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 Weekly Internet Poll # 347

Q. Do you think people in Kathmandu have similar priorities and political views as those in other parts of the country?

Total votes: 2,906

Weekly Internet Poll # 348. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. What is the best option for King Gyanendra?

On your marks...

...get set, and let's start again



ALL LINED UP AND WAITING: The Election Commission's parking lot is filling up with pickups needed for the elections even though the polls now look unlikely before October.

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A PEOPLE WAR
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ANALYSIS by KUNDA DIXIT

Nepali politics may look hopelessly tangled at the moment, but things can be resolved with some fairly easy steps. The prerequisites are broad political will and an agreement by the parties to tone down the grandstanding.

- The eight parties need to come together to admit what they have always known: that elections to the constituent assembly are not possible in June. Then they agree on a date in October after the festivals.

It's not the end of the world to postpone the election, as

Ian Martin keeps saying, especially when the people, the parties, and the election commission are so unprepared. Better a delayed election than a defective election. The reason this is such a big issue is because the Maoists and the parties have made the date a matter of prestige. Someone just has to make sure the king and his praetorian guards don't mess around.

- The Maoist leadership has its own reasons for talking tough and issuing ultimatums on republic. There is a lot of impatience in the rank-and-file which the top comrades have themselves

whipped up. Pressure is building up on Pushpa Kamal Dahal from his deputies on policy issues and on India's role. But the comrades have to learn to differentiate between radical slogans meant for internal party consumption and what is in the national interest. Attacking police stations in Banke and Bardiya, failing to rein in the YCL, and saying confiscated property won't be returned prove to everyone they aren't ready to be a legitimate political party.

- All rights activists and those clamouring for ethnic and geographical representation need to be convinced by the politicians that many of their demands can only be discussed and decided by the constituent assembly. It may be counterproductive for their own cause to put the cart before the horse.

- To kickstart the madhes negotiations, a symbolic gesture like the transfer of Home Minister Sitaula to another portfolio is urgent. The Maoists refused to let that happen in the interim government, but now they need to

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Terror in the tarai p2

be realistic. No one will lose face if health reasons are cited. The madhes needs immediate attention and Peace Minister Poudel is underestimating the seriousness of the crisis (see p 10-11). And while we are at it, isn't it time for Girija Prasad Koirala to pass on the baton while he is still relatively well-liked?

Signature
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Times

editors@nepalitimes.com
www.nepalitimes.com

Published by Himalmedia Pvt Ltd, Editor: Kunda Dixit
Executive Editor: Anagha Neelakantan
Design: Kiran Maharjan Web: Rupendra Kayastha
Director Sales and Marketing: Sunaina Shah marketing@himalmedia.com
Circulation Manager: Samir Maharjan sales@himalmedia.com
Subscription: subscription@himalmedia.com, 5011628/29
Hatiban, Godavari Road, Lalitpur
GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu 5543333-6, Fax: 5521013
Printed at Jagadamba Press, Hatiban: 5547018



Bye to a maverick

A passionate businessman with a chip on his shoulder and serious drive

Mohan Gopal Khetan was perhaps Nepal's most famous diabetic. He always had an extra shot of insulin in his kurta pocket when he partied, which was quite often—he rarely refused an invite.

For a man who fully lived every day, insulin injections were minor hassles. He was only 61 when he died last week. But it was a life full of vitality and variety.



STATE OF THE STATE
C K Lal

During the late 80s and early 90s, the flamboyant Khetan courted controversy and inspired awe. He was unapologetic about the methods he employed to advance his business interests. He refused to be cowed down when arrested for alleged violation of the Foreign Currency Regulation in 1993.

Irregular meals and stress while in custody played havoc with his health. But Khetan kept up his unconventional ways, ignoring powerful friends who suggested that it didn't pay to be a Marwari maverick in Nepal.

He sided openly with Ganeshman Singh in the internal power struggles of the Nepali Congress. He supported the UML, bragged that he had helped the Maoists at the beginning of their armed struggle, and eventually said that Girija Prasad Koirala was the only politician who had never asked him for pecuniary favours.

But Khetan's munificence

didn't buy him popularity. Powerful politicians often refused to acknowledge him publicly—largely because he was a Marwari. In return, Khetan flaunted his background even more.

Marwaris are a close-knit community and present a unified face, but differences within their ranks are marked. According to insiders, Marwaris in Nepal are of four types.

Biratanagar families consider themselves the elite. They claim higher status because they are mostly in manufacturing, which creates jobs and contributes more to the national economy than trading. The Golchhas and Dugars are prominent among them.

The descendants of families that came to Nepal from Burma via Hong Kong dominated foreign trade for years. Many have since relocated to south-east Asian countries and are said to consider themselves superior to Nepali traders dealing in primary goods.

The mercantile families in tarai towns usually have businesses on both sides of the border. They've been around for generations and are now doctors, engineers, chartered accountants, and even politicians. They are confident, indigenised, and speak Maithili, Bhojpur, or Awadhi.

Ironically, Indrachok Marwaris, such as Khetan, were once considered the underclass of the community though they have lived in the capital for over a century and speak Newari with

fluency. Most began, unglamorously, by trading in textiles, sitting in their shops 365 days of the year. Even big sahujis found it difficult to find respectable Indian grooms for their daughters.

Khetan's father had to move to Birganj to find a suitable boy for his sister across the border. The young Khetan, instead of getting annoyed, decided to become more successful—financially and socially—than everyone else of his time. In doing so, he established the primacy of Kathmandu Marwaris in Nepal.

Khetan found his true calling in representing multinational corporations. He became a quintessential comprador and flourished with the aid industry. Indrachok's Marwari families had been stirred even before Khetan's adventures—BL Mittal had made his fortune in construction and Binod Chaudhary showed promise from a very early age. But Khetan was big and growing.

With the liberalisation of the 1990s, Khetan diversified into manufacturing, banking, insurance, and aviation. His successes were legendary and failures spectacular.

He courted controversy to the end, always behaving as if he were settling scores for the suffering of his salesmen forefathers. Accounts cleared, he left this world. The man from Makhani will be remembered for years by his friends and foes alike. ●

GOOD NEWS AND BAD NEWS

The good news is that the media rights group Reporters without Borders has removed Gyanendra and Prachanda from its 'Predators of Press Freedom List' this year. The bad news is that despite restoration of democracy the Nepali press is still under attack.

Press Freedom Day this week was a time to assess the 12 months since People Power II. Ever since the king's military coup in February 2005, the Nepali media fought back by playing an activist role and defending press freedom by its maximum application. Journalists were not just struggling for their own freedom but for the peoples' right to information. It was the media's unity and courage, especially on the part of colleagues in radio, that made it possible to confront dictatorship and help topple it.

Across Nepal, most journalists are breathing a sigh of relief. The iron hand of the state has been removed. But the scars of past abuse remain. It wasn't just during the king's rule that journalists had their fingernails pierced in underground torture chambers. Back in 2001-3 a democratically elected prime minister allowed the police to use emergency powers to incarcerate and beat journalists. Some spent a year-and-a-half in jail with daily torture and still suffer post-traumatic stress. It is a warning to us that the press can be brutally suppressed even by a government operating within the parameters of constitutional guaranteed freedoms while the parliament is in session. It has happened, it can happen again.

Having survived all that, the media this year faced a new kind of challenge. Journalists in the tarai who worked fearlessly through some of the bleakest periods of the war say things are much worse now. In Lahan, Rajbiraj, Janakpur, and across the central tarai lawless bands of criminals in cahoots with various militant groups are targeting journalists. For the first time, the threat is ethnic. Journalists are being targeted because of their race, their name, where they live, their appearance.

The Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) has counted more than 100 cases of intimidation and beatings of journalists in the past year. After the madhes uprising in January, more than a dozen journalists have been internally displaced. Many still don't dare return. Various militant madhes factions regularly call reporters and threaten them with death for not printing press releases prominently enough, or for news critical of them. Ironically, one of the former-Maoist JTMM factions is led by Jwala Singh, an ex-hack and Siraha FNJ secretary.

The country is submerged in identity politics, led sometimes by groups which no one has heard of before. Their method is to try to manipulate the media and if reporters are unwilling use threats and violence. A correspondent in Butwal was beaten with iron rods recently by janajati protesters. There is photographic evidence proving who the assailants are, and they happen to be associates of the former mayor. Yet, no action has been taken. The Rajbiraj reporter of a national daily hasn't been back to his town since January. Kantipur and Image have been repeatedly and deliberately targeted in the eastern tarai. Birganj FM was ransacked by a mob. The region between Parsa and Morang is now the most dangerous place in Nepal to be a journalist.

