



Times Weekly Internet Poll # 309

Q. How hopeful are you that the UN mission will be successful in overseeing arms management?

Total votes: 3,359

Weekly Internet Poll # 310. To vote go to: www.nepalimes.com

Q. Rate the performance of the seven party alliance government after 100 days in office.

Maoists are on a public relations offensive out west

Sword into ploughshare



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RAMESWOR BOHARA
in SURKHET

As he readied his paddy terrace for planting last week, Ram Bahadur Gurung of Gumi VDC in Surkhhet got a pleasant surprise. A group of armed Maoists volunteered to help him.

Some comrades ploughed the field, others used the hoe and the women guerrillas waded knee-deep into the slush to plant paddy. The People's War now has a different focus here in western Nepal: to win hearts and minds.

Aware that the people blame them for past brutality, the rebels are on a public relations offensive. Ram Bahadur had got used to being forced to give shelter to Maoists and feed them. Now he doesn't know whether he can trust the guerrillas who still have rifles slung over their shoulders. "They say there will be peace now," says a wizened 70-year-old farmer, "they

help us in the fields, so we are not as afraid as we used to be."

Just three months of ceasefire, and it is hard to tell that these lush green hills have been soaked with blood the past ten years. The Maoists murdered party workers, teachers, traders. More died in brutal crackdowns by state security.

The rebels cut suspension bridges, blew up telecom towers, roads, radio transmitters, hydropower stations, making this isolated region even more remote. Development has been set back decades, as VDC buildings, health posts, schools and drinking water systems were demolished.

"We were at war and had to obey party decisions," explains Comrade Jitendra, "we won't make that mistake, the focus now is not the war."

It is clear that comrades who till recently believed that power came out of the barrel of a gun now seem to be convinced that

power comes from the people. "If the leaders decide to disband the PLA we will go along with it," says Comrade Pratik of the rebel's Sixth Division.

Many still think the ceasefire is another Maoist ploy. But Comrade Ramesh appears contrite, "We will now turn from destruction to development." •

Farewell to arms?

The high-level UN mission lead by Staffan de Mistura returned to New York Thursday without being able to persuade the Maoists and the government to come up with a common position on demilitarising before elections.

"There is a lack of trust on the techniques of arms management," de Mistura told reporters at the airport on Thursday, but added, "on this the UN can help."

The visit did provide a sense of urgency to the peace process which was stuck because of a deadlock over arms. De Mistura tried to hurry things up by hinting at a Thursday deadline, but analysts said it may have been too much to expect a breakthrough so quickly.

"We're hoping there is a momentum, I'm not disappointed," de Mistura said, "if they come up with some kind of consensus while we are back in New York we will take that into account."

The UN team spent a week in Nepal and actively tried to bring the two sides together. It will now report to Secretary General Kofi Annan and discuss a possible future UN monitoring mission to oversee the peace process.

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The peace riddle

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Nepal's high noon

The reel life relevance of the classic western to today's Kathmandu

PEACE RIDDLE

There is a Nepali folk riddle that goes something like this: a farmer needs to take a goat, a tiger and a pile of grass across a narrow bridge to the other side of the stream. He can only take one thing at a time, but if he takes the grass first the tiger will eat the goat. If he takes the tiger, the goat will eat the grass. What does he do?

The UN's de Mistura mission must have encountered a similar problem while dealing with the government, army, Maoists, parliamentarians in Kathmandu this week. Of course, it would be great if you could trust the tiger not to eat up the goat, or if you could talk the goat into not being greedy and leave the grass alone.

It would be lovely if everyone trusted each other, but it doesn't work that way in the real world. So you have to resort to what conflict resolution experts call 'sequencing'. De-escalation carried out in proper order so that there is no need for the two sides to distrust each other.

Luckily, the Nepal conflict is still a political one, and at the moment there is political will on both sides to resolve it through negotiations. As de Mistura himself said when he arrived, this has made his job much easier because the UN is usually being called to firefight in wars where the blaze is out of control.

The sticking point is still that the Maoists don't want to lay down their arms immediately because a) they don't trust the army and b) five of their own seven field commanders have expressed reservations. And the Nepal Army, as the armed force of a legitimate state power, doesn't want the Maoists to be put on the same pedestal and is against any kind of arms quarantine.

Intractable as these two positions may seem, a formula acceptable to the army and the Maoists is possible: both sides confine troops to barracks and keep weapons under monitored storage while the UN supervises the ceasefire and the runup to constituent assembly elections. The only disagreement is about whether those weapons should be under lock and key.

There is a consensus among the international community that the Maoists can't be a part of an interim setup while still openly carrying arms. And the Nepal Army, despite some ambitious jarsaps in the ranks, is so beholden to the UN for lucrative peacekeeping that it won't jeopardise that cash cow.

The trick now is to sequence the moves. Just like the smart farmer first took the goat across the bridge, then the grass. On the return trip he brought the goat back and took the tiger over and left him there with the grass. Finally, he lead the goat across.

The farmer used his head, and no one ate anyone up.

Described by many as the definitive western, *High Noon* was made in 1952. Ok, that's a while ago, pardner, even before an old geezer like me.

When movies today are churned out for either maximum pyrotechnic effect or pretend to explore tough issues but come up with the usual answers (ie, Bush



GUEST COLUMN
Pravin Rana

is bad and the clueless and Americans are behind all the ills of the world) *High Noon* is a relevant blast from the past.

Well at least Thucydides, Hobbes, and Churchill might agree as might many of the Nepali security forces that fought so hard the last ten years.

Minimalism is the movie's strength. Shot in grainy black and white, the story unfolds in the span of a few hours in a town called Hadleyville. Frank Miller, a brutal killer, was sentenced to death some five years ago but manages to receive a pardon from,

er, politicians we are told (how about that, isn't that a shock?).

His three partners (one of them a very young high-cheekboned Lee Van Cleef who plays "Bad" opposite Clint Eastwood in *The Good, Bad, and the Ugly*) are waiting for him at the train station where he is to arrive at Noon. They plan to proceed to town and kill Will Kane, the town's marshal, played by the legendary actor Gary Cooper, who put Frank Miller away in the first place. News spreads amongst the townsfolk of Frank Miller's imminent arrival and there isn't a soul willing to stand up to Miller and the boys. The judge skips town, the deputy sheriff is too self-absorbed, would-be posse members are either too cynical or believe Frank Miller can't be defeated, and the town criers and leaders think it best that Marshall Kane get the hell out of town. And Kane is ready to get out himself.

You see, he just got married that morning and plans to ride off into the sunset with Helen, his Quaker wife, played by yet another beautiful legend, Grace Kelly, the real life tragic Princess of Monaco.

Ah, what a conundrum Kane faces which are thankless vicissitudes of being the guy in charge of security and telling the townsfolk that they have to stand up to Frank Miller. And the townsfolk and criers really don't want him around. He is *persona non grata* in Hadleyville. He is the main obstacle to peace.

Does he leave? There would be no movie if he did of course. The moral struggle is simple yet relevant (at least amongst realists)

and the suspense as the clock tick-tocks away towards high noon is managed with finesse. The dialogue (very little action in this movie) makes it great. Take this nugget of a response he gets as an old friend declines to help him:

"You risk your skin catching killers and the juries turn them loose so they can come back and shoot at you again. If you're honest you're poor your whole life and in the end you wind up dying all alone on some dirty street. For what? For nothing. For a tin star."

One knows exactly how the Nepali security forces and some plain-spoken diplomats feel right now. And then there is his wife Helen's alternative take:

"My brother was 19. I watched him die. That's when I became a Quaker. I don't care who's right or who's wrong. There's got to be some better way for people to live."

The theme of *High Noon* is classic and therefore withstands the test of time. Stand up and fight the bad guys because you see them for who they are even in the face of massive resistance from those that have an 'alternative' plan for peace—even if that peace could ultimately corrupt one's values? Or, skip town and just let it be? Watch this movie with your kids, if you can.

End note: any resemblance in the above of Pushpa Kamal Dahal and his deputies to Frank Miller and his boys, Ambassador Moriarty to Marshall Kane, the Nepali media and 'activists' to the town leaders or criers, and Ian Martin to Helen are intentional and not coincidental. ●



KAMAL YONJAN

The elusive formula

Peace prospects, despite setbacks, are still bright

If you were not on the list of people the UN reconnaissance mission of Staffan de Mistura met this week you probably don't matter.

De Mistura avoided King Gyanendra, too. But whether it was an intentional affront or an act of oversight, disregarding the king



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

was not well advised. No matter what we think of him, King Gyanendra's acquiescence is still necessary for the democratisation of the Nepal Army, a crucial element of the Nepal peace plan.

The government seems to think it has the army on a leash, but the generals continue to act as if nothing has changed. The generals ignore summons by the commission investigating the April excesses, its drunken officers abduct and torture policemen on duty and it doesn't

answer to the Ministry of Defence.

The international community, too, seems to have given carte blanche to the Nepal Army on a simple promise they will take orders from the seven-party government. This premise remains to be tested, but gone are the government's calls for reforms in the army.

The UN team has been looking at 'arms management', but all the political parties seem to think it refers only to Maoist arms. In their eight-point agreement, the government and the Maoists unequivocally agreed to request the UN to assist in the management of the armies and arms of both sides and to monitor it for a free and fair election to the constituent assembly.

As we go to press on Thursday afternoon, an acceptable formula for managing arms is still elusive. Mission chief Mistura hid behind diplomatese but it's clear that a consensus isn't possible unless the militaries of both sides are simultaneously dealt with.

The Nepal Army didn't succeed in

crushing the insurgency. The People's Liberation Army failed to overthrow the regime through an armed revolution. Both were brought to their senses by a peaceful uprising. It's the agenda of peace that must prevail. What we have to do now is find a formula to neutralise weapons on both sides.

The Nepal Army's weapons will have to be quarantined in acceptable locations and monitored by mutually agreeable observers. Soldiers may be allowed to keep small arms inside barracks, but they can't come out because their very presence can sway voting patterns.

The strength of the Maoist army first needs to be verified before it can be monitored. They, too, have to be housed in designated areas until the constituent assembly makes a decision for their rehabilitation or reintegration.

During the uncertainties of transition it is tempting to overestimate one's power. Maoist commanders have been behaving as if they run a parallel government. Nothing of

that sort. For a large section of Nepali society and the international community, Pushpa Kamal Dahal and his cohorts are still on probation. Should they fail to respect the people's yearning for peace, they will have no peace.

The seven-party alliance must similarly get over the illusion that it has the people's mandate to rule with the help of royal remnants. The agenda that they have sworn to implement consists of establishing peace, bringing the agents of royal excesses to book, and institutionalising democracy by conducting the elections of constituent assembly as soon as possible.

A point of convergence isn't as difficult as it appears. Peace prospects, despite threatening setbacks, are still bright. But if this chance is once again missed, another generation of Nepalis will have to live through an all-consuming conflict. That's what Koirala and Dahal need to keep in the back of their minds when they meet next to expedite stalled negotiations. ●

LETTERS

CIVIL SOCIETY

It is good news for Nepal that its civil society has woken up and started realising the responsibility of keeping government-of-the-day in check. However, I agree with your editorial ('Super parliament', #308) that our civil society is becoming more reactive than proactive. They have become naysaying nabobs of negativism. For monarchy: no. For continuance of parliament: no. For continuity of the present Koirala government: no. And it goes on. When the government tries to get civil society involved in helping with the peace process by asking it to join the peace-monitoring mission they refuse. And what about trying to impose a particular doctrine by holding sit-ins for a republic and pretending to represent us, who have reservations about such sensitive issues? Civil society pioneers should shed their prejudiced political line.

