158 remain missing.

The words 'missing' and 'disappeared', used interchangeably, refer to the same thing, though activists say the latter conveys a greater sense of agency. Now, 'enforced disappearance' is considered the most accurate description.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

“For lasting peace,

Mary Werntz, head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegation to Nepal, spoke with *Nepali Times* about helping families find missing members and the need for a separate, independent commission on the disappeared.

Nepali Times: Is there the political will to address the issue of disappearance?
Mary Werntz: The biggest challenge is to not allow this issue and the suffering of families to be totally drawn into a political issue. It is about a basic humanitarian right. Also, unless you deal with the issue of the missing, you cannot move forward to a lasting peace.

The agreement on 8 November between these seven parties and the CPN-M to create a high level body to address this issue is extremely positive. In some countries it takes 10 years to get to that point. I've been told by the Ministry for Peace and Reconstruction that the high-level commission on the disappeared will go forward. They are very optimistic. It is essential that the commission be given the proper legal basis and be formed and function in an independent fashion. Parallel with this is the need to put into place measures to prevent further cases of disappearance.

What would be the mandate of such a commission?
The commission's mandate should be independent and humanitarian, focusing on the provision of remedies and information. It should be in contact and approachable by the families. Its first goal should be seeking to clarify the status of the missing. It should answer the question of whether someone is dead or alive, if dead the circumstances of the death and the location of the human remains. It should as well work on proper exhumation of the human remains and on identification of the recovered remains. Additionally and very importantly, it should answer to the needs of the families (material support, psychological support, etc) to help them in their mourning process.

The commission will need to collect, centralise, and process all the information with regard to the missing. This takes time. We've been working here

or alive

More than a thousand people were imprisoned, tortured, or killed right in the middle of the capital

diary', #290). Basnet was himself a victim of Maoist torture in his native Solu, but was taken in for his journalism work.

There were Maoists inside, too: Krishna KC, who has also written a book on Bhairabnath, Himal Sharma, and many others. The army had penetrated the Maoists' Kathmandu task force and used information from torture for further arrests. But torture was notoriously unreliable and thousands of innocent people across Nepal were made to suffer and die.

With the mind of a lawyer and the observational skills of a journalist, Basnet tells us in stark

and simple words what he and fellow prisoners went through. His story needs no literary embellishments, his independence gives the book authenticity that other accounts of Bhairabnath detainees lack.

His book reads like classic Solzhenitsyn: "The strange thing about torture is that after relentless beatings night and day, you don't feel the pain anymore. You go into a kind of trance." Or: "They told me to take my shirt off, but I couldn't because it was stuck to the wounds from the previous night's beatings...so the soldier just ripped it off."

Basnet writes about being able to see the red neon sign of Himalayan Bank from across the road through a gap in his blindfold and hearing traffic noise. Amidst all the cruelty he is baffled to see his torturers lovingly fondle a puppy, or hearing bells ringing at the barrack temple. 'How can people like these be religious,' he asks himself.

There were an estimated ten camps inside Bhairabnath, each housing up to 90 inmates, and two camps were for women. Basnet was kept in the Squash Court and later the Commando Chok, and before every ICRC inspection the prisoners would be moved to tents inside wide bunkers.

Basnet tried to find out as much as he could about his torturers and meticulously lists their names in his book. Some have gone on UN peacekeeping duties, some are still in the army and others are retired.

"Many of them took a great deal of pleasure in inflicting pain on us," recalled Basnet

who still has scars of his beatings. Two years later, he still gets nightmares.

It was because of Basnet's testimony that the truth about 49 of the inmates of Bhairabnath having been executed and cremated at the Shivapuri National Park has come out. After his release, Basnet's lobbying with human rights organisations forced the army to own up and release dozens of other inmates.

But for many it was too late. After his release Basnet visited families of those who he had watched die so they could have closure. The book lists names of every other detainee that Basnet met during his nine months inside.

"Parents who hear that their sons have died grieve once," Basnet told us, his eyes glistening, "but those whose sons have disappeared grieve a

thousand times."

Surviving inmates of Bhairabnath and the families of those who died or are still missing want justice. And they say the Maoists in government and ministers sympathetic to the army don't want unpleasant truths from the past to come out.

"Those who tortured us are walking around openly and threatening us, while we have to hide and still be scared," says Basnet, who has sued King Gyanendra as supreme commander of the army. He gets death threats, but says: "They can kill me, but they can't kill my book"

Passing Bhairabnath as the slanting sun illuminated its gates, Basnet looks away. "What a beautiful palace and they turned it into a burial ground...I can't bear to remember what went on behind those walls." ●

TESTIMONY OF TORTURE: Jitman Basnet reading passages from the book that documents his nine-month torture and incarceration at Bhairabnath in which he names all names. A Google Earth view of barrack showing the key areas (left).



we must deal with the missing"

since 1997 and have rooms full of documents which, if there is a commission we are comfortable is working properly, we'd want to hand over. The commission would also be responsible for recognising death, deciding about maybe a memorial, compensation, other legal aspects, say a woman who has lost her husband cannot hand the land down to her son because there is no way for her to prove her husband is dead.

