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When the Maoists got their student wing to force a nationwide education shutdown two weeks ago, they wanted to put political pressure on the government to resume negotiations. It seems to be working.

The government is also hoping that an end to the education strike could mark the beginning of a peace process. "If the talks with the Maoist student wing are successful, it could pave the way for possible peace talks," Education Minister Bimalendra Nidhi told us on Thursday afternoon, as mediators appeared closer to a deal.

Sudeep Pathak, coordinator of the task force mediating between the government and the rebel students said an agreement was within reach and that there was bargaining on the precise wording of the agreement. "An agreement on opening schools could lead to peace talks," he said.

The Maoist students' main demand is the withdrawal of its terrorist tag, but the government first wants them to accept schools as violence free zones. Minister Nidhi told us: "If they agree to keep out of schools, we can consider withdrawing the terrorist label."

The Maoists are under considerable pressure after the arrest of their top leaders in India and analysts say they would benefit from a monsoon breathing spell.

CLASS WAR

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

But the army is said to be dead against a ceasefire, citing previous truces that the Maoists used to regroup.

"It is the government's security forces that use schools as barracks and bring violence to them," says the Maoist AANFSU-R president, Lekhnath Neupane, who has been giving frequent phone interviews on FM stations all week.

However, it is clear that the education strike is more about politics than about education. "We believe the AANFSU-R strike is politically motivated because the real demands of the students on fees have been sidelined," says Rajendra Rai, president of the rival UML-affiliated student union.

The Maoists, who have seen their anti-monarchy slogans hijacked by the anti-'regression' street agitation of the political parties and their student wings, needed to assert themselves. An indefinite education strike was an easy way to make their presence felt. Besides closing schools, the Maoists have also been taking away thousands of students and teachers from rural schools all

over Nepal for revolutionary indoctrination sessions.

If there is a silver lining in the school closure, it is that it may lead to another truce. A prominent human rights activist in the mediation task force told us: "Both the Maoists and the government want to see the negotiations between their student wing and the government leads to peace talks."

So far, the only thing standing in the way is semantics. ●


When schools become a war zone, the sword is mightier than the pen



Editorial p2
Nepali dystopia

Times nepaliguys.com
Weekly Internet Poll # 141

Q. Is Sher Bahadur Deuba likely to get the Maoists to agree on a ceasefire?



Total votes: 1,474

Weekly Internet Poll # 142. To vote go to: www.nepalitimes.com

Q. Should the UML join the Deuba government?

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The middle way

Liberating democracy from the shackles of the past

NEPALI DYSTOPIA

As things go from bad to worse, this country's well-wishers keep asking us: what do you think will happen? One thing we have learnt is not to underestimate the capacity for Nepal's circumstances to get even more dire. "Things will get worse before they get better," we say wistfully, recognising that only the first part of that statement may hold true.

Observe the signs of a failing state: the scant presence of the government in large parts of the country, the sagging morale of those who are supposed to be in charge and the demolition of the education system.

Extrapolating this country's accelerated slide downwards, it is easy to predict a doomsday scenario for 2006: by then the death toll in a decade of conflict reaches 25,000. The number of those wounded, maimed, bereaved, orphaned and widowed crosses the one million mark. Almost every family is touched by tragedy. A Maoist utopia is already looking like a dystopia.

The revolution has degenerated into criminality and warlordism, with a new generation of unschooled children taking up arms. The Maoist rank and file is wracked by infighting and purges, but the leadership can't stop fighting without risking the ruthless retribution of hardliners. The war takes on an increasingly ethnic polarisation. As the conflict gets more desperate, the guerrillas show less and less interest in the safety of non-combatants, indeed deliberately targeting them to sow panic and chaos. The countryside is littered with landmines and booby-trap roadside bombs.

The military becomes even more indiscriminate in cracking down on suspected insurgents. Instances of disappearances, extra-judicial killings, pillage and rape put Nepal right at the top of the list of the world's worst violators of human rights, mentioned in the same breath as Congo and Colombia.

Tourism is a thing of the past, the civilian administration and government has long since collapsed. The political parties have been torn to shreds by the pincers of the extreme left and right, and by their own infighting. Five million Nepalis have fled to India and New Delhi has started voicing concerns about instability in Nepal threatening its own security. India does not allow UN peacekeeping forces to stabilise the situation, but doesn't intervene itself for fear of being sucked into the conflict. Nepal is left to its own devices, just another hotspot in an increasingly unstable world that no one has time for.

It doesn't take a prophet to foresee this apocalyptic scenario in two year's time. Signs are already pointing that way, and that is the way things will go unless the comrades in the hills, the king in his palace and the political parties on the streets come to their senses and see where they are taking the country. Maybe one of them will wrest control one day, but of what use is that power if there is no country left to exercise it in?



ROBIN SAYAMI

As Nepal's choices narrow down to either a 'guided democracy' of the right or a 'people's democracy', it is time to start looking for an alternative middle way.

Under both scenarios, the first casualty will be competitive elections and the loss of civil liberty

GUEST COLUMN
Alok Bohara



and individual rights. From a practical geopolitical point of view, a Maoist 'utopia' with a heavy dose of social engineering in the middle of the two rising free market economies is hard to imagine.

Our elder leaders did suffer in their struggle for liberty from the Rana regime and the autocratic Panchayat system. But after achieving a multiparty system, their focus and priority was on winning

elections and the need to raise funds by any means to win votes. They began to lose authority over the behaviour of their party cadre and the civil servants. The rot spread quickly through the system.

By the end of the 1990s, Nepal was practicing an illiberal and dysfunctional democracy. But despite all this, democratic institutions were being built and a new culture of political choice and freedom was spreading across the land. The foundations of a future genuine democracy were being laid.

This glimmer of hope can be seen within the entrepreneurial spirit of our small private sector. It was too much to expect our democracy to be perfect in just 10 years. But when the time comes to pick up the pieces and rebuild it with a new constitution and a new democratic process, we must put

more emphasis on the rules and liberal norms rather than just elections. Many leading democracies in the West built their nations in that way. Even semi-democratic Asian economies implemented sound liberal values like rule of law, quality of regulation and accountability. We must strike a balance here, and in several ways:

The political parties must first exhibit some **internal democracy**. They must be brought under a strict code of conduct, including fair and progressive election finance rules, which will allow a fresh young leadership to emerge.

Political devolution to regional governments and some form of mixed proportional representation system of election may give added weight to grassroots voices. Half the countries around the world have these two provisions in one way or another.

This should be followed by **economic devolution** with a 50/50 revenue sharing formula from hydropower and other resources to be ploughed into local development through federal incentives to innovate, develop and invest. This will balance regional economic growth and allow fairer benefits to local populations. Political and economic devolution can benefit both the center and the regional governments.

Separation of powers and the question of the army's chain of command is one of the most intractable points of disagreement between the king, political parties and the Maoists. The current three-member Defence Council may be widened to include some key

LETTERS

DEUBA III

He roared like a *sher* in 1995 and so did the Maoists. Had he nipped them in the bud then, 8,000 lives needn't have been lost (#199). We all remember his second stint as prime minister—the failed talks with the Maoists, escalations in the rebel attacks on the police, armed force outposts as well as innocent citizens, the muzzled press and the draconian laws he resorted to combat the rebels. Are we now supposed to believe that he will wave a magic wand and bring peace between the rebels, the four political parties and the palace? I wish him well because I hate to see a lion go out a lamb.

Tirtha Mali, Florida, USA

RNAC

Vijay Lama's 'Too much drag' (#199) reminded me of the time I asked an RNAC employee why the company was doing so badly. She told me that the

airline has more than 2,000 employees for only two jet aircraft. If it were well managed, the airline could be managed easily by a dozen full timers and a few part timers. As Lama points out, the company has become a kind of employment agency for politicians, but may I say this problem is not peculiar solely to RA. The NY City subway system is still running on early 20th century technology, saddled with too many workers with big paychecks. It is a repository of political favours for most city officials. The people of New York usually dismiss them as lazy good-for-nothings. The situation is so bad that there are more managers than field workers. RNAC is in the same situation and the only way it will turn a profit is by going public or private.

Kiran Thapa, New York

DOGMANDU

Sraddha Basnyat says, 'Dogs are man's best friends with

benefits' in 'Dogmandu' (#199), citing their protection, loyalty and love. That we all agree upon, but she forgets dogs can also be nightmares. Mauling deaths, transmitting diseases and keeping us awake all night evoke a different reality. KAT's good intentions, I think, are misdirected. Sure, a bit of TLC and compassion should be extended to them but over-population and endless barking have eroded my compassion. We need to advocate castration, euthanasia and adoption to control the population of our four-footed friends. I like dogs but I like a good night's sleep better.

KK Tamang, Kathmandu

THE D WORD

Why is it that the word 'development' in and by itself, holds very little meaning for Nepal. The relationship between Nepal and the 'd' word is determined only by the adjectives used, mostly 'under-', 'less-' and most recently 'failed-'. The existence of innumerable prettier and much more attractive adjectives is no secret, it all depends on how committed we are to reach a level where we can truly utilise them.

A recent seminar in Kathmandu highlighted the deficit in the annual financial resource requirement to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). It rightly pointed out that Nepal needs

more than triple the amount available now if it is to meet the MDG. Much concern was also expressed that available financial resources are just lying in the treasury while the remaining is sought from various multilateral and bilateral donors, and other international donor agencies and support institutions. How wise is it to maintain the status quo in the name of additional financial resources? Prudence suggests that immediate steps must be initiated to address some, if not all, sectoral goals to help us achieve some MDG goals.

However, waiting for the full amount needed to achieve all this



KUNDA DIXIT

ministers and other House representatives. The commander-in-chief should be a non-voting member and, most importantly, the military must be brought under parliamentary control. The constitutional ambiguity regarding the Article 127 and the role of the Monarch must be clarified once and for all.

Educational reform with a three-tier decentralised education system implanted in each region needs to be adopted immediately to fill the vacuum in the education sector and to level the playing field for all Nepalis. Political meddling in education, among other factors, is directly responsible for the collapse of the public education system in Nepal, and the blame lies squarely with the political parties.

Control of corruption by giving the CIAA more teeth and reducing political interference in its functioning.

Freedom of expression and free press are essential rights, without which civil society cannot function and act as a watchdog. But personal liberty to make economic choices and to own private property is also a fundamental right. The right to periodically choose new governments should rest with the people, and must be exercised within a competitive multiparty electoral environment.

These long-run solutions must be debated openly in a democratic manner and may even provide an anchor for a negotiated settlement with the Maoists and the other political parties. With the formation of an all-party government, the country must move forward to create a new constitution and the Maoists will find that their salvation lies in renouncing violence and joining the political mainstream. ●

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Uncle Sam's nephews

America doesn't need to put its money where its mouth is

Even though it is the Indians who are arming us to the teeth (the latest Advanced Light Helicopters landed in Gauchar this week), it is the Americans who get all the credit. The American contribution is

STATE OF THE STATE
CK Lal



insignificant in comparison to what the army has sourced from India, Belgium, Britain, Belarus, South Africa and China.

In fact, American help has been confined to the services of 'consultants'. Let's face it, a country bogged down in a Mesopotamian quagmire can't have much to teach us about counterinsurgency.

Influence can be peddled by pushing an ideological line, by leverage or through linkages. Relationships between asymmetrical states are like those between magnets and iron filings. The filings gravitate towards the poles. In a bipolar world, this was fairly straight forward. Today, the filings have only one choice.

With Soviet Union gone for good from global affairs, Beijing and New Delhi are falling over each other to humour the neocon hawks who run Washington. Littler countries like Nepal have even less room to maneuver. They have to go along with the hyperpower, or its proxies, or be left out. King Gyanendra seems to have realised this reality rather well.

Despite popular perception to the contrary, neither China nor India seem to be overly worried about the ever increasing influence

of Americans in Kathmandu. In an ironic twist to the Maoist legacy, China has left it up to the market. The Nepali middle-class can't imagine a life without the cheap Khasa goods and for that they are eternally grateful to China. As for the guerrillas who are fighting in their Great Helmsman's name, the Chinese dismiss them as 'anti-government forces'.

The Europeans, including the British now, rely on the 'system' (the palace-military-bureaucracy combine) to implement diplomatic policies. Outside the charmed circle of top brass, important topis and a few NGO biggies, they exercise little influence in Nepal. But being big donors, they can afford to manipulate aid to exert influence.

New Delhi has traditionally depended on Indo-Nepal linkages to influence policies here. From a soldier in the Royal Nepal Army to its Supreme Commander-in-Chief, almost everyone here has a relative, a friend, an offspring or a contact in India. Linkages of the business community are even stronger.

But Indians appear to have realised that personal linkages, like currency, may be more readily devalued by abundance than scarcity, as in the old adage of familiarity breeding contempt. Hence, they have begun to use leverage acquired through small grants directly administered by the embassy in Kathmandu.



The smartest have been the Americans who don't need to put their money where their mouth is anymore. They have no need for leverage or linkages and have replaced the Soviets in pushing the ideological line. This time it is the mantra of neo-liberal free market capitalism. Which means they really don't have to put the money on the table any more.

Antonio Gramsci used to say that hegemony has intellectual, moral and political dimensions. The Americans have an unchallenged monopoly over all

these in Nepal by assiduously cultivating academia, media, professions and 'civil society'. The moral leadership has been acquired by harping on democratic ideals, despite the double standards in its application. The political agenda set by Bretton Woods Sisters keep the Planning Commission and the Ministry of Finance perennially on tenterhooks.

No wonder the Maoists and al-Qaeda detest America so much—it is a serious challenge to their own ideological bigotry. ●

could overwhelm our strained efforts to target all sectors at the same time and drown us in the complexities of development. The adage of trying to swim with the tide may not be appropriate here as there is a tendency for all efforts to be swept away. Perhaps swimming against the tide (poverty) may make us work much harder but at least we reach some sort of dry land (development) from where we can embark upon the path to poverty alleviation.