Pradepta Sharma, Mumbai

● Really enjoyed your editorial ('Super parliament', #308), which was well thought-out and balanced, and allows a proportional 'give' to all sides. The distinction between civil society and political activists is key. What makes civil society so potent is its ability to influence policy-making without participating in the legal process itself. Civil society is crucial in upholding the system of checks and balances, especially in a country like ours. But, as your editorial correctly pointed out, if civil society endorses the Maoist line exclusively at the detriment of all other views and actively promotes a role for itself as a practicing member of the governing polity, then it loses its utility as an impartial observer. Worse, if the usual suspects from our self-declared civil society are to participate in any interim government, the result will amount to a biased advantage for the Maoist position.

Your assertion that the Maoists are afraid of laying down arms because they are unsure of their standing in the population (minus the threat of force) is plausible. So is your view of the heightened probability of a split in the Maoist ranks should the issue of disarmament not suit the inclinations of certain factions within the Maoists. However, the question from the very beginning of this process has been whether the state is working to bring the Maoists into the fold or if the idea is to bring whoever is willing from the Maoists, into the mainstream?

If it's the latter, I'm sorry, but it does not make sense to appease Pushpa, Baburam and their cohorts now, just to have 40 deaths a week and a partially failed peace process, later. The thought of exonerating the political leadership and condemning the Maoist fighting force has repercussions along ethnic, caste and class lines that reach far beyond the

obvious issue of settlement.

Yes, there is paranoia of the Maoists going back to the jungles after this monsoon but I agree that they have come too far too fast to do that. But the paranoia itself isn't misplaced, in fact it drives much of the policy making in Nepal today. The point here is that the Maoists have manoeuvred into a position where ironically, the agenda of peace has become a Maoist agenda. So, the paranoia is justified in the sense that it prevents the seizure of concession from the Maoists that under conditions of parity would be rational. But given the present circumstances, the suggestion of such concessions jeopardise the peace process and bring forth allegations of allegiance to the crown. Yes, the unfortunate alternative is 40 Nepali deaths a week. Equally unfortunate is the idea of 27 million Nepalis being held hostage, psychologically, by the Maoists refusing to disarm. What is really misplaced is the hope the political leadership can navigate the Maoist gauntlet by exposing contradictions in the Maoist position while simultaneously driving the peace process towards what is acceptable to all Nepalis and the international community.

Name withheld, email

RANA RINPOCHE

Being a Rana myself, I'm at loath to encounter bigoted behaviour among Ranas. They strongly cling to the vestiges of their autocratic past, and still harbour ambitions of returning to some sort of a system where they can retain their hold. Many of these families are very rich. They have lot to lose. That's why we need a clean break from the past.

The abolishment of the monarchy is the only way we can achieve this. The caste system in our society is bad enough, the class these families bring, makes Nepali society look completely feudal. But let's not lump all Ranas and Shahs together. Many are involved in grass root activities, supporting and working for the poor. Many Ranas are poor themselves. 'A Rana becomes Rinpoche' (#308) is an example of a non-stereotype Rana. For a Rana to break completely from the strong Hindu past, to become a Rinpoche and preach its message of peace and happiness, requires strong conviction. We must admire the man's determination and dedication to do what he thought was the correct path. He is an example for the rest of us.

S Rana, London

● Sridhar SJB Rana chose the path destined for him. Good for him. But I was a little intrigued by your title to the piece: 'A Rana becomes Rinpoche'. As if the surname was something to be highlighted. A question to the editors: Rana is just another Nepali surname like Sharma, Chamar, Sherpa, Gurung, Yadab. So why

should the fact that Sridhar is a Rana hold any significance? Feudal hangover?

Sam Sharma, email

GARBAGE IN

Your front page picture ('Waste management', #308) is proof of the Nepal government's lack of interest in public issues. It is shameful that a site of the pro-democratic struggle has turned into a garbage disposal centre. There is organic and inorganic rubbish. They should be separated at home, so the organic waste is composted and used in the garden instead of ending up on the city streets. Recycling the inorganic also creates new jobs. Garbage scavengers should be organised to pick up trash house-to-



house instead of picking it from public dumping sites. Fine those who throw household rubbish in the street. The easy way to a cleaner city is with good management and an aware citizenry.

The Green Team, Bhaktapur

WHICH NEPAL, WHEN?

Nepal existed a long time before Prithbi Narayan Shah, contrary to what Bharat Basnet thinks ('Prithbi Narayan's message', #308). It was centred in Kathmandu, and had a government, a legal system, currency, foreign relations, and defined boundaries. That, however, may not have been the case with the other *rajyas* that were merged into present-day Nepal.

Bhai Kaji, Kathmandu

INTELLECTUAL POWER

Kunda Dixit writes 'even if the right decision is taken today, we'll still have eight hours of winter power cuts daily till at least 2013' ('The country's future is dark', #308). But his concern raises another major issue: it will take longer than the energy crisis to create intellectual power in Nepal, even if we make sound policies. Smart Nepalis are heading West or are there already, and those who remain are frustrated. The country's future is indeed dark, in every sense.

Prakash Pangei, email

NIGERIANS IN NEPAL

There are valid points raised about Nigerians visiting Nepal in your translated item (From the Nepali Press, 'Nigerian Watch', #308). Having lived with Nigerian students while studying in the former USSR and having read about their involvement drug trafficking in India, I think our authorities are already a little late to the game. Our troubled country does not need more problems. So do we need to host them? It also seems ridiculous that Nepali football clubs are hiring Nigerian players for the domestic league. As someone said, this does the sport in our country no favours. The Home Ministry, Immigration Department, Ministry of Tourism, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs should all take action immediately.

Nava Raj Karki, email

FROM BAD TO VERSE

You editorial, 'Super parliament' (#309), mentioned Grey Shirts, which led me to pen this little diatribe:

SHADES OF GRAY

Prologue:
Blown by the southerly winds
dark grey
clouds hover over the Himalaya
with thunderous lightning
and
torrential rain
ready to wash away the precious soil.
Act I:
Grey is the colour of choice
for the masses
Grey is hip
from the colour of hair to dresses
Grey is custom-tailored to differentiate
between a short-sleeved shirt
and
a full-sleeved tuck-in shirt
in a classless system.
Act II:
Grey is the *badal*
so are the whiskers
Grey strokes in the hair
faded by memories of a bygone era
Sita Ram
Sita Ram
Babu Ram
Babu Ram
Ram Ram
Hare Hare
Act III
Hot red fire
eventually becomes
kharani
that is swept away in the Bagmati.
Epilogue:
Black and White
makes
grey.
We are, but,
brown.

SN Singh, email

Not plane dealing

SUMAN PRADHAN

A controversial Chinese aircraft deal originally pushed by the Nepal Army and the palace is stuck in cabinet, as the new government comes under pressure from Beijing not to cancel the order.

If the deal goes ahead, several sources say, Nepali taxpayers will end up paying \$8 million more than the cost price for aircraft that are unsuitable and unnecessary. The extra money will most likely line the pockets of top palace and army officials, they add.

A cabinet decision approving the purchase of two Chinese MA-60 turboprops was slated for Monday, but deferred indefinitely. A government source told us the cabinet will take a decision on the matter "after all the relevant information comes in".

The deal is now seen as a measure of the capacity of the seven-party government to stand up to pressure not just from the Chinese but also from powerful figures from the royal past.

The controversy is in part about whether the craft, developed from the Soviet-era AN24 is suitable for Nepal's flying conditions. But the spotlight now is on how the deal was arranged and through whom. The MA-60 is manufactured by Xi'an Aircraft Industrial Corporation and can carry up to 60 people, but it has been shunned by China's own domestic airlines.

The Chinese sold two to Zimbabwe last year for \$8 million a piece and gave away one free. One made an emergency landing at Victoria Falls injuring passengers, another is grounded and a third caught fire while attempting takeoff in Harare last month.



An over-invoiced army order for aircraft we do not need

The plane has no type and airworthiness certification from the US Federal Aviation Agency and Europe's Joint Aviation Authorities, which means no one will insure them.

The deal was pushed by powerful royal adviser Sharad Chandra Shah who, along with relatives and associates, is also the local agent for the aircraft. The deal was pursued by the Chief of Army Staff Pyar Jung Thapa when he flew to Beijing via Lhasa in October 2005.

Later, Defence Secretary Bishnu Dutta Uprety led a government team including pilots from the army's air wing (Number 11 Brigade) to evaluate the plane.

Despite misgivings from army engineers and pilots and irregularities in procedure because there was no competitive bidding,

Uprety signed a memorandum for the purchase and the government sent an advance of \$5 million to the China National Aero-Technology Import and Export Company.

After regime change in April, the new government wanted to scrap the deal. But Shah flew to Shanghai in June and got the Chinese authorities to pressure the government to stick to the contract or forfeit the \$5 million advance. Sources told us Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat has lately sided with the army chief to okay the deal on grounds that cancellation would cost money. Mahat told us, "This was a liability entered into by the previous government. It is a government-to-government contract. Cancelling it will affect bilateral ties." Others say it's better to

Choppers, too

Irregularities in the MA-60 order have also spotlighted the army's recent order for two MI-17 helicopters from Russia's Kazan Helicopter Plant through a local agent for a total of \$8million.

In March the royal regime wanted to get a loan from a consortium of Nepali banks to buy four MI-17s, but when the banks backed out it decided to buy only two and pay for it from the state coffers. If it cancels the order, the government will lose Rs 200 million it has paid for the letter of credit.

Unlike the MA-60 it could be argued that the helicopters are proven in Nepal's terrain and are genuinely required. But there are questions about safety. Of the six MI-17s and MI-8s that the army has bought or got as grant, only one is still airworthy. One blew up during the raid on Malangwa in February, three have crashed and one is grounded.

Sources say that the procedures of these military purchases are opaque and involve kickbacks and padding not just in the purchase but also on spare parts. Streamlining hardware procurement and making the army accountable to taxpayers should be part of the reforms contemplated for the Nepal Army.

"Buying the helicopters is the easy part provided we have the money," says one military source, "but what is the helicopter going to cost in whole life-cycle terms? These are very expensive toys."

cut the losses instead of buying unsuitable equipment and throw good money after bad.

The planes have a list price of about \$8.5 million, but Nepal will pay \$12 million each. So to save the advance, the government will end up paying close to \$8 million in 'padding' money. "This was a deal pushed by the royal government and the army," one source told us, "the intention was not only to line their pockets but also to accumulate funds to suppress the people's movement."

The irony is that the army now says it doesn't want the planes. So the aircraft are being panned off to state-run Nepal Airlines. But officials at the airline don't want the gas-guzzling MA-60s either because they would be too costly to run. ●

Visit Nepal, again and again

MALLIKA ARYAL

Nepal Tourism Board's paper trail looks different these days. Gone are the pictures of Everest, the Kumari, and the Buddha under the tree. New publicity materials for the 'Naturally Nepal' campaign carry cartoonist Abin Shrestha's illustrations of 'Rhino dai' hurrying across Basantapur laden with shopping bags, partying in Kathmandu, bungee jumping over the Bhote Koshi, and meditating at a retreat.