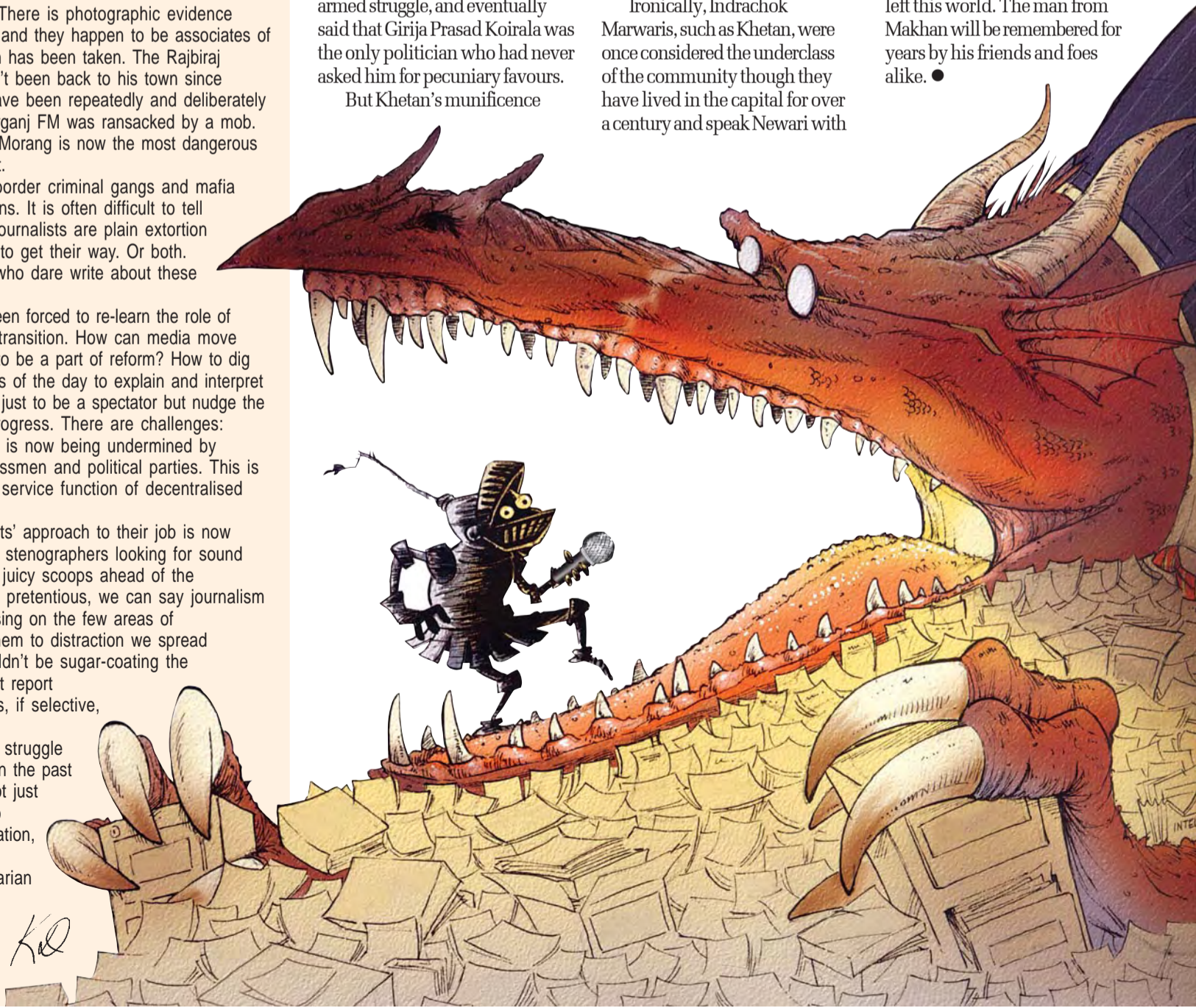
In this twilight zone, cross-border criminal gangs and mafia work hand-in-hand with politicians. It is often difficult to tell these days whether threats to journalists are plain extortion or political forces using muscle to get their way. Or both. Even in the capital, journalists who dare write about these gangs get death threats.

In the past year, we have been forced to re-learn the role of media during a messy political transition. How can media move beyond talking-head journalism to be a part of reform? How to dig deeper than the political quarrels of the day to explain and interpret events? The media's role is not just to be a spectator but nudge the country towards stability and progress. There are challenges: Nepal's FM radio success story is now being undermined by ownership going over to businessmen and political parties. This is already undermining the public service function of decentralised radio.

A paradigm shift in journalists' approach to their job is now needed. Reporters can't just be stenographers looking for sound bites, obsessed with snatching juicy scoops ahead of the competition. At risk of sounding pretentious, we can say journalism needs a higher calling. By focusing on the few areas of disagreement and magnifying them to distraction we spread cynicism and despair. We shouldn't be sugar-coating the news, but neither should we just report confrontation and conflict. Facts, if selective, can lie.

Happily, the Nepali media's struggle for freedom and independence in the past two years gives us hope. It's not just journalists who are now used to freedom, empowered by information, Nepal's citizens also are.

They will not tolerate totalitarian control of any kind anymore.



WALKLEY

LETTERS

NEW ORDER

Ashraf Ghani says that the intelligence and experience of Nepalis' need to be used ('New order', guest column, #346). Right on. What stops this prosaic but accurate prescription from being followed is the fact that most of my countrymen and -women are sick and tired of being used and abused by politicians and policymakers. Ghani's reading of the situation is exactly correct, though, as was Yash Ghai's ('One more chance', #345).

U Thapa, email

CK LAL

CK Lal's 'The price of radicalism' (State of the state, #346) paints a clear picture of life as it is lived today in the tarai. Even liberals, whether they admit it or not, have found it hard to take the growing madhesi sense of entitlement without flinching. How much easier it would be to accept the aspirations of all underrepresented, socially discriminated groups if only we knew more about how they lived. Lal helps us all understand our compatriots better.

Shanti Aryal, email

● I found 'The price of radicalism' to be arrogant and callous. Is CK Lal justifying the selective targeting of people of pahadi origin by the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum and the resultant 'respect' the tv merchant Mr Yadav is enjoying of late? Don't forget, Mr Lal, the ends do not justify the means.

SK Aryal, email

LAW AND ORDER

While it is important to point out the antics of the Young Communist League ('An armless army', #345) and the Maoists in general ('Still in the crosshairs', #346), it can get counter-productive to keep demonising them. True, they are acting as a law unto their own. But ask the decent law-abiding citizens of a number of Kathmandu neighbourhoods who have formed their own 'neighbourhood police' or 'patrol' or 'citizen's security' what on earth they think they are playing at. I find this far more alarming than I do a YCL that behaves like the natural militia

successor of the 'people's liberation army'. That is to be expected, and will only slow down when the Maoists are part-forced and part-cajoled into feeling like they really are part of the government. Each of these little local 'patrol' groups is one step away from vigilantism—and that to me reeks of a society where no one thinks it is wrong to be a law unto yourself, not even the so-called educated, middle conscience of the country. To deserve public security and law and order, one has to be willing to ask for accountability repeatedly, again and again, and leave one's leaders with no choice but to ensure it.

M Gurung, email

SNOBBISH

In 'Best and brightest' (Strictly Business, #346), Ashutosh Tiwari makes a disturbing argument. But it's a little too easy, I think, to write such analyses. Oh sure, he covers all his bases, and no one will ever accuse him of being one of those 'people like us' types. But he is surely not being as irresponsible or illogical as he sounds? Regular, bright, motivated folks should stay away from politics? But how, Mr Tiwari, can you expect a polity—or even just its 'best and brightest'—to hold its leaders accountable if it always holds them ever-so-slightly in contempt? This is exactly what is happening now, and look at the price we are paying for it.

Kiran, email

POVERTY CYCLE

Last weekend in Syabrubesi I witnessed an incident which seems symptomatic of the state of affairs in Nepal. Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Program (TRPAP) had organised a mountain bike race to promote their work on the Tamang Heritage Trail. I had just completed my fourth trek in this area, and was fascinated to see almost a dozen Kathmandu babus arrive in a fleet of new-looking 4WDs. While the 21 eager participants waited at the starting line for the 7AM whistle, these self-important bigwigs delayed proceedings for almost 30 minutes while they took photos of each other gracing the event. When the race was finally underway, the 'organising

committee' returned to their guesthouse lawn to exchange promotional t-shirts and caps, and congratulate themselves on their cleverness.

Yet four hours walk along the trail, the village of Tungmen has no visiting healthcare workers or toilets, and its 200 or so residents exist in dire poverty. The more than Rs 5 million spent by TRPAP on



cars, t-shirts etc would provide healthcare, teachers, and toilets for many years for such a village.

The pomposity of smug babus who think giving each other t-shirts "alleviates rural poverty" is a sad indictment of those who believe that Nepal ends at the roadhead.

Perhaps TRPAP should change their name to Can't Really Alleviate Poverty (CRAP).

Judy Smith, email

HUMAN COST

Anuj Tamang was recently mentioned in a few by-the-way lines of a national daily because he died. We do not blink an eye or pause to think about individual deaths anymore, but they all have stories to tell.

Anuj was fighting kidney failure and liver cirrhosis at Patan Hospital. He requested that he be taken back home to Darjeeling, perhaps to bid farewell to his wife and daughter, perhaps to seek forgiveness from his parents for not being a good son, or maybe just for a final homecoming. He embarked on the journey all right, but never made it home. He was

stranded on the way due to the Chure Bhawar banda and died.

How many Anuj Tamangs get stuck in these bandas? We cannot fulfil a dying man's wish, and have even less hope of addressing the dreams of those still living.

Yadav Bantawa, email

YES AND NO

Thanks for the brilliant, succinct analysis in your editorial 'A public republic' (#346). I think it is also time that the media in general get more vocal in resisting the antics of the Young Communist League.

On another note, I wait all week for your paper, but then get done with it rather quickly. It would be good to have more articles and reports to read. And more good news, please—this is a country of 27 million, there must be something good happening somewhere.

Shreeyana Singh Budhathoki, email

● I thought your New Year's issue (#344) was splendid, a visual delight. Ignore the people who say that *Nepali Times* does not have 'enough to read'. We all get tired of pontificating pundits and nattering nabobs, and sometimes you don't need anything but pictures—the goat in 'Coils of fear' (#346), the built and re-built bridge ('Bridge-building', #345), the cautiously optimistic 'Time flies' ('New year's wishes', #344) say it all.

Tina K, email

LETTERS

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

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Nepal's health care system is crying out for change

Getting doctors to stay

On our last morning in Bajhang, a man walked up and asked me to see his son. Kiran was a seven-year-old and his father had carried him eight hours down from the hills.

The boy had two weeks of fever and a tender bulge on the left side of his neck. The father showed me a paper from Chainpur Hospital written the day before: 'Refer to higher centre for treatment'.



NEPALI PAN
Mark Zimmerman

In fact, all the boy had was a skin abscess and he just needed minor surgery. Unfortunately, no anesthesia or pain relief medicine was available. The incision into his neck, though successful, was very painful. He had to be held down, his crying filling the hallway. As we were cleaning up, we watched the grateful father laying his son on the porch outside the hospital to warm him in the winter sun.

