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Happy New Year

2062

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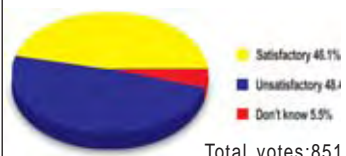
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Times nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll # 242

Q. How do you rate the performance of the council of ministers in the past 60 days?



Total votes: 851

Weekly Internet Poll # 243. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. Has official corruption been reduced since February First?

American Standard



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ISSN 1814-2613
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UNDOING Pressure to rollback curbs

NARESH NEWAR

Nepal's international partners have been strangely quiet as the UN High Commission on Human Rights prepares to debate Nepal's human rights situation in Geneva next week and as the expiry of the three-month state of emergency draws to a close.

But there is an indication that the donor community is not as monolithic as it appears, and there is a divergence on what will work better in persuading the king to roll back on curbs: carrots or sticks, or both. Government officials, meanwhile, are trying to soft-peddle on human rights and democracy to deflect the pressure mainly from the Europeans and India.

"We are looking to see if the king will lift the emergency, restore press freedom and civil liberties and make moves on a peace process," one Kathmandu-based ambassador told us. In meetings with the international community, senior government officials have reportedly softened their position offering concessions on human rights monitoring as well as assurances that freedoms will be restored soon. But the Information Minister told a media delegation on Thursday that the restrictions on news on FM radios will stay and denied reports that mobile phones will be restored soon.

Continued p12



DEEPENDRA BAJRACHARYA

Amadeus enhances and defines the travel and tourism landscape of Nepal

Offers greater employment opportunities to the Nepali youth

Kathmandu, Nepal.

April 7, 2005. Amadeus has been a pioneer in providing global platform to Nepal Travel industry by bringing in the state of the art travel technology. After successfully developing the Indian travel industry and bringing it to a global platform, Amadeus pioneered to replicate the same for the travel industry of Nepal.

At a time when no other reservation system was keen to enter the Nepal market, Amadeus took the plunge and the initiative to do so and established a liaison office in Nepal in October 1997. To take such a step exactly 7 years ago was a bold decision in the industry, however, now looking back one can clearly see that the decision was no doubt a bold but a correct one. It helped the travel industry of Nepal in more ways than one. Amadeus has played a pioneering role in shaping the nascent travel industry of Nepal and taking it to where

it is today. Amadeus measured and promoted the economic importance of travel industry of Nepal, it also was an excellent ground to study the travel industry market and evaluate the travel technology potential in the Nepal.

Furthermore and more importantly, Amadeus went ahead to educate people from the industry on IT development and automation products to enable them to offer Nepalese products and services worldwide by this way ascertaining the development potential for IT. This also helped to facilitate access to world class resources and technological advancement and finally to develop human capital required for growth of the industry by providing free of cost training/education on automation.

Amadeus provided world-wide platform to Nepal travel industry by bringing in the state of art technology in

automation, by providing training on Computerized Reservation System usage, computers, technical, help desk support all free of cost. Education, training and development are the keys to Amadeus' success globally. With this resource at hand, Amadeus educated and trained the travel industry on automation and helped change the travel industry to adapt to new technologies with ease. All these facilities were and are provided free of cost, because at Amadeus we believe that a trained staff is an asset to any organization.

Amadeus Nepal Pvt Ltd is centrally and conveniently located at hotel Yak and Yeti in Kathmandu and was registered in December 2004, servicing the travel fraternity of Nepal. The company is established with the objective to provide IT and software services, develop software products such as reservation tools, accounting software

etc. for travel trade industry including customized software products for travel agents, local providers and sale of the same in local and foreign markets. Initially, the company will provide travel automation software solutions, develop customised software solutions and sell tailor made software products. With success in its initial foray, the company has plans to provide services accomplished by the use of software and the adding of value to the software. It will include call centres, back office data processing and web content development which in turn will provide greater employment opportunity to the aspiring young talent in Nepal and create an in house IT laboratory. ●



advt.

2062

King Gyanendra, addressing the Royal Nepali Army's cadet graduation ceremony at Kharipati on Monday, said: "The alternative to democracy is democracy, not terrorism."

There will be very few people in Nepal who will disagree with that: not even the political party leadership which excels in seeing a dark cloud behind every silver lining. For some Kathmandu-based diplomats, who were present at the king's address, it was exactly what they wanted to hear. And most Nepali people would whole-heartedly endorse their monarch's sentiment. So where is the problem?

In fact, we seem agreed on just about everything about the future course this country should take. We all know (or should admit we know deep down) there is no military solution to the insurgency. Even some in the Maoist leadership have admitted this publicly. In reality, all that the revolution has achieved in the past decade is to bring ruin and misery to Nepal and Nepalis, postpone reforms, demolish democracy, dismantle hard-earned freedoms, encourage rightwing adventurism and push us to militaristic tendencies.

We are now long past the stage where either side will improve its bargaining position in future talks by trying to get the upper hand militarily. The yearning for peace is so strong that they will only earn the collective curse of all Nepali people if they drag this on (see p 4). The hope that the other side will split and self-destruct is also a delusion: the state is more resilient than the Maoists thing and a split in rebels ranks may unleash more virulent, even ethnic-laced, warfare in future.

If everyone is for peace what is everyone waiting for? If the leaders mean what they say there shouldn't be any problem to kickstart the peace process. (If they say one thing and do another, then we have a problem.) The only obstacles to peace we see are *ijjat*, ego, competition for the peace dividend, and a winner-takes-all attitude. None of these obstacles are intractable. In fact, whoever puts forward the first peace overture with, let's say a unilateral ceasefire proposal, is going to make the other side look like a warmonger. The people will not see peace-making as an admission of weakness. It takes more courage to work for a resolution than to keep fighting.

What's stopping us then from accepting UN or other mediation, what do we have to lose? Why not agree to a roundtable conference to discuss constitutional reforms—there isn't a constitution in the world that can't be improved. The Maoists could be publicly offered a face-saving reward of rehabilitation, troop induction, training and employment which they would look foolish to refuse even in the eyes of their own cadre.

Delaying a resolution by engaging in deadlocked debate about which comes first, peace or democracy, doesn't get us anywhere. We need both, together. That should be our new year resolution for 2062.



SUN DIAL: One of the last sunsets of 2061 silhouettes Dharara on Thursday evening.

KUMAR SHRESTHA

Model multilateralism

Let's not get sucked into self-destructive xenophobia and paranoia

Schizophrenia seems to have struck the state apparatus. Senior government functionaries have always loved to play victim, now they regard international media, activists and even diplomats with ill-disguised paranoia. If you are not a Pakistani, Chinese, North Korean, Sudanese, or Cuban these days you could be a potential enemy.

This the Hermit Kingdom Syndrome all over again. Just like mid-19th century Nepal, fear of outside influence once again forces the entire nation to withdraw into its shell. For an outward-looking country that had a good international reputation for tolerance and freedom this descent into isolationism is deeply disturbing. It shows we are too preoccupied with present concerns to care about the future.

We need to continue to be fully engaged with the outside world, because what happens there directly affects us here. Paul Wolfowitz's appointment as president of the World Bank and John Bolton's selection as America's new UN rep will affect us all no matter where we live on this planet.

Robert McNamara is still remembered in Nepal's midhills as "Makaimara"—they blame the World Bank for crops that were devastated by his policies in 1968-1981. Nepalis need to be even more careful about Wolfowitz. But we can't fight the new

neocons that dictate policies that affect us by shutting ourselves off. We protect our national interest by projecting internationalism in our foreign policy not by being xenophobic.

And what happens here affects how the outside world sees us. The travel trade is complaining of trekking groups which have cancelled, saying they will not visit Nepal until democracy is restored.

Last week, a local school held a Model United Nations and simulated debates at the world body. The exercise proved that the size of a member state isn't an obstacle to be heard in the international arena. The resolutions passed by the Nepali boys and girls on the environment and human rights will do credit to any UN committee in its real New York headquarters.

Proceedings of the mock General Assembly discussing the agenda for reforms, including the expansion of Security Council, were even more riveting. Students had researched the policies of

member states and accurately simulated their stance. The Chinese delegation was its inscrutable best, the Americans were characteristically unilateral, the French argued both ways, Germany wore its injured pride well, Britain was hanging on to America's coat-tails, the Indians and Pakistanis got into a completely predictable argument over Kashmir.

Hours of heated debates ended in an inevitable stalemate, just like in real life. At the end of it, you couldn't help admiring the verve of the young Nepalis playacting adult delegates. If this is the calibre of our future diplomats, we have nothing to worry about.

But given the state we are in, most of these promising youngsters will probably end up in the west if ground realities in Nepal do not change. None of us can them to return to a country where three of five ambassadorial appointees, the press reported this week, are ex-military brass.

In the hierarchy of an individual's responsibilities towards humanity, country, community, family and self, everything seems to be giving way to the personal. At the 50th anniversary of the Federation of Nepali Journalists last week, a media person remarked that he was a Nepali first and journalist second. He forgot that he is a human being above all else.

Democracy, human rights, and the inviolability of basic freedoms are the most fundamental values of humanism. We may also have to re-invent internationalism so Nepal remains engaged in the world arena. The government may be contemplating change in curricula to make education narrowly 'nationalist', but in the age of globalisation it will be a wasted effort.

Paranoia shouldn't give way to a national schizophrenia that forces citizens to sacrifice life itself through a mistaken notion of survival. ●



LETTERS

IGNORANCE

Reporting by the BBC and comments by other foreign government representatives from the US, UK and India after King Gyanendra's declaration of emergency has been and still is, inaccurate and uninformed. The depth of ignorance about Nepal is amazing. King Gyanendra acted within the constitution (it wasn't a 'coup') by dismissing the 'government' because of the abysmal state Nepal was in due to the said government and the Maoists who have been declared terrorists. Nepal may have appeared to the outside world to be a democracy but, in practice, it never has been. For many people there is no such thing as a free and independent vote as they are coerced by their employers, the political party workers, fellow students or by bribes, into voting for a particular party. As for the 'elected' governments since 1990, the ministers have grown exceedingly rich by misappropriating huge amounts of foreign aid etc, which was intended to be used for the development of Nepal and to improve the lives of its citizens. This blatant corruption within the government may have initially made the Maoist insurgents but after 10 years the Nepali people are suffering from the actions of the Maoists in every respect. The whole country is being crippled by the Maoist road blockades and bandas. Is it surprising that King Gyanendra took the steps he did to try to save his country and his people from further abuse and devastation? The reactions of the US, UK and India are hypocritical and the international media's reporting after February First is flawed.

Joan Winstanley Norwich, UK

WHAT PEOPLE SAY

You poll question on the constituent assembly ('What people say', #239) was enlightening: I see that I am not alone in my confusion. We are confused because we have been the victims of doublespeak on both sides of the political spectrum. In spite of many erudite editorials arguing one or other side, there has in fact been no sincere dialogue on how the proposed process should take place. Both sides seem to prefer the smokescreen of misunderstanding to the possibility of failure. If there is a groundswell of support for a new constitution then the

will of the people must be obeyed. No democrat can argue with that. However, as the saying goes, the devil is in the detail. How are the polls to elect members for the constituent assembly to take place: one representative per district? One per VDC? Using existing electoral demarcations? New ones? Will it be a winner takes all scenario?