Faced with steadily declining arrivals, the tourism body is looking to reposition Nepal's image in the international (and especially Indian) market, and compete with other travel destinations in Asia. Since March 2006, the dreary 'Visit Nepal' campaign has been replaced with 'Naturally Nepal—Once is not Enough', which has the ambitious aim of attracting a total of 10 million tourists by 2010 and making Nepal a top ten global destination. Last year's arrival figure was 375,000.

Says Aditya Baral, NTB's Public Relations Director, "India makes up for almost 35 percent of total tourist arrival. But that does not mean we will not take our campaign to a global level."

The new campaign moves away from obvious expressions of Nepal's uniqueness, which is long-overdue. "Nepal is about our mountains, culture and heritage, but it is also about our hospitality, festivals, extreme adventure, air sports, meditation and much more," says Nandini Lahe-Thapa, Director of Tourism Marketing and Promotion at NTB. Dance bars are now being promoted as part of a suggested Stag Weekend in Kathmandu.

After launching the brand in Kathmandu in March this year, and at the ITB in Berlin in March 2006, NTB has moved onto Delhi with a series of low cost marketing initiatives, such as guerrilla poster campaigns in Gurgaon and South Delhi, a print campaign in leading dailies, search engine optimisation for the web, and promotions in cafés and movie theatres.

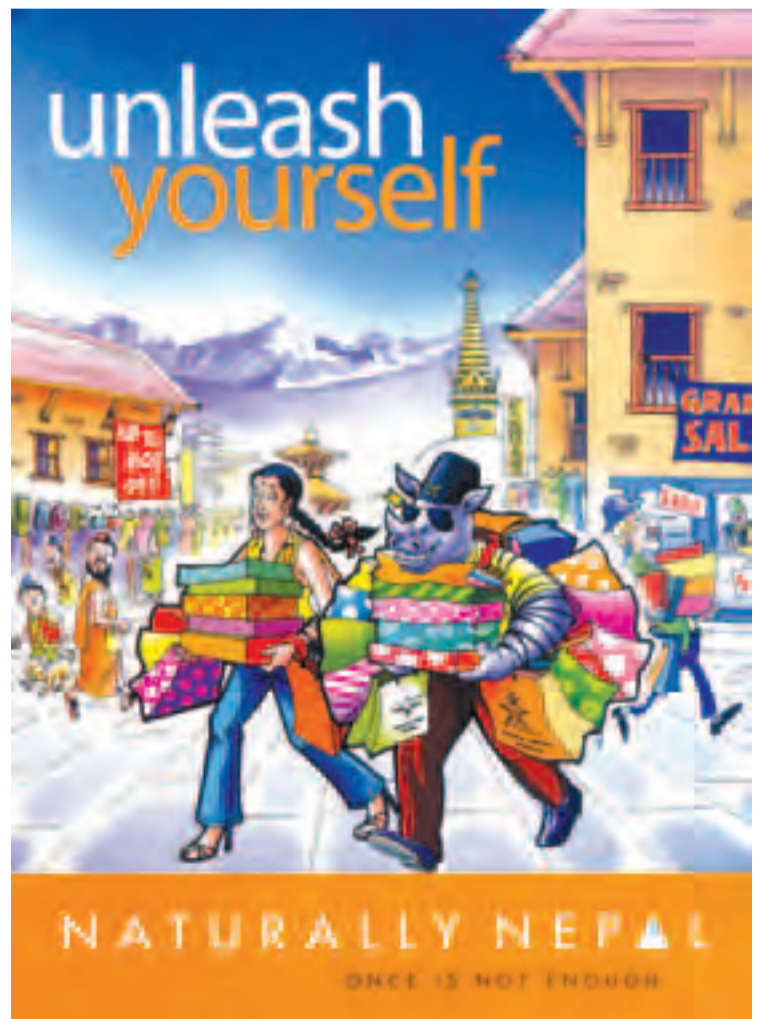
Spurred on by the political changes in April, tourist arrivals from India have increased by almost 24 percent in June compared with last year's figures. "Although we cannot take all the credit for the increase in arrivals, we are encouraged to see that more people feel it is safe to come to Nepal," says Thapa.

When tourism officials here agreed that Nepal needed to be re-branded, they found that while some of the creatives could be produced here, an outside mind was needed to better understand the pulls and patterns of international tourism. So NTB conducted a global tender in October 2005, and picked the New Delhi-based Alchemy Social Infrastructure, in large part due to budget realities.

Alchemy has previously worked on promotional campaigns for the Soaltee Group in Kathmandu, India's PVR cinemas, and with an Amsterdam-based PR agency, Y&R. Its local partner, Business Advantage, is meant to be 'creative reputation manager' for the Indian market, working with NTB from December last year through February, to develop an art-based look for the campaign, and carry out research, planning and consultation with private and government agencies in Nepal, India and other major tourist generating markets. "Unlike earlier campaigns, this brand was not based on mere intuition," Baral says.

"The campaign's tagline 'Once is not enough' should serve as a mantra for the Nepali tourism industry to focus on customer retention rather than

A cavorting Rhino Dai is Nepal's new brand ambassador



Some win, some lose

Hospitality industry trade unions had a busy week, forcing two Indian staff to leave the Casino Everest at The Everest Hotel and the country, and compromising to re-open the Yak & Yeti Hotel.

Officials at the Casino Everest said Indian nationals Rajesh Kataria and Kishore Sagar fled Nepal early this week after receiving explicit threats from local Maoist-aligned trade union members. "They were quite radical in their threats," said TR Bhatta, general manager of The Everest Hotel. Bhatta added that senior Maoist leadership, when asked to help, was responsive and said they deplored such behaviour. Ramesh Pant, chairman of the All Nepal Hotel and Restaurant Workers' Association, issued a statement denying his cadres involvement. "It is not our policy to threaten anyone," he stressed. Sources say union members have long-pressurised tourism industry entrepreneurs to hire only Nepali staff.



The incident comes during a severe struggle for supremacy between the Maoist trade union and the trade union aligned with CPN-UML. The Maoists are using the ceasefire and peace to expand and strengthen their organisation.

Meanwhile, after eight months of closure, Yak & Yeti Hotel has resumed operations. A settlement was finally negotiated between management and two trade unions, the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions and the All Nepal Trade Union Federation (Revolutionary). The Yak & Yeti employs 400 people and has been shut since 24 December 2005, following a stalemate in a labour dispute about a number of issues including annual raises. Twenty-one rooms were booked right after the re-opening was announced, said Shiva Ram Thapa, corporate president at the hotel. (Pic: Yak & Yeti Hotel welcomes its first guest after re-opening on Tuesday.)

NTB in India

Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) and Nepal's Consulate General organised a meet for press and tour operators in Kolkata last week to talk about tourism possibilities after the April movement. Acting Director of NTB Aditya Baral also talked about branding Nepal and special packages on offer for Indian tourists.

All accounted for

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nepal commended Laxmi Bank and Ace Finance for Best Presented Accounts. This is the second year that Laxmi Bank has won the award, and Ace Finance is the first financial institution to receive it. Criteria include how informative a company's annual reports are, its annual general body meetings, and adherence to good governance values.

NEW PRODUCTS

NISSAN TIIDA - Dugar Brothers & Sons, authorised distributors of Nissan vehicles and spare parts have introduced the Nissan Tiida. The car, which comes in sedan and hatchback models, has a new generation 1.8 l, four-cylinder lightweight aluminium design engine, large interior space, and plasma cluster ion air conditioner. The Rs 2.7-2.8 million Tiida is promoted as being fuel efficient, with 13km/l mileage under test conditions.

Kolkata Kathmandu

Many similarities and many lessons

It could be Kathmandu. On a recent trip to Kolkata, it took me two hours to get from the airport to the city because a mob had gathered along the way to pelt stones at a police station. Once in the city, you have to deal with a



ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed

centre that is paralysed everyday for two to four hours due to rallies and processions. There are cabs confidently propped below no parking signs, squealing horns, and pedestrians insinuated into every possible space. Kathmandu, which is now one large staging post for loktantrik assertions, is never far from one's mind.

But dig deeper, and you realise that most apt comparison is through the lessons of time. Now Kolkata is a near-constant presence on the corporate radar, as the Beed's favourite Buddhadeb Bhattacharya manages to package everything under the sun in communist gift-wrapping. But in the 25 years from 1977 that West Bengal spent under the Left Front, mistakes were made that we in Nepal can learn a lot from, as our society from right of centre to left. Industries moved away from Kolkata and people started migrating to other parts of India and the world. Unionised labour rights activists made industrial growth impossible. The ironic result was that some who refused



MIN BAJRACHARYA

to work at home under relatively fair terms, ended up working abroad in jobs with absolutely no guarantees. Power cuts paralysed the city and the urban infrastructure was crumbling. Political leaders brought the city to a standstill with regular shows of strength on the Esplanade and student leaders shut down schools and colleges, and occasionally set off bombs in College Street. Students had to make 'voluntary' donations and businesses paid a parallel tax. With this violence and mayhem, Kolkata slipped in national as well as international rankings.

The work culture rings familiar too. A job, in the public or private sector becomes a way to subsidise one's lifestyle, rather than a way to increase productivity. The successive demands made by our own trade unions resemble the extractive pseudo-militant mentality of yesteryear Kolkata. Businesses didn't argue—they shut down or relocated. Kolkata and the state are

still trying to counter the damage down by the mistakes of the West Bengal Left Front in that period.

Here's what Nepal can learn from Kolkata: Politics is not about disruption, but about lending a hand to create stability. Labour can get only what enterprise can afford. Businesses are not created as tools for social welfare; they are created to earn profits. If they can't do business here, they will move elsewhere. Education is not about the easiest way to get a degree with the least effort, but about earning competencies to take on a globalising world. Disrupting traffic and blocking roads is as effective—and immature a show of strength or displeasure as a child who cries and thrashes about on the ground the get a new toy.

There is hope. Kolkata's working towards infrastructure building and attracting a younger, more dynamic and driven work force. What we need is a change of mindset to become a society that believes that we can do and will do. ●

Re-inventing Nepal™

customer acquisition," says Arun Anand, brand consultant at Alchemy. Nepal has traditionally had up to 40 percent repeat visitors, so it's debatable whether this is a horse that needs more flogging. And repeat visitors might notice that some of the images in the brochure are not from Nepal (a Buddha set against Chinese characters), and others are plain wrong, such as an inverted image of Everest).

But if any publicity is good publicity even if it is Nepal appearing on the nightly news for the wrong reasons then Nepal is off to a flying start. Tourism veteran Yogendra Shakya, chairman of Club Himalaya, says: "While it is good to attract tourists by promising weekend retreats, it is also very important to make sure that we deliver quality products."

NTB can plaster South Delhi with posters, but if the campaign continues to have minimal local participation, no amount of cute cartoons will help. Says Shakya, "The challenge is to get everyone singing the same song. NTB can't work alone in this, it should plan to make every travel agent, every hotel owner, travel entrepreneur and every Nepali its brand ambassador." ●

PRANAV BUDHATHOKI in LONDON

Think of Croatia. To the extent that people around the world thought of it at all (aside from the World Cup) they related the former Yugoslav province with the Balkan conflict. Croatia worked so aggressively to reinvent its image in the aftermath of conflict that Brand Croatia is today seen as a country with pristine beaches, quaint towns, and Europe's darling destination for FDI.

Most other country-brands, including ours are still in a mess. India is still heat and dust and snake charmers. Bangladesh is floods and ship graveyards. Sri Lanka is Tiger territory and Pakistan is Taliban.

