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Taking off

DOMESTIC

AVIATION

p8-9






nepalnews.com

Weekly Internet Poll # 248

Q. How do you evaluate the first 100 days of the royal government?



Good 35.2%

Satisfactory 23.8%

Not good 40%

Don't know 2.2%

Total votes:810

Weekly Internet Poll # 249. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Will the new seven party alliance help in resolving the political deadlock?

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Abandoned



Jaya Bista and her three daughters in Serabada, Kalikot, will be affected by the aid suspension.

KUNDA DIXIT

NARESH NEWAR

The suspension of one of the country's most effective donor supported poverty alleviation projects in remote western Nepal has sparked debate about where the line is drawn between staff safety and public need.

On 15 May, the German aid agency GTZ, British DfID and the Dutch group SNV jointly announced the indefinite

suspension of Rural Community Infrastructure Works (RCIW) after Maoists beat up a female staff of the project's local partner in Kalikot.

Debkala Acharya was badly injured in the attack at Sukatiya VDC but reports from Kalikot headquarters of Manma say the reason was more personal enmity than her work with the project.

Donor agencies have always said safety of their staff is a priority and have often

suspended projects after physical attacks in the past. But what if the threats are a result of local rivalry?

"We are also not happy with the suspension at all but we can't put our staff at risk, we don't have any other way," Ulf Wernicke of GTZ in Kathmandu told us, "We expect commitment from (the Maoists) and the suspension will remain until we have assurances of full security for our staff."

However, Kalikot-based community groups have sent word out that Acharya was targeted for reasons other than her work with the GTZ-funded food for work program in her district. A local Maoist commissar in Kalikot, while not denying that the beating took place, is said to want GTZ to justify the suspension of its program.

Continued p4

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Sa, Karnali

The people of Kalikot shouldn't be punished for something carried out by a handful of outlaws

UNITED WE STAND

The declaration by seven political parties on 8 May to work together to find a common approach to restore peace and democracy in the kingdom is the first speck of light we have seen in this long dark tunnel of our feckless party politics.

Not since the national government after the People's Movement in 1990 has there been such unity of purpose to address the nation's problems. Ironically, it comes near the third anniversary this Sunday of the dissolution of parliament—the event on 22 May 2002 that triggered the split in the Nepali Congress and put the country on the path to democratic reversal.

The declaration by the Group of Seven (six erstwhile parliamentary parties plus the five members of the United Left Front) is significant because it isn't just another vague diatribe against 'regression' but presents a consensus agreement on a roadmap for peace and democracy and a workplan for action. Which comes first, democracy or peace, maybe a matter of debate but the document lays out reinstatement of parliament as a least-cost option and a common minimum objective.

Responding to the public's lukewarm support for their past agitation against the king, the declaration also evaluates the parties' mistakes and offers corrections. (However, we'd still have liked to see the NC owning up and apologising for the involvement of its hooligans in mosque-burning on 1 September, 2004.)

But by far the most significant aspect of the G-7 is that it seeks to turn the country's stalemated tri-polar power struggle into one in which constitutional forces (the king ceremonially presiding over parties in parliament) can together seek a solution with the Maoists.

The 8 May declaration leaves the door open for the rebels by stating its willingness to discuss a constituent assembly if they abandon violence. Prachanda's prompt and positive response to this must be seen as an encouraging sign.

Given past fractiousness, sustaining this unity will need vision and statesmanship. The parties are their own worst enemies and need to save themselves from self-destructive greed. Once more, the agitation is turning into burning tyres and uprooting sidewalk railings. This time, instead of destroying public property why can't pro-democracy demos symbolically plant new trees where they have been chopped down for instance?

As proof that they mean business, the NC should use the 22 May anniversary to begin reunification talks. If the egos of Sher Bahadur Deuba and Girija Prasad Koirala are obstacles, then the party should look for alternative leadership.

For years now, we have in this space called for the parties to give up pettiness and think of the country. They seem to be finally doing so. The ball is now in His Majesty's court to acknowledge this gesture and meet the parties half-way. The alternative may push the parties and the rebels closer. If we remain divided any longer, we will all fall.



Despite tremendous efforts being made by the people of the Karnali to overcome hardships and centuries of neglect, the rest of Nepal still sees us as 'backward'. If Kathmandu keeps giving up on the Karnali, this could become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

GUEST COLUMN
Min Bahadur Shahi



In the past nine years, the development of Humla, Mugu, Kalikot and Dolpa districts of Karnali have been hard hit by the insurgency. There is great uncertainty, and traditional out-migration has increased deepening the hopelessness and fatalism of the people. Although compared to other regions, the residents of this remote northwestern corner of Nepal face a much harder struggle for daily survival, Karnali's citizens are a proud and dignified lot.

Kalikot is the youngest district in the Karnali and also the most affected by the insurgency. Bifurcated by the mighty Karnali River, its location and relative isolation has made it a coveted strategic area for both sides in the conflict. Kalikot has no road and no airport and its 100,000 people have been bypassed by most development agencies.

Despite this, the people of Kalikot have reason to hope. They

are waiting for the Surkhet-Jumla road, which is going to make access easier. The classrooms in the district's schools are full, through hard work families still manage to feed themselves even though mobility for trade is limited.

Recently, technicians from the Nepal Electricity Authority and members of the Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre (KIRDARC) travelled from Manma to Sannigad to inspect the small hydropower plant which has been inactive for six years now. The good news is that they were not stopped by armed groups and Kalikot may soon have electricity again.

In a way, the situation has never been better to galvanise local people for development work in Kalikot and the rest of Karnali. Armed groups know they can't stop activities that genuinely benefit the people. This is why the announcement of suspension of activities by GTZ, after two members of its partner NGO were beaten by the Maoists in Sukatiya near Manma last week, is such a shock. Directly affected will be the GTZ-supported Rural Community Infrastructure Works (RCIW) project which had been providing valuable local support.

We in the Karnali and the

people of Kalikot have been saddened by the negative publicity generated by the pullout. We are against violence, intimidation, beatings by any group against unarmed innocent development workers. There was more to this incident than meets the eye and we feel that the donor agency's notice in the media was unfair and unnecessarily jeopardised the delivery of services to the people of Kalikot at a time when they need it most.

One can't punish all the people of Kalikot for something perpetrated by a handful of outlaws. And before public statements are hurriedly published, due attention must be paid to others who work and live in the area and how they may be affected.

Development work in conflict zones must be based firmly on the community's trust. All agencies working in such areas must cooperate and coordinate their activities so this trust is not eroded.

We meet challenges every day, but these challenges also provide us opportunities to take our work forward. And in these sensitive times, it is specially important that all decisions be based on facts and not on secondary sources.

In this situation, we must not run away from the problem, but be even more firm in resolving it. All it needs is determination, integrity, commitment to uplift the people of Kalikot and Karnali. And we would urge all concerned to review their decision and immediately resume help to Kalikot. ●

Min Bahadur Shahi is the chairman of the Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre (KIRDARC)

Fear of freedom or freedom from fear?

The third anniversary of the dissolution of parliament is a time to reflect on restoring it

It took three months under house-arrest to finally bring Madhab Nepal to his senses. He realised that the fundamental question of governance in Nepal remains unresolved to this day and he wants the future of monarchy to be a topic of national debate. This should dispel doubts about the UML's democratic credentials.

Sher Bahadur Deuba will have ample time as he sits in the cooler to reflect upon

STATE OF THE STATE
CK Lal



the self-inflicted wounds

that led to his own descent into political irrelevance. Ambitious schemers on Deuba's coat-tails started bringing him down the day he stepped into Singha Darbar as a palace pawn to checkmate democracy. He was persuaded that a chronically squabbling parliament was a hindrance to fight the Maoist menace. He ignored the advice of those who told him to show patience and restraint.

Whatever you may say about Girija

Prasad Koirala, at least he has been consistent in his main demand – restoration of parliament as a point of departure for progressive changes in the polity. Now, seven mainstream parties representing 95 percent of parliamentary strength have supported this demand. The Europeans, Indians and the Americans welcomed this new-found unity among the parties and have finally realised the folly of supporting the needless political experiments of the last three years. These developments augur well for the restoration of Nepali democracy.

However, the head-in-the-sand attitude of Kathmandu's ruling elite about February First persists. It is this unwavering faith in dogmatism that allows the regime to eject passengers from aircraft, stop leaders from meeting political detainees, arrest activists freed on court orders, flex administrative and financial muscle to muzzle the media in excesses that transcend the Panchayat. We see the same tendency to justify the

unjustifiable in the name of protecting the 'national interest', a vague expression that can't conceal its intrinsic militarism. In the days to come, countering such pretensions from the self-appointed guardians of the national interest will be the main challenge to institutionalise democratic nationalism.

Anywhere in the world a change of government outside the provision of the constitution of the day is called a 'coup'. On Sunday we will be celebrating the third anniversary of 22 May 2002—the day Deuba dismantled parliament and announced elections he knew could never be held. This was a creeping coup, carefully calibrated to foreclose the possibility of public outcry. The charade continues today. On the specious pretext of ensuring freedom from fear, fear of freedom is being instilled in the minds of the vulnerable middleclass. We are being told repeatedly and in shrill tones to crave peace before development and then only democracy, as if such a neat

precedence of fulfilment of human desires were possible. The royal takeover is defended by fanning fears of a Maoist takeover. Reason invariably collapses under grief and outrage at the barbarity of violence. The fight against terror is used to justify curtailment of civil liberties, dismantling of democracy and to excuse vigilante justice. It is a theatre of the absurd.

It is impossible to put a timeframe for this process to unravel but a democratic and progressive Nepal is sure to emerge from this churning. We can't predict the future but we must prepare for it. Now that the parties have their act together, the palace, too, must stop prevaricating and spell out its stance on constitutional monarchy. The importance of the restoration of parliament was important before, now it has become urgent as well. It is pointless tinkering any more with royal cabinets, it's time to restore due process under the constitution through a reactivated lower house. ●

LETTERS

FLOP-FLIP

Both Prashant Jha and Swapn Dasgupta hit it squarely on the head in your last issue (NT, #247), heralding perhaps not just realpolitik vis-à-vis Nepal but also *realmedia*. The so-called Indian flip-flop is really the other way around: its ill-informed over-reaction in the immediate aftermath of 1 February was the real diplomatic flop, while Manmohan Singh embracing ground truth in Nepal was a flip back to reality. He is undoubtedly India's pragmatic response to China's Deng. But the South Block's original flop reaction is understandable: it was naturally reluctant to write off its political investments endowed in various party bosses. After all they did deliver, whether it was Mahakali or the Bhutani refugee imbroglio.