On the Maoist side: if they lose the constituent assembly they lose all. It is their biggest gamble. No wonder they're not upfront about it. Same is true for the parties. While they're all for polls, there remains the niggling doubt that just maybe in light of the embarrassing errors they have committed over the past decade that just possibly they no longer hold sway over as much of the population as they might like to admit. If they lose, they also lose all. The solution then, on both sides, has been to continue to delay and let confusion reign. And it has worked: your poll is proof that the people are genuinely confused. When will they have the moral courage to come forth and put all their cards on the table: dispel the devil from the detail and let well-informed citizens decide for themselves?

I have purposely removed the sovereign from this equation. Partly in an attempt to help you get this through censors and partly because I believe only Lord Pashupatinath can help him at this point.

Name withheld, Kathmandu

● Everyone talks about human rights but I suspect there lurks a dangerous disagreement about the definition of the term. What makes me think so? Statements like the following attributed to the Minister for Women, Children and Social Welfare: "Restoration of human rights ... is impossible without the restoration of peace in the country." "Restoration" of human rights is impossible for the simple reason that they cannot be taken away. Human rights are not given to us by anyone so they cannot be restored by anyone. We possess them by the fact of being human. They can be respected or violated but never taken away.

Fr Cap Miller, SJ Rector, St Xavier's Godavari

DHAN BAHADUR

Thank you for being one of the few in Nepal to print the picture of the radio journalist Dhan Bahadur Roka Magar the Radio Nepal news reader who was killed by

Maoists (Mediawatch', #241). Some clarifications: Dhan Bahadur's full surname was 'Roka Magar', he was from Rolpa and read the news in the Magar Kham language over Radio Nepal Surkhet.

Man Bahadur Pun, email

● Thank you for publishing your regular Mediawatch update (#241) it keeps us readers informed about the conditions you in the media work under and gives us an idea (together with the 'Liberty Gauge' on your masthead) how much of what you write we should believe. Of all the restrictions so far, the jamming for 15 minutes of BBC English news on 103 FM is the most absurd. You need no other proof of the paranoia and stupidity of the people running this show.

Gyan Subba, Kumaripati

● This illegitimate administration's acts border so much on irrationality that it is simply comical. The recent ban of the BBC Nepali service on FM stations is one of the most despicable acts of this undemocratic regime and proves its own cowardice.

Shyamal Shrestha, email

LOOP HOLE

I can sympathise with companies like UTL and also Nepal Telecom for being cut off for a while ('India concerned on UTL restrictions', #241). However, I believe that UTL has also not been dead honest or legal in using their loop system. They haven't been permitted to operate their phones as mobiles, which they have been doing. UTL should brush up on its own ways of functioning in their host country before jumping too soon to criticise our government, especially in times of emergency.

LK Chaudhary, email

CHELIS

I was delighted to see the Chelis rear their heads again ('Make peace, not love', #240) but very disappointed at the failure of their aesthetic analysis. They nominate the first vice-chairman (and it is still unclear to readers such as myself whether this means Bista or Giri) as the sexiest member of the cabinet. As any Cheli should know, power and sexiness go hand in hand. But my central question is: why was the chairman bypassed? Even a recent BBC piece pointed out how svelte and slim he looks. The Chelis have revealed their basic lack of understanding of what Nepali women actually want. Nepali women want real men who rule—not this nonsense about constituent shonstituent assemblies.

Name withheld, email

AIN

CK Lal in his State of the State column 'Meddling along' (#241) seems not fully informed about the Association of INGOs (AIN). He can contact the AIN office and find out any information he needs to do a

followup article in your prestigious newspaper. As a member of AIN, INF is independent, transparent, has a democratic structure, gives preference to the poor and disadvantaged and is always ready to pass on to the media any information it requests. This is my personal view.

Surendra Gautam, INF, Pokhara

TIMES ON PDF

I stumbled across your website while doing a Google search to track down some information in *Nepali Times*. Just wanted to let you know that I think your newly-activated PDF archive is a fabulous resource—especially in light of today's interesting times in Nepal. I spent some time in Nepal in 2001 and I've kept up on events ever since. While the *Nepali Times's* own website is nice, I really appreciate your offering the full issues in their original well-written, laid-out form.

J Gerlach, email

● Thanks for reprinting the translation of that brilliant Brecht poem in your editorial ('To posterity', #241). The words



have haunting parallels to Nepal and I re-read it several times to savour the words and the emotions they contained. Small mistake: you spelt the poet's name wrong in the byline to the editorial, it is Bertolt Brecht with a 't'.

D Surin, Kathmandu

CORRECTION

The wrong picture accompanied the business brief item, 'Sita abandons Nepal' (#241). The photo should have gone with the Everest Bank news that is published in this issue 'Everest in Pokhara' (p 5). In 'Nepali Ama' (#240) Indira Basnet of Support to Safe Motherhood Program was mistakenly identified as Indira Shrestha.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Letters to the editor are welcome, but may be edited for space. Preference will be given to contributions that are concise and where writers are clearly identified. However, names of writers can be withheld from publication on request.



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The east is west

Travelling across Terathum is now like going to Rukum



RAVI TULADHAR

KISHORE NEPAL in MYANGLUNG

It takes eight hours to traverse the 70 km stretch from Hile to Myanglung.

Across the green hills of eastern Nepal, with its scented forests and grand vistas, travelers are lulled into dreaming that peace has returned to this land. But the numerous checkpoints along the way, the charred hulks of burnt vans and tree trunks by the side of the road prove that even here the conflict is never very far away.

For the first six years of the conflict, eastern Nepal was largely unaffected. But the violence crept in stealthily like a

dangerous unseen epidemic. By 2003, the hinterlands of Khotang, Terathum, Sankhuwa Sabha, Bhojpur, Taplejung and Panchthar were reeling under Maoist tactics of murders, bombings and blockades. The chief architect of the Maoist expansion in the Arun Valley has been Basu Sakya, whose intention was to make Sankhuwa Sabha "the Rolpa of the east".

Today, seeing the fear in the people's faces, blocked highways, blockades, district headquarters where not even porters are allowed to travel – it is clear that he has succeeded. Aatrai, the centre of Kirat culture in the east now feels like Rukumkot. We saw the same depopulation as in

western Nepal with villagers fleeing forced Maoist recruitment. In Ukre village there are no able-bodied men left.

"Parts of Terathum especially Aathrai and Jiri-Khimti are now pretty badly affected," admits Kedar Dhungana, a local politician in Myanglung Bajar.

This used to be the bustling market town of the Limbuwan region and today, 40 percent of the population is still Limbu. The town (*pic, above*) hasn't fully recovered from the devastating fire that razed it three years ago and the conflict has now made it even more desolate. "There is a deep sense of gloom," says a local lodge-

owner, "we are sick of these blockades. You think we are secure here in the district headquarters? We can't even move beyond the bus park. Why isn't the king restoring peace to this country?"

Security is tight. There are frequent patrols and locals know the soldiers are on the warpath when the phone lines get temporarily cut. The Maoists don't dare enter the town and avoid provoking a firefight. "You meet them often on the trails and in the surrounding areas but they don't enter Myanglung," says a local shopkeeper.

That is why he is surprised by the mysterious appearance of slogans on the walls of houses in the bajar: 'Hatyara Prachanda Murdabad,' or 'Prachande Deshdrohi ho' and 'Dr Baburam Bhattarai riha gar'. Every morning, the fresh graffiti painted with enamel has been appearing in the town. Townspeople told us they doubt the Maoists wrote them, especially because the night curfew is so strict.

A government official shrugged his shoulder and said: "Maybe they came after four in the morning and painted the slogans." Whoever painted it, these slogans have suddenly appeared all over Nepal and are being displayed prominently on NTV.

We ask locals if things have changed for the better after 1 February. They hesitate and look at the tv camera but tell us later it hasn't really. Most political parties and their local representatives had been chased out by the Maoists in the past three years. "The NC has been nearly decimated and since February First, the UML has been trying to put together its network," Dhungana explains. The low-intensity violence has continued even in the past two

months. But with the strict blockade and the heightened security, the people sense that war is now at their doorsteps.

The Maoists seem to be aware that they don't have public support. We saw a directive issued in December by District Secretary Bishnu Dahal instructing his cadre not to indulge in extortion and torture. But the Maoists are still harassing teachers. "They force us to join training programs and we still have to pay them a tax from our salary," Saran Kangdamwa, high school teacher told us.

Security patrols travel out of Myanglung and there have been extensive search operations in Jiri-Khimti Bajar, five km to the west, since 1 March. Shopkeepers said they were happy to see the soldiers but they were questioned rudely. "We wanted to help them but since they manhandled people in the bajar many just kept quiet," said one trader. One man wasn't afraid to identify himself. "My name is Bal Bahadur Damai, I am from Piple, I have rented a small room here in the bajar and pay Rs 500 as rent. That day, they came and forcibly opened the door that hit me hard on my shoulder, since then I can't work."

Maoist public relations has grown better in inverse proportion. Maoist Yokta Bahadur Limbu who calls himself 'Manab' stopped us on the trail to ask for IDs. "If you people are real journalists try to find out what is happening here and who the real terrorists are," he says as he let us pass.

But the rebels aren't much better. Following their tactics from the west, they recently destroyed the suspension bridge over the Tamur at Khakule inconveniencing thousands of villagers. Of the VDC buildings in Terathum, all except five have been bombed out. ●

Jumla's refugees wait it out in Surkhet

RITA THAPA in SURKHET

In his home village in Jumla, Dhanlal Buda's life revolved around sheep and wool. Spinning, carding, weaving and knitting has always been his family's livelihood. His ancestral motto is: 'oonko tala, soonko bhada' and generations turned wool to gold.

Until eight months ago, Dhanlal's happy family lived in its self-contained world little affected by the outside world. The pastoral life was barely subsistence but it was idyllic. A goat was slaughtered every week, there was plenty of wool to spin and weave into *liu* and *radi*, *pakhi*, interspersed with the community singing of *maagla* during celebrations and religious festivals.

The Budas and other families refused to give in to forced recruitment by the Maoists of their children. Threatened, Dhanlal Buda with 29 other families escaped south to Surkhet where they have been living for the past eight months as refugees in tents.

Except for the two burned tankers near Chhinchu and felled trees along the highway to Kohalpur and another threatened blockade from 2 April, Surkhet seemed outwardly peaceful. The CDO's office was uncannily quiet, the streets were patrolled by security trucks and vans and sleek jeeps belonging to various aid agencies. Night falls early, all doors shut and the town is



The Buda family at their homestead in Jumla and now living in tents in Surkhet.

cloaked in an eerie silence.

In the past three years, the development business has boomed in Surkhet with 315 registered NGOs. The activists and charities speak of heightened security risks, being trapped by both sides and a lack of funds for those who lack connections and the English language. But they are also not united, have simplistic analysis of development issues and seem to be far removed from their constituencies. It is not uncommon to see several NGOs housed in one office, all caught up in proposal-writing or workshop-attending frenzy.