Nepal has neither a positive nor a negative image. It has no image. It used to be hippies-trekking-Mt Everest. But then it became royal massacre and conflict. The two cancelled each other out and we are back to neutral. But this is the time we should be moving to cash in on an international reputation for people power and non-violently overthrowing dictatorship.

After years of its begging-bowl foreign policy, Nepal is well and reflexively branded to receive aid but poorly branded for anything else: as a tourism destination, trade and investment destination, gap-year destination, or destination of any sort. Nepal needs a new brand to stand out and distinguish us from others. Some perceptions about Nepal are previously so ingrained and authoritative that they do not need to be pushed. So we should stop nattering about mountains for a while because the world knows "they're there". Re-inventing brand Nepal does not involve recycling identity from what has gone before or doing away with our heritage and tradition.

Peru, our Maoist-in-arms sister nation and war-ravaged just like us launched a concerted effort after the conflict to fine-tune its image. Its Machu Picchu and Inca trail today are swarming with corporate multinational staff on expensive confidence-boosting treks that foster teamwork. European charities sell Peru's organised treks too. Hey, didn't we invent trekking?

Our exceptional is scattered everywhere and nowhere

Nepal has a spring in its step. When we got our parliament back, there should have been a pop concert, a national food festival and a moonlight party in Tundikhel to celebrate our achievement. These should have been replicated at embassies abroad. There was so much goodwill to redeem for debt relief, the peace dividend or setting up the UN Peace Centre in Nepal.

We are still fretting over trickling in of budget backpackers this autumn. Nepal Tourism Board's vague slogan 'Naturally Nepal' should be discarded and a new, targeted campaign should be launched to attract double-income kid-less families and double-income pensioners from Europe and elsewhere who are awash with money.

And why are we aiming at lecherous Indian men? Why not target women with catchy campaigns to 'Dump Husbands, Indulge in Nepal' for spa weekends?

Nepal's embassies abroad should be at the forefront of any strategic branding offensive. Unfortunately, the post-democracy purge has left them all amabassdorless and staffed mostly by unmotivated and unproductive apparatchiks. We need the world's best-trained entrepreneurs to sell and promote brand Nepal.

The first people you meet on entering a country often mould your impressions. In Nepal, these people are scruffy and rude officials and taxi drivers on antique cars trying to rip you off every step of the way. Or is that part of the welcome ceremony?

If we want to cast off our government's dreary image, remake the political parties so they operate like enterprises. Our exceptionality is scattered everywhere and nowhere distinctly. We need to pull these all together under a unifying theme and a heavily promoted brand. Government should be at the frontline in any efforts to re-invent our identity and project them well. Corporate houses, academic institutions, media, and local communities can tag along under a pooled initiative.

The only alternative, doing nothing, would lead to people around the world continuing to stereotype the country and pigeonhole us all. ●

King wants to talk to Prachanda



Jana Aastha, 2 August

अस्तु
There is information to suggest that the king has offered to talk with Prachanda. Sources close to the palace and Maoists say that the king has been using various channels to try to

meet Prachanda this week. But it's certain that Prachanda shows no signs of agreeing to this, no matter how cold the Maoists' relationship with the seven parties may be turning. Meanwhile, although Prachanda wanted to meet Girija Prasad Koirala, the NC leader's advisers kept staving him off with excuses of no time.

These are the circumstances around the king's interest in political talks with Prachanda, and royalists have been using various channels trying to make this meeting happen. According to sources, they have approached Prachanda asking why he is not willing to meet the king if he wants to run the government with the support of thousands of supporters from the villages to the central level. "We have not sent any response as we are still in favour of sustaining our relationship with the seven parties," said one senior Maoist leader.

Sources say that king became interested in

meeting the Maoist chairman after the UML, the NC and the NC (D) cut off his privileges and authority and began in earnest to treat him as just a ceremonial monarch. His current efforts are seriously puzzling party leaders. Their best-case scenario is that the king wants the Maoists to agree to the parties' proposal of a ceremonial monarch. Or, he could be trying to widen the gap between the parties and the Maoists.

It appears that during the second round of talks in 2003 (which failed), the Maoist leaders had proposed meeting the king to know his stand on the constituent assembly. The king showed no interest then. Ironically, now that he has no power, he wants to talk to them. Koirala, on the other hand, has been distancing himself from the Maoist leaders and even outright ignoring them. When he wasn't in government, Koirala would go running to New Delhi. For the Maoists, Koirala and the king behave in the same manner when they are in power, and they take Koirala's refusal to meet Prachanda seriously. People are slowly believing that the UML and the NC, which had promised successful talks with the Maoists, have failed to make the peace process decisive.



Knowing Koirala

Nepal, 6 August

नेपाल

Girija Koirala has always been known as someone who makes decisions in haste and regrets them later. Whether as a prime minister, party president or political worker, Koirala has always made controversial decisions, and many of his political moves have been outrageous. Manohari Baral, a close friend of Koirala who struggled with him through the Rana and Panchayat regimes, says that the Koirala family doesn't know who really looks out for them. Loyal supporters were kicked out of the Koirala house, while selfish and disreputable people came as they wished.

Close family friend Bhimraj Naulakha says that when Koirala became prime minister in 1991, he was surrounded by small group of cunning politicians who encouraged him to make decisions that made him very unpopular. He was literally trapped. "Koirala was never able to form a good team and failed to advance his party and lead the country well," says Naulakha.

The reason he has backing in the party is because he fights hard for his party and the movement, and he can impress anyone. For example, it's difficult to keep up with Koirala. Not even his deteriorating health has slowed

him down. He remains patient, confident, and hopeful, no matter how difficult the political situation. Koirala is also praised for his simplicity, cheerfulness, friendliness and generosity. He didn't change even when his health worsened, which earned him more friends.

Koirala's lifestyle has never changed much. Since he gave up his favourite western-style suits and ties, he has always worn a white homespun kurtha pyjama with a coat. He still uses his favourite fragrances, Evening in Paris and Kanta. Koirala is non-vegetarian, he relishes mutton and chicken, and is also fond of eating vegetables from his own kitchen garden. He enjoys tea and drinks six-seven glasses a day, and takes a glass of milk every morning. Koirala used to smoke



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VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Nepal was established in May 2005, following the signature of an agreement of cooperation with the Government of Nepal. The Office has a mandate to monitor the observance of human rights and international humanitarian law, bearing in mind the climate of violence and the internal conflict in the country with a view to advising the authorities of Nepal on the formulation and implementation of policies, programmes and measures for the promotion and protection of human rights in Nepal. The office is seeking to fill the following positions:

UNV/International Interpreter/Translator, 5 positions

Based in Kathmandu, Pokhara, Biratnagar and Nepalgunj under the direct supervision of the Field Office Coordinator, the incumbents will perform the following main functions: Interpret at various meetings as and when the need arises - this includes interpreting for the Field Coordinator and International Field Human Rights Officers and other UN officials, during meetings with government officials, NGO's, interviews with victims and family members, and/or the general population. Participate in field missions to assist the Field Human Rights Officers in gathering information related to the conflict and to human rights/humanitarian law violations. Interpret at various interviews during visits to detention centres including with security forces and persons deprived of their liberty. Assist in taking notes during meetings when required. Assist in translating confidential or other documents from Nepali to English ensuring that all deadlines are met and the quality of translation is adequate. Keep track of all his/her translations of documents and maintain copies of the translated materials. Advise the requestor on the approximate completion time of requests for translations of documents. Coordinates and/or supports his/her interpretation/translation work with the National Interpreter/Translators. Performs other related functions, as required.

Qualifications and other desirable skills for the positions: Advanced University degree, preferably in Foreign languages or equivalent, law, international relations, literature, anthropology or other disciplines related to social sciences. A combination of relevant academic qualifications and experience may be accepted in lieu of the advanced university degree.

Some experience in simultaneous interpretation/translation desirable.

Ability to work in an international and multi-ethnic environment and good interpersonal skills. High awareness of the political sensitivity of the work to be undertaken. The incumbent will be relied upon to use utmost discretion and maintain confidentiality of all materials relating to the work. Knowledge of the historical, political and cultural situation of Nepal. Skills in word processing (MS Word for Windows, Excel), use of the INTERNET and electronic messaging. Very good physical condition.

Candidates are requested to complete a UN Personal History form available either at UN offices throughout the country or the OHCHR's webpage <http://nepal.ohchr.org/vacancy.htm>. **The deadline for applications is 11 August 2006.** All applicants are strongly encouraged to submit their applications by email mentioning the vacancy title at personnel_np@ohchr.org or mail it to Personnel Officer - OHCHR - Nepal P.O. Box 24555 Kathmandu, Nepal.

Only short listed candidates will be contacted.

60-70 cigarettes a day, especially after the death of his beloved wife Sushma, but has recently quit on the advice of his doctor. He still drinks a couple of pegs of whisky.

Koirala is quite passionate about photography – in the early days he made a special trip to Calcutta to buy equipment, and mostly photographed his wife. He has an interesting quirk that still endures – he makes sure that anyone who takes his picture sends him a copy.

Envoy selection

Chalphal, 30 July

सुभाष

During the royal regime, Nepal's diplomacy sector became a recruitment centre for royalists and sycophants. With all the political changes in Nepal, the diplomatic community is also trying to redeem itself by becoming more inclusive and loktantrik. Although 12 serving ambassadors were recalled by the new government, it still hasn't been able to send new envoys to replace them. A highly placed source in the government tells us that the government has been doing its homework for the selection process. Deputy Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and Prime Minister Koirala are in the process of finalising standards for new nominations. Apparently, the House of Representatives will hold special hearings for important diplomatic positions. The CPN (UML) has been pushing nominees who could improve Nepal's image abroad, and they believe civil society should be represented. The party has recommended Nilambar Acharya [for a top ambassadorial post], and says it will obtain India's support if necessary. The UML has also recommended party central committee and foreign department member Radha Gyawali. The party believes that Gyawali's background in political science and diplomacy will be an asset to Nepal's diplomatic community and that she [CHK] should be in an important foreign ministry position. Milan Tuladhar is the choice for China' forwarded by the UML and political experts. Former student leader Tanka Karki is also on the list, and UML central advisory committee chairperson Kamal Koirala has been recommended for SAARC country. Others on the list include human rights activist Arjun Karki, Sushil Pyakurel, Murari Sharma, Ganesh Yonjon and Professor Surya Subedi. The NC has recommended former vice chancellor Nabin Prakash Jung Shah and Suprabha Ghimire, while the NC (D) has recommended Lok Raj Baral, Sagar Samsher and Balbahadur Kunwar.

Garbage politics

Rajdhani, 3 August

राजधानी

Millions of rupees allocated one-and-half years ago to manage the Sisdol Landfill Dumping Site in Okharpauwa, Nuwakot, where Kathmandu's garbage goes are being misused. Residents complain that the coordination committee, which last year spent Rs 3.5 million to



KIRAN PANDAY

manage the garbage in an environment-friendly manner, has not made any progress in the area.

Local resident Basudev Ghimire complained that the committee has never reported how the money was spent last year and under what headings. "We were assured that one person from each house would be given employment, but nothing has happened," he said. Residents have started investigating how the money was spent, and have refused to allow garbage trucks from Kathmandu in since Saturday, arguing that while the dumping has gone on, they have not received any of the benefits the site is obliged to tender them. Among the various agreements not honoured is the promise to build a 40-bed hospital in the area and provide free medical services to the residents. On average 300 tons of Kathmandu's garbage is dumped in Sisdol Landfill everyday.

