

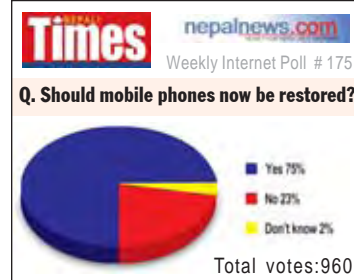
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## Free Pun



JB Pun Magar, staff reporter of *Himal Khabarpatrika* and contributor to *Nepali Times* was abducted Wednesday by Maoists while covering the anti-rebel uprising in Kapilbastu. The investigative journalist had covered the recruitment of child soldiers by the Maoists (see 'Giving children a fighting chance', #227) but was also harassed by the army in November.

"He is a very professional journalist who is objective and fair even in the most challenging assignment, we demand his immediate release," said *Himal* editor, Rajendra Dahal, "it is unfortunate that the Maoists have detained him at a time when the state has also been harassing the media."



Weekly Internet Poll # 176. To vote go to: [www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com)  
 Q. How would you characterise everyday situation in Nepal in the past month?



TEACHING A DOG NEW TRICKS: Nine-year-old German Shepherd, Sabbu, jumps through a flaming hoop for the benefit of spectators during Army Day on 8 March at Tundikhel as his minders look on.

KUMAR SHRESTHA/NEPALNEWS.COM

## Terrorised students across Nepal prepare for final exams

RAMESWOR BOHARA  
in NEPALGANJ

Even by the insane standards of Nepal's conflict, Nepalganj had not seen anything like it: the bombing of six schools last month to force them to close.

With the SLC exams due on 27 March, more than 2,000 schools in the far west have begun to reopen after nearly a month. More than 500,000 students had been affected by the Maoist threats, which seemed to be

# Fleeing school

aimed at maximum disruption of normal life.

"After the bombings, children are still terrorised and distracted. They cannot concentrate on their studies," says a teacher from Mahendra High School here. A high school student who doesn't want to be named says: "I am afraid, what if they bomb us again?"

Although the schools have opened, they have done so in defiance of the Maoist call for a strike and school authorities throughout the region fear

retaliation by the rebels.

Meanwhile, Nepal's donors who have been involved in supporting education have reacted with outrage at sustained and deliberate attacks on the school system. "It is unacceptable for conflict to enter the classroom," UNICEF's Nepal representative, Suomi Sakai, told us, "children, their families and teachers need to feel confident that schools are a safe haven, free from violence and threats."

But if this is the situation in Nepalganj, things are much worse

in the villages. Teachers from districts across Nepal say hundreds of thousands of students haven't been able to prepare for their exams and it looks like exams can only be held in district headquarters for security reasons.

"We have not yet been able to finalise the exam centres due to this situation," explains Bishnu Prasad Thaiba, Banke DEO.

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Something to hide?

More p4

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# Kingdom

in shining armour is

'regime change.'

Alternatively, the empire could allow the kingdom to solve the crisis and arrive at a sustainable internal equilibrium. These are stark but the only pragmatic options for a speedy end to the current suffering. What the majority of the Nepali people desire is a quick liberation from violence and fear, it does not matter at this stage who is the hero inside the shining armor is. Diplomatic thumb-twiddling or the fancy to play the morally blind killing-field umpire whose sole goal is to keep the macabre game going will only prolong the horrors for real people in the name of abstract, discretionary ideals.

As currently deployed, the Western human rights discourse - a product of the Cold War - is aimed at undermining the powers of the erstwhile Soviet and other disaffected states to regulate the lives of their citizens living in conditions of relative order.

In the context of Nepal's total breakdown of law and order, what is needed at this point is a genuine concern for human life in its physical sense—universalised human rights will have meaning only when the state can ensure the basic condition for the material and biological integrity of the human subject. Even though these states are often portrayed as antithetical to human rights, the irony is that only stable, well-functioning states can ensure the rights - whether they be civil, human, or economic—of their citizens.

If it was any other way, the stateless societies in Somalia and Congo would have been considered utopias by now. ●

# Nepal's 'other' half

## Pluralism is a prerequisite for peace and justice

The Nepal tarai as an area of study is still a virgin territory. Even though it is home to over half of all Nepalis the region is little studied and even less understood.

The tarai and madhes are mistakenly used synonymously. Actually the tarai is a

### STATE OF THE STATE CK Lal



geographical area with different communities as its residents, while madhesh is a cultural space with madhesis as its inhabitants. Ignorance alone, however, doesn't fully explain the apathy towards the tarai in general and madhes in particular. Partly, it is because of the way the Nepali identity has evolved over the centuries.

King Prithvi Narayan Shah built modern Nepal upon the strength of his determination and that of his Gorkhali army. He later imagined his kingdom as a garden of 'four castes and 36 races' that populated the hills and valleys of Mahabharat range. Readings of his *Dibya Upadesh* reveal that madhesis figured in his formulation primarily as the 'other', the group to be feared.

After the transformation of Kunwars into Ranas, Nepal's hereditary premiers ran the country as a family fiefdom. They needed madhesis to exploit the forest and agricultural resources of the tarai. Hence,

some madhesis found a place at their feet. But even they remained less than subjects, with almost no contact with their rulers in distant Kathmandu Valley. Madhesis needed visas to travel to their own capital.

The imagination of Nepal as a nation is a relatively new phenomenon. It began as an offshoot of the Indian independence struggle when some articulate Gorkhalis in Darjeeling and Kasi came up with the notion of Nepal as the fatherland of Nepalis everywhere. Markers of this de-territorialised Nepali identity were based on the monoculture

Panchayat nationalism. Patriotism during the first decade of the Panchayat regime consisted of unconditional loyalty to 'one language, one dress, one religion, and one people under the all-powerful monarchy'. But even when politics became a little more open after the 1980 referendum, there was no let-up in the attempts of 'Nepalising' madhesis. Those who couldn't or refused to be assimilated in the mainstream were vilified as anti-national or worse. Right up to the 1990s madhesi remained a derogatory term in elite circles.

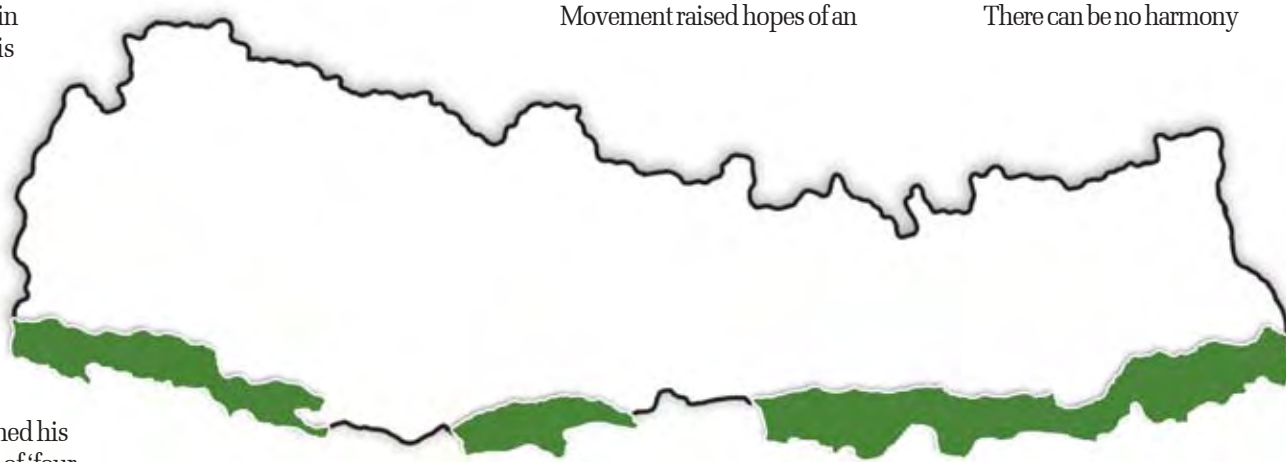
The 1990 People's Movement raised hopes of an

based around the five symbols of *Nepalipani*.

Even today, while women, dalit, the poor, gays, janjatis, and even foreigners married to Nepalis seek due recognition, tarai-basis are still left out. The dominant *Nepalipani* model still prevails over the concept of an egalitarian '*Nepaliyata*'.

The Maoists for their part are obsessed with the notion of class and are inherently incapable of producing a blueprint of an inclusive and democratic Nepali identity. Their creation of regional autonomous regions is a PR exercise since totalitarianism is antithetical to the aspirations of the left out.

There can be no harmony



concept of one language, one religion and one people. The Nepali language, Hinduism, a martial tradition, an anti-Indian self-description, and kingship are five symbols of this new *Nepalipani*. When the Shah Restoration accepted this formulation, even madhesis who were beneficiaries of the feudal state were pushed away.

After 1960, the promotion of a unified mainstream culture became the kingpin of

inclusive identity, but couldn't fulfil the aspirations of the main externalised population group of Nepal. The new constitution cites the upliftment of the marginalised through legal guarantees and remedies, but it refuses to even recognise that madhesis have been systematically excluded for centuries and gives continuity to the assimilation model of constructing a homogeneous Nepali identity

without the acceptance of multiple identities. Pluralism is a prerequisite to peace and justice. The two-day international conference on 'Nepal Tarai: Context and Possibilities' that began Thursday is a pioneering effort to clear conceptual confusions and lay the groundwork for more substantive tarai studies in future. It is a time to end persistent externalisation of nearly half of the country's population. ●

*New York Times* last month that she got a diplomat to escort her to the plane while she fled Nepal into self-imposed exile? She does have a high opinion of the threat she poses to Nepal's national security.

Anis Rayamajhi, email

### RAW DEAL

I read the interview of Indian ambassador Shiv Shankar Mukherji ('There was another road map', #236) and was struck by the questions your interviewer posed to him. Asking him the 'gist' of the message he was carrying to His Majesty, the 'Indian stand for constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy', the 'military assistance to the Royal Nepali Army' and so on. Are you a RAW agent? As a Nepali don't you feel ashamed to ask questions

like the 'stated objective of India to strengthen the RNA's capacity' and 'pressures that (India) can bring to bear to get the parties on board'? The questions to the Indian ambassador should have been 'when are you handing over Prachanda and Baburam to Nepal', or 'why do you think that your job in Nepal is to take position on matters internal to the Nepali people?'

Dibya B Gurung, New York

### TRUE GRIT

I want you to know that I admire the grit and spirit shown by you and your colleagues thus far in such extremely adverse circumstances. I wish all of you the best possible outcome, both for our profession and your country.