Despite such a large presence of NGOs in Surkhet, the Jumlis are on their own. After an initial relief response and

support from the government, the Red Cross and several charities, the refugees have been left to their fate. The only other noted presence was of the human rights group, INSEC, which says it has been trying to negotiate a return home for the Jumlis.

A grant from the organisation, Tewa, and practical help from Chandra Thakali of Annapurna Hotel and Nagarik Aawaj Peace Ambassadors Govinda and Prithbi, made it possible for the Jumlis to get cooking and water dishes, a month's supply of green vegetable, milk and toiletries.

Dhanlal Buda and the other families from Jumla are dignified people who are proud of being self-sufficient. They don't

want to be beggars. Dhanlal's skilled fingers are weaving or spinning constantly while he speaks simply but philosophically: "Even in the most trying of days one is gifted with laughter and pain each waking day."

How is that, we ask. "Well, the children play and smile and that makes us happy but each day we yearn for our homes and that makes us very sad."

They have been going to the CDO's office but there hasn't been much progress in getting help for their return. The hot season is coming, they are traumatised by the prospect of wind storms, insects and snakes of the lowlands. Their self-respect and dignity is still intact. But for how much longer if we fail to help them? ●



RITA THAPA

Govinda Mainali retrial in Japan

The defense team of Govinda Prasad Mainali, a 39 year-old Nepali who is serving a life sentence at Yokohama for the murder of a 39-year-old executive in 1997, made an appeal for retrial to the Tokyo High Court last week

The defense team pointed out that the prosecution had neglected to carry out detailed study and testing of the evidence retrieved and demanded the retrial so as to clarify the real facts about the evidence. The defense lawyers (see pic) believe that since the DNA test techniques have been improved a lot since the time of the murder, the study would bring about the truth about the murderer.

A day before filing for the retrial, one of the Govinda's defense team visited Govinda at Yokohama jail and reconfirmed his determination for retrial. It is said that retrial may affect Govinda's term in jail adversely. But Govinda immediately said: "I do not wish my sentence term to be extended but more than that, I can never admit to a crime I never committed." This week, Govinda's 74 year-old mother will be coming to Japan with Govinda's wife, Radha.

Everest in Pokhara

In an effort to spread out and offer better facilities, Everest Bank Limited (EBL) has established its 16th branch in New Road, Pokhara. Many Pokharelis and people from adjoining districts go abroad to earn money. EBL hopes to provide better remittance facilities to the people there. Indian ambassador, Shiv Shankar Mukerjee inaugurated the office in Pokhara on 28 March. (See pic)



Martinair to stop flights

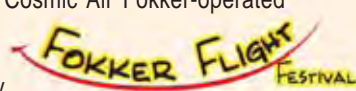
The Dutch charter airline, Martinair is stopping its once weekly Amsterdam-Kathmandu flights from 18 April because of low bookings. The airline's marketing department made the announcement in Amsterdam last week and hinted it was because of low occupancy and the reduced prospects of traffic picking up. Meanwhile, Qatar Airways has also announced that it will terminate its four weekly Kathmandu-Kuala Lumpur flights effective from 1 June because of low volume in both directions. However, Qatar says it is committed to keeping its twice daily flights to Doha.

Youth for peace

Rotary Clubs of Nepal are organising a SAARC-level Centennial Rotary Youth Leadership Award (RYLA) to mark the 100 years celebration of the Rotary Movement. The six-day residential intensive training program will be held at Budhanilkantha School from 7-12 May. The participants should be registered through the recommendation of any Rotary Club. A total of 200 participants from SAARC countries are expected to attend the program meant for young leaders. RYLA's theme this year is Youth for World Peace.

Cosmic's Fokker festival

Cosmic Air started its new scheme for Fokker Flight Festival from 1 April. The festival is open on all Cosmic Air Fokker-operated domestic flights—between Kathmandu and Nepalganj, Bhairawa and Biratnagar. A lucky draw on each flight decides the winner of a Cosmic Yingang motorcycle.



Hama Hangama

Hama Iron and Steel Industries Pvt Ltd has recently launched a consumer scheme named the Hama Ghar Hangama (HGH). Every month Hama offers its consumers free Hama iron steel, 50 percent reimbursement of the total Hama iron steel purchased and 50 sacks of cement to each lucky winner. Four lucky winners get water tanks and eight receive a five percent reimbursement on Hama iron purchased.

The aid haemorrhage

Aid should be in the business of putting itself out of business

In the Gregorian 21st century Nepal, there have been many interesting debates—whether or not we need cell-phones, Internet, how useful is democracy after all, and whether or not we actually need development assistance.

ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed



The current government has been defiantly telling donors to shove it. While critics say it is politically motivated, this Beed agrees with many others who say this is as good an opportunity as any to discuss the efficacy of foreign aid. After all, billions of dollars from donor taxpayers have been funnelled to Nepal in the past 40 years. And some would have it that it has just been a way to take from the poor in rich countries and give it to the rich in poor countries.

Two issues are of importance—has the assistance-driven economy gone too far in making development activities a mechanism that is driven by the whims and fancies of 'parachute consultants'? And, has the development sector weaned away

our best and brightest over the past two decades and turned them into international civil servants in other countries? For example, isn't there a way to keep Nepali micro-credit experts in Nepal instead of exporting them to Cambodia? We need our efficient administrators here, not in Afghanistan.

Accountability of aid has been minimal because in many cases the objective is to be able to spend more rather than spend effectively. Results are guided by mission activities that are short-term and the vision of chiefs whose tenure is also short-term. Projects reports hop from proposal to appraisal to monitoring, making Nepal one of the highest per-capita in the sheer volume of reports we churn out.

Assistance themes are fragmented making duplication inevitable. In the quest to make their own tenures exciting, 'experts' push lots of ideas and put a few into action. The apathy towards the private sector has found many areas of potential partnerships untouched. Government officials are 'adopted' either through topping up of salaries

or sponsored junkets to create a class that knows how to demand but not perform.

This breed of home-grown consultants who have learned to earn more without being accountable for their performance has suddenly led to the growth of generally complacent, highly-paid non-competing professionals who are more than happy to sing to the tune of their masters. Unfortunately, the gifted among us have entered this sector, making us role models for others.

The phenomenon is not unique to Nepal. The talented and brilliant are wooed the world over by the corporate world. Trouble is that in Nepal, they are taken away by the development world, lured by better financial deals and jobs that are not linked with performance. In the past decade, we have seen brilliant Nepalis vegetate after being brain-drained into the development whirlpool.

The Beed is not for stopping development assistance. But let's streamline it, make it work towards making itself redundant and not prolong dependency. ●

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Surprise and suspicion greet King Jigme

Samaya, 7 April

समय

Even though there is no domestic pro-democracy movement and no discernible outside pressure, Bhutan's King Jigme Singye Wangchuk has surprised everyone by putting forward a proposal to devolve power to a constitutional monarchy and a two-party parliamentary system. Although the 100,000 Bhutani refugees have described the move as an effort to distract world attention from their plight. It has gained wide support. In the 100 years of monarchy, it seems Bhutanis believe that the people will get reform only if the king decides to give it. It remains to be seen what final shape the constitution will take. The proposal will be sent out to Bhutan's 534,000 people considered citizens.

After that there will be a referendum at end-2005. It also remains to be seen how many people in Bhutan, where the literacy rate is only 30 percent, will be able to read and understand the new draft constitution. And there is speculation that in a country steeped in unquestioned loyalty to royalty, the people may reject the king's devolution plan. King Jigme has not just offered to become a constitutional monarch, but said he will step down after he reaches 65 and if he or any other king doesn't behave properly there is a provision for parliament to pass a no-trust vote. The draft gives full sovereignty to the people and keeps the monarchy as a symbol of national unity. King Jigme, a student of international diplomacy became king at 16 in 1972 and at age 49 there was a blot on his reign with the 'ethnic cleansing' of people of Nepali origin for which he has been condemned internationally. But the rare gesture of giving up power voluntarily has increased the chances that he will now be considered a statesman. "This is throwing dust in the eyes of foreigners," says refugee leader, Teknath Rizal, "the king is still above the law and the people will not be able to exercise real democracy." Indeed, the draft resolution makes no effort to resolve the refugee question. Instead there is an effort to entrench the move by making 1958 the cut-off year for citizenship. The conditions for new citizenship is so severe (those accused of being critical of the king aren't eligible) so there is no question of the refugees ever being considered Bhutanis again. Other than that, the draft resolution is more



progressive than Nepal's constitution on issues like women's rights, for example on inheritance. Although it was crafted with help from Indian experts, the draft reflects Bhutani realities: for instance the army chief's nomination is the responsibility of the king. In addition, up to 75 members of the house and 25 members of the upper house will be answerable to the king. Although 85 percent of its people make their living on agriculture and its development parameters are poor, Bhutan has a per capita income of \$ 660 which is one of the highest in South Asia. Although a 1947 treaty makes Bhutan an Indian protectorate, the draft constitution skirts the issue of international recognition and treaties as well as international diplomatic relations. But it does make every Bhutani a 'trustee' to guard the country's natural resources, especially hydropower. The constitution emphasises raising literacy rate and spreading health care.

Under the two party system, the party that gets most votes in election makes the government while the other one is in the opposition. Parties can lose their political recognition if they are not transparent in their financial dealings. They can't use extra-legal means to take advantage of being in government. There is strong punishment against a party taking money from private, NGOs or foreign sources. There is also a provision for declaration of emergency but for that the prime minister has to request it in writing to the king. Its duration can only last 21 days and will affect press freedom and civil liberties. Bhutan will be a Buddhist kingdom but the state will conserve other religions. The king will be a the supreme commander of the army and all citizens will have to get militia training.

Despite these provisions, the Association of Press Freedom Activities (Bhutan) is not satisfied. Chairman IP Adhikari says: "Bhutan has lied and tricked it way through many international conferences about its democracy and freedom. This draft is just another of those tricks."

The coming years will show if the king is sincere in his democratic dealings. If he is, his international stature will improve. If he doesn't his new constitution will be seen as a smear. As far the Bhutani refugees are concerned, the bottom line is that it will be easier for them to deal with a democratic Thimphu than an autocratic one.

Third force

Gunaraj Luitel in Kantipur, 5 April

कान्तिपुर

The current thinking seems to be to militarily defeat the Maoists and then bring democracy back on track. But it is now becoming clear that restoration of democracy may make it easier to resolve the insurgency. This is the argument of the international community also. In other words, democracy is not an obstacle to conflict resolution, it is an inevitable part. Biswanath Upadhaya, one of the writers of the constitution, is of the opinion that parliament can be restored in order to provide an exit strategy out of the present deadlock. However, the question will be asked: when parliament was in session in the past its elected members never debated the country's crisis seriously. What guarantees they will do so if it is restored now? Things are different today. Elected representatives have tasted the absence of democracy, they know the effect lack of democracy can have on social progress. Being able to think freely in a democratic environment is completely different from existing in a closed society. We can't move ahead to resolve the country's crisis by keeping a majority of the people out of the decision-making process. The king can have no closer friend than the political parties who believe in constitutional monarchy and democracy. He must move forward with them.

The struggle for democracy is

not easy, it is risky but the rewards are great. This was the message Girija Koirala gave after his release from a two-month house arrest this week. Instead of spouting anger and taking on a hardline republican stance, Koirala's message in Sanepa on Saturday was one of moderation.

