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p12-13

Dog Days



RAM HUMAGAIN

Times nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll # 165

Q. Should landmines be banned in Nepal?

Total votes: 669

Weekly Internet Poll # 165. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. Was it appropriate to hold the Raj Parishad Central Conference?

How active?

Is it raw ambition or a genuine attempt to find a solution

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

It's not a question of whether King Gyanendra should be an active monarch or not, it is about how active he should be.

That appears to be the message that the organisers of the Raj Parishad wanted to convey with their controversial two-day conference that began at the BICC on Thursday. "If the country is adrift and the king wants to help rescue it, what's wrong with that, isn't that what he should do?" asks the former chairman of the royal council's standing committee, Keshar Jung Rayamajhi.

Raj Parishad members say they are not against constitutional monarchy and democracy, adding that political parties are so hung up on due process that they have lost sight of the need to find a solution to

the country's crisis. They blame the parties for not helping the king in forming an all-party government.

But political parties, including the UML, which is a partner in the royal-appointed Deuba coalition, say Thursday's conference was final proof of the king's authoritarian ambitions. Indeed, 11 invited UML members in the government including Deputy Prime Minister Bharat Mohan Adhikari boycotted the conference. The UML also deployed its student wing to block roads, burn tyres and stone the police. There was a brief attempt to block the road at Ghantaghar that the royal motorcade was to take en route to BICC. The road was cleared of bricks and tyres just in time.

"The Raj Parishad conference is unconstitutional and illegitimate, it has widened

the gap between the parties and the king," the UML's Subash Nembang told us. The NC's Arjun Narsingh KC agrees: "This is a calculated move to consolidate the royal takeover two years ago, it will create conditions for a tyrannical rule."

The fact that the Raj Parishad conference coincided with rumours that the king is contemplating sacking Deuba again to reign directly added to misgivings among the parties. Aside from its legality, many politicians suspect the conference is designed to prepare the groundwork for direct royal rule.

Analysts say that at the heart of the dispute is a deep lack of trust between the king and the parties. Some Kathmandu-based diplomats feel the king is genuinely trying to find a solution and the parties are

raising procedural issues to block him. "If the king wants to go beyond the political deadlock to strike a peace deal with the Maoists, most people would welcome it," a senior diplomat told us.

Speaker Taranath Ranabhat, who is ex-officio member of the royal council, told us: "It all depends on what kind of final document the convention comes up with, but going by today's speeches there is nothing to worry about."

Chairman of the Raj Parishad standing committee, Parsu Narayan Chaudhary has said the council would recommend measures the king could take. He added: "We're not here to bash parties, we want to help the king find a solution." ●

Editorial p2
Don't do it

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canvas

was very young. So young, he doesn't even remember. "My parents are photographers and I must have been nine when I started snapping shots," he recalls. "The tripods were taller than me, but I still remember clearly the excitement that gripped me whenever I held the camera." Living in the ancient city has shaped his interest in the architecture and life of medieval Kathmandu so well depicted in his recent work.

"I wanted to recreate what life was like in the 15th Century Bhaktapur," he explains, as he points out the sienna-tinted compositions at the Indigo this week. "Bhaktapur is living

history, the people, the gods and goddesses." Although he plans his pictures, sometimes there are lucky accidents like the 'Sadhu at Pashupatinath'.

"I was shooting something else when I sensed this sadhu standing behind me," he recalls, "I just turned around and clicked and turned back again." The vibrant colours of the sadhu's painted forehead and the wisp of smoke curling above his dark eyes create a remarkable and mystic effect. ●

'Life Through The Lens' is on at the Indigo Gallery till 15 January.
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Stalemate

Himal, 1-15 December

हिमाल

A directionless Nepal has been at the crossroads for quite sometime now. The king, political parties and rebels that are supposed to be the guides are themselves confused. Their ideas for a way out of the present crisis have only complicated matters. The king seems to want an active monarchy, the government wants talks with the rebels failing which elections by a deadline, the rebels want elections for a constituent assembly and some of the parties want a reinstatement of parliament.

The first alternative has the least scope. The king may desire direct rule but it will be difficult for him to remain in power after that. After his October Fourth move, he has had even more problems on his hands. In effect, he had to gear down his ambitions in order to remain a power centre. He faces pressure from foreign powers. In the long run, the king's popularity will decline among people who have no role in these messy games.

The idea of peace talks and elections is the 'outlet' advocated by the present government and its allies. But coalition partners are divided. Ministers and political parties in the coalition government have opposed Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's pledge, as ordered by the king, to hold elections. The rebels have rejected the government's invitation for talks. No one believes elections can be held without peace.

As far as the Maoists' demand for constituent assembly is concerned, it is not going to happen anytime soon because there needs to be a consensus on the need for one. All power centres including the king will have to accept the roles given by the constitution prepared by the people's representatives.

As long as the present political equation remains, the constituent assembly does not appear a possibility. Either the rebels have to win or they will have to reach an agreement with one of the remaining two forces. But the Maoists have neither emerged winners nor have they been so weakened as to surrender or reach an agreement. To go for constituent assembly, the stalemate will have to drag on into a prolonged phase of violence.

At face value, the fourth idea—reinstatement of the parliament—is not desirable. The mandated tenure of the dissolved House of Representatives has expired but those supporting the idea believe it impossible to hold elections. They argue that the reinstatement of the house would help bring the constitution back on track. Those opposing the idea say that the reinstatement of the house would not make any

sense because the parliament has failed to face challenges.

Reinstatement is not possible, it is argued, because the Supreme Court has verified the validity of the dissolution of the House of Representatives. But the fact remains that parliament was dissolved on condition that elections be held within six months, the same condition at the Supreme Court considered when it approved the decision of House dissolution. Since the condition of the elections has not been met, the house can be reinstated and the court's decision does not appear to be an obstacle. Our constitution has not envisaged a situation with no parliament for more than six months. The argument that the reinstatement of the house would violate the spirit of the constitution, therefore, is not valid.

Absolute democracy

Debendra Raj Pandey in Kantipur, 3 December

कान्तिपुर

We often hear this argument: if Girija Prasad Koirala or Madhab Kumar Nepal can do what they like, why can't the king do the same? In a democracy, leaders tend to be dictators and dismiss the people's strength. That is why people cannot differentiate between a democracy and an autocratic monarchy. The fact remains that leaders come and go, the new generation moves on. Political party leaders often forget this. The first thing our leaders did after they came into power was become allies of the old power centres. The aim of such a relationship was to retain each other. And while doing that, the leaders suppressed progressive voices and the zeal of their younger cadres. In short, leaders behaved like royals. This is why there are now questions about the future of the political leadership. One wonders what will happen to the younger turks. Who will manage them and how? The fact that these questions are being raised indicate that they are expressions of a new generation and the answer is not an autocratic monarchy. There is no country that is completely satisfied with its democracy. In South Asia, we know how it works but even in the US there has been serious critique of democratic practices. The latest US presidential elections showed many pitfalls especially of political patronage in the electoral process. Despite all this, no one says America needs dictatorship. The American people have weaknesses but no one says it was a mistake to make them sovereign. This is also true for South Asia. In his write-up on the fall of the ancient Roman empire, historian Edward Gibbon raised an interesting issue: among the different kinds of regimes in the world, the one that deserves to be demeaned the most is monarchy. He asked, "Could there be anyone in this world who would, without reacting, take the fact that an infant son would inherit the entire

देशमा शान्ति र सुव्यवस्था कायम हुन सकेमा मात्र विकासको गति तिब्र हुन सक्छ । यसर्थ समाजमा शान्ति, सुव्यवस्था कायम राखि एकता र राष्ट्रिय हितको भावनाले विकास कार्यमा सहभागी हुनु सबै नेपालीहरूको प्रमुख कर्तव्य हो ।

श्री ५ को सरकार
सूचना तथा संचार मंत्रालय
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What makes a dog tick

Little can be as rewarding as training a dog so it feels at ease in the human world. Good training is not punishment-based, but reinforcing good behaviours through reward. By understanding what makes a dog tick and using the proven techniques, trainers can learn to socialise and train a dog to be a well-mannered companion.

Obedience training is basically an education in good manners. Dogs can learn to respond to cues such as sit, down, stand, stay, come and loose leash walking, as well as for troubleshooting issues such as poor manners, jumping up and pulling on leash. Here are 10 do's and don'ts to train dogs:

- 1 Keep training simple
- 2 Start training in a quiet place
- 3 Set up your dog to win
- 4 Reward all good work
- 5 Reward immediately
- 6 Train just a few times a day
- 7 Don't nag or blame your dog
- 8 Keep encouraging your dog
- 9 Stop training if your dog is tired or has lost interest
- 10 Don't train if you are tired
- 11 Don't let anyone use a different command word
- 12 Always give voice and hand signals at the same time—make sure they are clear
- 13 The earlier you begin training the easier it is
- 14 Train at home for five to 10 minutes at a time
- 15 All dog commands are just one word
- 16 Develop three tones of voice: command, reprimand & praise

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DON'T DO IT

A slew of statements in the past month hinting at a Poush One-type royal putsch is too deliberate to be a coincidence. First we had the government spokesman stirring a hornet's nest on 11 November by wondering publicly about the possibility of reverting to authoritarianism.

Then there was a sense of disquieting déjà vu as we heard demands to set up a 'royal advisory council'. Pliant party disgruntleds seem to be forging an alliance, and a younger generation of royals was newly vocal. On Thursday, a regional Raj Parishad meeting was inaugurated by King Gyanendra himself.

This shadowy game is being played out amidst a semi-democracy, when a twitching constitution still grants us the right to free expression. The royal right has every right to use that freedom, just as those who don't agree have the right to disagree.

But if the freedom is being used to do away with those very civil liberties, then it's not enough to just sit in the sidelines. We are either free or we're not, we can't be half-free. The choice shouldn't just be Mahendrapath or Prachandapath, we should be free to say neither. One can't be 'objective' about dictatorship or totalitarianism.

However much the political parties brought it on themselves with their shenanigans, and even though there are few indications that they have mended their wayward ways, we strongly advise against any temptation to reverse history. This will push even those who still believe our common future lies in constitutional monarchy and pluralistic democracy towards republicanism. Whoever is counselling this move is pushing the monarchy itself into a trap and the country into irreversible polarisation.

In the week after October Fourth, we gave King Gyanendra the benefit of doubt but cautioned that he was gambling his throne with the move. The last two years of musical chair governments have not been any different from pre-October Fourth. Whatever this was, it isn't working. But the Deuba government is a coalition of the willing and at least representative of the membership of the former house. How is dumping Deuba for direct rule going to be any different than what we have now: a government and military which take orders directly from the palace?

There is a fork on the road, we should take the path that takes us towards inclusion and shores up democracy instead of dismantling what remains of it. Only that will help us find ways to address the other serious threat to democracy: the Maoists.

A monarchy's morality

There is a lesson for all monarchies from the persona of Thailand's King Bhumibol

The role of a constitutional head of state is a tricky one. India's president doesn't have executive powers which are vested in the prime minister, but President Abdul Kalam wields

GUEST COLUMN
Raghu Pant



power that emanates from his popularity and moral authority. So when he speaks out on something he feels strongly about, like education or communal harmony, the prime minister has to listen.

Nelson Mandela may not be the president of his country any more but he is regarded as the father of the nation in South Africa and his moral stature makes him a global leader, respected and admired everywhere and he is looked up to by other world leaders.

Among Asia's monarchs, Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk survived the Khmer Rouge and ensured the continuity of monarchy recently by handing over the throne to his son, Sihamoni. Even though he is no longer king, he is regarded with high respect by Cambodians.

Thailand's Bhumibol

Adulyadej is the model of a people-centred constitutional monarch whose legitimacy stems not so much from tradition as the moral authority that the king commands because of his personal integrity and honour.

As I saw on a recent visit to Thailand, with his involvement in the welfare of the Thai people, he is the moral compass for the nation and has carved for himself a place in the hearts of his subjects. King Bhumibol, whose 77th birthday was celebrated last week, has the image of a reliable guardian and responsible custodian of national interest.

At a food festival organised last week at the BICC in Kathmandu on his birthday by the Thai ambassador, Penchome Incharoensak, we got a chance not just to savour Thai food that appeals to the Nepali palate, but also to look at various exhibits that showed the economic advances that Thailand has made in recent years.

There was a time when Thailand and Nepal were at similar stages of development. Like Nepal, Thailand has also battled a Maoist insurgency and beat it with the carrot-and-stick approach of military strikes



and rural development. Today, Thailand has forged ahead and a lot of the credit for steering the country to the path of sustainable development and democracy goes to King Bhumibol.

The high regard that the Thai people have for their monarch is because of his simple lifestyle, personal integrity and his devotion to the welfare of his citizens. The source of King Bhumibol's power is not political or military. The public's trust in their king comes from his refusal to use political and executive power, from his moral strength and ethical standing. There is a positive lesson here for other monarchs. ●

Raghu Pant, a former journalist, is the Minister of Labour and Transport.

LETTERS

D'ETAT ET MOI

Your editorial ('Round and round in circles') and CK Lal's book review ('Revolutions devour their own children', #223) evoke a Dickensonian *Tale of Two Cities* feeling in present-day Nepal. All Nepalis, especially the ruling elite, politicians, rebels, generals and the so-called intellegentsia need to turn the pages of history. Kathmandu lives in a cocoon. Our erstwhile political leaders squandered the gains of the People's Movement so flagrantly that we are now back in a pre-1990 status quo with royal proclamations and palace appointed governments. We have a cabinet that increases the royal household budget while the people are starving and being butchered. We have new limos and the thundering of Harley Davidsons on the Ring Road. This is the 'let them eat cake' mentality that you cite in your editorial. It is time for the rulers to gain self-realisation, time to look inwards and think. Otherwise history may well repeat itself.

S N Singh, email

● This is in response to an interesting remark made by FA Hutchison in his letter (#224) about 'where is a Nepali Vaclav Havel?' We Nepalis have never learnt the meaning of the word 'leadership' or 'leader'. There is an illusion that a leader should be a politician or a monarch.

Qualifications of a leader in Nepal include: political incarceration, association with a political party or inheritance of the throne. If we look outside Nepal, the world has re-defined the meaning of leadership. Like Havel, leaders ought to be agents of change. Leaders ought to be motivators, communicators and popular. None of the leaders in Nepal have these characteristics. There could be a Nepali Havel but the Havels of Nepal have been ousted from their leadership aspirations.

D Mahat Baltimore, USA

● 'Summitting under a shamiana in Lumbini' (#224) by Kanak Mani Dixit is articulate and sheds light on the ugly pretence hidden under the surface of duplicitious rule. It was a

gesture of disrespect to have the king garland a tiny statue of Buddha from behind.

Prajna Lama, Kathmandu

● Having been born and brought up abroad but now settled in Nepal, I found 'Summitting under a shamiana in Lumbini' (#224) spot on. As a Nepali to witness such embarrassment on an international scale is heartbreaking. I thank Dixit for being one Nepali who is brave enough to tell things as they are. One just had to look at the coverage on tv to get a flavour of that sad picture. Lumbini is a national treasure and our government should learn some aesthetics and put that knowledge to use when staging events of this magnitude. And perhaps at the next summit our government-at-war will be better equipped to discuss peace by bringing a bit of that to the table.

Ritika Lama, Jawalakhel

PIRATED PILOTS

Behind the lament of Royal Nepal Airlines pilots ('Our pilots are being pirated', #224) is a tragic tale of management fiasco, mostly attributed to incompetent managers and ruthless politicians. The airline is probably the only national institution that can compete with its regional counterparts and bring significant revenue to the nation. Instead, what we have is a horror story that is reflected in your coverage, pilots lamenting about pay scales, depleting fleet, not to mention staff stealing company assets, politicians getting preferential treatment and an abysmal punctuality record. Royal Nepal Airlines reflects the socio-

economic attitude at a national level and it shows the height of incompetency and disgrace.