C Theophilus, Kuala Lumpur

● I was shocked to read of the brief detention of *Himal Khabarpatrika's* Kanak Mani Dixit. I wonder what advantage to Nepal comes from the detention of editors and social workers who are loyally and seriously working to find better ways to help Nepal towards peace. How has Nepal reached this state? It would seem that years, if not centuries, of rule and development centred on the Kathmandu Valley, has left the rural poor in despair. All want peace throughout Nepal. That peace will come only when the poor receive justice. That justice will come only when we put the past behind us so as to live in the present and work for a just future for all Nepalese. We cannot expect this or that form of government to bring peace. When we all stop fighting, forgive one another,

and work to bring spiritual growth to everyone we influence, we can start to enjoy peace in Nepal. A government appropriate to Nepal will naturally follow.

Rev G William Robins, SJ,  
St Xavier's Social Service Centre,  
Jawalakhele

### GOOD COP

Lovely Nepali Pan article by Jiggy Gaton ('Kathmandu's finest', #237). Maybe he should thank his karma before he thanks Nepali public service officials. Having said that please convey to Mr. Gaton that I'm willing to match his Rs 500 reward to the honest cop if he manages to find him.

Kush Mainali, Kathmandu

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## SOMETHING TO HIDE?

It is difficult for us in the media to look for a light at the end of the tunnel when that light could very well be another train.

There are many things that puzzle us about the past month, but none more so than the crude way that the media has been bludgeoned. A counter-insurgency war is no picnic, we grant that, and it would be foolish to seek subtlety and sophistication in these times. But such a broad swipe at civil liberties risks endangering the very institutions you are trying to preserve. The treatment is more damaging than the disease.

After all, what are we up against here? An underground group that doesn't believe in democracy, freedom, pluralism, a free press or non-violence. How does it help to fight it by undermining the institutions which believe in those very same values? Political parties which have been the worst victims of Maoist atrocities and believe in non-violence are supposed to be on your side. Civil society is a bulwark against extremism. A free press, besides being a fundamental right, allows people to vent off steam so pressures don't build up.

How then does it help to weaken those who are on your side? Imprisoning parliamentary leaders helps only those who have no use for parliaments. Harassing civil society strengthens only those who believe power comes out of the barrel of a gun. Gagging the press emboldens those who abhor freedom.

These are not western concepts being rammed down our throats by outsiders. The Nepali people have by now been accustomed to political choice, to think and speak freely. They have come to rely on a vibrant and independent media to inform them of events and interpret them from a wide range of perspectives and opinion. Turning the clock back may buy time, but the people won't take it for long.

Hitting the mute button has silenced not just the media, but the people as well. It's not just journalists who miss press freedom, the people want it too.

Some won't like us saying it, but we'll say it anyway: the people don't trust the official version of events even if it is the truth. Even as a counter-insurgency strategy the press needs to be kept free and credible. The information gap across Nepal is now being filled by clandestine rebel broadcasts, or by the BBC in Nepali (see p 8-9). Gagging FM news means outlandish rumours run rife. How does all this help fight terrorism?

The only reason we can see is that someone somewhere has something to hide. But even that is the wrong reason because the harder you try to hide the more obvious the deception becomes.



Whatever the ultimate outcome of the current conflict in Nepal, the royal takeover is beginning to bring the end closer by forcing the major protagonists in the decade-long conflict to come out in the open and put their money where their mouth has been.

### GUEST COLUMN Saubhagya Shah



The moral majority led by Denmark, Switzerland and other donors have already cut off aid to force a return back to the 31 January status quo. Since the king shows no signs of standing down, there are strong indications that the Europeans will start taking the next morally logical step of shutting their missions en masse in. Besides sending serious geopolitical tremors, white flight on such a scale is bound to further blight this country, or what remains of it. The February fuss has a

telling revelation: the projects of development and democracy are less about helping the poor people and more about shaping the ideological and strategic behaviour of recipient states. Meanwhile, on the right flank, India, America, and Britain have admitted to being a coalition of the willing with India as the lead agent to challenge the

monarch. The tripartite league not only portends the future, but also sheds critical light on South Asia's past. There is perhaps a good reason why the hyper empire and its powerful ideological instruments such as the BBC, Amnesty, the UN and the various Human Rights Watches continue to make much righteous noises on Tibet even as they maintained a complicit silence over much more egregious annexations and human abuses in Kashmir, Sikkim and Bhutan.

Whether out of fear or favor, moral ambiguity characterized most of the actors, both internal and external, during the most vicious atrocities of the last decade. While the hyper empire (principally structured around US arms, Anglo-Saxon body, Judeo-Christian soul, and a global network of client states) and its ideological tools sought to make cause celebre out of a few events such as the Doramba killings, there was by and large a studied silence on the general process of forced displacements, coerced recruitments, mass abductions, torture, cultural cleansing, maiming, killings and the wanton degradation of human dignity among the peasantry and rural folks. The empire expressed its righteous ire only when the conflict adversely impacted the fortunes of a special class that echoes and reaffirms the sponsoring ideology and authority of the hyper empire at the local level, but maintains a rewarded silence on the contradictions of the same clientalist regime at the international level. What was absent was an unequivocal critique of violence and coercion

irrespective of whether it was hurting the voiceless peasants, political cadres, capital interests, or the articulate 'civil' classes.

Is there a compensatory overdrive to buffer an boutique revolution in the Himalayan hemp fields to make up for all the moral bankruptcy in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Rwanda, Palestine, Guantanamo, Zimbabwe, Darfur and such other locations of human suffering and political duplicity? In other words, an exotic utopia here that could be voyeuristically indulge, but never personally suffered, the same way we engage with the artistic productions of Quentin Tarantino.

Universalised values of human rights, justice, equality, sovereignty and democracy are not worth the paper they are written on if their application is selective to serve self interests.

Hypocrisy and double-standards are the graveyard of all high ideals, and offer no moral high-ground even to the 'best' or the 'biggest' democratic regimes.

Like the cheap cannabis of the 1960s down in Freak Street, Nepal continues to be a budget destination for all those in search of quick nirvana and a bully pulpit at a steep discount. In Shangri-la, one is free to preach a brand of morality that one does not practice at home or anywhere else in the world. Therefore, if it is the considered judgment of the interlocutors that the Nepali state does not enjoy the sovereign rights to defend itself and its citizens with adequate means, then all they have to do is paint this as a rogue state in league with the axis of evil and the marines will do a quick job of

## LETTERS

### ANTI-VIOLENCE

In your editorial 'Right here right now' (#236) you repeat the oft-repeated refrain on the need for the Maoists to 'join the mainstream'. One wonders if those who repeat this slogan have ever asked themselves what it really means. Do they mean a totalitarian violent ideology can co-exist and work with a democratic and pluralistic set up? Even a child can see the contradiction in that. So what it seems to mean is that the rebels should abandon violence and their main aim to establish a communist totalitarian state in Nepal. In short, they should abandon their basic revolutionary ideology, yet we know that the Maoist leadership will never do that. In the same issue the weekly *Nepali Times/nepalnews.com* internet poll asks if the blockade hurts the 'Maoists cause'. Which cause? The establishment of a communist republic? We have to realise that if the CPN(M) had chosen a democratic and peaceful path many of the 40-something points of their manifesto could have been achieved through reforms. If we find ourselves in the present sorry state it is because we as a civil society have not been able to refuse and resolutely oppose violence as a means to achieve political objectives. Some intellectuals, journalists, and even some 'democracy' and 'human rights' activists have seen in the Maoists movement an instrument to redress the wrongs of Nepali society, be it corruption or inequality. This attitude on one side

contradicts the very same principles and values of democracy that is endowed by an inherent power to heal itself and does not need a violent external force to solve its problems, and on the other shows the sorry state of our 'democratic' culture and our perception of the Rule of Law. Through these years we have witnessed destruction and death on a daily basis yet the very same mainstream newspapers that published the news and photos of wiped out police posts in western Nepal also published articles hailing the Maoists as heroes and publicized writings of their ideologues calling for class and ethnic hatred. Unfortunately, ten years of mayhem have done nothing to change this attitude and there are still some who are ready to give the Maoists a blank cheque. In the same issue you have translated a column by *Samaya* editor Yubaraj Ghimire, (From the *Nepali Press*, #236) that again reiterates this contradiction: exhorting the Maoists to give up violence on the one hand while asking them to 'stand firm in their statement' on the other. Such pathetic journalism and ambiguity gives reason to the Maoists to go on fighting as they see it as a form of support.

Unless and until a full and uncompromising refusal of violence in politics prevails our country will know no peace.

SK Aryal, Northampton, UK

● After reading Under My Hat ('Learning to live with sensors', #236) I wanted to write

to Mr Scissorhands to applaud his dedication to the thankless job that he is performing for king and country. Censors have been given a bad name in some quarters by the ham-handedness of a few, but a really good censor can serve as a goad to creativity and even a sort of covert editor who encourages concision and eloquence—witness the output of Antonio Gramsci from Mussolini's prisons. Since you have been on the job, I must say I have noticed a marked uptick in the allusiveness and suppleness of the prose of the publication in your care. You have the rare opportunity of working in the office of a very fine writer and editor and on the premises of the preeminent English-language weekly in Nepal. What a chance to improve your skills. But will it really light the afterburners of your career? Even internationally, since the fall of the Soviet bloc and the Latin American military juntas, the job market for your specialty is restricted mainly to Burma and North Korea. Only wimps who know that they can't win political debates silence their opposition. The clash of opinions is the internal-combustion engine of democracy. That's why freedom of speech is precious. And, dear censor, it's in your hands.

Peter Constantini, Seattle

### ELEGY FOR DEMOCRACY

I was very disappointed with the review of Majushree Thapa's excellent new book *Forget Kathmandu: An Elegy for Democracy* by Asthi Sakhwa ('Post-February First

postmodern democracy', #237). The review is full of impenetrable academic terms such as 'deconstruction', 'postmodernism', 'diversified, collective, anonymous experience' etc. This sort of high-sounding academic analysis has hardly any pertinence to the great majority of *Nepali Times* readers. The style of the review is in stark contrast to Ms Thapa's beautifully clear prose style and the way she deals with her subject matter in such an intelligent, stimulating, and honest way.

Stephen Keeling, Dholahiti, Lalitpur

● The only piece of writing that is worse than Manjushree Thapa's self-indulgent, preachy and exhibitionist new book is the review of it in your online edition ([www.nepalitimes.com](http://www.nepalitimes.com)) of your paper which was so obtuse that none of me and my friends could decide whether the reviewer was trashing the book or praising it to high heavens. It deserved to be trashed. Manjushree Thapa is so obsessed with guilt about being born to privilege that she repeatedly takes recourse in unconvincing 'progressivism', self-hate and air-brushing of history. That much is clear from the book. But why inflict her psychiatric problems on the rest of us? It was painful enough to read the ignorant reviews here in India. And now you, too?