What is difficult to comprehend, however, are the Euro-Americans standing in phalanx behind South Block. Why would these self-styled paragons of liberal democracy and good governance so unequivocally support the resumption of power by kleptocrats of yore without forcing them to submit to a popular vote? Could it be that they too have benefited? Look at the Enron-like Dhabol deals of Bhote Kosi/Khimti where Nepali consumers have to pay double the electricity rates while Euro-American investors and contractors are walking away with the windfall. Look at the Kali Gandaki scam where Rs 12 billion was doled out in a Rs 7 billion civil contract, with the major beneficiary being not Nepali electricity consumers but Euro-American contractors. Look at Middle Marsyangdi where the story is repeating itself. Look at the oversight-free partnership of western aid agencies and their INGOs with party-organised NGOs in Nepal. The zillion-dollar question is: would Nepali cognoscenti be wrong in explaining this anomaly with the hypothesis that Euro-Americans too have benefited from the kleptocracy of the 1990s?

Name withheld on request

● Kiran Panday's picture of Girija Prasad Koirala and Madhab Kumar Nepal on your online edition (#246) says it all. The distrustful body language of the two leaders, their reluctant postures, the utter hopelessness of their demeanours. And in the background, the sardonic grins of party cadres who probably hope to benefit from the unity in terms of future employment. That picture spoke a thousand words.

Bijay Gurung, Ibaraki, Japan

● This letter is in response to the letter to the editor by Sanchit Shrestha (#247). Your newspaper should be wary of publishing anything that purports to understand the sentiment of the Nepali people better than the rest of us. He not only says that Dixit, along with the 'iniquitous' parties, have failed to win Nepali hearts and minds but takes the silence on our fellow citizens' part as the conclusive proof of love lost

between them. Either he is blissfully oblivious to the silencers imposed on Nepalis or he feels them justified, in which case he should talk only of himself and not on behalf of the 'silent' masses. The worst arguments in support of the royal coup (and the only argument) is that it was carried out on behalf of the Nepali people. If indeed that is the case, then the king should immediately prove it by taking the proposition to the people. Otherwise him and his followers like Mr Shrestha should stop reading other people's mind and focus on their own.

Name withheld on request

● The concern raised by Former Speaker Daman Nath Dhungana in your translation of his interview in *Deshantar* ('How dare we let it happen, #247) shows his concern for democracy in Nepal. He is right about the harassment people are facing. Democracy is granted and democracy is taken back from the hands of the people as if it was the '*tathastu ashirbad*' of Lord Shiva. The king has no right to do this to his people, but who has the right to decide on our behalf? In the past too, when we had to fight for democracy, we were united, we shared our interest and goal. We did get democracy no matter how many times it was taken back. But the people chosen to be representatives of the citizens were distracted by vested interests, abusing the trust bestowed on them. Why can't leaders work and dedicate themselves to the betterment of citizens and for the nation? The history of politics is stained with corruption, injustice, bias and personal interests. Now that the king has admitted he wants democracy but only when the people understand its value, when leaders can commit themselves for the good of the nation, what makes Dhungana think the people will still support political leaders like him who squandered democracy after they had won it? How can these leaders ask, 'Did the king consult with any of the political forces before making his February First move?' The people have eyes to see and the right to cast their vote. Freedom and democracy exist only when leaders understand and execute their duties properly. Things will then fall into place.

Reena Sen, email

● Recently there has been an outpouring of support for February First in your letters column. Most seem to be from readers in Kathmandu or outside Nepal who are ignorant of the security situation in the hinterland. They were pampered during the Panchayat and must be hoping that the good old days are back again. Why else would they be so blind to what is happening in the country? They are following the king in blaming the political parties and their leaders and put all the blame for Maoist activities on them. It was actually the palace that damaged the atmosphere during both past ceasefires and negotiations that the parties tried to negotiate with the Maoists with issues like the Doramaba massacre and the five km limit on army movement. The king has time and again expressed his wish to

be a 'constructive' ruler, without elaborating on what this means. He has ended up surrounding himself with sychophants and yes-men who are going about issuing orders that are contradictory to his royal proclamation. How else can the flagrant human rights abuses so soon after the signing of the Geneva MoU be justified? The palace's strategy is to postpone the crisis and buy time to pursue an undemocratic path so the monarch can be active and the psychopaths can enjoy power again. It is painful to see so much contradiction between what the royal government says and what it does. The king has said he wants to strengthen democracy but all his actions so far show only a drift towards authoritarianism.

Ram Milan Sah, Sarlahi

COLONIAL HAUNTS

Just read Pravin Rana's piece ('Colonial hunts', #247) on Rana nostalgia in your

Internet edition and enjoyed it very much. Would he also care to write a similar piece on the other Ranas, by marriage or otherwise, currently on top of the Pecking Order. We'll then know how to read the near empty sign of your paper's liberty gauge, a silent monument to these deranged and twisted times.

Name withheld on request

NO FUN

For all of us who have already read Dan Brown's book *Da Vinci Code*, Jiggy Gatton's review ('The religious X-files, #247) does give us additional information. But for those who haven't yet read the book, the reviewer spoils the fun by disclosing secrets from the book like the part about the Last Supper. It was this suspense that kept me going when I read the book and the reviewer shouldn't have stolen the thunder.

A Vani, email

TREE SLAUGHTER

Your front page photo ('Grand Trunk Road', #247) could break anyone's heart. At a time when the environment of Kathmandu Valley is worsening the authorities should have been planting more trees instead of felling them. I am writing to you to seek some answers. While people are being cut down outside the capital, in Kathmandu we are witnessing terrorism against trees—the brave and innocent beings that had been protecting the Valley for ages. The sight of the corpses of these trees on your front page was heart-rending. Whoever is responsible for this deed with misplaced logic and values must be prosecuted.

Jaya Dev Baidya, Thapathali

Before all our species leave the valley
Hauled away in heavy trucks, it's time
To praise improvement of the city
And confess to a past of crime:

Forgive our jaunty limbs and shiny leaves,
That cluttered views and clogged the sewer.
Who but foolish cows could grieve
The loss of shade and scent of verdure?

We kept aloft, with too much poise:
As cars and buses slammed our trunks
(Grinding gears with fumes and noise)
We only emanated love, like monks.

So hear, to our misdeeds give coverage!
We trees don't often strive for mention in the press
We have no love of paper used for printing
knowledge
(In fact, we would prefer if printed news were less).

Now one can stroll the boulevards with ease,
Gone is fear of bumping into dirty trees.
We deserve our end and are not displeased
With afterlives as toothpicks for the Nepalese.

Eucalyptus, Jacaranda, Pine, Pulchok

Mister! I am the Lorax. I speak for the trees.
I speak for the trees, for the trees have no tongues.
Way back in the days when the grass was still green
and the pond was still wet
and the clouds were still clean,
one morning, I came to this glorious place.
And I first saw the trees!
But that was a long time ago, today
at the far end of town
where the Grickle-grass grows
and the wind smells slow-and-sour when it blows
and no birds ever sing excepting old crows...
is the Street of the Lifted Lorax.

After Dr Seuss, email



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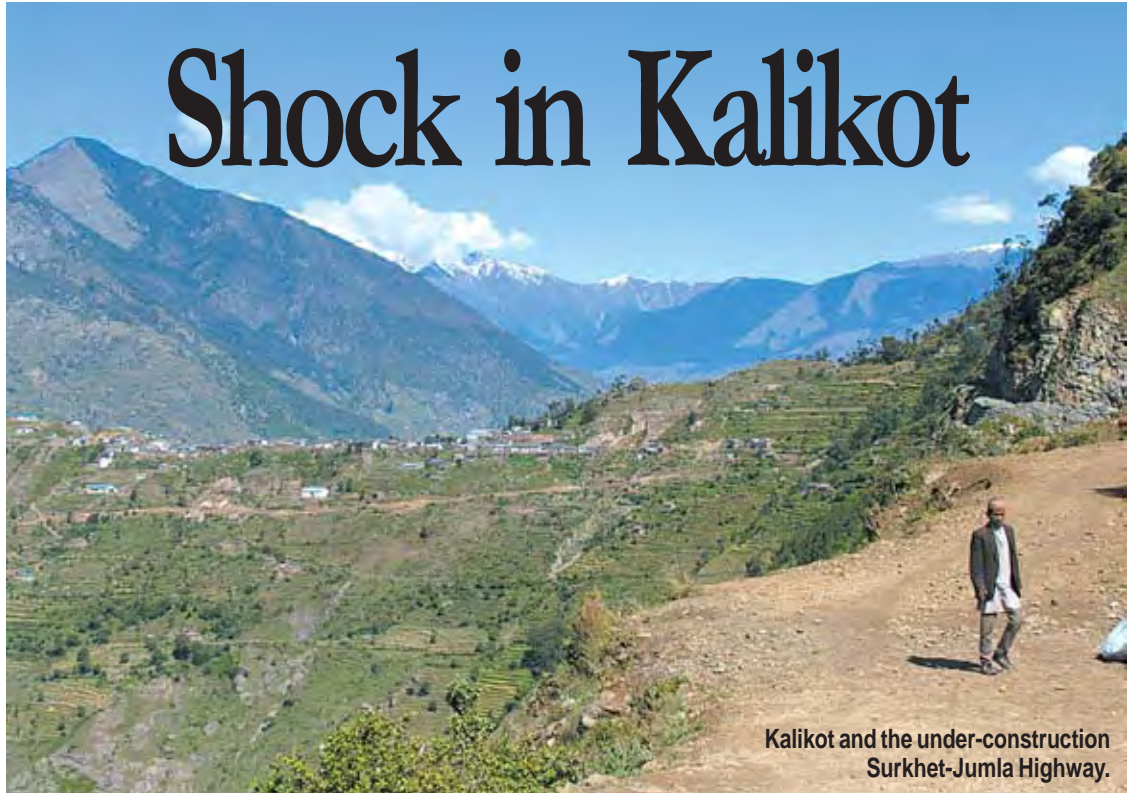
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Shock in Kalikot



Kalikot and the under-construction Surkhet-Jumla Highway.