The lure of swimming with the tide is so great that we fail to realise that there is an alternative. If we are able to easily sustain our search for donors and financial resources in the name of development—and actually achieve success in that area, why then are we so inept in sustaining development? Could it be that swimming with the tide requires less effort and consumes less energy?

It is absolutely imperative for the would-be, could-be and should-be power-centres to make an extra effort, for the sake of the country and our children, to emerge from self-indulgence and lend a helping hand in earning an adjective that does justice to development and Nepal.

Gehendra Purush Dhakal,
email

#200

I went through the *Nepali Times* #200 and would like to thank you and your staff for the hard work you have put in over the past four years. I read the your paper with the following motives:

- To get an analytical portrait of contemporary national and international issues.
- To set standards for English language journalism in Nepal.
- To improve my English language and style.

Your move to introduce a page every week for book reviews is a welcomed. It would be great if you could also list

some of the best-selling books on the market. And how about dedicating more column inches to the concerns of Nepali youth so they can cultivate their spiritual values and career-oriented goals.

Bal Krishna Parajuli,
Chabahil

● How time flies. It has been four years that I started reading your online edition and I must thank the *Nepali Times* team (it is great to put the faces to the names at last!) for their tireless work in keeping us overseas Nepalis informed about what is going on at home. You have done it with honesty, independence and style under what must be very difficult circumstances. Thank you.

Govind B Gurung, UK

● Congratulations to you and the team for reaching 200 issues. *Nepali Times* defends it's existence by quality!

Glenn Mitrasingh,
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Radio wave

Community radio hastens grassroots development in Nepal

ALL PICS: MUKUNDA BOGATI



STEVE BUCKLEY

One hundred km north of the birthplace of the Buddha in Lumbini is the village of Madanpokhara. It is not easy to reach and is an hour's walk from the nearest road. Walking up through the small holdings you pass a school, temples, some teas shops and stores. At the top of the hill is a low white brick building with a tall red mast.

Radio Madan Pokhara broadcasts across a rural agricultural

community in which few people have access to electricity or a telephone. Yet almost every household has a radio receiver and it is the principal means of local communication and discussion of local development.

There are two dominant media forms in the world today, differentiated by private and public. There are some good examples of public service broadcasting, but many state-owned media are not sufficiently independent of the

government. Instead of truly serving the public interest, they remain the instruments of the government in power.

There is almost no country in the world today that is not, by one means or another, also reached by private commercial media, whether through the liberalisation of broadcast licensing or through the rapid growth of satellite services. In many countries, growing concentration of ownership has tended to reduce the diversity of

Vote for change

Every now and then, you need to throw the bums out

A mood for change is sweeping the world's democracies. In the manner of the Chinese proverb, these are, indeed, interesting times.

It began in Spain, a few days after the tragedy and outrage of the Madrid terror bombings. The Spanish voters turned away from the safe choice of their Prime Minister's conservative party and opted for radical change. The socialists, however much

HERE AND THERE
Daniel Lak



they came to power on the back of a

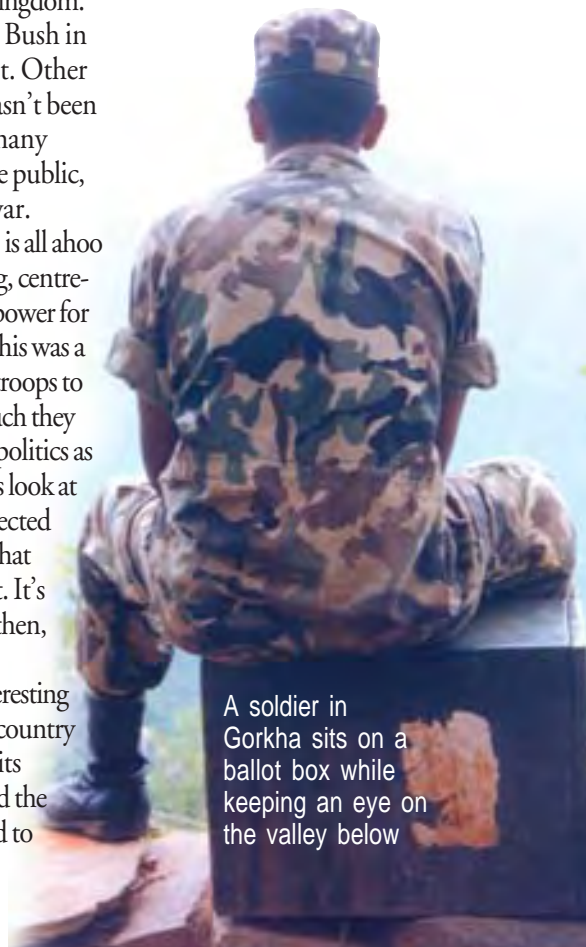
national tragedy, are sweeping away plenty of national cobwebs and articulating the electorate's visceral dislike of the war in Iraq. Across Europe, this past week or so, voters spoke out loudly against incumbent parties—whoever they were. Even in countries with governments that opposed the war in Iraq, notably Germany, the vote went against those in power, often to the detriment of polite politics as usual.

In Britain, the mainstream Labor and Conservative parties were swept aside in favour of an extreme anti-Europe force that claims to be in favour of

"independence" for the United Kingdom. Tony Blair's support of George Bush in Iraq probably hurt him the most. Other than the war, his government hasn't been doing a bad job, in the eyes of many independent commentators. The public, however, does not like Blair's war.

My own native land, Canada, is all ahoop right now as the natural governing, centre-left Liberal party looks set to lose power for the first time since 1993. Again, this was a government that refused to send troops to Iraq. But Canadians, however much they agreed with that, are fed up with politics as usual. And they're taking a serious look at a right wing party that they've rejected scornfully for years now. It's not that the country is moving to the right. It's just a feeling that every now and then, you need to throw the bums out.

America remains the most interesting electoral battleground of all. The country went to war pretty much behind its president. George Bush convinced the majority of voters that Iraq needed to be invaded and brought to heel. Congress agreed. There was a consensus across the political



A soldier in Gorkha sits on a ballot box while keeping an eye on the valley below

spectrum that no president has had since World War II. But the latest polls show a volatile and angry group of people preparing to vote in the next election. They don't know what to make of Iraq. Yes, it's good that Saddam is gone, they say, but why does the aftermath seem to be such a mess? Yes, there has to be sacrifice to pay for the war against terrorist groups, but why don't the rich assume their share of the burden? And increasingly, say the opinion polls, they're blaming their president.

In the end, no matter what the result in any of these elections, victory by incumbents or stunning loss, this is a good time for democracy. The angry tumult among voters is getting through to politicians and if they don't change, they pay the price. Anti-incumbency is a sign of healthy democracy. Too bad the incumbent in Nepal isn't elected, whether you say it is Deuba or the king. Isn't it time to change that so the voters don't have only violence as an outlet for their frustrations? Nepalis have shown the instinct of mature democratic voters many times in the past. It's time to let them do that again, even if it means throwing the bums out. ●



Clockwise from left: Yamuna Saru Magar presents *Kanunglaam* (Our path), a Radio Madan Pokhara program in Magar. Birendra Ghimere interviews a woman working in her field, while Ramchandra Basyal interviews local blacksmith Dil Bahadur Biswokarma for Radio Madan Pokhara. A trainee practices interviewing techniques for a radio package.

broadcasting. Progress is not as fast as we would like, but it is heading in the right direction with grassroots civil society campaigns for community broadcasting.

Last year, the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) held its eighth world conference in Kathmandu, the first time it was held in Asia. We recognised the growing interest in community broadcasting in Asia and agreed to establish a regional section with a coordinating office in Kathmandu. The priorities are straightforward: to raise awareness of the idea that citizens should have the right to own and operate their own community-based media. To lobby for political and legislative recognition of community broadcasting. To build community media skills and capacity among local civil society groups and networks. Regardless of the national media situation within countries, it is indisputable that there is intense competition between the view that media and cultural are commodities, the domain of private companies and market forces, and the idea that media and culture are matters of public interest about which citizens should be rightly concerned.

Enlightened governments should recognise that it is in their own national interest to move beyond the instrumentalist view of media that dates from the age of monopoly and instead embrace a vision of communication in the public interest with a diversity of public service broadcasting including community media. ●

Steve Buckley is the president of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC)



DOMESTIC BRIEFS

Circus parents detained in India

Nepali and Indian activists fighting the recruitment of Nepali children in Indian circuses have lodged a strong protest against the detention in India of five Nepali family members this week.

The parents had gone to India to seek the release of up to 35 Nepali girls being held at the Great Roman Circus in the town of Karnaliganj near Lucknow. They are currently being held at the Sub-district Magistrate's office in the town.

The parents were accompanied by representatives from the Nepal Child Welfare Foundation (NCWF) and the South Asian Coalition Against Child Servitude (SACCS) and were engaged in a rescue of the children when it turned violent. One of the five detained Nepalis is said to be a child who managed to escape with her mother during the raid.

"The incident must be investigated and this unwarranted detention immediately ended," NCWF said in a statement. The foundation has also asked for the release of the other missing children at the Great Roman Circus in Karnaliganj. NWCF successfully rescued 29 Nepali children from the Great Indian circus in Kerala and reunited them with their parents in April.

The five detained by Uttar Pradesh police include Surya Bahadur Lama, Janak Bahadur Lama, Thuli Maya Lama, Vishu Maya Lama and Nita Lama all from Bijauna in Makwanpur District.

Conservation awarded

WWF Nepal Program chose seven institutions and three individuals for the Abraham Conservation Award 2004 in recognition of their outstanding contribution to nature conservation and sustainable development. In a decade of its existence, a total of 76 awards have been given to 51 individuals and 25 institutions. In the past, everyone from game scouts to committed conservationists were recognised. Institutions like the Royal Nepali Army and grassroots NGOs have also been honoured. This year the awardees were:

Institutions

- Satyalong Mother Group, Tapethok, Kangchenjunga Conservation Area
- Phortse Village, Khumjung, Solokhumbu District
- Royal Chitwan National Park and Purano Gorakh Gana, Royal Nepal Army
- Ganchhen Menkhang Service Center, Phoksundo, Dolpa
- Youth in Anti-poaching Operation Awareness Campaign, Nawalparasi
- Gauri Mahila Community Forest User Group, Kothiaghat, Bardia

Individuals

- Hari P Neupane, FECOFUN
- Dawa Tshering Sherpa, Kangchenjunga Conservation Area
- Punam Lama, Thonche, Manang

Each received a certificate of appreciation and cash prizes—Rs 50,000 to institutions and Rs 25,000 for individuals—at the formal award ceremony in Kathmandu on 17 June. The Abraham Conservation Award was set up in 1995 with the support of WWF-US Board Member Nancy Abraham.

private media.

A third form of community-based, independent media but with social rather than commercial objectives, has gradually emerged from civil society to find a place alongside the established public and private media in many countries.

Country-level legislative and regulatory frameworks remain obstacles, but the general trend is growth of new services and the opening up of the airwaves. The emergence of community media builds on growing recognition that core development goals like reducing poverty can be more effectively achieved by empowering and giving a voice to poor people themselves. In Nepal, the airwaves opened up gradually after the introduction of parliamentary democracy. Progress has been slow and somewhat difficult, for community radio as well as for democracy. But wherever it was established, it has become clear that community broadcasting can play a specific and crucial role in encouraging public participation,

strengthening cultural and linguistic diversity and giving voice to poor and otherwise marginalised groups.

As international development agencies accept that the most effective approaches to poverty reduction are community-driven and empowerment oriented, the role and potential of community media has also begun to enter mainstream thinking. In the past two years, the UNDP and the World Bank have both recognised the vital importance of community media. Despite constraints, community broadcasting has grown to become a global movement reaching out to many of the poorest communities in even the most remote rural areas. In Asia, we are reaching a critical mass of support and interest. Nepal and the Philippines are established community radio countries. We have seen legal reform in the last two years in India, Indonesia and Thailand that promises to open the airwaves to community

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Boys army

A chance encounter with a group of young Maoists with schoolbags full of grenades



BIBI FUNYAL in DAILEKH

The mornings are freezing at 2,500m in the mountains. Nearly 65km northwest from the administrative headquarters of Dailekh, 55-year-old Laxmi Shahi is wracked by a terrible cough that kept her awake all night. She is still in bed when someone knocks on the door. Fifteen-year-old Bishnu Bahadur Shahi enters, whispers something in Laxmi's ear and leaves. All Laxmi does is nod yes. A few minutes later, a dozen young boys with large backpacks come to the house with loud greetings of 'lal salam'. All of them look like they belong in school, but instead of

books, their bags are packed full of grenades.

They seem immune to the cold. Most of them have no shoes or warm clothes. Their stoicism extends to showing no fear. They follow the lead of Bahadur Thapa, 'Comrade Samman', their 13-year-old commander (pictured in topi, above). He has a red homemade cotton belt full of explosives strapped to his waist, he spouts Maoist ideology and is ever ready for battle, to kill and be killed. Samman is not scared of either danger or death. An army helicopter sweeps overhead and his hand

reaches automatically for his belt to grab the grenades. "I will kill the enemy before I am killed," he says with pride.

Before he became Comrade Samman, Bahadur was a sixth grader at the local government school. His father Ram Lal Thapa was a farmer till he was forcibly recruited for the 'people's war'. With the sole breadwinner gone, it fell upon Bahadur's mother to earn money. "My mother was just a housewife but she worked hard to send me to school," recalls Samman. "One day, the security forces came to our village and arrested many young boys and girls, including her, and they were beaten and tortured. I was struck across my face when I tried to follow my mother and I fell to the ground. I do not remember what happened next. Later, I was told that she was killed on the way to Dailekh, accused of being a Maoist. I cried for my mother." Two months after that, Ram Lal's teacher told him the security forces were after him, so he quit school and ran away with his classmates. The smarter ones had already fled to India.