Parbat Giri, New Delhi

● Asthi Sakhwa's review of Manjushree Thapa made me laugh out loud. Is this the same Manjushree Thapa who wrote in the



# When you're a poor country

You don't get to have a Patriot Act, you have a Vitamin A Act

So the World Bank has decided to suspend aid to oppose the February First move and bring the 'bad guys' to their knees. International human rights groups, in a joint draft report, suggest suspending all aid to Nepal. Items include toothbrushes, soap, Vitamin A, Pan Parag, pani puris, along with all military supplies. The Pan Parag ban is really going to hurt. For some odd reason, the report doesn't suggest banning Belgian chocolates, truffles, foie gras, beer or any kind of fricassee.

Hey, when you're one of the poorest countries, you get to be the guinea pig.

When you're a poor country you get to have countries like the United States tell India "Hey fellas, here's a good opportunity for you to take the lead. I know you're trying to get into the Security Council so why not use this as a tune-up opportunity."

(Based on a secret poll by Wolfensohn and Associates, 50 percent of the World Bank staff thought poverty meant flying Business Class instead of First. The remaining 50 percent thought subsidised food in the World Bank Cafeteria was one of the most successful poverty reduction moves by the Bank in the last 50 years.)

When you're one of the poorest countries, even Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney and Condoleeza Rice tell you to use the Gandhian approach to fight terrorists.

When you're one of the poorest countries, you don't get to have the Patriot Act - you get the Vitamin A Act.

When you're a poor country, you don't get to send terrorists to Guantanamo, you put garlands on them and hope they leave you alone.



When you're a poor country, all terrorists are called 'Maoists', 'Insurgents', 'Revolutionaries' or 'JNU Gold Medalists'.

Hey, I kid because I love.

But seriously, this might be a great opportunity for Nepal to begin shaking that foreign aid syndrome. My grades in school started improving only after my Dad said he was going to stop paying tuition. (Ok, they went from failing to just barely passing but lets not get caught up in details here.) It's a simplistic paradigm but people can get very creative when there are limited options.

Take the great Benjamin Franklin, one of the founding Fathers of the Oldest Democracy. He started out as a printer but he was also an athlete, inventor, writer, statesman, diplomat and a ladies' man (our politicians have that one covered) yet always humble. Even at the pinnacle of his career he continued to introduce himself to others as a printer. (Note to all political handlers in Nepal: please make Ben Franklin required reading for everyone in the political class.)

Ben Franklin found the notion of a government without arms a very peculiar notion. Surrounded by pacifist Quakers (kind of like some 'intellectuals' in Nepal) in Pennsylvania in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, he used, get this - a lottery as a 'work-around' to purchase arms.

Now I am not suggesting that there's anyone currently in the political class in Nepal that can match the intellectual firepower of Ben Franklin. But we know how to do this lottery/gambling thing. Or how about a tax on the national card game of Marriage, Cabin Restaurants or Massage Parlours? All we have to lose is our dependence on aid.

When you're a poor country, you have to put up with columnists like me.

NEPALI PAN  
Pravin Rana



RAMESWOR BOHARA

Children at morning assembly in Nepalganj's Mahendra High School as classes resumed this week after the Maoists bombed it and other schools.

from p1

Private schools in the towns have announced that they will be holding two exams in one day and government schools have arranged to hold exams at night also to cope with students coming for exams from outlying areas.

Because education has been one of the main targets of the rebels, enrollment is down and dropout rates have soared because parents fear their children will be abducted. Most parents have sent their boys to India or to the cities for schooling and in many schools there are only girls left. Nepal's peacetime dropout rate of 70 percent of children below 10 years is now estimated to be much higher.

"I can't tell you how bad things are in the districts it makes you want to weep," says a human rights activist here, "in many villages there are just no young boys and very few girls left."

Even in Nepalganj, school disruptions have meant that hundreds of children cross the border to Rupedia every morning to go to schools that have mushroomed there to cater to Nepali children.

A border policeman sees the children go back and forth and shakes his head: "What can they do, schools here are forced to close half the time." Kusendra Mahato of the Karnali Integrated Rural Development Project says there has been a flight of school children from the villages in Kalikot and Jumla in the past months.

The conflict threatens to erase the dramatic gains made in literacy rates in the past 30 years. School enrollment of children from grades 1-10 should have reached nearly six million last year from just two million in 1981. It is clear the figure this year will be much lower but no one has an estimate of how much. ●



RUPA JOSHI

**"It is vital that adults involved in fighting this conflict recognise their common interest in ensuring that the next generation of Nepalis can read, write and count."**

- Suomi Sakai, UNICEF

## "The real issue is





## World Bank warning

WASHINGTON—The World Bank said Wednesday it is considering stopping its projects and programs in the country if the current political tension continued and constitutional freedoms are not respected. In a carefully worded statement issued in Washington, the Bank said it was monitoring events in Nepal closely and could take further action in two months. Bank staff from Kathmandu had reportedly written to its Board saying that more time would be needed to make a 'ground-level assessment' of whether ongoing projects can be implemented. The Board expressed concerns about the security situation in Nepal and whether projects could actually be carried out. The Board also raised questions about the government's ability to continue implementing difficult economic reforms 'in the absence of representative mechanisms to build broad-based consensus'. The Bank, however, still broadly supported the cautious approach proposed by management to consult closely with other development partners in assessing the progress that the government makes in reform implementation as well as issues related to the broader governance environment of the country, including the rule of law and protection of human rights. Sources said World Bank Country Director Ken Ohashi gave the government a window of one to two months to show renewed commitment to reform and governance issues. (IPS)

## Everest is once-in-a-lifetime

The annual iExplore list of Top 10 Once-in-a-Lifetime Trips has put a trek to Mt Everest Base Camp in seventh position in its Top 10 ranking. Nepal is the only South Asian country on the list. Last year, *The Observer* ranked the Everest Base Camp in seventh position in its 20 Journeys of a Lifetime.

Champagne flight to the North Pole has been registered as number one in the ranking, followed by Travel to Timbujtu (Mali) and back and Sea kayak the Panama Canal.

iExplore founder and CEO, George Deeb said "People are more interested in accumulating life changing experiences. This list shows you how far consumers are willing to go to get as unique an experience as possible."

Founded in 1999, iExplore is the leading online seller of adventure and experiential travel. Here's this year's Top 10 Once-in-a-lifetime list:

- 1 Champagne flight to the North Pole
- 2 Travel to Timbuktu and back
- 3 Sea kayak the Panama Canal
- 4 Stay with a Mongolian family in the Gobi Desert
- 5 Cage dive with great white sharks in South Africa
- 6 Camel caravan across the Sahara Desert
- 7 Trek to Mount Everest Base Camp
- 8 Take a hot springs bath in Iceland
- 9 Balloon safari over the Serengeti
- 10 Walk rainforest tree canopies in the Amazon.



## Setting sites

Advertising Avenues Nepal has launched its website [www.avenues.com.np](http://www.avenues.com.np). It is one of the first online advertising services in the country.

# Rocking stocks

## When the chips are down, the stock market soars

While Kathmandu's glitterati, literati and twitterati focused on prophesying doomsday, cash-rich investors just made it to the stock exchange and gave it a bull-run that has not been seen for quite a while.

Even though the NEPSE index soared 20 percent post-February First, we are yet to hear

**ECONOMIC SENSE**  
Artha Beed



from our self-proclaimed economist intelligentsia or advice-bag donors. This bull-run is not pushed by insider traders who like to see their shares soar at financial year ends to make their annual reports look good. It isn't the result of a few diaspora Nepalis investing in the bourse either. Why is there significant volume changing hands now?

Firstly, the insulated inhabitants of the Valley are experiencing a 'feel good' factor and investment in stocks is a definite indication of this security. Second, there is a lot of money in the market. Real estate transactions tumbled as regulations became strict so the returns-hungry punters put their money in stock.

Surely, this bull-run is not good money chasing bad stocks as the only place the money is going is into commercial bank shares. The Nepali investor knows that banks are professionally managed companies better regulated than other industries. They have also been cautious in keeping banks promoted by people of dubious distinction at bay. So here's an opportunity for people to ponder upon why more

companies should be professionally managed and share the booty with the public.

Many would be forgiven for wondering if we even had a stock exchange but as the bull run advances the regulators have come into focus. This Beed has been harping on about reforming this sector for a while now. The stock exchange should be in the private domain and the government remain a regulator. Thereafter, we should stop injecting socialist concepts into capitalist products like the stock exchange (see 'Shareholder Scare', #74 or [www.arthabeed.com](http://www.arthabeed.com)). More instruments have to be allowed such as non-voting shares, debenture linked variants and mutual funds owned by banks. Finally, trading of stocks on paper now belong to museum showcases. We need to get into de-mat or paperless trading through the process of depositories. If multiple banks can share one institution such as

the SCT, depositories can surely facilitate multiple companies' registry function.

This would bring transparency, ensuring that the stock market growth is sustainable. At the end of the day, you provide comfort to your investor and the investor will provide you with money. There could be a lesson from India, where investors large and small are lining up to get a biometric identity that has been made mandatory by the regulators to invest. Interestingly, private companies that are designated by the regulator are provided this identity.

The starting point could be making the Nepal Stock Exchange operations transparent. If they ask everyone to submit audited accounts of the investing public for the same, can we see the NSE financials published? ●

[www.arthabeed.com](http://www.arthabeed.com)



MIN BAJRACHARYA

# about security vs terrorism'

Pakistani ambassador Zamir Akram served two terms in Washington DC before being sent to Nepal and doesn't agree that Kathmandu is R&R posting.

Nepal is an important country for Pakistan, the SAARC Secretariat is located in Kathmandu and the two countries share similar challenges like having large and powerful neighbours, he says.

Still, it hasn't been all work for Akram since he arrived here in early 2002. He is an outdoor person and has done the Chomolungma Base Camp as well as the Lo Manthang treks. The scenery in Mustang is similar to Skardu in northern Pakistan but Akram is impressed with the facilities for organised trekking in Nepal. His wife, Sadia, has been involved in fundraising for army widows and charities like Maiti Nepal.

Workwise, it has never been a dull moment. He feels there is no way out but

for the monarchy and the political parties to cooperate to address the larger problem of the insurgency. But he has misgivings about the strong rhetoric coming from the international community. "This level of comment has taken place in other countries but they should be unacceptable for any sovereign country," he says, "Pakistan's own view is that this is Nepal's internal affair."

Akram adds this doesn't mean Pakistan is indifferent to Nepal's problems: "The real issue is not so much democracy as one of security versus terrorism and His Majesty has himself reiterated his commitment to democracy." This debate has a familiar ring to Pakistani ears, especially since the justification used for King Gyanendra's February First move is similar to those used by General Musharaff when he seized power in 1999: that the political parties had made a mess of things and someone had to step in to set things right.

