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Weekly Internet Poll # 253

Q. Is it now time for the Maoists to give up violence and join the political mainstream?



Yes 85.7%  
No 12.5%  
Don't know 1.9%

Total votes:754

Weekly Internet Poll # 254. To vote go to: [www.nepaltimes.com](http://www.nepaltimes.com)

Q. Should there be a foreign arms embargo on Nepal?

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ROYAL MOTORCADE:  
King Gyanendra (driving black Jaguar) and Queen Komal arrive at Jawalakhel on Thursday afternoon to witness the Bhoto Jatra ceremony.



KIRAN PANDAY

# How much longer?

## Five months after February First, Nepalis are still waiting

ANALYSIS by  
**RAJENDRA DAHAL**

Five months later, everything everyone wished wouldn't happen has come to pass. Within Nepal and outside many wished the king and parties would unite but the gap widened. The parties should have reinvented themselves to prevail but were marginalised by militarised forces. On 1 February, even those skeptical of the king's move wanted to give him a chance to restore peace but the country has since been sucked ever deeper into a vortex of violence. We have even stopped counting the daily dead. Individually, the parties, king and rebels are incapable of resolving the

crisis. But neither are they able to finish each other off. This is an indecisive deadend and the people can do little else but wait hopelessly. The parties are being pushed and pulled in a direction they don't want to go—it is against their values to partner with an armed group. In past weeks, the parties have moderated their agitation, possibly because they think it may get out of control. They still swear by a constitutional monarchy but are dragged by a radicalised cadre. The king has emerged in the past five months as more of a ruler than a constitutional monarch. Despite saying the right things about democracy and rule of law, inside and outside Nepal there are

doubts he actually means it. By repeating the rhetoric often enough, he may hope to turn it into a cliché. His choice of ultraloyal technocrats rather than meritocrats to run the country prove he's in it for the long haul. Despite strong pressure, the king is in no mood to give the parties space and roll back. Faced with international isolation, his government is making a show of looking for alternative financial and military support. The idea is to crush the Maoists, whatever the cost to the people and the economy. And in case the Maoists do look like they may win the king is convinced that the Americans, Europeans and Indians will step in to prevent it.

This may be why he doesn't see talk of an alliance between the parties and the Maoists as a threat, and he seems in no particular hurry to find a resolution. The strategy seems to be to use the next three years to craft a polity that suits the role he sees for himself. All this is making even pro-monarchy moderates seriously worried about the future. The Maoists are now not just playing parties against each other but playing them against the palace. The gap between them has never been wider and this gives the rebels the confidence to make grand gestures like promising not to kill unarmed civilians. The king's policy of keeping India at arm's length has also softened New Delhi's stance towards the Maoists—a very welcome development for the rebels at a time when everything else seemed to be going against them. ●

**Editorial p2**  
**From warfare to welfare**

The earth says 'Levitate'.  
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is spread your wings and soar.  
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## FROM WARFARE TO WELFARE

During the six-month ceasefire period in 2003, Nepal's donors spent much money taking our politicians, human rights activists and journalists to Sri Lanka to observe the Norwegian-brokered peace process between the Tamil Tiger separatists and the Sri Lankan government.

That fragile ceasefire is still holding and there are some lessons there for Nepal—that a break in the hostilities even without actual peace building is still better for the people than war. But our peaceniks would have learnt much more if they had studied Sri Lanka's JVP uprising in the south instead.

In 1988-90, this extreme Marxist neo-nationalistic insurrection claimed tens of thousands of lives. Sri Lanka then had two full-scale civil wars going on at the same time: the separatist conflict in the northeast and the insurgency in the south. Both were much more virulent than what we see in Nepal today. From 1984 to 2002, nearly 100,000 people lost their lives.

The JVP uprising was finally quelled in 1991 when an intelligence breakthrough led to the capture and execution of five of its top leaders. The rebel group that once believed in the inevitability of an armed struggle then joined mainstream politics. With its populist and flag-waving nationalism, the JVP won four parliamentary seats in the 1993 elections and now has 31 of 225 seats in the current parliament. It even had four ministerial portfolios in President Chandrika Kumaratunga's UPA government which collapsed last week when the JVP withdrew its support. It opposed the president's proposal to share over \$3 billion in tsunami relief with the Tamil Tigers.

By giving up violence, the JVP was able to wield much more power than it would ever have attained through force. Kumaratunga also made the emotionally difficult choice of forging a political partnership with the people who assassinated her charismatic husband, Vijaya, in 1988. Still, the government and rebels showed statesmanship in responding to the wishes of a war-weary people.

There are many lessons we in Nepal can learn from the history of the JVP in Sri Lanka:

- A counterinsurgency war can't be won by adding guns, artillery, helicopter gunships and by doubling troop strength, what is critical is the quality of intelligence
- The government must demonstrate that it is a credible alternative to the rebels by protecting its citizens and delivering basic services
- True and lasting political power comes from the ballot, not the bullet
- Violence only begets more violence and pushes the country toward the self-destructive path of militarisation, further delaying social and political reform

By now, it must be self-evident to our own rulers that weapons acquisition is not only unaffordable, it is also not going to win this war. Maoist leaders, on the other hand, just need to look at their Sri Lankan comrades to see how easy it is to become political kingmakers by giving up violence.

# The lion king

## The perils of republicanism and naivety

They are beating the drums and chanting the slogans. The denizens of cyberspace come together in blogs and fora to ponder the future of a kingless Nepal. The optimism of the republicans is limitless. They see the monarch as the chief obstacle to lasting peace and stability.

### GUEST COLUMN Rabindra Nakarmi

'If only the king voluntarily renounced his throne and the Maoists joined mainstream politics, democracy would flourish again!' There are two main flaws in this logic. The republicans see the king as the chief source of instability in our democratic system. The monarch is portrayed as a hungry lion in a weak cage that must be fed at all times from our taxes.

'How can a lion be happy in a cage? The lust to rule the jungle will never be quenched. If Nepalis want to live as citizens, not subjects, they must unite in ridding the lion.' Would our democracy be safer without a constitutional monarch?

Let us go back to the jungle. Who gains most when the lion is chased away? Won't the hungry wolf packs come out? By securing the loyalty of the army, the monarch has acted as a buffer between the armed forces and the political leadership in the post-1990 polity.

Sure, the Defence Ministry should have more control over the military and the parliament must have the power (with 60 percent of the votes) to overturn the king's veto. But it is not difficult to see

Nepal descend into military dictatorship without a monarch to keep the institution in check.

The other fallacy that is peddled by intellectuals (even those who do not press for a republic) concerns the ease with which the Maoists can be accommodated into our political system. The theory is that the Maoists will champion the issues of the minorities and the poor who have been ignored by the mainstream parties.

How do the Maoists intend to implement this lofty goal? Say the Maoists win 30 percent of the seats in parliament and form a coalition government. Are we to cheer them on when they reveal their four-year 'democratic' plans to feed, clothe, and educate everyone? Can we trust the people who kill campus chiefs and abduct children to run our schools? Imagine the economic tremors that will be unleashed once the keys to the Finance Ministry is handed over to those barbarians.

Violence is not the only method by which a leader can inflict damage on its citizens. Is not Mao Zedong responsible for the worst man-made famine in history? More than 30 million people may have died during 1959-61 as a result of the terribly misguided Great Leap Forward. Amartya Sen showed that democracies have never suffered famines, but by blocking or reversing the process of economic liberalisation, a democratically elected Maoist government (or opposition) will only push more people into poverty.

The ultra-left in India is



already planning to spoil that country's recent economic achievement. With barely seven percent of the votes, they are pushing their allies in power to pass the National Employment Guarantee Scheme which is just another Marxist economic plan that will cause more harm to the very people it purports to help.

Economics aside, one has to wonder if Maoists bound to a constitutional framework will respect civil liberties, religious freedom and private property. How can one expect people who slaughter bus passengers, force innocent civilians to partake in senseless projects, maim and murder anyone who doesn't agree with them to run the affairs of the state?

It is more important than ever before to keep our eyes open to the dangers we might be inviting by allowing ourselves to go for peace at any cost. The Maoists can cause just as much damage without their guns. Pragmatism demands that once its military is vanquished, the Maoists have no choice but to assimilate into the mainstream left party. If we want to restore peace and stability, this is our only option. ●

Rabindra Nakarmi is the pen name of a political analyst.

# Death of an engineer

## Dinesh Chandra Pyakhurel's suicide is a symbol of the country's own deadend

In an insurgency-ravaged country, deaths are statistics. Loss of one life ceases to be a human tragedy, just another notch in the axe. After every brutality, the violence is denounced, apologies are made and activists condemn the killings. Media reports the numbers with dispassionate objectivity. But life goes on. Until the next massacre.

For a nation numbed by recent slaughters in Chitwan, Kabhre and Kailali the suicide of Dinesh Chandra Pyakhurel went almost unnoticed.

The self-annihilation of a water-supply engineer and top bureaucrat represented the state of society itself. Regime instability fuels frustration among civil servants. After February First, governance has been arbitrary, amendments of laws through ordinances are commonplace. The constitution itself has been repeatedly re-interpreted to suit the interests of people in power. In the ensuing uncertainty, the moral-legal compass directing the behaviour of individuals has become non-functional. An authoritarian regime lurches towards anarchy without central control. The sight of this speeding monster

is frightening to innocent bystanders but it must be even more apocalyptic for insiders.

Since the royal takeover, people unwilling to jump on the directionless train have got out of its way. Some journalists have lapsed into silence, other professionals have just given up and left. Several bureaucrats have taken voluntary retirement. Dinesh chose to take his own life. His manner of withdrawal from life itself stands for all those who have refused to ride this train to nowhere.

Surveillance, interrogation and repression are the tools used by authoritarians to cling to power, to force the opposition into submission. They employ propaganda as force-multiplier. The publicity machinery of 'constructive monarchy' has been running a concerted campaign to defame everyone with democratic persuasion. People with the strength of principles have taken the criticism in their stride but pragmatists have made peace with power

and turncoats, as always, survive.

Value-neutral professionals can neither stand the storm nor bow easily. So they are the first to fall when rules are thrown out of the window. Dinesh was a professional of the Panchayat era but had adapted to post-Panchayat competition with great felicity. He was one of the very few engineers to rise to the level of secretary to the government. But when the royal regime treated him shabbily, throwing him into a 'reserve pool' with neither authority nor responsibility, he lost the will to live. His death is a symbol of the country's own dead-end.