We must ask who is responsible for making young soldiers like Samman. What are the realistic causes and catalysts that changed a little schoolboy into a militant who walks the western hills armed with grenades and guns? The oft-repeated slogan that children are peace zones do not seem to apply here. ●

Some names were changed to protect their identity.

Join Deuba

Do the parties want to resolve Nepal's crisis or compound it further?

From 7,000km away the goings on in Nepal look like a tragic-comedy. Let me try to get a handle on this:

When King Gyanendra announced the vacancy for the post of prime minister, the major political parties could not agree on a prime ministerial candidate leaving the king with a free hand to pick a man of his choice. Now, with the appointment of Sher Bahadur Deuba, the parties still remain divided. There are new disagreements between the parties and within the parties.

The UML took over two weeks just to come up with conditions to support the government. First, the party's Standing Committee discussed it. As it could not reach any conclusion, the matter was handed over to the party's Central Committee. The Central Committee discussed the

LONDON EYE
Robin Raj



matter for several days only to pass the buck back to the Standing Committee.

The Standing Committee then came up with an over 50-point proposal, which the party said, the new government needed to follow, if it was to receive the party's cooperation. This author wonders if the UML would be able to implement its own proposals had it been given the responsibility of leading the government.

The Nepali Congress, on the other hand, has said it would only support Deuba if he restored the dissolved parliament. Again, the question is, had Girija Prasad Koirala been appointed as prime minister, would he have been ready to recommend the king restore the dissolved House?

Why are all these conditions being imposed on Deuba? Do the parties want to resolve the problem the country is currently facing or further compound it? If the resolution of the crisis is the top priority, then there can be only two conditions: the restoration of democratic process and the resolution of the Maoist insurgency. Only the issues directly related to those two conditions should be considered at this moment. This is not the time to bring up the issues of secularism and the 1950 Indo-Nepal treaty.

There was no guarantee that the king would have accepted the choice of the five agitating parties if they had made a unanimous recommendation. They failed to do that. In the absence of such a candidate, Deuba's appointment was not a bad choice after all. Technically, Deuba may not be very different from his two predecessors—he was appointed under the same constitutional provision. However, politically the appointment of the man who was sacked for 'incompetence' is itself an acknowledgement by the king that his action was wrong.

Therefore, comparing Deuba's position with that of Lokendra Bahadur Chand or Surya Bahadur Thapa is incorrect. Deuba, moreover, has a democratic credential not less than that of Koirala or Nepal. There is no reason why he should not be trusted in dealing with the prevailing crisis. It will only help the 'regression' and the 'rebellion' if parties try to impose their own conditions on him.

The best way forward for the major political parties will be to fully support Deuba and join his government—not ask him to meet their conditions before any concrete gestures could be made. That will allow all the parties to sit together and come up with a unanimous view, which the king will find hard to deny. Unless that happens, it is very unlikely that the current crisis will be resolved. Lack of unity among the political parties means greater benefit to the forces to the left and the right, a series of new governments, deepening of the crisis and, probably, the destruction of the country. It is up to the political parties to take some responsibility. ●



KIRAN PANDAY

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (LI-BIRD) is a non-profit making, non-governmental organization (NGO) established in October 1995 with its headquarter in Pokhara. LI-BIRD is committed to capitalise on local initiatives for a sustainable management of renewable natural resources and improved livelihood of people in Nepal.

1. POSITION: PROGRAMME DIRECTOR (Level 10)

The incumbent will be primarily responsible for (a) providing leadership in formulation and implementation of policies, strategies, programmes and projects to address organisational goals and objectives; (b) co-ordinating project development and fund raising; (c) strengthening HRD policies and procedures; (d) promoting strategic alliances with other organisations and donors; (e) awareness raising and advocacy; and (f) training, information and publication.

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- Strong knowledge and skills in policy and strategy analysis, and project development;
- Excellent experience in policy analysis, and socio-economic research;
- Strong working experience in forging strategic partnership with donors, and in fund raising;
- Experience in co-ordinating documentation and publication of research and development outputs;
- Experience in participatory R&D, agro-biodiversity and natural resource management;
- Experience in formulating and implementing HRD policies and procedures desired;
- Experience in dissemination, awareness raising, and lobbying and advocacy desired;
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- Excellent in writing skills, and written and spoken English.

2. Position: Project Officer (Training, Information and Publication; Level 6)

The incumbent will be primarily responsible for assisting in training, documentation and publication, and information management to meet organisation's information requirement for dissemination, awareness raising, lobbying and advocacy, and project development.

Qualification, competences and requirements

- Minimum B.Sc Agriculture or B.Com. or equivalent degree with training in information technology, and with minimum of 2 years of experience in the relevant field;
- Experience in co-ordinating training programmes and producing training materials;
- Experience in documentation and publication (technical reports; newsletters, and other reports);
- Experience in information management relevant to agriculture and natural resource management;
- Dynamic, energetic and exposed to computer based resource and information management;
- Excellent knowledge of internet surfing and webpage designing;
- Demonstrate excellent interpersonal and writing skills, and fluent in English.

Both the positions are based at Head Office in Pokhara, Kaski with frequent field visits. LI-BIRD offers a nationally competitive salary and benefit packages as per LI-BIRD's Personnel Policy Manual.

Application with detailed CV with two references, should reach LI-BIRD not later than 25 June 2004. Only short listed candidates will be invited for the interview. Please visit www.libird.org for details about the organisation. and send email request for detailed job description, if required.

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Cute cats

Bhunti's four cubs are the main attraction at Jawalakhel Zoo

SRADDHA BASNYAT

It was a tense night four months ago for the keepers at the Central Zoo. The resident Royal Bengal tigress, Bhunti, was in labour. They pressed their ears against the cave wall and waited. Finally, they heard muffled grunts. Three weeks later, the proud mother emerged from her den with two cubs. A couple days later, Bhunti brought out two more.

The cubs now weigh an impressive 15kg each. "They have voracious appetites," says Binab Karmacharya, the zoo's vet officer.

Each cub eats 1kg of buffalo and 500g of chicken meat daily. They'll be eating a lot more very soon. The cubs' father, Jange, requires 8kg of buffalo meat six days a week and Bhunti eats 7kg.

Director RK Shrestha is confident about the cubs' survival chances: "We will try to keep them healthier than in the wild with a better diet and a less stressful environment."

As adults they won't need to fight for territory or food, reducing

the chance of death from injury. A captive tiger also lives longer. In the wild, a young male tiger pushes an older one out of his territory into areas that have less prey. Unable to hunt, the tiger eventually starves to death.

Breeding tigers in captivity is very easy. Cubs can be taken from their mother right after birth and hand raised. Tigresses can then come into heat up to three times a year. Average litters have two or three cubs. That means she can produce up to nine or 10 cubs annually. So is captive breeding all good news?

"Worldwide, there are now more tigers in captivity than there are in the wild," says tiger expert Nanda Rana. Most of them are

Royal Bengal tigers, which number more than any of the four other subspecies. Three other subspecies are extinct.

The primary objective of captive breeding is to keep threatened species alive with the hope of reintroducing them back into the wild. Tigers have been protected by international regulations since the 70s. By then their numbers were already dangerously low. But reintroduction poses a serious challenge, and hasn't been done satisfactorily.

There are several problems with releasing a captive tiger into the wild. Hunting is something a cub learns from its mother. In captivity, this is near impossible. In most cases the mother herself was born in captivity. And once they've had human contact, it's very difficult to release tigers that may wander into villages, endangering human lives as well as their own.

Just over five decades ago, 100,000 Bengal tigers lived in Asia. Today, there are fewer than 5,000. Some 200 of them are in Nepal. To

address such a drastic decline in their population, tigers have been bred in captivity. But Bhunti's litter marks the first time a tigress gave birth in captivity since King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC) took over the zoo management in 1995.

The cubs may also find it difficult to be placed in zoos abroad since there is a glut of captive-bred tigers. Zoo experts here hope the new cubs will have some genetic value. Nine-year-old Bhunti and her 14-year-old mate Jange were both man-eaters captured in Chitwan and brought to the zoo. Since both parents are wild tigers, they feel other zoos where the Bengal tigers have been frequently inbred might make room for a Nepali tiger or two.

"We're discussing the options and we'll come to a decision soon. There is no need to rush it," says Shrestha. But space is an issue. There isn't enough room in Bhunti's lodgings at Jawalakhel for four new adolescent tigers. ●



SURAT BOM MALLA



Jange, the proud father, takes an evening dip. His cubs at three months (above).

KIRAN PANDAY

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KIRAN PANDAY

From hydro to solar

With photovoltaics, Nepalis don't have to curse the darkness anymore

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

For 80 percent of Nepalis who have no access to electricity, the fact that Nepal has the highest per capita potential to generate hydropower has a hollow ring. And for the 20 percent who do, electricity is so expensive that they can't afford to use it much.

Enter: photovoltaic (PV) technology. This system of converting sunlight into electricity and storing it in batteries, could revolutionise Nepal's electricity use. All it needs is a solar cell set up on a sunny terrace or rooftop. PV cells

used to be expensive, but prices have plummeted dramatically and it is now within reach of many Nepalis.

Hypothetically, if just 1,000 Kathmandu houses had PVs of 3KW per hour capacity, we'd have 15MW of power daily, taking into consideration that the average period of sunshine is five hours per day. This would mean that the rooftops of 1,000 houses in Kathmandu could generate three percent of Nepal's current installed hydropower capacity of 600MW. Multiply the gains by 365 days, add

thousands of other rooftops all over Nepal and it would be the equivalent of an expensive new hydropower plant.

But how much does it cost? For starters, around Rs 1 million invested in PV modules, batteries, inverters for building integrated PV electrification systems and a monitoring system. For Alternative Current to get connected to the national grid all that is needed is stac equipment that costs even less.

The Centre for Energy Studies at the Tribhuban University's



Institute of Engineering has demonstrated the technology in its own building with solar panels providing 27KW of power in a day, enough for lighting the building and the wireless local area network for computers (see pic, left). The excess energy is channeled into the campus grid. When there isn't enough power in its PV system, the CES building takes electricity from the campus grid, thus balancing the surplus and deficit and meriting the name Zero Energy House.

"What we did in our building can be replicated anywhere else," says the centre's director, Jagannath Shrestha (pictured, above). "We are creating awareness to encourage people to adopt this technology." PVs are something of a passion for Shrestha who thinks it will provide cheap solar power for the masses.

At night, when there is no sunshine, PV users can get power from the national grid. "That way, people will pay less than their usual electricity bill," he adds. The idea is to calculate the difference between what you give from the PV system and what you take through the national grid.

But, for that there has to be some changes in the system and the law. For instance, Nepal Electricity Authority's distribution system has a one-way flow of power from the national grid to consumers. For a reverse flow there has to be changes

made in the law too. "This could take some time," says Shrestha. "But, if the government understands its value, the necessary changes should not be a big deal."

Will it be worth the trouble? Hydro experts say that at the moment, the national power grid is cheaper than the PV system. But prices of solar panels are falling—the per watt power of a panel that cost \$100 a few years ago now is \$4. "The system is quite suitable for high value consumption like lighting, tv and refrigeration but not for industrial use," says energy expert Bikash Pandey. "It would be ideal for places that have no access to hydropower generation."

Professor Shrestha at CES says that installing a solar panel to produce the AC and connecting it to the national grid through stac will cost \$5 per watt of power. The electricity produced through several run-of-river and storage plants in the country costs \$4 per watt, on average. "Don't forget the politics and other hassles when it comes to constructing hydropower plants," reminds Shrestha.

In Germany more than 10,000 consumers already have solar panels under the Rooftop Program where roof tiles double as solar power collectors. Japan is promoting a Sunshine Program for solar electricity. By 2050, half of world's energy is expected to come from solar power. ●

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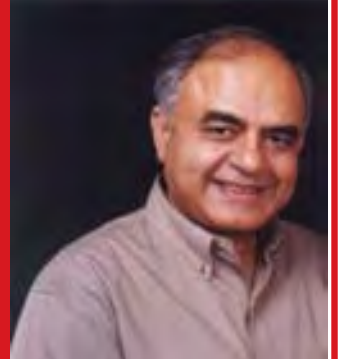
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BIZ NEWS

Networking money

SmartChoice Technologies launched an integrated shared services network for ATMs and POS terminals managed through a national switch. It supports multiple device types and is available on a subscription basis to banks and financial institutions across Nepal. So far, there are a total of eight member banks involved, including new agreements with Nepal Credit & Commerce Bank, Development Credit Bank and Machhapuchchhre Bank.

Regional tourism

Aiming to develop the tourism business between Nepal and Bangladesh and promote Nepal as a tourist destination, the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), in association with the local Nepali embassy, organised the Media and Tour Operators Meet in Dhaka on 13 June. In 2003 alone about 24,000 tourist visas to Nepal were issued to Bangladeshis. Biman has five flights a week between Kathmandu and Dhaka.

Home loans

Everest Bank's new EBL Home Equity Loan Scheme allows existing home loan customers to avail a line of credit against the equity they have built on their houses. Customers who have been paying installments regularly, have an increased disposable income and a house with an appreciated market value are eligible for the offer of low interest loans against the extension of the mortgage.

Keeping it Real

Dabur's Real Taste Challenge offer is sure to keep you on your toes—or taste buds. On 18 and 19 June, 60 supermarkets and shops in Kathmandu and major towns across Nepal will give out free tastes of Real juice and all you have to do is guess what flavour it is to be eligible for a prize.



NEW PRODUCTS

BRAIN BOOST: Offering to speed up your child's brain development and put them on a fast track to good grades—especially in math—Universal Concept Mental Arithmetic System (UC MAS) Nepal offers courses for children 5-13. Training involves the abacus method, used in over 35 countries and aids overall brain development.