But Akram doesn't think that compari-

son can be taken too far because in Nepal's case, there is a lot of "wiggle room" within the constitution for the king to act even though some political leaders don't agree with that role.

"What helped us in Pakistan was that people were fed up with corruption and mismanagement and lack of governance and when President Musharaff took over the reigns of power there was an expectation that things would improve which fortunately they have," he says.

Akram has pushed hard to foster bilateral trade, culture and tourism with frequent exchanges of delegations. PIA restarted its flights to Karachi during his tenure and the airline wants to begin a third flight to Islamabad.

Asked about the thaw in India-Pakistan relations, Akram admits there has been an improvement in atmospherics but there is still a long way to go on issues like Kashmir. On SAARC, he says: "Everyone must give up something

for the common good but if the attitude is going to remain that of a big brother then the chances of regional cooperation are non-existent."

Post 9/11 there is a new strategic dimension to US-Pakistan relations which is reminiscent of the 1980s when the Americans saw Pakistan as an ally against the Soviets in Afghanistan. But Akram would like to see US-Pakistan relations moving beyond being just a "fair-weather friend".

"The Americans now accept that there has to be more investment in bilateral relations and not cooperating only when Washington needs it," adds Akram, who will be heading the foreign policy desk at the prime minister's office in Islamabad.

We asked Akram what he regrets the most about his stay in Nepal. "Not being able to trek to Langtang," he says, "but that always gives me an excuse to come back." ●



# “Politicians pushed out democracy”

Sanghu, 7 March Interview with Krishna Prasad Bhandari, senior advocate

साधु

### Where is Nepali politics headed?

To evaluate the situation now, democracy will not exist until corruption is rooted out. The country will not develop and monarchy can't survive until democracy is restored. We have not had an honest and visionary leader. No constitution or law has been made with the people in mind. Even this constitution wasn't much help. On one side we have the Maoists using violence and on the other the Royal Nepali Army waging war in the name of peace. Caught in between are the people.

### What gave rise to the culture of corruption?

It all started during the Panchayat. But it flourished during post-1990 democracy because politicians could be bought out. That is why the country is now facing violence and poverty and its citizens are living in terror. The corrupted, from party workers to leaders, have bled the country dry.

a new leadership. For the palace to weaken parties and divide and rule is to work against the good of the nation.

### How are the people to perceive the royal step?

We need to leave behind the lust for power within the parties. Some politicians and so-called intellectuals have a big hand in pushing democracy into the palace gates. If it hadn't been for their weaknesses, democracy wouldn't be crippled today. But just because they were to blame doesn't mean the palace can label democracy defective. There is something seriously amiss. The king's speech doesn't match his actions. One gets the sense he is moving towards active monarchy instead of multiparty democracy.

### But the king has time and again expressed his commitment to constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy.

The country



### Who invited this situation in the country?

Until now, the king, NC and UML have been the main rulers. Lack of vision and action on their part led to this situation. The king is also a Nepali and we must acknowledge his good work and criticise bad ones. We can't say that right is wrong and wrong is right. The palace is as much to blame as the political parties and so-called intellectuals for this mess.

### So what's the way out?

Though the past led to this accident, the climax was the king's February First proclamation. The parties much recognise their weaknesses. Until they acknowledge it, there can be no improvement. That's why what the king said was based on truth.

### If that's so, why did the parties protest?

Each party has factions. The UML and the NC know they do have honest, patriotic, intelligent party workers but they are duped time and again. Those who were in power destroyed the country. We need

cannot develop without democracy and democracy can't survive without political parties. If a leader leads the people with honest vision towards development, freedom and prosperity, nobody needs to be imprisoned or arrested. It is wrong to imprison or punish someone for anything other than a crime. The country is in a state of emergency and laws have been made accordingly. Some people have not been allowed to leave the Valley although they are not Maoists. If the emergency is to bring the Maoists under control, why are others being punished? This is just an excuse to weaken the democratic forces.

### How should the political parties move ahead in future?

We have lost our democratic rights and freedom to the selfishness of a few corrupt people. Still, a country needs political parties. They must now strive to earn back the people's respect and start again.

### Should the emergency have been imposed?

The government says that this was done to quell the Maoists. But it needn't be imposed on the innocent and those protesting peacefully. To do so is authoritarian.



Politician: I still can't say how we have taken the February First move. First we have to see what will be given.

समय Samay, 11 March

### QUOTES OF THE WEEK



The monarch in Nepal is like an emergency light. When normal power supply is disturbed, the emergency light comes on automatically

Foreign Minister Ramesh Nath Pandey in Times of India, 8 March

Winning isn't everything...it's the only thing



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# TODAY



# Defining democracy

Nispakshya, 1 March

Parliaments are not necessarily the best medium for democracy. There are examples of citizens enjoying freedom in countries that have not adopted accepted democratic norms. Though it might look like democracy is in jeopardy at the moment, it is not so.

Democracy is defined differently in different countries and in different situations. Communist and military regimes define democracy differently from developed and developing nations. If the USA, UK, India and EU consider themselves guardians of democracy, they should inculcate their pattern of democracy in every nation. They can't pressure Nepal just because she is a small, poor nation.

Democracy is not practiced in many powerful developed countries. It has been misused in others, ruining nations. To allow powerful countries to act according to their will while pressuring small countries with issues of human rights and democracy is unfair. Truth is, no nation today can deceive its citizens. Nepalis have understood the meaning of real democracy. Our friends must realise that political leaders and members of main parties aren't the only Nepalis. There are millions living in violence, surviving on meagre incomes. Some countries have raised the human rights issue after the king's move on February First. Nepal welcomes support from the international community but will not tolerate unnecessary foreign interference. We must be allowed to make independent decisions for national security and development. These same nations have said the Bhutani refugee problem is an internal affair. Why don't they say the same now?

There were gross violations of human rights during the street demonstrations. Political leaders were openly involved in unconstitutional activities. Why didn't the international community speak up then? Foreign aid was abused and subject to corruption. Now that the country is heading toward peace and development, these same countries threaten to stop aid in democracy's name.

The king has asked for three years to maintain peace. It's absurd that Nepal's so-called friends can't wait that long. Democracy for Nepal will be achieved only when its impoverished and starving citizens have food, employment, health care, land and security, can travel within their own country without fear. True democracy means all children have access to proper education and people can live in peace and security. This is something that the political parties and their leaders never realised. For them, gaining power in the government was what democracy was all about.

निष्पक्ष



## Village schools

Nepal Samacharpatra, 7 March

MYAGDI—Villagers of Jhyamrukot, Kuhu and Takam VDCs are running Radha Krishna Primary School with money collected by selling fodder grass. Instead of relying on the government, they sell fodder to cover the cost of running the school. Of five teachers employed, three are paid government salaries, the other two are paid by local donations. The trend is spreading to surrounding villages.

## Jailhouse rock

Jana Aastha, 2 March

The prisoners of Lalitpur's Nakhu jail have presented a list of demands to the Home Ministry. If fulfilled, these demands will make living in prison so much easier that the unemployed might actually prefer it. The 29 prisoners have requested a high school, hospital, gym, library, computer training and facilities, better food and visiting hours. They have also asked that the guards and other staff in the jail be paid as much as the prison officers and special allowances given to prisoners on public holidays. The jail must be better maintained and the prisoners be taught technical skills said the list titled *Prisoners' Hopes*. It also included some strong

political demands. The prisoners have threatened to schedule protest marches, meetings and slogans in the jail if the demands are not fulfilled.

## Home coming

Annappurna Post, 8 March

NEPALGANJ—The fact that many Nepalis who had fled the conflict to India are starting to return may be an indication that things are returning to relative normalcy in their home districts. According to the police at the Nepalganj-Rupedia border checkpoint, the number of people leaving Nepal used to be in the hundreds every day but that traffic has slowed. "Now, they are coming back," says Police Inspector Chabilal Rana at the border, citing that 563 Nepalis came back last Friday and only 101 crossed over into India. Last month the numbers were reversed and about 500 people from Bheri, Rapti and Karnali left for India everyday. The people leaving are seasonal migrants who go to pick grapes or apples in Himachal Pradesh.

## Switching sides

Nepal Samacharpatra, 9 March

More than two-dozen Maoists from Rautahat have deserted the Maoist party to join the people's freedom movement. The Maoists Area-in-Charge Arjun Yadab, Rautahat district people's

government member Nebalal Rai Yadab, area members Binod Tiwari, Laxmi Yadab and 30 others issued a joint statement and left the rebel party. The increasing violence among the Maoists and their extortion prompted these party workers to quit, according to the statement. Workers from the tarai are taken to the hills for training in warfare and forced to learn a new culture and language. This has caused a rift between the Maoists of the north and the south. The statement also mentions cultural discord and differential treatments as reasons for leaving the Maoists to join the movement in tarai.



How can I give you a property description? I have just been minister for a month.

राजधानी Rajdhani, 3 March

### Earn a Post-Graduate Diploma in Education

at

a teacher training course run jointly by Rato Bangala Foundation, Bank Street College of Education in New York and Kathmandu University

Under the aegis of the three institutions named above, an intensive training is conducted annually on Rato Bangala School premises. The course, a child-centered

training for primary school teachers, weaves together theory and practice. Mature individuals who have completed their 10+2 or B.A. in any field are eligible to participate. This one-year training is accredited by the Ministry of Education's National Center for Education Development (NCED) in Sano Thimi. All participants will receive certification on primary teacher training, and those with a B.A. have the option of continuing for another four months at Kathmandu University, at the end of which time they will be awarded a Post-Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE).

Through conducting training sessions for other teachers, teachers who are working toward earning a PGDE learn to be both skillful teachers and effective teacher leaders.

The training is bi-lingual, so both English-only and Nepali-only speakers will benefit.

Forms for the upcoming academic year (2005/2006) are being distributed at Rato Bangala Foundation. The office is open from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The deadline for submission is 13 April, 2005.



For further details, contact:  
Rato Bangala Foundation  
P. O. Box: 202  
Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur, Nepal  
Tel: 5-534318, 5-542045  
Fax: 977-1-5-547619  
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## Celebrating 20 YEARS OF ENABLING ABILITIES!

The Swiss NGO Terre des hommes is proud to announce the 20th anniversary of bringing direct aid to poor children in Nepal and 20 years of partnering with the Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre for Disabled Children, Banepa – the leading referral centre for reconstructive surgery and rehabilitation in Nepal and beyond.