Name withheld, email

GLOBAL WARNING

I was surprised at the rise of pro-environment and donor friendly articles relating to the ratification of Kyoto Protocol in your paper (#224). The logic forwarded by the two writers (Navin Singh Khadka and Bikash Pandey) for Nepal to sign Kyoto are ridiculous while the biggest carbon dioxide emitters have not ratified it. The first thing is to judge the extent of damage and to divide the responsibility for climate change. Nepal's contribution is negligible and we have more to lose than gain by signing such conventions. The gain of \$4.5 million from biogas plants is peanuts compared to the future cost Nepal will bear as it moves towards industrialisation. The cheapest source of energy will be petroleum-based fuels and we should be looking at the country's economic growth rather than agreeing to the terms of the donor community. The issue of trading carbon is an expensive option as it brings small revenue while creating a long-term negative impact on economic growth.

Santosh KC, email

● Your latest issue (#224) had three writeups, including the editorial, on the benefits for Nepal of ratifying Kyoto. I am sure that Kyoto would help reduce carbon emissions and slow down global warming and the melting of our glaciers and snow. But would Nepal benefit economically as the articles

argue? And if it does, which Nepalis will benefit?

In the past 30 years we were told the forest was our wealth (*hariyo ban Nepalko dhan*). Who benefited from this slogan and the timber? Certainly not the poor. And later we were told of the tremendous economic benefits Nepal would reap from our hydro-electricity. But who benefited the most? Millions still have no access to electricity and those who do, pay the highest power tariffs in the world. Multinationals and their agents in Nepal have benefited from the rates (Bhote Kosi, Khimti) or the 'payment' they get for not working (Kali Gandaki, Marsyangdi) based on the contracts that our own leaders so generously signed. Would Nepalis really be able to afford the rates Nepal Electricity Authority would be forced to charge because of the high cost it will have to pay others? Would we end up subsidising export of electricity to India while poor Nepalis would be forced to use biogas plants? We should stop dreaming in green. Nepal may get \$200 million and more for biogas program and other 'green' programs but would much of it remain in Nepal? Would it benefit the millions of Nepalis who, because of their lifestyle, help earn the money? What would the money be spent on? On the military? On buying luxurious cars and paying medical expenses of the super elite? On distributing bonuses to party workers? On paying off our loans to the World Bank and Asian Development Bank? On paying one fourth of the income to foreign consultants to tell us what we should do with the money? Are most



KUMAR SHRESTHA/NEPALNEWS.COM

Self-fulfilling prophecy of failure

Tis the season for Delhi-based South Asian correspondents to parachute in and tell the world about how bad things are in Nepal.

It was during the Maoist 'blockade' of Kathmandu in August that the media feeding frenzy reached a crescendo,

STATE OF THE STATE CK Lal



surpassing even the royal massacre. Nepal's suffering also inspires a lot of bleeding hearts in the west. Following the footsteps of Alex Perry of *Time* last year, its conservative soul-mate *Economist* in its 4 December issue urges the international community to save Nepal from imminent failure. Perhaps alarmed by the same doomsday scenario, Sir Jeffrey James is paying an unannounced visit to Kathmandu this week. The kingdom may not have grown much better since his last visit in August but it hasn't become any worse either.

Admittedly, things in Nepal aren't very encouraging. The conflict has intensified, democracy is in the doldrums, and semi-authoritarianism threatens to turn into something worse. But the state is not in danger of failing, as *The*

Economist would have it. The leader ('A failing state') in the magazine, however, could be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Failure is a process involving the weakening of a state's capacity to provide legitimate governance. Actually, Nepal's capacity to handle crises has improved and has reached a level of sophistication not found in the failed states of the sub-Sahara. At worst, we are in a gray zone where the state is flailing but still has the resilience to bounce back.

Edwin G Corr calls it the 'Gray Area Phenomenon' (GAP) where the stability of nation states is threatened by non-state actors and control has shifted from the legitimate government to 'new half-political, half-criminal powers'. To fix this, we have to go back to legitimate governance. Persistent calls by the international community (the euphemism for the power triad of the US, UK and India) for a unity of constitutional forces sounds hollow when the constitution is itself in intensive-care. A parliament is the soul of a constitutional monarchy and unless it is revived, the Nepali polity will continue to sink into the quagmire of militarism.

When the Maoist uprising started to strain the apparatus of the state in 1996, nation-

Things are bad but outside meddling will make it worse



Speaker Taranath Ranabhat, Prime Minister Deuba and chairman of the Raj Parishad Parsu Narayan Chaudhary greet King Gyanendra as he arrives at the BICC for the council's central convention on Thursday.

building in Nepal was just beginning. The 1990 constitution was finding its footing, a hung parliament was struggling to come to terms with the remnants of a 30-year old regime. Democracy was yet to build a competent police force, an efficient civil service, an independent judicial system operating under the rule of law and a professional disciplined military under civilian command.

These are still some of the challenges and we can't wait to fix them after the fighting stops. In fact, they have to be done at the earliest to resolve issues of governance raised by Maoists.

The US, UK and India have been adding fuel to the fires of war by their one-point agenda of bolstering the Royal Nepali Army. The hardware has

whetted the army's appetite, now it wants more of everything: more money, more men, more machines. As a result we are now regarded as a human rights hot spot. Any hasty parallels with Afghanistan may well turn out to be true if military aid to Nepal continues unchecked.

Nepal's economy is too primitive to fail. Unlike half-baked countries of colonial Africa, Nepal's territorial boundary is too old to disintegrate. Communal strife in the kingdom is still dormant, democratic exercise can easily give conflicting aspirations of competing communities a safe vent without seriously disrupting national unity.

The complexity of challenges facing us notwithstanding, we are a society that has come to terms with its past. We have

realised that despotic rule—whether authoritarian or totalitarian—has no future. What we have failed to produce so far is a national consensus on our common future. That is a task we have to do ourselves, outsiders can't help.

Outside do-gooders only make matters worse by trying to meddle, just look at the proxy wars in the region. If it is our karma to become another Afghanistan, let us, but without daisy-cutters, helicopter gunships and landmines. At least with .303s and socket bombs we know we can bounce back when the fighters are exhausted. Peace will return to this land, but *The Economist* and *Time* will probably have left for another trouble spot by then. ●

Nepalis condemned to forever remain bucolic? To have their elite benefit from 'green' income and pay for the environmental sins of polluting rich countries?

Rajendra Pradhan, Kathmandu

● Thank you for that comprehensive coverage and Bikash Pandey's compelling arguments in favour of Kyoto ratification (#224). As Pandey says, there isn't just a moral long-term reason Nepal should ratify the Kyoto Protocol. We bear the direct impact of climate change. Those hand-wringing free-marketers who are still in denial may realise 20 years from now that the planet's surface is indeed warming due to fossil fuel combustion. But by the time they do something about it, it may be too late to save our mountains, and for the Maldives and Bangladesh. The ostriches with their heads in the sand are the governments of the United States and Australia whose politics is governed so much by the oil and coal lobby that their brains are fossilised. Nepal should set an example to the rest of the world by being clean and green, not just because it is ecologically correct but because it makes economic sense. And if someone is going to pay us for propagating renewable energy and for forest conservation, what's the harm?

Gyan Subba, email

CHITWAN

Your coverage of Chitwan fails to mention four lodges, namely Gaida Wildlife Camp, Chitwan Jungle Lodge, Narayani Safari and Island

Jungle Resort which have been offering more or less the same facilities and services for decades as those resorts mentioned. You should have been fair and published the names of all seven lodges operating in the RCNP which are government concession holders so your readers have a choice. The article gives the wrong impression that there are only three lodges inside the National Park and you are intentionally favouring them.

**Gaida Wildlife Camp, Chitwan
Jungle Lodge,
Island Jungle Resort**

● Many thanks for the wonderful article about the Royal Chitwan National Park ('It's a jungle out there', #224). We would like to correct a mistake regarding the rates in the article. Our normal tariff rate for Tiger Tops Jungle Lodge is \$350 plus tax plus national park fee per person per night. The rate of \$250 per person for two nights package is only for expatriates. Similarly, our tariff rate for Tiger Mountain Tharu Lodge is \$150 plus tax per person per night.

Barsha KC, Tiger Mountain

BREEDING SEASON

My friend Milan Dixit would have been better off married to one of the many furry creatures in Kunda Dixit's 'Another breeding season' (Under My Hat, #224) like the yak he mentions, or the donkey he alludes to in passing. Needless to say, we'd all support Milan should she choose to go and live in Ulan Bataar.

Dubby Bhagat, Patan

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NRS 38

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स्वास्थ्यको लागि हानिकारक छ

Dailekh's teachers have been on strike for two months to protest forcible recruitment by Maoists

Teachers at the



CLINGING ON TO DEAR LIFE: People crossing the river at Chupra across a suspension bridge destroyed by the Maoists.

ALL PICS: RAVI TULADHAR

One era's terrorist

Historically, 'terrorists' have often gone on to become acceptable partners in a political process

It's time we talked about stamping out 'terrorism'. I don't mean the concept, I refer to the word. Does it really advance the wholly welcome goal of ending violence aimed at the innocent if we persist in being promiscuous with our terminology.

In short, it's wrong and dangerous to label almost every act of violence

in an insurgency or rebellion as terrorism. Are Nepal's Maoists, for example, terrorists just because the government, army and media label them as such? I think not. They are rebels to be sure, insurgents, occasionally they are murderers. But as far as they and their supporters are concerned, they are involved in a battle to change society and history may just dictate that calling them 'terrorists' does more harm than good.

The term has already been cheapened well beyond usefulness. When Israel came into being in 1948, its founders were viewed by many as terrorists. They had used terror tactics to drive home

their demands for a homeland for Jewish people. In July of 1946, about 20 Jewish men dressed as local Arabs and milkmen entered the King David Hotel in Jerusalem. Britain was the colonial power in Palestine and it used the hotel as military and police headquarters.

The 'milkmen' planted bombs in the basement of the hotel and the resulting explosion killed more than 90 people, most of them civilians. The attack was denounced as 'dastardly and criminal' and its perpetrators and planners were called 'cowards'. Two of those 'cowards' who planted bombs and planned the assault later became future prime ministers of Israel, welcome in London, Washington and other world capitals that routinely denounce terrorism and refuse to negotiate with those who use violence as an instrument of political coercion.

The Irish Republican Army fought British rule for more than a century, winning independence for 26 southern counties and power-sharing with London and local opponents of home rule in the North. They used bullets, bombs, fear, bloodshed and yes, 'terrorism' to achieve their goals. Irish

leaders travel the world now too, welcome everywhere and admired for their achievements. Yet the British government once went so far as to ban the broadcast of actual statements from IRA leaders and supporters, allowing their words to be pronounced only by actors. The aim, according to the thinking of the time, was to 'deny terrorists the oxygen of publicity'.

Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers now cooperate with Colombo in various ways to govern the north of the island. The African National Congress, routinely denounced as a terrorist and communist organisation, governs South Africa as a capitalist democracy and wins elections with a broad mandate. The pattern is repeated around the world. Rebels begin as terrorists and end as statesmen.

Iraq's insurgents are a particularly poignant illustration of my point. They fight American forces and kill many of their own people. They kidnap foreigners to frighten their countries into leaving occupied Iraq. It's widely agreed in Washington and London that they are terrorists.

But someday soon, today's insurgents will be wearing business suits and

addressing the United Nations and possibly even the US Congress.

Some might say, a lot might say, that al Qaeda and its various elements are glaring exceptions to my argument. The men who crashed airliners into buildings on 11 September are pure terrorists. Osama bin Laden and his lieutenants plan attacks on the innocent from safe havens in forgotten corners of a faraway land. Bombing nightclubs full of young Australians in Bali is an unacceptable way to make a political point. Yes, it is, and there can be no countenancing of 9/11-style tactics. But that doesn't mean that the men behind this campaign might someday not be considered acceptable partners in a political process.

Unthinkable now but the present lasts barely an instant. The future keeps coming and with it fresh thinking, new circumstances and better realities. Variations on the 'terror' concept bind us to the past and leave us blinkered, uncreative in easy judgement. We need to fight violence while staying open to all possibilities for peace.

Including shaking hands stained with blood. ●

HERE AND THERE
Daniel Lak



frontlines

KISHORE NEPAL
in DAILEKH

When Maoists murdered Mukti Nath Adhikari, a respected social worker and teacher in Lamjung two years ago, the government that employed him, politicians and activists didn't speak out.

A magazine cover printed a picture of him nailed to a tree like Jesus Christ and Adhikari became an icon of the fate of teachers in Nepal's Maoist war. Intimidated, tortured and killed by the Maoists and abandoned by their employers, the government.

Adhikari's murder was also a reminder of just how brutal the Maoists had become. It is featured in Dhruva Basnet's film, *Schools in the Crossfire* being screened at the Kathmandu International Film Festival on Friday.

According to the human rights group INSEC, 74 teachers have been killed by the Maoists since the conflict began nearly nine years ago. Fifty-two teachers, suspected of being Maoists, have been slain by the state. But here in Dailekh, teachers still remember the fate of a decent and hard working teacher from the magazine cover two years ago and it has reminded them about just how vulnerable they are.

Like Dailekh's women who rose up against the Maoists, the district's teachers have been on a defiant strike against the Maoists for two months now. The district's 300 schools have been closed since Dasain after teachers stopped taking classes to protest the Maoist threat to make them 'whole-timers' (WTs).

Some teachers have gone underground, others have been unable to resist the pressure and agreed to become WT's, but most have abandoned their schools and fled to the district headquarters. Many schools have since been turned into barracks for the Maoists, and students have been recruited into the rebel ranks.

The walls between classrooms have been demolished, the schools have been turned into meeting and training rooms. Students have been forced to dig trenches

and bunkers around the school as part of the Maoist 'tunnel war' campaign.

Although Maoist intimidation is not new, the mandatory requirement to become WT has provoked the backlash from the teachers. "We are on strike against the Maoists but we are still getting our salary from the government," says Jaya Prasad Timilsina, a teacher from a secondary school in Chaumunda who has fled to the town.



"We have to take permission from them even to move to the next village. How can a teacher work?" ask Deepak Hamal of Chauratha.

Teachers have always been at the frontline of this war and nowhere more so than in Dailekh. For many years now, they have obediently paid Maoist taxes, which sometimes amounts to 10 percent of their meagre salaries. Even so, the property of some teachers have been seized and teachers with political affiliations have either been killed or hounded out of the district.

Two years ago, the Maoists abducted Chet Bahadur Thapa, a teacher of Laxmi High School in Sat Tala village and beat him up, breaking his right



leg. Himalaya Jung Shah, a teacher of Jwala Higher Secondary School of Betan village and the vice president of the District Teacher's Organisation, was also beaten up and is still an invalid. Narendra Singh, a teacher of Bhairab High School in Naumule, where the women rose up against the Maoists last month, was recently ordered by local rebels to leave the village with his 70-year-old mother and family.



Krishna Bhattarai, district president of the Teacher's Union blames both the government and the Maoists. Indeed, Maoists call teachers "Green snakes in the green grass", suspect them of being informants and whenever they come to the district headquarters, the security forces suspect teachers of being Maoists and abuse them.

"Many of our members have been threatened and abducted by Maoists but the government has never tried to help," says Bhattarai, "Instead of protection all we get from the police and army is harassment."



Inspired by the women-led anti-Maoist movement in Dullu, Bhattarai says Dailekh's teachers are determined to continue their strike until the Maoists stop harassing them. The Teachers' Union had given an ultimatum of 30 November, which the Maoists ignored. Activists Gauri Shankar Lal Das and Sushil Pyakurel of the National Human Rights Commission recently visited Dailekh to try to mediate with the Maoists but they returned empty handed.

Krishna Bahadur Bhandari, a teacher at the Tribeni Sangam School in Chupra, explains why teachers can't be WT's: "It means total surrender, they will take over our property and our students will have to join the Maoists."