RIDE IN STYLE: June will see Perodua's new compact model, the Kelisa, entering the Nepali market with flair. Engine enthusiasts will note the 1,000cc, three cylinder, 12-valve EFI, double overhead camshaft engine and 85bhp power, while the less mechanically inclined will find the stylish five-person interior and affordable price attractive. Distributed by Nemlink International Traders, there are hopes to sell at least 200 cars in the first year.

Victory for all

Athletes, sports and businesses can make winning a habit with proper management

Sports management in Nepal is all about teeth-baring fights between top officials, if newspaper reports are anything to go by. There's Rukma Shumsher Rana vs Kishore Bahadur Singh, an argument between the Nepal

STRICTLY BUSINESS
Ashutosh Tiwari



Olympic Committee and the National Sports Council to control the resources allocated to sports development. The other long-festering quarrel is between Geeta Rana and Ganesh Thapa about who will be at the helm of the All Nepal Football Association.

These fights often degenerate into tiring spectator sports—draining enthusiasm out of fans and making others hesitant to take the development of Nepali sports seriously. Meanwhile, a politicised and polarised Sports Council twiddles its thumb while examples of its mismanagement becomes embarrassingly visible.

Consider these examples: when Nepali sportsmen and women went to Islamabad earlier this year to take part in the 9th South Asian Federation (SAF) Games, they made an arduous cross-continent journey by train. The officials, however, flew to Karachi. Unsurprisingly, our athletes performed well below expectations, even at football, where they could've won gold.

At home, the lack of maintenance has made Dasrath Rangasala a mud bath for teams competing in the ongoing Martyrs' Memorial League



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Football. The players appear to spend more time avoiding slip-ups than dribbling. Last year, two people drowned in the stadium's swimming pool because there was no trained lifeguard on duty. No one was held accountable and according to *Samay* magazine, the situation remains negligent this summer too.

Recently, two separate official delegations left Nepal to attend the same taekwondo federation meeting at Seoul. Other than an obvious duplication of efforts, such junkets only divide athletes' loyalties and send mixed signals to the world. One reason why sports management remains a mess is because of a rooted Panchayati philosophy.

Sport is thought of as an activity that requires nurturing by the state and constant interference by the bureaucracy. While sports has metamorphosed into billion-dollar industries in other parts of the world, here in Nepal, the fight is to protect fixed shares of the pie instead of collaborative work to increase what already exists. As a result, they are unable to create incentives to attract private money

to pay for repair and maintenance of sports infrastructures.

Against this depressing backdrop, the recent news about the corporate sponsoring of taekwondo athlete Sangina Vaidya (pictured), the first Nepali to formally qualify for this year's Olympics, is to be welcomed. The six companies—VOITH, ICTC, Nepal Lever, Jyoti Group, Nabil Bank and Dabur Nepal—said they were motivated by patriotism to cover 85 percent of Sangina's costs ('Shining Sangina', #199). Their action sent three positive signals: first, the Nepali corporate sector now sees the value of endorsing top athletes. Second, under certain conditions, private money is available for the development of sports. And last, access to additional funds may help boost an athlete's chance for an Olympic medal.

Given all this, one challenge remains for our sports bureaucrats—they must stop their fights and look for ways to attract private funds for sports and athletes. This way, when Nepali athletes win, their victory reflects well on us all. ●

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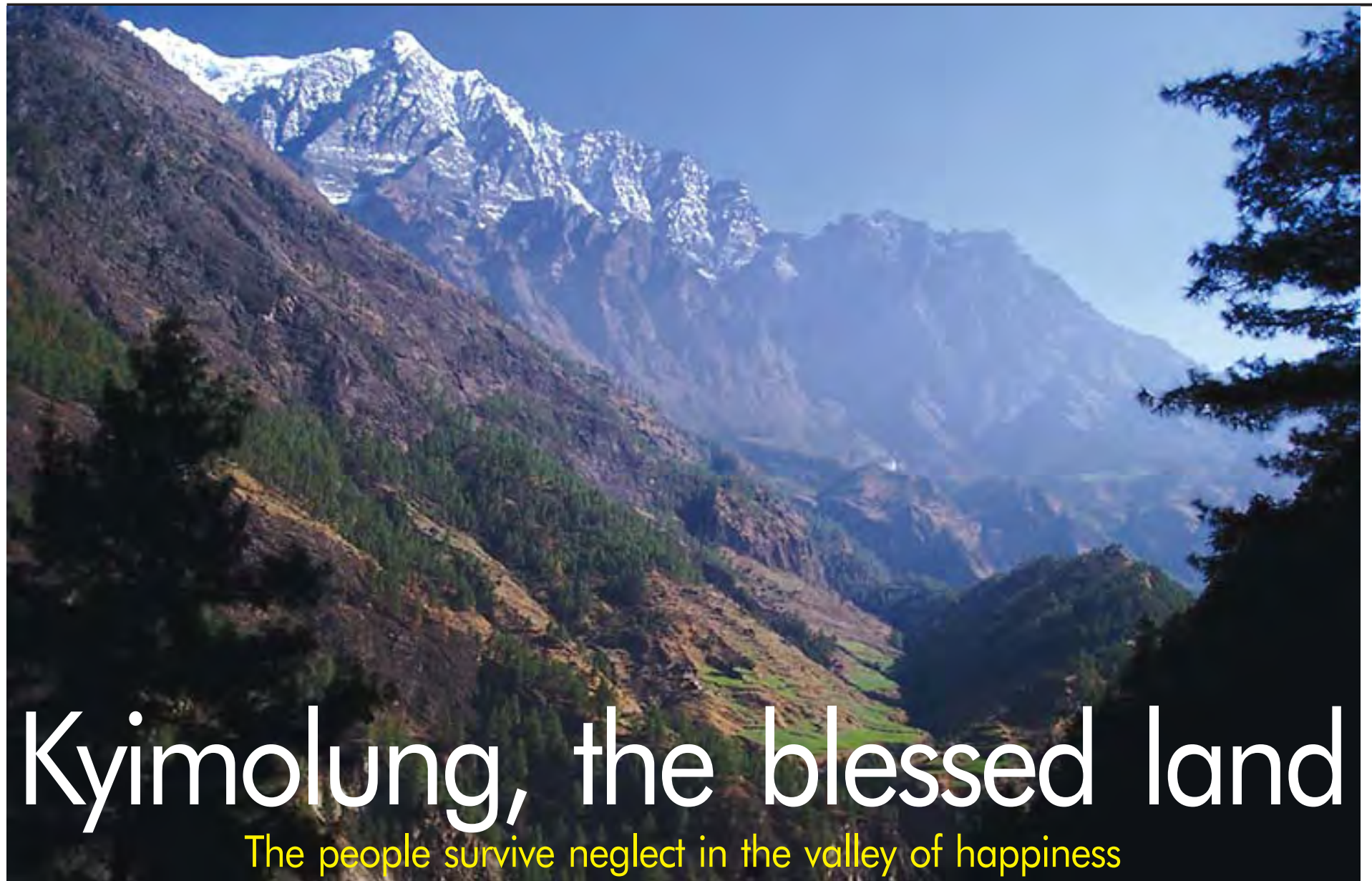
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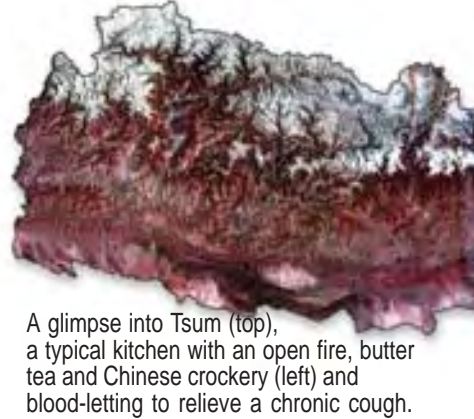
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Kyimolung, the blessed land

The people survive neglect in the valley of happiness

ALL PICS: STEFAN PRIESNER



A glimpse into Tsum (top), a typical kitchen with an open fire, butter tea and Chinese crockery (left) and blood-letting to relieve a chronic cough.

STEFAN PRIESNER in TSUM

In the remote borderlands of the high Himalaya, several valleys are said to be *Beyul*—hidden lands that, according to ancient scriptures, were established by Guru Rinpoche, the 8th century Indian saint accredited for spreading Buddhism. *Beyul* are havens of peace, prosperity and spiritual progress and refuges for believers. In 17th century Tsum (Chekampar), a valley that branches off the Budi Gandaki towards the north of Ganesh Himal in upper Gorkha, was named *Beyul Kyimolung*.

Even non-Buddhists understand why Tsum is perceived as a blessed land. Perhaps one of Nepal's most beautiful valleys, it is cut off from the southern lowlands of Nepal by deep, forested gorges and swift rivers, and from Tibet in the north by snow-covered passes. The surprisingly flat valley floor provides for some 4,000 inhabitants of almost exclusively Tibetan origin. Clusters of stone houses with slate roofs dot the landscape, enclosed by gentle forested slopes and snow capped mountains with cascading glaciers. This is century-old Buddhist heartland, with monasteries, *bumpa*, *chortens* and *mani* walls omnipresent.

Beyul Kyimolung means “the valley of happiness”, a name echoed

in the people, who appear proud and content—an attitude perhaps influenced by a strong feeling of identity, strong social cohesion and small income disparities. The generous Tsumpa hospitality is the highlight of a visit—countless cups of butter tea, *dhindo* and boiled potatoes shared generously with strangers.

And yet, one cannot help but wonder if the people's happiness and well being is not seriously compromised as they struggle with illness, lack of education and income shortages. Tsum has been almost completely neglected by development efforts, and now this isolation is perpetuated as people see themselves living in an area controlled by the Maoists and delinked from the central government. The implications are clear long before entering the remote valley. A few hours north of Arughat Bazar, where the road and government outreach ends, a woman in her thirties sits beside the trail with a syringe sticking in her chest—the indigenous healer is treating her chronic cough by bloodletting. Asked whether the syringe is sterile, the healer says, “I always clean it in the river, and besides, I've used it on lots of patients...”

In Tsum, change is slow. For

centuries people have depended on subsistence agriculture, cattle rearing and all-important trade links to Tibet: to the east, Kyirong is only a day and a half walk over the mountains. But the cross-Himalayan trade of Tibetan salt for rice and goods from the Nepali hills has given way to one-sided shopping trips. There is hardly anything that can be bartered from the Nepali side and the once well-stocked village storages that awaited transport to Tibet are now empty. Except for the yearly yarchagumba rush in May, all other traffic over the high passes is one-way into Nepal as even rice and vegetable oil is cheaper in Tibet. The Tsumpa depend on several excursions every year, sometimes risking their lives, to earn small profits from retailing. “I lost three of my fingers to the cold for Rs 2000 when I went to Kyirong in January,” says Dorji Norbu from Nile, showing his blackened left hand. “Had I not walked on and on for 24 hours without stopping, I would still be up there.”

Still, the challenges in income are nothing compared to problems in health, sanitation and education. One village was completely devoid of children. Eighteen died in a single month last year, but because Tsum doesn't have any health workers, nobody could tell us why. A middle-aged woman tells us how much she

misses their laughter.

If children reach the age of five—30 percent don't—chances that they benefit from formal schooling are slim. There are school buildings, but local confidence in public schools is close to zero. The half dozen trained local teachers in Tsum are an integral part of the social fabric, often involved in activities that distract them from their job. While we were there, one was preparing *tormas* for a village *puja*, and another was repairing a bridge.

Teachers posted by the government only show up sporadically. “Sometimes they only come once a year—they do not want to stay in remote areas,” a villager explains. Irregular classes result in a low attendance rate, and Tshering Gyurmed, one of the local teachers, estimates that the primary enrollment rate has dropped to almost 20 percent. Only half of those enrolled also attend school. For most children, the only alternatives are no school at all or the monastery. Samten Dorji, who runs classes in Tsum's main monastery, *Rachhen Gompa*, tells us, “Up to 30 percent of children are sent to monastic schools in Bouddha and India where they become monks and nuns.”

Villagers say the problems were much the same before the Maoists

came in 2001. That year, police abandoned the Chokhang post and since then the Maoists come regularly in the summer to ask for contributions from villagers. But little has really changed, and since local elections were suspended in 2002, traditional village-based self-help systems for small repair and maintenance work have revived. The village headman oversees this, and, together with a group of elders, resolves small disputes over issues like trespassing cattle and unpaid debts. Two months ago, a man was suspected of having broken into a *bumpa* to steal the sacred relics. When the man denied the charges despite overwhelming evidence, the people beat him all night and then stuck his leg into a hot oven.

In a place where state services don't exist, self-help initiatives are the only option. Even further isolated by the present conflict, whatever few development benefits the area received are about to vanish. Out of the reach of the central government, but not under the aegis of the Maoists either, this is no man's land. Tsum, it seems, is too remote to be of critical importance for those with the power to help. ●

Stefan Priesner is Deputy Chief of SURF, a UNDP regional office, and visited Tsum in his personal capacity. The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of UNDP.

"Older than Nepal"

And some other unique selling points of a new tourist destination

THOMAS BELL in RASUWA

Head north out of Kathmandu, through Trisuli and take a left when you reach the end of the road. A mere 10 hours rattle and ride from the capital, western Rasuwa is a forgotten world.

To the east are the apple-pie shops and solar showers of Langtang. But in the neglected valleys outside the National Park earlier layers of regional history have not been overlain by the recent influx of outsiders. Memories of Prithvi Narayan Shah's conquests, of the Nepal-Tibet wars and of Khampa guerrillas lie jumbled on the surface, largely undisturbed by more recent developments. Neither the Maoists nor the army come here.

