



Seat of power



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Times nepalnews.com
Weekly Internet Poll # 296

Q. Was the king right to restore parliament?

Total votes: 14,144

Yes 69.1%
No 27.6%
Don't know 3.3%

Weekly Internet Poll # 297. To vote go to: www.nepalintimes.com

Q. Do you approve of the choice by the SPA of Girija Prasad Koirala as prime minister?

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The Maoist respond to ceasefire with offer of talks

NARESH NEWAR

The first week of freedom has been heady for the Nepali people. While a restored parliament sat inside Singha Darbar, the parliament of the street stood outside keeping vigil.

Their idea was to make sure that the political parties do not backtrack on their commitment to go through with the constituent assembly, which is a concern also of the Maoists. The parties have underlined their commitment to the 12-point roadmap, but there is a feeling among political activist that someone somewhere could put a spanner in the works.

Although the sight of the

same old faces in the core cabinet drew jeers, its declaration of an indefinite ceasefire has raised hope across Nepal that this time it will lead to a restoration of peace and reconciliation. The news was greeted with even more jubilation than the restoration of parliament last week, and the hope is that it will not just provide relief to a long-suffering people but also create the atmosphere for future talks. The Maoists said Thursday they are now ready to begin negotiations.

However, all this is still tempered with worries that it may turn out like past ceasefires which were used as a tactic to regroup. Previous truces were also accompanied by an actual increase in extortion, abductions

and intimidation by the Maoists which is also starting to happen now. The shooting of a prominent paediatrician on Thursday morning by suspected extortionists has cast doubts about the hold that the Maoist leadership has on its rank and file and a need for full monitoring of this ceasefire.

The whole world is watching Nepal as it enters a new chapter of democracy. This week has seen a flurry of visits by high-profile foreign delegations. The message from them is: the Maoists must renounce violence to join the mainstream and the international community is willing to resume development support.

Continued p10

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Published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd, Chief Editor: Kunda Dixit
 Desk Editor: Marty Logan
 Design: Kiran Maharjan Web: Bhushan Shilpakar
 Vice-president Corporate Affairs: Sneh Sayami
 Advertising: Sambhu Guragain advertising@himalmedia.com
 Subscription: subscription@himalmedia.com
 Hatiban, Godavari Road, Lalitpur
 GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu Tel: 5543333-6, Fax: 5521013
 Printed at Jagadamba Press, Hatiban: 5547018

How foreigners can

Listen to the people and maybe you'll learn something.

TESTING THE TRUCE

It took the seven party alliance nearly a week to cobble together a skeleton five-member cabinet. But the decisions it took at its first meeting could be harbingers of durable peace. Unlike earlier truce calls since July 2001 (four in all) the latest overture from the government is backed by the people's overwhelming yearning for peace. The regime and the rebels are bound by their 12-point understanding to make this ceasefire really work.

Lack of credible monitoring was the main reason past truces failed. It will be unrealistic to expect that no violation of ceasefire will occur in the coming weeks. In a conflict as widespread as this insurgency, lapses at the local level are bound to occur. But they must not be allowed to wreck the peace process.

Past ceasefires have also meant just an end to confrontations between the warring sides. Ordinary citizens actually suffered more during those ceasefires from extortion, forced recruitment of children, closure of schools and other harassment. Extortion this week has hit a peak in Kathmandu, with a paediatrician actually shot in broad daylight for refusing to give in to extortion. The Maoists better reign in their cadre if they want to retain their credibility.

One man's extortion is another man's donation, but the comrades don't even try to hide that money collected is used for support of the rank and file. If the rebels don't have this source of funds, short-term arrangements have to be made so they don't force it from the people.

The movement of armed guerrillas, security of off-duty soldiers, mutually acceptable limits on expansion and arms procurements, and a moratorium on incendiary speeches are other pressing issues that need attention from the new peace cabinet.

Perhaps it's a little early to talk about demobilisation, rehabilitation or reintegration of guerrillas. But that goal needs to be kept in sight while designing the framework of a workable ceasefire. A truce is too serious an issue to be left just to the government and insurgents. Civil society and the international community must immediately use their leverage to get the warring sides to use the present ceasefire for peace-building.

People power. It dislodges dictators, autocrats, now even god-kings. It's a glorious expression of human potential in action. The best we can be, or at least, the best as a large group full of emotion and fire.

Now the land lies quiet and the work of remaking Nepal in earnest has begun. People power has gone back to, well, school,

GUEST COLUMN
Daniel Lak



kitchens and offices, where its daily life exists. No barracks for these brave soldiers. The hardest work of all though lies ahead and it's helpful to keep in mind examples from elsewhere about peace building, entrenching democracy, inclusion and justice.

South Africa's truth and reconciliation commission offers an obvious model for Nepalis to start addressing the rampant carnage that Maoists and security forces have inflicted on the countryside. Especially the latter which behaved abominably from

the late 1990s onward, murdering thousands of innocent people, raping, stealing and thus provoking large numbers of alienated people into Maoist ranks. The guerrillas and their cold-blooded ideologues can't escape scrutiny either, nor the process of justice. There were many crimes by rebel fighters that had nothing to do with any Peoples' War. Journalist Gyanendra Khadka's brutal execution in 2003 comes to mind. For a start, I'd like to see arrests in every case for which a politburo member apologized for a brutal act by a regional commander or underling. Just for a start.

Truth and reconciliation also mean forgiveness and both sides will have to study South Africa and Northern Ireland for examples of how this helped heal badly damaged societies. What's crucial is the transparency of the investigation progress and that accused people tell the truth to their victims' families. If they don't, they should be punished. If they do, then let them ask for mercy and let that mercy be granted, in the name of national healing.

Sri Lanka provides both good and bad examples for a nascent peace process. Not that the Maoists bear any resemblance to the Tamil Tigers, or the RNA to the Sri Lankan military. Both are far more battle hardened and well financed. The current disarray in the peace process tells us of the importance of disarmament,

decommissioning, ceasefires and monitoring when armed conflict does stop. This will require a broad international effort, not just a single do-gooder country that shuts other interested parties out of the peace mechanisms.

In East Timor, the United Nations and regional powers like Australia managed a tricky transition from rebellious colony to independent state by providing incentives for both sides to reconcile. Indonesia, in particular, was going through political turmoil and had far-sighted enough leaders to reject the notion that an ultra-nationalist response in Timor might entrench Jakarta's power. Instead, they played along with the peace process.

Now India bears no real resemblance to Indonesia at the time of Timor crisis, nor was Nepal its errant colony. But let's face it. India has powerful and real interests here, economic, political and geo-strategic. To deny that would be blindness and folly. So India needs to be intimately involved in the making of the new Nepal, yet counterbalanced by international resources and know-how so that the 'India card' can never again be played by militants or recalcitrant royalists to spark a riot or provoke support for fascist measures. And you know what? I think India has changed immeasurably in the past decade and it's ready to play this role, involved, at the fore front, yet consultative, one friend of Nepal among many.

We need to reign in the aid



KUMAR SHRESTHA

LETTERS 1

DEMOCRACY BEGINS AT HOME

It is one thing to decide that you no longer want the budget for the royal family to come out of the threadbare pockets of the Nepali public. It is quite another matter to evolve your thinking out of your own feudal mindset and take the full responsibilities of democratic representation to heart. In other words, if you plan to continue as the lord and master of your domestic or work realm, do not think that your feudal mentality and behaviour will not be reflected in your outer society and government. Are you going to write letters and pound the pavement to fight for your rights when you are trying to get your government work done, or are you going to take the lazy way out and pay some baksheesh to some thulo manche to get it done? Are you ready to let the child labourers in your home, office, community go to school, and instead pay proper market rates to people working with a proper shift with regular breaks and holidays to do your work? Are you willing to let the so-called kamis and lowest caste

human beings drink water from your glasses, and eat at your table? Or are you too much of a thulo manche for that? Are you ready to see 50 percent of the government seats reserved for female representation? Do you really think you are ready to give up your gender and caste privileges? If you can't answer yes, completely and honestly, to these simple questions, then what you really want is definitely *not* democracy, but perhaps another brand of feudalism where your own personal overlord status is elevated closer to that of a sovereign. Just taking the Shah kings' photos off of bank notes will not change the feudal mentality. On the other hand, if you are really ready for democracy, prove it by your actions and not merely in slogans. Democracy begins at home.

L Sherpa, Solukhumbu

- Now the new government is in place, my only worry is if these people who ran Nepal with disastrous results in the past will learn from their mistakes and create a good future for Nepalis.

The same old faces, same old attitudes, everything looks the same. It makes me want to cry. The Nepali people want the politicians to promise that they won't repeat their mistakes. Why isn't everyone making the same noise about *desh chod* to the politicians? As for the king, we need him.

Krishna P Koirala, email

- Chitrallekha Yadav did us women proud when she so eloquently and capably acted as speaker of the reinstated parliament. I had tears of happiness in my eyes as I witnessed her superb performance. "You know", I told my husband, "a woman speaker presiding over a parliament gained through janandolan, is a good omen. It is like Saraswati and Laxmi presiding over Nepal's fragile democracy. I have hope for the future!" And now I hear that a very capable woman is being neglected because she belongs to the wrong party. Have these so-called party leaders forgotten so soon that such very petty party politics got us into the current

mess? Have they not yet learnt to honour and respect capability and skills (which Chitrallekha Yadav has proved she has in abundance)? And will our politicians ever learn about gender equity? I strongly recommend that Chitrallekha Yadav be chosen speaker of the house.

Subhadra Belbase, Kirtipur

- Everybody outside Nepal thinks the country got freedom and democracy. What I recall is that Mr GP Koirala ruled 80 percent of the time during the so-called democracy from 1990 to 2002. He practically ruined the country's industry, lead the national flag carrier to bankruptcy, the garment industry to decay, his relatives became powerful and his daughter a millionaire. Terrorism thrived. Finally when the king decided to take power, Girija raised hell in the name of democracy! Is democracy equivalent to a political party or does it include the people? Our case proves the theory that democracy, instead of rule for the people by the people, is in reality the rule of leaders rich in financial and muscle power, and

of course foreign power. I would request *Nepali Times* to refresh our memories with details of political events before the king took over. Was it the king's choice, compulsion or an option given by the so-called 'democratic leaders'? You would do us a favour by reminding the self-proclaimed democrats that if the janata can't forgive the king they will not forgive the leaders for mistakes committed twice.

Rahul Shrestha, by email

- 'Letters' have always been my favourite part of Friday morning reading in *Nepali Times* but when I read a few that had pro-king or anti-loktantra sentiments in them, I was surprised and angered. But after having read the entire issue (#295), it dawned on me that this is a loktantry space, a microcosm where remarks like 'Loktantra is not for the people' from J Thapa and 'This country is nothing without the King...Long live the King' from Name Withheld would not be censored. Those letters and people who feel that the people's movement was nothing but

help

agencies who'll see this new period as yet another opportunity to convince their home governments to shower them with money – funds that won't leave the Kathmandu valley and the usual circle of suspect aidocrats. There's enough expertise among civil society in Nepal, which includes those who work in the aid and NGO sectors, to tell the donors what is needed and who it's to be given too. If the foreigners want democracy, they should behave democratically. Cambodia in the 1990s is a case in point of aid agencies and the UN run amok, with disastrous effects on the local economy and polity.

Military assistance from abroad is both essential and potentially disruptive. Here India will want to restore its links to the RNA but they must be patient. So must Washington but we're not dealing with reasonable people in the US government these days. We must rely on the likes of Human Rights Watch and Senator Patrick Leahy, feeding them with plenty of information, to keep tabs on the Pentagon and the State Department.

If there's an underlying point here, it's that the people have spoken. They have asserted sovereignty and a long silenced voice in their own affairs. They need information, support and resources to solidify their victory. But mostly, they need the respect of the international community that's about to come pouring into Nepal to try to win the peace.

Listen to the people and maybe you'll learn something. Do what you think is right without consultation and you'll fail, yet again. ●

Purple rhodoendron revolution

Mixing the red of the left with blue of the centre against the yellow of the right

Perplexed by the intensity and impact of the Second People's Movement Nepal's international minders have been lining up to visit Nepal. They may still be uneasy with the six-point roadmap of the seven party alliance and their 12-point understanding with the Maoists but the parties have for now been given the benefit of doubt. After the success of the Kathmandu Spring dips and donors grudgingly accept that the insufferable parliamentary party leadership do a saving grace.

Contrary to the fears of widespread violence, the civil disobedience movement was characteristically peaceful. And despite doubts about their ability to guide and control the agitation, party leaders were able to withdraw the movement in an orderly manner as soon as their main demand, reinstatement of lower house of parliament, was met by a reluctant monarch.

STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal



The movement may have looked unplanned but it wasn't as chaotic as everyone feared. Nearly everyday, millions poured out into

the streets all over the country for three weeks but not a single shop-window was broken by agitators anywhere even though some government buildings were vandalised. Protestors faced batons, tear-gas, rubber bullets and live ammunition but not a shot was fired in self-defence from the streets. Studies in urban uprisings show that crowds of over 50,000 inevitably descend into lawlessness resulting in arson, looting and brutal killings.

In Kathmandu, more than half-a-million protestors marched past army barricades defying shoot-to-kill curfews but the multitude maintained restraint in the face of provocation. This was the first-of-its-kind political upheaval involving widest possible cross-section of population. Is this the way oppositional politics will unfold in the twenty-first century? It seems the world wants to know and is willing to see Nepal without Cold War blinkers for the first time since the Maoist insurgency began a decade ago.

Even hard-boiled Marxist firebreathers in India seem to be fascinated by the success of Nepal's Purple Rhododendron Revolution. CPI-M leader Sitaram Yechury graced the VIP visitor's box of the inaugural session of the reinstated parliament. Richard Boucher, United States Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, paid a much-publicised visit soon after. Norwegian Minister for Development Erik Solheim was here this week.

Apart from high-profile visitors, hordes of policy wonks and highbrow journalists have been camping in the city to know more about the chemistry between Maoists and the parties, their usual refrain being: will the fragile bilateral ceasefire hold? Nobody knows for sure, but we hope that it does. This country has tried several alternatives over the decade of insurgency. A partnership for peace and democracy just might succeed in mainstreaming Maoists.

Since the parliament has already committed itself to an election for the constituent assembly by a voice vote, the paranoia about a political alliance between parliamentary parties and insurgents has now become



superfluous. In whatever way the constituent assembly is formed, it is sure to have the mandate to decide, among other things, the fate of the monarchy.

With one of their key demands thus being turned into a common national agenda, Maoists should be celebrating. But they are suspicious and perhaps rightly so, of the real intentions of donors thinking aloud about resuming military supplies to RNA.

The real understandings between some influential RNA generals and Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala are whispered in private but never spelt out in detail. It is said that Ram Sharan Mahat has been awarded a cabinet berth despite his lacklustre performance during the movement primarily because he functioned as a back channel link between parties and the palace. That he happens to be the donors' darling too is his additional qualification. But with Mahat of Nepali Congress and Khadga Oli of UML holding key portfolios in the Koirala cabinet, it does look like a status quo team.

The reinstated parliament must keep its promise of transforming the RNA into a Nepal National Army before accepting any international assistance. The RNA's ambitious expansion plans spelt out by warhorse Satchit Shamsheer need to be shelved forthwith to create conditions for disbandment of Maoist guerrillas. In any case, we don't need an army that we can't afford to pay for from our own treasury.

Meanwhile, the government needs all the help it can get to transform the ceasefire into sustainable peace. That's the message that all international interlocutors must take back home. ●

political players playing puppet with the people undermine the feelings and values of thousands of people who took to the streets, defied curfew, risked their lives and kept hope alive despite having no political affiliation. I fought for loktantra, was jailed and now I live in a budding loktantra. I am also aware of the long and arduous road ahead but I believe that I will not be suppressed for having an opinion. Please do not withhold my name.

Sameecheeta Jhangad, Jhapa

BLOG

Mallika Aryal's informative article correctly highlights Nepali blogs' role in providing an invaluable alternative news angle to the outside world. Aryal also rightly suggested problems around access and online credibility. But there are deeper issues for Nepali bloggers that seem reflective of offline problems. Nepali blogs, like offline media, are not havens of complete free speech. Comments are moderated by bloggers and self-censorship is

in place, as Dinesh Wagle of UWB has admitted (there are certain topics he refused to post on). More importantly, reasoned debate is very hard to find. Most comment boxes are filled with repetitive and intensely personal attacks against all political leaders and fellow commentators. Anonymous comment box posting seems to encourage sharp and aggressive online attacks. Worse, many blogs develop their own online orthodoxy. Blogdai's site, for example, appears to reinforce like-minded readers and chase away any alternative views. This all sounds negative but hopefully recent developments in democracy offline can be matched in greater democratic debate and self-scrutiny across the Nepali blogosphere.

James Sharrock, Kilburn, London, U.K.

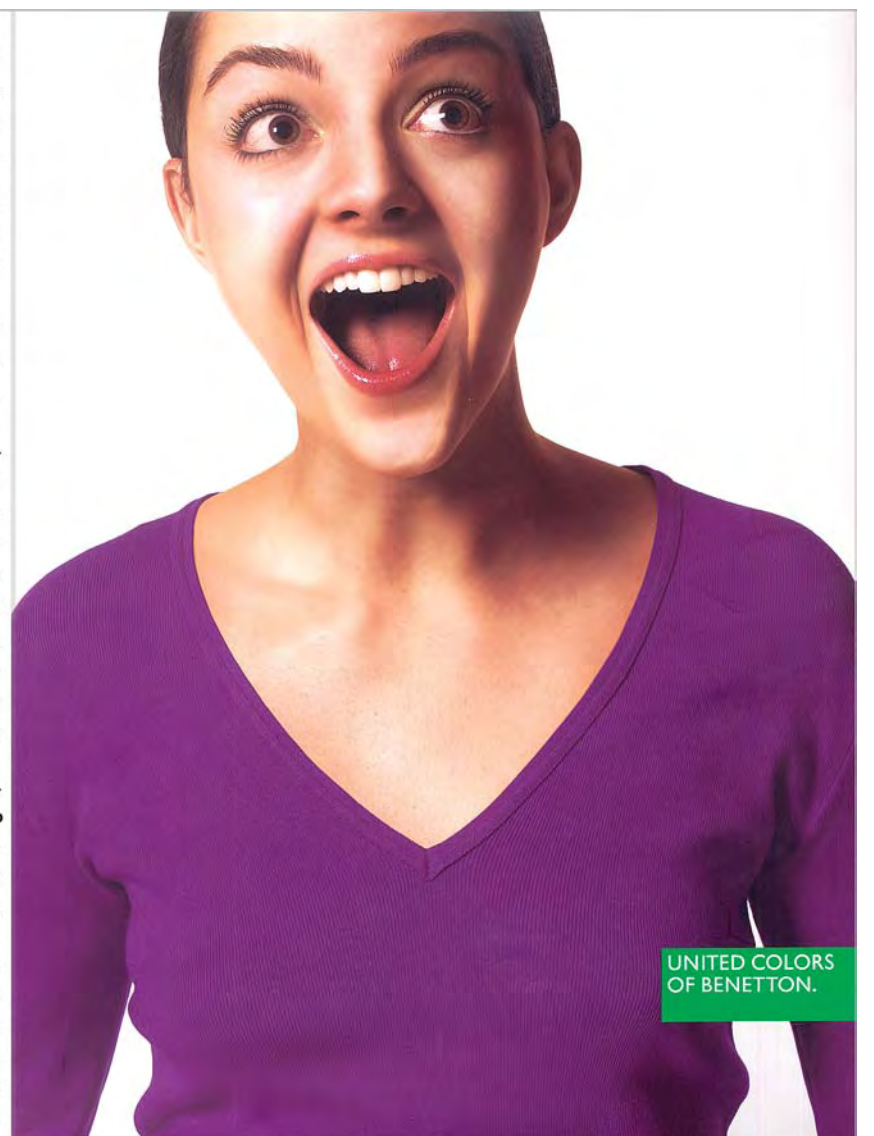
PAPER CROWN

Congratulations for the front-page picture ('Paper crown', #295). This time, it's really "under your hat"!!

Anonymous, by email

New Arrival Summer Collections

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Megawealth

How to turn falling water into wealth

The ongoing bloody insurgency might have been avoided ten years ago if someone could have given Prachanda and Baburam a pocket calculator and a map.

Here's some number crunching. The surface area of Nepal is 140,800 km². Arable land covers 16.07 percent which is 22,627 km². The population of Nepal is 28,287,147 (July 2006 estimate). Eighty five percent of the population is rural, which is a little over 24 million.

If there was a reform program sharing the arable land equally the result would be that each man, woman, or child would receive a plot of land 24 m x 40 m. That's slightly less than one tenth of a hectare. It is perhaps enough to raise a goat on but insufficient by far to provide a decent standard of living for a human being.

There actually isn't any land to redistribute in Nepal. The myth of agrarian utopia is being propagated by ruthless counter-elites who are influenced by an outdated Marxist ideology and exploiting the myth to further their own political ambitions rather than furthering the commonwealth of the people.

The real problem in Nepal is that over the past 50 years, well-meaning and morally justifiable health care programs have cut infant mortality, while educational expansion has created greater literacy and demand for employment. Yet Nepal's population has grown faster than its economy. Infrastructure and social services development have not kept pace.

Nepal has passed its carrying capacity as an agrarian society. There is only one practical solution: it must have a realistic plan to change from 85 percent rural to 85 urban over the next 20 years. Nepal must industrialise and urbanise—and create the infrastructure for modern city states where dynamic shifts in culture, education and technology can take place.

How is Nepal going to find the hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars necessary to achieve this goal? Currently, the only known resource for doing this is Nepal's huge undeveloped hydropower potential. A common national goal accepted by all would undermine the apparent support for the insurgency.

Theoretically it is technically and economically feasible to develop about 43,000 MW of hydropower. All of Nepal could be electrified with up to 5,000 MW. The remaining power would be equivalent to putting a 25 Watt light bulb in every house on Planet Earth and there would still be power left over. The market is just next door. Right now the adjacent States of India have a short-fall of 20,000 MW. Within the next 10 years India will need an additional 100,000 MW of installed capacity to grow economically. Nepal is a key player for solving India's energy problem.

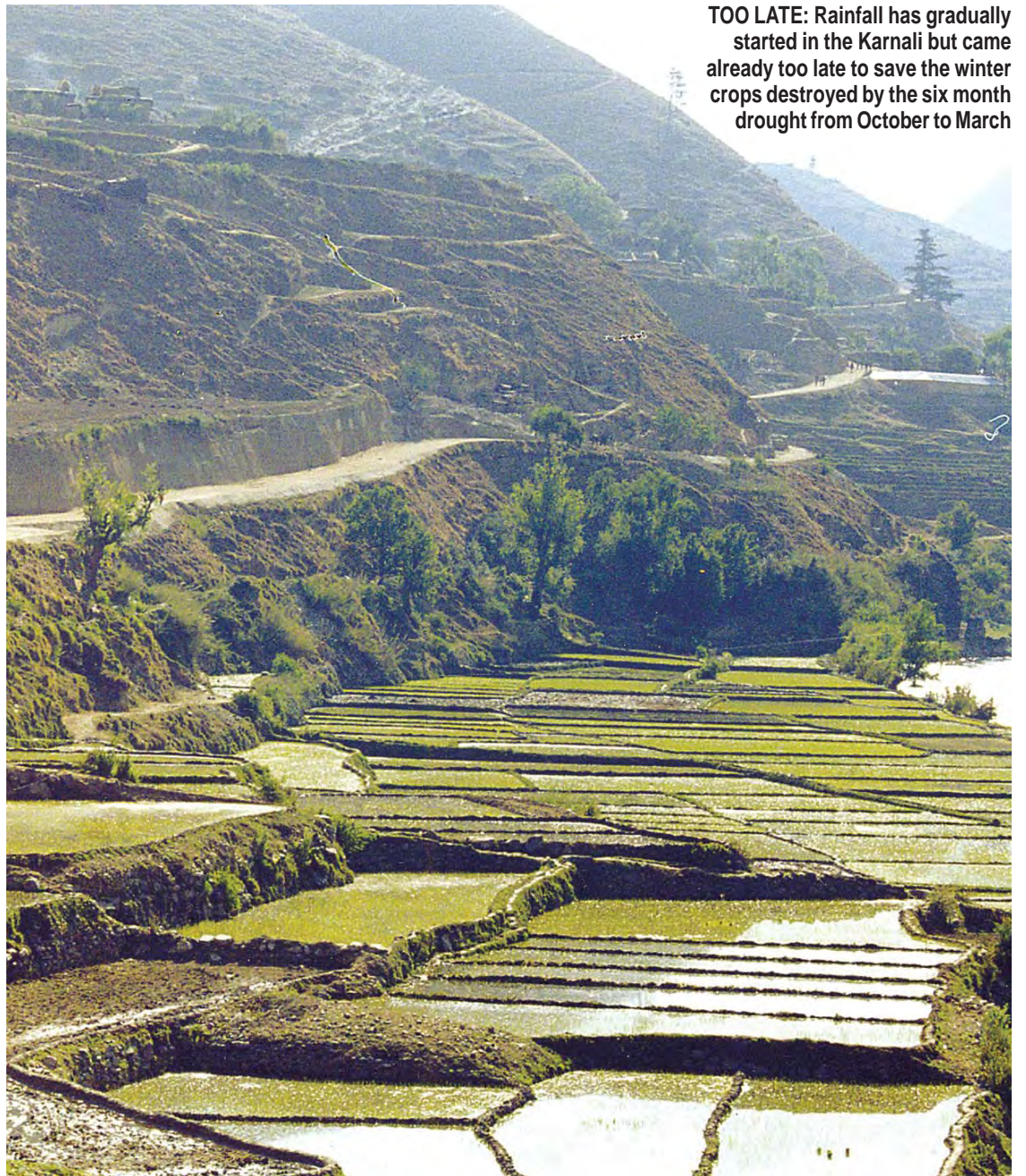
The Snowy Mountains Engineering Company (SMEC), have been negotiating power sales with the Power Trading Corporation (PTC) India Ltd for the 750 MW West Seti hydropower project. When this project is online the annual royalties alone would be about \$ 20 million. Of this money the Local Self-Governance Regulation stipulates that 10 percent would go to Doti DDC.