Hrishikesh Niraula, Dailekh's CDO admits there isn't much the government can do but says the Maoists have no option but to allow the schools to reopen. "After all, the tax on teachers' salaries is one of their main sources of income," he says, "The teachers' strike has deprived them of an income." ●



Support for democracy: NDI poll

Nepalis overwhelmingly want to see peace, democracy, economic growth and national unity, a public opinion poll conducted for the US-based National Democratic Institute by AC Nielsen/ORG MARG has shown. The survey was conducted among 3,000 respondents in 60 districts.

Three-fourths viewed democracy as the best form of government for Nepal, 60 percent favoured constitutional monarchy and support for a republic was only 17 percent. Economic decline was the major concern with 55 percent concerned about the lack of jobs, 33 percent felt Maoist violence was the major concern, 22 percent were worried about education and 18 percent thought corruption was the real problem.

Even if 93 percent of the respondents felt that the country is currently headed in the wrong direction, most citizens are still optimistic that the conflict can be resolved. The survey shows an increase in approval for the performance of King Gyanendra, likely attributable to the reappointment of Deuba and the formation of a multi-party cabinet. Deuba also had broad approval with 57 percent approving of the job he is doing.

A vast majority, 85 percent, felt that political parties act only on behalf of themselves, and 43 percent thought that political parties played mostly a negative role. Eighty-two percent of citizens were strongly willing to vote and they wanted to see national and local elections. However, 72 percent believed elections cannot take place under the current environment.

British help against Maoist extortion

As Maoist extortion reaches unprecedented levels, a Kathmandu-based diplomat has for the first time offered police help in dealing with the problem. Addressing the ninth annual general meeting of the Nepal-British Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Kathmandu on 3 December, the British ambassador to Nepal, Keith Bloomfield, said that the British Metropolitan Police had submitted a report to the Nepal government to help deal with extortion of businesses by the rebels. "The extortion is systematic and regular, which is making life difficult for the business community," said Bloomfield, who also heads the Industrial Security Group that represents countries with major foreign investment projects in Nepal. The Metropolitan Police has already submitted a master plan to the Nepal government and advised the setting up of a special task force involving all security agencies to launch an anti-extortion pilot program in the capital.

"The problem of extortion is expanding and increasing in amount," he said. Addressing the function, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Prakash Sharan Mahat urged businessmen to say a "collective no" to extortionists. He said the government was ready to help the business community if they stood up against the rebels together as the people in Dailekh did.

India-Nepal aviation meet delayed

An important meeting between Nepal and India to review the bilateral air agreement scheduled for this week has been postponed. The Indian civil aviation secretary postponed it for 'unavoidable reasons' till January. "We want to discuss revision of the agreement to increase flight frequency, air seats and new points," said Yagya Gautam, joint secretary at Nepal's Civil Aviation Ministry. Nepal and India allow each country's carriers to fly 6,000 seats a week but it needs to be increased because of demand. "The air services agreement has to be revised," says Nagendra Ghimire, director general at the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal.

Apart from their state-run airlines, private carriers from Nepal and India this year launched their services. Cosmic Air has begun flying to Indian cities and India's Jet Air and Sahara Airways are flying between New Delhi and Kathmandu. Nepal had planned to request additional destinations like Goa, Ahmedabad, Chennai and Bodhgaya. "We will be signing a MoU when the meeting is held," Gautam told us. Other issues are fifth freedom rights as well as streamlining air routes between India and Nepal.

Cleaning up

Encouraged by the enthusiasm that the local women's group of Milan Marg, Teku, showed in keeping their area clean, Friends of the Bagmati (FOB) organised a Clean Up Program around the Bagmati Ghat on 4 December. Kathmandu

Metropolitan City office supported the program by providing the necessary equipment and technical human resources.

The group of women were trained by FOB under the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme project to make compost manure in order to manage their household solid waste. Almost 50 people joined hands to sweep piles of waste that had accumulated adjacent to Milan Park and along the nearby 50 metres stretch. Participants included people from different walks of life. They were of the opinion that the local people should be responsible for their own area clean up.



November decline

Tourist arrivals declined in comparison to November last year, the second month in a row. There was a 17 percent drop compared to 2003. Nepal Tourism Board figures show both Indian and non-Indian markets recorded a sharp drop. Third country arrivals had shown a 50 percent growth until the first half of this year. But September onwards, the figure began to recede due to riots and news of conflict. A third of tourists come from the US, UK, Germany and France; India makes up the rest with a few other countries.



LAURIE ANN VASILY

Dalits not allowed

The violence during the Bharatpur temple incident highlights the tenuousness of Dalit rights

LAURIE ANN VASILY in BHARATPUR

The action by Dalits in Bharatpur on Sunday to gain legal entry into a temple and the ensuing violence against them by police and vigilantes held deep significance to Dalits here who continue to be denied entry into Hindu temples across Nepal.

The events followed the expensive and contentious International Consultation on Caste-Based Discrimination in Kathmandu last week and highlighted the tenuousness of the human rights situation of Dalits in Nepal. Prepared with legal permission to enter the Laxmi Banketesh temple in Bharatpur, a Dalit joint action committee had gained permission from the temple management committee to enter the premises. The stage had been set for what was intended as a peaceful and legal temple entry movement.

Instead, what the Dalits encountered on Sunday in Bharatpur could best be described as an intimidating environment where some individuals appeared to be more prepared for conflict and violence than for tolerance. Although the police had been adequately informed about the planned social action, they were remarkably ill-prepared for crowd control, peaceful protest and conflict mediation.

The procession to the temple was led by a young Dalit woman who was to perform a ritual inside the temple that hundreds and thousands of Hindu women perform every day. Carrying a simple bouquet of flowers, she had a simple aim: perform a puja to the deity inside the temple.

She is Hindu by birth but had never been allowed to perform this ritual that so many take for granted. When she and the Dalit procession leaders arrived at the temple entrance, they were denied entry. The 30 or so priests seated inside the gated entrance were themselves engaged in a puja surrounded with beautifully arranged flowers and vermillion. Grasping the metal gate and the metal bars around the temple, the Dalits appeared to be jailed both from without and within.

When they were denied entry, the Dalits tried to forcibly enter the temple. Passions ran high and many entered the temple by climbing over metal bars or forcing their way in through the metal gate. Things

quickly spiralled out of control and a police lathi charge ensued. Caught in the charge, many were trampled and unnecessarily beaten both by police lathis and butts of guns.

The Dalit procession fled and as they regrouped to attempt further negotiations with the temple management committee, a group of vigilante youths rushed at those who had gathered outside the temple area, hurling stones. A barrage of bricks and rocks split heads and injured many. Those fleeing this attack in many cases were denied even temporary shelter in local homes. The police did nothing to protect the Dalits from this unrestrained attack. When they did act, it was a little too late to pursue the vigilantes.

At that point, the Dalit leaders gathered their followers and led a procession away from the area which wound its way back towards Sahid Chok in Narayangad. Even here, the army's lumbering mine-protected vehicles cleaved through the procession and effectively silenced the Dalit's chants.

Back in Kathmandu, at the closing ceremony of the International Consultation on Caste-Based Discrimination, Minister for Local Development, Yuba Raj Gyawali reiterated the government's commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention on Eradication of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. High level representatives from multilateral and donor agencies as well as international human rights advocates proclaimed solidarity with the Nepali Dalit communities. Indeed, there are many who do work in solidarity with Nepali Dalits and care deeply about human rights across the world.

But even at this historically important consultation, many Dalit groups felt marginalised and excluded. The events of 5 December made a mockery of the rhetoric shared at the consultation. Practices of untouchability, social exclusion, caste-based discrimination and violence are not just rhetorical subjects but painful realities tragically borne by Dalit communities struggling for respect, humanity and freedom. ●

Laurie Ann Vasily is working on her PhD at Cornell University whose current research focuses on Nepali Dalit adult education issues



INDRA DHOJ KSHETRI

Women led the march to the temple in Bharatpur (top), the fracas as Dalits forcibly entered the temple and an activist wounded by a brick thrown by vigilantes.



Common roadmap

Worry in India about Nepal's crisis

PUSKAR GAUTAM in NEW DELHI

Such a big jamboree of Nepali academics, ex-military brass, ex-diplomats and activists to discuss the crisis in Nepal had perhaps not taken place even in Nepal. The two-day 'Track Two' conference this week was addressed by top Indian officials who stressed that unless Nepal and India worked together to meet the Maoist threat it wouldn't be possible to find a solution.

It is perhaps an indication of the seriousness with which the Indian establishment regards the situation in Nepal that it has got an Indian think tank to hold a semi-official conference here. The meeting comes amidst a backdrop of stepped up Maoist rhetoric against India and the unity of the two biggest Indian Maoist groups and two dozen others.

Nepal's own Maoists currently head the regional Maoist umbrella organisation, CCOMPOSA and say they want to 'South Asianise' Nepal's revolution. The strategy behind regionalising the conflict appears to be to use Nepal's experience to widen the front.

Aside from that, the Maoists' anti-Indian rhetoric and the threat to launch a

'class enemies' in western Bangladesh along the border with West Bengal.

The Indian rebels are using the ceasefire in Andhra Pradesh to expand their reach to states where they have been inactive or dormant: Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and even Uttaranchal. It is no coincidence that all three states border Nepal. The Indian central government has admitted that 155 districts are Naxalite-affected. For New Delhi this is the resurrected ghost of the 1970s Naxalite movement that had to be violently put down.

The Maoist analysis is that despite India's size, parts of it actually have objective conditions and contradictions that are even more conducive to a long-term people's war than in Nepal. In this way, a united regional Maoist group could emerge and make a Maoist 'South Asian Federation' an idea which may not be as far-fetched as it may have initially seemed.

There is now considerable worry among Indian strategists that the Royal Nepali Army is not showing enough initiative to go after the rebels and they even hint that the army's command structure may have to be revamped. If the Maoists actually capture state power

in Nepal, they fear it will send shock waves across India and embolden regional revolutionaries.

But despite the Royal Nepali Army having won only five of the 50 major battles in the past three years, it doesn't look like the Maoists' 'strategic offensive' will work. For that, India has to be embroiled in a big domestic crisis and that doesn't look likely. The current 'tunnel war' which the Maoists say is to



People's War Group guerrillas in the Telengana region of Andhra Pradesh.

counter-offensive in India, itself, if New Delhi intervenes militarily in Nepal is a deterrence in case such action is indeed being contemplated in response to a 'final offensive against the centre' by Nepali Maoists.

With the revolutions interlinked, it was necessary for India's Maoists to unite even if it was to shore up the revolution in Nepal. By the same token, the insurgency in Nepal has become a national security issue for India itself. By coordinating strategies, Nepali Maoists and their Indian comrades will be able to exploit existing tensions between India and its smaller neighbours, between New Delhi and state governments and between states to their advantage.

Recent CCOMPOSA statements hint at taking advantage of India-Pakistan tensions to further the struggle within India. Regional Maoists have also infiltrated the Bhutani refugees in Nepal and have already started exterminating

prepare for a future Indian incursion appears to be a symbolic exercise to keep the guerrillas focused on an external enemy.

Despite efforts at unity, Indian Maoist groups are disparate and dissipated. South Asia's Maoists say they want to follow Mao by the book but they appear to be excessively doctrinaire and have failed to learn from the experience of other struggles: they may fight but they won't win.

But by spreading the revolution out of Nepal into India's vast hinterland the conflict will prolong indefinitely into the future. Recent statements by Indian Maoist leader, Ganapati, that his group is preparing for a protracted people's war appears to prove this.

Neither the Maoists nor the democratic forces in India and Nepal will benefit from such a situation. The only ones who will take advantage will be the reactionaries. ●

Getting things back on track two

The two-day Track Two conference this week was attended by 15 Nepali and 10 Indian experts where the restoration of due process in Nepal and the potential for spillover of the insurgency to India were discussed. The possibility of King Gyanendra striking a deal with the Maoists and opting for direct rule for two years came up. Participants warned that if the palace didn't patch up with the parties they may join forces with the Maoists. While some delegates were for joint military operations against the Maoists, most Nepali participants opposed the idea. Inaugurating the meeting on 6 December, Indian foreign secretary and former ambassador to Nepal, Shyam Saran, made the following points:

- Nepal is not going to be a failed state
- The Maoist insurgency is a common security threat
- Delay diminishes chances of negotiated settlement
- There is no military solution
- Progressive Maoists can and should be brought into the mainstream





Jana Morcha's Baburam Nepali (left) addresses a rally in Baglung on Wednesday, saying: "We are leading the people against the Maoists." A minute's silence at the rally for victims of Maoist violence (right).



THOMAS BELL

Turf war

Jana Morcha and the Maoists are fighting for influence in central Nepal

THOMAS BELL in BAGLUNG

Riding a wave of popular anger against the Maoists, the confrontation between the Maoists and the Jana Morcha is spreading. It is a turf war between one communist faction that believes in armed struggle and another that has taken the parliamentary path.

The Jana Morcha's launched a campaign to 'expose' Maoist atrocities in August but more recently it is trying to ride the wave of popular outrage against Maoist atrocities that started in Dailekh last month.

To be sure, the anti-Maoist demonstration in Baglung headquarters on Wednesday was smaller and not as spontaneous

as the Dullu rally in Dailekh on 22 November. Chitra Bahadur KC is a former Jana Morcha MP from Dailekh and was here to address the town meeting of 500 people. Baglung has always been a stronghold of the Jana Morcha and two of its three MPs in parliament were from Baglung.

In September, Maoists kidnapped four Jana Morcha members on their way to a party rally in Dhorpatan. At the rally, Jana Morcha's local leader Pari Thapa denounced the Maoists. The next day, Tulsi Ram Aryal and other party leaders were abducted and some of them only managed to escape after two months in captivity.

The protests snowballed, and in retaliation, 300 Maoists

attacked Damek VDC on 29 November, where they tortured six people including Pari Thapa's wife, Rupa by drilling holes into her legs. Twenty villagers were severely beaten.

"Both parties claim this area," explains Baglung's CDO, Prem Narayan Sharma. "The Jana Morcha used to keep quiet when the Maoists attacked members of other parties. Now it's just them and the Maoists."

The turf war has now gone into kidnapping each other's cadre. The Maoists abducted five Jana Morcha members in Damek last month. Jana Morcha retaliated by holding six Maoists, although three have now been released. "I think they are bargaining," says Sharma.

He also says the two are fighting for territory at the grassroots even though their leaders don't want to fight each other.

Jana Morcha says angry villagers captured the Maoists and handed them over to the party. Chitra Bahadur KC explains: "Our party policy is not to capture Maoists, the people sometimes take them in."

Indiscipline in the Maoists' lower ranks may explain why a six point non-aggression pact signed recently between the leaders of the two parties has broken down. "Village level Maoists are acting on their own. They are ultra-leftists so they don't stick to agreements," says KC who as MP visited Kim Il Sung in Pyongyang.

Locals here have their own take on things. "Two years ago, Jana Morcha and the Maoists were brothers," said a shopkeeper observing the rally, holding up two fingers to show

how close they were. Others think Maoist discipline is breaking down. "District and village Maoists are leaderless," says a local reporter. "The big leaders are united but the little leaders don't listen. Villagers say local Maoists behave like criminals."

The current trouble in Baglung may be further proof that villagers will no longer tolerate Maoist brutality. Certainly, Jana Morcha found a sympathetic audience for its denunciation of Maoist methods here on Wednesday. But in future, there may be further fracturing of politics: between the Maoists and their erstwhile Jana Morcha allies and within the Maoists themselves.

The government, for its part, can't take comfort in the anti-Maoist mood. Says KC: "The Nepali people don't believe in the king or this government. The government is also a terrorist." ●

A trust in Nepal

Humlis throng to Simikot for the Nepal Trusts' annual health camp in Nepal's most remote district



CHARLES HAVILAND

CHARLES HAVILAND
in SIMIKOT

"I need some Nepali phrases like 'How are you feeling?' and 'What's the problem?'" says Kirsten Schwarz, a doctor from Germany over omelette, puris and tea. "All you really need to know is *kahan*

dukcha" replies Humla's district health officer, Roshan Pokhrel. "Just ask them to show it."