In towns and villages across Nepal, scenes like these play out every day. There is a hospital building and some staff, but they cannot provide even basic care. Women giving birth, children with broken arms and legs, people with burns, fever, and pain, all crying out for change in Nepal's health care system.

Nepal's health officials work against huge obstacles to provide comprehensive health care in remote places with a limited budget, and in the face of political turmoil. While the health infrastructure is generally adequate the big problem is assuring that staff are on duty, have competent skills, and are caring.

Only 18 percent of Nepali women who deliver babies have a trained health worker in attendance, and for the poorest parts of



the country it is less than five percent. Every day 12 Nepali women die at childbirth.

In the last ten years Nepal has seen tremendous growth in medical colleges and the annual production of new doctors will soon cross 1,000. We now have over 40 nursing campuses. Each year, the 125 separate medical institutes under CTEVT produce over 4,000 new health assistants, nurse midwives, and community medical assistants. Where do they all go? Why are rural Nepalis still without health care?

We need a paradigm shift in our thinking about health care in Nepal in three fundamental areas:

1 Provide quality care to the greatest number

Are we aiming for highest quality care for a few or quality care for many? The Health Ministry is now creating posts for health care workers who can cover much wider areas of the country. For example, while a specialist anesthesia doctor is unlikely to ever venture into the hospitals of Panchtar,

Baglung or Dandheldura there are now Anesthesia Assistants in each of those places, enabling operations to be conducted. Similarly, the SBA (skilled birth attendant) program trains not just doctors but multiple levels of health workers, nurses and ANMs to conduct safe deliveries.

2 Support health care workers in the field

Why do doctors, nurses and mid-level health workers refuse to stay in rural hospitals? First, there is a strong pull to migrate. In one of Nepal's premier medical colleges last year, over half of its graduating class of doctors left to train in the United States. Of them, 95 percent of will not return. In the past five years nurses have joined doctors in this mighty exodus. And who can blame them? A staff nurse will earn 10 times more in England than in Nepal.

Those who stay need to be taken care of while they work in difficult circumstances. Increasingly, local committees are starting

to manage rural hospitals, sometimes with excellent results. Several factors help in keeping health workers happy and productive. These are the 5 C's:

- **Communication:** Enable the hospital to use the internet, including telemedicine facility.
- **Continuing Medical Education:** Provide professional nourishment for staff growth.
- **Connection with a higher hospital:** Create a link with staff in another, regional center.
- **Community management:** Hospital staff do better when they are managed locally.
- **Children's education:** Unless their kids are looked after, the staff will soon move away.

There is no shortage of health care workers in Nepal, the problem is persuading them to stay where they are needed the most.

3 Build beyond MBBS

I am a doctor, and I have trained young doctors in Nepal for the last 20 years. Doctors are certainly needed in Nepal but they are not a remedy to all of our problems. In medicine experience sometimes counts even more than fine training. I know of experienced health assistants who can diagnose a patient better than most new doctors. And ANMs are far more skillful at delivering babies.

The captain of the rural health care team should be an MD General Practice doctor. Across Nepal, we have seen these all-rounders transform local health care systems. An MDGP can do operations, deliver babies, take care of kids and adults and has administrative training. We must train more MDGPs and get 2-3 of them to work in each district hospital as a team.

Let's re-examine our guiding principles, test them against available evidence and build on this strong foundation. Only then will we begin to hear less crying in the countryside.

Dr Mark Zimmerman is Executive Director of the Nick Simons Institute, which is working to enhance health care in rural Nepal.

Announcing applications for WAVE Mister & Miss University 2007



A Project of World- CARP Nepal

WAVE Mister & Miss University Beauty Pageant 2007



Mister University International
Niraj Baral

WAVE magazine in association with World-CARP Nepal is organizing the WAVE Mister & Miss University Beauty Pageant 2007 (WMMU) to be held on 15 June in Kathmandu. The pageant aims to bring together student representative from various backgrounds from across the country, to present a model of one world family to all people through the medium of a beauty pageant.

WMMU seeks beauty not only externally, but in the quality of character with which people carry out their lives. The participants are encouraged to pursue personal excellence through challenging one's limitations and to use their capacities for the sake of others by promoting a life of service dedicated to creating harmony in all aspects of life. WMMU encourages delegates to become campus peace ambassadors who can spread the culture of peace throughout their campuses.

This is also one pageant where Nepal has been able to make a mark, for Mister University Nepal Niraj Baral is the reigning Mister University International. He outshone contestants from 27 countries to win the title on August of 2006 in Philippines. The winners of this year's pageant will participate in the Mister and Miss University International to be held on July 7 in Seoul, Korea.

The entry form for this year is available in the May issue of WAVE magazine as well as in its website www.wavemag.com.np. The last date of entry is 15 May. Interested individuals or colleges can send in their participants.



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KIRAN PANDAY

“Business hasn't grown as expected”

Vijay Gajananda Vaidya, chairman of United Traders Syndicate, started his business career as an exclusive dealer for Toyota 40 years ago. Vaidya spoke with *Nepali Times* about the importance of first impressions and how to build a career of entrepreneurship.

***Nepali Times:* How did you enter into business and start working with Toyota?**

Vijay Gajananda Vaidya: Before I started working with Toyota, I worked for other organisations and got a lot of good experience. The six years I worked at USAID were especially great because I got to travel a lot. On the flip side, it also made me realise that I did not want to work for anyone. After I returned from the US, I went to meet the Toyota people in Japan. They asked me at our first meeting how many cars I could sell in a year, because in the seven years prior to that, just seven Toyota cars had been sold in Nepal. I was offended and walked out, but we did make a deal later.

How did you sell yourself, having had no business experience?

It's all about making a good impression. I couldn't afford it, but I stayed in a five-star hotel when I was there. I made them pursue me. I did all this to impress them, and it worked. When we signed the deal, I organised a big party. Nepal's ambassador to Japan asked me why I was spending all this money, and I remember telling him that all this would help me build connections. It did help in the long run.

So how well have you done?

I suggested six, they wanted 500, and after a lot of discussion we agreed on 12. That year I sold 96. Now we sell more than 500 cars a year.

When I came back from the US I had \$700. I also brought back a gramophone, which I sold for another \$300. Today I have a lot more than other people. But the support I have from my employees means much more to me than my property. Over 7,000 people work for me directly. If you include seasonal workers, it's over 9,000.

What's your outlook on the agriculture sector?

There are lots of possibilities in Nepal in agriculture. If we develop workers' skills and produce goods that the modern market demands, the results will be very good. When I saw that sweet peas were good business in Japan, I leased 10 hectares in Palung and started cultivating sweet peas. They sold for \$24 per kg in Japan.

When I saw that we weren't really cashing in on agriculture even when the business environment was good, I decided to give it a shot. I was attracted to tea because the gardens would make the hills green and because the industry is labour intensive. I got a tea expert for advice, sent the soil to be tested in India and Germany, heard positive news, and decided to start working with the local tea farmers there who were slowly getting disillusioned with the business.

What changes have you seen in the government and private sectors since you started out?

There's more work being done in both areas. The pace is slow though, and the foundations could be stronger. Even the private sector has not grown as much as we might have expected.

Nepali businesses still do not understand discipline and ethics. In other countries the business and corporate sectors understand that they are taxed heavily. The private sector here is trying to earn more money by evading taxes. I know people in government and I could have earned a lot via commissions, people from the government have approached me with deals that involved selling goods for more than their actual worth. I could have been the richest person in Nepal.

Are you saying you've never bribed anyone?

I've never paid anyone to work illegally. My sons and the people in my organisation will not bribe anyone because when you pay someone, the price of that good automatically rises. When the Maoists asked for money I refused. I'm generous and have gifted tvs and cars to those who've done good work for me, but I have never bribed anyone.

Economy's up

Or is it? And how can we know?

Rejoice! In dollar terms, our GDP has grown by 10 percent in the last two months.

Kind of. We need to understand where the growth has come from. The appreciation of the Indian rupee against the dollar means the same for the Nepali rupee. Which means that the denominator by which we divide the GDP in Nepali rupees has reduced over the last few months, which in turn means: a



ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed

staggering rise in GDP. Six years after we wrote about reducing the denominator ('Free the Nepali rupee', # 59), it seems like it is happening.

Regular readers know that one of the Beed's favourite talking points is the miraculous 'political' exchange rate that has changed only eight times since it was put into place on 13 April 1960. The 1.6 parity established on 1 February 1993 has been a faithful constant through our various economic and political upheavals. But we don't have any research papers or donor dollars funded studies on what this

fixed exchange rate actually does to our economic analysis. (Intriguingly, no one is blaming this on regressive forces either.)

The current exchange rate against the dollar, Rs 66, is close to the rate we had nine years ago. We need to know from the government and the Nepal Oil Corporation what impact this has had on the price of petroleum. If we were brave, we could use this time, when the price of oil is so low in rupee terms, to deregulate the sector.

The state electricity utility, which has dollar-based power purchase agreements with some power producers, is also benefiting from the weakness of the dollar vis a vis the rupee. It's time that they passed these gains on to the end consumer.

The pricing of projects where there is a high import component will also have to be reviewed. For every million dollars of committed project costs, the exchange rate appreciation has reduced costs by Rs 1 million. These factors have to be accounted for, and donors who have budgeted spendings for Rs 75-to-the-dollar need to rework computations and pay more dollars to make up the shortfall.

There are so many other vital



questions: does the appreciation of the rupee lead to inflation or should the price of commodities come down? Will the Indian state now have reason to 'politically' revise the exchange rate upwards to Rs 1.80 as a corrective measure? If so, do our experts at Nepal Rastra Bank have a response ready? Does this affect our remittances in rupee terms? If we do add significant value to exports, how will an upward movement of the rupee affect export-oriented industries?

And most important of all—might it be time to think about getting out of the fixed exchange regime?