KUNDA DIXIT

from p1

The fear now is that aside from depriving villagers of food, the withdrawal may also have put other aid groups in the district in the bad books of the rebels. Other Kathmandu-based aid agencies told us privately they were miffed at GTZ's abrupt decision.

The three other RCIW donors in Kathmandu, however, say the Maoists are in serious violation of the Basic Operating Guidelines signed by 10 aid organisations that allows termination of programs if aid workers are not safe.

The news from Kalikot was exaggerated in transmission and German media reported wrongly this week that two aid workers were killed in western Nepal. The government is also displeased with the suspension. "We were not consulted and we don't agree with the decision," says Basanta Raj Gautam, the Ministry of Local Development's national program coordinator for

RCIW, who has just returned from a monitoring mission to Kalikot.

RCIW provides cash and food for infrastructure projects, and local communities are involved in digging a mountain road linking Dailekh to the Karnali Highway. Gautam says that nearly 10 km of the total 18 km of road trail is completed and the remaining would have been finished this year. The work is now halted.

Other development groups say pulling out like this sends the wrong message to the people and to the Maoists. Says Gauri Pradhan of the National Human Rights Alliance, "We understand this is to pressure the Maoists but such direct action is not necessary and they should have discussed it first with other NGOs." Pradhan's child rights group has been under pressure from rebels in Salyan, Rolpa and Rukum to hand over a share of project funds as donation but they haven't withdrawn.

Hari Prasad Limbu of the Nepal Trust in Humla had his

office in Simikot bombed and staff threatened but says it is the duty of aid agencies not to be deterred. "The important thing is to continue to deliver assistance despite physical threats," Limbu says.

Shanta Lal Mulmi of the National Federation of NGOs had staff members beaten up recently when they refused to register with the Maoists in Sindhupalchok and Dadeldhura. "As people involved in development in conflict areas we have to overcome these challenges," Mulmi says.

Other development agencies didn't object so much to GTZ deciding to pull out but that the decision was taken unilaterally. They fear the message to the Maoists is that all they have to do is rough up staff to stop projects they don't like. Says Action Aid Nepal's Country Director Shibesh Chandra Regmi: "The donor action looks right if we think about the safety of staff but it doesn't seem fair from the poor people's point of view." ●

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Don't roll back

Reversing interest rate liberalisation may be fatal

Two weeks back, a statement from the Nepal Rastra Bank governor went largely unnoticed. He argued that banks are making a lot of money so the interest rate should perhaps be regulated. While he may have had good reasons to say this, we really need to examine what that means to the world outside in the 21st century.

A decade ago, the Rastra Bank made a landmark decision not to peg interest rates but to leave it to the market. That unleashed a plethora of banks competing with different sets of rates but it also gave the consumer the option of choosing a bank with an interest rate that

ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed



seemed most agreeable. Big and low risk corporate houses got low rates and businesses borrowing from moneylenders at high interest rates could switch to bank rates that were high but half of what they paid moneylenders. Individual consumers could choose a bank that provided better interest rates.

Some businesses argue that the interest rate spread of banks is high and the central bank needs to flex its muscles to control it. Perhaps these businesses either belong to the high-risk category thereby paying the highest interest rates or are jealous of the people who have opened banks, made money and been quite successful. The Beed has observed that some businesses are paying interest rates that are three times the rate paid by some prime corporate houses. It is a true market-determined situation and if banks are making profits by risking money to high-risk customers, the central bank should not have any problem in this regard.

It would be better for the government and the central bank to work harder at regulating the functioning of the banking business than to try



and disrupt fundamentals. For instance, should a set of promoters be involved in more than one financial institution? Why not start a credit rating system for banks so customers know when the deposit scheme of one bank is different from that of

another? Why not make public the actual changes that have taken place in foreign managed banks and how the millions poured into these banks have actually benefited Nepali consumers? How can we encourage more foreign banks to participate in Nepal and provide strong balance sheets to fund larger projects here?

Post-1990, the banking sector has done well. It has created many Nepali millionaires in terms of stockowners with a wealth of knowledge and experience in management and operations. If so many banks are doing well, it is because management skills of Nepali professionals have excelled.

Nepal Rastra Bank should stop sending misleading signals like rolling back on interests if it still believes that foreign investment and technology transfer is the way to bring a surge in market-oriented economies. We have witnessed the impact of rollback. When the central bank clamped down on stock exchange trading with stringent regulations a decade ago, it did not realise that confidence does not bounce back, even 10 years later. That is something we surely do not want the banking industry to go through. ●

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New schedule

Drukair
Royal Bhutan Airlines

Druk Air will begin its new summer flight schedule effective until 29 October on the Delhi and Paro routes from Kathmandu.

Masti campaign



Asian Thai Foods has started Rumpum Biking Masti scheme under which every second day a consumer will be given an Anna Lifan bike. Rumpum packets also have coupons worth Rs 1 to Rs 5,000.

Safe safe



Bumil Safe has launched Dia Safe in Nepal. The safes are available in a wide range of models and colours at their showroom, Home Furnishers in Tripureswor.

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Reservations: 4421215(Hunting Line), Fax: 977-1-4420766,
Email: marketing@yetiair.wlink.com.np, Website: www.yeti-airlines.com

MEDIAWATCH

- Bhaikaji Ghimire, managing director of *Samadrishti* weekly has been in detention for at Nakkhu the past two-and-a-half years without charge. Bishnu Nishturi of the FNJ visited him in jail last week and saw torture scars on Ghimire.
- Maoists have abducted the reporter of *Aankha* weekly, Som Sharma, from Mangalbare in Ilam last week.
- Surkhet correspondent of *Samaya*, Deb Kumar Subedi, was sentenced this week to three months in detention for reporting a democracy demonstration.
- Mobile phones of columnist Gunaraj Luitel and Ujir Magar of *Kantipur*, editor and publisher Pushkar Lal Shrestha, and Mahendra Bista of *Nepal Samacharpatra* and scores of others are still out. Nepal Telecom notified some of them it was on order from "higher up".
- The district administration has sent a letter (cc-ed to police) to Radio Sagarmatha and other Kathmandu stations warning them to comply with the order to only broadcast entertainment.
- Despite lifting of the emergency, restrictions on the print media enforced on 2 February for six months banning articles against the 'letter and spirit' of the royal proclamation and 'supporting terrorism' are still in force.
- *Himal Khabarpatrika* publisher Kanak Mani Dixit was summoned before the Lalitpur CDO office on Wednesday to explain why he wrote the article 'The National Crisis: Conditions and Opportunities'.
- On Tuesday, Maoists blew up a transmission tower of Ntv in Palpa. No one was hurt but broadcasts of the state-owned station to central Nepal was disrupted.

Flip-flop

Kanak Mani Dixit from New Delhi in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 15-30 May

The Indian decision to stop and then resume military aid to Nepal and the factors behind this ‘flip-flop’ will be important for geopolitical analysts and Nepal’s decision-makers to examine. This ability to bring about an Indian turnaround was a major diplomatic victory for Naryanhiti and the resumption of Indian military assistance to Nepal was determined by the interplay of four Indian power centres:

SOUTH BLOCK: The bureaucrats in the Ministry of External Affairs have traditionally determined Indian policy towards Nepal and since the 1 February move it has stuck to its ‘Twin Pillar’ policy of supporting constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy. Indian policy is now the responsibility of Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran, former ambassador in Kathmandu and well versed in Nepal affairs. Saran and his Nepal-desk colleague Ranjit Rae were in Bhutan when news of the Jakarta meeting came and it is learnt that they, as well as the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu, were taken aback with the news to resume military aid. It was a sign that Naryanhiti had been successful in pulling the Indian prime minister closer to its position.



INDIAN ARMY: Indian Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee has been muted in his reaction to the royal move. Indian defence ministers traditionally have tended to hold views close to that of the security forces, especially the army. Besides his senior cabinet colleague, Manmohan Singh must also have been influenced by the need expressed by the Indian Army officer to support a ‘brother army’. The Indian Army has always been sensitive about the Gorkha troops in its ranks, and its officers would be worried about retired soldiers not being able to collect pensions in the hills of Nepal. The present Commander-in-Chief JJ Singh is said to feel that cutting military aid would hurt the feeling of the Nepali side as well as affect the morale of serving Gorkha troops and pensioners. According to sources, Singh and Saran actually sparred at a high-level cabinet security meeting over this issue. The fact is that Indian hardware may enhance the fighting capability of the army by a bit but it will not bolster its dignity and sense of self-worth at the current juncture. More than support the Royal Nepali Army, the Indian decision to resume arms supplies has bolstered the king’s political position.

POLICE/INTELLIGENCE: The suspicion with which Indian police and intelligence involved in fighting armed rebels in Bihar, Jharkhand, Telangana and other regions regard the Nepali Maoists is understandable. Although various central and state police and intelligence bodies compete for influence, their common concerns are represented at the Prime Minister’s Office in New Delhi by the former head of the Intelligence Bureau, MK Narayanan. More than a political resolution in Nepal he would be keen to see the Maoists of Nepal brought to the ground and journalists in New Delhi say his position has been to argue in favour of the resumption of military aid.

INDIAN ROYALTY: A key source of Naryanhiti’s influence in the Delhi Darbar has been through India’s former rajas and princelings, and some New Delhi analysts say this category has had a major role in the reversal of policy on military aid. Indian Foreign Minister K Natwar Singh comes from Rajasthan’s Jat royalty and is said to be naturally sympathetic towards the Nepali royal family. Nepal’s Princess Himani is also a descendant of the royal clan of Sikar, also in Rajasthan.