There is not a fixed amount of wealth in the world that needs to be redistributed. Developing hydropower in Nepal would create wealth. This would not only benefit Nepal but the rest of the economies of South Asia.

Harnessing Nepal's hydroelectric potential will be capital intensive and will require massive investment up front from foreign governments, multilateral organisation and private businessmen. Such investment will not be possible unless Nepal is politically stable, security can be provided in the countryside, and the government is favourable to investors.

An atmosphere for transformative investment will not be possible while Nepal is suffering an insurgency being led by extortionate would-be revolutionaries who oppose private capitalism and foreign business. ●

Dr Steve Gorzula worked in the Department of Electricity Development from 1998-2004 for USAID's Private Sector Hydropower Development Project.



TOO LATE: Rainfall has gradually started in the Karnali but came already too late to save the winter crops destroyed by the six month drought from October to March

The west is hungry

Just as the political crisis cools down word of a serious food shortage in the Karnali

NARESH NEWAR

The rains of the past weeks may have given Kathmandu respite from load-shedding and a false sense of hope that the long winter drought is finally over.

But nearly six-months without rain from October to March has devastated farming in western Nepal and the full impact is only now becoming apparent.

The arid Karnali Zone, which includes Humla, Mugu, Kalikot, Dolpa and Jumla used to be a food deficit area even in the best of times. But the conflict and the drought has made the situation much worse than most can remember.

"Many people have already run out of their food stocks and are now eating herbs and roots to survive," says Chandra B Shahi, MP from Mugu from where he recently arrived in the capital to take his oath of office. Farmers across western Nepal couldn't plant their barley and wheat and where they did, the plants just wintered away.

Early warning of the crisis had already been flashed in March in a food and nutrition survey conducted by the French INGO, Action Contre La Faim (ACF), also known as Action Against Hunger.

The food crisis is said to be especially serious in southern Humla, north of Kalikot, the southern belt of Mugu and Dolpa.

In Humla the situation is so bad that the Maoists have allowed their 'wholetimers' to return to their families to find food for their families.

"We don't want to sound too alarmist but the food crisis is already widespread in these districts," says Mireille Seneclauze, of ACF. Farmers have also exhausted all their coping mechanisms, livestock is facing danger from lack of grazing and even if villagers get money from relatives in India there is no food to buy.

Confidential documents made available to Nepali Times of a crisis meeting of food organisations and donors on 13 April drew attention to the seriousness of the situation and noted 'time is running out'. But no action has been taken so far. The crisis was also eclipsed by news of the political upheaval in Kathmandu and other cities.

"There is no time to lose and now the aid agencies need to mobilise their resources to increase the supply of rice and other food grains as quickly as possible," says Rick van Keulen from the Dutch development agency SNV. During his trip to Humla in March, he was shocked

to see that wheat plants had barely grown 5-10 cm instead of the usual half-metre. Most of the farms had not even bothered to sow seeds.

The Ministry of Local Development (MLD) has been flying in rice from Nepalganj and Pokhara to Jumla and Simikot. But these airlifts are limited to the district headquarters. "The poorest villagers have to walk for five days to get 5 kg of rice and they never get them," explains Shahi. The royal regime had till last month stopped food supplies fearing it would get into the hands of the Maoists.

Estimates of people affected is hard to come by but aid agencies and local officials say in Mugu alone, about 18,000 villagers from 10 VDCs are severely affected. The UN's World Food Programme with support from FAO and SDC have sent assessment teams to seven food deficit districts of Karnali and will present their findings in 10 days.

"We are starting to have a contingency plan for a possible or potential response," said acting WFP country director JP Margerie. Some relief organisations say the situation is so serious that sending rice to the towns is not enough, food now has to be dropped from helicopters directly into affected VDCs. ●

Tourism toppers

The Nepal Tourism Board has bagged a top prize from the Pacific Asia Travel Association. NTB's promotional cd on Nepal won the Gold Award in the cd-rom category from among more than 280 entries. Shikhar Prasai, honorary secretary of the Nepal chapter of PATA and director of Natraj Tours, was named the Face of the Future as an exceptional young tourism professional and PATA Nepal was awarded the Award of Excellence from among more than 45 chapters worldwide for its continued effort in promoting Nepal even while the country was facing a crisis. Meanwhile, the Nepal Association of Tour and Travel Agents has sent letters to various diplomatic missions in Kathmandu asking them to remove travel advisories that discourage their nationals from visiting Nepal and asked to issue announcements stating that the country is now a safe destination.

Overseas work

The number of people leaving the country for jobs surged by 44.9 percent during the first nine months of the current fiscal year compared to the same period last year, according to the Department of Labour and Employment Promotion. Topping the list of destination countries was Malaysia, which accepted 65,216 workers, versus 45,569 in the same period last year. Next came Gulf countries Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. In all, 136,131 people left the country to take up jobs abroad between mid-July 2005 and mid-April 2006, compared to 93,942 for the similar period last fiscal year. The number of women going abroad for work more than doubled, increasing by 110 percent.

NEW PRODUCTS

GORKHA BEER: Gorkha Brewery, makers of Carlsberg, Tuborg, and San Miguel beers in Nepal have launched their proposed flagship brand, Gorkha Beer. Brewed in Nepal using the finest hops, pure water and barley malt, it is available in 650-ml amber bottles and has an alcohol content of 5.5 percent. Gorkha Beer is available in select outlets and there are plans to export it to various Asian and European countries.



KELON FRIDGE: Prime Trading House has introduced Kelon brand fridges and chest freezers in the Nepali market. Made in the US, the appliances are available in various models in the Kathmandu Valley.

BABY DIAPERS: Jasmine Hygiene Products, part of the Sharada Group, have launched Cuddlers Diapers Pad and Cuddlers Diapers. Manufactured using the latest technology, the diapers are 100 percent chlorine free and available in three sizes. Cuddlers Diapers cost Rs 180 for a packet of 10 while the Cuddlers Diaper Pad is priced at 10 for Rs 100.



Democracy 2.0

It's time to end groupthink, nourish small parties

Competitive firms know that if they fail to learn from their mistakes, they risk going out of business. Shouldn't the leaders of political parties—competing as they do for citizens' votes—similarly learn from their mistakes? They say that they are

STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari



sorry and that they wish to play straight this time. But before the fire of Jana Andolan II cools off, it's worth unbundling what went wrong earlier.

No clean break. The fall of the Panchayat did not provide a sense of closure from what went on before. There was no tribunal. Nor was there any truth and reconciliation commission to judge the actions of that 30-year-old system's abusers. Instead, their sins got glossed over and most soon emerged on the national stage as born-again democrats. Looking back, this failure to enforce a clean break set in motion many actions that eventually tarred the practices of multi-party democracy as being no more than Panchayat Plural.

Bias against smaller parties. Small parties paid a heavy price for being, well, small. Initially, all took part in general elections. But since most did not collect enough votes they were made to forfeit deposits and give up election symbols. Such forced humiliations sidelined them and robbed the nation of diverse voices that had bubbled up from the grassroots. Meanwhile, the

political process remained stuck on the platitudes of the three major parties. By 1996, one aggrieved small party had decided that enough was enough. Slingshotting a rifle, it trudged off into the jungles of Rolpa by denouncing multiparty democracy as "a system of selling dog meat by showing a goat's head".

Politburo-like central committees. The three big parties were not successful in containing internal fights for power. This was because they clung on to their respective party's politburo-like apparatus called the Central Working Committee (CWC), whose task was to enforce groupthink, conformity and loyalty and wield power by handing out election tickets. In doing so, it squashed intra-party challenges to the leadership. Ambitious insiders with different ideas had no choice but to leave the mother party to launch breakaway groups.

Politicised institutions. The problem of unemployment was so acute that every MP's only task was to find jobs for hundreds of party *karyakarta*. To that end, once he was in government, the MP worked hard to place his people in civil service and public enterprises. He also arm-twisted private firms to hire many more. His rivals did the same once they became ministers. By 2000, this practice's result was starkly visible: just about every state-funded institution in Nepal functioned not according to what the tax-paying citizens demanded but based on how the political winds blew.



KIRAN PANDAY

Not enough economic reforms. If democracy is defined as "a regime whose benefits are distributed among large numbers of citizens", then economic reforms help parcel out those benefits by empowering investors and consumers. The fact that an unelected government could shut down communication systems and muzzle the press 15 years after Jana Andolan I showed that little had been done earlier to widen the reform process by making it easier to funnel foreign and domestic private money into businesses of all kinds. After all, the more the people invest their own money—in telecom or media or infrastructure, for instance—the less likely it is that they'll let any one authoritarian group walk in and do as it pleases.

To strengthen our multi-party democracy, let's hope that this time around we are able to start afresh by maintaining the independence of public institutions, by pushing for wider economic reforms and by being inclusive of smaller parties in the political space while making politicians accountable to voters and not to those Soviet-style CWCs. ●

"Let us not be naïve about how difficult this process is going to be."



MIN BAJRACHARYA

The head of Nepal's UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OCHCR), Ian Martin, spoke to Nepali Times on how the UN can act beyond its fixed mandate towards the new political developments in Nepal.

Nepali Times: The role of the UN seems to be more challenging now.

Ian Martin: There are clearly a number of areas that the UN could assist if asked to do so beyond our human rights mandate, humanitarian and development mandate but that is not so much for the UN to propose. That is up to the government and their negotiations with the Maoists what they are looking for. The assets we have got in the past year include effective engagement for Maoists at different levels and also include the security forces whom we criticised and we have a respectful relationship with both. The security forces are interested in the UN's opinion of

them. The political parties have also appreciated our role in this movement as we visited most of them in detention. So I think we have opportunities through those relationships to play a constructive role in trying to make sure that tensions among them are kept under control.

Do you think that the ceasefire this time will last?

The main issue is that there should not just be a military ceasefire but that civilians have nothing to fear. There needs to be a clear discussion on what those modalities for the ceasefire are going to be, has to be properly negotiated and what kind of monitoring goes with whatever agreement is reached. The ceasefire has a military aspect and you have to be sure that the RNA and PLA are not going to attack each other. Once the ceasefire is agreed, the real risk is tensions among the different sectors of the population before there is an opportunity to establish strong democratic local government.

Transitional justice seems to be a buzzword today

Our presence has significant effect on the actors in terms of degree of deterrence in terms of committing violations but we haven't seen any satisfactory progress towards accountability in ensuring that those who committed abuses are effectively investigated and brought to justice.

There is clearly a strong demand in many sectors of the population, which is focusing initially on recent deaths and injuries but already people are looking beyond that to clarify the fate of long term disappeared and much

broader question to impunity and responsibility for human rights abuses for many years. OCHCR is not about to tell Nepal what it should do in those areas, but what we can do is make international experience available so that political and civil society actors debating what they want to do can have access to our experience.

Maoist leaders have told us that they are open about a new national army and ready to join if its formed and that they trust only the UN to help in that.

El Salvador is one example where a part of the UN negotiated peace agreement was in rehabilitation of the guerrillas. There are two issues: one is downsizing of armed forces and a lot of places where the UN is involved in demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants and the separate issue is the establishment of a new security forces and what degree of vetting takes place to exclude those who are unsuitable as they have been responsible for human rights abuses. That is certainly the area of where the UN has expertise to offer.

Are you positive now that the human rights situation will improve?

Of course, there are opportunities now. When this office opened, we were here first to monitor violations of international humanitarian law of nearly 10-years of armed conflict. If we have not just a mutual ceasefire but lasting peace, then that part of agenda will have been addressed. But let us not be naïve about how difficult this process is going to be. There is enormous amount of hard work to institutionalise human rights.