Breakfast talk at the Nepal Trust Guest House in Simikot with its staggering view of snowy peaks, the valley, the village and its runway. It was the last day of preparations for the 2004 Humla Health Camp, which ran for the last week of November bringing together doctors, nurses and student volunteers from

Nepal, India, Britain, Germany, Austria and the United States.

The aim: to offer medical services to the people of Nepal's most deprived and remote district. The organising charity, the Nepal Trust, says child mortality here is between 30 and 40 percent, child malnutrition is 42 percent and female literacy is only four percent.

The Nepal Trust is based in northern Scotland with directors in the UK and Nepal. It first became involved in Humla a decade ago building clinics in outlying villages. Nurse Janet Griffin, a grandmother of eight from near London and one of the camp leaders, took part in the trek to build the first clinic.

"A 49-year-old woman having her 19th child said 'Of my 19 children, half are dead and half the children from this village are dead.' That made me determined to come back to Humla and see what we could do," says Griffin.

A family tie gave rise to Nepal Trust Austria, which raised 40 percent of the funds for this camp, while Nepalis and Indians came from the Nepalganj Medical School led by surgeon M Kidwai. "It's an absolute condition that the Nepali team lead," said Trust chairman Tony Sharpe, a retired forester who says the Trust's initiatives follow invitations from local leaders.

The Trust hoped for an increase over the 6,000 Humlis treated by the first camp in 2003 but conflict and perhaps winter held numbers to some 4,500. On the first morning, hundreds of people queued from 5AM, crouched up against each other and huddled in blankets, women and men separated, babies everywhere. A puppet show with health messages prompted ripples of laughter among

those waiting.

There were stories of tragedy. One elderly man felt paralysis creeping up his side and his power of speech seemed to be disappearing. Doctors were not sure they could treat him. The Maoists, who control the district outside Simikot, had stopped or delayed many wanting to attend. It appears they tried to filter sick people from those they believed were just trying to escape the villages.

They had stopped Hari Bahadur Shahi, his wife and their gravely ill son from moving for a week. Probably as a result, the son died, the third of the Shahis' four children to pass away. A mentally ill woman had just given birth but mother and child, shunned by all, had no shelter.

Major operations were carried out including the removal of an abscess from a breast. A 15-year-old girl was diagnosed with heart disease, enabling the prescription of years' worth of medicine to prevent acute fever. Nonetheless, about half the patients "Were not sick, but think they are" said Kapil Sharma, a doctor from Hetauda who examined 145 patients in one morning.

The Nepal Trust has built seven clinics in Humla and has diversified into local electricity schemes, eco-trekking and monastery restoration. Tony Sharpe admits a health camp could only scratch the surface, perhaps the Trust should have started by strengthening the poorly-equipped district hospital where the camp took place, rather than with clinics.

The priority now is to give the hospital the tools to conduct small operations and to make it a proper referral centre with stronger links to Nepalganj. ●

(Also see: 'Moving mountains', #116)

From Russia

BADRI PAUDYAL
in MOSCOW

Forty years ago, the Soviet Union set up the 2.5 megawatt Panauti hydropower station. Moscow also built a portion of the East-West Highway, a hospital, the Janakpur Cigarette Factory, and other industries.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Moscow's development aid to Nepal dried up. But in its place we have seen Nepali entrepreneurs who settled down in Russia take the lead in investing in private hydropower projects and many other ventures in their home country.

Many of the Nepalis went to study in the Soviet Union, got married and lived there. After the changes in 1990, because of their knowledge of Russian and English as well as their entrepreneurial spirit, they led the pack in Russia's fledgling private sector. After becoming billionaires, some of them are bringing some of their money home to Nepal. Not only as charity, but as investors to develop their home country, create jobs and run a proper business.

Arun Ojha, Tek Raj Niraula, Binaya Shrestha, Ghanshyam Thapa and Ram Shah run an electronics business in Moscow. They got together to set up the Sanima Group which launched the Rs 300 million hydroelectric plant on the Sun Kosi River. The project has Rs 110 million equity from Sanima and other well-known Belarus-Russian tycoons: Upendra Mahato, Niraj Shrestha and Jiba Lamichhane as well as loans from a consortium of banks led by the Nepal Investment Bank.

The project is located in Sindhupalchok and most of the work including the powerhouse construction and links to the national grid is complete. Power generation will start next month. Sanima Pvt Ltd's managing director Arun Ojha has had to battle red tape, six years, for this project. Another obstacle was the impression among locals that the project was a charity and not a private investment and the time wasted in paperwork. "It took us three years just to get the paperwork ready but the actual construction only took one-and-a-half years," Ojha told us, "If it

hadn't been for the frequent bandas we'd have finished it in a year."

Despite the delays, Sun Kosi's investors are happy with the progress and are already thinking of further investment in the 1.5 megawatt Upper Sun Kosi and another project in the vicinity. The group is also looking at a much more ambitious 15 megawatt Mai Khola project in Ilam in eastern Nepal.

The investors of Sun Kosi have got together with other Russia-educated engineers and ITECO, SILT and CEMAT Consulting to set up the Molniya Hydropower Company which has started construction on the five megawatt Mailung Khola project in Rasuwa. The Rs 700 million joint venture involves a Chinese company, the Himalayan Bank and the Development Credit Bank in Kathmandu. Another Russian group wants to renovate Panauti into an advanced hydraulic lab to training power engineers and offer the power free to the grid, but NEA has not responded.

Sanima's plans to get into banking has finally come through this week with a Rs 320 million outlay in Sanima Development Bank which is a joint venture with other Russian Nepalis, a third-country partner and with 30 percent of stock options to be sold to the public.

Russia-based Nepalis have also been involved in media, health, education, finance and tourism. Mahato, Lamichhane and Ojha have invested Rs 120 million in Kantipur Television, and the three also have Rs 100 million in the Medicare Hospital in Kathmandu. Mahato owns stakes in Gongabu Bus park, Standard Finance, Salt Trading as well as the mobile telephone joint venture, SpiceTel.

Krishna, Sambhu and Surya Rijal from Moscow have another group that has invested in Kathmandu's Hermitage Travel Agency and the Hermitage Hotel in Chitwan's Sauraha. The Nepali Russians are also involved in education. Recently-returned Tara Pokhrel and Pemba Lama with Mahato and Lamichhane have put in more than 40 percent of



The Sun Kosi hydropower plant in Sindhupalchok built with Nepali Russian investment (above). Investor Arun Ojha inspects the intake at the plant site (left).

Rs 25 million authorised capital each in Acme and Kantipur Engineering colleges.

More than 800 students are enrolled in Kantipur Engineering College and three batches of BE students have graduated from the Dhapakhel-based institution. KEC's principal Rameswor Rijal himself graduated in highway engineering from Minsk and says the characteristic of Russian investors in Nepal is that they don't look for immediate returns.

"They are in it for the long haul, sometimes it feels like they aren't really interested in profits, they just want the college to be sustainable and maintain the quality of our

graduates," he says. Rijal would ultimately like to set up a technical university. "Nepal is at a point where we need a good technical university, one that would be a model not just for Nepal but also for the region," says Rijal. Nepal's climate, economy and socio-economic status makes Nepal an ideal regional educational centre, he adds.

Asked what motivates them, Russia-based Nepalis say they would like to give back to Nepali society what they got from it. There is great sadness about the conflict and the state of the country and while this may be the reason other Nepalis abroad have given up on Nepal, it is precisely why Russian NRNs want to invest here.

What frustrates them the most is the bureaucracy and the hurdles the state puts in their way. Nepali officialdom is suspicious about where the Russians made their money. Says Sanima's Ojha: "Where we got our money from is for the Russian government to decide, it is none of Nepal's business. Nepal should be happy we are bringing the money in."

The Royal Nepali

ambassador in Moscow, Lila Prasad Sharma, has made encouraging of Russian investment in Nepal a priority. "They want to do something for their motherland, they have already invested Rs 1 billion or more. No Nepali from America or elsewhere has done that," Sharma told us, "Yet, back home, in Nepal, they are hassled."

At the Foreign Ministry's Nepal Desk in Moscow, Nikolai Listopadov says: "At the moment, Russia may not be actively involved in aid in Nepal but our situation is improving. We are happy that there is greater trade and investment cooperation between Russian and Nepali entrepreneurs."

Mahato, Lamichhane and others have investments in Cyprus, China, Italy and Korea. Given Nepal's red tape, they would never have invested here and the only thing drawing them is that this is the land of their birth. Says Mahato: "You can't stop helping Nepal just because there is a Maoist problem. In fact that is precisely the reason we should be helping." ●



THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING: Upendra Mahato, Jiba Lamichhane and Tek Raj Niraula.

with love

Russian Nepalis are not asking what Nepal can do for them, but what they can do for Nepal



The Gorbushka electronic super mall in Moscow which has 80,000 customers a day and is owned by Nepalis.

ALL PICS: BADRI PAUDYAL

Nepali billionaires



Krishna Rijal with his Russian wife and his four-year-old quintiplets, and the Rijal dacha outside Moscow.

During the Soviet era, Russians were not allowed town private property. Fifteen years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Moscow has nearly as many multi-millionaires as New York. And some of them are Nepalis.

Knowledge of English and Russian as well as prior exposure to the free market allowed Nepali students in the Soviet Union to adjust faster to the consumer boom in the post-communist era. So they got married and settled down here. Not even in that bastion of global capitalism, the United States, has the Nepali diaspora struck it as rich as it has in Russia.

Jiba Lamichhane came to Russia to study engineering in 1986. He used to be a dealer for Sony, LG and Samsung in Russia. "There would be long queues even before we opened the stores, we sold goods worth hundreds of thousands of dollars every day. There was just so much pent-up demand the profit margin was 35-

40 percent," recalls Lamichhane of the period just after 1990.

The Nepalis thrived because locals lacked the business acumen in banking and exposure to the outside world. But now the Russians have learnt fast, and the business is more competitive. Lamichhane is managing director of Techno Trust, a company manufacturing the Elson brand LCD tvs for the Russian market.

There are more than 150 Nepali entrepreneurs and more than 36 business conglomerates in Russia and the CIS countries which are Nepali-owned. From Moscow to Minsk, Kiev, Kharkov, Odessa, St Petersburg to Volgograd, you will find successful Nepali traders dealing in electronic goods and appliances. Even the newly-arrived are doing well. Dile Lama came here not to study but to do business. He now runs the Tibet and Jhomolungma restaurants in Moscow and Minsk.

But by far the most successful Nepali in the CIS is Upendra

Mahato, who did a PhD, and after 1990 set up a business empire spanning electronics, oil, real estate, banking and heavy machinery. Mahato now has 12,000 employees, 50 of them Nepali. Starting off as an electronics trader, Mahato now owns a television factory in Voronezh, 400 km south of Moscow, making one million sets annually. And he owns the outlets to sell them: a huge electronics mega mall in Gorbushka which sees 80,000 customers a day. He is building a 26-storey \$50 million apartment block in a prime residential area in Moscow.

Russia's Nepali millionaires are now reaping the rewards of the hard work and struggle of their early days here. Most have dachas in the countryside, children attending the most expensive schools in Europe or the United States. They commute to work in limousines.

But the success is tinged with the fear of violence from extortionists and skinheads. ●

a **WAVE** event

The Blue Note,
a blues concert with
Nekhvam



TONIGHT

Time : 5:30 PM onwards
Venue : Yala Maya Kendra and Dhokaima Café
(next to Patan Dhoka Post Office)
Ticket : Rs. 200 (Tickets available at the venue)
*Complimentary drink included

Living in a colony

Suburban residential blocks are not just trendy, they are also practical and affordable

NARESH NEWAR

An the Jyapu neighbourhood of Bagdol, Patan, the community of Maharjans are overwhelmed to see their downscale neighbourhood turn into a posh residential area.

Six years ago, when Astaman Maharjan bought a huge tract of land to build a colony of bungalows, his friends warned him that he was taking a huge risk. The friends were right, Bagdol was a backwater. It had bad roads and that the real flop of the estate venture was that it was inconceivable.

But Astaman's gamble paid off. Bishnu Awas, a colony of 36 small bungalows, is thriving. People are moving in and this has set off a chain reaction of groceries, newspaper stalls, cyber cafes and restaurants. Astaman did not just strike it rich but he raised the profile of his entire neighbourhood and created opportunities for others.

"A housing colony is still a new concept but it is practical, affordable and bound to catch on," explains Astaman, who admits he was inspired by the apartment complex concept initiated by the Chaudhary Group.

Indeed, the trend is spreading in Kathmandu Valley for real estate developers to provide collective housing which individual home builders once had to struggle with. Leading housing companies such as Civil Homes, Sunrise Homes and Comfort Housing have already built several suburban residential areas. In 2001, Civil Homes took the first big leap by building 55 houses in Bhaishapati. The response was so overwhelming that all houses were booked even before they were finished. The company has added two more colonies in

Kalanki and Sunakothi that will have more than 350 bungalows.

"Houses don't sell just because they are in a residential colony," says IR Tamang of Civil Homes, "People look for design and workmanship." Tamang's experience is that selling budget housing is more difficult than selling more expensive townhouses. (See interview, p 11)

The economics of it is that real estate developers save money buying construction material in bulk and that is where the profit margins come from. Reputed housing companies are now under pressure from banks which have seen a spurt in home loans to develop more residential blocks.

Three years ago, when Everest Bank launched its Home Loan Scheme it started an avalanche of home-buying. Today, Standard Chartered, Kumari, Laxmi, Himalayan and Bank of Kathmandu all provide attractive home financing packages. The loans can be

repaid in monthly installments lasting five to 18 years with 8.5 to 9.5 percent interests. The banks have invested an estimated Rs 4 billion in housing alone in the last three years.

"At a time when the prices of land and construction materials are escalating, people prefer not to build houses on their own. They believe they can save money and hassle by buying readymade bungalows," says Dilip Neupane, marketing manager of Sunrise Homes.

Located at Balkumari near Koteswor bridge, Sunrise Homes already has 57 elegant houses. "We are building 100 more bungalows and more than half of them have already been booked," says Neupane. Many families have moved out of congested inner city areas like Asan, Lajimpat, Indra Chok and Patan.

The colonies have their own water supply system, the roads are wider, there is ample parking space, security and

Future in apartments

As the Valley runs out of land, the future of housing in Kathmandu is in new self-contained high-rise apartment blocks. And already housing developers are setting their eyes on it. "The prospect is good because today's generation prefers community housing with security and facilities," says Bismaraj Chalise of the up-market Ace Apartments, which is nearing completion in Naxal.