Dinesh was also a victim of witch-hunts characteristic of authoritarianism. The RCCC is neither constitutional nor unconstitutional—it is extra-constitutional just like the regime that spawned it. You can't reason with instruments of bias because all you'll get is indifference, if not contempt. You can't even bargain with it—a trading relationship implies equality. But an extra-constitutional authority doesn't understand anything other than either

complete domination or total submission. You can't hope to coexist with it peaceably because your very existence represents either a threat to the regime or an opportunity for exploitation. It forces you to either prostrate or perish.

Faced with the prospect of being harassed endlessly, death must have looked like an alluring alternative to Dinesh. Throughout his life, the engineer worked on the assumption that two-and-two makes four. Dinesh found the arithmetic of life in the past two months too dissonant to bear.

In the heat of weighty matters like the boycott of municipal elections by political parties, the controversy over appointment of the new chief justice, the army's procurement of weapons from the global bazar, few have time to reflect over the death of an engineer. But in one way or another, all of us are guilty.

It is our passivity and apathy that killed Dinesh Chandra Pyakhurel. We have suffered so much neglect for so long that we have lost the ability to mourn. Tears do not flow easily these days, that perhaps is the most frightening realisation. A storm is quietly brewing within. When it bursts, no embankment will contain it. ●



### STATE OF THE STATE CK Lal





## LETTERS

## HM ON FM

The Secretary of the Ministry of Communication and Telecommunication Lokman Singh Karki has made a false statement in 'HM on FM' ('From the Nepali Press, #252) by saying that FM stations in foreign countries are not allowed to broadcast news. Here, in the UK, almost all FM stations have hourly news updates and the news range from local to international, social to politics and crime to entertainment. Programs are also interrupted to inform the public if something important happens.

**Sandesh, Leeds, UK**

## SLC

I don't quite agree with CK Lal ('How about those who didn't pass?', #252) that we overdo the garlanding and vermillion. In fact, I think we don't recognise the achievements enough. Lal's distaste of recognising people stems from the fact that we don't do anything for those who did not achieve the same feat as those who did. While I understand his concerns for those who did not succeed, it does not justify giving less or no recognition to those who did. I don't think the examiners failed a majority of the students just for the heck of it. There has to be a certain standard everyone must meet in order to pass. I am not saying that the present standard is good. If the students do not meet certain expectations, then I don't think there is anything morally wrong in 'failing' those students. Let's face it: passing and failing are facts of life, it starts from the day you are born until you die. Lal has proposed an alternate system but I don't see how it would favour the 'unsuccessful' ones. In this competitive era, over time, I don't see how 'need to improve' in maths would be any different from 'failed' in maths. I am not sure if such semantics will make any difference in the long-term. Rehabilitating 'SLC-failed' school dropouts is indeed much more challenging. As Lal says, SLC-failed does not mean that they are incapable of doing anything in life. Rather, we need to set a standard that is competitive with the standards of neighbouring countries like India. We may need to focus more on vocational training so students get skills that they can cash in in the marketplace.

**Name withheld, email**

## IRONIES

It was ironic to read Bijen Jonchhe's 'Ironies abound' (#252) because the writer ironically found more ironies surrounding the political parties than the current government. He miserably failed

to express the more pertinent ironies facing our society these days, about the state repeating the rhetoric of democracy and constitution while continuously keeping politicians, journalists and human rights activists in prison without formal charges. He also failed to mention the irony about the establishment of the RCCC while a similar body CIAA is in existence. I can understand the omission of yet another irony about the government harping on anti-corruption agenda while one of its own leaders is reportedly blacklisted for not paying the loan he 'forgot' he took.

**Sunil Sharma, Teku**

- Rather than being the capital of a friendly neighbour, New Delhi has become a pilgrimage destination for most Nepali political leaders, even terrorists ('Comrades in Delhi', #251). Everyone gets a pat on their back from their masters. Koirala's visit was of a similar nature despite it being named a 'medical visit'. Looks like he spent more time paying homage to his masters than in hospital. From Delhi he gained enough support for his seven-party alliance, also possibly with the Maoists, to strengthen their movement in making Nepal a democratic nation. He fails to understand that it was his inter/intra party politics, negligence and bad governance that led to failed democracy in Nepal. He should be concentrating on correcting himself rather than on building alliances. Having been PM a number of times in the last seven years, he is more responsible than others for the nation's ill fate today and the rise of the Maoists, a major setback in Nepal's history. At the same time, how can a terrorist organisation support a democratic movement in Nepal? At 86, Girija Prasad Koirala should finally grow up.

**P Saria, email**

- It is amusing that Dipta Shah thinks he ought to be alarmed about India's actions against its own security interest ('Outside, looking in', #251). If it is one thing that New Delhi knows really well, it is how to protect its own interests and that is what drives India's participation in Nepal's insurgency crisis. This means only two things for Nepal: Delhi's interest is in unarming the Maoists with or without democracy and that it will do so with or without the king (therefore the perceived 'ambiguity'). To attribute EU's 'luxury of maintaining a position that ignores South Asia' to its distance is a rather weak argument and to be fair, one that is equally applicable to the US.

Whatever EU's motives may be, perhaps Dipta should catch up on various ways the EU is shaping the world as we know it (including environment laws that would give US exports a severe blow) in order to understand fully why its position differs greatly from the US.

**Sarahana Shrestha, email**

- Villagers in some parts of Nepal are being armed to fight the Maoists but the army spokesman denies the army's involvement. ('Walking without understanding', #251). So who is? And if the villagers are getting arms themselves, then isn't that illegal? Are these villagers being armed by landlords or warlords? Either way, the result will be anarchy. This is a serious mistake that will lead to looting and indiscriminate killings. The Maoists were allowed to grow beyond control, now this.

**Dinesh Rai, Naxal**

- The fact that the authorities find it acceptable to shut off roads of the capital for the king's arrival home yet again demonstrates their utter contempt for the welfare of the country's subjects. Tens of thousands of commuters are stuck in monster traffic jams at rush hour breathing in foul exhaust fumes with hardly a policeman in sight. Why not take a helicopter to the palace? I suppose it is too much to expect Nepal's rulers to care for anything other than their self-interest. Yours anonymously for fear of being booted out of the country.

**A concerned expat**

- The government and Maoists are both playing foul. Despite their assertions ('We are not terrorists', #251) the Maoists are creating more victims and the government has abdicated its role in taking care of

them. Stop this nonsense at once, stop punishing the people for your power games. Otherwise we'll give you both red cards.

**Deepak Sapkota, Patan**

## TREES

The trees are struggling to live despite being chopped down (#252). Help them survive. Bring back the trees. We need the greenery, use the rainy season to give the saplings a boost.

**Rabina Rachalica, Green Team Jagati-8, Bhaktapur**

- I understand that the trees in Pulchok were removed for security reasons. However, if I were a Maoist commander and wanted to remove local security forces, I would certainly know where to find a large group of them. They are all huddled together under the shade of the few small trees in Pulchok that escaped the 'tree slaughter'. A perfect target! I, too, have been trying to understand this much discussed question that was asked in the SLC exams: 'What sort of composition does the present government have? Present a brief evaluation of its functioning?' It occurred to me that maybe the government was taking a secret poll to provide some answers on how to proceed in the future by asking the smart young minds of Nepal to provide answers.

**Bonnie Ellison, email**

## MASKS

Since the hardcopy edition of *Nepali Times* doesn't reach me in Seoul, I have been reading it on the Internet. But lately, I notice Kunda Dixit is wearing masks and not hats in his column Under My Hat. What's up? Is it a metaphor? Has he run out of hats? Is he ashamed to show his face? A mask means that a person is playing a different character, especially hidden, negative personalities.

**Pabitra Mani Bhandari, Seoul**

## LETTERS

*Nepali Times* welcomes all feedback. Letters should be brief and may be edited for space. While pseudonyms can be accepted, writers who provide their real names and contact details will be given preference. Email letters should be in text format without attachments with 'letter to the editor' in the subject line.

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# Hope in Kapilbastu

It is a 45-minute drive down a long dirt road from the highway to the village of Singraha in Kapilbastu near the Indian border. Villagers are mostly dalits and Muslims and there is only one school: the Chunda Kumari Primary School (pictured, right). It may not look like much but schools like this give hope for Nepal's future because it shows what can be done if villagers are allowed to run their schools themselves.

It has four small classrooms and a bathroom that no one uses. The teachers not only teach but also go house-to-house asking villagers to enrol children.

"Having the community involved means parents are involved with the school and they will look after its well being," says Yagya Bikram Shahi of the Community Owned Primary Education Program (COPE) of the UN, "many times the Maoists tried to close down schools but due to community pressure they have remained open."

Kapilbastu's teachers like this one at the COPE-supported Ram Janaki School (below) have also learnt a lot. They now want to send their students not just to school but are aiming at colleges when they graduate.

Uma Kant Mishra, Kapilbastu's DEO is full of praise for COPE. "They taught us that female teachers are probably better, showed us how to promote primary schools with local help," he says. In addition, because parents were part of the school management committee the school was forced to pay attention to quality.

Sugarta Nau whose daughter Anita studies in Chunda Kumari, says, "I have gained knowledge by being a part of the school management committee, I am not educated but I want my child to be able to read and write."



AARTI BASNYAT



AARTI BASNYAT

For a district where less than half the children are enrolled, less than a quarter of the teachers have any training and 80 percent of the education budget is spent just on teachers' salaries, COPE has brought drastic change. And no one knows this better than Bishnu Kala Panday, headmistress of Chunda Kumari. "Earlier girls were not allowed to go to school," she recalls, "parents distrusted male teachers, we made the effort to go house-to-house asking people to enrol their children. They now trust us."

Still, it's an uphill battle in an area steeped in patriarchy. A girl is sent to school only up to the time she is married, and there are many child wives.

Bhagwat Dayal's daughter goes to Chunda Kumari, but she tells us: "She will study till class five and that's all, after that she will go to her husband's house. I don't think I would want my daughter-in-law to study once she comes here either." On the other hand, a few years ago parents here wouldn't even be sending their daughters to school in the first place.