In the villages of Goljung and Gutlang, they dust down the tarnished cutlasses once used in battles and now re-enacted in the horse dance. Himan Singh Tamang, a teacher in Gutlang, says that the figures wheeling about the village

followed. It was not until Jang Bahadur Rana built the fort at Rasuwagadhi that the border stabilised and local relations with the Tibetans and Chinese returned to peaceful trading and cultural osmosis.

A dirt track to the zinc mines in Dhading passes near these villages, although it is barely used. Tiny power lines from the futuristic underground hydro plant at Chilime loop along the valley, dwarfed by the landscape. Only one or two houses have electricity. Megh Bahadur Pandey, the chief warden of the Langtang National Park, estimates that only a dozen trekking groups have come this way in the last decade heading for Ganesh Himal.

Now, UNDP, in a partnership with the Nepal Tourism Board called the Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme (TRPAP), is hoping to open the area up. It reckons the locals are ready to deal with tourism after a year of exposure to concepts like 'community mobilisation' and 'capacity building'.

The locals, by their own account, feel unqualified enthusiasm for the visitors they have been promised. "We will get facilities from tourists. Tourists will bring economic benefits," says Himan Tamang of Gutlang. With only 10 SLC graduates in a population of 2,000, his village has much to gain. But as excited as they are to join an economy they can barely imagine, many seem motivated by an understandable pride in their culture and surroundings. Tamang adds that he wants to "advertise this place and culture to the world. I want no change. Culture is our wealth."



THOMAS BELL

Journalists, trekking agents and local officials on the promotional trip were politely asked not to litter. One reporter earned himself a slap for grabbing a local woman in the hot springs at Tatopani. There will surely be more surprises in store for both locals and visitors as trekkers add their footprints to those of the lamas, soldiers, merchants and herdsmen that shaped this place.

The path climbs steeply from the valley of the Chilime Khola. The white mountains of the Tibetan border are behind and snowy Gosainkund ahead.

Hishilintu Gompa with its crumbling wall paintings, is said to be 2,000 years old. After a further, briefly alarming, climb to the summer yak pastures at the top of the ridge, the trail reaches Nagtali Gompa. Lama Kamsung Wangdi says, "The gompa is 200 generations old—before there were kings or states, older than Nepal."

Rasuwa's plans to promote tourism and the road to Tibet suffered a serious blow with the murder by Maoists in April of DDC chairman, Bhim Lal Hirachan. He had tirelessly promoted trekking and trade as ways to lift his district out of poverty.

Now there are plans to build a road linking Kathmandu to Kyirong in Tibet, perhaps as soon as 2007. The last few kilometres before the border were a restricted zone until recently and foreigners need a permit arranged through a trekking agency.

The shops are stocked with Chinese noodles, beer and pungent rice wine. It was the Tibetan border that offered the final, fascinating glimpse of the layers of Himalayan history. Beyond the old stone frontier fort that gives the district of Rasuwa its name is a modern pedestrian footbridge into China. Local people pass freely to sell sheep

and goats and buy clothing and shoes.

On the far side 18-year-old Zhang Wei from Beijing sprays people's feet for SARS and offers a cigarette to the first Western imperialist he has ever seen.

Along with four colleagues in the Chinese police, some of them Tibetan, he occupies the guardhouse that is the first building on the other side. The only other building is called a reception centre for returning refugees. To the delight and amusement of many members of our group it was a brothel, where Chinese citizens of Nepali origin do a brisk trade with the small garrisons on both sides.

Now tourism seems ready to add a fresh set of influences. Don't expect this wild mountain world to change overnight. Without any solar showers or apple pie, only the enterprising are likely to venture into this secret place. ●



square represent the local king's struggle against Prithvi Narayan Shah. It is easy to see that the dancers pirouetting in horse costumes, clashing their long curved blades, had fearsome ancestors. But rather than ancient violence, the dance recalls the wisdom of making peace.

The consensus is that the tradition refers to the Nepal-Tibet wars. In 1792, a joint Chinese-Tibetan army coursed through these valleys and advanced on Kathmandu. More invasions

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The UML has not deserted the movement



MIN BAJRACHARYA

UML leader Sahana Pradhan in *Deshantar*, 13 June

देशान्तर साप्ताहिक

Our party believes that Sher Bahadur Deuba's government should not be likened to those of Lokendra Bahadur Chand and Surya Bahadur Thapa. His reinstatement to the post of prime minister by the king is proof of the monarch's defeat. Don't forget that Deuba was protesting 'regression' on the streets too, just like us. At that point, we said that we would welcome Deuba's appointment.

This does not mean, however, that regression has been redressed completely. Once again, I reiterate that our support of Deuba does not mean that we believe the king's regressive move has been rectified. His appointment may involve the monarch's hidden agenda and we need to be alert and cautious.

If there is consensus among all the political forces, we can go directly for a constituent assembly, leaving the king with no choice but to agree. He should not think that the UML has deserted the movement. The party will not shirk from exerting pressure, either from the streets or from the government, when it comes to peace.

The new government must understand that it cannot make a single move without immense pressure. Deuba believes his reinstatement washed away his past sins. He does not seem to realise that the credit of his reinstatement goes to the momentum created by the people's movement. Deuba needs to be reigned in from time to time, otherwise he tends to go off the track. We need a government to monitor him.

The other parties that protested with us on the streets now seem to have bad vision regarding the Deuba government. Girija Prasad Koirala did not have his way in the latest political development so he opposes Deuba. This is not an honest political attitude. The Nepali Congress said that the five party alliance would nominate one person to be prime minister but backed off from nominating Madhab Kumar Nepal, as was earlier agreed upon. This is why we no longer have an agreement.

The first order of the day is to hold parliamentary elections. With the decision of the elected government and the parliament, the constitution should be either rewritten or a new one drafted. If the Maoist rebels do not agree, we will have to hold elections for a constituent assembly to bring the rebels into the mainstream. For their part, the rebels must allow free and fair elections to take place. They must be active participants too. Only an elected government can accommodate the rebels in mainstream politics.

At present, the Maoists are unclear about what they want. They have flip-flopped on issues like a roundtable conference and constituent assembly. The rebels must understand that when times are comparatively easy, they must be more flexible and open a path to peace for the country.

The 30 years Mao spent in his struggle did not cause the Chinese people to suffer. But the rebels' war has cost Nepalis too much: there is fear and intimidation, and innocents are being killed. This is not the behaviour of a true communist. The Maoists must realise their mistakes the same way as communists did after the Jhapa movement. This is terrorism and the people who spread terror are terrorists.

UML never alone

Madhab Kumar Nepal, general secretary of the CPN (UML) in *Budhabar*, 16 June

बुधवार

If the government claims that it has executive powers, then this must be proven. That is why we are demanding the annulment of the amended regulation for the functioning of the ministers' council.

If what we heard is true, the king himself wants to forget the past and begin afresh. In that case, we will have to go back to the day before King Gyanendra took over, 3 October 2002. The regulation was amended after the appointment of Lokendra Bahadur Chand and remained unchanged during the tenure of Surya Bahadur Thapa, who supposedly had executive powers, just like the new Deuba government. If that is true, there should be no difficulty in getting rid of the amended regulation. That is our primary demand. If it is not met, we will not join the government.

Deuba's Nepali Congress (Democratic) protested the royal takeover. It is also the country's third biggest party. Since Deuba himself was sacked from the post of prime minister, he had the support of different parties. Therefore we must take his reinstatement positively. Our demand for a constituent assembly is not something new. We already expressed our willingness for democratic alternatives but we never dismissed that central idea. The reason we are stressing it now is for national consensus. A constituent assembly could guide the country out of the present crisis and solve the Maoist insurgency.

We left the street demonstrations but that does not mean that we have nothing to do: we will continue mobilising people, organising meetings, seminars and campaigns to better democracy and usher in peace. No one can stop us because the CPN (UML) is based

on the people—we will never be alone.

On the basis of issues, we are still ready to work together with other parties. Our experience has shown that in the long run, some co-workers tire and aim for smaller targets but we plan to reach the summit of Everest. We will do it.

Noodle currency

Rajdhani, 16 June

राजधानी

A packet of instant noodles for a yarchagumba—the 'Himalayan Viagra' is the new term of barter in Dhorpatan hunting reserve this season. The collectors, who go above 16,000ft in this former conservation area in search of the fungus/aphrodisiac (NT #195), happily accept the price of Rs 70 for a packet of noodles, the only food available in the Dolpo highlands.



The Maoists have been allowing the people to collect yarchagumba for the past two weeks, charging them Rs 15 per piece. The government banned harvesting in the area, but the rebels defied the rule and opened the reserve for a month-long period. As a result, businessmen from Baglung, Myagdi, Dolpa, Jumla, Mugu, Jajarkot, Kathmandu, India and China have arrived in droves to buy yarchagumba. In the past two years, businessmen used Tibetan refugees to collect Rs 22 million worth of the medicinal animal-plant.

The rebels are motivated by the bottomline: they earned Rs 3.2 million in royalties and this year their projection is a hefty Rs 5 million. Given the rush for yarchagumba, their target does not

seem overly ambitious, especially as the Maoists have succeeded in creating an atmosphere where collectors work free from government intervention. After the rebels set fire to the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) office at the Dhorpatan hunting reserve, government presence is confined to the district headquarters, an eight-day walk away.

Like Abu Ghraib

Kantipur, 13 June

कान्तिपुर

PATNA – The Nepali Maoists say they are going to take the matter of what they call sustained persecution against their arrested leaders and cadre by the police of the Indian state of Bihar to international forums. "A formal allegation will be lodged with Amnesty International and at the International Committee of the Red Cross against the Bihar police for the torture of our leaders and cadres in custodies," read a statement issued by the CPN-Maoist in Patna. The rebel party added that the police actions contravened international humanitarian laws. The statement also compared the physical torture meted out by the Bihar police to the recent Iraqi prison scandal at Abu Ghraib. Two weeks ago, 11 Maoists, including central leaders Rajendra Thapa and Lokendra Bista, were arrested from a Patna hotel. (Nepalnews.com)

Imperialist hack

Spacetime, 13 June

स्पेसटाइम डैनिक

ROLPA – The Maoist campaign to counter propaganda that they are hostile to US citizens met with a little providence through Brad Workman, a Florida journalist, who came to report from Rolpa but fell very ill on the trail. Workman had acute dysentery and high fever as he tried to reach



हिमाल Robin Sayami in *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 15-29 June

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



"Press out!"
Minister for Education and Sport Bimalendra Nidhi shooing journalists accompanying parents meeting him to press for an end to the education strike
Rajdhani, 17 June

Thawang, the headquarters of the Maoist-declared Magarat Autonomous Regional Government. After walking for days, he meet some rebels who took him to a medical team. "I didn't think I would fall ill but I was lying only semi-conscious when a team of Maoist medical personnel aided me," says Workman. He was treated under the direction of Santosh Budhamagar, head of the rebel-controlled area, who said, "Although the party does not allow US journalists into our territory, it was our moral responsibility to help."

Workman asked the Maoists to let him use their satellite phone to call a rescue helicopter. "I told them that I wanted to see my mother's face before I died," recalls Workman. After recovering from his illness, he returned to Nepalganj on foot. The rebels didn't accept any money. Workman is a freelance reporter and a member of US Photo Journalists' Association. (Nepalnews.com)

Securing the office

Kantipur, 15 June

कान्तिपुर

NARAYANGHAT – When the Maoists started attacking government offices, security training was initiated for employees in several district offices. The District Police Office recently trained 38 employees in 30 government offices. Employees from another 31

offices are up next. Dhiru Basnyet, DSP at the District Police Office, explains, "After the danger of attacks increased, employees are being trained to protect the office building and other employees." Trainees include peons and security guards that work in government offices, corporations and banks. Basnyet added that the police are willing to extend their training service to the private sector. Within a period of one year, rebels bombed six government offices in Chitwan and looted five banks.

(Translated by Archana, Nepalnews.com)

Nothing to read

Rajdhani, 15 June

राजधानी

UDAYPUR – Despite a government policy of free textbooks to primary students, over 100,000 children in four districts of Sagarmatha zone don't have yet to receive theirs two months into the new academic session. Most students in Khotang, Okhaldhunga, Siraha and Udaypur are sharing or just doing without. The distributor, Sajha Prakashan's branch office in Lahan, blames the Curriculum Development Centre at Sanothimi for failing to send them the books. Rohit Pokhrel, the head of Sajha Prakashan in Lahan, said out of nearly 200,000 primary level students, only 73,000 thousand students in four districts have textbooks. (Nepalnews.com)

Amending power

Ram Prasad Dahal in Rajdhani, 15 June

राजधानी

Almost a week after Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba formed his cabinet, the ministers' council has yet to convene a single meeting. The regulation was amended after King Gyanendra assumed executive powers post-October Fourth and requires all cabinet decisions to have his approval.

The UML has said it will join the government only after the third time prime minister scraps that amendment and regains executive powers. However, a senior official told us that only the king can cancel the amendment. Now there are conflicting reports emerging from Deuba's camp: one minister says the first meeting of the ministers' council may bring up the amendment while another source says the prime minister will not hold the meeting without first consulting the king.

Deuba is under pressure from his own party, the Nepali Congress (Democratic) and the UML to scrap the regulation for the duty execution of the ministers' council. He knows that if the first meeting of the ministers' council does not do so, it will send the wrong signal.

The meeting was scheduled for last Monday. The chief secretary and other government officials waited for the prime minister and his cabinet to arrive at 9AM, but no one turned up even at the end of the work day. With the cabinet meeting yet to take place, more than a dozen files containing important government work is pending at the cabinet secretariat.

Normally, cabinet meetings take place on the day the ministers' council is formed. But last Thursday, when Deuba named two of his cabinet colleagues, they were occupied with the



KIRAN PANDAY

swearing-in ceremony. "That is why the initial plan was to hold the meeting on Friday," says a source close to the prime minister. "But Deuba later said the meeting would take place on Monday." The regular cabinet meetings take place on Mondays and Fridays.

