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Q. Should the UML join the Deuba government?

Total votes: 1,230

Weekly Internet Poll # 143. To vote go to: www.nepaltimes.com

Q. Do you support elections for a constituent assembly?

“Take us home”

A botched rescue of Nepali girls from an Indian circus last week exposes a distressing crossborder paedophile racket

RAMESWOR BOHARA in LUCKNOW



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Two years ago, Surya Lama decided to send his daughter Nisha away to a circus in India. The middleman promised she would earn IRs 100 a day and go to school.

Today, Nisha is among 30 Nepali girls who disappeared from The Great Roman Circus at Karnelganj near Lucknow, and Surya is in custody with three other parents at the Gonda police station. One of the circus girls who managed to escape, 14-year-old Nita Lama, is also in police detention.

Inside the police station in Gonda on Thursday, Nita caught me by the hand and wouldn't let me go. "Take me home with you, take me back to Nepal," she wept. Nita's mother, Thulimaya, is in shock and can't speak.

While the Nepali parents are in custody, the circus owner, Fateh Khan and his son Reza Khan drive around Lucknow openly carrying firearms and have threatened Nisha

and the Nepalis inside the station.

The parents of the girls approached the Nepal Child Welfare Society (NCWS) in Butwal, which had rescued 29 Nepali boys and girls from a circus in Kerala in April. The society asked Indian child rights activist Kailash Satyarthi of the Bachpan Bachao Andolan for help.

When police raided the circus to rescue the girls on 15 June, it was clear the owner had been tipped off. Goons with iron rods started beating up the activists and parents. Reza Khan brandished a pistol in full view of tv cameras. The police just stood by while the girls were bundled away. Except Nisha, none have been seen since.

Two other parents, Bishnukumari and Janak Lama are on hunger strike at the state assembly in Lucknow, demanding to be reunited with their daughters. Satyarthi, who got a knife wound in his head, has abandoned his hunger strike

because of threats.

The District Court in Gonda has ruled that Nisha's parents can take her away only after paying a IRs 50,000 bond. Says Khem Thapa of the NCWS: "Parents are being forced to buy back their own daughters."

On Sunday, Uttar Pradesh Labour Minister Kaushal Kishore told us: "I'm on the case, I'll allow the girls to go back with their guardians and I'll get circus licenses revoked." It doesn't look like these instructions have been passed down to the police in Gonda.

In the few minutes some of the parents got to see their daughters during the raid last week, the girls related horrifying tales of sexual exploitation, rape and beatings. Testimonies reveal the circus also operated a paedophile ring. The girls were forced to service policemen and state officials.

"The circus has full protection of the police and the state machinery,"

Bishnukumari Lama looks for her daughter among Nepali girls at the circus (big picture).

Top to bottom: Kailash Satyarthi escorts the girls, Reza Khan unleashes his goons on the activists and parents, Bishnukumari being beaten and led away, Bishnukumari cries for help, Surya Lama suffered a head wound during the raid.

Kailash Satyarthi told us. He estimates there are 1,500 Nepali minors and teenagers working in circuses in India, where many are virtual sex slaves.

At the police station, Surya Lama is full of remorse for what he made his daughter go through. "It is all my fault, I am a sinner," he says breaking down. "I'm never going to let anyone else in my village make the same mistake I did." ●

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FIX IT

With all the political posturing, haggling and grandstanding going on these days, it is easy to lose sight of the future. The partisan interests of the competing powers are hopelessly tangled.

But it wouldn't be an over-simplification to say that the bottom line is how much power the king should have. And since the king derives some of his supremacy from control over the Royal Nepali Army, that is the crux of the issue. The 'constituent assembly' demand is just a code word for overhauling this status quo even though none of those who seek it seem clear about what kind of assembly it should be and how to cobble one together. What can such a body do that can't be achieved by reworking the existing constitution?

Civil society is understandably enthusiastic about a constituent assembly because it sees that as a way to get the Maoists to the negotiating table. Sections of the Girija Congress and the splinter left in the anti-'regression' agitation are veering towards it. The Maoists are waging a 'people's war' and Baburam Bhattarai says (p16) he'll settle for a constituent assembly for now.

It is clear that this isn't a fight for a share of the pie. All three sides want the whole pie. That is not the way a solution can be found.

It would be foolish to assume that the king and the army are going to voluntarily relinquish their traditional dominance over the polity. But it does look like the longer they resist reform, the more intractable this crisis will be. The only sensible way is for the political parties and the palace to coexist and pave the way for peace, elections and constitutional reform. There is a way to convince the Maoists to join the head table. Call it a constituent assembly or whatever.

The tool kit is here. We know how to use it. Let's fix it.



King as trustee

The Working Procedure Regulation was never a hindrance to doing good work

Commenting on the Hindu society's condition of chronic anarchy, historian Arnold Toynbee described it as a disintegrating civilisation compelled to admit alien architects (Turks, Brits) to furnish it with functioning order. The political

GUEST COLUMN
Dipak Gyawali



elite of Indic civilisation had become incompetent and sterile. Toynbee was not writing about Nepal, but seeing how appeals are made here to outsiders to mediate, he might well have.

One symptom of the Nepali

dominant minority's sterility is the current debate on what interim governments can or should do. Obsessed with procedures rather than substance, and personalities over vision, the discussion remains at the level of chatter.

A recent storm in a teacup has been over the Working Procedure Regulation under the Lokendra Bahadur Chand cabinet. Branded as 'regression', Brahminical puritans of Marxist and other hues saw it as a major hurdle to join the Deuba cabinet. The excuse was exposed this week as it became clear that an interim prime minister informing the head of state of important measures, and if necessary, even seeking royal advice, is simply good statecraft.

What needs doing in Nepal today is restoring peace, initiating good governance and holding elections so that voters can choose a chief political executive. That task cannot, and should not, be done

by the king, the parties or those who believe in doing it from the barrel of a gun. The Chand cabinet's working procedure did not stop it from bringing about a wholly indigenous ceasefire, or the Thapa cabinet from resuming fire when the Maoists failed to negotiate in good faith. Nor did it stop many cabinet ministers from initiating much needed reforms from within the existing framework of laws and regulations.

What the agitating parties, whose last electoral mandates have expired, need to explain to the country is what exactly they hope to do that the Chand and Thapa cabinets could not. Play favouritism with civil servant transfers and politicise the bureaucracy as happened under old procedures? Settle old scores? Harvest resources for coming elections?

In a democracy, parties do not represent the people, voting does. That too for a fixed time with a periodically renewed mandate under campaigned values. With change in trust and behaviour, the legitimacy of an old vote evaporates and a fresh mandate must be sought.

With the last parliament, it happened right at the start with a two-month house deadlock over vote rigging. An all-powerful, all-party committee headed by the prime minister, the speaker as well as the leader of the opposition and chiefs of smaller parties decided to put off the debate. The seeds of illegitimacy were sown then. "We

LETTERS

DYSTOPIA

In 'Nepali dystopia' (Editorial, #201) you have painted a rather depressing doomsday scenario for Nepal in two year's time. At the rate at which things are going from bad to worse, I would say that we have even

less time than that for your dystopia to be realised. The powers that be must read your last sentence, 'What use is power if there is no country left to exercise it in?'

Gautam K Maskey,
Thapathali

● Your editorial, 'Nepali dystopia', laments the conditions of a failed state in Nepal. Our neighbour, India has finally awakened from a deep Kumbakarna-like slumber to notice the Maoist support network in the Indo-Gangetic plains. The Maoists have now become a security threat to the Indians because the Naxalite and tribal belts have even greater, if not the same, inequality, exploitation, poverty and entrenched caste discrimination as Nepal. Ironically, the Nepali Maoists have become a 'shining path' for disenchanted Indians in Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkand and Andhra Pradesh.

India already deals with Islamic militant infiltration from Kashmir. It does not need a peasant-proletarian revolution sprouting at its doorstep.

Nepal is much more porous than Kashmir. It is quite mysterious why the Indian authorities did not nip the Maoist supply and activities in their area in the bud. India probably wanted to extract

some favours from Nepal in a quid pro quo manner. Little did Big Brother notice that the fire had already spread to its own house. Now it may be too late. There is a lesson here for babus in South Bloc. Please reread your Ramayana.

SN Singh, email

CHITWAN CHEESE

Hasta Gurung in 'Crying over spilt milk' (#199) reports dairy farmers in Chitwan dumping 100,000 litres of milk because bandas prevented them from taking it to market. Ok, I'm French and partial to cheese, but I am appalled that all that milk was wasted and not turned into local cheese which I have been making in Chitwan. Just shows that the only sustainable revolution is through education. For cheese making, all you need is a canvas bag, an acquired taste for cheese and access to a market. This easy recipe will keep for over 10 days without a fridge or even a cool place.

Here's how: Let your milk go sour, empty the whey (feed your pigs), mix the curd with lots of salt, cut garlic, add herbs to taste. Pour in clean canvas bag, hang out to drip in airy room. The cheese will be ready for consumption next morning. This is the recipe for the famous Boursin cheese, which comes in small round cardboard boxes, wrapped in foil, flavoured with garlic, pepper or herbs. It can be sold at attractive prices to trekkers and other tourists.

Alternatively you can let it dry, spread out in the sun under a net. This will keep even longer. You can also keep it in glass jars filled with brine (salted water) or veg oil with chillies for conservation, this will give you excellent feta to eat with your salads. Feta's sharp, salty flavor—often referred to as tangy—and crumbly texture make it a popular addition to mixed salads. It is often cut into cubes and served with bread and





BENEDICTION: The Patan Kumari smiles at King Gyanendra during the Bhoto Jatra festival on Tuesday.



HUNGRY FOR NEWS: Family members of people 'disappeared' by the government on a relay hunger strike at Bhadrakali on Monday.



GUITAR GODS: Nirakar and Manoj of 1974 AD perform on Sunday at the BICC hall during the band's two-day Ultimate Rock Show.



PLAYMAKERS: Basketball gives way to EURO 2004 fever in Lainchaur on Friday.



SITTING PRETTY: Singer Rekha Satyal at the release of her new album, 'Nauli' on Sunday at Durbar Hotel.

The right chord

Deepak Bajracharya had his first public performance at 14, and recalls stepping on stage feeling calm and collected. Sixteen years later, he is still cool and confident as he emerges as one of the freshest and most creative young voices in the Nepali music scene.

Deepak didn't get there by fluke. He worked hard, learning classical vocals and taking lessons in western classical guitar. But when Deepak finished college, his parents thought it would be better for him to take up the family business. So he dabbled in handicraft, tried his hand at wood carving and even opened a shop in Thamel. But somewhere in the back of his head the sound of music

was always calling him.

On a visit to Japan, it suddenly dawned on Deepak why Nepalis were not making progress in modern music. "It wasn't enough to be able to sing, you had to understand music," he says. He returned to Nepal determined to set up a facility for aspiring musicians to have a proper academic approach.

Deepak's Royal Tone Academy is a non-profit institution that ploughs fees back to students for

materials. It has become a gathering place for young Nepali musicians, where they learn notes, rhythm and timing. It is a holistic approach to music, including everything from skill development and recording to stage presence and presentation.

His own music has evolved. Today, fans swing their hips to Deepak's unique fusion of Latin rhythms and Nepali beats. "Music is about waves, not bound to any language. The trick is to find the right wave that's appealing to the human ear," he explains. Deepak is working on his seventh album, an exclusive compilation of Anita Khadka's lyrics.

As Kodak brand ambassador he will donate Rs 1 from each of his new album sold to the Nepal Cancer Relief Society. Kodak donates an additional Rs 2 from each film roll developed to cancer patients. Why cancer? "Nepal has treatment, but it is too expensive for most people. The money we raise goes to who needs it most," he says.