Residents say that reporting the breach of agreement to the concerned departments and the Local Development Ministry several times has had no impact.

Uncivil society

Yubaraj Ghimire in Samaya, 4 August

समाय

At a time when the Maoists and the government can't agree on the fate of parliament, other disagreements have surfaced. They may look serious, but they're not natural, and if there is a commitment to negotiate, a solution can be found. However, there are elements posing as allies trying to provoke both sides.

It may not be a bad idea to keep parliament so there is no political vacuum and so it can help the peace process. However, if parliament becomes a den of murky conspiracies it may actually end up being destructive. Why was the Speaker in such a hurry to instruct the government to sign the Rome Statute? Why was it done without consultations, and on behalf of which organisation or group was the move made?

There is a similar danger from the Maoist side. Prachanda now wants a parliament that has already agreed on an election for

a constituent assembly to announce a republic through the interim parliament. This is disingenuous coming from a man who earlier had promised to abide by the constituent assembly verdict even if it was in favour of monarchy. Why is Prachanda emulating the king to wrest away the people's choice? Making such a statement when the Maoists haven't yet laid down their weapons smacks of 'terrorist' tactics and not open politics. The future of the monarchy is something that the people have to decide through free and fair ballot, not through threats. Prachanda should also remember that even if Koirala or Sitaula give in to all his demands and hand power over to the Maoists it won't have any meaning. Only the people can make such decisions, and in a free election.

In all this there is a section of civil society and parliamentary left leaders who seem more responsive to what the Maoists want than what the country needs. If civil society is now on the streets as a pressure group for the Maoists, then we can conclude that civil society no longer exists. Civil society can't be used by anyone as a twin brother of any one party.

True, there are doubts about the constituent assembly elections. But these doubts can be tackled by talking to the government and the Maoists. Instead of taking responsibility for patching up and finding a solution, civil society is taking to streets to widen the gap between the Maoists and the government.

The government, Maoists, parliament and civil society should be showing responsibility and playing a creative role to solve problems. After a point, 'agitation' becomes not just counterproductive but also gives birth to anarchy.

"This movement will not end until we have a democratic republic."



KIRAN PANDAY

Interview with civil society activist Dr Debendra Pandey Himal Khabarpatrika, 1-16 August

सिंह

It looks like the size of the movement has reduced after some partners reached government posts?

One need not worry about the size of the movement. This is not a competition for power but a struggle driven by ideology and beliefs. There might be fewer people involved, but the main issue is to free ourselves from the slavery of monarchy. That some people leave the movement to help the state does not diminish the impact of the movement. The sit-in on 26 July proves this.

Why are you still on the road when others have left?

This is a journey and we have not felt abandoned. We have been spurred on by the concerns of thousands of civilians who fear that the movement might become diffuse and that regressive forces could profit from that.

But party workers have left the movement?

Members from all parties participated in the sit-in. People who know them know that they did. I did not feel good about Maoist student organisation cadres coming with flags and shouting party slogans. Our appeal to all is not to carry party flags and banners in civil society movements.

What is the aim of the citizens' movement?

What I understood from last year was that there were many who were satisfied with King Gyanendra leaving power, restoring democracy and parliament. That is their right. But the people's movement is for a democratic republic. Until that is achieved the movement will go on.



Don't worry dear, I'm in the hospital now but I managed to get the prepaid card

सिंह Robin Sayami in Himal Khabarpatrika, 1-16 August

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“ You call it abduction, we see it as educational tours. ”

Lekhnath Neupane, President of All Nepal National Free Students Union (Revolutionary) explaining why the Maoists took students out from school across the country. Nepal Television, 30 July.



CARLEY PETESCH

Below the stoic, humbling mountains that ring Kathmandu Valley, the chaos of life and the lively people who create it have a palpable rhythm. In the tradition and culture here is movement. As a dancer from America recently arrived in Nepal, I wanted to explore the movement of Nepal, magnify it and understand more about the country's traditional dances in order to learn more about the pace of life here.

Of the numerous dances attributed to various cultural groups and social movements, my main interest was the Newari Dance, in part because I'm based in Kathmandu and it makes sense to explore the culture with its deepest roots here. All I knew to start with was that Newari dance was festive, and included traditional costumes and masks. But when I started exploring, I came up against a curious challenge: finding places to learn the Newari Dance and see it being performed is more difficult than you think. Despite Kathmandu and Bhaktapur's abundant Newari population, the ritualistic and celebratory dances are sadly not often taught in dance studios, and the dance is mostly performed in a few tourist venues or at festivals.

"People don't have time anymore to pass on such traditions," said Raju Hyaumikha, 38, the director of

the Kathmandu University-based Newari Music and Dance Centre in Bhaktapur. "Now people have different occupations than when I was young, so they don't have time to think about this older culture."

Most traditional dance and music schools agree that teaching Newari Dance in order to preserve the culture is extremely important. The dance movement tells stories of the deities and reflects various religious and philosophical aspects of Newari culture. These schools often carry on traditional Newari music classes, but in the months between festivals, dance classes are scarce. "Students are studying hard," Hyaumikha explained, "the classes will start up again next term."



PICS: CARLEY PETESCH

Newari Dance

Similarly, The Sadhana Kala Kendra dance school does not presently give Newari Dance classes unless a solo class is specifically requested. "The centre was founded to preserve Nepali Dance and music. Nepali people play instruments poorly, so we are here to form stronger musicians," the school's director Tikendra Rai explained. As far as dance goes, though, the school teaches what is in demand from its students. Rai said that classical and Nepali folk dances are more commercial dances that are taught year round. He claimed that the most popular classes at his school are Hindi and modern dances. "Nepali people demand these dances," Rai said. "Newari dance is not in high demand unless there is a festival."

Suresh Nepali, 36, has been a dance student for 18 years and performs various dances with his wife from time to time. "I started with modern dance, moved to Nepali folk and then I learned Newari," Nepali said. "Now, people want variety," he explained. Newari Dance embodies only one culture and dance students want to branch out. "Newari Dance," he said, "is also the most difficult to learn. There is a specific language, and when studying Newari Dance, one must also study the music." Nepali, once a private teacher of Newari and Nepali folk dances, also believes that he and others simply don't have enough time to dedicate to this art.

It is saddening that in a country so reliant on its traditions, that one rich tradition is scarcely found. If the most popular dances taught originate from another country, how is Nepali dance preserved?

Back at Sadhana Kala Kendra, the dance teachers generously agreed to show me

some traditional Newari Dance. They clothed themselves in black and red patterned costumes complete with the traditional accessories: a red flower, macasi earrings, thick hollowed-silver ankle bracelets and a gold headpiece. They were delighted to practice this dance for me and I was happy to have my first glimpse at Newari Dance culture. Their version was a duet, nimble and celebratory as they danced in circles around each other.

Aside from a private showing in a dance school, or attendance at a festival, it seems to me the only venues for truly exposing oneself regularly to ritual Newari dance are hotels and restaurants around Kathmandu. There, several dance groups perform traditional dance during meals or as a separate showing. Last Tuesday I attended a traditional performance in a beautifully decorated and peaceful studio on the top of Hotel Vajra. One of the most respectable and well-known dance groups performs there—Kala-Mandapa, The Institute of Nepali Performing Arts. This group directed by Rajendra Shrestha is one of the cultural centres in Kathmandu devoted to propagating the rich traditions of Newari culture's performing arts.

Shrestha has made Newari dance accessible outside of its traditional festival setting. He has taken the religious, ritualistic and philosophical aspects of the dance and woven them into a performing arts form that is shown weekly. Kala-Mandapa's repertoire includes ritual operatic dance drama, ritual dances of gods and festive rhythmic dances, as well as comical and satirical social dramas.

The Newari Dance I saw here was vastly different from that at the Sadhana Kala Kendra. The costumes were made of rich, brightly coloured fabrics and the dancers wore thick make-up, intricate crowns and ornate jewellery. The movement was low to the ground and deeply centred with dancer's limbs that expanded, hands that stretched far back with fingers that were strong. This dance was not like western dance, where nowadays, anything goes, and tradition is not very influential. This dance told a story, had a philosophy, and every gesture, stance and glance had meaning. This was the Newari Dance I had been searching for, one that mirrored the deep religious and cultural aspects of Nepal.

"Through dance and music, we learn the real knowledge of our being," Shrestha said. One hopes for a realisation in Nepal of the richness of the country's movement traditions. And I hope that Newari Dance, a vital and once-vibrant part of Newari culture, is further supported and taught. ●

The Sadhana Kala Kendra Dance School

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Transparency is not in where we stand, but in what direction we are moving.

— J. W. Williams



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From guns to grown-up jobs

MARTY LOGAN

Ten years of conflict have dumped loads of distress and destruction onto this country but also revealed some positive findings about Nepali society. One is that, deprived of their men and forced to manage their families' affairs, women are far more resilient and resourceful than most people ever gave them credit for. Another is that even faced with imminent danger to their most precious assets, their children, parents plan carefully before they rush their offspring to safety.

The latter was one finding of a recent field study about children forced to flee the conflict in villages to work in Nepal's towns and cities. 'Family and village networks supported the children well during migration. Exploitative labour agents and traffickers were not reported,' says *Asylums of Exploitation*, published by Nepal-based INGO Terre des Hommes Foundation

supported by Save the Children Alliance and based on research conducted by the Centre for Research on Environment, Health and Population Activities (CREHPA).

"Maoists would visit houses three times. They would threaten the parents-give us Rs 50,000 or your child. After the second visit, the children migrated," explained Moni Shrestha and Laxmi Shrestha, field coordinators for the research study from CREHPA. "Parents are very alert. When they know the Maoists are attacking a neighbouring village, they send their children to the city," the coordinators told us.

The study also contradicts the assumption that families, in their fear and desperation due to the conflict, are careless in placing their children in labour situations. But that does not make the work done by the children any less exploitative. 'The level of verbal and corporal punishment of labouring children was much higher than expected. As well, the amount of social discrimination

against labouring children was extreme, and was noted by many children,' says the report.

Researchers interviewed 413 internally displaced children (267 boys and 146 girls) ages 10-17 in Kathmandu, Pokhara and Biratnagar. Of the 141 in the capital, the largest number, 50, worked in carpet factories. In Pokhara, 40 out of 138 were domestics and in Biratnagar 41 of the 134 children interviewed worked in restaurants.

On average, girls worked 11 hours a day and boys nine. Despite this, most described their working situations as good or average. All-except for street children-were eating regularly, almost all children had access to medicine but not necessarily health care and one-fifth of boys and three-fifths of girls were taking classes, either formally or informally.

One-half of girls and one-quarter of boys were sending money to their families but many children, particularly domestic workers and mechanics helpers were unpaid. Many of those children had been targeted by Maoists (rather than leaving for indirect reasons like their school shutting down) and their parents simply wanted to send them somewhere safe as fast as possible, said Moni Shrestha.

Some employers took advantage of that desperation, said Laxmi Shrestha. One girl told researchers: "I have to get up at 3AM, otherwise they pour a pan of water on me. The employer's children also discriminate against me,

Women and children are vulnerable to the effects of conflict, but are more resilient than expected



saying, 'You are a servant! Get away from me'. My employer's wife teaches her children to talk like this."

