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KANAK MANI DIXIT

There has been such a flurry of international activity on Nepal over the last month that one would think—as with development, peacemaking and conflict resolution—the return to democracy too has been farmed out to overseas friends and next-door neighbours. Fortunately, the past week saw the beginning of coordinated activity by political parties, on whom rests the responsibility of bringing the country back to civilised, democratic rule based on primacy of law, constitutional evolution and representative government.

Given that democracy brokered by anyone other than the representatives of the people is bound to be more conservative than liberal, amidst their concern and activism it is important for special representatives, ambassadors, diplomats and Nepal desk-officers everywhere to pay heed to what is happening on ground level in the country they want to save. Given that only three individuals of the 205 members of the disbanded Third Parliament speak parlour-quality English, it is

Enter the politician

Charting the course back to pluralism

not hard to understand why the diplomats tend to be one step removed from the political movement on the ground. This demographic distance is a definite factor of Nepali politics because of the weight the internationals pull on national affairs due to geopolitics and control of the purse strings of development and arms delivery.

Three weeks ago, the United Nations decided in Geneva that the protection of human rights of Nepali citizens vis-à-vis the rebels and the security forces required an international presence of more than 50 international monitors. Ian Martin, the much-heralded head of the Nepal Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, is due to arrive on Friday. On Tuesday, the UN system in Nepal, in unprecedented action, called for full respect by the government for the principles of press freedom.

At a time when the government willingly has its head-in-sand, it is the United Nations and bilateral donors which have taken a stand on emergency, humanitarian and development assistance to the people at risk. As we speak, there is a high-level meeting to discuss Nepal developments among Delhi-based diplomats, ambassadors arriving from Kathmandu and the Indian Foreign Office. Issuing a joint statement on Tuesday, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists called for a



First after February First: Koirala meets Nepal on Tuesday.

KIRAN PANDAY

news is that the political parties are beginning to coordinate, particularly since the release of NC President Girija Prasad Koirala last month and UML General Secretary Madhab Kumar Nepal at midnight on Sunday. The plan apparently is to announce a common agenda (which is what NC's Ram Sharan Mahat and UML's Subhas Nembang were working on when they were arrested on 27 April) that is to lead to a unified movement not only of the 'five parties' but the 'seven parties' including the Deuba Congress.

The political parties are hopefully chastened by the criticism of their past behaviour in parliament and gullibility while fighting regression. Actively watched by an alert public, they are the ones to chart the course back to pluralism. The world, having stood firm by the Nepali people in the hour of need, must regard the politicians and their parties as representing the aspirations of the population. Unfortunately, the reported comments of US Ambassador James Moriarty at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington DC last Friday, including reference to the February First action being popular among ordinary Nepalis, at the very least, does not inspire confidence in the intentions of the super power. ●

rollback of fundamental rights.

The activism of the world community in favour of human rights and democracy is today matched by the silence emanating from the erstwhile (pre-February First) civil society. What the royal takeover of 1 February has done is started a process where civil society wheat is separating from civil society chaff and we find no more than a handful of those who have dared to speak up for the fundamental principles of governance. Among a particular category, it is almost as if they

believe there could be development in the absence of democracy.

The silence of civil society, however, is compensated by the growing activism of the political parties, which were initially impacted by the shock-and-awe of 1 February. The late blooming reaction of the parties is also explained by the internal contradictions within them on matters of personality and principle and the attempts at restructuring while the top men were still in detention. But the

Times nepalnews.com Weekly Internet Poll # 246

Q. Should India resume military assistance to Nepal?

Yes 48.7%
No 48.9%
Don't know 1.3%

Total votes: 1050

Weekly Internet Poll # 247. To vote go to: www.nepalintimes.com

Q. Are you satisfied with the response of the political parties after the lifting of the emergency?

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LONG AND WINDING ROAD

The removal of emergency has been greeted by all with a sigh of relief. The UN secretary general, neighbouring India and others have expressed their satisfaction and urged the government to follow it up with further relaxation and restoration of democracy. Surprisingly, the reaction here in Nepal has been rather muted and for good reason.

Firstly, there are those who thought the emergency was working, at least inside the Ring Road. But draconian restrictions placed on freedom of movement and expression are still in place. Even though some important political figures have been released, the period of detention of many others such as Narhari Acharya and Lila Mani Pokharel have been extended by another three months. Cell phones have been partially restored but even landline phones of important political figures are still dead.

Logically, the lifting of the emergency should have automatically ended press censorship. But the notorious notification curtailing press freedom hasn't yet been withdrawn. News is still banned on FM. May Day and Word Press Freedom Day had to be celebrated in defiance of prohibitory orders issued by the district administration.



The state of emergency may be officially over but it has left a bad hangover.

The gulf between what the government says and does is so wide that no one dares take any risk. This has created a crisis of confidence not only between the palace and political

parties but also between the government and civil society. For a country mired in violent insurgency and international censure for human rights violations, such uncertainty is intolerable.

The government must go beyond symbolic removal of state of emergency. Local authorities need to be told categorically that fundamental rights have been restored. Freedom of the press must not only be guaranteed but ensured through an enabling environment. And remember, this time there are international monitors watching.

Finally, the process of reconciliation between constitutional forces can only begin with the rescinding of all extra-legal institutions created under the emergency provisions.

It is a long and winding road towards democratic, peaceful and prosperous Nepal. But there can be no turning back.

Nepali Times: You added 10 members last year, Romania and Bulgaria are next. Is there a feeling the EU growing too fast?

Eduardo Lechuga Jimenez: Yes, this week there was another step forward with the enlargement agreement of the EU for Romania and Bulgaria which means that in a very short time, in 2007, we will have 27 members. Also, there is a queue of countries negotiating membership. We have Croatia, other Balkan countries and in the medium term, Turkey. My guess is that by the end of this decade there will be around 30 countries in the EU. The speed could be seen as fast, that is why there is already a debate within the EU to what extent we can continue on this path. It is clear that one year after the enlargement by 10 new members in May 2004 the EU is working surprisingly well. The basic thing is to maintain economic and social cohesion and for that obviously funds have to be distributed within the EU so that the cohesion takes place. But you are right, as we expand we have to keep revising our policies. The more homogenous we are, the easier it will be for the EU to move in the right direction. This has been proven when you look at achievements like the Euro, as of today the strongest currency in the world, and technological and commercial project as the Airbus 380, the biggest aircraft in the globe and so forth.

How are you going to resolve this crisis over the European constitution?

I would not call it a crisis. No

Eduardo Lechuga Jimenez is acting head of Delegation of the European Commission in Nepal. In the run-up to Europe Day on 9 May, he spoke to Nepali Times about the challenges faced by an expanding Europe and the EU's reaction to events in Nepal.

doubt, the EU Constitution is one of the big aims to be achieved. For the first time in the EU we have a legal point of reference for all the countries. Six members have already approved it but we are aware that in the next few months

other EU members will have a say about it. So far, the referendums about this EU constitution have been positive for its members and if it is approved there is no doubt it will mean that the European project is moving ahead.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

LETTERS

STATEMENT

I am surprised that ICJ Secretary General Nicholas Howen told *Samaya* weekly ('Mission statement', #244) 'If the Maoists don't cooperate, it will cast doubt on their credibility.' This statement only means that the Maoists have 'credibility' of a sort which needs to be protected. So far, I thought Maoists were cold-blooded first degree criminals who need to be brought to justice. Howen should not hesitate to explain what credibility he has seen in the Maoists. Why are political authorities in this country ignoring such remarks from foreign governments and organisations? They cannot and should not act on behalf of the people of Nepal.

Salini Johnson, Melbourne

● It is heartening to see the role of the RNA soldier finally being put in the proper perspective ('Amrit Medhasi', #244). The public's lack of understanding and support to the state forces in this war so far is pitiable and the media has a huge role to play in disabusing notions that the RNA and the Maoists are equal abusers of human rights in our country. It needs to be emphasised for example that, like Amrit Medhasi, all the soldiers of the RNA have joined it of their own free will. The RNA does not abduct, brainwash and coerce anyone to join its ranks like the Maoists do. Other countries have resorted to drafting soldiers in case of emergency but despite being severely undermanned, the RNA has not resorted to such measures. The soldiers of the RNA are men and women who consciously decided to sign up for their jobs. Another issue that the human rights groups and the media don't talk much about is the rate of improvement of the two forces in complying with universal human rights standards. If such a comparative study is done, is there any doubt who the black sheep would be? Since 2001,

the RNA has expended resources in training its soldiers on human rights matters and punished wrongdoers. Have the Maoists done the same? Why don't we hear these stories? Though human rights organisations and the media have to be thanked for their work so far, simply pointing out the atrocities committed by the two sides is only half-the-picture, a half-truth. The whole truth is that the state forces and the Maoists are not equal perpetrators of the climate of fear and terror in our country. Such distinctions have to be made and made publicly.

Abhishek Basnyat, via email

● Does the American administration know that Egypt has been under a state of emergency for the last 20 years? The Indians know very well how democratic Bhutanis are but that didn't stop the Indian prime minister from making King Jigme the chief guest at the Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi this year. It didn't matter to the Indians that one million Bhutani refugees have been languishing in camps in eastern Nepal for the past 13 years. And India's love for democracy didn't stop it from tangoing with the general to its west either. Those in power, it seems, can get away with hypocrisy and double standards. That is why I couldn't agree more with Bihari Krishna Shrestha's Guest Column, 'Charting our own path' (#245).

Hemanta Aryal, Kathmandu

● No sooner had the emergency been lifted, the seven student unions affiliated to political parties were first off the mark to compete with the Maoists to wreak anarchy on the country's education system. If this is what their political bosses in the erstwhile parliamentary parties have in mind as a way out of the present crisis, then I for one would rather have the emergency continue and make the party leadership sit in the cooler for some more time. This is not just an elite view, most Nepali

people feel the same way. Let's not mix up democracy with demagoguery.

Gyan Subba, Kumaripati

HUG TREES

Recently you published a timely letter from Jan Salter and Neeta Pokhrel ('Tree huggers', #241). The following week you showed a photograph of the trees cut down in Baluwatar with the caption: 'The Slaughter Continues'. It is still continuing. This week I counted 21 mature trees cut down outside the Engineering Campus in Pulchok. My reaction has shifted from upset to outrage. I do however realise that there are issues of greater concern—all over Nepal people are being cut down.