We can talk endlessly about social inclusion, federalism, and the works. But we do not have time to think about our economy. Our self-proclaimed intellectuals, economic experts who run think tanks, and seminar frequenters have a lot to answer for. The people deserve healthy debate and they aren't getting it. ●



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Sick politics

Naya Patrika, 2 May

नयाँ

When Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula started having hearing problems, he left for New Delhi. Doctors say he needs a shot to fix the vessels connecting his left ear to his throat. Sitaula also has diabetes and has been watching what he eats for two decades. In addition, he is a strict vegetarian, does not drink, and avoids onions.

health. He has been exercising and doing yoga and lost 6kg recently.

Pushpa Kamal Dahal has high blood pressure. "I did not have this problem during the 'people's war', but developed it after I started living in Kathmandu," he says.

Sher Bahadur Deuba is an asthmatic chain-smoker. He has a stomach ailment that has in the past taken him to Bangkok and Delhi for treatment. He is also understood to have severe skin problems, which is why his wife takes him in for a weekly facial. Sushil Koirala has tongue cancer and went to the US last year for surgery. All his teeth had to be pulled out, which is why he has trouble speaking loudly these days. He is also diabetic. Shailaja Acharya has breast cancer. She announced last year that since she has to go to India for treatment regularly, she wouldn't mind being Nepal's ambassador there.

Baburam Bhattarai says his stomach problems have started to get better after he started regular yoga. Mohan Baidya, a voracious reader, has undergone many surgeries for the removal of cataracts, but still cannot see very clearly. Other Maoist leaders like Ram Bahadur Thapa and Post Bahadur Bogati say they do not yet have serious health problems. However, Krishna Prasad Mahara does have a sight problem for which he was operated upon last year at Tilganga. He is on regular medication, must use medicated eyedrops, and frequently visit hospitals.

Bam Dev Gautam and Ram Chandra Poudel both have back problems. Gautam has gained some weight in the last few months and now weighs 90kg. He was in New Delhi last

year for treatment and also goes for acupuncture. Ram Sharan Mahat and his brother Prakash Sharan Mahat both suffer from back problems. Arjun Narsingh KC also has back problems, likes to drink, and chews around 10 leaves of tobacco everyday.

UML leader Bidya Bhandari was diagnosed with leukaemia recently and has been undergoing chemotherapy in New Delhi. Khum Bahadur Khadka has kidney trouble. "When my kidneys were good, I didn't have the money for alcohol. Now I have some money, but my kidneys have failed me," he was heard joking recently. Sujata Koirala has uterine problems and has been treated at Sushma Koirala Memorial Hospital.

Poudel's troubles

Chhalphal, 29 April

छलफल

The crowd at last week's Democracy Day celebrations at Basantapur pelted stones and water bottles at Minister for Peace and Reconstruction Ram Chandra Poudel because he did not speak in favour of republicanism. In gatherings across Nepal, Poudel has said he is against the establishment of a republic through a referendum and elections to a constituent assembly.

Poudel is thought to be flip-flopping because he wants to hold onto both his positions, those of party president and minister. Sujata Koirala's camp in the party is said to have asked him to give one up. When it started to become clear just how power hungry he was, those in the party in favour of a ceremonial monarchy started to manipulate him.

Those close to him are not surprised that Poudel is so adamant, but they worry that his beliefs are giving the Nepali Congress a bad name, and the left parties an edge.

NC party workers throughout the nation have been pressuring the party to clarify its stance on the republic issue, saying that they cannot go to their constituents until they know this.

Since he became minister, Poudel has been diverting money

नेताजी, ज्यानलाई कस्तो छ ?

मुलुकको स्वास्थ्यबारे चर्का भाषण गर्ने सबैजसो नेता आफैँ अस्वस्थ छन् ।



The whole country knows about Prime Minister Koirala's health problems. He is on oxygen for much of the day. He suffers from chronic bronchitis and emphysema, which means he has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. He has to have an MRI every two days. Doctors suspected that Koirala had TB and started treating him, but the nasty side effects of the medication outweighed the illness, and he is no longer on TB drugs.

Madhab Nepal suffers from cardiovascular stenosis, or the narrowing of a heart valve. He says he is very careful about his



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from the budget of ministries allotted to the Maoists to his own. The Maoist ministers have realised what is happening and threatened to raise this issue at the next meeting of the council of ministers.

Crimefighters

Ram Charan Choudhary, Maoist MP *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 29 April-14 May



'The Maoists haven't changed, they are still rooted in their own ways, they haven't transformed'—these allegations come from people who refuse to be introspective and would rather find fault in others. We are restructuring our ranks and in this period of work and transition, it is only normal that some signs of weakness come to the fore.

It is true that in some places we are running 'parallel governments'. The transitional period between the fall of the previous government and the formation of a new one has left people without the services one associates with a government. Social crimes such as murder, rape, and kidnap are on the rise. Many criminal groups are working in sync with the authorities.

In these circumstances, we cannot be reduced to mere observers. Either the government has to commit to curbing crime or it should let us work unhindered.

We are providing security and services to the people where the state is absent. The Young Communist League and Jana Sewa Samiti are doing the same in various places.

We aren't saying others should adopt our methods. But when the state is inept, we are forced to take on its responsibilities. Various factions are saying that in combating crime, we are taking the law into our own hands. We do intend to transform completely. But we have been forced to project ourselves strongly because of the legacy of the previous government and the lack of a state.

The big drama about the seizure of land and property during the 'people's war' was intended to defame us. We have made it clear that the seized property will be handed back, but based on certain guidelines—only land acquired unjustly will be returned. Feudal landlords with excess landholdings will not get their property back, though they will be given basic housing. Final decisions on land-related issues will only be made after scientific land reform.

The focus now should be on the election to the constituent assembly. The monarchy is getting restless and showing signs of resurfacing, we should be uniting to put an end to it. At times like these, discussion about land and property are conspiracies to distract us from the issue at hand.



०६३ वैशाख



०६४ वैशाख

Palace
Top: April 2006
Bottom: April 2007

हिमाल Robin Sayami in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 29 April-14 May

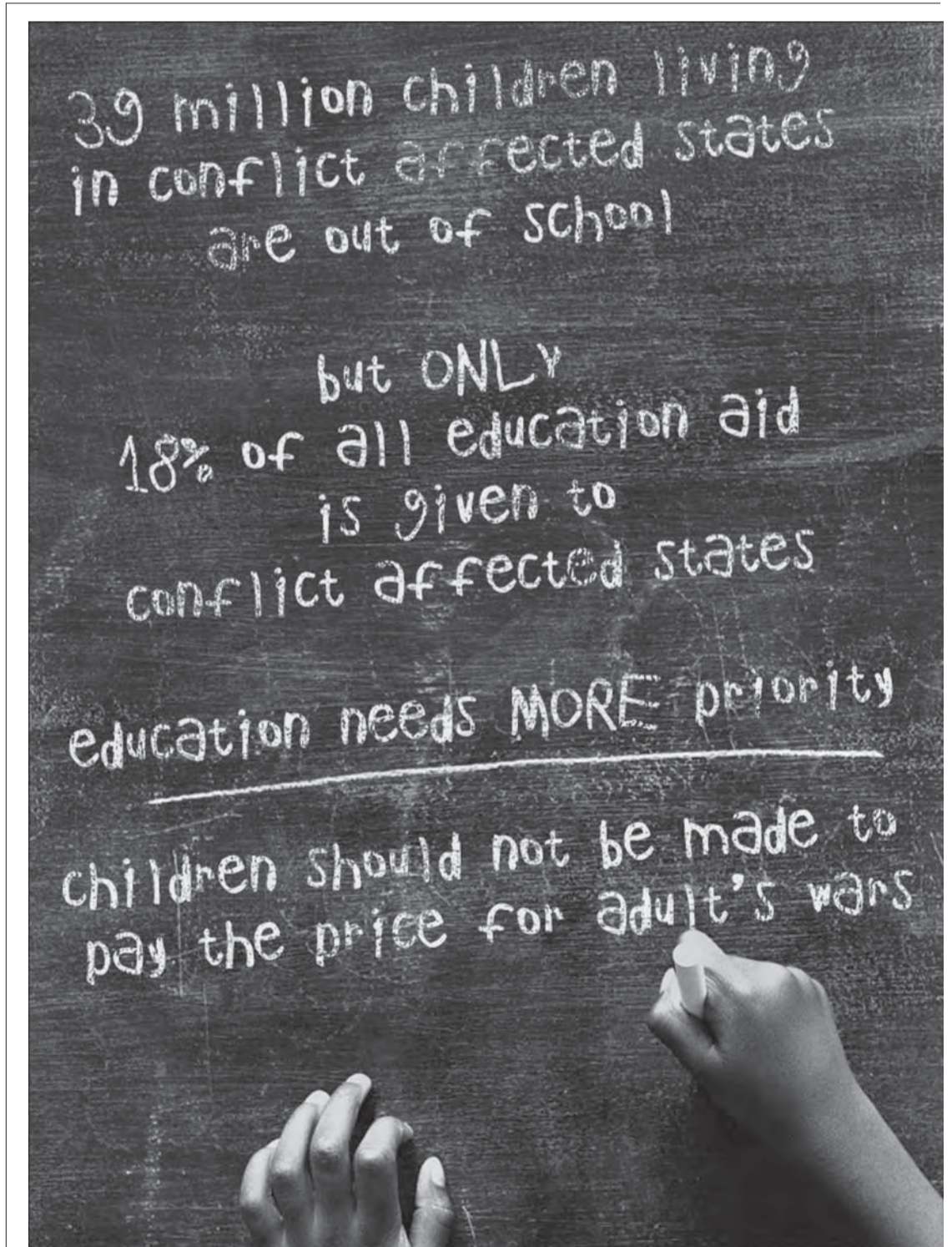
QUOTE OF THE WEEK



“I told the employees at the Department of Roads to reduce their kickbacks from 60 percent to 30 percent.”