Isn't this what a truth and reconciliation commission is supposed to do?

There's a lot of confusion about this. A high level body is mentioned only in the 8 November agreement, and is not explicitly included in the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA). The CPA mentions a Truth and Reconciliation Commission which can technically be a short-term body, with a mandate that could be linked with the judiciary, whereas the missing commission will function for many years to come and should have a mandate independent of judicial inquiries. The missing commission answers directly to the needs of the families of the missing people, whereas the Truth and Reconciliation Commission helps a society to come to terms with its past.

What do the families want?

We work to help families move forward. Some demand justice and push for just compensation.

Others don't demand justice in the human rights sense but require recognition. Society has different opinions and certain actors in civil society have very strong opinions that may not be exactly what families think. ICRC believes the families have the right to define for themselves what they need, in order to get on with their lives.

How effective do you think the draft bill on disappearance is?

There's the draft law and existing law. Nepal is a signatory to the Geneva Convention and there are rules that are binding for Nepal. We are encouraging Nepal to sign the convention on enforced disappearance, as domestic law would have to be in line with that.

The government also has to want to implement conventions it has signed. Then there's the question of the legal system. Once you have a law, you have to be willing to use it.

How closely do you work with the NHRC?

We've always worked with the NHRC, but we've been a little confused of late about what their role is. We want to help, for example, by providing anthropological forensic expertise unavailable here and would like to know whose responsibility exhumation and forensic analyses in the case of the missing is.

The ICRC's figures for the disappeared aren't the same as those of the NHRC or OHCHR.

This issue of numbers is a little complicated. We have some 3,300 cases in our database from families of the missing who approached us during the last ten years. Over 2,000 were 'solved', one way or the other, most found alive and in detention during the conflict. We don't claim our numbers are right, within three months of our publishing the list of the 812 missing (*see story*), we had 125 more, and that was what we expected. But our list is up-to-date. In December, our people walked all over Nepal and met every single one of those families. The 937 people on our list are people whose families have no information about the fate of their relatives.

It's said most people on the disappeared list are probably dead.

Yes indeed, it is sadly so. You hear often of people who make up a story regarding the missing in order to collect compensation or some such. Maybe some guy ran off with his girlfriend to India, or someone lives as a refugee in Denmark and their family in the mountains don't know, or someone doesn't want to be contacted by family members. Such cases may exist. However, these are the exception. The ICRC has a long experience in armed conflict worldwide and knows that these few cases are used as a cheap excuse to avoid the sad reality of the disappeared. Mothers don't lie. The real issue is that over 900 families of the missing in Nepal are still without news.

“The agony of families is being prolonged”

Nepali Times: What message does the Disappearance Bill send out about institutional accountability and impunity?

Lena Sundh: Under international human rights standards, states have a clear obligation to investigate and prosecute persons allegedly responsible for serious human rights violations, such as enforced disappearances. The bill reflects the government's recognition that enforced disappearance is not only a serious human rights violation, but also that it must be made a criminal offence under Nepali law. OHCHR welcomes the bill as a step towards ensuring such accountability.

But we are very concerned that the Bill does not fully meet international human rights standards. One concern is that the bill is not intended to apply to acts of disappearance which were committed in the past. Also, crimes of disappearance are considered to continue until the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person are clarified. So most disappearances in Nepal would not be considered past crimes, but ongoing crimes.

Another concern is that it does not address the fact that military courts have jurisdiction over Nepal Army personnel accused of disappearance under the existing Army Act. This is contrary to international human rights principles which allow only ordinary civilian courts to exercise jurisdiction over persons accused of serious human rights violations.

There are other problems. The definition of disappearance in the Bill does not include all the elements of the internationally-accepted definition of enforced disappearance—for example, by ensuring not only that government officials, but also any person acting with the support or acquiescence of the government, may be held responsible. The penalty the bill provides (up to five years of imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs 50,000) is not at all reflective of the very serious nature of the crime of disappearance.

The bill in its current form is limited to individual criminal accountability. According to international human rights standards, states also have the responsibility to undertake a range of institutional and other measures to prevent, terminate, investigate, and punish acts of enforced disappearance. OHCHR recommends that a more comprehensive law on disappearance be adopted in Nepal in the near future.