In February this paper carried a celebrated editorial 'Hariyo ban Nepal ko dhan' (#233) providing much food for thought. Read on the most literal level it gives good reasons why trees that line the streets of Kathmandu (and Patan and the road to Bhaktapur) should not be decimated. Sundaral Bahuguna, of the Chipko Andolan stated: "The largest and most important product of the tree is not timber as we have been taught but soil, water and oxygen". Can anyone deny that Kathmandu needs more oxygen? Will no one raise their voice or take action before the city loses more of its beautiful, life-giving trees?

Ruth Foster, Ekantakuna

HUMLA

Thanks to Naresh Newar for his articles highlighting the plight of the people in Humla (#245). It is very much a neglected and forgotten outpost of the 'hidden Himalayas' as he says. However, over the past 10 years, we as an organisation have tried to make a difference in Humla, constructing health posts, installing micro-hydro units, bringing electricity to the villages, renovating monasteries, training health workers and running health camps in the remote, hidden valleys. And all were done with the participation and cooperation of the villagers. But there's a lot more that needs to be done and we are trying to establish an integrated network of health provision throughout the region, to lift Humla from its abject position on the Human Development Index. Humlis have waited long enough. As for Ujeli Rokaya

('Nothing stops Ujeli', #245), wow, more power to her for her courage and determination! Humla (and Nepal) could do with more people like her.

Sheila Mapson, Nepal Trust

● It was sad reading the articles 'Cry, beloved country', 'Humla's class struggle' and 'Kasial's plight', (#245). The arson and slaughter by Maoists of innocent villagers proves that the ideology and principle with which they first began has disappeared. On the other hand, teachers using the Maoists as an excuse to abandon villages and go on holiday has deteriorated the plight of many students. At a time when Kasial should be playing with his friends and studying, he has to carry 15 kg of rice and consider himself lucky to get it and carry it up those steep hilly trails for three hours on an empty stomach. I don't know who is to blame for the plight of these innocent people but I want to ask the Maoists: how can we understand that you've been fighting for the people? Or has the postmodern world lost the meaning of integrity, love and sympathy? Or is the people's war a mere pretext to gain power?

Milan Gurung, via email

U-15

I am a regular reader of Nepali Times and love to read your sports articles. It will definitely help in developing sports in Nepal. In the last issue, you beautifully presented the success story of our U-15 cricket team ('Our boys bring home the cup', #245). But it would help even more if you mentioned the age bar of the Nepali team which will be a major problem for Nepal in the future. In this edition of the U-15 Asia Cup, only one player was selected for the dream team from the winning team, Nepal but six were selected from Afghanistan.

Niranjan Adhikari, via email

● Congratulations to Bhairab Risal ('Sun light in Humla', #245) for his single-handed effort to light up Humla. He deserves a helping hand and as a Nepali who enjoys electricity, I have pledged my Rs 4,000 to light up a home in Humla. I urge fellow Nepalis to do the same.

Rima Namgyal, email



perspective

Has EU policy on foreign aid changed with enlargement?

We are one of the biggest donors in the world and we are increasing the volume of our aid and streamlining it. However, we are currently giving new thoughts to aid. For example assistance we



give to countries like Nepal and to countries like Brazil and China can't be the same. Our cooperation will be reviewed, my guess is that there will be new rules about how to work with recently industrialised countries on the one hand and less developed countries on the other. Nevertheless the EU's principles of democracy and good governance will always be adhered to in its aid policy.

And has this policy towards Nepal changed after February First?

There is a long tradition of cooperation with Nepal. It goes back to the 1970s. We are currently following the guidelines embedded within the EU-Nepal Cooperation Agreement signed in 1996. What has changed after February First is that due to the new political situation we are reviewing our cooperation. Which,

in a pragmatic way, means ongoing projects will continue but pipeline projects for the time being will be on hold. For future cooperation we will make an assessment soon and act accordingly.

And what are the conditions that need to be fulfilled for you to resume aid in the pipeline?

As I said before, we have not stopped it but in order to improve our current and future cooperation we will have to work in line with our EU-Nepal Cooperation Agreement where both sides accept respect for human rights and democratic principles as the basis for cooperation between the parties. As you know we believe in multi-party democracy systems, therefore, we would like to see in Nepal a return to a democratic situation soon and the re-establishment of fundamental rights, in particular the right to association, freedom of expression, rights of the media etc...in short, a political program aimed at the re-establishment of a multiparty democracy.

The argument justifying February First is that the political parties made a mess of it but you say the EU will only resume aid if the same parties are restored to power.

This is an issue that should be dealt with internally. But once again, we maintain we want to work with democratic governments. Therefore, the sooner Nepal returns to democracy the better for both sides and we will in that framework be able to ameliorate our cooperation.

Have you offered any help to facilitate a peace process or mediation role?

During the last EC-Nepal Joint Commission in September and Troikai's visit in December 2004 to Nepal we have manifested that possibility. The EU has always envisaged the possible use of mechanism oriented to help solve the conflict problem. We are still committed to that offer but in the context I mentioned before.

Yellow + blue = green

When will our political hues be a harmony of colour?

In the referendum of 1980, political choice was colour-coded to simplify voting: yellow for continuation of the system and blue for a change to multiparty democracy. Results went in the favour of 'improved' panchayat, democratic aspirations of nearly half the voters were left unaddressed for a decade.

When the People's Movement of 1990 upturned the verdict of 1980, most panchays dyed their bandanas blue. A few hardcore yellow hearts like Marich Man Singh refused and

STATE OF THE STATE CK Lal



decided to lie low. Democrats thought that the yellow fever of the 80s was over. They were so sanguine that not even the sudden dissolution of parliament in May 2002 could wake them up.

After 4 October 2002 all that the dismissed premier Sher Bahadur Deuba could think of was his reinstatement. Eventually he was quite happy to be a nominated premier of a government with nominal powers. The firebrand of the Nepali Congress-D hadn't just mellowed, he had actually yellowed.

By consenting to accept the decisive leadership of the king, the Deuba coalition endorsed the royal takeover of October Fourth by default. This is the reason victims of February First appear to be willing collaborators of constructive monarchy.

Twenty-five years after the referendum the NC is once more thrust at the frontline of anti-palace peaceful struggle. But this time the colour scheme of the political game has a third shade—blood red of the armed



Maoists whose true colours aren't yet clear. Maoists sound virulently anti-monarchy but their actions have always resulted in strengthening the hands of palace.

No politician with a panchayat background was touched by Maoists in the initial stages of insurgency. UML activists were similarly spared their wrath. It seemed as if eliminating the NC in the countryside was the sole aim of the armed insurgency. Now that the centre has crumbled and extremists of the left and right face each other menacingly, it's only the centrist NC that still has the political strength to save them from each other.

In the coming days, a lot will depend upon the proclivities of popular politicians under a blue banner. Far from being a spent force, mainstream parties will decide the future course of Nepali politics.

The international community would like to see twin pillars of 1990 constitution work in harmony. An accommodation between yellow and blue to create a green hue of constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy is still the best possible option. But looking at the belligerence of former panchays dreaming about

absolute monarchy patterned after panchayat, the chances of Girija Prasad Koirala discussing absolute democracy with the likes of Tulsi Giri are dim.

At the other extreme, even though Comrade Madhab Nepal and Chairman Prachanda wave the same hammer-and-sickle flag, their political bases are too similar to allow these two ambitious leaders to work together. Prachanda can't tolerate Baburam Bhattarai and Madhab Nepal barely tolerates KP Oli in the UML politburo.

Were the pink communists of Balkhu to join forces with the yellow storm troopers of the palace to fight the Maoist menace, an orange-tinged politics of Marxists and monarchists may emerge. Recently freed Madhab Nepal has ruled out all such possibilities but he is known to change his stand at any hint of power. If this marriage of convenience is solemnised, it may force NC to open lines of communication with the Maoists thus transforming the political landscape. It may appear far-fetched at the moment but this country has seen its share of surprises. The time to think the unthinkable may be nigh. Purple power will transform the socio-cultural landscape of Nepal forever. ●

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Workers at the NEEK factory in Hetauda.



sufficient. Industrial analysts say the fact is that NEEK has been successful because of a management which injected vision into the business.

Now, NEEK is venturing into exports and recently got an order for several hundred transformers for Bhutan. There was another pending order for 15,000 units from Bangladesh but NEEK had to turn it down because of transportation uncertainties. "We didn't want to take the order and not be able to deliver," explains Joshi.

NEEK has the capacity to produce 2,000 transformers a year but it could be more if there were no night curfews and blockades. Their main client is Nepal Electricity Authority to which it has sold 6,500 transformers. But the demand is rising and after it received its ISO 9001 certification in 1999, NEEK is bidding for supplying to India, Bangladesh and African countries. ●

AARTI BASNYAT

When Nepal Ekarat Engineering Company (NEEK) was established as the first Nepal-Thailand joint venture company in 1990, only seven percent of Nepalis had access to electricity. For many that would have been a hurdle but NEEK saw it as an opportunity.

Kush Kumar Joshi and Ajaya

Mudbhary were electrical engineers and they immediately realised that with democracy and liberal economic policy, there would be new investments in hydropower. As Nepal electrified, the demand for transformers would zoom.

And so it did. NEEK laid emphasis on quality and competitiveness through productivity. Soon the plant in

Hetauda couldn't produce transformers fast enough for the domestic market and today meets 90 percent of the domestic demand.

When Joshi was doing contract work on transmission lines, he used to import transformers from Thailand. Through research and market study he found transformers from Thailand to be affordable and of

high quality and began importing from the Ekarat Company in Thailand. Ekarat's chairman Kiet Phong Noichaboon was not just a businessman, he was altruistic and a devout Buddhist. He wanted to do something for the land of the Buddha's birth and that was how NEEK was set up.

Most other exporters wouldn't want to give away their business to a local subsidiary but Ekarat proposed to Joshi that they set up a manufacturing base in Nepal. "Not only did he want to expand his business he also wanted to earn divine merit," explains Joshi, "and I think he has earned it."

Commercial production in Hetauda began in 1992 and the initial period revolved around training and support. NEEK's transformers meet international standards and Joshi says he wanted to dispel the notion that things can be third rate just because you are supplying to the Nepali market.

But like any other manufacturer, NEEK is facing problems due to the blockades of highways and strikes. Joshi would also like to see the government being more proactive in encouraging industries like NEEK so the country can become self-

"Tremendous scope for growth in electricals"

Managing Director of the Nepal Ekarat Engineering Company, Kush Kumar Joshi talked to *Nepali Times* about transformers, joint ventures and exporting products in the region during this difficult period.