The study notes that children who have made contact with NGOs are far more likely to seek help dealing with exploitative workplaces but also criticises NGOs for not putting

more effort into finding and helping conflict displaced children.

The study found no reason to conclude that displaced children are treated worse overall than other working kids but its findings reinforce the need for society to work harder to end exploitative labour. ●

Recommendations

Central government should: relax school enrolment rules so IDP children without documentation can study

Municipalities should: provide basic health care services and access to education

NGOs should: shift emphasis from drop-in centres and shelters to mobile outreach

Families employing children should: finance their education and health care and link them with supporting organisations

Employers should: receive training on supporting and protecting working children, existing laws and child rights and make necessary changes to provide these

Life in a nondemocracy

Acemoglu and Robinson's recent book, *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* is a major contribution to the understanding of democratisation and the endurance of democracy as a political institution.

Amidst the structural transformations that are occurring in Nepali politics today, it is a timely read for those interested in gaining insights into the mechanisms that



BOOK
Avidit Acharya

underlie political change. Although the book is a general theory of democratisation, and the authors never mention Nepal (South Africa, Britain, Singapore and Argentina are cited) it provides a theoretical framework that can explain the history of Nepal's elusive quest for a consolidated democracy.

At the heart of the book is the distinction between 'democracy' and 'nondemocracy'. In a nondemocracy, policies reflect the interest of the rich 'elites', who are a minority, whereas in a democracy, policies reflect the interests of the majority of citizens, who are relatively poor.

Both democratic and nondemocratic governments seek to implement their preferred policies, but are constrained by external threats. The elites, when they are in power, are threatened by the possibility

of revolution. The citizens, when they have power in a democracy, are threatened by the possibility that the elites will mount a coup.

Faced with such threats, democratic and nondemocratic regimes, if they are to survive, must make concessions. They can either offer to change policy, or to give up power. The problem with concessions through policy is that they may not be credible. In the threat of a revolution today, the elite will try to promise reform, but tomorrow, when the threat subsides, they will find it in their best interest to renege. In consideration of this, the revolutionaries, when they are strong, have no reason to accept promises of policy concession. They will demand more. They will demand that the political institutions be changed so that they can guarantee themselves favourable policies in the future as well. Democratisation is a way of making such guarantees.

Democratisation occurs when inequality is high so that the disenfranchised have incentives to contest power. However, since income gets lost and assets get damaged when a revolution occurs, it is possible that the gains from revolution may not be as high as the costs of it. When inequality is low, the citizens do not have much to gain by revolting, so a revolution will not be a threat. This is the case in Singapore, which is a relatively equal nondemocracy.

At higher levels of inequality, however,

the citizens do have something to gain, so a revolution can take place and the elites will have to make credible concessions. This explains why the Ranas, the Panchayat and recently King Gyanendra conceded power. However, when inequality is extremely high, then again democratisation will not take place, because the rulers will find it less costly to repress a revolution than to make concessions.

Probing the economic origins of dictatorship and democracy

In 1990, in order to prevent the monarch from using further repression, the democrats of Jana Andolan I struck a bargain with the king that although policies would be decided by parliament, the king could keep his crown and control of the army. The deal led to the institution of constitutional monarchy that we have had since then. Evidently, however, the citizens felt that too much was conceded, and their patience finally wore out this past April.

Not surprisingly, there is a belief among some critics that 'democracy failed in Nepal' and that alternative political

institutions must be sought. The Maoists for instance have appealed to communism. One should be careful in making such arguments. As the Acemoglu-Robinson theory seems to imply, there are many types of democracies.

In fact, there is a continuum of types: from democracy that caters less to the citizens and more to the elites, gradually to that which caters more to the citizens and less to the elites. There are many ways to share power in democracy, and just because one type of democracy is not successful does not mean that democracy, in general, cannot work. ●



Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy
Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson
2006, Cambridge University Press

Unfriendly fire

Report tallies the destruction of a deadly decade

War is dirty business. Unconventional wars are even more so—they devastate the landscape unrecognisably. People die in ways normally unimaginable. Fathers cremate their sons.

In internal armed conflicts, friendly forces and enemies are identical in appearance. Every tool has the potential of being used as a weapon. The harder a state tries to win, the deeper it sinks in the quagmire of retribution and reprisal.

'Collateral damage' is higher in internal armed conflicts, since the line between the militant and the militia is so thin. The farmer in the paddy field may be a militia in mufti. The youngster in telltale boots in the bus may be a real soldier. Or not.

There is no proven way to calculate the impact of a war. The consequences of the Doramba killings or the Madi massacre are impossible to calculate. You can't put a price on the grief of a widow, an orphan or aged parents.

The cost of war is a rough estimate of identifiable losses and opportunities. It's basically a guesstimate. As the peace process moves along, it can be instructive to look back and see what we have collectively lost in the last decade of conflict. That, say the researchers of the report *A Decade of Disaster*, is their main objective.

The subtitle of the report is more appropriate: *Human and Physical Cost of the Nepali Conflict, 1996-2005*. The term 'disaster' sounds rather too banal to describe a conflict that tore our social fabric apart. That's



NARESH NEWAR

another problem with this publication: the choice of words, sentence structures, and the writing style makes a reader wish the report were in Nepali. Come to think of it, why is it published in English anyway?

Among other tallies of death and destruction, the report lists number of children killed in the conflict by gender, district and region in detail that can be shocking if we pause to think that every child had a story, a future and two grieving parents. Other than shock value, however, it's difficult to see how such numbers will be of any use in designing post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction measures.

Despite the desolation it brings, war is a lucrative business for some. Merchants of death benefit most from shady weapon deals done in the heat of war. War means bigger budgets, faster promotions, less transparency,

bigger contracts and bigger kickbacks.

Though the book is a rehash of published statistics and contains very little original data or information, it can be a handy reference for consultants to prepare powerpoint presentations and for donors interested in rehab and recon. To the rest of us, it's a timely reminder that war is too important a matter to be left to commissars in grey shirts and generals in olive green. After the April Uprising, it's incumbent upon us to give peace a chance. Real freedom, as Jean-Paul Sartre observed, is what we do with what has been done to us. ●

CK Lal



A Decade of Disaster: Human and Physical Cost of Nepal Conflict, 1996-2005
A Research Report, May 2006
Page: vi+134, Price: Rs 500
Community Study and Welfare Centre (CSWC)

Nepal must defend its Asian Cricket Council title this month to qualify for the 2007 world cup

Once and future champions

PRERANA MARASINI

After practicing for a month at the Tribhuvan University grounds, Nepal's national cricket team is confident about facing Pakistan. The national team is leaving on 5 August to play three practice matches in Pakistan before the upcoming Asian Cricket Council Trophy 2006 in Malaysia from 13-27 August. There is both pressure and great hope, as the under -19 squad won the Asia Cup last year, beating a strong Malaysian team.

In Karachi, Nepal will play against three different teams of Pakistan's National Cricket Academy, and in Kuala Lumpur it will play round-robin elimination matches against Kuwait, Hong Kong, Myanmar and Bhutan. Nepal has to top this group to enter the quarterfinals of the ACC Trophy.

And then the nail biting begins. "If we come out as a winner in the ACC Trophy, we'll secure a place for the ICC Cricket World Cup; if we are runners-up, we'll qualify for the Asia Cup," says Shakti Gauchan, vice captain of the national team.

It's a strong squad, though the selection process was marred by some controversy. Wicketkeeper Chhetri caught out five batsmen in the last ICC under-19 Cricket World Cup 2006 held in Sri Lanka in February. Besides Chhetri, the team is also counting on players like Sarad Veswakar, Paresh Lohani, Shakti Gauchan, and Paras Khadka among others. Top off-spinner Sanjam Regmi's omission was hotly debated, but Bijay Sharma, who heads the selection committee, defended his decision: "Sanjam is a good bowler but he not a great batsman. Akash Gupta, who is replacing Sanjam, can do both well."



BIKASH KARKI

"When selecting players for events like this, we look for players who have already played at least national games. International experience is a bonus" said Sharma. For example, Mehboob Alam, another top player, who usually plays for Qatar's Set Club but was recalled by the Cricket Association of Nepal and has been training with the team for the last few months.

The team is strong, but not all it could be. Kanishka Chaugain, who captained Nepal's winning team at last year's ACC tournament in Malaysia and who's been a star national player since 2000, is heading US-wards to study. "I know how important these games are and that the team was counting on me," he said, "but I have to focus on education." Captain Binod Das says that while Chaugain will be missed, Mahesh Chhetri, his replacement, is a solid team player.

At the ACC Trophy, the Nepali team is looking to not just field and bowl well, but to improve their often weak batting, says vice captain Gauchan. To reach the finals in Malaysia, Nepal will have to play 17 countries, including heavyweights like former champions Malaysia, the UAE and Hong Kong. ●

Counting our losses 1996-2006

Total Number of people killed	:	13,190
Teachers killed	:	173
Children killed	:	446
Municipal property destroyed	:	Rs 41.58 million
DDC property destroyed	:	Rs 33.06 million
Telecommunication facilities destroyed	:	Rs 358 million

Stop the band-aid treatment

Without a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East, there will be more Lebanons.

The Middle East is a tinderbox, with key players on all sides waiting for every chance to destroy their enemies. Israel's vulnerability, and a repetitive cause of violence, is the holding of prisoners. Militant Palestinians and Lebanese know that a captured Israeli soldier or civilian is a cause of conflict or a



ANALYSIS
Jimmy Carter

valuable bargaining chip for prisoner exchange, and there have been many such trades.

June's renewed violence came when Palestinians dug a tunnel under the barrier that surrounds Gaza and assaulted Israeli soldiers, killing two and capturing one. They offered to exchange him for the release of 95 women and 313 children from the almost 10,000 Arabs in Israeli prisons. Israel rejected a swap and attacked Gaza in an attempt to free the soldier and stop rocket fire into Israel. The resulting destruction brought reconciliation between warring Palestinian factions and support for them throughout the Arab world.

Hezbollah militants in south Lebanon then killed and captured Israeli soldiers, and insisted on Israel's withdrawal from disputed territory and an exchange for some of the several thousand incarcerated Lebanese. With US backing, Israeli bombs and missiles rained down on Lebanon. Soon, Hezbollah rockets supplied by Syria



and Iran were striking northern Israel.

Israel has a right to defend itself against attacks on its citizens, but it is inhumane and counterproductive to punish civilian populations in the illogical hope that they will then blame Hamas and Hezbollah for provoking the devastating response. Instead, Arab and worldwide support has increased for these groups, while Israel and the United States are condemned.

Israel belatedly announced, but did not carry out, a two-day cessation in bombing Lebanon, after global condemnation of an air attack on the Lebanese village of Qana, where 57 civilians were killed and where 106 died from the same cause 10 years ago. As before there were expressions of 'deep regret', a promise of 'immediate investigation' and the defence that

dropped leaflets had warned families in the region to leave their homes.

The urgent need in Lebanon is that Israeli attacks stop, that Lebanon's regular military forces control the southern region of the country, that Hezbollah cease as a separate fighting force, and future attacks against Israel be prevented. Israel should withdraw from all Lebanese territory and release Lebanese prisoners. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has rejected such a ceasefire.

Even Security Council implementation of such a solution will be a band-aid. The current conflict is part of a repetitive cycle of violence that results from the absence of a comprehensive settlement in the region, exacerbated by the unprecedented six-year absence of any effort to achieve this goal.

Leaders on both sides ignore strong

peace majorities, allowing extremist-led violence to preempt all opportunities for building a political consensus.