Lena Sundh, representative in Nepal of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, spoke with *Nepali Times* about the new Disappearance Bill and the stalling on an independent investigation into Bhairabnath.

What else needs to happen to address the issue of disappearance and the needs of the families?

Since the office in Nepal was established in 2005, OHCHR has been gathering information on the disappeared and has maintained contact with relatives of the disappeared and organisations working on their behalf. We have presented information on cases to the authorities and to the Working Group on Involuntary and Enforced Disappearances. We have also carried out an in-depth investigation into allegations of disappearances from the Bhairabnath Battalion and published a report in May 2006. Many times we have called on the authorities to carry out independent investigations into the disappeared, but so far there has been little response. At times we have been given inaccurate and misleading information by the Nepal Army, which also never provided us with a copy of its report on investigations into our May 2006 report. We have also raised cases of those abducted by the CPN-M and whose whereabouts are also unknown.

The 8 November 2006 agreement between the SPA and the CPN-M committed them to setting up a high level commission of inquiry on disappearances. Unfortunately, nothing appears to have been done so far to set up such a commission. OHCHR believes that such a commission must be independent, credible, and competent, and only established after broad consultations with civil society and other stakeholders, including relatives of the disappeared. The delay in setting up proper, independent inquiries to clarify the fate of all the disappeared is prolonging the agony of families waiting to know the fate



MIN BAJRACHARYA

and whereabouts of their loved ones, and denying them the right to justice and reparations.

Should disappearance be part of the mandate of the truth and reconciliation commission (TRC) decided upon in the comprehensive peace agreement?

In addition to the truth and reconciliation commission in the CPA, there is also a commitment to create a commission of inquiry on disappearances. The establishment of such a commission would not substitute for an eventual TRC, which would look into a broad range of human rights violations, including disappearances. Effective investigations into individual cases of disappearances by a commission of inquiry would allow a TRC to focus on broader issues related to disappearances, such as the general pattern of disappearances, institutional and political responsibility, and effective measures to prevent disappearances in the future. It would also allow the TRC to focus on supporting processes for reconciliation and healing the wounds.



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25 years of AIDS

It is now a quarter-of-a-century since the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) was recognised. The knowledge that has been gained since and the pace at which basic research has been translated into lifesaving treatments is unprecedented.

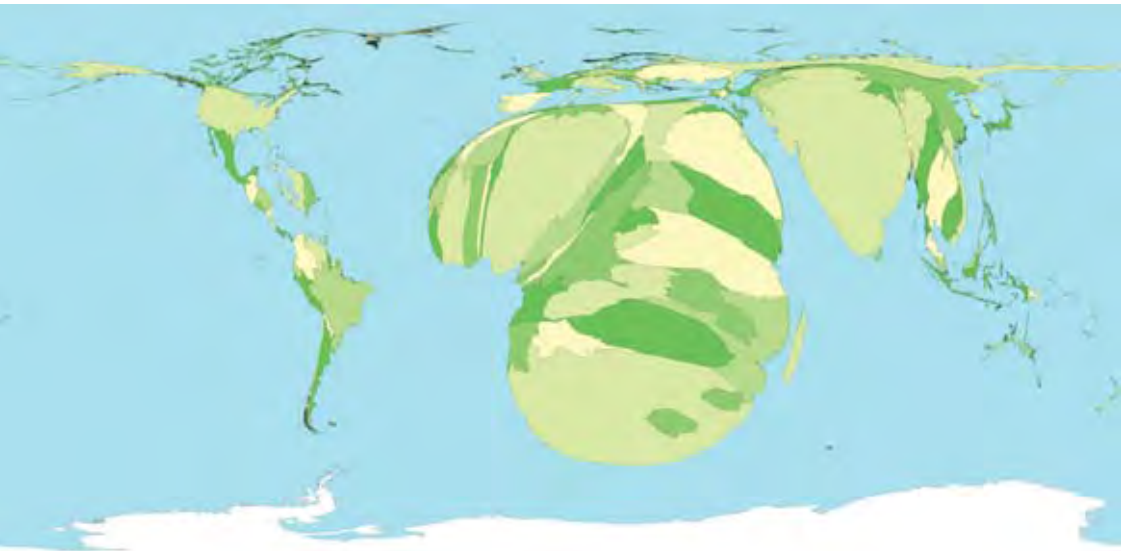


COMMENT
Anthony S Fauci

The discovery of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) as the cause of AIDS was followed by elucidation of its pathogenesis, natural history, and epidemiology, the creation of a diagnostic blood test, and the development of antiretroviral (ARV) drugs. In 1996, the approval of the first drug of a class called protease inhibitors led to the adoption of a multi-drug, anti-HIV regimen known as highly active antiretroviral therapy, or HAART. This dramatically transformed the quality of life and extended the life expectancy of HIV-infected individuals.