Nepali Times: Why transformers?

Kush Kumar Joshi: We started business in the electrical line, constructing electrical things like transmission lines, so when we were procuring transformers we found this transformer from Thailand which was of good quality and available at a great price. The electrification ratio at that time was only seven percent, there was a huge demand in the market for transformers so we jumped right in.

Did you really need a joint venture partner? Couldn't you go it alone?

To design and manufacture a transformer is not such a big thing but the quality and experience we gained proved to be a major advantage. Also the chairman of our mother company Ekarat Thailand wanted to do something for Nepal because they were Buddhists. On one hand, there was the business opportunity and on the other, they wanted to help Nepal develop.

How does your domestic market compare with exports?

There is tremendous scope for growth for electrical components in the domestic market because only 19 percent of Nepalis have access to electricity. There is still 81 percent to tap and a huge transformer requirement exists. So far we have made 7,000 transformers. We are very competitive, technically competent and confident about exporting. We can bid in the international market, but we are focusing more on the regional market due to transportation problems. Our focus is Bhutan, Bangladesh and now, India.

How important was your breakthrough in bagging the Bhutan order?

The Bhutan order was very important for us. Their interest was not only the price but also quality and this boosts our reputation. There were restrictions on commercial transactions between Bhutan and Nepal because of the currency but that hurdle was crossed with the help of both governments, which allowed us to deal in Indian currency instead of dollars. It was good for business and the economies of both Nepal and Bhutan. This has opened the door for trade between Bhutan and Nepal. It is a milestone.

How has the political situation affected your business?

We were receiving a lot of inquiries for big numbers of transformers from both India and Bangladesh but we chose Bhutan because it was a small order. We are living in uncertain times with bandas and blockades. Our factory is in Hetauda and for the past three years, the curfew there has prevented us from working after 7PM. We can't operate our factory at full capacity even if we had an order. If we had more orders and weren't able to fulfil them, it would create problems with new customers and our reliability would be questioned. If there was political stability the business would be growing much faster and perhaps we would also have diversified into more sophisticated electrical components.



Tourists plummet again

The Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation said that tourist arrivals by air declined 38 percent in April this year as compared to the same month of the previous year. NTB's tally for April shows 18,879 tourists arriving by air compared to 30,402 tourists last April. Some 5,058 of them were Indian this year while 7,511 Indian tourists visited in April last year. Tourist arrivals from the UK, USA, Germany, Japan and Australia were down by 29, 33, 30, 45 and 30 percent respectively. The decline is attributed to the unstable political situation in the country. NTB also says that since September First, tourist arrivals had seen a continuous decline. The industry believes that until a strong national carrier and competitive packages are not floated in markets, revival of tourist numbers will be difficult despite relentless efforts. Even then, industry experts are optimistic that the arrival trends will go up now that the emergency has been lifted.

Ghar subidha

Nepal Industrial and Commercial Bank has launched its NIC Ghar Subidha scheme. With the lowest interest rates, this facility aims to enable middle class Nepali families to own their own houses.



Fly to Bhutan

Druk Air has introduced special promotional fares on KTM-DEL-KTM and KTM-DEL routes under certain conditions. The offer is valid for a month.



Showroom

Giordano has opened a new exclusive showroom in Lajimpat, opposite Suwal music library. Opened under the agreement of Giordano Hongkong and Samden Enterprises in Nepal, it showcases clothing for men and women.



NEW PRODUCT

HI-TECH: LG Electronics in association with the Chaudhary Group has unveiled its latest range of premium products for the Nepali market such as multiplexes with inbuilt DVD and VCR, home theatre facilities and GSM phones.



SUPER SPLENDOR: The new Hero Honda Super Splendor is Syakar Company's latest entrant in the Nepali motorcycle market with 125 cc for an introductory price of Rs 1,09,500.

The numbers game

More is not always better

Last week, like a lot of you the Beed was up to his neck attending marriage receptions and the common thread that bound them was the talk of quantity, not quality.

Hosts like to brag about the number of people they've invited. And usually, a thousand are invited but the food runs out

ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed



before 300 have arrived. Proud mothers of brides and brides-to-be talk of 51 saris and 101 saris for their daughters. It does not matter if each one cost a hundred or a thousand or tens of thousands. Bands are judged by the number of members in the group or the number of hours they were engaged. It doesn't matter if they weren't playing music but just plain noise. Catering companies lure clients with the number of items on their menu, perhaps people ignore the fact that only a few of them are prepared for the feast. Our quest for growing numbers is never ending. Perhaps it is our agrarian background that has led to this incessant obsession with numbers, where prosperity is judged by the number of cattle, goat or chicken you own and not by how healthy they are.

Government officials love to

brag about the number of banks and financial institutions we have even if the same set of people own them. We have more airlines than any of our neighbouring countries. We like to talk about the 50+ FM stations and the number of civil society organisations in the same way and political parties are judged on the number of people they 'feed-in' to a rally. Our own parliament has 205 members while a billion people in India have just above 540. Judging by our parliamentarian to population ratio, India should have a parliament with 8,000+ members.

We have more committees than we can count and people represent more committees than we can remember. Even our Rotarian friends in Nepal have caught the number bug. If you throw a stone, it might just hit a Rotarian.

Our development plans too, focus on quantity. It is about providing health to all and education to all rather than improving the quality of health and education. We go by the number of schools that are built, not considering if they have enough teachers or if classes are conducted at all. Tax officials talk of the number of people in the tax net, not their quality. We talk of the number of saplings

planted, not the number of trees that have grown. We talk of the number of tourists arriving and not the money spent by them. Statistical expression of development has led to quantification and number games, judging gender, vaccination, nutrition, ethnicity, rights, abuses, exploitation, energy and communication et al by them. And tools like logframes have made us dream in numbers in terms of judgment.

Of course, the numbers game is important, as it is one form of judging performance but ignoring quality as a way of life leads to mediocrity. This creates situations like a plethora of political parties lacking in quality, plethora of business people lacking in enterprise development, plethora of bilaterals and NGOs lacking in delivery of development basics, plethora of self-proclaimed intellectuals lacking in rational thought. Economy and development in the medium and long-term are qualitative issues, not the short-term maze of numbers. We need to refocus constantly to not get sucked into the number game. Perhaps people may start by inviting fewer people to parties but providing quality experience to those few. ●

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Vigilante justice

JB Pun Magar in
Himal Khabarpatrika, 29 April-14 May

हिमाल

BARGADAWA—The vigilantes that started with the intention of fighting injustice at the hands of the Maoists, is now following their lead by torturing, looting and killing innocent civilians. Unarmed villagers are now forming groups to defend themselves against the gun-toting vigilantes led by the notorious Muna Khan. The vigilantes have subjected many villagers to interrogation, house search, extortion and even forced them to join their retaliation committee and buy arms from them.

On 21 March, committee members including Radhe Mukhiya Yadab and eight others beat up Rajendra Malla, a small trader, during the village market day at Rupaulia when they did not get the money demanded to buy alcohol. "They were drunk

targeting those wearing dhaka topis. Girija Prasad Basyal was victim to such mistreatment. He was told that there were "orders to kill anyone wearing dhaka topis."

On 23 March, a group of 300 villagers from Rupaulia took a delegation to the district administration office in Somani to punish the perpetrators and to request security. Despite assurance from Police Officer Ram Kumar Khanal to control the vigilantes, the violence is getting out of hand. On 27 March, the vigilantes mercilessly thrashed shopkeeper Keshab Raj Sharma for failing to pay the money demanded. Almost 60 of the vigilantes came and ransacked his house, plundered his belongings and beat him up badly. "They even took my wife's jewellery. Even now they come everyday and threaten to kill us if we don't pay," said Sharma. The vigilantes beat up 82-

year-old Saraswati Chapagain and broke her arm. Many villagers south of Nawalparasi have become prey to the vigilantes' atrocities. On 26 March, they forcefully amputated Somani's 40-year-old Ram Kishor Chamar's arm and made him eat it before shooting him in cold blood.

On 31 March, they beat up teachers Shambhu Prajapati and Satyadeb in the school compound and on the same day, thrashed dozens of villagers for protesting their activities. Now, the vigilantes have started to speak like the Maoists, justifying extortion.



JB PUN

and armed when they beat me up with the butt of their guns," said Malla. They had been going around the marketplace shooting in the air and raising false alarm by shouting that the Maoists had come. More than a dozen people were injured while trying to escape, some were children, women and elderly citizens. The vigilantes forced 15-year-old girls Bimala Chaudhary and Parbati Chaudhary to take off their clothes. "There were about 20-25 of them and when we requested them not to mistreat the girls, they attacked and beat up five of us cow herders with their guns," recalled Bhimlal Dhakal. The vigilantes, supposedly fighting against the Maoists, have planted the seeds of a communal rift between the hill and tarai populace. Now they are

"Why should the public complain about helping those fighting for the people?" said Murari Pahalman, president of Nawalparasi Pratikar Samiti. There are over 150 youths involved in the committee, whose advisory team is led by Muna Khan. Almost all members carry guns and bullets. "We still don't have enough arms. The administration should aid us," said Bhagwan Chaudhary, president of the Somani Committee. The local administration still does not acknowledge the vigilante group walking armed in broad daylight but the people see them accompanied by the security force, also carrying guns. But Police Officer Sharma denies this saying, "We would have taken action against those carrying arms."



Get up! Emergency has been lifted
Drum: Emergency
Shackle: Bondage

कान्तिपुर Kantipur, 3 May

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



The king has been in a crisis since he closed doors for national reconciliation, he has to find a way out himself. No king has ever become strong by leaving the public behind.

Nepali Congress leader Girija P Koirala in *Kantipur*, 5 May

Irresponsible

Editorial in
Nepal Samacharpatra, 2 May

On Friday evening at Janajyoti Campus in Mahedranagar, the security forces opened fire at innocent students, terrorising villagers and causing students to rise in revolt. According to the details of the incident, members of ANNFSU were discussing preparations for their inaugural committee and district level inspection program when the security forces suddenly burst into the room. The students began to run in fear when they saw armed security personnel and were shot at on suspicion of being Maoists.