Mission accomplished

Dhruba Simkhada in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 14 May

For four years, the president of the NC Girija Koirala had just one demand: restoration of parliament. His party went to the supreme court, but it didn't listen and nor did the king. In the beginning, only the NWPP and the NSP (Anandadebi) supported him. Halfway through the process, the NC-D and the UML abandoned the house restoration demand and joined the king, saying 'regression has been corrected'. It is not just because he is the senior-most leader that the seven party alliance unanimously voted Koirala for prime ministership this time. "If the NC had also gone and joined the king we wouldn't have seen a return to democracy for another 30 years," says Baldeb Sharma Majgaiya of the NC.

So the 84-year-old leader stuck stubbornly to his demand. Many said Koirala's demand will never be fulfilled but he never gave up. In fact, every opportunity he got, he advised the king repeatedly not to violate the constitution. He said once: "If I slip, I will go and live in Biratnagar but if His Majesty slips just once it will be his last slip-up."

Although he was hounded by the king, it was from his own protégé, Sher Bahadur Deuba, that he never got any support. The party split over the question of whether or not to extend the state of emergency. The party said no, but Deuba as prime minister refused and without consulting his party colleagues he dissolved parliament on the night of 22 May 2002. The party expelled Deuba and he set up his own NC-D.

Ever since, Koirala has been single-mindedly focussed on restoring the house that was dissolved that night. When the king took over complete power on 1 February 2005 Koirala said:



KIRAN PANDAY

"The last struggle of my life is going to be the struggle to restore democracy so that future generations will not have to keep fighting for it. All I want is a democracy that no one can take away from the people again. Then I will rest."

Sociologist Max Weber used to say there are three kinds of leaders: traditional, charismatic and legal. Koirala is a third kind, he is a 'leader of continuity'. And that is why at this juncture in history, Koirala has the support of the Maoists, the international community, other parties, civil society and even the king.

To be sure, Koirala has his kinks. He has made a lot of mistakes in the past 12 years, and even his own colleagues in the party are critical of him. He pushed a majority government through a needless mid-term poll to a minority, he refused the supreme court verdict on Tanakpur, he refused to let his own colleague Krishna Prasad Bhattarai remain as prime minister, and as president of the party he failed to keep it united. And then this week he sacked Taranath Ranabhat as speaker even though the man had served as speaker for four years while parliament was in limbo. The public perception of Koirala who has now become prime minister for the fourth time is still not very positive.

Despite all this, what Koirala will now be remembered for is his tenacity that forced the king to give in to the will of the people. Finally, parliament was restored last week. But even though he doesn't want future generations of Nepalis to have to keep on

struggling for democracy, the process is still fraught with challenges. Foremost among them is the implementation of the 12-point agreement with the Maoists along the lines of the people's movement.



KIRAN PANDAY

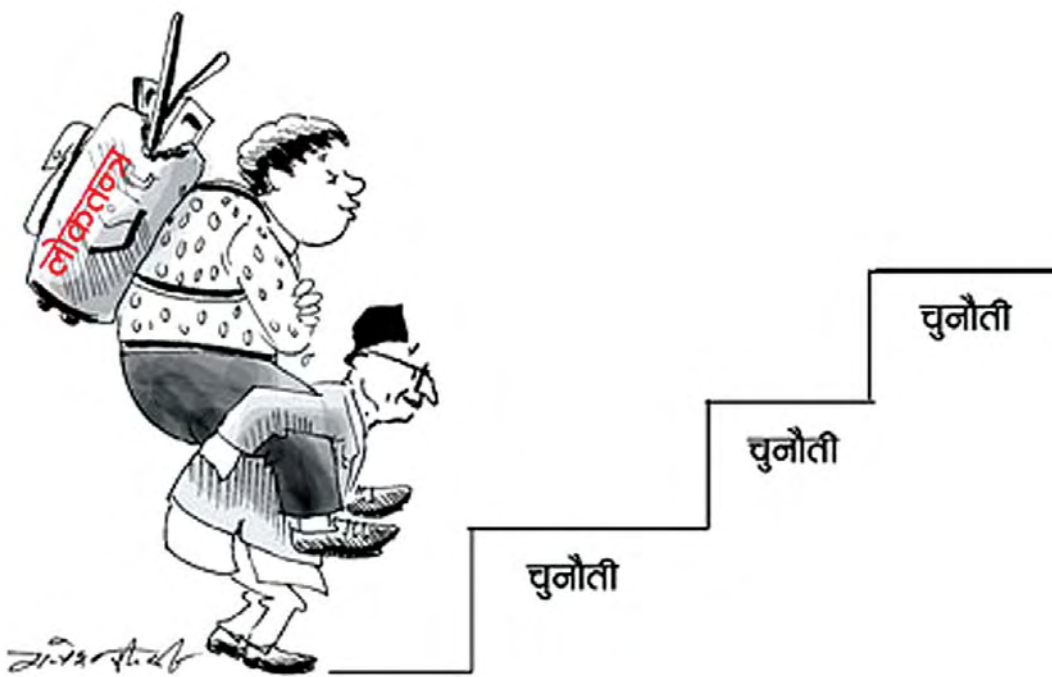
What unity?

Ghatana Ra Bichar, 3 - 9 May

सदना विचार

Delay in forming the cabinet due to squabbling within the seven parties has made a mockery of the democratic aspirations of the people's movement. After bearing the atrocities of 14 months of the king's autocratic rule, the people expected their leaders to be united but were let down. No one has been willing to sacrifice positions and show generosity. The CPN-UML, currently the largest party in parliament after the division of the Nepali Congress, surprised everyone with its behaviour. Had Maoist leaders and others from the seven-party alliance not interfered, bickering within the CPN-UML have continued. In the reinstated parliament, leaders seem to be in a fix about how to take political decisions: whether to abide by the constitution or respect the demands of the people's movement. Parliament itself was created by the 1990 constitution and owes all its powers to the same. Thus there is compulsion to follow its rules at the same time that pressure is being applied by the movement. During the king's rule, decisions would sometimes be based on the spirit of the constitution and at

other times on the sole whims of the king. Now the people have taken the place of the king, so the parties are compelled to work according to their desires as well as in line with the constitution. While this confusion might be understandable, fighting among the leaders at this early stage is deplorable. From the beginning they were unable to come together. Nepali Congress President Girija Prasad Koirala did not really want to become the prime minister, he had hoped the CPN-UML's Madhab Kumar Nepal or some other leader would take the job. But the CPN-UML was the only party that agreed to this alternative. As a result, Nepal, who wanted to become prime minister, had to propose Koirala's name for the post. As prime minister, Koirala will have to bear responsibility for the government so it was natural that he wanted to keep the prime posts for the NC. But the CPN-UML disagreed and demanded the ministries of Home, Communications, Foreign Relations, Local Development, Water Resources and Finance. Their reasoning was, "We are the largest party in parliament and most of the movement's martyrs were from our party." When the Maoists got wind of this they argued that their party had an equal hand in the movement and



Bag carried by boy: Democracy
Steps: challenges, challenges, challenges

नेपाल Nepal, 30 April

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“Conspiracy will not work anymore because people now know that traitors will no longer be spared.”

Amik Sherchan, Chairman of Janmorcha party in Bimarsa, 4 May



MISTAKEN: Member of Parliament of CPN-UML Pradeep Gyawali being manhandled by protesters outside Singha Durbar on 2 May.

कान्तिपुर Narendra Shrestha in Kantipur

suggested that if the UML really cared for the people they must be able to work from outside the government. On Monday, the UML informed the NC leadership that it would support it but from outside the government. NC leaders took this as a threat and urged the UML to join the government under any circumstances. The UML was unable to ignore the call and eventually agreed.

Royalists hiding

Desantar, 30 April

देशान्तर सामाजिक

Many ministers and officials loyal to the king have now gone underground or are hiding inside army barracks. Tulsi Giri, Kamal Thapa, Shrish Shamsheer Rana, Bharat Kesar Singh and Satchit Shamsheer Rana are on the run. Thapa, who ordered aerial firing against peaceful pro-democracy demonstrators in Kathmandu, has taken refuge at the barracks run by his brother. The Ranas have been hiding at army headquarters since the day after parliament was restored. Singh, who pushed for the king to be called the 'emperor of the Hindus', has also been forced to take shelter with the army. Giri was all set to leave for Bangalore as the king was preparing his first national address but was asked to stay back to correct it. That pre-empted his escape and since then he has been staying with the RNA, which moves him around the capital in a car with blackened windows. Several ministers who don't own houses in Kathmandu have still not left government quarters and many assistant ministers like Pratap Lohar, Harishanker Pariyar and Sonelal Yadab have failed to find houses on rent. Even their sympathisers and supporters have refused to house them after pro-democracy demonstrators made a public appeal for people not to rent to any of these royalists. Tanka Dhakal has not found anyone willing to rent a house to him while former justice and law minister Nirajan Thapa is also taking refuge with the army. None of these ministers have been seen in public. Former assistant minister Bhuwan Pathak, who was responsible for dividing the RPP, has not ventured from his home, royalist Prakash Koirala is reportedly in an unstable mental state and former NC worker Mani Lama stays home cursing the king for destroying his political career. RPP spokesperson Rosan Karki, a well respected RPP member until she joined the king's government, has also gone into seclusion inside her home in Khumaltar and has broken off ties with her own family. Kesar Bahadur Bista has also not stepped foot outside his home. His party, Democratic National Party reportedly asked him to resign from the royal government and join them while the pro-democracy movement was in full swing. Sadhabana's Badri Mandal has also remained underground while Sharad Chandra Shah is living in the barracks. He was chased from the country following the 1990 People's Movement and returned to support the repressive royal regime after February First. His

second wife, Anjana Chakubaji, fled to Singapore the day after the king's announcement.

Unconditionally

Krishna Pahadi in Kantipur, 2 May

कान्तिपुर


There were three main reasons for the April uprising. First, when the people saw that the parties and Maoists had come to an agreement via the 12-point pact, they understood that there was still hope that the Maoists would give up arms and take the peaceful



MIN BAJRACHARYA

way out. Secondly, anger was growing towards the royalty after the king took direct power and, thirdly, the state started suppressing the non-violent movement with force and torture. To encourage the Maoists to give up arms, we need to move towards an unconditional constituent assembly without delay. The word 'unconditional'

is needed because in Nepal leaders are not known for putting their words into actions. We are certain that via a constituent assembly the majority would vote for a democratic republic so that the monarchy, like an epidemic, would forever be eradicated. If such action is not taken, those who were responsible for suppressing the movement this time will soon reorganise under the king's leadership again. To ask for a ceremonial king or to be satisfied with a constitutional monarchy will be a betrayal to the martyrs. The main responsibility of this government is to hold parliamentary elections as soon as possible. For it to be an inclusive government the new interim ministers should be women, dalits, madhesis and indigenous people. The 12-point agreement already touches on human rights and freedom but the state should be representative of social justice. The new constitution should reflect the feelings of the people's movement, which was the ideal example of a non-violent movement and a lesson to the rest of the world. We, the members of civil society, are not interested in power. To suggest that we become ministers is to offend us. We are here to make people stronger, ensure permanent peace, protect human rights and to strengthen the culture of democracy. We will continue our movement without self-interest for many years to come.



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Voting with the

Many trekkers devoted extra time and energy



WANDA VIVEQUIN

When the going got tough for trekkers during Nepal's democracy spring, the tough, the committed (and those with non-changeable, non-refundable flight tickets to Nepal) got creative.

Outside the Khumbu, trekkers and climbers had few choices but to wait it out in Kathmandu or Pokhara, pay an exorbitant amount of money to helicopter to Besi Sahar or do it the old-fashioned way—walk to the trailhead.

While the Khumbu continued to be serviced by regular flights (bad weather and a short pilots' strike aside) getting onto the Annapurna circuit was another story. My own trekking group was luckily able to roll out of Kathmandu on 4 April, a day before our scheduled start date, and beat the strike. With security on high alert, the trip to Besi Sahar took much longer than usual but at least we were on the trail. Many who arrived after us were not so lucky.

As a trekking group leader and regular visitor to Nepal, I fully expected the strike to end after five days or so but I had seriously underestimated the determination of the people this time around to affect real change.

Our destination was the Nar

Phu valley in Manang, the region hit by heavy snows in October 2005 and the scene of a horrific avalanche that killed 18 people on Mt Kanguru (see 'Do not take the mountains lightly', # 270). Arriving in the remote village of Nar on 15 April, we were surprised to learn that the strike was still on and that the situation in Kathmandu was serious. No buses to Besi Sahar for all those days would mean a Marsyangdi Valley empty of trekkers.