The UN pays 94 percent of the funds for schools and the VDCs provide the rest. Buoyed by the success, the UN is launching COPE 2 to use the same model for municipality and higher secondary schools. The project has set up 120 schools in 83 VDCs in six districts and now wants to replicate the model elsewhere. ●

*Aarti Basnyat in Kapilbastu*

# From the grassroots up

## The best news in education in a long time

**NARESH NEWAR**

This year's SLC results said it all: 80 percent of students from government schools failed their exams.

It wasn't just the students that failed, the government failed too in managing the school system. Now, the success of public schools that have been handed over to local communities is a beacon of hope.

The rot set in with the nationalisation of locally-managed schools in 1971. It was an experiment that failed miserably and brought down the quality of instruction. Now, goaded by donors, the government is poised to hand them back.

Just as with community forestry, community radio and community health care, it looks like the way to go is to decentralise the management of schools. This way, teachers are more accountable and show greater responsibility. And because the schools are locally-managed, the Maoists don't interfere as much.

Some 2,200 schools have now been handed over to local communities and in a few years 27,000 more schools nationwide will be transferred, making Nepal a unique education model in the developing world.

"In the past, the government appointed all teachers," explains Rajendra Joshi of the World Bank in Kathmandu, "but once the community took over it started weeding out bad teachers."

The initiative is spearheaded by the Ministry of Education with support from the World Bank and UNICEF under the Community School Support Program (CSSP) which gives grants of Rs 100,000 to schools that used to have a budget of only Rs 10,000 a year.

"In the schools where it has been tried, it has already brought a lot of hope to achieve Nepal's education goals," says UNICEF's Sanphe Lhalungpa who is especially happy to see the high dropout rate reducing in the new locally-run schools.

Retention of students especially at the primary level has always posed a big challenge in Nepal and this has to do with poor motivation of teachers, lack of books and dingy classrooms. Even before the conflict, 70 percent of children between six to 10 dropped out of school, one of the highest rates in the world.

"You cannot blame the conflict for crisis in education," says Helen Sherpa of the World Education group, "but the conflict has made it worse." Government education offices have been

constantly under Maoist threat and last week the rebels blew up the District Education Office in Khotang. Government teachers have been extorted mercilessly by the Maoists, paying upto 20 percent of their salaries as 'revolutionary tax'.

Educationists admit that just giving away grants to schools will not solve the problem, they think community management can be a quality control factor. They admit that some communities are not cohesive and dedicated but say if decentralisation works with forest conservation there is no reason it won't work to revamp education.

"This is not about undertaking technical responsibilities but knowing who is a good or bad teacher," says Joshi. Experience with existing community-managed schools is that the Maoists also leave them alone.

At the National Planning Commission there is excitement in the air after a lot of gloom and doom about meeting the UN's Millennium Development Goal to achieve universal literacy by 2015. "Community management of schools gives us the best chance of achieving that target," says Shankar Sharma but adds cautiously, "it all depends now on whether the conflict intensifies." ●

# The most cost-effective way to raise enrolment

Eight years ago, Save the Children US, in partnership with local organisations, started the first of its community-based Early Child Development (ECD) centre in Siraha.

By 2000, nearly 300 graduates went directly into class one in local government schools. Eighty-six entered a pre-primary class, 16 jumped immediately to class two and one started in class three.

A survey showed the children were excelling and passed from class one to class two at double the rate of their peers. But do they continue to do well? International research shows children who attend early childhood program tend to 'fade out' and after the first few years, the academic gap between these children and others tends to close.

But in Siraha there has been no fade out for children from ECD centres. By 2004, 80 percent of the 2,000 cohorts were moving through school with no failure or repetition. Projecting these results, the children look more than twice as likely to complete primary school within five years as the average Nepali student.

Even more important is that the children stay in school, even if they fail a year. Over four years, only 14 of the cohort of 291 have dropped out of school, about one-tenth



of the national annual dropout rate. The most recent primary school completion rate for Nepal (2003) indicates that only half the enrolled students nationally ever complete grade five—including all those who repeat along the way. If repetitions are included, we project that over 90 percent of the ECD children will complete grade five.

The number of centres in Siraha continues to expand. SCF-US with the DEO and nine local voluntary groups support 234 of these community-based centres, benefiting

over 5,300 children aged four and five—about 12 percent of all eligible children. In order to meet the demand, a shift system has been initiated in some centres, so that twice as many children can be served without increasing management costs.

Over 2,700 children, not yet counting the current year, have successfully completed the program, and every year, all graduates have entered school. The centres become self-sustaining within five years with some support from the local district education office.

These ECD centres make a vital contribution to addressing social exclusion in Nepal. Nationwide, girls still lag behind boys in enrolment and they are more likely to drop out of school. But girls attend these centres and then go on to school in the same numbers as boys.

More than a quarter of all those currently enrolled in Siraha are dalits, although they make up only 17 percent of the population there. Strong community-based and community-managed early childhood programs are the most effective (and the most cost-effective) way to raise enrolment, promoting caste and gender equity, preventing dropout and ensuring school success. ●

*Udayalaxmi Pradhananga and Sheridan Bartlett*



### MDG alarm bells ring

Nepal is falling behind in targets to meet the UN's millennium development goals (MDGs) to halve poverty by 2015. With only 10 years to go, the Maoist rebellion and political instability are holding back development, particularly in rural areas. "It will be a difficult task to achieve the targets due to the conflict and poor governance," says development expert Mohan Man Sainju. Nepal needs to cut poverty by half, reduce the proportion of people suffering from hunger, attain 100 percent enrolment, reduce child and maternal mortality rates and halve the incidence of malaria and other preventable diseases.

The government says it reduced poverty by 31 percent over the past five years but experts say this reduction is a consequence of growth in remittances from Nepali migrant workers abroad. "This (poverty reduction) is a matter for debate. Remittances are not a sustainable and authentic indicator of how far poverty has been reduced," said Prerna Bomzan from Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN).

Nepal's maternal and child mortality rates are the highest in the region. In September Nepal has to submit a progress report to the UN in Geneva on meeting MDG targets. Activist groups, fearing the government may attempt a whitewash is preparing an alternative report.

"It depends on the intensity of the conflict. Once there is peace, we could achieve about 75 percent of the MDGs," says NPC Vice-Chairman Shankar Sharma. Indeed, the only silver lining seems to be in education, where despite conflict enrolment rates are up (see p4). In a bid to ensure that the MDGs are achievable in Nepal, the UN has initiated the Millennium Campaign which plans to use NGOs and civic groups to help raise mass awareness of, and participation in, the development process. (IRIN)

### Reducing poverty

World Bank has approved a \$32 million grant for road infrastructure in rural areas. An estimated 36 percent of Nepal's 24 million people live more than a two hours walk away from the nearest navigable road. Lack of road access is much worse in the hills. About 15 districts are not connected by road. "Access to services and economic opportunities have been among the top casualties of Nepal's ongoing conflict, especially in rural hinterlands," says Kenichi Ohashi of the World Bank, which believes that poor access to markets and services in remote areas pose as main constraints to economic growth.

### World's highest book and CD release

As the race to outdo each other on Chomolungma, musicians are the latest to get into the act. Ramesh Adhikari, lyricist, had his book of national songs *Mero Desh* and CD *Peace and Life* released on the summit. Summiteers Chhang Dawa Sherpa, 23 and Tashi Lakpa Sherpa, 19 reached the top of Chomolungma on 30 May and carried out the launch ceremony.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

The Dugar Group has been representing some of the leading automobile brands for the last 30 years. Chief Operating Officer Vaibav Dadha spoke to *Nepali Times* about the changing scenario and competition.

# Mindless ‘mistakes’

The decision-making apparatus in the Maoist party promotes violence

Early this month, a bus carrying 150 passengers, including a few plain-clothed military personnel, was blown to bits in Madi. Thirty-eight people died and the rest were wounded in what was the worst attack against civilians in

STRICTLY BUSINESS  
Ashutosh Tiwari



Nepal. The next day, Maoist chieftain Pushpa Kamal Dahal admitted that the attack was a "serious mistake". But three days later, Dahal's comrades bombed another bus in Kabhre killing two civilians, six soldiers and injuring more passengers.

According to INSEC, 234 Nepalis lost their lives to Maoists' explosives (11 were killed by the army's) in the first quarter of 2005. While civil society pundits attribute Maoists' murderous ways to rifts between political and military factions, it's time to search for other explanations. Is there something structurally closed about the Maoist decision-making apparatus that allows its cadres to bomb civilians?

In a democracy with openly competing political institutions, a party's actions are freely reported by the press. Those reports allow supporters and critics to give feedback, which the party uses to improve the quality of its decisions. Indeed, one significant consequence of democratic openness, with its bundle of rights, checks and balances, is that the parties' positions settle not on extreme ends but around the compromising middle.

Similarly, market conditions act as one voting bloc for



KANAK MANI DIXIT

evaluating the decision-making system of a private firm, which is not democratic but hierarchical. No matter how cleverly cutting-edge the executives think their strategy is, if the market looks the other way, their firm will lose money. To avoid that, firms constantly seek feedback from customers, talk to employees and investors or hire consultants to help improve decisions.

But the Maoists face little incentive to collect and inject diverse and independent third-party feedback into their decision-making process. With 'pro-poor social justice' as an advertising line, they use abduction to bring in new recruits. INSEC says that between February 1996 and April 2005, the Maoists kidnapped 34,014 Nepalis. Once in, the recruits are to dream of a future free of 'class enemies' but survive in the present through the use of force, extortion and violence. Their leaders keep the issues of 'justice' and 'enemies' vague so anyone can define them any way to justify any act of violence.

Meantime, those who stray from the party are punished for

being traitors and spies, all disagreements are crushed. The only thing that's fit to grow is an ideologically homogeneous mindset that is hostile to information that contradicts its worldview. To paraphrase Polish poet Wislawa Szymborska, such a mindset knows what it knows and doesn't want to know any more. Ambitious recruits figure that the only way to get promoted is to start by increasing the enemies' body count.