Local residents who witnessed the incident had told the security forces that the students were not Maoists. The security forces did not listen to them and went ahead, causing serious injury to some of the students. ANNFSU's Central Committee Member Nar Bahadur Dhama, District-level Committee's Assistant Secretary Mahesh Pant and Janajyoti Campus' student Kiran Chhetri were shot in the leg. This incident casts a shadow on the credibility of the security force that is supposed to look after the security of the nation. They claim that they were forced to open fire because they had only received information about a Maoist meeting and the students had not informed them about theirs. Their excuse that they began to shoot at the students on suspicion of being Maoists because they began to run is irrational. Can you shoot at a group of people just because you think they are Maoists? This is a serious question. First, the informer gave wrong information to the security forces. Second, responsible security personnel opened fire without verifying facts. Besides these, there were a number of grave mistakes made. To shoot at a non-violent crowd of unarmed innocent students is against human rights and the Geneva Convention. Even if they were Maoists, according to the law of the kingdom, they could have been arrested or treated as prisoners but they were students discussing their association's programs. A few of them were meeting for a simple discussion at the campus they attended and they thought it was safe. Student associations have protested this act of violence creating difficulties in the educational calendar again. For students to live in terror of the state is to confuse hundreds of young people. It is important that the guilty party be brought to justice. The security force must also understand that they cannot act on suspicion alone, to do so is to violate human rights and the law.

People's interest

Padma Sundar Lawoti in
Nispakshya, 26 April

निष्पक्ष

The king's February First move made many Nepalis happy because it was the step he took portraying the real picture of the country. However, the



KIRAN PANDAY

implementation part of the royal declaration appears not to be as serious as it should have been. If appointments in the ministers' council and other political positions are made on the basis of geography, ethnicity, region, and experience, it would perhaps have yielded effective and early results. But of course, there has been improvement in law and order. You can see for yourself how things have changed.

Prior to 1 February, anything could have happened anywhere but now, even if there are rumours of a Nepal banda, it is ineffective in Kathmandu. People have been able to carry on with their lives the way they like and the situation is slowly improving in other areas as well. The people's feeling and the situation of the country is one side, the other is the opinion of foreigners and adamant political parties. This is wrong. The leaders of political parties should at least be practical. If they look at the ground reality and analyse the aspirations of the people, nothing will stop them from working together with the king. The monarch has made it clear that the parties must be loyal towards the people and democracy. If the parties give up their vested interests, they will have no reason to protest. They have been protesting only because their interests are not being met. The king has repeatedly expressed his commitment to constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy. If we do not believe the king, then who can we believe? The parties have only been making certain quarters happy to profit themselves. Outsiders guide some parties, a few of the leaders are remote-controlled and others have their own selfish interests. These politicians are worried because they have no way of indulging in corruption while others are concerned about being prosecuted for their involvement in such cases in the past. Considering the national and international scenario, the Maoists will have to come to terms with the government. If they continue protesting just for the sake of protesting, the people will outcast them. Yes, it's true that they've targeted me. They robbed two of my houses and burnt

them down. They should be competing on matters of principle but the way they've been operating shows that the leadership has no control over its cadre.

Information war

Samaya, 5 May

समय

In Rolpa and Rukum, the local villagers can listen to both government and Maoist news on radio. Hearing two versions of the same story reported differently by Radio Nepal and Maoist FM confuses them. "The government radio says one thing and the Maoists report it differently. We don't know whose report is genuine," said an ex-Indian army soldier in Gairgaun. While most of the villagers do not believe everything that the Maoist radio broadcasts, they are incredulous about certain reports aired by the government radio especially when they hear reports of certain incidents that never actually occurred. This is evident from the events of security forces' Operation Khara in April when the Maoists were supposed to have suffered a heavy blow at the hands of the Royal Nepali Army (RNA), which attacked them both from the air and the ground. The government media reported the killing of over 113 militants and the death of three security force personnel. On the contrary, the Maoist radio reported the death of 22 RNA soldiers and 18 Maoists. Three days after the Khara incident, the government radio said that 60 Maoists had been killed. "We were really surprised to hear their reports," said Prem Buda of Kotgaun, referring to the news last week about his village in which the government claimed to have killed 22 Maoists while the rebels reported the killing of 65 army personnel. "We neither saw the killing of Maoists or security personnel, unlike the news broadcasts (both by the government and the Maoists)," said Prem Buda. Many villagers like him claim that only three security personnel and six Maoists had been killed. There is no way to verify the reports independently.

Why English?

Column by Ritubichar in Himal Khabarpatrika, 29 April

हिमाल

Katrin Hagen is the daughter of late Toni Hagen, the great Swiss geologist who travelled across the length and breadth of Nepal. As a young girl, Katrin accompanied

her father on many of these treks since 1953 and grew to love Nepal. She has lost count of how many times she has been here. Being a surgeon, she volunteers to perform operations in hospitals in Nepal whenever she is here. Recently, at a ceremony she presented the Tribhuban University Central Library with her father's meticulous geological wall map of Nepal. At the ceremony, although Katrin was the only non-Nepali, every speech was in English and even the MC spoke in English. It wasn't just this function, at every ceremony in Nepal even if there is only one foreigner present we Nepalis insist on struggling to express ourselves in English. Why can't we just get an interpreter to translate for those who can't understand Nepali and go ahead and speak in our own mother tongue? Will the concerned authorities please pay attention to this?

Land grab

Nepal, 8 May

नेपाल

The influx of Nepali migrants to bordering Indian states is a boon for Indian landowners. Many Nepalis from the western tarai districts of Nawalparasi, Rupandehi and Kapilbastu are moving to India for permanent residence. This has led to the increase in land demand and Indian landowners have been hiking up the prices. "Ever since Nepalis began buying land and houses here, the real estate prices have skyrocketed," said Mahendra Jaiswal of Sunauli. Most of the new settlers belong to middle and high-class families. A majority of them moved to India out of fear of the Maoists. Some of them own industries and large business firms in Bhairawa and Butwal. In Sunauli's Nautanwa, the price of land has more than doubled and landowners are now plotting their lands to sell. At Nautanwa's bypass road, houses of Nepali migrants are being constructed but many will not be able to register the houses in their names due to legal complications. Nepalis have also been investing in Siddharthanagar district of India.

Failed statement

Buddhabar, 4 May

बुधवार

Authoritarian rule has turned out to be weak and unsuccessful. The decision to lift emergency was not due to the king's kindness and sympathy but was prompted by

national and international pressure. The king's move was taken under the pretense of curbing terrorism but the real motives are now public knowledge. Who can forget the utter injustice that has taken place since February First: the arrests of party leaders, capture of media offices by army personnel, formation of the royal commission to assassinate the characters of political leaders and the attempt to curb the voices raised against the royal proclamation. Even after democracy was restored in the country, former panchays and mandales did not stop protesting the multiparty system, steering the 'bring the king and save the nation' campaign.

Now, post-February First, state terror has taken an even more dangerous form, making way for absolutism which is against the spirit of the nation's constitution, law and acts. The 1990 constitution had never given much importance to what the king said but now that the country is being run as per his orders, his move has so far benefited neither the country nor its citizens. The only ones who it benefited are the incapable people appointed as ministers including Tulusi Giri, who has spent most of his life outside his homeland. Often it is heard that Maoist terror was reduced after February First. This is not true, and propaganda spread by state run media. Under the chairmanship of the king, the council of ministers has been discarding the constitution and rule of law by appointing pro-palace individuals to work in the districts, zones and regions. These are the same people who were irresponsible and lacked accountability towards the citizens during the Panchayat era. The gagging of the press, restriction of movement within the country and barring of respected Nepali intellectuals from travelling abroad to attend seminars are examples of authoritarianism. Besides being hard on democratic groups, we haven't moved closer to peace and democracy. How long will our country be run this way?

Prachanda's rejoinder to Baburam

BBC Nepali Service, 30 April

नेपाली

Comrade Laldhoj's (read Baburam) serious accusation that the party's central committee's latest meeting was very unhealthy and that it marked unprincipled groupism has raised questions: is he preparing a background to disassociate himself from the party and the people's war? Certainly, during the central working committee meeting, Bhattarai's unruly working style, self-centred thoughts, false intellectual ego and indulgence in groupism against the central office was widely criticised.

Bhattarai's accusation against the party's central committee only proves that he has not understood Comrade Mao's teaching. We should believe in the party and the people. If we have doubts in these very basic principles, we can do nothing. He has claimed that he remained tolerant and silent about pretty serious and worrisome issues in the meeting. But the fact is that he himself is going against the decision and the spirit of the central committee meeting.

Whenever there is discussion on article 40 of private property, capitalist representatives get pissed off. In the same way, Bhattarai loses his control whenever there is talk about centralisation of power. This has been historically proved from the period the people's war was not even launched till the last central working meeting.

By labelling profound principle-based and political charges against the central committee's easy decision that had to be taken given the need for counterattack and the conspiracy of national and foreign reactionaries, Laldhoj has only revealed his distraction and his intellectual and political bankruptcy. In a special and sensitive process like strategic counterattack, if all standing committee members remain intact in the party, army and the revolutionary council, there will be greater clarity in the party and the movement. This is a simple conclusion of political knowledge, but our knowledgeable comrade is in an illusion because of his own opinion. Since he sees loss for himself, he thinks the entire movement stands to lose.

As long as Comrade Laldhoj remains chief of the united front, he has no problem with Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and Prachandapath. The development of a people's republic in the 21st century too is right for him. But once his position changes, he thinks everything in the party is regression. When making serious charges against the party, he revealed his groupism mindset. In the letter he submitted to the party's central office, he forcefully referred to a group and has been projecting himself as the leader of that faction. What group is that and who has charged that group? There is no substantive proof in the letter. By tampering with facts and camouflaging the central committee's decision, he has been practicing groupism in the party.

His move has come at a crucial time when the central committee's unanimous decision of revolutionary transformation and counterattack was to be implemented. This only shows that Comrade Laldhoj is helping imperialism, expansionism and the royal army. That is a fatal direction he has adopted.