But once back on the Annapurna circuit, after being the first group to cross the precipitous Kang La out of the valley, we were surprised to see a sprinkling of trekkers travelling in both directions. It seemed the pro-democracy uprising had not deterred hikers from embarking on this world famous trek.

We met a large French group that had walked in clockwise after flying to Pokhara, undertaking the brutal 1,600m climb from Muktinath to the top of Thorung La and then trekking out through the Marsyangdi. They had their fingers crossed that transportation would resume by the time they reached Besi Sahar but had stocked up on potatoes in case they had to wait it out at the trailhead.

The dribble of trekkers who had decided to take the 'old route' onto the circuit via Begnas Tal,

Nalma and Baglung Pani, turned into a steady flow by the time we reached Jagat. This itinerary required them to walk 12 km from Pokhara to the former official start of the circuit at Begnas Tal and then an additional two and a half days to Khudi.

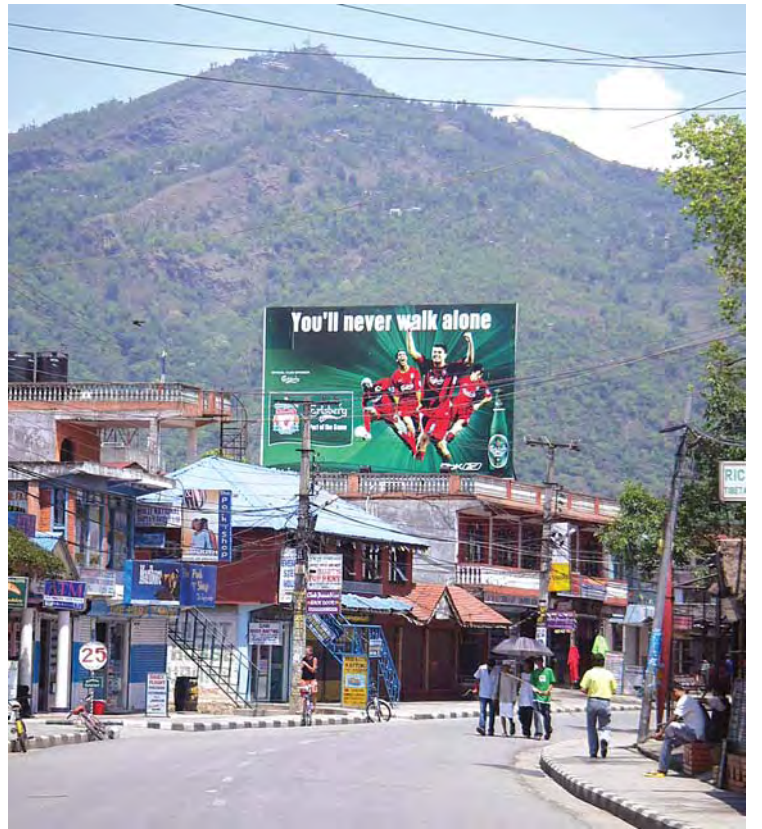
As we left Khudi to start the long hot climb to Baglung Pani we saw a line of trekkers snaking along the trail from Besi Sahar and knowing the strike was still on, wondered what approach they had taken. It turned out that this French group had chartered a helicopter from Pokhara.

The walk through the forests and fields of the old route was an absolute treat: wonderful clean villages without the ubiquitous children asking for pens and sweets, stunning terraces hillsides where families worked together planting and friendly smiling faces.

That was until we hit Syauli Bajar, where we stopped at the office of the Himalayan Rescue Dog Squad. Ingo Schnabel moved the headquarters of this inspired project from Kathmandu to the geographical centre of Nepal after the last People's Movement in 1990 and although his premises were not commandeered by security forces this time as they were then, the lack of kerosene caused by the strike forced him to close his rooms.



ALL PICS: WANDA VIVEQUIN



TREKKING IN TIMES OF TROUBLE: Trekking tents in Manang, after they braved the strikes and altitude to get behind the Annapurnas (left). Stopping for lunch at Nar Phu Valley. But by the time they got down to Pokhara on 23 April, the city was shut down.

There was, however, enough fuel for my group to cook soup and then we headed off to Begnas Tal for our final night on the trail. The following day we walked 12 km into Pokhara to the sounds of hundreds of feet on hot asphalt and the hubbub of conversation from people uncertain of what the next few days would bring. Among those hundreds of sets of feet were those of trekking porters embarking on the four-day walk back to Kathmandu—a sobering sight.

From talking with fellow trekkers it was evident that their efforts to get onto the trail were a measure of support for the Nepali people. Not scared off by travel warnings and prepared to walk an extra three days to see some of the most beautiful mountains on earth was our way of saying we won't give up on this country.

Back in Pokhara checking email, I fully expected to see my in-box filled with cancellations for my October trips. Not so. I will be back. ●

There's always one bad apple

During the strike, trekking guide Purna Bahadur Thapa Magar got a last-minute request from a friend to guide a lone client from Australia. He wishes he had said no. Here is his story:

"We went to the Everest region to avoid any strike-related problems. From the beginning this man had a threatening, superior attitude. When I explained the need to go slowly because of the high altitude or to respect local cultures he didn't pay any attention. He said 'I'm your boss and you are my porter, I'll decide where we go. He walked 9-10 hours a day. When I told him that I couldn't walk for so long because of my load he said I could leave if I wanted. Since we were at Gorak Shep I said he would have to pay half my salary. He refused, even after I begged. I had a return ticket and some money so luckily I was able to make it home, after a long walk."

...eir feet

...ergy to hit the trails for democracy

Tourist attraction

Kathmandu Spring has actually improved Nepal's image as a tourist destination

For the tourists stuck in Kathmandu in April it was hardly what they had planned for a holiday in the Himalaya. Locked inside their hotels, unable to see the natural Nepal sold to them many left within the first few days of the beginning of the People's Movement while those who had already booked flight tickets and hotel rooms cancelled their slots. But there were tourists who not just stayed back, but staged pro-democracy demonstrations and even briefly got themselves arrested. Now, that should be something to write home about.

Johannis Jappen, a German tourist who has been visiting Nepal since 1998 remembers sitting for breakfast in Thamel trying like everyone else to figure out what was going to happen next. He remembers discussing with other tourists the consequences of them joining in the protest. The next thing he knew a waiter came and said, "Have you heard, tourists are going to join in the protests." That night Johannis went back to his hotel and with the management's permission wrote pro-democracy slogans on pieces of bed sheet provided for by the hotel.

"It was spontaneous, word had already spread among tourists here," he recalls. The next day, 11 April, several dozen tourists gathered in Thamel Chok, with slogans like 'Loktantra Jindabaad' written on pieces of bedsheets. As they expressed their solidarity with the people of Nepal in the rain drenched streets of Thamel many locals cheered and clapped them on.

Because of the proximity to the royal palace, the riot police was edgy. Pretty soon they were charging with canes raised. Four Germans, three English, one Russian and one Israeli were arrested. They were all taken to the police station in Sorakhutte. "I have no complaints about the treatment," recalls Johannis. Four hours later, their respective embassies arrived in blue plates and took them back to their hotels.

On the worst day of the curfew, there were Spanish and Israeli tourists who had arrived on a flight from Bangkok. Asked if they were not deterred, they said they came to see democracy in action. Tour agents in Kathmandu have reported queries from individual travellers who suddenly want to visit the country where people power triumphed.

Johannis and others defied the curfews even more from the next day, going out taking pictures including a rare photographic evidence of police removing three protesters shot dead in Kalanki and tossed in the back of a van. ●

(See: www.himalkhabar.com)





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What now, where next?

from p1

No one has any illusions that vast challenges remain: what are the modalities of the constituent assembly elections, will the Maoists agree to join an interim administration, how will the rebel leadership sell this to its cadre who are massed right now just outside Kathmandu Valley, how feasible is an integrated RNA-PLA force?

The foremost on the agenda for the cabinet is to deal with the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of the warring sides. In Dhading last week, Maoist local leader Ram Prasad Bhandari sounded a word of caution: "We will consider joining the new national army but not without the involvement of a reliable organisation like UN to manage that. If the two armies are kept separately, then there is the danger of another war."

There are few models in the world where the merging of a guerrilla force and a national army has worked and for Nepal, this will be the biggest challenge ever. When the chief of army, Pyar Jung Thapa said just after the king's climbdown that the RNA was also looking forward to the merging of two armies, there were murmurs of disapproval within his force.

"All it needs is a spark and a mutiny inside the army against such an idea," says a source close to the RNA. International experts who have studied integration and demobilisation say there is a good chance it will work well in Nepal. "Unlike wartorn countries in Africa where everyone owns a gun, the situation here is different," says the expert.

Although the UN also has experience in the area of disarmament and demobilisation of the rebel militia, experts say that the process has not always been successful. The most difficult task has always been reintegrating the former militants into the mainstream society and rehabilitating them. The challenge is even tougher for child combatants.

If the ceasefire lasts, negotiations get underway, and demobilisation and disarmament take place successfully, there will still be residual risk. Civilians whose families were victimised by the army and the Maoists will be seeking justice or even revenge. There is a worry of a spurt in violence, mob justice, lynchings.

So there is talk of 'transitional justice' to help interim administrations develop justice, prosecution initiatives, vetting and monitoring and the formation of truth commissions.

For Nepal, the establishment of a truth commission has become a demand of the streets as well as parliament. "The perpetrators should not be allowed to walk scot free like the post-1990 movement but should be punished according to rule of law," says human rights activist Kundan Aryal.

The establishment of truth commission is more of healing the victimised population than seeking revenge against their abusers and perpetrators. "How you take action is based on local culture and society and Nepal is unlike many in the western world who want an eye for an eye," an international lawyer observed. Indeed, the Nepali people may want justice according to rules of law and not necessarily severe punishment. ●

No easy struggle

The Dalit movement can't let internal rifts distract it

MARTY LOGAN

The recent incident of a Dalit woman being barred by her neighbours (see: 'Water for all', #291) from using a village water tap on the outskirts of the capital proves that untouchability remains an entrenched social crime.

That is why the recent translation of a book on the country's Dalit movement is both timely and frustrating. Although the Nepali original is dated 2002 and it was based on the author's masters thesis submitted in 2000, the publishers puzzlingly decided not to update it.

Judging by the landscape of mushrooming Dalit organisations that *The Nepali Dalit Social Movement* describes in the afterglow of 1990's democratic revolution, it's likely the scene has changed completely in the past six years so it would have been useful to hear the latest. Yet in the Preface, author Yam Bahadur Kisan's argues: 'Adding new content to reflect these changes would have entailed writing an entirely different book.'

That aside, this book, published by the Legal Rights Protection Society Nepal with support from Danida, is a readable introduction both to the origins of the caste system in India and to the inner workings of the anti-discrimination activities here that hardly seem unified enough to deserve the 'movement' label of the title.

To a neophyte, the abundantly researched first chapter on how caste grew from the class system of the new Aryan state taking root in the Indian subcontinent is an eye-opener. But from that point on, the reader is led on a



MIN BAJRACHARYA

somewhat uneven ride.

Kisan summarises the history of the growth of Nepal's caste system. In 1854 Jang Bahadur Rana enacted the Muluki Ain which divided Shudras (the labouring class) into 'touchables' and 'untouchables' and further classified them as groups whose touch did or did not require purification. (an appendix has a shockingly long list of Dalit sub-castes). But the Ranas themselves were quick to overlook and even manipulate these categories and avoid punishments for breaking their own laws when they started keeping concubines from low-caste groups.

Kisan argues that no government before or since 1854 has championed an end to the caste system, not even the democratic ones. And despite prohibitions against untouchability in both the Constitution and the revised Muluki Ain whose provisions are cancelled out by reference to the sanctity of religious acts. 'The ruling class... appears as yet not psychologically ready to accept changes in the caste system,' argues the author.

That is one reason for the proliferation of organisations created to erase the caste system, described in the final five chapters of the book. This is also where the weaknesses of *The Nepali Dalit Social Movement* begin to show. Primarily, the author relies too heavily on the words of the organisations themselves to describe their positions and activities rather than analysing their deeds.

At times the text reads as if Kisan is listing promises outlined in the groups' constitutions or position papers. What would be more interesting is his own evaluation of the main bodies' activities and a description of trends within the movement over the years. Admittedly, the book took form as a Masters thesis but for readers that is irrelevant—they just want a fulfilling read.