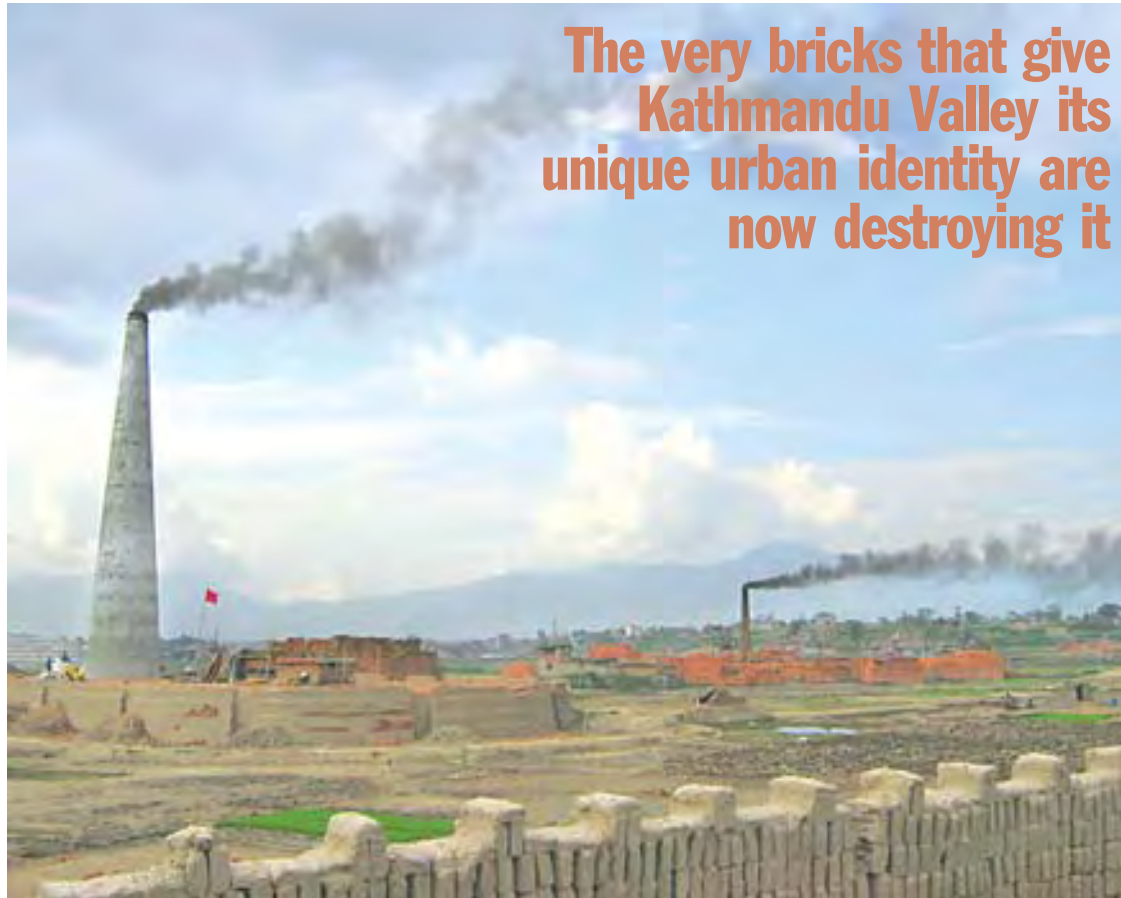
When he is not in the studio, Deepak and his 4-year-old daughter Cherisa are likely to be found splashing about in a swimming pool. Other things may come up, but he says one fact will always stay the same: "Music is everything to me and I want to encourage future musicians."

(Sradha Basnyal)



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Liril freshness all day long



The very bricks that give Kathmandu Valley its unique urban identity are now destroying it

ALL PICS: MUDITA BAJRACHARYA

MUDITA BAJRACHARYA

Though the bricks that make up the capital's temples, bahals and houses are a part of Kathmandu Valley's architectural heritage, they are also turning out to be an environmental curse.

As Kathmandu's current population of 1.3 million grows at a breakneck eight percent per year, the furnaces of the brick kilns in the city outskirts can't bake clay fast enough to meet demand.

The effect can be seen everywhere: the malignant eyesores of smokestacks where green paddy fields used to be, the increased pollution and the destruction of the Valley's fertile topsoil (see box, p5). Brick stack emissions make up

more than one-third of the air pollution in the Valley, and since most of the kilns are located near the airport, poor visibility on approach forces many planes to divert. "Our main worry are particles below 10 microns because they lodge deep inside the lungs," says Bhusan Tuladhar of Clean Energy Nepal.

Jhaukhel, near Bhaktapur, used to be a bucolic town with terrace paddy fields and clumps of bamboo groves. Today, it looks like an open pit mine. The people of Jhaukhel approached the Department of Cottage and Small Scale Industries (DoCSI), which licenses the kilns, the Ministry of Population and Environment (MOPE) and even the prime minister's office

demanding action.

No one listened. So the Bhaktapur Environment Conservation Forum decided to organise a rally against the kilns in November 2003. Things turned ugly at one of the factories, as kiln owner and former ward chairman Tek Bahadur Lakhaju got into a fight with several of the protesters. Maheswor Neupane, who led the rally regrets the violence, but is determined to continue the campaign. "We want to throw the illegal kilns out, and bring the registered ones under government guidelines," he says.

This spring, the Bhaktapur District Office, with DoCSI and the CDO, used police to dismantle more than 35 illegal

Killer kilns



MRINMOY MAJUMDER

An 'improved' kiln in Imadol (left) spews out as much pollution as the old variety. Farmers in Bhaisepati (above) readying their fields for paddy plantation this week.

Anti-kiln activist Maheswor Neupane of Jhaukhel and kiln-owner Tek Bahadur Lakhaju (right, far right). The vertical shaft kiln (below) gives off almost no smoke.



The alternative to war

War happens because politics is made to fail by evil people

War is hell. More than that, war is evil—ask almost any soldier who's been there. Not many of them come through combat with anything other than loathing for organised violence. But not many politicians or defence department bureaucrats ever ask ordinary soldiers before ordering them into battle, or taking steps that will lead to war.

They wouldn't get the right answers. Last year's documentary, *The Fog of War* might just be a substitute for those

battlefield opinions. I wonder if anyone in the Royal Nepali Army or the government has seen it. The film is based around a series of interviews with Robert S McNamara who was US secretary of defence for seven years in the 1960s. He first worked for President John F Kennedy then stayed on in his post after Kennedy was assassinated in 1963. His was a lively watch. First the Cuban missile crisis brought the world to the brink of nuclear war. McNamara and Kennedy agonised over the presence of Soviet nuclear

missiles in Cuba, choosing to confront Moscow with a fierce stance in public, while offering private concessions. It worked and we were spared both a devastating war and the presence of atomic weapons 140km from America.

Then came Vietnam. About 16,000 American troops were already there when McNamara assumed office. In *The Fog of War*, he relates how that number climbed steadily as he bought into the theory that the communists in North Vietnam were somehow a threat to the US, that their victory in their own country might prompt other nations to choose communism over liberal democracy.

McNamara has many regrets about his days of war mongering. He speaks frankly about them in the film, but says in the end, war has its own dynamic. He explains the title of the film as a reference to the way that truth is obscured and twisted when a nation is at war. The secretary of defence admits to a fair amount of twisting in his time. Coming back from one of his many trips to South East Asia, a younger McNamara tells the media that the war is going in America's



Secretary of Defence Robert S McNamara and General Westmoreland, Vietnam Assistance Command Commander, talks with General Tee on condition of the war in Vietnam, 1965. (National Archives)

favour and the communists are on the run. We knew then that he was lying and time hasn't diminished the falsehood.

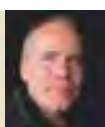
The chemical defoliant, Agent Orange, came into wide use during McNamara's time as secretary of defence. Chilling footage of soldiers rolling drums of the stuff onto aircraft illustrate his mea culpa, his

insistence that had he known more about the effects of the poison on people, he might not have approved its use. In 1967, McNamara was fired by his boss, President Lyndon B Johnson. The war wasn't going well. Young Americans were protesting in the streets, sometimes violently. The media was showing people across the US portraits from the theatre of war that chilled and shocked many. McNamara was eased out of high office but nothing changed.

In the end, nearly four million Vietnamese died in the 'American War', as it's known in Vietnam. Tens of thousands of homes and villages were destroyed, vast swathes of countryside laid waste. Countless billions of dollars were spent in what was—ultimately—a failed attempt to stop communism. Because *The Fog of War* is an American film, McNamara is not asked whether he considers himself a war criminal. The tone of the documentary is studiously neutral, and perhaps this is best.

But war, all war, is evil. That's the message I take from this film. War happens because politics fails, or is made to fail by evil people. There is always an alternative to war. ●

HERE AND THERE
Daniel Lak



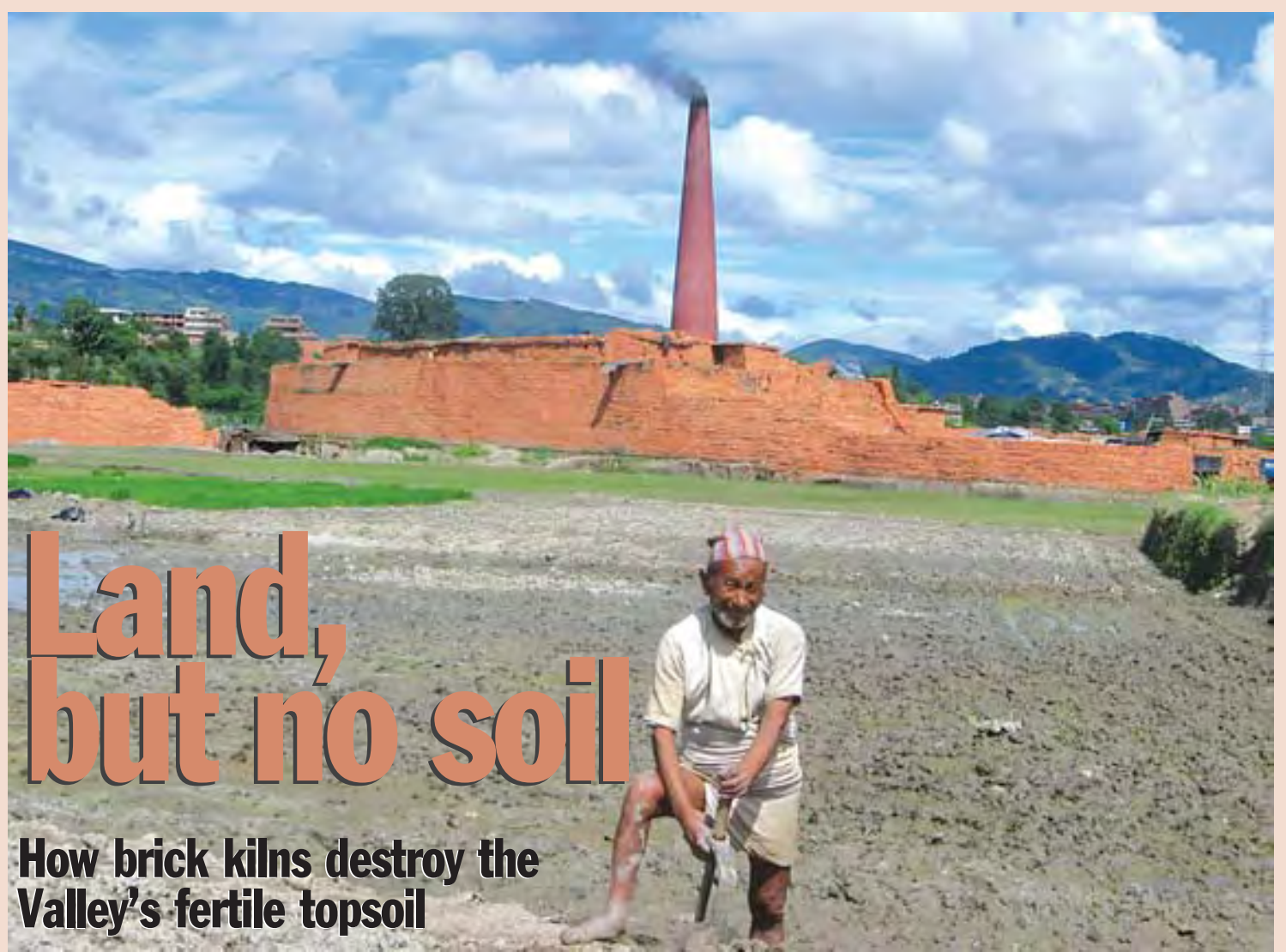
kilns.
 "We have tried many times to dismantle the illegal kilns, but the politicians are on the take and always interfere," says Bhaktapur CDO Gyeh Nath Bhandari. The DoCSI banned further registration of the primitive and polluting bull trench kilns in December 2002, and plans to enforce a total ban by June 2004. According to the department's guidelines, all bull trenches are supposed to be converted to less polluting fixed chimney technology or vertical shaft brick kilns by the end of this month. There are other provisions: all kilns should own property in a 60m radius around the stacks and have a lease for at least five years. The kilns should be at least five km from a forest area and one km from a residential area. It is hard to find a kiln that follows any of these rules.

The old bull trench stacks spew out seven times more soot into the atmosphere than the improved fixed chimney technology. Vertical shaft furnaces are even less polluting. But low grade fuel means that sometimes the supposedly 'improved' kilns are just as bad.

Mahendra Chitrakar, president of the Central Brick Association denies that his kilns pollute. "Matsyagau has seven kilns and yet it is the least polluted part of the Valley," he fumes.