DPRNA

नेपाल कृषिप्रधान मुलुक हो। यहाँका ८० प्रतिशतभन्दा बढी जनता कृषि पेशामा आधारित छन्। कूल राष्ट्रिय आयको रून्डै ४० प्रतिशत हिस्सा अहिले पनि कृषि क्षेत्रले नै ओगटेको छ। सिङ्गो मुलुकको आर्थिक, सामाजिक मेरुदण्डको रूपमा रहेको कृषिक्षेत्र उपेक्षित हुनु हुँदैन। कृषकहरू देशका वास्तविक नायक हुन्। उनीहरूलाई सम्मान र कदर गर्नुपर्छ। कृषकहरूले पनि आफ्नो पसिनामाथि विश्वास गर्नुपर्छ। नयाँ नयाँ कृषि प्रणाली अवलम्बन गर्नुपर्छ। पढ्दिमा खेती गर्नु नहुने होइन। रुन् कृषिक्षेत्रलाई आधुनिकीकरण गर्न शिक्षित र सचेत कृषकको खाँचो छ। त्यसैले कृषि पेशालाई आदर गरौं, कृषकलाई सम्मान गरौं।

श्री ५ को सरकार
सूचना तथा सञ्चार मन्त्रालय
सूचना विभाग

5th HIMALAYAN



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Beetles for Peace in Nepal and Around the World

Celebration of Europe

On 9 May Europeans worldwide will celebrate Europe

One of the meetings of the Convention called to formulate a new Constitution for Europe.



different traditions and languages but also with shared values such as democracy, freedom and social justice, the EU motto is 'United in Diversity'. The EU and its institutions have a common flag that is used inside and outside Europe as a symbol of European Unity—the flag is blue with a circle of 12 yellow stars.

Recent EU achievements

In 2005, 55 years after the first initiative, European cooperation has gradually expanded and evolved. Today, the EU brings together 450 million people from 25 individual member states that cooperate and consult each other on almost all thinkable issues. In addition to the enlargement with 10 new member states in May 2004, the EU has made other great achievements in recent years.

In January 2002, the single currency, the Euro, was introduced in 12 member states and in 2004 the EU member states agreed on a new European Constitutional Treaty, which will now have to be ratified by the EU member states. In several countries, the European people will be consulted directly in national referendums. The constitution will in particular have an impact on the ability of the European Union to speak with a coherent voice in international affairs.

Many of the challenges that Europe and the rest of the world face in the age of globalisation can

On 9 May 2005, it will be 55 years since the former French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman delivered his famous speech in which he proposed the idea of European Integration. This idea was born in the aftermath of numerous European wars culminating with the Second World War (1939-45) in which most European countries suffered terrible losses.

Schuman recognised that any lasting peace in Europe would require that France and Germany together with their respective allies set aside their age old differences and disputes. Accordingly, he proposed a plan whereby Germany and France joined efforts to improve their industrial productions in close collaboration with other European countries. Due

to the importance of coal and steel industries for their national economies, and being a major input in any weapons and war industry, Schuman knew that solidarity in this sector would make war between France and Germany not only unthinkable but practically impossible.

It took less than a year before Schuman's idea was translated into a binding legal document. On 18 April 1951, six countries—Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands—signed the Treaty of Paris establishing the European Coal and Steel Community. Six years on, in 1957, the same countries signed up for closer cooperation in the Treaty of Rome by which the European Economic Community was established. Later, this merged into

the European Community and what is now known as the European Union (EU).

Europe Day has been celebrated on 9 May since 1985, where European leaders at a high-level meeting decided to celebrate European integration and Robert Schuman's vision.

Continuous growth

In 2004, the EU reached a major milestone in terms of enlarging the cooperation with 10 Central and Eastern European countries reaching a total of 25 member states. In only two years time, in 2007, a new enlargement is envisaged with Romania and Bulgaria in 2007 and membership negotiations with Croatia, the Balkan countries and Turkey should begin later this year.

The continuous expansion and evolution of the European Union is a testimony of the success story of bringing lasting peace to European nations and people and more recently to a break down of long-standing dividing lines in Europe. The expansions have been successful because social, political and economic coherence have been given high priority. It may take some years for new member states to prepare for membership but at the end of the day the preparations allow new members to participate in defining European policies side by side with long-time members of the European family.

The European motto

Due to the fact that Europe is not only a continent with many





European integration

Day, recalling achievements and looking to the future



MIN BAJRACHARYA

only be dealt with on an international level. Europe will continue to push for multilateral responses and promoting our core values—democracy, human rights, good governance and the rule of law.

The EU institutions

The three core European Union institutions are the Council of the European Union, the European Parliament and the European Commission.

The Council consists of ministers from the national governments of all 25 EU member states. The Council shares with the European Parliament the responsibility for passing laws and taking policy decisions. The

presidency of the European Union rotates among the member states on a six-month basis. In 2005, Luxembourg holds the EU presidency from January-June, to be taken over by United Kingdom from July-December.

The European Parliament is elected every five years by the European people. The present parliament was elected in June 2004 and has 732 members from all EU member states grouped in Europe-wide political groups. Nearly one-third (222) are women. The main job of the parliament is to pass European laws—a responsibility shared with the Council. In addition, the parliament approves the EU annual budget and oversees the work of the European Commission.

The European Commission represents the interest of Europe as a whole and it works independently from national governments. The Commission consists of 25 Commissioners—one from each EU member state. The current Commission President José Manuel Barroso and his 24 Commissioners were appointed in November 2004. The Commission headquarters in Brussels prepares European laws and policies. Once laws, policies and programmes are approved, the Commission takes responsibility for their implementation in member states and in countries outside Europe, such as the development portfolio managed by the EC Delegation to Nepal.

The EU in the world

It is not only Europeans that benefit from the EU. Given the success of European integration, the EU is committed to spread peace, stability and prosperity beyond its borders. The best way to prevent conflict from arising is to create

prosperity and opportunities worldwide. As the world's largest trading power, the EU uses its influence to establish fair rules for world trade so poorer countries benefit from globalisation. As development partners, individual EU member states and the European Commission are committed to remain the world's largest donor.

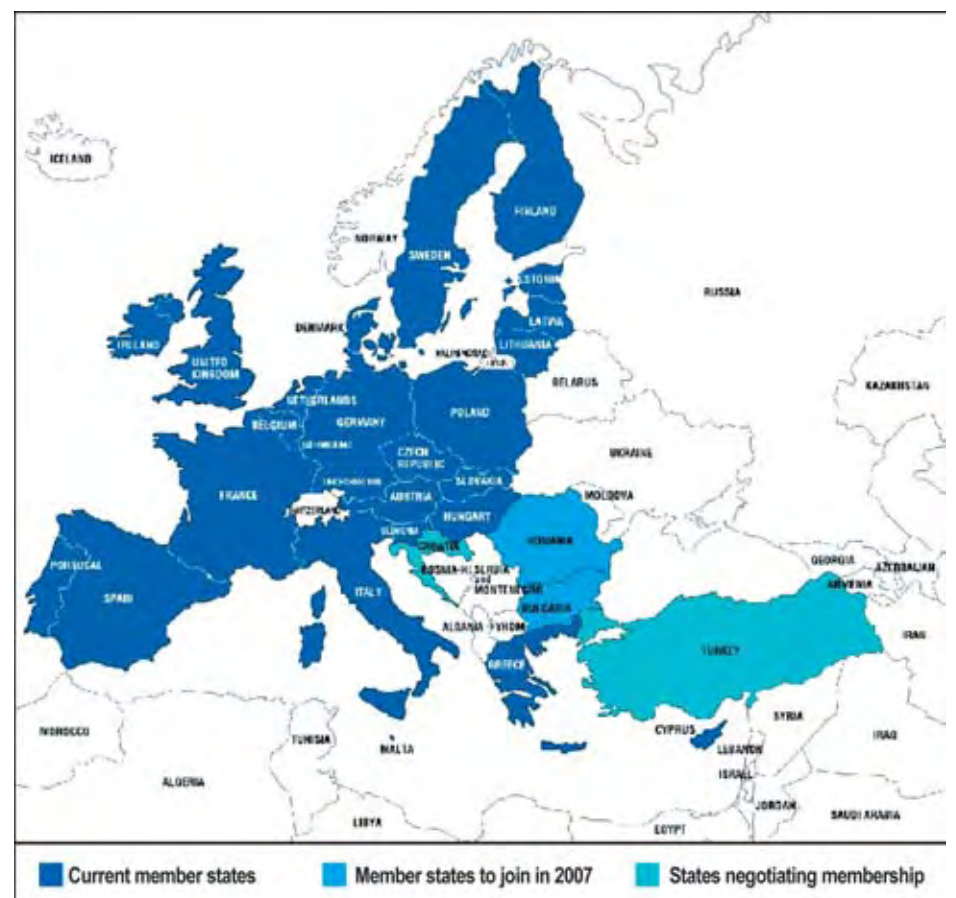
The EU provides development programs and humanitarian assistance that benefit millions of people every day. The EU has also taken a lead in fighting pollution and promoting sustainable development worldwide. When it comes to promotion and protection of civil and political rights, the EU engages and provides advice and assistance to support democracy, human rights defenders, free media and respect for rule of law.

The EU in Nepal

Several EU member states are long-standing development partners with Nepal and currently five member states have their individual diplomatic missions in Kathmandu alongside the Delegation of the European Commission to Nepal. As an institution, EU established



diplomatic relations with Nepal in 1975 and an EU-Kingdom of Nepal Co-operation Agreement was signed in June 1998. Within this co-operation framework high-level consultations—the so-called 'Joint Commission' takes place on an annual basis. The European Commission opened a Technical Office in Nepal in 1992. This presence was developed into the Delegation of the European Commission to Nepal in 2002. The current European Commission Strategy Paper for Nepal 2002-2006 identifies rural development, trade facilitation and conflict mitigation as priority sectors. In addition, the EC implements a significant human rights and democracy portfolio as well as humanitarian and Asia-wide assistance programs in Nepal. ●



EU members and when they joined

1952: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands

1973: Denmark, Ireland, United Kingdom

1981: Greece

1986: Portugal, Spain

1995: Austria, Finland and Sweden

2004: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia

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Looking up to the mountains

A centre for Himalayan studies located in the plains

MARK TURIN in SILIGURI

It is always heartening to find a group of good scholars working on interesting topics and better still if they are doing so together.

On a recent research trip to Darjeeling and Sikkim, I twice happened to come across Occasional Papers from the Documentation Cell of the Centre for Himalayan Studies at North Bengal University in local archives and libraries. Some of the publications were press digests and news clippings from dailies in South Asia, while others were indices of parliamentary proceedings pertaining to relations between India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim (before the mid-1970s) and China. This corpus of data exemplifies a kind of meticulous documentation that few scholars have the time to do these days, so I set myself the task of tracking down the elusive centre.

Even in the hub of urban Darjeeling, the first point of call for learning anything about anything is naturally Google, and sure enough it delivered: a single entry with a telephone number and email address of the Centre for Himalayan Studies. I got in touch and resolved to pay the



centre a visit in Raja Ram Mohan Pur, just outside of Siliguri and strategically located on the road to the Nepali border.