Truth prevails

Kamal Koirala in Sanghu, 4 April

संगु

Last Friday, I was reading the *Nepali Times* and its Mediawatch column about journalists killed: five by the Maoists and six by the state. On Sunday, *Samacharpatra* reported the death of another journalist Khagendra Shrestha, editor of *Dharan Today*. He had been shot by unknown assailants. He could have been murdered by someone acting on behalf of the state or the Maoists but the killing of journalists will never kill journalism in Nepal. One dies, another will be born. It may have made the bloody thirsty assassins happy but it will not kill the spirit of journalism. For the last several years, journalists have been victims of both the state and the Maoists. Neither have been able to face the truth exposed by the media. Shrestha's assassins must have assumed that his murder helped them but such an act of cowardice will never help these brainless killers. It is likely that many Nepalis may not have heard or read about Shrestha but his name will be recorded in the history of Nepali journalism. He paid the ultimate price for press freedom.

Media phobia

Editorial in *Rajdhani*, 5 April

राजधानी

Successive Nepali rulers have always harboured a phobia about the media. They have hesitated from fully disclosing details of issues of domestic or international importance in the mistaken belief that it will somehow undermine them. In fact, they have always believed international agencies more than the domestic media. There can only be two conclusions from this: Nepal's rulers have always felt insecure about the media's power or only those who have never understood the importance of a free media have become rulers.

Such insecurity doesn't increase the prestige of those in power, it damages national reputation and kills creativity. There are plenty of examples from recent Nepali history of rulers who have clamped down on media because it has been critical of them or because they just don't know how to use an independent and credible media for their own purposes.

Part of the reason for this immaturity in dealing with media is because there hasn't been enough debate on the importance of the fourth estate in safeguarding democracy. What kind of understanding should exist between the government and media? What are the rights and responsibilities of the media? We will not claim that the Nepali media hasn't made mistakes in the past. But curbs on the media's freedom have always fed a backlash against the state.

The government set up after 1 February 2005 has been expressing dissatisfaction about the media's reporting but doing precious little to use the power of that very media to improve Nepal's standing domestically and internationally. The most vivid proof of this is that the Nepali people have to depend on foreign reporting about their own country.



A freer press?

On sword: Anti-terrorism law

कान्तिपुर Kantipur, 2 April

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"If the reports that the Indian ambassador is instigating politicians against the monarchy are true then he should be expelled from the country as it violates the Vienna convention."

Honorary ADC to King Gyanendra and President of the World Hindu Federation, Bharat Kesari Simha in *Janadharana*, 31 March



Goodbye to authoritarianism

Former MP Radheshyam Adhikary in
Drishti, 5 April

दृष्टि

The formation of the ministers' council under the chairmanship of the king is not in line with the constitution. As far as the state of emergency is concerned, it can be imposed only at the recommendation of the ministers' council. Our constitution did not envisage the king taking action, therefore the constitutional spirit, provision and concept is that no question can be raised about the king's deeds. That provision has been violated whereas the constitutional view that no one can challenge the king's moves has been kept intact.

Everything the RCCC is doing is unconstitutional. Irrespective of who recommended the formation of such a commission, it is not in accordance with the constitution. The imposition of the state of emergency does not mean that other constitutional bodies become ineffective. For instance there are bodies like the Supreme Court, Election Commission, Public Service Commission and CIAA. At a time when the constitutional bodies are still functional, forming a separate one is unconstitutional. An order says anyone challenging the royal council will be subject to prosecution.

When the state power grabs a judge by his collar, we may not be able to retaliate but does such a move not appear against the basic legal structure?

The present constitution has accepted the principle of division of powers. It is something we abide by and I believe the king himself is under the same constitution. The 1990 movement bid the authoritarian system goodbye, we can't re-impose the system we replaced. For that to happen, the constitution must be declared null and void. But if the present constitution exists, it needs to be followed.

It is clear that the royal commission's tenure will end as soon as the state of emergency is over, so according to the royal declaration, only one month remains. What will be done with the state of emergency is still to be seen. According to the constitution, the state of emergency can be extended by parliament. Even if we do not have parliament, we have the Upper House. If the state of emergency is not ratified by parliament within three months, it will simply come to an end. As soon as that happens, the royal commission's tenure will end. Of course, things can be different if the body is used as a political instrument.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

“Ask the king”

Deshantar, 3 April

Interview with Girija Prasad Koirala

देशान्तर साप्ताहिक

What is NC's stance towards February First and how will your party move forward?

The 1 February move that led to the king's direct rule is totally against the constitution. It has destroyed the constitution which was framed with the consensus of both the king and the citizens after 1990's People's Movement. The king should have moved forward with the political parties with a policy of unity, nationalism and harmony. We always stressed that such joint efforts would have solved the Maoist problem. The parliament is the only means through which the king, parties and people can work together to solve national problems.

Is there possibility for dialogue?

Only after all our friends are released, press freedom is restored and a political environment is created. Without this, dialogue is not possible. I will be discussing with other parties about future action.

What about the Maoists?

I have always said we will take up our movement even at gunpoint from both sides. We are not willing to join the king or the Maoists. There is no possibility of aligning with the Maoists until they give up violence.

How was the two months you spent in house arrest?

I was always prepared for such a situation. I was supposed to be under house arrest but I was constantly locked inside a room, not even allowed to walk downstairs or inside my house.

Is the NC divided over constitutional monarchy and republic?

NC has always adhered to constitutional monarchy. But I don't know where we will stand now. It would be better if you asked the king this question.

What should the king do?

He should restore parliament.

But wouldn't that be unconstitutional?

No. If the king used Article 127 to end the constitution, he can use the same for a good purpose. I appreciate the support of the international community for our democracy but only we, not they, can make decisions to solve the problem between the king and parties. For the last two-and-a-half years, the movement demanding restoration of parliament has continued.

But the Maoists have not said they will come for peace talks even if parliament is restored.

You shouldn't give too much importance to the Maoists. Once the parties and people are united, the Maoists can be easily sidelined. The king should not go it alone.

Vacancy Announcement

SNV/Nepal, a Dutch non-government development organisation, has been working in Nepal since 1980. SNV/Nepal focuses on capacitating key institutions at the district, regional and national level with the ability to serve the interests of marginal areas. SNV's sectoral niches are in governance, private sector development and natural resource management.

The Canadian Cooperation Office – Nepal (CCO) assists Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in the planning and delivery of CIDA's development program. The CCO also supports the Canadian Embassy to Nepal and contributes to the implementation of Canada's shared agenda on Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Development.

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- Capture and disseminate timely security and safety information and give advice to staff operating and traveling in districts and remote areas.
- Assess the security and safety in specific districts.
- Ensure the development and implementation of all required security and safety procedures for CCO and SNV in Nepal.

Required Knowledge: A minimum of Masters Degree in any discipline; 5 years of working experience on security planning and implementation; ability of working and establishing rapport with people from different backgrounds and with different viewpoints or (political) affiliations; knowledge and experience in providing risk management and security training is essential.

Required Skills: Fluency in spoken and written English and Nepali; excellent communications skills; rapport building; networking skills; coaching skills; capacity to work with minimal supervision; analytical skills and decision making ability; willingness and flexibility to travel in remote and conflict affected areas. Previous experience of working in insecure and conflict affected areas would be advantageous.

Applications are to be sent to the below address along with a cover letter with the latest curriculum vitae, daytime contact number, a recent photograph and the names of two referees along with their contact address/telephone numbers. Only shortlisted candidates will be notified; written assessment and final interviews will take place on the week of May 16, 2005.

Deadline for submitting applications: 5:00 pm Friday April 22, 2005

Job description is available for pick up from **Organisation Development Centre (ODC)** from **April 4, 2005 onwards** or it could be accessed through our website www.odcincorp.com under the category "Recruitment". Candidates unable to pick up the above or access the website may request for it through e-mail.



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KUNDA DIXIT

Close encounter in the Himala

Trekking through Nepal's changing political la

LUBA SVRCINA in DOLAKHA

The first time I visited Nepal in 1999, the people were shrugging the Maoists off as a flash in the pan. A year later they were seen as a nuisance. By 2002, villagers had fear written on their faces and in 2004, it had changed to a heavy feeling of despair, resignation and fading hope. They were fed up with extortion, the fall in trekking tourism caused by the insurgency and felt let down by successive governments in Kathmandu incapable of resolving the crisis.

Trekking used to be an adventure in nature but by 2002 there was a new kind of adventure in the mountains. The certain interception by Maoists along the trail, the demand for money, the bargaining and the inevitable political discussions. Some trekkers sought out Maoists, the guerrillas in the mist they came to see and were disappointed when they didn't. Others were visibly upset and even if the revolutionary tax was not a lot of money for them, had moral problems giving money to a group that espoused violence.

Being from a former communist east European country, I decided if I was going to give them money I may as well find out

what they'd do with it. How did they propose to fund the promised free education and medical care with the money they collected from trekkers? If they want to play Robin Hood, take money from the rich and give it to the poor, why were they destroying the tourism industry? Governments collect taxes from the people for their operating budget. How can they tax people who are subsistence farmers and have no cash flow to start with? History has shown that communist systems have failed everywhere it has been tried, why do they think Nepal will be a miraculous exception?

The young Maoist seemed baffled and at a loss for words. Each question was punctuated by a long silence. An hour and a half into my harangue and he was questioning his own ideology. I told him I fled communism to Canada and was a refugee. He couldn't imagine a white person could be a 'saranarathi'. I gave him a fraction of the money demanded and made him promise to leave us alone.

Last October, I met two Nepali men also trekking in Dolakha. One seemed to be educated and loved to talk, the other one was the silent type. We talked about balance of power and its importance in democracy. If nobody supports anybody in anything, how is progress possible? People need to

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support parties according to their platforms not on the basis of caste or ethnicity.

The talkative one asked me about restructuring parliament. There has to be a balance of power, I said, there has to be a strong parliament and a strong king. If parliament is weak and the king is strong, there is no democracy. If parliament is strong and the king weak, there is no veto power and the system is unbalanced again.

February First did send democracy reeling but democracy is a right that has to be earned. Nepal has a certain feeling of isolation. The reason for all that has happened are the Maoist threats against the political parties and the instability it has created, especially in the countryside. If the political parties give up their tantrums and cooperate for a change, Nepal would have a better future.

When the first gentleman found out I was a refugee, he flooded me with questions. Was there a military solution? I said no. They looked at me, stunned. I added that I was a Buddhist and believed in ahimsa. Two weeks later, I learned that the reserved fellow was a Maoist making sure that the first one was not a government spy. That's why (like in my old country) they always come in twos.

A few days later, I met another Maoist. He demanded Rs 2,000 again and filled out a

receipt. I gave him Rs 1,000 and began arguing in broken Nepali. The villagers gathered around us, surprised to see a *bideshi* woman daring to challenge a Maoist. I knew from experience that communists don't negotiate easily, they need to be weakened first. The young rebel was annoyed and started screaming: "Is there democracy in Nepal now?" I replied: "Democracy is not possible when there are terrorists in the country." He picked up his bag and walked away without a word, the villagers parted to let him through.