Moreover, ARVs given to pregnant HIV-infected women and newborns have proven enormously successful in preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Since these combinations of drugs were introduced, at least three million years of life have been saved in the United States alone. We have

Now we need to get medication to all those who need it most, and develop an HIV vaccine



over 25 approved anti-HIV drugs and drug combinations, and a robust pipeline of next-generation drugs in various stages of development and clinical testing.

Now our task is to apply these scientific and technological advances to delivering treatment and prevention strategies around the world, especially to people in resource-poor nations. It is clear that efforts to combat the pandemic must be scaled up in Africa, Asia, and other parts of the world where HIV/AIDS exacts its greatest toll. There are an estimated 40 million HIV-infected people in the world; nearly three million died of AIDS in 2006 alone.

Programs such as the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, and philanthropies like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Clinton Foundation have helped make drugs available to treat two million people infected with HIV in lower- and middle-income countries. But fewer than 25 percent of people in these countries who need ARVs are receiving them.

With 4.3 million new HIV infections each year, we face an untenable situation, as new infections far outstrip our ability to treat all those infected. We

desperately need to improve our ability to prevent infections.

A wide array of prevention strategies, including behavioural modification, condom distribution, and the provision of clean needles and syringes to IV drug users has emerged. Recent studies suggest properly performed and followed-up adult male circumcision is a promising prevention strategy. The ongoing development of topical microbicides offers women the hope of warding off HIV infection when using condoms or refusing intercourse is not feasible.

But the greatest scientific and public health goal in HIV/AIDS research, developing an effective

vaccine, still eludes us. This is particularly difficult because of the nature of the virus, particularly its ability to integrate itself into the genome of host cells, to readily mutate, and conceal that part of its outer coat that would induce protective antibodies.

We also know that the body’s natural immune response is inadequate in controlling the virus. Since the discovery of HIV, there has been no documented case of an individual’s immune system completely eradicating the virus following established infection.

Many current studies focus on developing vaccines that might at least slow the progression of HIV or make a person less likely to pass the virus on to others. To develop a vaccine that can prevent HIV infection, we need to discover how to induce the human body to produce a protective immune response.

Despite the extraordinary scientific and medical accomplishments in the battle against HIV/AIDS so far, history will judge us by what we accomplish in the next 25 years, and how we deliver the fruits of our research efforts to those who need them most. ● (Project Syndicate)

Anthony Fauci is director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. He also advises the White House on global AIDS issues and initiatives to bolster medical and public health preparedness against emerging infectious disease threats such as pandemic influenza.

China, the Olympics, and the world

China needs a bigger international role and a change in its system of governance

The whole world, it seems, views China as the next great global power. A trip to Beijing does little to dispel that impression. Out of the welter of dust, noise, welders’ sparks, flotillas of cement mixers and construction cranes, the setting for the 2008 Summer Olympic Games is taking shape.

But looking down on the scene from the half-finished Morgan Centre, the luxury apartment complex, and seven-star hotel that is arising beside the Olympic site, one is



ANALYSIS
Orville Schell

awestruck not only by the project’s grandeur, but by its design daring. Below, like some latticed popover, is the Herzog & de

Meuron-designed ‘birds nest’ Olympic Stadium. Beside it is the stunning ‘water cube,’ or Aquatics Centre, of Chinese/Australian design.

Feeling the Promethian energy unleashed in Beijing, it is easy to believe in China’s aspirations to restore itself to a position of global wealth and power. Over the past half-century, when the Chinese have put their minds to it, they have always demonstrated extraordinary fortitude and resolution, whether in embracing Mao’s revolution or in realising the economic counter-revolution unleashed by Deng Xiaoping.

But, to become a truly ‘great nation,’ China must make two great leaps. First, it must become more comfortable playing an active and constructive international role. China is now deeply involved in the world because of trade. But it maintains a nineteenth-century notion of sovereignty – namely, that its leaders have an absolute right to do

whatever they want without outside interference. China’s leaders fear that if they begin to pronounce on the domestic record of other nations, much less join in sanctions or United Nations peacekeeping missions, they will establish a precedent that would allow others to intrude on domestic Chinese affairs. But the Chinese government has just had a wake-up call in Sudan, from which China imports 50 percent of its oil. After doing little to pressure Sudanese strongman Omar al-Bashir into admitting UN peacekeepers to stem the killing in Darfur, China suddenly found the promise of an unsullied Olympics at risk.

It was only after actress Mia Farrow suggested that the 2008 Olympics might be remembered as the genocide games, that an emissary was dispatched and al-Bashir relented. It was an important moment in China’s evolution from a defensive to an offensive player on the international scene.