Traumatized Israelis cling to the false hope that their lives will be made safer by incremental unilateral withdrawals from occupied areas, while Palestinians see their remnant territories reduced to human dumping grounds surrounded by a 'security barrier' that embarrasses Israel's friends and fails to bring safety or stability.

The general parameters of a long-term, two-state agreement are well known. Israel is violating key UN resolutions, official US policy and the international 'road map' for peace by occupying Arab lands and oppressing the Palestinians. Except for negotiated modifications, Israel's official pre-1967 borders must be honoured, and US government leaders stay in the forefront of achieving this long-delayed goal.

A major impediment to progress is the US administration's policy that dialogue on controversial issues only comes as a reward for subservient behaviour. Direct engagement with the PLO or the Palestinian Authority and Syria will be necessary for secure negotiated settlements. Failure to address these issues and leaders risks the creation of an arc of even greater instability running from Jerusalem through Beirut, Damascus, Baghdad and Tehran. ●

(Project Syndicate)

Jimmy Carter is a former President of the United States and the founder of the nonprofit Carter Center in Atlanta.

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Stalemate makes de Mistura mission leave with work half finished

Mission (partly) accomplished

SUMAN PRADHAN

The high-level UN peace mission to Nepal wanted a consensus on arms management by the time it left on Thursday. That didn't happen, but the trip was not in vain.

It did inject a sense of urgency to the peace process, and give the issue of demilitarisation a momentum on which future efforts can be built. Given the polarised positions on both sides perhaps it was too much to expect things to be patched up so quickly.

Despite a week of official and behind-the-scenes meetings by de Mistura with the Maoists, the two sides failed to agree on the key issue of arms management. Both sides, however, did reiterate their commitment to the eight-point agreement of 16 June that deals with other political aspects of the peace process.

A UN diplomat said that though it was disappointing, the inability to secure an arms agreement now was not a blow to the peace process. "The issue could be taken up again in the near future," he said.

De Mistura arrived here last week with a mandate to forge a consensus on demilitarisation ahead of constituent assembly elections. Several ideas were floated, including a 'Double Key' approach to arms management (see box).

The Maoists initially agreed to Double Key, but later insisted that the Nepal Army should also be subjected to the same rules. The government and army both



MIN BAJRACHARYA

"I'M NOT DISAPPOINTED": Staffan de Mistura puts on a brave face as he faces reporters before flying back to New York on Thursday.

said no and the UN apparently saw little reason to push them hard at this point. The meeting between Prime Minister Koirala and Pushpa Kamal Dahal Wednesday evening appears to have been sidetracked by other discussions.

Additionally, rebel negotiators linked arms storage with overarching political issues, calling on the UN and Nepal government to try for a comprehensive 'package' agreement on an interim government, joint command of the two armies and reforms in the Nepal Army.

Asked if his party accepted the double key approach to arms management, Maoist chief negotiator, Krishna Bahadur

Mahara told us: "Yes we do, but only if the Nepal Army is subjected to same conditions."

His colleague Deb Gurung elaborated: "We will not agree to a system that separates only us from our arms. Bring a formula equal to both sides, and we have no problems in accepting it."

A senior Nepal government official said that it would be unrealistic to expect the Nepal Army to submit to disarmament. "Everywhere, it has been the rebels who have been disarmed, not the legitimate force."

While the Maoists face considerable pressure from their commanders in the field who do not want to give up their weapons, the government may also have found it hard to convince the

Nepal Army about being confined to barracks.

De Mistura is concerned that emerging crises elsewhere in the world will distract the UN. Secretary General Kofi Annan has taken a keen interest in Nepal, and he thinks his retirement at the end of this year could leave the future uncertain.

"Will Nepal be a priority for a new secretary general? We don't know," said a source close to the UN mission, "this is the reason why de Mistura was really appealing for a consensus on the arms management. That would have strengthened the UN's role in Nepal and would have contributed towards lasting peace." ●

The 'Double Key' formula

The double key formula has widely been used in conflict resolution in many parts of the world. Under this system combatant armies are confined to separate barracks which have armouries in which each weapons inventory is stored under two sets of locks. One set of keys is held by the respective combatant army and the other by UN monitors.

The disagreement in Nepal is over the Maoists insisting that the Nepal Army be subject to the same procedure of weapon storage as itself, and the military saying that as the army of a legitimate state it can't be treated at the same level as a rebel force.

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INVITATION FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR INDEPENDENT PRE MIDTERM REVIEW STUDIES

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) implements the Livelihoods and Forestry Programme (LFP) in cooperation with the Government of Nepal (GoN), Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation (MFSC). This ten-year programme started in April 2001 and is under implementation in 15 districts of Nepal. LFP is implemented in coordination with a range of partners including MFSC, local government bodies and civil society organisations. The programme goal is to improve livelihoods and reduce vulnerability of poor and excluded people. DFID wishes to commission independent studies of LFP's major areas of intervention between August 21 and the end of September 2006. The study outcomes will inform the DFID/GoN Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the programme scheduled for November 2006. To take this task forward, DFID would hereby like to invite expressions of interest from qualified and competent consultancy firms, organisations or teams of individuals to conduct studies in one or more of the following areas:

- Sustainable Forest Management
- Social mobilisation
- Quick Impact Activities

The expression of interest must include:

a) technical proposals which should include i) CVs of the proposed team members ii) Availability iii) Relevant experience and iv) Documentation regarding legal and tax status of organisation (if proposal from an organisation); and
b) financial proposals which should include i) Fee rates for individual team members; and ii) other operational costs.

The last date for submission of Expressions of Interest is 10 August 2006, 5pm. Short-listed individuals/organisations are expected to participate in a workshop on 14 or 15 August. Interested teams of individuals and organisations may contact DFID main gate, Ekantakuna, Lalitpur for the study Terms of References (ToRs) from 9am to 5pm. Proposals should be submitted to:

Programme Support Officer
Livelihoods Pillar
DFID Nepal
PO Box 106, Kathmandu, Nepal

DFID Department for International Development

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Indian Philosopher, 1869-1948

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ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Colours of Life** an exhibition by various Nepali artists at Hotel Glacier, Pokhara till 10 August.
- ❖ **Exhibition of Creation** An exhibition of paintings and installation art by Japanese artist Masanori Yoneda at Siddhartha Art Gallery till 10 August. 4218048
- ❖ **SARLM** a painting exhibition by Korean American Artist Joong Baek Kim Nepal Art Council, till 11 August. 4220735
- ❖ **Harmony: Sculpture Symposium 2006** at NAFA complex till 18 August.
- ❖ **Impressions of Manang** 10-28 September, Nepal Tourism Board



EVENTS

- ❖ **FSA Film Club** presents Director Mohan Mainali's *Six Stories* and *Seeking Peace in Karnali* at Yala Maya Kendra, 4 August at 5PM, Rs 50. Films followed by discussion with the filmmakers. 5542544
- ❖ **Satgati (Deliverance)** by Satyajit Ray at Nepal India Library, RNAC building, 4 August, 3PM.
- ❖ **Human Rights** discussion with Rabindra Bhattarai, 5 August, at Martin Chautari.
- ❖ **A Tribute to Artist RN Joshi** pre launch of a book and art workshop, 5 August, Park Gallery. 5522307
- ❖ **Shubharambha** classic music and songs of early '50s to early '90s, at Russian Culture Centre, 5th August, 3PM. 9841313979
- ❖ **Teej Festival** at Radisson Hotel, stalls, exhibition, sale and more 11-12 August, 9AM-7PM. 4425898
- ❖ **A View from the Bridge** by Rato Bangala School's Aangan Tedo at St Xavier's College, 11-13 August. 5522614
- ❖ **Sunsilk Nepal Fashion Week** at Hotel Hyatt Regency 10-14 August
- ❖ **Changa Chait-2063** Battle in the sky at Club Himalaya on 9,16 and 23 September.
- ❖ **Alcoholics Anonymous** problems with alcohol? 9851016079

MUSIC

- ❖ **Cloud Walkers** at Moksh Live, 4 August, 8.30 PM, Rs 150 5526212
- ❖ **Heartbreakers** live every Friday at Rum Doodle Bar & Restaurant. 4422613
- ❖ **Cadenza Collective** live every Wednesday and Saturday 8PM at Upstairs.
- ❖ **Live Music** at New Orleans Café. 4700311
- ❖ **Uncork the good times** with Ciney and Par-e-jat playing along with BBQ every Friday from 7PM at Fusion-The bar at Dwarika's Hotel. 4479448

DINING

- ❖ **Mempura Festival** at Hyatt Regency till 10 August. 4491234
- ❖ **Masterpiece menu** at The Shambala Garden Café, Shangri-La Hotel. 4412999
- ❖ **Mezza and Margarita** at Dwarika's Fusion- the bar every Wednesday, Rs 555. 4479448
- ❖ **Eden Lounge Bar** Happy hour 3-7PM, buy one get one free cocktails. 6th floor, Kathmandu Mall, Sundhara.
- ❖ **Monsoon Madness Wine Festival** Enjoy wines from four continents at Kilroy's of Kathmandu. 4250440
- ❖ **Mango Masti** At all restaurants in Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **Traditional Cuisines** at Patan Museum Café. 5526271
- ❖ **Wet & Wild Summer Splash** Special package of swimming and lunch, or overnight with breakfast and swimming, Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **Earth Watch Restaurant** Breakfast with birds, lunch with butterflies and dinner by the fireplace at Park Village Hotel. 4375280.
- ❖ **Special budget lunches** at Rum Doodle Bar and Restaurant. 4422613
- ❖ **Breakfast** Singma Restaurant, 8.30-11AM daily. 5009092.
- ❖ **Jatra Wednesday Nights** Free cocktail for women. 4256622

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Shamanism Full Moon Trek to Lake Gosainkunda** Rs 5999, 4-12 August. 4412508
- ❖ **Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge**, relaxation and massages in Pokhara. 4361500
- ❖ **Conferences and workshops** at Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **Nature Retreat** at Park Village Resorts & Spa. 4375280
- ❖ **Escape Kathmandu** at Shivapuri Heights Cottage. 9841371927
- ❖ **Dwarika's Overnight Package** Night of luxury at Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488
- ❖ **Escape to Godavari Village Resort**, an overnight stay package with breakfast & swimming. 5560675

Quest Entertainment

Omkara, or Omi, is a powerful chieftain who heads a gang of outlaws, which include Langda Tyagi and Kesu as his chief cohorts. The story begins when Omi appoints Kesu and not Langda as his chief lieutenant. Seething with envy Langda hatches a plot to falsely implicate Omi's beautiful lover Dolly in a love affair with Kesu, Omi's favourite lieutenant. With the help of Indu, Langda's wife, the plan takes shape and results in horrific tragedy. Using petty lies, Langda keeps poisoning Omi's mind till one day it snaps and Omi goes about tearing up his perfect world. By the time he realises what he has done it is already too late.

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NEPALI WEATHER by MAUSAM BEED



Midway through this monsoon, and paddy farmers are already hoping for a late save. There's some hope, though. Thursday morning's satellite picture shows overcast skies over Nepal, and while they aren't strong enough to bring much needed rain to salvage the season's farming, there is another storm coming out of the Bay. It will lose some strength, but right now how rain is distributed is as important as how much of it arrives. On Tuesday morning, for example, a powerful torrent flooded the central and northwest of the Kathmandu Valley, while the rest of it remained dry. This week, Valley residents should plan to stay in during the hot, humid days, and enjoy cool, wet nights.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

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KIRAN PANDAY

CHIEF GRILL: Chief of Army Staff General Pyar Jung Thapa is ambushed by reporters on Thursday as he makes his way to answer the Rayamaji Commission's questions, just a little late.