It is clear that the change in Indian policy in Jakarta last month was the result of clash and accommodation between these four forces. But there may have been other factors. Indian Hindutva organisations have been close to the Nepali monarchy, and several conservative columnists and commentators also affected Indian policy-making. This time, the palace won. But the Jakarta about-turn has left such a bitter taste among policy-makers in New Delhi that it may actually have an opposite effect in the long-term. Jakarta indicated how much the Nepali state has become dependent upon New Delhi’s goodwill.

The royal regime has derived diplomatic dividend from this change in Indian policy but the future course will be determined by whether or not it sticks to the king’s commitment made in Jakarta to a democracy roadmap, whether political prisoners are released, whether the press will be free. There is also a school of thought in New Delhi that India should abandon its ‘Twin Pillar’ doctrine for a ‘One Pillar’ policy solely focussing on the parliamentary system of representative government. Said one senior policy-maker: “If we are asked to choose between the king and the Nepali people we will choose the people.”

Instead of wasting time debating what an outside power does or does not do as the days go by vis-a-vis Nepal policy, it will be more important for political figures and analysts to start creating facts on the ground.

State blockade

Samaya, 19 May

समय

ROLPA—Many villages have been unable to get medical supplies because security forces have blocked them to prevent supplies from reaching the Maoists. Rolpa has been a refuge for injured rebels and a training ground for Maoists. To control the growing activity of the rebels in that area, security forces have barred transport of medicine and food supplies to rural areas for the past three months. But local people say the blockade has affected their lives. In Kot, 63-year-old Bir Maya has been unable have her wound healed for the last two months after she fell off a tree and broke her arm. She has been visiting the local health post only to find that they have no medicines. She cannot afford to travel to another district for treatment and now has been using local medicinal herbs but her pain is still severe. In Tribeni, Ram Bahadur Pun has been suffering from stomach ailment for several months. “I have been in pain for a long time,” he says. The posts have even run out of Jivan Jal. “Many villagers have no choice but to travel all the way to Nepalganj and Dang,” says pharmacist Yam Bahadur Basnet. Food supplies have been restricted and the people of this district have not seen rice for many months. Says Bir Bahadur

of Rangkot: “The Maoists have made Rolpa unfit to live in and the security forces have been harassing us poor people.”

Corruption charges

RCCC Chairman Bhakta Bhahadur Koirala in *Nispakshya*, 17 May

निष्पक्ष

We had instructed the police to arrest Sher Bahadur Deuba on 22 April. They brought Deuba to us only five days later. We had to arrest him because he refused to answer our questions. We will arrest anyone who does not cooperate on interrogation. We have charged him of a crime, he has the opportunity to defend himself. In fact, it is a chance to get a clean chit. But if someone says he or she will not give any explanation, that is a different issue altogether. That is his fundamental right and no one can do anything about it. If Deuba keeps quiet it may be an admission of guilt and if he does not produce bail, he will have to face legal prosecution. It is clear that under such circumstances, he will have to go to jail. Former Ministers Purna Bahadur Khadka, Mohammad Mohsin and Yuba Raj Gyawali were summoned and they offered their explanations and produced the bail. If Deuba had done the same, he would also have been freed by now. It is only the corrupt people who are afraid of us, corrupt politicians of political parties have ganged up

against us. Their politics are aimed at protecting themselves from our actions. But we have no concern with politics. We have no political vendetta.

Captain’s telly

Jana Astha, 11 May

आस्था

It wasn’t as easy as RNAC Captain Sishir Sharma had imagined trying to sneak his 42-inch plasma tv through airport customs by posing as the king’s pilot. His crate imprinted with king-size letters ‘Royal Palace’ at first caused quite a stir at TIA among airport and security personnel. They thought it belonged to the palace after the royal visit to Boao and needed to be rushed off to Naryanhiti. When they found out it belonged to the pilot who was misusing the name of the palace, orders for his arrest came. But he was released on the recommendation of a government department. When asked why he had indulged in such an act, the pilot replied that he had the privilege since he was flying the airplane carrying the king from Singapore. Sharma, who has also served as the director of RNAC, escaped scot-free with no charges despite such a brazen attempt at smuggling. He was even allowed to take his plasma television home after seven days upon paying a custom duty of Rs 127,000.



Chicken roast: Democracy
Book on fire: Law

राजधानी *Rajdhani*, 18 May

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



This is not an authoritarian regime. We work within the limits of the law and acts of the country.

Bhakta Bahadur Koirala, chairman of the RCCC in *Nispakshya*, 17 May



Time to move with the Times...

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Who killed Pokhrel?

.....
Samaya, 19 May

Who killed Pandit Narayan Prasad Pokhrel and why? As with any other murder of a powerful person conspiracy theories abound. Though the Maoist affiliated Dalit Mukti Morcha of Kapilbastu has taken responsibility for the incident, the silence of the upper echelons of the rebel party casts reason for doubt. Some months ago, the Maoists of this region had captured Chet Bahadur Kunwar of the royal palace and freed him a few days later. This shows that the Maoist policy in this area does not include the killing of 'high profile' people.

Two years ago, two members of the Maoist revolutionary wing were arrested at Pandit Pokhrel's residence. Sources say that though the revolutionary group suspected the Pandit of informing the police, they did not blame him. But this does not mean that the Pandit did not have political enemies. He had close connections with the World Hindu Council and World Hindu Federation. Hindu hardliners had for some years been trying to make Nepal their centre. After the Federation's Achhyut Regmi began favouring Ashok Singhal openly, he began to make things difficult for Pokhrel who had grown popular. But the Council's 'denominational agenda' and the arguments raised by Pokhrel meant that relations between

Singhal, Bharat Keshari Simha and Pokhrel deteriorated. Even if it was the Maoists' Dalit Mukti Morcha killed Pokhrel, the World Hindu Federation and Singhal will benefit the most. Could it be that the Maoists' Dalit wing is manipulated by other powers? This incident has many political implications. Pokhrel was a progressive pandit, he was against Hindu fundamentalism and untouchable practices. Often accused of trying to destroy Hindu society, it is not difficult to measure their scorn for him.

The power wielded by the World Hindu Federation and World Hindu Council and its sister organisation in Nepal—Hindu Social Workers' Association—is connected to the present regime while Pandit Pokhrel's power came from his popularity among devotees and his 'Puran revolution'. Before news about his death was broadcast, a directive was issued to state-run tv and radio stations in Nepal telling them not to call him '*Bachan Siromani*'. If the leaders of the Maoist party do not clarify their role in Pandit Pokhrel's murder, it will only benefit the Indian extremist Hindu association and their associates in Nepal. Pandit Pokhrel's religious and altruistic campaign for the people had become the greatest obstacle to their domination campaign. (A Maoist mouthpiece, *Jana Bidroha* said this week that the leadership had started an inquiry into the murder.)

Rebel rebels

Himal Khabarpatrika, 15-30 May

हिमाल

There are signs that the Prachanda-Baburam rift is affecting the lower rank and file in the rebel movement. Senior sources in the Maoist eastern command confirm former Maoist student leader Debendra Parajuli and Maoist women's association Secretary Kalpana Dhamala are being tortured under Maoist detention at an undisclosed location in eastern Nepal. The reason seems to be a difference of opinion with political commissar and central committee member Ram Bahadur Thapa (Badal). The two youth leaders seem to have become victims of the latest trend within the Maoist fold to sideline supporters of Baburam Bhattarai. Officially, they have been charged with divulging party secrets and on suspicion of being involved in the arrest of senior party leaders in India last year. Parajuli and Dhamala had been critical of Badal for the military setbacks that the Maoists have faced in the east in the past year, according to the source. Another politbureau member in charge of external relations, Dina Nath Sharma has also been forced to resign from his post for his suspected role in the arrest of 11 senior leaders in Patna last year.

Baburam's blames Prachanda for:

- 1 Glorifying Prachanda path by making it like Mao Zedong thought
- 2 Not allowing freedom within the party
- 3 Blaming him for the arrests of Maoists in India
- 4 Developing a personality cult
- 5 Showing 'Rayamajhi' traits by displaying affinity to a feudal king
- 6 Sidelining everyone else
- 7 Saying one thing, doing another
- 8 Indulging in groupism creating factions
- 9 Putting himself on the same pedestal as Marx, Engels and Mao



Prachanda blames Baburam for:

- 1 Demolishing the strategic offensive plan
- 2 Severing links to the party and the people's war
- 3 Taking revenge against top leadership
- 4 Suspicious role in the arrest of party leaders in India
- 5 Looking down on the People's Liberation Army
- 6 His actions have helped imperialism, expansionism and the royal army
- 7 Lobbying against the central leadership
- 8 Questions about integrity and commitment to party ideals
- 9 Promoting anarchy by raising objections at the wrong time



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Women power (Clockwise from top left): Bhawana Pant of Buddha Air, Prashansa Shrestha of Cosmic Air, Yashodhara Thapa of Buddha Air and Jeena Lingden of Yeti Air.



ABHA ELI PHOBOO

When Sony Rana got her pilot's license in 1988, she became the first Nepali woman to sit in the cockpit. Now, she has become the first Nepali woman to be certified to fly jets after she got her Boeing 757 rating recently.

"It has always been exhilarating and no, I have never felt awkward," says Rana who has now been flying with Royal Nepal Airlines for nearly 20 years. There are eight women pilots flying for Royal Nepal and other

private carriers and the number is increasing to keep pace with the growth in the domestic airline industry. Women have found that they don't need to be stereotyped as stewardesses anymore—they can be pilots, aeronautical engineers, air traffic controllers or work in managerial positions in airlines.

"I got into piloting quite by accident really," says Hira Thapa, the most recent addition to the female pilot sorority flying for the national carrier. "I was just flipping through the papers when I saw this ad and made up my



mind to go learn to fly. My parents were very supportive."

Then there are those who always dreamed of flying and from a very young age knew for certain that a pilot was what they wanted to be. "My uncle was a pilot and he used to take me to the airport and the tower. I sat in the cockpit as a little girl and I remember the first thing I liked about it was the smell of the fuel! Deep down I knew that I would fly one day," says Yashodhara Thapa of Buddha Air.