Who was responsible for bombing the bus in Madi? Dahal didn't cite names. Given the expenses associated with developing recruits to execute acts of terror, it's unlikely that Dahal & Co will push Maoist resources into inaction for long. What is likely is that as long as its business model is anchored by an insulated decision-making process that has violence on the default mode, D & C's associates, despite their leader's opportunistically calculated promise to "not kill civilians even if they are criminals", will continue to lob explosives at innocent Nepalis. ●

# Autos and the upwardly mobile

**Nepali Times:** How has your business evolved?  
**Vaibav Dadha:** We have been in automobile trading for the past 30 years. We started off with Volkswagen in 1974. Today we are dealing with 10 brands including Nissan, Volkswagen and Audi. We recently set up a state-of-the-art centre last year, which is one of the best-equipped in Nepal.

**What has support from the government been like?**  
It is a very volatile trade. It all depends on the government's policies. In fact last year there probably was a 200 percent increase in the passenger vehicle sector with new Marutis joining the taxi service.

**What are the necessary changes needed?**  
Information dissemination still needs to improve in Nepal. Anywhere else in the world, information is passed on a regular, monthly basis and a very transparent business is done. But in Nepal it is not so, everything is hidden and it's not a very free trade policy. There is no authentic data. Only one data comes and that is from Nepal Automobile Dealers Association and this too is only once a year. That's not sufficient. It should be transparent, more frequent and every importer or the government should provide details on a company wise basis.

**Has the market grown?**  
With the opening of finance and banking sector in the last three to four years the market has drastically improved. It is not very complicated for people who want to procure a vehicle now to do so. The financing is fairly straightforward. That's one of the reasons the graph is going up. There is a shift from motorcycle to four wheelers.

**Will the competition especially from China be an influential factor in the future?**  
Competition has been growing. There are more and more

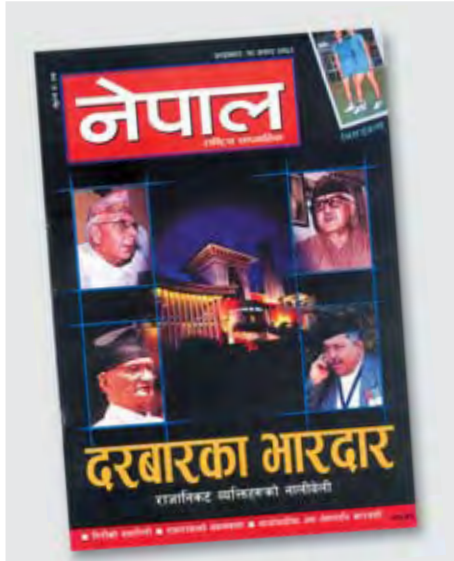
brands coming in from China but Chinese brands for two and four wheelers have suffered because of poor after sales. As of now about 80 percent of the market is dominated by Indian brands. Subsequently I believe all the Indian brands are going to be doing very well here.

**There seems to be a growing interest in Royal Enfield motorbikes?**  
We have appointed dealers all over Nepal and are providing backup with regard to servicing parts and easy financing facilities to customers. Royal Enfield is a dream bike and it has become easy for people to shift from a Bajaj or Honda to an Enfield.

**Considering the present state of economy is there scope for growth in the luxury car segment?**  
Nissan has been doing very well. In fact in the passenger vehicle segment Nissan has been the number one for the past three years. We have just started marketing Nissan in the commercial segment where we are sure in a short span of time we will do well. People are going to be surprised because though the economy has not been doing well, sales in this category has been moving upwards. One of the safest options to invest in for banks is higher purchase loan for a vehicle. The money is very secure. I think that the finance is going to open up more in the coming days considering that they are asking for the guarantee of the distributors.

**Have you identified other sectors in Nepal where the industry could grow?**  
In Kathmandu Valley the sales has been on the up trend. However with the current scenario in Nepal for people outside Kathmandu the situation has not improved to be investing in automobiles. The growth prospect is tremendous.





Nepal, 26 June

नेपाल

Among the royal courtiers those who can be called shadow politicians are: Sharad Chandra Shah, Sachit Shamsher JBR, Bharat Keshar Simha and Dr Kesharjung Rayamajhi.

**Sharad Chandra Shah**  
Field Marshal Surendra Bahadur Shah married King Tribhuban's niece and his son is Sharad Chandra Shah. Sources say he has been close to King Gyanendra since the Panchayat days. He played an important role in mobilising Panchayat youth workers during the 1980 referendum and later. Shah's trusted people from that period, Tanka Dhakal and Khadga Bahadur GC, are ministers today.

Sharad Chandra Shah's speciality is behind-the-scenes power-brokering.

# Power by proximity: the inner circle

During the 1990 People's Movement he was the vice-chairman of the Population Commission and was accused of using the Sports Council to quell the revolt. In revenge, agitators burnt down his house in Dilli Bajar. He then went to an ashram in south India and later ran a restaurant in Singapore. In 1997, he returned and was appointed to the Information Technology Commission.

He was always interested in sports but now he has become a player in politics. "Sharad Chandra Shah is an administrative man not a political figure, however, he has a lot of influence among those in power," says RPP Secretary Shivahari Paudyal.

council is Sachit Shamsher," says one former member of the Council, "the chairman is only a figurehead."

The Royal Council conference headed by Sachit Shamsher proposed that the problem could only be solved through the king's direct involvement, which was opposed by the political parties. "The Council's job is to provide advice and suggestions when asked by the king, this cannot be considered politics," he said then. There are those who consider Sachit Shamsher's words to be the official line of the palace and the army. He meets the king occasionally and says, "We only provide advice when asked by His Majesty."

were at their peak, he said in an interview: "A stick is not enough, we need a Jang Bahadur." At that time he maintained there could be no talks with the Maoists, now he has modified that to say: "Unless they give up their weapons there cannot be any talks."

**Kesharjung Rayamajhi**  
After his term as chairman of the Royal Council expired on 18 February 2003, Rayamajhi is not officially a royal adviser. However he gives prophetic suggestions. At a program organised last year by the king's niece, he suggested, "It is important that the king form an advisory council under his own chairmanship." And that is exactly what happened. Palace sources deny him being an insider but there is no doubt he is a trusted loyalist. After February First he has met the king only once and reasons, "I'm trying for an audience but perhaps because His Majesty is busy it hasn't happened."

He famously defected from the Communist Party of Nepal in the 1960s and has served the royals loyally since. In the interim government formed after the restoration of democracy, he was nominated by the king to serve as the minister for education, culture and local administration. He even fought an election with his own party Janata Dal but lost. Even while he was chairman of the council he admitted he had advised in favour of the 4 October 2002 royal move.

## Unnatural alliance

Editorial in *Nepal Samacharpatra*, 21 June

नेपाल समाचारपत्र

The three-way power struggle between the king, political parties and the Maoists after sacking of parliament for the third time, has taken a new direction with the recent turn of events. Parliamentary forces are now trying to find ways to work with the Maoists while the rebels, declared terrorists by the government, have also officially expressed their full support and commitment in the agitation of the parliamentary forces. This turn of events has now created a situation where the triangular struggle is now bipolar between the monarchy and the parties with the Maoists. Independent intellectuals have expressed their disapproval of this unexpected alliance between parliamentary parties and the underground

rebels. The country's problems can't be expected to be solved with the alliance of these two forces that hold contradictory ideologies, strategies and work ethics. The possibility of a coalition of parliamentary forces, who support constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy, and the Maoists, whose aim is to abolish the monarchy, is very bleak. The Maoist problem was addressed when parliament was functioning with democratic political parties themselves in power. However, the past has shown us that the parties used the Maoist issue to get to power while the Maoists used the weaknesses of the democratic political parties to destabilise the parliamentary system. After February First there was wide speculation that political parties might get close to the Maoists. But back then, senior leaders of the parties had openly declared that there could be no

alliance with the Maoists unless they gave up violence. Since then, the Maoists have committed the most outrageous murders in their 10-year history. It is strange that soon after 40 civilians were killed in a passenger bus in Chitwan and the wives and innocent children of security personnel were brutally murdered in Kailali, the political parties should forget their former stance and ask for help from the Maoists. The Maoists haven't stopped the killing of leaders and workers of the parliamentary parties either. The last resolve of the seven parliamentary parties only looks like a momentary venture to gain power. The decision to form an alliance with the Maoists is not only wrong but also irresponsible.

## Mohan Bikram

Samaya, 24 June

समय

Mohan Bikram has been talking from his hideout about the rifts in the Maoist leadership. The Maverick communist leader describes it as an indication of Prachanda's "dictatorial style" and thinks many Maoist rank and file are now in danger from Prachanda loyalists. He says Baburam should have challenged Prachanda but seems to think that Baburam doesn't have the fortitude. Mohan Bikram has been sharply critical of Baburam ever since the latter left his party to join Prachanda in the early 1990s but this time he appears to have softened. He thinks feudalistic and fascist tendencies are on the rise in the Maoist movement and he believes that Baburam's life is in danger. He is surprised that Baburam was sent to India and suspects he may have bowed to pressure. He maintains the Maoists cannot win and reiterates his stand that the Maoists will one day unite with the monarchy. He thinks the Maoist overtures

towards India are a part of an effort towards a soft landing under Indian mediation. He adds: "In this way, the Maoists are no different than the UML and NC which are always looking to Delhi for blessings. They are not revolutionaries anymore."

## NGOs in Sallyan

Kapil Kifle in *Rajdhani*, 22 June

राजधानी

SALLYAN—NGOs in the midwest are worried by a new Maoist policy to allow only groups that register with them to work in their areas. The Maoist 'Magarat Autonomous People's Government' has said it will only allow NGOs to only work in roads, electricity, education, irrigation and health sectors. "They told us this one year ago but we had managed to carry on our work," said Dilli Binadi of Save the Children Norway. Binadi says his organisation can't register with the Maoists because it has an agreement with the government. But Maoist district chief for Sallyan, Bhaskar says his group needs to be recognised as the power in the region. In fact, Bhaskar reprimanded Shoba Gautam of the Human Rights and Communications Organisation who was here to train local activists in international humanitarian law. "You should have only come after asking us first," Bhaskar said in an aggressive tone. Gautam put up a spirited defence, arguing that as a citizen of the country she was free to go wherever she wanted. Tilottam Poudel of the child welfare group, CWIN, says the only way to survive in Sallyan is to be totally transparent. He says he tries to explain to the Maoists that his services are needed by the region's children. The Maoists can't kick out CWIN and Rural Reconstruction Nepal because they know the villagers would not like it.