The last cabinet meeting took place almost a month-and-a-half ago under Surya Bahadur Thapa. It issued the ordinance on the royal palace expenditure and decided on the appointment of joint secretaries. It was an informal meeting that took place at the prime minister's official residence. Deuba's close aides have confirmed that the amended regulation for the duty execution of the ministers' council was the main hitch. Deuba's own party and the UML will comprehend that he holds no executive powers if he fails to challenge the amendment.



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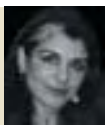
fatwas.com

The online subterranean world of Islam's radical fringe



Behadings online, fatwas online: the subterranean world of Islam's radical fringe can be found on countless Internet sites. These technologically sophisticated fanatics are able to reach a wide

ANALYSIS
Mai Yamani



audience that exists because

of the deep dissatisfaction and anger of so many young Muslims everywhere. The Internet has brought together a worldwide community of the alienated and the embittered.

The West thinks that this anger is a sign of some clash of civilisations: "us" against "them", which implies that only one side can win. But the anger of young Muslims results primarily from revulsion at their corrupt leaders and the subservience of these rulers to the US. It is bitterness rooted in material causes, not in some fanatical, irrational and anti-democratic sentiment

whose adherents must either be re-educated or crushed.

The problem starts at the top of Muslim societies, not with the disaffected at the bottom. Muslim rulers have mostly failed to satisfy the needs of their populations. At the same time, in much of the Muslim world, authoritarian regimes typically attempt to control and propagate exclusionary forms of Islamic dogma.

For many years, these regimes—whether the Shia of Iran or the Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia—succeeded in suppressing pluralism and individuality. But, as their regimes increasingly came to be seen as politically illegitimate, their model of Islam was also discredited. So the disappointed and disaffected search for an Islam that meets their expectations.

For the many websites that attract these disaffected people, it helps that no central authority exists today for the Muslim *umma* (the world community of Islam). By

humiliating, degrading and outlawing any Islamic tendency that disagreed with the prevailing dogma, authoritarian regimes did not eliminate pluralism but merely sent it underground. Today's technology allows that underground to speak and meet.

In the face of repression, Internet Islam appears to speak with authentic authority. But Islam has traditionally always been pluralistic and tolerant of differences. The Caliph Ali Ibn Abi Talib said, "Our strength lies in our differences." For over a thousand years, under Mecca's traditional rulers, the Hashemite descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, all sects debated and exchanged knowledge in the Great Mosque.

Indeed, prior to Saudi/Wahhabi rule in 1932, Mecca was cosmopolitan and open. Adherents of the four Sunni schools of thought, as well as the Shia, the Zaydis, the Ismaelites and those of different origins and races—Indians, Central Asians, Persians, Moroccans, Africans and Turks—all recognised their differences but could identify with the one source, the Koran.

But the Wahhabis tried to appropriate Mecca for their own version of Islam, and to export their exclusionary doctrine. For a while they succeeded. Today, however, we are witnessing the failure of the Wahhabi project to monopolise Islam. Fatwas of the type issued by the highest Wahhabi cleric, Bin Baz, such as the notorious one before the first Gulf War declaring the Earth to be flat, have, unsurprisingly, lost their authority and credibility. Ignorance, combined with the wider corruption and hypocrisy of the regime, emptied these religious rulings of meaning.

What has followed is the hijacking of Islam by radical angry men raised on Wahhabi dogma but disillusioned with the world they inherited. Fatwas promulgated after Bin Baz are almost always horrendous in their intolerance and virulence, and certainly appear backward and anti-

modernist. They clash not only with the West, but with the golden age of Islam, when Muslim astronomers, mathematicians, physicians, philosophers and poets flourished. Although the Internet appears to be renewing Islamic pluralism, today's online fatwas are non-negotiable orders, not a call for fresh creativity.

Hundreds of websites now compete to be the new Mecca, the place where all devout Muslims turn for guidance. The most extreme preach the ideas of al-Qaeda and their ideological brethren. These include the haunting celebration of a young man's imminent martyrdom by suicide bombing, while other websites, although less violent, have widened the scope of sin to include learning English, studying science and giving women access to the Internet without a male guardian present.

Fatwas online harbour animosity not only towards the West, but also toward other Muslims. Wahhabi clerics, for example, call for jihad against the Shia "heretics" promising the rewards of heaven. Most of these fatwas have a violent streak that the Saudi establishment is quick to dismiss as belonging to the Middle Ages. The fact is, however, that these fanatics are a modern phenomenon, a creation of the Muslim world's failed political systems, and a stark reminder of the price of long years of repression.

Far from disappearing, the repressed are returning from underground in grotesque forms to haunt the world they grew up in. No matter how much their countries' rulers try to disown them, they cannot escape their creation. Globalisation and technology have given the disaffected a new homeland to profess Islam as they see it. In that Internet world, no authority has the ability to silence or satisfy them. ●

(© Project Syndicate)

Mai Yamani is an author and Research Fellow at the Royal Institute for International Affairs.

1,000,000 migrant workers

BANGKOK—There seems to be light at the end of the tunnel for migrant workers in Thailand who have lent their sweat to boost the health of the country's economy, but ironically lead lives in fear of arrest and deportation by the authorities. This hopeful sign stems from a policy that the Thai government will start enforcing from 1 July to regulate the presence of an estimated over one million migrant workers who live within its borders. The initiative offers both documented and undocumented migrant workers an opportunity to register themselves directly with Thai authorities, rather than doing so through their employers. It also encourages the workers to register family members who have slipped into Thailand with them but are unemployed.

"The basic concept is good, because the migrant workers will be given an identity card once they register that will be theirs and not be held by the employers," said Jackie Pollock of the Migrant Action Programme, a NGO based in the northern city of Chiang Mai. "It will give them some protection to avoid being harassed by the police or by their employers." Furthermore, the policy that goes into effect by July also places a premium on the rights of migrant workers—something that was completely overlooked previously and resulted in regular violations and human rights abuses.

They will enjoy the same protection under labour laws that cover the Thai employees. In addition, migrant workers will be entitled to receive the same wages and benefits as their Thai counterparts. The current minimum wage is \$3.35 per day. Benefits include access to health care and education for the dependants of the migrant workers. Thailand has close to an estimated 1.2 million migrant workers, a majority of whom lack proper work documents. Close to one million are from Burma, while 110,000 are from Laos and 88,000 from Cambodia, according to figures from labour advocates.

Thailand's agriculture, fisheries and garment manufacturing sectors are entirely dependent on cheap foreign labour from neighbouring countries. In the construction industry, the bulk of manual work is performed by migrant workers. And in households, the use of foreign domestic maids is on the rise. In 2000, the Thai Labour Department estimated that the total economic contribution to the Thai economy from registered migrant workers was \$2.3 million. ● (IPS)

Handwash

It could save a million lives a year

Just washing hands could save the lives of more than a million children each year, a study shows. It protects children from diarrhoea and more unexpectedly, also from pneumonia. These two are the biggest killers of children below the age of five.

The results arise from studies under 'Phase' (personal hygiene and sanitation education), the project taken up in four countries by a partnership of the NGOs African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF) and Plan International, along with the pharmaceuticals firm GlaxoSmithKline (GSK). The program has now taken on an extensive campaign to promote handwashing among children in Kenya, Zambia, Nicaragua and Peru.

"We are now talking to NGOs in Uganda, Mexico and India to spread the program further," said Claire Hitchcock from GSK and coordinator of the program. It is also looking at a whole range of far-reaching benefits just from washing hands, Hitchcock added. "We do need more evidence to link handwashing with reduction of the incidence of pneumonia, but we find that when children are cleaner and take care of themselves, they become less susceptible to other diseases." Children also showed far greater self-esteem when their hands are clean. "They were more confident, they were happier and their academic performance improved," Hitchcock said.

There is a catch: children are most susceptible to diarrhoea and pneumonia below age five, and the program to promote cleanliness and particularly handwashing is aimed at children between six and 13 years of age. These children are encouraged then to teach their parents. But that does not mean the program has to wait a generation to take effect. "There is a high incidence of infectious diseases even among children of that age," says Hitchcock. Also, the program is aiming to get the message across more widely. It runs primarily through the school system in select areas in the four countries.

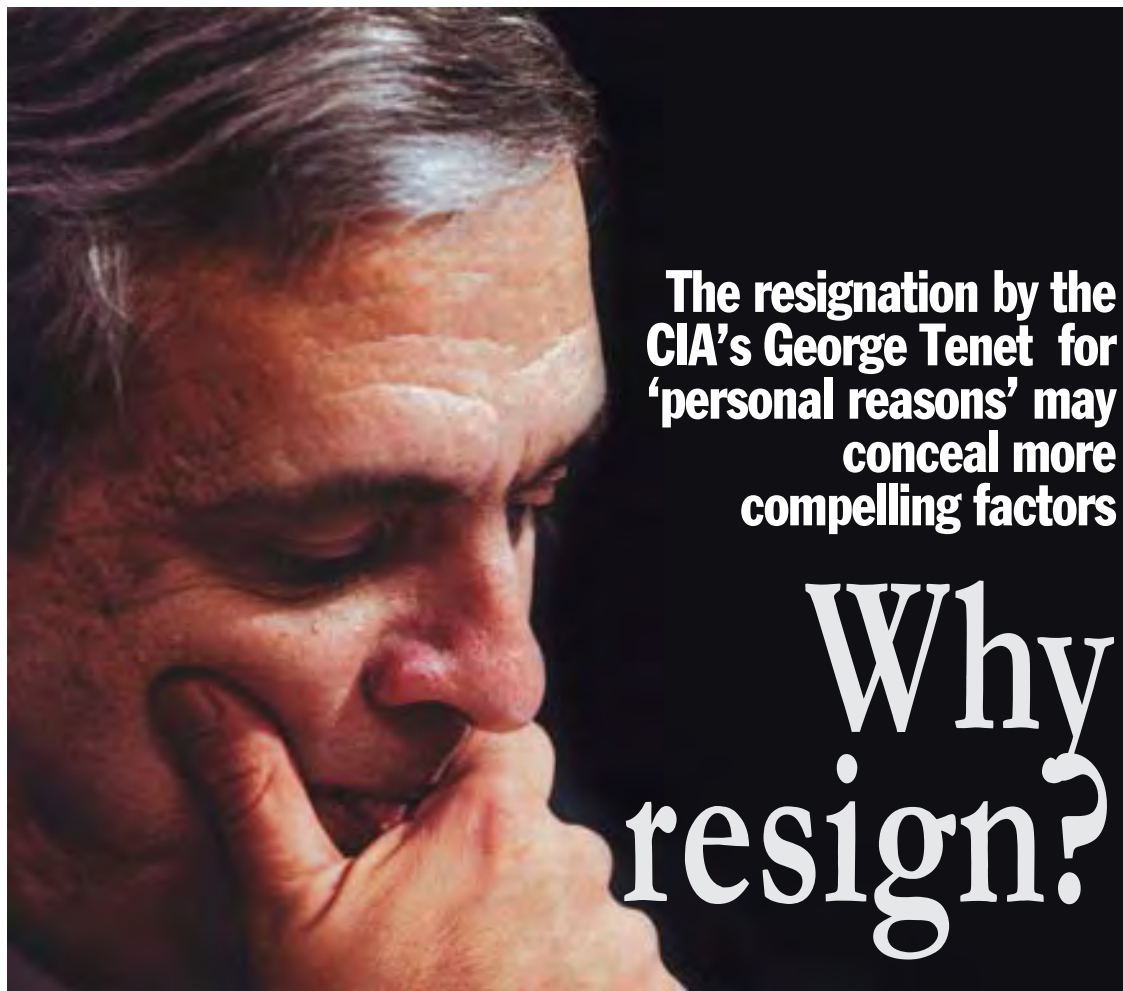
The best method is to use soap with water to wash hands, but Phase suggests local alternatives such as ash



or herbal leaves in Kenya if soap is not available. "If you don't wash your hands after using the toilet, your hands become a superhighway for transmitting microbes from one person to another," Valerie Curtis, director of the hygiene centre at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and a global expert on the beneficial effects of handwashing said in a message to the Phase program.

Diarrhoeal diseases kill nearly two million children under the age of five each year around the world, which is approximately 15 percent of all child deaths in this age group, says a statement from the Phase partners. Eighty to 90 percent of these cases are related to environmental conditions, in particular contaminated water and inadequate sanitation. The strong link found between handwashing and a decrease in respiratory infections follows one other study that showed similar results. A US Navy study showed handwashing reduced the risk of respiratory infections among training recruits by as much as 45 percent.

Students are encouraged to create their own folk songs or poems on handwashing. They also create signs to place near latrines to remind both children and adults to use nearby handwashing facilities. Some of the other preventative actions the teachers encourage is keeping animals away from the home, building latrines and keeping them clean, making drying racks for kitchen utensils, wearing footwear in latrines and safe waste disposal. ● (IPS)



Hardly a day goes by on which we do not hear of a government minister somewhere resigning his or her office. In a sense, this is hardly surprising. After all, the 25-member states of the European

ANALYSIS
Ralf Dahrendorf



Union alone employ hundreds of ministers between them—and even more if junior ministers are included. But why do ministers resign? More interestingly still: why do some not resign although there seem to be compelling reasons for them to do so?

In the absence of empirical research, generalisations must be guesswork. Ministers frequently resign because they find themselves involved in scandals, often connected in recent times with financing political parties. In Italy, one encounters several ghosts of such past misdeeds. Sometimes ministers resign for what they call “personal reasons”. Such reasons may conceal more compelling factors, as the recent resignation of American CIA Director George Tenet suggests. But Tony Blair lost one of his best and most loyal cabinet friends, Alan Milburn, because he genuinely wanted to spend more time with his family.