For Bhawana Pant who also flies Beech 1900s for Buddha Air, her father who is a captain in Royal Nepal Airlines was the source of encouragement and inspiration. "I liked the uniforms," she laughs, "and I was completely fascinated by the notion of taking a plane up. Flying in Nepal is a challenge because of the topography." Pant flew the Cessna Grandcaravan to remote airports in western Nepal for Necon. "Flying to Simikot and Jumla then was different," she recalls, "and I remember people crowding around when they heard a woman was flying the plane."

Indeed, some women pilots have found that air hours flown in the Nepal Himalaya are worth a premium and that makes it easy for them to get better paying jobs elsewhere. A few have defected to foreign airlines but most say they wouldn't give up flying in Nepal for the world.

"Every day is an experience and we get to travel all across the country," says Jeena Lingden, "people think it's a risky job. But it all depends on how professional you are and how seriously you take flying." Lingden and Sabina Shrestha of Yeti Airlines regularly fly Twin Otters in and out of Phaplu, Lukla and Jufali, three of the most difficult airports in Nepal.

"I've always wanted to fly in Nepal," says Sabina, "it is the most beautiful and challenging place on earth to fly in. But you do have to make compromises between your home and career."

All women pilots we interviewed for this article said they got full support from their parents. And this is important since family pressure can be

stressful. "It's like any other work, our lives are the same as other women professionals," says Shobha Bannerjee, an Indian pilot who lives in Nepal and flies Dornier 228s for Sita Air even though pilots are in great demand in India and salaries have gone up.

Prashansa Shrestha used to fly helicopters and has now switched to Cosmic Air, flying twin-engine SAAB 340 turboprops to Pokhara. Despite turbulence and afternoon storms over the mountains during this time of year, Prashansa says pilots are trained to handle all situations. "Because of my helicopter experience I find fixed wing planes much easier to fly, although choppers were more fun," says she.

Sarina Gurung is now the only female helicopter pilot in Nepal and takes Simrik's Mi-17s to remote airports. (See also: 'Walking on air', # 205). When Sarina lands in the middle of nowhere, villagers flock to her aircraft to catch a glimpse of the "keti driverni". Says Sarina: "I love flying choppers, they are adventurous and I've always loved adventure." ●



Nepal

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Low fares lure domestic travellers

The introduction of jets on domestic air routes for the first time has taken the aviation sector by storm



ALL PICS: KIRAN PANDAY

Cosmic Air's Fokker 100s and their unbeatable prices have transformed air travel on trunk routes from Kathmandu to Biratnagar, Bhairawa and Nepalgunj.

More established domestic airlines like Buddha and Yeti have had to think fast to respond. Fares have come tumbling down, frequency of flights have gone up, service has improved somewhat and airlines are focussing on their unique selling points. Buddha and Yeti have forged an alliance and are now offering early morning or late night slots to counter competition from Cosmic.

They are hush-hush about it but some airlines are also planning point-to-point flights within Nepal that don't touch Kathmandu. Biratnagar-Nepalgunj, Pokhara-Bhairawa and even Bhadrapur-Mahendranagar are seen as viable options because of the hassles of highway travel these days.

At the moment, passengers have to fly through Kathmandu and often spend the night here if they want to travel from, say, Biratnagar to Pokhara.

Prem Nath Thakur at the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) says permission for such routes would be readily given. "We are waiting for the airlines to come up with proposals, it would inject new business and ease the cut-throat competition on the Kathmandu routes," he adds.

This would also ease the traffic congestion in Kathmandu.

With Cosmic ready to bring in its fourth Fokker 100, there is going to be a parking problem here. "We've been expanding like crazy and I don't know where we are going park our planes anymore," admits Cosmic's Lawrence Liew.

"Competition is getting really stiff, it's become like a fish market," says RP Bhandari of Gorkha Airlines, "and fares are being slashed at a time of high fuel prices and low tourist volume. It's great for consumers but not so good for airlines." Gorkha has therefore decided to diversify to remote airports like Tumlingtar and Rujmatar where there is less competition.

But officials are finding it difficult to prod other carriers flying trunk or tourist routes to also fly to remote strips. "Few airlines really fly to unprofitable remote areas," says Mery Patrabansh, manager of Flight Schedule and Permission Section at CAAN.

We asked Buddha Air if they are hurting from the competition. "The drop in occupancy is expected in the off season," said Rupesh Joshi of Buddha Air, "but we are concentrating on providing high quality services at reasonable fares." At Yeti Airlines, the fall in tourism has prompted focus on Nepali passengers. Says Bijay Shrestha of Yeti, "We really want to encourage Nepali travellers to fly and it's working—many are now hooked on the comfort and speed of flying." ●

Abha Eli Phoboo



JET LAGGED: Passengers from Kathmandu disembark at Nepalgunj airport this week (top) and a Buddha Air Beechcraft readies for takeoff as a Fokker 100 lands.



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Don Quixote, dissident

Four hundred years later, let's pay homage to Cervantes and the quixotic world he warned us about

It is now four centuries since the birth of a masterpiece whose author and hero both seem younger than we do. The simplest explanation for this may be found in Flaubert's words about *Don Quixote*: "I found my origins in this book, which I knew by heart before I learned how to read." Indeed, at the core of Don Quixote is something essential that we knew even before we read it but which became part of

our nature only after we completed its mesmerising journey. This is the unmistakable stamp of greatness in a writer.

Hunting after his own ghost—an obvious sign of inner unhappiness—Hidalgo searched for a place where dreams, reality, sainthood, love and justice coexist. In their burlesque approach to humanity, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza are the most enduring and endearing clownish couple in world literature.

It is no surprise, then, that for the last 400 years Don Quixote and Panza have bred many relatives and successors, including countless buffoonish boss-and-servant couples. Even the history of circus is focused on such a pairing: the vain, dignified White Clown and Augustus the Fool, the humble loser who is kicked in the pants by his stiff, pompous partner.

For an east European like myself, it is not easy to ignore the history of the circus—or history itself. The solemn Communist Manifesto announced the spectre of the Great Utopia haunting Europe but failed to warn us of the bloody tyranny. The gullible Sancho Panza was meant to adopt the revolution's deceptive dogma as entitlement to wage a brutal war against all. The dream of improving the world



disguised a farce that affected not only a single life, as in Cervantes' story, and affected not only the misleading army of buffoons believed to be missionaries. This dream destroyed generations of victims.

In the world circus, the poet looks

like a Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance, and Augustus the Fool appears ill-equipped for everyday life. Like Don Quixote—and Cervantes himself—the artist dreams of other rules and rewards than his fellow men, who are content to digest their everyday lives.

In the socio-political arena, Augustus the Fool faces the Clown of Power. Cervantes' political parody can be read in many 20th century east European stories. Its incomparable vitality and language, for example, find their way into the work of the Soviet writer Andrei Platonov. A communist who considered himself an honest proletarian writer but called by Stalin, the Red Clown of Power, 'svoloc' (scoundrel) and 'balagancik' (buffoon), Platonov lived a lifelong ordeal.

His carnivalesque odyssey of totalitarianism displays a world of misery, boredom and obedience in its dark journey to an unreachable paradise. The communist Knight, the new 'caballero de la triste figura', a kind of enlightened idiot, blinded by his loyalty to the unreal and by his harsh political correctness, considers Lenin a new Moses. He rides the Rosinante of the Proletarian Force, falls in love with the dead Rosa Luxemburg in her role as Comrade Dulcinea and has intercourse with a locomotive.

In today's free-market carnival, nothing seems visible unless it is scandalous and nothing is scandalous enough to be memorable. So we pay homage to Cervantes at a time when we routinely co-habit with a very different outrageousness: religious fanaticism and terrorism, political manipulation, the cacophony of perverted simplification, the belligerent marriage between a new messianism and an aggrandising quixotic blindness. So long as we celebrate Cervantes, however, perhaps all is not lost. ● *Project Syndicate*

Norman Manea is a Romanian novelist. His memoir, *The Return of the Hooligan*, is being published across Europe.

Etching a world

Seema Shah etches questions of spiritual consciousness in her new exhibition

Seema Sharma Shah, a graphic artist, has taken printmaking in Nepal to greater heights. Her works at the solo exhibition *Mystical Song* at Park Gallery, Lajimpat, showcases the full dimension of her artistic ability through etchings.

Seema's earlier prints dealt with nature where she presented the pantheistic view. She explored primitive mysteries, hidden truths and primal fears using a crude formal vocabulary of line and flat simplified shapes in which the rhythm of composition, form and colour is created through two-dimensional abstraction. This created harmony and unified the artwork.

She has moved into a new domain of creative experience as she explores the female psyche from various perspectives. What does it mean to be a woman? What is her relationship with the society? To her family? To her self? Here again, she relies on the two-dimensional qualities of line and colour as a means of suggesting mood and meaning while retaining a semblance of reality, her primary emphasis being on form.

This solo exhibition of Seema's works is a vision of the mystery of

life and its spiritual consciousness. She draws attention to universal mysteries and the incomprehensive power of various Hindu mythical gods and goddesses. Surrealism and dreamlike imagery, in some of her art pieces, defies fixed interpretation and reflects the inexplicable spiritual realm of the subconscious.