## Why torment us?

Himal Khabarpatrika, 15 June

हिमाल

The Home Ministry set up a task force to investigate disappearances and when it brought out a list last month, Machendra Limbu of Sunsari went through it over and over again. But he couldn't find the name of his 22-year-old son, Uttam. Wiping tears from his eyes, Machendra says simply: "I thought I'd find him on the list this time but my heart has given up now." Security forces had picked up Uttam at night from his home three years ago. Uttam's 56-year-old mother says, "I have cried so much that I have no tears left. If he is alive they should just tell us he is alive, if he is dead tell us he is dead. Why torment us like this?"



Also in Sunsari, Dal Bahadur and Padam Kumari Magar last saw their son, 34-year-old Hari, on the same night that Uttam Limbu disappeared. Dal Bahadur and Padam Kumari (pictured) weep openly remembering their son. Hari's 26-year-old wife Hari Maya says, "My in-laws are old, I have to take care of everything." Sunsari's CDO had told Hari Maya as soon as Hari was taken away that he was in custody but the next day when she went with some of his clothes the district administration denied having him in detention. Harka Majhi also disappeared three years ago. His elderly mother lives in a small shack and still waits for him to return.



Petrol pump: cconstitutional assembly  
Bus: Movement

राजधानी *Rajdhani*, 22 June

### QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"We strongly urge the international community to resolutely come forward with an effective framework in curbing the financing of terrorism."

King Gyanendra in the Doha Second South Summit, 15 June



“Thick skinned  
like a rhino”

*Ghatna ra Bichar, 22 June*

१०. छाटवना विचार

Tulsi Giri, known for being a pillar of active monarchy, has been drawn into controversy for not paying a bank loan he took years ago. After news of his blacklisting, people have been demanding his resignation, some even satirising the situation by collecting petty cash to help him pay back the loan. Excerpts of an interview:



**Did you take a loan for Himalayan Plastic?**  
They appointed me as a shareholder of the company and when requested, I accepted to be president. But I had no hand in taking loans, spending it or such transactions.

**But to agree to be a shareholder and president, then to deny responsibility in paying loans?**

I had resigned from being a prime minister back then. Politics was not the way I wanted it to be so I didn't want to be involved in it anymore. A person I knew came to me and requested me to be a sleeping partner in his company. I agreed. Whether that was wrong or right is a different matter. I have decided that until the bank sends me a formal notice, I don't have to pay anyone anything on the basis of

news published in the papers.

**If the bank does issue a notice, how will you pay back? Apparently, you don't own any property in Nepal.**

First let the bank complete its procedures, if it is proved that I have to pay back, I will pay back somehow. I sold my house and property two decades ago and left the country. I never thought that I would be involved in politics again. Circumstances changed, I have responsibilities but the political scenario is still not the way I want it to be.

## What is the way you want it to be?

When it is implemented, you will know.

**That means you are dissatisfied even with present politics?**

Yes, this is neither a duck nor a chicken. I am not inclined towards moving this way. I believe that we must move straight ahead.

**You want to lead the country on a more reactionary path?**

I don't know what that is. I believe that the nation must be led towards the path that both the king and the nation want.

### Not the path asserted by political parties?

Haven't you seen where the parties have taken the country? You want to go that way?

**You get a lot of flak for your outspokenness.**

I have thick skin like a rhino, criticism doesn't make any difference to me.

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सूचना तथा सञ्चार मन्त्रालय  
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SUBHAS RAI



MIN BAJRACHARYA

# TOON TIME

The very measures designed to curb media freedom have allowed Nepali cartoonists to come of age



BATSAYAN

## PESHAL POKHREL

The scene is an editor's office complete with computer, phone and cluttered table. But sitting at the desk is a soldier in camouflage fatigues scribbling away. The sign on the door says: 'Editor-in-chief: In'. Numerous editorials have been written about the loss of press freedom after February First. Columnists have heaped scorn at the curbs. But that one illustration by Nepal's best-known cartoonist, Batsayan, said it most eloquently of all. His real name is Durga Baral and the 53-year-old artist lives in Pokhara, which allows him a different perspective on the absurd goings-on in the capital. The developments were ripe for ridicule. But in the fear-filled weeks after February First, Batsayan remembers being not so sure about how far he could go.

**CARTOON CHARACTERS:** Rabin Sayami, Abin Shrestha, Batsayan and Rajesh KC get together to discuss their craft.

"I didn't want the editor to get into trouble just because of me, so I held myself back," he recalls. But when he read the columns of fellow-*Kantipur* contributor, Khagendra Sangraula and saw what *Himal Khabarpatrika* was getting away with, he decided to let himself go. Batsayan's biting post-February cartoons boosted the morale of other editors and cartoonists. Playing cat-and-mouse with the censors, cartoonists started going further and taking more risks than writers. *Budhabar* cartoonist Basu Kshitij's illustration comparing Bhutan's democracy to Nepal's raised the government's hackles and editor Surya Thapa was summoned to the CDO to explain. Ramesh Bista of *Bimarsha Weekly* had a cartoon ready to go to press but the military 'guest editor' posted in the newsroom had objections. Bista held his ground and threatened that the space would be left blank, so the censor relented and the cartoon was printed. *Kantipur* found two of Batsayan's cartoons too risqué to print. One of them poked fun at

the editors writing absurd editorials on ballet dancing and smelly socks by portraying a newsroom scene in which an editorial was being prepared and titling it, 'Delicious Momos, Possibilities and Challenges'. Uttam Nepal had a series of cartoons poking fun at Ramesh Nath Pandey and Kirti Nidhi Bista but his paper, *Rajdhani*, said it would be too dicey to print them. "There has been an offensive to gag us and even my colleagues couldn't digest my cartoons," says Nepal. But cartoonists didn't give up and have been taking the lead in probing the limits of what is permissible. Rabin Sayami has submitted cartoons to *Himal Khabarpatrika* and *Jana Aastha* that make readers bite their tongues. One of them on 1 Baisakh was of Tulsi Giri wishing everyone, 'Happy New Year 2017'. This was a reference to the sacking by King Mahendra of BP Koirala's elected government in 1960. Another shows the king and the Maoists playing chess with the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh looking over





both their shoulders.

Rajesh KC of *Kantipur* mocked the ban on mobiles with a cartoon of a garbage collector walking the streets with a sack shouting, “Nokia, Ericsson, Motorola” offering to buy the sets by the kilo. Editors admit that part of the reason they have more freedom with articles and commentaries is because the cartoonists kept the door ajar. One of the taboo subjects has always been the depiction of royalty. Even after 1990 and even on Gai Jatra papers, when cartoonists drew prime ministers as naked women, the royalty was strictly out of bounds. But since February First, when the monarch descended to the level of everyday

politics, the royalty is not spared. “If the king had remained a constitutional monarch, I guess we wouldn’t be drawing him,” says Rabin Sayami.

It is not a cartoonist’s job to make the subjects of their work happy or sad, says Sayami, and adds that the UML’s Madhab Nepal is livid about the way he is depicted as a wimp in cartoons. One favourite of cartoonists is Girija Koirala, the politician almost everybody loves to hate. With his large nose, bad teeth and outsized spectacles, he is a cartoonists’ delight and appears on cartoons even when out of power.

If it appears that cartoonists are more critical of the government than the Maoists, it is only

because they see that the press is being unnecessarily targeted as a result of the February First move. They wonder why press freedom should be the casualty when the reason for the royal takeover was to crush the Maoists.

Abin Shrestha of *Samaya* magazine says cartoons need not always be humorous, they can expose misery, double-standards and sadness. He has even drawn cartoons of the terrorist attack on the bus on Madi showing a Maoist crocodile shedding tears, saying: “We are saddened by this incident and like always we promise through this statement that we will take every step necessary to prevent it from happening again.” ●



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# Turning nature's megapixels into art

To be able to capture nature in all its hues is Prajwal Pradhan's biggest challenge

Nepal's natural beauty has catapulted the country's fame as an artiste's delight and Prajwal Pradhan has captured its many faces with his lens: a steppe eagle swooping over Kathmandu on a hot day, a plumbeous redstart that you have to search for among rocks on a riverbed, an elephant taking a shower or stark white flowers against a deep blue background. It is flora and fauna caught in technicolour.

In 1985, Pradhan received a scholarship from the British Council to study photography and the audiovisual medium. It was then that his affair with the camera grew. He returned to work with NTV and in those years, Pradhan says he was unable to explore his creativity, "I didn't understand the value of still photography then."

Later, as a government employee he dabbled in advertising. Even then, he was taking pictures of popular tourist spots only and converting them into postcards. It was only later as his interest in his surroundings grew that Pradhan decided to experiment with nature photography.

"I began to read more, flip through magazines such as the National Geographic and wondered how those photographers captured such beautiful colours," muses

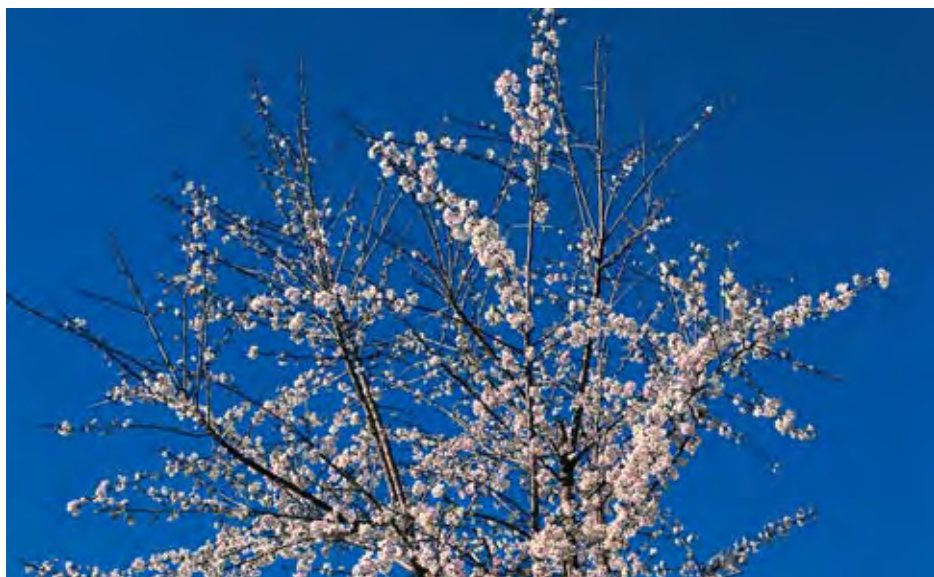


KIRAN PANDAY

Pradhan. But in the past seven years, Pradhan's portfolio includes pictures that make viewers sit up and take notice.