Minister of Physical Planning and Works Hisila Yami quoted in *Deshantar*, 21 April

SELECTED MATERIAL TRANSLATED EVERY WEEK FROM THE NEPALI PRESS



Save the Children Rewrite the Future



RIP

Himal Khabarpatrika, 29 April-14 May



Narsingh Bahadur Shrestha, renowned entrepreneur and one of the pioneers of the democratic movement, passed away on 23 April at the age of 82. Three days later, the country lost another prominent entrepreneur, Mohan Gopal Khetan. Khetan died at the age of 61 due to a heart attack at the Norvic Hospital in Kathmandu. He was also suffering from diabetes.

Shrestha was the founding president of Himalayan Bank and had also filled various advisory roles. He was an industrialist-businessman who backed economic liberalisation. He was a renowned social worker and an active contributor to the 1950 democratic movement.

Shrestha started his business career in transportation, and followed with a successful

venture into construction. Diabetes and heart trouble were cited as the reasons for his demise.

Khetan went into business while still a student and had early success. After starting his career in the sugar industry, Khetan established the Khetan Group, which quickly became one of Nepal's leading business institutions. He moved into the corporate industry with the establishment of Mutual Trading in 1986. Khetan then invested in other business and industrial sectors such as banking, insurance, beer, and instant noodles.

Khetan also headed social welfare organisations that focussed on education, health, and religious efforts. Khetan helped build numerous schools and hospitals and was also the honorary consular general for Turkey in Nepal.

Khetan was known for his direct approach to matters and was held to be a good public speaker. While the business community in general has kept politics at arm's length, Khetan occasionally attracted attention with his controversial political opinions. He won over the hearts of many people in his eventful life.



South face so

This month, a Swiss climber will attempt to finish a treacherous route on Annapurna I

BILLI BIERLING

A Swiss climber is just about to attempt a new solo route on the sheer south face of Annapurna I (pictured above). The 8,000m peak is one of the country's most treacherous and avalanche-prone.

Ueli Steck wants to finish a route first tried by two French

climbers in 1992. Jean-Christophe Lafaille and Pierre Beghin attempted to conquer the world's tenth highest mountain via its south face. Their expedition had a tragic end when Beghin fell to his death at about 7,100m. It took Lafaille five days to get back to base camp.

Annapurna I is Steck's second big project this year. In February

he set a new speed record on the notorious Eiger North Face in Switzerland, whizzing up the icy rock wall in 3 hours and 54 minutes, a full 46 minutes faster than the previous record (pictured below).

The 30-year-old Steck, who is considered one of the strongest mountaineers climbing now, said he even surprised himself: "I was



ULI STECK

Early summits

Halfway through this spring climbing season, a lot has already happened on the world's highest peaks. Two climbers from Kazakhstan, Maxut Zhumayev, 30, and Vassily Pivtsov, 31, summited Everest on 30 April via the North Col without using supplementary oxygen. Both climbers have now scaled 11 of the 14 eight thousanders without oxygen. Their summits of Everest are said to be the earliest so far from the north side.

According to the Discovery Channel, five sherpas, led by Phurba Tashi, reached the top of the world on the same day Zhumayev and Pivtsov topped out. The dispatch also describes the ordeal of the Kazakhs' descent and how they had to be assisted by the sherpas to make it back to Advanced Base Camp. "At ABC the men revealed that they had gone 48 hours without a drop of water and no extra oxygen during their summit push and descent", the website said. They are reported to be well.

Everest has also claimed its first casualty of the year. Dawa Sherpa, who was from the Makalu region, was killed between Camp II and Camp III on the Nepal side. The Ministry of Tourism says he fell down the Kharapas crevasse while on his

way up to Camp III on 26 April.

Another mountaineer going for all eight-thousanders bagged Dhaulagiri I, his twelfth. Spaniard Inaki Ocha de Olza reached the summit at the 8,167 on 26 April. His teammate and compatriot Jorge Egocheaga followed shortly after, but later had to be evacuated from Base Camp due to frostbite. Other Dhaulagiri ascents reported include those of Romanian Horia Colibasanu and Kazakh team members Serguey Samoilov, Svetlana Sharipova, and Eugeny Shutov on 1 May, and a speed summit by Denis Urubko on 2 May.

An Italian climber is said to have fallen to his death just below the summit the day Ochoa topped out.

There have already been a few summits of Cho Oyo, the world's sixth highest mountain, with Italians Silvio Mondinelli and Marco Confortola reaching the top after an impressive 20-hour push from Camp I.

Despite the early summits on Everest, most teams are still waiting for the weather window, which traditionally arrives between 15 and 25 May. However, last year was a late Everest season with climbers reaching the summit as late as early June.



KOICHIRO OHMORI

olo

amazed, I hadn't thought this was humanly possible."

Steck came to Nepal fresh from this remarkable achievement ready for more challenges, in particular, the 3,000m-high wall of the south face of Annapurna I. And he certainly hit the ground running. He went to the Everest region to acclimatise and quickly nipped up Cholatse (6,335m), a technical trekking peak in the Khumbu.

The idea to scale the south face of Annapurna I was born in 2004 when Steck bagged two major Himalayan peaks in a row. He soloed the north face of Cholatse, which is a 1,500m high vertical rock and ice wall, and the East Face of Taboche. "After I had finished the 'Khumbu-Express' I knew I had to climb an 8,000m peak. So I had to come up with a good plan and the south face of Annapurna I looked most appealing to me," he said.

All his climbs so far have

been done without oxygen, as for Steck using 'gas' would be 'cheating'. "The experience would not be the same with oxygen. People are fooling themselves, only pretending to be at a certain altitude," he argued. The trained carpenter is also critical of the commercialisation of Everest, but says he'd love to stand on the top of the world one day—if wallet and time allow.

But for now all Steck wants is to get up Annapurna I, his way. He says he isn't scared, but seems a little nervous sitting by the pool in his hotel. "I have to pull myself together and avoid thinking about it too much... otherwise the face will even become higher and more overhanging," he said. "But I think I've reached the limit of my physical abilities. I can't get any stronger or faster—the only thing I can do is go higher." ●

Annapurna I for beginners

- Annapurna I (8,091m) is the tenth highest mountain in the world and the eighth highest in Nepal.
- Annapurna was first climbed via the North Face by a French expedition led by Maurice Herzog in 1950.
- Annapurna I is notorious for its avalanche danger. Legendary climbers like Anatoli Boukreev from Russia and Christian Kuntner from Italy have died on the mountain.
- Lafaille, who attempted the south face 1992 but turned backed when his partner fell to his death, died on Makalu (8,463m) in January 2006 while trying a solo winter ascent.
- Related links: www.mounteverest.net, www.uelisteck.ch (German).

A thief's tale

The start of Studio 7s production of Habib Tanvir's *The Honest Thief* is dramatic enough. "Truth is divine... divine is the truth... nothing compares... with the sacred, the holy... the power of truth..."

The play chronicles the life of Charandas, a thief who promises his guru to never tell lies. In one comic episode after another, Charandas dodges the law and over time attains cult Robin Hood-type status. He eventually decides to quit the game—but not before robbing the state treasury.

He pulls it off but also steals the queen's heart, which brings us to the heart of this play. There are four other vows Charandas has made—he will not eat from a golden plate, ride an elephant leading a procession, marry a queen, or become king. Whether he can stick to them—whether any of us can stick to our principles and morals in a world filled with compromises and moral corruption.

Each character in *The Honest Thief* is an archetype from contemporary society: the dishonest constable, the corrupt minister, the greedy landlord and his wife who refuse to share their sacks of grain with starving villagers, and the sadhu who is



THOMAS SCHROM

the voice of reason. Diya Maskey who plays Charandas, and Rajendra Shrestha in the role of the sadhu deliver the classic physical performances one expects from Studio 7 players.

Also of note are the vibrant red and yellow costumes, which imbue the characters with larger-than-life personas. There are visual metaphors aplenty too. In one scene two women come on stage with babies on their back, and both have a prominent item of camouflage clothing. The score is an interesting mix of Nepali hip-hop and bhajans.

This is the kind of production Studio 7 and director

Sabine Lehmann do best. There are strong characters, broad wit, and lots of movement. And underpinning all these are difficult questions that we all face, or sometimes shy away from. Why is the truth so difficult? Is it worth killing and dying for? Are we all, at our best in today's messy world, trying to be 'honest thieves'? ● *Mallika Aryal*

The Honest Thief plays at the Naga Theatre in Hotel Vajra on 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, and 20 May. All performances start at 7.15 PM. Tickets cost Rs 700. For booking and information on discounts ring 4271545.



A delicate imagination

"I express through water colours the soul of a flower," says Neera Joshi Pradhan, who is perhaps Nepal's only botanical artist. Pradhan's solo show *Colors of the Sepals and Petals*, is divided into a 'botanical' and an 'impressionistic' section. Both showcase her deft depiction of the delicate beauty, complexity, and grace of flowers.

The botanical art is rigorous—the magnolias, rhododendrons, hibiscus, and orchids you see in perfect formation on their stems are exactly what the plants look like.

The free-flowing impressionistic paintings on the other hand so closely focussed on the petals and sepals of flowers that they practically create another world of not-quite-abstract shapes and vibrant colours.

A trained botanist, Pradhan says she has always been intrigued by flowers. "I think flowers can express every kind of emotion and, more than that, they are the perfect embodiments of beauty" she says. Pradhan's impressionistic paintings are sprawling explorations of the

feelings evoked by the flowers in all their detailed, delicate, multi-hued beauty. She believes that watercolours are the best medium to capture the different hues of flowers. "There is a transparency in watercolours that brings out the essence of every flower I paint." Pradhan has had four solo exhibitions and eight group exhibitions in India and the US, but this is the first time that she's exhibiting her impressionistic paintings of flowers.

The 40-year-old believes that, sadly, Nepal's rich floral heritage is lost on most people here, and hopes that her art inspires people to look more closely at the beauty around them. "These paintings are personal, and everyone who sees them should interpret them as they see fit," says Pradhan, who is also curator of Park Gallery. "Flowers touch everyone, in many different ways." ● *Pranaya SJB Rana*

"Colours of the sepals and petals" runs until 15 May at the Park Gallery, Pulchok.