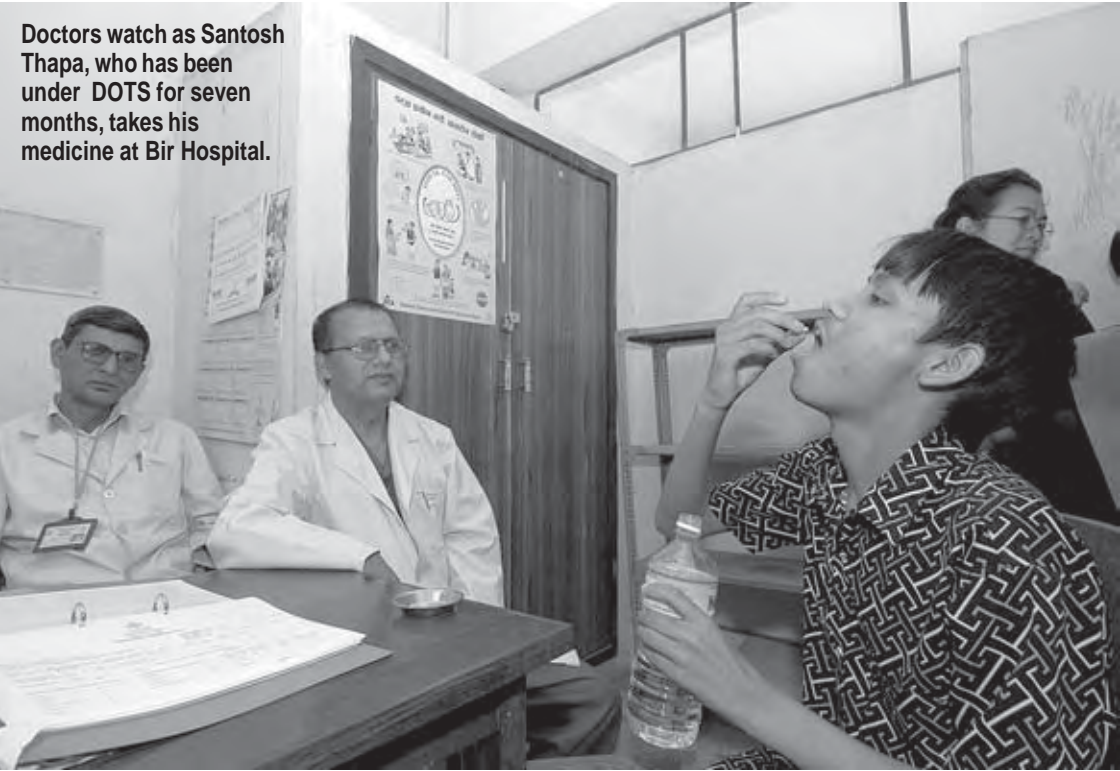
The crude vocabulary of line and simplified shapes of her Nature series assumes a sophisticated dimension. She moves from two-dimensional abstraction to nearly three-dimensional abstraction, revealing the poetic quality of her creative process. The pervasive mood of solitude of her series on women gives way to spiritual serenity and mystical joy and the muted colours of her earlier works are replaced by brighter shades.

This exhibition of hers marks a culmination in her artistic career where she has overcome challenges posed by the medium. She etches questions that haunt the viewer. The thematic concern is reflected by the effortless dynamics of creative tension. ● *Shailendra Kumar Singh*

Mystical Song, an exhibition of etchings by Seema Sharma Shah at Park Gallery, Lajimpat, until 20 May. 4419353



Doctors watch as Santosh Thapa, who has been under DOTS for seven months, takes his medicine at Bir Hospital.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

TB or not TB

Nepal’s world acclaimed anti-TB treatment program is relatively unscathed by the conflict

NARESH NEWAR

Every year, on World Tuberculosis Day, attention of Nepal’s biggest killer disease peaks. On 24 March seminars are held, ministers give speeches and the next morning’s papers are full of reports. But, as is usual with this sort of flash flood coverage, the interest soon dies down and the disease slips off the radar screens. Half of all Nepalis are infected with the TB bacillus and of these nearly 100,000 have active TB. There are 40,000 new cases every year and up to 7,000 people die annually from the disease. And 15 percent of all TB cases are in children, the infections spread rapidly because of malnutrition. Still, a lot more Nepalis would be dying from TB every day if it had not been for the national tuberculosis program managed by the state-run National Tuberculosis Centre (NTC) with technical and financial assistance from a consortium of international health agencies. Indeed, Nepal’s efforts with TB control is regarded as a model for other developing countries. Treatment success rates in Nepal have more than doubled from 40 percent in 1994 to over 88 percent now. “Today, we are able to save the lives of 80,000 people, that’s the number of people with active TB,” says Christian Gunnberg of the UN’s World Health Organisation (WHO), one of the government’s main partners in the TB program. The anti-TB drive in Nepal has been heading in the right direction especially with the Directly Observed Treatment Short (DOTS) course. Introduced in 1996, DOTS is now been implemented in all districts and 75 percent of the population has access to treatment. “I lost my grandfather when he was 50 because he did not

know where to go for treatment,” says 18-year-old Sabita Nakarmi. Fifteen years after her grandfather died, Sabita was also infected with the same disease but eight-month of DOTS cured her completely. “I’m lucky to be alive, I only wish that such treatment had been available for my grandfather,” says Nakarmi. Even with the conflict situation, the DOTS strategy has faced minimum difficulty. It is available in more than 2,500 treatment centres and sub-centres throughout the kingdom. “TB is the disease of the poor, there should never be any obstacle in its treatment,” says Nem Mitra Shrestha of German Nepal Tuberculosis Project (GENETUP), which runs one of the most effective DOTS centres in the country. The treatment is available in rural areas but there are serious concerns about whether TB patients can reach these health centres for the antibiotics. For the first two months, patients have to take their medicines daily in front of trained health workers. The medication will not be effective if they miss even a single day. Constant Maoist road blockades have interrupted the treatment for many TB patients. “Access to DOTS like all health care is a fundamental right for all citizens, the provision of services and people’s access to them should be protected, respected and promoted by all concerned in this conflict,” says Susan Clapham of the British aid group, DfID. But Clapham adds that the conflict has not really impacted the TB program. DfID supports the national TB program by providing \$7 million worth of anti-TB drugs through WHO annually. Despite transportation challenges, NTP has sufficient drugs stored in all centres so

patients have enough medicines and because communities have learnt to value the NTP’s service, patients continue to show up for treatment despite hardships. Many health professionals involved in helping TB patients agree that even those families displaced due to the conflict continue DOTS as the treatment is available anywhere in the country and the drugs are free. An improved program, DOTS-Plus, is being added this month to treat patients with multi drug resistant-TB, one of the leading causes of death among patients. Others who die of TB have multiple complications like AIDS, leukaemia, cancer, lung and heart diseases. “TB program works when it is well thought out and designed and treatment centres and diagnostic services are placed close to patients,” says Keshab Bhakta Shrestha, director of NTP. Experts have found that the best way to improve the efficacy of DOTS is by raising awareness and educating patients. Nepal’s success in this has attracted a large number of aid agencies especially since the government categorised the TB program as a high development priority. Over 14 key agencies from Germany, UK, Japan, Netherlands, Norway and France have been actively participating in the national program. Explains DfID’s Clapham: “Nepal’s TB program has adopted a commendable public health approach, it has decentralised care provision right down to sub-health posts. In addition to the fact that frontline health workers provide care, so do trained community volunteers.” This ‘de-medicalisation’ is said to be a key learning point not just for TB but for other diseases in other developing countries. ●

Lest we forget

And still the political parties wonder why the people don’t come out in their support

At a time when there is a lot of talk about the restoration of democracy and handing back leadership to the seven party alliance, let us remind ourselves what they were up to when they were in power. How can we forget:

1. We had 15 governments in 15 years.
2. Genuine statesmen were relegated to the sidelines as party bosses clawed their way to the top.
3. For these honchos, self-aggrandisement came first, the interest of the party second and national interest last.
4. Parliament was used as an arena to push personal interests not to fulfil electoral promises.
5. As soon as they came to power, party bosses started distributing posts and jobs as rewards of loyalty and not on merit.
6. They interfered with the administrative structure and politicised it so much that it became a haven for the corrupt and mediocre.
7. They paid lip service to democracy and abandoned nationalism.
8. ‘Democracy’ became an end in itself, not linked to development.
9. Education was cynically abused through their student wings to further party interests.
10. Governance was characterised by lack of transparency and accountability.
11. State secrets were compromised— interest groups knew about cabinet decisions even before the state media announced them.
12. Nepotism, favouritism and corruption governed appointment of officials to key posts.
13. National assets were sold off at throwaway prices in the name of privatisation.
14. And how can we forget the foreign trips for medical treatment financed by the state and used for political horse-trading?
15. Parties colluded to use parliament sessions to sanction huge benefits to themselves paid by taxpayers.
16. Misleading citizens was developed into an art form. After having secretly signed the Tanakpur Treaty, it was ratified through parliament by calling it an ‘agreement’.
17. Inconsistent utterances by the so-called democratic leaders have lent little credibility to party manifestos.
18. Parliament was abrogated time and again, with boycotts, walkouts and unruliness being the rule.
19. Despite talk of decentralisation, politics became even more capital centric, distancing elected leaders even further from the people.
20. Movement on social reform was so slow as to be imperceptible.
21. The proportion of higher castes in the civil service actually grew.
22. Frequent government change brought wild swings in policy and lack of continuity discouraging investors and partners.
23. Although corruption was democratised, top leaders were up to their necks in scandals: Dhamija, Lauda, Chase Air, China Southwest, Melamchi, Bakra Irrigation, teacher appointments.
24. Charge sheeted colleagues were given protection from the CIAA by political leaders in power.
25. When corruption became an issue it was turned into political vendetta and a witch hunt.
26. Democratic parties lacked internal democracy and sycophancy thrived. Dissenters were cast out into the wilderness.
27. Leaders even announced mid-term elections at the hint of opposition within the party, in the hope of garnering absolute majority.
28. Misusing state machinery to influence election results became the order of the day.
29. The police was politicised for electoral gain and political vengeance.
30. The use of criminal gangs for political activities elevated common thugs to the status of political figures.
31. Protests and bandas were the order of the day and were conducted with scant regard to inconvenience to the general public, the national economy and development.
32. The culture of political protests deteriorated into paralysing the education system, punishing the people to get back at political opponents in government.
33. Leaders who wantonly violated human rights, press freedom and civil liberties with impunity while in power talked of ‘grand design’, ‘regression’ when out of it.
34. While in power they called the Maoists ‘terrorists’ and tried to subdue them with force, but the moment they were out of power the same leaders didn’t hesitate to travel to India to meet senior Maoists.
35. When crackdowns were carried out, they were brutal and counterproductive, eg: Operation Kilo Sierra 2.
36. Political leaders are now trying to return to power on the back of foreign powers and donors rather than popular support. One has even gone to New Delhi to ask donors to stop aid to Nepal.
37. If that doesn’t work, they want to spark off a street unrest.
38. If that doesn’t work they are willing to come to power through the grace of His Majesty.
39. Every action of King Gyanendra’s is being labelled unconstitutional even though their demand of revival of parliament is even more unconstitutional.
40. After all this, the parties can only come up with a ragtag agreement promising peace and good governance in vague generalities. And still they wonder why there is no popular support for their anti-king agitation. ●

Bijen Jonchhe describes himself as an ever optimistic entrepreneur.