This is not to say that Kisan is not critical of the movement and its leaders, he doesn't hesitate to point out flaws and offer his own recipe for success. For the movement to succeed, Kisan concludes, it will require more acts like 1954's forcing open the doors of Pashupatinath to Dalits. Success will require 'empowerment, unification and struggle... (but) the most important means for Nepali Dalits to achieve their freedom is through struggle, struggle and more struggle'. ●



The Nepali Dalit Social Movement
Legal Rights Protection
Society Nepal
December 2005
200 pp
ISBN: 99946-35-19-0

"I just want to live as a Nepali"

Bharat Bishwakarma is not ashamed of his roots, but he wants to be free to define them



As an activist in the 1990 democratic spring, Bharat Bishwakarma remembers how the euphoria of freedom slowly ebbed as his friends colleagues joined the political mainstream. But because of his Dalit background Bharat found it much harder. "I saw from the beginning that I was sort of sidelined, I didn't have easy access to the parties. I would have joined but..." he recalls.

Nepal's civil society was ballooning in the 1990s and Dalit rights groups were on the rise. Bharat was offered positions in some of them but declined.

"I didn't want to be labelled as part of a limited group," he says, "I should have the right to live as a Nepali without any other category being imposed on me. If someone wants to be known as an activist or a Dalit or a Janjati that's their right, but I choose not to."

Bharat introduces himself by his surname and says he's not a Dalit. "They say, how come, and I reply I don't know why I should be labelled a Dalit, is it in the constitution? Is it in the

Vedas? If someone has the right to accept this label then others also have the right not to accept it," he reasons. Bharat finished his bachelor's degree and got a job at the NGO, South Asia Partnership (SAP) which he credits for his solid foundation in management and human relations and now is the financial controller for the Asia region, at the Canadian Centre for International Studies (CECI) where he is responsible for an annual budget of US\$7 million.

He says his success is due partly to luck, partly to hard work but mostly to his parents' recognition that their six children should be educated. "In Trisuli there weren't many people from my community studying, but where I am today it is not unusual," says Bharat who is the father of three children and is enrolled at a night college for an MBA degree.

Bharat is a member of various cooperatives and professional organisations, and strongly believes in the movement to improve the lives of Dalits but he thinks it should be renamed. "The word itself means downtrodden, oppressed," he explains, "I would prefer that it be called the movement for social justice so that all Nepalis who believe in it are free to join."

Bharat has a surprisingly upbeat take on the recent incident of the woman in Bungmati who was abused for taking water from the village tap. "It's sad but what does it mean? Earlier, people wouldn't have dared to go and touch the water tap so there was peace but the cost was that someone was suppressed. Now, people are aware, so that when there's an action, there's a reaction."

He thinks it is important that all Nepalis be prepared for that reaction and understand that change doesn't mean that the country must continue to have winners and losers. Says Bharat: "As social activists we should be able to convey the message that this change is good for everyone in the long run because they will be seen as people who live in a just society, where no one needs to suffer." ●

It's perfectly (eco)logical

Godavari's unique appropriate technology theme park trains farmers from across the Himalaya



KUNDA DIXIT

SMALL IS GREAT: Samden Sherpa uses a 3-D model of the Godavari Demonstration and Training Centre to explain the lay of the land, Uma Pratap, an Indian expert trains Nepali beekeepers on how to extract honey, ban mara briquettes burn with a clean smokeless flame.

- It is hard to believe that this small hydraulic ram pump that makes a rhythmic popping sound could transform agriculture across Himalayan valleys and make farmers self-sufficient.

The ram works without electricity or diesel, it just uses the power of gravity to pump water up at least 100 m. Water comes down a thick pipe and one-third of it can be lifted through a narrower pipe for irrigation. Eighty percent of Nepalis depend on agriculture and 80 percent of their farms are rain fed—a hydraulic ram could allow monsoon-dependent farmers to grow up to three crops a year. But few farmers in Nepal use it.

- Legend has it that the ban mara weed came to Nepal through American wheat aid in the 1960s. Indigenous to Mexico it quickly spread across the tarai and midhills, smothering undergrowth and killing forests. It couldn't be used as fodder, it spread too fast to control and for decades no one knew what to do with the weed.

Now, a Nepali inventor has found a way to burn ban mara bushes and turn the ash into briquettes that can be used as fuel for special smoke-free stoves. It is cheaper than firewood, cheaper than gas or kerosene. Yet, few people use it.

- As afternoon temperature in the low valleys get up to 40 Celsius, it is difficult to keep water cool. But the technology exists to build your own cool box. Make a one-metre square box with two layers of brick and cover with it with a thatch roof. Fill the gap between the bricks with sand and keep it moist. Cover it with burlap. Voila! The temperature inside will be a constant 10 degrees below the ambient. Cooled by evaporation this contraption doesn't use any electricity. Still, virtually no one in Nepal knows about this.

The hydraulic ram, the ban mara briquette stove and the village cooler are all examples of small is beautiful technologies that have been around for decades, yet they just

haven't caught on.

Scientists have often wondered why appropriate technology that is economically viable, ecologically sensible and suited to our conditions are so

difficult to sell to the public. And they figured it was because they couldn't demonstrate how they worked.

"We figured we should show people how things work instead of just telling them about it," explains Milan Tuladhar of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) in Kathmandu, "that is why we set up this demonstration centre."

Tucked away in a side valley opposite the Botanical Garden at the base of a thickly-forested mountain in Godavari is ICIMOD's Demonstration and Training Centre for mountain agriculture. Every year, hundreds of farmers, trainers and academics from Pakistan, China, India, Bhutan and Afghanistan come to Godavari to learn about everything from terrace farming to water harvesting.

ICIMOD has set aside one hectare to demonstrate how to optimise agriculture on a sloping mountainside using simple A-frames for contours and interspersing nitrogen-fixing plants for erosion control.

A water-harvesting site shows how to store rain or running water irrigation and household use with a simple impounding technique using plastic sheets.

"We have farmers visiting us from Doti and Khotang and they actually give us ideas about improving the techniques," says Samden Sherpa who looks after the centre, "when they see it with their eyes, they think, oh I could use this back home and they immediately come up with ideas about how they could adapt it to their use."

ICIMOD's Godavari site was gifted by the government 15 years ago and is an ideal location. The Pulchoki hill that towers above is a biodiversity treasure house with at least 102 species of birds, 96 species of butterflies and is an orchid paradise with some 35 species. Of the 7,000 types of plants found on Pulchoki, 93 have medicinal properties.

"We have Pakistani and Bhutani agriculture specialists

who come here and they are so impressed they want to build similar demonstration centres in their own country," says Samden.

The centre also conducts experiments in, for example, erosion control. A 30-degree slope is divided into three portions with terracing, hedgerow, without hedgerow and a control slope without terracing. The slope without terrace loses 40 tons of topsoil per hectare per year, while a terrace with peach trees at its edges loses only four tons.

On a recent visit, the centre had brought in Dr Uma Pratap from Himachal Pradesh to train a group of 20 beekeepers from across Nepal who were learning hive maintenance and honey collection techniques for Asiatic bees, which are more resistant to disease than their fussy European cousins.

Says Pratap: "I can't think of a more scenic place to learn by doing. It is much more effective than sitting in a classroom explaining people about bee hives." ●

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China's roadmap

Desire growth, inequality and poverty remain a concern



China is about to adopt its 11th five-year plan, setting the stage for the continuation of probably the most remarkable economic transformation in history, while improving the well-being of almost a quarter of the world's population.

COMMENT
Joseph Stiglitz



Never before has the world seen

such sustained growth; never before has there been so much poverty reduction.

Part of the key to China's long-run success has been its almost unique combination of pragmatism and vision. While much of the rest of the developing world, following the Washington Consensus, has been directed at a quixotic quest for higher GDP, China has once again made clear that it seeks sustainable and

more equitable increases in real living standards.

China realises that it has entered a phase of economic growth that is imposing enormous—and unsustainable—demands on the environment. Unless there is a change in course, living standards will eventually be compromised. That is why the new five-year plan places great emphasis on the environment.

Even many of the more backward parts of China have been growing at a pace that would be a marvel, were it not for the fact that other parts of the country are growing even more rapidly. While this has reduced poverty, inequality has been increasing, with growing disparities between cities and rural areas, and between coastal regions and the interior.

This year's World Bank *World Development Report* explains why

inequality, not just poverty, should be a concern, and China's 11th five-year plan attacks the problem head-on. The government has for several years talked about a more harmonious society, and the plan describes ambitious programs for achieving this.

China's role in the world and the world's economy has changed, and the plan reflects this, too. Its future growth will have to be based more on domestic demand than on exports, which will require increases in consumption. Indeed, China has a rare problem: excessive savings. People save partly because of weaknesses in government social-insurance programs; strengthening social security (pensions) and public health and education will simultaneously reduce social inequalities, increase citizens' sense of well-being, and promote current consumption.

If successful—and, so far, China has almost always surpassed even its own high expectations—these adjustments may impose enormous strains on a global economic system that is already unbalanced by America's huge fiscal and trade imbalances.

With such a clear vision of the future, the challenge will be implementation. China is a large country, and it could not have succeeded as it has without widespread decentralisation.

While America says that it cannot afford to do anything about greenhouse gases, China's senior officials have acted more responsibly. Within a month of the adoption of the plan, new environmental taxes on cars, gasoline, and wood products were imposed: China was using market based mechanisms to address its and the world's environmental problems. But the pressures on local government officials to deliver economic growth and jobs will be enormous. They will be sorely tempted to argue that if America cannot afford to

produce in a way that preserves our planet, how can we? To translate its vision into action, the Chinese government will need strong policies.

As China has moved toward a market economy, it has developed some of the problems that have plagued the developed countries: special interests that clothe self-serving arguments behind a thin veil of market ideology. Some will argue for trickle-down economics: don't worry about the poor, eventually everybody will benefit from growth. And some will oppose competition policy and strong corporate governance laws: let Darwinian survival work its wonders. Growth arguments will be advanced to counter strong social and environmental policies: higher gasoline taxes, for example, will kill our nascent auto industry.

There is only one way to counter this: open discussion of economic policies in order to expose fallacies and provide scope for creative solutions to the many challenges facing China today. George W Bush has shown the dangers of excessive secrecy and confining decision-making to a narrow circle of sycophants. Most people outside China do not fully appreciate the extent to which its leaders, by contrast, have engaged in extensive deliberations and broad consultations (even with foreigners) as they strive to solve the enormous problems they face.

Market economies are *not* self-regulating. They can't simply be left on autopilot, especially if one wants to ensure that their benefits are shared widely. China's 11th five-year plan provides a roadmap for that response. The world watches in awe, and hope, as the lives of 1.3 billion people continue to be transformed. ● Project Syndicate

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



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Hit well every time

It's simple: know your swing plane

A couple of days ago, I watched a seasoned golfer at the practice range top or duff about 10 shots. Then suddenly he struck two good ones and looked at me with total delight, saying "why can't I do this all the time?"

I told him that with steady practice and hard work he would be able to do it more often. Today I am going to explain how.

Often, people forget the dynamics of the swing plane and just try to force their swing so they can whack the ball longer. Some others try improvising their equipment so they can gain more yards. Doing this is no better than fighting a losing battle.

I think most seasoned golfers are aware of the maxim 'hitting the ball from the inside' but they don't seem to have an in-depth

understanding or feel for it. If you watch them at the practice range, you will probably see most of them swing on a plane that moves from the outside to the

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



inside (the opposite of what's required).

There are generally two reasons for this mistake.

1. If you move your back swing outside the line of your target, chances are that you will hit from the outside plane, resulting in a slice and a huge loss of distance.
2. The most common mistake golfers make is after getting into the right position at the top of their swing, they rush to hit the ball, using their wrists and arms too much and again making contact from the outside of the swing plane to produce a pull or a big slice.



So how to get this right?

To avoid the back swing flaw, you need to turn your shoulders to 90 degrees to be in the proper position. Don't forget: only a good back swing can lead to a proper downswing and follow-through.

The chances of making an error are much higher on the downswing. From the top the first move is: clear (turn) your left shoulder and let your arms drop down, without unhinging the wrist to avoid any unnecessary movements. When you drop the club down (at this point the club shaft should be parallel to the target line) turn your hips to square the clubface at impact.

I have found that most golfers don't believe that the club can turn 90 degrees to be square at impact from the dropped position (parallel to the target line). In reality, they're not turning their hips and body far enough, instead compensating with their wrists and hands, so they can't square the clubface. Practice dropping your hands so the club is parallel to the target line and you will start hitting the ball consistently from the inside. You will also be able to keep your left arm straight after impact.

Trust me, your ball will soon start flying 20 extra yards. ●

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



Hyphenated children

Children of mixed race can look at the world with two pairs of eyes

NINA PINE

Mixed race children have to deal with the issue of identity all the time but being called 'cultural cocktails', 'global nomads', or even 'a bum between two chairs' doesn't help.