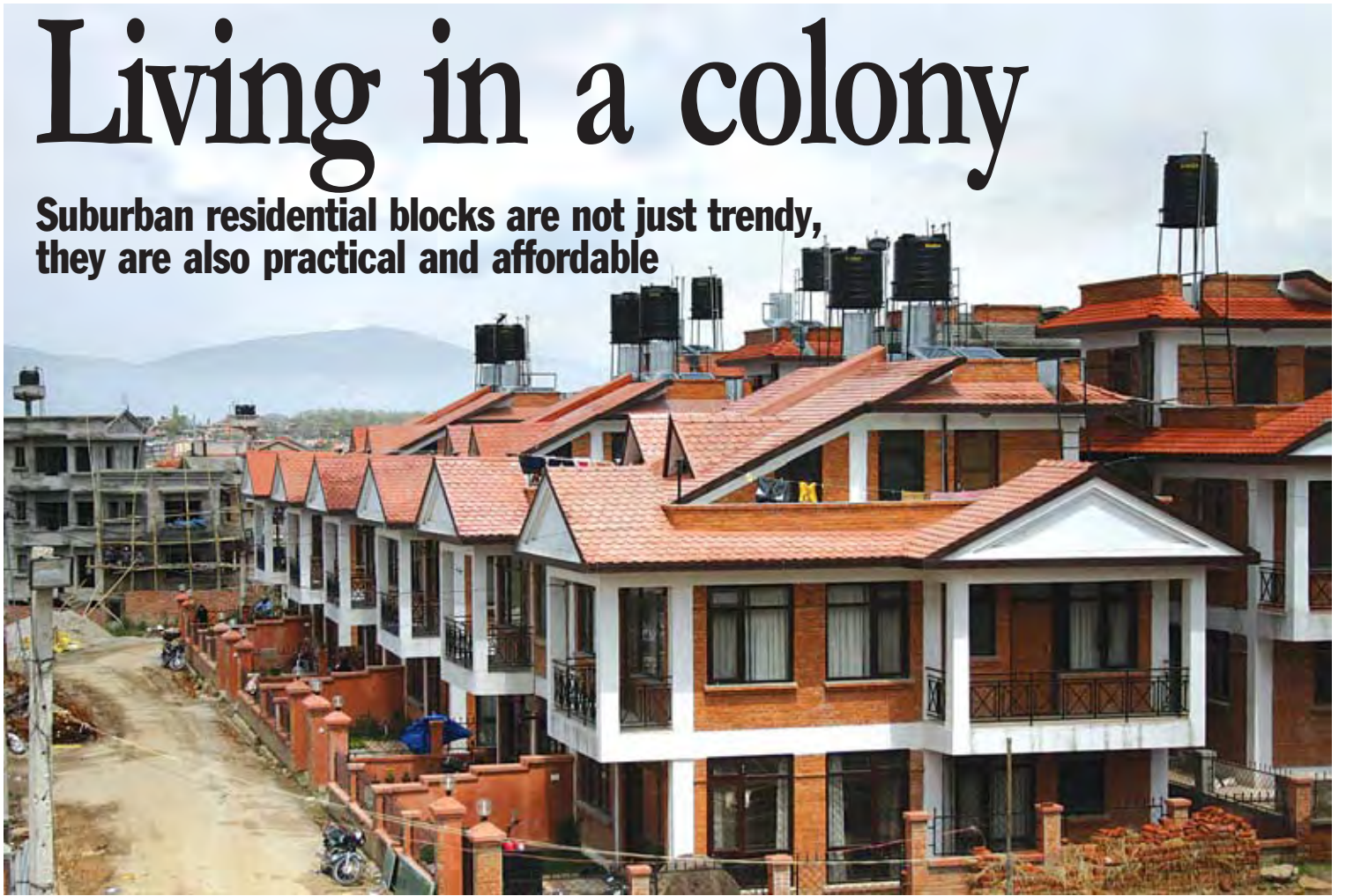
About 56 apartments worth about Rs 3.5 million have been sold while real estate companies have been cropping up, building apartment complexes as the demand grows. "The business in apartments is gradually growing and will take off in the next few years," predicts Sandeep Bikram Rana of Ansal Chaudhary Developers, which pioneered the idea six years ago. Ansal's apartment complex in Bagdol with more than 140 units was sold off six months after opening. It has built another complex in Harisiddhi where nearly all 125 apartments are booked, mostly by Kathmandu's inner-city residents.

phones are taken care of. Even if you have to pay slightly more for all this, most residents seem to think it is worth while. Some residents have even formed committees to raise funds for garbage collection and maintenance.

"There is a real sense of community, unlike in Asan where there were all these strangers," says Sharmila Shrestha who moved into Bagdol from Asan a year ago. Airline stewardess Bindya Thapa who moved in with her sister

recently agrees: "The neighbours all know each other and give help and support when needed."

Property inside the colony has greater resale value. In Bagdol, several families have already sold off their property for Rs 4 million, more than double the original price. "The demand for houses is really growing. We are now running out of land," says 61-year-old Astaman Maharjan who has now begun developing another colony nearby targeting middle class families. ●



KIRAN PANDAY

Phenomenal growth in housing colonies



KIRAN PANDAY

Four years ago when Civil Homes began one of Kathmandu's first housing colony projects, it brought a revolution in lifestyle. It gave new hope to middle class families wanting to buy houses at affordable prices. Executive chairman IR Tamang spoke to us on how his company led the modernised housing trend.

How did you come up with the housing colony concept?

Three years ago, the Chaudhary Group introduced the concept of the multi-storey apartment system at a time when Nepal's housing sector had not quite developed. Civil Homes had just started and we thought why not build on a similar concept by building a colony of bungalows. There were risks but the idea caught on.

What were the risks involved?

Since the colony system was a new concept, we foresaw many challenges. In our country, people don't really trust others to build houses for them. Besides, people today are more quality and environment conscious. If you can't sell houses according to their design and taste, then all investment is wasted. The investment is billions of rupees in one colony. But the first phase in Bhaishapati was so successful that we sold all the houses. We immediately began our second colony in Kalanki that second year building about 125 houses. Now for the third phase, we are preparing another colony with 225 houses at Sunakothi.

But has it really made housing more affordable?

Certainly, it has helped. The new generation of young professionals want to live independently. Earlier, they would have had to save for 15-20 years to build their own dream houses, now with this concept coupled with housing grants from banks, they can have a house within year.

Isn't Kathmandu running out of space?

While building affordable houses, we should not try to overdo things. The rate of urbanisation is rapid and we must not turn the city into a concrete jungle. The government needs to allocate specific pocket areas in the city to build houses so that the city can be managed effectively. But there is still a lot of space to build colonies for another 10-15 years. After that we will have no choice but to go vertical. Then we have to promote the multi-storey apartment system.

Is the real estate business better now?

Today, it is the best investment sector. Most Nepalis want to live in the Valley now because they feel secure. Especially middle class families and overseas Nepalis who want to invest in houses. In the last three years, the real estate business has really prospered and helped generate businesses and jobs for many Nepalis.

What is the best thing about living in housing colonies?

The social relations between neighbours is really healthy in colony areas. It is a close-knit community where they share ideas and do things together. They also have user communities to help each other. The best part has been helping the growth of small businesses such as groceries in the surrounding areas.

“Chhaplang chhuplung”

If you thought that ordering a glass of Horlicks at a posh bar might make you look like a fool, you're wrong, for the 130-year-old energy drink has been branded as the coolest drink of the world. According to *The Sun*, the world's trendiest bars, clubs and hotels are serving the old barley bedtime favourite instead of caffeine-packed coffee and tea. Horlicks is now available at The Zetter, Clerkenwell, Central London, voted among the world's 50 coolest hotels and the Groucho club in Soho. The drink is also on the menu of Rivington bar in Shoreditch, East London and Mayfair's Embassy Club, the haunt of 'bling bling' footballers which offers Horlicks so they can get a good kip before a game.

Starting out



Sanima Bikash Bittiya Sanstha Limited, a new financial institution, was launched this week. Promoted by non-Resident Nepalis who have achieved unprecedented success in their business endeavours abroad, Sanima says it has the vision to help the country prosper. (See p 8-9)

Steeling strong

Kamala Rollong Mills has introduced modern technology to make its product Kamala Steel at par with contemporary international standards. Awarded with Nepal Standard for its quality product, the company has been producing Kamala and Kamalakari brand iron rods in the Nepali market. The products are made of prime billets imported from India and overseas.

NEW PRODUCTS

HAIRLESS—Fem, a well-known cosmetic product has launched hair-removing cream in its new Easy Squeezy tube in 25 gm packs. The cream is available in four fragrances—Rose, Chandan, Blossom and Lemon for Rs 31.20. It is available at all general, medical and department stores.



UNFAZED—Morang Auto Works, the authorised distributor of Yamaha motorcycles for Nepal, launched the new Yamaha model Fazer. Available in two models, the price of a regular Fazer is Rs 108,900 and a Fazer with a disc brake and self-start costs Rs 116,900. For a limited period of introduction, it will be sold at Rs 105,900 and Rs 113,900 respectively.

HEATING UP—Built with Australian technological support, Solar Hot brand's solar water heaters with vacuum tube and metal heat tube technology are now available in the market. Nepal's authorised dealer for the brand RC Trading says that since the water heater has 55mm insulation, the collected water will remain heated for 72 hours.



BRAND AMBASSADOR—Bagpiper Whiskey re-launched with Deepak Bajracharya as its local brand ambassador. The stylish new pack is said to be an upgrade of its packaging.

Stitching a niche

What will the Nepali garment industry do after January First?

Are we seeing the last days of the Nepali readymade garment industry that employs 60,000 people? Yes and no.

The story of garments in Nepal has long been not of entrepreneurship and business

STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari



savvy but of luck and charity. Sadly, both are about to run out on 1 January when quotas are lifted, forcing Nepal to compete for markets and customers with the whole world. Meantime, according to a report published by the Garment Association of Nepal (GAN), Nepal's annual exports to the US (worth a little over \$100 million), which accounts for 80 percent of our garment exports have been declining all of this year.

On the other hand, if Nepal accepts the changing global reality, looks around the region, understands what China, India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are doing, then figures out what it can do to carve out a niche for itself, it can remain a player. Such a repositioning would mean weak players would be forced out of the market but the stronger ones can consolidate their operations, focus only on doing things they do very well and transform the way they conduct business to remain competitive.

So far, except for Surya Nepal (whose markets are growing in India, thanks in part to the corporate muscle of its parent ITC) the media reports in Nepal have been coloured by panic, gloom and a cry for help

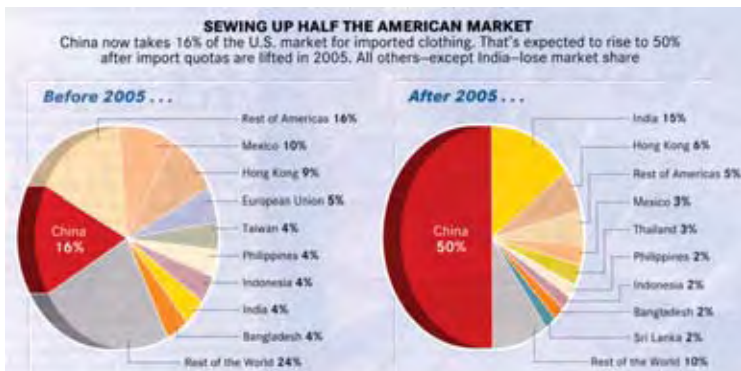
and not by the evidence of quiet and careful strategising.

A readymade garment company is a low-tech but labour-intensive venture. Historically, countries with low labour costs on the cusp of industrialisation have used it to give themselves a jumpstart to earn foreign currency. As those countries did well economically, they started seeing their labour costs rise. They then moved up the value chain to design, market, distribute and sell the garments while farming out bulk production to countries with lower labour costs.

For many years, this was a template for an arrangement

Garment exporters made money like there was no tomorrow.

The curtains on sheltered markets are about to be lifted, these businessmen will find their products under the glare of harsh global competition. Unfortunately for them, competition is dictated entirely by the actions of companies such as Wal-Mart, GAP, JC Penney, H&M and others, who can now dump Nepal in favour of countries with stronger relationships with buying houses, lower labour costs, or lower political risks, or better technological base for converting fibre to fabrics or lower costs of doing business and higher overall reliability



between rich and poor countries, whereby the former would offer market-access benefits and provide guaranteed secure markets for the products. Since the late 1980s, Indian businessmen came to set up shops with local investors and Nepal has benefited. Indeed, before international buyers started slapping social and environmental compliance codes on their Nepal-based suppliers, there was a time when every fourth house in New Baneswor was a tubelight-powered garment sweatshop.

(Translation? The elephants next door known as China and India, not to mention tiny Bangladesh with an RMG industry with annual exports worth \$5 billion).

Instead of continuing to knock on US Senator Diane Feinstein's (D-CA) door for additional time-bound protections that are unlikely to happen, the choices before the Nepali readymade garment industry are twofold: either find a niche in the regional and global markets or perish altogether. ●

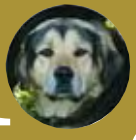
Superfresh breath with Superstrong gums

Say goodbye to artificial freshness. Introducing Dabur Red Gel toothpaste enriched with the unique freshness of Lemon!

With Clove to prevent toothache and Mint to prevent bad breath, Dabur Red Gel is the breakthrough oral care concept you've been waiting for!

Clove prevents toothache
Mint prevents bad breath
Lemon gives freshness

Kathmandu's dog day afternoons



The country is going to the dogs, all the more reason for our four-legged friends to learn some obedience so they know who's the boss

ALL PICS: JIGGY GATON

JIGGY GATON

It has happened to many of us: on a trek or in a galli we are suddenly surrounded by 20 or more yapping canines, some of which are the size of small tuk-tuks. How would most of us react? Probably as I did when I was caught in just this situation last week and not at all frightened or worried about which part of my anatomy was about to be bitten off.

I was attending the 'Who's the Boss Dog Obedience Training' held on the Department of Livestock service's vet hospital grounds in Tripureswor last week. Leading the group of 20 or so Nepali dog owners was Elke Meyer, a senior Dog Behaviour Trainer from Australia who had come over the pond to volunteer her services to Dogmandu.

Sponsored by AnimalNepal.org, Meyer has just concluded her weeklong program. What was amazingly apparent in just the first 10 minutes of my arrival on Day Three was that I did not have to be in fear for my life as these beasts were all on check chains and trotting around the field in almost total control. "Heel! Down! Stay! Good Dog!" And all the dogs did as they were told even though the commands were in English. I had

never seen a Nepali dog do such things. My experiences were more of the Bad Dog variety: snap—ouch!

Meyer's program was for both professional trainer wanna-bes as well as for the public, anyone who had a pooch was eligible. Costs were marginal, Rs 900 and items such as check chains and leashes were on sale for pups who had never seen such a thing. Those completing the course were awarded certificates based on their participation. Aspiring trainers were tested both on the field with their animal as well as in the classroom where they had to correctly answer questions on Alpha Pack Behaviour and other aspects of canine psychology. Both human and canine graduates are now in a continuing program to train others on the topic of 'Who's the Boss'.

What I found most inspiring is that the state of pet ownership in the kingdom is approaching a new higher level of proficiency. Whereas most pets used to be allowed to roam the streets sustaining themselves on garbage, owners these days are getting more sophisticated. All of us here in the Doo have had run-ins with strays and pets posing as attack and/or guard dogs. In fact, according to Elke Meyers, most dogs purchased to guard homes or businesses are just as dangerous to their

owners as to the would-be burglars if not properly trained.

For example, a properly trained dog may bark at the garbage collector but with a simple command of "Come", this potential weapon of ankle destruction would immediately return to the owner, tail wagging and grinning from ear-to-ear.

Dogs that go through obedience training learn that they are not the alpha male of the pack, meaning they do not have to defend the entire family and that they are not the one who make protection decisions. In other words, they are not the leader. After that responsibility is taken off his shoulders, it places the pet at ease, reduces an enormous burden and promotes vigorous tail wagging instead of jaw gnashing.

For example, I watched a large Shepard on Day Three of the training refuse to lie down on command. It took the owner and Elke both to put the yapping nipping stubborn one down but down he finally went. By Day Five, the same unruly pup was going down on command and very happy to get a "Good dog" from his owner. The owner was looking a lot happier as well, he knew now that he was the boss and not the other way around.



Elke Meyers

Although Elke Meyers has gone back to Australia to continue training dogs and horses down under, she has left AnimalNepal with a strong training program, which is continuing now at 1905 Restaurant in Kantipath every Saturday. All you need is your dog and a free afternoon. ●

animalnepal@hotmail.com
http://www.animalnepal.org/training/

First country, then democracy



LONDON—President General Pervez Musharraf has made it clear that he has no intention of stepping down as army chief and becoming a purely civilian leader any time soon as he feels Pakistan needs him in uniform. "I think the country is more important than democracy," he said in an interview with the *Daily Telegraph*.