The Danish-supported Institute of Environment Management (IEM) is helping with the new technology, but at the present pace it will take at least until spring next year to replace all running bull trench chimneys with fixed chimneys. "But new technologies need to be used properly, with the right fuel and right procedures," explains IEM's Sanjay Shah. Research in India has shown that a fixed chimney kiln can bring down pollution by 20 percent.

Meanwhile, the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) is supporting the vertical shaft technology and is carrying out field trials in Lalitpur. Although they are energy efficient and less polluting, owners are reluctant to use them because of the high investment and low productivity. But if run properly, Martin Karcher of SDC says the vertical shaft technology could transform an informal, seasonal and wasteful activity into a formal manufacturing industry. ●



Land, but no soil

How brick kilns destroy the Valley's fertile topsoil

MUDITA BAJRACHARYA

MRINMOY MAJUMDER

The changing land-use pattern in the Valley is evident on the outskirts of Kathmandu and Lalitpur as more and more land is devoured by urban sprawl.

The remaining arable land is increasingly turned into clay mines to supply brick kilns. Farmers are leasing their land to these kilns, and in the process are losing the fertility of their topsoil. Degradation of land quality is a virtually irreversible process and the soil never gets back its fertility.

The 120 brick kilns in the Valley erode the topsoil completely, and what the farmer gets back at the end of the lease is a large pit devoid of any agricultural value. Brick kilns run mostly from December to June, and the farmer is paid the equivalent of a wheat harvest in the area being leased. Most brick kilns close down during the monsoon when the land reverts back to paddy cultivation.

At the Chun Devi Ita Bhatta in Bhaktapur, supervisor Shivshankar Yadav boasts that his kiln occupies 90 ropani of land and bakes five million bricks every season.

The farmer is compensated 160kg of wheat priced at Rs 11 per kg for every season his land is leased. What is not factored into the calcu-

lation is that in one year, the farmer will have lost 220cm of his priceless and irreplaceable topsoil.

Nir Kumar Shrestha, a farmer in Bhaishapati reckons he has lost nearly two metres of his topsoil in the past four years after he leased his field to the SK Chimney Bhatta. "My land had become useless for wheat, but after hauling loads of compost and manure, I manage to salvage the paddy," Nir Kumar says.

The farmer's traditional risk-averse nature is overruled by the promise of windfall gains, opening them and their soil to exploitation by the brick kiln owners. The cash in hand is too tempting, and many can't afford to think of the longterm consequences.

At Jhaukhel in Bhaktapur, 78-year-old Gyan Bahadur Suwal is ploughing his 5.5 ropani of land all by himself. For the past 12 years, he has been renting out his land to Jay Dibyaswori Ita Bhatta and his field is now four metres below the surrounding land. The kiln owners don't always level off the land before they leave, and even if they do it doesn't bring back the lost fertility.

Gyan Bahadur remembers when his land gave him 480kg of paddy with just organic fertiliser. Today, the



Gyan Bahadur Suwal in Jhaukhel ploughing his field to plant paddy this week (top), a part of his field is now four metres below the surrounding land because of topsoil extraction by a brick kiln.

same field produces only 180kg, and even this with lots of hard work hauling fertilisers. Gyan Bahadur has also seen his vegetable crop go down and his profit margin is now nil. It actually makes more sense to lease his land for Rs 3,500 for six months to the brick kiln owner. Almost everyone in Jhaukhel these days sells off their top soil to the brick business, and those who don't find their property sitting high and dry above the surrounding fields.

The relationship between envi-

ronment and development in Kathmandu Valley is inverted and the environmental stresses are contributing to underdevelopment and poverty. One of the basic causes of poor land management is poverty, but its consequence is ever-deepening poverty. To get out of this vicious cycle, land use alternatives must be reconciled with demographic pressure. And this can only happen if the farmers have insurance against crop failure and other sustainable alternatives ●

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Resisting resistance

Innocents are killed as Maoists target those who defy them



JB PUN

JB PUN MAGAR in KAPILBASTU

Raghubar Lodh from Pipara in Kapilbastu had gone to Mumbai to work so he could support his wife, Inarmati, and three children. The 25-year-old returned home two weeks ago on leave. At 10PM on 17 June, a group of Maoists came into his house and shot him dead. Hundreds of armed Maoists surrounded the village and then went from house to house.

They burst into the home of former chairman of Pipara VDC, Mohamad Musalman, and shot Musalman's son, Mustafa, twice in the head. "We were on the roof with the whole family, and came down when it started to rain," Musalman recalls. "Suddenly we heard gunfire nearby, then some Maoists came in and dragged my son away and we heard two shots."

The same group went to the

house of Mohammad Wakil, father of eight, lead him out to the front lawn and shot him dead. They also killed Gobardhan Lodh and Pradip Chaudhary.

In a statement the next day, the local Maoist command said the five killed in Pipara were members of a resistance committee and among the dead was the group's leader, Pritam Pandey. However, Pandey is alive and told us in a telephone interview this week that only Pradip Chaudhary was a member of his anti-Maoist committee.

Pritam Pandey set up the 75-member resistance committee after villagers here got "fed up" with Maoist extortion and threats. In an interview before this week's attack he boasted that he would shoot any Maoist "on the spot". Pandey is re-

garded by some as a gangster, which he vehemently denies (*see box*). But it is clear that his armed anti-Maoist resistance group is similar to the Ranvir Sena set up by landowners and high caste villagers to fight Indian Maoists in Bihar.

Pandey claims to be training and arming 500 young supporters and says he has help from Indian politicians. "We have received help from Kamaruddin Khan and Uttar Pradesh Labour Minister Mata Prasad Pandey," he told us. "We are even holding talks with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav."

The Indian police dismissed these claims: "Pandey has 22 criminal cases registered in our country, how can we help such

a criminal?" Pritam Pandey used to be known as a notorious dcoit who called himself Sukhi Nath Pandey during the Panchayat era. After 1990, he joined the Nepali Congress and used his political connections in Kathmandu to widen his influence. Pandey does not hide his past. "Temple priests can't defy the Maoists. It takes people like us to do that," he says.

Pandey says the villagers killed in Pipara last week were murdered in cold blood. Superintendent of police at Taulihawa, Lok Bahadur Karki, says the wounds on all five look like they were from guns fired at close range. Says Pandey: "The Maoists have shown their cowardice by killing innocent villagers, they will pay for this."

Pandey survived a Maoist assassination attempt six months ago and in the last month the group has already killed three rebels in retaliation. The father of Chetan Kurmi, one of the Maoists killed said a large sum of money was stolen from his son. "I asked them to kill me instead, but they shot him," the bereaved father said. The Maoist Resistance Group tried to kill Rajendra Tiwari, chief of Madheshi Liberation Front in Kapilbastu last month. The rebels responded by bombing six places in and around Labeni village two weeks ago. Maoist Saroj Sharma said he would not spare anyone who defied the rebels.

Kapilbastu villagers fear the violence will escalate. A local school headmaster told us, "No one dares leave their houses anymore." ●

"I'm not a dacoit"

At about the time the Maoists were issuing a statement on Sunday that they had killed Pritam Pandey and six others in Pipara, an angry Pandey was giving us a phone interview. "They will never get me," he shouted, "they should go after the bandits who are sucking the villagers dry." He continued: "We have nothing against the Maoists, we are against khaobadis who rob the people. Why are they protecting the robbers?" Pritam Pandey had fled to India with his gunmen after receiving information that the Maoists were targeting him. "We will exact revenge for the killings," he vowed. "We are preparing to launch an even more terrible attack against them." Pritam Pandey claims to have AK47s, shot guns and a whole lot of bombs. He also says he can easily buy more assault rifles in India. "These murders will make us stronger. They will give birth to hundreds of anti-Maoist supporters," he added, warning journalists not to call him a dacoit.



Not seeing the forest for the trees

UMID BAGCHAND in KAILALI

Unlike in the east, the Siwalik foothills in western Nepal soar over the tarai plains to nearly 3,000m. The altitude makes these slopes ideal for pine, and the mountains of northern Kailali are famous for their coniferous forests.

Unchecked felling and timber poaching is now endangering the forests. And with the forest cover gone, the Siwaliks, which are made of gravel, sand and soft conglomerate, are much more vulnerable to soil erosion during the monsoon.

Saw mills in the tarai are now carting down up to 50 lorries daily filled with pine logs from the stretch of mountains from Khanidanda in Kailali to Budar in Doti. Additionally, in the past month, local storms have felled 300 pine trees along the Dhangadi-Dadeldhura highway. Environmentalists are worried that at this rate of destruction, the famous pine forests of western Nepal may soon become extinct.

There are thousands of cubic metres of pine trunks piled up along the highway, ready to be loaded on to trucks. In the absence of security, there appears to be a free-for-all among timber contractors. Even if they have permits to fell trees, locals say, they often poach trees from neighbouring districts and protected community forests.

"The best thing that happened to these

forests was the Nepal bandas and the blockades," said one Kailali villager, "at least the Shaktiman trucks couldn't ply for some weeks." But now, it looks like the timber contractors are making up for lost time, and the trucks are roaring up and down the highway to Kailali and Kanchanpur fully loaded with timber again.

"There is no police or army here, so they are quite free to do what they want," says another villager in Phaltunde village. "No one is stopping them." The Maoists aren't concerned about the denudation either, as they are happy enough collecting their 15 percent cut from the timber merchants for their revolutionary coffers.

Villagers in upper Kailali despair for their forests, saying that at the rate the trees are being cut, their VDCs will soon have no forests left. In Doti, the District Forest Officer, Biswanath Mahato, says the felling is being carried out with all the legal provisions: a tender notice in Gorkhapatra and strict limits on forests to be cleared for highway construction.

Mahato says permission has been granted this year to cut 8,000 cubic ft along the highway alignments, 70,000 cubic ft from community forests and 24,000 cubic ft of pine from other areas. The regional forestry director, Diwakar Pandey says the

With no government and little law enforcement, the famous pine forests of western Nepal are vanishing



trees need to be culled for proper management to prevent trees from being destroyed by fires and storms with fire gaps and shelter belts. But Pandey admits that the glut in the timber market means prices have crashed and there aren't enough contractors willing to lift the logs.

When asked, villagers in Kailali doubted that only the stipulated amount of timber was being cut. "This season I earned quite a lot of

money," admitted the driver of a Shaktiman truck during a tea stop along the highway. On condition that we not use his name, he continued: "If they are paying us so much, our bosses must be raking it in. They must be building houses in Kathmandu."

Another truck driver confided: "I am only doing this to support my family, but when I see our forests being destroyed, I feel really sad." ●



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Hari Prasad comes home

This week, Hari Prasad Farhangi returned home after serving a six year sentence in Thailand for drug smuggling. He says he was framed. Hari Prasad spoke to *Nepali Times* about the terrible condition of Nepali inmates there who are hoping against hope for a royal pardon.

NARESH NEWAR

In 1997, Hari Prasad Farhangi met two men named Taranath and Resam in Kathmandu who offered to find him a job in Bangkok. He applied for a Thai visa and agreed to travel with them.

While waiting for a taxi at Bangkok airport after arrival, police swooped on the three of them. Resam was caught with 13kg of hashish, but managed to escape. Taranath and Hari Prasad were caught.

"I was terrified, I had no idea why they were arresting us," Hari Prasad recalls. He could have escaped, but didn't because he hadn't done anything wrong. Later, the Thai customs officer demanded a 20,000 baht bribe but he didn't have that kind of money. Officials seized his passport and possessions and packed him off to Klong Prem-Lard Yao Prison in Bangkok.

Ignoring advice from other Nepali inmates, Hari Prasad hired a lawyer to fight back. His family in Nepal sent all their savings, Rs 600,000, to pay a private lawyer who advised him to plead guilty for a reduced sentence. Hari Prasad refused and got a six years. Later, Taranath told the court Hari Prasad had nothing to do with the drugs, but the judge refused to commute the sentence.

During his jail term, Hari Prasad came across many Nepalis who were in much more serious trouble. There are 12 Nepali inmates at Lard Yao, some of them women. At Bangkwang Prison outside Bangkok, there are 50 Nepali prisoners, many of them serving life or 50-year terms for drug offences. Nearly all claim

innocence and say they were framed by traffickers.

"There are many innocent Nepalis like me jailed without proof," says Hari Prasad, citing the example of a fellow inmate, 54-year-old Wangyal Ghale who is in for life. "Wangyal is in the worst condition and will not survive for very long," Hari Prasad says, "his state of mind has deteriorated, he forgets to eat and hardly sleeps." Wangyal has already spent 20 years in prison, and since inmates have to buy their own medicines, gets no medical support from the prison authorities.

Nuri Sherpa, another 50-year-old at Lard Yao, suffers from chronic ulcer, hypertension and other ailments. Other prisoners have asthma, heart disease, insomnia, kidney and advanced glaucoma. In November 2003, inmate Harka Bahadur Pun died of tuberculosis. At Bombat Prison, prisoner rights activists say, Nepali prisoners face abuse, including being constantly clamped in leg irons.