### Milestones:

- 1985 - Program started in Nepal with a view to provide treatment and rehabilitation services to disabled children of the poorer and disadvantaged section of society.
- 1992 - The program was handed over to the Nepali NGO "Friends of the Disabled" in order to empower local expertise and ownership.
- Over 15% of all children with disabilities in Nepal have been treated so far - 20,908 disabled children from mainly poor families from 74 districts, except Manang District.
- 111,890 children throughout Nepal have been screened for possible disabilities.
- 21,292 successful surgical procedures carried out.
- 23,163 orthopedic devices fabricated and distributed.
- Community Based Rehabilitation program provides follow-up care to the patients in 20 districts.
- Treatment cost per child - Rs. 38,000 - presently covered through donations, both institutional and private.
- Program coverage - 40 districts in Nepal, half of them with the assistance of local partner NGOs and HRDC is in the process of decentralizing its services by setting up satellite centres in Nepalgunj and Biratnagar.
- Capacity building for local partners in the districts through: training and education; disability orientation; primary rehabilitation therapy training; sharing information; organizing mobile health camps, etc.
- Integration into society starts from the first day of intervention through active involvement of guardians and their parents in the decision making process regarding the treatment and rehabilitation.

The Swiss Foundation of Terre des hommes (Tdh) with headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland, is the largest Swiss children's aid organization operating outside Switzerland. Since 1960, the movement has been active wherever children are in need. The movement provides direct and non-bureaucratic assistance to children in distress, wherever they may be. Through resolute commitment and long-term experience, Terre des hommes today plays a leading role in the field of humanitarian aid at an international level. With emergency action and long-term projects, Terre des hommes is fighting for children's rights in 30 countries, practicing a strict policy of political, racial and religious neutrality.

Its program in Nepal includes projects in the field of nutrition, anti-trafficking and humanitarian assistance.

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हत्या र हिंसा सामाजिक अपराध हुन्। यस्ता कुराले समाजको विकास, उन्नति र प्रगतिमा बाधा पार्दछन्। नेपालका जुनसुकै नागरिकको हत्या भए पनि नेपालमाताको एउटा होनहार सपूत सन्तान गुम्दछन्। तसर्थ हत्या र हिंसाका विचार छाडी प्रत्येक जात, जाति, वर्ग, समुदाय र विचारहरूको आधारमा विखण्डन ल्याउने प्रवृत्तिलाई अलग्याएर पारस्परिक सहयोग र सद्भावना बढाउनेतर्फ लाग्नु समस्त नेपालीको कर्तव्य हो।

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# The sounds of silence



Across Nepal, there is an information vacuum as radio stations are gagged

MIN BAJRACHARYA

## NARESH NEWAR

Big things have small beginnings. When a group of Nepali media activists and journalists finally got the license to launch the country's (and the region's) first community radio station in 1996, the shabby one-room studio in Kathmandu didn't look like much.

But Radio Sagarmatha did not just launch itself, it unleashed a wave of public broadcasting in Nepal bringing an unprecedented deregulation in the FM spectrum.

Within a decade there were more than 50 FM stations across the country. And contrary to the government's worst fears, the stations didn't spread anarchy and chaos. In fact, radio became a vital source of information and expanded the public space for debate and consensus. They didn't undermine our culture with Hindi pop, in fact Nepali folk and dohori got a big boost.

Nepal became recognised the world over as a pioneer in public service broadcasting in developing societies and young democracies. Nepalis could hold

their heads high at international media seminars and show others how to do it. Indeed, even Sri Lanka which has a long tradition of broadcasting, sent journalists to Nepal to learn how to operate community stations.

Ten years of effort, training and investment has now been dismantled in one fell swoop by the government's ban on news and current affairs on FM for security reasons. Even educational and farming programs can't be aired. Some FMs have closed, others are broadcasting music all day long. Thousands of

journalists have been laid off. Ironically, people addicted to news on FM are turning to underground rebel broadcasts which have filled the gap. Shortwave radios that were extinct are suddenly in great demand and even second-hand ones are selling at a premium as people switch to the BBC Nepali Service which has increased its program duration to fill demand (see interview).

"It's a very sad situation. Independent radio broadcasters were serving the nation so well and better than any form of media. How can they be accused of boosting the morale of Maoists and undermining the state?" says Bharat Koirala, the architect of Nepal's public broadcasting success story. It was largely in recognition for his tireless lobbying for Radio Sagarmatha that Koirala was conferred the Magsaysay Award for media in 2002.

Radio Sagarmatha's license paved the way for Nepal's FM boom: community radios, public broadcasters and commercial stations. The FM wave unleashed a music revolution in Pokhara and spurred the growth of folk music. But for the most part, radio fulfilled the Nepali thirst for freedom. Rural stations like Radio Madanpokhara in Palpa started with a studio in a cowshed. Radio Swargadwari in Dang used to broadcast vital

information for farmers and traders.

A new design of dokos with a small wicker pocket where women gathering fodder could put their radios became the vogue across Nepal. In Jumla, shepherds on pastures listened to studio discussions on Radio Karnali and felt empowered. Bus drivers along the highways in Chitwan got important information live on the status of the roads through their radios. Maithili and Bhojpur broadcasts from Nepal became instant hits across the border in



KIRAN PANDAY



RADIO CONTROL:  
(Clockwise from top)

- Radio Sagarmatha's Durga Karki interviews a woman recruit into the Royal Nepali Army at Chhauni
- A radio anchor at Radio Madanpokhara in Palpa
- FM pioneer Bharat Koirala
- A samosa cook at the Radio Sagarmatha canteen listens to music on his station this week since the ban on news still stays



India. This was the nation talking to itself through a network of decentralised, localised and vibrant radio stations.

After February First, there has been a vast silence. The new information minister shocked listeners when he told BBC last month that FM stations all over the world only broadcast music, not news. "It was an absurd statement and blatantly false," says Raghu Mainali president of the Community Broadcasters' Association. In the absence of clear instructions on what's ok and what's not, most broadcasters are playing it safe. "We don't even know if it's all right to broadcast news about lost and abducted children, their health or about immunisation campaigns," says Mainali.

Radio journalists say this is the time radio can play an effective role in supporting the government's development efforts. With the ban on news, there is already a backlash. In the absence of news there are wild rumours and even news of Maoist atrocities and brutality are not getting to the public. With news allowed only on the credibility-challenged state radio, even when the government tells the truth people take it with a pinch of salt.

Bharat Koirala says if the government is so concerned, it can always give FM stations guidelines like it has for the print media. "If there are certain norms radios should observe, why not tell them this is how far



they can go and let them resume news and discussions immediately."

Most FM investors from outside Kathmandu have been so frightened about losing their licenses that they haven't challenged the ban. "There is no organised lobbying by FM groups and associations to get news reinstated," says Gopal Guragain from Communications Corner which provided radio content to a network of stations all over the country via satellite.

"Why are FM radios being targeted? All we are asking for are clear instructions about the news format," says Bharat Sakya, president of Kathmandu Valley Broadcasters' Forum. Most of the radio stations are on the verge of

collapse as advertisers pull out sponsorship for popular news programs.

"The major setback is the revenue loss and the people who have lost their jobs," says Prabhat Rimal, Kantipur FM, "We are trying our best to redeploy radio staff into our newspaper and television units." Outside Kathmandu, the situation is much worse. Synergy FM of Chitwan was forced to lay off seven journalists in one day right after the royal proclamation was made. ●

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## This is the BBC in Kathmandu

In an interview with *Nepali Times*, the BBC's Rabindra Mishra spoke from London about the role BBC Nepali is playing in the current situation



**Nepali Times:** What kind of response are you getting from listeners?

**Rabindra Mishra:** The response has been extremely positive. People are snapping up shortwave radios: from villagers to high level officials within Nepal and in the surrounding countries, the Nepali Service from the BBC World Service is currently one of the few sources of accurate and independent news about Nepal. In addition to our daily 30-minute Nepali language program on shortwave, the English programs are on 103 FM 23 hours a day in Kathmandu.

**BBC Nepali Service has its own studio in Kathmandu. Will we see an expansion in services?**

As a result of the recent developments in Nepal, we have started an additional 15-minute transmission from 1 March 2005 at 0100 GMT (6.45 AM local time).

**What do you attribute the people's trust in the BBC's content to?**

The BBC has always been a trusted source of impartial and factual reporting in Nepal. We believe it is important for consumers to have choices and a plurality of views on offer but at this time we are the only Nepali language station offering independent news and analysis on Nepal and as such we are striving to report the news as quickly, accurately and impartially as possible.

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## China's beanstalk

BEIJING—If per capita income in China grows at eight percent per year—a reduction from the red-hot pace of 9.5 percent it has grown since 1978—it will overtake the current per capita US income in just over 25 years, according to the latest analysis by the Earth Policy Institute (EPI).

And if those increased incomes translate into the kind of lifestyle currently enjoyed by most US citizens, Chinese demands will overwhelm what the planet can offer, according to the analysis *Learning from China: Why the Western Economic Model Will Not Work for the World*. While geo-politicians worry whether China will integrate itself into the current western-dominated international system, Lester Brown, EPI's founder, is far more worried about the impact of a wealthy China on the earth's diminishing resource base.

"If it does not work for China," he notes, "it will not work for India, which has an economy growing at seven percent per year and a population projected to surpass China's by 2030." China's demands on the basic raw materials to feed its galloping economy have become increasingly clear here in just the past few months as successive trade delegations, including one headed by President Hu Jintao himself, have made their way to Latin America to sign long-term supply contracts for the production of commodities from agriculture to mining.

In a 12-day, four-country trip in November, Hu announced more than \$ 30 billion in new Chinese investments in Latin America in basic industries and infrastructure designed to facilitate the export of raw materials from the region across the Pacific over the next generation. China's economic boom is the biggest single factor in the steady rise of commodity prices worldwide over the past years, a factor that, coupled with its investments and shrewd diplomacy, is buying it considerable goodwill in much of the developing world but especially in South and Southeast Asia, as well as Latin America.

Indeed, a survey of 22 countries commissioned by the BBC and released earlier this week found that China is now viewed as playing a significantly more positive role in the world than either the United States or Russia and that majorities or significant pluralities in 17 of the countries were particularly positive about China's growing economic clout. The poll, of nearly 23,000 people, was conducted by GlobeScan and the University of Maryland's Program on International Policy Attitudes in late 2004. But Brown, a founder and former director of the Worldwatch Institute who has long warned about limits to the earth's ability to sustain wealthy lifestyles, at least as they exist in the United States, now argues that — to the extent China's growth is aimed at replicating such lifestyles, its efforts will ultimately prove futile. (IPS)



# Behind Dubai's dazzle

## The hidden costs of being west Asia's commercial capital

NICK MEO in DUBAI

**T**wenty storeys above the streets of Dubai tiny figures of workmen hammer steel into place day and night in west Asia's biggest construction boom.