GOOFY OFFICE: A man waits in the empty office of the District Development Office in Dhanusa on 25 April. The official has fled due to an ultimatum by tarai militant groups.

AJIT TIWARI

AJIT TIWARI in JANAKPUR

The rulers in Kathmandu, preoccupied with giving pro-republican speeches at Tundikhel, don't seem to realise how fast the situation is deteriorating in the mid-eastern tarai. Worse, they appear not to care.

The appearance of pamphlets in the past week by militant tarai groups giving Nepalis of hill

origin a two week ultimatum to leave the plains proves they are deliberately igniting ethnic violence to trigger a backlash. The question is: who benefits from such a conflagration and why are the eight parties not showing the urgency to douse it?

Here in the tarai, the threat of ethnic cleansing is now real. The trouble is, it is difficult to tell who is in charge and who to

negotiate with. An extremist pamphlet from the self-styled 'Tarai Tiger' group issued two weeks ago gave hill-ethnic civil servants one month to leave the madhes. On Nepali new year's day on 14 April the underground JTMM-Jwala also threatened action against hill-ethnic officials who didn't quit, then the JTMM-Goit in Bara issued a similar threat but gave only a week's deadline.

Bara CDO Bhola Sibakoti says: "Civil servants here are all terrorised by threats from Tarai Tigers, Tarai Cobra, MJF, or the Chure Bhabar Ekata Samaj. Many have simply quit."

To get an idea of just how bad things are, one has to make the rounds of the post office, land revenue office, survey department, land reform and education offices, municipality, or even hospitals. No hill-ethnic

bureaucrat is left in most districts: some have taken extended leave, others have requested transfers but most have just fled.

The methods are simple: civil servants of hill origin are first asked to hand over between Rs 25,000-100,000 and if they refuse they are threatened or killed. That is the fate which befell Basudeb Poudel of Kalaiya in Bara who was abducted and

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the tarai

"This is worse than it was during the Maoist war."

killed by the JTMM-Goit on 16 April.

The DDC officer of Bara and director of the Kalaiya municipality were both asked to fork over Rs 500,000 each. Because they didn't have the cash both have fled the district. Bara LDO Bishnu Lamichhane hasn't been in his office for the past two months.

In Sarlahi, Naresh Jha of the Civil Service Organisation told us: "This is worse than it was

additional armed police in each district capital. But many here say it is precisely this attitude in Kathmandu of treating the tarai as a law and order problem that is delaying resolution.

The prolonged closure of district offices has hit ordinary people the most: many wishing to go abroad can't get passports and necessary documents, crossborder trade is at a standstill, sales transactions have stopped.

Bara lawyer Ramkrishna Kafle



during the Maoist war."

The threats are obviously having their desired effect. Officials in Dhanusa, Sarlahi, Siraha, Mahottari, Rautahat, and Bara report civil servants queuing up waiting for transfers or leaves. Rautahat CDO Durga Prasad Bhandari has put it all in writing and sent a two-page memo to the Home Ministry in Kathmandu.

Kathmandu has reacted by toughening security. Some district administration offices have armed police guards and in Mahottari government offices that had been closed are opening again. The Home Ministry is planning to put 75

has been threatened, and says there has been a criminalisation of identity politics in the tarai. "It is now clear this is a meticulous and deliberate attempt to disrupt ethnic harmony, and whoever is doing this is trying to provoke a backlash. And it's shameful that politicians of tarai origin philosophise in Kathmandu but don't speak out against the violence here."

It is clear that elections cannot be held in such a terrorised state. And this has made some ask: are the political forces who don't want elections allowing the tarai to fester precisely for that reason? ●



RAMESWOR BOHARA

The wild west

The Maoist attack on a border police post was to protect a lucrative timber smuggling interests

RAMESWOR BOHARA in BANKE

For the past seven years during the conflict, the Suiya border checkpoint in Banke has been known as a den for smugglers and dacoits.

Gangs poached timber from Banke's dense sal forests, taking the logs across the border to India. The Maoists offered them protection during the war and collected their cut.

But with the peace process, police posts were re-established across the country. Here in Suiya, the smugglers and Maoists found their lucrative timber smuggling business threatened by the presence of the police.

At 6.30 in the evening on 30 April a large group of well-known local thugs lead by the Maoist Banke member Nandakishore Pandey attacked the police post with swords and knives. They looted money, valuables, and guns and then set fire to furniture and uniforms. Policeman Purna Bahadur BK fled and hid nearby, and says: "If we hadn't run away we'd have been cut down with swords."

Police in-charge Mukesh Kunwar was captured and detained overnight by Pandey at his house. "It was pre-planned, they wanted us out of there," he told us.

The Muslim-dominated border village has been terrorised by both the Maoists and the smugglers, and most were fed up. "It was becoming impossible to survive here and to protect our women and daughters," says Sadruq Hussain (pictured), "but things had improved somewhat after the police arrived."

However, the lightly-armed police were themselves being threatened by the Maoists and couldn't control the rampant timber smuggling. In fact, two Indian smugglers whom the police had kept in custody were freed by the attackers on Monday night.

Now, the villagers are being terrorised again. Pandey and his cadre found out that villagers and local party leaders had complained to reporters who had arrived from Nepalganj on Tuesday and threatened to kill them. Now the villagers say they don't feel secure and may have to run away.

The Maoists threatened to kill Mohammed Dalil for talking to reporters and said: "If we don't get protection we will have to go across to India for safety."

An Armed Police Force unit has been placed in Suiya for now, but it is only a temporary measure. ●

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The history at the end of history

No one can force a society to be modern or liberal

Fifteen years ago in *The End of History and the Last Man* I argued that there was no alternative to a market economy and a democratic political system for a society to be modern. Not everyone wants to be modern or can set up the institutions and policies that make democracy and capitalism work. But no system yields better results.



OPINION
Francis Fukuyama

While the *End of History* was an argument about modernisation, some have linked my thesis to George W Bush's foreign policy and American strategic hegemony. But my ideas are not the intellectual foundation for the Bush administration's policies.

Bush initially justified intervention in Iraq on the grounds that Saddam Hussein planned to develop weapons of mass destruction, the regime's alleged links to al-Qaeda, and Iraq's violation of human rights and lack of democracy. As the first two justifications crumbled in the wake of the 2003 invasion, the US government emphasised the importance of democracy.

Bush argued that the desire for freedom and democracy was universal and that America would support democratic movements "with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world." Supporters saw their views confirmed in the queues of Iraqi voters in the various elections held between January and December 2005, in the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon, and in the Afghan presidential and parliamentary elections.

These events were inspiring, but the road to liberal democracy in the Middle East will probably be extremely disappointing in the near to medium term. The Bush administration's efforts to build a regional policy around it are headed toward abject failure.

The desire to live in a modern society and to be free of tyranny is universal, or nearly so. This is why each year millions try to move from the developing to the developed world to find the political stability, job opportunities, health care, and education they lack at home.

But this is not the same as a universal desire to live in a liberal society, that is, a political order characterised by a sphere of individual rights and the rule of law. This desire, acquired over time, is often a by-product of



successful modernisation.

Moreover, the desire to live in a modern liberal democracy does not translate into an ability to do so. The Bush administration assumed in its approach to post-Saddam Iraq that democracy and a market economy were default conditions to which societies reverted once oppressive tyranny was removed. Rather, they are complex, interdependent institutions that have to be

painstakingly built over time.

Before you have a liberal democracy, you need a functioning state (which Germany and Japan still had after they were defeated in World War II). This is not the case in countries like Iraq.

The End of History was never linked to a specifically American model of social or political organisation. I believe the European Union, not the contemporary US, more

accurately reflects what the world will look like at the end of history. The EU's attempt to transcend sovereignty and traditional power politics by establishing a transnational rule of law is much more in line with a 'post-historical' world than Americans' continuing belief in god, national sovereignty, and their military.

Finally, I never linked the global emergence of democracy to American agency, particularly not to the exercise of American military power. Democratic transitions need to be driven by societies that want democracy, and since they require institutions, are usually drawn out processes.

Outside powers can help by the example they set as politically and economically successful societies. They can also provide funding, advice, technical assistance, and yes, occasionally military force to help the process along. But coercive regime change was never the key to democratic transition. ●
(Project Syndicate)

Francis Fukuyama is dean of the school of advanced international studies at Johns Hopkins University, and chairman of *The American Interest*.

A NATION DIVIDED: Twenty million Chinese children live away from their parents, and an estimated 150 million Chinese work far from home, largely due to asymmetrical business and land reforms.



China's economic achievements during the last three decades are largely the result of radical economic reform. Privately-owned firms, which hardly existed when these reforms started, today account for about 60 percent of total production.

Ownership is, however, only one dimension of an economic system. China's system has changed drastically in other ways too. Decision-making regarding

processes, monopoly, and autarchy. China's reform period illustrates starkly the historical lesson that unleashing individual initiative boosts economic development.

China is a type of mixed economy, with specific features. Although internationalisation of the economy has served China well, it is unlikely that the current 35 percent share of GDP claimed by exports and the heavy reliance on foreign technology are sustainable in the long run. Another shaky factor is the tension between widespread private ownership of firms and pervasive public ownership of assets. For example, by disfavoured lending to private firms, state-owned banks distort the allocation of resources. Chinese agriculture is another example of this tension—public ownership of land harms the investment incentives for family farms and reduces their chance of consolidating

Mixed bag

China's economy needs more fiscal and social reform

land holdings in order to exploit economies of scale.

Addressing this tension is imperative, as the entry and expansion of small private companies will be increasingly important when China's domestic markets and domestic innovation start playing a greater role. Financial assets and land holdings will need to continue to be shifted out of the public sector.