Nepali prisoners often fare worse than others in Thailand because they don't get money from family to bribe guards, the Nepali embassy in Bangkok takes no interest in them and they are bullied by other inmates. European, Japanese or American prisoners get regular visits from their embassies who help with pocket money as well as extradition procedures.

Luckily for the Nepali prisoners, there are international and Thai activists who have come to the rescue. If it wasn't for Peter Foster and his wife in England, for

instance, Hari Prasad would have no money to pay his airfare home after release.

Another activist is American computer engineer, Ben Parks, who has taken the welfare of Nepali prisoners as a personal crusade. Then there are Christian groups in Thailand who visit the inmates regularly bringing food, medicine and other essentials. As a result, many of the Nepali prisoners have converted to Christianity. The Nepali prisoners now have their own website so that relatives and friends can get updates on their health, release, extradition, or the possibility of a royal pardon. (www.ptet-nepal.org)

Parks has been trying to find ways to push through the extradition of the prisoners to Nepal, and although the Thai government seems amenable there isn't much interest in Kathmandu's officialdom. He is also helping relatives apply for a royal pardon from Thai King Bhumibol on his birthday. The Nepali embassy in Bangkok is supposed to process these pardon applications, but keeps losing them. Says Hari Prasad: "The king's pardon is their only hope."

At 50, Hari Prasad is still not used to not living inside his cell walls, and says he would have died without the support of his family, friends and the people on the other side of the world that he has never met. When he came back, Hari Prasad was welcomed with open arms and a huge party in his honour that reduced him to tears. What now, we asked him. "I will go back to Pokhara and become a farmer," Hari Prasad told us. "No more big dreams." ●

DOMESTIC BRIEFS

Solar purified water

A solar-powered water purification system has been chosen by the EU's Commissioner of the Environment for an International Cooperation Award, saying it has 'massive potential' to battle water-borne diseases, particularly in remote areas in the developing world.

Called Naiade, the units are manufactured by the Dutch firm Nedap and was developed by a 62-year-old specialist in ultraviolet technology, Dick van Dijk. Prototypes are being used and tested in Ghana, Brazil, Turkey and India. An Indian company is presently identifying suitable sites for setting up the Naiade system.

Contaminated water from a river or pond is poured into the Naiade. After passing through two filters, the water is run through the UV unit powered by the solar panel that can produce enough pure water per day to satisfy the average drinking-water needs of a community of 250-300 with 2,500 litres a day. The unit costs just under \$4,000 and if 80 percent of the price is borne by NGOs, the local community can pay for the rest with a soft credit program. "The locals must have a stake in the system, that is better for everyone," says Van Dijk. www.nedapnaiade.com



Building friendship

Work on a new building for Dharan's Mahendra Multiple Campus started with outgoing Indian ambassador to Nepal, Shyam Saran, laying the foundation stone on 22 June. The Indian government has sanctioned Rs 25.91 million for the classroom block, teachers' rooms, library hall and furniture. The campus student roll of over 4,000 students from Sunsari, Morang, Saptari, Dhankuta and the Purbanchal hills will benefit from the building, which is to be called Nepal Bharat Maitri Bhawan to symbolise of Nepal-India ties.

Manakamana cablecar to resume

Manakamana cable car will resume its operation by the weekend after Maoists damaged one of the towers, sources within the company told us. The service to the popular pilgrimage destination near Gorkha stopped after the security forces said they wanted to investigate the explosion. The company denies that it temporarily halted due to the Maoist attack. "We freeze our service every three months for three days and this was our opportunity to do that in order to elevate the poles," was the official reason from Manakamana. He added the bomb near Keyarpani village did not cause any major damage to the cablecar tower. But the Maoists confirmed they had targetted the cablecar service because it regularly transported security officials to Manakamana. The company line was adamant: "This is a public transportation business. We cannot deny services to anyone—be it Maoist or security personnel, king or beggar."



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That is exactly how much Nepal owes foreign creditors, which comes to Rs 10,000 for every man, woman and child in this country

NAVIN SINGH KHADKA

Falling exports and plummeting investment are eating into Nepal's reserves. But an even bigger crisis is looming: a lot of the interest and principle payments of our foreign loans are nearing their due.

Foreign debt now stands at nearly Rs 230 billion. Servicing it is already eating up the biggest chunk of Nepal's budget and amounts to 70 percent of our GDP.

Worse, the government doesn't have a mechanism to calculate exactly how much we owe to whom and how to schedule those payments. In most countries, this is done with sophisticated computer software. Here we depend on the good faith of our donors. When they ask us to pay, we pay.

As more and more of Nepal's past loans mature, its servicing is biting off an ever larger chunk of our foreign reserves. The Financial Comptroller General Office admits the highest share of the government expenditure went to debt repayment in the last three years.

Last year, approximately 20 percent of the total budget expenditure was spent on servicing domestic and foreign loans. The percentage of regular expenditure is almost 30 percent.

The grace period of Nepal's major longterm loans have now ended, increasing the debt burden. Between 2000 and 2002, debt servicing increased by nearly 10 percent, depleting the country's foreign exchange reserves. "Apart



MIN BAJRACHARYA

from debt servicing, foreign loans have more than doubled since the 1990s," says economist Bishwambher Pyakural.

The alarm bells should be clanging, but in the corridors of the Financial Comptroller General's Office it seems to be business as usual. Officialdom can't even calculate the amortisation on loans. "We don't yet have a mechanism to calculate and tally what the donors claim as the

principle and the interest to be paid," one official admitted sheepishly. "We have been servicing the debt purely on the good faith of the donors. They send us the bill and we simply pay them."

With such blind faith, the comptroller's office has ended up paying interest of even those loans whose principles were paid long ago. "It has happened many times in the past," one Finance Ministry official said.

The Asian Development Bank is trying to equip the government agencies to deal with debt servicing through the Strengthening Institutional Capacity for Effective Public Debt Management Project. It has introduced the Commonwealth Secretariat Debt Recording

Management System, a software that helps update debt repayment schedules. The trouble is, no one has been trained to work this software.

"There seems to be some problem about training the staff at FCGO," Finance Ministry Joint Secretary Krishna Gyawali told us. "We are aware that our debt management is not satisfactory."

Paperwork on loans received since the 1950s are swathed in dusty cloth and stacked on top of the steel cabinets where insects have been feasting on them for decades. The communication gap between the Finance Ministry and the comptroller's office doesn't help calculate amortisation since donor commitment, the actual disbursement, the interest rate and

the negotiated exchange rate all need to be considered.

Yet, Nepali officials exude pride in the fact that Nepal has never defaulted on a foreign loan. "We have paid on the dot every time in the last 50 years," said one official proudly. The ADB project in a recent study showed Nepal's loans are highly concessional and the real rate of interest is less than the economic growth rate. "That is why such loans are deemed to be sustainable," says Bhuvan Bajracharya, team leader of the project at the Finance Ministry.

Luckily, the devaluation of the US dollar has already saved the country some Rs 700 million in repayment of dollar denominated loans in the current fiscal year. The money has been used to offset part of the Rs 77 billion internal debt, officials said.

The IMF's Nepal resident representative, Sukhwinder Singh, says Nepal's debt service ratio is still not so bad. "Considering the net present value, Nepal's foreign loan component comes down to 22 percent of the GDP and the loan repayment ratio to the GDP is 3.6 percent which is quite normal by international standards," he told us.

But some economists say Nepal can't afford to service its loan burden and should seek debt relief from donors and join the group of Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPIC) to get the debt relief. "We should try to get our loans written off," says expert Devendra Raj Pandey. "Especially because we know these are loans given to past authoritarian regimes and are now being paid by ordinary Nepalis."

But Finance Ministry officials say joining the HIPIC club would be a shame on Nepal. "We have never been a defaulter, so why should we be called HIPIC?" they ask. "We will lose all our hard-earned international credibility." ●

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BIZ NEWS

Video stars

It was merely a matter of time before a video music award was instituted in the grand tradition of corporate-sponsored awards. Over the last two years, the music video industry has grown in tandem to the leaps made in private sector television. What started as an in-house exercise quickly became a popular and lucrative niche with young innovators at the helm. In recognition of the convergence between music and visuals, Close-Up, in association with Channel Nepal, presents the first Close-Up Video Music Awards 2061 on 26 June at the BICC, with a live telecast on Channel Nepal from 4PM. Various nominees from the 15 categories, which include a Critic's Award and Viewer's Choice, will be performing at the event.

Yeti's SAABs



Yeti Airlines has brought a second SAAB 340B 36-seater aircraft. The Swedish-made commuter turboprops will be used in the Biratnagar, Pokhara, Bhairawa, Baratpur and Nepalganj sectors and will make the airline the biggest domestic operator. Yeti already flies Twin Otters to Lukla, Phaplu, Jumla, Dolpo, Simikot, Taplejung, Manang, Simra and Rumjatar, offering cargo flights to remote mountain airstrips. (See interview with Yeti General Manager Vijay Shrestha below).

Sky train

Qatar Airways has launched an innovative Fly & Rail service in Germany last week with Deutsche Bahn. Qatar's air passengers can connect with nearly 6,000 German railway stations as part of the program, allowing travellers to make simultaneous rail travel plans, cutting down on paperwork and ensuring reliability and comfort.

NEW PRODUCTS

NO COMPROMISES: Translated, that is exactly what the new model of Yamaha Libero Lx offers in its 'No Samjhauta Bike'. The 106cc engine provides 85km/l and is priced at Rs 103,900. To celebrate 25 years of successful business, Morang Auto Works, the authorised dealers in Nepal, will let you ride away with a brand new Libero Lx after paying just 25 percent of the amount followed by 36 easy monthly installments.



STEELY RESOLVE: After two decades in the business, Pashupati Iron & Steel recently introduced Pashupati Turboquench TMT Steel Bar to the Nepali market. With high strength and ductility combined with excellent durability, the product is said to be ideal for our earthquake-prone country.



SELF-PROJECTION: Boxlight Corporation USA is the world's premier resource for digital projection equipment. Its multimedia projectors, based on LCD and DLP technology, are available in portable, ultraportable, multipurpose, fixed and home theatre models. Visit CAS Trading House at ComputerLand Building in Putalisadak.



The Ugly Nepali

It is impossible to avoid the tipsy junketeer while travelling

These days, your Beed travels with fingers crossed that a fellow Nepali will not be in the seat next to him. This isn't an indictment of Nepali travellers, but the last few close encounters bruised his already shattered pride

ECONOMIC SENSE
Artha Beed



in being a second class global citizen based on his country of origin. Having finally made it into the aircraft, and upon opening to the international pages of a foreign newspaper, one finds Nepal right there next to hot spots such as Sudan, Haiti and Rwanda. Unlike in Hollywood, on the road bad publicity does translate to bad news. Some effects are tangible, like the harassment by immigration. But the other manifestation of how low our country's stock have sunk is our own lack of self-esteem.

The planeloads of overseas workers heading out with a carry-on bag full of dreams at least prop up the economy, although they are treated like the scum of the earth by Nepali immigration, stewardesses and airport officials at the other end. No, it is the parasitic professional government junketeer who gets on my nerves. In what must be a classic reversal of roles, they become the boorish and uncouth Ugly Nepali as soon as they get into the cabin. After the second whiskey somewhere over the Indo-Gangetic plains, they are already getting on the nerves. The questions begin,

starting with the classic opener, "Ani, ghar kata?"

A rapid descent into a hell of minute unsolicited details follow, right down to a tacky comparison on daily allowances for the trip. Donor-funded junketeers are especially offensive: they narrate and compare notes on subjects like whether the ticket was funded, the best way to squeeze out a few extra dollars from the sponsors and the fantastic bargain shopping.

Given the faintest hint of encouragement, your fellow Nepali will tell you exactly how to wangle a different route through another city to visit the second cousin from your maternal side. It is all an extension of the ego, an unobtrusive challenge to your own worth. Without any qualms they will divulge details on how much "extra" they made.

Bolstered by alcohol, the intrepid Nepali junketeer on his way home will seek to inflict himself on any foreigner within speaking distance. One incident stands out in memory: a trapped Englishman was subjected to winding narrative on the land of Mt Everest, Pashupatinath, the god-fearing natives followed by the Maoist insurgency and conspiracy theories on the royal massacre. In such a situation, the emergency exit looks like a



tantalisingly tempting escape.

In the interest of upholding the good name of Nepali nationhood, we should apportion a part of our junket funds to give our roving ambassadors a crash course on travel etiquette and interpersonal skills. Travelling Nepalis are part of Brand Nepal® and we can't afford to get it wrong. But till we get it right, the Beed will continue to travel with an extra copy of *Nepali Times* to act as a handy junketeer deterrent. ●

Yeti fills gap in domestic capacity



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Nepali Times: Your expansion must mean business is good.