China’s second challenge concerns its hybrid capitalist/Leninist system of governance, which may not function well enough without democratic feedback and the rule of law. Although hardly democrats, President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao already are expending large amounts of time and resources on divisive social problems in the countryside where income growth has lagged. They have cancelled national agricultural taxes, made rural schooling free, launched a new rural medical insurance plan, and guaranteed that, since there is still no title for holding private agricultural land, peasants are entitled to renew their long-term leases.

So China may be edging towards a whole new way of interacting with the world and dealing with its people; its curious authoritarian capitalism may be inching towards



some new, and possibly viable, model for long-term development. But, as Mao always noted, theory should not be confused with practice, and the sustainability of such a model remains untested. Indeed, no state run by a Communist Party has yet managed to reform itself sufficiently to modernise and develop successfully. In this, China is a both pioneer and a developmental curiosity. What kind of nation China aspires to be, and where it is headed, is still something of a conundrum. China’s focus now is not on grand political visions for the future, but on grand visions for a Beijing reborn to impress the world. Beneath the surface are many threatening cracks. But to drive past the Olympic Green in Beijing will help make many Chinese believe that perhaps the centre will hold in this unprecedented and unusual experiment of nation building. ● (Project Syndicate)

Orville Schell is a renowned expert on China and Dean of the School of Journalism at the University of California-Berkeley.

ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Photo.Circle** Dambar Krishna Shrestha's feature story on Nepali workers in Qatar, Susheel Shrestha's works, and Udipt Singh Chettry's sports reportage, 2 June, 9.45 AM at the Sundhara Bakery Café.
- ❖ **Colors of the sepals and petals** an exhibition of paintings by Neera Joshi Pradhan, until mid June, at Park Gallery, Lazimpat. 4419353

EVENTS

- ❖ **International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression** 4 June
- ❖ **World Environment Day** 5 June
- ❖ **East to East** a film about Pakistani families in Britain, 1 June, 6.45PM at the Lazimpat Gallery Café. 4428549
- ❖ **Shastrartha** organised by MAPS on ethnomusicology, 2 June, 4-6PM at Martin Chautari. 4238050
- ❖ **Pottery course** by Santosh Kumar from the Delhi Blue Pottery Trust, at Newa Art Ceramics in Mdhypur, Thimi, 25 May-24 June. 9841257968
- ❖ **Core Empowerment Training** by writer Paula Laxmi Horan, five day intensive retreat at the Farm House, Nagarkot, 13-17 June. 9803356700
- ❖ **Film South Asia 2007** Festival of South Asian documentaries, 11-14 October, call for entries deadline 30 June. www.filmsouthasia.org



MUSIC

- ❖ **Soul of Raga** live classical and fusion music, every Friday night at Nhuchhe's Kitchen, The Organic Bistro. 4429903.
- ❖ **Open mic night** at Via Via Café, every Friday, 8PM
- ❖ **Live music** at the Red Onion Bar, Wednesdays from 8PM with Yanki and Zigme Lepcha. 4416071
- ❖ **DJ Raju and the Cloudwalkers** live at the Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency, every Friday and Saturday. 4491234

DINING

- ❖ **Friday evening BBQ** with live music, at the Hotel Himalaya, 7PM, Rs 499. 5523900
- ❖ **Walk and lunch** every Saturday at the Shivapuri Heights Cottage. 9841371927
- ❖ **Kebabs and curries** at the Dhaba, Thapathali. 9841290619
- ❖ **Krishnarpan** Nepali specialty restaurant at Dwarika's Hotel, six to 22 course ceremonial lunch and dinner. 4479488
- ❖ **Weekend special** with sekuwa, bara, barbeque, Fridays at Ambassador Garden House, Lazimpat, 5.30 PM. 4411706
- ❖ **Mongolian BBQ** Wednesdays and Fridays, 6.30 PM on at the Splash Bar and Grill, Radisson Hotel. Rs 1,000 for unlimited barbeque and beer. 4422828
- ❖ **Flavours of the Middle East** every Friday and the taste of Thailand every Wednesday at The Café, Hyatt Regency, Boudha. 4491234
- ❖ **Light nouvelle snacks** and elaborate cordon bleu meals at LaiSoon, Pulchok, behind the Egyptian embassy. 5537166
- ❖ **Continental cuisine** and wine by the fire place at Kilroy's, Thamel. 4250440.
- ❖ **Smorgasbord** lunch at Park Village Resort, every Saturday. 4375280
- ❖ **Gyakok** at the Shambala Garden Café, Hotel Shangri-La, minimum four diners at Rs 450 per person, two hours notice.
- ❖ **Retro brunch barbecue** with Crossfire Band at Le Meridien, Gokarna from 12-4PM, Rs 1,000 including swimming. 4451212
- ❖ **Calcutta's rolls, biryani, kebabs** Indian cuisine at Bawarchi, Bluebird Mall Food Court. 9741000735
- ❖ **Woodfired pizzas** at the Roadhouse Café, Thamel 4262768, Bhatbhateni 4426587 and Pulchok 5521755
- ❖ **Pizza** from the woodfired oven at Java, Thamel. 4422519
- ❖ **Jazzabell café** enjoy great food, exotic cocktails and music, Chakupat, Patan. 2114075