This would also help address another feature of China's economic system, endemic corruption. This is difficult to do as long as politicians and bureaucrats have things to 'sell' to firms and individuals, including rationed loans from public-sector banks and regulatory permits. In rural areas, corruption comes from frequent expropriation of land-lease contracts held by farmers working on collectively-owned land, which local officials then turn over to non-agriculture land developers.

Now some types of corruption, including 'asset stripping' in connection with privatising public sector firms, has speeded up the emergence of a class of private capitalists and entrepreneurs. But corruption as a permanent element of China's economic system will reduce the efficiency of the allocation of resources and damage the legitimacy of private entrepreneurship. Reducing corruption will require not only government pep talks against bad ethics, but also institutional reforms, including further deregulation, stronger property rights, and more privately owned assets. Free media would also help.

China also needs to shift from its

'extensive'—and resource consuming—growth strategy to a more 'intensive' development path. Although high growth requires large-scale capital formation, the relation between investment in real capital assets and human capital in China seems to be out of proportion. The current investment in the former is 43 percent of GDP, and for human capital, in the form of education, 4.3 percent. For more efficient growth this ratio should be changed in favour of education, including vocational training.

Eliminating today's vast wastage of natural resources, which underpins exceptionally high pollution, will require a reformed regulatory framework, including higher user prices for energy, raw materials, and environmental resources. A less resource-dependent development strategy would free up resources for improvements in the country's much-neglected social arrangements, particularly among rural citizens and 'urban outsiders' (individuals in informal urban sectors). This includes patchy arrangements for income security, and unevenly distributed social services, such as health and education.

The case for combining further government withdrawal from the production system with more engagement in the social field is compelling. ●
(Project Syndicate)

Assar Lindbeck is professor of international economics at Stockholm University. His most recent work is *An Essay on Economic Reforms and Social Change in China*.



COMMENT
Assar Lindbeck

consumption and production has largely been decentralised to households and firms, respectively. Economic incentives, markets, competition, and internationalisation have to a considerable extent replaced command, administrative



Beware of obsolete dogma promising all the answers

The curse of ideology

Conflict in the 20th century reached new levels of depravity through the introduction of ideology. For the first time, territorial wars and other conventional excuses for mayhem took lower casualties and ruined fewer lives than state-sponsored purges and repression.

As an opinionated student of history, the Hand fears and loathes ideology for the blind



MOVING TARGET
Foreign Hand

faith it demands and the devastation unleashed in its name. Every thinking person is bound to despise those who glom onto doctrinaire beliefs and allow such abuses. The atrocities committed for political conviction are too numerous and nasty to forgive and forget.

Fascist regimes in Spain, Italy, and Japan jailed trade-unionists, executed leftists, and brutally suppressed dissent before collapsing in the dustbin of history. Stalin wiped out the landlord class, demonised kulaks ('rich' peasants), and exiled countless to the gulag to preserve Marxist purity, only to have his legacy disowned by his successor. Hitler's ideology of racial superiority systematically slaughtered millions of innocents in concentration camps before destroying Germany. Needless to say, none of the above qualifies as progressive.

Communism and capitalism emerged from the ashes of World War II to compete fiercely for the next 50 years. The Cold War provided a handy excuse for a ruinous arms race that ignited proxy wars throughout the third world, propping up tinpot dictators from Mobutu to Mengistu. Millions more were thus sacrificed to the weird 20th century phenomena of ideological struggle.

Repressive military juntas in Latin America 'disappeared' and murdered innumerable 'leftists', while Mao Tse Tung launched purges that reached into every home, liquidating all labelled 'rightist'. In Argentina or China, right or left, the merest suspicion of dissent was enough for imprisonment, torture, and death. State organised persecution for thought-crime surely marks an all-time low in human political history.

By the time Nixon and Kissinger launched their secret bombing of neutral Laos and Cambodia, justified by anti-communist domino theory ideology, events were spinning out of control. This particular effort proved spectacularly counterproductive by propelling the Maoist Khmer Rouge to power. The result, a five-year orgy of killing, was another no-win situation for all, especially those stuck in the middle.

None of this feverish activity benefited anybody except the governing clique, who inevitably used their chosen ideology to crush opposition and terrorise the citizenry as a means of maintaining power.

The Hand admits to a melancholic fascination with unquestioned belief. What attracts certain people to such strict doctrine? The absolute conviction required by the party removes the need to think for oneself, which must be comforting to some. Psychology amateurs would point to the stern father-figure personality cults of Hitler, Stalin, and Mao that were so brutally effective in keeping the people obedient. It would be convenient if a set of books provided solutions to all the problems of governance and society, and in my more desperate moments I wonder if brainwashing isn't somehow soothing.

But rigid adherence to a canon creates far more problems than it

solves. When critical analysis can lead to dreaded accusations of 'revisionism' and a possible death sentence, intellectual flexibility and independent thought are stifled. The next step is mental lethargy and stagnation.

Buying into an ideology allows individuals to relinquish personal responsibility in the guise of following orders. As individualism is submerged in pursuit of the greater goal, which usually amounts to increasing production for the state.

When a dissenting opinion can be fatal, cultural diversity is the first victim. Fascists dehumanised and wiped out minorities, while communists suppressed and derided traditional cultural expression as superstitious, reactionary, and irrelevant in the workers' paradise.

The uniformity imposed by ideological governments is intentionally drab and the arts inevitably become propaganda tools. Rather than celebrate human nature and creative expression, ideologues control such diversity in the interest of ideological monoculture.

The Hand entertains no doubts that denial of the human spirit ultimately damned these systems to disgrace and failure. The soul seeks more out of life than fulfilling party dictated quotas for the current five-year plan, and societies that ignore morality and spirituality are unsustainable.

Alas, Nepal looks set to join North Korea as the final battleground of the Cold War, long after the other players have moved on to more profitable agendas. Maoist denunciations of regressive royalist forces and imperialist conspiracies would be amusing if they weren't so ridiculously outdated, and if they didn't put the country at risk of repeating these senseless episodes of history. ●

Chancing it

Only we can make things better for ourselves

At the end of the day, you never know. This useful thought can tame most egos, given a chance. It does, like it or not. Time, chance, and whatever else you fear, all catch up with you.

No matter how highly you regard yourself, or are venerated by various versions of the masses, despite the high esteem in which you hold your own-self, it all comes down to the passage of time. Or chance. A small cancer cell sidling against some others in a part of the body; a worn spot on a fuel line on the airplane engine; storm cells swirling in a distant, unperceived place. It's all chaos theory.

Life is random. Our ego tells us we're in charge. And if we are President George W Bush, Gyanendra Shah, Comrade Awesome, or Salvador Allende of Chile, for a time we are in charge. We even get to where we are legitimately, a little stealth, a lot of popular support or natural momentum. But you know what? At the end of the day, nothing is guaranteed. The supposition of divine sanction

serves only to let us down harder than the airier confines of fatalism.

So when you look at the state of Nepal these days, perhaps the best approach is—



HERE AND THERE
Daniel Lak

"what's the big deal". Okay, the various attempts, fair and foul, of recent actors to positively influence events have failed or gone horribly wrong. The king and his dynasty repose discredited yet snappish and angry utopians of right and left sweat bullets as their dreams collapse around them. Democrats are grovelling in the dirt or wallowing in sloughs of despond.

So we missed the CA elections. Maoist cadres aren't happy in crappy cantonments. Tarai grievances are seething merrily and dozens of other complaints are being brought to Kathmandu in torchlight processions from the provinces. Read and weep, oh ye of the comfortable classes.

Look further afield. Development is picking up but, for the most part, not nearly efficiently enough. Kathmandu's aid-o-crat elite is doing its best but it takes time to shed the habits of years of perceived conflict and shelter-seeking. Back in donor capitals, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, and other hotter hell holes are displacing funds and interest. It's not easy to be tasked with developing Nepal.



On the human rights front, there are hopes but little prospect of great strides being made towards accountability and an end to impunity and natural justice. No one in politics right now has un-bloodied hands. All share some guilt for the dire state of the nation, so who's going to take the first step towards truth and reconciliation? No one who isn't pushed, or promised immunity, that's for sure.

Yes we need a Nelson Mandela, a Martin Luther King, an Oliver Cromwell. But giants don't walk the earth anymore. Ordinary, mediocre, timid folk like us are going to have to do it ourselves. And risk the randomness of existence. Take a chance on failure, irrelevance, or worse.

Just taking that first step could be crucial. It could do all sorts of things but if it really gets going, it will re-invent civil society and put the good people a half step ahead of the political classes. Just taking that chance, breathing deep, stepping into the gap, going for it. Stating boldly what's needed and when, and explaining the time-bound consequences of failure. Not the politicians, but the poli, the people.

Is there any other alternative?