"We are fighting terrorism in the mountains. The army is suffering casualties and actively moving against them," he said. "We are trying to improve relations with India; there is a process of rapprochement. We are trying to bring about a transformation in Pakistan. The minority of extremists have dominated the vast majority of

moderates. We need to transform this." Musharraf said that required "unity of the political element, the bureaucratic element and the military element. I think I provide this unity."

General Musharraf promised earlier this year to quit the army but said he had had to "rethink" his promise. Legally, he argued, both the National Assembly and the Senate recently passed a bill "requesting" him to keep his military position. Politically, he said, Pakistan and the world had an interest in maintaining his firm leadership in turbulent times.

Under mining

NAIROBI—The Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World concluded with a renewed commitment by 144 states that have banned anti-personnel mines to eradicate this insidious weapon. The summit adopted an action plan containing 70 commitments on speeding up destruction of mine stockpiles, clearing mined lands within the treaty's deadlines and ensuring long-term aid for mine survivors. Participants undertook to ensure that every state in the world joined the Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel mines. ICRC president Jakob Kellenberger stressed the need for more to be done to help mine victims, pointing out that most had yet to see a significant improvement in their lives through adequate medical care, physical rehabilitation and socio-economic reintegration. He addressed the summit, together with heads of state, ministers and senior political officials from more than 90 countries. A group of senior military officials from eight countries reviewed the findings of a study commissioned in 1996 on the military use and effectiveness of anti-personnel mines. They not only reaffirmed the previous conclusion that the appalling consequences of anti-personnel mines far outweighed their limited military value but also concluded that eight years of experience since the study had confirmed that anti-personnel mines were obsolete on the modern battlefield and that their use was not justifiable under any circumstances.

Americans seek asylum in Canada

MONTREAL—Canadian leaders, not the country's refugee system, should decide the fate of soldiers who have deserted the US military to apply for asylum in their northern neighbour, according to a support group. One of those soldiers, Jeremy Hinzman, went before Canada's refugee board for a hearing on whether he qualifies for asylum. The adjudicator announced he would not consider the argument that Hinzman did not have to serve because the US-led war on Iraq was illegal.

Hinzman arrived in Canada on 3 January with his wife and child, fleeing his army unit, the 82nd Airborne Regiment, just days before it was to depart for Iraq. The army specialist, who had already served in Afghanistan, had applied to be discharged or reassigned as a conscientious objector but the military denied his request. Going through the process can take up to a year, says Bill Galvin of the Washington, DC-based Centre on Conscience and War, a member of the GI Rights network. Galvin says his group is now processing a "couple dozen" submissions and estimates that another 10 organisations are doing similar work. "Being AWOL is no big deal. But desertion is a specific intent and crime. If your intent is to never return or to avoid war...that is much more serious. Part of the problem is when folks go to Canada and apply for asylum, they provide the government with evidence," adds Galvin, "so by going to Canada they actually make their situation with the US military worse." Two recent conscientious objectors who deserted, Camilo Mejia and Stephen Funk, each were sentenced to one year in jail by military court-martial earlier this year. (IPS)

Missing the Iron Curtain

PRAGUE—Millions in eastern Europe remain convinced that life was better for them before communism collapsed 15 years ago. A survey in the Czech Republic showed that one in five Czechs, older people particularly, would like to see a return to communism. More than half of the pensioners said the country was wrong to choose democracy in 1989. Opinion polls in other former communist countries have shown that many old people feel that life was better for them under communism.

In Poland and former East Germany, longing for communism has become widespread enough to earn a word of its own—'Ostalgie'—partly after the German word 'ost' meaning east. In a survey in Slovakia by the MVK agency, half the respondents said they were dissatisfied with changes since 1989. In Russia where successive Soviet regimes were among the most repressive in the world, the Russian Communist Party is still widely supported.

The transition from centrally planned to free market economies that followed the fall of eastern Europe's communist regimes brought an end to guaranteed employment and state financial support for everyone. These fears over social security and public order have been translated into real support for communist parties in some countries in the region. But few believe that communism will again become a dominant political force in eastern Europe because only of older generation support the communist parties. (IPS)

Rich get richer



Wealthy nations disregard their commitment to fight poverty

THALIF DEEN in NEW YORK

The world's poorer nations are paying a heavy price in human lives for the failure of the rich to provide the resources they promised to fight global hunger and poverty, humanitarian agency Oxfam said in a report. If the world fails to act, warned the international body, '45 million more children will die needlessly by 2015'—the targeted date for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set by 189 world leaders in September 2000.

Additionally, 247 million more people in sub-Saharan Africa will be living on the razor edge of poverty, surviving on less than a dollar a day in 2015, 97 million more children will still be out of school and 53 million more people in the world will lack proper sanitation facilities by that date. The sums that rich countries invest in global poverty reduction are shamefully small, the London-based NGO said in its study, *Paying the Price*. At an average of \$80 per person per year in rich countries, the investment is equivalent to the price of a weekly cup of coffee.

The eight goals for 2015 include reducing by half extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS and ensuring environmental sustainability. The eighth goal calls for a global partnership of rich and poor countries for development. But most of the rich nations have not only failed to meet their pledge to spend 0.7 percent of their GDP as Official Development Aid (ODA) to the poor as agreed in 1970 but have also refused to commit to meet their obligations to remove tariff barriers, permit market access and cancel southern nations' debts.

Currently, the world's poorest nations are paying back a staggering \$100 million a day in debt. But tackling global poverty requires more than money said the report: poor countries'

prospects are also undermined by unfair trade rules, the violent consequences of the arms trade and the impacts of global warming. Yet cancelling the debts of 32 of the poorest countries would be 'small change for the rich nations'. The cost to the richest countries would amount to \$1.8 billion each year over the next decade—or on average a mere \$2.10 for each of their citizens annually.

Oxfam is urging seven leaders of the G8 nations—the United States, Germany, France, Italy, Japan, Britain and Canada—to make history in 2005 by cancelling poor countries' debts and increasing ODA. The eighth member of the Group is Russia. So far only four nations—Norway, Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands—have consistently met the ODA target—after nearly 30 years. Five other European countries have set their ODA deadlines ahead of 2015: Italy (2006), Luxembourg and Ireland (2007), Belgium (2010) and France (2012).

By devoting only 0.14 percent of its national income to development aid, US spending in 2003 was one-tenth of what it invested in its invasion and 'rebuilding' of Iraq. The US will not reach the aid target needed to halve world poverty until 2040 and Germany until 2087, while Japan is decreasing its aid commitment. Two top recipients of French aid, French Polynesia and New Caledonia and one top recipient of US aid, Israel, are, in fact, high-income countries.

The Bush administration's 'war on terror' also threatens to divert aid away from those who need it most. Aid is again being used as a political tool, according to Oxfam, with one-third of the increase in ODA in 2002 resulting from large allocations to Afghanistan and Pakistan. The goals of development aid are being redefined to suit that new security agenda: in Denmark, Japan and Australia, 'combating terrorism' is now the explicit

aim of official aid programs.

Oxfam is also urging both the G8 and other donors to:

- provide better quality and more overseas aid funding, including at least \$50 billion in extra aid immediately (to meet the MDGs)

- cancel 100 percent debt of the world's poorest countries, including bilateral debts and those owed to the World Bank and the African Development Bank

- fully implement commitments to improve delivery of aid and eliminate the concept of 'tied aid', according to which poorer nations have to purchase goods from donor nations, irrespective of their needs.

Caroline Green of Oxfam singled out Italy and the US as the "worst offenders" of such aid. About 70 percent of US aid is "tied", she added. Funding the poor is not simply an act of charity: it is a both a moral obligation and a matter of justice, argues the report.

Time for action to meet the MDGs is running out, yet progress has been "unforgivably slow". Only one goal—halving income poverty—has any chance of being met but even this is due to progress in just a handful of countries. Poor country governments must also fulfil their commitments to fight poverty. But without finance, these countries will not be able to take advantage of global trade and investment opportunities or protect their citizens' basic rights to life, good health and education.

The study urges poorer nations to: spend 20 percent of their national budget on basic social services to reduce poverty, institutionalise civil society, ensure parliamentary participation in the creation of pro-poor policies and guarantee transparency and accountability, rights to free and fair elections, freedom of expression and the rule of law. ● (IPS)

Mr Chips turns out to be 007

Dutch maths teacher admits fake communist party scam that fooled Mao Zedong

JOHN HENLEY in AMSTERDAM

A 76-year-old retired Dutch maths teacher described how for more than 25 years he was feted by communist leaders around the world as the inspired head of a radical Marxist-Leninist party that never existed. As Chris Petersen, head of the supposedly 600-member Marxist-Leninist party of the Netherlands, Pieter Boevé travelled to Beijing more than two dozen times and met Mao Zedong. He was also welcomed with open arms in Albania by Enver Hoxha, and in the eastern bloc capitals of Europe.

"In fact we had at most a dozen members, none of whom had the faintest idea of the truth," Boevé said from his home in the seaside resort of Zandvoort. "The whole thing was a hoax set up by the secret services to learn all they could about what was going on in Marxist Peking."

The Mao regime was so impressed by the revolutionary zeal of Petersen/Boevé and his MLPN that it gave him regular briefings on the chairman's latest thinking at the Chinese mission in The Hague. Beijing even funded the non-existent party's newspaper, *De Kommunist*, which was written entirely by Dutch secret service (BVD) agents.

"We took everybody in," Boevé said proudly. "As far as I know, the MLPN was the only wholly fake radical party to have existed and certainly the only one to have really worked. We passed inside information on every Maoist policy nuance to all the western intelligence forces. It was a wonderful adventure."

Boevé was first recruited by the BVD in 1955 when he visited a World Student Congress in Moscow. Soon after, he was invited to China, then still the Soviet Union's ally, for a similar

communist youth junket. After the Sino-Soviet split of the early 1960s, the Chinese began courting western communists and, egged on by the BVD, Boevé played along.

"I was invited to Peking for a month-long course on the wisdom of Chairman Mao," he said. "It was quite a baptism of fire. I hadn't read a great deal of Marx or Lenin at that stage, let alone Mao. But I soon got very proficient. I could spout for hours."

The foundation of the MLPN was announced by *De Kommunist* in 1969. Its main role was to undermine the official Dutch Communist party, the KPN, by denouncing its deviant beliefs and unreliable conduct, and to garner information on—and gain access to—the Maoist elite in Beijing.

In the latter task, it was successful beyond the BVD's wildest dreams. "They adored us," Boevé said. "I was invited to all the big events—Army Days, Anniversaries of the Republic, everything. There were feasts in the Great Hall of the People and long articles in the People's Daily. And they gave us lots of money."

Most European Maoist groups, unable to keep up with an endless string of purges and policy about-turns, had lost faith by the mid-1980s and the MLPN gradually began winding down its activities. But as late as 1989, after the Tiananmen student uprising, Boevé was invited to Beijing to praise the regime's crackdown.

The existence of Project Mongol, as it was dubbed by the BVD, was successfully kept secret until this September, when another former agent, Frits Hoekstra, published a book about the service's glory days. It caused something of an uproar in the Netherlands, a country where a fair



few genuine former radicals now occupy leading positions in public life.

Boevé, who was never a salaried spy and who, despite his extra-curricular activities, rose to become head teacher of a top Dutch grammar school, said he was at first unwilling to have his name revealed. "My family knew but no one else," he said. "As far as my friends and former colleagues were concerned, all my travel was to do with educational exchanges."

Since the revelations about his former life as one of the west's most productive spooks, Boevé said reactions have varied from shock and disbelief, "How can we ever trust you again?" to mild amusement. "My fellow members of the Zandvoort town council call me 007," he said. "I don't mind. I'm satisfied with what I've done with my life. I've travelled the world at someone else's expense and I feel did my bit. And it was certainly fun." ● (GNS)

NEW active gel

closeup Now in Nepal

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Whiter Smiles. Healthier Smiles.

Toothpaste with mouthwash for fresh breath and confidence ● Vitamins, Fluoride and Micro-whiteners for strong white teeth

property of a nation just because he is the king's son? More so, when they see that top leaders and even generals bow their heads to the cradle where the new king sleeps, an example how these powerful people prove their loyalty to the royal generations."

Gibbon is not against monarchy. He said that some monarchies survived in Europe because the monarchs in these places softened their positions. But in the last 200 years even the monarchies that became moderate have vanished. In Nepal, we haven't experienced the reign of a softened king since 1950. We can't draw comparisons about one king being better than the other. That is why we need democracy. It is not that we do not know we made mistakes with multi-party democracy. It is just that we have to learn from our mistakes. The leaders should stop treating the people like their personal property as the kings do. They should not think of their parties as ancestral property, they need to hand over the baton to real representatives of the people who show commitment to the people's welfare. Only a democracy that is not subservient to the monarchy can defeat the Maoists.

Premier tantrums

Gunaraj Luintel in *Kantipur*, 7 December

कान्तिपुर

These days Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba doesn't miss any opportunity to give people a piece of his mind. A few days ago he was a guest at a program related to communications, and he fired a salvo at the media. The following day he attended a program hosted by the civil service and he berated the



bureaucracy. Then, at an FNCCI program he lashed out at businessmen. "Journalists should be helping contain terrorism instead of spreading it," he told media. Deuba's language and tone resembled that of a police or army officer. This is no surprise given the time he spends with them. Deuba has forgotten the immediate media support he received after his reappointment as prime minister. The reason for that support was the expectation that this government would produce positive results. But those hopes are now dashed. While taking on the business community, Deuba blamed them of paying off the Maoists. But how can anyone survive in this

society without giving into extortion demands? For those living within the security shield of the state, there may be exceptions. Even poor farmers are forced to donate to the rebels. They really don't have a choice. Only when people have nothing left to lose do they rise up like the people of Dailekh have done.

Deuba accused the bureaucrats of not performing. So, why doesn't he punish them? He heads the government, after all. Isn't he just trying to pass the buck? Maybe the reason the bureaucrats don't listen to the politicians is because they know the government's days are numbered. Deuba didn't even spare cartoonists, and one particular one for lampooning his official residence awns 'Baluwatar Restaurant and Bar'.

Media bashing

Prakash Pokhrel in *Samaya*, 2 December

समय

I travelled to Tamghas via Palpa to report on civilians trapped by war. I reached Ridi Bajar at 9AM. A woman at a tea stall said she hadn't seen security forces here for three years. "Everything we do is controlled by the people's government," she said matter-of-factly. I reached Baletaksar Bajar around 10.30 AM and was surprised to find an army patrol there, completely contradicting what the woman had said. They asked me some questions and waved me on. The road entered a forest, the road was steep and I was on first gear. At 10.45 AM an army patrol stopped me. "Take your helmet off," he ordered and slapped me hard on my cheek a couple of times. "What have I done, why are you hitting me?" I asked. He hit me again. There were other soldiers watching us. I kept telling him I was a journalist and asked him why he was hitting me. Another soldier

walked towards me and said: "He's a journalist, beat him up." He started pushing and kicking me. I was helpless and broke down. While the soldier was leaving I asked him his name. He returned and pointed a gun at me. I said: "Sir, you have gun and I have a pen. You can go ahead and shoot me. I am not afraid." I don't know where I got the courage from, I thought this was it, I thought of my parents and how they would miss me. Tears streamed down my face as I faced the gun. Another soldier begun hitting my motorcycle. He was joined by another person whose face was covered with a handkerchief. He interrogated me and I explained that I had come here with the permission of General Kumar Lama at the army camp in Tamgas and acting DSP Sharda Prasad Chaudhari. "They assured full support for my work as a journalist," I told him. Instead, the soldier shouted at me for taking the names of his superior officers. "Nonsense, you don't know how to present yourself in front of the army," he said in English. He finally let me go. Villagers later offered me comfort and nursed my wounds. If journalists are treated so brutally, just imagine what ordinary citizens must go through. I am convinced that the army is bent on repressing journalists.