"Nature is already photogenic but you have to look for composition and colour," says the artist, "to be able to capture it in all its hues is one of the biggest challenges. Almost 80 percent of the pictures I take have to be discarded."

The photographer's eye is different from other's, it must see what others can't,



the tones and textures and have the technical expertise to bring them out as accurately as possible in print. The specific artistry of each photographer and each photograph depends on composition.

Composition is of great importance to Pradhan. "Even here in my exhibition, I see children who come to see it are appreciative because of the visual aesthetics," he says. Nature photography needs a lot of patience and research.

Pradhan explains that it is essential for the photographer to not just know the types of flora and fauna but also understand their habitat. "But sometimes," he adds, "It's just pure luck." ●

Aarti Basnyat

Flora and Fauna of Nepal.  
Photos by Prajwal Pradhan at Bluestar Hotel, Tripureswor.  
Until 30 June.  
pradhan@enet.com.np



## Lying still

Charting an era through Bernard Shaw's letters

After having acted with the likes of Sean Connery in *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, Naseeruddin Shah will be in Kathmandu to stage *Dear Liar* with Ratna Pathak Shah. The duo will perform the play directed by Satyadev Dubay at Association of St Mary's Alumnae Nepal's (ASMAN) Supper Theatre this July. Proceeds from the event will go to Asman Art Fund which will provide scholarships for talented individuals to attend Gurukul School of Theatre's two-year residential course.

*Dear Liar* is a play written in 1957 by Jerome Kilty. It was derived from a compilation of letters that George Bernard Shaw wrote to Stella Campbell, an actress he was

romancing. The drama is an early example of epistolary form of play writing with straightforward narrations and not recreation of events. It chronicles the deep mutual admiration and love that Shaw and Campbell shared, though they were both married but not to each other. The play is set between 1895-1939, that very significant era in history which witnessed not only innumerable path breaking accomplishments in theatre but also the two World Wars and the end of the Edwardian era whose lifestyle was dear to people like Stella.

Shah, who portrays George Bernard Shaw, is a Bollywood actor known for his versatility, accomplishments and recent

achievement in Hollywood. He has acted in movies like *Umrao Jaan*, *Hey Ram*, *Bhopal Express*, *The Perfect Murder* and *Monsoon Wedding*. Shah has also performed in over 60 productions on the professional stage. For the last 26 years, he has been running the Motley Theatre Company as director. Ratna Pathak Shah, who has acted in several films and tv serials is also part of the theatre company. An accomplished theatre actor, she has performed in over 30 plays in both Hindi and English. ●

**Dear Liar ASMAN's Supper Theatre at Soaltee Crowne Plaza, 1-2 July. 9851023958**

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# Building bridges

Instead of building walls we should build bridges, physically and figuratively

ABHA ELI PHOBOO

Off the dry, dusty road near Nakhu jail, amidst the junk and machinery, serenely pedalling through the air on their tar bato is David Sowerwine with the boys from his EcoSystems workshop. The contraption looks like a ski lift, bicycle and Santa Claus's sleigh sans reindeers, all rolled into one.

The front has two tandem seats for drivers with a bicycle's gear, pedal and brake system. Behind are passenger seats followed by cargo carriers. The route is fitted with poles through which the cable connects, much like that of a trolley, so when the drivers begin pedalling, the complete entourage lifts off and follows the wire route.

"It would be great if we could have this at various places in Kathmandu," says David, "It does not pollute, is pretty cheap, does not need roads and would add to the charm of the Valley."

The 'wire road' was built by EcoSystems, a company that David and his wife Haydi set up in Nepal in 1996 to work with energy and transport solutions. The American couple have been a fixture in the alternative technology sector in Nepal for nearly 15 years, but they are now heading home. They leave behind a lifetime of work in setting up workable and sustainable technological solutions to Nepal's topographical barriers.

In the early 1990s, after their efforts at solving the garbage problem of the capital were thwarted by red tape, the Sowerwines began to work on wire bridges (tar pul) for rural transportation. It wasn't long before the people from Milche, a village down Bagmati, heard of their work and walked for a day-and-half to Kathmandu to ask if they could have a tar pul.

"We weren't very sure but they sent delegations again and again and finally, we relented," says Haydi, "they were so happy, one villager even sang a song about our bridge at the inauguration." Two weeks after the Milche bridge was built villagers from Gadi near Hetauda came asking for one "just like that".

"Gadi had a real problem because the high school was across the river and, the children had to cross it everyday. One of the villagers was very determined about acquiring the bridge, his mother had drowned while crossing the river. But they didn't have enough funds and neither did we," says David. Help from the German and Canadian embassies has enabled the Sowerwines to bridge distances at critical points across the country.

The average cost of building a tar pul is \$15,000. "It is reasonable as it includes the direct cost of labour, steel, safety measures and everything else," says David. EcoSystems has set up more than 30 bridges all over Nepal, most of

them in remote areas such as Rukum and along the Kali Gandaki. "We do run risks with the Maoists but we make it a point to clarify things first," says David, "our latest project is installing two bridges in Rukum for user groups. Getting to the countryside with the insurgency is a problem for us especially since the bridges need regular maintenance."

The enthusiasm of the local people helps. "They are so eager, readily participating in building foundations, getting equipments there or contributing whatever they can to make sure the work is smooth," says David. One of their latest projects in Rukum connects a village with a health post which would otherwise take a day to reach.

The tar pul technology has evolved and the Sowerwines are leaving EcoSystems in the capable hands of coordinator Nanda Lal Bhandari and his group of dedicated Nepali bridge builders. But even though they are leaving, the tireless couple are working on yet another project that could help with rural electrification. In their garage in Patan is a pedalling device that generates electricity to light up a 100 bulbs that have the cut-off tops of plastic coke bottles for lampshades.

Says David: "The person who has this can work like a power company and make money generating electricity or recharging batteries for distribution. With some fine tuning, it'll fly." ●



Students taking the tar pul in Theuwater to go to school.

DAVID SOWERWINE

# Pre-monsoon weddings

Four weddings and a robbery in Kathmandu

You hear the band on the street, the trumpets crooning a Bollywood hit, the drums beating faster and faster. The traffic grinds to a halt, the garland-bedecked rented car moves through the narrow alley. It is the pre-monsoon wedding season and another round of endless parties.

There are already a dozen or so wedding invitations on my desk, some from people I don't even know. Several of them are for different parties of the same couple. And these wedding invitations are getting gaudier and brighter: one of them is tabloid size and folds like an accordion. Size seems to matter in Kathmandu weddings these days.

So there I go, round and round in circles inside the Ring Road attending five parties in one day. A European acquaintance I run into admits he doesn't know why he was invited. "I only met the groom once," he tells me. Same here. In the grand five-star ballroom, the nation's movers and shakers are all there: political leaders, media people, industrialists, celebrities, diplomats and socialites. The length of the guest list seems to matter in Kathmandu weddings these days.

Some of these people I had already run into at parties earlier in the day. As we make eye contact, familiar faces look away with that knowing smirk: "So you're here again, too?"

By the end of the day, driving around Kathmandu's traffic has worn me out. Why do all Nepalis marry at the same time? Is it because pre-marital sex is taboo and we have our own mating season? Or is it because the positions of the planets determine when



we tie the knot? Whatever.

The next reception is under a tent. Out of sheer boredom I move with like-minded colleagues to the buffet. The queue snakes right across the shamiana and people are lined

up plates in hand like refugees waiting to be fed. Some look fed up already. Others who got their food are stabbing at chunks of goat with the unique multi-tasking cutlery that one only sees at wedding palaces—the one that's not a spoon, not yet a knife nor a fork but somehow serves as all three. Paper napkins litter the sad grass, plates are stacked under the chairs, people are tripping over empty soft drink bottles all over the place.

The next wedding is classier. A soft Narayan Gopal gazal envelops the evening and guests are nursing scotches on the rocks wrapped in white napkins. The discussion drifts to the pros and cons of February First and no one had any extreme views either way. This is a civilised wedding in which the invitees are least bothered about the wedding itself.

Suddenly, Narayan Gopal is replaced by an announcement. A ladies' handbag had gone missing and guests were requested not to leave their belongings unattended. Silence. Over made-up and under-dressed women look over their bare shoulders. Looks like on top of being bored stiff, we risk being robbed at wedding parties these days. Was the thief in question one of the invitees? Didn't stay long enough to find out. I went over to the stage to congratulate the bride and groom. They apologised for not being able to give me time. I said I understood, how could they when they had invited 1,500 other people?

Now that the wedding season is finally over, I am looking forward to the peace and quiet of a Kathmandu monsoon during which I hope no one decides to get married. ●

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# From outback to inside

## Australia's 'bush campuses' cash in on foreign students

**KALINGA SENEVIRATNE**  
 in SYDNEY

The Central Queensland city of Rockhampton is over 1,000 kms from Sydney but its university, set up over a decade ago to bring tertiary education to outback Queensland, runs a campus in a leased multi-storey building in Sydney today that has more students than its parent.

While the Rockhampton campus of the Central Queensland University has a student body of about 4,000, its Sydney branch, marketed as CQU, has 4,490 students, of which 97.3 percent are foreign, some of them from Nepal.

CQU is one of at least nine Australian regional universities that have set up campuses on office blocks and even in partly rented hotels in Sydney to cash in on foreign students looking for a quick degree and perhaps permanent residency here.

A Bangladeshi student outside the CQU campus told us: "There are too many Indians, Sri Lankans and Indonesians here. I don't meet many Australians."

While Australian students basically get an interest-free loan from the government, known as the Higher Education Contributory Scheme, all foreign students have to pay fees of up to \$19,100 per year. Some 220,000 foreign students (85 percent from Asia) are studying in Australia. To be sure, there are many genuine universities doing quality academic work. But fly-by-nights have been attracted by the boom in Asian education.