Labourers from south Asia man the forest of cranes along the half-built tower blocks south and west of Jumeira Beach, the

world's second-biggest building site after Shanghai and a magnet for those hoping to make money by buying property here, ranging from Afghan warlords to the English football team.

The sheikhs who run Dubai plan to make it the commercial capital of the Middle East, so dozens of skyscrapers and thousands of apartment blocks are shooting up. The boom has sucked in an army of workers from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, unskilled men who toil for years, away from families to save \$50 a month.

Unlike Dubai's 100,000 pampered British expatriates in air-conditioned luxury, the Asian labourers are banned from the glitzy shopping malls, new golf courses and smart restaurants. Instead they squeeze six in a dormitory room, enduring temperatures of 50 degree C in summer and allowed to return home to see their families only once every two years. Accident rates on construction sites are high.

Westerners barely notice them, only perhaps at the end of the working day when queues of

exhausted men in filthy blue overalls wait patiently for their buses home to distant work camps on the city outskirts.

These men have no voice and no rights. Trades unions are banned. Workers have staged protests about their poor conditions before and that draws swift crackdowns by the police. 'Troublemakers' are rapidly deported. The UAE is no democracy and guest workers are expected to do as told and when their usefulness is finished, go home with their earnings.

In 2003, when the World Bank met in Dubai, Human Rights Watch appealed to it to argue the case with the UAE government for better treatment of migrant workers.

Some do well in Dubai's free-wheeling economy. But those who cannot stand the conditions run away. Thousands live in massive slums full of illegal immigrants in the neighbouring Emirate of Sharjah. Even those who prosper in Dubai and settle permanently are denied rights although they now make up the bulk of the Emirate's population.

● (The Independent)

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# Kiss and tell

In trying to build bridges, could Lollywood's Meera have burnt them instead

ZOFEEN T EBRAHIM in KARACHI

Is it really just 'a storm in a tea-cup' and a 'non-issue' that some people seem so ready to dismiss? Why such a hue and cry, after Meera—known as the queen of Pakistan cinema—locked lips with her Indian co-star.

Does it really boil down to religion or as someone put it a 'cultural baggage' that Pakistani moviegoers carry. Ironically, Pakistanis watch foreign movies with baring-daring scenes without batting an eyelid. Nonetheless when a Pakistani actress enacts the same scene, all hell breaks loose.

Will Meera, Pakistani tinsel town's number one sultry siren, who caused all the brouhaha by kissing, her co-star Ashmit Patel, in an Indian film *Nazar* pay a heavy price for that lone kiss? Will all the other Pakistani actors have to bear the government's wrath for her acting 'against Islamic ethics and moral values'? And while the Meera episode is still hot, ask others—why have they never protested to the vulgar fare churned out by the film industry in general and all the conceivable explicit scenes Meera has enacted in Pakistan all these years in particular?

"Given her lack of reputation at home, we should not worry too much about her lack of ethics in Bollywood," shoots Aijaz Gul, a film critic, cinema analyst and film exhibitor. However, there are others like Hasan Zaidi, a young Pakistani filmmaker who feels otherwise. Pointing fingers at a 'culture of hypocrisy' that has permeated Pakistan, he says: "We know all kinds of

things happen in our society but we are loathe to see them depicted either on screen or in literature. Our men would like 'our' women to at least pretend to be virtuous even as they enjoy themselves elsewhere. But in this particular case, I don't even think kissing was the issue—this was a purely manufactured media circus with ulterior motives."

According to Zaidi, there have been kissing scenes before in Pakistani films that have been cut out by the censor board. "And if you have ever seen a Pushto film (regional language), there is a lot worse going on sometimes," he adds.

Local media reports indicate Pakistan's Ministry of Culture has decided to take action by imposing a heavy fine on the actress because of her 'bold scenes'. Stumped by the reaction, Meera—who is still in India with rumours that she plans to stay on—is reported to have said that all she wanted was to "bring the two countries together".

"If I have kissed Ashmit, it's like Pakistan kissing India. If I have hugged him, it's as if every Pakistani has hugged every Indian. I don't understand why there's so much hue and cry. I am here as an ambassador of peace and whatever I am doing is part of the process of building bridges," she says.

"Haven't these people kissed anyone in their lives?" asks an equally nonplussed Patel, who shared the kiss with Meera, which he incidentally calls a 'peck on the cheek' and 'not even a proper kiss'. Mahesh Bhatt, the writer and co-producer of *Nazar* terms the whole thing



"childish and quite ridiculous".

"This is the first India-Pakistan film that also dares to cement relations between the two countries. Hence, it would be tragic if anyone wanted to spoil this relationship," he says. But in no mood to stir the hornet's nest as he has plans for a launch in Pakistan also, he adds: "Anything that upsets their (Pakistan's) sensibilities, I wouldn't be a party to. I didn't know there would be so much of hullabaloo that has prompted me to write to the Pakistan president."

The recent thaw in relations between Pakistan and India has seen many Indian Bollywood stars visit their neighbouring country to interact with local actors. This

camaraderie has often helped generate funds for the underprivileged, the most recent being aid for the Asian tsunami victims. Various co-productions, star-studded events and concerts—unthinkable a couple of years back—have now become common. Adding to that is a growing population of Indian soap opera addicts on this side of the border.

"I think this whole issue is nothing but a storm in a tea cup," points out Hoori Noorani, an avid cinemagoer and a leading publisher. "The so called 'defenders of our culture' use Islam and terms such as 'moral values' when it is convenient for them. The film is yet to be released and it isn't fair to comment on it." ● (IPS)

# Lhotshampa chargesheet

Bhutan's Gross National Sadness will undermine its future happiness

There was once a fairy tale kingdom in the Himalaya. It had a king who played basketball and promoted Gross National Happiness. But then the king decided to redress what he considered a demographic imbalance. A bhumi-putra policy was evolved and implemented harshly. Some 100,000 of the kingdom's population of 700,000 were forced to leave.

SOUTHASIA BEAT  
Kanak Mani Dixit



The fairy tale kingdom has done well over the years. But it also won for itself a place in the hall of infamy for being the country in the modern era to have evicted the largest proportion of its population. No other state has quite managed to create this level of Gross National Sadness. There is a skeleton in the Bhutani closet that will drag down its history.

It was the monsoon of 1992 that I went down to Jhapa to meet and interview Lhotshampa evictees as they streamed in from Siliguri on trucks conveniently made available by Indian authorities. These were Nepali-speakers from a different era, whose ancestors had entered Bhutan a century earlier as part of the great migration eastward. The rulers of Bhutan were happy to welcome the hardworking

migrants of different castes and ethnicities to their unproductive southern hills, for there was revenue to be generated.

Cut off from the developments of the rest of the Subcontinent, including the great changes that overtook Nepal after the fall of the Ranas in 1950, the Nepali-speakers of Bhutan retained much of their old habits, customs and diets which had disappeared from their country of origin. I found this, for example, in the extreme humility displayed by the refugee villagers in front of figures of authority. These were hardly the politicised militants that the Thimphu aristocracy claimed was out to destroy the Bhutanese idyll.

What I saw at Kakarbhitta 13 years ago were hapless villagers who had been uprooted from their homes and property only days earlier by dzongdag administrators from district like Chirang, Sarbhanga and Samdrup Jongkhar. They came as peasants who have been violently uprooted would, with wooden trunks, stools, cloth bundles, beddings, kitchen utensils and wickerwork dokos.

This was depopulation. The fears of cultural inundation felt by the upcountry Ngalong community was of course real, for the Nepali-speaking Lhotshampa represented the dominant and expanding culture of the central Himalaya.

But nothing could justify the policy of intimidation and violence against a people that till then were considered Bhutani citizens. Proud subsistence hill farmers were turned stateless, to live on the dole and suffering all the indignities of a refugee population in the hot and humid plains of eastern Nepal.

They are still there. Over 120,000 refugees, 15,000 families packed into seven refugee camps and supported reluctantly by the UNHCR. It has been nearly 15 years since the terrible exodus, and the Lhotshampa hope against hope for their king in Thimphu to have a change of heart. They wait in the refugee camps, mistreated by their own feeble leaders and ignored by everyone else. Enmeshed in its own escalating political crises, Nepal has been unable to take up the matter effectively with Thimphu, nor with New Delhi and the international community. There was a time when the Bhutani refugee issue was Kathmandu's primary foreign policy concern, not any more.

Western governments who assist in Bhutan's development have been bowled over by the latter's shangri la status, and are willing to turn a blind eye to the inhumanity against a lakh plus Nepali-speakers if that will help Thimphu maintain its image of Himalayan purity. More shocking in



Lhotshampa straight out of Chirang arrive at Jhapa camp in July 1992.

the tragic saga has been New Delhi's disregard for the humanitarian aspects of the Lhotshampa casefile. South Block has not lifted a finger to help one of the largest groups of refugees in Southasia, and what tragic irony that they come from the smallest country in the mainland.

Prevarication has been Thimphu's tool over the years in a policy meant to prolong the uncertainty so the refugees will give up and disperse into the Subcontinent's sea of humanity. Stalling tactics have been used every step of the way, and the distraction of Kathmandu's leaders exploited to the fullest. When international pressure forced a

verification exercise in one of the refugee camps, and it became clear that nearly everyone counted would be regarded as a Bhutani citizen under international law, Thimphu exaggerated an incident of stone-throwing two years ago to withdraw its team. The exercise has yet to resume.

Bhutan is known to be run efficiently by its Ngalong elite. Everything it does, it does 'well': even the eviction of its own citizens. But the fact is that when you hit 'Bhutanese refugees' in Google, you come away with 340,000 entries. History remembers an injustice done, even if it can't do anything to right the wrong immediately. ●



# Real life drama

## Reaching out from a space where theatre is lived



A scene from *Jat Sodhnu Jogi Ko* on opening night.

KIRAN PANDAY

Their world's a stage. Nepal's first theatre school has started teaching students acting, directing, writing, improvising and creating on stage. They are taught that life is theatre and to act is not to play a part but to live.

Sunil Pokharel got a few enthusiasts together in 1982 and started out at the Alliance

affiliate with Kathmandu University for an academic degree in the next two years is underway.

Experimenting new techniques and adapting plays for the Nepali audience is a Gurukul specialty. *Putali Ko Ghar*, the Nepali adapted version of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* was a hit even in Norway's Ibsen

Festival last year. "The number of people that turned up was amazing," recalls Pokharel of the Norway tour. "Even here, high school students came in droves because it was in their course of study."