Tourists roll over and play dead when the Maoists ask them for money, paying the price demanded instead of trying to reason with them. The Maoist collected Rs 3,000 from our little group of one guide and four porters. A group of 35 trekking behind us paid the full amount. In that one-hour, the rebels had collected Rs 35,000.

There is no question that the king's move undermined democracy. But democracy is a right that has to be earned and it comes with obligations and requires a degree of maturity. Rural Nepalis have time and again demonstrated maturity, unfortunately national leaders of the parties haven't. Since none of the governments since 1996 had the capacity and wisdom to deal with the Maoists, the king really had no choice. A desperate situation demands desperate measures. It is easy to criticise the king but he is hardly the problem. The Maoists are much more elusive, destructive and dangerous and few are brave enough to question their intentions.

The king perhaps didn't realise the world was watching that closely. If he now acts with wisdom and garners domestic and international support, this crisis can be brought under control and resolved. After all, he says he is fighting for the survival of democracy, as well as for his own crown and country. ●

It's a jungle out there

A trekking guide recounts how he was robbed in broad daylight in Thamel

PURNA BAHADUR THAPA MAGAR

For the past seven years, I have worked as a licensed trekking guide. I have seen my share of adventure, acting as a go-between when my clients meet rebels who want money. Or taking them safely past security checkpoints.

Never once had anyone stolen anything from me or my trekkers in the mountains of Nepal. But last month I was robbed in broad daylight on the streets of Kathmandu.

I had just returned from some freelance guiding with a German trekker who had agreed to pay 10 euros a day. At the end of a two-week trek, my stingy customer didn't keep his end of the bargain. But that's another story.

On 19 March, I went to Thamel to a money exchange counter to change my hard-earned euros. At 8AM, I was standing outside the counter when a middle-aged man approached me. He asked me what I did for a living and thinking he might be a prospective client, I answered his questions. Then he took me to a corner, flipped an identity card (I couldn't see it properly) and said he was a CID police officer.

I had been detained by police under mistaken identity before and was treated badly. So when this guy put me in a taxi and took me to Hanuman Dhoka, I remembered my previous ordeal and was scared. Throughout the ride he threatened and questioned me. He wanted to know how I had got the euros, how much I had. Then he took my wallet and went through it thoroughly. I was numb with fear. He said



MIN BAJRACHARYA


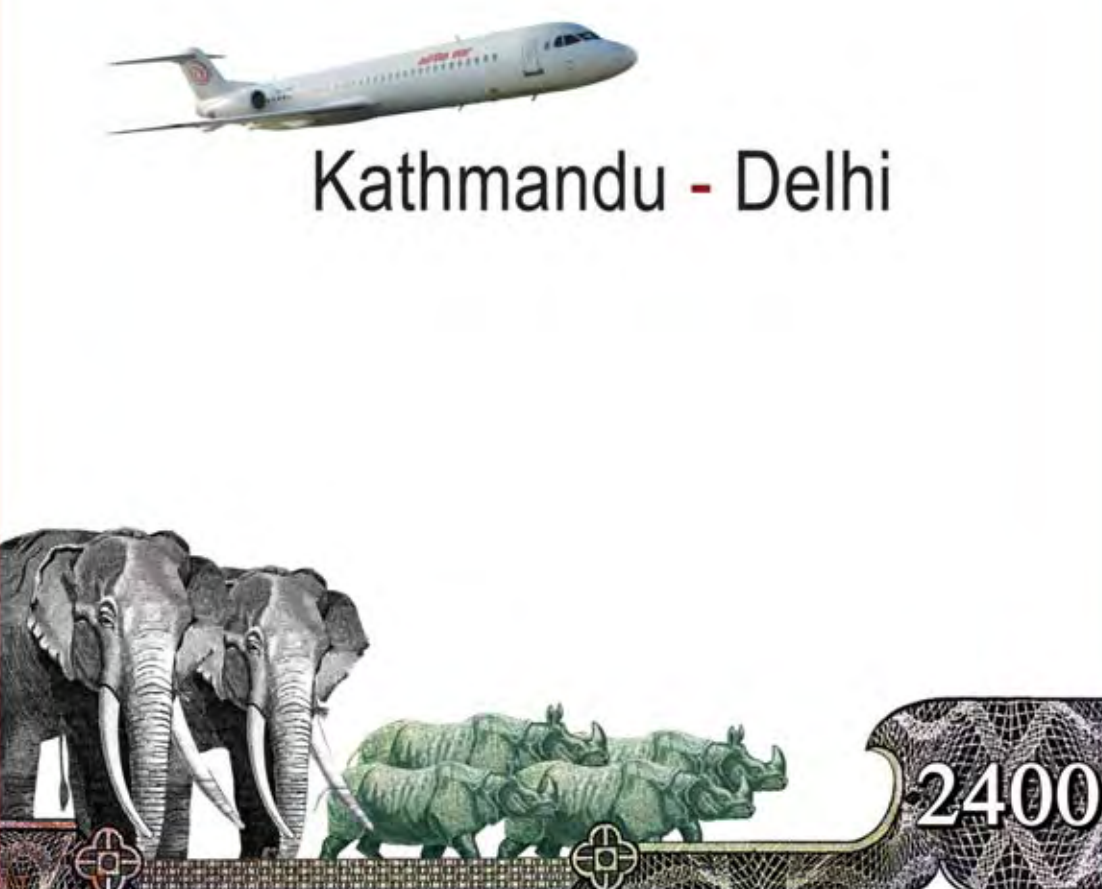
he would put me in prison, hinting I would be framed with harsher charges.

He stopped the taxi some way from the Hanuman Dhoka station and told me to give him all my money. I had no choice but to hand over 135 euros and Rs 900. He went towards the police station and disappeared.

I don't know his name and I never saw him again.

I have thought about this man's language, demeanour and behaviour. I don't think he was a professional conman, in fact he really looked like a policeman. But the fact remains, I was conned out of two weeks of hard-earned money.

We should be telling tourists: Nepal is safe, just be careful in Kathmandu. (as told to Aarti Basnyat)





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How to be good

It's not as easy as you think, as Studio 7's rendition of *The Good Person of Szechwan* shows us



Written in various European countries and in the United States while he ran away from Nazi Germany, Bertolt Brecht's *The Good Person of Szechwan* has a universal feel to it. On April 22, Studio 7 will open the play for this season at Hotel Vajra.

Set in fictional China, *The Good Person of Szechwan* is

about three gods on a quest to find at least one good person on earth. Ironically, a young prostitute turns out to be that one person but even she asks herself: "How can I be good when everything is so expensive?" The gods learn how difficult it is to be good to oneself and to others in such an unjust world.

A Brecht masterpiece, it is a

modern parable posing serious questions while using heightened comic characters. It addresses basic human issues such as: how to be a good person in an imperfect, money-centred, class-divided society.

"This is a situation found everywhere in the world especially in the so-called third world," says Sabine Lehmann,

director of play, "every year here at Studio 7 we try to find a play relevant to the situation of the country. I believe in using theatre as an eye-opener and at the same time, a place to enjoy. It is a tool to realise something about life and the situation that we live in."

The Good Person of Szechwan is an amalgam of music, comedy, drama and politics. It uses the technique of epic theatre with alienation, arousing the process of reflection and critical examination of the events on stage by the audience as well as by the actor. This process of thinking is in all of Brecht's plays, always accompanied by a good sense of humour.

Brecht had a clear attitude towards the events of his time, yet the situations he portrays are of lasting truth, as they seek to show the point at which the world or the human attitude is to be altered. One of Brecht's main achievements was to revolutionise a prevailing style of theatre, that created mere passive consumers, intoxicated by more and more illusions.

He formulated the theory and practice of a theatre that aroused a process of reflection and critical

examination by the actor and the audience of the events shown on the stage. This new theatrical style is known as 'Epic Theatre' with the use of the alienation method and a new style of music, all to help the actor and the audience to stand aside and observe with discrimination all aspects of life portrayed. Brecht achieved a 'Total Theatre', full of provocation always raising questions in search of the truth.

"That does not mean it is dry theatre without emotions. The audience is moved but able to make judgments. You can laugh, cry but also think about what is being said, of a solution if possible, they get thoughtfully involved," says Lehmann who founded Studio 7 in 1981 as an international actors' ensemble based in Kathmandu. Every April since then, it has staged a production which Lehmann herself directs. ●

Studio 7 presents *The Good Person of Szechwan* by Bertolt Brecht at Naga Theatre, Hotel Vajra Every Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 22 April-8 May 7.15 PM
Reservations: 4271545, vajra@mos.com.np

From 1974 AD to 2062 BS

Jomsom is where it's at for this year's most exotic trans-Himalayan new year party

AARTI BASNYAT

If you missed the new year's dawn on 1 January, here's your chance to celebrate it on 1 Baisakh. Or if you've slumped back on your resolutions, you can gather new determination and set realistic goals for the Nepali new year which this year falls on 14 April.

This is your second chance, so make sure you do it right, take a trip to Jomsom to make it special. Jomsom Mountain Resort is where it's at with the band 1974 AD and the coolest DJ in town.

At 2,800m, Jomsom Mountain Resort (JMR) is located upstream from world's deepest gorge between Annapurna and Dhaulagiri. With a stupendous view of Nilgiri (7,061m) from every room and the Kali Gandaki flowing past. JMR is regarded as one of the world's most exotic resorts. And what most people don't realise is how close it is: just 20 minutes flight from Pokhara and there are upto 10 flights a day.

JMR has a special Jomsom jamming package for new year's, promoting the quiet town as a place for rejuvenation and party to welcome 2062 in style. Famous for the friendliness of the Thakali people and

breathhtaking scenery, Jomsom is a short trek away from Muktinath if you want to mix pilgrimage with pleasure. Being the only Nepali city that is completely eco-friendly and plastic-free, going to Jomsom from dirty old Kathmandu will not only clean your lungs but also your soul.

The Jomsom jamming package from Kathmandu costs Rs 8,500 for Nepalis and \$350 for foreigners and includes a night's stay in Pokhara. The second from Pokhara costs Rs 4,999 for Nepalis and \$199 for foreigners. Both packages comprise of airfare, two nights and one day at the resort, two buffet breakfasts and a buffet dinner, a new year's gala dinner party with 1974 AD, a complimentary drink and door prizes. Then there is a walking tour of Marpha, the town famous for its apple brandy.

It's a bargain, priced with little profit margin to encourage people to visit Jomsom and drink in its beauty. JMR wants to promote local tourism with affordable prices and good services. This new year's event is organised by PartyNepal and they've put together an irresistible party package.

1974 AD, the happening Nepali rock band with over a decade of music behind them, is the highlight of the event. The band is known for its rock, blues and folk fusion



music that has evolved with every album. It began its alliance with SOI (parent company of JMR and Cosmic Air) by allowing the immensely popular song *Nepali* to be used as a jingle for the advertisement of the only Nepali bike to be manufactured in Nepal, Cosmic Yingang. AD's latest album *Pinjada ko Suga* has busted the charts with its title song of the same name. The AD has also made

frequent diaspora concert tours, the latest in Australia.