Out of touch

Nepal Samacharpatra, 6 December

नेपाल समाचारपत्र

ROLPA—Local government authorities including the CDO still use an obsolete telegram to send urgent messages to the prime minister's office in Kathmandu. The Maoists in Rolpa, on the other hand, carry satellite phones and cordless sets. CDO Kamalmani Kafle believes that as far as the

government is concerned Rolpa doesn't exist. The Maoists have superior communications and use it for early warning about army patrols. The CDO has to first write down his message, send it by messenger to the police office, where it is then dictated as a telegram and passed on to Kathmandu. Rolpa's communication would improve if the government got around to repairing the nine VSAT telephone lines at Sat Dobato, eight km from the district headquarters. Kafle has repeatedly requested repairs, but it hasn't happened. Government staff can't even call their families to let them know they are ok. "Two ministers of the government are from this district but they couldn't be bothered about our broken phones," says a civil servant posted here. Most phones have been out since the Maoists bombed the microwave tower here in 2002.

Vengeance

Deshantar, 5 December

देशान्तर साप्ताहिक

Friends of Prince Paras who brutally beat up Soaltee Crowne Plaza chairman Prabhakar S Rana's son Siddhartha, his fiancée Nilima and journalist Sagun Lawoti at Galaxy Disco of Everest Hotel are reportedly in hiding. Siddhartha filed a case against Pragnun Rana (former army chief Kiran Shamsheer's grandson), Indrabir Singh (former police chief's son), Prabanjan Rana (former general Digamber Shamsheer's son) and Abhaya Shah at the district court but the police did not take action against them. According to sources, after Siddhartha lost hope of receiving support from law enforcement authorities, he is now bent on taking revenge with the help of hired hands. Paras' friends have stopped walking freely around the city.



Madhab:
Why is constituent assembly necessary?
The parliament should be restored
I think we have to go for constituent assembly *नेपाल समाचारपत्र Nepal Samacharpatra*, 5 December

QUOTES OF THE WEEK



The Royal Council acts as a bridge between the King and the people but we will not participate in any activity that will encourage the king to go beyond the constitution.

RPP leader and minister for Land Reforms and Management Jogmehar Shrestha in *Kantipur*, December 9



announces the 9th

Immersion Course on Contemporary Social Issues

Applications are invited for the 9th session of the Immersion Course to begin from 31 January 2005. The objective of the Course is to enable Nepali graduates to intellectually comprehend critical contemporary issues through an intense exposure to the social sciences as they relate to Nepali society. The Course consists of a total of eleven modules. Each module, apart from Research Methodology, will take one week. The Research Methodology module lasts six weeks.

The moderators for the coming session are: Sudhindra Sharma (Introduction to Sociology & Anthropology/Introduction to Nepali Society & Culture), Kunda Dixit (Media & Society), Dipak Gyawali (Economy & Society), Ajaya Dixit (Technology & Society), Pratyoush Onta (History & Society), Krishna Bhattachan (Ethnicity & Society), Seira Tamang (Gender & Society), Hari Sharma (Politics & Society), Shanta Dixit (Education & Society) and Dilli Ram Dahal/Sudhindra Sharma (Research Methodology).

Basic qualification: Bachelor's degree and good grasp of English
Class size: 26 participants
Course duration: 16 weeks (6:30 to 9:00 am, Mon-Fri)
Application deadline: 31 December 2004
Course fee: Rs 10,000 (course material included)

Fellowships will be provided to deserving participants from disadvantaged groups, women and members of college faculties. Participants will also have free access to the Social Science Baha Library during the course duration.

For details, please visit www.himalassociation.org/baha/immersion or call 5542544/5548142.

Application forms are available from Social Science Baha, Himal Association, Patan Dhoka, and can also be downloaded from our web-site.

The Immersion Course is run by the Social Science Baha.



“My camera is my brush, and the light is my colour”

The bromide

ABHA ELI PHOBOO

Everybody knows him. He is that crazy fellow with the camera slung around his neck, taking pictures of the shivering devotees half immersed in freezing waters of winter during the Madhab Narayan Fast. He's been coming every year for the last 10 years and has become so much a part of the rituals that he is allowed into the sacred areas where nobody else is.

“I've been studying the festival,” says Kishor Kayastha. “Now I know every vantage point, timing and process of the rituals. It affords me correct calculations

for my photo shoot.” Kayastha likes to call himself an “experimental photographer”, and after every experiment he holds an exhibition to show the world how it turned out. His latest is ‘Life Through The Lens’ at Indigo Gallery and it is about his infatuation with panoramic photography.

The photograph of the Madhab Narayan Fast at the exhibition is made up of 24 different shots taken with meticulous dedication. “Taking pictures of people is difficult because they move. I have to be really quick,” he explains. “I study my subject, sketch my

composition, calculate the exposure, angle and shots before I shoot.”

He keeps returning to a place until he feels that the light and composition is right. Not able to get the desired results with the usual panoramic camera, he went digital and printed the pictures on bromide. “Taking pictures is one thing,” he states, “making them is something else. I like to think that my photos are paintings on bromide canvas. My camera is my brush and the light is my colour.”

Born and brought up in Bhaktapur, Kayastha's passion for photography began when he



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Fair trade, Nepali style

The time has come for Nepalis to buy Nepali goods for a cause



KIRAN PANDAY

AARTI BASNYAT

A lot of companies these days can be seen paying lip service to corporate social responsibility. It has become the buzzword and many times an excuse for business-as-usual.

Not Lotus Holdings though. The six-year-old venture company that launches new businesses runs Lotus Paper Crafts, Lotus Arts and Crafts, Fine Weaves, Formation Carpets and Trading for Development (TFD).

So far, TFD had been mainly involved in exporting Nepali manufactured goods but with now, it hopes to market Nepali handicraft products in the Nepali market. The brains behind this ‘buy Nepali’ campaign are Shasta L Rana of TFD (pictured, above), Lotus President Sulo Shrestha Shah and Director, Ajay Bikram Shah.

Nepali handicrafts have seen a boom in recent times and the group believes the domestic market is now getting more conscious of house décor, using Nepali products, architecture and style to give it the authentic Nepali touch.

“It made sense to try and penetrate the Nepali market and promote Nepali handicrafts,” says Shasta Rana, who hopes that as a socially-conscious organisation TFD can help local handicrafts gain a foothold in the local market for instance by reviving the pashmina boom here and giving copper craft a new twist. Shasta recruited many of the craftsmen herself, taking products out of

storage and creating new designs.

But producers are used to the prices they get for exports of handicrafts like pashminas, how can they be affordable for Nepalis? “We will rectify this by keeping a minimum profit margin and dealing directly with the producers and eliminating middlemen,” Shasta explains, though she admits the real challenge is to compete with cheap Chinese products. Although TFD is not a non-profit organisation, she says there is a way to stay afloat and still provide affordable products.

TFD has participated in trade fairs abroad, but is organising its first-ever fair in Nepal next week and plans to have one every six months at its new showroom in Jawalakhel. TFD will not just sell its own products but also provide shoppers with a ‘one stop’ arena. Customers can make both bulk purchases as well as loose goods. They can design and order their own products and not have to run around Kathmandu trying to find what they want.

If TFD had a motto it would be: ‘high-quality Nepali goods that are environmentally and socially friendly at affordable prices’. TFD doesn't use child labour, single and widowed women are given employment, and one percent of their revenue is donated to the needy children charity, ‘Hoste-hainse’.

TFD exhibition is on from 12-19 December at the HB Complex, Ekanta Kuna.
www.tfd.com.np



The signs were auspicious. It was the first day of the annual water festival in the Cambodian capital and one of my closest friends in Kathmandu, architect and conservationist John Sanday, was being awarded the Order of the British Empire.

It was pouring when the time came for British Ambassador Stephan Bridges, representing Queen Elizabeth, conferred the award on Sanday (pictured, right) whose tall, lanky figure and good-natured persona is familiar to many in Nepal.

Although most Nepalis are not aware of the important work John has done to preserve and enhance Nepal's cultural heritage, this important recognition should spread awareness. John Sanday's name will now be an integral part of Nepal's cultural history and recognition of his heritage conservation work in Nepal and

From Asan to Angkor

British architect John Sanday is awarded an OBE for his conservation work in Nepal and Cambodia

BARBARA ADMAS in PHNOM PENH

Cambodia.

Most recipients of the knighthood normally have to travel to London to receive the medal which would then be pinned onto his jacket by Queen Elizabeth at Buckingham Palace, but John has never been one for convention for convention's sake. He kept wondering if it wouldn't be possible to receive the award in Cambodia, where so much of his work and dedication has been centred over the last 12 years. He also wanted to share his acclaim with a dedicated group of Cambodian technicians and architects with whom he had worked so closely and formed lasting friendships.

John Sanday has been working on the 12th Century temples of Preah Khan and Ta Som since 1992 after he finished his big Hanuman Dhoka project in Nepal. The Killing Fields were still fresh and festering in everyone's mind and he had to build his team from scratch since most engineers and technicians had been killed by the Khmer Rouge.



When he started working in Preah Khan, he and his team often encountered suspicious gun-toting teenagers in the jungle which were encroaching on the temple complexes and had to be judiciously cut back in order to save some important 1,000-year-old stone sculptures and temples in the world famous Angkor complex.

John Sanday's old friends from Siem Reap and his conservation team were present at the ambassador's residence in Phnom Penh for the award ceremony. They were joined by Azedine Beschouch of the UNESCO in Paris, who for the last decade has been involved in the campaign to protect Angkor. Much of Sanday's work in Nepal was also carried out under UNESCO auspices, although the main sponsor in Cambodia is the World Monument Fund.

Since John Sanday started his career in Nepal and has worked on conservation projects all over the country, one hopes that he will also be appropriately honoured in Nepal as well. His restoration of the Hanuman Dhoka Palace in Kathmandu is John's best known work in Nepal. He had discovered a few old craftsmen who remembered the traditional technique for making temple bricks and his reconstruction of Hanuman Dhoka was not just rebuilding



the monument but rediscovering the masonry and carpentry techniques with which they were built.

John also worked on buildings in Bhaktapur and Patan, propping up a sliding Swayambhu, and he is now restoring four monasteries in Mustang and one in Tukche.

Young Nepali and Cambodian architects have benefited from John's skills as well as his passion for restoration. His expertise and his willingness to share his craft has ensured that the work of restoration will now pass on to a new generation of local architects, conservationists and engineers. Although he received his medal in Cambodia, the award also honoured his achievements in Nepal.

There will surely be a party waiting for John when he returns to Kathmandu. ●



Maoist sobriety is out but so is flashy western-induced modernity. And China's new urban rich are trying to reach out for a new eclectic Chinese style that combines oriental opulence with sophisticated simplicity.

Beijing, a city in the throes of vast urban re-design before the 2008 Olympics, is leading the change. The Chinese capital is becoming once again a centre of refined pleasures and cultural pursuits, notwithstanding the supersized malls, futuristic buildings and unceasing construction.

Before it surrendered itself to Chairman Mao Zedong's vision of being an industrial stronghold with a skyline of smoking chimneys, the imperial capital of China used to be a cultural mecca of quaint shops, teahouses and temples. Now it seems things have come full circle and it's Beijing's time again. Out of the blue architects, artists and intellectuals are flocking to Beijing.

Trendy designers are becoming hot commodity with China's new class of rich—all too eager to abandon their austere proletarian flats and move into million-dollar designer villas. "It feels like a revolution in

taste," says Emily Zhang, owner of a pioneer modern art gallery in Beijing, the Qin Gallery.

Leaving aside the highbrow intellectual scorn towards moneymaking, it is indeed China's economic boom that is propelling a surge in artistic and cultural experiments—from architecture to interior design and modern art. "What do you aspire to after having bought your own car and house? Wealthy Chinese people want to acquire a certain lifestyle and the more choices, the better," argues Celia Shi, founder and president of Beijing Illinois Co Ltd, a homegrown interior design and furniture company. Despite its all-foreign name, Illinois is a Chinese success story. In its nine years of history, the company has grown by targeting the expanding and increasingly wealthy Chinese middle-class and their newly discovered affection for quality goods with opulent, often oriental flavour.

The way Illinois has become a buzzword for a new urban chic, built around the themes of chinoiserie, speaks volumes about the changes in lifestyle and taste that big Chinese cities are experiencing.

Made in China

The yin and yang of the abstract and traditional merge in modern China

The opening of the Swedish furniture giant, Ikea, in the capital six years ago attracted vast crowds and the company still ranks as one of the biggest influences on popular taste. Anything foreign (read modern) still has top cachet but a few, like Illinois founder Celia Shi, are trying to come up with a new and different Chinese style.

Where Ikea's trademark is blonde-wood furniture emphasising austere minimalism, Illinois focuses on imposing dark wood furniture pieces that suggest affluence and opulence. And while Ikea aims to produce affordable home products for the average Chinese urban consumers, Illinois targets affluent middle-class consumers—those with an annual income of more than \$5,000.

No longer is the term 'Made in China' synonymous with cheap, low quality goods. Catering to increasing demands for lifestyle varieties of its customers, Illinois has so far rolled out 40 distinct series with catchy names such as Aurora, Moli, New Vivid and even Armani. They span the range of neo-classical Chinese furniture made from dark solid wood with oriental twists like engraved bamboo leaves to minimalist modern combinations of home-office chairs and bookshelves in quirky combinations of steel and glass. Dining room sets come with marble or glass tabletops accompanied by chairs with velvet and silk upholstery.

The ornate retro-style harking back to China's past is visible even in the modern art circles in Beijing where the avant-garde and experimental tend to dominate. But it is not only the interior of the houses that is changing. A few years back, when choosing their dream house, wealthy urbanities were in pursuit of Spanish-style haciendas,

European mansions or California-style villas—all available just a stone's throw from the city centre. Now, Tang-style housing is quickly making a comeback in Beijing's sprawling suburbs.

Modern villas built Chinese style with floating roofs and glass-dome inner courtyards are springing up everywhere. The time is right for Chinese-style villas to enter the luxury villa market, argues Lu Dalong, the developer of Cathay View, a new courtyard villa compound in the Shunyi suburbs. "Because with China's growing influence in the world, the Tang-style has become increasingly popular internationally."

Designer Rebecca Xsu thinks the trend reflects a desire to return to nature and one's roots. "People are looking for an escape—there is too much steel and concrete around. In the past, Beijingers lived close to nature and the earth. The courtyards had earthen floors and were open to the sky. Designers want to reflect that."

The age-old Chinese desire to commune with the natural environment is also evident in an innovative collection of holiday homes, all individually designed by 12 top Asian architects and located near the Great Wall. It is a curious mélange of ultra-modern and individualist Zen-style design called the Commune that blends with the surrounding nature. On an earthier note, the staff at the Commune wear Maoist-style uniforms with badges that evoke the fervour of the Cultural Revolution.

The originality of this new, 'made in China' style was recognised at the 2002 architectural Biennale in Venice where the Commune's developer Zhang Xin won a special prize, the Silver Lion, for her role as a 'patron of architecture'. ● (IPS)

"Lata ko desh ma gaando tanderi." (In a land of fools, even a woman with un-fair & ugly skin can be a heroni - as translated by UNACO, the United Nation's Assn. of Cartoonists)



Little did our Heroni know, born in the USA, destined to be boob-jobbed, botoxed and bitter, that 25 years later she would be happy doing DIDO covers @ Rum Doodle in Thamel...
...to be continued.



KE GARNE? WHATEVER.
But be a Heroni - Celebrate your Precious Human Birth

"The past is like a river flowing out of sight; the future is an ocean filled with opportunity and delight."
~ Anna Hoxie ~ Wife of American Banker during the Stock Market Crash of 1929.

Next change: Herojigette decides never to wear a Power Suit again and goes shopping in Bagh Bazaar
Strip #48 2061 by jigme gaton - read. love. write.