Because it relies mostly on word-of-mouth, Gurukul is leading a hand-to-mouth existence. There are plays where

hardly anyone turns up, even though that is becoming rarer these days as word of the quality of its productions spreads. "We'll perform even if only two people show up," says Pokharel. Gurukul members seem too busy trying to stage the productions to spread the word.

Students and teachers of Tribhuvan University have taken

it upon themselves to form a Friends of Gurukul fraternity of theatre aficionados. Popular demand has time and again resurrected *Agni Ko Katha*, a poignant play written by Abhi Subedi condemning the destruction of places of learning.

Kachahari Natak or Theatre of the Oppressed has gained a platform here. Like street plays, Kachahari Natak can be performed anywhere but unlike street plays, it does not advocate a solution and asks the audience to offer theirs instead. Gurukul teaches Kachahari to community theatre groups. "The people know the issues they face better than we do, we can never tell for sure what the solution is. Through interaction and improvisation, we help the audience explore and find it," says Pokharel. Gurukul is using this technique to help school students deal with their problems.

This year, Gurukul has also invited a Norwegian director to direct a Nepali play through its exchange program, members will participate in the lights and sets workshop at Delhi's National School of Drama this summer and there is Satya Mohan Joshi's *Bagh Bhairab* to be rehearsed for the coming season. But for now, Gurukul is busy staging *Jat Sodhnu Jogi Ko* at the Sama Theatre every evening (see box).

"It's going to be a busy year," says Pokharel, "a lot of work but that is just the way we want it." ●

### THEATRE

Abha Eli Phoboo



Francaise teaching young Nepalis drama. But the group soon expanded and in 2002 set up Gurukul, a residential drama centre.

In the three years Gurukul has produced brilliant actors and technicians, and its productions are already recognised as the best in Nepali theatre. "It is intense. We learn the basics, techniques and things we never knew," says student Ghanashyam Mishra of Janakpur. The course goes beyond just drama, students learn yoga, martial arts, dance, painting and personal growth skills. Plans to



## Amazing grace

With easy grace, he stretches lankily on the step centre stage as the play *Jat Sodhnu Jogi Ko* opens. The flow of his speech, body language and the sets comfortably adapt Indian playwright Vijay Tendulkar's Marathi drama into Nepali. Sunil Pokharel is Mahinarayan Gharti whose lifelong ambition for an MA degree has taken him from his village to the city. What he does not expect is to lose his job in a newspaper for being overqualified. Then begins his search for professorship, landing in a remote village college whose building houses the chairman's cow. Funny and relaxed, the audience warms up to the story and Anup Baral's direction enlivens the act with steady rhythm. A satire on the educational system, the theme is relevant and strikes a chord in the audience. It is the serious bits that seem to be a bit incongruous in places, trying to slip in the message in between the quips and social satire. You just have to see this play.

*Jat Sodhnu Jogi Ko* is staged every evening at 5PM at Gurukul's Sama Theatre in Baneswor till 10 April. Tickets: Rs100, Rs 50 and for students, Rs 25.

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# The whole 90 yards

There is a way out of these awkward spots, practice!

Once you start hitting the ball reasonably well, you begin to really enjoy the game. At any level though, golfers still dream of improving their game. For instance, if they shoot 80, their target will be to break that number the very next time they step on the golf course. The desire to keep playing better never ends.

From my experience, seasoned golfers often ruin their score by getting into trouble from shots inside 90 yards. In most cases, they are more likely to fail when they have to control their swing. All these golfers usually hit great with a full swing yet when it comes to a quarter, half or  $\frac{3}{4}$  shot, the results are way below average. Inconsistent shot making from this range affects their scoring.

**TEE BREAK**  
Deepak Acharya



are more likely to fail when they have to control their swing. All these golfers usually hit great with a full swing yet when it comes to a quarter, half or  $\frac{3}{4}$  shot, the results

are way below average. Inconsistent shot making from this range affects their scoring.

Ever looked back after a round of golf knowing you could have done better if the shots within 90 yards had been well executed? I'm sure you've done that plenty of times. Apart from the very best players, golfers rarely practice shots of this range and are unaware of good technique. They lack confidence and suffer the consequences.

I bet that when you're on the practice range, you just hit those full shots. Well, grow smart and get into the habit of trying out controlled shots as well. Feel free to use the tips given below as a guide:



To sharpen your skills and get the feel from inside 90 yards, use a pitching or sand wedge, take a quarter back swing and see how far the ball pitches. Continue to practice this until you are comfortable and get reasonably consistent results. Then switch to a half swing. Notice the difference in distance. Repeat this drill as well before moving on to the three-quarter swing. During all this practice, the speed on your downswing must remain as identical as possible. As a guide, I hit my sand wedge to about 30, 55 and 75 yards on these three different swing lengths. However remember, I am a professional so don't expect the same distances yourself!

The key point is to get the feel of how much back swing to take for a given distance. It's very similar to how you practice putting. A five-footer might need just a four inch back swing but a 30-footer would need closer to a 10-inch back swing.

Vary the back swing during practice sessions until you are comfortable. Observe how far the ball flies with less than full swings. Though they are capable of producing good results, even top professionals don't like it when they are inside this range and have to hit less than full swings. They are confident and accurate with their distances but still use good course management on par 4s and 5s to try and leave themselves full shots to the green of at least a 100 yards.

Amateurs are not capable of hitting accurate distances off the tee or even from the fairway, often ending up in those awkward positions inside 90 yards. Practice makes perfect and can save you from these otherwise difficult positions. Once you gain confidence and feel comfortable inside 90 yards, your scores will improve dramatically. ●

Deepak Acharya is a golf instructor and Golf Director at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa, Kathmandu. [prodeepak@hotmail.com](mailto:prodeepak@hotmail.com)



MIN BAJRACHARYA

## Sticks and stones

Are all you need for Nepal's unofficial national sport

AARTI BASNYAT

Nepal has no national game. The closest we come to an indigenous sport is *dandi biyo*. But due to the popularity of football, cricket and even chungu, dandi biyo is in danger of going the way of the dodo. So in the larger national interest we decided to find out more about Nepal's unofficial official sport.

In rural areas, children still play it and it is known as *guli danda* in the tarai. And all you need is a big stick and a small stick to play. But no one in Kathmandu seemed to know anything more than that. So we trotted off to the National Sports Council hoping to find someone who did.

Chief of the Sports Development Division, Ramesh Khanal, seemed just as clueless. "I'm sure you'll find someone who knows the rules," he said, sticking his head out the door and yelling, "Eh Chandra, do you know how to play dandi biyo?"

"Yes, sir," came Chandra's voice followed by the man himself. Chandra Rai, the beaming saviour of our quest is a "non-graduate first class staff" at the Sports Council. It is Chandra's thesis that dandi biyo originated in ancient

Mohenjodaro. But more importantly for us, Chandra knew "The Rules".

But Rameshji warned us: "It's not our national game you know, a game has to have specific rules and regulations for it to be declared a national sport. It must be played at various levels—district, national, international. Dandi biyo is played by village boys and cowherds who make up rules as they go. It can't be called our national sport, it's more of a traditional game."

Ouch. So we prodded Chandra Rai. The game involves two primary objects—dandi (long stick) and biyo (a stump one-fourth the size of the bigger one with pointy ends). You hit the biyo with the dandi, flipping it up by striking the end.

First, the players must bounce the biyo from his dandi. Whoever bounces it the most number of times gets to play first.

You must flick the biyo as far as possible from the base, which is a small groove on the ground. Player then goes to where the biyo is and taps the edge so it leaps up into the air at which the player strikes it with all his might. Players then measure how far the biyo is from the base in

dandi length units.

1. If the biyo is hit only once in midair, the distance is measured according to the length of the dandi
2. If the biyo is hit twice, it is measured according to the length of the biyo
3. If the biyo is hit thrice, measuring is done according to the distance between the forefinger and the tiny finger.

Once the measuring is over, the first player calls out the approximate distance his or her biyo travelled. The second player tries to outdo this and the third tries to outdo the second and so on.

Sometimes, other players try to block the biyo with branches and bushes they might have picked, making the game more interesting. Other players try to block the one lifting the biyo out of the hole with his dandi. If they either catch the biyo or hit his dandi with it, the player is out.

From the looks of things, dandi biyo needs some standardisation and the rules seem a bit too improvised for the game to qualify for the Beijing Olympics. The good news is that for now you can make the rules as you go along. ●

## Teaming up

The Nepal Under-14 tennis team is back in Kathmandu from Ho Chi Minh City where it participated in the International Tennis Federation's 14 and Under Asian Championships-Zone 2. The Nepalese team led by coach Hem Bahadur Lama had five players: Gaurav Shah, Ramesh Karki, Jimmy Sherpa, Priti Rijal and Saloni Pandey. Endorsed by the All Nepal Lawn Tennis Association, the team worked hard to establish a ranking for Nepal with their combined points. They competed in singles and doubles matches during the two tournaments lasting four days each. In the first tournament, Vietnam won in the boys' category and Sri Lanka won the same in the second tournament. Malaysia won both tournaments in the girls' category. The Sri Lankan boy's determination was inspiring. His home had been swept away in the tsunami but his family was safe.



**SURYA NEPAL**  
GOLF





MIN BAJRACHARYA

**HAPPY TOGETHER:** His Majesty King Gyanendra and COAS Pyar Jung Thapa share a joke during the Army Day parade during Shivaratri at Tudhikhel on Tuesday.



NEPALNEWS.COM

**LENDING A HELPFUL HAND:** Japanese Ambassador to Nepal, Tsutomu Hiraoka and founder chairman of Nepalganj Medical College, Mukunda Bhakta Shrestha, shaking hands after signing a Rs 6 million grant for conflict victims on Wednesday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

**ARRESTING GALS IN KATHMANDU:** Bhim Kumari Budha, former tourism minister, being interviewed by the international press at Asan during the Women's Day protest rally on Tuesday. Budha and several others were arrested soon after.



KIRAN PANDAY

**MY NEW JET:** Capt RP Pradhan, president of SOI group points at a poster showing the third Fokker 100 jet that joined the Cosmic Air's fleet at a press conference on Monday.



KIRAN PANDAY

**SING-ALONG NOW:** Girls practicing outside St Xavier's College on Sunday for the 'Father Watrin Memorial Music Tribute'.

# Kevin's eye

In the early 1980s when Nepal was still roadless and undiscovered, Kevin Bubriski (*below*) went off the beaten trek to record the lives of people in Nepal's remotest regions.

Twenty years later, Kevin is exhibiting his stunning black and white images at the Indigo Gallery and what immediately strikes viewers is that the more things change the more they remain the same. Boys framed by modular concrete pillars in a Patan bahal, pigeons taking flight in the morning fog at Mangal Bajar, Gurung school boys in Barpak who must now be in their 30s.