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Weekend package** at Le Meridien Kathmandu Gokarna Forest Golf Resort and Spa, two nights three days at Rs 8,888 and one night two days at Rs 4,444. 4451212
- ❖ **Wet and wild package** at Godavari Village Resort, every Saturday and Sunday, unlimited swimming, buffet lunch with a bottle of beer for a softdrink, Rs 690. 5560675

For inclusion in the listing send information to editors@nepalitimes.com

Quest Entertainment

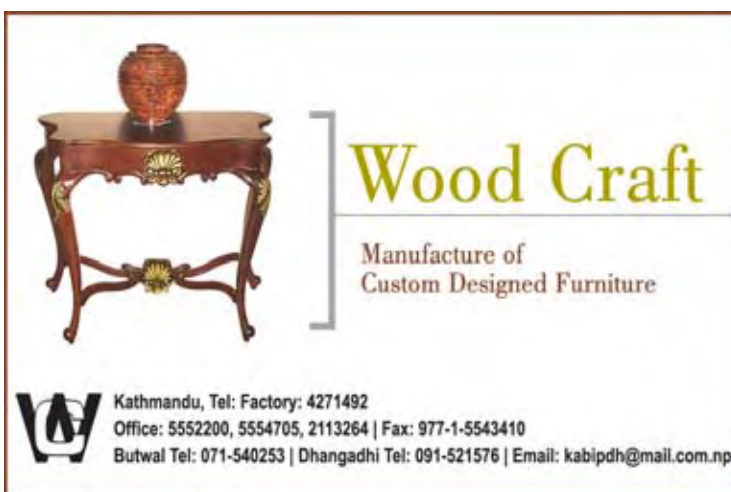
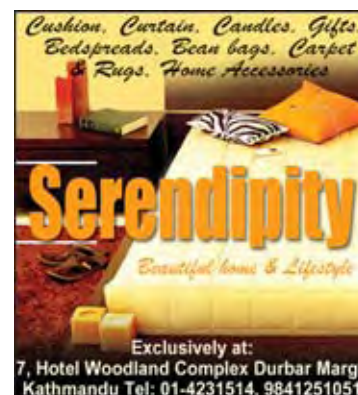


In *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*, Elizabeth (Keira Knightly), Will (Orlando Bloom), and Captain Barbosa (Geoffrey Rush) rescue Captain Jack Sparrow (Johnny Depp) from the clutches of the Kraken. Now they must face their foes, Davey Jones (Bill Nighy) and Lord Cutler Beckett (Tom Hollander). The crew must call the Pirate Lords from the four corners of the globe, including the infamous Sao Feng (Chow-Yun Fat), to a gathering that will make their final stand against Beckett, Jones, Norrington, the Flying Dutchman, and the entire East India Trading Company.

Call 4442220 for show timings at Jai Nepal
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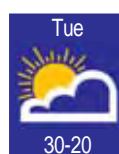
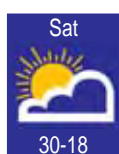


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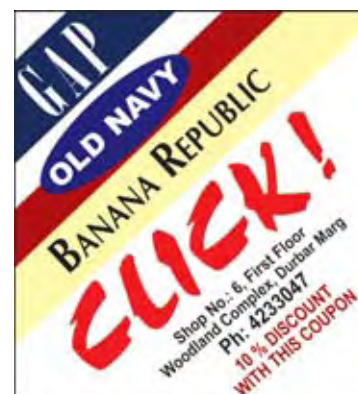
by NGAMINDRA DAHAL



KATHMANDU VALLEY



The clear, hot days of the past week or so are a result of the westerly jetstream persisting over the south of the Himalaya, even unleashing a freak blizzard on Dolpo. But we expect it to make its seasonal migration north soon to allow in warm, moist air from the Bay so the pre-monsoon fireworks can start which should be early next week. The southwesterly monsoon has struck Kerala with a bang right on schedule this week, and its Bay arm should be entering Nepali air space sometime around 10 June. That means ETA Kathmandu about 15 June or so. Don't grumble about the heat, without it there will be no rains.