Nestled in the tree-lined campus of North Bengal University (NBU), with a Himalayan backdrop true to its name, lies the Centre for Himalayan Studies (CHS). Directed by the dynamic and welcoming Karubaki Datta, and populated by a range of scholars and support staff, this interdisciplinary research centre falls under the Area Studies Program of the university.

It was established in December 1978 and is treated as a

fully-fledged department of NBU. In the past 27 years, the Centre has had eight directors and a number of impressive resident research scholars, including two who are particularly well-known to the Nepali-speaking academy: NC Sinha and TB Subba.

The activities of the centre range from research projects, seminars and publications, to guidance and supervision of graduate students. Collaborative research projects include a profile of the Eastern Himalayas, while individual scholars are presently investigating topics as diverse as the women of Bhutan,



the carrying capacity of the Teesta basin of Sikkim, the growth of Kalimpong as an urban centre and others are compiling a resource planning atlas of the eastern Himalayan Region. Twenty-nine MPhil dissertations and 14 PhD thesis have been completed by students at the centre, largely in the social sciences and during my short visit, I witnessed a large number of students coming to make use of the library and documentation cell.

A specific project worthy of mention is the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) settlement information for

Sikkim based on maps and statistical information from the Indian census, spear-headed by the cartographer DB Boot. The publication's wing and the documentation cell of the centre deserve special attention. Along with seminar proceedings and special lectures, the centre publishes a useful annual journal entitled *Himalayan Miscellany* which is regrettably not subscribed to by many university libraries in the west, while the documentation cell focuses its attention on producing Regmi-like digests of events that transpire in the eastern Himalayas. The library is well-run and contains a set of standard texts along with some delightfully rare volumes and the staff are eager for more scholars to pass through, avail themselves of the resources and perhaps give a lecture or two. I would encourage any researcher, should they find themselves in the area, to pay a visit. ●

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Germany's zero hour

Looking back at 8 May 1945 in sorrow and anger



RALF DAHRENDORF

The Eighth of May always brings back memories of 1945 because for me the end of the war in Europe really was a zero hour.

When the first Soviet soldiers came up our little street in the western suburbs of Berlin, we knew that the great slaughter was coming to an end. My father who had been in the resistance would come back from Brandenburg prison. I no longer needed to hide as I had done after my release from a Gestapo camp at the beginning of February. Somehow a new life would begin.

First, however, was the chaos. The Nazis were gone and the occupation powers

had not yet set up any kind of administration. We all went looting the local shops; I still have the slim volumes of romantic poetry which my 16-year-old self took from a bookshop. The occupation troops went on a rampage. Food was hard to find. My father was taken from prison and transported straight to central Berlin, where he was told to set up the office for Berlin's energy supply, a task that had to be done literally from nothing. There was no power, no transport, no organised life of any kind for a period.

Was it defeat or liberation? For Germans this question was not easily answered though clearly our family was liberated in every sense. The question then was this: liberated for what? Where do we

go from here?

"You must help," my mother said to me. So I offered my services to the local Soviet authority and helped distribute basic foodstuff to a small number of outlets in our district of Zehlendorf. Five weeks later, however, I was back at school. I carried a special pass as a 'victim of fascism' but others showed the Iron Cross they had got for late military action. Some were refugees from the east, many had their homes destroyed in air raids, almost all grieved for lost loved ones.

Yet the zero hour did not last. It is almost unbelievable but three years later the liberalising policies that followed a currency reform set in motion what came to be known as Germany's economic miracle. To be precise: this is how West Germany's economic miracle began. The German example shows just how different occupation powers can be. In the Soviet zone of occupation, progress was slow and above all coupled with a new enslavement. Even concentration camps like Buchenwald changed their guards and inmates but remained in use.

The western powers in Germany, on the other hand, pursued, after a short period of non-fraternisation, a policy of controlled empowerment. Within a year of the end of the war there were indigenous administrations, within two years elections. Democracy was not just preached but practised and it could build on German traditions.

All this, to be sure, was not just benevolence on the part of the occupying powers. It was also a result of the incipient Cold War and the desire of both sides to consolidate 'their' part of Germany. Even then, there are lessons to be learned from the process.

Two of these deserve to be mentioned. One is economic and has to do with the Marshall Plan. It is perhaps regrettable but nonetheless real that democracy finds roots more easily if economic conditions improve. Such improvement requires above all self-help, the actions of individuals who will not accept the misery of the zero hour for long.

Such self-help can be encouraged by policies (which is what Ludwig Erhard, the father of the 'social market economy' did in Germany) but some starting capital helps. This is where the Marshall Plan of American support became crucial. Similarly, the European Union has helped, and continues to help the postcommunist countries on their way.

The other lesson is moral and it is more difficult. The Nuremberg trials exposed the guilt of the Nazi leaders beyond doubt, if indeed any such doubt was left in people's minds. While these were important, however, Germany did not begin its arduous path away from zero hour with concern for the past.

Indeed, the Adenauer years after 1949 were described by many as years of 'restoration' because too many minor Nazi figures had remained in their jobs. In some ways, the country simply ignored their past and moved forward. Years later when a market economy and political democracy were established, Germany did turn toward 'coping with the past' and did so very effectively.

Germany's Nazi past is uniquely horrible, so comparisons with other countries with blighted histories are misleading. Still, in its own way Poland has followed a similar path after 1989: first the new, then the attempt to come to terms with the past. On balance this is a better method of dealing with a nation's zero hour than doing things the other way round.

In Europe then, 8 May 2005 is an occasion to look back in sorrow and anger. It is also an occasion to look forward with pride in the achievements of recent decades and therefore for hope. ● *Project Syndicate*

Ralf Dahrendorf is a member of the British House of Lords.



A lull in the mountains

The midhills of eastern Nepal are tense but quiet

DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA in SANKHUWASABHA

After February First, and especially after the Maoist defeats at Khara and Rolpa in western Nepal, here in the east there is an unusual lull.

The RNA has been establishing new base camps near strategic passes that the Maoists need to move down to the tarai, while the rebels have been pushed up into remote villages in the hills and jungle hamlets along the East-West Highway and seem to be avoiding a confrontation.

"They aren't in a capacity to challenge us frontally anymore, if they do they know they will suffer even bigger casualties than in Khara and Rolpa," says a confident Major General Om Bahadur Pun, at the Eastern Division Headquarters in Itahari which looks after Mechi, Kosi and Sagarmatha Zones.

Pun, who took over two months ago, has visited his outposts and says the army has things under control. "The Maoists are losing popular support because they are terrorising the people and because of their extortion and forced recruitment of children," he told us.

On a recent trip up from Khandbari towards Terathum, however, Maoist militia armed

with rifles and shoulder bags containing socket bombs were roaming freely in the bajars except in the district headquarters.

Somewhere in Sankhuwasabha, the Maoists' 18th Battalion gave visiting journalists a march past with captured weapons, which included one GPMG, a couple of AK47s, INSAS rifles and a dozen SLRs. More impressive were their communication sets, which included satellite phones and walkie talkies with a range of 12 km. One Maoist was preparing a solar cell array to collectively recharge batteries for the sets.

Despite the show of force, the Maoists in the east have suffered major setbacks since their audacious attacks on Bhojpur and Pashupatinagar last year. Even in those raids, which were successful in penetrating the towns' defences, the Maoists suffered heavy casualties. The rebels deny any split in the party but admit suffering losses due to the capture or deaths of its senior leaders. Ram Bahadur Thapa (Badal) has taken over the rebel eastern command after the Indian Police arrested of Mohan Baidya in Silguri last year.

Desertions appear to be a serious problem. The party has tried to rely on ethnic-based Kirat, Limbu and Tharu fronts to extend its presence in the east but suffered setbacks after the Khumbuwan Mukti Morcha and the Madhesi Mukti Morcha not just split off but also took up arms against the Maoists. Despite this, Commissar Himal of the Maoists' 18th Battalion claims to control most of the countryside and says his forces feel safe in the villages because of his group's good communications that gives early warning of approaching patrols.

The army has starting setting up base camps on strategic passes like Aiselukharka near Khotang which links the eastern midhills to the tarai highway and Letang in Ilam. "There has been a decrease in Maoist activities since we set up the camps, meanwhile the morale of the soldiers is up after February First," says Major Raj Rana of the RNA's 2nd Brigade at Hile. At Aiselukharka, the RNA contingent were also having a march past and showed a dug-in 81 mm mortar used to defend the base perimeter. ●



CAT AND MOUSE:

Soldiers test an 81 mm mortar at their base camp in Aiselukharka last month (top).

A Maoist charges batteries for his walkie talkie with a solar panel near Sankhuwasabha (right). A Maoist unit drilling for the benefit of visitors in Sankhuwasabha and the army unit drills in Purbi Pritana, Itahari.



PICS: DAMBAR KRISHNA SHRESTHA

Jasmine

Its sweet scent this season reminds me of Aama

Small, unassuming but fragrant enough to perfume the world. Jasmine.

It reminds me of Aama. Come spring, she would gather armfuls from the garden, ban us from the bathroom and then close the door on the world. We never knew what she did there, sometimes for hours at a stretch. Later, she would emerge soft and serene from clouds of steam.

This season, when the sweet scent of jasmine lies like a veil

upon the Valley air, it reminds me of her. They say the brain's nerve endings for the sense of smell are located close to the cells that store memory, that is why when

we smell something recollections rush back.

Now I wonder what Aama did behind that locked bathroom door. I imagine her running the hot water to fill the old stone tub where she washed loads of clothes until her back hurt and hands reddened with cold—the same tub that never looked clean no matter how often she scrubbed it.

A stray ray of late afternoon sunlight would push its way past the nylon lace curtains to mark a path across the blue and green linoleum. She must have moved the homemade needlepoint rug, worried that it would get wet. She'd allow herself two fresh towels, one to turban her hair and another to dry off. This she would have placed on the commode, within arms reach from the tub.

Slowly she would undress, peeling off her clothes so that they lay discarded on the floor like a shell, still warm and smelling of her. She might dare for a minute to look at her reflection. She sees her breasts, breasts that have nursed two children and are no longer as firm as they once were. A seven-inch scar mars her soft belly, a memento of a misdiagnosed pregnancy.

Her skin is white and pale, except the hands, which are worn from being a mother, a housekeeper and a keen gardener. She might have smiled at the brown earth moons under her nails—and shrugged.