RAMESWOR BOHARA

FARMERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE: Maoist cadres put down their guns to join the toiling masses planting rice in Gumi VDC, Surkhet last week.



KIRAN PANDAY

FOR GOD, KING AND COUNTRY: Hindu fundamentalist groups burnt tyres and obstructed traffic for hours Thursday morning demanding that the decision to turn the country secular be revoked.



KIRAN PANDAY

LIFE'S BUT A STAGE: Young actors perform Abhi Subedi's *Jiban Dekhi Jiban Samma* at Gurukul on Wednesday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

GAMBLING IN SHANGRI-LA: The newly-opened Casino Shangri-La welcomes its first punters on Wednesday.

A gift of sight

Sandak Ruit, ophthalmologist, was pleased, but not surprised to receive the Ramon Magsaysay Award this week.

The soft-spoken 52-year-old doctor sees the award as an honour for every Nepali, and most particularly his team at the Tilganga Eye Centre.

"Deep down, I always knew that someone somewhere in the world would recognise the work we have been doing," he says. While personally gratified at receiving the award Ruit hasn't decided what he will do with the \$50,000 prize money, but assures us the money will be put to good use.

Tilganga's ophthalmologist team under Ruit is small, but it does big work. The clinic is one of the world's best places for cataract surgery and intraocular lens transplants. The team travels around the world for eye surgery camps and training programs.

In fact, Nepali doctors are even making North Koreans see. Tilganga doctors travelled twice to the virtually closed country, but Ruit is careful not to say too much. "The work we are doing is not related to any political ideology. I am not bothered about what political system any one country has," he says, "I care only about blind people everywhere in the world."

Tilganga's eye doctors also go to less controversial countries such as Pakistan, India, China, and Bangladesh. Recently a team of 100 Thai doctors visited the clinic to learn about how their Nepali counterparts have managed to grow so much in 12 years.

Since Tilganga was established in 1994, it has helped tackle rampant corneal

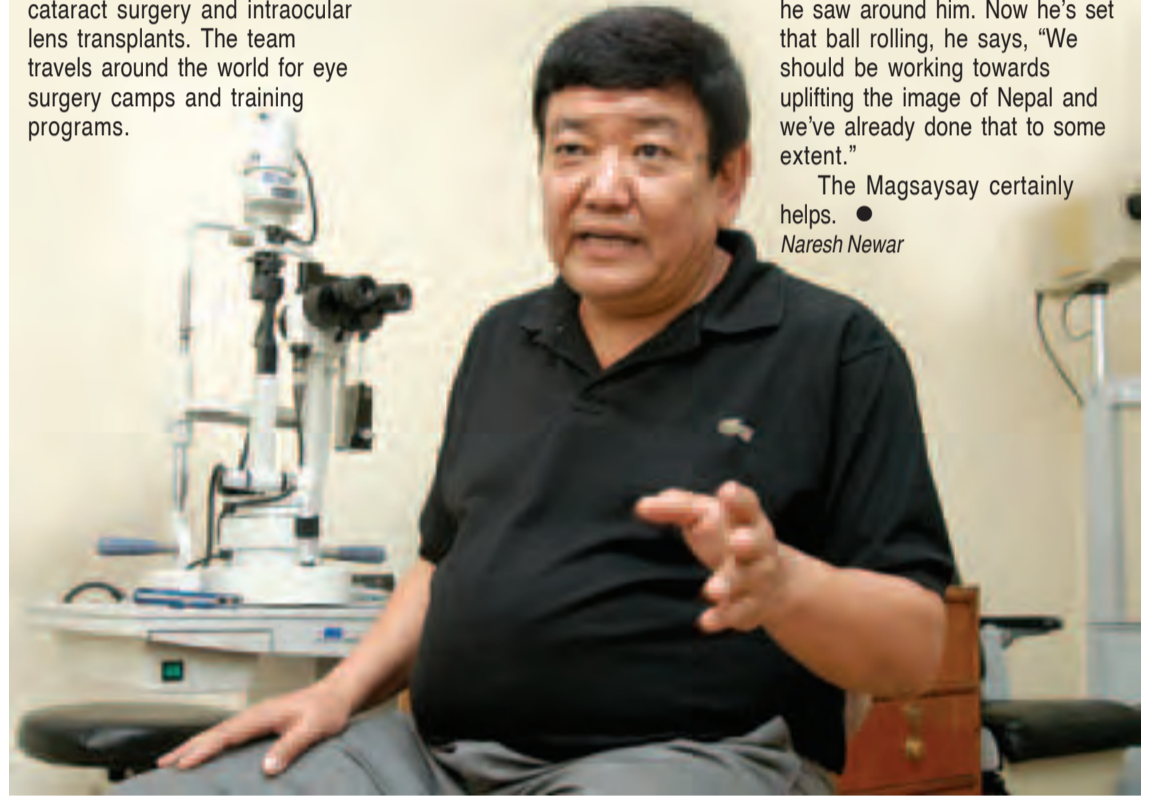
blindness caused by vitamin A deficiency, by running regular microsurgical eye camps in remote parts of Nepal. "Wherever we go, Nepal or North Korea, local communities are thankful and we really feel like we make a difference in their lives," Ruit says proudly.

The Tilganga centre is also renowned internationally for its production of world-class intraocular eye lens which are used to replace damaged natural lenses. The centre's Fred Hollows Foundation Intraocular Lens Factory in Kathmandu is Nepali-run and produces 1,000 lenses every day for export to over 50 countries.

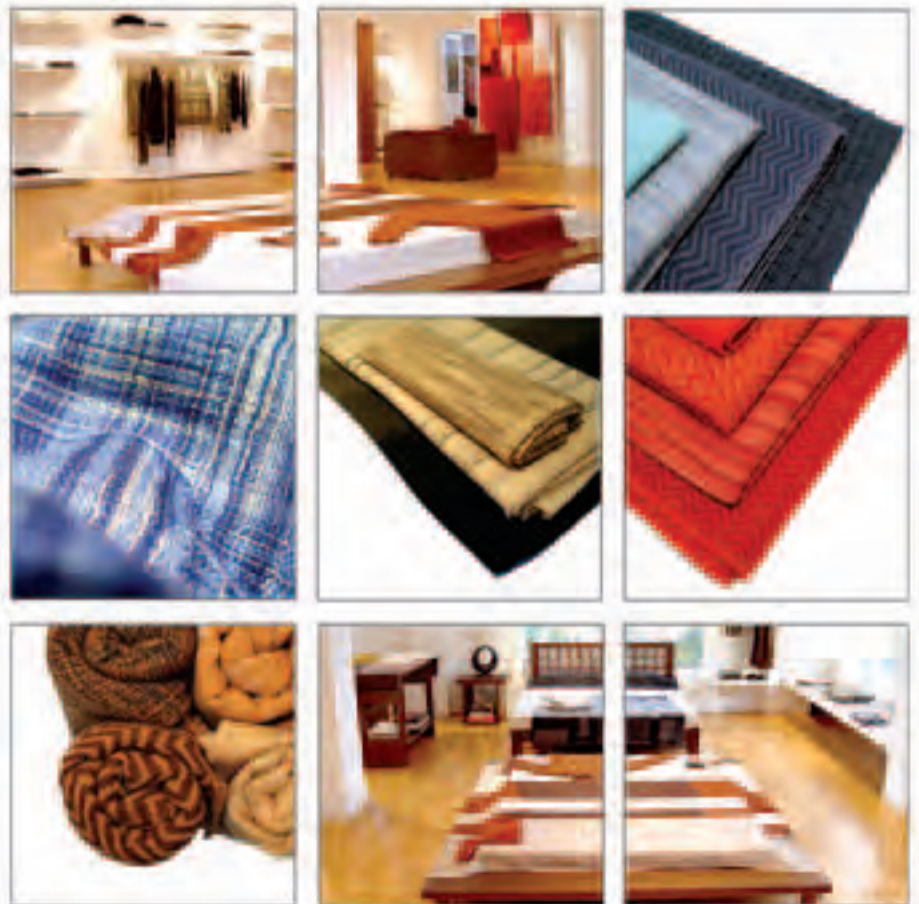
Even as a child in remote Olangchungola, Sandak Ruit felt that he had to do something about the deplorable health conditions he saw around him. Now he's set that ball rolling, he says, "We should be working towards uplifting the image of Nepal and we've already done that to some extent."

The Magsaysay certainly helps. ●

Naresh Newar



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Capital flight

Are we losing the fire in our bellies? Are we slacking off and allowing lethargy and ennui to obliterate the fervour of the April Uprising? The answer to both questions is: "Umm, that's a thought."

How else does one explain the sharp drop in the number of car stonings, traffic stoppages, chukka jams and todfods in the city centre this week? We are keeping close count here at the semi-autonomous National Demonstration

Centre (call hotline for latest information on which roads are blocked by dialing

UNDER MY HAT
Kunda Dixit

103) and have found that there was an entire rush hour period on Tuesday evening when no one blocked traffic at Singha Darbar intersection by lying down on the asphalt.

Not a single royal statue was vandalised throughout the kingdom the whole of last week. The Mahindra and Mahindra Highway was actually not blocked for six hours on Sunday after a minor traffic altercation in Lahan. No one stoned any newspaper office on Thursday. This is a scandal.

What's wrong with us, are we going to let go of the gains of our pro-democracy movement so easily? Will we allow the euphoria of freedom to evaporate into thin air? Have human beings outlived their usefulness? What is the best cure for my dandruff? Will someone stop me before I ask another rhetorical question? Thank you.

As we all know, there are entire sections of society that are still not using their hard-won freedoms to rise up and struggle for their rights by bringing the nation's capital to a grinding halt through relay hunger strikes to fast unto death over and over again.

How come no one set fire to a single government vehicle and made a complete arson of himself when Sunday was made a working day? And there you all are, sitting idly by and not gheraoing the prime minister's residence to force the government to shift Nepal's capital out of Kathmandu.


We have changed the rules of royal succession to allow daughters to become queens in the new Republic of Nepal, parliament has declared Nepal a secular Hindu Kingdom and the government has refused to collect royalty from mountaineering expeditions because it doesn't like the 'R' word. Yet we refuse to take the bull by the horns and shift the nation's capital out of Kathmandu and rid ourselves of its monarchical past.

The question arises, where should the capital of a New Nepal be located? That is a very good point, and luckily for you I have been doing my homework and have a shortlisted the following:

- Kathmandu is running out of water, the government wants to bring water from Melamchi but the people of Melamchi don't want to give it to us. Solution: if Melamchi doesn't want to come to Kathmandu take Kathmandu to Melamchi.
- Okharpauwa residents have refused refuse from Kathmandu. Solution: Relocate Nepal's capital to Okharpauwa and no one will notice because both are garbage dumps.
- Jomsom. Nepal's capital must be located in a place that has the best apple brandy in the country. Ministers can ride mules to work.
- Shift the capital to Kalapani and you kill two birds with one stone: you regain Nepali territory, and you are the farthest you can possibly be from the rest of Nepal so no one will ever bother you.
- Relocate Nepal's capital to New Delhi. Everything's being decided there anyway.

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