In Jomsom, they will play their all-time favourite hits and latest compositions. The live concert will be followed by a DJ session with DJ Sickfreak so you can party till the new year dawns. ●

Contact: 4490146, 4496110
salesjom@cosmicair.com



EU hems in Chinese textile

BRUSSELS—The European Union unveiled an 'early warning system' to monitor import of China's surging textiles and clothing, and to impose safeguards if it reaches 'danger zones'. "China, and its dramatic potential to increase exports following the lifting of quotas from 1 January this year has become a key concern for a number of European Union member states and European textiles producers," said EU trade commissioner Peter Mandelson. "My aim is to ensure a smooth transition to a post quota world without incurring avoidable damage to our industry and vulnerable developing countries. The guidelines recognise the legitimate concerns of member state governments and textiles sector, while allowing China to benefit from the lifting of quotas. They equip us to make a swift and effective response," he added.

Under the guidelines the Commission could limit textile and clothing imports if they rise anywhere between 10 and 100 percent of 2004 levels. Under World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules, China's trade partners can limit imports until 2008 if they can prove that the imports are disrupting the market. China currently has a 20 percent share of global textile exports. Mandelson predicts that this could rise to 50 percent over the next five years. This is likely to hurt producers in developing countries such as Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, which have traditionally benefited from the quota system. "The time has now come to limit the seemingly voracious appetite of Chinese exporters for the European market," Bill Lakin, director-general of the European textile association Euratex said last month. But Mandelson stressed that no immediate action is planned. "We only have two full months of data," he said. "It is too early therefore to judge what sort of difference in trade flows and what likely market disruption is going to arise." He said the safeguards should be a last resort. (IPS)

Thaksin chooses softer option

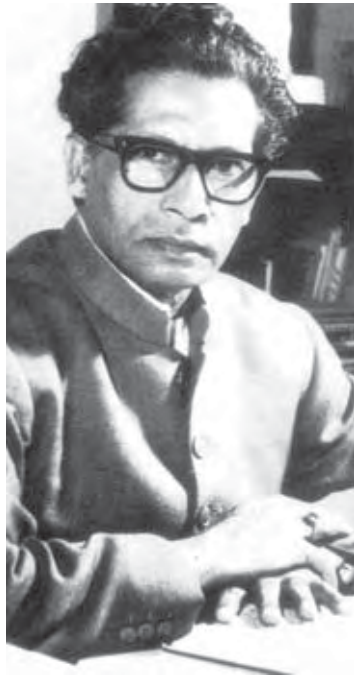
BANGKOK—Finally, Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has found virtue in a softer and conciliatory approach to quell an escalating insurgency in the country's predominantly Muslim provinces in the south. He used a rare joint session of Thailand's parliament and senate to unveil this new strategy, consequently marking a break from the hardline position he had advocated since the latest round of violence flared up in that restive region in January last year. "Most of what had occurred did not warrant the use of heavy weapons," the prime minister told 700 MPs and senators from both houses on the second day of a historic debate to find a resolution to the violence in the south. In opening the sessions on Wednesday, Thaksin urged lawmakers from across the political spectrum to place faith in "compromise and abandon prejudices for the sake of reconciliation." The government will stress on preventive measures that are acceptable to the beleaguered Malay-Muslim minority in this predominantly Buddhist country in responding to the violence attributed to suspected Muslim separatists. That would mean putting on hold the military operations of an estimated 35,000 Thai troops in the southern provinces of Narathiwat, Yala and Pattani, which have been under martial law since last year. (IPS)



Dam, sceptical project

WASHINGTON—A new dam funded by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and hailed as a windfall for Laos may end up doing more harm than good to one of the world's poorest nations and its vulnerable farmers, say several independent development groups. The World Bank, whose approval often signals a green light for other public and commercial banks to get involved, formally approved funding for the \$ 1.25 billion Nam Theun 2 hydroelectric dam project on 1 April after 12 years of studies and deliberations.

The ADB said it would give Laos, Asia's poorest nation, a total of \$120 million in loans and political risk guarantees. The European Investment Bank (EIB) will make a funding decision shortly. The involvement of the World Bank, the ADB and the EIB catalyses significant amounts of long-term US dollar debt from commercial lenders to support the power sectors of Thailand and Laos. The project is run by the Nam Theun 2 Power Company Limited (NTPC), which is owned by a consortium comprising EDF International of France, the government of Laos, the Electricity Generating Public Company Ltd of Thailand and the Italian-Thai Development Public Company. Many analysts, however, have assailed the banks' support and say it shows that international financial institutions, spearheaded by the Washington-based World Bank, are ignoring their own policy guidelines and paying little regard to indigenous people, the environment or the long-term welfare of the poor nation. The World Bank is providing up to \$270 million in loans and risk guarantees for the project, due to be completed in 2009. (IPS)



Harivansh Rai Bachchan came from a Kayasth family, whose origins revert three centuries back to the village of Amroha in Basti district of one-time Awadh. This became the United Provinces of Agra and Avadh under the British,

SOUTHASIA BEAT

Kanak Mani Dixit



the Uttar Pradesh of modern India. Harivansh's autobiography, *In the Afternoon of Time* (translated from original Hindi by Rupert Snell, Penguin India, 2001), provides an opportunity to understand a disappeared period and lifestyle that is part of the common Southasian experience of the Ganga plains.

'Bachchan' was what he was called in the family, meaning 'child' or 'boy', and the poet Harivansh retained it as his nom-de-plume. It is the surname that the elder son Amitabh made famous through his Bollywood mega-stardom. Harivansh's youth spanned a time before and after the First World War, the years of on-again off-again revolt against the British, with MK Gandhi seeking to calibrate the revolt to stay within the ambit of peaceful satyagraha.

When the poet was growing up in Allahabad, forsaking Urdu study for Hindi which was in the process gaining supremacy, the differentiations between Braj Bhasa, Maithili, Bhojpuri and other

How they died

An evocative autobiography tells of how death was a constant companion in the Ganga plains till recently

vernaculars of the Ganga maidaan were still considered significant. There was more fluidity back then across sectarian and religious boundaries. This being Prayag, where the two great rivers meet, the men bathed in the Ganga and the women in the Jamuna. The women worshipped Bhavani, while the males gravitated towards a Shiva temple built by an ancestor. Krishna's birthday, Janmastami, was celebrated, as was Muharram.

Amidst visits by hakims, vaidyas and homeopaths to the family home, Harivansh's childhood and youth includes a long and continuous list of family members breathing their last. The killers were consumption (tuberculosis), measles, malaria, diarrhea, pneumonia, seizures, various infections, and childbirth complications. In Harivansh's recounting, there are always new orphans, widows and widowers in the mohalla, and deities being propitiated to keep the grim reaper at bay.

Four babies had died before Pratap Narayan and Sursati gave birth to Harivansh. His nanny, who feeds Harivansh mother's milk after her own infant dies, passes away when the poet is still a child. His closest playmate, a cousin named Patto, is suddenly taken ill and never seen again. "I overheard the grown ups saying that Patto had died and all sorts of questions came up in my mind. Do children die? What does it mean, this dying? Does a child turn into a kind of vapour and vanish into thin air?"

Young Harivansh sees death for the first time when his sister Bhagwande passes away, lying in a charpoy in the household courtyard. Two months later an aunt named Maharani is gone, none the stronger for being proud and unbowed against familial intrigue. Within a month, her mother Radha dies at age 95, carrying with her

the family history harking back to the ancestors of Amroha. Then Maharani's daughter Buddhi breathes her last, alone in a hospice after having been sent away so as not to disturb the wedding of a cousin.

"Deaths were taking place so thick and fast.... That we began wondering anxiously how long the sequence would go on and whose turn it would be next." Before long, an elder cousin's wife passes away, giving birth to a stillborn child. "Six deaths in less than a year would be enough to shake any family and I began to feel a strange emptiness within me...The last year's spate of deaths seemed to leave many spaces empty around me, many links in the chain of relationships broken."

Beyond the family, Harivansh's close friend Karkal gets drenched in a downpour and dies of high fever. His ashes are borne away by the Ganga, and before long his wife and Harivansh's confidante Champa's ashes too follow. But the sharpest blow is meted out over the years as the poet's wife Shyama struggles against intestinal tuberculosis. She teeters between life and death for eight years before departing, leaving behind a distraught Harivansh.

Among the upper and lower middle classes of Southasia, this persistent visitations of death is now a matter of history. Simply put, there are fewer members in families and fewer deaths, particularly among children and young adults. But as is clear from this evocative autobiography, back then people passed away in the home surrounded by a circle of concerned family members. Today, the Southasian middle class dies more often than not in dilapidated hospital wards reeking of disinfectant, removed from relations and friends. That, too, is evolution. ●



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Important Dates

Form Distribution:	11-18 April	Application Deadline:	20 April
Entrance Exam:	22 April	Interview:	3-5 May
Registration:	11 May	Classes begin:	12 May

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"Democratisation through peace"



NARESH NEWAR

Susan Ulbaek, head of Asia Department of Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was in Kathmandu this week carrying a message from Copenhagen expressing concerns for human rights and democracy. Between meetings, Ulbaek spoke exclusively with *Nepali Times* on Thursday.

Nepali Times: What is Denmark's main message to Nepal?

Susan Ulbaek: Our basic concern is that we would like to see the revival of democracy and restoration of civil liberties. We want to see the process of democratisation restored through peace.

How is suspending aid going to help you do that?

We want to be clear that we are not suspending aid. We would like to stay here as long as we can and support the Nepali people. We have only suspended Danish-funded activities under the Revenue Administration Support project until further notice. The Danish government has decided not to enter into any project or program agreements with the Nepali authorities.

Your decision has been criticised as unilateral by other donors.

Danish government assistance is based on partnership which has at its very centre the progress on human rights situation and democratisation. We consider the events of February First as a serious setback to multiparty democracy. Democracy cannot be safeguarded by excluding legitimate democratic forces from the decision-making process.

Do you believe the country resolution on Nepal will go ahead in Geneva?

We very much hope that will happen. We are working to get a resolution to show we can all cooperate on human rights. We don't want any confrontation in Geneva.

What if the resolution fails?

Then, we will have to move things all over again. We are working hard on an agreement with the government because we would like to see the human rights situation improve.

The human rights situation was bad even under democratic governments, how come you didn't react then?

We were always arguing and giving very strong messages on human rights to the government. These messages on human rights and democratisation were also sent to political parties. We had hoped a lot of good things but unfortunately, nothing happened.

What have you discussed so far with political leaders?

We want to know their strategies and are urging them to unite and present a united framework since that is essential for the restoration of democracy.

All eyes on Geneva

from p1

Key donors and diplomats in Kathmandu say they are waiting for the resolution on human rights in Nepal to be tabled in Geneva on Monday afternoon. A vote is expected by 15 April.

The resolution, coordinated by the Swiss, will be reportedly drafted under Article 9. It will emphasise restoration of fundamental rights, signing of the human rights accord between the state and Maoists and appointment of a special rapporteur for international human rights monitoring.

"The outcome of that debate will decide whether aid agencies will harden their stance or continue multilateral support," explained one Kathmandu-based donor representative. The Swiss, the Danes and the Nordics have been the most uncompromising on Nepal's human rights

record and the February First royal move.