MIN BAJRACHARYA

A GARDEN OF MANY FLOWERS: US Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, Barry R Lowenkron (*middle*) with Foreign Minister Sahana Pradhan and US Ambassador James Moriarty on Thursday at Sital Nibas under a portrait of King Prithbi Narayan Shah.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

BURNING ISSUE: Bhutani protesters burn a protrait of the Indian prime minister at the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu on Tuesday as other refugees began their 'Long March' back to Bhutan. The march was stopped at a border bridge in Jhapa and Indian police shot dead one protester and injured several others. After talks, the march has been put off for 15 days.



KUMAR SHRESTHA

RUNNING BLIND: Blind marathoner Mark Pollock (*left*) and John Regan his guide, after completing the world's highest run from 5,356m Chomolungma Base Camp and ending at the 3,446m at Namche Bajar in 16h 27m 39s on Monday night.



KIRAN PANDAY

THE ART OF TREKKING: Artists Sagar Manandhar, Prasant Gurung, Bidhata KC, Bhawana Manandhar, Erina Dongol, Sunil Ranjit, and LK Lama during an artistic trek 'Inspiration of Manaslu' at Sama Gaun (3,360m) last week organised by Manang Youth Society which will use the paintings produced to promote treks in Manang and Manaslu.

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The United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) is working with the Nepal Government, multilateral, bilateral agencies and civil society to achieve the Millennium Development Goals through support that is consistent with the Government of Nepal's development priorities.

DFID's work in Nepal focuses on support for the immediate implementation of the peace process; helping to lay the foundations for an effective and inclusive state; the promotion of inclusive economic growth and aid effectiveness and harmonisation.

DFID Nepal is currently finalising an interim Country Assistance Plan and requires a **Team leader to lead the Programme Coordination and Quality Assurance (PCQA) Team and a Communication Specialist** to support the development and implementation of this plan.

The Team Leader will work with teams of technical advisers and programme management staff and will be responsible for the Quality Assurance of Programme Administration and Financial systems. They will also manage internal and external communications, corporate reporting and learning for their team.

The Communications Specialist will work with the PCQA, Effective and Inclusive State, Inclusive Economic Growth and Management Services Teams leading on effective communications. This will include developing and implementing a Communications strategy.

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- Strong verbal and written English skills and a proven track record of presenting ideas/submissions orally and in writing.
- Effective People management skills.

Team Leader applicants should

- Have A Masters Degree and/or at least 5 years experience in managing Development programmes/projects.
- Be able to demonstrate that they are competent in: planning and delivery of work, analysis and use of information, decision making, working with others, communicating with others and influencing.
- Fluent written/oral communications in English and Nepali.

Communications Specialist applicants should

- Have a degree or equivalent in a communications related subject and at least 5 years experience working with the media.
- Having previous experience working in development would be an advantage
- Be able to demonstrate that they are competent in: planning and delivery of work, analysis and use of information, working with others, communicating with others and influencing.
- Fluent written/oral communications in English and Nepali.

Located in the DFID office in Kathmandu, the successful applicants will work in a fast paced, multi-cultural environment that places a high premium on inclusive team working. The position offers significant opportunities for professional and career growth. Though based in Kathmandu, some in-country and international travel will be required.

There will be an attractive and competitive local salary and benefits package.

DFID is an Equal Opportunities employer and appoints on merit by open competition. Applicants should be Nepali residents or have a relevant work permit to work in Nepal. Applications are welcomed from all parts of the community and we actively encourage interest from women, Dalits, disadvantaged Janajatis, Madhesi and those with a disability.

For an application form and more information, including Terms of Reference, please e-mail recruitment-nepal@dfid.gov.uk Please send a completed application form by e-mail to the same address. Only complete applications made on the prescribed application form will be considered. The closing date for applications is **15th June 2007.**

DFID/900642/07

Isn't it good, red sandalwood

(sung to the tune of Norwegian Wood)

Hridayendra sarkar coming down with the chickenpox has the palace all aflutter. The little prince was rushed back from Gokarna to Nirmal Nibas this week where he is recuperating under the close supervision of great step-grandmother Ratna. All this wouldn't have made headlines in the tabloids had the **Nabayubaraj** not been proposed as a compromise candidate to save the monarchy. Now it looks like even that won't do the trick.



So the Indo-Nepal medical diplomacy is in full swing again: Ram Baran, Shekhar, and Sushil all trooped off to Apollo Hospital to meet a slew of Indian leaders and take the opportunity to have their heads examined. Ram Baran needs to treat his tarai schizophrenia, First Nephew Shekhar has to sort out his **dysfunctional** relationship with First Daughter Sujata and First Cousin Sushil badly needs a face-lift. Now that Nona is no more, the Sujata-Sushil rift has paralysed decision-making in the Koirala kitchen cabinet. With the two pulling a hapless Girija in diametrically opposite directions the centre-right party establishment even lost control of the NSU leadership in Chitwan because the Sujata and Shekhar lobbies cancelled each other out. The Ass's advice to the prime minister is to forget about unification of the Nepali Congress for now, just unite the Koirala family first. Next week exclusive on Ass: **UML** medical diplomacy in Delhi.