Denial of departure

If you can't fly, take the road



What do you do when the immigration exit stamp is rescinded before you get to board the plane and your Jet Airways ticket is returned to you with a note ‘Off-loaded by Nepal security’?

SOUTHASIA BEAT
Kanak Mani Dixit

Collect one’s baggage, get the airport tax reimbursed and go home to skulk and complain about the unfairness of life in autocratic regimes?
It is bizarre, this particular evolution of restricting personal

liberty currently being carried out in the Nepali kingdom. Jurists, lawyers, activists, politicians and framers of constitution are refused entry into aircraft to fly to international or domestic destinations. There is no charge sheet, no prior notice, just a mysterious list (an original one, apparently updated twice since the royal takeover of 1 February) that is held close by someone in the maws of the terminal building and is referred to on walkie-talkie by hapless immigration officials and superintendents of police.

There are not a few politicians who, still waiting for a shower of goodwill from on high, will not even announce that their boarding cards have been snatched. They tiptoe home, hoping that their show of trust, patience and obeisance will register where it needs to register, and they will get ‘the call’. That is how it is beginning to work, for ministerships, ambassadorships, corruption commissionerships, and perhaps even (in the days head) National Human Rights Commissionership.
So how does one get to Colombo from Kathmandu to

attend a conference organised by the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies? Does Nepal have roads? Yes. Does it have an open border with India? Yes. What is the nearest airport in India with regular air connections to Delhi? Lucknow.
Off-loaded at 2.30 PM, I was on the road by 5PM, Lucknow-Delhi-Colombo ticket in hand. The ‘list’ obviously had not made it to Nagdhunga at the Kathmandu Valley rim. A massive thunderstorm slows progress but no tigers and leopards were in evidence to make it a high adventure. A traffic jam of more than a hundred trucks and buses meant we can’t make it into the town of Narayanghat before curfew. But a ‘member of the security forces’ in an extra jolly mood waves us through, and at 10PM we enter the busiest market hub of Nepal and find it looking like a ghost town.
After waiting out the curfew in Uncle’s Lodge across the Narayani River at Gaidakot, we are on the road again at 4AM. Arriving at Butwal in the central tarai in two hours flat, it is time to head down to cross over into India at Sunauli. Nepal not being in an efficient state of repression, one is allowed to cross the border as a free citizen. It helps that the Nepal-India ‘simana’ is the ideal Southasian frontier, ie it is open.
At Sunauli, a Tata Sumo jeep is willing to take me through the backroads of eastern

Uttar Pradesh to Lucknow. The vehicle is the regular hire of the Gorakhpur correspondent for the *Dainik Jagaran* (whose total circulation from 25 editions across northern India is over two million, with readership of 17.5 million, let that sink in). It is clear that the Sumo is used to having its way in these backwaters of erstwhile Avadh, and we make good time over the Rapti River on whose upper reaches lies the cradle of the Maobadi rebellion of Nepal.
There used to be a time when Nepalis feared travelling through these badlands of northern India. With Nepal converted into a playground of Maoists, bandits, highway robbers, gun-toting soldiers in plain clothes and state-supported vigilantes, it is the taxi drivers south of the border who now quake at the thought of entering the kingdom, by day or night.
Bypassing Gorakhpur, we take a short-cut through Basti, Ayodhya, Faizabad and arrive at the outskirts of Lucknow this side of the Gomti River. It is getting awfully close to the boarding time of Air Sahara’s last flight to New Delhi and we are still on the other side of Lucknow’s urban sprawl. Over the Gomti Bridge, past the stadium, downtown Hazratganj and the railway station, we do make it in time.
No, I didn’t get offloaded in Lucknow, nor in New Delhi later that evening for the flight to Colombo. ●

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108 holes

Il Sun Park sets a golfing record

Il Sun Park arrived in Kathmandu with her Korean diplomat husband HD Kim in February 2002. She is an avid golfer and well known in the Kathmandu golfing circuit for playing 36 holes (two full rounds) a day. A couple of weeks ago, she approached me and explained her intention of attempting to play 100 holes or more in a day. She planned to do this on a Monday when the golf course is less crowded. She asked if I could inform all players to let her play through on the day of her attempt so as not to slow her down during her challenge to reach her target.

I was intrigued by her idea. To be honest I thought then that playing so much golf in a day was impossible. If you asked me to attempt it, even dangling a very lucrative prize as an incentive, I doubt I would be able to make it!

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



Setting a goal is one issue but actually accomplishing is quite another. To get an idea of what she was aiming for, six rounds of golf (108 holes) means walking about 50 km. Well, actually it ends up being more since it's not possible to hit every ball straight. On top of that is the energy needed to swing the club the whole day long. The day of reckoning finally arrived—9 May 2005 at the Gokarna Forest Golf Resort. A contingent of Korean lady golfers was present to encourage and boost Park to reach her goal. She started her game at 5.30 AM in the rain and in what looked like would be a miserable day. Her prayers for better weather were soon answered and by 10AM, the sun was shining and it was a glorious day for golfing.



Park then played relentlessly, for 12 hours and 25 minutes with an half an hour lunch break. I believe she had a few blisters on her feet but she kept right on at it. By 6.55 PM in the evening, it was too dark to continue. When she finished she commented, "I was still energetic and could have played more holes if the course had floodlights." I just shook my head in amazement. Il Sun Park, 51, had accomplished her remarkable endeavour. She had played 108 holes or six rounds of golf in a single day. This is definitely a record in Nepal for playing the most number of holes. Later, Park and I talked about the golfing scenario here and she said, "I have been to so many countries with my husband on his diplomatic postings but I can assure you, Nepal is heaven for golf in the world. The weather and climate here is just beyond compare." "Golf can only grow in Nepal. With facilities like Gokarna Forest Golf Resort, this game has a very high potential here," she added, "I personally think this resort's course is the best course I have ever come across and I'm so pleased to be able to take in a round every day." She thanked the club's staff, its members, the ladies who encouraged her and expressed her gratitude to her beloved husband for all his support. I wonder if this feat qualifies for the Guinness Book of World Records but it definitely qualifies for the Nepali record. ●

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



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Upendra's dream

Three cheers for the star of Three Stars

The semi-final of the AFC President's Cup last week was Upendra Man Singh's last game as a national football player. The 32-year-old captain and goalkeeper of this year's Nepal league champion, Three Star Club, has now hung his boots and plans to be Nepal's first goalkeeping coach. He spoke to *Nepali Times* about being a professional sportsman in Nepal.

Nepali Times: The semi-final was a disappointment.
Upendra Man Singh: We were unlucky. We did our best but it wasn't good enough. After the game was over, we watched our video. We had our weaknesses and if had been able to address them, we might have won but then it was a game, you either win or you lose. We did win the fair play award though. Also, the crowd really cheered us on and I think we played better than expected.

What were those weaknesses you noticed in the video?
We need to improve in the striking zone. In the whole tournament we made only three goals and that's not so great. We missed really good chances. Also a few of the players weren't feeling that well—Suren had a knee injury and some were suffering from food poisoning and ankle problems. But really, we played better than expected.

What did you think of the penalty shootout on Saturday?
The game closed on a draw and we knew that our future hung on those penalty shots. The first time I missed Kyrgyzstan's penalty shot, the ball had slightly grazed my finger and slipped away. My heart sank and I had this dreadful feeling that we were down on our luck. Then the second time, I didn't know what would happen but I managed to save it, making things equal. But then I missed the third again and we knew we had lost. After that we had no hope. It was one of the saddest moments of my life.

How did you cope with the defeat?
Well, I felt really depressed. I just sat there for a while and watched



KIRAN PANDAY

the Kyrgyz team do victory laps. Around 20,000 people had come to cheer and support us, many more were watching us on tv. They would have had been ecstatic if we had won. We did all we could but still felt like we had let everybody down. The club could really have used the money because they invested a lot in the players.

But don't you think club football in Nepal has come of age?
Yes, it is now possible to make a living as a professional football player. Clubs pay around Rs 5,000 to Rs 12,000 a month,

depending on a player's ability. Three Star and Manang Marsyangdi really invest in their clubs and they have some of the best players. Every year you get to either renew your contract (if you are good enough) or join another club.

What about corporate sponsorships?
That's picking up too. Adidas sponsored us with Rs 500,000 and Mayos gave Rs 250,000. Three Star Club is from Lalitpur and many individuals helped us financially. We had tremendous support and it helped us play better.

What does it take to make it as a professional football player in Nepal?
A lot of discipline, hard work and sincere training. I got it easy really and my family supported me through it all. Directly after SLC, I made it to the U-16 team and then straight to the national team. I was studying civil engineering but had to drop out. Soon I was playing for clubs in Bangkok, Bangladesh and India. It was quite something because I had never dreamed of being a professional football player. All it takes is a lot of determination and the courage to follow your dream.