Every day, they face problems from language barriers to identifying with one culture or another and therefore with divergent social beliefs and values.

"My mother is English, Irish and Indian and my father is American and I've lived in Nepal my whole life," says one student, then she asks with a smile, "so where do you think I'm from?"

Most individuals who are of mixed race like to think of themselves as global citizens, they travel the world, have attended international schools and because of their exposure feel comfortable in any cultural milieu. The most direct problem is one of language, they have more than one to learn and bilingualism among mixed parent children is common.

Just as individuals who have grown up in a country other than their own learn that country's native language, children of mixed race often embrace both of their parent's languages. A German-American student explains that the reason he speaks both his parents' languages is because he grew up being constantly exposed to these two cultures and languages.

On the other hand, there are factors that can determine whether a child is bilingual or not. Children will tend to speak whichever language their parents speak, as that is what the child is exposed to (therefore, if parents speak in English with each other, then English will most likely be that child's first language).

The country where they spend their young years can also determine what languages the child will learn. "My parents always spoke in English while I was growing up because we were living in the US," said a Nepali-British student, "so naturally English was my first language."

At the same time, parents can

make a positive impact by making sure children don't forget their culture even if the family lives a nomadic life. Says an Indian student: "Even though I have never lived in India, my parents made sure that I learnt how to speak and write in my native tongue."

Multilingualism among dual culture children makes it easier for them to fit in wherever they go and learn extra languages if they want. And as today's youth become increasingly international, being able to speak a number of languages is not only useful but in many cases an essential skill.

Some mixed race individuals are better at dealing with the cross-cultural pull of their parents countries than others. This will include everyday dealings with people: social beliefs, etiquette, cultural rituals, religion and even food.

"Since I am both Nepali and American, Nepalis don't consider me Nepali and Americans don't think of me as American. I'm either a *kuiiri* or the 'Asian kid'," says one teenager in Kathmandu.

Being an individual of multiple nationalities can be challenging at times as the children find themselves either

choosing one of their parents' cultures or identity with a daring mixture of both.

"I've lived here most of my life, so I feel more Nepali than I do American. I just can relate to Nepali culture and customs more than those of the US," admits another student.

Religion is another area that children of mixed-race have to deal with and most end up keeping the faith of both religions or not being very religious at all. A student whose father is Jewish and mother Buddhist grew up as a Buddhist although the family did take the occasional Jewish holiday. "I am asked if my beliefs conflict," she says, "but such a concern never really occurred to me—I've never looked for the contrasts."

Despite the difficulties of being a mixed race individual, most tend to enjoy their mixture of cultures because it gives them a unique perspective. "It's as if I can look at the world with two pairs of eyes," says one Nepali-American. "I'm a living contradiction I guess—and I'm loving every minute of it." ●

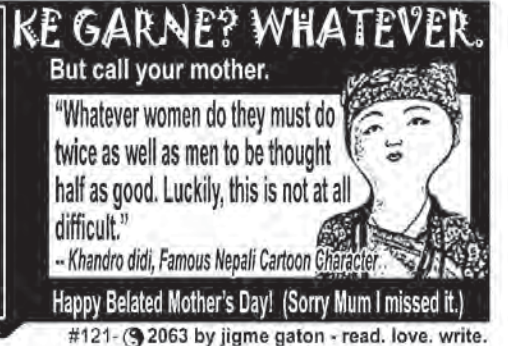
Nina Pine is herself a Nepali-American and lives in Kathmandu.

May-June Himal Southasian now on the stands!



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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Khulla Dhoka** exhibition of painted doors at Dhokaima Café 5 and 6 May.
- ❖ **Nick Dawson's** photography exhibition at Indigo Gallery till 14 May.

EVENTS

- ❖ **Mask making** with Wave and Chandan Chitrakar, 6 May, 8.30 AM, meeting point Nabil Bank, Kantipath.
- ❖ **Constituent Assembly for Inclusive Democracy**, peaceful rally 7 and 8 May at 7AM, assemble at Royal Nepal Academy.
- ❖ **Prayer flags: a survivor returns** documentary at Jatra Cafe, 7 May, 7.15 PM. 4256622
- ❖ **Derzu Uzala** film screening at NTB, 7 May, 5.30 PM
- ❖ **Buddha Jayanti** 13 May.
- ❖ **Walk with Wave** 13 May, 8.30 AM, Champadevi clean up campaign, meeting point St. Xavier's School.
- ❖ **Peace ride to Lumbini** with Himalayan Enfielders, 12-14 May.
- ❖ **International Day for Biological Diversity** 22 May.
- ❖ **Life Skills Training Camp** 26-28 May, call to confirm by 23 May. 4107599
- ❖ **Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival 2006**, 7-10 December, calling for entries. Forms available at: www.himalassociation.org/kimff

MUSIC

- ❖ **Heartbreakers** live every Friday at Rum Doodle Bar.
- ❖ **Special Reggae Session** with Jerry (Caribbean island) and the Reggae machine at Moksh Live, 5 May, 8PM, Rs 200.
- ❖ **Cadenza Collective** live every Wednesday and Saturday 8PM at Upstairs, Lajimpat.
- ❖ **Live Music** at New Orleans Café. 4700311
- ❖ **Pakeeza Night** dance, authentic Mughlai cuisine every Friday 7.30 PM at Far Pavilion Restaurant, The Everest Hotel. 4780100
- ❖ **Reggae Night** at Moksh Live, 7.30 PM. 5526212
- ❖ **Best of jazz** JCS trio and friends. Niek's Place, Tuesdays and Saturdays.
- ❖ **Jatra Friday** nights, live music by Siron. 4256622
- ❖ **Unplugged** sessions with Strings, Jatra Saturday nights. 4256622
- ❖ **Live Music** at Juneli Bar, Hotel de l'Annapurna. 4221711

DINING

- ❖ **BBQ** every Friday at Jalan Jalan Restaurant. Kupondole Height. 5544872.
- ❖ **Beat the heat** with milkshakes and smoothies at Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Imago-Dei** café and gallery, food, dessert and coffee, Nagpokhari, open Monday-Friday 9AM-9PM. 4442464
- ❖ **Café U** for organic Japanese homecooking. Near International Club, Sanepa. 11AM-6PM. Closed on Tuesdays. 5524202
- ❖ **Momo & Sekuwa Revolution** every Saturday at Tea-House Inn. 668-0080,
- ❖ **Wet & Wild Summer Splash** at Godavari Village Resort, a special package of Swimming & Lunch. 5560675
- ❖ **Breakfast** at Singma Restaurant. 8.30 - 11.00AM daily. 5520004
- ❖ **BBQ Dinner** at Summit Hotel every Friday. 6.30-9.30 PM. 5521810
- ❖ **Breakfast with Birds** Lunch with Butterfly at Farm House Cafe. 4375279



GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Buddham Saranam Gacchami** special offer 13 May weekend Rs 1250.00 per person. Club Himalaya. 668-0080
- ❖ **Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge**, relaxation and massages in Pokhara. 4361500
- ❖ **Junglewalks**, rafting, elephant rides all at Jungle Base Camp Lodge, Bardia. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com
- ❖ **Park Village**, Budhanilkantha, Full room Rs 1,600. 4375280
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श्री ५ को सरकार
सूचना तथा सञ्चार मन्त्रालय
सूचना विभाग

NEPALI WEATHER by MAUSAM BEED

This is the time of the year when the searing heat of the Indo-Gangetic plains rises along the Himalayan foothills creating towering thunderheads that bring serious localised rain. That is what we have been seeing this week—nothing unusual, but just a bit premature. These pre-monsoon showers are supposed to arrive towards the end of May. Showers will be localised, like on Tuesday when Nagarkot got 16 mm in one hour and the Valley floor got nothing. If you are in the tarai, don't complain about the 44 degrees heat because it is this heat that is instrumental in creating the conditions for the monsoon winds to start blowing inland from the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Fri 28-14	Sat 30-13	Sun 29-14	Mon 30-14	Tue 31-15
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BBC नेपाली
Daily 2045-2115 on 102.4

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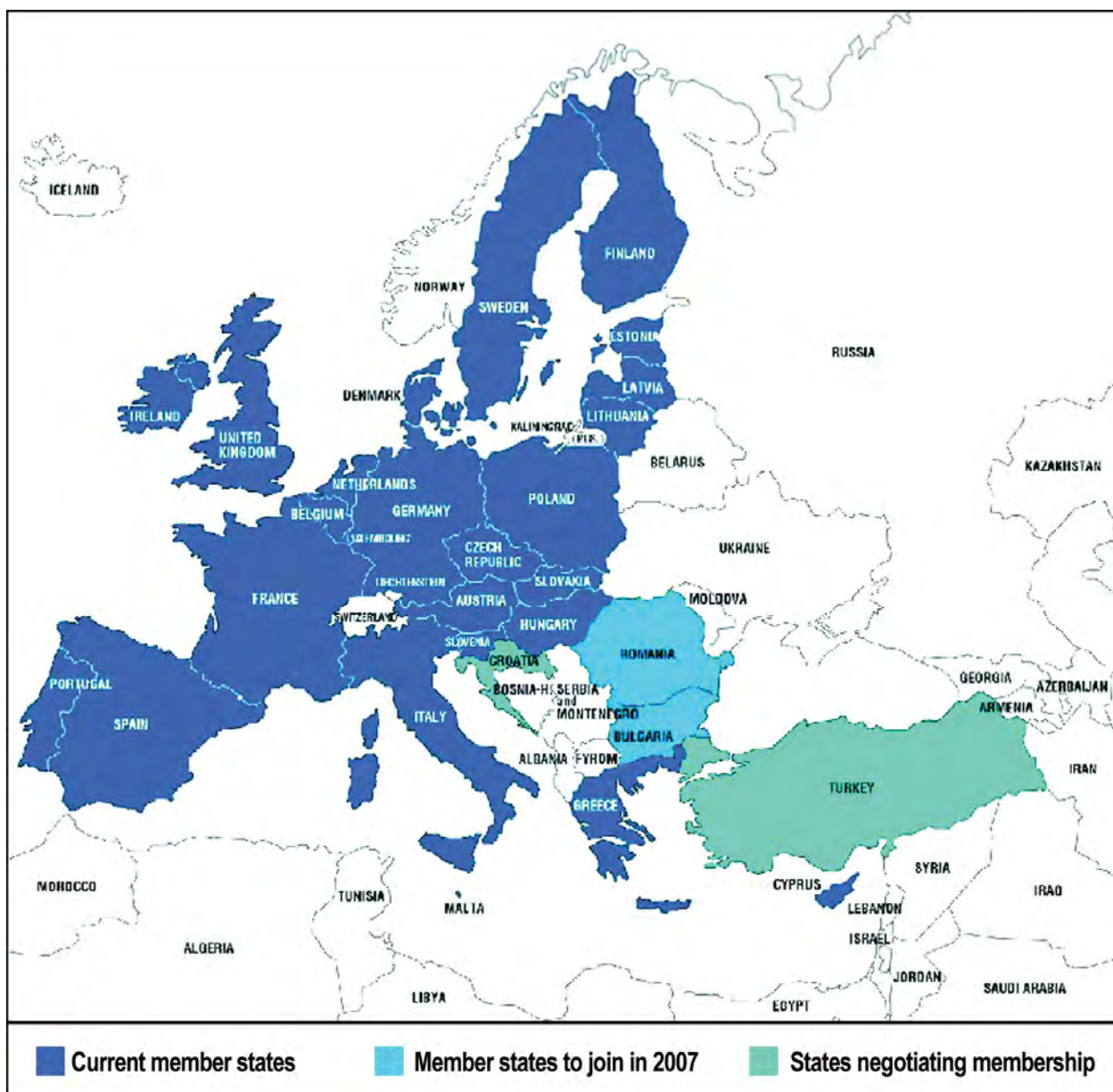
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Europe Day 2006

Focus on dialogue and democracy



Continuous enlargements

Since the first agreement was signed in 1951, several enlargements have taken place and the EU now counts 25 member states. Next year, in 2007, an additional two countries are scheduled to join - Romania and Bulgaria. While preparations for their accession are still underway, the EU in October 2005 also initiated negotiations with yet another two countries, Croatia and Turkey. These recent enlargements and membership negotiations are obvious commitments of EU intentions to expand prosperity and democratic values beyond current EU borders. The fact that political, economic and social coherence have been key driving forces in all membership preparations, allow new EU members to successfully participate in deciding European policies from the day they join. The EU, its members, and institutions have a common flag that is used as a symbol of the European unity - the flag is dark blue with a circle of 12 yellow stars. No matter how many member states join the EU, this flag remains the same.