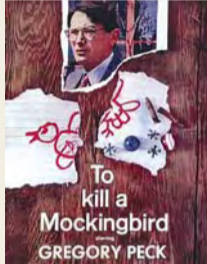
ABOUT TOWN

EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **LAST DAY A People War** travelling photo exhibition, 5 May Saturday, 10AM-6PM, at Nepal Art Council, Babar Mahal.
- ❖ **Individuality through creativity** photography by the visually impaired at Nepal Art Council, 5-7 May
- ❖ **Photo.Circle.V** exhibition of photographs by Bikas Rauniar, Anuj Chitrakar and, Subel Bhandari, 5 May, 9.45 AM-12PM, at the Bakery Café, Sundhara.
- ❖ **Colours of the sepals and petals** an exhibition of paintings based on botanical art by Neera Joshi Pradhan, 10.30 AM-6PM, except Saturdays at Park Gallery, Pulchok, until 15 May. 5522307
- ❖ **Moments of passion** an exhibition of collage paintings by Gaurav Shrestha, 6-15 May, 11AM-6PM daily at The Art Shop, Darbar Marg. 9841341810
- ❖ **Sacred Realms** mixed media works by Seema Sharma Shah at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, until 26 May, 11AM-6PM daily. 4218048

EVENTS

- ❖ **To Kill a Mockingbird** starring Gregory Peck, based on Harper Lee's novel, 4 May, 6.30 PM at the Lazimpat Gallery Café.
- ❖ **Yuva Chalfal Shrinkhala** about intraparty democratic practices, 4 May, 3-5 PM at Martin Chautari. 4107599
- ❖ **The Honest Thief** performed by Studio 7, opening weekend 4-6 May, further performances on 11-19 May and 18-20 May, 7.15 PM at the Naga Theater, Hotel Vajra. 4271545
- ❖ **Lectures, therapies, and workshops** on memory, self-confidence, stress and health by Dutch psychotherapist P Langedijk, 7-12 May at Nepal Japan Children's Library, Lainchaur. 4279712
- ❖ **Second Israeli Film Festival** two films screened each day at 3.30 PM and 5.45 PM, 8-10 May at the Russian Culture Centre, free passes. 4411811
- ❖ **Aarohan National Theatre Festival 2007** featuring theatre groups from all over Nepal, two shows a day at 12 noon and 5.30 PM, at Gurukul, until 11 May. 4466956
- ❖ **School Bullying** a talk program by Niti Rana, 17 May at The New Era, Battispatali. 9851023958
- ❖ **Pottery course** by Santosh Kumar from the Delhi Blue Pottery Trust, at Newa Art Ceramics in Mdhyapur, Thimi, 25 May-24 June. 9841257968



MUSIC

- ❖ **Kathmandu Chorale Spring Concert** 19 May, 3.30 PM and 6 PM, at The British School, Jhamsikhel. Admission free. 5521218
- ❖ **Open Mic Night** at Via Via Café, every Friday, 8PM onwards.
- ❖ **Live Music** at the Red Onion Bar, Wednesdays from 8PM with Yanki and Zigma Lepcha. 4416071
- ❖ **Moksh Live** presents live music, every Friday, at the Moksh Bar, Pulchok. 5526212
- ❖ **DJ Raju and the Cloudwalkers** live at the Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency, every Friday and Saturday. 4491234

DINING

- ❖ **Friday evening BBQ** with live music, at the Hotel Himalaya, 30 March onwards from 7PM, Rs 499 net. 5523900
- ❖ **Krishnarpan** Nepali specialty restaurant at Dwarika's Hotel, six to 22 course ceremonial lunch and dinner. 4479488
- ❖ **Weekend special** with sekuwa, bara, barbeque, Fridays at Ambassador Garden House, Lazimpat, 5.30 PM onwards. 4411706
- ❖ **Mongolian BBQ** with Mongolian cuisine Wednesdays, Friday, 6.30 PM on at the Splash Bar and Grill, Radisson Hotel. Rs 1,000 for unlimited barbeque and beer. 4422828
- ❖ **Flavours** of the Middle East every Friday and the taste of Thailand every Wednesday at The Café, Hyatt Regency, Boudha. 4491234
- ❖ **Light nouvelle snacks** and elaborate cordon bleu meals at La'Soon, Pulchok, behind the Egyptian embassy. 5537166
- ❖ **Continental cuisine** and wine by the fire place at Kilroy's, Thamel. 4250440.
- ❖ **Smorgasbord** lunch at Park Village Resort, every Saturday. 4375280
- ❖ **Gyakok** at the Shambala Garden Café, Hotel Shangri-La, minimum four diners at Rs 450 per person, two hours' notice.
- ❖ **Retro brunch barbecue** with Crossfire Band at Le Meridien, Gokarna from 12-4PM, Rs 1,000 including swimming. 4451212
- ❖ **Calcutta's rolls, biryani, kebabs** Indian cuisine at Bawarchi, Bluebird Mall Food Court. 9741000735
- ❖ **Woodfired Pizzas** at the Roadhouse Café, Thamel 4262768, Bhatbhateni 4426587 and Pulchok 5521755
- ❖ **Pizza** from the woodfired oven at Java, Thamel. 4422519
- ❖ **Jazzabell Café** enjoy great food, exotic cocktails and music, Chakupat, Patan. 2114075

GETAWAYS

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

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Peter Parker (Tobey Maguire) finally seems to be finding the right balance between being Spiderman and dating girlfriend Mary-Jane Watson (Kirsten Dunst), but his new-found happiness is shattered when a meteorite crashes to earth bringing with it a slimy black substance that binds with Spidey's suit to give him new powers. Two new supervillians Sandman and Venom enter the fray and to add to his troubles, Harry Osborne (James Franco) is back as the new Green Goblin.

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NEPALI WEATHER by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

KATHMANDU

This week has been all about sunny intervals followed by rain that is sometimes furious in the late afternoons. Thursday afternoon's satellite picture shows Tibet under the influence of huge cyclone-gathering clouds from northwesterly fronts. Breakaway fractions of these containing light moisture are spilling over into the Nepali sky, producing cool breezes, thunderstorms, and showers. The cold, gusting winds and hailstorms are because the clouds come from a polar front. Expect more of the same over the weekend, humidity, cool breezes, thunderstorms, and sunny intervals.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

Fri 29-15	Sat 29-14	Sun 29-16	Mon 30s-16	Tue 30-16
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MIN BAJRACHARYA

UNHAPPY FAMILIES: Families of victims of Maoist excesses lay out pictures of their loved ones at the Maitighar mandala on Monday asking for justice. Police broke up the meeting and a number of attendees were roughed up.



KIRAN PANDAY

SPEAKING UP: The Federation of Nepalese Journalists walk through town to mark World Press Freedom Day on Thursday.



KIRAN KRISHNA SHRESTHA

WHERE IS MY DRIVER?: UML general secretary Madhab Nepal looks pensive as he waits in the rain after going through the photographic exhibition, A People War. His driver was upstairs, viewing the exhibition himself.



KIRAN PANDAY

LIGHTS OF PEACE: The Boudhanath stupa is brilliantly lit with thousands of butter lamps and the light of the moon on the occasion of the Buddha's 2,551st birthday on Wednesday.



BIMAL SHARMA

OFF WE GO: One of 21 enthusiastic Nepali and foreign participants whizzing along the Tamang Heritage Trail up from m Syabrubesi on Saturday during a two-day mountain bike race organised by the UN-supported Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Program.



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The Australian Government also has a range of **Endeavour Awards** open to candidates from Nepal. These include: Endeavour Postgraduate Awards; Endeavour International Postgraduate Research Scholarships; Endeavour Vocational Technical Education Awards; Endeavour Research Fellowships; and Endeavour Executive Awards. Details on these awards are also available at www.australianscholarships.gov.au.

ALA Scholarship applications can be submitted both online and by post. Online applications can be submitted at: www.australianscholarships.gov.au and is open from 1 May 2007 until 31 July 2007. Applications submitted via post by applicants from South Asia should reach the following address by 16 July 2007.

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21 Gregory's Rd, Colombo 7, Sri Lanka

For more information on the Australian Scholarships program please visit www.australianscholarships.gov.au.

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May Day! May Day!

Not since the slaughter of 256 rare African parakeets has our cow pasture-turned-international airport seen a week as eventful as this.

First, some bloke ploughed his dozer through the cable running to the VORDME beacon knocking the airport out of action during the evening rush hour. The very next day a Doha flight had a **bomb scare** that closed down the airport, this time during the morning rush hour. Despite the Ass's fine investigative skills she's not been able to figure out how or why that alert went from Qatar to Mangalore to Kolkata to Kathmandu.

Anyway, no sooner had the airport opened again thousands of passengers were stranded in the terminal because the YCL decided to block the Ring Road. The next day it was the turn of irate passengers on the formerly-Royal Nepal Airlines flight to Dubai that had been delayed by five days who decided enough was enough and **gheraoed** the security check thereby sealing off the departure area. As this donkey goes to press, the airport is open but we don't know for how long.

As noted last week, Kingji has intensified efforts to enlist supernatural intervention to preserve his **Tantrick Kingdom**. After giving new meaning to the phrase 'let's all make our sacrifices for the sake of the country' Big G has deployed an army of Brahmins to stage a **mahayagya** to stave off the Ill Winds Wafting from the South. As the intimate details of these and other palace goings-on (like the top secret meeting between the former Supreme Commander and the Chief of Army Staff) get plastered across Kathmandu's more salacious (than us) weeklies, efforts are reportedly underway to figure out who the Deep Throat within Naryanhiti is.



It doesn't surprise your asinine columnist one bit that the comrades are impatient to turn Nepal into a republic and declare victory. You would too if you had hailstones the size of socket bombs raining down on your tents. But you'd be in even more of a hurry if your cantonments are being invaded by **snakes**. No, not counter-revolutionary anti-proletarian feudal snakes,

but real reptiles.

And the comrades may have forsaken the battlefield but they are invading the air waves. Listeners of Radio Paschimanchal in Palpa have suddenly noticed a new slant in the evening news bulletins in which critics of the Maoists are referred to as 'mandalays' Gyanendra the king is called by his friendly nickname, Gyanay.

And they are making forays into film as well. The movie **Lal Salam** has just finished shooting (camera, not gun) and it has revolutionary dance sequences performed by the All Nepal People's Cultural Federation. The Ass has been told never mind by whom that Comrade Awesome giving his fiery 'May Day, May Day!' speech this week at Tundikhel will make a cameo appearance in the 1 hr 26 min feature film. How that bit is going to be woven into the plot, we're not sure, but we're convinced it will be scintillating.



By the way, cabinet meetings have been moved from Baluwatar to Singha Darbar.

This week the Maoists tried hard to push through replacement secretaries in the ministries that they control. And they still can't agree on ambassadors one year after regime change. There are eight cooks and they're making a mess of the **broth**.



Maharababu has certainly done some spring cleaning at Radio Nepal. The Ghatana Bichar morning radio package now sounds just like Radio Ganatantra. Which is no surprise because the minister has brought in comrades from his formerly clandestine radio. Moles in Gorkhapatra and NTV say they have been told to play down news about YCL bullying and give full prominence to President Prachanda's various orations, of which there are many. How is this different from what the **Sri Punch** did when he took over?

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