Comrade Deb Gurung (army security code name: "Zulu 21") goes down in history this week as the first minister to call for a bund. As head of the Ethnic Federal Republican Front, the minister of local development wants the Supreme Court to overturn its decision on Nepali language, and since there is no likelihood of that happening we'll all be forcibly bunned again on Friday as you read this at home. During the most unstable coalition governments of the post-1990 democracy era we used to have three bunds a week on average, but even during those dark and uncertain days we never had a **government** minister calling a shutdown, for fakir's sake. Deb Babu is ably assisted in this endeavour by our very own valley commissar Comrade Hitman whose work on behalf of self-described "backward" groups is well known.



The behaviour of the formerly-subterranean comrades in government is beginning to arouse suspicions that the Maoists may move from their strategic offensive phase into a strategic withdrawal and pull out of the eight-party alliance ahead of elections. Being in the opposition can give them an anti-incumbent advantage, the freedom to unleash the YCL, stone ambassadorial cars without triggering a diplomatic incident, and call any number of bunds they want.

But it will be difficult to convince the comrade ministers who have been getting fairly comfortable in their jobs. Comrade Hasiya (code name: "Zulu 26") has got so hooked to the limelight thanks to Melamchi she now wants to have the project no matter what. Mahara Babu (code: "Zulu 21") has three cell phones (**Mero** Mobile, **Tero** Mobile and **Hamara** CDMA) and none of them work properly. Getting a call during a press meet at Singha Darbar recently he was shouting "Hello! Hello!" and when it turned out to be a wrong number he yelled into the phone: "Don't you know you're talking to a minister?"



It's not a coincidence that Nepal is flooded with sandalwood en route from Karnataka to Lhasa. They hunted down Comrade Veerapan, so the business just moved north to Nepal which is why it is called 'red' sandalwood here. The Ass can't figure out what the fuss is about anyway. It's not our sandalwood forests that are being chopped down, they are not selling it in Nepal so we're not breaking any international treaties. We are just facilitating trade between our two neighbours and everybody gets his share. Nepal is benefiting from being a transit point between India and China, and wasn't that supposed to make us really **rich**?

So, instead of working up all this self-righteous outrage let's allow the sandalwood trade to flourish, collect our freight fees, and if any sandalwood is apprehended by chance, we can always send it back to India and barter it for diesel.

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MISTER & MISS UNIVERSITY NEPAL

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WAVE MISTER & MISS UNIVERSITY 2007

Final Contestants

WHO WILL IT BE?

19 colleges, all vying to send their representatives to the Mister and Miss University International pageant in Korea this July as WAVE Mr and Miss University 2007. Who will it be?

You ask. They answer.

How to send sms:
type wave (space) your question and send to **7676**. The question should be maximum of 150 characters and will cost Rs 5 plus tax. The selected question will be asked in the finale and will win attractive prizes

01. Mr. Sauram Raj Tuladhar, Caspian Valley College
02. Miss. Samiksha Bhattarai, ED-Mark Academy
03. Mr. Nimesh Pradhan, Prime College
04. Miss. Isha Shrestha, Prime College
05. Mr. Gaurav Khatriwada, Tribhuvan University
06. Miss. Durga Thapa Magar, Thaames International
07. Mr. Sulakshyan Baharati, Trichandra College
08. Miss. Esha Bajracharya, Campion College
09. Mr. David Shakyia, Thaames International
10. Miss. Ramila Shrestha, National Institute of Technical Sciences
11. Mr. Bikram Singh Basnet, St. Xavier's College
12. Miss. Akriti Shrestha, Symbiosis College
13. Mr. Bishwas KC, Thaames International
14. Miss. Swekshya Adhikari, Orient College
15. Mr. Hemant Kr. Rauniyar, Ayurveda Campus
16. Miss. Roshana Karki, Columbus HSS & College
17. Mr. Hembung Rai, Intl. School of Tourism & Hotel Management
18. Miss. Sushmita Tamrakar, Tribhuvan University
19. Mr. Anuj Thapa, ISM College (PU)
20. Miss. Pragya Manandhar, Nagarjuna College
21. Mr. Amrit Pariyar, Prime College
22. Miss. Jaya Kasthakar, Kantipur Valley College
23. Mr. Prabhat Shrestha, Shankar Dev Campus
24. Miss. Arpana Singh, Public Youth Campus

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