Current EU priorities

Today, 56 years after the first initiative, the EU brings together more than 450 million people and the constant dialogue on almost every imaginable social, political, trade and environmental issue has contributed to Europe's high levels of living standards. As a further integrating factor, 12 member states have already introduced the Euro as their official currency. The EU also speaks with an increasingly stronger and coherent voice in international affairs to effectively address the challenges of today and enjoy the benefits of an increasingly globalized world. Europe is a continent with many different traditions and languages; however, Europeans have come to share common values such as democracy, freedom and social justice. In fact, one of the most used mottos to describe the EU is "United in Diversity".

The EU institutions

The three most important EU institutions are the **Council of the European Union**, the **European Parliament** and the **European Commission**.

The **Council** consist of ministers from the national governments of all 25 EU member states. The Council shares with the European Parliament the responsibility for passing laws and taking policy decisions. The **Presidency of the European Union** rotates among the member states on a 6-monthly basis. In 2006, Austria holds the EU Presidency from January-June, to be taken over by Finland from July-December. As Austria does not have an Embassy in Nepal, Finland has been nominated the local EU presidency in Nepal for 2006. To safeguard continuity in EU's policies, a Troika format is used, consisting of the country currently holding the EU Presidency, the incoming EU Presidency, and a representative from the European Commission.

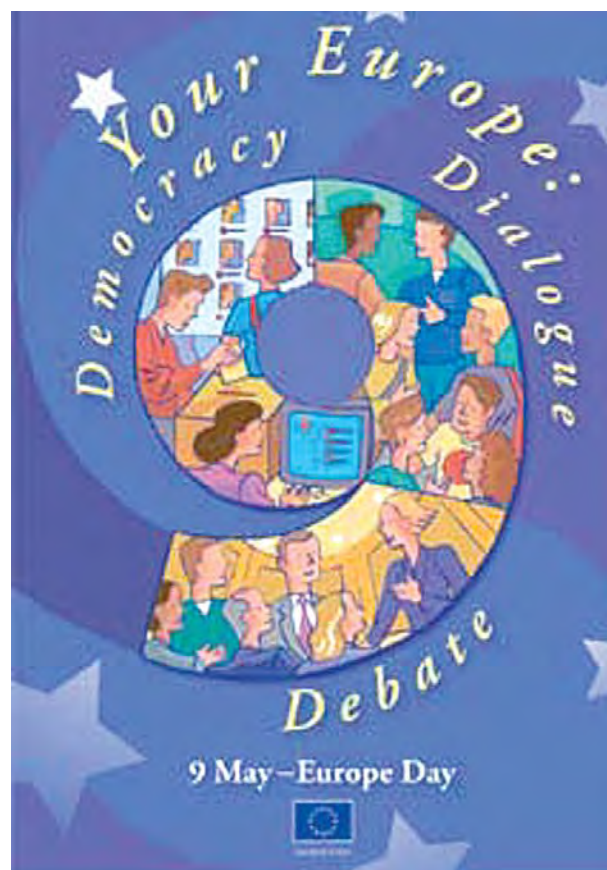
The European people directly elect the **European Parliament (EP)** every five years. The present Parliament was elected in June 2004

9 May is the day people from 25 different countries celebrate their common reference as Europeans. The celebration of "Europe Day" takes place the same day as the former French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman delivered a famous speech back in 1950. Schuman proposed that Europeans committed themselves to democracy, increased their dialogue to better understand each other and started discussing how to solve important political and economic issues as a group and not as individual countries. For many Europeans this speech became a turning point in history as it provided the ideas leading to the extensive and successful European integration.

Mr. Schuman's ideas were shared at a time when Europe was trying to get back on its feet after the Second World War (1939-45) in which most European countries suffered terrible losses. Today, in 2006, when Europeans again celebrate their common history and values, Schuman's idea of lasting peace is often taken for granted. In many other parts of the world, including Nepal, lasting peace cannot be taken for granted; thus, it is useful to reflect on recent history and see what made European countries set aside their age old disputes and embarking upon a dialogue.

Schuman envisaged that economic interdependence between larger European countries would make war a phenomenon of the past. It took less than a year before Schuman's idea was translated into a binding legal

document - the political commitment to peace was thus already a reality. On 18 April 1951, six countries signed the Treaty of Paris establishing the **European Coal and Steel Community**. Soon thereafter, this commitment was sealed with the Treaty of Rome, which is still considered the founding document of the European Union (EU) of today.





and has **732 members** from all EU member states grouped in Europe-wide alliances. Nearly one-third (222) are women. The main job of the Parliament is to pass European laws – a responsibility shared with the Council.

The **European Commission (EC)** represents the interests of Europe as a whole and it works independently from national governments. The current Commission President Mr. José Manuel Barroso and his 24 Commissioners were appointed in November 2004. The Commission headquarters in Brussels prepares European laws and policies. Within EU borders, the Commission takes responsibility for the implementation of laws, policies and programmes. Beyond the borders of the EU, the Commission is often an active contributor to human and social development and acts as a trade facilitator.

The EU in the world

It is not only Europeans that benefit from the European Union. Given the success of European integration, the EU is committed to **spread peace, stability and prosperity beyond its borders**. The best way to **prevent conflicts** from arising is to **create prosperity and opportunities worldwide**. As the **world's largest trading power**, the EU uses its influence to establish fair rules for world trade so that **poorer countries benefit from globalisation**. The European Union **provides development programmes and humanitarian assistance** that



benefit millions of people every day.

A good example of this is the December 2005 **European Consensus on Development**, which confirms the EU commitment to remain the world's largest donor. The EU has also taken a lead in **fighting pollution and promoting sustainable development** worldwide. In Nepal, as in many other countries, the EU has repeatedly stressed the importance of promotion and protection of **democratic values**. The EU will continue to push for multilateral responses and to promote the values that have proved successful in maintaining peace and fostering economic growth and human development in Europe: democracy, human rights, good governance and the Rule of Law.

The EU in Nepal

Alongside the European Commission (EC) represented by the Delegation of the European Commission to Nepal, several EU member states are long-standing development partners with Nepal. Currently five member states have their individual diplomatic missions in Kathmandu. As an institution, EU established diplomatic relations with Nepal in 1975 and an EU-Kingdom of Nepal Co-operation Agreement was signed in June 1998. Within this co-operation framework high-level consultations – the so-called 'Joint Commission' take place on a bi-annual basis. The current European Commission Strategy for Nepal 2002-2006 identifies Rural Development, Rule of Law, Conflict Mitigation and economic cooperation as priority sectors. In addition, the EC implements a significant human rights and democracy portfolio as well as humanitarian and Asia-wide assistance programs in Nepal.

The EC will stand ready to support the country and its people in reshaping the economy, improving living standards, and create institutions and capacities that are able to effectively respond to challenges and bring benefits to every single person living within the borders of Nepal. Some of our current efforts include improving access to justice countrywide, assisting vulnerable communities affected by the conflict and monitoring human rights as well as installing renewable energy systems in remote communities.

Given the mandate it holds on trade issues, the EC is ready to support efforts to create a

conducive environment for foreign investments in Nepal and proper integration of Nepal in the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Guiding principles for economic co-operation partnership often includes commitment to corporate governance, transparency and efficiency. Through some of its Asia-wide programmes, the EC has established business-to-business contacts between European and Nepalese companies that hopefully will have long-lasting value. In addition, the EC through its mandate to open negotiations with third countries, including Nepal, in order to revise and update the existing bilateral air service agreements. Finally, this month we expect several Nepalese students to be notified that they have received an Erasmus Mundus scholarship allowing them to obtain a Master degree from European universities.

For more information, visit www.delnpl.ec.europa.eu

EU members and when they joined

- 1952** : Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands
- 1973** : Denmark, Ireland, United Kingdom
- 1981** : Greece
- 1986** : Portugal, Spain
- 1995** : Austria, Finland and Sweden
- 2004** : Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia



The EURO zone: Belgium, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal and Finland



KIRAN PANDAY

MILITARY LENDS A HAND: A frail Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala arrives in parliament on Sunday.



KIRAN PANDAY

WE DO: In a departure from tradition, it was the prime minister and not the king who swore in this new council of ministers on Tuesday.



KIRAN PANDAY

MIN NATH: The chariot of Min Nath is dragged through the historic heart of Patan on Tuesday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

HIGH AND DRY: Kathmandu residents don't remember the Rani Pokhari ever being so empty. The fact that it hasn't filled up despite recent rain suggests that construction nearby has severed its water supply.

Happily helping

Married at 13, Indira Sapkota was happy staying at home taking care of her family. Some 11 years and three children later, she decided to use the skills she learnt as a wife and mother to venture into the world of business. Her success changed her life—and the lives of thousands of other Nepalis.

Sapkota, now 68, remembers how empowered and independent she felt by simply having some money for herself. "It was when I started making profits that I understood how women can help their families," she remembers. She started bringing together small

groups of women, training them to sew, make pickles and jam and to knit.

Not satisfied with just training a small circle of neighbours, she decided to scale up. Eight years ago she set up Bhotu-Indira Social Welfare Organisation (BISWO) which teaches women skills and other ways to make money. "The most encouraging part of my job is when people come to us for training from remote parts of Nepal and then go back and find their feet," she says.

Nepal Grihini Udyog is a spin-off of BISWO that makes handmade clothing. In its office, bhotos made from dammar kumari fabric, trousers, caps, maternity clothes, sweaters, aprons and tablecloths are neatly arranged in piles. It once employed more than 250 people and even exported to Japan, the US and France. Today, just over 25 people work here, another casualty of the political turmoil in the country. Strikes and bandas mean raw materials are not available and workers

have a hard time getting to work. Recently, BISWO opened a day centre in Dili Bajar for senior citizens. "Older people can come, relax and listen to bhajans. It helps pass their time easily and stay happier," says Sapkota as she prepares to leave for another meeting. On a recent visit to Gokarna she saw an empty building and decided to use it to open a primary school for children from low-income households. Today it is Shree Gram Sudhar Primary School in Baluwa village which is expanding with help from the Indian Embassy so it can accommodate more children.

She also dreams of turning the senior's day centre into a full-fledged senior's home one day. Says Indira: "I want be working and helping people until my body allows me, to me that is real happiness." ●

Mallika Aryal

Nepal Grihini Udyog clothes are sold under the AAD logo in department stores in Kathmandu.



KIRAN PANDAY

Oof yumaa!

NEW Liril ORANGE

Cool off this summer with a splash of orange. The refreshing fragrance of Liril orange leaves you fresh and cool.

Right royal mess

Now that we find ourselves in the cusp of a new Nepal, it has been ordained that all relics of our royal past be replaced with even older revolutionary relics.

Luckily the national anthem doesn't have to be changed because its lyricist had the foresight 75 years ago to already incorporate in it a reference to Comrade Awesome's nom de guerre: That's a relief, imagine having to memorise a new national anathema every time there is regime change.

Which is why we should go about this monumental task of renaming names with a measured pragmatism and with the minimum disruption.

UNDER MY HAT
Kunda Dixit



For example, we must strike while the iron is hot to show that we mean business by taking out all references to His Majesty's Government and replacing it with His Moribund

Government. This way we don't have to change the acronym and a lot of reprinting cost will be saved by leaving HMG on government sign boards.

The other glaring reminder of the ancien regime is our very own flag carrier. But imagine the expense of painting over Royal in Royal Nepal Airlines entire fleet. So, for a fraction of the cost, we will just replace the 'R' and call it Loyal Nepal Airlines.

In order to spur the new interim government to get down to business and take some concrete steps, here are some suggestions of name changes that should be undertaken on a war footing:

What's out

- Lok Man Singh Karki
- Aishwarya Shield Spelling Bee
- Tribhuban International Airport
- Maharajganj
- Patan Darbar Square
- Royal Stag
- Birendranagar
- Mahendranagar
- Royal Chitwan National Park

What's in

- Loktantra Man Singh Karki
- Sujata Shield Spelling Bee
- Tinkune Internminable Airport
- Chairmanganj
- Patan Demo Square
- Plebian Stag
- Surkhet
- Phuket
- Some Animals Are More Equal Than Others

What's out

- Crowne Plaza
- Royal Bengal Tiger
- Kingfisher Lager
- Birendra International Convention Centre
- Royal Challenge Beer
- Ratna Park
- Sahi Sainik Manch
- Rani Pokhari
- Darbar Marg
- Raj Parishad
- Kalanki Chowk
- Mahendra Highway

What's in

- Crowneless Plaza
- Tarai Tiger
- Presidentfisher
- Baneswor National Congregation Centre
- Royally-challenged Beer
- Car Park
- Psy-ops Munch
- Khali Pokhari
- Paribar Marg
- Raj Perished
- Bumper-to-Bumper Choke Point
- Mahindra & Mahindra Highway



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