Vijay Shrestha: In the international sector, Nepal is making some progress by having an open sky policy. In the domestic segment, however, people see the rush for tickets and assume that there has been a growth in passenger traffic. But that is because capacity dropped by half after Necon Air's collapse. Many misinterpret this as growth, it's not. There hasn't been a significant increase in the sector in the past two years.

But haven't security hassles on buses boosted demand for air seats?

Not really. Because of economic non-performance, there is a general slump in travel, both by air and highway. Some passengers find it difficult to get tickets, though their numbers are not very high. There isn't much of a business to cash in on under the current security situation. There isn't too much

surplus demand.

So how come you are adding two new SAABs?

We had three Twin Otters serving STOL airfields and covered 70 percent of that market. But we decided to get the two SAAB aircraft to fill the vacuum left by two Necon ATR42s being out of the picture and decided to jump into trunk routes also. Over the last six years we have grown into a company that has provided sufficient services to remote areas—more than any other airline. We'd also like to operate internationally in the near future.

What lead to the shakeout in the domestic airline industry?

It has to do with how the operators look at the entire market. The bottom line for airlines is economics. The profit margin is very slim—about three percent—even when things are going well.

Yeti Airlines is on an ambitious expansion drive, and has become the airline with the largest domestic network in Nepal. But this not because demand for domestic flights is up, says General Manager Vijay Shrestha in this interview with *Nepali Times*.

Over the last few years, the global airline market has gone down radically. In Nepal, since the GDP is plummeting, it reflects on the airline industry too. The airlines that closed used gas guzzlers like Avros, and as soon as better and newer aircraft were introduced, passengers choose to fly in them.

Given increasing air accidents, are we to deduce air safety is being compromised?

Actually, Nepal's air safety record is very good. The accidents and incidents that took place in the past had to do with the weather. CAAN has never compromised air safety. Every airline knows safety enhances profit. An accident slashes sales growth. Airlines can't afford to have their planes grounded after an incident. Nepali airlines have small fleets and if one aircraft is lost, capacity goes down significantly. If we compromise on safety, we put our entire business at risk.

Any reason why private operators ignore remote areas?

It isn't so bad, if you consider the traffic growth in the last 10-11 years. After RNAC withdrew from remote areas, private operators have filled the gap. For instance, the traffic from Nepalganj to Jumla has grown by more than 70 percent. Passenger traffic has grown even in remote areas.



The British Film Festival returns with a new goodybag of movies

Brit flicks

If it seems that everyone everywhere is watching the same movies, then we have good news for you. It's that time of year when movie buffs flock eagerly to Gopi Krishna for the fourth annual British Film Festival. This year's selection (see p11) promises to be an entertaining array of comedy, thriller, adventure and epic journey to showcase modern British films.

It has been a good year for films made in the UK: many did very well in world box office takings and nearly 75

films were produced with British investment or talent. It was a welcome relief from 2002, when the industry went into a slump after waning Hollywood investment that had become a mainstay for UK film production in the 1990s.

Though the US is still a huge investor, the UK film industry continues to make its distinctive mark in cinema. The tenuous partnership, if it can be called that, is a balancing act between artistic integrity and summer blockbusters. More often

than not, films co-produced with US moviemakers means more UK movies are appearing on international markets. Barbara Hewitt, director at the British Council in Kathmandu, says, "The problem is finding the stories to engage audiences used to Hollywood product, but Britain is lucky to possess enough good directors, actors and technicians to make much of the rest of the world distinctly envious."

Recently the UK Film Council decided on a new mandate: commercial cinema would be at the heart of the

British film industry but without compromising on quality. The end product would be distinctly British but with the appeal of greater diversity.

The organisers at the British Council are excited about the selection at this year's festival. The five films that made the grade—each a powerful representation of modern British cinema—does exactly that, taking into account a patchwork of ethnicity both in the UK and here in Kathmandu. "Every story is a

compelling drama of people struggling to survive and make sense of their lives, winning but sometimes failing, in ways we all recognise. Yet each story emerges from a totally different context and this tells us much about the rich multicultural world of modern Britain," says Hewitt.

Discerning young Nepali moviegoers are the target audience for the festival this year. It should be an exciting alternative to the usual Bollywood and Hollywood fare. ●

(Sradha Basnyat)

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28 June

Touching the Void

Running time 106 mins

Certification 15

Director Kevin Macdonald

Starring Joe Simpson, Simon Yates, Brendan Mackey, Nicholas Aaron



This film is based on the international bestseller by renowned climber Joe Simpson, which describes one of the most extraordinary true stories of survival and adventure of our time. The book recounts a climb Simpson and his partner, Simon Yates, undertook in the Peruvian Andes in 1985. The two young and ambitious mountaineers set off to scale the hitherto unclimbed west face of Siula Grande, a remote and treacherous 21,000ft peak. Starting the descent through a blizzard, Simpson fell, shattering his leg. A heroic battle for survival unfolded in which both men were faced with life or death decisions which test the human spirit to its limit. Simpson and Yates returned to Siula Grande together for the first time to retell their story for the camera.

29 June

Dirty Pretty Things

Running time 97 mins

Certification 15

Director Stephen Frears

Starring Audrey Tautou, Sergi Lopez, Chiwetel Ejiofor



In this urban thriller, an African night porter enlists the help of a prostitute, a Turkish chambermaid and a Chinese mortuary technician to solve a bizarre murder. Set in a world of asylum seekers that lies behind the familiar urban metropolis. This is a tale of two cities, both of them in London. Pietter Okwe is a doctor who was framed for murder in Libreville and now scrapes a living in London, driving mini-cabs and working as a night porter in a West End tourist hotel. When he discovers a human heart in one of the hotel rooms he knows that as an illegal alien working without papers he cannot ask too many questions. Okwe struggles with his sense of injustice as evidence emerges that the hotel is being used to remove human organs from third world donors. Finally, with the aid of his motley crew, he investigates the murder and enforces a strange kind of poetic justice. *Dirty Pretty Things* explores a Dickensian landscape of rag trade sweatshops, hotel kitchens and mini-cab venues in a London that most Londoners never see.

30 June

The Warrior

Running time 86 mins

Certification 15

Director Asif Kapadia

Starring Irfan Khan



A timeless tale of an epic journey from the deserts of Rajasthan to the snowcapped peaks of the Himalayas, the story follows Lafcadia, head of a small band of warriors employed by a tyrannical lord who rules the region from his crumbling fort in the desert. The warriors are ordered to wipe out a village that is late with its payments. The warriors set off on horseback

and proceed to raze the rustic village to the ground. In the midst of the slaughter Lafcadia has a mystical encounter with a young girl. He drops his sword, vows to never kill again and he decides to escape his violent life. He sets off with his young son, Katiba, for his native village in the mountains.

1 July

Anita and Me

Running time 92 mins

Certification 15

Director Metin Huseyin

Starring Chandeepp Uppal, Anna Brewster, Sanjeev Bhaskar



It is 1972 and Meena, a 12-year-old, lives in the village of Tollington in Britain. She is the daughter of Indian parents who have come to England to give her a better life. Her idyllic adolescence, surrounded by eccentric relatives and friends, is disrupted by the arrival of Anita Rutter and her dysfunctional family. At 14, blonde, aloof, beautiful, outrageous and sassy, Anita is everything Meena thinks she wants to be. Meena wheedles her way into Anita's life, but the arrival of a baby brother, teenage hormones, impending entrance exams for the posh grammar school and a motorcycling rebel without a future, threaten to turn her salad days sour. *Anita and Me* paints a comic, poignant, compassionate and colourful portrait of village life in the era of flares, power cuts, glam rock, decimalisation and Ted Heath.

2 July

About A Boy

Running time 101 mins

Certification 15

Director Paul Weitz and Chris Weitz

Starring Hugh Grant, Toni Collette, Rachel Weisz



About a Boy tells the story of Will, a rich, child-free and irresponsible Londoner in his thirties, who, in search of available women, invents an imaginary son and starts attending single parent meetings. As a result of one of his liaisons he meets Marcus, a strange 12-year-old boy with problems at school. Gradually, Will and Marcus become friends and as Will teaches Marcus how to be a cool kid, Marcus helps Will to finally grow up.



Venue: Gopi Krishna Cinema, Kathmandu
Movie Timing: 6:30 PM

Free tickets available in advance from the reception at the British Council, Lainchaur, remaining tickets on the day of the film from 6:10 PM at the cinema.
Contact: Sangha Bhattarai, 4410798

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Learning fear

Nepal Samacharpatra, 22 June

नेपाल समाचारपत्र

Seventy-four percent of students in Maoist-affected areas are suffering from the fear that they might be abducted either by Maoist rebels or security forces, a recent survey in Gulmi reveals.

Of the 281 high school students from Dhurkot Bastu and Jaisithok villages that took part in the study, 74 percent said they were afraid that the Maoist rebels or the security force would forcibly take them again. "That fear haunts us all the time, whether we are attending class or even our way to or from school," said Ramita Pandey and Ranju Bhandari of Himalaya Higher Secondary School. "We feel afraid even when we study late at night."



KIRAN PANDAY

Perhaps more alarming is that 14 percent said that they looked forward to learning more if the rebels take them. The surveyed students underwent Maoist indoctrination that lasted anywhere between a few hours to over a day. Most students had to walk up to 10 hours at a stretch to reach the rebel camps. They were told about the negative aspects of the present curriculum and promised that the 'people's education' would be scientific and practical. Most of the students were too afraid for their own safety to comprehend or embrace the revolutionary rhetoric. Their biggest concern was a military ambush along the way and being caught in the crossfire.

The students said that the rebels used them as labourers during Maoist programs and training. They were made to carry firewood, stones and soil, build roads, clear drains and grounds, cook food and clean utensils. The students said they had no choice but to do what they were told after the rebels threatened to send them to Rolpa and Rukum as guerillas if they defied orders.

Parents are equally worried. "When our children are taken, their education is disrupted and we are left to worry about the security forces thinking we are Maoists," they say. Bright students and those who can afford it have left the villages to pursue their studies in safer urban areas.

During the survey, even primary level students attended Maoist political programs and the second-in-command at the local 'people's government', Dhurkot Rajasthal Bishnu Bhandari, said data could be collected only after permission was granted by the rebels.

The survey established that rebels go to the schools more often than the security forces. When soldiers come, they force teachers to lick off Maoist slogans from school walls before making them erase it. "When we, the caretakers of the students are ridiculed in front of the students they are traumatised," says Madan Kumar Singh, a teacher. He says if they don't erase the slogans, the security forces punish them, and if they do, they become rebel targets. What the students want is simple: "We need peace, we don't want to live with fear. May the war end forever and let us go back to school to study."

Constituent assembly, or else

Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai in Kantipur, 22 June

कान्तिपुर

The appointment of Sher Bahadur Deuba as prime minister, the exit of the UML from the agitation and Girija Prasad Koirala's anti-constituent assembly statements prove that foreign powers are at play in Nepal. The international power centres are of the opinion that the outlet of the present political crisis is possible only when the trilateral conflict among the king, the parliamentary parties and the rebels can be transformed into a bilateral tussle. Therefore, we see the game of bringing the king and the parliamentary parties together to pit them against the revolutionary people's power—a new political strategy of the old regime.

If Girija's statement against the constituent assembly has to do with his concern that Deuba's Congress and the UML will now support the royalists' conditional constituent assembly, then the issue should be taken seriously. What makes it more serious is the fact that some foreign quarters are also pushing the idea of a conditional constituent assembly.

We have already made it clear that we will not agree with such a proposal. This would be similar to an improved Panchayat system, which proved to be trap. Just when the tide is turning in favour of a constituent assembly, even in the Congress camp, why is Koirala against the idea? Unless the mystery behind this becomes clear, we cannot easily and specifically talk about such a development. If Koirala means that there cannot be free and fair elections for a constituent assembly trapped between the guns of the royal army and the people's army, we



KIRAN PANDAY

must eliminate such fear.

With regard to this concern, quite some time ago, we stressed the importance of the involvement of the United Nations. Since it is the army that becomes the decisive issue in politics, we have been talking about its management in a way that it becomes acceptable to all sides. The parliamentary forces have always feared the people's liberation army that has risen from among the exploited people. They believe that the royal army, which has always been the puppet of the Shah and Rana families after the Sugauli Treaty, is common and neutral. This diffidence on the part of the parliamentary forces is suicidal.

One must understand that the slogan for a constituent assembly is not ours. We have always maintained that our ultimate destination is a people's republic. World history and that of our own country shows that it is the parliamentary forces that have always raised the issue of a constituent assembly. They should have made it their prime demand because it is the

supreme form of the capitalist republicanism.