But there is said to be hectic behind-the-scenes lobbying going on in the corridors of the Palais des Nations in Geneva not to sponsor a country resolution that would spotlight Nepal. The Americans and the British are reported to be taking a slightly softer line saying a critical country resolution could actually create a backlash in Nepal and make matters worse. "I don't know who is involved in the resolution, but it is doubtful if the resolution will get through," explained a foreign aid expert.

Indian diplomats, who bailed Nepal out during last year's debate, have taken a harsher stance this time. Even though Indian diplomats across Europe, in Washington and Japan have been lobbying hard on governments to be tough on Nepal, New Delhi may not vote for the UN resolution because it has itself refused

international monitoring in Kashmir. It is likely that member nations such as Cuba will bail Nepal out on a no-action motion.

A European diplomat says the Geneva meeting is not just about human rights and February First. "It's not about hurting Nepal but about how to move the country forward," he told us.

The Europeans have been pressing hard on Nepal to allow international human rights monitoring. But there are fears this may complicate even further access to the districts for their aid personnel.

While there are still some disagreements among donors about aid cuts, most have agreed to wait and see what happens end-April when the 100-day timeframe the king wanted is over.

Some donors are critical of colleagues who have been unforgiving of the government. "The king has been relaxing curbs, we don't see a reciprocal response on the part of some donors," said one Kathmandu-based aid representative in an off-the-record interview this week.

Some diplomats consider the release of NC leader Girija P Koirala as a gesture of

faith that the king is listening to foreign powers, and say they have detected a loosening of press censorship in recent weeks. But others don't agree things are improving; human rights abuses are not being reported, radio stations can't broadcast information and political leaders are still in detention.

Explains one foreign aid worker: "The Maoists have benefited the most from censorship because news of their brutality is not getting reported and curbs on movement of human rights activists means their atrocities are not being exposed."

There is a feeling among some donors that King Gyanendra is in it for the long haul and even if the emergency is lifted things will not change dramatically. They are also worried that the conflict will be even more entrenched and fear for the safety of their project staff.

Meanwhile, a letter signed by 11 members of the US Congress to King Gyanendra this week warned: "We cannot condone any deprivation of the basic freedom and civil liberties to which your people are entitled." ●

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Tee on the funny side

Laughing at your game could be your saving grace

Conversations with golfers inevitably include golf jokes. If they can't crack one about the game, they are taking it way too seriously.

If you are not a golfer, without doubt many of these golf jokes will go over your head. (By the way, I'd like to know why a non-golfer is even reading this!) But I sympathise with those subjected to golf humour. I too was in that same clueless position many years ago as a junior at the Royal Nepal Golf Club. I'd look around with a blank smile plastered on my face as the golfers roared with laughter at some wisecrack.

Looking back I can imagine that many of those were crude humour. However, even those are often used as a refresher to

lighten up the mood after a bad round. Just as there are jokes about everything else in the world, golf has jokes as its lighter side.

This week, we treat you to some golf truths from the funny side. Feel free to use any of them the next time you find yourself drowning your sorrows at the 19th hole.

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



- Trust me, your worst round ever will follow your best round of golf almost immediately. To top it off, the probability of the former increases with the number of people you tell about the latter.
- No matter how bad your last shot was, the worst is yet to come. This law does not expire at the 18th hole since it has the supernatural tendency to extend over the course of a tournament, a summer and eventually, a lifetime.
- All brand new golf balls are water magnetic. Though this cannot be proven in the lab, it is a known fact that the more expensive the golf ball, the greater its attraction to water.

• Golf balls never bounce off trees back into play. If one does, the tree is breaking a law of the universe and should be cut down.

• No matter what causes a golfer to miff a shot, all his playing partners must solemnly chant, "You looked up" or invoke the wrath of the universe.

- The higher a golfer's handicap, the more qualified he deems himself as an instructor.
- Every par three hole in the world has a secret desire to humiliate golfers. The shorter the hole, the greater its desire.
- Sand has to be alive. If it isn't, how do you explain the way it works against you?
- During your rounds, golf carts always run out of juice at the farthest point from the clubhouse.
- Golf balls from the same 'sleeve' tend to follow one another, particularly out of bounds or into the water.
- 'Nice lag' can usually be translated to 'lousy putt'. Similarly, 'tough break' can usually be translated 'way to miss an easy one, sucker'.

On a more serious note, this Saturday, the Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre (SIRC) is holding its annual charity golf tournament at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort. The success of this event means that those suffering from spinal injuries get a chance at life again. So, take an afternoon away from your yearly calendar to join in and support this worthy cause.

Call the Resort (4451212) for information on how, even as a non-golfer, you can help by having a wonderful Saturday outing and joining in the fun.

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



KIRAN PANDEY

Shoes for the masses

AARTI BASNYAT

You know you are on to a good thing when Chinese and Indian companies start pirating your products.

That is what has happened to Amir Rana and his Goldstar brand walking shoes. They have become so successful in Nepal that knockoffs called 'Goodstar' have started appearing in the market.

Unlike Nike or Reeboks which are pirated because they are expensive, it looks like Goldstar's copy-cats want a slice of the pie that the shoe has carved for itself in Nepal's domestic market because of its low price. It is a functional, no-frills shoe that is worn by everyone from peons to managers, from underground rebels to civil servants across Nepal.

Amir Rana, the charismatic 34-year-old entrepreneur who inherited the brand from his father, Noor Pratap Rana, says that after 11 years Goldstar has become a household name in Nepal. It was launched after a studied research of the market. Foot specialists and experts who had worked for various shoe companies were brought in as consultants to design the product and draw up a business plan. For a largely roadless and vertical

country, a shoe had to be sturdy, light and cheap to succeed.

"We wanted shoes that people would not think twice about buying, whether because of price or quality. But we did not expect Goldstar to be such a huge hit," admits Amir. But there was no looking back from the word go.

Amir Rana is modest about the success of Goldstar, the walking shoe that has become a household name in Nepal

Goldstar is now branching out into the next big market: school shoes. The company [NAME?] is investing on marketing (they wouldn't tell us how much). And Amir has done his homework on the demand from the proliferation of schools all over the country.


"Goldstar never needed much publicity," says Rana, "marketing

gizmos weren't required then. It was more the 'you need it, we have it' sort of strategy. Today, we have to publicise our products to let the people know."

Inevitably the school shoes will also be pirated. But Amir is prepared for that. "I don't mind competition but I have reservations when it comes to copying our shoes and stealing our brand name. Why can't people stick to healthy competition? Nike and Addidas are competitors, but they don't pirate each other's ideas," he adds.

Though Goldstar did not start out to be a social brand, its cheap pricing and quality automatically launched the concept of social and corporate responsibility. "We started off like any other company—to make profit. But by pricing our quality products at minimum profit margins, we managed to fulfil our social responsibility while making profit," says Amir.

Amir does not limit his sense of social responsibility to his company, he also personally sponsors scholarships for orphans and underprivileged children. He is also the treasurer of the Meritous Award established by his father. ●



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SURYA NEPAL

GOLF

"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 UNACOOTs, the United Nation's Assn. of Cartoonists

THE ADVENTURES OF HEROJIG
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The Do's and Don'ts of Internet Dating in Nepal

<p>1) Do provide Family name (saves trouble later)</p> <p>2) Do provide correct Gender (saves trouble later)</p> <p>3) Do state your <i>honest</i> intentions (Marriage =YES / Sex = NO)</p>	<p>1) Don't provide Financial Data (ie. 7 goats, 3 bufs..)</p> <p>2) Don't use a real photo (unless u look like Preity)</p> <p>3) Don't expect to meet Aishwarya Rai online</p>
--	---

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can also be seen at www.extreme-nepal.com

ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Celebrating Line Drawings** at Siddhartha Art Gallery, until 13 April.
- ❖ **The Logic of Dust** Installation by Apolo F Murciano at Gallery Nine, Lajimpat, until 14 April. 4428694
- ❖ **Magic Pencil Artworks** by Britain's best children's illustrators at the British Council, Lainchor. Until 6 May. 4410798

EVENTS

- ❖ **Reiki** by Elif Koksall on 7-8 April, 9AM-4PM at HBMC, Thamel. 4414843
- ❖ **Memorial Mass Service** to pray for Pope John Paul II on 8 April, 5PM at Assumption Church, Dhobighat.
- ❖ **SIRC Charity Golf Tournament** on 9 April, 11AM at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort, Kathmandu. 4470874
- ❖ **Gradual Steps to Spiritual Freedom** Talk by Losang Namgyal on 9 April, 10AM-4PM at Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre. 44414843
- ❖ **French Film Festival** Until 10 April at Russian Cultural Centre. 4241163
- ❖ **Jat Sodhnu Jogi Ko** at Gurukul, Setopool, 5PM. Till 10 April. 4466956
- ❖ **Buena Vista Social Club** by Wim Wenders at the Film Club, Baggikhana, Patan Dhoka on 10 April, 5PM. Tickets Rs 50, 5542544
- ❖ **Nepali New Year's Day** on 1 Baisakh, April 14.
- ❖ **Baisaki Raat** New year's eve at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot on 13 April.
- ❖ **Dare to Wear** New Year's party at Radisson Hotel on 13 April. 4411818
- ❖ **Jomsom Jammin'** New year celebrations with 1974 AD. 4490146
- ❖ **Open House** at The International French School of Kathmandu, Lajimpat, on 15 April, 9AM-1PM. 4411203
- ❖ **Chait Dasain** on 17 April.
- ❖ **The Good Person of Szechwan** Staged by Studio 7 at Hotel Vajra, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, 22 April-8 May. 4271545
- ❖ **Toyoto Women's Motor Rally** on 23 April. 4478301
- ❖ **1905 Sundays** Garage sale, pet practices, stalls, food and more. <http://www.extreme-nepal.com/1905sundays.htm>
- ❖ **Fun in the Sun** at Club Sundhara, Hotel Shangri-la, Lajimpat. 4412999
- ❖ **Art workshop** for kids at Buddha Gallery. 4441689
- ❖ **Rugby Practice** Every Saturday. 4435939, citygymktm@hotmail.com
- ❖ **Sanibaar Mela** Saturdays at the Dharahara Bakery Café, 12AM-5PM.



MUSIC

- ❖ **Live Jazz** by JCS trio and Peter McTwister, Thursdays at Full Moon Bar, Mondays at New Orleans Café, Thamel. 4700736
- ❖ **Fusion Time** Every Monday at Jalan Jalan Restaurant, Lajimpat. 4410438
- ❖ **Live Music** Everyday at Hotel de l'Annapurna, Darbar Marg. 4221711
- ❖ **Good Time Blues Band** at Rum Doodle, Fridays, 7PM. 4701208
- ❖ **Jatra** Saturday nights with Looza, 6.30 PM onwards. 4256622
- ❖ **Jukebox experience** Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at Rox. 4491234
- ❖ **Jazz** at Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lajimpat, Wednesdays and Saturdays, 8 PM.