Blair also lost his ministers of foreign affairs and of development assistance, Robin Cook and Clare Short, respectively. In their case, it was a serious policy disagreement—over the Iraq war—that made them go, and Cook certainly remains a politician-in-waiting. Yet Geoff Hoon, Prime Minister Blair’s defence minister, as well as his American counterpart, Donald Rumsfeld, remain in office. Neither, to be sure, is clearly

involved in a manifest scandal, nor do they disagree with the policies set by their leaders.

On the contrary, they not only support these policies but stubbornly defend even their aberrations, like the mistreatment of prisoners of war. These ministers institute investigations, they move generals sideways or even into premature retirement, they haul perpetrators before military tribunals: but they apparently see no reason to respond to those members of Congress or Parliament, let alone of the public, who wonder whether it is not time for the ministers themselves to go.

The case of crimes in Iraq is particularly dramatic, but less obvious cases make the same point. The German minister of transport, for example, presided over a catastrophic and costly failure of a road toll system that he had proudly announced. But even he may stay in office to try again, having blamed others—in this case private companies—for the debacle. If something unacceptable happens without a minister’s direct involvement, he or she can get away with it, or so it seems, by pointing a finger at the bureaucrats or contractors who are responsible for implementing an approved policy.

Was it always thus? One would like to think not. In any case, two ethical concepts come to mind, neither of which is much in vogue these days when talking about government: responsibility and honor. Both values are, or at least used to be, part of the ethics of governance. Responsibility concerns the fact that ministers are accountable for everything that happens within their sphere. In fact, they alone are accountable in the

strict sense. In parliamentary systems, they can and must appear before the elected representatives of the people and explain what happened.

Because they alone are directly accountable, it is not enough for a minister to point to and name the miscreants in any particular case. Civil servants cannot defend themselves in the same way. They have to be defended by their ministers. If something of such severity has happened that a minister finds it impossible to defend them, they may have to pay the penalty, but the minister must still assume responsibility.

It is proper to assume that Secretary Rumsfeld did not condone, let alone order, the abuse of Iraqi prisoners. Honour may seem an old-fashioned term. What it says in Rumsfeld’s case is that there may be no legal or constitutional obligation for a responsible minister to resign over the Iraqi abuse scandal, but once upon a time it would have been regarded as a matter of honor that he *does* resign. Such a step not only demonstrates that the minister in question is fully aware of the burden of his responsibility, but also that he puts the integrity of democratic institutions above his personal interest, let alone the electoral prospects of those whom he served.

Democracy is a precious but also a precarious set of values. If we want to persuade others to subscribe to it, we do well to demonstrate that we not only believe in elections and majorities but also in the virtues of responsibility and honor. ● (© Project Syndicate)

Ralf Dahrendorf, a former European Commissioner from Germany, is a member of the British House of Lords.

More skeptical

The rise of Euroskeptical parties has worrying implications

The drubbing that many governments suffered in the EU parliament elections places them in a difficult position. Only an incurable optimist can hope that this week’s EU summit will bring glory to any of them.

The summit has two purposes: to finalise the text of a new EU Constitution and to appoint the next president of the Commission. These negotiations will be much harder in view of the spectacular repudiation of a number of key governments at the ballot box, together with the potent rise of protest and Euroskeptical parties in several member states.

The problem for Europe’s leaders is that their own repudiation by voters does not necessarily carry the same message as the rise of the Euroskeptical parties. The record slump in the vote for Gerhard Schröder’s governing

OPINION
Lan Davidson



Social Democrats in Germany has little to do with his policy towards Europe, but a great deal to do with the perceived failure of his economic policies—and the persistence of low growth and high unemployment—at home. Despite the nationalist parties’ success in France, the same is true of the setback for President Jacques Chirac’s centre-right party.

In Britain, by contrast, where the economy is strong and unemployment low, the main factor behind the collapse in the vote for the governing Labor Party has been anger with Tony Blair’s determination to go to war in Iraq beside George Bush.

Nevertheless, the rise of Euroskeptical parties, in a number of countries including Britain, France, Belgium, Poland and the Czech Republic, has worrying implications for a summit meeting whose purpose is to take European integration a small but unmistakable step forward. In Britain, in particular, the spectacular surge of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) can only strengthen the government’s long-standing latent Euroskepticism.

The proposed constitution will contain a Charter of Fundamental Rights, which is intended to enhance the political and moral legitimacy of the EU. But will it really enhance the rights of EU citizens? Or, as the British government insists, will it merely be a declaratory document that only describes rights already existing under national legislation in the member states?

The draft constitution would enhance the policy making powers of the Union, with a bit more majority voting in the Council of Ministers and a stronger role for the European Parliament. But, despite Tony Blair’s one-time declaration that he would take Britain “into the heart of Europe,” he remains viscerally opposed to the prospect of further integration and will resist any new encroachment on British sovereignty in his red line areas of tax, foreign policy and EU budget finance.

One question always asked in this poll is whether voters tend to trust or mistrust different institutions, such as national parliaments, national governments and the European Union. Overall, the general level of trust in the European Union is not high: only 41 percent of voters tend to trust the EU, whereas 42 percent tend not to trust it. But in Britain, the figures are dramatically different: only 19 percent trust the EU, while 55 percent distrust it.

The predicament for Europe’s leaders at this week’s summit is that they stand at the cusp of an unstable process of European integration. With the accession of 10 new members, the EU must become more integrated if it is to function. But it is not at all clear that those governments that would normally support more integration can sell it to their disillusioned electorates. Tony Blair has promised a referendum on the new EU constitution, which he cannot possibly win. The central question will be whether Europe’s “leaders” deliberately play for failure, in the hope that the problem will go away. ● (© Project Syndicate)

Lan Davidson is an adviser to the European Policy Centre in Brussels.



I don't know why I didn't come

A little bit of coitus never hoitus.

bedding habits of the Bedouin to the risqué activities of an 18th-century male Scottish masturbation club known as the "Beggar's Benison".

The book fulfils many functions—if you are, perhaps, an ardent young man confused by your coy mistress, a perusal of the "Orgasm in the Orient" chapter will fill you in on lovemaking techniques from Ancient Chinese Tao texts. "She extends her abdomen. It indicates that she wishes shallower thrusts."

Those chafing against a homophobic environment can take comfort in the fact that their detractors would not have gone down well in ancient Greece. Or perhaps they would have. Aristophanes reflected the sentiments of the time when he wrote: "Well, this is a fine state of affairs, you villain. You meet my son fresh from the bath and you don't kiss him. You don't even feel his testicles. And you're supposed to be a friend of ours!"

Speaking of testicles, Margolis offers up a wealth of etymological information for the verbally licentious. The word testify

actually comes from the habit of placing one's hand on one's balls when taking a vow. "Fornication" comes from the Latin word for stove, fornix. Roman prostitutes working in bakeries would take the opportunity to make a little cash while their buns were in the oven.

Lest you conclude that Margolis is purely a master of the anecdotal and scurrilous, I must disabuse you of that notion. True the book will have you guffawing, but it's a double-edged sword; a text that amuses but also illuminates. CS Lewis referred to the "snobbery of chronology"; the conviction in any given generation that the apotheosis of information on a topic has been reached.

It's fascinating to read the "authorities" on sex throughout the ages, all of whom thought that they were having the last grim word on the subject. Licence has given way to repression and swung back to licence again, as human beings wrestle with the urge to merge.

Prominent Christian theologians such as the 17th-century sexpert Tomas Sanchez stipulated that any person fearing

an orgasmic convulsion outside an act of procreation should "lie still... make the sign of the cross and pray fervently for God not to allow him to slip into orgasmic pleasure". In sharp contrast, pre-Christian treatises were proponents of guilt-free pleasure between equals. The Kamasutra offers the following advice to those in search of priapic virtuosity: "Eating many eggs fried in butter then immersed in honey will make the member hard for the whole night."

This was undertaken with the admirable intention of making your woman happy. Unfortunately women faced an increasingly raw deal as the juggernaut of Christianity rolled onward; their previously celebrated sensuality became something feared and attacked by those who were no longer comfortable with tides of longing.

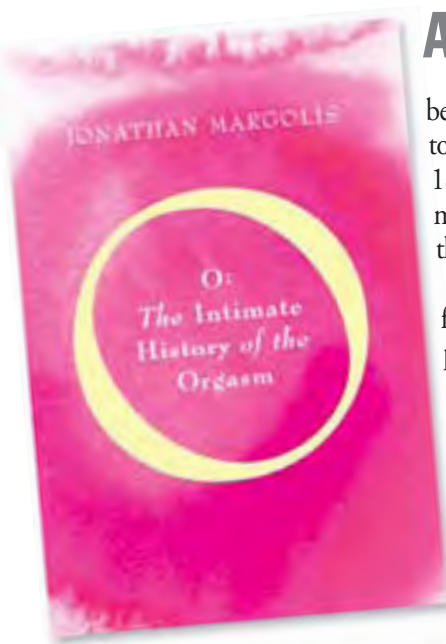
Persecution and distress aside, the orgasm has survived, and one of the chief pleasures of this book is Margolis's analysis of the potential reasons for its existence. His thesis is this: rather than viewing the orgasm as an adjunct—the cream in the coffee

or the cherry on the cake—we should understand its pursuit as our primary motivation in life. It is hardwired into our systems, linked to the survival of the fittest.

Male and female orgasms have evolved to be deliberately mismatched for specific biological reasons; a suitable pair bond is sensed and accepted by a woman if her paramour invests the time and effort to help her climax. This indicates that the chap may be a keeper. "In short making women feel good may help men to win the Darwinian contest of supremacy."

Thus the quest for orgasmic release propels us through the centuries. Margolis argues that testosterone, the primary generator of sexual desire in both men and women has been the "single most influential chemical in human history". If this seems far-fetched, one has only to go down to your local bar at closing time this evening to check out the vast ooze of testosterone in motion. But take heart; in the words of Dorothy Parkers "A little coitus never hoitus". ● (© *The Observer*)

O: The Intimate History of the Orgasm
Jonathan Margolis
Century 395 pp £14.99



You might be forgiven for plunging straight into this hot pink tome with unbridled enthusiasm. After all, it promises nothing less than a ride through the development and

REVIEW

Zöe A L Green

quirks of that most sought after and occasionally elusive sensation, the genital sneeze. Gratifyingly, it delivers.

There are hundreds of bat tips tube acquired on Margolis's historico-anthropological odyssey, which ranges from the

BIGBEN



"I finish my thupka and I unite Nepal!" - Prithvi Narayan Shah

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Manindra's course

How a golf visionary set up the Royal Nepal Golf Club

Driving down from the airport, many people wonder what the refreshing view on the right is. Exquisite and green, it is a part of the Royal Nepal Golf Club (RNGC), Nepal's oldest golfing facility. Many of Nepal's golf enthusiasts, including myself, are proud to say that this is the place we learned the game of golf.

It takes both vision and implementation for a successful result, and when we look at RNGC today, with its club atmosphere and the playing conditions of the course, one person stands out as having being instrumental in this achievement: Manindra Raj Shrestha, who has been the club's president for over a decade.

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



His selfless support helped create the RNGC of today. Many members of RNGC may not know

that the greens they play on came from his courtyard. Despite his wife's misgivings, he brought grass from his lawn and introduced the first Bermuda grass greens in Nepal. I recall one morning when I was playing with him, he saw a big chunk of weed and started pulling it out immediately. It was this passion and dedication that laid the foundations for the development of golf and the RNGC. Today, many follow his footsteps, including his son Sonny.

I was fortunate to share Manindra's thoughts on the past, present and future of golf in Nepal.



When did you start the game? How were you inspired to take it up?

I started playing golf in 1977. Before that, I had thought it was a lazy man's game. It was Prince Basundhara who goaded me into playing, and having taken it up, I became aware of the game's potential, and took an active part in trying to promote it.

I have seen that myself! You are a legend. How do you look at golf in Nepal presently?

Although it is moving slowly in the right direction, I still feel there is a lot left to be done. This can only happen with the all round development of the game, starting from getting more children to play and having more golf courses around the country.

We have talked so much about golf tourism. In your opinion how it is best done?

This is one topic that has been discussed for over a decade, including with people directly related to tourism development in Nepal. However nothing has come of it. To develop golf for tourism, HMG and the private sector need to work together. One of the best ways would be for the government to provide the land and the private sector to develop it. The government has such a lot of unused land. They can easily provide it if they choose to.

You drove RNGC through rough roads to bring it to its present state. What do you see it today?

RNGC, as you mentioned, is one of the most successful sports institutions in Nepal, mainly due to the selfless efforts of its members and strict adherence to its objectives of promoting the game in Nepal. I feel that the effort we put in the last 10 to 12 years have paid off, as the club is still following the visions laid down then.

We have all been talking about getting more juniors started, so how can we walk this talk?

Last year, RNGC started a five year golf development plan with the basic objective of promoting golf at the junior level. If all other clubs and organisations follow that model, I am sure we can have worldclass players coming out of Nepal within 10 years.

Today when we look back at the foundations this gentleman's vision laid for us, we must take our hats off to him.

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



Hits and misses

First impressions from the week's Euro 2004 matches

GABRIELLE MARCOTTI in LISBON

Perhaps it's inevitable given that no team wants to start a tournament with a defeat, but the first batch of games at EURO 2004 were marked by tactical conservatism, a lack of goals and somewhat under-par performances, particularly by the so-called favorites. Portugal was stunned by Greece. France did little before Zinedine Zidane's last minute heroics. England defended in numbers, and Italy was outplayed by Denmark.

HIT! Zinedine Zidane

This isn't for what he did in the first 89 minutes, when England's congested midfield stifled his creative vein. Rather, by nailing the equaliser and converting the winner from the penalty spot, he proved just why so many consider him the best in the world.

MISS! Portugal's old guard

The host nation crumbled under pressure against Greece, and most worryingly, among the major culprits were Manuel Rui Costa, Luis Figo and Fernando Couto. These three great veterans either need to step up or make way for new blood.