We considered the idea of a constituent assembly, given the historical transformation of Nepali society from feudalism to capitalism and the geopolitical situation. In other words, a constituent assembly is not our desire but our compulsion—one that is fraught with many dangers. In many countries, parties like ours have got bogged down in the quagmire of a constituent assembly but we are determined to march ahead. This, however, does not mean that we are merely paying lip service to the idea and will not accept the results of a constituent assembly.

If it is done in a free and unconditional environment, we are ready to accept the challenge and this is our commitment. But if the leadership in the main parliamentary parties still balk at a constituent assembly and if various international quarters continue their conspiracy to isolate us by bringing the king and the parties together, history could take a turn that will make this whole issue redundant. This is not being said in anger, it is a clear declaration made in with total comprehension.

Maoist tax

Rajdhani, 21 June

राजधानी

SINDHULI—The Maoists have announced in all the villages that the people no longer have to give donations. Instead, the rebels will levy taxes based on personal income. So far only teachers have been subjected to this ruling. Previously they handed over a month's salary every four months but now they will have to pay a yearly tax amounting to 13 days of their salary. Farmers are not exempt: they must pay for every



Man : Robinson
Pockets : Acquittals
Suitcase : Narcotics

राजधानी Uttam Nepal in Rajdhani, 20 June

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



"We human rights activists have been unable to do anything."

Activist Sudhip Pathak, president of Nepal Human Rights Organisation, in an interview with *Deshantar*, 20 June

buffalo and goat as well as on acreage. Not even the poorest farmers are spared taxes with families are forced to pay based on the worth of their homes. Tiled and tin roofs will be taxed more than thatched roofs. The rebels have also ordered NGOs and community-based organisations not to start any projects without their written permission. Local government workers, including the VDC secretary, will not be allowed to work in the village anymore. The government budget allocated for the VDC will be used as at the Maoists' discretion.

Khaobadi cop

Kantipur, 21 June

कान्तिपुर

DHANGADI – Villagers in Dhangadi captured a policeman who has been accused of terrorising locals and handed him over to the Kailali district police station. For the past three days, police constable Dhan Bahadur Chand had been robbing passers-by near Campus Chowk in broad daylight by brandishing a fake pistol. And at night, he extorted restaurant owners, robbed motorcyclists and harassed girls. He intimidated the people by calling himself a Maoist and even looted the deputy chief of Dhangadi. Fortunately, the villagers decided not to take this and got together to capture him. After beating him severely, they

handed Chand over to the police, who assured them that strict action would be taken.

Rabid danger

Rajdhani, 21 June

राजधानी

MAHOTTARI – Over 40 people will die of rabies if medicine does not reach them on time. For the last two weeks, the Epidemiology and Disease Control unit of the Health Department have been unable to supply anti-rabies vaccines to the District Hospital in Jaleswor. Last month alone, 2,500ml of vaccine were supplied but the hospital ran out after treating over 60 cases of dog bite. The unavailability of the vaccine has forced many Nepalis to spend large amounts of money traveling across the border to India for treatment. About 10-15 Nepalis with dog bites visit the hospital everyday, only to be deprived of treatment due to a shortage of medicine. Local health workers point out that the district hospital gives free treatment to Nepali as well as Indian patients, who come from across the border for free medicines.

Branch in Birganj

Rajdhani, 20 June

राजधानी

Five months ago, when the Council of Ministers asked for permission to open a Foreign



MIN BAJRACHARYA

Ministry branch office in Birganj, the okay came through. The process to set up the office is to begin soon. This marks the first time the Foreign Ministry is opening an office outside the capital and undoubtedly has to do with India establishing its consular general's office at Birganj. The branch office will coordinate between government offices and the consular general and commercial dealings will be the priority. An under secretary-level official of the Foreign Ministry will be heading the branch office team. Although India has yet to formally inaugurate the consular general's office that was established three months ago, business has already started. (Nepalnews.com)

Umesh's nightmare

Nepal Samacharpatra, 22 June

नेपाल समाचारपत्र

"Chant our slogans or face the people's army punishment," a Maoist militant warned Umesh Mishra. The 12-year-old schoolboy was forced to run shouting Maoist slogans with the rest of the 200 students and teachers who were abducted on 20 May from the Aiselukharka School in Sindhupalchok. All students and teachers of Class Six and above were force marched to the Maoists meetings. Umesh, now at a hospital in Kathmandu, still shivers with fear. The Maoists forced the group to run up the mountains shouting revolutionary slogans. When his principal became breathless and couldn't shout slogans, they made him carry their flag all the way up to Sipapokhre village. Umesh was so traumatised that he developed heart problems and is now at Sahid Gangalal Heart Centre in the Valley. He has recurring nightmares about the Maoists.



"We were made to run all morning, forced to listen to speeches in the sun all day long, and then we had to walk all the way home in the evening," he recalls. Umesh's health started deteriorating. First, he just had fever, but later he was diagnosed with a heart ailment.

This was the second time he was abducted. The rebels took him and his friends a fortnight earlier for military training but Umesh managed to escape. When he was taken to the training area again, he saw his classmate armed with a gun and dressed in combat fatigues. "If they had taken me, I'd have ended up like him," says Umesh. His elder brother, Purna, says many schoolchildren in Sindhupalchok live in fear of Maoists threats and abductions. He said: "Some join the people's army, others live in fear, there is no other alternative."



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Crossing the bridge

Fair elections in Afghanistan will be impossible without security

JIM LOBE in WASHINGTON

While more than 140,000 US troops in Iraq continue trying to impose security in advance of the 30 June handover of limited sovereignty to the new Iraqi administration, the security situation in nearby Afghanistan continues to deteriorate. With national elections just three months away, observers here say that tribal warlords, as well as resurgent Taliban forces, appear as strong as at any time since the Taliban was ousted 30 months ago, making it increasingly unlikely that the balloting, if it goes forward as scheduled, will be judged free and fair by international and other observers.

"Trends are going the wrong way," according to Mark Schneider, the Washington director of the International Crisis Group (ICG), a Brussels-based conflict resolution think tank. "Militias around the country pose a threat to the possibility of any credible elections taking place." While US and international media attention has been focused almost exclusively on the problems encountered by US occupation forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, where the US has some 20,000 troops mostly chasing Taliban and al-Qaeda forces, has been pushed far into the background.

That was made painfully clear in the US last week when visiting President Hamid Karzai received



virtually no media attention despite his address to Congress and his joint appearance with President George W. Bush for a White House Rose Garden press conference, during which he remained largely silent as his host fended off questions about US abuses of detainees in both Afghanistan and Iraq and the domestic economy.

Officially, Washington remains upbeat about Afghanistan. Addressing a group at the Center for Strategic and International Studies

(CSIS) Monday, Ambassador William Taylor, the State Department coordinator for Afghanistan, insisted that UN officials had registered more than four million voters to date and that as many as 100,000 more were being registered each day. He said about 36 percent of the registrants are women. The UN estimates the total number of eligible voters in Afghanistan at a little more than 10 million. "If we get at least six million voters registered," Taylor said, "that

will be a critical mass."

At the same time, the envoy admitted that the security situation leaves much to be desired and could easily interfere with the fairness of the upcoming election, which will determine the presidency and the Lower House of parliament. "This is not going to be pretty," he said, noting that local militias, many fuelled by revenues from the thriving opium trade, are likely to practice intimidation against voters, particularly in the balloting for

parliament.

US military casualties, although still minimal compared to Iraq, have risen sharply, even as Washington increased the number of troops it is devoting to fighting the Taliban and al-Qaeda in the mainly Pashtun south and southeast, particularly along the border with Pakistan. In addition, more aid workers—at least 18, five of them foreign nationals—have been killed by suspected Taliban forces than at any time since US-backed forces ousted the Taliban in late 2001. As a result, many NGOs have withdrawn their staff, bringing reconstruction efforts to a standstill.

In addition to the US troops, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) has some 6,500 peacekeepers in Afghanistan as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), all of whom, however, are confined to Kabul. Another 250 German-led troops make up a provincial reconstruction team (PRT) assigned to Kunduz, a relatively quiet northern city. NATO pledged to provide the equipment (including helicopters) and troops to supply another four PRTs to strategic cities around the country in order to extend Karzai's authority well into the countryside and stabilise the situation through the deployment of rapid-reaction forces there, but these have not been forthcoming—to the great frustration of the US, as well as Karzai himself. ● (IPS)

"My life is important"

After the beheading of Kim Sun-il, public pressure grows against troop deployment

AHN MI-YOUNG in SEOUL



Although the government announced that its decision to deploy 3,000 troops to Iraq is unlikely to be swayed by the beheading of a South Korean hostage, mounting public protests, however, could force it to cancel the deployment.

In a video broadcast Sunday on Arabic-language television network Al-Jazeera, Kim Sun-il cried in English, "Korean soldiers, please get out of here. I don't want to die. I don't want to die. I know that your life is important, but my life is important." Kim worked for a South

Korean supplier to the American military and was abducted on 17 June while making a delivery in the Iraqi city of Fallujah.

His captors from Jamaat al-Tawhid and Jihad (Monotheism and Jihad), the militant group led by Abu Musab al-Zarqwi in Iraq, threatened to behead him if Seoul did not cancel its plans by Tuesday to send troops to Iraq. The deadline passed and the beheaded body of the 33-year-old translator was found on the road between Baghdad and Falluja. But South Korea's President Roh Moo-Hyun was adamant and said he will

send more troops to Iraq despite the beheading.

"The South Korean plan to send troops to Iraq is not to engage in hostilities against Iraqis or other Arab people but to help reconstruction and restoration in Iraq," Roh said in a brief, nationally televised speech Wednesday morning after news of the killing stunned the country. On Monday some 700 Koreans took to the capital's streets in a candlelight vigil, urging Kim's release and calling on the government to cancel the troop dispatch. More protests are planned this week.

A coalition of 365 civil organisations announced it would hold massive protests and candlelight vigils this weekend in central Seoul to force the government to reconsider its decision to send 3,000 troops to Iraq's Arbil area in early August. The coalition also wants the South Korean president to order the pull back of 660 medics and engineers already in Iraq.

At the heart of the matter is South Korea's relationship with the United States. Seoul is very keen to strengthen its relationship with the US, thereby winning more support from Washington for a peaceful end to a long-running dispute over North Korea's nuclear weapons development. When the deployment of the 3,000 troops is complete, South Korea will be the biggest coalition partner in Iraq after the US and UK. ● (IPS)

Fundamental

\$900 billion on arms, \$60 billion on aid

STEFANIA BIANCHI in BRUSSELS

Arms-exporting governments are undermining the United Nations Millennium Development Goals by diverting vital resources from crucial areas such as health and education, warns a new report. New research by Oxfam International and Amnesty International says that arms sales are 'diverting resources from areas such as health and education, as well as undermining the security and human rights of the population'. The report 'Guns or Growth', released on 22 June, says six developing countries—Oman, Syria, Burma, Pakistan, Eritrea and Burundi—spend more on arms than they do on health and education combined.

"Government failure to stick to their own promises on arms exports means that children are denied an education, AIDS sufferers are not getting treatment and thousands are dying needlessly," Barbara Stocking, director of Oxfam said. According to the report, an average \$22 billion is spent on arms by countries in Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and Africa every year. This sum would have enabled those countries to put every child in school and reduce child mortality by two thirds by 2015—two of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).



I usually limit myself in my newspaper commentaries to my area of expertise, economics. But as an American, I am so horrified by what has happened in my country—and what my country has done to others over the past two years—that I feel I must speak out.

COMMENT
Joseph Stiglitz



I believe American abuses of human rights and the canons of civilised peoples that have come to light in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay, and the more horrendous abuses that almost surely will come to light later, are not merely the act of aberrant individuals. They are the result of a Bush administration that has trampled on human rights and international law, including the Geneva conventions, and tried to undermine basic democratic protections ever since it took office.

Sadly, torture and other atrocities do happen in war but I believe the Bush administration is responsible for creating a climate in which international law and democratic processes have been disregarded.

The Bush administration trampled on citizens' basic right to know what their government is doing, refusing, for example, to disclose who was on the task force that shaped its energy policy—though one really doesn't need that information to see that it was shaped by the oil industry and for the oil industry.

When abuses occur in one area, they can quickly spread to others. For weeks the Bush administration kept the report on abuses in Iraqi prisons from the American people by pressuring CBS not to air the photographs in its possession. Similarly, it was only through the use of the Freedom of Information Act that the dramatic photographs of the coffins of US soldiers coming home were finally made public.

Defenders of President Bush, Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld and the military emphasise the difficulty of the task they face in Iraq, human frailty and fallibility and the fact that there are always a few "rotten apples". America's system of government, however, recognises all of this and attempts to guard against it. Had the letter and spirit of these safeguards been followed, we would not have been in this war at all, or at least not alone.