"I realise that Nepal will always be a part of me and the photographs I take," says Bubriski who spent two years as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Karnali. Bubriski's photographs reflect the traditional aspects of Nepali life with his use of black, white and shadows. Why this preference for black and white? "I like the expressive quality of black and white which allow the viewer to concentrate on the design and structure of the image. Each print is a handmade object." Indeed, the black and white images of Nepal from the past 30 years reflect the strong enduring integrity of the Nepali people and our cultures.

Asked about his favourite print at the Indigo, Bubriski



points without hesitation at the one of monks at Tsurphu Monastery in Tibet carrying food offerings.

Bubriski has won accolades for his photographs including the recent 2004 Hasselblad Masters Award. His books *Portrait of Nepal* (1993) *Power Places of Kathmandu Valley* (1995) and *Pilgrimage: Looking at Ground Zero* (2002) reveal a photographer with a keen eye for social responsibility. Here is someone who uses the images he creates as a bridge between people. ●

Aarti Basnyat



Reflections from Tibet. Photographs by Kevin Bubriski till 31 March at Indigo Gallery, 4413580

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Editor and Publisher, Kunda Dixit, makes the lucky draw on 10 March at the Himalmedia office.

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"Lata ko desh ma gaando tanderi." (In a land of fools, even a man with a bad goatee can be a hero.) - as translated by UNACO, the United Nation's Assn. of Cartoonists

**THE ADVENTURES OF HEROJIG** Your Cartoon Choices to Save the Kingdom! Many special thanks to Shubu Sanzip, Tina, Chandra, Rajendra, and Tom for contributing these suggestions:



by JIGME GATON

**KE GARNE? WHATEVER.** But be a Heroji, laugh (at yourself often)

"The person who knows how to laugh at himself will never cease to be amused."

Shirley MacLaine, Outspoken American actress and dancer, b.1934

Next change: Herojig is stumped for new ideas; suggestions? Write HeroJig care of this newspaper.

#59 2061 by jigme gatton - read. love. write.

The Adventures of HeroJig can also be seen at [www.extreme-nepal.com](http://www.extreme-nepal.com)

- ABOUT TOWN**
- FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS**
- ❖ **Fundraising for cyclist Pushkar Shah** Artworks by Govinda Azad, Temba Chhiri Sherpa and Pushkar Shah at Nepal Art Council, Baber Mahal. Until 13 March. 4264710
  - ❖ **Celebrating Line** Exhibition of selected drawings at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, 15 March-13 April. 4411122
  - ❖ **Kathmandu & Kali Gandaki** Exhibition of photographs by Anagarika Sugata at GAA, Thamel, until 18 March. Proceeds go to the Chairo Gumba Restoration Fund. 4414785, [gaa@gaa.org.np](mailto:gaa@gaa.org.np)
  - ❖ **Uttishtha** Art workshop at Osho Tapoban, 11-20 March. 4242106
  - ❖ **Festive Images** Paintings by Pradip K Bajracharya at Buddha Gallery, Thamel. 13-27 March. 4441689
  - ❖ **Reflections from Tibet** Photos by Kevin Bubriski at Indigo Gallery, Naxal. Until 31 March. 4413580
  - ❖ **Magic Pencil** Artworks by Britain's best children's illustrators at the British Council, Lainchor. Until 6 May. 4410798

- EVENTS**
- ❖ **World Water Day** on 22 March.
  - ❖ **Jat Sodhnu Jogi Ko** Play directed by Anup Baral at Gurukul, Dhobikhola, Setopool, 5PM. Till 10 April. 4466956
  - ❖ **Art workshop** for kids at Buddha Gallery. 4441689
  - ❖ **Rugby Practice** Every Saturday for both experienced and beginners. Contact Gopal Chhetri at 4435939, [citygymktm@hotmail.com](mailto:citygymktm@hotmail.com)
  - ❖ **Sanibaar Mela** Every Saturday at the Dharahara Bakery Café, 12AM-5PM.
  - ❖ **The God Dance of Kathmandu Valley** Tuesdays at Hotel Vajra.

- MUSIC**
- ❖ **Night for Tsunami** Kishor Gurung live at Shankar Hotel, Lajimpat on 18 March, 6.30 PM, tickets Rs 1000. 4261831, 4410151, 55221113
  - ❖ **Live Jazz** by JCS trio and Peter McTwister, Thursdays at Full Moon Bar, Mondays at New Orleans Café, Thamel. 4700736
  - ❖ **Live with Abhaya and the Steam Injuns** at Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488
  - ❖ **Fusion Time** Mondays at Jalan Jalan Restaurant, Lajimpat, 7PM. 4410438
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  - ❖ **Jazz** at Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lajimpat. Every Wednesday and Saturday.



- FOOD**
- ❖ **Arniko Special Lunch** at Hotel de l'Annapurna, Darbar Marg. 4221711
  - ❖ **Krishnarpan** Nepali specialty restaurant at Dwarika's Hotel. 4479488
  - ❖ **Barbecue Dinner** Every Friday at the Summit Hotel. 5521810
  - ❖ **Exotic Seafood** at Rox Restaurant, Hyatt Regency. 4491234
  - ❖ **Delicacies** Pastas and snacks at Roadhouse Café, Jawalakhel. 5521755
  - ❖ **Sizzling Weekend** at Garden Terrace, Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
  - ❖ **Genuine Thai** cuisine at Royal Lotus, Bakhundole. 5521231
  - ❖ **Farm House Café** Delicious meals at Park Village Hotel. 4375280
  - ❖ **Café Bahal** Newari cuisine at Kathmandu Guest House, Thamel. 4700632
  - ❖ **Barbecue-Ban Bhoj** at Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
  - ❖ **Vegetarian Creations** at Stupa View Restaurant. 4480262
  - ❖ **The Beer Garden** at Vajrayantra, Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
  - ❖ **Dwarika's Thali** Lunch at the Heritage courtyard. 4479488
  - ❖ **The Tharu Kitchen** at Jungle Base Camp. [Junglebasecamp@yahoo.com](mailto:Junglebasecamp@yahoo.com)

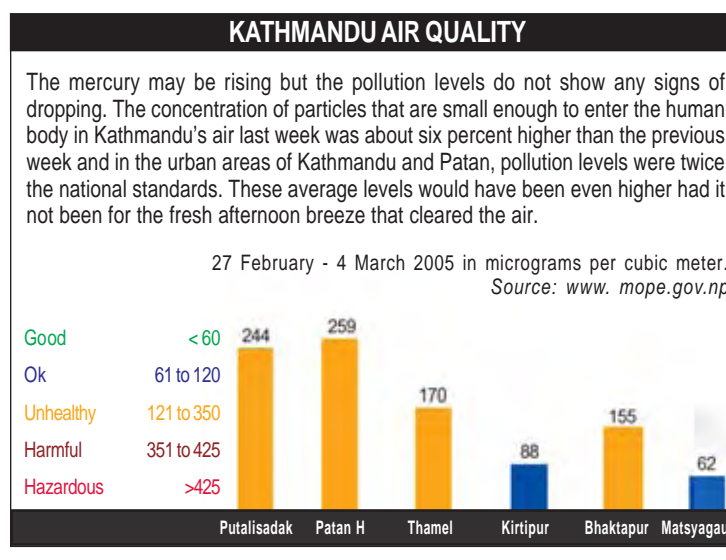
- GETAWAYS**
- ❖ **Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge** Celebrate spring. 4361500
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  - ❖ **Chiso Chiso Hawama** Package for Rs 1,700 at Club Himalaya. 4411706
  - ❖ **Jungle Base Camp Lodge**, Bardia, special package and prices. [junglebasecamp@yahoo.com](mailto:junglebasecamp@yahoo.com)
  - ❖ **Malaysia Dream Holidays** Packages starting from Rs 45,500 per person. 4247215 extn 013-14, [malaysiaholidays\\_marco@polo.com.np](mailto:malaysiaholidays_marco@polo.com.np)
  - ❖ **Getaway package** Night's stay at Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
  - ❖ **AAA Organic Farm Guesthouse** Rs 950 with three meals. 6631734
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**NEPALI WEATHER** by MAUSAM BEED

The mercury surged four degrees this week to the upper 20s, indicating that spring is finally here. The minimum temperatures also climbed firmly into the double digits, bringing down the daily temperature variation to 15 degrees from nearly 20 last month. This satellite picture taken on Thursday morning shows a fresh westerly front that will bring cloud cover along the western Himalaya over the weekend. The existing high-pressure pattern over Kathmandu will keep this system at bay, so even if things get overcast there won't be much by way of rain.



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# Hint hint, wink wink

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## UNDER MY HAT Kunda Dixit



best results, it should be consumed with a slice of lemon and a

pinch of salt within 100 days of manufacture. Management welcomes suggestions and complaints via email and they will be immediately deleted. Anyone found to be taking any of this stuff seriously should go and get his and/or her head examined free of charge by a member of the Head Hunting Department of the Ministry of Infotainment and Commotion, if you get my drift.

And after that word of caution, which is mandatory under current regulations to protect our asses from being hauled over the coals, we can plunge right into this morning's main headlines to find out what is not really happening around the nation even as we speak.

## Sundays on again

After thorough deliberation and much agonising indecision, the Bureau of Sloth and Lethargy has finally decided to restore the Sunday holiday inside the Outer Ring Road.

The on-again-off-again decision came after the Bureau announced last week that Sunday would be a working day in Kathmandu Valley but irate civilian servants said this would deprive them of

adequate rest to prepare for a new week of idle worship. "If we work Sundays, we will be forced to become our old inefficient and lazy selves," said one bureaucrat who agreed to be interviewed only in silhouette while taking a post-prandial nap.

Outside the Outer Ring Road, however, it will be business as unusual on Sundays, the Bureau said.

## Test-tube tourists born

The test-tube baby boom showed no signs of abating this week as more and more experimental human beings entered the kingdom, boosting hopes that this would impact favourably on sagging domestic tourism figures for the season.

Among those born this week was a test-tube journalist who, unaware of prevailing laws of the land, hasn't stopped bawling ever since he was born four days ago. Now that Nepal is a signatory of the International Anti-Biopiracy Convention it retains the copyright for the new babies so they can't be cloned by anyone else. Not that anybody would want to.

## "I kid you not": Minister

The Minister of Innuendo and Insinuation has urged the media to disseminate only news based on facts that are stranger than fiction.

Addressing a gathering of journalists-turned-pan wallas in Biratnagar this week, he said: "It is not untrue to deny that there is hardly no censorship, but I can't confirm that those days are not here to stay."

He added that unlike in the old days of unbelievable freedom, the public can now trust every word in the papers since they have all been fact-checked by the concerned authoritarians. He added: "You can be sure that nothing is made up, unless it's an emergency."

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