HIT! Henrik Larsson

It took a petition, letters from politicians and teammates and a plea from his six-year-old son, but when the Celtic striker finally decided to return to international action, it gave all of Sweden a lift.

MISS! Alex Del Piero and Mauro Camoranesi

They're supposed to provide width to Italy's 4-2-3-1 system, but against Denmark they were chaotic and wasteful. Del Piero isn't a natural winger, but this alone can't explain his perennial underachievement. As for Camoranesi, who is a winger, there can be no excuses.

HIT! Tomas Sorensen

Denmark played exceptionally well as a team against Italy, but it was the goalkeeper's three prodigious saves that avoided defeat. It's good to see him shine again after 18 difficult months following the 2002 World Cup.

MISS! Holland's 4-3-3 system

Against Germany, particularly for the first hour, the players just did not seem to get it. They were slow, sluggish

and stretched all over the pitch, leaving room for the Germans to exploit.

HIT! Otto Rehhagel

The Greece boss gave a tactical masterclass against Portugal. Outmatched in terms of talent, Greece responded with intelligence and workrate, converting chances and playing to their strengths.

MISS! Bulgaria

When you lose 5-0, it can't be anything other than a miss. It should be noted however that Bulgaria did create a

didn't get much service against France, but he also showed little of the explosive quickness and ability to get into goal scoring chances.

HIT! Vicente

He may well be the best winger in the tournament, and he's only going to get better. He tore Russia apart down the left and with better finishing from Raul and Fernando Morientes, Spain could have had a far gaudier scoreline. A true gem.

MISS! Croatia's finishing



number of chances early in the game and that Sweden's late goals came on the counterattack.

HIT! Karel Poborsky

The star of EURO 96 faltered after moving to the Premiership and to Portugal. Now he is making up for lost time, both at club level and with the national team. Against Latvia he was devastating, like the rest of his Czech teammates, who dominated their opponents from the very first minute.

MISS! Johann Vogel

A guy of his experience simply should not be getting sent off in the opening game, especially against an opponent, Croatia, that Switzerland realistically needed to beat if they are to have any chance to go to the quarterfinals.

HIT! Latvia

OK, so the Baltic boys lost and the margin could have been far greater than the 2-1 scoreline. But they took the lead and hung on for a long time.

MISS! Michael Owen

Right now, he looks like the oldest 24-year-old in the world. True, he

Ivica Olic, Milan Rapajic, Ivica Mornar and Dado Prso put on a horror show against Switzerland that would have made some of their predecessors in the Croatia shirt—Alen Boksic and Davor Suker, to name but two—cringe.

HIT! German grit and organisation

I hate to dwell on stereotypes, but Rudi Voeller's troops showed that what they lack in raw talent they make up for in determination and toughness. Don't expect a rerun of the 2002 World Cup but do expect Germany to give everyone a run for their money. **MISS! Russia's disciplinary record** Five bookings and a sending off do not bode well for a team already hampered by injuries and forced absences. Against an impressive Spanish side, Russia got physical and paid the price. Roman Sharonov is now suspended, weakening an already strapped back line.

Gabrielle Marcotti is a well known Italian sports journalist based in England.

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SURYA

STATUTORY DIRECTIVE : SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

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"If you want to win, you have to go a little beserk."
Bill Rodgers, World Record Olympic Marathon Winner

Next Change: Winners List and reader's comments

ABOUT TOWN

EVENTS

- ❖ **Monsoon wine festival** at Kilroy's of Kathmandu, Thamel. 250440
- ❖ **4th Bagmati River Festival** till 21 August
- ❖ **Cigar Tasting Dinner** 19 June at 1905, Kantipath.
- ❖ **Art of Living** 15-19 June at DAV School, 3PM-6:30 PM.
- ❖ **Monsoon H₂O Party** 25 June at Dwarikas. Rs 699 with drink and dinner
- ❖ **The Sound of Music** by Malpi International School. 5:30 PM on 25-26 June, Royal Nepal Academy Hall. 4240159
- ❖ **The British Film Festival 2004** 28 June-2 July at Gopi Krishna Cinema
- ❖ **Hyundai Vehicles Pre-Monsoon Camp**, 15-22 June, AVCO service Centre, Matidevi
- ❖ **Euro 2004 - Football Mania** the Piano Lounge Bar, Hotel Yak Yeti. 5PM onwards

MUSIC

- ❖ **Close Up Music Xplosion** 35 music stars on one stage, noon onwards at BICC, 19 June. Tickets Rs 100
- ❖ **Ultimate 1974 AD Rock Show** at the BICC. 19 and 20 June, 3PM.
- ❖ **International Music Day**, 21 June with the Alliance Française. Amateur bands from 12-3PM and an evening show with professionals.
- ❖ **Close Up Video Music Awards** live on Channel Nepal. 4PM onwards, 26 June. www.spacetimeonline.com/cvma
- ❖ **Jatra weekends** The Strings on Fridays and Full Circle on Saturdays.



FOOD

- ❖ **Summit's Barbecue Dinner** with vegetarian specials. Summit Hotel.
- ❖ **Vegetarian Creations** at Stupa View Restaurant. 4480262
- ❖ **Organic Market** every Saturday at Baber Mahal Revisited.
- ❖ **Sunny Side Up Weekend BBQ** at Soaltee Crowne Plaza Kathmandu.
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NEPALI WEATHER by MAUSAM BEED



After those copious pre-monsoon showers the real thing seems to have been waylaid on its way to Nepal from the Bay of Bengal. The clouds are taking their time massing up in northeast India and the upper atmospheric winds are still from the west, arresting their advance. This satellite picture taken on Thursday at noon shows an unusually powerful monsoon current from the Arabian Sea moving straight into northern India, a rare meteorological event. This has delayed the traditional frontal wave from the Bay. The Valley will experience overcast days, some humidity and occasional cloudbursts in the early part of next week.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

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BOOKWORM

On the Ethos of Hindu Women: Issues, Taboos and forms of Expression
Vivienne Kondos
Mandala Publications, 2004
Rs 550



In this collection of essays, Vivienne Kondos explores the everyday lives of Hindu women, often venturing onto controversial ground. This is a work of major interest to anyone trying to get a deeper look into the gender roles in Hindu culture and society.

Courtesy: Mandala Book Point, Kantipath, 4227711, mandala@csl.com.np

JAI NEPAL CINEMA

Lakshya is based on the 1999 Indian Army skirmishes with Pakistani intruders in the heights of Kargil in Jammu and Kashmir. Starting with his life as a careless rich boy, the film traces the journey of cadet Karan Shergill (Hrithik Roshan) and the changes in his character, strengths and beliefs. Co-starring Amitabh Bachchan and Preity Zinta, **Lakshya** aims to redefine war films in Bollywood.



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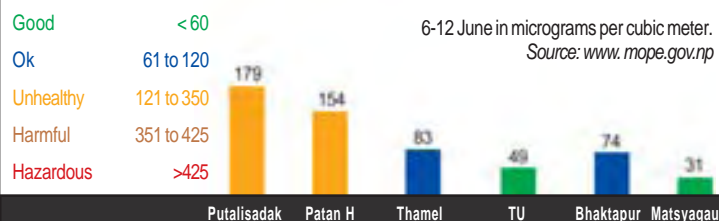
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For insertions ring NT Marketing at 5543333-36.

KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

If you took a deep breath and sensed something strange in the last week, it was probably because you were breathing oxygen and not soot particles! With the exception of Putali Sadak, which maintained an even 179 PM10 reading, all the other monitoring stations noted improvement in air quality. It seems the education strike may have environmental effects as well, because the air around TU remained 'good'—with less than 60 particles per cubic metre—for most of the week. Matsyagaun was better still, not venturing even once into just 'ok' levels.



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KIRAN PANDAY

BIG GUNS: This week the army stepped up security at Kathmandu airport.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

PRO-KRISHNA: A different sort of demo at Putali Sadak on Wednesday was a rath yatra in honour of Lord Krishna.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

NEW CD: Stars Rajesh Hamal and Sambujit Baskota jointly released a new album by Ramkrishna Dhakal (far left) called *Ashraya* on Sunday at the Radisson Hotel.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

FALSE ALARM: Rumours that the education strike ended got this student and his mother only as far as the bus stop near New Road on Thursday morning.



MIN BAJRACHARYA

RUMBA RUMBA: Singer Nima Rumba receives nominations for two categories at the Close Up Video Music Awards from Channel Nepal's Jamim Shah.



Tirtha's ability

After 27 years as a teacher, Tirtha Shrestha still smiles as she remembers her early school days in Myagdi.

Polio left her crippled at an early age but her father said nothing was wrong with her mind and encouraged her to study. Then came the biggest hurdle in every Nepali student's life: the SLC exams.

"Students from my village repeatedly failed, so when my turn came, my father told me not to bother as I would probably fail too," she remembers. But Tirtha had no intention of giving up. She snuck out of her house and secretly went to the exam centre in Baglung. "It took me more than six hours because back then I didn't have crutches," she says, "so I crawled with the help of a wooden stick." When the results came out, she was one of only three girls who passed from the district that year.

Tirtha went on to be a young teacher and then the principal of Beni Secondary School. Her biggest regret is never having the opportunity to pursue academics more fully. "I got so far with just an SLC diploma, who knows

what I could have done if I finished my IA or higher?" she laughs.

In Myagdi, where education was once considered a wasted exercise, public opinion began to change when Tirtha's education launched her career. Many parents followed her father's example and started sending their children to school. Tirtha is usually cheerful, but her face darkens when she talks about her pet peeve: NGOs.

"So much money is donated but almost nothing reaches the schools," she complains. "If it did, a lot more could have been accomplished." She is proud of Beni Secondary School and is quick to point out that she hasn't had any problems with the Maoists. They acknowledge her immense contribution to the people and leave her alone. Students with disabilities are encouraged to attend, but as the school cannot afford special provisions for them, very few are able to do so.

This teacher hopes to open a school exclusively for the differently-abled in Myagdi someday. These plans are just a dream as Tirtha concentrates on a more immediate challenge, a task that brings her full circle, as she prepares her first batch of SLC students. Luckily, they have her for inspiration. ●

(Milan Wagle)

Transmogrifying hegemonic values

Since we Nepalis have given up trying to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps from the septic tank that we have got ourselves into, it now falls upon the UN Specialist Envoy to extricate us from the goo, according to a political analyst who requested anonymity because he is, um, in

actual fact, none other than

UNDER MY HAT
Kunda Dixit



yours truly. So, I took time off from my busy schedule to interview the visiting dignitary, who spoke frankly and gave clear and precise answers to my queries. Some excerpts:

Q: Can you tell us something about the timing of your visit to Nepal?

A: Certainly. We arrived at 12:30 on Tuesday and are looking forward into the near to medium-term future so we can anticipate important and paradoxical trends, there are organisational, systemic, thematic and institutional issues, there is a transformative agenda in the context of economic globalisation of which Nepal cannot avoid being involved. The key to the future is therefore to maximise the strengths and minimise the weakness in all approaches to interdisciplinary holistic and collaborative strategies that build on potential risk scenarios.

Q: I see. Does that mean the United Nations is willing to be involved in mediation here?

A: Let me put it this way: yes, no and maybe. But whichever way, it will require a sectorwide stakeholder consultation at all levels and a strategy that will depend more on changing the structures of organisations and more importantly the institutions that embody them: especially the mainstreaming efforts and the basic organisational re-intermediarisation that are a necessary starting point. In other words, and I can't emphasise this enough, we need an enabling environment for empowerment from

the bottom up.

Q: Is that a yes or a no?

A: Since you are asking me directly, let me answer you obliquely. Although it is vitally important to be cognizant of our global, national and sub-national contexts, we need to work under a consistent interdependent framework to institutionalise multilateral monitoring mechanisms without undermining the need for strong localised initiatives, unless of course they are buffeted by various global and regional exigencies.

Q: What on earth are you talking about?

A: Let me try to explain and put this in its proper context. What it demands is a radically-participatory consultative engagement, a sustainability paradigm so that we can problematise the creation of solidarities and identity expressions, consensus-building and the prospective vision of an alternative paradigm. We have to redefine the context in which the

normative discourses and pluralistic advocacy are agreed upon between systematic powers and structural shifts.

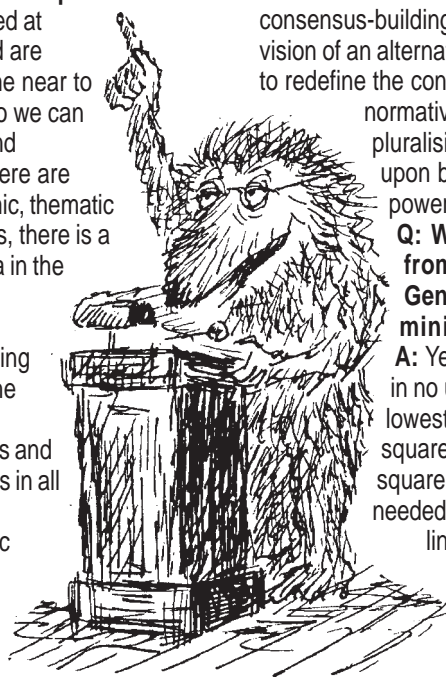
Q: Was that the message from the Secretary General to the prime minister?

A: Yes, we made it very clear in no uncertain terms that the lowest common denominator is square root of x minus y squared. Concerted action is needed to make intergenerational linkages between fake universalism and a missionary drift towards a more elevated parochial truth and transmogrifying

hegemonic values so that there can be a compelling rationale to adopt a rights-based approach on cross-cutting over-arching issues by one section of interlocutors without in any way obviating the need for legally enforceable obligations. It means accessing strong analytical and methodological tools in a timebound workplan of diversification and decentralisation.

Q: And what was the prime minister's response?

A: He said he didn't know what the hell we were talking about.



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