Her garden is beautiful and people come to admire her green thumb and buy her plants. It keeps her in 'pin money', money that she is fiercely glad to have.

The mirror has fogged over with steam.

She gathers the masses of jasmine and floats it on the water. Opening the cold water tap, she would test the temperature of her bath with her elbow. The sensitivity to heat in her hands had been washed out with all the laundering and lifting hot dishes off the stove. She refuses to dwell on what to make for dinner. She has to please a carnivorous husband, a vegetarian daughter and a finicky son. This is her time.

The flowers have given up their scent, mingling with the water and rising with the steam. She bends over the tub to inhale it, eyes closed.

Then she steps into the water, carefully holding the sides. Perhaps she slid down, lower and lower. Holding her breath she would slip under the surface.

A little water spills over the side. ●

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DHOKAIMA क्याफे

Bol! Speak up!

What Faiz wrote against the British in his India resonates in Kathmandu today

In the Southasia beyond India, Mahatma Gandhi is increasingly regarded as 'Indian'. For many a Nepali citizen, the Sakyamuni Buddha is by now a 'Nepali'. By the same logic, Lalon Fakir would be restricted to being a Bangladeshi and Rabindranath Tagore an Indian.

Borders that delineate the countries of Southasia also have taken on the function of assigning civilisational figures to individual nation-states, even though the personalities who inhabited Undivided India, for example, should be part of the humanistic heritage of Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka as well as the post-colonial, present-day Bharat. Development theorist and practitioner Akhtar Hamid Khan, who moved from Comilla to Karachi to organise the people of the Orangi slum, should be regarded as our common mentor. The same for Iqbal Ahmed, the great humanist and scholar born in Bihar and domiciled in Islamabad.

Noor Jahan was 'the pride of Pakistan' but also of the rest of us. MS Subbulakshmi was 'the nightingale of India' but also the songstress of all Southasia. When the great mystic and musical genius Pathan-e-Khan of Multan passed away a few years ago, the loss was of a jewel of our common heritage but few in India or Bangladesh knew enough to mourn his passing. Pakistan today should

be putting out postage stamps to commemorate the achievements of mathematician Srinivasa Ramajunan and Bangladesh on the writing genius of RK Narayanan.

But that is not how things are working out and we continue to categorise people according to where they lived before Partition. There is even less likelihood that those born after 1947 in our increasingly polarised societies will be regarded as Southasian even while remaining citizens of their own countries.

Mirza Ghalib was a great citizen of undivided India, and is described in a Pakistani website as 'one of the greatest poets of South Asian history'. Allama Iqbal provided the seed of the idea of Pakistan, but he was also what one could be called an 'Undivided Indian'. This trajectory brings us to the question of how to regard Faiz Ahmed Faiz, the great poet of love and revolution and inheritor of the legacy of Ghalib and Iqbal. As a passionate writer of ghazals and someone who fought the British with the weight of a great classical heritage, Faiz should be an icon today for Indians, Bangladeshis and Nepalis. His legacy, however, is increasingly restricted within the frontiers of Pakistan, where his protest poetry still inspires.

At a time when Nepal is rapidly 'becoming Pakistan' in terms of autocratic rule and the loss of civil liberties, some cultural activists decided that Faiz must be introduced to the Kathmandu audience. The oldest generation of Kathmandu's



KIRAN PANDAY

educated would have appreciated Ghalib and read Iqbal. But even they would not have known Faiz. As for the succeeding generations, Faiz might as well not have been born.

This was the logic behind the staging of the program *Faiz: Abhivyakti ko Haq* (Faiz: The Right to Expression). This being an evening in tribute to an Urdu great, the Persian *haq* was used in the title instead of the Sanskrit *adhikar*. The event was organised in a hall whose name—*Baggikhana*—has Urdu associations. Nepalis, however, have lost even the little ability they once had to understand Urdu. As Bollywood films gradually relinquish Hindustani in favour of Hindi, even that route of access to the Urdu *labaj* has evaporated. The organisers of the Faiz program, hence, had to provide translations of the poems.

And what poems they were, played out from old tapes and new CDs, as sung by Iqbal Bano, Nayyar Noor and Tina Sani! *Intesaab* is a poem about a homeland that resembles a dejected forest of yellowing leaves, inhabited by people in need of

empathy, including prisoners of conscience, *tangawallahs*, railwaymen, exploited women, abducted children and the peasant farmers. *Hum Dekhenge*, as sung by Iqbal Bano became the anthem against the dictatorship of Zia-ul-Haq, and tells of a time to come when the meek shall inherit the earth, when palaces shall crumble and regal headgear shall slip.

But *Bol* as rendered by Tina Sani and also sung live to his own music by Kathmandu artiste Aavas (*see pic*) was the song of the evening, catching the fancy of the audience of writers, poets and journalists at a time when the cultural world of Kathmandu is acting strange in its silence. For those who understood the history of the country and of the neighbourhood, what Faiz wrote against the British in his India (see free translation below), resonated in Kathmandu in the year 2005.

*Speak up, for your lips are still your own
Speak, while there is still the time
Speak, while truth still lives
Speak, and say what you have to say.*

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Golfing glory

Our team leaves to participate in the SAARC Golf Championship

Unlike the Asian Games and the Olympics, the SAF Games do not include golf as an event. Against this backdrop the SAARC Golf Championship was introduced in 1999 to provide a platform for Southasian golf governing bodies and golfers to get together, strengthen mutual relationships and compete at the highest regional levels.

It's a pity I never had the chance to play at this premier regional amateur event since just the year before I had declared myself a professional. This year the seventh edition of this prestigious event (from 5-8 May) is being hosted by Sri Lanka for the first time. They have chosen one of the region's finest golf courses, the Victoria Golf and Country Club located in the beautiful hill station of Kandy.

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



India has hosted the event a few times including the inaugural one in Bangalore, Bangladesh and Pakistan

have also played host. The Maldives does not have a golf course or a golf team, so their abstention from the event is understood. That leaves just the two other remaining SAARC members: Bhutan and us.

Bhutan doesn't have a full-length 18-hole golf course yet but we are fortunate enough to have one. The big question now is: when will Nepal host the SAARC golf event?

Perhaps our amateur golf's governing body will get into serious action and reciprocate the many invitations they have accepted these past years. The event used to be a 'Men Only' affair but that changed last year in Lahore when ladies were also included.

Last week, the Nepal Golf Association conducted a qualifying event at Royal Nepal Golf Club to select players for the forthcoming event. After 54 gruelling holes, Tashi Ghale, Tashi Tsering and CB Bhandari qualified for our three-member men's team. We have only two ladies that meet the required handicap criteria, thus Kesang Lama and Shastika Shrestha qualified by default. For Tashi Tsering and Kesang Lama, this is their first



GOPAL CHITRAKAR

appearance in the SAARC Golf Championship. All others have participated in it previously. A special mention should be made for CB Bhandari, who only missed the initial event but has represented us in all the others. So far Nepal's performance has been quite unsatisfactory. This year, we hope our team will fare better and perhaps bring a medal home.

The team, led by Prachanda Shrestha, joint secretary of Nepal Golf Association, left for the Championship on Tuesday and all are geared up for the tournament. Kesang Lama, our new emerging lady golfer, was very excited about her first international appearance and Tashi Tsering, who was also a member of our Namura Cup team to Australia 2003, was in high spirits. Every player in the team is capable of shooting low scores any given day and they have our best wishes and total support. We hope they do much better this year. ●

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



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Balancing mind and body

Tai Chi may be derived from the martial arts but it is now a great way to relax

AARTI BASNYAT

The Chinese characters Tai Chi Chuan can be translated to mean 'the supreme ultimate force'. It is also associated with the ancient Chinese tradition of yin yang, which is the ultimate duality and balance between two complementary forces such as the male and the female and harmony in both.

The Chinese propounder of Tai Chi was Chang San-Feng who once had a vivid dream of a mortal combat between a snake and crane. He was so inspired by their movement that he invented Tai Chi.

It may have once been a form of exercise for martial artists but it has now become a form of relaxation of mind and body for people all over the world in these stressful times. Many of the movements are either derived from the ancient martial arts or from the movements of birds and animals. The gestures are slow, soft and graceful with smooth and even transitions while changing forms. The focus is to circulate the *chi* or the vital force in the body which is supposed to animate the body.

Tai Chi is taught in a number of places in Nepal. Self-Awakening Centre in Baber Mahal Revisited offers the latest, along with transcendental meditation, yoga, reiki and alternative therapy.

Deepak Shrestha, member of the World United Martial Arts and the Tai Chi Chuan Federation of Nepal, is the instructor there. Earlier he was interested in Kung Fu but health problems prevented him from continuing. It was at this point that his Chinese teacher introduced him to Tai Chi and he was hooked. It restored his sense of well-being and improved his health.

Shrestha now teaches Tai Chi in private sessions too, including at a park in Maharajganj where he teaches students as old as 81. Conducted in collaboration with the Tai Chi Federation, these classes cost Rs 300 a month.

"Not many young people



KIRAN PANDAY

come to my classes," says Shrestha, "maybe they find the slow movements boring but it has helped a lot of my students physiologically and many of them come because of their health problems."

The effects of Tai Chi have been known to benefit mind and body. The fluid movements help improve posture and movement while curing various illnesses. The exercises are not strenuous, they are done according to the physical well-being of the person so all age groups can practise it.

Shivili Rana of Self-Awakening Centre says: "People are always complaining about lack of peace, we try to give them peace from within. In today's world there is no safe haven and if people feel balanced from within, they can tackle any problem."

Shivili herself suffered from insomnia but with transcendental meditation, she overcame it and today, describes herself as a happier, more optimistic person. The Self-Awakening Centre is a place where people who lead hectic lives and have no time for themselves can go to find their inner selves to heal.