HEROJIGette's Adventures can also be seen at www.extreme-nepal.com

ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Poster exhibition** of Japanese Graphic Art at Japanese Embassy Hall, Panipokhari. 9.30 AM-4.30 PM. Until 10 December.
- ❖ **Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival** at the Russian Culture Centre, Kamal Pokhari. Until 12 December. 5542544
- ❖ **Chinese Handicraft Exhibition** Celebrating Nepal-China diplomatic relations at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited. Until 12 December. 4247834
- ❖ **Spirit of Emotions** Abstract paintings by Ramesh Khanal. Until 16 December. 4419353
- ❖ **Paintings by Kiran Manandhar** Abstract works at Buddha Gallery, Thamel. Until 18 December. 4441689
- ❖ **Winter Show** Colourful artworks by Shobha Adhikary Wagley at Gallery Moksh, from 12 to 26 December. 2113339
- ❖ **Life through the Lens** Photographs by Kishor Kayastha at Indigo Gallery, till 15 January. 4413580, indigo@wlink.com.np



EVENTS

- ❖ **Summit Christmas Market** on 10 December from 3PM-9PM at Summit Hotel, Kupondole.
- ❖ **Chaka Khan Live at the Jazz Club** Movie show at Moksh, 6.30 PM onwards on 14 December. Free entry.
- ❖ **WCN Amateur Nature and Wildlife Photography Competition** for amateur photographers. Deadline 15 December. 5524202, www.wcn.org.np
- ❖ **Zodiac Blast** at the Rox, Hyatt Regency on 18 December, 8.30 PM onwards. Free palm reading with door prizes, drink and music for Rs 400, proceeds go to charity. infohaami@yahoo.com
- ❖ **Kids Carnival at Khel** Celebrate Christmas at Hotel Shangri-la with fun and games on 25 December. 4412999

MUSIC

- ❖ **Winter concert** by Kathmandu Chorale on 11 December, 3.30 PM-6PM at the British School Hall, Jhamsikhel. Free entrance
- ❖ **Jatra Saturday nights** with Looza, 6.30 PM onwards. 4256622
- ❖ **Jukebox experience** with Pooja Gurung and The Cloud Walkers every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at Rox Bar. 4491234
- ❖ **Deo** at Not Just The Jazz Bar Fridays at Hotel Shangri-la, Lajimpat.
- ❖ **Happening live jazz in town** at Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lajimpat. Every Wednesday and Saturday, 7.45 PM onwards.

FOOD

- ❖ **New delicacies** Introducing pastas and snacks at Roadhouse Café, Jawalakhel. 5521755
- ❖ **Bakers Basket** Chef Ayub Saleem introduces yummy Christmas pudding and cakes at Hotel Yak & Yeti. Until 28 December. 4248999
- ❖ **The Spirit of Christmas** Sumptuous Christmas Goodies at Hyatt Regency. 4491234
- ❖ **Tickling Tastebuds** Barbeque every Friday at The Shambala Garden Café, Shangri-la Hotel, 7PM onwards. 4412999
- ❖ **La Soon** Restaurant and Vinotheque, next to the Egyptian Embassy, Pulchok. 5537166
- ❖ **Sizzling Weekend Treat** with live music, dance, barbeque and karaoke at Garden Terrace, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **Delicious barbecue dinner** Fridays at Summit Hotel. 5521810
- ❖ **Farm House Café** Unlimited nature with delicious meals at Park Village Hotel. 4375280
- ❖ **Dwarika's Thali Lunch** at the Heritage courtyard. 4479488
- ❖ **The Tharu Kitchen** at Jungle Base Camp. Junglebasecamp@yahoo.com

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Dream Holiday** Package tour to Malaysia for Christmas and New Year. Marco Polo Travels and Qatar Airways, 2012345
- ❖ **Getaway package** Night's stay at Godavari Village Resort, includes dinner and breakfast. 5560675
- ❖ **Tiger Mountain Lodge** Christmas and New Year offers. 4361500
- ❖ **Tiger Tops** Two-night package for \$250 at Chitwan, Tharu Safari Lodge for \$200 per night, expats only. 4361500
- ❖ **Christmas by the jungle** at Jungle Base Camp Lodge, Bardia. Special package and prices. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com
- ❖ **Temple Tiger** One-night package \$250. 4263480
- ❖ **Machan Wildlife Jungle Resort** special packages available. 4225001
- ❖ **Weekend Special** at Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha. 4375280

JAI NEPAL CINEMA

Veer-Zaara portrays the trauma of partition. In true Yashraj tradition, it is an emotional love story. Saamiya Siddiqui (Rani Mukherji) is a Pakistani lawyer who helps two lovers. Veer aka Veer Pratap Singh (Shahrukh Khan) is from India and Zaara aka Zaara Hayaat Khan (Preity Zinta) is from Pakistan. This film shows how love conquers all and goes beyond boundaries drawn by men. It also reflects the new Indian sentiment towards Pakistan.



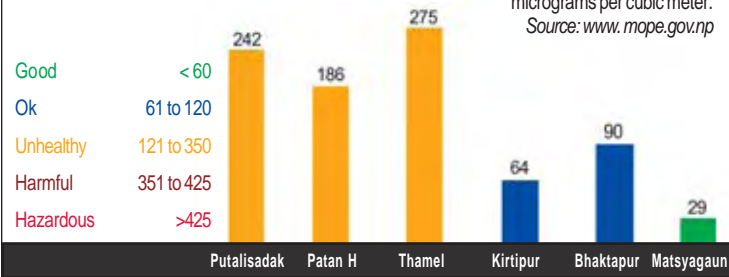
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KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

The Nepali delegation at a regional air pollution conference in Agra this week boasted that the concentration of PM10 in Kathmandu's air had gone down by seven percent in the past year. No evidence of that this week, as the concentration of particles under 10 microns is still in the 'harmful' zone. Thamel is not such a cool place to hang out, and neither are the major intersections where vehicular emissions are made worse by the soot particles from burning tyres of street protests.

28 November - 4 December in micrograms per cubic meter.
Source: www.mope.gov.np



NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



A high pressure system over the Tibetan plateau is blocking the advance of a series of westerly fronts this past week which has left Kathmandu Valley cold, dry and clear. Which is why the morning fog this year has been relatively thin. The lack of moisture is also seen in the lack of characteristic winter fog over the tarai this year. Although this satellite image taken on Thursday at noon shows a big westerly front over Afghanistan and headed our way, it does not have enough strength to bring us precipitation.

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Nepal hosts international golfers

Surya Nepal Masters brings in the region's best golfers to Gokarna Forest

Sorry, but no golfing tips this week. I'm holding them close while I endeavour to become the first Nepali winner of the prestigious Surya Nepal Masters that started with the Pro-Am on Wednesday.

Looking back, I realise I've participated in every single one of these tournaments. The first five as an amateur, the last six as a professional. My

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



successes were in 1995 and 1996 when I won both the individual and team amateur prizes. This is the 12th time I will be playing.

As a professional, the best I have got to is fourth and I'm not satisfied with that. Fellow Nepali professionals and I have been practicing hard in preparation for our bid to come out tops this year.

Before 1998 the tournament was on invitation only, then it became part of the the Professional Golf Association of India's tour event. The competition from the Indian tour is as tough as ever. Now that they have all arrived in Kathmandu, let's look at what we're up against.

The top ranked Amby Valley PGA Tour star **Ashok Kumar** has flown in from down under, fresh from a stint at the

\$1 million Cadbury Schweppes Australian PGA Championship. His sole aim is to take on the field and win at the majestic and challenging Gokarna Forest Golf Course.

"A champion is one who wins in every conceivable condition," says Ashok Kumar. "I have registered five wins this season, all on different courses and weather conditions, but the Gokarna Forest Golf Resort is a different kettle of fish altogether. The undulating nature of the course with tight fairways and lightning fast greens is akin to world class courses we encounter on the Asian circuit. A win here would give me as much pleasure as would one on the Asian PGA Tour," said the 23-year old Delhi pro.

In addition to the challenges posed by the course, Ashok will face some stiff competition from the supremely talented field.

Ashok's arch-rival, **Shiv Kapur**, is an Asian Games Gold Medalist. He has an extremely impressive record in his Rookie season, including a win at the Amby Valley MGC Open in Chennai and three runner-up finishes in six outings. An Arjuna Awardee, Kapur will definitely look to upstage Ashok, especially after being relegated to three successive second place finishes by him.

"Ashok is a fabulous player but nothing is going to deter me from my goal of winning the event at the Gokarna Forest Golf Resort," says Kapur. "I have played on some of the best golf courses the world over but the Gokarna facility is special. It is a sheer test of golfing skills and as a professional, I would love nothing more than to have the Surya Nepal Masters title under my belt," said the 22-year old.

Talented defending champion at this event is **Digvijay Singh**, who stormed to an impressive and impeccable victory last year. Also present are 2002 Indian Open winner and twice Order of Merit winner **Vijay Kumar**, 1998 Indian Open winner, **Feroz Ali**, Winner of the Patna Open 2004, **Rafiq Ali**, and twice Honda-Siel PGA Golf Championship winner **Uttam Singh Mundy**.

Non-Indian participants include **Mohd Jibon Ali**, **Babu Ahmed** and **Shahid** from Bangladesh, and **Anura Rohana**



Digvijay Singh lifting last year's trophy at the Surya Masters.

and **Lalith Kumara** from Sri Lanka.

To name a few, the local challenge will come from **Deepak Neupane**, **Ramesh Nagarkoti**, **Deepak Thapa Magar**, **Pashupati Sharma**, **Sabin Sapkota**, **Sachin Bhattarai**, and I.

Well, the Gokarna Golf Course has been tweaked into top shape for the tournament, the big boys from the tour have arrived and Friday we'll be on

the second day of this four-day international professional golf tournament.

Golfer or not, come on down any day till 12 December. and get a feel of a large scale international sporting event where you, as a spectator, can enjoy not only the sport but also a walk in the sun and a relaxing time within the beautiful ambience of Gokarna Forest. For more information call the

Golf Resort on 4450444 or 4451212. Entrance is free.

What could be more encouraging than having plenty of resident well wishers walking the course, encouraging us to produce that little extra that could carry us into top place finishes! ●

Deepak Acharya is a golf instructor and Golf Director at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa
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SURYA NEPAL
GOLF



KUMAR SHRESTHA/NEPALNEWS.COM

ROYAL OPENING: King Gyanendra speeds past Tri Chandra Campus on Thursday morning on his way to inaugurate the controversial Raj Parishad meeting at the BICC. Minutes earlier, stone-throwing students had been protesting here against the conference.



KIRAN PANDAY

CHEEK TO JOWL: RPP president Pashupati Shamsheer Rana snatches a quick word with Minister for Land Reform Jogmeher Shrestha at the RPP's second council meeting in the BICC on Wednesday.



KIRAN PANDAY

BLAST: A powerful pressure cooker bomb destroyed a three-storey block of the Agriculture Inputs Company in Kuleswor on Thursday morning.



KIRAN PANDAY

LOTSA RIBBONS: Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Bharat Mohan Adhikari inaugurating a new branch of NIC at Kamaladi on Thursday.



KIRAN PANDAY

EAT IT TOO: Chef Ayub Saleem of the Grand Hotel, Delhi shows off his concoctions to *The Himalayan Times* food columnist Dubby Bhagat on Tuesday. The Baker's Basket event at the Yak & Yeti is part of their run-up to Christmas.

New vibration

In the last decade, we have seen the rise of various genres of music in Kathmandu—from rock to hip-hop to even trance. We grafted the Mtv culture into our own and neglect long-standing musical traditions. After the short burst of enthusiasm over 'Wari Jamuna', Nepali music gradually fused with international genres, not to mention the techno-electronic sounds. In the midst of this entire scramble to imitate and add electric zing, the pure sounds of the flute accompanied by sarangi strings keeping time to the beat of the madal is soothing to the ears.

The new band Kutumba was formed precisely to promote traditional Nepali folk music.

They are from the Shukrabar event team and realised that at every event they planned, the musicians played classical music and very little folk. They understood the potential of the lost sounds of traditional folk as Rashil, a band member, says, "We are trying out instruments that are new to us as well as those played in the villages but not much in the cities."

The band consists of Arun Manandhar (tunga), Rubin Kumar Shrestha (flute), Pavit Maharjan (madal). Raja Maharjan (percussion), Sambhu Manandhar (effects) and Rashil Palanchoke (sarangi). The music created by Kutumba is not only unadulterated, it is inspired by harmony and rhythms that all Nepalis have grown up with.

The band prefers performing live to releasing albums, though they have already released two. The first was their namesake *Kutumba* and the other *Folk Roots* was recently released. The next Kutumba event 'Acoustic Vibes with Kutumba' is organised by Wave magazine and scheduled for 18 December. You should be there, not just because Kutumba is a promising band but the concert will be a rare opportunity to hear traditional oldies like *Maitighar* and *Resham Firiri*. ●

(Aarti Basnyat)

Acoustic Vibes with Kutumba
Saturday, 18 December PM,
at the Yala Maya Kendra
Tickets: Rs 200 available at Wave,
Dhokaima Café, AKA Café, Tantra,
Himalayan Java



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Before we go, the main points once again

One never knows during these uncertain times how long we in the fourth estate will be allowed to vent bile, so we must take freedom of press seriously. And in public interest, uphold our right to get things utterly wrong. As we hacks in the journalistic profession like to put it: let's make hay while the sun shines. In other words, let's strike while the iron is hot, as many as we have in the fire at this point.

UNDER MY HAT
Kunda Dixit



We may not like what is going on around us, we may not agree with everything that is being said, but the constitution gives us the right to make things up as we go

along. And thank Lord Bishnu for that.

Luckily we are all professionals here and we stick to our journalistic code of ethics and consider that lying is ok as long as we don't do it on purpose. That makes life much easier and allows columns like these, which would be banned in any civilised country, to see the light of day:

French Bomb Found and Lost at TIA

The plastic explosive that French police secretly planted in an unsuspecting passenger's suitcase in Paris last week has been located in the baggage of a passenger arriving at Tribhuban International Airport (TIA) Thursday morning, unusually unreliable sources said.

The bundle of explosives, which French sniffer dogs could not detect at Charles de Gaulle was ferreted out by Bhalu, the mongrel who has made TIA's international apron his home and is often seen pre-inspecting incoming luggage for interesting tidbits.

"Yes, I can confirm that we have unconfirmed reports that Bhalu found the bomb and took it to an undisclosed location," the head of airport police told reporters, requesting anonymity, "he may have mistaken it for a sausage and shared it with friends." A wide dog-bomb alert has been put out in the capital.

NOC Employees Strike for Expensive Gas

Employees of the state-owned Nepal Oily Corporation (NOC) went on an indefinite strike Monday demanding a steep hike in petroleum prices.

"How can we make our ends meet and provide for our families if gasoline is so cheap," asked an employee who was gheraoing the corporation's premises by gham tapoing in the lawn. The All-Nepal Federation of Adulterous Gas Stations also joined the strike to create a manmade shortage demanding that the government hike petrol and diesel prices by 50 percent. "Otherwise it just doesn't make economic sense for us to mix kerosene in it," said one oil baron.

Corruption Day Observed

International Corruption Day was observed in Kathmandu on Friday with special talk programs, rallies, tyre-burning, street riots and arson.

"Nepal has taken the lead among the world's most corrupt countries, and we don't want people suddenly developing pangs of conscience," said an international consultant delivering a keynote speech at an interaction program on 'Getting Rich Is Glorious with FIDIC Contracts—a Top-Down Approach'.

Cowdung Supplies Sufficient for Winter: Govt

Responding to panic-buying by desperate citizens, His Majesty's Government has assured all and sundry that its strategic stockpile of cowdung patties are enough to meet the nation's winter demand.

Faced with a severe kerosene shortage, the public has reverted to dried cowdung, a traditional fuel. Kitchens of five star hotels have switched to cattle droppings, and pizza parlours specialising in wood-fired pizzas are now offering dung-fired double-topping pepperonis.

"Thanks to the contribution of Nepal's cattle population, our cowdung supplies are enough to meet any exigencies," said the Minister of Animal Husbandry and Bullshit.



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