FOOD

- ❖ **Sunshine Weekend Brunch** Free swim at Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
- ❖ **Barbeque Lunch** Saturdays at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot. 6680080
- ❖ **Special Combo** Burmese and Thai Menu at 1905, Kantipath.
- ❖ **Sekuwa and Momo Revolution** Saturdays at the Tea House Inn, Nagarkot. 6680048
- ❖ **LQ Cauldron** at Latin Quarter Salsa Bar, Baber Mahal Revisited. 4254260
- ❖ **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 Treat** at Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **Farm House Café** Delicious meals at Park Village Hotel. 4375280
- ❖ **Café Bahal** Newari cuisine at Kathmandu Guest House, Thamel. 4700632
- ❖ **The Beer Garden** at Vajrayantha, Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **The Tharu Kitchen** at Jungle Base Camp. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Stay a night, get another free** at Shangri-la Village, Pokhara. 4435742
- ❖ **Wet Wild Summer Splash** Special package with unlimited swimming hours at Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge** Voted world's top room with a view. 4361500
- ❖ **Shivapuri Cottage** Nature, peace and bird watching at 6,000ft. 4354331
- ❖ **Chiso Chiso Hawama** at Nagarkot, special packages. 6680080
- ❖ **Jungle Base Camp Lodge**, Bardia, special package and prices. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com
- ❖ **Malaysia Dream Holidays** Packages starting from Rs 45,500 per person. 4247215 extn 013-14, malaysiaholidays_marco@polo.com.np

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JAI NEPAL CINEMA

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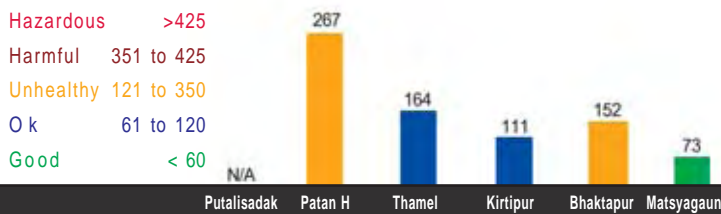
Call 4442220 for show timings
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KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

Towards the end of last week, the pollution concentration in Kathmandu's air shot up. The source of the dust was Kathmandu Valley pollution from brick kilns mixed with sand particles blowing in from the Indian desert which is covering the entire Gangetic belt. The result is that harmful particles below 10 microns have reached concentrations in Kathmandu Valley last week 44 percent higher than the previous week. Oh yes, Putali Sadak's monitoring system still has not been fixed.

27 March - 2 April 2005 in micrograms per cubic meter.
Source: www.mope.gov.np



NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



You must have noticed the onset of the haze season and this satellite picture taken on Thursday morning shows you why: the circulation over northern India and Pakistan have caused the winds to pick up dust in the Thar desert. These particles then ride the westerly winds and are carried right across the Indo-Gangetic plains and rise up to about 4,000m right along the Himalaya. The haze filters the sun, keeping maximum temperatures down and lowers nighttime temperatures. That is why we are getting unseasonably low temperatures for this time of year. The low pressure system will be up this weekend, bringing cloud cover and passing afternoon storm systems over central Nepal.

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DEEPENDRA BAJRACHARYA

PEACE WISH: Pilgrims from Thankot travelled all the way to Debgat at the confluence of the Trisuli and Kali Gandaki to immerse this adorned clay figure of Ganesh and pray for peace.



KIRAN PANDAY

THE SLAUGHTER CONTINUES: Security was cited as the reason that these stately 80-year-old trees were felled outside the prime minister's residence in Baluwatar last week.



KUMAR SHRESTHA/NEPALNEWS.COM

LEGAL RALLY AGAINST ILLEGAL TRAFFICKING: A street rally against trafficking of young Nepali women on 7 April, Anti-Trafficking Day.



KIRAN PANDAY

PARTY TIME: Nepali Congress' Central Committee members (Bal Bahadur Rai, Nona Koirala, Khum Bahadur Khadka, Govinda Raj Joshi) at their party office on Saturday after Girija Prasad Koirala was released from house arrest.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

WATER CRISIS: The lines for water get longer at Dally as the dry season sets in. Women line up on Sunday, many had been waiting since dawn.

A burning need

Between scolding an unruly visitor for not wearing a gown and attending to patients, some so severely burned they can scarcely move, nurses Krishna Sworee Shrestha and Nara Devi Bariya find a few minutes to blow off steam.

Bir Hospital's burn unit is severely understaffed but with caregivers like Krishna and Nara, they do the work of a dozen nurses in other hospitals. The two have just returned from a three-week training stint in Perth and are working with renewed motivation and vigour.

Krishna and Nara's time in Australia was sponsored by AusAid to participate in an intensive training at Royal Perth Hospital. "There are lots," Krishna replies when asked what she found different down under. "In Australia, dressing and basic medicines are free. Here, even poor patients have to pay for everything." For Nara, who's been at Bir for 22 years and is now the sister-in-charge, one big difference stands out: "In Australia, we saw patients with 90 percent burns survive. Here, we can lose patients with 30 percent burns."

Undaunted, Krishna and Nara are trying to improve the survival rate and also make the burns unit a pleasant place for the truly needy. Bir is the only public facility in Nepal dedicated to treating burn victims. The unit was established in 2001 under the former head of burns and plastic surgery, Keshav Das Joshi. "The biggest satisfaction is to see a patient get well and walk out of here. It's what keeps us going," says 33-year-old Krishna.

But both nurses are concerned by an alarming trend of suicide burns in the past few years. Of the eight patients in the ward this week, five are women who attempted suicide. Women make up nearly 80 percent of all suicide burn cases in Nepal and most are between 15 and 30

years old. "It's really an indication of the socio-economic status of Nepali women. The problems pile up, they have no one to talk to, so they douse themselves in kerosene and set themselves on fire. They don't know what burns do, the pain and suffering," says Nara.

Burn treatment is complex, requiring a multidimensional approach as the two saw in Australia. Here, they have to make do with the bare essentials and there is no long-term care and counselling. Still, Krishna and Nara aren't sitting around and complaining. They have started with very basic do-able things like preventing infections, which keep the recovery rate low in Nepal. They take what they have and make the most of it so they can help their patients survive and return to their normal lives. ●

Sradha Basnyat



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Music to my ears

To earn the distinction of being arguably the most heavily-entertained nation on earth in just two short months is no mean feat. It needed vision, determination and a spirit of adventurism to sail off into uncharted waters at sunset knowing fully well that the ship of state would run aground. It is this can-do attitude that makes us confident and optimistic about the future despite the hole in our hull.

It helps, of course, that we have a Minister of Inflammation who firmly believes that FM radio around the world is only used to play songs. He is right. Even in Ancient Rome, historical records tell us, FM stations were playing fiddle solos while the city burned.

And in Kathmandu aside from instant noodle jingles and instrumentals, radio journalists have in the past two months

turned their news studios into karaoke bars. The trend started with

Radio Nepal broadcasting popular patriotic tunes on 103 FM in place of the BBC World Service to shield the Nepali public from depressing international news such as the death of the pope and the Michael Jackson trial. Now, other FM stations have taken the cue and started putting their news into music and singing them.

"This is Radio Infotainment coming to you straight from our studios in Baneswor. Our correspondent Elvis Presley is down at the Jailhouse in Charkhal Adda and he has the latest. Elvis, so what is going on down there, if you could please sing it to the tune of your famous hit, *Jailhouse Rock*.

Yeah, sure, Ghamaraj Ji, The warden, it is reliably learnt, threw parties into Central Jail, The bandh was there and the reporters began to

wail, They defied the ban on assembly of five or more people and the joint began to swing You should've heard the jailed journalists sing Let's rock, everybody let's rock Everybody in the whole cell block (chorus) This is Elvis Presley reporting for Infotainment Radio. Back to you Ghamaraj.

Thanks, Elvis. Let's now go live to our reporter, Jerry Lee Lewis, who has been standing by impatiently all day long on the Mugling-Narayanghat Highway to sing us his dispatch. We advise you to exercise caution because his stanzas may be disturbing to some of our listeners. So, Jerry, over to you can you please bring us up to date to the tune of your great single hit *Great Balls of Fire*?

(guitar solo) You burn my lorry and you roast my buffalos Too much arson, man, drive me insane Just today there were two tankers and a truck Goodness gracious great balls of fire I chew my gum and I twiddle my thumb There just ain't much to do during a bandh Just sit all day at Jalbire to watch Goodness gracious those great balls of fire

And that brings us to the end of this bulletin, we just have enough time for our political analyst Bob Dylan with today's commentary which he will sing to the tune of his all-time great ballad, *Blowin' in the Wind*.

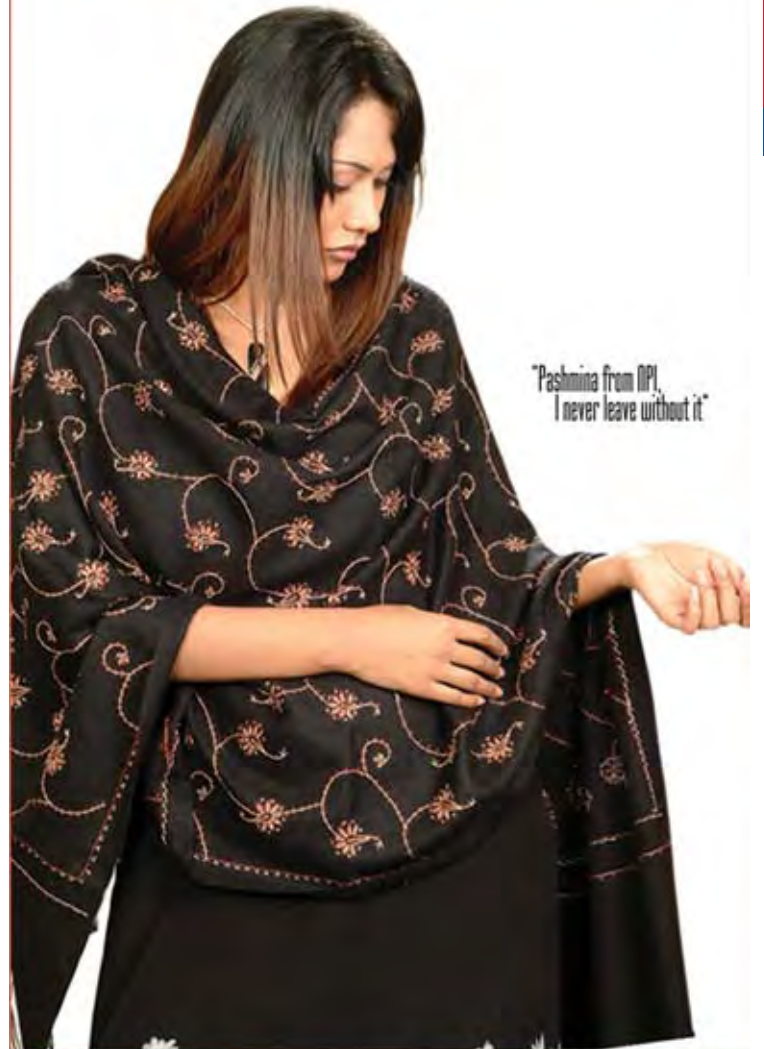
How many months can an emergency exist, Before we all go completely nuts? Yes 'n' how many months can some people exist, Before mobiles are forever banned? Yes 'n' how long can the highways be blocked Before we run out of adulterated diesel? The answer, my friend, is the passing of wind. Yes, 'n' we're all pissing into the wind.

UNDER MY HAT Kunda Dixit



turned their news studios into karaoke bars. The trend started with

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