Wars should not be undertaken based on the judgment of one individual and his cabal. Had Bush only gone along with the democratic processes enshrined in the UN Charter, the trauma of Iraq need not have occurred.

We know that individuals and institutions make mistakes. Such mistakes are all the more likely in times of stress. We have to put in place rules and procedures, safeguards, a system of due process, to make it *more likely* that justice is done. It is clear that the checks needed to prevent abuse in the Iraqi and Afghan prisons were

The lawless sheriff

Something has gone wrong with the system of checks and balances in America's democracy



not in place, and that the Bush administration had created a climate that made such abuses more likely, if not inevitable.

Something has gone wrong with the system of checks and balances in America's democracy.

Congress and the press should have checked the president. The international community tried. Unfortunately, the global system of international law and governance remains too weak to prevent the determined

misbehaviour of the president of the world's most powerful country if he is hell bent on starting a war on his own. ● (© Project Syndicate)

Joseph E Stiglitz is Professor of Economics at Columbia University.

imbalance

The goals agreed by heads of state in September 2000 aim to reduce poverty, improve access to basic services, bring disease under control and ensure universal primary education by 2015. The Oxfam-Amnesty report says it is 'shocking how few governments make a serious attempt to consider the impact on development of their arms exports. Paying lip service to such a commitment means that scarce resources are being diverted from the fight against poverty, and millions are suffering as a result'.

In 2002, arms delivered to Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and Africa represented more than two-thirds of the value of all arms deliveries worldwide. Of the total arms exported to these regions, 90 percent came from the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.

In 2001 Tanzania spent 40 million dollars on a British military Watchman radar system—enough to provide healthcare for 3.5 million people. In 1999 South Africa agreed to purchase armaments—including frigates, submarines, aircraft and helicopters—for \$6 billion. This money could have purchased treatment with combination therapy for all five million South African AIDS sufferers for two years. The report says that governments that sell arms can assess the impact it will have on poverty, and argues that governments should agree to an international arms trade treaty to control the arms trade and safeguard sustainable development and human rights.

Paul Eavis, director of Saferworld, a group that promotes new strategies to increase human security and to prevent armed violence, says governments should be ashamed. "Inappropriate arms sales are responsible for entrenching and exacerbating poverty," he said in a statement. "Despite assurances, most governments are still only playing lip service to assessing arms sales against their impact on poverty. To ensure we have strict international controls we need an arms trade treaty."

Of 17 main arms exporting countries surveyed—Argentina, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Sweden, Turkey, Britain, Ukraine and the US—the report found that only Britain and the Netherlands had policies involving the government department responsible for development in export decision-making. Only four countries—Bulgaria, Sweden, Britain and the Netherlands—had ever refused a sale on the grounds it might undermine sustainable development. Tuesday's report follows a warning from World Bank President James Wolfensohn last month that there is already a "fundamental imbalance" between global defence spending of \$900 billion compared with \$325 billion on agricultural subsidies and only \$60 billion on aid. ● (IPS)

TERIOS

ART ON GOOD ROADS... ARTIST ON BAD ONES



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Bill's oral office

Don't look here for a personal account of Monica Lewinsky



some insight into why the CTBT failed, why US policy in the Middle East went on the rocks and why the Republican Party refused to pay up on UN dues. Nevertheless, don't expect much rational thinking into why Clinton decided to bomb Iraq especially when he admits, 'Iraq was no higher than number six on my list of priorities'.

While one does not get a feeling of anger over all the problems that Clinton faced in his life at the White House, you do get hints of frustration over the way Washington works, or doesn't. After all is said and done, at least you believe Bill Clinton when he quips, 'There are no Good and Bad people in Washington, there are just people who are Right and Wrong'.

I was glad this book ended when it did, for after hundreds of pages of thinking about how the US government is steering the people of America down an ever slipperier slope of social decay, increased colonialism and an alarming rise in nationalism, I was ready for Bill Clinton's undying optimism: 'We are more alike than we are different. On a global level, all we have to do is to see that there are more similarities between us all than there are differences'. That's the good news, as is the news that this presidential memoir, while definitely self-serving, is indeed very interesting and is a must-read for all American history buffs. ***1/2

My Life by Bill Clinton is 900 pages long and will barely fit in your carry-on bag on your next flight to Jomsom, but it is the one new book that is destined for every bestseller list this summer (it's already number one on Amazon.com). But if reading a US presidential memoir is not your idea of

REVIEW
Jiggy Gaton

fun, sample what Clinton has to say about his personal 'War and Peace' on the American presidency and his experiences there: 'Most presidential memoirs are dull and self-serving; I wanted to write a memoir on the Presidency that was interesting and self-serving.'

Clinton's new book is not just about being the 42nd US president, and all that went on in the White House between 1993-2001. It is the story of how a simple Bill from a broken home in rural

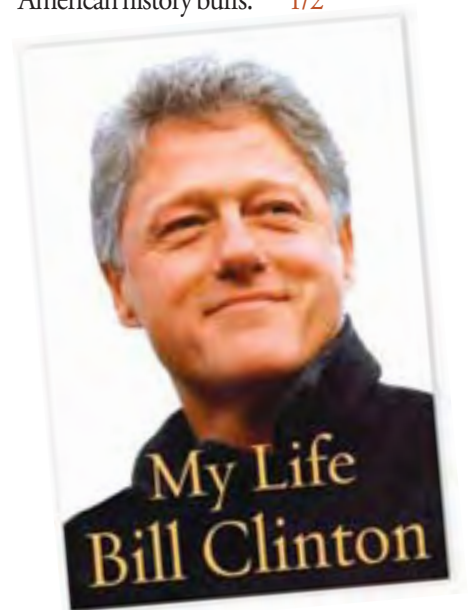
America grew up to be one of the most popular as well as controversial presidents in recent history. Not many have the legacy of near-impeachment over oral sex in the Oval Office.

However, if you are looking for a personal account of the Monica Lewinsky affair, you will not find that in *My Life*. To say anything more about Monica would be telling... What you will find in this weighty tome is a comprehensive and well-written memoir divided into two parts: one, the life of the man and his family, and two, the policy thinking of a past president caught in a quagmire of controversy, all at a very critical time in American history. The first half of the book is told in a narrative style, just like how his small-town uncle taught him to weave a good tale back in the 1950s. The latter half of the book, however, appears to be a justification for most of the major policy decisions made or ignored by Clinton in his eight

years as the most powerful man in the world.

Surprisingly lacking in this huge book are any signs of anger, resentment or ill-feeling towards any of his opponents during the Whitewater investigations, even when it seemed like bipartisan policymaking had stopped and gossip-mongering had taken over completely in 1998. I was living in Washington DC at that time, and I can tell you, the executive branch of the government had pretty much shut down and gone into defensive-retaliation mode, combating everything from rumours of murder-suicides over corrupt investment deals to date rape while Clinton was Governor of Arkansas.

By 1999, any policymaking that was in the making had stopped. This happened at the worst possible time for America, as we see in *My Life*. Many of the shenanigans that went on in the capital during those years happened when important policies were being formulated and the book gives



My Life
Bill Clinton
Alfred A Knopf, 2004
ISBN: 0375414576
\$35 (Hardcover)

Jiggy Gaton is a cartoonist and columnist for *Nepali Times* and *WAVE*, who visited Bill Clinton's hometown of Hot Springs, Arkansas many times and always wondered, "How does a boy from this place wind up as president of the US?"

BIGBEN



Sunset cruise in Chitwan, burning elephant grass...

BOOKWORM

Nepal Studies in the UK
Conversations with Practitioners
Pratyoush Onta



Nepal Studies in the UK: Conversations with Practitioners
Pratyoush Onta
Martin Chautari, 2004
Rs 950

Pratyoush Onta interviews 19 scholars, including Michael Hutt, Ian Harper and Mark Turin, to get an in-depth understanding of how research on Nepal is produced in the UK.

Arguing that the UK has been the centre of social science writing about our country, Onta aims to provide insights into research interests and perspectives, as well as include personal backgrounds of the researchers and sketches of the institutional environment in which such studies are carried out. This book will be useful for anyone wanting to know about the contemporary history of Nepal Studies.

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

Single handicappers

How to play those lob shots

When approaching the green, most seasoned golfers prefer to chip rather than pitch. This means they are more comfortable playing a relatively low shot and run the ball up the pin, rather than hitting a higher lob shot that lands close to the pin and stops immediately.

The reason for this is that the former is a good percentage shot, and the latter is much harder to execute consistently with a much larger margin for error. However, every so often during a round, there will be situations where there is not much green to work with or there is a heavy rough, water or perhaps even a deep bunker to clear.

TEE BREAK
Deepak Acharya



In these instances, a low running chip shot is not an option. The only shot is the high flying, soft landing pitch. Even though the percentages are against executing this shot well, and the risks of taking this option are high, there is no choice but to play it. This is something every golfer needs to have in order to improve their score. If you know the proper technique and practice it, you will soon feel comfortable using it on the course when necessary.



To play this type of shot, you must be able to create elevation in your shot, and for that you require to follow two main criteria:

First, lay the clubface a little open before taking your grip, which ensures there will be enough elevation when you hit down on the back of the ball.

Second, open your stance with the feet, shoulders, and hips aiming left of the target. This allows you to swing freely on your follow through. Ensure the clubface aims at the pin. Keep the ball forward in your stance (more towards the left foot).

Once your address position is correctly set, then commit to taking your back swing on the line of the feet. Unlike other swings, you have to hinge your wrist more to be able to create a steep angle of attack on the downswing. This is what gives the height on the shot. Ensure the down swing returns on the same path as the backswing. It should feel as though your swing is well left of the target. The key to this shot is to hold the clubface open through impact with the grooves facing the sky. If you follow these instructions, keep your rhythm smooth and put in a little practice, there's no reason why you shouldn't be able to play this shot well.

Know your rules:

Q. At a par 3 hole, A had hit his first tee shot into the woods and hits a provisional ball, which lands two feet from the flag. However his caddy and the gallery who had already gone to search for the ball, had found a ball within the permissible 5 minute search time, but the ball was not yet identified as belonging to A. A wanted to declare his first ball as lost ball. Is this permissible?

A. In this circumstance, A must identify the ball which has been found, and if that is his ball, he should continue to play with that ball. However if that was not his ball, only then is he allowed to continue play with the provisional ball.

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



Check out the Czechs

Emerging triumphant from qualifying Group 3 ahead of the Netherlands, and with most of their players having top-flight experience in most of Europe's best leagues, the Czech Republic at their best possess all the flair and style of the doomed Italians and to the never-say-die resilience of the Germans.

Hardly surprising, as within their ranks they boast some of the finest players in the Bundesliga and Serie A. Their most notable talent is Juventus FC's Pavel Nedved—a left-sided midfielder with power and pace and a knack for scoring goals from set pieces.

Nedved was acknowledged by many to have been the outstanding player of the 2002/03 UEFA Champions League, and his absence through suspension from the Juventus side that lost on penalties to AC Milan in the final was cited by many as the decisive factor in the game.

Of a similar vintage to Nedved, former Manchester United FC winger Karel Poborsk can provide a significant threat down the right, and will be hoping to emulate the sparkling form that led the Czech Republic to the final of EURO 96 and briefly made him a household name in Europe.

The Czechs are spoiled for choice in the centre of midfield. PFC CSKA Moskva midfielder Jiri Jarošik did not become the most expensive player ever to join a Russian club without good

What Karel Brückner's Czech Republic side lacks in quantity, he makes up in sheer quality

Pavel Nedved celebrates with his team.



reason, while Liverpool FC's Vladimír Šmicer brings an element of toughness to a midfield dripping with style.

No analysis of the Czech midfield would be complete without a mention of BV Borussia Dortmund's brilliant Tomáš Rosick. Lightning-fast and supremely composed with the ball at his feet, the youngster was, like so many of his teammates, a graduate of the AC Sparta Praha academy, and has the passing skills to turn a game.

He will certainly provide much of the ammunition for the Czech Republic's forwards, who will be led by the giant Jan Koller. Surprisingly nimble with the ball at his feet but unsurprisingly deadly in the air, Koller will nonetheless need to be at his best to keep Liverpool prodigy Milan Baroš out of the first team.

At the other end, young goalkeeper Petr Cech has tended to be Brückner's first choice. Now playing in France, he is one of a number of veterans of the Czech team who surprisingly triumphed at the UEFA European Under-21 Championship along with Baroš and defender Zdenek Grygera.

Cech has the commanding presence to preside over a relatively inexperienced defence that also boasts Tomáš Hübschman—a young Sparta defender rated by many to be one of the finest prospects in Europe.