The success of Australia's export education industry is closely connected to its foreign aid program of the 1970s and 1980s, when university education was free here. By offering



scholarships to study in Australia, mainly through the Colombo Plan, the nation was able to brand its education services with an international focus. Today it is a \$6 billion industry and the ninth highest revenue earner. In addition, students' accommodation, living expenses and visiting relatives, bring in billions more.

The government is also encouraging the public educational institutions to go commercial and are using Australia's immigration program to attract fee-paying students from Asia to its campuses. Aman Poonai, international students officer at the University of Technology Sydney, says, "It's easy to get PR (permanent residency) here, compared to the Green Card in the US. That's why a lot of Indians come here to study. In addition, it's cheaper here."

A series of investigative reports in the *Sydney Morning Herald* recently found out that some universities have lowered entry standards to attract foreign students. Changes to immigration laws making it easier to gain PR in Australia if you complete a local degree attracted Asian criminal

syndicates, especially from China, which forge certificates to get students into universities in Australia as a first step to get them PR, reported the paper.

The University of Sydney's faculty of economics and business has increased its income from foreign students five-fold in the last five years to \$39 million last year. Some 40 percent of the faculty's 7,200 students are from overseas. Political economics lecturer Stuart Rosewarne told the paper that economic success has come at a price because teachers have lowered their marking levels to cater to students with poor English knowledge. He said: "It's a nightmare trying to mark essays, so the way the faculty has dealt with it is to get rid of essays."

Australia's success is being emulated by others countries in the region, such as Singapore, Malaysia, India and China. Thus, the flow of Asian students to this country may already have peaked. Education Minister Brendon Nelson's response to this argument is "Like our wheat producers, our coal exporters—if you rely significantly on international markets and exports for your well-being and financial security, in a sense you're exposed". ●

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# A different stroke

## It's all about having a ball

A few years ago, I watched a golfer hit a great shot on a par three. The ball headed right for the tightly cut flag on the left side of the green and pitched perfectly next to the hole but it rolled on about five metres and found the water.

"What ball are you playing," I asked him.

"Pinnacle Gold, 90 compression," he replied.

I advised that he might have found himself right next to the flag with a tap in birdie if he had been playing a softer ball. He frowned but agreed.

Revolution in technology means that today we have a large variety of golf balls to suit every level of play. Some say that the golf ball today has reached an optimum level and that, like in tennis, there is a serious study now to move back the levels of spin and speed (distances) achievable.

Did you know that the golf ball today actually flies 50 or more yards further than those made some decades ago? Here's an interesting fact that I am sure many are unaware of: the first golf balls were made from wood! A documented reference goes back to a John Daly (no, not the big hitter John of this era) playing with a wooden ball in 1550.

In 1618, the Featherie, or feather golf ball was introduced and around 1880, Guttie balls were being produced. In the early 1890s, many of the rubber companies including Dunlop began mass-production of golf balls, which killed off the handcrafted ball business.

In 1898, Coburn Haskell introduced the one-piece rubber cored ball, which proved so effective in the British and US Opens that they were subsequently adopted universally by 1901. These balls looked just like Gutties but gave the average golfer an extra 20 yards from the tee. Around the same time, W Millison developed a thread winding machine and Haskell balls were mass produced, making them more affordable. In 1905, William Taylor first applied the dimple pattern to a Haskell ball and this was when the golf ball took on its modern form.

Manufacturers continued to experiment with their design, including Goodrich who introduced the pneumatic ball in 1906. However being prone to expansion, this one soon died away.

In 1921, the R&A (Scotland) and USGA (USA) had standardised the size and weight tolerances of the ball. Between 1931 and 1990, both these organisations differed on the dimensions of the golf ball, which meant that the game played on either side of the Atlantic was similar but different.

Since then further constraints have been proposed which are detailed in the Rules of Golf. Nowadays, balls with the same specifications are played around the world.

It was only in 1972 when Spalding introduced the first two-piece ball, the Executive, that the basic Haskell design was substantially improved upon. Antique golf balls of the last century are avidly collected and are becoming increasingly valuable. A dimple patterned Guttie in good condition is worth about \$500.

When I first started playing golf in 1981, I remember that the Spalding Company had produced their Topflite balls and those were my favourites until the early 90s. Over the years, I have had different preferences of golf balls at different times. Certainly a golf ball that you like and which gives you a good feel will also help you perform better. Today, I play the Titliest Pro V1x for its great feel, durability, distance and spin.

With such a rich variety of balls to suit the individual and circumstances, a golfer has to evaluate their game, check out areas of weaknesses and strengths and get expert advice from a golf professional to choose the type of ball that will compliment their game the best.

On another note, most golfers in the know would have signed up for the Gokarna Open 2005 and would be checking their tee times for Saturday morning. When the Star Cruise Holiday winner of the competition is announced, remind me to tell you what ball the champ used. ●

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

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# In the tall grass

## Wimbledon's women get taller and taller

Carlos Rodriguez has seen the future of women's tennis and it requires him to look up. The diminutive Rodriguez is the long time coach of Justine Henin-Hardenne, who won the French Open two weeks ago and then lost her first match since March at the Wimbledon on Tuesday. But Rodriguez knows that the Belgian's record is not the only element that sets her apart from her peers.

At 5.5¾ ft, she is the shortest member of the top 20. "I'm not afraid for Justine because she's grown up playing against these girls but I'm afraid for girls of her size in the future," Rodriguez said. Henin-Hardenne, for the moment, is the last remaining link to a tennis past when champions possessed exceptional talent and average height.

Maureen Connolly, the Californian, who in 1953 became the first woman to complete the Grand Slam, was not called 'Little Mo' for nothing. She was 5.4 ft. Billie Jean King, another Californian who rose to the top of the game, is half an inch taller. Chris Evert, even with her excellent posture, never stood taller than 5.6 ft. The same goes for the three-time French Open champion Arantxa Sanchez Vicario. And Martina Hingis, the Swiss who retired young after reaching No 1 in the world and then losing her edge, is 5.7 ft. Compare those numbers with the top 10 last week, in which the seventh-ranked Henin-Hardenne was the only player under 5.8½ ft and the average height was a shade over 5.10 ft.

Ten years ago, the average height of the year-end top 10 was 5.8 ft. In 2000, it was 5.9 ft. Now, it's one inch taller again and the trend may not yet have peaked. Nicole Vaidisova, the rising Czech who will be seeded at Wimbledon at age 16, stands 5.11. Maria Sharapova is six feet.

"I don't know how the girls got so tall," said Serena Williams, the 2002 and 2003 Wimbledon champion who was upset by Sharapova in last year's final. "I'm not nearly as tall as most of the girls." That is not quite the truth, but at 5.9 ft, Williams, for all her intimidating physical presence, does indeed find herself on the



## Frowning on grunting

Female tennis players at Wimbledon may be banned from making grunting noises when they strike the ball at the tournament. Alan Mills, Wimbledon's chief official for 22 years who retires after this week's tournament believes that coaches are teaching their players to grunt. He says, "Many of the non-grunting players are unhappy about the noise pollution and a kind of counter-grunt culture has emerged in recent years whereby offended parties ape their opponent's noises." Officials can only act if the player is shown to be making the noise on purpose to intimidate the opponent and that can be a difficult matter to prove. Adds Mills, "As far as I'm concerned it is certainly a specific matter that the rule makers should address. Rules should be changed to crack down on the practice."

short side of the mean in the top 20.

Nick Bollettieri, the coach whose academy in Florida has been a training ground for several generations of top players, including Williams, Sharapova and Vaidisova, said, "There are some disadvantages in tennis to being tall but if I had a choice I would certainly take a big, strong, flexible athlete over a smaller one."

The rankings certainly bear that out. The tallest person in the top 10, Lindsay Davenport, also has been ranked No 1 for the last eight months. The 6.2½ ft Davenport was the first woman of truly great height to become the world's top player as she won three Grand Slam singles titles in the span of 16 months from 1998 to 2000. Her

success helped set the tone for the future.

But the players who really changed the nature of the modern game were Serena and her older sister Venus, who stands 6.1 ft. Not only were the sisters big and powerful. They were also remarkably quick and athletic. "I'm not convinced tall is always better," said Robert Lansdorp, the groundstroke guru who once coached Davenport and Pete Sampras and still works with Sharapova. "I think if you get someone small who moves extremely well that can still be an advantage. I don't think you can be 5.2 ft anymore. But I think you can be 5.7 or 5.8 ft and be a great tennis player." Nonetheless, the body of evidence continues to point in the upward direction. ● IHT



SURYA NEPAL

GOLF



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

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Albert Camus, Nobel Prize Writer (1913-1959)

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#73 2062 by jigme gaton - read. love. write.

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

ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Tamas: The Darkness** Performance art by Ashmina Ranjit at Gurukul, 6PM on 25 June. 4466956
- ❖ **Nature: Flora and Fauna of Nepal** Photos by Prajwal Pradhan at Bluestar Hotel, Tripureswor, 1PM-7PM, until 30 June. [ppradhan@enet.com.np](mailto:ppradhan@enet.com.np)
- ❖ **Floral paintings** in aquarelle by Neera Joshi Pradhan at Park Gallery, Lajimpat, until 30 June. 4419353
- ❖ **Light and Life** Photos by Kishor Kayastha, until 9 July at Lajimpat Gallery Café. 4428549
- ❖ **Raku Pottery** by Gopal Kalapremi for sale at Lajimpat Gallery Shop, Rs 2,000-Rs 3,000. 4428549
- ❖ **Mysterious and Inexplicable Phenomena of Lightballs** Photos by Hirokazu Kobayashi at Siddhartha Art Gallery, until 8 July. 4218048
- ❖ **Quien Sabe** Paintings by Max Miller at The Art Shop, Darbar Marg, until 15 July. 4267063

EVENTS

- ❖ **The Sherpas of Khumbu** by Frances Klatzel on 24 June, 9.30 AM at Shankar Hotel, Lajimpat, Rs 100.
- ❖ **Monsoon Masquerade Party** on 24 June at Latin Quarter Salsa Bar, Baber Mahal Revisited, 7.30 PM, Rs 750.
- ❖ **How to heal unhappiness** Talk by Anila Tenzin Namdrol on 25 June, 10AM-4PM at HMBC, Thamel. 4414843
- ❖ **Dear Liar** ASMAN's Supper theatre starring Naseeruddin Shah and Ratna Pathak Shah, 1-2 July at Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 9851023958
- ❖ **Selection from KIMFF** Screening at Lajimpat Gallery Café this month, 7PM, Rs 50. 4428590
- ❖ **Intercultural Exchange Program** Every Wednesday at Goethe Zentrum, Thapathali, 4.15 PM. 4250871
- ❖ **Tai Chi** Demonstration and group meditation at Swayambhu. 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** Saturdays. 4435939, [citygymktm@hotmail.com](mailto:citygymktm@hotmail.com)
- ❖ **Sanibar Mela** Saturdays at Bakery Café, Dharara, 2PM and Chuchepati, Boudha, 3PM.