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THE ADVENTURES OF HEROJIG

by JIGME GATON

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ABOUT TOWN

- FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS**
- ❖ **Buddha Jayanti** on 23 May.
 - ❖ **Aloha Nepal** Works by Wicki Van De Veer at Lajimpat Gallery Café, until 25 May. Proceeds go to SETU Nepal. 4428549
 - ❖ **Artist Choice** Ceramics by Carole Irwin at Indigo Gallery, from 28 May.
 - ❖ **Bottle of Stories** Raku pottery by Gopal Kalapremi at Gallery Nine, Lajimpat, until 30 May. 4428694
 - ❖ **Our Lives are Linked** Photos, posters and documentaries on biodiversity and humanity at Alliance Française, 10AM-4PM, until 3 June. 4241163
 - ❖ **Symphony of Forms** by Aditi Chakraborty at The Art Shop, Darbar Marg, until 5 June. 4372675
 - ❖ **Samay Chakra** by Ragini Upadhyaya-Grela, until 8 June at Siddhartha Art Gallery. 4218048
-

- EVENTS**
- ❖ **World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development** on 20 May, 4PM at UNESCO, Jawalakhel. 5554769
 - ❖ **Journalism—Roles and Challenges** Presentation at Kathmandu University School of Management, Manbhawan on 21 May, 11AM.
 - ❖ **On the Road with the Red God** Documentary by Kesang Tseten on 22 May at NTB, Bhrikuti Mandap, 5.30 PM.
 - ❖ **Collateral** on 24 May at Lajimpat Gallery Café, 7PM, Rs 50. 4428549
 - ❖ **Rock 'n Roll Night** at Baber Mahal Revisited on 28 May, 7PM, Rs 750.
 - ❖ **Intercultural Exchange Program** Every Wednesday at Goethe Zentrum, Thapathali, 4.15 PM. 4250871
 - ❖ **Tai Chi** Free classes at Baber Mahal Revisited. 4256618
 - ❖ **1905 Sundays** Garage sale, pet practices and more. 4215068
 - ❖ **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**
- ❖ **1974 AD** Live at Moks, Pulchok, 7PM onwards on 20 May. 5526212
 - ❖ **The Good Time Blues Band** at Rum Doodle, 7PM. 4701208
 - ❖ **Ladies Nights** Wednesdays at Jatra, Thamel, with live acoustic music, one free drink. 4256622
 - ❖ **Fusion** Mondays at Jalan Jalan Restaurant, Lajimpat, 7PM. 4410438
 - ❖ **Live Music** Everyday at Hotel de l'Annapurna, Darbar Marg. 4221711
 - ❖ **Jukebox experience** Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at Rox. 4491234
 - ❖ **Jazz** at Upstairs Jazz Bar, Lajimpat, Wednesdays and Saturdays, 8 PM.

- FOOD**
- ❖ **Al Fresco goes à la Bruni** at Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
 - ❖ **Bawarchi** The Restro Bar for Nawabi cuisine at Lajimpat. 4436673
 - ❖ **Seven Sensations** at the Pub, Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
 - ❖ **The Organic Café and Salad Bar** at Thamel. 4215726
 - ❖ **BBQ Lunch** at Le Meridien, Gokarna Forest Golf Resort. 4445550
 - ❖ **Barbecue 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 Vajriyanya, Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
 - ❖ **The Tharu Kitchen** at Jungle Base Camp. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com

- GETAWAYS**
- ❖ **Malaysia Dream Holidays** Special offers for June. 2012345, malaysiaholidays_marco@polo.com.np
 - ❖ **Star Cruises** Available in Nepal from 1 June. 2012345, starcruises_marco@polo.com.np
 - ❖ **Fun Free** Stay one night get one Night at Shangri-la Village, Pokhara. 4435742
 - ❖ **Wet Wild Summer Splash** Special package with unlimited swimming hours at Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
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 - ❖ **Chiso Chiso Hawama** at Nagarkot, special packages. 6680080
 - ❖ **Jungle Base Camp Lodge**, Bardia, special package and prices. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com
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 - ❖ **Malaysia Dream Holidays** 10 percent discount on packages purchased at NATTA Mart. malaysiaholidays_marco@polo.com.np, 2012345.

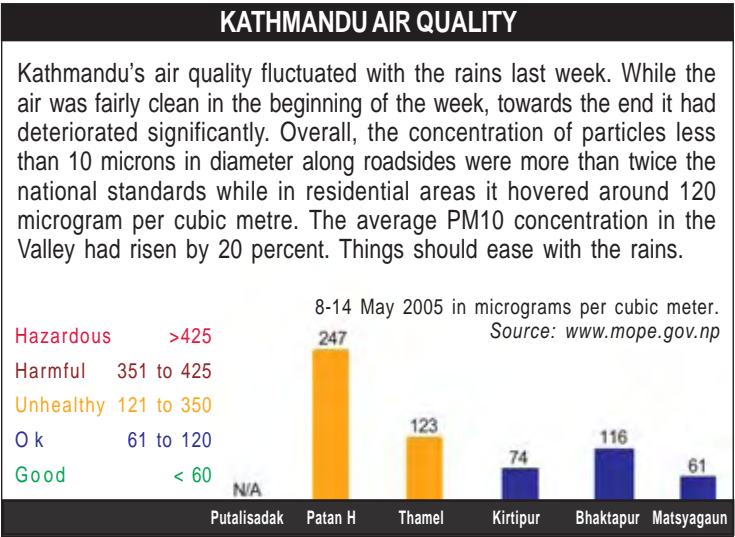
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NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED

Though the official date of monsoon arrival is a month away the current weather patterns do not indicate it is on schedule. There are some stirrings of activity in the bay and in the Arabian Sea off Kerala but the westerlies are still strong over the Tibetan plateau. This satellite picture taken on Thursday shows fresh westerly jet heading towards the plateau while the stream of cloud from Bay of Bengal is struggling against the westerlies towards the northeastern Himalaya. There is possibility of more thunderstorms and hail like the one in Pokhara across the midhills. Expect warmer and stormy weekend afternoons.

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ROYAL CHECK: Crown Prince Paras and Crown Princess Himani visiting the Avia Club Ultralight stall at the NATTA Travel Mart at BICC on Friday.



DC RALLY: More than 500 people turned up at a pro-democracy rally in front of the White House on Sunday. They chanted “No to absolute monarchy, no to obsolete Maoism”.



IN MEMORY: Candles lit in memory of the 172 people who lost their lives in the ongoing conflict in the month of Baisakh on Sunday at Maitighar.



GRINDSTONE: People dancing at the Surya Lights Grind on Saturday at Hyatt Regency.



UP TO THEIR OLD TRICKS: Members of the UML affiliated student union burning tyres and sidewalk bars at New Road on Sunday.

Prativa goes places

Prativa Panday used to be quite satisfied being a doctor to Nepal. But she loved to trek and go places. Earlier this month, she was elected president of the International Society of Travel Medicine (ISTM) at its convention in Lisbon. Not only is she the first Nepali to hold this position but also the first Asian and the first woman.

Born into a big clan that emphasised the need for education, Panday was already studying medicine in Delhi at age 15. She worked in Nepal for some time before going to the US for a postgraduate degree in Internal Medicine. After practicing for 10 years as an attending physician at Boston's Beth Israel Hospital and as a clinical instructor in medicine at Harvard University, Panday decided she wanted to come home. "My children were growing up and I didn't want to grow old in a foreign country eating turkey and mashed potatoes," she says. The fact that there was a family support system in Nepal helped.

Panday works with CIWEC Clinic Travel Medicine Centre in Kathmandu. She has trekked all



the major trekking routes in Nepal for work, pleasure or both. She even worked one season as a Himalayan Rescue Association volunteer doctor at Pheriche and the work varies from stomach bugs to acute mountain sickness.

CIWEC Travel Medicine Centre helps tourists, expatriates or even locals with almost any medical problem and if they are not able to provide the required services, they provide referrals to other appropriate medical facilities or even arrange evacuation to another country.

The Centre is a member of ISTM, which is the only and largest international organisation of travel health with 1,800 members from 72 countries.

Nepal is now known as one of the best-studied destinations in the world for travel medicine. Panday has been a doctor for 30 years and she tells us that she enjoys her work immensely, which is the reason behind her dedication. When asked for advice for other aspiring professionals she says: "Anything is possible if you try hard and work towards your goal."

Aarti Basnyat

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Politically corrected news items

The great thing about practicing journalism at a time when corporal punishment is back in vogue is that you don't have to worry about telling the truth. You can't imagine what a big load it is off our backs not to have to double-check every piece of gossip and conspiracy theory for its veracity and accuracy, if any.

Suddenly, we can forget everything we ever learnt in journalism school and just make it all up as we go along. When it is against the law to tell the truth and nothing but the truth so help us God, we can all sit back, relax in front of the tv with a cylinder of Pringles and let the chips fall where they may.

UNDER MY HAT
Kunda Dixit



what we say. And you, dear readers, should by now know better than to believe every word we say. You should only believe every other word.

If, perchance, a bit of authentic fact does somehow find itself inadvertently into print then we are duty-bound by the code of conduct of our professional ethics to issue a correction in the next edition of the paper. That little insert buried in the inside pages therefore is an important clue to our valued customers about items the previous day that the editors mistakenly thought were wrong but were in actual fact right and therefore had to be immediately refuted so that people didn't get the wrong idea. So, as a newspaper of record here are this week's politically corrected news items.

CORRECTIONS

The caption accompanying the front page picture in yesterday's paper mistakenly said that 80-year-old trees along Pulchok were being chopped down. What the picture actually shows are the trees in the process of being re-assembled and glued together as a part of the municipality's tree translocation and graft campaign which it is carrying out in cahoots with logging contractors. Beg your pardon, we will be more careful next time. -Ed.

Due to a reporting error, a news item in yesterday's edition said the Maoists have called an indefinite nationwide transportation strike. The strike is now definite. The terror is regretted.

A news item in yesterday's paper about DIG Gopal Man Shrestha caught red-handed running a red light at Baneshwor intersection and not being able to produce his driving license, while being factually correct was incomplete. The Valley Traffic Police has given up trying to control Kathmandu's kamikaze drivers and has subcontracted the job to retired Japanese freelancers since they're the only ones who can make head or tail of the solar-powered Maitighar traffic lights which are working again after being under repairs since last June. Inconvenience caused to the red-faced DIG is regretted. - Ed.

Due to space constraints caused by the downsizing of our newspaper, a news item in yesterday's edition referred to the high-up authority by his first name, omitted honorifics and failed to capitalise his Official Title. Sorry about that, we're now returning to our broadsheet size.

There was a typo in last week's new item on page one about God being detained again soon after his release. The correct title should have been: 'Re-arresting God in Kathmandu'. We apologise for the inconvenience.

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