There is a nice mixture of youth and experience in the Czech squad, and after failing to reach the FIFA World Cup finals in 1998 and 2002 and underperforming massively at EURO 2000, there is also a real determination to show that they are as good as they have been hyped up to be. ●

EUROcup runneth over...

With beer and English hooligans

In the Portuguese resort town of Albufeira, the owners of bars along the Sá Carneiro coastal strip and downtown Da Oura avenue say their receipts average \$22,000 a day since the start of the EURO 2004 football tournament on 12 June. The scene of recent rioting by England fans and hooligans, Albufeira is home to the largest community of British expatriates in Portugal. It is located 320km south of the capital, in the Algarve region on the southern coast.

For the bar owners, the destruction of tables and chairs by England supporters amounts to an

insignificant loss compared to the profits they're raking in. A total of 33 England fans have been deported from Portugal, after paying \$2,200 fines, and several more have orders to be sent home. They were arrested in connection with the violence in Portugal and are now facing trial and possible football banning orders in Britain.

England supporters have also virtually taken over the Praça do Rossio, Lisbon's central square, turning it into a kind of general headquarters where they gather day and night, transforming the beautiful urban plaza into an immense garbage dump littered with

piles of plastic bags, bottles, and plastic and cardboard cups. All night long, thousands of British men and women, jump into the fountains, sing and dance, break bottles, wave flags and shout insults.

As Portugal receives a deluge of visitors from all over Europe, the police are increasingly concerned about the disorderly conduct of the hooligans, and have assigned growing contingents to control the disorder. An average of 1,220 planes a day are arriving in Portugal, and the air traffic is not expected to let up until the championships are over on 4 July. ● (IPS)

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STATUTORY DIRECTIVE : SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

"Lata ko desh ma gaando tanderi." (In a land of fools, even a man with a goatee can be a hero.)

And the Winners are... **WHERE'S HEROJIG? CONTEST**

But that Pajero killed my father.

Does that phone have a camera?

Yumm um... Chicken Basket !!!

Thanks a Nihi!

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Thanks for playing *Where's Herojig?*

"You can do it."
Ven. Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche (1939 - 1987)

Next Change: Herojig contemplates independence.

1st Prize - the Pajero to Thupten of Pulchowk Rd. 2nd Prize - the phone to Sunita of Timi. 3rd Prize - the Chicken Basket to Binod Chetri - CONGRATS ALL!

(c) 2061 by jigme gaton - permission to try anything.

ABOUT TOWN

FESTIVAL AND EXHIBITIONS

- ❖ **Secret Moments** Paintings by Bhairaj Maharjan till 15 July at Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited, 4218048
- ❖ **Erotic Drawings** by Birendra Pratap Singh till 10 July at Buddha Gallery Zen Café, Thamel. 4441689

EVENTS

- ❖ **Close-Up Video Music Awards** at BICC, 4PM onwards, 26 June. Live telecast on Channel Nepal.
- ❖ **Yale Whiffenpoofs** back at the Hotel Yak & Yeti. 7PM on 29-30 June. Rs 999 per person.
- ❖ **4th Bagmati River Festival** till 21 August
- ❖ **Monsoon H2O Party** Rs 699 with drink and dinner. 25 June at Dwarika's Hotel.
- ❖ **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, Chabahil.
- ❖ **Towards a New Horizon** Cultural program by Maiti Nepal, 3PM on 27 June, Royal Academy Hall. 4492904
- ❖ **An Evening with Pankaj Uddhas** 6PM on 2 July at Hyatt Regency Kathmandu. Tickets Rs 3,000. 2080392



MUSIC

- ❖ **Full Circle** 7PM Fridays at Bakery Café, Jawalakhel. 4434554
- ❖ **Deo** at Not Just The Jazz Bar Fridays at Hotel Shangri-la, Lazimpat.
- ❖ **Jatra Friday Nites** Live music by The Strings. 4256622

DRINKS

- ❖ **Red Onion Bar** EURO 2004 on a 61" screen. Buy four Carlsbergs and score one free, buy a Famous Grouse Whisky get one free, ditto on Heineken. Blind Faith sings live every Friday.
- ❖ **Lychee Martinis** and latest club hits at Rox Bar, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, 4491234
- ❖ **EURO 2004 Football Mania** at the Piano Lounge Bar, Hotel Yak Yeti. 5PM onwards till 5 July

FOOD

- ❖ **Summit's Barbecue Dinner** with vegetarian specials. Summit Hotel. 5521810
- ❖ **Friday Nights** at Subterranea Club Kilroy. 4412821
- ❖ **Vegetarian Creations** at Stupa View Restaurant. 4480262
- ❖ **Organic Market** every Saturday at Baber Mahal Revisited.
- ❖ **Splash Spring BBQ** Wednesday and Friday evenings. Radisson Hotel Kathmandu.
- ❖ **Executive Lunch** at Toran Restaurant, Dwarika's. 4479488
- ❖ **Sunny Side Up Weekend BBQ** at Soaltee Crowne Plaza Kathmandu. 4273999
- ❖ **The Beer Garden** at Vaijayantha, Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **Dwarika's Thali Lunch** at The Heritage courtyard. 4479488

GETAWAYS

- ❖ **Bird watching escape** Shivapuri retreat with meals by Kilroy's. 4253352
- ❖ **Wet & Wild Summer Splash** every weekend at the Godavari Village Resort. 5560675
- ❖ **Pure relaxation** at Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge. 01 4361500
- ❖ **Bardia National Park** with Jungle Base Camp Lodge. junglebasecamp@yahoo.com
- ❖ **Golf** at Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa. 4451212
- ❖ **Weekend Special** at Park Village Resort, Budhanilkantha. 4375280
- ❖ **Early Bird discounts** at Shangri-La Hotel & Resort. 4412999
- ❖ **Summer in Shivapuri** at Shivapuri Heights. steve@escape2nepal.com

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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.

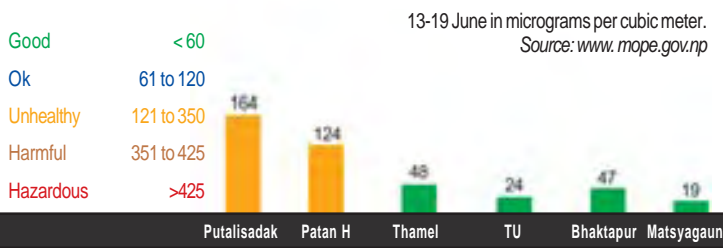
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JAI NEPAL CINEMA

LAKSHYA

KATHMANDU AIR QUALITY

The air pollution in the Valley continued to drop to abnormally low levels last week, with all the monitoring stations registering decreases in PM10 (Particles small enough to enter the human body) values. Matsyagaun and the area around TU had very low pollution rates, staying 'good' throughout the week. Even so, Putali Sadak and Patan Hospital still fall in the 'unhealthy' range, with PM10 concentrations over 120.



NEPALI WEATHER

by MAUSAM BEED



This is a highly unusual satellite image taken on Wednesday at noon: not a speck of cloud across the subcontinent. By the third week of June the monsoon should have been surging across the north Indian plains towards New Delhi. It is clear by now that after an initial healthy start, the Arabian Sea branch of the monsoon this year has hit a roadblock. We can't say how long this lull will last. There is a system in the intertropical convergence zone building off Sri Lanka. Luckily for eastern Nepal, we are under the spell of a monsoon trough from the Bay of Bengal.

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BENEDICTION: The Patan Kumari smiles at King Gyanendra during the Bhoto Jatra festival on Tuesday.

RAM HUMAGAIN/NEPALNEWS.COM



HUNGRY FOR NEWS: Family members of people 'disappeared' by the government on a relay hunger strike at Bhadrakali on Monday.

KUMAR SHRESTHA/NEPALNEWS.COM



GUITAR GODS: Nirakar and Manoj of 1974 AD perform on Sunday at the BICC hall during the band's two-day Ultimate Rock Show.

KIRAN PANDAY



PLAYMAKERS: Basketball gives way to EURO 2004 fever in Lainchaur on Friday.

KIRAN PANDAY



SITTING PRETTY: Singer Rekha Satyal at the release of her new album, 'Nauli' on Sunday at Durbar Hotel.

KIRAN PANDAY

The right chord

Deepak Bajracharya had his first public performance at 14, and recalls stepping on stage feeling calm and collected. Sixteen years later, he is still cool and confident as he emerges as one of the freshest and most creative young voices in the Nepali music scene.

Deepak didn't get there by fluke. He worked hard, learning classical vocals and taking lessons in western classical guitar. But when Deepak finished college, his parents thought it would be better for him to take up the family business. So he dabbled in handicraft, tried his hand at wood carving and even opened a shop in Thamel. But somewhere in the back of his head the sound of music

was always calling him.

On a visit to Japan, it suddenly dawned on Deepak why Nepalis were not making progress in modern music. "It wasn't enough to be able to sing, you had to understand music," he says. He returned to Nepal determined to set up a facility for aspiring musicians to have a proper academic approach.

Deepak's Royal Tone Academy is a non-profit institution that ploughs fees back to students for

materials. It has become a gathering place for young Nepali musicians, where they learn notes, rhythm and timing. It is a holistic approach to music, including everything from skill development and recording to stage presence and presentation.

His own music has evolved. Today, fans swing their hips to Deepak's unique fusion of Latin rhythms and Nepali beats. "Music is about waves, not bound to any language. The trick is to find the right wave that's appealing to the human ear," he explains. Deepak is working on his seventh album, an exclusive compilation of Anita Khadka's lyrics.

As Kodak brand ambassador he will donate Rs 1 from each of his new album sold to the Nepal Cancer Relief Society. Kodak donates an additional Rs 2 from each film roll developed to cancer patients. Why cancer? "Nepal has treatment, but it is too expensive for most people. The money we raise goes to who needs it most," he says.

When he is not in the studio, Deepak and his 4-year-old daughter Cherisa are likely to be found splashing about in a swimming pool. Other things may come up, but he says one fact will always stay the same: "Music is everything to me and I want to encourage future musicians."

(Sradha Basnyal)



MIN BAJRACHARYA



All the news that's fit to print

As gatekeepers of a newspaper of record, it behooves us to respect the great faith and trust that you, our valued customers, have placed upon us by ensuring strict quality control over the items that we allow to see the light of day. This means eternal vigilance to ensure that only news that grows on the finest vines, is freshly plucked, juicy, succulent and ripe will be allowed to pass on to the fermentation vats where they will be turned into vintage editorials that will age gracefully and can be enjoyed decades hence.



In this day and age, it is impossible to verify every rumour so we don't bother anymore. We just go ahead and print them all, and let the chips fall where they may. After all, rumour has it, where there is smoke there must be fire. Readers today also have short attention spans, and I know from past experience that you have most certainly stopped reading thus far into this influential column so I can write just about anything here on forth and it won't make an iota of difference.

In fact, now that no one is actually reading this, I can say the most outrageous things about our current rulers and get away with it because I'm sure they're all watching Latvia vs the Czech Republic and not doing what they should be doing which is: induct new ministers into the cabinet. And that brings us to the first item in this roundup of the week's most important events:

CPN(UML), NC(D) CWC OK CMP

Agencies

KATHMANDU — Six months after being appointed PM, Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba has finally agreed with Mr Madhab Kumar Nepal on a Common Minimum Programme (CMP), senior sources opined Thursday.

The CMP includes provisions for a future coalition government not to do more work than is absolutely necessary and get by with the minimum. It is reliably learnt that this landmark agreement between the two leaders means the last hurdle for the formation of an all-party cabinet has been cleared and an announcement to this effect is expected by the second half of 2007 AD.

"A common minimum program is needed because we don't want any coalition partner to show extra initiative and do something foolish like sign a peace agreement," the source, who requested anonymity, told scribes at an off-the-record television interview.

Regression Takes A Rain Check

BY OUR REGRESSIVE ANALYST

KATHMANDU — The four-party alliance has decided to suspend its anti-regression street agitation at Ratna Park because of the onset of the rainy season, it was announced

Wednesday. The alliance leaders said they had received a credible weather forecast from the Met Department that monsoon rains may be headed our way and the streets may be muddy in isolated parts of the Kingdom. But in a fiery speech this week, alliance leader Girija Prasad Koirala said he was keeping all options open. "The king has no right to hire and fire prime ministers, and after the rains we will resume our protests unless he makes me prime minister," he thundered, adding for good measure: "Nepal has no future with Nepal."

KIRAN PANDAY

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Pokhara/Kathmandu : YA 132 - 1015 HRS

Kathmandu/Nepalgunj : YA 177 - 1120 HRS
Nepalgunj/Kathmandu : YA 178 - 1240 HRS

Kathmandu/Bhairahawa : YA 161 - 1410 HRS
Bhairahawa/Kathmandu : YA 162 - 1510 HRS

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