MUSIC

- ❖ **Mexican Night** at Moksh on 24 June at 7PM, Rs 150. 5526212
- ❖ **Siddhartha Sandhya** To celebrate monsoon on 26 June, 6PM at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Rs 250. 4218048
- ❖ **Paleti Number 6** at R-sala on 1 July, 6PM, Rs 500, reservations required. 5552839
- ❖ **JCS Trio** Saturdays, 8PM at 1905, Kantipath, free entrance. 4215068
- ❖ **Live** The Duo at the Jazz Bar, Hotel Shangrila, Lajimpat.
- ❖ **Live music** Courtney Preston and Agnes Quimpo at Indigo Gallery on 24 June, 7PM. 4413580
- ❖ **The Good Time Blues Band** at Rum Doodle, Thamel, 7PM. 4701208
- ❖ **Ladies Nights** Wednesdays at Jatra, Thamel, with live acoustic music, one free drink. 4256622
- ❖ **Fusion Time** 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, 7.45 PM.

FOOD

- ❖ **Pakistani Food Festival** at Hyatt Regency, 26 June-1 July. 4491234
- ❖ **Great Dining Experiences** with exclusive menus at Hotel Yak and Yeti. 4248999
- ❖ **Mango Masti** Tempting tropical treats at Soaltee Crowne Plaza. 4273999
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- ❖ **Crosskitchen** European and Indian cuisine at Lajimpat. 9851083806
- ❖ **Boire and Manger** at Vineyard, Baber Mahal Revisited.
- ❖ **Bawarchi** The Restro Bar for Nawabi cuisine at Lajimpat. 4436673
- ❖ **BBQ Lunch** at Le Meridien, Gokarna Forest Golf Resort. 4445550
- ❖ **Barbeque lunch** Saturdays at Club Himalaya, Nagarkot. 6680080
- ❖ **Special Combo** Burmese and Thai Menu at 1905, Kantipath.
- ❖ **Momo Revolution** Saturdays at the Tea House Inn, Nagarkot. 6680048
- ❖ **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 Vajrayantha, Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **The Tharu Kitchen** at Jungle Base Camp. [junglebasecamp@yahoo.com](mailto:junglebasecamp@yahoo.com)



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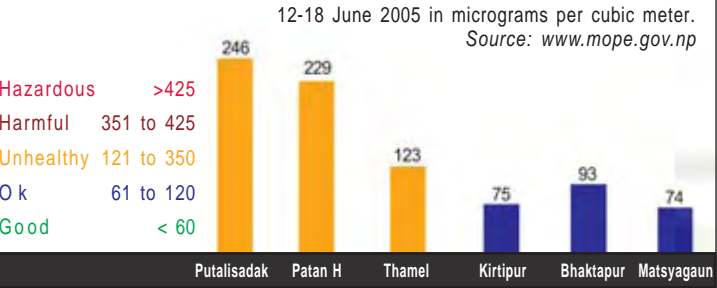
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KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

The average value of fine particles smaller than 10 microns as obtained from Putalisadak is more than twice the national standard. Similarly, the air quality in reference to PM10 around Patan Hospital is still unhealthy and higher than the standard. But as with this week's rains, the monsoon showers will flush down the dust and air quality will show improvement in coming weeks.



NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



With 100mm rainfall in Biratnagar on Monday, the delayed monsoon (by two weeks) finally stepped into Nepal from the east. By the time you read this column, the first round of burst of this year's monsoon will already have covered the country. As a great relief, the monsoon showers effectively brought down the decade's high temperature by three to six degrees. This satellite picture taken on Thursday morning shows the Bay of Bengal arm of South Asian monsoon in a fully recharged condition, pumping moisture towards us. The present pressure patterns indicate a continuous inflow of rain-bearing clouds for the last week of June, which will bring more rains along lower hills and the tarai. Paddy farmers of Kathmandu Valley who have been waiting for heavy showers to prepare their fields may expect adequate rainfall by mid next week.

KATHMANDU VALLEY



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KUMAR SHRESTHA/NEPALNEWS.COM

**VERTICAL CHALLENGE:** Nepali congress supporters sneaked up to the parapet of Dharara during the seven-party street demonstration on Friday to unfurl their party flag and shout pro-democracy slogans.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

**WIND INSTRUMENTS:** The traditional Gurju Paltan flute band welcomes the Rato Machendranath chariot as it is pulled towards Jawalakhel on Monday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

**SMILE:** 108 Japanese tourists on a peace tour of Nepal take pictures of the Buddha figure at Swayambhu on Wednesday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

**MUSIC IN THEIR SOUL:** Abhaya Subba and Nirakar Yakthumba performing at Moksh to celebrate World Music Day on Tuesday.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

**BEAUTY AND BRAINS:** Past Miss Nepals and Runners Up pose at a press conference on Wednesday to announce the Dabur Vatika Miss Nepal 2005 Contest scheduled for 10 September.

# Mangal, the musician-maker

**I**t takes one artiste to recognise another. Mangal Krishna Shrestha is a musician and painter with a difference: he promotes other people's works not his own.

Mangal Krishna began his artistic career painting landscapes in his bookshop in Basantapur with his favourite music playing in the background. The combination of the three arts should have kept him busy but it was not enough. His realisation that Nepali music would suffer with growing foreign influence prompted him to start his own production company East Meets West (EMW) in 1996. The intention was to promote Nepali classical and folk music and musicians. "There were so many good musicians but very few albums actually produced," recalls Mangal Krishna.

By now his company has produced over three-dozen albums of various genres such as classical, folk, fusion and even spiritual. *Heart Sutra*, a fusion of Nepali folk and classical tunes sold over 13,000 copies. "The album evokes Nepal and is a way to remember the country," says Mangal Krishna. EMW's latest releases are two English albums *Free Your Mind* and *The Answer* by one of the most talented musical groups in the country, Full Circle.

Part of the trick is to make classical and folk music also glamorous. "People had the concept that classical music was meant only for the older generation, now more and more people are convinced that to forget our roots is to erase our identity," he says.

The Kirateswor Sangit Ashram in Pashupati, of which he is an executive member, not only holds classical concerts every full moon, it also conducts training programs for young musicians and those interested in learning the art. For the past 12 years



KIRAN PANDAY

the ashram has run just on donations.

Mangal Krishna plays the flute and madal himself but does not aim to produce his own album. He still continues to paint landscapes and semi-abstract works but this is a rare person more willing to promote other people's talent than his own. He says: "There are so many really good musicians who need to be heard still, there is no time for my own music and paintings." Maybe he's saving it for his retirement. ●

*Alok Tumbahangphey*

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# This space is reserved for government ads

As a part of the government's laudable efforts to help the media industry become more self-reliant, self-important, self-righteous and self-censored, the allocation of government advertisements to various private publications will henceforth be resumed on a case-by-case basis. Which means journos willing to sell their souls will be eligible for compensation with a case of cash each.

The news has sent waves of jubilation through the Nepali media universe which had been feeling the pinch because monthly payoffs from the ministry were cut due to budgetary constraints.

Within hours of the announcement, there was already a long queue at the Ministry of Information of eager editors willing to print handouts in exchange for handouts.

UNDER MY HAT  
Kunda Dixit



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**MISSING**  
Several hard disks from the mainframe servers of the Treasury Department of the Rastriya Banijya Bank have gone missing. The disks contain extremely sensitive top secret data on high-profile willful defaulters and could undermine national security if they fall into the wrong hands. Anyone finding the missing hard disks should keep it. They shouldn't tell anyone about it, least of all, us. They should get hold of a heavy-duty sledge hammer and with a few deft strokes batter the disks into smithereens since they are the only proof we have on the non-paying asses.

His Majesty's Government  
Ministry of Hard Knocks and Floppies  
Lost and Found Department

**PLAY GOLF, MAKE FRIENDS**  
The Royal Nepal Golf Diplomacy Club, an HMG Undertaking, announces a drive to enlist new members from the Kathmandu diplomatic corps, loyal members of the drooling elite, sections of the military industrial complex and other interested parties. Whether one plays golf or not, the message is the same: to exploit bonds and forge personal links with leading decision makers in the country and let them score birdies. Slogan: 'Restore Democracy after 18 Holes'.

**INTERNATIONAL TENDER TO CLIMB MT EVEREST**  
In an effort to boost revenue, His Majesty's Government has decided to auction climbing permits for Mt Everest through international bidding. Sealed tenders are invited from interested expeditions desirous of breaking records on the world's highest mountain for the Autumn Season 2005. Applications should list the activities they wish to undertake while on top and how much extra they are willing to pay for it. Tick one: Land Hot Air Balloon on Summit, Rollerblade To Base Camp, Blast Off into Outer Space on Personal Rocket from Summit Launchpad, Open Scenic Momo Shop and Cutlet Outlet. Send tender document with earnest money in envelope and slip it under the table at Ministry of Tourism and Fatalism, Exhibitionist Road by 15 July. HMG reserves the right to accept in part or reject earnest money if it is not earnest enough without assigning any reason whatsoever. So there.

**FAST TRACK AT SHITALL NIBAS**  
Keeping in mind the frequency at which Kathmandu-based ambassadors are being angrily summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs so it can express its displeasure about interference in Nepal's internal affairs and to control the rush of diplomats being reprimanded, the ministry has opened a fast-track one-window clearance for all future cases in which the government takes a dim view of objectionable ambassadorial pronouncements. The fully-automated kiosk will have voice-recognition digital software where plenipotentiaries and emissaries can record their answers to the government's question as to why their statements should not be construed as violations of the Vienna Convention and not in keeping with diplomatic niceties. For further information about these new facilities visit our website: [www.hmg/shitall/gov.np](http://www.hmg/shitall/gov.np)

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