As Farah Usmani of UNFPA, who has only recently been taking Tai Chi classes, tells us: "It is really good, it gets you energised while relaxing you at the same time. It loosens your joints and especially if you have a desk job, it provides a break. Also it isn't very hard to learn, we have been coming for only a week but know the basics already." ●

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TAI CHI CHI KUNG SHIATSU YOGA

"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 Association of Cartoonists

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ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Magic Pencil** Artworks by Britain's best children's illustrators at the British Council, Lainchor. Until 6 May. 4410798
- ❖ **Buddha Gallery's** First anniversary exhibition, till 10 May. 4440689
- ❖ **Samay Chakra** by Ragini Upadhy-Grela, 10 May-8 June at Siddhartha Art Gallery. 4218048
- ❖ **Mystical Song** Etchings by Seema Sharma Shah at Park Gallery, Lajimpat, until 28 May. 4419353
- ❖ **Aloha Nepal** Works by Wicki Van De Veer at Lajimpat Gallery Café, until 25 May. Proceeds go to SETU Nepal. 4428549

EVENTS

- ❖ **Musical trip** with DJ Guido on 6 May at Latin Quarter Salsa Bar, Baber Mahal Revisited, 8PM, Rs 350 with one free drink.
- ❖ **Summer Dance Party** on 7 May at Liquid Lounge, Lajimpat.
- ❖ **Fifth Himalayan Beetle Rally** on 7 May. Raising funds for Single Women Group, Antenna Foundation and Maya Foundation. 4427623
- ❖ **One Day Dharma Talk** on 7 May, 10AM-4PM at HBMC, Thamel. 4414843
- ❖ **Book Sale** at Pilgrims Book House, Kupondole, till 8 May. 5521159
- ❖ **The Good Person of Szechwan** Staged by Studio 7 at Hotel Vajra, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, until 8 May. 4271545
- ❖ **Sideways** Film show on 10 May at Lajimpat Gallery Café, 7PM, Rs 50.
- ❖ **Tai Chi** Free classes at Baber Mahal Revisited. 4256618
- ❖ **1905 Sundays** Pet practices and more.
- ❖ **Fun in the Sun** at Club Sundhara, Hotel Shangri-la. 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

- ❖ **Raamesh** at Gurukul, 6-7 May, 5PM, Rs 100, Rs 200. 4466956
- ❖ **Full Circle Live** at Indigo Gallery on 7 May, 8PM, Rs 750.
- ❖ **Raju Gurung and Equinox** Live at Patan on 7 May, 6.30 PM, Rs 350. 4414542.
- ❖ **Kathmandu Chorale Spring Concert** on 14 May at The British School, Jhamsikhel, 3.30 PM-6PM. Free entrance.
- ❖ **Rock thru the Ages** on 14 May, 7PM at New Orleans Café, Thamel, Rs 200. 4700736
- ❖ **Siddhartha Sandhya** at Siddhartha Art Gallery on 15 May, 6PM-7.30PM.
- ❖ **Live at Moks** Friday jam sessions and Tuesday Soul nights. 5526212
- ❖ **Ladies Nights** Wednesdays at Jatra, live acoustic music and free drink.
- ❖ **Fusion Time** Mondays at Jalan Jalan Restaurant, Lajimpat, 7PM. 4410438
- ❖ **Live Music** Everyday at Hotel de l'Annapurna, Darbar Marg. 4221711
- ❖ **The Heart Breakers** at Rum Doodle, Fridays, 7PM onwards. 4701208
- ❖ **Prism Live** at Red Onion Bar, Lajimpat, 7.30 PM onwards.
- ❖ **Jukebox experience** Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at Rox Bar.
- ❖ **Jazz** at Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lajimpat, Wednesdays and Saturdays, 7.45 PM.

FOOD

- ❖ **Great Value Lunches** at Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
- ❖ **BBQ Lunch** at Le Meridien, Gokarna Forest Golf Resort. 4445550
- ❖ **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.
- ❖ **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
- ❖ **Earth Watch Restaurant** at Park Village, dine with nature. 4375280
- ❖ **Café Bahal** Newari cuisine at Kathmandu Guest House, Thamel. 4700632
- ❖ **The Beer Garden** at Vaijayantha, Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **The Tharu Kitchen** at Jungle Base Camp. Junglebasecamp@yahoo.com

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Stay one night** get one Night at Shangri-la Village, Pokhara. 4435742
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JAI NEPAL CINEMA

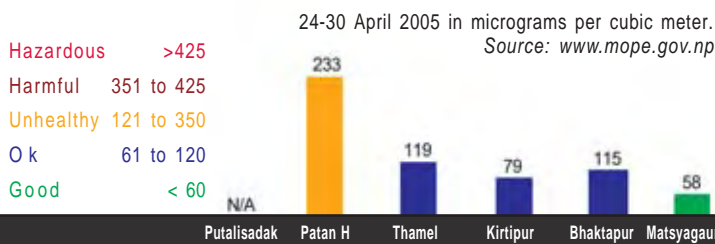
There are mysterious deaths caused by man-eating tigers in Jim Corbett Park. The International Wildlife Welfare appoints ace conservationist Krish Thapar and his wife Riya to investigate. Dev and his friends also set out for an adventure trip during that weekend. Destiny prevents them from going to the farmhouse as planned, instead they end up in India's biggest jungle. Both groups bond together but at night, the jungle comes alive. Then starts the journey of fear, panic and trauma. They are the hunted with death at their heels.

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KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

The rains cleared up the air last week with the average concentration of PM10 particles in Kathmandu Valley going down by 37 percent. Although areas with heavy traffic had PM10 levels that were twice as high as the national average, the air quality in residential areas and outskirts of the main city were within national standards. With the rains coming down still, the pollutants in the air will hopefully remain fairly low this week too. So, breathe easy and take a walk after the rain.



NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



The sudden fall of mean temperatures in May led us to wear warm clothes again. This time the rains were from high clouds of the northwesterly frontal system, which is unusual. Normally, pre-monsoon rains in April and May occur as a result of the collision of warm frontal system from the south of the Himalaya. However, this time the northerly front emerged unusually strong and kept pouring rain showers and chilly winds from the polar region. This satellite image taken on Thursday morning shows a prominent northwesterly frontal system bringing high clouds with a fairly good amount of moisture. The quota of rainfall in May, about 108 mm for the Valley, will occur in the first week of this month. Expect more rain and cold days this weekend.

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KIRAN PANDAY

YAHOO! The new elected committee of the Federation of Nepali Journalists celebrating their victory at midnight on Thursday at Royal Nepal Academy.



DEEPENDRA BAJRACHARYA

LITTLE GURU: Rinpoche Asanga, one of the most respected gurus of the Sakya lineage, participating in the celebration of his sixth birthday at the Tharling Monastery in Boudha on Sunday.



KIRAN PANDAY

FLOWER SHOWERS: Volunteers clearing up the grounds of Dasrath Stadium after helicopters showered it with flowers to celebrate the inaugural of the AFC President's Cup on Wednesday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

BATTLING THE WAVES: Chinese and Nepali journalists rafting from Kothe to Sukute at a program organised by Nepal Tourism Board on Monday.



KIRAN PANDAY

PLAY ME A TUNE: A classical piano recital by British pianist Anthony Peebles at Hyatt Regency on Tuesday.

Ustad Ale

Nepal has many flautists but no one has completed his Masters in flute-playing as has Jeevan Ale, 37. He completed his Masters from the Prayag Institute of Allahabad, India.

Having devoted more than half of his life to classical music, this resident of Mahottari has finally received accolades for his efforts. Though interested in flutes from an early age, Ale says that he only understood the intensity of its music when he started studying it.

"Even when I played folk tunes on the flute, I did not reach the level of satisfaction that I get when I play classical tunes," says Ale. Last year, he was more involved in the academic side of music rather than the practical. He taught at Kathmandu University and also gave private tuitions.

Says Ale to his students: "Do not come to me with high expectations." And for his own peace of mind, he seems to follow the same philosophy. Ale is always inspiring people to study and practice music, adding, "Very few people have the inherent talent given by God but studying music gives an in-depth understanding to it."

Ale lost his right leg in an accident while overseeing lumber in Nawalparasi. Though he had only broken his leg in the accident, the carelessness of doctors in Bharatpur hospital resulted in gangrene and later he had to have it amputated. Ale did not let this stop him and with Fr Gafne's help, he went to Jaipur in India to get an artificial leg fitted. This incident only spurred him on to explore the intricacies of music and become a better flautist. To make

sure that he wasn't distracted from his love for music, Ale has remained a bachelor. When asked if he ever plans to marry, Ale laughs and says, "I haven't written it off completely but it seems so far away that I don't think I will." ●



KIRAN PANDAY



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Our nation's horoscope

Throughout human history to the present day, mankind has fantasised about heavenly bodies. So if you are one of those, there is nothing to be embarrassed about.

From the core of our galaxy to the farthest reaches of the universe, the earth's passage through the cosmos has held deep significance for people on our home planet as we try to make momentous decisions on whether or not, for example, to take the plunge

UNDER MY HAT
Kunda Dixit



and declare a state of national urgency. The behaviour of the planets and the moon are especially important to prepare compatible horoscope charts to ensure that they are properly aligned with each other as well as with Intelsat 5 which is in geostationary orbit over the Indian Ocean even as we speak. In case the planets are not in harmony with the constellations as is often the case, we have in our country many expert preceptors who can fix that for a fee. And even though they can never seem to agree with each other, they can, if need be, calculate planetary orbits relative to each other and come up with a way to cajole Mars and Venus, for instance, to make a more auspicious configuration and slip in an astronomical *baksheesh* to Jupiter and Saturn to look away. Those two are real troublemakers.

The problem arises when, like at the present time in which we have no parliament and no prime minister, we also don't have a royal astrologer. How on earth are we supposed to make important decisions on matters of state if the post of Astrologer General is vacant? How will we ever know when to appoint a prime minister or bring post-paid mobiles

back into service?

So, in the public interest and to hasten the decision-making process here is the nation's horoscope. (Instructions for use: read all the zodiacal forecasts and pick the one that is best suited to you.)

- Aries:** Mistakes can be made if you are too impulsive or don't think things through. Be patient and let them make the first move.
- Taurus:** You will be released from house arrest today. Be grateful. You got three months to think.
- Gemini:** Strong chances of party unity this Friday, if it doesn't happen now it won't happen in our lifetime.
- Cancer:** Auspicious to come above ground and rethink your strategy. Read Sun Tzu.
- Leo:** Today is not a good day at work. You'll receive a gift from someone you haven't seen in a long time. Don't open it.
- Virgo:** Go away, I have nothing to say to you.
- Libra:** An alteration of the home furniture will be beneficial, replace cabinet.
- Scorpio:** Money is coming your way this week but I wouldn't put that down in the personal asset declaration form just yet if I were you.
- Sagittarius:** You can try once more to fly out to New Delhi. This time, try another airline.
- Capricorn:** Isn't it embarrassing to be caught actually reading this stuff?
- Aquarius:** You'll be meeting a lot of world leaders, so work on your handshake.
- Pisces:** Your hard work will pay off and you'll actually get away with another weekly column in which you turn yourself into a complete dork.

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